

Ottoman Cotton Textiles, 1500s to 1800:

The Story of a Success that Did Not Last

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Throughout its early modern history the Ottoman Empire contained a sizeable number of textile-producing centres. Most of the materials woven here formed part of the manufacturing traditions of the Islamic world; these included figured velvets and silks, but also carpets, rugs and fancy cotton towels.¹ Other industries, such as the manufacture of woollens in Salonica, had been introduced around 1500 by Sephardi Jews expelled from Spain. Thus where the production and distribution of textiles was concerned, the Ottomans shared certain characteristic features with Iran and India on the one hand and with central -- and even western -- Europe on the other. Ottoman cottons must therefore be studied in a broad geographic, economic and cultural context.

Concomitantly, isolating cotton production is somewhat artificial, even though for analytical purposes we cannot avoid doing so. While the cultivation of the raw fibre formed part of regional agricultural economies, dominated by wheat and barley, weaving cotton into cloth might involve the addition of other fibres, and thus traders and craftspeople dealing with silk and wool were brought into close contact with cotton weavers. In addition once we enter the distribution sector, we find that cotton once again

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¹ Rosamund Mack, *Bazaar to Piazza, Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 48.

is integrated into a larger picture. The export of raw cotton and cotton fabrics, about which we happen to know most, is to a large extent part of the Ottoman trade with Venice and later with France; and this encompassed silk and angora wool as well as cotton. And from the retailing merchants' point of view, the cotton textiles that they marketed might well be merely one of the numerous goods for which they tried to find customers. Thus even though our study is concerned with the cotton sector, along the way we will need to concern ourselves with the manner in which this branch of production fitted into the Ottoman economy as a whole.

A Changing Problematic

When casting our eyes over the numerous places in the Ottoman Empire where cotton-growing, -weaving and -dyeing were major agricultural and industrial activities, it is hard to avoid asking ourselves why these active producers did not initiate an 'industrial revolution' of their own. At first glance this question will appear very old-fashioned, and the questioner will in all likelihood be told first that the 'industrial revolution' itself is a myth, that pre-industrial activities and attitudes persisted over many years even in the industrial heartlands of Europe, and secondly that it is wrong to measure the performances of non-European manufacturers against those of their European competitors. If industrialization in Britain and later on the continent was at least partly the product of a conjunction of 'lucky breaks', as the person objecting to our question may very well concede, such fortunate contingencies scarcely could have occurred twice.

But given the importance of cotton in the early modern economies of Anatolia, Egypt and Syria, the question why local manufacturers did not use economies of scale is not so

easily ruled out of court. Present-day answers however are rather different from those put forward in the 1960s and 1970s. Thirty to forty years ago, it was assumed that ‘peripheralization’ in a world economy dominated by European states and commercial companies sufficed to explain why Ottoman manufacturers not only were unable to capture markets abroad, but even to maintain themselves in their own domestic context.² Some authors assumed a general decline of craft industries in the late sixteenth century, even though serious (and often temporary) difficulties were documented for only a few of them.³

Other historians assumed that ‘incorporation’ and ‘de-industrialization’ occurred rather later, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and especially after 1815; but what happened in the over two hundred intervening years for a long time was very little studied. Yet as early as 1979, this ‘globalizing’ approach to the problem was already placed in perspective by one of the inventors of the ‘world economy’ concept, namely by Fernand Braudel himself. Braudel pointed out that the Ottoman state maintained control over the land routes crossing its territory until the late eighteenth century, and that this was a fact of prime political and economic importance. His argument also implied that for the early modern period the role of ocean routes had perhaps been overestimated, and quite explicitly he asked himself how phenomena such as large and active cities,

² For an early statement of the problem, in which the uncertainties are clearly spelled out, see Immanuel Wallerstein, Hale Decdeli and Resat Kasaba, ‘The Incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the World-Economy’, in Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ed., *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, reprint 1987), pp. 88-100.

³ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, ‘The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, VI (1975), pp. 3-28.

which are well attested, could have existed in an Ottoman polity that supposedly was in a state of fatal decline.⁴

Several more or less recent studies have further demonstrated this tenacity of Ottoman traders, showing that caravan connections from India and Iran to Ottoman commercial centres remained of significance well into the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁵ Moreover not only merchants but also artisans were adept in the art of self-defence: Murat Çizakça in an important article has made it clear that in the seventeenth century, European demand for many raw materials produced in the eastern Mediterranean was less important than it had been in the later 1500s.⁶ This declining demand allowed quite a few Ottoman craftsmen time for recovery, and they made good use of it. Çizakça's argument also meant that the pace of 'incorporation' had definitely been overestimated by all too zealous historians.

On the other hand after the 1750s French merchants active in Istanbul, Izmir and other trading centres of the Ottoman Empire were taking advantage of the lack of banks on the sultans' territory to engage in profitable financial dealings. Through these speculations the economies of major commercial centres of the Ottoman Empire came to be so closely connected with France that we can speak of 'incorporation' at least with

⁴ Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme*, 3 vols. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1979), vol. 3, pp. 402-19.

⁵ Eugen Wirth, 'Aleppo im 19. Jahrhundert - ein Beispiel für die Stabilität und Dynamik spätosmanischer Wirtschaft', in *Osmanische Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, In memoriam Vanko Boškov*, ed. Hans Georg Majer (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), pp. 186-205.

⁶ Murat Çizakça, 'Incorporation of the Middle East into the European World Economy', *Review*, VIII, 3 (1985), pp. 353-78.

respect to these places.⁷ In summary present-day historians have concluded that the ‘incorporation’ process was a partial and piecemeal affair, which touched some places much earlier than others. Moreover we now know that ‘incorporation into the European-controlled world economy’ was a process full of fits, starts, backfiring and contradictions; and this applied not only to the late eighteenth century, but to earlier periods as well.

An example may be in order: already in the mid-seventeenth century, Izmir had prospered as a trading centre frequented by Europeans and Iranian-based Armenians alike, many of them at least partially concerned with the cotton trade; this development became possible because Ottoman central control was no longer as absolute as it had once been.⁸ On the other hand an active industrial town such as Tokat in north-central Anatolia even in the late eighteenth century was of little significance to European merchants -- a fact that has doubtless retarded the study of this important centre, among other things, of cotton manufacture.⁹ Yet the goods exported from the Ottoman realm, when compared to overall production, were nothing but the tip of the iceberg: the vast majority of Ottoman textiles, made of cotton, wool or silk, was doubtless produced for the domestic market, and therefore Tokat is a more characteristic manufacturing centre than, for instance, Aleppo with its large communities of foreign traders. Given this variety it is thus a source of major misunderstandings to make one or two centres or even

⁷ Edhem Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), pp. 148-243.

⁸ Daniel Goffman, ‘Izmir’, in Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, Bruce Masters, eds., *The Ottoman City between East and West, Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 83-5.

⁹ Mehmet Genç, ‘17-19. Yüzyıllarda Sanayi ve Ticaret Merkezi Olarak Tokat’, in *Türk Taribinde ve Kültüründe Tokat Sempozyumu, 2-6 Temmuz 1986* (Tokat: Tokat Valiliği Şeyhülislâm İbn Kemal Araştırma Merkezi, 1987), pp. 145-69.

regions ‘stand in’ for the Empire’s economy as a whole, common though this practice has been even in the recent past.

From ‘World Economy’ to Individual Businesses

I would not claim that all the avenues of research opened up by the ‘world economy’ paradigm have as yet been explored, far from it. However though I hope to stand corrected soon, at present it seems unlikely that much work on these issues will be done in the foreseeable future. For during the last decade or so, there has been a kind of sea change, and a reaction has set in against the ‘world economy and peripheralization’ paradigms, often with the argument that these paradigms do not allow sufficient scope for the initiatives of individual artisans or peasants.¹⁰ Critics of the older paradigm have sometimes claimed that it implies an automatism, in other words, the system is supposed to operate regardless of what individual actors choose to do or avoid. In addition it has induced historians to ignore well-documented productive activities, for as we well know, if the facts don’t fit the theory, so much the worse for the facts. In this perspective the ‘world economy and peripheralization’ paradigms supposedly deprive the craftspeople involved of any significant degree of agency, and an explanation of industrial history is created in which all initiative is situated on the side of European and later also American entrepreneurs. While in my view, this point is well taken, the less fortunate consequence of this paradigm shift has been that the fate of individual Ottoman industries has ceased to interest most historians altogether. As a glance at the bibliography cited in this article

¹⁰Ariel Salzmann, ‘Review of Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (eds.), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991, vii+260 pp.’, *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 16 - 2 (1992), pp. 264-71.

will readily show, the number of studies dealing with the period before 1800 and combining the 'words 'Ottoman' and 'cotton' in their titles is limited indeed.

Instead, individual enterprises now occupy centre stage, but since so few records survive of artisan workshops, scholars tend to concentrate on trade. In addition much thought is being given to the legal and institutional framework; this includes state legitimization and taxation practices, the functioning of craft -- and in our perspective, cotton weavers' -- guilds, or else the operation of the pious foundations that so often owned the workshops in which weavers and dyers carried on their work. In a sense, this renewed emphasis on institutions has allowed Ottomanist historians to find a modern justification for long-standing practices: for given the state-centredness of most of our documentation, we have traditionally been concerned with the 'command economy', the sponsoring of economic activities by pious foundations and the supply of necessities to the Ottoman army, court and capital.¹¹

This account will make readers suspect that problems related to cotton production are not a major concern of today's Ottomanist historians, and such a conclusion will not be totally wrong. Yet we aficionados of Ottoman cotton production have also had our share of good fortune. Thus for example the manufacture of cotton yarn for Austrian weavers before and shortly after 1800 was largely in the hands of associations of Ottoman Greeks

¹¹ As two examples among many see Lütü Güçer, *XVI.-XVII. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Hububat Meselesi ve Hububattan Alınan Vergiler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi, 1964); Ömer Lütü Barkan, 'Şehirlerin Teşekkül ve İnkişafı Tarihi Bakımından Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İmaret Sitelerinin Kuruluş ve İşleyiş Tarzına Âit Araştırmalar', *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 23 – 1/2 (1962-63), pp. 239-96. I thus share the reservations of Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 5.

doing business on Habsburg territory. Production and commerce being controlled by a small group of families, this is one of the very few cases in which the present concern with individual firms has shed a good deal of light on cotton manufacturing processes.¹² Other information on the cotton industry has emerged in connection with studies of consumption. For a long time Ottomanist historians had considered consumption as something almost indecent, a subject of condemnation rather than of serious study. But this is past history now, and consumption studies have recently come into their own.¹³

We will thus examine Ottoman cotton production in the light of the ‘incorporation paradigm’, which I do not think should be totally discarded, but also with regard to more recent concerns with individual enterprises, institutional frameworks and consumption. However such an undertaking requires at least a brief introduction of the Ottoman primary sources relevant to our concerns. For as we will see, cotton manufacture before about 1800 has not been treated often enough for us to limit ourselves to drawing conclusions from the available secondary literature; to the contrary time and again recourse to primary sources will become necessary.

Sources Produced in the Ottoman Realm¹⁴

¹² Olga Katsiardi-Hering, ‘Associations of Greek Artisans and Merchants between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires: The Case of Red Cotton Yarn (late 18th — early 19th centuries).’ (forthcoming).

¹³ Donald Quataert, ed., *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922. An Introduction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

¹⁴ As European sources have been studied *in extenso*, they will not be included here.

The Ottoman lands, which in the sixteenth century included Egypt, Syria, as well as Anatolia and the Balkans, comprised some of the world's most ancient producers of cotton. Moreover the Ottoman government, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards if not earlier, possessed a well-developed bureaucracy, and evaluating the documentation left by these officials, of which an important part survives to the present day, has been keeping Ottomanist historians busy ever since the 1940s and 1950s and is likely to do so for many decades yet.

However it must be admitted that our source base is anything but satisfactory; and while thirty years ago many of us Ottomanist historians hoped to write Ottoman economic history largely if not totally on the basis of domestic sources, that hope has been sorely disappointed.¹⁵ Ottoman documents on cotton do exist, but they cover only a few, often highly localized aspects of production and trade. On the cultivation of the cotton plant, the prime sources are the tax registers that, mainly compiled during the sixteenth century, covered the towns and villages of a given province along with the taxes in kind that the inhabitants were required to pay.¹⁶ However these registers present problems of their own: if information on individual villages was difficult to obtain, the scribes were not

¹⁵ Edhem Eldem, 'Capitulations and Western Trade', in Suraiya Faroqhi, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2006).

¹⁶ Most historians have been interested in the demographic information imparted by these registers. For discussions of the agricultural production involved, see Wolf Dieter Hütteroth and Kamal Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century* (Erlangen, Germany: Fränkische Geographische Gesellschaft, 1977); Huricihan İslamoğlu and Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Crop Patterns and Agricultural Production Trends in Sixteenth-Century Anatolia', *Review*, II - 3 (1979), 401-36; Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire, Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); Wolf Dieter Hütteroth and Nejat Göyünç *Land an der Grenze, Osmanische Verwaltung im heutigen türkisch-syrisch-irakischen Grenzgebiet im 16. Jahrhundert* (Istanbul: Eren, 1997).

above copying the data collected a decade or two previously, sometimes acknowledging the fact, but more frequently not. Moreover the information collected might itself be flawed because the officials preparing the registers had to rely on information supplied by the holders (*sipahi*) of tax assignments (*timar*), or else by the peasants themselves. However both these groups had a vested interest in declaring production lower than it really was: peasants wanted to pay less in taxes, and *sipahis* were concerned that their *timars* might be reduced if considered ‘too’ productive. Some of these tricks can be found out, and some defects in the data remedied, if a good series of registers survives and comparison becomes possible; however that is far from always being the case.¹⁷ And worst of all, after about 1590, when tax-farming took the place of *timars* now assigned less often in exchange for military and administrative services, these registers were no longer prepared with any regularity. Even so, it would be of great interest to produce, on the basis of these tax registers, a sequence of maps documenting cotton cultivation in the major production regions of the Empire. But at present we are limited to a few data of regional significance only, and most are not as yet available in mapped form.¹⁸

Regulations detailing production standards with respect to cotton cloth, about which we would otherwise know nothing, come from the occasional complaints addressed to the Ottoman central administration. Obviously complainants who took their cases all the way to Istanbul were a small minority; many must have addressed themselves to the kadis instead, or even just taken their grievances to the local guild elders. But as the judges’

¹⁷ Heath Lowry, ‘The Ottoman Tahrir Defterleri as a Source for Social and Economic History. Pitfalls and Limitations’, in Heath Lowry, *Studies in Defterology, Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1992), pp. 3-18.

¹⁸ For two exceptions see Hütteroth and Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography* and Hütteroth and Göyünç, *Land an der Grenze*.

registers do not survive for many major cotton-manufacturing towns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we must make due with the chance finds in the imperial chancery registers. Thus we learn that in the region near the karst lakes of south-western Anatolia lining fabrics and other cottons were woven, that came in three different qualities and were sometimes dyed locally; unfortunately we do not know anything about the colour range.¹⁹ For the eighteenth century however the records kept by local judges, now much more frequent, are a major resource.

Once they have been catalogued, customs registers also contain much information on the history of cotton production. At present however only a few such volumes have been made available to researchers, and not all of these contain information on our subject. However a register dated 1487-90, recording a long list of unpaid customs dues and relating to the port of Kefe (Caffa, Feodosia) has proven very helpful in this respect.²⁰ For a much later period, namely the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the customs registers of Erzurum, close to the Ottoman-Iranian border, provide information on the importation of limited amounts of Iranian cotton.²¹ It is to be hoped that more of these registers will be catalogued in the future;

¹⁹ Başbakanlık Arşivi-Osmanlı Arşivi (from now on BA) Mühimme defteri (MD) 84, pp. 23 and 28 (1038/1628-9).

²⁰ Halil İnalcık, *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea*, vol. 1, *The Customs Register of Caffa 1487-1490* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1996). Kate Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade in the Early Ottoman State, The Merchants of Genoa and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 99 provides evidence for the export of raw cotton from the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire, but has nothing on cotton fabrics.

²¹ İnalcık, *Sources and Studies*; Neşe Erim, 'Trade, Traders and the State in Eighteenth-century Erzurum', *New Perspectives on Turkey* V/VI (1991), pp. 123-50, see p. 131.

unfortunately most of the material available seems to date from the eighteenth century, which tends to have a low priority among Istanbul's archivists.

For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a certain amount of quantitative information can be derived from documents connected to tax-farming; but if usable at all, these texts will indicate trends rather than giving us production figures for this or that locality.²² Difficulties are compounded by the fact that tax farms without any organic links to one another were often sold to one and the same person and the accounts amalgamated, so that little information can be derived from such records. For quantitative data, we are thus thrown back on European customs records and similar sources, which are of course limited to what was exported and neglect the doubtless much larger share of the domestic market.²³ However in terms of qualitative information, Ottoman documents are more helpful; and recent studies have shown how manufacturers of cotton cloth in the region of Tokat tried to stay one step ahead of the tax farmers, or how cotton yarns and fabrics were moved around between towns and villages in the course of production.²⁴ As a result, a synthetic study of Ottoman cotton production will have to combine information produced within the sultan's bureaucracy and that recorded by outsiders, especially French merchants, who in the eighteenth

²² Mehmet Genç, 'A Study of the Feasibility of Using Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Financial Records as an Indicator of Economic Activity', in Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ed., *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 311-44.

²³ Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700-1820)* (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1992).

²⁴ Yüksel Duman, 'Notables, Textiles and Copper in Ottoman Tokat 1750-1840' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Binghamton University, 1998).

century were significant buyers of cotton grown in western Anatolia and Syria.²⁵ Unfortunately quite often these attempts at synthesis are bedevilled by serious problems of compatibility.

Last but not least, there are the surviving yarns and textiles themselves. Here the student of cotton is at a disadvantage when compared to scholars studying carpets or silks, because cotton was rarely considered valuable enough for preservation. Among the few exceptions to this rule, we might mention the rather numerous embroideries surviving in museums and private collections. But often the catalogues do not tell us whether the ground fabric, usually embroidered in silk, was cotton or linen, and it is difficult to tell the two apart on the basis of photographs. Linen was apparently preferred, but cottons were not unknown.²⁶ To compound the problem, a broad systematic study of embroidery motifs used by the different religious and ethnic groups inhabiting Ottoman territory does not as yet exist, and the dates provided in catalogues are quite often disputed. However apparently textile experts agree that the oldest surviving embroideries date from the later seventeenth century, and only for the eighteenth do we possess enough material to form any kind of corpus.

The Sixteenth Century

²⁵ Gilles Veinstein, 'Ayân de la région d'Izmir et le commerce du Levant (deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle)', *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* XX (1975), 131-46. Veinstein's account of the manner in which these magnates marketed their peasants' cotton is very instructive.

²⁶ Roderick Taylor, *Ottoman Embroidery* (New York: Interlink Books, 1993), p. 127: example of embroidery on cotton, dated before 1750.

For the very beginning of our period, namely 1487-90, some information has emerged about Anatolian cotton yarns and cotton cloth imported into the Crimean khanate, whose rulers had recently come to recognize the sultans as their suzerains. The goods on record include fine muslin for turbans, coverlets from the western Anatolian town of Bergama as well as handkerchiefs, and a rough fabric (*kirbas*) from Bursa; the latter town was already on record for its production of cottons.²⁷ Moreover a comparison with French data from the late 1700s, compiled by the French consul Claude Peyssonnel, has shown that the Crimean market even at the very end of our period, when this territory already was ruled by the Tsars, continued to absorb Anatolian cotton fabrics. Because of their cheapness printed cottons (*basma*) from Tokat and *bogası* from northern Anatolia, which in this time and place was usually dyed and polished, competed on favourable terms with those imported from Holland and France.²⁸ This evidence shows that the cotton goods of northern Anatolia, in the *longue durée* of three centuries, remained an item of interregional or even international trade.

But in terms of cotton cultivation and manufacture, it was not the north, but rather Anatolia's western and southern regions, in addition to northern Syria and Cyprus, that held pride of place ever since the fourteenth century if not earlier. By the later 1570s, with Cyprus conquered from the Venetians, all these regions were part of the Ottoman Empire. The sultans' administration paid considerable attention to cotton, as it was used

²⁷ Inalcik, *Sources and Studies*, p. 121; Heath Lowry, *Ottoman Bursa in Travel Accounts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Ottoman and Turkish Studies Endowed Chair, 2003), p. 41, from the account of Bertrandon de la Broquière.

²⁸ Inalcik, *Sources and Studies*, p. 127.

for sailcloth and also for the underwear of soldiers and the linings of uniform cloaks.²⁹ Therefore in the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire was one of the few polities to possess a standing army, this fibre figured on the list of items of military relevance whose exportation was prohibited. We possess some evidence about traders from the Aegean coast of Anatolia who managed to smuggle cotton and sell it to foreign merchants even though they risked confiscation if found out; presumably the price differential was important enough to make it worth their while.³⁰

Perhaps towards the end of the century and definitely in the early 1600s however, this export prohibition was relaxed, and Venetian merchants for instance were granted -- at first more or less exceptional and temporary -- permissions to take cotton out of the Empire.³¹ For this change of policy two explanations come to mind: on the one hand, the disengagement between the Ottoman and Spanish empires from about 1590 onwards may have lessened the naval arsenal's demand. At the same time, the changeover to an army consisting largely of musket-wielding mercenaries who needed to be paid in cash sharply increased the treasury's need for ready money. Tax farmers may well have

²⁹ The heavy cloth known as *kirbaz*/*kirpas* could be made of flax, hemp or cotton: Inalcik, *Sources and Studies*, pp. 63 and 68.

³⁰ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia, Trade, Crafts, and Food Production in an Urban Setting 1520-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 136; Zeki Arıkan, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İhracı Yasak Mallar (Memnu Meta) in *Professor Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1991), pp. 279-307.

³¹ In 1004/1595-6 a permission to export cotton from the area of İzmir and Foça was revoked on the grounds that not enough was left for the -- sacrosanct -- needs of the capital and for those of other provinces: MD 74, p. 247.

suggested that they would tender higher bids if, instead of chasing cotton-smuggling merchants, they could simply make them pay customs duties.³²

As a second consideration, the cultivation of cotton was increasing, and an awareness of this fact probably lessened the need for export prohibitions. Huricihan İslamoğlu's important work on north-central Anatolia, in other words the regions of Çorum, Tokat and Niksar, has shown that taxable cotton crops grew substantially in this area during the sixteenth century, even though this region certainly did not rank among the major producers.³³ İslamoğlu has suggested that as population increased in town and countryside, many peasants probably became part of putting-out networks, thus orienting themselves towards regional and sometimes even interregional markets. Cultivating cotton, and also spinning and weaving this material, could form part of such a survival strategy.³⁴

Growing cotton cultivation was also apparent in the sub-province (*liva, sancak*) of Adana, before the late 1800s still largely inhabited by nomads and semi-nomads. This area had been a producer since the middle ages and cotton cultivation was to boom here in quite an extraordinary fashion during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But even in the 1500s, about 19 percent of the agriculturally used land was under cotton, and the taxable

³² Suraiya Faroqhi, 'The Venetian Presence in the Ottoman Empire', reprinted in Huri İslamoğlu İnan, ed., *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, pp. 311-44, see p. 339.

³³ Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire, Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 223-4.

³⁴ İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant*, pp. 223-37.

crop increased by almost 150 percent in the course of the sixteenth century.³⁵ As the cotton grown in this region before the changeover to American varieties was of a kind that did not open once the capsules had ripened, it was possible for the cultivators to leave the plants to themselves until they returned from their summer pastures in the fall; therefore regular migrations on the part of the growers did not prevent the expansion of cotton cultivation.

Cotton Manufactures in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Evidence from Istanbul

What we know about the manufacture and distribution of cotton cloth, unfortunately, for the most part leaves out what we would like to know best, namely the fabrics destined for private customers.³⁶ For given the official character of our documentation most of the available information deals with the needs of the Ottoman state; thus registers from the seventeenth century not rarely refer to the deliveries of simple lining fabric demanded from Thessalian weavers.³⁷ Even the writers of petitions who denounced the smuggling

³⁵ Huricihan İslamoğlu and Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Crop Patterns and Agricultural Production Trends in Sixteenth-Century Anatolia', *Review*, II - 3 (1979), 401-36; Mustafa Soysal, *Die Siedlungs- und Landschaftsentwicklung der Çukurova, Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Yüregir-Ebene* (Erlangen, Germany: Fränkische Geographische Gesellschaft, 1976), pp. 32-3.

³⁶ Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Notes on the Production of Cotton Cloth in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Anatolia', *The Journal of European Economic History*, 8 - 2 (1979), pp. 405-17.

³⁷ One example among others: according to BA section Maliyeden müdevver No. 7642, p. 12 the province of Tırhala delivered 40,000 pieces of *keirpas*, to be used for the janissaries, for which in 1025/1616 the treasury paid 80,000 *akçe*. About ten years later, according to Maliyeden müdevver 3457, p. 14 (1036/1626-7) the Thessalian towns of Tırhala and Yenişehir/Larissa every year were supposed to deliver 80,000 Tırhala ells (metric equivalent unknown) of *keirpas* for the same purpose; I am unable to tell whether the area from which these deliveries now came was larger,

of cotton, and who provide much of the evidence that we possess about this line of trade, often underlined the urgency of their concerns by claiming that due to the exporters' activities, they themselves lacked the raw cotton needed for the cloth they were expected to deliver.³⁸ Yet given the reputation of the Ottoman fisc -- like other early modern states -- as a notoriously bad paymaster, manufacturers could hardly have survived working for the navy alone and must have sold to private customers as well. Apparently there were even people who went around western Anatolia collecting sail- and tent-cloth from the producers and then selling it to 'Frankish' merchants.³⁹ That sort of crime made it into the records, but the bath towels and shirts of the ordinary consumer, those mainstays of 'regular' trade, were not of high priority as far as the authorities were concerned.

The years just before and after 1600 certainly were a crisis period in Ottoman history, and manufacturing was seriously affected. In the past this crisis has often been linked to the rise in prices that at least in part was due to the importation of American silver, although other factors, such as changes in the velocity of currency circulation due to population growth and increased urbanization have also been recognized as contributing

or the amount demanded had increased -- perhaps both these things were true. Presumably the *kirpas* referred to here was a cotton fabric.

³⁸ MD 6, p. 184, No. 395 (972/1564-5); this register has been published: İsmet Binark, *et alii* (eds.), *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri 972/1564-65*, 3 vols. (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1995).

³⁹ MD 7, p. 21, No 72 (975/1567-8), published as Hacı Osman Yıldırım *et alii* (eds.), *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri 975-976/1567-69*, 5 vols. (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1997).

factors.⁴⁰ However earlier claims that the high prices prevailing in Europe, and the ample silver supplies in the hands of European merchants, drained the Ottoman Empire of its raw materials including cotton and induced a permanent weakness in the manufacturing sector are now considered of only very limited validity. Today the fiscal crisis that without any doubt afflicted the Ottoman polity in the late 1500s and early 1600s is considered mainly a consequence of a revamping of the military apparatus, rather than of 'imported' inflation.⁴¹ Moreover we need to think carefully about the consequences of shrinking disposable incomes upon the demand for cotton cloth: for Venetian consuls of the early seventeenth century have commented that when customers needed to economize, they switched from silks or woollens to padded cottons.⁴² It is thus imaginable that as long as insecurity on the roads did not impede interregional traffic, cottons did not do so badly even in times of crisis. If only we had the figures in hand to prove or disprove this hypothesis!

Be that as it may: in the course of archival work, researchers have found quite a few textile industries that flourished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period that earlier researchers had always considered a time of overall 'decline'. By contrast the work of Mehmet Genç has made it clear that the mid-eighteenth century between about 1720 and 1760 saw a moderate prosperity in certain regions of the Ottoman realm, before the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768-74 destroyed civilian demand and made capital

⁴⁰ Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 112-30.

⁴¹ Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, p. 128.

⁴² Domenico Sella, 'The Rise and Fall of the Venetian Woollen Industry', in Brian Pullan (ed.), *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. 106-26, see p. 118.

formation, always a weak point of Ottoman enterprises, virtually impossible.⁴³ Cottons were very much part of this -- albeit limited -- growth in the manufacturing sector.

A price list from Istanbul, dated to 1600, shows that while this was certainly a period of economic difficulties, the shops of Istanbul continued to receive a variety of cotton yarns and fabrics.⁴⁴ Quilts were covered with a textile called *beledi*, usually of cotton but occasionally of silk: this fabric was produced in the capital itself, but also in the Aegean coast-lands of Anatolia, in Urla and Tire.⁴⁵ In specialized shops the customer could purchase *beş* -- probably an ordinary cotton or sometimes linen fabric without any frills; this material bore the names of the Anatolian towns of Rize, Sinop, Akçaşehir, Ereğli, Nazilli and Beyşehir.⁴⁶ As the Black Sea coast produced linen and hemp, presumably the *beş* from Rize, Sinop and Ereğli was made from these materials, while that called after Nazilli and -- perhaps -- Akçasehir and Beyşehir must have been woven of cotton. Cotton towels came from Bursa and once again Tire; this latter place produced an

⁴³ Mehmet Genç, 'L'Économie ottomane et la guerre au XVIIIème siècle', *Turcica*, XXVII (1995), pp. 177-96; Id., 'Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics, and Main Trends', in Donald Quataert, ed., *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 59-86.

⁴⁴ Mübahat Kütükoğlu, '1009 (1600) Tarihli Narh Defterine göre İstanbul'da çeşidli Eşya ve Hizmet Fiyatları', *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 9 (1978), pp. 1-86.

⁴⁵ Whenever textiles in price lists and estate inventories are called after a town, we unfortunately have no way of knowing whether this meant that the fabrics in question had been woven in the localities referred to or whether they were simply 'façon de.' But given the fact that the products of the Ottoman Empire tended to come together in Istanbul, the likelihood that sources compiled in the capital deal with the real places of origin is quite high. On textile terminology in general see Mine Uzuner Özen, 'Türkçede Kumaş Adları', *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 33 (1980-81), pp. 291-340.

⁴⁶ Kütükoğlu, 'Eşya ve Hizmet Fiyatları', pp. 34-5.

especially expensive variety “with silk along the edges”, which probably meant embroidery or crochet work.⁴⁷

Forty years later a similar price list, once again from Istanbul, indicates those regional cotton specialities that better-off customers might purchase in the markets of the capital.⁴⁸ Cotton yarns were almost exclusively an Anatolian product. In 1640, they came in many varieties, from the fine yarn, called after Istanbul itself, that was used to sew valuable furs and form borders around what were probably the more expensive varieties of shirt, to the coarse type that was used for candle-wicks.⁴⁹ Buttons were often of silk yarn, but poorer customers made do with items manufactured out of cotton. In the shops of the fabric-sellers (*bezazân*) customers could not only buy materials by the ell, many of them woven in the capital itself, but also ready-made shirts, that mainstay of Ottoman costume both male and female. A special category were the shirts and towels used in the public baths: from certain Balkan towns there arrived items ornamented with silk that fetched high prices, while the wraps that could be tied around the waist (*peştemal*) also were made of silk for the affluent and -- probably -- of cotton for those on a limited budget. Both these seventeenth-century lists are of special interest not only because they show how widespread was the manufacture of cotton yarn and cotton cloth in Istanbul and elsewhere, but also because they give us some inkling of the broad range of cotton textiles used by well-to-do customers who were neither military men nor officials.

⁴⁷ Kütükoğlu, ‘Eşya ve Hizmet Fiyatları’, p. 37. For a similar description of late eighteenth-century towels, this time from the Macedonian town of Serres/Serrai see Inalcik, *Sources and Studies*, p. 129.

⁴⁸ Mübahat Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Taribli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1983), pp. 156-66.

⁴⁹ Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, pp. 158-9.

Eighteenth-Century Manufacturing: Evidence from the Provinces

In the mid-eighteenth century many manufactures, of cottons and other textiles, were able to expand; but for the Anatolian trading town of Tokat evidence is available mainly for the late 1700s and early 1800s. Even in this less than prosperous period, cotton textiles were manufactured here in appreciable quantities.⁵⁰ Printing (*basma*) became important during this period; unfortunately we do not know what kinds of designs were preferred. However the industry suffered from a great increase in indigo prices, which made dyers hunt for cheaper substitutes, and also from heavy taxation and continual interference on the part of the principal tax farmers. Thus dyeing fabrics in indigo-blue, as practiced in the north-central Anatolian towns of Zile and Niksar, was prohibited by the central financial administration, in order to ensure the regional monopoly of the man who had farmed the dye-house of Tokat.⁵¹ As a result of these difficulties copper took over from cotton as the city's major industry.

For the very end of our period (January 1802) a list of fabrics found in the possession of a recently deceased inhabitant of Tokat, probably a textile dealer, provides a fine example of the continuing availability of cotton weaves, even in a period of serious economic depression, and also of the numerous regional trade routes on which these textiles were moved around. The document enumerates bales of *beş*, some of them dyed red, black

⁵⁰ Duman, 'Notables, Textiles and Copper', pp. 125-72.

⁵¹ BA, section Maliyeden müdevver 9996, p. 167 (1180/1766-7); Duman, 'Notables, Textiles and Copper', *passim*, provides many similar examples.

and other colours, lining (*astar*) and chintz (*çit*).⁵² When these fabrics are listed without specifying the place of manufacture, we can assume they were of local make. In addition the inventory records *beş* from Gürün, Malatya and Mosul, while *kutni*, often a cotton-silk mixture, is said to have come from Bursa and Syria/Damascus, the latter being much more expensive than the former. In addition we find a fabric called *alaca*, which once again may have been a mixture of fibres containing a share of cotton -- if it was not simply decorated with coloured stripes; unfortunately the terminology is ambiguous. Most probably the term *alaca* was used for striped cotton-silk mixtures with a substantial share of cotton; after all, in Istanbul around 1600, customers had been expected to buy their *alaca* from cotton merchants.⁵³ Our inventory also documents different *alacas* from Manisa, Diyarbakır and Aleppo, the latter city also manufacturing a fabric called ‘with flowers’ (*çiçekli*). Since the latter was a good deal cheaper than *kutni*, I would suspect that *çiçekli* was a textile made more or less entirely of cotton.⁵⁴

As this list indicates, some Ottoman cotton manufactures managed to survive the crisis of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and from the important centre of Bursa, we possess several other sources confirming this impression. When in 1779 the Italian scholar Domenico Sestini visited Bursa, he was impressed mainly by the silks, but also by the cottons manufactured in this city.⁵⁵ In Sestini’s time, a textile made of a cotton warp and a silk weft, that he called *cutun/kutni* was decorated with stripes. In

⁵² Mehmet Öztürk, ‘Tokat’ta Fiyatlar (1772-1823)’, in *Türk Taribinde ve Kültüründe Tokat*, pp. 184-211, see p. 203. For terminology relating to textiles of Indian origin: Halil İnalcık, ‘Osmanlı Pamuklu Pazarı, Hindistan ve İngiltere: Pazar Rekabetinde Emek Maliyetinin Rolü’, *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi- METU Studies in Development*, special issue 1979-80, pp. 1-66, see pp. 32-7.

⁵³ Uzuner Özen, ‘Türkçede Kumaş Adları’, p. 300.

⁵⁴ Kütükoğlu, ‘Eşya ve Hizmet Fiyatları’, p. 43.

⁵⁵ Domenico Sestini’s description of Bursa in: Lowry, *Ottoman Bursa*, pp. 56-61.

addition Armenian weavers manufactured muslin handkerchiefs that he called *testemel/destmal*; as the environs of Bursa produced mainly silk and mulberries, the raw cotton needed by the weavers was brought in from further south, from the region of Manisa well-known for its cottons.⁵⁶

Estate inventories of a few Bursa merchants and weavers involved in the production and distribution of cotton fabrics have been located, and show the large gap between those that prospered and those that did not. A wretchedly poor weaver of *beledi* whose inventory was compiled in 1201/1786-7 left his loom and, probably, some frames, spinning wheels and other implements.⁵⁷ His principal resource consisted of his white and dyed cotton yarns and twenty-five cushions or cushion covers; but after the dower of his widow and various incidental expenses had been paid, the inheritance was negligible. İstamat son of Konstantin was described as a maker of/trader in the cotton-silk fabric known as *ketni*.⁵⁸ He was by contrast a substantial man, a property owner and a money-lender to both Muslims and non-Muslims. İstamat had extended loans to other artisans, some of the latter were even occupied in cotton-manufacturing. But whether these were consumption loans or else connected with the conduct of the deceased's textile business remains unclear. İstamat's shop contained white, dyed, flowered and otherwise ornamented *ketni*, in addition to the dyestuffs, silk, linen and cotton that went into the fabrics he produced. We should probably regard him as a merchant, a manufacturer and a money-lender in combination.

⁵⁶ Veinstein, 'Ayân de la région d'Izmir'.

⁵⁷ Milli Kütüphane, Ankara, Bursa Kadı Sicilleri B 232, fol. 6b. The term *tefe* is used for the frame holding a reed of a handloom, but can also mean a hank of spun silk.

⁵⁸ Bursa Kadı Sicilleri B 243, fols. 10a-11a, dated 1205/1790-1.

Even wealthier was Hacı Salih b. Ahmed, whom his inventory, of 1787-8, described as a manufacturer of/trader in cloth; probably the latter activity predominated.⁵⁹ Hacı Salih was a moneylender on an even greater scale than İstamat, with over a hundred debtors on record; more importantly for our purposes, the inventory of his shop showed an enormous variety of fabrics, some silks but for the most part cottons. The deceased had formed close commercial links to the cotton-manufacturing districts of south-western Anatolia, especially Denizli and Agra (today: Atabey), but also to Bor in the southern-central part of the peninsula. From these places he obtained fine fabrics suitable for women's veils and turbans, but also coarser stuffs for quilts and other home furnishings. Among the more distant centres of Ottoman textile trade, Hacı Salih evidently favoured Aleppo, from where he had obtained over twenty bales of *alaca*, probably once again a cotton-silk mixture. Trade evidently paid better than manufacture, in Bursa as elsewhere, and money-lending was probably the most lucrative activity in which a wealthy person could engage.

A few years later, in the early 1800s, business in the Bursa textile sector still was going reasonably well: the Austrian diplomat and historian Joseph von Hammer, not usually inclined to paeans of enthusiasm, certainly reserved most of his praise for the local silks, but he also considered the aprons used in the public baths (*Pischtemal*), dyed blue and green, worth a special mention; many of these must have been made of cotton.⁶⁰ Hammer called these textiles *Leinwand*, a term normally used for linen; but as all other

⁵⁹ Bursa Kadı Sicilleri B232, fol. 55b ff, dated 1202/1787-8.

⁶⁰ Joseph von Hammer, *Umblick auf einer Reise von Constantinopel nach Brussa...* (Budapest: Adolph Hartleben, 1818), p. 69.

authors when dealing with Bursa refer to silk and cottons only, I suspect that he intended *Leinwand* to mean ‘towels, underwear, laundry’ in a generic sense.

Anecdotic evidence indicating the survival of well-established cotton industries in south-eastern Anatolia is also available, namely from the old cotton town of Urfa. Here the English traveller James Silk Buckingham was held up for some time in 1816, here he watched cotton printers at work and told a local textile manufacturer about the new methods of production current in Britain; he was promptly offered a job as a ‘technical adviser’.⁶¹ Buckingham also saw cotton manufacturers at work in Diyarbakır, another old-established centre, where five hundred printers were at work in the early nineteenth century.⁶² It is a great pity that quantitative evidence of the kind provided by Buckingham is otherwise so rare.

It has been claimed that after 1750-60, urban craft enterprises often stagnated or even declined, but that the slack was taken up by rural industries.⁶³ This tendency may have been more marked in some regions than in others, but it certainly did occur in the cotton-growing, -spinning and -weaving industries of Thessaly. Here the poverty of the sharecropper villages in the plains, where dues to landlords were heavy, induced the cultivators to grow cotton, spin some of it during the agriculturally slack season, and sell cotton wool and yarn at low prices to the inhabitants of the uplands who dyed and wove

⁶¹ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels to Mesopotamia, including a Journey to Aleppo* (London, 1827), pp. 51-129.

⁶² İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), p. 312.

⁶³ Socrates Petmézas, ‘Patterns of Protoindustrialization in the Ottoman Empire: the Case of Eastern Thessaly, Ca. 1750-1860’, *Journal of European Economic History*, 19 - 3 (1990), pp. 575-603, see pp. 581-2.

these materials into cloth. Production processes were controlled by local dignitaries who were also merchants, sometimes with contacts both to Istanbul and to foreign markets. Incidentally in Thessaly as elsewhere, cotton and silk fabrics were manufactured under much the same commercial arrangements; this state of affairs once again confirms our claim that isolating cotton from other textiles is no more than an artificial device for purposes of analysis.

Indo-Ottoman Fabrics

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indian cottons became popular among better-off Ottoman consumers just as they did among contemporary Europeans, and some merchants of Cairo made money reselling this cloth on the Ottoman market.⁶⁴ The official historian Mustafa Naima in the early eighteenth century expressed concern about this development, because Indian merchants purchased few goods in the Ottoman lands, and thus were deemed guilty of emptying the realm of silver and gold.⁶⁵ At the end of the eighteenth century Sultan Abdülhamid I (r. 1774-89) in fact was concerned enough about this loss of bullion that he attempted to impede the trade: people not of the highest rank were forbidden to wear Indian luxuries, with the avowed intention of protecting local manufactures. However a recent biographer has suggested that the real intention was to

⁶⁴ André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII^e siècle*, 2 vols (Damascus, 1973-74), vol. i, p. 135.

⁶⁵ Halil İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Economic Mind and Aspects of the Ottoman Economy', in Michael Cook, ed., *Studies of the Economic History of the Middle East* (London, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 207-18.

limit spending on consumption in order to make funds available for the conduct of war.⁶⁶

To what extent these prohibitions were enforced remains debatable. For by this time Indian cottons, with their fast colours and often elaborate designs, had long become part of Ottoman culture: to witness the many loan words from Indian languages for cotton cloth that entered Ottoman parlance during those years; today they are for the most part defunct.⁶⁷

More relevant for the historian of Ottoman cotton manufacture is the response of certain textile producers active in the sultans' realm: in the region between Aleppo in the south and Urfa and Ayntab (Gaziantep) in the north, manufacturers began to produce successful imitations of Indian piece goods. The *chafarcanis* woven and printed in Diyarbakır, today in south-eastern Turkey, were dyed either red or violet, with floral motifs in white and a border; they seem to have resembled their Indian models quite closely.⁶⁸ It is assumed that the techniques required for the manufacture of *chafarcanis* arrived from northern India by way of Iran, possibly carried by the Armenian merchants who were such active textile traders. These cottons, along with the red *bogası* that had long formed a stock in trade of Anatolian manufacturers, are well documented in French archival sources. Moreover the kadi registers of Diyarbakır in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries indicate that apart from silks, silk-cotton mixtures such as *alaca* and *kutni* were being produced, some of which were given a special sheen by passing

⁶⁶ Duman, 'Notables, Textiles and Copper', pp. 144-5; Fikret Sarıcaoglu, *Kendi Kaleminden bir Padişahın Portresi, Sultan I. Abdülhamid (1774-1789)* (Istanbul: Tabiat ve Tarih Vakfı, 2001), pp. 254-5.

⁶⁷ İnalçık, 'Osmanlı Pamuk Pazarı', see pp. 32-4.

⁶⁸ Katsumi Fukasawa, *Toilerie et commerce du Levant, d'Alep à Marseille* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1987), pp. 47-8.

them through a press (*mengene*); however since nothing is said about the designs, we do not know whether these fabrics also were inspired by Indian models.⁶⁹

Another centre of cotton manufacture was Ayntab (today Gaziantep in south-eastern Turkey), from where French merchants procured the fabrics called *ajami* and a broader version known as *toiles larges*. In the seventeenth century many of these had been dyed blue by the well-known dyers of Aleppo; but in the mid-1700s French manufacturers began to produce their own adaptations of Indian prints, the well-named *indiennes*, and demand therefore switched to un-dyed fabrics.⁷⁰ These Indo-Ottoman cotton textiles of the mid-eighteenth century must have found customers in the Ottoman Empire as well, but about this aspect of their distribution very little is known. Yet it is obvious that some French consumers used the *chafarcanis* of Aleppo mainly for home textiles such as curtains and bedspreads; the only surviving examples have apparently been found in French archives.⁷¹

Eighteenth Century Cotton Exportations

In spite of the examples mentioned above, French traders were mainly interested in raw cotton and cotton yarns, and only on this limited sector of the Ottoman cotton economy

⁶⁹ Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Diyarbakır*, pp. 311-4. It is also noteworthy that in tax terms, the weavers of this city were the highest-assessed, and therefore presumably the most prosperous, among the local guilds.

⁷⁰ Fukasawa, *Toilerie*, pp. 51-2.

⁷¹ Fukasawa, *Toilerie et commerce*, samples reproduced on cover.

do we possess numeric data.⁷² Throughout the eighteenth century, imports of raw cotton grew much faster than those of cotton yarn, although the latter on an average also more than doubled between 1700-2 and 1786-9. In terms of value as expressed in *livres*, raw cotton amounted to one sixth of yarn exports at the earlier date, while at the second, raw cottons sent to Marseille were more than three times as valuable as the corresponding yarns. This meant that that more and more spinning was undertaken in France, and moreover a share of the white yarn imported from the Ottoman lands was relatively coarse and used for candlewicks rather than for weaving. However during this period cotton yarns dyed 'Turkey red' were popular not only with buyers in the Habsburg territories but also with French consumers. Thus textile manufacturers in Rouen continued to depend on Ottoman cotton yarn for their kerchiefs. Commercial agents active on Ottoman territory considered it most profitable to buy un-dyed thread from the spinners and have it dyed later on; presumably local intermediaries were indispensable for this procedure.⁷³

In the early eighteenth century Syria -- in the geographical sense of the word -- was the principal source of both raw and spun cotton exported by French merchants. Egypt was only an exporter of yarn, a fact that testifies to the province's abiding industrial strength, and Izmir also was more important in this field than as a supplier of raw cotton. Thessaly by contrast possessed active rural industries but exported only the raw fibre. By the late 1700s French interests were concentrated in Izmir, where local magnates promoted the exportation of both fibre and yarn in order to increase customs revenue. Provincial

⁷² Robert Paris, *Histoire du commerce de Marseille*, vol 5, *Le Levant, de 1660 à 1789* (Paris: Plon, 1957), pp. 510-5; Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna*, pp. 231-41.

⁷³ Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna*, pp. 233, 241.

grandees of southern Syria did the same, but a series of local power struggles resulted in trade and production falling behind. Apart from Izmir, Salonica had become an important supplier of raw cotton; the city and its hinterland did not however export yarn any more than Thessaly had done almost a century earlier.

From all this, the question arises whether at least on the eastern and western shores of the Aegean Sea, raw cotton prices increased to the point that they deterred local weavers. Prices per *quintal* of raw cotton did in fact double in the course of the century, but the price of yarn more than tripled; whether this was due to high demand or a loss of weavers due to the numerous plague epidemics of the time is difficult to say. At least spinners do not seem to have suffered from the effects of a 'price scissors'; but what happened to the manufacturers of cotton cloth is impossible to tell, because neither the French records nor any other sources that I know of provide price data on cotton cloth. Therefore an important question remains unresolved: at present we cannot tell whether the greatly increased export of cotton fibre had negative effects on Ottoman weavers, or whether the growth in cotton cultivation was important enough to satisfy both manufacturers and exporters. It is likely that the economic downturn that began in the 1760s had negative effects on cotton weaving not only in Tokat, where it is well attested, but on other centres as well. However the matter as yet awaits further investigation.

Surviving Incorporation into the World Economy – At Least for a While

A significant example of craftsmen at least temporarily successful in adapting to the requirements of distant markets were the inhabitants of certain small towns and villages in Thessaly that spun and dyed red cotton yarn for enterprises located on Habsburg

territory.⁷⁴ This was, as Petmézas has pointed out, an industry in which the villagers' production was financed and organized by merchants.⁷⁵ The latter also were of Thessalian origin and the most successful ones built themselves fine houses in Ambelakia and elsewhere. But at the same time these merchants were so closely tied to their Austrian environment that one of the most prominent personages translated his Greek family name into its German equivalent, and it is as the house of the Schwarz family that the dwelling, still extant, is known to the present day. The Ambelakia traders combined family connections to their home villages with a shrewd appreciation of the possibilities offered by Austrian commercial law: they thus regularly dissolved and reformed their associations in order to maximize commercial advantages. However in the long run, both the world economy and domestic conditions worked against them: by the late eighteenth century the dyeing of fabrics in 'Turkey red' was no longer an Ottoman monopoly, while from the early 1800s onwards, English machine-made yarn was both cheaper and easier to use on mechanized looms.⁷⁶ Thus when Ambelakia was sacked by a local magnate, the town did not recover, and even today, it is a very small and remote place.

To complete our story of Ottoman cottons, we will move slightly beyond our assigned time limits. Concerning the later nineteenth century, the work of Donald Quataert has shown that even during this heyday of European colonialism, there was no wholesale de-industrialization in Ottoman towns. Aided perhaps by the fact that, the Egyptian case

⁷⁴ Katsiardi-Hering, 'Associations of Greek artisans and merchants'; Petmézas, 'Patterns of Protoindustrialization'.

⁷⁵ Petmézas, 'Patterns of Protoindustrialization', p. 589.

⁷⁶ Traian Stoianovich, 'The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant', *Journal of Economic History*, XX (1960), 234-313, see p. 257; Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 33-6.

apart, no colonial state established itself on Ottoman territory, craftsmen often found ways to adapt, for instance by using imported cotton yarns to weave fabrics that appealed to local consumers more than foreign-made wares. Certainly this adaptation had its price: production costs often were lowered by having women and children work long hours at derisory wages, and in addition, the new industries were often more dependent on world market conjunctures than their predecessors had been.⁷⁷ But even so, in a major monograph on the nineteenth-century Balkans we find the perhaps rather surprising conclusion that after the 1830s or thereabouts, when Mahmud II (r. 1808-39) had managed to restore a degree of stability, the Ottoman state offered better conditions for craft production than the newly independent national states of south-eastern Europe.⁷⁸

Why was There no ‘Great Leap Forward’? Official Distrust of Exportation and the Prevalence of ‘Provisionism’

Why then did the Ottoman cotton industry not establish a place for itself on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century world market? Answers must be tentative; for as we have seen, given the fact that scholars have largely lost interest in the ‘world economy and peripheralization’ paradigms, they have tended to neglect the old question why a relatively vigorous branch of industrial production such as Ottoman cottons did not mutate into a kind of home-grown capitalism. However the idea that Mediterranean textile crafts might have developed into modern-style industries had it not been for

⁷⁷ Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 176-7.

⁷⁸ Michael Palaret, *The Balkan Economies, c. 1800-1914, Evolution Without Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 50-7, 188-97.

European intervention is now mostly discounted.⁷⁹ But the work that has been done on what we might call the ‘economic mind’ of the pre-nineteenth century Ottoman elite, as well as a variety of studies on tax-farming, have shown up some of the reasons why textile producers, in spite of appreciable successes, proved unable to break through a certain ‘glass ceiling’. In this perspective, cotton producers are simply one case among many, and what is valid for ‘the Ottoman economy’ in general applies to them as well.

First of all, the Ottoman elite believed that supplying the consumers’ market and thereby keeping prices low had high priority; for only in this fashion, so it was assumed, were military successes and public construction financially feasible, and these two things stood high among the hallmarks of a successful monarch. In addition supplying Istanbul, one of the largest cities of early modern Europe, also was secured by keeping the prices of foodstuffs and supplies artificially low; and the cotton manufacturers of the Anatolian towns of Diyarbekir, Tokat or Manisa, as well as their competitors from Mosul or Cyprus, were obliged to sell their fabrics at prices determined by the kadi of Istanbul.⁸⁰

Whether these prices allowed for a respectable profit margin remains anybody’s guess. Maybe at times they only allowed the traders to break even; but in this case we may apply Christopher Bayly’s observation with respect to eighteenth-century India to the Ottoman realm as well.⁸¹ As taxes were paid in coin, and little silver was produced in the sultan’s territories, provincials would have been obliged to sell their products in Istanbul whatever the prices, because that was where the coin could be found that they needed to

⁷⁹ Petmézas, ‘Patterns of Protoindustrialization’, p. 576.

⁸⁰ Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi*, pp. 126-32.

⁸¹ Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars, North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 63.

earn in order to pay next year's taxes -- and thus it is not so astounding that throughout the early modern period, the higher prices offered by smugglers were such an inducement.

Given the priorities of the Ottoman elite, export was not regarded as something to be promoted by the state. Until about 1600, as we have seen, the exportation of cotton had usually been forbidden for political and military reasons, and no exception was made in favour of finished cotton textiles. As to the personal security of Ottoman merchants who ventured into foreign parts: in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the sultans did make considerable efforts to protect the commercial interests of their subjects who traded in the Adriatic. But this was probably due more to political than to economic considerations; or phrased differently, by intervening in disputes concerning merchants from the Ottoman realm, both Muslims and non-Muslims, the sultans showed their interest in the welfare of 'their' traders, such a concern being expected of a just ruler according to Ottoman statecraft. In addition, by insisting on their right to grant protection, the sultans demonstrated the extent of their power even on, for instance, Venetian-controlled territory. In particular, the Ottoman government thus gave a concrete form to its demand that, as agreements with Venetians and others often specified, commerce must take place under conditions of reciprocity.⁸² However this policy apparently did not outlast the mid-seventeenth century Ottoman-Venetian war

⁸² Hans Theunissen, 'Ottoman-Venetian Diplomats: The *ahidnames*. The Historical Background and the Development of a Category of Political-Diplomatic Instruments together with an Annotated Edition of a Corpus of Relevant Documents' (Unpublished Ph D thesis, Utrecht, 1991), pp. 496-7. (Only available on the Internet; I cite the manuscript version).

over Candia (1645-69).⁸³ In later periods merchants were typically 'on their own', and in order to trade on Habsburg territory, in the eighteenth century it was often necessary to swear loyalty to the emperor in Vienna. Many traders, by now virtually all non-Muslims, complied with this requirement, which meant that the Ottoman Empire lost some of its economically most active denizens.

Given the overriding concern with the supplies needed by the Ottoman court, the armed forces and the capital, the Ottoman governing elite considered that goods produced in the Empire were to be kept within its borders, and exportation might be tolerated only if something was left over after domestic needs had been met. This 'provisionism', as it has been called, certainly did not prevent Ottoman subjects from selling their goods in Iran, Venice and occasionally even in India. Moreover in the eighteenth century, these traders were to be found in Amsterdam, Vienna, Trieste and the fairs of Leipzig as well.⁸⁴ Yet the Ottoman elite certainly did not view foreign markets as territories to be conquered, and foreign trade as a legitimate site of battle against the 'infidels'.

Mercantilism was thus never imagined, much less implemented, although there was a serious concern about the outflow of bullion towards the east: but here Indian and Iranian merchants were viewed as a more severe threat than Europeans who well into the

⁸³ Suraiya Faruqi, 'Ottoman Views on Corsairs and Piracy in the Adriatic', in Elizabeth Zachariadou, ed., *The Kapudan Pasha. His Office and his Domain*, (Rethymnon: University of Crete Press, 2002), pp. 357-71.

⁸⁴ On 'provisionism' see Genç, 'Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century', p. 60. For an older but still instructive overview over the activities of Balkan traders, unfortunately with but few references to cottons, compare: Stoianovich, 'The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant', *passim*.

eighteenth century, often brought silver into the realm rather than carrying it out.⁸⁵ At least where French traders were concerned it was only with the financial speculation of the later 1700s that this latter trend was reversed, and by that time, political problems were serious enough to prevent the sultans' administration from interfering.⁸⁶

Why was There no 'Great Leap Forward'? The Relative Weakness of Capital Formation

Secondly Halil Inalcik's pioneering study of Ottoman capital formation is by now over thirty-five years old, yet some of his conclusions are still helpful.⁸⁷ Inalcik has pointed out that in the sixteenth century, when the sultans were at the acme of their power, members of the ruling group and pious foundations were in the best position to accumulate capital and invest it. Pious foundations in addition enjoyed a significant advantage over individual members of the elite, as their capital was inalienable at least until the later eighteenth century. Otherwise, apart from judges and professors (*ulema*), Ottoman officials could count on having most of their wealth confiscated, at their deaths if not before. Pious foundations certainly played a more active role in economic life than they have long been given credit for: many administrators of pious foundations were quite efficient and the number of profitable deals that they engaged in could be substantial. Yet in the end, the money made by such institutions was reinvested only to a limited extent, while most of it served the purposes for which the trust had been instituted. It is also worth noting that the prospect of confiscation did not prevent many Ottoman officials

⁸⁵ Inalcik, 'The Ottoman Economic Mind'.

⁸⁶ Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul*, p. 170.

⁸⁷ Halil Inalcik, 'Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire', *Journal of Economic History*, XXIX – 1 (1969), pp. 97-140.

from investing in productive activities. Yet in the end, these men were concerned with political power, for themselves and for the members of their households, rather than with economic gain by and of itself.

Merchants engaged in long-distance trade certainly enjoyed privileges, which ultimately were based in the governing elite's concern with its own provisioning, and often -- but not always -- the profit margins of long-distance dealers were not officially fixed, and they must have been much higher than those allowed to craftsmen and retailers.⁸⁸ However the relative absence of official protection made even wealthy Ottoman merchants relatively vulnerable, especially in their dealings with their French or English competitors. In this respect I would imagine that the 'incorporation and peripheralization' paradigm has much to recommend it. Certainly it has become obvious that, differently from what was believed twenty-five years ago, Ottoman Muslims did not necessarily allow their religious allegiance to stand in the way of profitable deals with 'unbelievers', and at least down to the Cretan war Anatolian, Stambouliote and Bosnian Muslims visited Venice in appreciable numbers.⁸⁹ But their lack of political clout within the Ottoman system, and the low degree of protection they were given, limited possibilities for capital formation. This weakness in turn made it difficult for merchants to invest, for instance, in the production of cotton fabrics more often than was actually the case.

⁸⁸ Inalcik, 'Capital Formation', pp. 98-9.

⁸⁹ Cemal Kafadar, 'A Death in Venice (1575): Anatolian Muslim Merchants Trading in the Serenissima', *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 10, *Raiyyet Rüşumu, Essays presented to Halil Inalcik* .. (1986), pp. 191-218.

Why was There no ‘Great Leap Forward’? The Limitations Imposed by Tax-farmers and Guildsmen

Thirdly the prevalence of tax-farming must be taken into account. Recent studies have shown that life-time tax-farms, instituted in 1695, had a significant role in keeping the empire together, as local elites were, so to say, made shareholders in the Ottoman enterprise and thus discouraged from exploiting the weakness of the central government in order to set up states of their own.⁹⁰ But from the economic point of view, the consequences were often negative. In theory, they should not have been, as life-time tax-farmers were supposed to take an intelligent interest in the welfare of ‘their’ taxpayers, and be careful not to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. But in actual fact, subcontracting tax-farms to local men was common; and as the latter had no security of tenure, they often did all the things that life-time tax-farmers should have been anxious to avoid. These underlings attempted to maximize short-term gains, and thus frequently forced craftspeople to produce in places which were convenient for tax collection, and not necessarily for the productive processes involved. This tendency towards keeping producers anchored in particular places sometimes impeded those craftsmen who wished to move production into rural/semi-rural locales, where costs were lower.⁹¹ Moreover through over-taxation, tax-farmers tended to exacerbate the lack of capital which as we have seen, was a constant problem in Ottoman production including cotton textiles.

⁹⁰ Ariel Salzmann, ‘An Ancien Régime Revisited: ‘Privatization’ and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire’, *Politics and Society*, XXI - 4 (1993), pp. 393-423; Dina Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire Mosul 1540-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 168.

⁹¹ Duman, ‘Notables, Textiles and Copper’, pp. 126-9.

As a fourth factor of significance historians have pointed to the role of large workshops that in the eighteenth century were often set up by pious foundations anxious to increase revenues.⁹² This tendency was especially relevant to cotton producers, since dye-houses, due to the investment they required, were very often foundation property. These establishments did not involve a factory-like division of labour, but seem to have been simply juxtapositions of independent craftsmen who undertook small investments and paid rent to the pious foundation in question. Such buildings set aside for the use of artisans provided workspaces at limited cost, and may well have aided the revival of cities hard hit by the mercenaries' rebellions that had disrupted much of Anatolia during the seventeenth century. But there were negative aspects as well: thus the close proximity of the artisans working in such a place, and frequently the common investment in costly implements, tended to reinforce mutual control and make it more difficult for enterprising craftsmen to branch out into activities not foreseen or approved by their neighbours. Furthermore state controls were facilitated by this concentration of production, and they also often proved detrimental to manufacturers.⁹³

If the tenants of a collective workshop wished to do so, they could exclude unwelcome competitors by applying to the courts and invoking the traditions of their crafts; and the judges, while upholding the right of each and every craftsman to make a living, certainly had no particular interest in aiding innovators. After all, innovations could easily be described as lowering the established standards of the craft involved; and admittedly this was quite often true. Thus a typical complaint about the manufacturers of ordinary

⁹² Suraiya Faruqi, 'Between Collective Workshops and Private Homes: Places of Work in Eighteenth-century Bursa', in *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women, Establishing Status, Establishing Control* (Istanbul: Eren, 2002), pp. 235-44.

⁹³ Genç, 'Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century', p. 63.

cottons might say that the pieces offered for sale were too short for a cloak, so that customers presumably had to buy two pieces and were left with a remnant that was difficult to use efficiently.⁹⁴ Presumably the fine border line between rapid adaptation to market requirements and the attempt to fob off shoddy goods on unsuspecting customers was often crossed. But even if we accept this objection as valid, the fact remains that large workshops made life more difficult for artisans willing to experiment with new production processes.

In Conclusion

As the present survey has shown, recent work on Ottoman textile production has tended to prioritize factors connected with domestic developments, rather than those originating outside the realm of the sultans. This in a sense is paradoxical, for now that researchers are normally interested in global issues, Ottoman economic history has thus turned in upon itself. Perhaps that is a consequence of the fact that at present, social and economic history as practiced well into the 1980s has had to yield pride of place to a concern with historiographical discourse, state formation, the conduct of war, consumption as a manner of establishing social status, or the history of women. Agriculture and manufacturing have been left somewhat in the shadow, and as a result, researchers practicing these 'old-fashioned' branches of study have perhaps failed to catch up with the most recent trends.

Be that as it may, we are left with a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, archival research, especially that focusing on the eighteenth century, continues to turn up lively

⁹⁴ MD 52, p. 288, No. 767 (992/1584).

cotton industries in all sorts of places, while at the same time, historians more interested in ‘macro’ developments have emphasized the limits that Ottoman state and societal structures, to say nothing of the *mentalités* of the elites, have placed upon the growth of manufacturing. Probably this apparent paradox can be largely explained by the fact that the Ottoman domestic market was a great deal larger than we appreciate at present. If this is true, then the limits so eloquently described by Mehmet Genç and Yüksel Duman operated mainly when it came to widening the scope of production to a point that access to the international market would have become a possibility; but in spite of the difficulties caused by officials and tax farmers, supplying the domestic market continued *tant bien que mal*.

After all we have seen that cotton fabrics were not only sent to the markets of Istanbul -- this phenomenon can be easily explained by the ‘Bayly effect’ -- but also interchanged between important interregional marketing centres such as Aleppo, Tokat and Bursa, which in addition received cotton cloth from the smaller manufacturing towns of their own hinterlands. This observation is noteworthy also because interregional trade of this kind was apparently more common in the eighteenth century than it had been two hundred years earlier. Possibly this is in part an error of perspective due to the much more limited sixteenth-century documentation, but I do not think that this is the whole explanation. In any case, while for the years before and after 1600, it is not easy to find examples of Ottoman domestic trade that did not somehow involve Istanbul, such instances are relatively abundant for the eighteenth century.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ For internal trade excluding Istanbul, viewed from an Anatolian perspective, see Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*, pp. 82-5, 102.

Apparently the cotton-manufacturing centres that we have come across in the course of this study found their customers within the Ottoman borders, due to the relative expansion of consumption among the better-off that has been observed mainly for Istanbul, but that also occurred in commercial nodes such as Tokat, Bursa or Aleppo.⁹⁶ What still remains enigmatic is the contradiction between the overall decline observed by Genç, which seems 'logical' given the long and destructive wars of the time, and the persistence of often lively cotton manufactures in Bursa, Urfa, Aleppo or Tokat, and in the hinterlands of these cities, during the late 1700s and early 1800s.⁹⁷ Perhaps the interruption of trade across the Mediterranean due to the wars following the French Revolution, which benefited Greek shippers and Aleppo's traders by eliminating their most dangerous competitors, proved advantageous to cotton weavers as well. After all French woollens throughout the 1700s a serious competitor in the middle-level market, had conveniently disappeared. In addition some people did make money during those years, by smuggling grain to the belligerents or else by reviving old connections to India.⁹⁸ Aleppo's silk-cotton mixtures, which did so well in the early 1800s, were only one among the numerous quality cotton textiles that flourished as long as the Franco-British wars protected Ottoman domestic manufactures. And where simple fabrics such as *beledi* and *bogası* were concerned: people who were the victims of these -- in spite of everything

⁹⁶ Madeline C. Zilfi, 'Goods in the *Mahalle*: Distributional Encounters in Eighteenth Century Istanbul', in Donald Quataert, ed., *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922, An Introduction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 289-312.

⁹⁷ Genç, 'L'Économie ottomane et la guerre.'

⁹⁸ On grain-smuggling: Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Ondokuzuncu Yüzyılın Başlarında Antalya Limanı', in *VIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, vol. 2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1981) pp. 1461-71. On Indian and other long-distance trade: Wirth, 'Aleppo im 19. Jahrhundert', pp. 190-7 according to the reports of the French consul Rousseau.

-- rather difficult years may well have switched their demand from silks to cottons, as their counterparts around 1600 had done before them.