

Breads for the Followers, Silver Vessels for the Lord: The System of Distribution and Redistribution in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th centuries)

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Kullara Tayın, Efendiye Gümüş Takım: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Dağıtım ve Bölüşürme Düzeni (16.-18. yüzyıl)

Öz ■ Osmanlı Sarayının üst düzeyde idarecilere olağanüstü büyük miktarlarda işe için ürün dağıtımını birçok modern araştırmacıyı hayrete düşürmektedir. Yalnız, bu olguya yakından bakıldığı zaman, burada kök salmış ve iyi işleyen/yürütülen bir dağıtım ve bölüşürme sisteminin söz konusu olduğu görülebilir. Sosyal açıdan, işe tahsisleri yukardan aşağıya doğru işleyen bir mekanizma olduğu göze çarpmakta ve böylece veren/dağıtan kimse, doğrudan taraftar toplayıp iktidarını pekiştirebilecek bir duruma ulaşabilmekteydi. Bu işe dağıtım sistemini son derece gelişmiş ince bir hediye verme sistemi tamamlamaktaydı. Bu da, Osmanlılar'da yine bir dağıtım ve bölüşürme alt sistemi olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Sözkonusu sistem, sosyal açıdan her yöne doğru bir dağıtımını mümkün kılmasına rağmen, ağırlıklı olarak veren kişinin kariyerinin yararına yönelik bir ağ örgüsünü kurmak manasına gelmekteydi. Böyle hallerde dağıtım hareketi çok defa yukarıya doğru yöneltilmekteydi. Dolayısıyla her iki system, bir ferdin toplum içindeki statüsünü/mevkiini pekiştirerek kudret elde etme yönünde işleyebilmekteydi.

Anahtar kelimeler: Osmanlılar'da İşe ve Dağıtım, Bölüşürme, Toplumsal Statü, Reaya, Soyo-Kültürel Ağlar, Kariyer, Hediye Verme.

Between the years 1692 and 1695, Rabi'a Sultan, the *hasseki* of Ahmed II,¹ received a daily ration of bread consisting of 12 *nan-ı hass*, two *nan-ı piç*, three *çöreks*, three *na'llı halka*, 12 *simids*, three *nan-ı pite*, three *nan-ı mirahori*, three

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1 She was the mother of Prince İbrahim and Prince Selim, Ahmed II's twin sons (born 1692) and of his daughter Asiye Sultan, cf. M. Çığatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*. Ankara: TTK, 1980, pp. 71-72.

nan-ı nohud, and no less than 220 *fodula*, if we believe the entries in a register² dealing with courtly food distribution. This allocation stands in sharp contrast to that of the Prince Mustafa (born 1664, in 1695 Mustafa II) and Prince Ahmed (born 1673, in 1703 Ahmed III), who received together a daily share of eight *nan-ı hass*, two *nan-ı piç*, (as a later addition) two *na'llı halka* and ten “pairs” of *somun* (bread loafs).³ 220 breads cannot have been meant for a single individual, and even in the case of the two princes it is clear at first sight that the amount is too large for two persons alone.

To understand the Ottoman concept of regular food distribution we should not forget the observation in Marcel Mauss' classic *Essai sur le don*, that all systems of gift giving are connected with the obligation of reciprocity. Feeding people, which is in principle an archaic form of gift giving, implies therefore that the donor can expect something in return, mainly loyalty and favours, which is nothing other than a means of collecting followers.

While in our example for the *hasseki* having a numerous group of beneficiaries was obviously desirable, for the two princes this would not have been the case. Having too many supporters could have made the princes dangerous rivals for the ruler, which was definitely not wanted.

As similar allotments of basic victuals like bread, meat, rice, fat, sugar or honey, sometimes also of vegetables, were made on a regular basis to the members of the ruling elite, these provisions were certainly meant as an additional salary in

- 2 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul (henceforth BOA) D.MSF 32081/3, p. 6. The first part of this *defter* was apparently drawn up in October 1692, but refers in parts back to the year 1688. The earliest of these references is 20 Receb 1099/21.V.1688, *ibidem*, p. 38. This is half a year after the accession of Süleyman II. The first date incorporated in the text is 12 Safer 1104/23.IO.1692, *ibidem*, p. 6. It seems, however, that the register was bound later and some of the pages were mixed up. The last entry is dated 17 Şevval 1107/20. V. 1696, *ibidem*, p. 55. More than a year before this date Mustafa II had come to the throne.
- 3 A remark on the upper margin says that half of the allotment was given to Prince Ahmed and the other half (i.e. the ration of Prince Mustafa) was now to be shared by the *daye kadın* (child's nurse) and the *odalık kadın* (a concubine, maybe Âlicenab Kadın? cf. Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları*, p. 73-75). BOA, D.MSF 32081/3, p. 10. After Mustafa II's accession to the throne (6.II.1695) the ration for Prince Ahmed alone was changed from four to six *nan-ı hass*; next to one *na'llı halka* and one *nan-ı piç*, Ahmed now received the full amount of ten *fodula*. The entry is dated 3 Şa'ban 1106/3. VIII.1695. BOA, D.MSF 32081/3, p. 8. For the *halkas* of Prince Mustafa and Prince Ahmed weekly nine *kıyye* (11,55 kg) of clarified butter (*revgan-ı sade*) were given to the Palace's bakery (*furun-ı hass*), *ibidem*, p. 33.

kind, a salary which kept its value even in times of monetary inflation. However, the enormous quantities of certain allocated victuals point in another direction: they were intended to be used for redistribution, thus creating ties with sub-groups, as already suggested by Tülay Artan some years ago.⁴

A fragment of an account book (dated 4 Safer 1180/12.VII.1766), apparently from the kitchen of a Grand Vizier (probably Muhsinzade Mehmed Pasha),⁵ lists, for example, among the recipients of allotments the *ka'imakam paşa* getting a daily ration of 40 breads(?).⁶ We can be certain, though, that he would have already been receiving his share from the imperial kitchen in the same manner as the Grand Vizier himself. Hence, there is no doubt that the *ka'imakam paşa's* portion would have been redistributed. The next persons mentioned in this *defter* are the secretary of the *divan* and the steward of the gatekeepers, with 12 and 13 breads respectively,⁷ evidently again meant for redistribution and the same applies to the next layer of apportionment.

These few examples, which could be multiplied, point first of all to the symbolic and ritual meaning of bread as a means of strengthening the ties of loyalty of subordinates. As a Turkish proverb has it: *Ekmeğ veren el ısırılmaz*, "one does not bite the hand which gives bread."⁸ This is the reason why I have taken my examples here only from the distribution of bread.

Strangely enough, Ottoman methods and rituals creating ties have not been, as yet, a focus of modern researchers. This is, however, a significant topic for a patrimonial system where the social structure was largely based on patronage and networks of clients. In this context, a passage in Tavernier's French travelogue about the Janissaries' meal at *divan*-days in the Ottoman palace is interesting: 'At the same time [as the viziers eat] the *Chourba* [*çorba*] is brought, which is a kind of rice soup, to feed the Janissaries who are posted under the galleries. When it happens that they [the Janissaries] have some discontent and that they are

4 Cf. Tülay Artan, "Aspects of the Ottoman Elite's Food Consumption: Looking for "Staples," "Luxuries," and "Delicacies" in a Changing Century", Donald Quataert (ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 2000, pp. 142-143.

5 Compare İ. H. Danişmend, *Osmanlı Devlet Erkânı*. İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971, p. 62.

6 Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (henceforth: TSMA) D. 8882, p. 1.

7 TSMA, D. 8882, p. 1.

8 This seems to be a universal feature; German, for example, has, as an equivalent to the English proverb "Who blows the pipe sets the tone", "*Wes Brot ich eß, des Lied ich sing*" ('Whose bread I eat, whose song I sing'.)

irritated about a vezier or the Grand Signor himself, none of them would touch the *Chourba*, but they reject the plates very rudely and show in this manner that they harbour bitterness.⁹ The phrase ‘to overturn the kettle’ as a sign of mutiny among the Janissaries even made it into the dictionaries.¹⁰ This gesture, though, only makes sense if accepting food is considered to be a sign of submission and fealty.

On the other hand, it becomes clear from our documents that this system of distribution and redistribution follows and influences given hierarchic structures. The donor decides – at least in theory – how large the number of followers for the beneficiary could be – who, on the other hand, does the same when redistributing his share again. In a society without sharp formal divisions between the segments of hierarchy, control of an ample number of followers could significantly mould a person’s status. As the Venetian diplomat Lorenzo Bernardo put it in 1592: ‘Because the Turk does not care about delicious food and not about rich furnishings for his house, since he is content with only bread and rice and with only blanket and cushion, he shows all his *grandezza* with a multitude of slaves and horses.’¹¹ We should, of course, take the assertion that Turks did not care much about food and did not demonstrate their wealth with expensive furniture in their houses with more than just a pinch of salt, but Bernardo’s other observation has a considerable kernel of truth, when he identifies manpower as a symbol of potency.

Food could of course also be used as a singular gift to people of higher standing at certain occasions like *bayram* etc. The protestant priest Stephan Gerlach has for example a note in his diary that in September 1577, 250 women were arrested as prostitutes in Istanbul. “It is said, however, that many of them do not deserve it, since they were reported by their *imams* or priests ... only out of jealousy. Because

9 “*Que s’il arrive qu’ils ayent quelque mécontentement, & qu’ils soient irritez contre un Vizir ou contre le Grand Seigneur mesme, aucun d’eux ne met la main au Chourba, mais ils rejettent rudement les plats, & témoignent par-là qu’ils ont de l’aigreur.*» Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Nouvelle relation de l’interieur du serail du Grand Seigneur*. Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1675, p. 88.

10 Redhouse, *Türkçe/Osmanlıca-İngilizce Sözlük*, Istanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 2000, p. 627.

11 Lorenzo Bernardo, “Relazione dell’impero Ottomano di Lorenzo Bernardo, 1592”, Eugenio Albèri (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori Veneti al senato*, Serie III^a – Volume II^o, Firenze: Tipografia all’insegna di Clio, 1844, p. 368: “*perchè il Turco prima non curava il delicato mangiare, nè li ricchi addobbamenti di casa, ma solo si contentava di pane e riso, e del solo tappeto e cuscino; tutta la sua grandezza la mostrava nel numero dei molti schiavi e cavalli*”.

they did not bring them, during fast and at *bayeran, pilau*, which is dry rice, and other food or trousers and shirts.”¹² Even if officials expected these kinds of gifts at certain times, this type of food distribution does not belong to our system. The distribution system we are dealing here with always implies a downward movement, which must be answered with an upward movement of loyalty and favours, thus forming a circle of care and dependency. The starting point of the whole system was in fact the Ottoman Palace, shaping in this manner a concept of controlled dependencies.

The pattern of redistribution is, however, by no means restricted to food, although there the paradigm is particularly discernible and easier to follow than in other fields. Closely related to this procedure of food allotments for redistribution are pre-modern Middle Eastern modes of gift exchange. This concept of distribution and redistribution has been identified by Karl Polanyi as being common in societies with prevailing symmetries and an institutionalised centricity, but without distinctly developed market economies.¹³ A closer look reveals, however, that we should not speak of a lack of market economies in this context, but rather of a non-existent supply-demand-price mechanism in regard to the redistributed item.¹⁴

Polanyi’s ideas were developed though from data of the ancient Middle East¹⁵ and remain on a rather general level. For Ottoman society (as well as those of other pre-modern Middle Eastern countries) we therefore need to establish a new model on the basis of Polanyi’s insights.

12 Stephan Gerlach, *Stephan Gerlachs deß Aeltern Tage-Buch/ Der von zween Glorwürdigsten Römischen Kaysern/ Maximiliano und Rudolpho, Beyderseits den Andern dieses Nahmens/ Höchstseeligster Gedächtnüß/ An die Ottomanische Pforte zu Constantinopel Abgefertigten!.....Gesandtschafft*. Frankfurt am Mayn: In Verlegung Johann-David Zunners. Gedruckt bey Heinrich Friesen, 1674, p. 385.

13 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston, Ma.: Beacon Press, 2001, pp. 45-58.

14 In 19th-century France, for example, newly founded zoos obtained their exotic animals mainly as a redistribution by Napoleon III, who received them as diplomatic gifts, cf. Michael A. Osborne, “The Role of Exotic Animals in the Scientific and Political Culture of Nineteenth Century France”, Liliane Bodson (ed.), *Les animaux exotiques dans les relations internationales: espèces, fonctions, significations*. Liège: Univ. de Liège, 1998, pp. 15-30. As 19th-century France cannot be regarded as a country without a distinct market economy, we must attribute the redistribution to a lack of market economy for exotic beasts.

15 Cf. Karl Polanyi et al., *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economy in History and Theory*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957.

For some individuals of the upper strata in Ottoman administration we are able to follow the gift traffic – at least partly – because in the *Başbakanlık Arşivi* (and partly also in the Archives of the Topkapı Palace) in Istanbul a number of private treasury inventories of high-ranking dignitaries are preserved. To a large extent they are wrongly catalogued, some appear as *hediye defterleri*, pointing to the main bulk of entries. These registers must have come into the hands of the state following the execution of their original owner, a confiscation of his assets or, in the case of Sultanic ‘slaves’ (in the 17th and 18th centuries including Muslim-born servants of the imperial household) in the normal way of inheritance.¹⁶

In a bookkeeping of the treasury of this kind from the *vali* of Aleppo, covering the years 1659 to 1560 we find entries such as: “From the *kâtibs* came red velvet, two bolts. One of them was given to Hasan, the other one as a gift to Bekir.”¹⁷ Or: “From [Yusuf Çelebi in Kilis] came Saye-cloth with a pattern. Given as a gift to the *na’ib*.”¹⁸ Recipients of redistributed gifts were by no means only subordinates or complete underlings, higher ranking officials could get the same treatment: A garment presented to our pasha by his *kethüda* was given to the son of the Grand Vizier. Red velvet, also coming from the *kethüda*, was received by a certain ‘Osman Pasha. Red satin (*diba*) from one of the Alleppine consuls (*balyoz*) was sent to the court in Istanbul, to the Sultan himself.¹⁹

A fragment of a courtly register from 26 Cemazi I 966/6. III. 1559 with the heading *ağa kullarına in’am buyurulan atlar ki zikir olunur*. “Horses as gifts for the servants [in rank of] *ağa*” reveals the same approach. ‘Ali Ağa, the *mir-i ‘alem*, for example gets a greyish horse which had been a present of the governor of Erzurum. Only one of the 22 horses in this document had not been a gift from an official such as the *sancakbeği* of Tarsus or the governor of Sivas etc.²⁰

From these few examples it is evident that the official *Ottoman* concept of gift giving was again a form of distribution and redistribution, this time, however, closely connected with the perception of honour. In fact, we have to deal here with a special form of conspicuous consumption. Yet, from the economic point of view this system seems not to have been very fruitful, since it was mainly a

16 For the latter issue see Rifaat A. Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman *Veizir* and *Paşa* Households 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report”, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, 4 (1974), p. 446, note 36.

17 BOA, MAD 14724, p. 4.

18 BOA, MAD 14724, p. 5.

19 BOA, MAD 14724, p. 5.

20 TSMA, D. 10084.

circulation of luxury goods without significant impact on their production. Actually it is difficult to say how big the share of newly bought goods in this honour traffic was, since we do not have exact data. I would estimate this segment not to have been more than 30-40 %.

If we take the obligation of reciprocity into account, what was the benefit for those involved in this traffic of honours?

We have a *defter* for the period from May 1660 to April 1662, of Kaplan Mustafa Paşa, who was married to a daughter of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha²¹ and had a rather successful career, which makes his output of gifts an interesting topic. He was to become twice *kapudan-ı derya*, Grand Admiral, from 1666 until 1672 and from 1678 until his death in 1680.²² Apparently he started his career in the *enderun* and was *silahdar* before he was given a post as a governor.²³ From archival material outside our *defter* we know that Kaplan Mustafa was governor (*mirmiran*) of Trablus Şam (Tripoli in today's Lebanon) at the end of June in 1659,²⁴ and remained in this post at least until Muharrem 1071/September 1660.²⁵ In 1663/4 he was governor of Karaman and took part in the Hungarian campaign.²⁶ In June 1665 we find him mentioned as *mirmiran-ı Şam-ı Şerif*, as governor of Damascus.²⁷ From this office he was promoted to the post of admiral.²⁸

The register from his treasury²⁹ was composed while he was governor of Tripoli. Kaplan Mustafa Pasha must have been on friendly terms with the former steward (*kethüda*) of the *valide sultan*, Gürcü Mehmed Pasha, because the latter receives a broadcloth (*çuka*) for a garment, a turban (*sarık*), underpants and a shirt (*don ve gömlek*), while his *ağa* (probably his *kethüda*) gets a fabric for a dress (*donluk*).³⁰ While a *çuka donluk* was a rather modest gift, handed out also to individuals of minor standing, turbans were a standard part of official gift packages. The

21 M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Köprülülüler", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* VI, Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1967, p. 897

22 Danişmend, *Osmanlı Devlet Erkânı*, pp. 198-199.

23 Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i 'Osmânî* IV, Istanbul: Matba'a-i 'Amire, 1315, p. 52.

24 D.BŞM 209, p. 18.

25 D.BŞM 209, p. 25.

26 Silahdar Fındıklı Mehmed Ağa, *Silahdar Tarihi*. I, Istanbul: Devlet Matba'ası, 1928, pp. 237, 250, 283, 291, 362.

27 D.BŞM 209, p. 44.

28 Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i 'Osmânî*, IV, p. 52.

29 BOA, D.BŞM 211.

30 BOA, D.BŞM 211, p. 2.

underwear, however, points to a rather close and warm-hearted relationship. Usually underwear was not given to higher ranking distant officials.

The focal point of Kaplan Mustafa's gift efforts is not so much the central administration; he aims more at local notabilities and local business. Local sheikhs, *mollas*, *müftüs* and especially *kadıs* are pampered with fabrics, especially different kinds of broadcloth. Even the dismissed *kadı* (*ma'zul olan kadı efendiye*) gets five cubits (*zira*) of blue *londrina* broadcloth and an embroidered *şali* napkin.³¹

Men of piety were not forgotten either; interestingly enough, a certain *kızılbaş Baba-ı 'Acem* receives one white fabric for a dress (*donluk*) and five cubits of *londura* broadcloth.³² This certainly does not imply heretic inclinations on Kaplan Mustafa's side; presumably it was just a concession to local conditions in the largely shi'ite hinterland. At another time the Mevlevi Sheykh in Konya is graced with a yellow silk (*hare*) for a dress.³³

Of course, the regional garrisons are taken accordingly into consideration, as well as the *esnaf*, the artisans. We find the [heads of the] smiths, of the silk makers (*gazzaz*), the head broker (*dellal başı*), the [heads of the] turban makers, of the sword makers, the tanners, the saddlers, the perfumers, the saddle-pad makers, the spinners of goat hair and the tinkers among the addressees of the pasha's gift distribution.³⁴

Unfortunately, we do not know what Mustafa Pasha received as answering gifts, maybe it was textiles, but it could also have been sugar ore something similar. A *defter* fragment from a Grand Vizier travelling to Aleppo (probably around 1700 or a bit later) lists as gifts from local authorities, for example the *kadı* of Ma'arrat, five sugar loafs and ten wax candles.³⁵ Hence, official personal encounters had obviously to be equipped with a gift. Larger packages required a suitable occasion, such as religious or private feasts, (like circumcision festivals, *sünnet düğünü*).

Mustafa Pasha's endeavours were evidently directed to establish a stable local network to make his office in Tripoli a success. On the other hand, he did not neglect the administrative elite. A Mehmed Ağa of the household of the Grand Vizier (Köprülü Fazıl) Ahmed Pasha receives, for example, in 1661, a sable fur of the best quality.³⁶ The son of the Grand Vizier (Köprülü Mehmed Pasha) gets 15

31 BOA, D.BŞM 211, p. 5.

32 BOA, D.BŞM 211, pp.10-11.

33 BOA, D.BŞM 211, p. 12.

34 BOA, D.BŞM 211, pp.14-15.

35 TSMA, D. 5839.

36 BOA, D.BŞM 211, p. 10.

yards (*arşun*) of *londrina* broadcloth and two measures for a dress (*donluk*) of Italian *atlas*.³⁷

If we compare Mustafa Pasha's gifts with those of his colleagues, we see that he is not exaggerating his largesse. A "normal" gift package to an equal or a superior official would normally consist mainly of silks or other costly fabrics. We find rather good examples of formal gift giving in a list of presents for the Sultan on the occasion of Prince Mehmed's circumcision in 1582.³⁸ A full package of a *beğlerbeği* usually included wine bottles, drinking vessels and trays, all made of silver (*sürahi, maşraba ve tepsi 'an nukara*), and expensive silks and brocades (such as *seraser, çatma, benek, kemha, atlas, kutni-i Bağdadî*), all nine fold, and finally 18 turbans (*destar*).³⁹ A *sancakbeği* would give only one type of silver vessel, preferably *sürahis*, and a smaller variety of fabrics, all in packages of five.⁴⁰

In the 16th century, silver drinking vessels seem to have been mainly an element of gifting in an upward direction. However, these sets of vessels are not found registered in *defters* from the second half of the 17th century. Now, alongside the ubiquitous fabrics, formal gifts from pashas tended to contain Chinese porcelain.⁴¹ Nevertheless, among the presents for the circumcision festivities of 1675⁴² and

37 BOA, D.BŞM 211, p. 4.

38 See Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "Power and Submission: Gifting at Royal Circumcision Festivals in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th Centuries)", *Turcica* 41 (2009), pp. 41-58.

39 Cf. for example TSMA, D. 9614, fol. 4 a.

40 See for example TSMA, D. 9614, fol. 8 a.

41 The larger quantities of Chinese porcelain registered in Ottoman treasury inventories from the mid of the 17th century onward is probably the outcome of a foothold held by the Dutch *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) in Basra (1645). Cf. T. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company as Recorded in the Dagh-Registers of Batavia Castle, those of Hirado and Deshima and Other Contemporary Papers (1602-1682)*. Leiden: Brill, 1954, pp. 12, 98. It is not quite clear, however, whether the porcelain listed in the Ottoman registers was indeed Chinese or (especially 1652-1683) a Persian substitute. As the Chinese porcelain market had collapsed the VOC traded blue and white pottery from Persia, which was sometimes mistaken for Chinese porcelain. Cf. Yolande Crowe, *Persia and China: Safavid Blue and White Ceramics in the Victoria & Albert Museum, 1501-1738*. London: La Borie, 2002, p. 21.

42 See Reindl-Kiel, "Power and Submission", pp. 58-69. BOA, D.BŞM.SRH 20605, pp. Ä.2-5. Most silver items in this inventory, though, are of a different kind: ewer and bowl (*leğen ma' ibrik*), coffee ewer (*kahve ibriği*) or incense burners (*buhurdan*) and rosewater sprinklers (*gülabdân*). Interestingly, the only exception are the gifts of the Greek Patriarch (*Patrik-i asitane*): here we find again the old-fashioned silver drinking sets *sürahi, maşraba* and *sini*; *ibidem*, p. 5.

1720 we again find silver vessels – but this time the donors were guilds of Istanbul, like the barbers,⁴³ the butchers⁴⁴ or the boatmen (*sandalcıyan*).⁴⁵

It is obvious that donors of gifts in a horizontal or downward direction could make choices within a wider range of items than individuals who were donating to officials of higher standing. While downward present giving was relevant for the support of one's career, horizontal gifting could be an investment for the future, as a colleague might suddenly make a career leap and become a superior. Higher ranking officials (including their households), in other words those from whom future favours or promotions could be expected, were of course a key target of gifting. To modern observers, the logic of this arrangement smacks of bribery. Yet, Ottoman officials had without doubt a different understanding. For them corruption meant being paid to commit an illegal act.

Conclusion

We have here several parallel processes of circulation. Besides the monetary circulation, which is completely under the control of the state, is the first I mentioned here, which I called the cycle of care (in the form of food) and of dependency. This circulation is initiated by the Palace, but not under its close control.

Another system, this time completely outside the control of the authorities, is the local traffic of gifts, involving notables and businessmen, which enables a governor to be more effective and successful in his province. This cycle I would call the cycle of effectiveness. Finally, and not less important is the process of circulating gifts among the households of colleagues and superiors, which can be called a cycle of honour and career. This included the ruler of course – for any official the ultimate source of a prosperous future.

These different cycles enabled the machinery of society, politics and power to function smoothly. Outside this system of cycles it was hardly possible to work successfully and to achieve power. This would have been similar to an attempt to operate beyond the circulation of money. Despite all largesse and the luxury of goods involved this concept did not bear any features of capitalism; in a way it was a counter-model to Max Weber's "Protestant Ethics".

43 TSMA, E. 3964/34.

44 TSMA, E. 3964/36.

45 TSMA, E. 3964/47.

Breads for the Followers, Silver Vessels for the Lord: The System of Distribution and Redistribution in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th centuries)

Abstract ■ The enormous amounts of victuals distributed by the Ottoman Palace to high-ranking officials have puzzled many modern researchers. A closer look, however, reveals that we are dealing here with an established and well-functioning system of distribution and redistribution. From the social point of view, allotments of food were shared out in a downward movement, enabling the donator to recruit direct followers and thereby to enhance his or her power. This scheme of food distribution was supplemented by a sophisticated system of gift giving, which, in the Ottoman case, was also a subset system of distribution and redistribution. Although this latter system allowed, in social aspects, distribution in all directions, a certain emphasis lay, in general, on creating a network for the benefit of one's career, which often meant an upward movement. Both systems, therefore, were used to strengthen one's position within society and to gain power.

Keywords: Distribution, Re-distribution; Social Status, Followers, Social Ties, Career, Gifting

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