The Fieldglass and the Magnifying Lens: Studies of Ottoman Crafts and Craftsmen

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Ottoman crafts and craftsmen have not, on the whole, been popular with XXth-century researchers. They are difficult to grasp, since they have left few direct testimonies of their activities. Much of the limited information we possess was recorded by other people, usually Ottoman officials. Traders were for the most part wealthier than craftsmen, and even modest merchants operating on a purely regional level were more likely to come to the attention of government authorities and thus have their activities recorded in writing. In this respect, Ottoman craftsmen resemble their counterparts in many regions of the pre-industrial world. As a perusal of the literature on artisanal production in early modern Europe, India or Japan will show, even monographs dealing specially with craftsmen often treat the relationship between merchants and artisans as a key issue, to such an extent that the problems of craftsmen as craftsmen become secondary matters. Craftsmen are studied not on their own behalf, but due to the importance of their activities to other people. Fernand Braudel has summarized the problem from the merchants' point of view, when he discusses how representatives of commercial capitalism invest (or in many cases, choose not to invest) in craft production.[1] Thus even when artisans are left in peace to manage their workshops and market their products, throughout the pre-industrial world they constitute a dependent variable, more acted upon than actors.

[1] Fernand Braudel, *Civilization matérielle, économie et capitalisme XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1979), vol. 2, *Les jeux de l'échange*, p. 199 ff.

If craftsmen have almost always been studied as constituent parts of larger units, they may be compared with other 'subalterns' such as women, who even today are viewed as almost inseparable from the larger context of the family.[2] In the case of Ottoman artisans, one of the overarching concepts most frequently employed is that of 'craft industry'. We possess studies of, for example, the silk industry of Bursa, the silk manufactures of Lebanon, and the copper and cotton industries of Tokat[3]. When selecting the 'craft industry' as a unit of analysis, we ask questions concerning the global performance of this or that branch of production. Our main concern is with output and prices, and, if data can be located, with inputs such as wages and raw material prices as well. This concern with the basic concepts of economic analysis is perfectly normal, since economic history is a branch of economics, in addition to being a branch of history. There is nothing wrong with such an emphasis, provided the social factors conditioning production are not treated as *quantité négligeable.*

Macro-economic Approaches

However the unit employed by many historians when studying Ottoman craft production is larger than even the individual industry. Economic historians dealing with the XIXth

[2] This term comes from Indian social science; there is a publication called *Subaltern Studies.*

[3] On Bursa silk: Fahri Dalsar, *Türk Sanayi ve Ticaret Tarihinde Bursa' da Ipekçilik* (Istanbul, 1960); Leila T. Erder, 'The Making of Industrial Bursa: Economic Activity and Population in a Turkish City 1835-1975' Ph D thesis, Princeton, 1976; Murat Çizakça, 'Price History and the Bursa Silk Industry: A Study in Ottoman Industrial Decline 1550-1650', reprint in Huri Islamoğlu-Inan (ed.), *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge, Engl., Paris, 1987), pp. 247-261; Roger Owen, 'The Silk-reeling Industry of Mount Lebanon, 1840-1914; A Study of the Possibilities and Limitations of Factory Production in the Periphery', in Huri Islamoğlu-Inan (ed.), *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge, Engl., Paris, 1987, pp. 271-283; Mehmet Genç, '17.-19. Yüzyıllarda Sanayi ve Ticaret Merkezi Olarak Tokat' in Hayri Bolay *et al* (eds.), *Türk Tarihinde ve Türk Kültüründe Tokat* (Ankara, 1987), pp. 145-169.

and XXth centuries operate with the concept of key industries. In late XVIIIth-century England, cotton manufacture was the key industry, while the construction of railways became a key industry during the middle and later XIXth century. For preindustrial periods, key industries are much harder to determine. Since quantitative data on Ottoman economic activity are comparatively sparse, the precise criteria by which we determine a key industry in a XIXth or XXth-century context are often inapplicable, and impressionistic judgments can scarcely be avoided. In consequence, any historian studying a given branch of manufacture will be sorely tempted to regard it as a key industry, for no better reason than the fact that he or she happens to be working on it.

Particularly the Bursa silk industry of the XVth to XVIIth centuries, which has been exceptionally well investigated, is often regarded as a key industry. To put it differently, its expansion and subsequent decline have been regarded as indicators for the prosperity or crisis of the Ottoman economy.[4] However with a larger number of monographs available on different craft industries, it has become apparent that some industries developed in a manner comparable to the Bursa silk industry, while others followed an altogether different trajectory.[5] As a result, it is no longer so certain that the Bursa industry occupies the crucial position we have assigned to it, and we will need to rethink the entire question.

Moreover, the macro-economic approach to Ottoman craft production allows us to analyse the Ottoman economy — an even broader generalization — as a system of markets. Most scholars would distinguish between local, regional, interregional

[4] Ömer Lütfi Barkan, 'The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 6 (1975), p. 8 (from now on *IJMES*).

[5] Nikolay Todorov, '19cu Yüzyılın Ilk Yarısında Bulgaristan Esnaf Teşkilatında Bazı Karakter Değişmeleri', *Istanbul Üniversitesi Iktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 27, 1-2 (1967-68), 1-36 (from now on *IFM*).

and international levels. Linkages between different levels constitute a significant aspect of economic history. Goods may pass from a village market to a provincial fair, and from there to a centre of interregional trade, such as the Balkan fairs of the XVIth to the early XIXth centuries. If the goods are to be exported, they may move from local and provincial fairs to a port, such as Salonica, Sayda, Izmir or Alexandria. Most modern scholars have concentrated their attention upon interregional and international trade, while craft industries producing for purely regional and local markets have attracted but little attention. Amnon Cohen's work on baking and the meat trade in XVIth-century Jerusalem may be regarded as the exception which proves the rule, and even in this instance, interregional links were not totally absent.[6] Industries whose products were distributed over a wide area are more revealing about the state of the Ottoman economy as a whole than those catering for a purely local market. But the social historian is concerned with the functioning of small communities such as craft guilds or provincial towns, and exclusive concern with global concepts such as 'craft industries' can easily hamper our understanding of the problems of 'real-life' artisans.

The Ottoman Economy and Early Modern Europe

Economic historicans attempt to conceptualize relations of the Ottoman economy with the growing, encroaching and ultimately incorporating world economy of early modern and later of industrial Europe. In this context, craft industries have a crucial role to play. From the middle of the XIXth century onward, historians and observers of the contemporary scene have always assumed that competition by the industrializing economies of Western Europe destroyed Ottoman crafts. By the late XIXth century, this process was perceived as virtually complete. Only

[6] Amnon Cohen, *Economic Life in Ottoman Jerusalem* (Cambridge, Engl., 1989), p. 35.

in recent years have certain historians pointed out that quite a few craft industries managed to survive by adapting to changed conditions. Ottoman craft industries of the late XIXth century were dependent on the capitalist and European-dominated world market much more than their XVIIth-century predecessors, but the volume of their production declined less seriously than had been assumed.[7]

In the late XVIth as well as in the XIXth century, some regions of the Ottoman Empire were more affected than others by European economic penetration. This fact is well known, and yet data showing an intensification of European economic penetration (or its opposite) are often taken as evidence for the state of the Ottoman economy as a whole. This is definitely a misconception. The economy of the Aegean coastlands was profoundly affected by trade with Europe during the XVIIIth century, while the middle Danube remained a *cul-de-sac* until the coming of the railroads.[8]

The 'Two-phase Model' and XVIIIth Century Recovery

Impulses from the metropolises of Europe equally affected the rate at which Ottoman regional economies were brought under control by European capitalists. A two-phase model has been suggested: in the XVIth century, the destruction of Ottoman craft industries and the growth of frequently contraband raw material exports proceeded apace.[9] But between about 1600 and 1760, political crisis in the metropolises and the opening up of more promising opportunities in South Asia and the Amer-

[7] This is the opinion of Donald Quataert in his forthcoming contribution to the 'Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire'.

[8] Bruce McGowan, 'The Middle Danube *cul-de-sac*' in Huri Islamoglu-Inan (ed.), *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge, Engl., Paris, 1987), pp. 170-177.

[9] Murat Çizakça, 'Incorporation of the Middle East into the European World Economy', *Review*, 3 (1985), 353-378.

icas protected the Ottoman Empire from further European penetration, and many local industries revived. In XVIIIth-century Bursa, there was once again a silk cloth manufacture. Since locally raised cocoons were now available, manufacturers were less sensitive to European competition for Iranian raw silk and the political vicissitudes affecting Iranian silk production. Only in the late XVIIIth century, and even more dramatically in the 1830s', were Ottoman producers confronted with the full force of the European world economy, and Bursa silk cloth manufacture was replaced with cocoon raising and silk reeling.

At present we know almost nothing about the investments which made this revival possible. Probably some capital came from merchants, and sometimes tax-farmers also participated. When taking over a mine for example, a tax-farmer might have to drain it before he could begin operations. But investment on the part of tax-farmers should not be overestimated. Even though the institution of life-long tax-farms at the end of the XVIIth century was meant to facilitate investment, the practice of subletting tax-farms for short periods nullified the beneficial impact of these long-term contracts.[10] Moreover the practice of drawing off all foundation revenues not needed for the simple reproduction of the foundation in question also discouraged investment, while the deployment of foundation-owned capital had played an important role in the expansion of the XVth and XVIth centuries. Some of the capital was probably provided by the artisans themselves, but since most of them were poor people, they could only make a limited contribution. A study of XVIIth and XVIIIth century investment patterns should start from the hypothesis that merchants were the principal builders of economic recovery during this period. But only carefully constructed monographs on individual industries and industrial

[10] MEHMET GENÇ, 'Osmanlı Maliyesinde Malikâne Sistemi', in Osman Okyar, Ünal Nalbantoğlu (eds.), *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri, Metinler, Tartışmalar* (Ankara, 1975) pp. 244-245.

centres will allow us to determine whether this hypothesis is true or false. Moreover, a degree of uncertainty will always remain, as the kadi registers, our only source for studies of this type, contain very little information on investment patterns.

If the two-phase model is at all appropriate to Ottoman realities, we should also be able to discern its political repercussions. In the later XVIth century, the Ottoman Empire went through a period of political crisis, which we might describe as a transition from direct rule by the Sultans to routinized government by the bureaucracy.[11] This latter system remained in force until the late XVIIIth and early XIXth centuries, when Selim III attempted to change and Mahmud II succeeded in changing the political balance. The defeat and abolition of the janissary corps eliminated obstacles which previously had prevented the Sultans from exercising political power directly. These two major changes within the political system of the mature Ottoman Empire coincided with the two periods in which European traders were particularly aggressive. Where the changes of the late XVIIIth and early XIXth centuries are concerned, we usually assume that initiative lay with the Europeans. But even in this late period, European impact resulted in the strengthening of the Ottoman centre, rather than its opposite, so that cohesive forces within the Ottoman ruling group must have been of considerable strength.

Where the late XVIth century is concerned, certain scholars have tried to prove a connection between European economic intervention (the 'price revolution') and Ottoman political change. In my opinion, these attempts have been but moderately successful, and internal factors were probably more important than external ones in accounting for Ottoman political transformation. During the Köprülü restoration, routinization of

[11] For a discussion of this issue, compare Rifa' at Abou-El-Haj, 'The Nature of the Ottoman State in the Seventeenth Century', unpublished manuscript. I thank the author for permission to consult it.

government procedures continued, and in the consolidated Ottoman state of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, European merchants did not always get their own way. Easier gains could be obtained in less strongly cemented states, and the relative cohesion of the Ottoman Empire during the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries made these territories comparatively uninviting to European traders.

The Popularity of Passivity

When a historian ascribes an all-important role to European capitalists in explaining economic transformation in the Ottoman Empire, (s)he implies that Ottoman merchants, craftsmen or administrators remained passive by comparison with their European opponents. This line of reasoning was quite popular with certain researchers who had formed themselves intellectually during the early Republican period, that is during the *étatiste* phase lasting until 1950. Given the political concerns of the times, the Ottoman government's intervention in trade and price formation was regarded as a highly positive feature, which enabled historians to postulate a measure of continuity despite the 'great divide' of 1912-1923. However in the 1960s, Halil Inalcik posed the question whether Ottoman *dirigiste* policies were sufficient to secure economic growth in the face of formidable challenges, namely European penetration, population growth and the competition of other 'world economies' with lower wage levels.[12] But even with this new set of questions on the agenda, researchers found it useful to assume that Ottoman state and society were passively absorbed by a far more powerful European-dominated world economy. With this assumption,

[12] Halil Inalcik, 'Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire', *The Journal of Economic History*, XIX (1969), 97-140; id., 'Osmanlı Pamuklu Pazarı, Hindistan ve Ingiltere: Pazar Rekabetinde Emek Maliyetinin Rolü', *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi* (1979-80 özel sayrisr), 1-66.

economic crisis could be explained without casting aspersion on the Ottoman state and ruling class, and in the 'conservative modernization' period after 1950, this proved a substantial advantage.

In the historiography concerning the Ottoman Empire, we rarely find questioning of the kind which characterizes debate concerning the British conquest of the Indian subcontinent. Indianist literature often discusses the social groups that supported British penetration and their reasons for so doing, while Ottomanists only study this problem in a very limited context.[13] Non-Muslim merchants appear as the only major allies of Venetians, Englishmen or Frenchmen, and the structural reasons which made this alliance possible are almost never discussed.[14] But once we begin to doubt the total passivity of Ottoman state and society *vis à vis* European economic penetration, a whole new set of questions opens up: (1) What was the attitude of provincial ruling groups toward European exporting merchants? (Research on the Karaosmanogullar, currently in progress, may prove enlightening in this respect). (2) Was there any divergence of interests between local ruling groups and merchants on the one hand and modest artisans on the other? (Problems of this kind have been raised for XVIIIth-XIXth century Syria and Egypt, but not for Ottoman Anatolia). (3) What was the impact of war on Ottoman craft producers and mercantile networks? (This question has recently been taken up by a few Ottoman historians, but we still do not know why the XVIth-century economy survived the ravages of Ottoman war financing so much better than its XVIIIth century counterpart).[15]

[13] C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, Engl., 1983), p. 229 ff.

[14] As an example for this limited outlook, see Ali Ihsan Bağis, *Osmanli Ticaretinde Gayri Müslimler, Kapitülasyonlar, Beratli Tüccarlar, Avrupa ve Hayriye Tüccarlari (1750-1839)* (Ankara, 1983).

[15] Mehmet Genç, 'Osmanli Ekonomisi ve Savas', *Yapyt, Toplumsal Araştirmalar Dergisi*, 49'4 (1984), 50'5 (1984), 86-93.

The 'penetration-absorption' model of Ottoman economic development assumes that the decisive impulses came from the centres of the European capitalist economy, principally Marseille and London. However an alternative model suggests that the Ottoman manufacturing economy possessed its own dynamic, and was not simply acted upon by outside factors. For example rural industries and saleable specialty crops developed when an increased population made it difficult to subsist by grain farming alone, and were not merely a response to foreign demand.[16]

In spite of its well-known *laissez-faire* policy concerning imports, the Ottoman state was a 'strong' state. The central government and/or provincial governors determined which goods could be exported, what dues and customs merchants must pay and who functioned as intermediaries between producers and exporting merchants. In addition the Ottoman Empire maintained firm control of its overland trade routes, and this control was undisputed until the late XVIIIth century.[17] A previous generation of researchers minimized the importance of this fact, because on a world scale, Asian overland trade routes no longer possessed their previous importance once European merchants had made contact with South and East Asia by way of oceanic routes.[18] But today trade between the Ottoman Empire and the Indian subcontinent, as well as Ottoman-Iranian commerce and interregional trade within the Empire itself are much better known than they were in the past, and their importance is more appreciated. Much of this trade used the Asian land routes, and their control by the Ottoman state was a factor staving off European economic penetration.

[16] Huri Islamoğlu-Inan, 'State and Peasants in the Ottoman Empire: A Study of Peasant Economy in North Central Anatolia during the Sixteenth Century', in Huri Islamoğlu-Inan (ed.), *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge, Engl., Paris, 1987), p. 119 ff.

[17] Braudel, *Civilization*, vol. 3, *Le temps du monde*, pp. 405-496.

[18] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd edition (London, Oxford, New York, 1968), p. 28. The author bases his statements on studies by Köprülü and Inalcık.

Cash Flows

As a strong ruling class governing a strong state, the Ottoman bureaucracy determined which goods should enter the networks of commercial exchange, and which ones were reserved for the direct consumption of court and army. This applies not only to agricultural produce, but to goods manufactured by craftsmen as well. Woollen cloth manufacturers of Salonica, cotton goods weavers of Ayden and Thessaly or sackcloth makers of the Bursa region worked not only for the market, but supplied the janissaries, the Arsenal or the Ottoman Palace with goods in lieu of taxes. In other instances the craftsmen were paid, but received far less than the price they could demand from ordinary customers. Thus state policy determined what links individual groups were able to establish with the market.

A model developed for Northern India makes it seem likely that even deliveries to ordinary paying customers resulted from the central government's tax demands. The model can be described in the following fashion: taxes sent to the capital were normally forwarded in money. This procedure would have emptied the provinces of bullion, unless some compensatory cash flow redressed the balance. Taxpayers could earn back the money they spent on taxes by selling goods to wealthy members of the central administration, so that the latter were supplied not only with bullion, but with goods as well.[19].

In this sense the central government's tax demands furthered both commercial crops and craft industries, and in addition strengthened the privileged position of Istanbul. Given the flow of resources toward the centre, most of the Empire's purchasing power accumulated in the capital. Since goods go where purchasing power is found, the shops and markets of Istanbul were filled with goods produced in the provinces. Official sources concerning the Ottoman capital show a profusion of provincial

[19] BAYLY, *Rulers*, p. 63.

cloths, felts, leatherwares and copper goods, and it is not a matter of chance that no other town of Anatolia or Rumella possesses a price list as detailed as the famous Istanbul *narh defteri* of 1640.[20]

Up to this point we have assumed that no cash entered the Ottoman system from the outside, or that the ruling groups controlled whatever gold and silver entered the country, so that the taxpayers could only obtain cash from those who had been enriched by taxes. This was not true in real life; particularly European merchants brought silver and gold into the Empire, and while some of it was paid to tax farmers and customs officials as duties, a considerable share went to merchants and direct producers. Rural producers sometimes benefitted from these cash flows. Urban craftsmen, on the other hand, were disadvantaged, since foreign merchants rarely bought goods manufactured by urban industry, but raw materials or semi-finished products of village manufacturers such as cotton or silk thread. Therefore complaints concerning the activities of contraband traders were often formulated with the interests of artisans in mind.[21]

Here we are confronted with a structural feature which explains the all-pervasiveness of contraband trade. Ömer Lütfi Barkan once suggested that the high-pressure, high-price economy of early modern Europe made contact with a lower-pressured economy, namely that of the Ottoman Empire.[22] As a result, resources were 'sucked out' of the lower-pressured system and 'aspirated' into the high-pressured one. This simile makes sense as far as it goes. But it does not explain how the two systems were brought into contact in the first place. Barkan probably assumed that this contact came about due to the high

[20] Mübahat Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul, 1983).

[21] Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Mohair Manufacture and Mohair Workshops in Seventeenth-century Ankara', *IFM*, 41, 1-4 (1982-83), p. 228 f.

[22] Barkan, 'Price Revolution', pp. 4-8.

level of demand within the European economy, and this assumption is partly realistic. But on the other hand we should not make this simile of 'high-pressure' into a mystique. Given the military and naval strength of the XVIth century Ottoman Empire, contacts not desired by the Ottoman ruling class could have been prevented or at least severely curtailed. Here the model 'Made in India' provides a solution. If this model is applicable to our case, the very efficiency of the Ottoman government as a tax collector, and thereby as a simulant to the money economy, caused taxpayers to hunt for means of earning supplementary cash. The time-honoured practice of taxpayers' buying back their own money was no longer sufficient to supply the necessary bullion. The Ottoman Empire and Moghul India have both been placed in the category of 'gunpowder empires'.[23] But they shared an even more significant feature: they were both cash-taxing empires, and as such they could not exist without internal and external trade.

Craft Organizations as Part of the Ottoman Body Politic

The Ottoman state, a centralized empire, protected the livelihood of craftsmen by maintaining control over trade routes. But at the same time, Ottoman taxation policies placed craftsmen in a particularly vulnerable position. This ambiguity is important for Ottoman economic history, but most studies dealing specifically with artisans approach their subject from quite a different angle. Many present-day historians are in the habit of regarding the Ottoman Empire as a complex of institutions.[24] Some of these institutions possessed official sanction, such as the *timar*

[23] This expression was suggested by Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago, 1974), vol. 3, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times.*

[24] For a criticism of this position compare Huri Islamoğlu, 'M.A. Cook's Population Pressure in Rural Anatolia 1450-1600. A Critique of the Present Paradigm in Ottoman History', *Review of Middle East Studies*, 3, 120-135.

system or the *ilmiye* hierarchy. Others led a *de-facto* existence, such as the vizier and pasha households of the XVIIth century. The craftsmen's guilds lay somewhere in between. They did not form part of the state structure proper, and no *kanunname* regulated their functioning. But when the Ottoman government collected taxes, demanded services of artisans to the army commissariat or enforced rules of conduct in the marketplace, it addressed itself to the guild elders, and thereby recognized the latters' legitimacy.

When Ottoman historians of the XXth century deal with the state as the over-arching, dominant institution holding all other, smaller-scale institutions together, they generally adopt the point of view of the Ottoman ruling class. It is often assumed that the Ottoman Empire at least during the XVIth century was something very close to the ideal militarized state, able to shuffle its craftsmen and peasants around at will, and arousing little opposition in the process.[25] Peasants were resettled in remote border districts, while artisans were called from their home towns in the provinces, and made to work at building projects in Istanbul or elsewhere.

However, craftsmen mobilized in this fashion were often less docile than the image of the ideal military state implies. In 1580s Istanbul, craftsmen demanded and obtained higher wages, refusing to work unless their demands were granted.[26] Work stoppages due to labour disputes occurred outside the capital as well. The Gothic cathedrals of medieval France were not always built in an atmosphere of unanimous consent either, but at times aroused strident opposition from townsmen asked to foot the bill.[27] In the same fashion, Ottoman public buildings of the

[25] Ömer Lütfi Barkan, 'Osmanlı Imparatorlugunda bir Iskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler', *IFM*, 11, 1-4 (1949-50), p. 545.

[26] Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *Süleymaniye Cami ve Imareti Inşaatı (1550-1557)*, 2 vols. (Ankara, 1972, 1979), vol. 2, p. 292.

[27] Barbara Abou-El-Haj, 'The Urban Setting for Late Medieval Church Building, Reims and its Cathedral between 1210 and 1240', unpublished manuscript. I am grateful to the author for allowing me to consult it.

XVIth century seem to have been more controversial than the Ottoman ruling class was willing to admit. Great buildings were depicted as the work of the ruler and not of the ruled, but this also meant that the ruler was regarded as responsible for the evictions and other injustices which occurred in the process.[28]

When studying Ottoman craftsmen in an institutional framework, XXth century researchers concentrate on official regulation of the market. This is proably a congenial topic for those who wish to emphasize the harmony between rulers and ruled: on the one hand, the relevant rules and prohibitions were designed and enforced by Ottoman officials. But at the same time, craftsmen identified with this system of market controls. Their complaints concerning merchants, members of rival guilds, and all-too successful competitors within their own ranks emphasized that the system of market controls, such as it had existed since ancient times, was being subverted. Guildsmen looked to the Ottoman state for help against anyone who might undermine their economic position. On the other hand, enterprising merchants or craftsmen enlarging their businesses found it prudent to pocket and reinvest their profits as quietly as possible. Little evidence remains of the manner in which people of this kind defended their activities, whenever their profiteering was challenged by irate artisans. But probably Ottoman businessmen did develop specific lines of reasoning on these issues. Their arguments may have been analogous to those used on behalf of Ottoman governors who engaged in mercantile activities.[29] Commercial speculation was not expressly forbidden to the Sultan and his servitors, even though within the Ottoman bureaucracy, there existed an influential current of thought that considered such competition on the part of the ruling group against taxpayers as evidence of political decline. One would ex-

[28] [Ca'fer Efendi], *Risale-i mi' mariyye, An Early Seventeenth Century Treatise on Architecture*, tr. and annotated by Howard Crane (Leiden, ... 1987), p. 66.

[29] Metin Kunt, 'Derviş Mehmed Paşa, *Vezir* and Entrepreneur: A Study in Ottoman Political-economic Theory and Practice', *Turcica*, IX, 1 (1977), 197-214.

pect the 'entrepreneurs' among Ottoman craftsmen and merchants to emphasize the abundance of goods and low prices resulting from their activities, and the employment of poor people with no other source of livelihood. That records of such discourse have not at present been located may indicate that the ideology of market regulation was regarded as such a 'strong' ideology even by its opponents that they preferred to contravene in silence.

Within the institutionalist perspective, artisans have also been studied as servants of the Ottoman war machine.[30] Guildsmen were drafted to accompany the army on campaign, to set up shop whenever the latter pitched camp, thereby eliminating the need for soldiers to visit urban markets, where they might cause scarcity and disorder. The number of artisans to be made available by each guild often became a subject of hot dispute between guildsmen. Thus in 'normal' times, artisans' frustration at the sacrifices involved was not directed at the Ottoman state. The situation was however quite different in crisis periods such as the Patrona Halil rebellion, in which the annoyance of guildsmen who had sacrificed time and money for an abortive campaign played a significant part.[31]

The guilds acted as intermediary bodies between individual craftsmen and the central administration, securing manpower, taxes and social control. Therefore certain researchers have regarded the guilds as primarily an instrument of the state. However this is not really a fair assessment. If in most instances, guilds had not defended the interests of artisans, the latter would not have struggled to retain control over the selection of guild officials.[32] Yet this was what happened when the XVIIth

[30] Gabriel Baer, 'The Administrative, Economic and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds', *IJMES*, 1 (1970), 28-50; Gilles Veinstein, 'Du marché urbain au marché du camp: L'institution ottomane des *orducu*' in Abdeljelil Temimi (ed.), *Mélanges Professeur Robert Nantran*, (Zaghouan, 1988), pp. 299-327.

[31] Münir Aktepe, *Patrona Isyanı* (Istanbul, 1958).

[32] Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle, Essai d'histoire institutionelle, économique et sociale*, (Paris, 1962), p. 371.

century central administration attempted to farm out guild offices in or near the capital, or appointed people close to the Palace as guild elders.

A case documented in 1732 shows the interlocking official acts by which a person became the warden of an Istanbul guild.[33] As a first stage, the guildsmen had to select a candidate, then record their choice in the kadi's registers and secure an appointment by the Sultan's command. At the same time however, the former warden and the warden-elect came to an agreement, and the new warden paid his predecessor a fee in exchange for his transfer of the office. Thus a selection by the guildsmen, a transfer of office from one incumbent to the next and the central administration's agreement all entered into the appointment process, and its complexity symbolizes the composite character of the guild system as a whole.

Guilds may also be studied as part of a town or city, and most recent studies deal not with the guilds of the Ottoman Empire in its entirety, but with those of Bursa, Istanbul, Cairo, Jerusalem or Sofia.[34] Guild usage differed considerably from one city to another, and generalizations about the Ottoman guild system as a whole seem premature at the present time. But beyond considerations of research technique, interest on the part of city planners and restoration architects in the "interface" between Ottoman social history and architectural history has encouraged historians to study guilds within the framework of individual cities. The involvement of urban planners also explains why many studies of Ottoman cities concentrate on spatial structure, and particularly on the localization of crafts and

[33] Halil Inalcik, 'The Appointment of a Guild Warden (kethuda), '*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 76 (1986), 135-142.

[34] Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa 1600-1700* (Jerusalem, 1988); Engin Akarli, '*Gedik:* Implements, Mastership, Shop Usufruct and Monopoly among Istanbul Artisans, 1750-1850', *Wissenschaftskolleg-Jahrbuch* (1985-86), 223-232; Cohen, *Jerusalem;* Nicolai Todorov, *La ville balkanique aux XVe-XIXe siècles, développement socio-économique et démographique* (Bucarest, 1980).

trades. The location of shopping streets and markets, khans and tanneries has been studied, and changes in urban texture examined in detail. Historians with an urbanistic bent have dwelt upon the extent to which economic activities were located outside of residential quarters, and which types of shops and workshops intermingled with dwelling places.

Questions of this kind have practical relevance, since a "traditional" neighbourhood can hardly be remade or restored if its original function remains incomprehensible. Thus the interest of Turkish urban planners in problems of spatial structure has made studies of Ottoman cities appear very similar to the books on medieval and early modern cities that came out in France during the 1950s and 1960.[35] However the intellectual motivation is different; French urban historians often possessed a background in geography, which during the first half of this century appeared as a model to many avantgarde historians. The practical concern so apparent in much recent work on Turkish cities is absent from these earlier studies.

When we study crafts within an urban framework, we generally pay special attention to those branches of production which demand elaborate physical installations, such as tanneries, facilities for silk-reeling, or dye-houses.[36] This is due to the fact that such installations often leave physical traces that can be dated, so that we can determine when a given town quarter was settled or resettled. When cities grow, the tanneries due to their bad smells are transferred to locations more remote from the city centre, or else the transformation of a caravanserai serving interregional trade into a congeries of shops let to artisans with a purely local clientèle indicates that the urban action radius has decreased. For the architect and urban planner, this procedure

[35] As one example among many, compare JEAN SCHNEIDER, *La ville de Metz aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Nancy, 1950); PIERRE DEYON, *Étude sur la société au XVIIe siècle: Amiens capitale provinciale* (Paris, 1967).

[36] ANDRÉ RAYMOND, 'Signes urbains et étude de la population des grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane', *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 27 (1974).

of reading the town map is fundamental; it involves an understanding of the manner in which economic and social processes are transformed into features visible in the cityscape. Social relationships are of interest mainly if and when they are reflected in features that can be shown on a map. But historians also profit from this perspective, for while they mainly are concerned with social relationships rather than physical features, they need to supplement the scanty written evidence on Ottoman artisans by data derived from the physical environment.

Urban geographers have also taught us to regard the city as forming part of a country-wide or regional hierarchy. States maintain a hierarchically structured administration to facilitate tax collection and political control. The largest cities of any region (which may or may not coincide with a political unit) are able to command the services of smaller towns and villages.[37] The circulation of craft products demonstrates the existence of these hierarchies and networks. Thus the products of artisan labour are delivered as taxes, as happened in the case of the woollen fabrics produced by XVIth century Salonica weavers, or else enter the circuits of regional and interregional trade. From the kadi registers of Aleppo, we can show how soap, olive oil and cloth were delivered to the central city.[38] Not only goods, but also people migrated within urban networks, so that crafts might become established in places where they had previously been unknown. The opposite development also occurred; the craftsmen of an established textile-producing centre often tried to stop rival producers who wished to set up businesses in smaller towns belonging to the same economic network.[39] Obviously the artisans of a city high up in the poli-

[37] Braudel, *Civilization*, vol. 1: *Les structures du quotidien: Le possible et l'impossible*, p. 444 ff.

[38] Antoine Abdel Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)*, (Beirut, 1982).

[39] Suraiya Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting*, (Cambridge, Engl., 1984), p. 140.

tical and economic hierarchy found it easier to obtain access to the Ottoman central administration than their rivals in smaller settlements. As a result, their demands were more likely to receive official support. Thus the movement of craft goods and craftsmen indicates the "arteries and veins" of the Ottoman body politic.

The "Micro" Level

Up to this point, we have studied craftsmen within large networks and hierarchies, and as indicators of relationships that far transcended their shops and neighbourhoods, and of which they themselves were only dimly aware. This is still the standard approach. Only in the last few years have scholars begun to study the world of craftsmen as the latter themselves may have seen it. If the 'macro' approach is associated with economists, the 'institutional' view with historians of a traditional bent and the 'urbanistic' manner of proceeding with economic geographers and urban planners, the 'micro' approach has come to history from anthropology. In European history, anthropologists and historians collaborate very closely. Many of the most innovative historians have been strongly influenced by anthropology, and the educated public has even made certain works of historical anthropology into bestsellers.[40] However most scholars dealing with the history of Turkey have not shown much interest in this approach, and there is no equivalent to the history of 'mentalities' which is practised by anthropologically inclined historians in many parts of Western Europe.[41] The concept of 'mentality', which points to social psychology and yet is not used by psychologists, excites mistrust on the intellectual level. Other scholars may share the misgivings of Carlo Ginzburg and view 'mentalities' as something shared by king and

[40] This happened, for instance, in the case of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975).

[41] On the potential inherent in the history of mentalities, compare MICHEL VOVELLE, *Idéologies et mentalités* (Paris, 1982), particularly pp. 5-18.

beggar, and therefore the history of 'mentalities' as an activity neglecting the all important class differences, and therefore appropriate for conservatives only.[42] Certain historians may also consider the views and attitudes of 'little people' as of very limited significance, since the latter are not usually in a position to influence the course of world history. Reticences of this type are difficult to overcome, all the more as they remain partly unconscious. The simplest and most obvious reason why anthropological history has not become more popular among Ottoman historians is of course the paucity of sources. But since all historians of small communities, ordinary people and attitudes toward everyday life have to seek out and in a sense create their own sources, this difficulty appears considerable only in the short run.[43]

In spite of these reticences however, we now possess a few 'micro' studies of Ottoman craftsmen. Engin Akarl has focussed on Ottoman artisans and the manner in which they manipulated legal concepts in an effort to secure tenure of a locale in which to do business.[44] In XVIIIth century Istanbul, this had become difficult, since the major foundations that owned vast numbers of shops were being pressured for revenue by the Ottoman central administration, and sought tenants able to pay higher rents.[45] Craftsmen responded by claiming for themselves a form of property guaranteeing their right to set up shop in a given place. The closest modern analogy is perhaps the right of a Turkish notary public to set up an office, only a limited number of notaries being permitted to practise in any given district.

[42] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms, The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller*, tr. by John and Anne Tedeschi (London, Baltimore, 1980), p. XXIII.

[43] Vovelle, *Idéologies*, p. 21 ff.

[44] Akarli, 'Gedik'. A more developed version of this paper was read to the symposium on 'Legalism and Political Legitimation in the Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic' (Bochum, 1988) under the title: 'The Uses of Law among Istanbul Artisans and Tradesmen: The Story of *gedik* as Implements, Mastership, Shop Usufruct and Monopoly, 1750-1850'.

[45] Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi (XVIII. yy.dan Tanzimat'a Mali Tarih)* (Istanbul, 1986), pp. 100 ff., 212-213.

In the view of Istanbul artisans, the right to practise their trade, known as *gedik*, could be transferred only with the consent of the guild. Thus even if a foundation turned over its shops to a tenant-in-chief in exchange for an economic rent determined by auction, the craftsmen affected claimed that they could not be removed. Or to put it differently, the tenant-in-chief would find it difficult to rent out a shop whose previous tenants he had evicted. On the whole, Istanbul courts went along with this interpretation. Probably many kadis considered that craftsmen who had been in their shops for a long time were protected by the principle that ancient usage was good and novelties potentially harmful. However we still do not quite understand how, as bureaucrats appointed by the central administration, these *ulema* were able to resist official pressures in favour of a measure calculated to yield revenues. Be that as it may, the *gedik* became ever more widespread in the course of the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries, and many modern scholars have regarded it as a constitutive element of the Ottoman guild system.

This interplay between artisans and *ulema* is of much wider significance than one might guess from the immediate, fairly down-to-earth issues at stake. To begin with, artisan-*ulema* alliances were a feature of quite a few urban rebellions during the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, and only the destruction of the janissary corps in 1826 made it impossible to continue this coalition.[46] Understandings between artisans and individual *ulema* were not established in a vacuum, and were not merely the *ad-hoc* product of crisis situations. Rather, artisans and *ulema* interacted on an every-day level, particularly through the lower courts. Thus when a political crisis ensued, long-standing relationships only needed to be activated.

Moreover artisans in defence of their livelihoods pioneered

[46] SURAIYA FAROQHI, *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien (vom späten fünfzehnten Jahrhundert bis 1826)*, Vienna, 1981, pp. 107-127.

legal and institutional innovations that were taken up by the Ottoman bureaucracy. This observation may serve as a useful corrective against the wide-spread opinion that innovation in the Ottoman Empire was always inspired from 'above' and never from 'below'. Instead these findings suggest a model including a limited amount of give-and-take between ruled and rulers, or at least between the subject population and the lower stratum of the ruling group. As a next step, we need to establish the modalities of communication. The language and imagery of petitions and complaints may provide a starting point; but we can also look at the actions by which artisans voiced their discontent, such as closing their shops. In the long run, we will search for a grammar to the language of discontent, which constituted a significant medium of communication between rulers and ruled.

A third lesson to be learned from Akarl's work is the fact that the Ottoman political system remained capable of change down to a fairly late phase in its history. If the *gedik* was in fact created in the XVIIIth and early XIXth centuries as a response to fiscal pressure, it does not make sense to say that late Ottoman society was ossified to such a degree that institutional innovation was only possibile by violent means from above, and that patterns of innovation could only come from the outside. Admittedly, the *gedik* was an institution which did not make adaptation to changing market requirements any easier, and the system was particularly appropriate for branches of manufacture whose output stagnated and whose market area was contracting. But after all, many Ottoman artisans at the end of the XVIIIth and at the beginning of the XIXth century were employed in contracting industries. It is also of interest that the Ottoman guilds of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries had more or less operated without *gedik*s, and thus were more flexible than many European guilds of the early modern period, where arrangements resembling the *gedik* were frequent.

Different questions are raised by the work of Amnon Cohen on XVIth-century Jerusalem. In this medium-sized city of mod-

est economic potential, crafts geared to a local market were of prime importance. In the Jerusalem kadi registers, butchery and baking were mentioned with particular frequency. Cohen concentrates on the careers and family histories of certain wealthy craftsmen who combined their craft with trade and public office, especially that of market inspector or *muhtesib*.[47] The Jerusalem kadi registers also allow us to observe how marriage alliances built the prosperity of a given family: certain craftsmen married within their craft, while others established links to important merchants and officials. Some of the most successful artisans branched out into other crafts and into trade, without cutting their ties to the world of production. While Ottoman artisans were mostly poor and lacked opportunities for expansion, here we find entrepreneurs of artisan background, who moreover were not rejected by their fellow artisans due to their superior wealth. This is important because pre-industrial crafts are generally viewed as a sector which high-powered investors entered but rarely, while artisans seldom accumulated capital. If further research proves that capital-accumulating, upwardly mobile artisans were a significant feature of the XVIth-century Ottoman economic landscape, we will need to rethink the whole question why the 'sprouts of capitalism' visible in this period did not develop into the full-grown plant.

Craftsmen and Putting-out Merchants

With European, Indian and Chinese examples in mind, Fernand Braudel once developed a model valid for the transition period between pre-capitalist modes of production and capitalism.[49] As the first stage, he assumes independent artisans. In the second stage, artisans are linked by outside capital and organizing skills, but continue to produce in their homes or

[47] COHEN, *Jerusalem*, p. 31 ff.
[48] BRAUDEL, *Civilization*, vol. 2 *Les jeux de l'échange*, p. 215.
[49] *id.*, p. 259 ff. His discussion is based upon work by HUBERT BOURGIN.

workshops. In the third stage, artisans are physically brought together in manufactures; the fourth stage, the factory proper, does not concern us here. Ottoman manufactures of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries fit well enough into this scheme: the vast majority consisted of independent artisans, while a few state enterprises, particularly the Arsenal, may be classed as manufactures.

Of special interest is the second stage. Links between artisans were forged in a variety of ways; putting-out merchants constituted but one of several possibilities. In the Bulgarian towns of Kotel and Koprovište before 1870, locally manufactured woollen fabrics were marketed by tailors who worked up the material produced by their fellow townsmen, who were often relatives of the producers.[50] This form of distribution supplemented more conventional coordination by traders. In other parts of the Empire, artisans depended on merchants for raw material in a manner reminiscent of early modern European conditions. Seventeenth-century Bursa merchants owned much of the raw silk imported from Iran, and passed it out for twisting and dyeing.[51] Often the workers were not guildsmen, but women who dyed at home and presumably were paid less for their services. Cotton textiles were also produced under merchant control; semi-finished products were even shunted from one town to the next, presumably to lower costs.[52] From a quantitative point of view, production by guildsmen in XVIIth century Anatolia was more significant than that organized by merchants. In this respect, Ottoman textile manufacture differed from its counterpart in XVIIth or XVIIIth century Southern In-

[50] Michel R. Palairet, 'The Decline of the Old Balkan Woollen Industries 1870-1914', *Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 70, 3 (1983), 331-362.

[51] Gerber, *Bursa*, p. 65 ff.

[52] Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Merchant Networks and Ottoman Craft Production (16-17th Centuries)', in Yuzo Itagaki, Masao Mori, Takeshi Yukawa (eds.), *The Proceedings of International Conference* (sic) *on Urbanism in Islam (ICUIT)* 5 vols. (Tokio, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 116-117.

dia. In India, by contrast, control of production by merchants was the rule, even though control was exercised through the debt mechanism rather than through ownership of raw materials.

Ottoman guilds, while normally protecting the interests of smaller masters, were sometimes made to serve the businesses of large-scale producers. Thus in XIXth century Bulgaria, the major manufacturers of rough woollen cloth discovered that the guild facilitated negotiations with their principal customer, namely the Ottoman government.[53] They therefore made no attempt to dissolve the guild, as European experience of the early modern period would lead us to expect. But even though studies on the Bulgarian guilds presently available in English, French and Turkish do not indicate any power struggles between larger and smaller masters, it is not improbable that such disputes did in fact occur, but have been poorly documented. Most probably, the guilds existing in early XIXth century Bulgaria were rather different from the organizations of smaller masters which had predominated during the XVIIth century.

But even this "modernized" version of the guild was ultimately superseded by a putting-out system. By the middle of the XIXth century, guild producers were outdistanced by manufacturers operating in semi-rural districts such as Kotel or Koprovište. The latter were for the most part small-holding peasants who wove during their spare time. This production was coordinated by merchants and tailors who did not themselves weave, and survived only as long as peasants did not possess enough land to make a living from agriculture. When during the last quarter of the XIXth century, small-scale agriculture turned into a viable proposition, the industry decayed. Market-oriented manufacture by peasants disappeared; its place was taken by factory production on the one hand, and an enormous growth of textile manufacture for autoconsumption on the other.

[53] Todorov, 'Karakter Değismeleri', p. 32.

Conclusion

The present article is a plea for the study of artisans on the 'micro' as well as the 'macro' level. This approach is useful not only to the historical anthropologist or social historian, but also to the student of economic history. Artisans' everyday lives, when studied closely, allow us to see that the latter had scope for choice, and were not simply the passive objects of processes initiated in Europe.

The most important results of recent 'micro' studies can be summarized as follows: apparently Ottoman guilds of the XVIth or XVIIth century for the most part did not possess *gedik*s in the formal sense of the word. Established masters therefore found it difficult to prevent the entry of newcomers into the field. In XVIth-century Jerusalem and XVIIth-century Bursa, masters entered and left their crafts with relative ease. Certain masters branched out into trade and officialdom, without necessarily cutting their ties to the workshop. Even during the prosperous years of the XVIIIth century, *gedik* were still of limited significance. Fiscal pressure on foundations, however, was making it difficult for artisans to secure the right to a workshop. As a result, the *gedik* became more widespread. But the *gedik* really came into its own in times of economic stringency, which Ottoman society experienced during the last quarter of the XVIIIth and throughout the better part of the XIXth century.

Recent research makes it seem that direct destruction of Ottoman crafts by European imports was less universal than had previously been assumed, even though quite a few cases of this kind certainly occurred. Certain Ottoman manufactures, such as the woollen cloth of present-day Bulgaria, maintained themselves against competition from abroad, but succumbed due to political factors such as changes in agrarian taxation. A case of this sort makes us wonder about the reasons for the crisis of the Bursa silk industry in the late XVIth and early XVIIth

centuries. Prices for Iranian silk were going up due to European silk weaving, while the Ottoman financial crises depressed the demand for locally woven silk cloth. But why was there no large-scale attempt to manufacture cheaper silks for a broader market, using raw silk grown in the Bursa area?[54] In the XVIIIth century, this silk was of some importance, so why not in the previous hundred years? Possibly during the civil wars and demographic crisis of the XVIIth century, labour-intensive production of raw silk remained at a modest level. In the early XVIIIth century, when population stabilized and there was even a cautious recovery, the manufacture of raw silk became profitable, and the Bursa silk industry apparently regained some of its momentum.[55] If this explanation makes sense, demographic factors should have played a decisive role in the fate of the industry, obviously not 'on their own', but in conjunction with the impact of European competition which has already been discussed. Thus the examination of artisan activity on the 'micro' level may help us focus our attention on local dynamics *vis-à-vis* an all-engulfing world economy.

But this approach, though it seems to solve some of our research problems, is open to challenge from another angle, well-known to students of European history through the 'Brenner debate'.[56] This debate concerns the relative importance of class relations and long-term economic/demographic conjuncture in explaining the economic crises of the early modern period and the genesis of capitalism. Brenner has claimed that the role of class relations is so predominant that all other factors pale into

[54] Çızakça mentions attempts to cut costs by the use of inferior silk, but only as an indicator of crisis, not as an attempt to broaden the market. Possibly the Ottoman Palace as the principal buyer of Bursa silks was opposed to any lowering of standards. Be that as it may, we need to explain why there was no parallel to the English 'New Draperies', which were also created when the market for the older and more expensive fabrics was contracting.

[55] Çızakça, 'Industrial Decline', p. 260.

[56] T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philpin (eds.), *The Brenner Debate, Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe*, (Cambridge, Engl., 1985).

insignificance, a position also taken by Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly in their attempt to explain poverty in preindustrial Europe.[57] From this angle, the present article could be regarded as a piece of "economism", or even worse, as an attempt to minimize the ravages of colonialism. However other participants in the 'Brenner debate', such as Rodney Hilton or Guy Bois, have pleaded in favour of a model according to which class relations and class struggles are not acted out in a vacuum, but within a certain overall economic and demographic conjuncture and, one might add, within a particular set of environmental conditions.[58] The present article attempts to find out what the implications of such a model might be to the Ottoman historian.

[57] Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-industrial Europe*, 2nd edition (Brighton, Sussex, 1982).

[58] Aston and Philpin, *The Brenner Debate*, pp. 107-118 and 119-137.