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**TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN RUMELİ AND THE ARAB PROVINCES:
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND INTERNAL TRADE
(1560-1650)**

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Within the Ottoman Empire, trade in foodstuffs was largely local except where the capital and possibly a few other major cities were concerned. It has sometimes been assumed that the situation was largely similar in the case of woollen cloth, although this question is still in need of further investigation¹. Yet on the other hand, there existed well-defined areas specializing in the manufacture of silks, cotton goods, and mohair. Monographs have dealt with the centres of these industries, that is Bursa, Ankara, Plovdiv (Filibe), and most recently Salonica². However certain types of

1. Benjamin Braude, «Community and Conflict in the Economy of the Ottoman Balkans, 1500-1650, Ph. D. thesis, Harvard University 1977, p. 13. The author's thanks go to Dr. İsen Arıcanlı, of Middle East Technical University, Ankara, for making available a manuscript copy of this text. For an abbreviated version see: Benjamin Braude, «International Competition and Domestic Cloth in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1650, A Study in Underdevelopment,» *Review*, II, 3 (1979), 437-454.

2. On Bursa: Halil İnalçık, «15. Asır Türkiye İktisadî ve İçtimai Tarihi Kaynakları,» *İÜ İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 15, 1-4 (1953-54), 51-75 (from now on abbreviated *IFM*).

Halil İnalçık, «Bursa I. XV. Asır Sanayi ve Ticaret Tarihine Dair Vesikalar,» *Belleten*, XXIV, 93 (1960), 45-110.

Halil İnalçık, «Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant,» *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, III, 2 (1960), 131-147. (from now on abbreviated *JESHO*)

Fahri Dalsar, *Türkiye Sanayi ve Ticaret Tarihinde Bursa'da İpekçilik*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınlarından 856, İktisat Fakültesi No. 116 (İstanbul, 1960).

Klaus Liebe-Harkort, *Beiträge zur sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Lage Bursas am Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Ph. D. thesis, Hamburg 1970.

Murat Çizakça, *Sixteenth-Seventeenth Century Inflation and the Bursa Silk Industry: A Pattern for Ottoman Industrial Decline?* Ph. D. thesis, Univ. of Pennsylvania 1978.

On Ankara:

Özer Ergenç; «1580-1596 Yılları Arasında Ankara ve Konya Şehirlerinin Mukayeseli

textile manufacture, particularly those based upon cotton, hemp, and linen, were much more widely dispersed. In many cases, production involved not only the inhabitants of cities and towns, but the open countryside as well.

Evidence exists that these textiles were traded over long distances and sometimes exported³. Particularly İstanbul was a major customer, due to the needs of a large civilian population, but also to those of court and army. Following various types of textiles on their way from producer to consumer, we grasp some of the more important trade routes of the time. In the same context, it is worth investigating the way in which weavers obtained the raw fibres necessary to their trade, especially when these materials were produced in a locality some distance away. This type of research should result in maps showing Ottoman textile manufacture, which allow us to visualize both the centres of production and their linkage to the consuming areas.

Several such maps can be prepared, using different types of data as a basis. One map might show the distribution of collection points for the stamp tax, which was generally levied on the sale of various types of cloth (*damga-i-kirpas*, *damga-i akmişe*). While for the period which forms the subject of the present study, documents relating to this tax are not very abundant⁴, they do contain some quantitative information and are therefore particularly precious. But textiles were produced on an appreciable scale in many places where no *damga* taxes were ever recorded, or else where the relevant documents have been lost. In other cases stamp taxes were collected together with other, totally unrelated dues, so that the resulting figures no longer indicate the quantities of textiles produced.

Another map can be derived from data relating to dyeing establishments (*boya-hane*). In certain provinces, such installations existed not only in towns, but also in villages and even on summer pastures (*yayla*) For provinces whose official tax registers

İncelenmesi Yoluyla Osmanlı Şehirlerinin Kurumları ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapısı Üzerine bir Deneme», Ph. D. thesis, Ankara University 1973.

Özer Ergenç: «1600-1615 Yılları Arasında Ankara İktisadî Tarihine Ait Araştırmalar», in *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri*, ed. Osman Okyar, Ünal Nalbantoğlu (Ankara, 1975), p. 145-168.

On Filibe-Plovdiv:

Nikolay Todorov, «19. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Bulgaristan Esnaf Teşkilâtında Bazı Karakter Değişmeleri», *IFM*, 27, 1-2 (1967-1968), 1-36.

On Salonica:

Halil Sahillioğlu, «Yeniçeri Çuhası ve II. Bayezid'in Son Yıllarında Yeniçeri Çuha Muhasebesi», *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2-3 (1973-74), 415-467.

³ Compare Ergenç «Ankara ve Konya» passim, and Todorov «Karakter Değişmeleri», 8 (referring to the 18. cent).

⁴ As an example of a *damga* tax account see Başbakanlık Arşivi (BA), section Maliyeden müdevver (MM), no. 78.

(*tahrir*) contain records of this type, urban and rural production centres can be differentiated and it becomes possible to single out those areas where textile manufacture was most widespread. Moreover, since *boyahane* dues are recorded as separate items much more often than stamp taxes, the relative importance of the various textile producing centres can be evaluated with greater confidence.

However, here again the sources pose certain problems. In some provinces, *boyahane* dues were only recorded in one single place, and we have no way of knowing whether this meant that there was only one dyeing establishment in existence, or, as appears more likely, that this type of registration was simply an administrative convenience⁵. In addition, documents concerning dues levied on dyeing establishments do not record the types of fabrics processed, nor do they indicate whether the textiles in question were intended for personal consumption or for trading purposes. Many textile producers finished their fabrics at home, a circumstance which must have kept down the clientele of the local *boyahane*⁶. Moreover there is no guarantee that the percentage of home-finished fabrics was the same from one region to another; in fact we can be reasonably sure the exact opposite was the case.

Yet another map can be prepared using the evidence contained in the *mühimme defterleri*, registers of official correspondence which contained outgoing letters to foreign rulers and rescripts to local administrators⁷. Textile production was not usually a major concern of the central government in İstanbul. But even so, the needs of the Janissaries quite often induced officials to send imperial rescripts to the wool-producing centre of Salonica, and luxury fabrics for the court occasioned imports from Venice, or else correspondence with the authorities in Bursa or Damascus. More importantly, merchants and consumers, in most cases probably residents of İstanbul, frequently complained about the poor quality of goods produced in this or that district. Thus *mühimme* records allow us to establish the localities in which certain fabrics were produced and often provide some indication concerning the customers for whom they were intended. This latter type of information is particularly valuable since it cannot be derived from data concerning stamp or *boyahane* dues. At the same time, the rescripts in question sometimes refer to certain details characterizing production, such as the use of animal versus water power in the fulling of woollen cloth⁸. But this wealth of concrete detail is offset by the lack of quantitative data, except in a very indirect sense. For textile manufacture in a

5 Such an arrangement prevailed for instance in the *sancak* of Tarsus, compare Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara (TK), no. 134.

6 BA, Mühimme Defterleri (MD) no. 74, p. 38 (1004/1595-96).

7 For brief information on this category of sources compare the article 'Daftar' in EI.

8 MD 58, p. 352, no. 901 (993/1585).

given place must have reached a certain importance before it became worth the effort and cost of obtaining an imperial rescript regulating the conditions of production.

A definitive study of Ottoman textile production will use all three approaches and others in addition. Thus a coordinated effort to extract information from the numerous local *kadı* registers should prove particularly rewarding. But the present study sets itself a more limited objective, and deals only with rescripts recorded in the *mühimme defterleri*⁹. For the period between 1560 and 1650, over a hundred twenty documents relating to Rumeli and the Arab provinces have been collected. These two areas form the subject of the present article, while Anatolia has been singled out for special treatment at a later date. Emphasis is placed not so much upon the major centres, concerning which the *mühimme* records rarely provide much new information. Rather, attention is concentrated upon the smaller localities and upon their relations with outside markets, particularly the Ottoman capital. Cotton, linen, and hemp thus take their place next to better known and more prestigious fabrics.

Silks, Cottons, and Hemp from the Balkans

As far as the European territories of the Ottoman Empire were concerned, silk was mentioned in the *mühimme* registers only in connection with the Morea¹⁰. A group of traders from Elbasan robbed by a pirate of Venetian nationality while transporting silk and raw wool to Venice, may have purchased the former in the Peloponnese rather than in their native province¹¹. Silk production may also explain the residence of a British consul in Balyabadra (Paleopatras)¹². His countrymen through the Levant Company imported large quantities of the precious raw material into England, and sold so much English cloth that this factor has been viewed as one of the principal causes for the decline of Ottoman wool manufactures¹³.

Thessaly was a centre of cotton and linen fabrics. Most of our records deal with deliveries to the Ottoman state. Thus the Janissaries were given Thessalian cotton

9 Documents have been taken from *defter*s no. 3 to 91. But since typed catalogues belonging to this series do not go beyond no. 73, it has been impossible to locate all documents relating to production and consumption of textiles, particularly those recorded after about 1003/1594-95. A few documents have been taken from the BA, *Şikâyet Defterleri* (ŞD), no. 1, 2, 3 referring to the years 1059-1065/1649-55.

10 MD 53, p. 96, no. 263 (992/1584).

11 MD 33, p. 331, no. 686 (985/1577-78).

12 MD 73, p. 143, no. 333 (1003/1594-95).

13 Braude «International Competition», 441 ff.

to use as a lining or under-garment (*astar*), even though the quality of the goods delivered occasionally gave rise to complaints¹⁴. At the same time, there was an appreciable amount of production for the open market. Since some of the more important Balkan fairs of the late sixteenth century took place in this area, the trend toward commercial production must have been encouraged. In fact, regulations concerning the fair of Maşkolur, which was also attended by Venetian merchants, refer to the dues collected from what was probably cotton cloth (*bez*)¹⁵.

Various localities on the western coast of the Aegean and on the Dardanelles were frequently called upon to furnish sailcloth, which was in all likelihood usually manufactured out of cotton. This would explain why the Ottoman administration was so anxious to prohibit the export of cotton and cotton thread. The latter goods were ranked as strategic along with arms, horses, and grain, while export licenses were much more rarely granted than in case of raw wool or certain types of leather¹⁶. Thus during the Cyprus war, a Dubrovnik trader who had stored up considerable quantities of cotton in Sofia, supposedly for sale within the *vilayet* of Rumeli itself, was required to sell his stocks to Moslems. By this means, the Ottoman administration hoped to make sure that valuable raw material did not reach the Venetian arsenal¹⁷.

Sailcloth was also produced in central Greece, where the town of Livadiya appears to have constituted a centre of some activity¹⁸. Weavers in Athens, the island of Ağrıboz (Euboa), and the town of İstefa also worked for the Arsenal¹⁹. Another area of supply lay in the district of Gelibolu²⁰. In no case do we possess any indication concerning the amount of cloth produced. But the fact that the *kadı* of Gelibolu was assigned the sum of 150,000 *akçe*, to pay out either for cloth already woven or else as advances to weavers, indicates that the productive potential of the area was regarded as reasonably high²¹.

In the case of hemp, it is often difficult to distinguish between the fibres used

14 MD 87, p. 13, no. 43 (1046/1636-37); MD 70, p. 50, no. 106 (1001/1592-93).

15 TK 60, p. 210 b-212a.

16 The *mühimme defterleri* contain a number of lists specifying goods whose sale to Christian merchants was forbidden. These lists vary somewhat from occasion to occasion, but the basic prohibited articles occur regularly. Compare MD 23, p. 285, no. 611 (981/1573-74), MD 77, p. 1 (1014/1605-06).

17 MD 14, p. 896, no. 1322 (978/1570-71).

18 MD 10, p. 254, no. 392 (979/1571-72).

19 MD 21, p. 146, no. 354 (980/1572-73); MD 3, p. 288, no. 842 (967/1559-60).

20 MD 14, p. 475, no. 671 (978/1570-71).

21 Concerning advances paid to craftsmen working for the Ottoman government, compare Ömer L. Barkan, *Süleymaniye Camii ve İmaret-i İnşaatı* (1550-1557), (Ankara, 1972), vol. 1, 363 ff.

for manufacturing cloth or rope, and the raw material used in making ships water-tight (*ustubi*). Both hemp and hemp cloth (*kanaviçe bezi*) came from the regions which make up modern Roumania, namely Eflak (Walachia), Boğdan (Moldavia), and Erdel (Transylvania). In many cases, deliveries of these goods formed part of the tribute demanded by the Ottoman administration. Supplies also came from the province of Semendire²². Further south, the district of Gümülcine (Komotini) is often mentioned in the same context, although the local *kadı* experienced some difficulty in finding craftsmen who knew how to manufacture rope according to the specifications of the Arsenal²³.

Manufacture of Woollens: Salonica and Other Centres.

Production of coarse woollen fabrics (*aba*), used as cloaks by many modest subjects of the Ottoman Empire, was already well established in Filibe during the second half of the sixteenth century²⁴. We possess the answer to a complaint from a local administrator, who had decried the fact that *abas* were no longer woven in pieces of 12 ells as had been the previous custom, but in form of short cloths only 8 to 9 ells long. As has been indicated, the very fact that a document of this type survives makes it likely that the *abas* in question were the subject of more than purely local trade²⁵.

It is possible that the *abacı*, whose existence is recorded for the city of Edirne as well as the towns of Rodosçuk (Tekirdağ) and Yenişehir-i Fener (Larisa) toward the middle of the seventeenth century, sold mainly woollen fabrics from Filibe²⁶. This is particularly likely in the case of Edirne, where the *abacı* appear as merchants rather than as producing craftsmen. For aside from the cloth which had given their guild its name, they sold a variety of silk and cotton fabrics, some of which bore the name of towns like Selanik (Salonica), Karaferye (Verroia) and Serres (Serrai).

In Yenişehir, a dispute had arisen between grocers and *abacı*, since the former had also begun to stock simple woollen cloth. This indicates that the grocers of Yenişehir possessed some form of independent access to goods of this type. For it is not too likely that the *abacı* would have taken the trouble of procuring a *ferman* from

22 MD 21, p. 116, no. 283 (980/1572-73); MD 29, p. 9, no. 22 (984/1576-77); MD 24, p. 282, no. 758 (982/1574-75).

23 MD 10, p. 116, no. 184 (979/1571-72) For Arsenal supplies compare İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından, VIII, 16 (Ankara, 1948), p. 451-54, 483, 517.

24 MD 12, p. 220, no. 460 (978/1570-71).

25 Todorov, «Karakter Değişmeleri.» 2.

26 ŞD 2, p. 126, (1063/1652-53); ŞD 3, p. 150 (1065/1654-55); ŞD 2, p. 204 (1063/1652-53).

Istanbul simply to deal with a few recalcitrant members of their own guild, who insisted on supplying business rivals with cloth. Such a dispute could have been solved locally, and moreover the text of the document in our hands makes no reference to such deliveries. Under these circumstances, it is much more likely that *abas* were being brought into the city from outside, possibly by merchants who bought their goods at the various fairs. In this case, it is quite likely that the woollen fabrics sold by the grocers of Edirne did in fact come from Filibe.

Better quality woollen cloth (*çuha*) was manufactured in Edirne²⁷. Water-driven fulling mills were in use, and such mills were also employed in the more important *çuha* industry of Salonica²⁸. But frequent scarcity of water hampered the spread of this innovation. For when flour mills and fulling mills competed for limited water resources, the administration in Istanbul gave priority to grain and ordered the demolition of the fulling mills.

Textile production in Salonica has been studied by Uzunçarşılı with the help of *mühimme* documents²⁹, and most recently by Braude largely on the basis of sources in Hebrew and Spanish. In consequence, the rise and decline of this industry are relatively well known. Until about 1650, Braude considers it to have been occasionally prosperous. But between 1650 and the abolition of the Janissary corps in 1826, *çuha* production was declining and would have disappeared except for the fact that the Ottoman state ensured its continued existence for military reasons³⁰. Among the difficulties of the industry, Braude pinpoints the following: rising wool prices in the Balkans, increasing demands on the part of the Janissary corps and larger imports of cloth from England. One suspects that the first and second-named of these factors were of greater importance than the last, as English and Dutch woollens seem to have largely displaced previous imports from Venice³¹. On the other hand, contemporary Venetian sources point to lack of demand, occasioned by the financial and economic difficulties of the Ottoman Empire around 1600. Since Syrian customers appear to have switched from woollens to padded cottons, one might expect that some of the people who had previously bought the *çuha* of Salonica also found cheaper substitutes, such as the coarse woollen fabrics of Filibe.

27 MD 58, p. 352, no. 901 (993/1585).

28 Compare Braude, «Community and Conflict,» p. 22.

29 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 2 vols, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından VIII, 12, 1 (Ankara, 1943) I, 263-284.

30 Braude, «Community and Conflict,» p. 18, 69-70.

31 Domenico Sella, «The Rise and Fall of the Venetian Woollen Industry» in: *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Brian Pullan (London, 1968), p. 106-126.

Such a switch might also explain why the manufacture of *aba* proceeded to develop in a period of general industrial decline³².

As far as raw materials were concerned, the Ottoman administration attempted to alleviate the difficulties of the Salonica weavers by allowing them the right to preferential purchases and by curtailing exports of raw wool³³. But this policy was not very effective, particularly since local officials often had a direct stake in the export of grain and raw materials. On the other hand, no attempt was made to protect the manufactures of Salonica by limiting imports of finished cloth.

Aside from these long-term economic reasons, the *mühimme* records also enumerate a considerable number of short-term difficulties, which might be summarized under the heading of administrative malpractice. An exceptionally long rescript from the year 984/1576-77 refers to a complaint from the Salonica weavers and orders the *kadı* to check a number of abuses³⁴. First of all, the money sent from the Treasury to pay for production expenses was not being passed out to the producers unless they paid the official in charge (*emin*) a heavy bribe. Alleged defects in the cloth were another occasion for bribes, and the measuring rods did not bear the official stamp or *danga*. Accounts were not being properly kept, so that it was never clear how much *çuha* had been delivered by any individual weaver. Even the plague seems to have served as an opportunity to enrich corrupt officials. For to minimize the spread of infection, the central administration had permitted the weavers of Salonica to leave the overcrowded area within the walls and seek refuge in the surrounding countryside. At the same time, the *cemaatbaşı* and other prominent members of the community were to guarantee punctual delivery of the woollen cloth to be distributed to the Janissaries. However, the *emin* appears to have collected more than 150,000 *akçe* before he would allow the weavers to leave, and even an order from the Grand Vizier only resulted in partial and temporary restitution of the money.

Moroever, around 985/1577-78 the weaving community of Salonica sustained heavy losses due to the plague. No figures are given, but the responsible Janissary officials reported a large number of deaths and a consequent decrease in the work-force³⁵. The officials' report to the government ran as follows: In years bygone, an ell of *çuha* had been produced for half an *akçe*, while in the more recent past the cost had

32 Todorov «Karakter Değişmeleri,» 2.

33 MD 43, p. 15, no. 27 (988/1580-81). Compare also Braude, «Community and Conflict,» p. 42 ff, 57.

34 MD 29, p. 109, no. 266 (984/1576-77), same text MD 21, p. 89, no. 217 (980/1572-73).

Compare also MD 19, p. 201, no. 417 (983/1575-76).

35 MD 31, p. 48, no. 124 (985/1577-78).

increased to one *akçe* per ell. But now labour was so scarce that necessary expenses had risen to 6 *akçe*, and the authorities presumed that 22.5, 21, and 19 *akçe* would have to be paid for an unspecified quantity of good quality, medium, and poor *çuha*. Doubtlessly plague and administrative abuses alone cannot have been responsible for the decline of the textile manufactures of Salonica. But given the long-term difficulties described by Braude, what was tolerable under more or less normal conditions might have appreciably contributed to the downturn of the industry.

Many of the Salonica weavers apparently reacted to the crisis by emigration. We hear of people moving to Karaferye but also to Serres, Üsküb (Skopje), and Monastır³⁶. While raw materials in these places were certainly not cheaper nor foreign competition of less significance, deliveries to the Janissaries were only demanded in Salonica. Accordingly, the *kadı* of the latter town was ordered to track down the fugitives, have their looms dismantled, and bring them forcibly back to their city of origin. Probably to avoid this kind of pursuit, certain migrants preferred to cross the Aegean and settle in the region of İzmir and Tire, where commercial activities during this period were generally increasing. But the *kadis* of the Anatolian seaboard were also ordered to send back the fugitives³⁷. However in this context it is interesting to note that the central administration always assumed that the Salonica weavers pursued their old trades in their new places of residence. If this assumption is reasonably close to reality, the losses in total production may have been less than if we study the Salonica industry in isolation, or even in combination with secondary centres such as Tırhala. However in the absence of reliable quantitative data, it is impossible to make a positive statement concerning the matter.

As can be expected, the weavers remaining in Salonica tried to defend themselves against the increasing burden that the emigration of their colleagues placed upon them. Toward the end of the period under study, we possess a record of a dispute between the textile producers of Karaferye and those of Salonica³⁸. The latter claimed that their competitors generally produced a napped woollen cloth known as *velense*, and were drawing off both materials and men indispensable to the manufacture of the *çuha* needed by the central administration. In their reply, the Karaferye masters did not refute these claims. They simply affirmed that they were always cognizant of the importance of deliveries to the Janissary corps, but that at present the production of *miri çuha* had become rather difficult. Upon reception of the relevant reports, the administration in Istanbul ordered that all the recent

36 MD 85, p. 171, no. 393 (1040/1630-31).

37 MD 79, p. 2 (1018/1609-1610).

38 MD 89, p. 68, no. 173 (1053/1643-44).

migrants be conducted back to Salonica, and that Karaferye could only keep as many looms as had existed in this town 'from old times'. Only close local investigation could elucidate the consequences of this order.

In this context, a few remarks should be made concerning the export of raw wool (*yapağı*) as it is reflected in the *mühimme* registers. Toward the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the export of this commodity was frequently prohibited³⁹. However, such a policy was difficult to enforce, as is documented by a *ferman* to the *kadis* of Gelibolu, Tekfurdağı (Tekirdağ), and Silivri⁴⁰. Apparently European shippers were able to purchase raw wool at these ports, in spite of mandatory customs inspections upon leaving the Dardanelles. In consequence, the capital was not receiving the quantities of wool corresponding to its needs. More important even, from the viewpoint of the central administration, was the fact that commercial dues payable in Istanbul were adversely affected. But if this type of trade could continue even in the Marmara ports, smuggling of raw wool must have been even more common on the Aegean and Adriatic coasts, and in certain places the trade was even legal.

Moreover, at least during certain periods and in certain places, special export permits were quite often issued. As the woollen industry of Venice seems to have used a considerable amount of raw material from the Balkans⁴¹, it is not surprising to find the Venetians applying for such licenses. A document from the year 1580-81 shows the bargaining which might precede the grant of a special permission⁴². Apparently the *bailo* had invoked the custom that Venetian boats, arriving in Istanbul from Venice and Crete, had 'in the old days' been permitted to load wool and leather. Before making a decision, the central administration demanded that the *kadi* and *muhtesib* furnish some information concerning the boats in question, namely the time of their arrival, the amount of customs dues they had paid, and the goods they had imported. In addition, the harbour officials were to find out how much leather and wool the shippers wished to buy, and whether such purchases would cause any problems in the local supply situation. However, the authors of the rescript seemed to assume that a license for limited quantities might well be granted, and that wool and leather (*gön*) were not to be considered strategic goods, in the narrow sense of the term.

39 MD 23, p. 94, no. 189 (981/1573-74) does not mention raw wool among goods that should not be sold to Venetian merchants. MD 22, p. 294, no. 581 (981/1573-74) does however include this item. On the trade in raw wool compare: Şerafettin Turan, «Venepik'te Türk Ticaret Merkezi», *Bulleten*, XXXII, 126 (1968), 247-283, particularly 255.

40 MD 7, p. 302, no. 861 (975/1567-68).

41 Braude, «Community and Conflict», p. 44.

42 MD 43, p. 155, no. 279 (988/1580-81).

In fact, Ragusan merchants seem to have been active in the export of both wool and leather⁴³. Certain Venetian traders were also deeply involved. A document from the year 978/1570-71 refers to two Venetians, a merchant and a shipowner, both bearing the surname of Girardi, who possessed shares in a consignment of raw wool⁴⁴. Apparently they had defrauded their business partners, important Jewish traders of Galata. The Elbasan merchants referred to above could freely admit that they exported raw wool, and their claims against a Venetian citizen were protected by the Ottoman administration. Unfortunately quantitative data are too sparse to permit testing the hypothesis that exportation of wool for the Venetian cloth industry was the main factor causing the increase in Balkan wool prices at the end of the sixteenth century⁴⁵.

The Arab Provinces

In the *mühimme* records, Egypt and particularly Cairo are frequently mentioned as a source of luxury fabrics. Until the beginning of the seventeenth century the *kisve-i şerife*, a ceremonial covering for the Kaaba in black silk, was woven and embroidered in Cairo⁴⁶. Special foundations, dating from Mamluk times but considerably enlarged in the Ottoman period, were intended to finance its manufacture.

Egypt also remained famous for its carpets. In 985/1577-78 for instance, six rugs were delivered to the sanctuary of the Prophet in Medina⁴⁷. A few years later, the central administration made a concerted effort to introduce the art of making Egyptian-style rugs to İstanbul⁴⁸. Eleven masters, who had been reported as particularly skilled, were ordered to move to the capital and bring with them the materials needed for the exercise of their craft. Everyday fabrics, such as linen, seem to have interested the central administration only in passing, except when it was a question of supplying sailcloth for the Arsenal. But linen or linen fibres are occasionally mentioned among the goods imported from Egypt to the Balkans⁴⁹.

Much more varied are the records concerning textile production in Syria and

43 Francis W. Carter, *Dubrovnik (Ragusa), A Classic City-state* (London, New York, 1972), p. 216-292, 349-404, particularly p. 361-365, 367-371.

44 MD 39, p. 103, no. 255 (987/1579-80).

45 Compare Braude, «Community and Conflict», p. 46 ff.

46 On the preparation of the *kisve-i şerife* compare İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Mekke-i Mükerrime Emirleri*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından VII, 59 (Ankara, 1972), p. 64 ff.

47 MD 33, p. 168, no. 336 (985/1577-78), See also MD 28, p. 30, no. 71 (982/1574-75).

48 MD 60, p. 46, no. 113 (993/1585). This *ferman* published in Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu asır-ı hicride İstanbul hayatı* (961-1000)... Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Külliyyatı (İstanbul, 1333/1914-15), p. 187.

49 MD 26, p. 159, no. 421 (982/1574-75).

Palestine. The well-known woollen fabrics of the Safed Jews are briefly mentioned⁵⁰. Their activities in textile production and other trades were considered important enough to warrant them exemption from deportation to Cyprus. Homs was noted for a mixed fabric of wool and silk known as *alaca*⁵¹. It was used for *kaftans* and therefore traditionally produced in lengths of 11 ells (*zira*). Toward the end of the sixteenth century, producers in this place as in many others attempted to cut costs by manufacturing shorter pieces of about 9 ells, an expedient that aroused strong protests from the customers. Apparently the manufacture of textiles and particularly of silk in this area was reasonably prosperous during the second half of the sixteenth century. When a new tax register was being prepared in 1584, the compiling officials suggested the institution of a stamp tax and of weighing dues for silk, which had not previously been collected in this *sancak*⁵². While of course the introduction of such dues is not a sure indicator of increasing production, an assumption of this kind can stand until contradictory evidence is located.

Tripolis in Syria was an active centre for the production of raw silk. In 1584, prices had gone up considerably since the compilation of the previous tax register. While the older records assumed that one local *men* could be sold for 6 gold pieces, now prices had risen to 14-15 gold pieces per *men*⁵³. This increase was independent of the currency devaluations which occurred during the fifteen-eighties and nineties, for these did not affect gold. Thus the price increase should have been largely caused by rising demand, possibly in part occasioned by purchases on the part of the Levant Company⁵⁴. In fact this port was particularly frequented by English merchants, so much so that local authorities successfully demanded exemption from the general ruling which prohibited the sale of cotton to alien traders. It was claimed that port dues would dwindle to a fraction of their former value if English merchants ceased to visit Tripolis, and apparently they were primarily interested in cotton⁵⁵. But since the Levant Company during those years specialized in the importation of silk, one

50 MD 34, p. 278, no. 581 (986/1578-79).

51 MD 52, p. 238, no. 622 (992/1584).

For the different ells in use, compare Walter Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte umgerechnet ins metrische System, Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. Berthold Spuler, Erg. Bd. 1, Heft 1 (Leiden, 1955), p. 55 ff. If we assume that the Istanbul or Aleppo *zira* of 67/68 cm was intended, a standard length of fabric should have amounted to about 7.40 m. Nine ells would have been equivalent to about 6 m.

52 MD 52, p. 210, no. 546 (992/1584).

53 MD 52, p. 210, no. 545 (992/1584).

54 Compare Ralph Davis, «English Imports from the Middle East 1580-1780,» in: *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East..* ed. M. A. Cook (New York, Toronto, 1970), p. 193-206.

55 MD 62, p. 133, no. 298 (995-996/1586-88).

can assume that this valuable raw material was also instrumental in attracting traders.

As far as the actual manufacture of silk fabrics was concerned, the major centre in this area was Damascus. Among the types sold, *bürüncük*, *tafta*, *vale* and *kutnu* are specifically named⁵⁶. While *bürüncük* is a light material woven in such a manner as to give the fabric a crinkly appearance, the name of *tafta* was given to strong cloth which could be employed in curtains, covers, tents, and even sails⁵⁷. *Vale* was a fine fabric mainly used in clothing, *kutnu* a striped material often woven partly of silk and partly of cotton. It appears to have originated in Damascus and Bağdad, only at a later period did the manufacture spread to western Anatolia and Thrace. As in the Ottoman Empire the sale of textiles, particularly of valuable ones, generally took place in the covered market (*bedestan*), the *bedestan* of Damascus developed into a centre of the textile trade. Nearby was the stamp tax office, which was intended not only to collect revenue for the Imperial Treasury, but also to guarantee the quality of the fabrics sold. However the office was not very effective in this latter function. Thus the central administration had to forbid the sale of unopened bales of cloth, even if they had an official stamp (*damga*) affixed to them. For it was considered necessary to give the buyers a chance to inspect the goods before a sale was concluded⁵⁸. Loose weaving and the use of inferior indigo for dyeing purposes appear to have been the cause for many complaints.

Aleppo was also a prominent textile centre, noted particularly for its cottons, and supplied sailcloth to the Arsenal⁵⁹. For the early years of the seventeenth century, a dispute is recorded between the administrators of several major pious foundations, who all wished to attract the trade in cotton thread and profit from the substantial rents and weighing dues connected with it⁶⁰. If the document recorded in the *mühimme defterleri* really represents a final decision in this matter, the prize was won by the administrator of the *vakıf* of the former Grand Vizier Mehmed Paşa, whose foundations were supported by a number of important business buildings.

At least during the sixteenth century, some of the cotton thread in question

56 On silk manufacture in Mamluk Damascus compare Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass, 1967). p. 102. See also MD 26, p. 14, no. 38 (982/1574-75).

57 On different types of silk fabrics current in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see Dalsar, *İpekçilik*, p. 30 ff.

58 MD 26, p. 17, no. 49 (982/1574-75), MD 73, p. 384, no. 843 (1004/1595-96).

59 As one example among many: MD 27, p. 202, no. 465 (983/1575-76).

60 For similar disputes during the Mamluk period compare Lapidus, *Muslim Cities*, p. 60.

See MD 81, p. 80, no. 174 (1025/1616).

was exported to Venice and other European countries, which aroused vivid protests from local weavers⁶¹. Apparently European merchants did not buy directly from the producers, but used wealthy wholesalers (*madrabaz*) and brokers (*dellal*) as intermediaries. The numerous Venetian traders of Aleppo seem to have concentrated more on Iranian silk than on cotton, which latter material they preferred to buy in İzmir and Cyprus. But it is likely that Syrian cotton contributed to the boom of imports from the Levant which Frederic Lane has noted for the last years of the sixteenth century⁶².

French traders were also active in the cotton trade of Aleppo during the sixteenth century, particularly in the port of Tripolis (Trablusşam). In a dispute concerning the goods which might not be sold to European merchants, the French traders stated that they were not interested in wood suitable for shipbuilding, in arms, or in grain. Such a disclaimer is not surprising, for these goods could be expected to rank high on the 'prohibited' list, particularly since the Ottoman Empire was still at war with Venice⁶³. More interesting is the list of goods which the French traders quite openly wished to buy, namely nut-gall (*mazu*) silk, spices, cotton, and raisins. Thus it seems that Syrian cotton was reaching the markets of northern Europe simultaneously by Venetian, French, and English channels.

Further to the east, Mosul is mentioned for the fine cotton fabrics known as *tülbend*. This material appears to have been of some importance in interregional trade⁶⁴. For in 986/1578-9 the Mosul merchants who dealt in *tülbend* voiced the by now familiar complaint that buyers were no longer willing to pay a good price for these wares, as weavers in the recent past had been producing pieces both shorter and narrower than was desired by customers. In this case, merchants seem to have sought an agreement with the weavers rather than attempt to impose their own standards with the help of the administration in İstanbul. Only when the local official in charge of the stamp tax refused to recognize the arrangement, was the government asked to intervene. A rescript addressed to the provincial administrator ordered him to make sure that subordinate officials abided by the agreement between merchants and weavers.

61 MD 39, p. 254, no. 495 (988/1580-81). In this context compare Eliyahu Ashtor, «The Venetian Cotton Trade in Syria in the Later Middle Ages», *Studi Medievali* (Spoleto, 1976), reprinted as no. VII in the same author's *Studies on the Levantine Trade in the Middle Ages* (London, 1978).

62 Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, London, 1973), p. 304, 400-01.

63 MD 14, p. 516, no. 720 (978/1570-71).

64 MD 39, p. 58, no. 140 (987/1579-80).

Supplying the Capital: Private Merchants and State Trade.

While a large number of documents deals with fabrics produced in the provinces and offered for sale in the capital, references to textile manufacture in İstanbul itself are comparatively rare. This does not necessarily imply that the seat of the central administration was purely a consuming centre. But in many cases, the delivery of finished fabrics in place of raw materials may have been furthered by a system of taxation which still depended largely on deliveries in kind. Even so, silks and brocades were woven in the capital, and silk-spinning was represented as well⁶⁵. Thus a *ferman* published by Dalsar refers to a complaint concerning the quality of the thread manufactured. While in the past four, six, or eight strands of silk had been required for a single thread, the latter was now often manufactured out of one strand only, to the great loss of all customers.

An interesting group of documents deals with attempts to limit brocade-weaving in the capital, with the intention of preserving the gold and silver employed in these fabrics for monetary uses. Orders of this type were issued intermittently ever since the times of Mehmed the Conqueror⁶⁶. But late sixteenth-century documents are more informative than their predecessors in that they contain some data on the number of looms actually in operation⁶⁷. In 972/1564-65 an inspection revealed the existence of 318 looms, of which only one hundred were to be allowed to remain in existence. Looms belonging to wealthy masters were to be licensed for continued activity in preference to those rented by their operators. The aim behind this method of selection was probably to guarantee the quality of the fabrics produced, which after all were mostly purchased by the Palace. For the same reason, brocades woven on the licensed looms were to be marked with a special stamp (*damga*).

However this measure does not appear to have been very effective, for less than fifteen years later both the order and the inquiry into the number of İstanbul brocade looms had to be repeated⁶⁸. From a document issued in 985/1577-78, we learn why the policy of the central government was so difficult to enforce: out of a total of 268 looms recorded, eighty-eight belonged to twenty-eight servants of the central administration

65 MD 52, p. 264, no. 695 (992/1584). Published in Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu Asır*, p. 179-180.

66 For orders to take gold and silver to the mint compare Robert Anhegger, Halil İnalçık, ed., *Kânûnnâme-i sultânî ber müceb-i 'örf-i 'osmânî, II. Mehmed ve II. Bayezid Devirlerine ait Yasaknâme ve Kânûnnâmeler*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından, XI, 5 (Ankara, 1956), p. 3-5.

67 MD 6, p. 84, no. 172 (972/1564-65) compare Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu Asır*, p. 151.

68 MD 30, p. 103, no. 249 (985/1577-78). The text uses the expressions '*bir bab kâr-hane*' and '*bir bab tezgâh*' as if they were synonymous. This can be interpreted to mean that most if not all brocade workshops in İstanbul contained only one loom.

(*askeri*), while only 180 looms were in the hands of ordinary subjects of the Empire. According to the rescript, all *askeri* were to stop the production of brocade on most of their looms, and each person was now to manufacture this material only on a single loom. As this accounted for twenty-eight looms, seventy-two licenses were reserved for qualified brocade weavers among the ordinary population, both Moslems and non-Moslems. All other looms were henceforth to produce ordinary silk cloth, which did not require the use of silver or gold thread. A document dating from the year 1022/1613-14 reopened the issue; apparently the order of 1577-78 had not been obeyed any better than its predecessor. This time however, there was no enquiry into the number of operating looms, so that we do not know whether the declining tendency characteristic of the period between 1565 and 1578 (from 318 to 268, a decrease of 16 percent) continued into the seventeenth century⁶⁹.

Information concerning the fabrics sold in İstanbul can be gathered from the lists of officially approved prices (*narh*) which the *kadi*⁷⁰, under orders from the central administration, promulgated from time to time. Unfortunately one always has to take into account that the term «Haleb *astarı*» might mean 'lining cloth in the style of Aleppo' rather than fabrics actually woven in that city. In some cases, the sources expressly indicate examples of this kind, for instance when referring to *kemha* in the style of Chios, but produced in Bursa⁷¹. Several *narh* lists for İstanbul have been published, and refer particularly to the following items: different types of *çuha* whose provenience is not given, silk fabrics from İstanbul and from Damascus, lining produced locally, and other types of lining probably woven in Aleppo and Adana.

Another source of information on types of cloth in common use consisted of sumptuary regulations, which spelled out the articles of clothing that non-Moslems might or might not wear. These regulations had a two-fold aim. Christians and Jews

69 Compare Ahmed Refik, *Hicri On Birinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı* (1000-1100), Türk Tarih Encümeni Külliyyatı (İstanbul, 1931), p. 47-48.

70 For *narh* records compare: MD 48, p. 114, no. 304 (990-991/1582-83) (Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu Asır*, p. 175).

Ömer Lütfi Barkan, «XV. Asrın Sonunda Bazı Büyük Şehirlerde Eşya ve Yiyecek Fiyatlarının Tesbit ve Teftişi Hususlarını Tanzim Eden Kanunlar», *Tarih Vesikaları*, I, 5 (1942) 326-340; II, 7 (1942), 15-40; II, 9 (1942), 168-177.

Halil Sahillioglu, «Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1525 Yılı Sonunda İstanbul'da Fiatlar», *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, I, (1967), 36-40, II (1967), 54-56, III (1967), 50-59.

Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, «1009/1600 Tarihli Narh Defterine Göre İstanbul'da Çeşitli Eşya ve Hizmet Fiatları», *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, IX (1978), 1-85. For an attempt to fix, the *narh* for cloth at the level they had attained at the time of Kanuni Süleyman: MD 48, p. 178, no. 496 (990/1582), published in Dalsar, *İpekçilik*, p. 235.

71 Dalsar, *İpekçilik*, p. 81.

were to be distinguishable by their dress from Moslems and to a certain degree from one another as well, while at the same time they were to be denied the use of the more precious fabrics⁷². In consequence, the various sumptuary regulations also contain a considerable amount of information on the clothing favoured by Moslems, particularly the wealthier members of the community. On the other hand, it is probably safe to assume that the garments prescribed for non-Moslems in all walks of life were also, with slight variations worn by the poorer Moslems.

Thus the outer garment prescribed for men was a *kaftan* of blue or black *çuha*, which was to be made of the local product from Salonica, not of the more expensive and probably imported *sıkarlat çuha*⁷³. Undergarments were to be fashioned out of *bogasi*, while the belt might be partly of silk as long as its value did not surpass a certain limit. Headgear was to consist of a length of cotton from Denizli; the textiles bearing the name of this Anatolian town were obviously not considered equal to really fine *tülbend*. In fact, the latter quite often seems to have come from Iran. Women were not to wear wide cloaks (*ferace*) as their Moslem counterparts. Their dresses (*fistan*) were to be made out of mohair or the Bursa *kutnu* referred to previously. In general, they were to avoid the little caps of brocade which were worn by Moslem women of rank; but in case they insisted upon headgear of this type, it was to be made out of plain atlas or even of *kutnu*. Thus we can assume that an outer cloak of *çuha* from Selanik, along with undergarments and headgear of cotton, must have been the articles of clothing most frequently purchased by modest male inhabitants of İstanbul. Their womenfolk wore cloaks, probably of *çuha* or *kutnu* according to the season, while the headgear was often used for a modest display of luxury. These were the types of cloth which were most frequently brought into the capital, both by means of internal and of external trade.

Wealthy people in İstanbul seem to have bought considerable quantities of 'Frankish' *çuha*, the sale of which was regulated by special rescripts. In the past, the *çuhacı* of İstanbul and particularly of Galata had been accustomed to buy en bloc from importing 'Frankish' shippers, and then to distribute the material among themselves according to a system involving rotation⁷⁴. But in the early fifteen-eighties, certain Jewish merchants had become involved in the trade and were offering higher prices, thereby hurting the interests of the established merchants. By applying to the central administration, the latter procured an official order to reinstitute the previous arrangement. However, certain *çuhacı* seem to have been vehemently

72 MD 7, p. 779, no. 1989 (972/1564-65), compare also Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu Asır*, p. 68-69.

73 MD 7, p. 440, no. 1270, (972/1564-65).

74 MD 52, p. 338, no. 899 (992/1584), compare Ahmed Refik, *Onuncu Asır*, p. 178-179.

opposed to just this system of rotation and defended the right of each merchant to purchase as much *çuha* as he deemed expedient⁷⁵.

Ottoman merchants also went abroad to purchase woollen cloth. In a document from the year 1013/1604-05, mention was made of a collective petition of wholesalers involved in this type of trade. Unfortunately the merchants said nothing about the places where they bought their woollen cloths. But one might surmise that they had business dealings in Dubrovnik or else were occasional residents of the Fondaco dei Turci in Venice. These merchants claimed to accompany their goods in person, to sell by the bale and not by the ell, and for that reason to possess no shops. Considering their special situation, the central administration had never in the past demanded that they send practitioners of their trade to accompany the army on campaign. The wholesalers' petition for a confirmation of their privilege was favourably received⁷⁶.

For some of these merchants, trade with Venice was only part of a wider network of commercial contacts. A rescript addressed to the *kadı* of Edirne (1040/1630-31) refers to another petition from merchants who were in the habit of travelling to Iran bringing back goods for which they paid customs dues in İstanbul⁷⁷. However, at least part of their merchandise was then conveyed to Venice where the traders in question purchased woollen cloth and other goods. On the return journey, the caravan stopped in Edirne for a few days of rest, but according to the merchants' claim, the bales were not opened, no trading took place, and in consequence it was customary to defer payment of customs dues until the caravan had arrived in İstanbul. While the central administration was willing to accept this argument, it should probably not be taken too literally. It seems that the authorities in Edirne, if not the traders themselves, were quite willing to divert to their own use merchandise intended for İstanbul, whether grain, woollens, or cotton⁷⁸. Under these circumstances, one may rather assume that Edirne was a lively centre for the trade in woollen cloth, both imported and locally produced.

75 MD 53, p. 51, no. 139 (992/1584); the petitioners also requested that the central administration forbid the former *kethüda*, a Jewish merchant, any further involvement in the affairs of the guild.

76 MD 75, p. 286 (1013/1604-05), Ahmed Refik, *On Birinci Asırda*, p. 28.

For Dubrovnik's textile industry compare Carter, *Dubrovnik*, p. 293-308.

On the Fondaco dei Turci and the importing and exporting activities of Ottoman merchants see Turan, «Türk Ticaret Merkezi», *passim*.

For the institution of the *orducu*: Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique de l'Institut français d'archéologie d'Istanbul (Paris, 1962), p. 391.

77 MD 85, p. 270 (1040/1630-31).

78 For woollen cloth compare, MD 66, p. 20, no. 41 (997/1588-89), for cotton fabrics, MD 46, p. 227, no. 498, (992/1584).

Among the merchants engaged in this trade, there were some who attempted to escort their goods to Europe in person, not by the sea route foreseen in the negotiations between Şah Abbas and the Levant Company, but by crossing the Ottoman Empire from east to west. Apparently the Ottoman authorities did not particularly favour these attempts. A first consideration was that such merchants might be spies in the service of the Şah of Iran. But even in a case where this suspicion could not be proven, local administrators were instructed to have the goods under discussion sold in Edirne instead⁷⁹. Whether momentary difficulties with Dubrovnik, where the caravan in question was apparently headed, were the reason for these orders, is difficult to tell from the documents at our disposal. But considering the political ramifications of the silk trade with Iran during the sixteenth century, it is quite possible that the Ottoman authorities were trying to safeguard the role of their merchants as transit traders.

In importing and exporting textiles, the so-called *hassa tacirleri* showed particular activity. By this term, the *mühimme* registers mean merchants sent to foreign countries by the Sultan in order to make purchases for the Palace. Not only the Sultan himself, but also the *han* of the Crimea⁸⁰, and certain high-ranking dignitaries of the Ottoman Empire occasionally employed traders in this manner. Among these merchants we find both Moslems and non-Moslems. Some of them travelled over great distances, visiting for instance Muscovy as fur-buyers⁸¹, and purchasing luxury fabrics in Venice. Thus we possess an imperial rescript concerning a certain trader by the name of Mehmed, who had been honoured by the title of *tacirbaşı*. On his way back to İstanbul with a load of valuable silks, *tacirbaşı* Mehmed had become embroiled with the customs official (*iskele emini*) of a port on the Adriatic coast. In the course of the dispute, the *emin* declared the *tacirbaşı*'s document of institution a falsification and proceeded to «confiscate» his merchandise. Reaction from İstanbul was sharp: the goods having been purchased with money from the Treasury (*miri sermaye*), they were exempt from taxes and customs duties, and the hapless official was accused of greed and rapacity⁸².

Similar arrangements were made when the central administration wished to market goods abroad. Thus in the year 998/1589-90, 40 *yük* of silk belonging to the Treasury were entrusted to a certain *zaim*, who was to take the precious goods to Dubrovnik and from there to Venice⁸³. Again the consignment was to pass customs

79 MD 16, p. 43, no. 81 (979/1571-72).

80 For an example compare MD 22, p. 338, no. 668 (981/1573-74).

81 For example MD 35, p. 73, no. 174 (986/1578-79).

82 MD 80, p. 488, no. 1155 (1023/1614-15).

83 MD 67, p. 20 (998/1589-90). According to Hinz, *Masse und Gewichte*, p. 36 in Erzincan around 1518 a *yük* of silk was equivalent to 61.5 kg.

houses and toll stations duty-free. Local administrators were to furnish appropriate guards and help the official in question find a suitable ship to Venice. In a slightly older document published by Tayyip Gökbilgin, a governor of Rumeli had sent one of his servants (*kapı kulu*) to Venice under similar circumstances. When the time came for the *kapı kulu* to return, the Doge of Venice was requested to make sure that no customs duties were demanded and locate a boat which would take the governor's servant back into Ottoman territory⁸⁴.

Considering that the *mühimme* registers frequently refer to commercial relations of this sort, which might be called «state trade», it is remarkable that this type of exchange has not been more intensively discussed in overall evaluations of Ottoman commerce. A comparable institution in seventeenth-century Iran has attracted much more scholarly attention, for monopolization of silk exports in the hands of Şah Abbas I brought European traders into direct contact with a type of 'nationalized peddling trade'⁸⁵. But particularly where commerce in silk was involved, the Ottoman administration often proceeded in similar, if somewhat more haphazard fashion. This becomes particularly obvious when occasional windfalls during the Iranian wars left large portions of the Şirvan silk harvest in Ottoman hands⁸⁶. Under these circumstances, a comprehensive investigation of «state trade» in the Ottoman Empire might prove extremely rewarding⁸⁷.

Within the Ottoman Empire, major suppliers of textiles to the capital were Damascus and Aleppo. The importance of deliveries from Syria is stressed in a rescript addressed to the *beğlerbeğ* of Aleppo. Since certain fabrics were lacking in the İstanbul market, the governor was ordered to make sure that the merchants normally supplying the capital delivered their goods as soon as possible. In fact, the authorities were even requested to draw up a list of the merchants taking part in the next caravan, record their time of departure and furnish an inventory of the goods they were bringing with them⁸⁸. It would be of great interest to know whether this kind of information was periodically sent to the capital, and whether the lists in question were intended for the use of Palace purchasing agents alone. For if the information contained in these documents was made available to certain İstanbul merchants on

84 M. Tayyip Gökbilgin «Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Vesikalar Külliyyatında Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devri Belgeleri», *Belgeler*, 1, 2 (1964), 172; compare also Turan, «Türk Ticaret Merkezi», 251-252.

85 Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century. The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago, London, 1973), p. 367 ff.

86 Compare as an example MD 53, p. 255, no. 740 (993/1585).

87 Compare: Halil İnalçık, «Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire», *Journal of Economic History*, XXIX, (1969), 97-140.

88 MD 66, p. 30, no. 64 (997/1588-89).

a more or less regular basis, they should have been in a strong bargaining position vis à vis their Syrian counterparts.

Information about goods brought to the capital from Syria was particularly easy to collect, since many merchants preferred to entrust their goods to the annual pilgrimage caravan⁸⁹. Organization of the caravan was in the hands of the central administration itself, which every year appointed the officials in charge and never ceased to remind them of the religious and political importance of their duties. Moreover, a large number of foundations, often instituted by members of the Sultan's family, were devoted to the construction and upkeep of wells, the provisioning of poor pilgrims, and related matters⁹⁰. Yet in spite of these precautions, pilgrims and merchants often found themselves in difficulties. In a considerable number of documents, we encounter references to attacks upon the pilgrimage caravan. As an example, there survives the summary of a complaint from the *kadı* of Homs. His brother, a prominent victim of one of these robberies, was an employee of the foundation of Emir Buhari in Bursa and on his return trip from Mecca had taken back valuable goods, among other things *alaca* from Homs and *tafta* from Damascus⁹¹. It was probably in response to this commercial aspect of the Mecca caravans that we find Anatolian rebels of the seventeenth century attempting to cut the pilgrimage routes where they passed through territories over which the central administration had momentarily lost control⁹².

Conclusion

Certainly the selection of documents contained in the *mühimme defterleri* is somewhat biased, as heavy emphasis is placed upon the needs of the capital, the Palace, the Janissary corps, the Arsenal, and even to a limited extent upon the interests of importing and exporting merchants. Nor is it due to chance that the institution of

89 MD 34, p. 286, no. 595 (986/1578-79).

90 The *Mühimme* catalogues contain a large number of references to these foundations.

91 Near Aleppo the caravan was attacked by forty to fifty robbers, about whose identity nothing is revealed. But since the text mentions the existence of rebellious Bedouins in the area, it is conceivable that they were the guilty parties. Moreover, attacks of this type seem to have been quite frequent, for the *kadı* of Homs proposed the institution of a pass-guard (*derbendci*) at a place where the pilgrimage caravan had been attacked at least four times in recent years. He also suggested that provincial governors supply special guards for the caravan while it passed through their territory. As we can assume that the pilgrimage caravan was a major means of commerce and communication during the classical period of the Ottoman Empire, a detailed investigation of its organization, and the conjunctures and vicissitudes that it passed through, would much broaden our understanding of Ottoman social life.

'state trade' that is of commercial relations closely associated with diplomatic activity, is particularly well documented in the *mühimme defterleri*. But this bias is not as much of a disadvantage as might appear at first sight. Given the enormous weight of the capital, both in terms of population and of purchasing power, the more important routes of internal, and to a lesser degree even those of external trade, were bound to lead to İstanbul. In fact, it is likely that most if not all the textile manufacturing centres referred to in the *mühimme defterleri* maintained trade relations with the capital, or else formed part of the system of obligatory deliveries that provided the Palace, the Janissaries, and the Arsenal with both luxuries and necessities. One might go even further and assume that production of textiles which was not carried out in connection with the capital or in response to the needs of the central administration was almost by definition of purely local importance. In the case of many manufactured goods, similar statements are probably valid. A history of Ottoman internal trade will have to deal mainly with the varying impact that demand originating in İstanbul exercised upon production in the provinces.

For the time being we have, however, gained only a static picture of Ottoman textile production, while the dynamic aspect is reasonably well-known in only a few isolated instances, such as Bursa silks or Salonica woollens. As a next step, we will need to find out how certain other important branches of textile manufacture, such as for instance the production of cotton and mohair, developed in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Only by this procedure will it become possible to evaluate how much of Ottoman craft industry survived the onslaught of the sixteenth century price revolution, and continued to exist until the invasion of European manufactured goods after 1830⁹³.

92 Xavier de Planhol, *De la plaine pamphylienne aux lacs pisidiens, nomadisme et vie paysanne*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique de l'Institut français d'archéologie à İstanbul (İstanbul, 1958), p. 114.

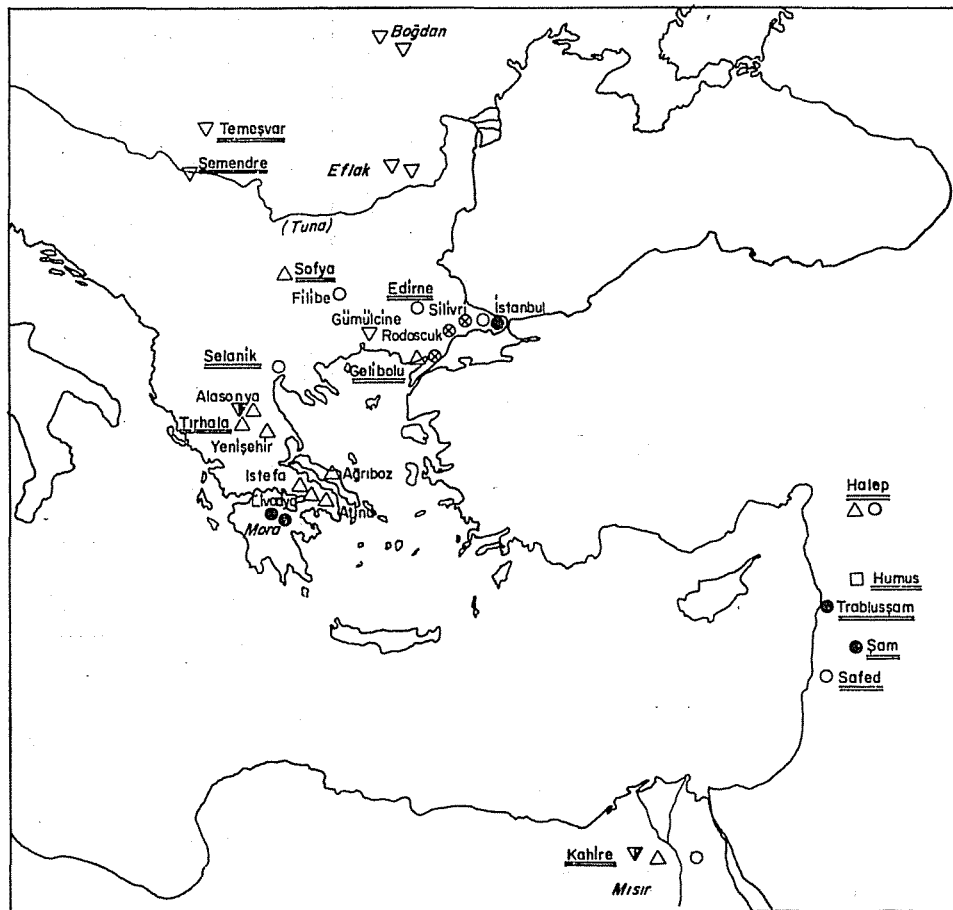
93 Compare: Mehmet Genç «Osmanlı Maliyesinde Malikâne Sistemi», in: *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri Metinler/Tartışmalar...*, ed. Osman Ökyar, Ünal Nalbantoğlu (Ankara, 1975), p. 231-291;

Nikolai Todorov, «La genèse du capitalisme dans les provinces bulgares de l'Empire Ottoman au cours de la première moitié du XIX^{es}.» *Etudes historiques*, I (1960), 222-248, reprinted as no X in *La ville balkanique sous les Ottomans (XV-XIX^{es})* (London, 1977), compare pp. 231-232; and most recently Çizakça, *Bursa*.

- △ Raw cotton, cotton fabrics
- Woollen fabrics
- ⊗ Raw wool
- ▽ Hemp
- Silk
- ▼ Linen
- Ataca

Boğdan - Name of an area
Selanik - Name of a sancak centre

Source for outline: Modern Orta Atlas
 (İstanbul, Novara, 1971), p.17.



TEXTILE MANUFACTURE IN RUMELI AND THE ARAB PROVINCES (1560-1650)