

Purchasing guild- and craft-based offices in the Ottoman central lands¹

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From the late sixteenth century onwards, the purchase of office became more widespread in the Ottoman realm than had been the case earlier on. To mention but one example: many tax farmers, particularly those who collected customs dues, also took on administrative positions involving the control of merchants and travelers; from our present viewpoint at least, these types of tax farm can be viewed as a sale of public office. Certainly tax farming and the concomitant sale of office had not been unknown in earlier periods of Ottoman history. From the fifteenth century at least, it was practiced particularly by the administrators of crown lands and pious foundations. Yet the incidence of tax farming greatly increased during the troubled years before and after 1600. This development, deplored by some contemporaries, was due to the growing numbers of musket-wielding mercenaries that came to form the core of the Ottoman fighting forces. As the central government's revenues did not suffice for the massive amounts of soldiers' pay now required, hard cash was increasingly demanded from candidates for any and all revenue-producing offices.

Artisans and their headmen

In the early seventeenth century however, guild offices were not as yet involved in this kind of revenue production. In fact it is difficult to say when exactly the headmen of craft guilds (*kethüda*), who held the offices that later became most amenable to sale, gained the sultans' recognition as possessing specific rights and duties with respect to their fellow artisans. It would seem, but this is not proven, that in most cases such official acknowledgements were issued at some time during the sixteenth century. By the 1600s *kethüdas* and their aides the *yığıtbaşıs* operated in a great many guilds, and by the early

¹ An earlier draft of this paper was published, in an unfortunately rather poor Turkish translation, in *İlhan Tekeli için Armagan Yazılar*, ed. Selim İlkin, Orhan Silier and Murat Güvenç (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2004): 219-236. As the present paper has been completely rewritten and new material added, please disregard the older version.

1700s, a *kethüda* got appointed to his position by an evidently well established and fairly complicated bureaucratic process.²

Yet it was not sufficient to possess the confidence of the authorities, for a guild headman who proved unacceptable to his fellow artisans would soon find it impossible to function. There were many reasons why guildsmen might turn to the kadi in order to rid themselves of an unwanted headman. He might be accused of being too old to run the guild effectively or of having lost touch with the exercise of his craft. In Cairo during the 1600s, the *kethüda*, or as he was often called in this city, the *kahya* of the painters guild was deposed because he had supposedly brought his fellow artisans under the control of the *mī'mārbāšā* or chief architect, and this move was not approved of by a sizeable number of the guildsmen affected.³ Moreover even though ultimately the painters had to recognize the authority of the *mī'mārbāšā*, the deposed *kethüda* -- although he had been vindicated -- did not regain his position.

That a *kethüda* disliked by the people he administered did not retain his office for very long is also apparent from a case that happened in eighteenth-century Bursa. In this city the kadis do not seem to have objected when guildsmen appeared in court with monotonous regularity desirous of changing their headmen, even if in the eyes of a modern historian, the artisans' requests appear somewhat frivolous. Thus the latter might complain about their headman's age, when a short while earlier, they had requested a man of mature years who was expected to be less aggressive than a younger person. It is also worth noting that at least in Bursa, being a Muslim did not protect a *kethüda* from losing his position even if his charges were all Christians. Remarkably, when we find groups of Orthodox artisans expressing their dissatisfaction with the head of their guild, the kadis seem to have quietly waived the rule that non-Muslims could not testify against Muslims.⁴ In brief the possibilities for craftsmen to rid themselves of their *kethüdas* were virtually limitless.

Unfortunately we cannot say whether money changed hands in the course of these dismissals and re-appointments. There must have been fees for court registration; as for other payments, the official registers have nothing to say.⁵ Another issue on which they

² Halil Inalcik, "The Appointment Procedure of a Guild Warden (*Kethuda*)", *Festschrift Andreas Tietze zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Freunden und Schülern, Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (1986) 76: 135-142.

³ Nelly Hanna, *Construction Work in Ottoman Cairo (1517-1798)* (Cairo: IFAO, 1984): 58-61.

⁴ Suraiya Faruqi, "Between Collective Workshops and Private Homes: Places of work in eighteenth-century Bursa" in *eadem, Stories of Ottoman Men and Women, Establishing Status Establishing Control* (Istanbul: Eren, 2002): 235-244.

⁵ Boğaç Ergene, *Local Court, Provincial Society and Justice in the Ottoman Empire, Legal Practice and Dispute Resolution in Çankırı and Kastamonu (1652-1744)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003): .

tell us very little is the remuneration of *kethüda*s and *yiğitbaşıs*. Evidently such artisans needed to spend considerable amounts of time away from their workshops, in the kadi's court or else in negotiation with members of their own guilds, to say nothing their bargaining with the headmen of other craft organizations from which -- for instance -- their own guild might procure raw materials. It is hard to imagine that headmen did not receive some compensation for the losses incurred, probably in the shape of gifts in money and in kind. Or else they may have been allowed larger shares of collectively purchased raw materials, which permitted them larger profits. One of the very few references to such payments hitherto located and concerning the Ottoman central lands involves the *kethüda* of the Tunisian fez-sellers established in Istanbul, whom his disgruntled fellow guildsmen accused of taking more than his due: a limited amount of money was evidently considered legitimate.⁶ When mentioned in our sources, the official term for the *kethüda*'s revenue was *kethüdalık avalidi*.⁷ To date, more information than on the central provinces is available on Cairo during the 1700s, where the guild headmen, called sheiks in local parlance, received no formal salaries but had the right to withhold small sums of money whenever they collected dues on behalf of the Ottoman state.⁸

Soldiers' pay in civilian hands

But in most instances it is only in a rather indirect fashion that we gain an impression of the sums of money that might accrue to a guild headman in the course of his duties. When military men were willing to forego their pay in exchange for guild office, and that particular transaction is the topic of our present study, they must have expected to receive at least the same amount of money from the artisans that they were now expected to govern. As a hypothesis, at present unproven, we can assume that at an early stage of the process, the payments by which artisans informally compensated guild elders were roughly equivalent to the pay that soldiers renounced when assuming guild office. However in the long run it is likely that competitive bidding among military men increased payments to the point that we can speak of craftsmen being exploited by the soldiery, evidently with the connivance of the sultan's administration.

Approaching the issue from a different angle, it is well known that from the late sixteenth and certainly from the seventeenth century onwards, members of the military corps increased their involvement with artisan life. The process by which this happened in Cairo

⁶ Başbakanlık Arşivi-Osmanlı Arsivi, section Maliyeden müdevver (from now MAD) 9983, p. 535.

⁷ MAD 8590, pp. 178-9 (Rebiülevvel 1140/Oct.-Nov. 1727).

⁸ André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire, au XVIII^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1973-74), vol. 2: 557-558.

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has been studied in a masterly fashion by André Raymond.⁹ Two separate developments can be discerned; on the one hand, military men no longer able to live on their pay might wish to exercise a craft. On the other hand powerful officers in a position to use strong-arm tactics when needed might impose themselves on artisans or merchants seen to be making a profit, supposedly as commercial partners, but in reality as mere parasites. Or else we find soldiers interposing themselves between producers and consumers in urban vegetable or firewood markets, wreaking havoc both with guild monopolies and with officially fixed prices (*narh*).¹⁰ On such tactics the surviving evidence is necessarily anecdotic, and the data do not lend themselves to quantification.

On the other hand, the inclusion of practicing artisans into the military and later paramilitary corps of Cairo (*ocak*) is well documented in the city's post-mortem inventories, and can therefore be quantified. By the second half of the eighteenth century, virtually all Muslim craftsmen of that metropolis had joined the paramilitary corps, and the only 'ordinary' taxpayers remaining were Jews and Christians. As to the Muslims, the craftsmen bequeathed part of their goods and chattels to the *ocak* of which in life, they had been members. But in return they escaped quite a few taxes that were only collected from ordinary subjects, enjoyed better protection from marauders and sometimes even obtained a small share of political power. As Raymond has pointed out, given these developments we cannot speak of a neat dichotomy between producing members of the subject class and unproductive soldiers. Contrary to an official Ottoman ideology that demanded a strict separation between rulers and ruled, in Cairo during the late 1600s and throughout the eighteenth century, the two groups coalesced to such an extent that sometimes it becomes difficult for the modern historian to separate them analytically.¹¹

Military men who involved themselves in artisan affairs on the one hand, and craftsmen joining the *ocaks* or military corps on the other: both these processes took place without the direct participation of government authorities. The latter limited themselves to occasionally prohibiting, probably without much success, the strong-arm tactics which janissaries and others so often applied when dealing with the artisan population. Such infractions after all disturbed the order of the marketplace, and thus fell within the kadis' and market inspectors' spheres of responsibility. In certain cases, when for instance fruit and vegetables were taken practically without payment from gardeners on their way to market, it was even possible to speak of highway robbery, an immediate concern of the

⁹ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 1: 307-373; vol. 2: 587-820.

¹⁰ Suraiya Faruqi, *Towns and Townsman of Ottoman Anatolia, Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 78.

¹¹ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 2: 815-816.

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sultan.¹² But apart from punishing the worst bullies, there was little the central administration could do, short of paying the soldiers enough money for their subsistence and then enforcing discipline. For such a radical procedure however, more cash would have been needed than the Treasury could ever hope to lay its hands on.

In theory janissaries and other military corps were periodically inspected, and people who did not present themselves at the muster struck off the rolls. Yet given the attraction of these corps, documents certifying that as a member of this or that *ocak*, a given person was entitled to the pay of a military man, soon appeared on the market. After a while these slips of paper, called *esame* after the register of soldiers' names (*isim*) kept by the central government's scribes, became negotiable as a commercial investment.¹³ Given the political and technical difficulties of withdrawing such paper once it had entered circulation, the sultans' administration down into the reign of Mahmud II (r. 1808-39) refrained from interfering with the *esame*. But not long before the abolition of the janissary corps in 1826, the holders of these tickets, quite a few artisans among them, were called upon to hand in their documents to the customs administration and collect half the amount of money recorded on their *esame*. Those who refrained from doing so were threatened with the loss of their entire investments: the holders thus suffered a substantial loss.

Guild officials of military backgrounds

It is in this context that we must view the official grant of positions in craft guilds, usually *kethüda*-ships, to men who were entitled to a soldier's pay and willing to cede this right to the sultan's Treasury. With the exception of a few documents that contain mostly supporting evidence, in the present paper we will analyze information culled from documents recorded in the 1720s. In the vast majority of cases the scene of the action is Istanbul. At a later stage it should become possible to establish how practices changed in the course of the century that was to follow, therefore it has seemed reasonable to concentrate on rather a short period for the time being. However due to the scantiness of the surviving evidence, certain phenomena could only be explained by reference to somewhat later texts.

¹² Therefore cases of highway robbery figure so prominently in the Ottoman chancery registers (Mühimme Defterleri). On the gardens surrounding Istanbul see Suraiya Faroqhi, "Supplying Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Istanbul with Fresh Produce" in *Nourrir les cités de la Méditerranée, antiquité--temps modernes* ed. by Brigitte Marin and Catherine Virlouvet (Paris: MMSH and Adrien Maisonneuve, 2003): 273-301.

¹³ See the entry 'Esome' in Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, reprint 1971), vol. 1: 546-547.

With the exception of Mehmet Genç, scholars have tended to ignore the sale of guild office, but for the craft historian the topic is worth a closer study.¹⁴ Evidence comes mainly from the registers known as the Başmuhasebe Defterleri, which contain large numbers of documents dealing with revenue collection and attempt to cover all expenditures undertaken by the central government.¹⁵ At present our cases all come from Istanbul, Anatolia and Rumelia. By contrast in Cairo guild headmen acquired their offices merely by securing the acquiescence of their fellow artisans and that of the local authorities as well; on the other hand, the sale of guild offices seems to have been unknown.¹⁶ Possibly soldiers employed in the central provinces knew that they were unlikely to make a place for themselves in Cairo society and therefore were unwilling to give up their pay tickets in exchange for offices in that city.

Surviving texts concerning the *kethüdaship* are of two kinds. Records of appointments to this position are usually fairly routine; but they do tell us why the office had fallen vacant, namely through the death or deposition of the former holder or else due to the latter's renunciation. In addition there survive official responses to complaints, which tend to be more instructive. Unfortunately for the most part the original petitions, which must sometimes have discussed the complaints in detail, do not survive, and we depend on copies in the Başmuhasebe and other registers. Petitions typically allude to assorted intrigues connected with the appointment process or else to deficiencies in the headman's performance. However once again the modern researcher is out of luck, as a 'sanitized' version has normally been preferred.¹⁷ The available texts also provide information about the *esames* held by the men applying for guild appointment, if any. Sometimes some general data concerning the candidates under review has also been included.

Typically our sources do not tell us what sacrifices sales of guild office entailed for the craftsmen concerned. Mehmet Genç has pointed out that many of the *kethüdas* who had purchased their offices probably did not try to run 'their' guilds. Therefore a replacement needed to be found, the relevant bills of course being footed by the artisans.¹⁸ In addition

¹⁴ For a brief reference compare: Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle, Essai d'histoire institutionnelle, économique et sociale* (Paris, Istanbul: Institut Français d'Archéologie d'Istanbul and Adrien Maisonneuve, 1962): 373. See especially Mehmet Genç, "Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics and Main Trends," in Donald Quataert ed, *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey 1500-1950* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994): 59-86.

¹⁵ In spite of their importance, as yet there is no published list of the surviving Başmuhasebe Defterleri, and I am most grateful to Mehmet Genç for sharing his information. The present study is mainly based on MAD No. 9908 and 8590, with supplementary documents from MAD 9906 and also from the section Cevdet Belediye, another section of the Başbakanlık Arşivi-Osmanlı Arşivi.

¹⁶ In any case, this is the impression we gain from Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 2: 551-559.

¹⁷ For a few examples among many, see Cevdet Belediye 473 (Şevval 1174/May-June 1760) and 487 (same date).

¹⁸ Genç, "Ottoman Industry": 62.

as we have seen, military men and receivers of other pensions willing to forgo their pay must have expected revenues at least as high, and probably rather higher, than those that they had ceded to the central Treasury. While indirectly the consumers could often be made to pay for these arrangements in the shape of higher prices, as a first step the guildsmen themselves had to satisfy the new appointee. But these issues were not relevant to the central administration and therefore do not turn up in our documents. Until now we have not found any references to artisans disgusted by the expense of paying two *kethüdas* and complaining that they could not continue unless they obtained some relief.

If pressed too hard, craftsmen were more likely to run away. This is worth noting as we normally think of artisans as fairly stable folk who will not abandon their places of settlement except in cases of dire necessity. But many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century craftsmen at least in Anatolia were quite mobile: when the exigencies of a tax collector weighed too heavily on them, guildsmen might decamp for other towns in the vicinity, for the surrounding countryside and in some instances even for Istanbul. On the other hand tax farmers who had acquired the right to tax goods manufactured in a given locality attempted, not always successfully, to oblige craftsmen producing these particular items in nearby places to settle or else remain within the relevant tax farmers' zones of activity.¹⁹ A successful *kethüda*, even if he had a powerbase of some kind due to his present or former military position, could not have collected his revenues if he did not take the potential mobility of many of 'his' artisans into account.

Certain guild offices produced sizeable amounts of revenue; this fact is apparent from the frequently increasing prices that candidates were willing to offer; however we also must make some allowance for currency deterioration.²⁰ A good example of competitive bidding concerned the guild of the porters who as a kind of 'labor aristocrats' owned horses to carry their loads (*at hammalları*). More modest practitioners of the same trade had to rely on their own muscles, and transported goods on poles or even directly on their backs (*sırık hammalları*, *sırt hammalları*).²¹ This relative wealth of the *at hammalları* probably explains why their *kethüdaship* was in brisk demand. When a certain Süleyman obtained it, he handed over to the Treasury a 'pay check' for 19 *akçe* and in addition consented to compensate his predecessor for the 6 *akçe* which the latter earlier on had offered for this position. But now another competitor submitted an even higher bid, and

¹⁹ Yüksel Duman, "Notables, Textiles and Copper in Ottoman Tokat 1750-1840," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Binghamton/SUNY, 1998, p. 169.

²⁰ Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 163. In itself this deterioration saved the treasury money, as soldiers' pay and other pensions were devalued accordingly.

²¹ MAD 8590, p. 217 (Cemaziyelâhir 1140/Jan.-Febr. 1728).

in order to retain his newly won position, Süleyman acquired the 'pay check' of an armorer, worth another 12 *akçe*. This document was handed over to the Treasury as well. As a result merely during the years of Süleyman's tenure, the increase amounted to 31 *akçe* or over a quarter of a *guruş*. As a counterpart the Treasury confirmed Süleyman's *kethüdaship*, at least for the time being.

Another case, similar in type but even more complicated in the details, was recorded in 1721, when a certain Mustafa stated that he had become the 'trusted [head] workman' (*mutemed*) of the carpenters of Galata.²² This organization seems to have been quite important and was often mentioned in the records of the time. As was typical of high-powered guilds, it could count on the services of a number of auxiliary craft organizations (*ana tabi ehl-i hiref taifesi*) whose contributions augmented that of the carpenters themselves whenever the Ottoman state demanded service. Mustafa the *mutemed* had given up a salary of 6 *akçe*, which had been due to himself for an unspecified service to the sultan (*ulufe*). But at a later stage a competitor by the name of İsmail offered 14 *akçe* and was awarded the office in his turn. İsmail's bid consisted of a 7 *akçe* pension payable by the tobacco customs administration, 2 *akçe* due from the tax collected from slaughtered animals (*serçin derçin mukataası*), and 3 *akçe* in the shape of pensions that would otherwise have been defrayed by the administration of the well-known silk weighing scales of Bursa.²³ Assigning pensions to specific revenue sources had become a common practice by the eighteenth century; in this manner the administration decentralized operations and thereby saved labor and money, for payment was now the responsibility of the incumbent tax farmer and the pensioner him/herself.

At the next stage of our saga, Mustafa reentered the fray. He also had acquired an impressive array of entitlements, presumably by indemnifying the pensioners in question in a manner that remains unknown. From a student of law and divinity (*talib-i ilim*) he had received the right to 3 *akçe*, payable by the administration of heirless property in Istanbul (İstanbul *beytülmalı*), another important tax farm. A second student had turned over his 'scholarship' of 2 *akçe*, payable by the administration of the collective workshop of the capital's silversmiths (*simkeşhane*). But the largest pension entitlement came from a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad who was also the son of a dervish sheik. This latter personage had been receiving 10 *akçe* from the Edirne customs administration, so that Mustafa was now able to offer an increase of 15 *akçe*, quite apart from the 6 *akçe* he had originally turned over and the fourteen additionally offered by his competitor İsmail.

²² MAD 9908, p. 342 (Cemaziyelâhir 1133/March-Apr. 1721).

²³ MAD 9908, p. 306 (Cemaziyelâhir 1133/March-Apr. 1721).

Thus by 1721 the *kethüdaship* of the Galata carpenters was acquired against the surrender of pay tickets amounting to 29 *akçe*. Put differently the office had increased in value almost fivefold within a limited number of years. Certainly by the early eighteenth century, the *akçe* was much devalued, but 120 pieces of this ancient silver coin still made up a *guruş*, which was the real means of payment at this time.²⁴ As to the financial bureaucrats who had to decide whether the proposed deal was permissible, they determined that there were no serious complaints against Mustafa -- and presumably, although they did not say so, that the increase offered was adequate. He thus was permitted to resume his *kethüda*-ship.

What happened when a candidate had obtained guild office but then was incapable of reimbursing the previous holder? For this was the later fate of Mustafa, who evidently had overreached himself in order to become the *mutemed* of the Galata carpenters. In Zilka'de 1133/ Aug.-Sept. 1721 Mustafa confessed that he was unable to pay the 14 *akçe* previously offered by İsmail, and petitioned to be excused.²⁵ But his plea did not do him much good: outright refusals were not often sent out by Ottoman bureaucrats. But the officials in question simply ignored his pleas, and issued an appointment document by which Mustafa was given the position and ordered to pay up. Whether he actually did so is of course another matter.

Guild office in return for hard cash

While the typical arrangement seems to have been that soldiers handed in their pay tickets in exchange for *kethüda*-ships, we also encounter a few cases in which sums of money were directly paid over. In these cases people might be involved who were not necessarily military men. In one record, dating from the mid-eighteenth century the reason for payment seems fairly straightforward: when a *yigitbaşı* of the Istanbul barbers died leaving a young son, an outsider took the place of the deceased but relinquished it to the young man after the latter had reached the age of sixteen.²⁶ The new *yigitbaşı* paid over 80 *guruş* to his predecessor, presumably in recognition of the fact that by the older man's intercession, he had made it possible for the young *yigitbaşı* to take over his father's position.

A much more complicated case involves the headship of the workmen who dug the channels by which waste water was evacuated, or through which fresh water conduits

²⁴ Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 163.

²⁵ MAD 9908, p. 578 (Zilka'de 1137/Aug.-Sept. 1721).

²⁶ MAD 9996, p. 56 (Rebiülevvel 1180/Aug.-Sept. 1766).

were then made to pass (*lağımcılık*). In eighteenth-century Istanbul, quite a few of these workmen were immigrant Albanians, who were guaranteed a share of whatever work was available. This arrangement also meant that the Albanians, whose search for work in Istanbul continued over the centuries, must have had a certain amount of group cohesion; apparently the central administration, always suspicious of immigrants to the capital, yet was willing to tolerate such men if they were members of an officially recognized group. Quite often Albanian and other immigrants were required to furnish mutual guarantees of good behavior.²⁷

In spite of the lowliness of the ditch-diggers' task, Seyyid Ömer their *kethüda* in 1721 was a man of some status and also a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. According to Seyyid Ömer's claim he had acquired the position of 'headman of the ditch-diggers' (*lağımcıbaşı*lık) against an annual payment of 12,000 *akçe*, corresponding to 100 *guruş*.²⁸ Subsequently Seyyid Ömer had lost his position to a certain Hüseyin, who had increased the payment to 18,000 *akçe*; but then the new *lağımcıbaşı* was commissioned to work on repairs to the fortress of Nish, and was killed in an accident while on site. Now Seyyid Ömer seized the opportunity of recovering his position, offering a further 3000 *akçe* in return.

In the financial administration this rather frenzied bidding seems to have caused misgivings. As the recipient of the money was not the central Treasury properly speaking, but rather the naval Arsenal, the responsible official (*emin-i tersane*) was asked to report on whether the 'headman-ship of the ditch-diggers' did in fact produce enough revenue to justify a further increase.²⁹ This question is remarkable, as the risk inherent in tax-farming and purchase of office normally was accepted by the tax farmer/purchaser, with capital punishment a possible and imprisonment a typical consequence of any failure to pay up.³⁰ But perhaps the administration wanted to avoid trouble with the often turbulent immigrant Albanians, whose payments were the source of the revenue that Seyyid Ömer was purchasing with his annual outlay. Be that as it may, the Arsenal administrator Abdullah reported back that Seyyid Ömer had been accepted by the ditch-diggers and for the last three or four years, had been paying 18,000 *akçe* to the Arsenal. The administrator implied that an increase of 3000 was not

²⁷ For sixteenth-century Albanian immigration: Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*, p. 271; for the mid-1700s *eadem*, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater Istanbul' as Reflected in the Kadi Registers of Eyüp," *Turcica*, 30 (1998): 163-183; personal observations from the late nineteenth century: Hagop Mintzuri, *İstanbul Anıları (1897-1940)*, tr. by Silva Kuyumcuyan, notes by Necdet Sakaoğlu (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1993), pp. 15, 16, 22.

²⁸ MAD 9908, p. 470 (Şaban 1133/ May-June 1721).

²⁹ The money in question (*mal-ı maktu*) had been assigned to the Arsenal on a permanent basis, an arrangement known as the *ocaklık*. Most such *ocaklıks* paid for the upkeep of garrison forces.

³⁰ Halil Sahillioğlu, "Bir Mültezimin Zimem Defterine göre XV. Yüzyıl Sonunda Osmanlı Darphane Mukataaları," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 23 (1962-63): 145-218, see p. 153.

unrealistic, and Seyyid Ömer was granted the position against an annual payment of 20,000 *akçe*.³¹

Who got to hold office?

While it is possible that many people who purchased their offices did so as an investment, and had neither the skills nor the inclination to do the job themselves, this was not true in all cases. To the contrary, professional competence -- or lack of same -- might be of some importance in determining who got to retain certain guild offices and who needed to turn over his acquisition to better qualified competitors. This state of affairs is apparent from a dispute concerning the office of town *mimar* (builder, architect) in the settlement of Turgutlu, that as a first step, was submitted to the kadi's court of Manisa. But as the dispute could not be resolved locally it was ultimately passed on to Istanbul.³² The person holding the position of town *mimar* had trained as a builder and was expected to aid the local kadi in questions concerning houses and pieces of land; his expertise was required especially when a house had to be divided up among several heirs. Therefore a town builder had to be proficient in the art of surveying.³³

While the office of *şehir mimarı* was not a guild office properly speaking, the holder must have obtained his experience by working as a member of the local builders' guild. Membership in the latter presumably was a precondition for office. Our document merely reports that a certain Mehmed had bought the Turgutlu position on condition that out of his own purse, he pay the 8 *akçe* due to his predecessor İbrahim. But then complaints were made that Mehmed did not have the necessary competence for the job, which accordingly was passed on to a certain Yorgi. What kind of compensation if any was paid in this instance remains unknown. Interestingly enough this position, which involved some power of decision-making, in principle could be held by a non-Muslim. But Yorgi did not enjoy his position for long: for Mehmed was able to convince the powers-that-be that he was in fact qualified for the job of town builder, and was thus reinstituted.

In this case it is likely that whether he was good at surveying or not, Mehmed enjoyed the support of influential people in his home town. Sometimes even Istanbul connections might be mobilized: thus when the town *mimar* of Aintab/Gaziantep had met his death by hanging and witnesses testified to this regrettable event, chief architect in Istanbul intervened in person and suggested the grant of an appointment document to a local

³¹ An arithmetical error went undetected: 18,000+3000=21,000. Or else the misgivings of the Treasury officials translated into a reduction of 1000 *akçe*.

³² MAD 9908, p. 411 (Receb 1133/ April-May 1721).

³³ Cengiz Orhonlu, "Şehir Mimarları" in *idem*, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sehicilik ve Ulaşım*, ed. by Salih Özbaran (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, reprint, 1984): 1-26.

man.³⁴ We do not know whether the previous holder had been murdered or else officially executed, and whether an act committed on the job was the reason for the killing. In any case, the suggestion of the Istanbul chief architect was accepted by the authorities, apparently without any money changing hands. We may surmise that a judicious mix of personal connections and professional competence determined appointments to the position of town *mimar*.

With respect to another appointment, the relevance of patronage links is made even more explicit. Once again, a provincial dispute could not be solved locally and thus was turned over to Istanbul. At issue was the *kethüda*-ship of the covered market (*bedestan*) in Sivas: the holder of this office had jurisdiction over the shopkeepers operating from this location, for the most part probably men of some substance. The incumbent holding the office in 1720-1 had purchased it by returning to the Treasury the right to a payment of 10 *akçe* a day. After the holder's death his successor, a certain Mustafa, who belonged to the suite of the then governor of Sivas, took over this obligation and thus obtained the office.³⁵

While our information concerning the social contexts in which a *kethüda* could misuse his position is not very abundant, this particular dispute at least gives us an inkling. For when a competitor of Mustafa's, by the name of Hacı Ali, sought to obtain the position he enumerated the many instances of misconduct of which his competitor had been accused. Hacı Ali stated -- and brought in numerous witnesses confirming his claim -- that Mustafa had exploited his relationship with the former governor. In particular he had lodged unjustified complaints against *bedestan* merchants who were then fined by the authorities. We can see here how links to a governor might be of advantage in obtaining a *kethüda*-ship, and may also suspect that the end of the governor's tenure also spelled the termination of Mustafa's 'reign of terror' over the traders of Sivas.

Were there any situations in which guild offices could *not* be purchased by military men and other receivers of state stipends? In some instances positions in guilds were passed on from father to son, and where this was the norm, outsiders may have found it difficult to penetrate. In Cairo where guild sheiks were normally appointed for life, there existed a certain number of artisan organizations that were run by members of the same family over the generations. This fact may well have been one of the reasons why in this city, as we have seen the administration of guilds apparently never became a saleable office.³⁶ But similar cases did occur in Istanbul as well: thus the boatmen working for the official

³⁴ MAD 9906, p. 479 (Ramazan 1132/

³⁵ MAD 9908, p. 451 (Şaban 1133/ May-June 1721).

³⁶ Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, vol. 2: 554.

centre for the weighing and distribution of flour (*kapan-ı dakik sefineciyan*) had a *yiğitbaşı* whom they wished to retain and who had acquired the office after it had been held by his father and elder brother in succession. We learn that the *yiğitbaşı*'s elder brother had relinquished the office because he had been promoted to guild *kethüda*.³⁷ While inheriting office in craft organizations did not protect the incumbent from deposition in favor of a competitor, such family continuity could be adduced as a point in a given candidate's favor, and thus we can assume that in the Ottoman capital as well, *kethüda*-ships that could be inherited were more difficult to put up for sale. A comparable impediment might arise if, as happened in the case of the Istanbul tanners, an outside authority such as the sheiks of the dervish lodge of Ahi Evran in Kırşehir claimed a say in the appointment of the sheik or *ahi baba*.³⁸ Conclusions *ex negativo* are hazardous, as our documentation is manifestly incomplete; yet it is worth noting that so far, no sales of *kethüda*-ships that have come to my attention involve the tanners.

Coping with guild factionalism, or making oneself acceptable (or not) as an outsider

Given the overwhelming importance of Treasury interests, we might assume that the guildsmen whose *kethüda* had bought his office had no say in who came to head their guild, and were obliged to meekly accept whichever soldier made the highest bid. Put differently the position of such a *kethüda* should have been much stronger than that of headmen who had been appointed by other procedures, for instance by consensus among the artisans concerned. Possibly such cases of abject powerlessness on the artisans' part did in fact occur, but since in those instances the guildsmen presumably did not dare to complain, our records have nothing to say about them.

However things could also work out quite differently; this becomes evident from a dispute between the janissary Seyyid Cafer b Abdullah and an untitled and therefore presumably non-military person named Abdullah b Ali.³⁹ For fourteen years Cafer, after turning over the 10 *akçe* due to him as a janissary of the 55. corps (*bölük*), had acted as the *dikicibaşı*, i. e. the head of the cobblers' guild. This sum of money had been his retirement pay (*ber vech-i tekaüd*). Now his opponent had engineered a complaint against him, that according to Seyyid Cafer was entirely baseless. Be that as it may Abdullah had obtained the position after promising as usual, to pay out of his own pocket the 10 *akçe* due to his predecessor. However Cafer was not satisfied with this solution, perhaps because it reflected negatively on his administrative/professional competence and probity. For Abdullah b Ali and the 'clouds of witness' that he had brought to the

³⁷ MAD 9996, p. 62 (Rebiülevvel 1180/Aug.-Sept. 1766).

³⁸ MAD 7940, p. 150 (Rebiülevvel 1222/ May-June 1807).

³⁹ MAD 9908, p. 469 (Şaban 1133/ May-June 1721). As the frequency of this name shows, by the eighteenth century we cannot assume that every 'son of Abdullah' was necessarily a recent convert to Islam. As Seyyid Cafer's father did not hold the title of *seyyid*, Cafer must have acquired it through his mother.

kadi's court accused Seyyid Cafer of having punished his fellow guildsmen contrary to 'şeriat and *kanun*.'⁴⁰ But perhaps it was simply a matter of money, and Cafer's protests may indicate that the revenue produced by his guild office was substantially higher than his retirement pay of 10 *akçe* per diem.

More importantly for our purposes however, in protesting against his deposition Seyyid Cafer demonstrated that he had numerous Istanbul cobblers on his side. Before the kadi, the *kethüdas*, their substitutes the *yığitbaşıs* and other senior artisans of the capital's seven covered streets (*arasta*) tenanted by cobblers appeared, in order to express their satisfaction with Seyyid Cafer's tenure of office. Eighty-seven Muslims and thirty-seven non-Muslims thought it worth their while to take off from work for this purpose. As the kadi of Istanbul also supported Seyyid Cafer's reinstatement, it comes as no surprise that the central administration decided accordingly. In this case there was no increase in the amount of soldiers' pay or pension reverting to the Treasury.

When Seyyid Cafer lost his position, his pay was not affected by whatever complaints the court of Istanbul's business district of Mahmud Paşa had accepted as well-founded. However this was only the legal side of the matter, and there might have been practical problems involved in collecting one's due from a successor, once the latter was securely established in guild office. This humdrum reality becomes apparent from the story of Murad b Ebubekir and his competitor Südoğlu Hüseyin, who both contended for the *kethüda*-ship of the men that stewed sheep's trotters (*paçacı*) for public consumption.⁴¹ This was probably not a wealthy guild, as trotters were also prepared by housewives, to the great disgust of the established artisans.⁴² Murad had been deposed and now complained that Hüseyin was not paying out his daily pension of 60 *akçe* as was his obligation. In fact, there had been earlier complaints about Murad, namely that he collected more money for himself than was legally his due. However neither the kadi nor the central administration apparently made Murad pay back his ill-gotten gains.

Nor did the appointment of Hüseyin, who should have paid his predecessor the substantial sum of half a *guruş* per diem, end the *paçacı*'s troubles. For after some time forty-seven guild masters contended that Hüseyin was perpetually drunk and that with the help of some other men, he habitually closed down the shops of certain of his charges and did not allow them to reopen unless he had collected a substantial bribe. Thus the *kethüda* must have had the right to close shops as a punishment for various

⁴⁰ MAD 9908, pp. 155-6 (Rebiülâhır 1133/ Jan.-Febr. 1721).

⁴¹ MAD 8590, pp. 178-9 (Cemaziyelevvel 1140/Dec.1720-Jan. 1727).

⁴² Suraiya Faroqhi, "Women's work, poverty and the privileges of guildsmen", *Archiv Orientalni*, 69, 2 issue in memory of Zdenka Veselà (May 2001): 155-164. By chance the complaint of the *paçacı*s against their non-guild competitors was also dated 1720.

irregularities; evidently he did not need to refer such cases to the market inspector or the judge.⁴³ However the complaints about Hüseyin were contested by fifty masters of the craft. This distribution indicates that the guild was about evenly divided between the supporters of Murad and those of Hüseyin.⁴⁴ In the end, the latter retained his office, but was ordered by the authorities to pay back the money owed to Murad 'month by month' starting from the very first day of his own appointment.

Major disputes within a given guild, of the kind referred to here, were not at all rare, and quite often they involved the person of the *kethüda*. Factionalism within a guild might reach a point that the members publicly stated that they were unable to agree on a headman. This is documented for the fez-makers of Tunisian origin active in Istanbul. In the end, these petty traders agreed to form two guilds based on the locations of their shops: one for Galata and one for *intra muros* Istanbul.⁴⁵

A similar conflict also must have happened in the tailors' guild, where the *kethüda* Ali, who had returned a salary of 18 *akçe* to the Treasury and had held his office ever since 1118/1706-7, claimed that there was -- in his perhaps unrealistic opinion -- a 'small minority' of fellow tailors who were trying to get rid of him.⁴⁶ Unfortunately in these and other cases, the reasons for faction formation within a given guild are never referred to; at least the appearance of Muslims and non-Muslims on one and the same side indicates that sectarian tensions were not, or perhaps not as yet, a significant factor in these disputes.⁴⁷

Increasing guild rigidity and fiscal exploitation

As our evidence shows, acquiring guild office, by returning military pay tickets or papers documenting pension rights to the central Treasury, was of some significance in the early eighteenth century, not only in Istanbul or Bursa, but occasionally even in provincial Anatolian towns. In some cases the bidding was quite lively and people holding the office, when confronted with a competitor offering more money, either had to relinquish their positions or else come up with the equivalent pay tickets. Given the existence of a market in military *esame*, the 'pay checks' had not necessarily been made out to the

⁴³ Other penalties, not always licit, are also on record: thus a text relayed in MAD 9996, p. 27 (1180/1776-7) forbids *kethüdas* and *yiğitbaşıs* to administer beatings to guildsmen. If necessary, such penalties should be ordered by the kadi's court. The North African artisans working in Istanbul also might be excluded from their guilds and sent home.

⁴⁴ MAD 9996, p. 27 (Muharrem 1180/June 1766).

⁴⁵ Suraiya Faruqi, "Immigrant tradesmen as guild members, or the adventures of Tunisian fez-sellers in eighteenth-century Istanbul," in "The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Era (1600-1900): In Honor of Caesar Farah," ed. by Jane Hathaway (in the course of publication).

⁴⁶ MAD 9908, p. 440 (Şaban 1133/ May-June 1721).

⁴⁷ For an eighteenth-century dispute in which the Muslim-Christian divide was in fact important compare Onur Yıldırım, "Ottoman Guilds as a Setting for Ethno-Religious Conflict: The Case of the Silk-thread Spinners' Guild in Istanbul", *International Review of Social History* (Dec. 2002) 47/3: 407-419.

person who offered them to the Treasury; and while this fact has been known for a long time, it is worth adding that students or dervish sheiks, who received official grants for totally different reasons, also might turn over their entitlements to outsiders. We do not really know why these religious figures preferred to sell their pension rights. Possibly the eighteenth-century devaluation of the currency made the future value of such payments appear increasingly doubtful. It thus seemed safer to capitalize these pensions and if possible invest the money somewhere else.

These arrangements must have ended, or at least severely limited, the flexibility in guild organization that has been observed for the seventeenth century, with respect both to Bursa and to the Ottoman capital itself.⁴⁸ In the 1600s, purchases of guild office had not been very much in evidence; moreover at least in Bursa, some artisans seem to have joined their chosen guilds simply by paying their taxes along with the established members. But if the revenues of the *kethüda* depended on the number of people in his guild, it is hard to imagine that this rather informal way of doing things could have been allowed to continue. Presumably before even making his bid, the prospective headman found out how many guild members there were and what they could pay as *kethüdalık avaidi*. Given plagues and food scarcities that limited the artisans' markets and must have lowered the dues they could afford to pay, the revenues that a *kethüda* might anticipate were already uncertain enough. He was not likely to accept developments that made them even less predictable, and the tantalizingly unspecific complaints of guild masters against certain headmen may have been connected to the attempts of the latter to enjoy some degree of stable purchasing power in an otherwise unstable environment.

To the present we have viewed the increasing rigidity of Ottoman guilds in the later 1700s and early 1800s in connection with the spread of the *gedik*. Once this right to exercise a certain craft in a given location could be inherited, or sold only to fellow guildsmen, the latter to some extent were protected against interference from outsiders.⁴⁹ While the strategies of artisan self-defense still are known only in part, a growing guild rigidity is not to be doubted.

Apart from demands made by the administrators of pious foundations who sought to increase rent revenues and may have forced artisans to limit competition that might bid

⁴⁸ Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1988) and Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul, Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004).

⁴⁹ Engin Akarlı, "Gedik: Implements, Mastership, Shop Usufruct and Monopoly among Istanbul Artisans, 1750-1850", *Wissenschaftskolleg-Jahrbuch* (1985-1986): 223-232 and *idem*, "Gedik: A Bundle of Rights and Obligations for Istanbul Artisans and Traders, 1750-1840," in *Law, Anthropology and the Constitution of the Social, Making Persons and Things*, ed. by Alain Pottage and Martha Mundy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 166-200.

up rents, we need to consider a number of other factors as well. These include the relocation of entire guilds in large khans, so that mutual supervision became much easier. In addition the ongoing struggles with tax farmers must have put a premium on cohesiveness: if all the guildsmen employed the same tactics they had better chances of buying raw materials at reasonable prices and perhaps escaping certain taxes. Most importantly as we have now demonstrated, the spread of *kethüda*-ships that had been purchased from the Ottoman administration also worked in the same direction.⁵⁰ *Nolens volens* artisan organizations became less flexible.

While we might have assumed that as a result of purchased *kethüda*-ships, artisans completely lost control over their guilds, this has turned out to be a mistaken impression. Purchasing guild office did not mean that the newly appointed headman could save himself the trouble of winning over the artisans whose affairs he was called upon to administer. For the latter could complain to the kadi and the central authorities with reasonable chances of obtaining a degree of redress. Presumably the reason for this unstable balance was the fact that so many *esame* and other 'pay checks' were available that they changed hands at moderate prices, while the *kethüdalık avalidi* provided guild officials with an income substantially higher than that provided by these state entitlements. In addition the income of a guild *kethüda*, which remained unspecified, could be adjusted for inflation more easily than income provided through *esame*, that after all was specified on the entitlement record itself. Given this situation there was much competition for guild offices, and thus the Treasury 'could afford' to depose headmen who had given rise to complaints, at no disadvantage to its own revenues. To the contrary often, but by no means always, changing the headmen meant collecting additional pay tickets, and therefore the sultan's officials actually were motivated to respond positively to the demands of guildsmen who wanted to change their *kethüdas*.

In conclusion: an inter-cultural perspective

So much for the intra-Ottoman context; however it is of interest to compare these dynamics with the purchase of office as practiced in at least one other culture. A comparison with early modern France seems especially appropriate, because in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the sale of offices was widely used in this kingdom as a means of revenue-raising, and in addition this practice has been studied in great detail.⁵¹

⁵⁰ On the role of working together in large khans see Genç, "'Ottoman Industry': 63 and Suraiya Faruqi, "Urban Space as Disputed Grounds: Territorial Aspects to Artisan Conflict in Sixteenth to Eighteenth-Century Istanbul" in eadem, *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women: Establishing Status, Establishing Control*, (Istanbul: Eren, 2002): 219-234.

⁵¹ Roland Mousnier, *La vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* (Paris: Presses Universitaires Françaises, 1971): 127-49.

Both in France and in the Ottoman Empire the purchasers of offices expected to draw regular incomes from the services that they performed, really or allegedly, for the public in general or at least for certain sections of the latter, guildsmen included. Fees were paid by those who needed the services in question, the treasuries of the French and Ottoman sovereigns not being directly involved. In that sense the sale of offices differed from revenue-farming, where state income was at issue: in those cases the treasuries in question received sums of cash immediately and sacrificed future revenues in return. Tax farming also was practiced in both *ancien régime* France and in the Ottoman Empire, but in the present context this institution has concerned us but marginally.

While overall practices thus were comparable, in some respects however the Ottoman and French treasuries differed substantially in the contexts in which they put offices up for sale. While in the Ottoman lands, soldiers or at least holders of military pay tickets occupied center stage, this was not true in France, where investors were typically civilians. French offices were treated as family property and often became hereditary upon payment of additional sums of money; in fact the proprietors often used them as stepping stones to ennoblement. As to the Ottoman Empire of the eighteenth century, it was run by a *de facto* aristocracy of grandees and tax farmers, but the latter never acquired the legally cemented privileges that might have turned them into a nobility. Property in offices thus was a matter of limited duration, and hereditary positions, while not unknown, played a much less important role. On the other hand the eighteenth-century implication of the Ottoman military in most aspects of government and administration does seem, at least at the present state of our knowledge, to be a peculiarity of the sultans' empire. This is an issue that needs to be studied in much more detail.

Another difference between French and Ottoman sales of office involved the manner in which those who acquired these positions paid for their purchases. In France it was customary to demand cash, rather than to use the sale of offices as a means of pulling out of circulation orders for payment previously issued by the crown. By contrast in the Ottoman context, cash demands by the Treasury appear to have been secondary, however that may well be an optical illusion due to the limited number of documents hitherto studied. In addition the French kings openly created offices for which there was no need, and often even duplicated those already in existence. Quite a few offices of this type were not intended to ever become operative; rather they were destined for sale as a prelude to their later abolition. In some instances the holders of the existing offices now duplicated might redeem the king's novel creations in order to preserve the revenues

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they hoped to get out of the people they were supposed to administer. In other cases, sections of the public that now were expected to pay fees to two office-holders instead of one, might pool resources in order to make the relevant purchase. In both cases the king's treasury was the winner.

Barring error these particular kinds of manipulation are not documented in the Ottoman registers. However it must be admitted that the sultan's officials did not often talk about their procedures and motivations. Thus the documents do not tell us anything about dubious deals that may have preceded the register entry, usually so bland and routine. It is perfectly possible, for instance, that certain 'competitors' had in fact been induced by Treasury officials to offer additional *esame*, not because they really wanted the position or even possessed the requisite 'pay checks' but rather, to force the *kethüda* already in office to increase the price of his position. However as far as we can judge at present, even though the Ottoman government has a well-deserved reputation for 'fiscalism' and even 'fisco-centrism', the royal administration of early modern France went much further in the fiscal exploitation of its subjects than was true of its Ottoman counterpart.⁵²

⁵² Genç, "*Ottoman Industry*": 66.