
Introduction

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In many respects, the present volume marks the continuing maturation of Ottoman and Turkish studies. First of all, it is a departure from the stress that has been placed on the agrarian sector of the Ottoman economy. This emphasis, I hasten to add, certainly has been appropriate. After all, the Ottoman state was an agrarian empire in which most people lived in the countryside and gained at least part of their livelihoods from the soil. And, most state revenues were extracted from the agrarian sector. A volume devoted to manufacturing hardly indicates that research on Ottoman/Turkish agriculture has been exhausted; quite the opposite is the case. But it does suggest a certain broadening of the historical inquiry regarding the nature and evolution of the Ottoman economy and an emerging ability to move beyond the most basic issues. At a fundamental level, the present volume demonstrates that more than primary production was taking place within the frontiers of this agrarian state. That is, the actual complexity of the Ottoman economy is now just beginning to be reflected in the historical scholarship.

In yet a second manner, this volume underscores positive developments in Ottoman and Middle Eastern studies. Versions of the four contributions that follow originally were presented at a conference, sponsored by the Southwest Asian and North African program and the Fernand Braudel Center, held at the State University of New York-

Binghamton, in November 1990. The conference was an unusual, even extraordinary, experience for many of its participants. Untypically, the four Ottoman/Turkish experts presented their research findings not to colleagues in the same area of specialization, but to scholars whose expertise lay in other areas of the world.¹ At the conference, specialists in various other regions—i.e., the United States, Italy, China, India, and Latin America—read and commented, in extenso, on one of the Ottoman/Turkish manufacturing papers. The intermingling of scholars of the varying recondite fields, in this age of academic over-specialization, forced the participants—presenters and commentators alike—to abandon their code languages and signals. This was a heady, and mutually enriching, experience.

Aficionados of the Ottoman past certainly gained from the encounter. At a very basic level, the comparisons with other regions reminded us of important realities affecting the industrial sector in quite fundamental ways. Take, for example, the mere size of the domestic market. While India and China during the nineteenth century each held 300 to 400 million potential domestic consumers, the Ottoman lands contained but twenty to twenty-five million!² Thus, the comparative approach takes the specificities of the Ottoman case, which often have obscured the outline and meaning of those historical experiences, and use them to offer us new questions to ask and new perspectives to employ. While comparative history certainly does not have all the answers, it seems especially useful for underdeveloped fields of inquiry such as Ottoman and Turkish and, more generally, Middle Eastern studies. For example, the Ottoman/Turkish specialists who had uncovered rural manufacturing in their own research took courage from the commentators' repeated observations that manufacturing in the countryside also was commonplace and important in areas as diverse as the nineteenth-century United States and eighteenth-century India. The comparative approach thus made abundantly clear that cultivators all over the world very often not only tilled fields but also manufactured goods for sale as well. Globally, manufacturing has not been and is not now simply an urban endeavor. And more, the commentators emphasized the close links between rural and urban production, as towns often finished country manufactures. Thus, they encouraged us to look more closely for such patterns in the Middle Eastern lands.

The conference reinforced my own belief that the field of Ottoman and Middle Eastern studies has made few, if any, methodological contributions to the major debates taking place in the fields of history and

economic history. Why this is so is not clear.³ Part of the answer certainly lies in the tendency of Ottoman historians to focus on one or another part of that once-vast empire. We too often do not treat the Ottoman economy in its entirety but rather study it in fragmentary form. Thus, we learn more about the subregions and less about the complex unity of the whole economy. Some of us have become specialists on the Turkish areas, others focus on the Arab or the Bulgarian regions. In our own defense, we specialists quickly point to the linguistic difficulties that indeed are real: Serbo-Croatian or Greek gives way to Bulgarian and to Turkish and to Arabic or Armenian, depending on the region. Many of these languages are difficult to acquire and there is some truth to this defense. But, the political division of the post-Ottoman Middle East into its southeast European, Turkish, and Arab nation-state components probably is a more important factor than mere linguistics. Although these regions have a shared economic history, their historiographies have remained nearly completely distinct because their historians, by and large, have adopted the agendas of the various states formed out of the debris of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, for example, historians in the various Balkan successor states too often battle their nationalist movements' Ottoman scourge. Those focusing on Turkey mirror the *étatist* biases and fears of the Turkish republican elites and worry overmuch about the state and its economic role. Surely a first step towards a methodological improvement of Ottoman studies is to reintegrate the regions of analysis into the single unit they once were.

Another source of methodological backwardness is our ignorance of the actual Ottoman historical experiences. Because the field of Ottoman studies is relatively new and very small, we often do not know what happened in the past. There are few researchers despite the centrality of Ottoman history for an understanding of Europe and the Middle East throughout the early modern and modern periods. The absence of even a basic framework of facts obviously impedes our understanding of their significance. While this excuse often is marshalled to avoid intellectual rigor, the absence of researchers remains a serious problem. The present volume is easily the most comprehensive account of Ottoman manufacturing available and, in some respects, it is a state-of-the-art summary. Its presence, hopefully, will help to move Ottoman economic and industrial history to a higher methodological plane. But, this volume notwithstanding, quite fundamental issues remain unresolved. Take, for example, the fundamental issue of change over time. The relationship of manufacturing during the seventeenth century to that in the eighteenth or

the nineteenth centuries is not at all clear. The contributors to this volume have not reached closure on the issue of whether or not Ottoman industry declined. But perhaps this should not be a cause for pessimism since questions concerning the decline of manufacturing in sixteenth century Italy and in eighteenth century India remain a battleground for scholars. So, Middle East specialists are in good company.

The Ottoman/Turkish story of manufacturing should hold considerable interest for historians of other regions. For such inquiring comparativists, here are some of the parameters of the Ottoman experience that seem most relevant. To begin with, the Ottoman regions were and remained sparsely populated. (Some still are today.) Population densities were greatest in the Balkan lands and least in the Arab provinces. These demographic patterns partly reflected the quality of the agricultural base; soil fertility levels overall are not impressive. Moreover, ground water resources and rainfall are slight. Generally, the Balkan lands are more favored and the Arab lands less. Manufacturing, both by hand and, beginning in the 1870s, by machines in factories, seems to have been more common in the more densely populated, better-watered zones. But, notably, Ottoman Damascus and Aleppo each were major, workshop-based industrial centers.

In this volume, we use the term manufacturing in a very broad sense: the production of goods by hand and by machine in homes, workshops, and factories. Machine production arrived late, visible only in the later nineteenth century. Thus, most of the volume focuses on manufacturing that was done by hand and intended for sale or, in the case of state-sponsored activities, the use, of others, in local and distant domestic markets and in the international market as well.

International rivalry—Indian, Persian/Iranian, Polish, German, French, English—is a familiar part of Ottoman manufacturing history. In addition to facing competition from other Ottoman producers, Ottoman manufacturers in earlier times, until ca. 1750, competed primarily with those further east, especially India and Persia/Iran. From a global perspective, Ottoman (together with New World) producers were among the first to experience intense European competition. Traces of this rivalry from the West are evident in the sixteenth century when European merchants disrupted supplies of raw and semiprocessed goods to Ottoman manufacturers. But head-to-head competition, in the sense of European producers selling large quantities of goods as a substitute for Ottoman-made products, began only in the later eighteenth century.

If they were familiar with international competition, Ottoman producers also were accustomed to working in the presence of a comparatively powerful state. When compared to states in most other areas of the world, the Ottoman state was impressively strong throughout the period.

It also seems relevant to point out that long distance trading networks in the Ottoman lands were disrupted by two events of global importance, temporally quite separate from one another. These were, first, the Portuguese and Columbian voyages of discovery, culminating in successes in 1488 and 1492; and, second, coming almost four centuries later, the development of steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal. The impact of these events on the Ottoman/Middle Eastern manufacturing sector of the respective periods surely holds much for fruitful comparative analysis with, say, the experiences of East Asia and India.

Here, in sum, is the general context within which Ottoman manufacturing evolved over the centuries: it functioned in a slightly settled, agriculturally marginal zone, at an economically sensitive international crossroads, governed by a powerful state.

In the post-Ottoman twentieth century, the various heirs of the Ottoman state actively have been involved in the industrial development of the Balkan, Turkish, and Arab regions. For much of this period, each state respectively sought to play a leading role in directing the economy and each typically focused on import substitution policies. More recently, the successor regimes in Turkey, Egypt, and Syria have turned to the international export market, even to the point of sometimes establishing special export manufacturing zones. The first two states concomitantly have moved to de-emphasize the governmental in favor of the private sector. Surely the story of Ottoman/Turkish manufacturing has relevance when considering the historical and contemporary fate of industry in China, Japan, the Indian subcontinent, and Latin America.

From a different perspective, the activities of Ottoman manufacturers are of considerable importance for the history of European manufacturing as well. The Middle East, for centuries during the medieval and early modern periods, provided Western manufacturers with their largest extraregional export markets, generating capital accumulation for subsequent development in Europe. At certain junctures in the early nineteenth century, moreover, the Ottoman market played a crucial role in the evolution of the English textile industry. Also, the patterns and successes of Ottoman (and earlier) Middle Eastern manufacturers led to changed patterns of production in both eastern and western Europe.

Broadly speaking, manufacturers in the Ottoman Empire and Europe often worked in intimately integrated and interwoven production networks. Manufacturers in both regions not only competed, borrowed, and copied from one another, but they also provided the other with semi-processed materials for finishing. In this view, nineteenth-century Ottoman imports of European, factory-made, yarns and dyestuffs were a continuation of the long-standing relationship between the two manufacturing economies. Two significant changes, however, had taken place. First, the volume of the exchanges had amplified considerably. Second, the previous prevailing rough parity had given way to Western manufacturing superiority. As one commentator, Jonathan Prude, eloquently put it: Ottoman manufacturing in the nineteenth century evolved within an iron cage of European industrialization. The intimacies and longevities in this European-Ottoman manufacturing relationship remain inadequately acknowledged in the historiographies of both regions.

At times, the four authors, because of the source materials that have shaped and sometimes skewed our view of the Ottoman/Turkish industrial economy, differ in their selection and treatment of themes. Abundant documentation led Faroqhi, for example, to discuss slave labor in manufacturing at considerable length, offering fascinating details on the subject. But her own contribution and the previous work of other scholars on the subject make it clear that the use of slaves for economic purposes was unimportant in the Ottoman (and Islamic) world; it was present on very rare occasions and in quite limited numbers. More generally, differences among the four authors often derive from the data bases they used in preparing their contributions. For the period before ca. 1800, there are relatively few alternatives to Ottoman state records as a source of information. In a profound manner, the nature of the data base has shaped the nature of the historical inquiry. Because they are compelled to rely so heavily on official state documents, both Faroqhi and Genç tend to see the world from the state's perspective and they place the state rather close to the center of things. Genç, who researches in the Ottoman dark ages of the eighteenth century, labors under the greatest burden, for the sources of that era usually are purely fiscal in nature and often discontinuous. Thus, his sources inherently are difficult to use for analyses over relatively long periods of time. Despite this, he presents a coherent picture of change during the period; but, it is from a state-centered perspective.

Quataert and Keyder, dealing with the post-1800 world, have access to a vastly greater variety of source materials. Ottoman/Turkish state sources, for their part, become almost unmanageably abundant. In

addition, there is a rich host of other materials—including European consular reports, newspapers, and a truly voluminous literature generated by private individuals and, later, corporations. Both had many different kinds of sources at their disposal and more materials on the nonstate factors affecting the manufacturing sector. They tend to offer a more balanced picture of manufacturing activities, both those within and outside the purview of the state. The actual relative importance of the state in manufacturing, moreover, did decline during the nineteenth century, when compared to the earlier periods. Then, during the Turkish republican era, when state economic enterprises became the order of the day, the relative role of the government seems to have expanded again.

Generally, the richness of data on state economic activities often meant that Ottoman historians focused on these efforts, to the exclusion of the nonstate sector. Hence, there has been great stress on government workshops and factories and on production for the imperial palace. In this volume, both Faroqhi and Genç devote considerable space to the state role in controlling artisans. Faroqhi, for her part, explicitly argues against overemphasizing the role of the state in the economy and in manufacturing. But, her contribution, which is based on official documents, mainly mirrors governmental concerns and priorities. Genç's attention to state manufactories also derives from his conviction that state policies in fact did play the crucial role. Ultimately, he argues, the Ottoman government's actions harmed industry and choked off positive developments that had been occurring. Although, as he demonstrates, the state controlled only ten percent of the economy, he justifies his emphasis by comparing that control to a ten percent share in the stockholdings of a modern corporation, which is a participation sufficient to vitally influence the affairs of the enterprise. This focus on state enterprises does pose difficulties. For example, one commentator questioned how Genç could devote a lengthy discussion to fifty looms in an Ottoman state manufacturing enterprise at a time when the textile industry of Lyon held 10 to 17,000 looms!⁴ Stress upon the state in the economy reflects the presence of strong historiographical traditions rather than actually significant state economic activities.⁵ We need to be more cautious when using official sources of information: here, clearly, we see that although the state did play an important role in pre-1800 manufacturing, its importance has been overstated.

The four contributions collectively go far in de-emphasizing the role of the European economy in the evolution of Ottoman/Turkish manufacturing. Faroqhi argues that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries, contact with Europe was too superficial to substantially affect more than a few specific industries. Looking in the countryside for manufacturing activities, she finds vast networks operating, unaffected by Europe. In the manufacturing history of later periods, international forces are given due weight but the discussions focus on the workings of Ottoman manufacturing itself. Thus, Genç places foreign wars at the center of the late eighteenth century economic crisis but centers his attention on internal dynamics. Both Quataert and Keyder take the international economy as a factor of given significance but also prefer to stress the interactions and developments within the Ottoman world.

The question of markets for Ottoman manufactured goods is closely connected to that of Western influence. Here, the three Ottoman specialists—Faroqhi, Genç, and Quataert—give considerable attention to domestic demand, thus de-emphasizing the international export market that long has held the center of scholarly attention. Instead, they seem to argue that, throughout Ottoman history, the domestic market was the crucial variable in determining the well-being of the manufacturing sector. Here, as in their general treatment of the role of the West, they place internal dynamics closer to the center of the explanation for the evolution of the Ottoman economy. The Ottoman economy is their subject of inquiry and not the impact of the West on that economy.

Market questions, in turn, directly related to those concerning capital accumulation: Genç sees the limited nature of export markets as seriously detrimental to capital accumulation during the eighteenth century. But, with the rise of state-imposed cash taxes, peasants made more manufactured goods for sale. Both peasants and merchants, he argues, were benefitting. Late in the century, however, these promising trends ended, as a fiscally strapped state confiscated the inheritances of the rich. Although the export market rose late in the nineteenth century, significant amounts of investment capital were not forthcoming. Keyder, for his part, holds that the absence of sufficient private capital drove the state into the role of manufacturing entrepreneur.

The spatial patterns of manufacturing, that is, the urban or rural location of work, and whether it was in homes, workshops, or factories emerged as a primary focus of discussion. Rural manufacturing received considerable attention, overcoming a bias in the sources that favors the more visible urban-based production processes. Faroqhi, working with very sparse materials, outlines sixteenth- and seventeenth-century networks of rural manufacturing in several regions. Some of these networks continued for centuries and their story forms part of Quataert's

account of manufacturing in the nineteenth century. Genç shows how artisans responded to increasing state pressure by moving to small production centers in rural areas and to more remote neighborhoods in the capital city of İstanbul. In these remoter rural and urban locations, they sought, with some success, to escape the eye and (tax) arm of the state.

All of the authors focus, in varying ways, on the connections between agriculture and industry, the vital impact of the one sector upon the other and the need to study both to understand each. But many details are lacking. We can surmise but cannot establish that households moved in and out of market manufacturing. The significance of changes in the relative weights of urban-rural, workshop-household production remain unclear. In U.S. manufacturing, the shift of households into market-oriented manufacturing is seen as a threshold event but the timing of this transition and its importance in Ottoman history is unknown.⁶

The emergence of mechanized factories late in the Ottoman period and the rise of large-scale state economic enterprises during the era of the Turkish republic are treated and given their proper weight. And yet, as the authors indicate, small manufacturing enterprises have remained important, down to the present day. In sum, the four contributors present small workshops and households as more central to the story of Ottoman/Turkish manufacturing than factories. Vibrant manufacturing in the absence of big factories was the norm; big factories were not seen as a necessary condition for successful industrial production. These findings in Ottoman Middle Eastern history thus form part of the broad-based consensus that has emerged among historians of manufacturing in other regions of the world over the long term. Overall, most historians now agree that small-scale production has been the normal locus of manufacturing. Factories have been the exception, appearing only briefly and belatedly on the historical scene. Since the 1970s, moreover, manufacturing is moving out of factories. Recognition of this so-called second industrial divide generally has rekindled appreciation of the role of home production, small workshops, and putting-out networks.

[After] the initial boom of mechanization, the most advanced kind of capitalism reverted to eclecticism, to an indivisibility of interests so to speak, as if the characteristic advantage of standing at the commanding heights of the economy...consisted precisely of *not* having to confine oneself to a single choice, of being able, as today's businessman would put it, to keep one's options open.⁷

Issues of Ottoman/Turkish rural and urban, home and factory, production fold into those concerning the mobilization of labor. The characteristic low population densities complicated the problem of finding sufficient workers for the private sector as well as for the state. In such a context, large scale projects were not impossible, but they did require exceptional efforts to mobilize the necessary labor. The state, for its part, often resorted to coercion, in times of both peace and war. Faroqhi, for example, describes how the state overcame labor shortages and attracted miners by offering them a combination of tax relief and wage work. Such practices reverberated down through Ottoman history and, centuries later, we find the state using the same devices to recruit labor in the Zonguldak coal fields. The İstanbul regime, more generally, reached into every area of society for the scarce workers. It sometimes employed tribal members to spin yarn and staff its centralized workshops in provincial regions while, on other occasions in the nineteenth century, it worked through Christian Church authorities to recruit orphans for one of its İstanbul textile factories.

In regards to labor recruitment in the private sector under conditions of scarcity, the sources are nearly always silent for the pre-1800 era. Labor shortages surely exerted upward pressure on wages and, in particular competitive situations, prompted entrepreneurs to look to rural putting-out networks for workers. Late in the Ottoman period, in the nineteenth century, private entrepreneurs who established factories resorted to a number of stratagems to solve the labor problem. Many built their mills in urban centers to be close to the labor sources; this was a great advantage enjoyed by the İstanbul mills. Other urban mill owners erected dormitories near factories to house the female workers that they recruited from the countryside. But when, in order to be near the raw material sources, they built mills away from urban centers, the entrepreneurs used other devices. Take, for example, the cotton spinning and weaving mills that private owners built on the nearly uninhabited Adana plain of southeastern Anatolia during the late nineteenth century. There, with the help of labor contractors, the mill owners recruited a waged workforce of several thousands, sometimes providing them with company kitchens and other amenities.

The guild-like organizations (*esnaf*) of the Ottoman world certainly aided both the state and the private sector in solving the problem of labor shortages in many urban areas. But their prevalence and actual economic significance remains unclear. Urban-based, visible and, particularly in İstanbul, important to the state, they are the frequent focus of Ottomanists' attentions who, once again, are depending on official records for their

information. Our enhanced appreciation of rural manufacturing should affect our assessment of the importance of these organizations. It remains an open question whether or not such craft organizations—in whatever manner they actually were organized—provided the majority of even urban-based industrial production before the nineteenth century.

Changes in the structure and nature of the *esnaf* guilds remains similarly uncertain although certain continuities appear evident during the long eighteenth century, until 1820. During this time, for example, the richest artisans received wages that were four to seven times greater than those of the poorest. These differentials hardly suggest egalitarian labor structures. Thereafter, in any event, craft guilds declined and, by ca. 1850, they had disappeared in many (but not all) Ottoman towns and cities. Overall, the authors trace the declining importance of captive labor and of these *esnaf* organizations and chronicle the rising significance of free labor. By the end of the nineteenth century, *corvée* labor occasionally appears to help build a railroad; but, in general, the Ottoman manufacturing workforce contracted freely in the labor market.

Female and child workers played a prominent role in manufacturing and had been present throughout the entire Ottoman period. They certainly were more visible in the later centuries but this might derive from the more detailed sources available. Females typically were excluded from guilds, but routinely were present as laborers in many government operations, including its workshops and its tribal networks. And they regularly labored in the private sector (outside of the guild membership), working not only in homes, but also in workshops and factories as well. There is the possibility that waged female labor outside of the home became more common in the nineteenth century, in those industries producing for the export market and/or under foreign control.

NOTES

1. The invited discussants were: A. Bagchi (India); N.K. Chaudhuri (India); F. Perlin (India); D. Sella (Italy); C. Poni (Italy); J. Prude (U.S.); F. Zapata (Mexico); A. Feuerwerker (China).

2. Comments by Feuerwerker and Bagchi.

3. For an interesting discussion of these issues in the broader context of Ottoman history, see Abou El-Haj (1991) and the "Introduction" in Quataert (1993a).

4. Comment by Carlo Poni.
5. Comment by Frank Perlin.
6. Comments by Jonathan Prude.
7. Braudel (1982), 381.

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