

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE:  
AN INTERPRETATION

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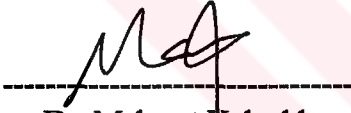
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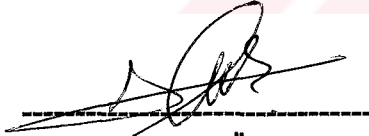
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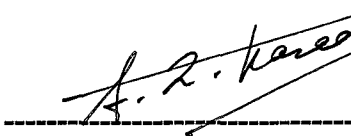
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## ABSTRACT

### EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE : AN INTERPRETATION

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This thesis analyzes various aspects of daily life in the Ottoman Empire especially in the Classical age. The thesis will trace the connection between the state, religion and Ottoman people alongside the features of daily life. To see the relationship between them mainly three types of sources are used: Judicial records, *mühimme* registers and travel accounts. Each of them is used in a comparative and complementary way in order to establish a general picture of the daily life in the Ottoman Empire during the classical period. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate partially the course of everyday life under the impact of the official and religious ideals, views and its practices over the issue.

Keywords: Everyday life, Official and Religious Impact on Social Life.

## ÖZET

### OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU'NDA GÜNDELİK HAYAT: BİR YORUM

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Bu çalışma, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda özellikle klasik dönem olarak adlandırılan dönemde gündelik hayatın unsurlarını incelemiştir. Tezde, halkın devlet ve din ile olan bağlantısı, günlük hayat çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, üç ana kaynak; kadı sicilleri, mühimme defterleri ve yabancı gezginlerin anlatıları temel alınmış ve bu kaynaklar birbirlerini tamamlayıcı ve birbirleriyle karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir. Tezde dinin ve devletin etkisi altında şekillenen Osmanlı'daki günlük hayatın bir kesitini sergilemek amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Günlük Hayat, Toplumsal Hayata Dinsel ve Resmi Etkiler.



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is no doubt that historians' interest in studying everyday life of a certain society is an outcome of the increasing concern and works on social history. One might argue that the process from economic and social history to history of private life is a reasonable one and both have helped historians to reflect on history of daily life at length.

#### **1.1 History of Culture and Daily Life**

It is obvious that social history, as a comprehensive concept, is composed of various aspects of social and historical concerns. Besides, it paves the way to the history of ordinary people. In fact, Ottoman social and economic history studies have been very favoured for long and there is no doubt that this is generated by clear and understandable influence of the Annales school<sup>1</sup> on Ottoman studies. But this preferred practice seems to be focused on describing the situation from the state's point of view, or according to the state. It is quite possible to observe the intensive place of the state and the attempt to explain things in documents by having reference or relation to the official view. Therefore social and economic history studies, in general, have consequently been state-dependent or state-related. This is not the only trouble with Ottoman social historiography. While we have an official approach to Ottoman social history, on the other hand, the ambiguousness of the definition of

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<sup>1</sup> See İnalçık, 1978. "The Impact of the Annales School on Ottoman studies and new findings", in *Review*, I(3/4), 69-96.

cultural history caused another misunderstanding. As Faroqhi says, if we take a look at the discussions among European historians, we have to accept that what they meant by cultural history has drastically changed. For a long time, cultural history was composed of arts, sciences and literature, but now popular and daily culture of the man in the street is a crucial part of it.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 The Purpose and The Sources of The Study

This study is mainly based on three types of sources that are mostly published: Judicial records, *mühimme* registers and travel accounts. Each of them is used in order to establish a general picture of the daily life in the Ottoman Empire during the classical period. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate partially the course of everyday life and the impact of the official ideals, views and its practices over the issue. Undoubtedly this study has a limited nature and therefore we have preferred to put reasonable restrictions over the issue in terms of time, place and sources. Since we aim to try to reach a possible interpretation and synthesis out of various documents, the use of published materials is, we believe, the right method. Similarly some crucial types of sources are deliberately excluded in accordance with the purpose of the study. *Tereke* registers, for instance, are not used because of both practical and theoretical reasons. First of all *tereke* register requires a specific study in itself or, in relation to a specific period of time or place. Since we do not have enough published register it would not be reasonable to make argumentation based on very few registers limited to a time or place while to work on unpublished material would be beyond the aim and the capacity of the study.

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<sup>2</sup> Faroqhi (1997), 4-5.



On the other hand, another problem that a social historian might face is that while trying to go detailed as much as possible in his study and to represent a general overview, he could unexpectedly be so unusual and exceptional that the result could be contradictory. For instance the criticism of the French social historian Le Roy Ladurie's study on a small settlement in northern France *Montaillou*, indicates this problem (Hechter, 1980: 44-45):

Some inhabitants were openly atheistic. Heterosexual behavior was quite free. Extra-martial affairs were common, and the priest doubled as the village's most prodigious sexual athlete. Homosexuality was known, but not especially favored. The village as a whole seemed to have little respect for distant authorities, be they ecclesiastical or political. Was this really what the High Middle Ages were like in western Europe, or even France? At this crucial juncture, Le Roy Ladurie is unaccountably silent...

Another valuable source of information belongs to those who travelled in the Empire. We may find a rich description of conditions concerning the daily life of the time. From West or East, the Empire attracted many travellers' attention for many reasons. Especially from the sixteenth century onward, the image of exotic east was a common fact in the western world. On the other hand travellers from the east were more familiar with the conditions in the Empire. A Muslim traveller could be more reliable in terms of having no (or less) prejudices and popular images. But a non-Muslim traveller's accounts are richer and more profitable because of his unfamiliarity with this world. A non-Muslim traveller could consider telling every detail he saw, unlike a Muslim, it was wholly a new world for him, therefore anything could be worth telling.

The question is how reliable is a traveller's account. In establishing the text, the material could be considered as a secondary source, or at least "a narrative" material whose writer had to satisfy his reader with many stereotypes and prejudices in his mind based on a mixture of former accounts, folk tales, popular beliefs and so on. It is by an individual with some expectations and for an audience with some prejudgments. The author of "Relation Nouvelle d'un Voyage de Constantinople" Josephus Grelot presented his book to the king in 1681 by remarking the importance of his accounts (Grelot, 1998: vii): "I hope that you shall let me present my book because it will be useful for your army since you will be the sovereign of those places one day."

On the other hand due to irregular intensification of the published sources and studies concerning different aspects of social life in the Empire a similarity between the intensity of sources and their use has become inevitable. Not so surprisingly Istanbul, the capital of the Empire, has an emphasis. There are many other subjects to be examined in terms of every day life. We have followed the same principle for the subjects as we did for the materials. Limitation of the subjects to be dealt with is to prevent an unusually extensive volume which would not be reasonable for a master's these.

### **1.3 Methodology**

In general, judicial registers have been regarded as primary source of economic and social history. There has been many studies concerning with the social history of the Empire in different eras based on these records. There is no doubt that they are much

more than the simple reflection of the practice of the Ottoman Islamic legal system. Legal cases enlighten us about not only social and economic conditions of the place and time in question, but also about daily troubles that one might face and its general impact on the community. It is possible to build a bridge between people of every status and the state by examining petitions about their grievances and the orders sent out to *kadis* regarding the petitions. In fact judicial documents or foreigners' accounts do not provide us with a complete knowledge of daily life in the Ottoman Empire. Official documents, namely imperial decrees and judicial registers, individually do not reflect the whole society, on the contrary, what we see in these documents are restricted to a group of people or certain situations. If these sources, in fact any kind of sources, are taken into consideration in an interdependent and complementary way a more comprehensible and clear picture can be obtained. For instance it is possible to have an idea about the nature of festivities around the Empire arranged for various occasions. But what judicial records tell us is that their purpose and importance for the state: The festivities are for the benefit of the current situation in the Empire and they are important because people need these 'safety valves' to relax and go beyond the common pressure on them for a while, and the state needs these occasions to keep its subject having respect, belief and confidence in the state and in the actual status quo. But official records do not give any indication about how free ordinary people are in violating customary rules and bans and how the officials ignore them. In many travellers' accounts we find detailed information about these facts. In the mean time a third one, the *surname* literature gives us the process of a ceremony from the beginning to the end, including the material and cultural aspects of them. Consequently these sources should be used to complete one another.

In the first chapter as the main space for daily life we deals with the general aspects of urban life. Places that are prerequisite for an Ottoman city are considered and what they socially say to the state and people is examined. It might be argued that population differences can be seen in terms of gender or religion or social status, but social relationships and interaction between different groups create a sort of togetherness that diminishes powerful effect of differences. In chapter two, the problem of identification is examined in terms of changing places. Since the place of birth or living determines the identity of premodern man, any attempt to change this place could result in a crisis in his life. Thus the importance of travelling, its meaning and its results should have an undeniable role in daily life. In chapter three our concern is unexpected and unruly acts. Fights, robberies, conflicts, disorders, everything against the law or threatening the current social order, is among the main concerns of the central authority. These kind of events have a dangerous character for the well-being of the state. Thus the state has the right to use any means to prevent them in the course of everyday life. The main issue in chapter four is the public spaces commonly used by the people. Since these places, such as *hamam*, mosque, *bozahane*, gather many people together and they are necessary for several reasons, they are inseparable part of daily life of an Ottoman. But still, the authority has its measures and rules to be sure of their innocent and secure positions. In chapter five, we take festivities into consideration, although they are not as frequent as other phenomena, but their significance in terms of everyday life is based on their crucial and necessary nature for both the state and the Ottoman people.

Consequently, a study on daily life is not as easy as one might expect. Few people in Ottoman history left a source directly dealing with the daily life of the time. When it is a normal life, and history of that normal life, it becomes difficult to discern. A history without wars, politics, diplomacy, a history of the routine requires more effort and work because one should read the realities behind the lines. For documents contain the things that they thought it was worth recording. Is something normal, common and ordinary worth recording for the well-being of the state or for the benefit of the next generations? The difficulty of writing history of daily life is paradoxically the main factor that makes it possible as well. There are very few primary sources on daily life, however every source we have may contain a kind of hidden information to be discovered.

## CHAPTER 2

### LIFE IN THE CITY

An important principal keeping order in society was based on the idea of original settlement. This principle assumed that everyone living in the Ottoman society belonged to a pre-determined place to live in. As long as the benefit of the state existed, a change of place was not tolerated. This may be a natural result generated by the understanding of classified society. Especially in Ottoman social system, were definite groups and classes from which one was not able to pass to another without some exceptions. The main division was between the military class, *askeri*, and the *reaya*, tax-paying subject. Even religion did not influence this division. Tax-paying subject was divided into four groups: Peasants, nomads, craftsmen and merchants. On the other hand there was another type of division based on religious differences. Muslims were the dominant group in the Empire, while non-Muslims, Christians, Jews, constituted the second main body of population. In the fifteenth century, with the conquest of the Balkans, thousands of Christian cavalymen included into the Ottoman military class, and Christian peasants too did not change their status and continued paying taxes as the Muslim *reaya* did.<sup>1</sup> Naturally there were many sub-divisions in society. The authority settled these divisions upon various criterions such as religion, nationality, gender, profession and ruled them for the benefit of the state and society. The *reaya* was

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<sup>1</sup> İnalcık (1976), 69; For the strict boundary between *askeri* and *reaya* and its exception an example from the *kanunname* of Selim I can be mentioned [I. Selim Kanunnameleri (1995), 75]: "*Ve evlad-ı askeri ve sadat dahi külliyyen askeridir ve askerinin zevcatı dahi askeridir mu'tik ve mu'taka müdebbir ve müdebbire ve mekatib ve mekatibeleri ve bunların evladı dahi askeridir ve askeri tayifesi fevz oldukdan sonra madam ki zevcleri reaya tayifesine nikahlanmış olmaya askeridir.*"



not allowed to leave his settlement because the system was founded on them. According to the law (İnalcık, 1976: 111) the *sipahi* had the right to force a *reaya* to return to his land if he left his place and lived less than fifteen (or sometimes ten) years outside. A peasant cultivates a piece of arable land, his production supports the living of a *sipahi* and this ensures the existence of the state (Gökçen, 1946: 81, no. 70):

... Anadolu ve Maraş ve Sivas ve Erzurum ve Haleb eyaletlerinden ve gayri yerlerden liva-i mezbura gelüb on yıldan berü tavattun eden reaya kaldırılub gene kadimi yerlerine gönderilmek babında ferman-ı alısanım sadır olmuştur, buyurdum ki, (...) on yıldan berüde kalkub taht-ı hükümetlerinden gelüb tavattun eden ve bilfiil tavattun etmeyüb serseri gezen reaya taifesini kaldırub ve bir yurd edenleri geru yurdların bey etdirüb kadimi mekanlarına gönderesüz (...) amma bu bahane ile on yıldan ziyade tavattun eden reayayı yerinden kaldırmak olmaz.

On the other hand in big towns were similar restrictions on various levels. It could deal with a whole group of people. In 1573, the non-Muslim Albanians who lived in Rumeli were banished from passing to Bursa and its neighborhood because non-Muslims were not allowed to pass to Anatolia without a reasonable purpose.<sup>2</sup> Also there were restrictions and bans related to religious differences and they aimed to emphasize the limits between divisions in public space. Many times the law forbade (A. Refik, 1998a: 14) non-Muslims to build houses close to mosques or sacred places such as Eyüb Sultan and did not permit to build new churches (A. Refik, 1988a: 44, 45).

<sup>2</sup> Dağlıoğlu (1940), 75, no. 110: "İmdi Rumelinden Anadoluya kefare tayifesi geçmek caiz değildir, memnurdur. (...) Kaç neferse ele getirüb dahi cümlesin yarar adamlere koşub südde-i saadetime gönderesin."



Occupation, as well, was generally to be followed by the son and the central authority had the right to force people. As Faroqhi states there are many decrees forcing provincial riches to be butchers in case of shortage (Faroqhi, 2000; 279).

## 2.1 Gender

Among the criterions gender partook a significant place. In the eyes of society and state, Ottoman community stressed the gender difference and the relationship between male and female subjects in various conditions. They made many rules regulating this difference to prevent any disorder. Consequently the gender difference in the Empire was emphasized and supported especially in public sphere. For instance, the central authority forbade young women to get in *peremes*, a sort of small boat, with *levends*, rootless and unemployed youths. This kind of behavior must have been suspect in terms of moral values. Thus the authorities had to be careful about young women touring with *levends*, but meanwhile the rule was not for poor old women who only tried to go across.<sup>3</sup>

Women's clothing was another important point in terms of gender relationships. Several times the authority had to remind of the regulations about Muslim women's clothes. Because its violation could cause a disorder in society especially among ordinary families. On the other hand some of them resembled the infidels' clothing. Thus it was against both moral and religious aspects.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A. Refik (1988a), 11.

<sup>4</sup> A. Refik (1988c), 86: "(...) bazı yaramaz avretler intihaz-ı fırsat ve sokaklarda halkı idlal kasdına izhar-ı zib ü zinet ve libaslarında guna gün ihdas-ı bid'at ve kefare avretlerine taklid (...) bundan akdem men olunmuş iken (...) birbirini görerek bu halet ehl-i ismet olanlara da adet olmak

The place they lived was also important for the state. For change of place or an attempt to do, was regarded as a threat for the current order. We know of the women from village which were not allowed to enter the city. In a decree of permission to an official coming from a village to his native place it was said that he and his family had the permission to come back to Istanbul but any woman from village was not allowed with him (Kal'a, 1997: 143). We can understand the reason of their worry about unknown women trying to get in the big city. This is another important factor shaping the concept of city in terms of gender differences. Since there were many bans to protect quarters complaining from immoral action of women, the state had to prevent any doubtful entry attempt to the city.

As for the women who had the right to live inside the city walls many rules were in effect aiming at strengthening the gender differentiation in the society. In fact city life did not seem to have offered the women many options to choose from. In comparison to the male population they had few things to do outside their houses. Moreover when they were in the streets it was a custom to act in group whatever they intended to do. during daily activities it was observed that many women went to bathhouses together. First of all forming a group could make the outside experiment much safer. Even women in group sometimes faced verbal attacks by men (MD 5-345).

Visiting friends or relatives was another opportunity to be in the streets. They had to be careful and avoid anything that could imply their femininity. In the

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*mertebelerine mieddi olmağla.."*

eyes of other men, as stated by Dernschwam (And, 1994: 196), whether Muslim or not, they were expected to do their best to make themselves as ugly, unpleasant as possible. Therefore they wore same one-colored and very large clothes that made them fat and ugly.

## 2.2 Religion

Religious differences had always been a leading factor in the Empire. Different religions, different customs and ceremonies were considered in the eyes of Islamic outlook. The state treated non-Muslim subject according to the *zimmi* understanding of Islam, however in daily life their relationship to the Muslim subject was not an easy one. Like the difference of male-female policy in the country the Muslim and non-Muslim perception established a definite and non-questionable separation in the unity of the Ottoman society. From the very beginning *zimmis* had a place in the community. In early sources Muslims did not seem to be bothered about living with non-Muslims in Anatolia. On the contrary it is possible to say that they made efforts to minimize this difference as much as possible. However after the conquest of Istanbul, things began to change. With the rule of Mehmed II the process of turning a principality into a powerful and moreover a stable state commenced. In the hands of Ottoman bureaucrats a new way of living was shaped to the needs of newly founding metropolises around the Empire. Commercial and social relationships with non-Muslims paved the way to a strong awareness of the other and the self. Otherness was reasonably identified with *zimmi* status. The development of that approach requires more attention for when the Ottomans conquered a territory resettlement of the place was obligatory

and it was almost considered as a religious responsibility (İnalçık, 1970: 235). People forcibly moved to an underpopulated region from various places in the Empire. Thus new population was consisted of a strange combination. Among them were landless people, rebellious population and a refractory tribe of nomads. It was not only obligation but also many methods to encourage people to settle in newly conquered lands like İstanbul were followed. This policy obviously drew the picture of an Ottoman town having a multi-faceted structure. In the very beginning of the foundation of the state we can suppose that the society did not seem to have a mentality of alienation or otherness because there was not a group that was able to discern itself from the minority or to claim to be the majority. However the process of repopulation resulted in an inevitable settlement and helped the nomadic characteristic of the Ottoman society turn into a sedentary one. In time, especially after the conquest of İstanbul, we see the earlier signs of discrimination in public sphere. In other words it can be considered as the beginning of the self-awareness. Religion was the first to come. With the non-Muslim subjects' gain of wealth and influence in trade, in the guilds etc, the central authority had to demand a *fetva* from the religious authority (İnalçık, 1970: 248) to justify the situation on the rights of non-Muslim subject.

### **2.3 Custom vs. Unusual**

The awareness was based first on religious understanding. Naturally in the Ottoman society religion was a dominant element that led the course of daily life. The structure of a quarter which was the main object in city life allowed the society to live a religion-based life. Religious differences had a tremendous effect

on the formation of social identity and status. There were quarters that were composed of the members of one single religion. It was a tradition of Islamic city understanding from the early times. The application of this understanding in the Empire can be divided into two categories. First the separation was social. In a Muslim quarter a *zimmi* was not allowed to have a house. This rule was approved by *sharia* and pursued by the state. In legal cases a non-Muslim who bought a house in quarter where all residents were Muslim was forced to buy it back. The reason for that rule was the idea of protecting the character of the quarter. If it was Muslim it had to stay Muslim. The reason was explained in a decree dated 1743. What is significant is the understanding that created the pattern of such a division. Selling the house to a Muslim was considered 'in accordance with ancient custom', but when it was sold to a *zimmi* the decree reads (Kal'a, 1997: 139): "Upon investigation all of the residents said that the house aforementioned was in the quarter of Muslims and it had been a Muslim's residence since days of yore and an occupation by a non-Muslim was not custom". Therefore it was contrary to the ancient custom and to *sharia*. The central authority considered the issue so serious that non-Muslim members of a quarter were invited to Islam if they did not want to sell their houses (A. Refik, 1988b: 53):

(...) ehl-i İslam evlerini kefare alub bir tarik ile temellük eylese hakimü'l-vakt ol evleri ehl-i İslama bey itdirmeğe kadir olur mu deyu Şeyhü'l-İslamdan istifta olundukda eshabı olan kefareye İslam teklif oluna kabul etmezler ise cebren bey itdirilüb deyu iki kıta fetva-ı şerife virdigün bildirüb (...) zıkr olunan evlerin eshabını meclis-i şer-i şerife davet idüb İslam teklif eyliyesin kabul iderler ise giru evlerinde olalar müslüman olmazlar ise tenbih idüb mühel viresin ki evlerin ehl-i İslama bey eyliyer.

It may be argued that the main point for this rule is not to put some restrictions on non-Muslim subject or to favor Muslims in social life, but to prevent any change which would bring out anything unexpected and unusual. The fear of the unusual can not be understood as an ordinary respect to the traditional way of living. It has deep connections with the idea of the state. For the well-being of the state, endurance and continuity are the key factors. Each attempt to make changes in society could result in a possible social irregularity. Religion, thus, can be considered as one of the separating factors in a certain community as a means of order. To separate community into several smaller groups it was necessary to identify them by religious differences. At this point sacred places have more importance in terms of the idea of a social division. While quarters, as ordinary places of living, were protected by laws, they took care of sacred places as well. It was a crucial issue for keeping social order. In an Islamic country consequently mosques were at the center of this concentration. That's why selling or renting property neighboring a mosque was strictly forbidden. Many decrees concerning this kind of illegal trade reminded the community of the ban, while some others ordered to demolish illegally constructed churches.<sup>5</sup> They were illegal because they were newly constructed. However only the old ones were allowed for the religious requirements of the non-Muslim subject. The rule points out again another matter of past and present which should be translated as custom and irregularity in society. For there were cases prohibiting both Muslims and non-Muslims from building houses for sake of a religious building. A famous one is about the Ayasofya mosque. In 1573 due to serious damage caused by illegal

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<sup>5</sup> Kal'a (1997), 128, 176; A. Refik (1988a), 44, 45,46; MD 12-644.

constructions around Ayasofya it was decided to demolish the houses and to keep the owners away from Ayasofya. The description is quite remarkable, it reads: "bazı kimesne (...) sakın olub kadimî binaları bozub ahar binalar vaz idüb..." (A. Refik, 1988a: 22-23). In 1808, another remarkable case, although quite late one, is completely opposite to the previous examples. This time the authority rejected the demand for turning a church into a mosque just because Muslims prayed in it (A. Refik, 1988d: 20). The reason for rejection is pure and simple, this was against customs:

(...) diyar-ı İslamiyyeden bir belde vakıa vakt-i fetihden beru ehl-i zimmet kefare yedinde terk ve ibka olunan kenaisi kadimeden olduğu meşhur ve mütevater olan bir kenisede Zeyd-i müslim ezan okusa mücerred ol kenisede ezan okunmağla ol kenise mescid olmuş olur mu? El-cevap olmaz.

What is remarkable again is the description of the church: This church had been secured for the use of the non-Muslims from the days of its conquest. Any attempt to change its situation is against *sharia* because Islam secures the right of the previous owner (Ebu Yusuf, 1970: 225), regardless of their religion and guarantees the actual religious places of the *zimmis*, in return, it is forbidden to build new ones. The point is focused on the conditions of the building, not the status of the people in question. Therefore what was important was based on the characteristics of the object. This could have been anything; a *kadimî* house, a *kadimî* mosque or a *kadimî* practice. We can suppose that the separation aimed at preserving status quo by referring to religious or gender differences.

On the other hand the availability of many quarters involving settlers from



various religious groups living together seems to be contradictory to the understanding of religious separation. But it is a proof of the custom-irregularity notion. As explained above, it did not create trouble as long as it was in accordance with the custom. Thus the fact that Jews, Christians and Muslims living together in a same quarter was not considered as an exceptional case (Ergenç, 1984: 71-72). This might be a result of reconciliation policy of the state towards non-Muslim subject during the repopulation process.

Moreover, religious separation was not restricted to living places. In 1584 and 1587 two decrees (A. Refik, 1988a: 54, 56) concerned the conflict about the Jewish graveyard in Istanbul. In two cases it was decided that the Muslim settlers violated the rights of the Jewish community on their graveyard. The result was based on the reality that the Jews had been using that graveyard from of old.

As it was the case of gender, non-Muslim's clothing in general was conditioned by the similar characteristics. The state considered clothes as a means of separating factor and used this fact to strengthen the actual situation. In many decrees the central authority described the officially accepted regulation concerning non-Muslims' clothes. However we understand that the clothes frequently caused problems. The officials did not allowed them to be seen in Muslim's clothes. Any similarity was prohibited (A. Refik, 1988a: 47-48). The main reason for this was to prevent physical resemblance between Muslims and non-Muslims. The justification was not surprising: It was because of their clothing which was contradictory to the ancient custom (A. Refik, 1988a: 47): "Adet-i kadime mugayir telebbus iderler deyu.." On the other hand non-Muslims



had their rights as well. In a document dated 1595 the sultan reminded the officials of his previous decree securing the rights of the Jewish community in Istanbul. No one was allowed to disturb them about their accepted clothes (A. Refik, 1988b: 20).

In fact clothes did not make trouble only in the non-Muslims' lives. Since the appearance formed the necessary elements of individual identification, the way they wore had a social language to be used for recognizing a person in the society. The grammar of this language had to be regulated by the state for its own benefit. In public spheres, any time, the state should have been able to discern its subjects' identity in terms of religion, social status, profession and so on. By regulating their appearance, they settled a sort of codification which was recognizable by the officials. This understanding was another way of classification of smaller groups in the Ottoman society. An important source, *Kitab-u Mesalih-i Muslimin* (Yücel, 1980), obviously described the situation in the seventeenth century. The author dealing with the social problems of his time approved the importance of the issue by writing three chapters about clothing in his book. He described the actual problems and advised the sultan on the possible ways of solution. This time trouble was brought on by Muslim subject. Decrees concerning *levends* disguised themselves in Janissaries' clothing reflect that this problem was not restricted to a certain religious group or gender.<sup>6</sup>

Time and place constituted the main representatives of the religious consciousness in daily life. When describing the religious side of the city in the

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 3, Crime and Criminals.

Ottoman Empire it is not possible to ignore the religion-society relationship. This relation kept alive and functional the religious mind of ordinary man in the Empire.

There is no doubt that in premodern societies religion had a dominant figure upon daily life of people. Leaving aside its theoretical essence that was thoroughly articulated and discussed by a small elite, at every level of society the tremendous effect of religion on daily basis can not be denied. Its role as regulating factor of any kind of relationships provides us with a crucial dimension reflecting clues about how it took part in the life of ordinary people.

## **2.4 Belief and Living Places**

Whether town or village, the most important public place in an Ottoman habitation was undoubtedly mosque. First of all any kind of settlement for people required a mosque. In a quarter settlers needed a small mosque, while for a city it was a Friday mosque (Faroghi, 1984). Friday mosque's importance was due to its political meaning. Since it was built as a symbol of the power of the sultan, its religious and political characteristics can not be separated. On the other hand a Friday mosque with its stone architecture was also physically different than other buildings having a function in daily life. Quite reasonably this stone construction, while protecting it from frequent fires, perfectly served to represent the firm and huge image of the sovereign at the same time. Not only big cities but especially the smaller southwestern settlements of Anatolia had a large number of Friday mosques (Faroghi, 1984: 166). Thus big Friday mosques and smaller quarter or

village mosques seem to have functioned in many different aspects around the Empire. This was the main place to be faced by ordinary people and due to the multi-religious nature of the Empire, not only mosques but also non-Muslim subject's religious places pictured its appearance. Logically in travel accounts, written by Muslims or non-Muslims, these sort of buildings took an essential place. Foreign travelers of different sects like Simeon, Dernschwam and Grelot, although visited the Empire in different times, were eager to describe the remarkable and sometimes unique buildings of Christianity to their readers. Simeon, as a pious Armenian traveller, with great impatience sought for Armenian churches everywhere he visited and, informed his readers as if he was a tourist guide. Grelot (1998: vii), a Catholic French, gave a significant place to Ayasofya. By illustrating the mosque he believed that he gave information to the king about the places which would be conquered by his excellency in the future. Especially in Istanbul it was common to see churches, mosques together in the same quarter or village. In 1751 (Kal'a, 1997: 340) the Muslim settlers of the village Karaca petitioned about the bell sounds heard outside the church. As for mosques, considering the religious and political messages presented by these buildings, for their construction and every effort was made. When needed, marble, iron, stone supplies, skilled workers, even money were gathered from various parts around the Empire without hesitation.<sup>7</sup> What is significant is the fact that the sultan's serious interest in these sort of supplies could not be observed for another issue except palace and *köşk* constructions. On the other hand, officially allowed churches could be restored and repaired (i.e. in case of fire, earthquake

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<sup>7</sup> A. Refik (1988a), 21; (1988b), 41; (1988c), 168, 191, 215; Dağhoğlu (1940), 108-109, 113.

etc.) according to *sharia* (A. Refik, 1988c: 10).

These places did not only function as religious centers, but also had social influence upon people. For achieving a settlement the need for a mosque was not just a religious detail. Quarters were represented by *imams* before the central authority. He offered petitions concerning local problems, and could to testify for or against suspected persons in the quarter. He was a sort of means between settlers and the local authority. Thus a mosque also represented and meant a social center concerning daily affairs. In social matters (Kal'a, 1997: 218) non-Muslims too were represented by their religious leaders.

## 2.5 Court

Courts in the course of Ottoman daily life should be considered as places with religious nature. Since its concept of justice was based on Islamic jurisprudence and its practice on *sharia*, (*urf* was important and valid as long as it remained in accordance with *sharia*), the process and final judgment of cases should have reflected Islamic principles, or at least Islamic nature. We might mention oaths and its denials as a good example. In many cases accuser and accused ones were supposed to make oath to convince the *kadı*. Since a Muslim is not allowed to make false oaths they tried to have a right judgment. If one of them refused to make an oath (*nukul*) then the *kadı*'s judgment became against him or her (Şer'iye Sicilleri II, 1989: 224):

Cemaat-i Dadeği'den Mehmed bin Ali Pir  
meclis-i şer'e Aişe bint-i Hüseyin'i ihzar  
eyleyüb üzerine takrir-i da'va kılub didi ki,  
mezbur Aişe beni muhkem let eyleyüb doğdü

deyücek mezbure Aişe'ye sual olundukda  
ba'de'l-inkar mezbur Mehmed beyyineden aciz  
ve kasır oldukda mezbure Aişe yemininde  
nükul eyledükde nükul ile hükm olunıb  
gıbbe't-taleb sicil olundu.

Mosques played a role for providing a meeting place for the Muslim residents of the quarter. Although we do not know precisely whether some people preferred to pray in their houses, however getting together in mosques did also serve to confirm one's place as a recognized and trustworthy member of the community (Ergenç, 1984: 73). That's why the *cemaat* concept was very powerful and efficient. Accusing a certain member of not praying (*namaz*) might be considered as an important proof for the mosque-*namaz* relationship. It is obvious that people had the right to accuse someone of not praying, in other words if a Muslim did not come up to mosque during prayer time it could be interpreted that he did not pray at all. That was enough to be seen as a dangerous and potential criminal threatening the order in the society. As an opposite case some Muslims did not hesitate to drink alcohol secretly. Lady Montagu (42) wrote about a well-educated official, Ahmed Bey, that she met in Belgrad. He claimed that wine was just prohibited in order to prevent social disorder. But it was allowed to drink at an acceptable level. Thus he did drink wine out of sight to prevent rumor among ordinary people. It may be argued that social pressure had influence on individuals as much as religious obligations did. Sometimes it was enough 'to look as if' rather than to be. Because violation of religious rules could be more embarrassing in public eye than in God's eye.

## 2.6 Craftsmen

The same mentality of division was pursued for craftsmen as well. Like the differentiation of religion or gender, there were rules for determining craftsmen in society. The members of each class had to wear clothes indicative of their situation. Moreover the law forbade them to wear luxurious garments.<sup>8</sup>

Craftsmen were represented by their own leaders *kethüda* and *yığitbaşı* before the state (İnalcık, 1976: 152-3). The central government faced many petitions (A. Refik, 1988a: 131) concerning craftsmen's problems articulated by these leaders. Crafts guilds in Ottoman cities contained a great part of the population. In fact this system (*ahilik*) was rooted in *fütüvve* ethics of the early Islamic tradition. That's why, although its purpose seemed to be economic and earthly, it had a very religious nature. Each guild had a *şeyh* as a spiritual leader. He was not in the position of an administrator, but his authority was powerful enough to keep this spirituality alive in mind. Having obtained such a structure these communities matched well with the contemporary religious understanding in the Ottoman society. This side was supported by another influential factor. As explained before, the composition of 'otherness' among different social groups had a undeniable role and this can not be ignored in the craft guilds. They certainly had an awareness of their groups and did not permit any *hamdest* (unskilled amateurs) in the community. To be a member of a certain guild required a long and hard process from youth as *şakird*.<sup>9</sup> At the turning points of this process, namely *kalfalık* and *ustalık*, a traditional and religious ceremony approved the end

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<sup>8</sup> İnalcık (1976), 150.

<sup>9</sup> İnalcık (1976), 152; Ergenç (1995), 91.

of a term and beginning of another one. This was necessary in terms of social respect and proficiency in the eye's of the people. While training new members for the guild, they had to protect themselves from outer interventions by non-member amateurs. Because this situation resulted in their loss of economic power and emergence quality problems. Many petitions (İnalçık, 1976: 158; Yıldırım, 2000: 153-4) about the poor quality of products did occur especially in the sixteenth century. In 1564 the number of workshops in Istanbul was more than three hundred and most of them violated the regulation or did not meet the requirements. Thus, the Sultan ordered (A. Refik, 1988a: 108) to pull this number back to one hundred. In 1577 (A. Refik, 1988a: 116) it was ordered to ban overflowing limestone (*kireç*) shops. Another ban (A. Refik, 1988b: 18) was put on flower shops. With the overpopulation in big cities the protection of skilled craftsmen began to fail. As stated by İnalçık (1976: 159) and Mantran (1962: 393) not only unskilled or incompetent producers but also military groups intruded into the producers' area. Between Janissaries and craftsmen a social conflict and hostility occurred. This change gradually effected the daily habits and life standard of ordinary people. Instead of high quality production under strict rules, they faced an overproduction which lowered quality and raised fixed prices. The Ottoman economy based on plenty now began to experience a shortage of many raw materials due to uncontrolled production. The central authority's attempts to keep them away from guilds often failed. The problem was described by the authority (A. Refik, 1988b: 131, 134) as 'disobedience to the custom and law'.

Commercial life did not put restrictions unlike any other social relationship. The notions of *zimmi* and infidel were not taken into consideration

too much in commerce. Documents concerning commercial activities in various court records give us a general picture of the size and character of this close relationship. Istanbul, Bursa, Ankara and some other commercial centers witnessed a huge and long connection in terms of trade. Merchants from European countries, even though they were part of *Daru'l-harb*, did not cause trouble for Ottomans who were accustomed to live with non-Muslims. Anatolia and the Balkans had important trade centers fed by international trade routes. From the very beginning Ottoman merchants had had close connections with their "infidel" colleagues. Moreover this many-sided picture had been completed by Arab and Persian merchants. Different religions, different cultures, different languages, different appearances were natural and ordinary in the Ottoman *hans*, caravanserais, markets, or *bedestans*. Accordingly one might observe the mixture of money. As indicated by various travellers (And, 1994: 171) Italian and Spanish money were often used.

One of the earliest sources demonstrating the intensive commercial activities between Muslim and non-Muslim merchants is the court records of Bursa. As early as 1470's (see İnalcık, 1960, no 1, 2, 7, 14, 24) many *zimmi*s had close relationship with their Muslim colleagues especially in terms of textile trade. Additionally European merchants could be found in the famous trade centers of Rumeli as early as *zimmi*s. It is reasonably more difficult to trade for European merchants in the Empire. They should have tried to find bilingual *zimmi*s or other Europeans who were familiar with the Ottoman customs, laws and way of life. In the early Bursa records a certain named *Benedit oğlu Maryot* seems to be one of them. In 25 September 1484 (İnalcık, 1981: 75, no. 80) Maryot and



another *Efrenc* called Cano declared that their debt to Hoca Ibrahim in return for *sof* was delayed until the end of October. Two months later, another document (İnalcık, 1981: 78, no. 97) mentions Maryot as the absolute agent of a Venetian merchant. The Venetian gave him full authority concerning any commercial and legal issue. Later on we see another case about him. In April 1485 (İnalcık, 1981: 83, no. 132), Mehmed, the agent of the custom duties, informed that he owed 10.000 akça to Maryot and some of this debt would be paid by a certain Hoca Sadreddin. In June 5, *Civanbatist oğlu Lorenzo*, an *Efrenc*, chose Maryot as his agent (*vekili'l-mutlak*) in the *liva* of Biga and other places.<sup>10</sup> Then Maryot, one week later, passed his authorization to another *zimmi Civan oğlu Bernado* to operate in Biga.<sup>11</sup> In an early document we learn that a certain Maryot (*Maryot nam efrenc*) had the revenues of the Bursa custom as *iltizam* for a while. But the previous holder of the same custom İlyas took it back by increasing the price in 1480.<sup>12</sup> This might be the same Maryot. As a result it is possible to argue that Benediit oğlu Maryot was a of Italian origin, possibly bilingual, very familiar with the commercial life in the Empire, and had been working with both non-Muslim and Muslim merchants and officials. On the other side, merchants from the Arab lands and Persia partook in this activities (İnalcık, 1981, no. 18, 21, 27, especially see İnalcık, 1960). In time more merchants from different nations appeared and began to trade around the Empire. English, Polish, French, German merchants visited the important commercial centers in the Ottoman Empire. This helped to strength the circumstances generated by a multi-religious and multi-cultural way

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<sup>10</sup> İnalcık (1981), 84, no. 140.

<sup>11</sup> İnalcık (1981), 84, no. 141.

<sup>12</sup> İnalcık (1960), 87, no. 29.

of life in the Ottoman society.

Another surprising situation was the participation of women in the commercial life around the Empire. In fact it was only natural to find data concerning women's activities in big cities such as Istanbul, Bursa. Women could make agreement, payment, sell or any kind of commercial activities with other women.<sup>13</sup> There are many cases that women went to *meclis*, the court, in person and followed the legal procedure. On the other side some preferred to send a man as proxy. A remarkable example from the court records of Harput gives the details of a sale agreement between two women and two men. But these two men were in the court just on behalf of another woman who sold her house to the women. Besides, one of the men was the husband of the seller.<sup>14</sup> Not only between women but also trade with men was not few.<sup>15</sup> As far as court records are concerned women who did not wish to be in the court personally preferred their fathers, husbands, and rarely their sons to represent them.<sup>16</sup> In addition women made frequently transactions within family as well. Between father and daughter or mother and daughter business was often done. In Ankara (Ongan, 1974: 24, no. 305), a woman named Efendibula, represented by her husband before the *kadı*, sold a mill to her daughter. In another interesting 'family business' example (Ongan, 1974: 45, no. 600) Kasım sold his share in his deceased father's house to his mother. Certainly this was not valid only for Ankara. As Haim Gerber stated (1980), in Bursa

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<sup>13</sup> Şer'iye Sicilleri (1989), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Şer'iye Sicilleri (1989), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Şer'iye Sicilleri (1989), 30, 34, 35, 38, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Ongan (1974), 22, no. 276; 31, no. 399; 34, no. 463; 100, no. 1315.

[women] sold property to other members of their families, and bought property from them. (...) Sometimes women sold their shares in pieces of real estate, which they held in common with other members of their families, to third parties. (...) Many documents in the *kadı* records of seventeenth century Bursa show that women were intensely involved in selling, buying and leasing of urban and village real estate.

A similar situation was described by Ronald Jennings for women in seventeenth century Kayseri (Jennings, 1975). Although women in Kayseri were not as involved in commerce as in Bursa, however they participated in public life. Not only Muslim women made transactions, the records (Ongan, 1974: 31, no. 401; Şer'iye Sicilleri, 1989, 2) demonstrate that in Ankara a Jewish woman Simha sold her house in a Jewish quarter to her son.

But the remarkable rate of this efficient participation happened to be even in distant cities from Rumeli. The Arab lands namely Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus seem to have commercial activities led by women as frequent as the Capital or Anatolian trade centers (Ze'evi (2000: 89).

## 2.7 FIRES

There is no doubt that disasters were part of daily life in the Empire. Leaving out some extraordinary cases such as earthquake or flood, particularly fire was almost expected everyday. Many official records demonstrate that especially in big cities the authorities continuously warned people about fire and put new regulations in order to prevent a future fire. This need was not based on a useless overestimation since people did not seem to be very concerned about the issue whether

deliberately or not. It is not surprising that the importance of fire for daily needs and the extensive use of wooden material in daily life resulted in numerous accidents. In big cities under the pressure of the continuously increasing population, urgent need for housing often caused to violation of the rules regulating urban planning. A decree to the *kadı* and *subaşı* of Istanbul summarizes the history of struggle against fire covering a period of more than twenty years in Istanbul. The decree which was written in 1558 reminds the local authorities of a previous order written in 1536 demanding to forbid building houses and shops close to or on the city walls and to demolish them. It also prohibits to store timber around the walls<sup>17</sup>. According to the rules (A. Refik, 1988a: 58-59) every building should have been at least 4 *arşun* far from the walls. At the conclusion the decree emphasizes that it was a repetition of the previous decree placed almost twenty years ago and it would be in force for the future. Following year we have another decree about the fire in Galata. While rebuilding the houses residents had to use *kerpiç* and were not allowed to have fringe (*saçak*) (A. Refik, 1988a: 59). But measures and orders do not seem to have worked much. Fires did not cease in Istanbul and in 1572 a decree (A. Refik, 1988a: 60-61) was placed concerning new measures. This time the sultan demanded from everyone in Istanbul to have stairs (*merdiven*) and a barrel (*fıçı*) of water and in case of fire they were expected to wait calmly for the Janissaries and help them. Thus we realize that during fire one of the main problems was the disorder and panic among people. At the end, sometimes a whole quarter disappeared and fire left behind nothing but hundreds

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<sup>17</sup> In many cities of the premodern time similar measures were taken to prevent fires. For instance in 1406 The Ragusan government decided to systematically demolish all wooden houses in the city and to replace them with stone or dry-wall-built houses. See Krekić, (1997).

of dead and homeless people. Necati Bey, a sixteenth century poet, possibly a witness of these sort of fires dealt with them in terms of love in his heart implying the social facts (Aylar, 1999: 459):

Can u dil almaga hecrun yuregime od urur  
Ki yaka yika evum varimi ide tarac

We see many decrees (for example A. Refik, 1988b: 17) regulating construction and urban planning in order to minimize damages caused by fire. An interesting one written in 1696 points out an important issue about the struggle against fire. The Sultan forbade to use timber in any construction in Istanbul. The law reads (A. Refik, 1988c: 21): ".. as buildings in Anatolia, Aleppo and Damascus, from now on use limestone, mud for construction." Taking the overpopulation of Istanbul into consideration the measure did not surprise us. The long prohibition on timber-based buildings in the capital resulted in shortage of stone by increasing prices. This should have paved the way to a more dangerous, forbidden but anyway much cheaper stuff which was timber. Other documents seem to explain the current situation about the issue. In 1697 a decree was issued to regulate brick production. Since bricks coming from Hore to Istanbul were flawed people had to face a shortage of bricks. Thus it was obligatory to follow regulations determined by architects.<sup>18</sup> Another document explained another reason for that shortage. Due to out of service *fırın*s (bakery) in the capital, it occurred a high demand of brick. Consequently these producers should have been supported immediately.<sup>19</sup> Next time the problem was not brick but unqualified

<sup>18</sup> A. Refik (1988c), 31: "...İstanbul'a gelen kiremidlerin nizamına halel gelüb zaman-ı kalilde fena bulmağla ..."

<sup>19</sup> A. Refik (1988c), 35: "...fırın ve karhanelerin imar ve ihyası mühim ve muktezi olmağın..."

staff. In 1698 a decree commanded to be careful about persons who sold flawed material.

Istanbul seems to have been suffered most, because of many reasons. Eremya Çelebi, an Armenian author lived at the second half of the seventeenth century in the Empire, states the problems in the capital causing fire so frequently. His first observation was the Ottomans' belittlement about fire. The huge amount of wood coming to the capital from various places made easy and cheap timber-based construction. Accidents by careless people and planned attempts to burn went together in the Empire (Andreasyan, 1973: 59-84). Derviş Mustafa Efendi (1994: 19) in his work *Harik Risalesi* states that the obvious reasons of fire were the lack of rain, high temperatures, winds and a social one, the fact that the High Council accepted to pay a lot to firemen.

In fact it is not easy to discern accidents from planned fires since it could be very beneficial. According to Derviş Mustafa Efendi, even if it could draw people's support, promise of a high payment easily turned fires into a profitable business. Eventually there was no need for an official payment to attract interests. The Janissaries already learnt how to deal with fire. Another important source can help us understand why there were so many fires. A fire sometimes meant more than a disaster to them but an opportunity to pillage the houses in case of the disorder during fire. So a lover or a Janissary could destroy everything a man had at that time. Busbecq, ambassador of Austria to the Empire, in his private letters told a similar story (Aylar, 1999: 460):

There was a big fire on the day we have arrived. The Janissaries as usually tried to end

the fire by demolishing the surrounding houses to keep the fire back. It is not surprising that Turkish soldiers want to have fire around, because they rob not only the burnt houses but also surrounding ones while demolishing them. For that reason they occasionally put the houses on fire.

We have a similar reflection in the Ottoman poetry. Necati Beg described the process during fire (Aylar, 1999: 460):

Gam ü gussa üşüp gönlüm evin yıkdıkları  
budur

Ki etrafa ulaşmaya derunumda yanan ateş

The notion of city has several aspects to be examined. However some of them are mentioned in this chapter. Social system in the Empire created divisions based on different principles. To pass from one to another is almost impossible, and attempts, with few exceptions, are considered as disobedience to the actual situation. On the other hand the authorities did not interfere in their interrelation in terms of commercial life. Thus firm restrictions put by the authority to rule social life began to lose power when something is to be done that is beneficial for the state. On the other hand there was an effectual position of the customs. As long as customs and habits that are not always necessarily religious, serve the state, any sort of innovation are considered a threat to the regular life in the Empire. Thus the state has an inevitable powerful impact on the everyday life of an ordinary Ottoman.

## CHAPTER 3

### CRIME & CRIMINALS

As for the daily difficulties of ordinary Ottoman people, there are many sources. For problems, natural or human based, mostly are subject to complain about, or worth recording. Fires, earthquakes, flood, are among the main concerns of the central authority, while fights, robberies, conflicts, disorders, everything against the law or threatening the current social order, no matter how local, are quite important for the officials. Their concern is not surprising, the *raison d'etat* could and should have justified their actions. In *Mühimme* registers, we find serious answers by the central government to unexpectedly insignificant issues, let's say, dealing with problems in a small quarter. But the principals of the Ottoman state were determined by the 'justice' concept. Anything that could threaten *nizam-i alem* attracted an official and high concern. Upon this understanding we can have numerous and various documents referring to everyday basics of social life by reflecting the unjust or unexpected.

Criminal cases are among the leading problems in society. If it is possible to classify these sort of social problems roughly, two main titles could be put in this classification: Common cases which affect few people and more critical and severe cases which cause great parts of society.

Small and ordinary cases might have happened anytime, anywhere. Generally one who left his native place whether for a long time or not, could be considered a potential victim. In many court registers we understand that travel



prepared a good opportunity for ordinary crimes. *Kuttau't-tariks* were mentioned many times in official records. Especially passages that were not protected well, as described by the officials *mahuf*, frightening, were open to such raids.<sup>1</sup> Not only to ordinary people but even to high officials it could have happened.<sup>2</sup> A *kadı* on the way to his new office in Gökbuze (Gebze) met the robbers and soon a second attack found him between Gökbuze and Dil, he became victim again.<sup>3</sup> Even on a main road like the Bursa-Mudanya line, the son of the *mütevelli* of Medina could be robbed.<sup>4</sup> In 1581 the officials was attacked while gathering *cizye* tax. The danger, although weaker, in caravanserais or *derbends* did not completely disappear. For crowded bandit groups did not hesitate to attack these protected places. We know of the merchants robbed while staying in the *derbend* of Aksu near İnegöl.<sup>5</sup> Robbers quite reasonably preferred nighttime. Thus finding volunteers for the *derbend* system not surprisingly became hard in time. In 1567, for the protection of the *derbend* of Söğüd (which was quite *mahuf*) the *kadı* of Bursa after having a permission from the central government (Dağlıoğlu, 1940: 52) tried to find appropriate applicants among *yaya*, *müsellem* and some other people. But just some *yayas* and *müsellems* dared to apply while no *reaya* became volunteer. Another record (MD 5: 192) demands from the *kadı* to find out the murderers of a merchant staying in a *han*. Simeon too, pointed out that even in caravanserais and *hans* security was not perfectly achieved. For example, an

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<sup>1</sup> MD 5-48.

<sup>2</sup> MD 5-137.

<sup>3</sup> MD 5-141.

<sup>4</sup> MD 5-62.

<sup>5</sup> MD 5-271.

extreme case of robbery occurred in Lefke in 1573. A group, at least fifty, attacked the Rüstem Paşa caravanserai and captured it for a time.<sup>6</sup>

Of course not only on the roads they committed crimes. They recorded many cases concerning houses, even a church that were among the targets of the criminals (see MD 5- 11, 38, 36; Dağlıoğlu 51-65). These groups did not always consist of vagabonds or homeless outlaws, on the contrary in many cases soldiers of the Empire like *Janissaries* or *sipahis*, and even *medrese* students as mentioned in the documents '*suhte*' partook in such violence.

Koçi Bey's statement about the lack of discipline among soldiers seems to be right (Koçi Bey, 1994: 59): "They go to campaign when they want. They do not have any obedience, any fear of the authority. Is it soldier of Islam?"<sup>7</sup> Results of such a disorder caused by soldiers or anyone with power came out as the central authority began to lose its strength. One of these results is more ironical. In 1571 some townsmen in Bursa submitted a petition (Dağlıoğlu, 1940: 63) about the *levends* that disguised themselves in *sipahis*' clothing and did harm to the villagers. Could they do that owing to the notorious behavior of the *sipahis* or was it just a medium for disguise? Another record dated in the same year is reflecting a similar case. The decree demands to punish armed *ehl-i fesads* wearing Janissarie's clothing. They caused outrage outside the town and went hunting in the mountains. The problem was their muskets because no one was allowed to use firearms except *Janissaries* and *Sipahis*.<sup>8</sup> Not only outlaws, but also some

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<sup>6</sup> Dağlıoğlu (1940), 74, no. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Koçi Bey (1994). Yılmaz Kurt (ed.): "*İstedikleri zaman sefere giderler. İtaat yok, taraf-ı saltanattan hayf ü haşyet yok. Asker-i İslam böyle mi olur?*"

<sup>8</sup> Dağlıoğlu (1940), 69-99.

peasants used firearms illegally to hunt.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is not possible to argue that illegal use of firearms served only bandits and criminals, quite reasonably hunt is livelihood. To complete the picture another important case should be mentioned here. The growing power of Janissaries in the Empire affected many things on the political stage. But social changes are not to be ignored. Undoubtedly their abuse of power and use of violence should have caused severe problems. But much wider and frequent problem with them perhaps occurred with the beginning of their involvement into commercial life. It can be seen its influence on both economic and social ground of the Empire. In Bursa (Dağhoğlu, 1940: 88), bakers complained about the Janissaries and *sipahis* who became involved in baking business. Consequently they caused a shortage. Not only baking, but many other businesses drew the military class' attention from the late sixteenth century onward. Their effort to move to another part of the society and its reasons can help to explain social shocks of the time.

These cases should not mean that whole military class was undergoing a severe corruption at the end of the sixteenth century. There are many cases to prove their loyalty and good working for sake of the state. One must keep in mind that conflicts, disputes, violence among townsmen and peasants still had a larger place in official records. (See Ongan, 1974: 86, 87, 114, 119).

Like social safety, moral order was established on the ordinary people's reaction. People who lived in a certain quarter (*mahalle*) had the right to petition the local *kadı* for any matter they did not like to see in their quarter. There is a lot

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<sup>9</sup> Dağhoğlu (1940), 62-87.

of petitions and their results recorded in *Mühimme* and court registers. Since the social order was arranged by a self-control system every quarter was responsible for its own society. The system of verification and its opposite method of complaint constituted peace and safety of the quarter. The reason of having many petitions demanding the exclusion of immoral men and women around. These demands were supported generally by the people's testimony. In 1565 a decree to the *kadı* of Galata demands to sell their houses and to drive them out of the city (A. Refik, 1988a: 38):

Galata kadısına hükm ki sūdde-i saadetime suret-i sicil gönderüb Galata haricinde merhum sultan cihangir cami mahallesi halkı meclisi şer'e gelüb mahallemizde Arap Fatı ve Narin ve Giritlü Nefise ve Atlu Ases dinmekle marufe Kamer ve Balatlu Ayni nam avretler yaramazlık ile meşhurdurlar didiklerinde Arab Fatıya adem gönderilüb davet olundukda gaybet idüb sayirleri gelüb muvacehelerinde cemaat-i müslimin yaramazlardır deyu mahalle halkından müderris Mevlana Muhyiddin ve Katib Mehmed ve İlyas ve Sinan Halife ve sair Müslümanlar şهادet idüb ve sabıkan mezburenin ahvalini teftiş için imam ve müezzin ve cemaat evi önüne vardıklarında imamınıza ve kadınıza ve şeriatinize lanet deyu şetm idüb ve bundan akdem kalafatçı mahallesinde namahrem ile basılub ve bundan gayri mezbure Arab Fatının evinde dahi namahrem ile basılub mahalli fesadı şenaatdır evi satılub mahallemizden giderilmesin rica ideriz didiklerin bildirdiğün ecilden buyurdum ki hükmi şerifim varıcak zıkr olunan avretlerin cebr ile evlerin bey' itdirüb kendülerin şehirden sürüb ve küfür söyliyən yeniçeri avreti dahi tecdid-i iman itdirildikten sonra eri gelince zindanda habs itdiresin.

But this is not a simple and quick process. As seen in the document, the story has three stages. First a regular petition informed the *kadı* on the immoral situation in the quarter. Among them were prestigious people in society like a *müderriş*, and a *katib*. Then the *kadı* invited the person in question. Finally a group consisted of the moral and also social representatives of the quarter, namely *imam* and *müezzin* went to control them. After verification of the complaint their exclusion was ordered. Two years later, a similar decree commands to drive out the men who married these sort of immoral women (A. Refik, 1988a: 39).

The demand of exclusion from the quarter was not always based women's immoral actions. In two similar cases Muslim residents led by *imam*, *müezzin* and other respectable persons mentioned with titles such as *Şeyh*, *Seyyid*, *El-Hac* expected from the authorities to force a whole family out of the quarter.<sup>10</sup>

There were some other ways to prevent actions against moral order in town. A decree to the *kadı* of Eyüb forbids women to enter some shops due to rumors about women meeting non-Muslim men in those places. That was an obvious violation of *sharia* and should have been prohibited (A. Refik, 1988a. 40). What is remarkable is that these measures were taken upon civil petitions. To establish order in a certain quarter residents did not hesitate to inform officials about the new situation which was considered, not necessarily a crime, but an immoral behavior according to the resident's moral values. Thus each quarter in town had its own authority and self-control of judgment on behalf of the *sharia*. Since the safety and morality of the quarter was more important than other

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<sup>10</sup> Şer'iye Sicilleri II (1989), 139-140; Ongan (1974), 20.

criteria especially if sacred places like Eyüb was in question. Mostly public petitions were welcomed and answered by the central government in accordance with the residences' expectations. This was nearly a must for a sustainable order.

On the other hand, every petition concerning moral issues did not result in a certain verdict and execution for the accused. It was not taken for granted for the petitioners. Court registers demonstrate that unproved claims required punishment. In 1547 a woman named Aişe proved the falsity of an accusation of prostitution against her.<sup>11</sup> In a similar case, about two hundred years later, upon a trustworthy testimony, the court decided to punish the man who accused his neighbor Ahmed Ağa of adultery and infidelity.<sup>12</sup>

In each case the main principle to be able to get a result required the trustworthiness of the one who accused or who was accused. In the Empire, in order to establish and maintain the social order the quarter or any other settlement was responsible for its own residents. The most important thing was the confidence of other people. This sort of system provided them with a individual safety based on community's trust.<sup>13</sup> This community inevitably offered a safe place as long as individual was a good member of the society. Therefore he or she would be a trustworthy member in the community's eyes so that no false accusation, ill-treatment or unjust action would be able to do harm to him or her.

Criminal cases had a social side affecting the course of daily life of those who were not directly concerned with in the Empire. If a murderer could not be

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<sup>11</sup> Şer'iye Sicilleri II (1989), 92.

<sup>12</sup> Şer'iye Sicilleri II (1989), 91.

<sup>13</sup> Yılmaz (2000), 94; Ergenç (1984), 73-75.

identified the Ottoman criminal law forced the residents of that quarter to pay a fee called *diyet* as a punishment. But some times it was possible to find cases of illegal *diyet* charges by the officials. Upon complaints (Kal'a, 1997: 160) it was continuously declared that in case of natural death no *diyet* could be demanded because *diyet* was legitimate only in criminal cases. This decree emphasized that accidental deaths by being burnt, being attacked by animals, falling down a tree, a rock, by thunder did not require *diyet*. That's why they had to inform local authorities about natural deaths in a certain place, so that they did not have to pay a *diyet* (Gökçen, 1946: 93):

A member of *yaylak*, while coming from the market of Menemen on his way to the village named Dere, due to the lack of a means of transport, walked by the river, then by the will of God, the barrier was demolished and he and his dog sank in the river.

In fact crime was generally an inevitable part of Ottoman daily life. The authority continuously tried to stop criminal cases by using different methods. It was important because the *nizam-ı alem* principle onto which the whole Ottoman system was based required a safe life.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **TRAVEL AND COMMUNICATION**

#### **4.1 Change of Place and Identity**

Going from one place to another was not an ordinary activity in Ottoman daily life. The main factors that shaped the travel life in the Empire were primarily based on the large size of its land, at the same time as the possibility of traveling by sea. Let alone long travels from the Balkans to the Asia Minor, or Rumeli to the Arab peninsula, even in the capital, owing to the highly troublesome geographical situation of the city, a shorter tour might have been significant. Poor travelling conditions and hard territorial circumstances often turned even a simple travel into a matter of life or death. Undoubtedly not only geographical difficulties, or meteorological conditions were effective; there were many unnatural factors that should have been taken into consideration such as bandits, robbers, rebels.

Another important factor ruling a traveler's life, volunteer or not, in the classical period of the Ottoman Empire was the problem of identity. Man in medieval times had strong connection with the place in which he lived. Place was a representation of the identity. He was identified by his city, or more specifically, his quarter. A change of place would mean a change of social status losing his personal position he acquired where he had been living. In a new place, everyone was stranger, or the traveler was an outsider. Settlements of the time were based on a simple principle; each quarter was a world itself and formed the



small parts of a bigger unit. The fact that settlers of a quarter knew each other well, was not only a natural result of living in narrow streets, of a moral demand of Islam, but essentially an obligation put by the central authority.

## **4.2 Aims and Methods**

There could be numerous reasons for beginning a travel; pilgrimage, commercial purposes, appointment for an office, even military campaign were among the most likely motives for a travel. Whatever its purpose, a traveler should take into consideration any probability including a sudden death. Although the methods of traveling had been evolved a great deal in time in order to avoid unexpected situations, for central authority, changing place was always of great importance. Transportation was attached to another vital system for the Empire and that was communication. In an empire whose nature mainly depended on territorial expanding, with an administrative system based on central bureaucratic authority, exchanging messages between places required proper and sustainable attention. That's why two important factors designed to meet these needs interchangeably fed and improved each other: *Ulaks* and *menzilhanes*. While *menzilhanes* were founded for the benefit of people and state officials, mostly for postmen called "Tatar", caravanserais were open to merchants. Since temporary dwelling during travel took long time, travel played a crucial role in people's life. Commercial activities, religious visits, military campaigns, and many other issues had to do with the safety of the roads.

For any kind of transport horse and camel were mostly preferred animals. Since for non-Muslims riding horse in towns were forbidden they were allowed to

ride a horse-like animal called 'bargir'. However, if it was a caravan camels had an unavoidable importance especially for long term travels (Gökçen, 1946: 53, no. 34). Simeon observed that from Istanbul to Sivas they favored horses, then towards inner Anatolia *bargir* and camel were preferred and finally eastern Anatolia whose roads and towns were in danger by the sweeping uprisings of Celali and Kızılbaş, bull was the only tolerable animal in the eyes of Janissaries. Simeon himself had to pay a lot of money to save his *bargir* in Muş.

Trade has always been depended on transportation. Undoubtedly in pre-modern times to feed the city was a crucial matter. Every settlement needed to produce in order to get what they did not have so that a continuous circle following a "give and take" principle to feed the city. This principle required one basic element: Transportation of the products. Therefore they established local markets where the producers, generally peasants met and traded. This understanding is not just a way of trading, but also a backbone of the Ottoman financial system in the province. The Ottoman Empire followed essentially a decentralized system in its finances because of its vast territory (İnalçık, 1994: 53).

The fact that half the *timar* revenues were paid in kind resulted in a crucial importance of transportation in the rural economy. This system consequently enforced peasants to convert their product into cash by taking it to the towns and the rural periodic markets. In many *kanunnames* (İnalçık, 1994: 71), peasants are supposed to bring his surplus produce to the nearest local periodic markets. This means that the *sipahis* had the right to demand free transportation to the market

that was not more than a day's travel. Beyond these local markets, a great direct move from village to town provided the citizens with their daily needs. On the other hand it is not surprising to expect vice versa. In many law books, we find exact information about the fact that there were citizens who did not wait for produces to come to the town. They preferred to go and collect them before. The law itself explains the reason of such an attempt: If one buys something before it was taken to the local market (or to the town) there is no tax on it. But this kind of trade is illegal. Therefore the produce had to be conveyed to a local market or to the town so that it could be taxed. In result, it is not surprising to expect the very existence of this illegal but quite profitable trade. So trade did not pass only from village to the town.

Travel for trade on the basis of local markets is just part of this picture. Beside the peasant-citizen (or producer-consumer) relationship in terms of changing places, with a wider look, caravan trade had always been more remarkable for it took much more time and much more money. The importance of the camel can be easily seen in long-distance transportation. Big caravans from India, Tabriz or Mecca paved the way to establish the main trade routes alongside Asia Minor. Commercial centers or caravanserais built on the official caravan routes became one of the main social factors that shaped the course of settlement-population movement. On the other hand since economic power means political stability, to keep trade routes and caravanserais safe and sustainable were worth fighting for. Timur's destruction of main stations of the silk trade in the north was not an ordinary military issue but the result of a struggle to keep Tabriz as the center of the trade of raw silk. The Ottoman annexation of Ankara, Osmancık,

Amasya and Erzincan were the gradual steps in taking control of the principal centers of the silk route to the east.

Travel for religious purposes did not seem to be very different from commercial one. Although it is not possible to suppose whether people preferred caravans, they must reasonably avoid as much as possible traveling alone or in small groups that did not satisfy the traveler for the safety of the travel. Therefore a bigger caravan simply but not necessarily meant a safer travel. The number of people in the caravan determined the commercial nature of the group. A long way caravan, thus, as if it was a small town with its own commercial life, could offer a perfect possibility to the travelers. To turn the caravan into a moving town was easy with different people from different economic backgrounds. A poor *hacı* could easily act as a merchant to make his long journey possible with a sell and buy principle, while a rich one preferred to make it a business travel. A caravan might be big enough to trade for the poor and the rich. In fact a journey that took months must have necessarily provided them with a chance for making a living. Thus it should be considered as part of the daily life of the Ottomans. They had to work, earn money and afford the travel, in short, travelers needed to survive. On the other hand a big caravan did not necessarily ensure a safer travel. On the contrary it could attract more attention of Bedouins or any other groups. They did not always face ordinary robbery, sometimes attacks to a caravan had political reasons.<sup>1</sup> A *hacı* could have been killed on his way to Mecca because of a conflict (Faroghi, 1994: 66) between central government and a leader of a local Bedouin tribe or between two tribes. And this was much more serious than any ordinary

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<sup>1</sup> Faroghi (1994), 69.

robbery, for they aimed at doing harm to the caravan as an enemy. In fact, caravans accompanied by a lot of armed men had a non-civil nature and perhaps this made easy to attack a group of pious men. In a document dated 979 the *defterdar* (keeper of register) of Damascus confirmed that every year a *hacc* caravan required two hundred Janissaries and one hundred *sipahis* for the security of the group.<sup>2</sup> In another document (Faroqhi, 1994: 76) written in 966 this amount is less. Hibri, an intellectual of the seventeenth century from Edirne (İlgürel, 1976), remarks such battles, attacks, slaughtered people and animals and so forth.

For *hac* or not, a safe travel did not only require hundreds of armed men. Food and, more important than that, water played a crucial role in this process. On their way to Mecca, Hibri considers places (*menzils*) until Damascus according to social organizations and institutions: He describes mosques, baths, bridges, inns, market places, *tabakhane*s, *medrese*s, palaces, tombs of saints etc. Places he mentions are mostly essential information about all that a traveler needs to or would like to know. Regarding his social, religious, personal needs the author answers the possible questions of a future *hacı* like 'where to stay?', 'how to go?', 'how long does it take?', 'where to eat?', 'where to pray'. His information sometimes involves 'historical' facts dealing with old palaces, castles, bridges, with their histories (İlgürel, 1976: 120):

Then we arrived at a pasture near the Murad Pasha Bridge in the desert named Merdjidabik. It is ten hours away from (the *menzil* named) Bakras. Murad Pasha, who died when he was grand vizier in the time of Deceased Sultan Ahmed, (...) fought a rebel (celali) called

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<sup>2</sup> MD 12, II v. 116, no. 918.

Canboladoğlu and beat him in 1016, built this bridge.

Moreover Hibri should have attracted the attention of the reader by telling interesting stories about the places he visited (İlgürel, 1976: 121):

Here, there is a big mill called 'Mohammad's Değirmen'. It is said that it was built by a Jew. When he finished it did not work. Then the Jew says 'Run for sake of Mohammad!' and it began operating. So he converted to Islam.

This kind of 'menazil literature' is obviously a kind of travel guide for future *hacı*s. However, Hibri, from Damascus on, gives priority to other two criterions: water supply and castles. He informs the reader about possible water sources around or warns him of lack of water. Secondly castles in the region are always mentioned together with water. The author's this new approach reasonably demonstrates two main needs for the survival of the travelers facing two dangers: Very high temperature in a defenseless territory. Consequently a castle might provide them with both water and safety. Although it was not an ultimate safety, being in a castle was always better than being outside. As a characteristic of travel in these times, established *menzils* remained dominant figures of an ordinary traveler. It can be asserted that reaching only the next *menzil* seemed to be the ultimate purpose of the day exceeding any other objective in travelers mind whatever it was.

In fact, whatever its purpose was, a travel could always be unsafe for officials, merchants, workers and other civilians. For instance the Muslim and non-Muslim merchants in Istanbul complained (A. Refik, 1988b: 39) about the insecurity of the *menazil* and *merahil* on the way to Ankara. In the meantime, a

decree (A. Refih, 1988b: 8) ordered to free a *zimmi* which was accidentally caught and arrested on his way to Istanbul from Manisa. The decree explained that he was a worker appointed by the Sultan.

Ottoman laws strictly tried to prohibit independent movements by a peasant or a group of peasants. The average time limit for legalizing a change of place was ten years. In court registers (see for example Gökçen, 1946: 81, no. 70), we find many orders expressing the central government's demand from the local *kadı* to send any peasant back to where they came from unless their stay exceeded ten years. Although there were many orders demanding an absolute drive-out of newly comers, especially during the Celali revolt it is possible to guess that thousands left their places for safer regions. Simeon (Andreasyan, 1964: 4) says that some these poor people filled Istanbul.

### 4.3 Travel and The Authority

Ottoman roads frequently witnessed peasants, nomads, slaves or wanderers who wanted to change their places. Each attempt may have various reasons. When nomads caused the problem, illegal movement, the reason was mostly their sheeps. In a court register (Gökçen, 1946: 81, no. 71) the local *kadı* was advised to drive out the intruding nomads who fed their sheeps in a tax-holding field and refused to pay tax. Their reason was that they did not "live" there.

Another kind of problematical traveler was created by slave subjects in the Empire. In fact, unless they did not attempt to escape travel was safe and easy for them. Grelot tells a story of a fugitive slave where he met in Büyükçekmece. This



Venetian was captured by the soldiers in the Kandiye War and sold to a Turk who lived in a village. His owner treated him well, though he did not give up planning a successful escape. What he expected appeared when his lord wanted him to bring a letter to Edirne which was two days away. On his way back, he run away and by hiding on daytime and walking on nighttime tried to reach Istanbul. But the officials captured him again. He could no convince them that he was not a runaway slave for he had to have a reliable record affirming his situation. Then a French traveler, Grelot (1988: 51) set him free paying the required amount of money. What is remarkable in this story is the relationship between the lord and his slave. After a certain period of time the lord entrusted his personal letters to his slave and did not hesitate to send him such a distant place. We have enough documents referring to slaves trusted by their lords and sent out more distant places for more serious jobs. Assuming runaway slave cases in small number, there is no doubt that many slaves or liberated slaves played a significant role in communication on behalf of their masters. This trust had to be based not completely on trustworthiness of slaves but mainly on their conviction on the mentality about being on the road. This understanding considered any unjustified movement on the road as illegal and criminal. This is the very reason of the fact that everyone had to have record, namely *mürur tezkiresi*, by the local *kadı* allowing and justifying the travel (see for examples Kal'a, 1997). In Bursa court records (İnalcık, 1981: 23, no. 63), we find a *kadı* letter dated 1484 addressed to the *Emin* of Gelibolu harbor informing him that a woman named Kadem left for Edirne to see her daughter.



It was a common habitude to entrust liberated slaves with power of proxy for business. Among Bursa court registers from the late fifteenth century on many traders did not hesitate to do that. Register number 27 (İnalçık, 1981: 10) mentions a merchant of Tabriz in Bursa giving the charge of taking his credits to his freed *kul* from another merchant in Edirne. (See also no. 42, 58, 65, 103.)

On the roads were newly appointed Ottoman officials as well. Sudden and unexpected dismissals and banishments, or just ordinary appointments all over the Empire could cause an intensive traffic and such an appointment could turn the travel into an adventure as did the travel of İsmail Belig of Bursa. His journey to Tokat in 1702 gives us a general idea about an average official's painful effort to reach his new office in province. He left Bursa for Istanbul, but in the Marmara Sea because of a terrible storm they reach Istanbul very late. However, he forgot this unlucky beginning after finding a companion. While going along the Black Sea shore they never got rid of continuous storms until he reached Tokat.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.4 Travel and Disorder

Of course not only slaves or villagers were illegally being on the road. A decree from the central government was sent to warn the local *kadıs* in İznikmid, Mudanya, Ereğli, Gemlik, İstavrik about the carpenter escaped from the Imperial shipyard.<sup>4</sup> And some Janisseries suddenly got out of sight while carrying valuables to the Mamuriye castle (Dağhoğlu, 1940: 59). But mostly outlaws or presumed outlaws occupied the roads to Istanbul according to the verdict about

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<sup>3</sup> Abdulkadiroğlu (1985).

<sup>4</sup> MD 5-208.

them. In many decrees concerning criminals the Palace demanded from local *kadis* to send the criminals to İstanbul where they were punished as drudge (*kürek mahkumu*). Another significant issue (Dağlıoğlu, 1940. 63) in these documents is the continuous warnings for probable attempts of escape. These warnings were not just a measure, they saw many examples of escape on the way to Istanbul. It is not surprising, consequently, to notify the officials, excuses were not acceptable.<sup>5</sup> The *derbend* system established in order to control illegal travelers and to secure innocent travelers. But authorities, as much as ordinary people, knew that a long term travel could face a danger any time. In a decree dated 1565 (MD 5: 77) the central authority demanded from the local officials to advise the Polish merchants to prefer frequently used roads. However the problem with travelling was not always about those who wanted to go somewhere. Also settlers in a region could be hurt by travelers. Peasants' complaints (MD 5-6) about the harm to their produces done by travelers were not very few. Travels of the state officials could cause serious problems in terms of the everyday life of the Ottoman subject. Providing *bargirs* for numerous *ulaks* around the Empire often created troubles among the people. Especially for the matters concerning the security of the Empire, many times the central government ordered the *kadis* to find enough *bargir* and *ulak* anytime and anywhere an official wanted. It might be as far as Egypt: "Südde-i sa'detümden Mısıra varınca yol üzerinde olan kadılara hükm ki, (...) Her kangımızun that-ı kazasına dahil olursa ademlerine yolda ve izde ve menazil ü merahilde yarar ulak bargiri tedarük idüb...".<sup>6</sup> These sort of orders could be abused or resulted in a disorder among ordinary people. Another decree

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<sup>5</sup> MD 5-197, 89.

<sup>6</sup> MD 12-496, see also 477, 478, 167, 282.

dated 1592 shows one of the possible and 'natural' results of such privileges to the officials (A. Refik, 1988b: 20):

İstanbul kadısına hükm ki,  
Nefs-i İstanbulda Tahtakal'a kurbünde Katır  
Hamı demekle ma'ruf han Mahmud Paşa  
Camiinin evkafından olub han içine konan  
müsafirin atlarına ve katırlarına subaşı  
tarafından asesler gelüb ulak için aluruz deyu  
dahlitmekle hana kimesne konmayub vakfa  
külli gadr olduğu i'lam olunmagın han içinde  
olanlara dahlolunmamasın emr idüb buyurdum  
ki, vusul buldukda han-ı mezbur içinde olanat  
ve katıra ulak için min ba'd dahl ü taarruz  
itdirmeyesin.

Thus both sides could be hurt and in danger. Both of them needed protection. But, all of these examples did not mean that traveling was totally dangerous and every travel did face a problem. If it was so, there would not be so many travels and travelers.

#### 4.5 Communication

The communication system was based on two main methods. There is no doubt that writing was of crucial importance. Especially official communication which means sending and receiving letters between distant centers around the Empire gradually developed with the wide and quick territorial expansion. It was necessary because the central administrative system required very quick and proper ways for having information coming from everywhere in the Empire. Official letters and other kind of information were carried by *ulaks* through *menzils*. Certainly the state considered the issue very important for its survival. Military success was based on good and quick communication, while matters like justice, safety, administration required the same fragile attention. This part was

highly important for ordinary people. Basically people's post went through these *menzils* as well (Halaçoğlu, 1981: 123). In terms of everyday communication, first significant issue is the contact between people and the state. All over the Empire, Istanbul became the first and most important destination, for complaints should have reached the Capital as quick as possible. Many decrees began by the formulae "südde-i sa'adetime mektub gönderüb..." indicating the method preferred by the petitioners. This was the main system building the bridge between ordinary people and the Ottoman officials. Complaints had to reach the Capital because, as stated by Faroqhi (1986: 27), it "might be directed against a given administrator, and involve a demand for the restitution of taxes unjustly collected, or else for the redress of other kinds of administrative malpractices." In the middle of this complaint mechanism was *kadi*. Petitioners often asked the *kadi* to forward their complaint. The connection with the state was provided by the local administrative and therefore needed to use official ways. However there were some other means as well. Sometimes petitioners did not hesitate to go to Istanbul, bypassing local officials. But a travel to Istanbul for ordinary people, especially those who lived in distant towns, was not easy. Petitioners could prefer to send representatives to Istanbul on their behalf in return to a previously determined sum of money. Its formulae, then, was generally expressed by the phrase: "südde-i sa'adetime adem gönderüb.." (Faroqhi, 1986: 28).

Naturally Istanbul was not the only destination to communicate with in terms of people-state relationship. Letters written by a *kadi* to another one kept the officials informed about both the public and private matters. In the court registers there are many *kadi* letters to enlighten us about how the process was made. A

letter dated 1484, (İnalcık, 1981: no. 54) was written by the *kadi* to inform the commander of the Janissary corps that a Janissary named İlyas who came to visit his relatives in Bursa became sick and was not able to return in time. Another letter (İnalcık, 1981: no. 66) by the same *kadi* is to the *kadi* of Yenişehir. The letter reads: "The person named Ahmet who has this letter with him claims that his stolen horse is in your district Bali. He is coming with two eyewitnesses to your court." An interesting letter by the *kadi* of Bursa was written to convince the *kadi* of Gönen of the fact that the person named Mehmed from Çeltükci-Ağaçlı village had not leprosy, so the *kadi* requested of his colleague not to hurt the aforementioned person (İnalcık, 1981: no. 129).

Certainly all means of communication did not only consist of officials or hired representatives. Slaves were a good and useful 'way' of transmission. Many merchants preferred to use their freed slaves. They were to carry out business on behalf of their masters. After having a *vekaletname* approved by *kadi*, freed slaves were responsible of the business especially in distant places. The use of freed slaves for this sort of matters is reasonable. After a long period of time and hard working, manumission was the sign of the owner's confidence in the slave. Nevertheless it did not always have to be a freed slave. French traveler Grelot (1988: 51) relates the story of a Venetian slave. His lord sent him to Edirne to bring a letter and he was expected to wait for its answer back. The author commented on the situation as the result of confidence of some years.

One might assume that appointing representatives to Istanbul for private matters was not cheap. The sum does not seem to be affordable by all even though

it was a collective petition. On the other side, the other way, using slaves, freed or not, was undoubtedly a sign of wealth. Thus few alternatives were left for the poor. Their method should be cheaper and therefore take longer than the others. No surprise at all, caravans perfectly fitted to the conditions. An interesting case informs us about how caravans served as communicating tools not only for commercial but also cultural purposes. A. N. Tarlan cites that Kınalızade Hasan Çelebi told a story that he heard from his father about the famous poet Necati Beg in his *Tezkire* (1997: XV-XVI):

We, the poets of the time, used to get together under the patronage of Hasan Paşa of Bursa and had conversation with each other. One day a caravan came from Kastamonu. Then we were informed of a young poet named Necati in Kastamonu and his two *gazels* that made him famous.

Another destination of information was from the Capital to the people. Decrees about public matters had to be 'heard' by those who was concerned. This is reflected in some decrees by the phrase: '*nida eylemek*' (to announce). In 1572 a decree (MD 12, 854) was issued to be announced in Kıbrıs by the *beglerbegi*. The order is about the sell of *miri* houses. We understand that the *beglerbegi* had informed the people in Kıbrıs by announcing the order of the sultan. Another example is about the misuse of the practice. In this case, the servant of a *mültezim* named Hüseyin misinformed the *sipahis* and announced the opposite of the actual order. He warned them against disobeying the orders and by doing this he misled the *sipahis* who did not know the correct order. The place where he made the false announcement is significant. The market place was the most appropriate area. For many other announcements, regardless of official or not, they preferred market

places where a lot of people from different quarters, even from different villages or towns could be naturally gathered together and therefore expansion of orders or news could be quicker and easier around the city. In a court register, the *kadi* of Ankara expressed that the new arrangement on equivalency of *guruş* to *akçe* was announced in market places around Ankara upon the order of the Sultan.<sup>7</sup> Like market places another proper place was mosques where Muslims regularly met there, five times a day. This community had the chance to communicate with each other and to exchange daily news or events heard or personally experienced by the *cemaat* from the early hours of the day till the beginning of the night time.<sup>8</sup>

Briefly we can argue that there were several means of communication for non-official information around the Empire. These methods were reasonably focused on centers which were attracting public interest, popular and functional in the course of everyday life of an ordinary Ottoman man. Members of a caravan did not only carry goods between different regions, but also letters, news, stories and most likely latest gossips from where they lived and stayed during the travel. Similarly places visited by masses like mosques, baths, markets were source of information and ground for communication.

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<sup>7</sup> Ongan (1974), 2, no. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ergenç (1984), 74.

## CHAPTER 5

### PUBLIC SPACES

Daily life of the Ottoman people intensified at some particular points of the city. Common activities generally focused on places such as bath (*hamam*), market, coffeehouse, *bozahane*, *meyhane* and so on. As long as these places existed the state tried to control them to prevent from turning into a center of disorder and insecurity. Especially the official view considered places such as coffeehouses as a threat to the order of the society for long. Continuous efforts and firm restrictions on them obviously failed and this new phenomenon gradually took its place and deeply rooted in everyday life of the society. Even religious authorities became unsuccessful in reaching an agreement in accordance with *sharia*. But the struggle against centers of '*fisk ü fücür*' aimed at maintaining the ideal social order as sustainable as possible. On the other hand we see other places that were considered safe, respected and approved both by the authorities and the public.

#### 5.1 Coffeehouses, *Meyhanes* and Others

The Ottomans' first contact with coffee was due to its wide consumption in the Arab lands. Soon, in the sixteenth century, the Capital of the Empire had its first coffeehouses. The debate on coffee had two basic reasons: Religiously it had similarities to wine as an opium, and socially it could have been a problem when people began to get together around coffeehouses. Its identification with *meyhane* and *bozahane* is obvious in official decrees (A. Refik, 1988a: 141):

(...) eger meyhane ve kahvehane ve eger Tatar bozası işlenen mahallerdir külliye ref olunmak ferman olunmuş idi. Haliyen üslub-ı sabık üzere



kemakan meyhaneler ve kahvehaneler işleyüb  
Tatar bozası satılub fisk ü fücür olduğı istima'  
olundı.

In 1583, fifteen years after this decree had been issued, another one (A. Refik, 1988a: 146) appeared and still coffeehouses were mentioned with *meyhanes*. But in time they became widespread centers of the Ottomans' 'legal' place of meeting in comparison with *meyhanes*. This period of integration was not a fast one, but various social groups had their roles in this process. Ze'evi points out that (1995: 29):

the main public social pastime in male society was coffee drinking, which had caught on at the end of the sixteenth century; in defiance of *fatwas* and imperial decrees banning or denouncing the new custom. The sijill records many apparently prosperous coffee houses, where tobacco and hashhish soon became part of the scene. The sources do not provide any information on the clientele of these establishments, but owners seem to have come from several social groups: *ulema*, officers and government officials, artisans and merchants. (...) [I]t can be assumed that here too the coffee house served as a meeting place for all levels of urban society, at least in the Muslim community, and functioned as part-time literary salon and local news network.

Gelibolulu Âli (1978: 180) states that Janissaries and *sipahis* in the Arab lands often visited coffeehouses and spent time with the riffraff of the region. In fact Janissaries had done much more than this. As pointed out in Ze'evi (2000: 89), in the *tereke* register of a Janissary who died in Jerusalem was a coffeehouse which was going to be sold by his wife and daughter in 1689. We understand that Janissaries, with the increasing tendency of their illegally penetration into commercial life, was able to find a way to do a quite common and widespread business in a distant city. Before that time, in 1656, in a much closer city Bursa, the

owner of a coffeehouse and his worker went to the *kadi* because of a disagreement. This is not surprising at all if one might consider the fact that there were 75 coffeehouses in Bursa in the seventeenth century according to Evliya Çelebi.<sup>1</sup> Another case is again interesting due to its connection with a Janissary. According to the court registers (Yediyıldız, 1988: 106), this soldier brought coffee from Egypt to Bursa, but died in a *han*. Having no heirs, the Sultan ordered to confiscate his property - 7-8000 *guruş* and 7-8000 *vukiyye* coffee -. There is no doubt that after the reign of Murad IV an obvious looseness took effect. On the other hand we might cite the price lists of Bursa to notify the difference. From 1624 to 1640 the price of coffee did not change at all. The price of one '*vukiyye*' coffee was 60 *akçe* in 1624 and 16 years later it was still 60 *akçe*. What is significant is this period was the reign of Murad IV which lasted between 1623 and 1640. Therefore, with the end of his reign, it is possible to argue that, mostly in Istanbul, but also in other cities around the Empire, an increase of its consumption which would mean more coffeehouses and higher prices. Not surprisingly, the case of Bursa provides (Yediyıldız, 1988: 127) us with the justification of this argument: The result was the increase from 60 to 71 *akçe* until 1653. It is not surprising that the process that made coffee a part of daily life. The observations of Grelot inform us of the fact that how coffee penetrated into the daily customs. He wants to enter Ayasofya to make pictures of its interior, then asks a Rum jeweller to help him find a way (1998: 112):

I privately expressed my intention to him. He said that he could talk to one of his neighbors. He believed that if he gives him some ornaments for his wife and drinks a cup of

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<sup>1</sup> Faroghi (1997), 240.

coffee with him, (...) this problem could be solved.

The seventeenth century doubtlessly witnessed the flourishing trade of coffee not only coming from the Arab lands but also from Europe. For instance, Eldem points out that (1999: 77-78) French coffee enjoyed a popularity in the surroundings of Istanbul and in Anatolia. From then on consumption of coffee gradually increased and, as Lady Montague personally experienced (Faroghi, 1997: 239), we might assume that it did not take too long to become a custom to offer coffee to guests of Ottomans.

*Meyhane*, there is no doubt that, being one of the most influential and controversial phenomena in the social life of the Empire. On the one hand an authority who had been trying to struggle against the production and consumption of wine by the Muslim subject in the Empire according to *sharia*, on the other hand, a large group of non-Muslim subject who wanted to consume it. The state repeatedly justified the non-Muslims' right to live in accordance with their traditions. But this was not an easy 'mixture' in terms of social life. The authorities continuously tried to check, warn, prevent and punish every attempt of Muslims' consumption of religiously forbidden drinks.<sup>2</sup> But due to the legal permission granted to the non-Muslim subject to drink and have their own *meyhanes* made nearly impossible to achieve an ultimate restriction on alcohol. These permissions were conditionally granted: They were neither allowed to sell to Muslims, nor to run *meyhanes* in Muslim quarters. Especially during strict prohibitions (A. Refik, 1988a: 50-51) they had to convey wine secretly and only at night time. Busbecq, as one of the victims of this 'annoying period' tells that they were advised to drink

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<sup>2</sup> MD 12-1064, 1196. Also see A. Refik (1988b), 14, 32.

water instead of wine (Telby, 1988: 161). However, leaving aside its prohibition, *meyhane* had an undeniable place in the Ottoman urban life. According to foreign travelers and officials, some of the Ottomans did not seem to be so respectful to the prohibition on wine, whether religious or governmental. Janissaries, officials, and many others liked to drink according to foreign witnesses in the Empire. Especially places where non-Muslim were allowed to drink offered drinks in good quality and Turks were eager to visit there. Ottomans could find the opportunity to drink not only in *meyhanes* in Galata or elsewhere, but also in various embassies.<sup>3</sup>

*Meyhane* had an important place in Ottoman poets' daily life. The same reason as other people attracted them to *meyhane*. They met there to find a place to communicate, to inform and to be informed about new poetic or social news, and to enjoy a *meclis* occasion.

Another public place was *bozahane*, again a meeting place that was considered officially troublesome and unpleasant. As Dernschwam defined it, *boza*, too, was a kind of fermented drink containing alcoholic substance (And, 1994: 191) and therefore it easily and soon found its place in the list of unsafe and illicit public spaces. Like coffee house or *meyhane*, reactions against *bozahane* were not only focused in Istanbul. Consequently similar cases occurred when the government detected the signs of a potentially dangerous meeting place around a *bozahane*. Officially between *bozahane*, coffeehouse and *meyhane*, there was not any slightest difference. The reason was the same as the others; threat to the safety and stability of the Ottoman everyday living (Ongan, 1974: 60, no. 747). The estimated end for

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<sup>3</sup> And (1994), 188, 189.

a *bozahane* was usually as effectual as pouring salt in wine barrels to turn it into vinegar (Ongan, 1974: 72, no. 894):

Budur ki, Nefs-i Ankara'da vaki olan meyhane  
ve bozahanenin ref olunmasına emr-i şerif-i  
vacibu'l-ita'a varid olub mahkeme-i şerife gelüb  
kıdvetu'l-ümera el-kiram Ankara sancağı beyi  
Hüsrev Bey hazretlerinin kethüdaları Mustafa  
kethüda mahzarında kıraat olunub ber muceb-i  
emr-i ali amel olunmak lazım oldukda  
Ankara'da vaki olan bozacının küpleri ve  
çanakları kırılub b'il-küllüye ref olunub  
kaydolundu.

At the beginning coffeehouses were not favored by those who preferred *meyhane*, especially poets.<sup>4</sup> '*Esir-i kahve*', a common phrase used by some poets became almost a motto of the discontents of coffee among *meyhane*-goers. A similar reaction occurred against *bozahanes* as well (Açıkgöz, 1999: 417). They complained about the *boza-i Tatar* replacing *mey*. The reason for these complaints about both *coffee* and *boza*, should have a social meaning in itself. It is reasonable to argue that the reason is rooted in the difference of social status of the clientele:

Aferinler şarab-ı gül-rengi  
Lanet olsun bozaya vü benge

These verses belong to Melihî, a poet of the fifteenth century and demonstrate how early the distinction began in their view<sup>5</sup>. Later on, discontents of *boza* increased as *bozahanes* became a powerful competitor in the Empire. Gelibolulu Ali pictured the situation while '*zümre-i meyhaneciyan*' occurred before the Sultan during the circumcision ceremony portrayed in his *Mecalis-i Sur* (Arslan, 1999: 463):

<sup>4</sup> Açıkgöz (1999), 417.

<sup>5</sup> İpekten (1996), 246.

Bu ortalıkda gezdi boza-hane erleri  
Cevzi boza çekildi nice kase cevheri

Kahve yemen habibi idi bade şuh-i Rum  
Bozıldı boza çevrine döndi kudüm-i şüm.

In fact people did not identify these places with each other unlike the central authority did. In the Ottoman ordinary man's view these were different and each of them had their own customers.

## 5.2 *Hamam*

*Hamam*, next public place, is much more common and legal than the previous ones. Shared by both women and men, *hamams* could be considered one of the most widespread public spaces around the Empire. Its importance comes from its functional structure benefited by every kind of people, regardless of their social status. In various accounts (And, 1994: 242-251), foreign observers emphasized the importance of cleanness in the Ottoman society. However *hamam*'s social function is as essential as its primary function as bath. Especially for women *hamam* had a different meaning since it was one of the most 'proper' places they were easily able to go to. For women and children, the *hamam* day often lasted all day long and on that day, at least once a week, they 'lived' in the building, meeting every need that a woman could have in her daily life. According to Nicholay (And, 1994: 247), for women the best and the easiest 'excuse' to go out. One might argue that *hamam* provided them with a place of their own, a sociable and safe space in which men were not allowed.

Not only for women, also for children its place was an inseparable part of daily life. Before socially important events or dates being clean established almost

an obligation in the ordinary Ottoman's view. Before weddings, circumcision ceremonies or holy days, a visit to *hamam* was a custom and this habit was considered as a worship. Therefore, for an important beginning in the daily life of an Ottoman its place was undeniable. That made *hamams* very convenient places for a quick and widespread communication. To realize its crucial place in the Ottoman society, court records enlighten us (Ongan, 1974: 23, no. 298). In Ankara the owner of a *hamam* did not hesitate to abolish the rental agreement with the tenant because the *hamam* had not been open for ten days. A remarkable court record illustrates the process perfectly. A guide hired by a group told the story of how they followed and captured a brigand (Gökçen: 1946: 56, no. 37):

(...) cümle on üç nefer kimesneler gelüb  
İnegöl'de evimde beni bulub bana bir altun  
kılavuzluk verüb ben önlerine düşüb Çengiler  
cemaatine iletüb badehu Mahmud hamamı  
dimekle maruf Ilıca hamamına girüb badehu  
Kütahya kazasına tabi Akviran nam karyede  
karbansaraya konub..

The group found a guide who recognized the region and before the pursue began, they preferred to go to a *hamam*, then sojourned in a caravanserai. The reason for their immediate visit to the *hamam* could be their need to take a bath after a long journey, but as reasonable as this, one might also suppose that *hamam* was one of the most appropriate public places to investigate and have information about the person(s) in question.

Another decree (MD 12: 962) illustrated the unjust behavior and ill-treatment of 'Oltu Sancağbeği' towards his subject. According to the record *Sancağbeği* was so cruel that 'the families of the Muslims in the castle were unable to go to *hamam*'.



In fact one might mention a kind of struggle between two different groups.

A decree dated 1575 clearly described the situation (A. Refik, 1988a: 142):

kafirler evlerinde meyhane ihdas olunmagla  
daima serhoşlar hammama giden havatin  
taifesine yapışub ve müslümanlar akşam ve  
yatsı namazına gitdikde bazısı şetm olunub  
ırzları münkesir olub ve (...) meyhanelerden  
bazı fasik çıkub avretler hamamına girüb  
hatunlara yapışub hatta bir def'a bir serhoş bir  
hatunu iç halvetde tutub taife-i havatin mesie  
kadir olmayub (...) ve Sefer nam müezzin gice  
ile mescidden evine giderken cebren  
meyhaneye koyub üzerine hamr saçub...

*Meyhane* and *hamam* were clearly distinguished from each other in terms of negative and positive aspects of everyday life. One side was consisted of a people who were respectful to the law and order in the Empire, and their visit to the mosque was a good sign indicating that they were pious -therefore socially and politically needed- subjects of the Empire. On the other side was *meyhane*, a place that was socially, religiously and politically refused. What is interesting in the document is the contradiction between mosque and *meyhane* can be seen as correlated with *hamam* and *meyhane*, by replacing mosque with *hamam*.

In fact *hamams* were one of the main factors to complete a habitation. In 1565 the sultan issued a decree (A. Refik, 1988a: 22) to permit Mihru Mah Sultan to build a *hamam* nearby a recently built mosque in Edirne Kapu. Similarly in 1587 (A. Refik, 1988a: 31) Hoca Saadeddin asked for a permission to build a *hamam* and a bakery upon the request of the residents in the quarter named Sultan Süleyman.



Legal or not, places that attracted the Ottoman people had important role in establishing the characteristics of everyday life. People's approach towards these public places did also reflect the social changes in the Empire.

### **5.3 *Meclis* in the Ottoman City**

For the Ottomans, city had close connections with literature, since the description of a city, whether prose or poetry, played a great role. There may be several reasons for this mentality. But what is definitely true is that the sense of being a townsman, if any, requires such a various 'feedback' in terms of literary works.

First of all the matter with the characteristics of literary works concerning urban life from various aspects is its definition and its readers. Leaving aside official reports about a city prepared for the sultan, although some of them have literary elements, we find information in two different types of literary works. First is an indirect method based on *Tezkires* containing many facts about cities and city life. Second is the direct one provided by mostly the *Şehrengiz* tradition and also individual works of poetry.

Since urban life has many aspects dealing with cultural activities, Ottoman poets deeply concerned in the features of the cities. In *tezkiye* literature poets' cultural life seems to have penetrated into the urban daily life of the time. Thus they are very rich sources of information in terms of strong connections between poet and city. This inevitable tie between them was reflected in many works and paved the way to a unique type namely *Şehrengiz* (For a detailed study see A. S. Levend, 1958). Another strong factor which supported this tie was developed and

brightened by the concept of patronage and its application in chief Ottoman cities. Briefly Ottoman poet and his understanding of city need a detailed study.

Undoubtedly poets had to have a profession to acquire a livelihood. A study on the professions of the Ottoman poets (İsen, 1999b: 310-314) shows the importance of their lives for the daily nature of the Empire. According to this categorization it is possible to see poets coming from various groups. The variation from craftsmen to bureaucrats is quite surprising and significant. Consequently this wide composition involving *kadis*, *mütevellis*, janissaries, cooks, physicians, scholars, tailors and so on, was effected by the needs of daily life, thus, became a mirror out of their literary works. On the other side, many *derviş*-poets connected to a *tarikât*, voiced different aspects of social life through *tasavvuf*-based poetry (İsen, 1999a: 302-305).

İstanbul, no doubt, is the leading city as a center of attraction for poets. Hundreds of poets, even they were born in different places, became residents in the capital where they were able to find a vigorous cultural life. However there were many other significant centers around the Empire, still attracting poets such as Edirne, Bursa, Trabzon, Üsküp, Manisa, Bağdat, Konya Diyarbakır and so on.

Every day lives of poets, as described in many *Tezkires*, give us important and detailed information about the untold side of the cities. Mostly focusing on *meyhanes* and other types of meeting places their biographies help to construct the concept of *meclis* as central point where they had the opportunity to communicate in a big city. However not only ill-famed *meyhanes*, but also ordinary shops and other public spaces had a crucial role in this network as indicated by Açıkgöz (1999).

Walter Andrews (2000: 182) states that divan poetry has plenty of examples proving that meetings, (*meclis*), were quite common in the Empire and in time gained a formal and ritualized nature. This phenomena consisted of inter-related components such as lover, beloved, garden, night, spring, wine, food and so on. These are not just metaphors made up by the poet, but at the same time what they experienced and observed during an actual *meclis* in their real lives.

It would be ungrounded and wrong to think that these places belonged to a limited group of people like poets. Ordinary people had the same way and taste of meeting and enjoying. Places mentioned in poetry, (and used many times as most favorable metaphors) were open to public in real life because this was a well-known and 'universal' pleasure in the course of the Ottoman's everyday life.

Aşık Çelebi in his famous *tezkiye Meşairu's-şuara* gives detailed information on the poets' favored meeting places. Many of them, having to do something to earn money, used their shops as a meeting place for other poets and friends (Açıkgöz, 1999: 417). On the other hand, there were more 'appropriate' but also relatively more 'troublesome' places for getting together such as coffeehouses, *bozahanes*, *meyhanes*. Thus one might make a division concerning their choice for meeting and communicating: First is the 'functional' one, namely shops, having a commercial purpose other than just gathering poets. However the second one aims at gathering people, any kind of people. Consequently we can suppose that there was a close relation between poets and ordinary people, since they shared mutual places which were part of everyday life especially at day time. Aşık Çelebi, again, gives information about the poets reciting poems during their bath in a *hamam*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Açıkgöz, (1999), 420.

Yet another fact that this activity was not restricted to day time, during night time, when public places were not open, houses and gardens turned into the favorite *meclis* places.

*Meclis* can relate to many things in daily life. But theoretically, we might assume that it has an abstract connection with the characteristics of urban life. Andrews (2000: 183-184) indicates that *gazel* could be understood only in terms of *meclis* in which it was created and repeatedly reproduced. Similarly *meclis* as a produce of urban life was experienced in a relatively closed place. This is garden (*bahçe*) and it had close connections with the understanding of social way of living in the Empire. As a cosmos, garden is a 'place with frontiers' (Andrews, 2000: 185), and there is an outside, and inner side of it. Essentially garden is the city. Thus in order to understand *meclis*, we have to define the structure of garden so that the interrelation between *meclis* and the city can be explained.

Grelot (1988: 40) described the gardens he saw in the capital of the Empire in a discontent manner. He thinks that most of the gardens of the sultan was not so nice due to scattered trees around. Miniatures also reflect the same feature of the Ottoman garden. Different types of trees are scattered around the garden. On the other hand, as stated by Andrews, garden is a well-protected place, an asylum for human beings. Symbolically it represents the idea of city: It is safe, it has frontiers, contains different types of entities, and ultimately it is a whole made of different and smaller pieces like scattered trees. Here not only gardens, but also other pieces, namely coffeehouses, *bozahanes*, *meyhanes*, *hamams*, have the spirit of *meclis*.

## CHAPTER 6

### FESTIVITIES

One of the most significant happenings around the Empire was festivities due to important occasions. These occasions varied from imperial weddings to *bayrams*. However it is possible to divide the reasons into two main categories: First category contains those connected to the court and had always an imperial motive. Among them were birth of a prince or princess, circumcision of a prince, a court marriage, new succession of a sultan, Second category had no connection with the life in the court, but was based on exclusively public life such as *bayrams*, other holy days, non-religious and local festivities and so on. Another division could be made taking into account a principle based on a regular-irregular distinction.<sup>1</sup> *Bayrams* and some festivals were regularly celebrated upon a calendar system, and they had a fixed date. But other events were not irregular and previously unsettled.

#### 6.1 Its Aims and Functions

It is not possible to confirm one single purpose for organizing festivities. Regardless of their status, their aims are various. And (1982: 1-9) argues that festivity is an collective happening that was conducted by an unchained energy and a big extravagancy. For a short time, it serves to disregard, forget an disobey strict customary rules and other sorts of pressures over the society. That is a safety valve of the society under pressure. Its another crucial function is to gather

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<sup>1</sup> And (1982), 11.

different social groups together and to take away frontiers between 'low' and 'high' levels.

Considering the role and essentials of game in social life, it is possible to find a very different, even an opposite result. In society, elements such as fun, entertainment, festivals, games naturally can reduce the hard pressure of strict rules generated by previously determined social roles. It is easy to take off one role and have a new one during the game. However, one should keep in mind that this is a good way to restore and intensify the awareness of the requirements settled by the given role. An ordinary man, while behaving in an unusual and even a wicked manner, realizes that he is part of that big organism and can have his place as long as he acts in accordance with the rules and customs in question.

Before presenting proofs concerning this argument, a more detailed look at the occasions of festivities. Succession of a new sultan was an important opportunity. The Ottomans also celebrated events of political significance such as departure for a campaign or return from campaign, reception for a foreign guest or ambassador. Circumcision ceremony of a prince was an occasion for feasting since he was initiated into manhood. Imperial weddings and births were other bright occasions for entertainment and celebration. Two opposite situations could lead to impressive festivities: To celebrate the victory of the army after a conquest or battle, or oppositely to make people forget about a military defeat or retreat in the battlefield. One might cite holy days (*bayram*) of the year and some days which were not connected with religion such as *nevrüz*, the first day of summer.

Rituals followed by certain groups or communities such as crafts guilds were also celebrated by the members.

The first purpose of the festivals was to entertain the participants through various games and unusual activities. By doing this prohibitions were deliberately withdrawn by the authorities in order to loosen restrictions on the Ottoman people. On the other hand to show the might and power of the Sultan was necessary. First of all they had to spend a lot because high expenditure affirmed the ultimate aim which was to be more influential and to satisfy the mass of people attending the festivals.

## **6.2 Official View and Policy**

Although the occasions seem to be diverse, essentially the characteristics of celebrations had mutual meanings: They had a religious motive in terms of maintaining social order and stability. The withdrawals of the rules, even the religious ones, from their daily life for a while, did not mean a withdrawal from religious mind or responsibilities in the society. On the contrary it resulted in a stronger emphasis on the idea of Islamic society and its excellence and grandeur. The fact that they were officially allowed to drink wine did not mean that it created a period of time without rules, laws or authority. Oppositely it was the authority itself that let them drink and it was the same authority as the one that forbade them from drinking. During the festival all the people in the Empire had to participate in the celebrations relatively. In other words it was an obligation to have fun in accordance with the idea of behaving mutually, living collectively and

obeying the rules as the authority wished. A foreign observer in the seventeenth century, A. Galland says that the participation in the celebration of the capture of the Kamenia castle in 1672 was obligatory. Every shop had to be decorated. The owners who did not decorate their shops were bastinadoed.<sup>2</sup> This is an obvious sign of the method used by the authority regarding festivities not only ordinary ways of having fun, nor a matter of prestige for the state, but also, perhaps mainly, uniformity and harmony of separate members in the society. As observed by Cantemir, drinking was free, shops were open all night long, however there was little unruly behavior.<sup>3</sup> Thus, another obligation forced the shop-keepers to open their shops at night. Collective participation and mass celebration provided the actual system with the continuity of the principles and policies of the everyday life. In the mean time obligation was aimed at preventing any alienation and exclusion from the unity of society. Consequently it was not possible to say that on days of festivities they did not have any restrictions. On the contrary this 'safety valves' depend on their special rules.

Festivals did also serve to strengthen the Sultan's image. Less pressure or less prohibitions did not 'soften' his might. He was exalted by the participation of the whole society and collective enjoyment. This was an important occasion to glorify the Sultan's position after a victory or, oppositely, after a defeat, any kind of disaster could be compensated by the production of sumptuous entertainments with great expenses. There were different methods to reach an influential result. To emphasize the importance of the occasion, sometimes they freed many

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<sup>2</sup> And (1982), 22

<sup>3</sup> And (1982), 38.



prisoners.<sup>4</sup> According to a foreign account, free food (namely *çanak yağması*) for the poor during the celebration established a good relationship between the Sultan and the ordinary people. The pashas offered food to all who visited them, and did not rise from the table until all the visitors had been served.<sup>5</sup> The author of the surname in verse named *Camiu'l-Buhur Der Mecalis-i Sur*, Gelibolulu Âli observed this scene (Arslan, 1999: 547):

Her heftede padişah-ı mesrur  
Eylerdi avama zayf-ı meşkur

Ya'ni nice bin çanak nefais  
Her birisi revnak-ı mecalis

Her kasede reng-i na-mükerrer  
Her tu'mede ta'm-ı şehd ü şükker

Thousands of boys were circumcised as an imperial favor to the honor of the circumcision of a prince. Nabi described the public circumcisions in his *Surname* written in 1675 for the honor of the circumcision ceremony of Mustaf and Ahmet, sons of Mehmed IV<sup>6</sup>:

Anlar ardınca yine oldı ayan  
İki yüz sünnete gelmiş sıbyan

(...)

Olub cameler ile zinet  
Beş yüz oğlan o gün oldı sünnet

Similarly collective conversions to Islam had a great impact on the people. In 1582, 7000 people converted to Islam for the circumcision ceremony of Mehmed III.<sup>7</sup> Some of them were *Kızılbaş* and the ceremony turned into a

<sup>4</sup> And (1982), 27.

<sup>5</sup> And (1994), 265; (1982), 43.

<sup>6</sup> Arslan (1999), 654

<sup>7</sup> And (1982), 6.

political propaganda due to the presence of the ambassador of Persia among the foreign representatives. Keeping in mind the fact that the ceremony took place during the war against Persia. Gelibolulu Âli who criticized and even insulted Persia and his ruler, then reflected the ambience as if it was a kind of revenge (Arslan, 1999: 546):

Ve'l-hasıl ol eyyam-ı ferah-bahşda vafır  
Lutf eyledi ol zümreye sultan-ı bahadır

Ol cudı görüb nicesi depdi yire tacın  
Terk eyledi İslama gelüb rafz revacın

(...)

Bu reşk ile gün başına bir nice Kızılbaş  
İslama gelüb oldu müselmanlara kardaş

Some important occasions were periodically celebrated. For instance people had the chance to see the Sultan every Friday. His departure for Friday prayer became an occasion and it was a spectacular event for the people.<sup>8</sup> Less frequent but a more impressive one was the sultan's departure for Edirne to spend the whole winter.<sup>9</sup> In fact there were socially and politically more complicated situations that could be calmed down by the ceremonies. The departure of Kanuni Süleyman from Istanbul to march on the army of his son Bayezid to eliminate him, became a ceremony as if it was a campaign against an infidel enemy. During the campaign they did not miss the occasion of a *bayram*. Busbecq (1953: 87) witnessed the celebrations in the headquarters of the army and was impressed by the ceremony.

<sup>8</sup> Andreasyan (trans.) (1964), 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> A. Refik (1988a), 3: "... *saadet ve ikbal ile bu kış mahruse-i Edirne'de kışlamak için teveccüh-i hümayurum mükarrer olub ...*"

### 6.3 Religious Motives, Social Purposes

One might argue that behind the idea of unity aimed and supported by festivities, was a religious concept, *ümme*, and that was quite crucial for the well-being of the state and the sovereignty. For example in the accounts of French traveller Grelot, we find a quite interesting ceremony (1998: 37-38):

During my stay [in Nikomedia], two ships which were constructed in three years were sent to Istanbul to be loaded and get to its first sail. The entire town was shocked by their height and length. The other ships in the harbor looked like small boats. They tied the ships to the quay beside the mosque, then turned the ships' bows towards Mecca. The Imam of the mosque came up to pray, I mean, to observe their traditional ceremony for newly constructed ships. After the prayers and blessings of Imam and the people for a good travel, the ships were loaded.

Since the religious and customary rules aimed at preserving the existent status, irrefutable differences in the society, whether religious or any other, were not ignored. *Zimmis*, too, had the right to celebrate their own holy days and make festivities based on non-religious occasions.<sup>10</sup> But, perhaps in return, they also had to attend Ottoman imperial ceremonies and display their gratefulness to the authorities. As Bassano observed, Jews in Istanbul prayed for Kanuni Süleyman and spread precious textiles and their own clothes under the feet of his horse as he returned to the capital from a campaign.<sup>11</sup> Simeon and Grelot, described different feasts and celebrations of the non-Muslim subject in the Empire. Grelot attended a feast in an Orthodox church in the Khios island. On the Saint Michael day, they

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<sup>10</sup> And (1982), 28.

<sup>11</sup> And (1994), 140.

celebrated the feast called *Panagiri Tu Taksiarki*. The invocation lasted all night long. After the Missa, the participants ate what they brought from home. Around midday they began to play, dance and have fun 'like the provincial pastimes in France' (Grelot, 1998: 151-153).

Undoubtedly there were many other occasions which were not necessarily based on imperial affairs, to be celebrated by ordinary people. A wedding or a circumcision ceremony of an ordinary member of the Ottoman society was good enough to be celebrated (Rycaut, 1972: 157):

The Turks never circumcise their children untill the age of seven years and upwards; and then they do it by a barber or chirugion, it not being esteemed a matter appropriated to the office of the Imam or priest; (...) They observe some ceremonies amongst them on this occasion, often differing according to the country and place; but commonly the child is set on horse-back in his best cloaths, attended with his school-fellows and companions, who with loud shouts repeat some words in the Alchoran; and being brought home, and the act of circumcision performed, (...) in the mean time there is a feast or banquet prepared for the guests.

In fact the mood of ceremony could be found anywhere and anytime around the Empire. Different social groups had their own ceremonies to mark an important event, generally a change of status during the course of daily life. Like circumcision, marriage or birth, there were some occasions in a man's life requiring a formal ceremony. Members of a craft guild had to pass through certain levels and the beginning of each period required a formal ceremony as a verification and certification of competence. As an old principle of the *fütüvve*

system, the process from apprenticeship to mastery was divided into sections. When a candidate proved his ability and deserved the next step, they arranged a methodical ceremony.

In the accounts of Evliya Çelebi, one might find very detailed information about their ceremonies (Gökyay, 1996: 207):

Bu Kağıdhane çemezarında kırk senede bir esnaf-ı zer-geran bu fezaya cem olub kanun-ı kuyumcı Süleyman Han üzere yigirmi gün yigirmi gice sohbet idüb (...) sahib-post olub (...) ve kuyumcılar halifelerinden ibtida on iki halife-i müsta'id-i padişah-i azimü's-şanın dest-i şeriflerin bus idüb ba'dehu vüzera-i izamın dest-i şeriflerin bus idüb ba'dehu ser-zergeran kuyumcıbaşının ve şeyhinin ve nakibinin ba'dehu sair pirlerin dest-i şeriflerin öpmek kanun-i Süleyman Handır. Ba'dehu kuyumcıbaşı padişaha cevahir ve murassa'atlı piş-tahta ve devat ve hat ve kalem ve gaddare misilli hedayer verirler. Ve'l-hasıl bu kağıdhane vadisinde beş altı bin hayme ve hargah kurulub yigirmi gün adem deryası olub giceleri çerağan kadr-i ruzları ruz ruşen olub ruz-i 'id-i adha olur. Ve yigirmisinde bir esnaf-ı sarracan dahi bunda teferrüc idüb bu dahi teferrüc-i ibretnüma olur. Amma her sene mah-ı Şabanın gurrelerinden ahirine dek İslambol kavmi Ramazana istikbal takribiyle bu Kağıdhane fezasına haymeler kurub kamil bir ay şeb-buk namıyla zevk ü safa iderler.

#### 6.4 Festivities and Disorder

On the other hand uncontrolled entertainment around the Empire was not tolerated by the authorities. Despite the fact that they permitted the violation of some rule to some extent during a festivity, other times any unruly movement, even under the face of a public amusement, was not allowed. In a decree dated 1567 the

Sultan ordered to keep the disorderly crowd away from the Eyüb Mosque and its neighborhood.<sup>12</sup> According to the decree they gambled (*zar ve satranç oynayanlar*), played instruments, making noises (*çalgu ile düğün idenler*) nearby the Mosque. What is interesting that the word '*düğün*' can be used interchangeably in Turkish and means literally wedding day of a girl or circumcision feast of a boy. But here, it does not sound as good and legitimate as the others. Similarly another decree (MD 5-186) was issued to punish a group of gypsies and rootless youths who wandered about in a market place with some prostitutes and players (*çalgucılar*). One might find out that the word '*düğün*' was used many times by the famous and respected authors of *Surnames*. For instance In *Camii'l-Buhur Der Mecalis-i Sur*, Gelibolulu Âli used the word in its original meaning (Arslan, 1999: 384, 426):

Ziyafet hod mukarrer anda söz yok  
Ziyafetsiz düğün gördüğümüz yok

(...)

Düğünün Hak mübarek itsün anun  
Gözi nurm Hüda gözetsin anun

We understand that the words were used according to the consideration of the authorities, not to the literal definitions. This relative use of meanings gives information about how the authority considered, regulated the policy of everyday life and determined its boundaries.

<sup>12</sup> A. Refik (1988a), 138: "...*Ve subaşılar fahişe avretleri ve hırsızları ve ehl-i fesadı tenhada tutub altınların ve akçelerin alub ıtlak idüb ve çalgu ile düğün idüb subaşılar ücret virirler imiş. Anı dahi görüb tenbih eylesin ki (...) cami-i şerif kurbünde ve çarşıda zar ve satranç oynayanları ve çalgu çalanları men idüb...*"

Consequently feasts were powerful and influential occasions to exalt and intensify the Sultan's authority and might. On the other hand different social groups had the chance to meet and live together for a while so that a kind of social reconciliation was achieved. But this does not mean that being together in time of feasts under less pressure than ever by reason of disregarded rules and customs would invalidate the boundaries between various groups. On the contrary, each group represented itself before the Sultan and tried to be the most successful one deserving to be praised. This helped to remind them of the actual boundaries. On the other hand The absolute figure in the feasts was doubtlessly the presence of the sultan. In the reciprocal relationship between the ruler and his subject during a feast, the sultan was supposed to make happy and satisfy his subject by exalting his own might, meanwhile the subject was expected to prove its loyalty to him by attending and enjoying as much as possible. Feasts served to build a society with strictly defined subgroups, but at the same time they prevented alienation by offering a collective way of living in which amusement and enthusiasm was commonly shared.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims at dealing with various aspects of daily life in the Ottoman Empire especially in the Classical age. As explained in the Introduction, it is not possible to examine the issue entirely, even if the subjects are restricted as reasonable as possible. However, to reach an argument out of the present study is possible. For the issues are examined in accordance with a determined process. In each chapter, a statement is proposed according to the data provided by the sources. Finally a reasonable theses statement appears when one considers the general arguments discussed in the chapters.

At first sight a study concerning daily life seems to have a nature that does not lead to a overall statement. For the events and the conduct of daily life is not individually 'arguable'. One might expect that a study on everyday living of a society, or just of a person would give nothing but a general view of chronologically organized actions in a certain period of time. What we do in this study is supposed to be more than that so the issue is concerned in terms of another perspective which is actually its connection with the central authority in this theses. When one takes a look at the relationship between the state and ordinary people it is possible to see and to reach a picture of a more complicated and arguable result than a study of events.

When regarding the state-subject relationship in a premodern society it is not surprising to see a one-sided interest whose aim is to keep the state alive as long as possible and to observe a policy based on the *raison d'état* principle over the people. However the state-subject relationship is, as can be seen in the study,



much more fragile and requires a deeper insight. The reason for that is due to the interdependent structure of this relationship. For the well-being of the state, continuity is essential. Thus the authority aims at preserving the status quo to have a secure continuity. Therefore as an open threat to this idea innovation that are not usual nor customary, could result in a possible social disorder. Like gender, religion, social status there are many separating factors in the Ottoman society as a means of order. The rules and regulations put by the state is to preserve the idea of the unlikeness within the unity. Additionally Islam regulates every single detail of the every day life of an ordinary Muslim. Consequently an ordinary Ottoman is expected to act in accordance with the customary and religious rules not only to serve the state's well-being, he already must observe them to be a good Muslim for his own good. Therefore his religion and his state has a direct role and impact on his everyday life. He was told how to settle, where to live, how to build a house, how to wear, where to go and how to go, even how to and when to amuse himself.

For the state, one might argue that, the main point for ruling everyday life is neither to favor Muslims in social life against the non-Muslim subject, nor to facilitate men's life in contrast with harder restrictions on women, nor to create a nobility by preventing transitions between social status. The main reason is to prevent any change which would bring out anything unexpected and unusual regardless of religious, social or individual differences. The fear of the unusual is not an ordinary respect to the traditional way of living. Each people is part of a large organism and can have his place as long as he acts in accordance with the rules and customs in question. Therefore one of the most important concerns of

the state is to regulate the course of everyday life of its subject. In doing this, the main factors the authority uses are social, religious or individual differences, and its essential method is to keep the differences in harmony with the help of customs and conventions. These are the makers of the daily life of an Ottoman subject.



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