

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
HISTORY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1850-1914

(A Note)

by Donald Quataert

State University of New York at Binghamton

Let me focus on the question of the gender distribution of work tasks, since it holds the key to many of the questions regarding Ottoman social (and economic) history. Here I am referring to both productive and reproductive tasks, in both urban as well as rural settings. The gender division of labor is the subject of considerable stereotyping, most of it incorrect. In manufacturing, my published work on carpetmaking and silkreeling shows that female labor accounted for the majority of output in those two sectors. Other research that I have performed reveals a similarly important role for females in many other manufacturing activities--for example, commercial cloth weaving at Erzurum in the 1840s and silk and linen weaving at Trabzon in 1900. In still other regions, women regularly provided cotton and mohair yarn for commercial male weavers in various urban areas, e.g., Diyarbakr, Ankara, Bitlis and Aleppo.

We need to study more carefully this question of women and girls' contribution to the workforce and remain aware that there are intimate connections between the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Who provided the increased labor that made possible the rise in commercial agricultural output during the period? What impact does this increased

output have on the gender distribution of labor in manufacturing, and in the reproductive tasks in the households? Given the kinds of sources that are and will be available, it will be extremely difficult to trace changes in the apportionment of agricultural or reproductive tasks. Most likely, the data simply will not be available except on a random basis. One seemingly feasible way of approaching the issue is through an examination of changes in the female contribution to manufacturing output over time. If we can understand this issue, perhaps we can gain more glimpses into the household itself and into the agricultural side of its activities. I believe that women became more important in manufacturing over the course of the nineteenth century. There seems to have been a major shift, away from a guild-organized, relatively well-paid, male workforce to an increasingly non-guild, female group of poorly-paid workers. Here, the chronological scope of the study must be 1750-1914, to capture the changes that occurred after the influx of imported textiles and the deepening involvement of the Ottoman economy in the international market. We need to explore the extent to which this work was located in the household itself and if the relative importance of work outside the home increased as the century progressed.

As a corollary, we need to study working conditions in Ottoman factories as they emerged, particularly after 1870. Who were the workers, how were they recruited, what are the spatial relationships between their homes and their worksites--that is, we need to trace the emergence of working class neighborhoods around factory sites. Once again, the gender division of labor is important. In tobacco factories, for example, tasks were sharply defined as male or female. But, I have evidence that suggests such distinctions were introduced by European managers, in the later part of the century.

SOURCES:

1. European materials. A great deal can be extracted from European consular reports. After 1890, there is a vast abundance of printed European consular reports--British, French, Italian, Austro-Hungarian and German. Before then, the task is more difficult. I have exhaustively studied the British materials at the Foreign Office. Certainly the French consular materials will be of equal value and the other Great Power archives must be consulted as well.

There is a vast quantity of 'travel' literature that can be consulted, much of it very significant. For instance, Regis Delbeuf's account of the Bursa silk industry contains social history details not found in any other sources on the subject. This literature can be systematically gleaned with great profit.

Newspapers, whether foreign-language or Ottoman, may not be of any real value but should be explored anyway. In particular, I would look for those outside of Istanbul (naturally the majority of these will be in Ottoman). Very late in the period, after 1908, newspapers and journals become more abundant and useful.

2. Ottoman materials. The Başbakanlık Arşivi materials, although difficult to use for such a project, still can yield very rich results. A team approach would be fruitful, with several team members in the archives together. First, record the catalog entries that seem to relate to manufacturing or the rare ones that specifically mention women. Then look at the documents themselves for gender-related issues. The Hatt-i Humayun and Cevdet classifications will be valuable, as will the Iradelere.

I have not personally explored the kadi sicilleri but am convinced

these would be even more valuable than the Prime Ministry archival materials. First, I would inventory the holdings that are accessible. Then, I would do a thorough examination of one location over time. That is, focus on a particular area over a longer period of time and not a larger area for a briefer time span. The case study researched then can serve as a benchmark for later studies.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMALARI
TÜSTAV