

**HISTORICAL DETERMINANTS OF STRATIFICATION :  
SOCIAL CLASS AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN TURKEY**

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Both Turkish and Western writers have pointed out that a characteristic of the Ottoman social system was the absence of a hereditary aristocracy.<sup>1</sup> The evidence uncovered in recent years has made it increasingly clear that this view of Ottoman society is true only to the extent that it is hedged with a number of qualifications.<sup>2</sup> Conversely in the last decade, Turkish and Western students of Turkey have thought that they could identify a Turkish hereditary

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1. **The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq : Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554 - 1562**, (Trs. Foster, Oxford, 1927), p. 60: «They do not consider that good qualities can be conferred by birth or handed down by inheritance», Baron de Tott, **Memoirs**, (London, 1785), Vol. II, Appendix, p. 36. «In a country where the unlettered son of a cobbler is eligible to the office of a Pasha or Vizier, according to the caprice of the sovereign, or the influence of bribery; a change in the authorities only adds to the evil by substituting a poor man to a rich one who must have recourse to extortion to support his new dignity... This state of things cannot endure, an aristocracy of hungry officials is one of the greatest curses that can be inflicted upon a country,» Edmund Spencer, **Travels in European Turkey in 1850** (London, 1851, 2 vols.), v. I, p. 270. For Turks see Mizancı Mehmed Murad, «Avrupadan İlk Sadalar,» **Mizan**, 12 Ramazan 1300 - May 23, 1888, pp. 531 - 532.
  2. Hamilton Gibb and Harold Bowen, **Islamic Society and the West : A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East, I, Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century**, Part I, p. 158 and note 1; also I. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, **Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları I : Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı** (Ankara, 1943), p. 31, A more sanguine note about such findings has been sounded by Marxist historians, particularly Bulgarian and Russian commentators on Ottoman History. See Bistra A. Cvetkova, «L'évolution du régime féodal Turc de la fin du XVI e jusqu'au milieu du XVIII e Siècle,» **Etudes Historiques** II, (1960), 171 - 206.



«upper class» in Republican Turkey.<sup>3</sup> This view also blots out a number of features in the stratification system of Turkey which provide clues to the reconstruction of the Ottoman system and gives us an insight into the present class situation in Turkey. This paper is an attempt to place the issue in clearer focus by making use of a number of preliminary distinctions which may be of use in future studies of Turkish stratification.

By placing the historical categories derived from the Ottoman experience into the framework of a recent, generalized paradigm of class consciousness,<sup>4</sup> this outline also seeks to provide the basis for cross-cultural comparisons.

The paradigm used here has the advantage of attempting to draw together a number of well-known methodologies used in the study of social classes and class consciousness. Basically it relies on the five main categories of *status awareness*, *stratum awareness*, *stratum affiliation*, *stratum consciousness* and *stratum action*. In this scheme *status awareness*<sup>4</sup> is defined as the «perception of continuous status ranges. Ability to place self and others.»<sup>5</sup> *Stratum awareness*, on the other hand, is the «perception of discrete, ranked categories,»<sup>6</sup> i. e., the «ability to place self and others in strata.» A special variant of stratum awareness is *class awareness* which is one «kind of stratum awareness based on economic criteria.»<sup>7</sup> *Stratum affiliation* is defined as the feeling of belonging to a stratum. «Again, there are many varieties of stratum affiliation, racial stratum affiliation, occupational stratum affiliation, religious stratum affiliation, and class affiliation.» Class affiliation is a type of stratum affiliation based exclusively on economic criteria. These criteria can be mixed, i. e., based both on racial and «style of life» components. Those who abide by these mixed criteria constitute a *social set*. *Stratum consciousness* is «identification with and commitment to stratum interests and ideology.» The particular type of stratum consciousness which is based exclusively on economic cri-

3. A. T. J. Matthews, **Emergent Turkish Administrators**, (Ankara, 1955), p. 25. It has become usual to speak of a Turkish «aristocracy» in the Turkish socialistically inclined periodical press in the last three or four years.

4. Richard T. Morris and Raymond J. Murphy, «A Paradigm for the Study of Class Consciousness» **Sociology and Social Research**, (1966), p. 297 - 313.

5. **Ibid.**, p. 298.

6. **Ibid.**,

7. **Ibid.**,



teria is called *class consciousness*. Finally, «behaviour undertaken on behalf of the interests and ideology of the stratum» is *stratum action* whereas one kind of stratum action based on exclusively economic criteria is class action.<sup>8</sup>

An important aspect of this model which is of particular use in our case is described by the authors as follows :

A contribution of the paradigm, as we see it, is its use as an orientation to the analysis of the subjective aspects of social stratification... The implication here is that class consciousness (or any other form of stratum consciousness) is a processual emergent and that it must be studied in a dynamic framework, either historical or biographical, rather than as a characteristic which is either present or absent among a population at a given time.<sup>9</sup>

One of the main points that this paper shall attempt to substantiate is that the category of «social set» is particularly suited to the study of Turkish social structure, since the latter already embodied in Central Asia ascriptive and achievement criteria in almost equal proportions, a situation which does not resemble the conditions that one encounters in the historical evolution of Western Europe.

#### 1. *Earliest Turkic Components of Stratification :*

Doubts as to the validity of the arguments concerning the absence of a Turkish aristocracy arise as soon as one observes that the Oğuz, the ethnic root stock of the Turks, *did* have a hereditary aristocracy. Among the latter, as among the earlier Turks, there seems to have existed a simple stratification system in which one can identify a *Han* or tribal leader at the apex, an aristocratic stratum (the Beys), and finally the lower classes or common people.<sup>10</sup>

Membership in the aristocratic class is determined by two criteria, kinship and achievement, but the kinship arrangements

8. *Ibid.*, p. 303.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

10. Faruk Sümer, «Oğuzlara ait Destanî Mahiyette Eserler,» *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih - Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* XVII, (July - Dec. 1959), pp. 418, 421.



that make for accession to the aristocratic stratum are so special that they merit further description :

Unlike later Roman society, the Altaic pastoralist society was more closely based on the principle of agnatic kinship... all Mongols and all Turks were actually or potentially agnatic kin.

By virtue of this principle, a Mongol of the lowest condition claimed a common ancestry with his supreme ruler Chingis Khan, and he was able to trace a direct agnatic relationship with the Emperor in the *n*th degree. The Kazakh, the Karakalpak, the medieval Jagatay Turk could establish the same relation in regard to his Emperor, Han, or Sultan. By this means the humblest Mongol could attain to the highest social position if he showed administrative skill or bravery and leadership qualities in the army; thereby he could become a minister or a general, and in both cases a member of the nobility. And the same principle was applied by Mongols or Turks as the case may be, equally to kin by birth or by adoption, including the adoption of a slave taken captive in war and freed.<sup>11</sup>

This structure which lent itself to social mobility was complicated by another structure which divided people into «noble» and «common» estates. We might describe the subjective aspect of this situation by saying that while on one hand the aspects of kinship structure described above raised the expectations of a less prestigious member of the group that he could rise in society, the fact that he belonged to a well-recognized stratum led to frustrations as regards his actual capacity to rise in society. As Krader describes it :

The system of agnation found throughout all societies of the Asian steppe pastoralists is formally conceptualized as the principle of kinship in the bone... Elaboration of the general principle of kinship in the bone, shared by Turkic and Mongol pastoralists alike, is the subdivision of these agnatic kin into estates, white bone or noble estate and black bone or the estate of commo-

<sup>11</sup>. Lawrence Krader, **Social Organization of the Mongol Turkic Pastoral Nomads**, (The Hague, 1963), pp. 321 - 322.



ners. Members of both estates are agnatically related in the widest degree; all members of a society, white bone or black, are theoretically descended from a common male ancestor. The social cleavage in the formation of the two estates is founded upon another principle in the society of the Asiatic steppe, the principle of ranking by order of birth. The various bones or paternal descent lines are collaterally ranked according to the order of birth of the founders and are thus considered as senior and junior to each other. Of the various collateral patriline, the senior in order of descent from the founding ancestor, the line of the eldest sons is the most noble and eventually became the noble line par excellence. A descent line junior in rank can only achieve the status of the senior line if the senior line ends without issue or with a woman... However, a junior line could be ennobled in its own right, regardless... through the meritorious deeds of one of its members.<sup>12</sup>

With time the Turks seem to have been able to stabilize the distinction between «noble» and «commoner» to the extent that no unexpected challenges could come any more from the ranks of the «commoners» on the basis of lineage pretensions. At least one historian has argued that a similar process is the distinguishing mark of the transformation of a tribal society into a «class society.»<sup>13</sup>

But another source of instability was the extent to which achievement continued to constitute a source of access to the «noble» estate.<sup>14</sup> To the extent that officials who had risen because of their services were given greater power than the nobility this feature was to constitute later the basis for a new type of conflict, one which took place within the «social set» that was the Turkic elite and that continued in the Ottoman Empire.

There are indications that even at the earliest times, in addition to the structures of stratification which we have described, there

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>13</sup> J. Harmatta, «The Dissolution of the Hun Empire,» *Acta Archeologica* II, 4 (1952), pp. 277 - 304.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Krader, «Feudalism and the Tartar Polity of the Middle Ages,» *Comparative Studies in Society and History* I (1958 - 59), p. 80; G. Györffy, «Die Rolle des Buyruq in der Altürkischen Gesellschaft,» *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XI (1960), p. 175.



existed less salient, latent components of stratification that would have led to the type of stratification by occupation which is familiar to Western students of stratification. For example, it would seem that being in charge of the provision of meat for the clan was a position less esteemed than that of tending horses.<sup>15</sup> But the Turkic tribes, although they have been shown to have been only semi-nomadic and to have had in historical times semi-sedentary features<sup>16</sup>, never acquired the highly differentiated structures of occupations which are the basis of the Western system of social stratification. This is particularly true of those occupations which one associates with «control of goods and services as expressed in the operations of the market economy.»<sup>17</sup> The latter is the definition in our paradigm of the type of activities without which one cannot speak of «classes.»

Neither was the inclusion of large groups of Turks into Islam, the Abbasid system, and the metropolitan economy that came with it, conducive to greater differentiation; for the arrested stage of this differentiation of occupations - insofar as contractual relations were subject to influences from outside the market - was a characteristic of early Islamic civilization.<sup>18</sup> What the Turks did take over after they joined the fold of Islam were two features: first the practice of bureaucracy and the skills which came down from the Sassanid scribes<sup>19</sup> and secondly a *picture* of stratification of ultimately Aristotelian origins.<sup>20</sup> We may already state here that there always was considerable difference between this Aristotelian model which came from a society with a totally different structure and the state of affairs in Turkic societies. Centuries later, Ottoman intellectuals took over the Aristotelian idea of an equipoise between the constituent parts of the *polis*, but one cannot escape the feeling that these ideals do not furnish reliable guides to

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15. Abdulkadir, «'Orun' ve 'Ülüş' Meselesi,» **Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası**, (İstanbul, 1931), p. 121 f.

16. Faruk Sümer, «Anadolu'ya Yalnız Göçebe Türkler mi Geldi?,» **Belleten** XXIV (October, 1960), pp. 567 - 578.

17. Morris and Raymond, **Sociology and Social Research** (1960), p. 300.

18. See A. K. S. Lambton, «The Merchant in Medieval Islam,» **A Locusts Leg: Studies in Honor of S. H. Taqizadeh** (London, 1962), pp. 121 - 130.

19. H. A. R. Gibb, «The Social Significance of the Shuubiya,» in **Studies on the Civilization of Islam** (Ed. by Stanford Shaw and William Polk, Boston, 1963), pp. 62 - 73.

20. Gustave E. von Grunebaum, **Medieval Islam** (Chicago, 1946), pp. 203 - 203.



the real situation in the Ottoman Empire with regard to stratification and consciousness of strata.

## 2. *Bureaucracy* :

The practices of Sassanid bureaucrats had a much more pervasive influence. The possibilities inherent in the use of a central bureaucracy were a boon to Turkic social structure, for they promised to check its fissile tendencies.<sup>21</sup> The characteristic steps that had entered into the formation of Central Asian Empires up to that date had been the gathering of various clans and then tribes into increasingly larger formations which made up the Empire. Bureaucracies, when attached to such Empires, made them more viable and stable. They did, however, introduce a new and permanent element into the stratification pattern. Bureaucrats now vied for power with the aristocracy which had from time immemorial assumed primarily the function of organizing military forces. The «middle layer» was thus split. This struggle between two components of the elite is a recurring feature of a number of Turkic empires. One of the most striking forms that it took was that of a struggle between languages. The language of the bureaucracy, of figures and bookkeeping, of the «city slicker» was Persian, while that of the Turkic gentry was Turkish; the clash between the two competing elites can be followed in recurring patterns in the Greater Selçuk Empire, the Selçuks of Rum and in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>22</sup> We may say, then, that one of the elements making for stra-

21. Turkic - Mongol groups had been able to establish Empires before but the latter were not particularly stable see René Giraud, *L'Empire des Turcs Célestes : les Règnes d'Hilteberich, Qapgan et Bilga* (Paris, 1960); for an analysis of the processes involved in the formation of Turkic Empires see Wilhelm Radloff, *Das Kutadgu Bilig des Jusuf Chass - Hadsehib aus Balasagun* (St. Petersburg, 1891 - 1910), Vol. I, Introduction, pp. LI - LV; also *Aus Sibirien* (Leipzig, 1893), I, 511 - 518, and Wilhelm Barthold, *Zwölf Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Türken Mittelasiens* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 10 - 11.

22. For the Greater Selçuk Empire see Bertold Spuler, «The Evolution of Persian Historiography,» in *Historians of the Middle East* (Ed. by Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt, London, 1962), p. 130. For the Selçuk of Rum see M. C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ, «Şemsüddin Mehmed Bey devrinde Karamanlılar,» *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* XIV March, 1964), pp. 81 - 98. For the Ottoman Empire see J. H. Kramers, «Turks, Ottoman, History,» *Encyclopedia of Islam*, first ed., 4 (2), p. 967; for cultural aspects Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Divan edebiyatı beyanındadır*, (İstanbul, 1945), p. 60.



tum consciousness was this conflict between bureaucrats and aristocrats, each with its own culture, myths and ideology.

A second important institution which left its mark in the social stratification system of the Ottoman Empire was the use of «slaves» as the «executive branch» of government in the Ottoman Empire. These «slaves» were children of non-Moslem families who were taken away from their families to be groomed for life-time state service. This group included the entourage of the sultan, the bureaucracy, the standing and the feudal army.<sup>23</sup> Among the rulers, only the Doctors of Islamic Law could not usually be recruited by this method.

The practice of relying on slaves to staff the central administrative - military machinery was not new but was brought to a point of refinement and purity in the Ottoman Empire that had not hitherto been attained. The Ottoman dynasty was thus able to solve a problem that had dogged earlier Turkic polities due to the patrimonial quality of political rule. The problem of the dividing of Empires among heirs, first in the form of appanages given them during their lifetime and then in the form of a dividing of the territory among them, could finally be solved.<sup>25</sup> There was now a central administrative executive machinery, robot-like in its allegiance to the dynasty, which provided for the continuity of the state by transcending the dynasty. A counter-weight devised against the wide powers granted to the slave-bureaucracy was the extremely precarious position of the members of this «ruling institution» vis-a-vis the Sultan.<sup>26</sup> With the introduction, at the time of Sultan Fatih of the principle of killing all princes of royal blood other than the eldest male heir of the Sultan, the possibility of establishing dynasties of «pretenders» - a specter which had haunted the Ottoman Empire in the XIVth Century-was permanently eliminated.<sup>27</sup>

The Ottoman Empire also solved the problem of other possible sources of opposition to the central powers by working for the

23. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1, pp. 39 ff.

24. *Ibid.*, I, 2, 107.

25. Some of these difficulties encountered by minor dynasts at the time when the Ottoman Empire had not established its hegemony are taken up by Claude Cahen in his article «Artukids», *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.), I, 665.

26. See Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1, 45.

27. See Halil İnalcık, «Osmanlı Hukukuna Giriş», *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, XIII (June 1958), p. 102 f. This practice was replaced later by that of isolating heirs from the outside world.



eradication of the influence of those warrior-princes who had been in the service of the Selçuks of Rum and with whom the Ottomans had had to compete when they were trying to become more than Selçuk march vassals and establish their supremacy in Anatolia.

The system of land tenure that emerged in the Ottoman Empire similarly worked in eliminating rivals to the central powers. Fief holders in the Ottoman Empire were not granted hereditary title to the land that they held.<sup>28</sup> Their «fief» was theoretically one given in exchange for military service. The state owned the land while the occupant only had the usufruct. This conception of a state with absolute control over the main source of production, again, was an innovation post-dating Turkic conversion to Islam.

A footnote and a digression is necessary at this point to do justice to the important work of those who have refuted the theory that a centralized state structure evolved late among the Turks.

Halil İnalcık has been the main contender of the thesis that Pre-Islamic Turks founded «states.»<sup>29</sup> What he seems to establish, however, is that the Pre-Islamic Turkic rulers were careful not to transgress the social and political traditions held by the group which they led. Together with the enormous authority wielded by the leader, this element gives the appearance of the existence of a state where no state existed. İnalcık's discussion does not dwell on the reasons for the disappearance of early Turkic «states.» In each case this seems to have been due to the inability to establish a stable administrative apparatus. Attempts had been made to establish an embryonic bureaucracy, but never successfully.<sup>30</sup>

With no feudalism, no hereditary princes and an institution staffed with slaves as an executive organ, the Ottoman Empire, su-

28. «The Ottoman feudal system seems to have differed from that of Western Europe chiefly in that the principal feudatories held their lands temporarily in virtue of their offices.» Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1, p. 52. See also Claude Cahen, «Réflexions sur l'usage du mot 'Féodalité'» *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* III, (April, 1960), p. 11.

29. See in particular İnalcık's article cited in footnote 27.

30. This in turn seems to have been due to the stability of the kinship arrangements earlier described. The latter may well turn out to be a consequence of Turkic clans being a type of clan in which the degree of relationship to the common ancestor is the organizing kinship principle. See Paul Kirshoff, «The Principles of Clanship in Human Society,» in Morton O. Fried ed. *Readings in Anthropology*, II (1959), pp. 259-271.



perfidiously examined, seems to approximate the optimum equilibrium of an «Oriental Despotism»<sup>31</sup> under which there are ideally only two «social sets»: the ruler and his executive servants on one hand and the ruled on the other.

As Halil İnalcık has stated :

The Ottoman system included two major classes. The first one called *askerî*, literally 'the military', included those to whom the Sultan had delegated religious or executive power through an Imperial diploma, namely officers of the court and the army, civil servants and *Ulema*. The second include the *reaya* comprising all Muslim and non-Muslim subjects who paid taxes but had no part in the government. It was a fundamental rule of the Empire to exclude its subjects from the privileges of the 'military'. Only those among them who were actual fighters on the frontiers and those who had entered the *Ulema* class after a regular course of study in a religious seminary could obtain the Sultan's, diploma and thus become members of the 'military' class.

It was, *in fine*, the Sultan's will alone that decided a man's status in society. In the period of decline, Koçi Beg and others asserted that a major cause of the disorganization of the Empire was the abandonment of this fundamental rule in favour of letting subjects become janissaries or fief (*tımar*) holders.<sup>32</sup>

This dichotomous picture, however, is only an «ideal type» for the Ottoman Empire, and it is important primarily because it enables us to separate the features of the polity that could obtain the stamp of legitimacy from nonlegitimate features. The actual, objective dimensions of stratification have to be gathered from the exceptions to the rule as well, and they are numerous.

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31. For the concept of Oriental despotism see K. A. Wittfogel, **Oriental Despotism** (New Haven, 1957), for a critical review of the concept see F. G. Pulleybank's review of Wittfogel in **Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies XXI**, (1958), pp. 657 - 660.

32. Halil İnalcık, «The Nature of Traditional Society : Turkey» in **Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey** (Ed. by Robert E. Ward and Dankwart Rustow, Princeton, 1964), p. 44.



First, the Empire embodied truly feudal structures at a number of points. For one, there were those Moslem Turkic princes and Byzantine barons who had very early chosen to join the Ottomans rather than to fight them. Thus, there existed families in the Ottoman Empire such as the Evrenos Oğulları, the Mihal Oğulları, the Malkoç Oğulları and the Turahan Oğulları who made up the «four ancient families of the Ottoman warrior nobility.»<sup>33</sup> These families, founded by members who had gained fame in war, constituted an aristocracy similar to that which existed in Central Asia. In the first centuries of the Empire, they were in control of large tracts of land and were considered, even by the rulers, to constitute a form of «peerage.»<sup>34</sup>

Secondly, there were the remnants of former vassals of the Selçuk Empire which the Ottoman Empire had to digest as it grew. In Eastern Turkey, for example, the descendants of a former Turkic princeling, the Zülkadiroğulları, enjoyed, up to the 17th century «the privileges of a mediatized ruling house.»<sup>35</sup> And in Bosnia, the Beys of Çengiç had their own «towers,» fief and feudal privileges.<sup>36</sup> In this case, and many others, being warriors in the march region of the Empire was used as a justification - or rationalization - of such privileges.

By and large it can be stated that the pressure on the part of the central slave executive to erase all these features of the Empire which did not fit the dual model were enduring and strong. This struggle is one of the main strands of Ottoman social history.\* Under pressure one of the ways of preserving a dynastic or noble identity was to assume a new protected status. Thus, in Central Anatolia, in Beyşehir, the dynasty of the Eşref Oğulları found the stratagem of establishing a religious trust to which the eldest son

33. I. Melikoff, «Evrenos,» E. I. (2nd ed.), II, p. 720.

34. *Ibid.*,

35. V. L. Menage, «Dhu'l kadr,» E. I. (2nd ed.), II, p. 329

36. Hamdi Kreşevlakoviç, **Çengiç Beyleri : Osmanlı devrinde Bosna - Hersek feodalizmi hakkında bir etüt**, (Trs. from the Croat by İsmail Eren, İstanbul, 1960), *passim*.

\* See Paul Wittek, «De la défaite d'Ankara à la prise de Constantinople,» **Revue des Etudes Islamiques**, XII (1938), pp. 1-34; Ömer Lütfi Barkan, «Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir iskân ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak sürgünler,» **İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası** 15 (1953-54), p. 213.



of the family was appointed trustee in perpetuity.<sup>37</sup> Similar moves were undertaken by members of the «ruling institution» to give their descendants a comfortable, if not luxurious, income. Such members of mediatized dynasties or former families of statesmen appear as members of the *Âyân ve Eşraf*, a new type of gentry into which filtered all types of former privileged residues. The term *âyân* also applied in a more narrow sense in the XVIIIth century to men who took up the defence of local interests against tax farmers and eventually became tax farmers themselves.

A third point, at which there always existed the possibility for the formation of an aristocracy was the ruling institution itself. Thus, members of the «feudal army» who received a fief in exchange for providing an armed military contingent in time of war normally passed on their «mukataa» to their eldest son.<sup>38</sup> Legally, they could be personally disenfranchised only if they had not waged war for seven generations, a very mild provision.<sup>39</sup> But it did happen that in many cases their fief was taken away because of the interests of the central authorities. In the XVIIth century the latter began to dispossess fief holders of their lands and give them to tax farmers. The *sipahi* (fief holders) thus became natural allies of the remnants of earlier «noble» families<sup>40</sup> and stepped into their shoes as elements protesting against the leveling policies of the state.

Another process making for the transmission of hereditary privileges was begun when Janissaries were allowed to marry, at the time of Sultan Selim I. The state now felt that sons of Janissaries should be provided with state employment as Janissaries. This set up a snowball effect checked only by factors of fertility and institutional stability.

37. İsmail H. Uzunçarşılı, «Ashaf Oğulları,» E. I. (2nd ed.), I, 703. For a detailed picture of the course that such developments took see Muhammad Ahmed Simsar, «The Waqfiyah of 'Ahmed Paşa',» (Philadelphia, 1940), *passim*.

38. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1, p. 51.

39. Halil İnalcık, *Fatih devri üzerinde tetkikler ve vesikalar* (Ankara, 1954), p. 170, note 125.

40. The Turkish historian Naima and the traveller Evliya Çelebi are the chroniclers, from two different points of view of the incredibly complicated circumstances under which these developments took place. See *Tarih-i Naima* (İstanbul, 1820 - 1863), 6 Vols and Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahat-name* (İkdam and Maadif Editions, İstanbul, ) XI Vols.



Side by side with the «slave» institution there existed in the Empire the stratum of the *Ulema*, or doctors of Islamic Law, who had privileged status insofar as their «civil rights» were the most protected of all the strata entering into the formation of the «governmental set.»<sup>41</sup> This, plus the characteristic that their expertise had an arcane dimension, closed to the uninitiated, made the latter a veritable social bastion. There were wellknown families of *Ulema*. These privileged families began to increase in number and stability in the 18th century when the skills of interpreting the «basic constitution» of the polity - controlled by the *Ulema* - acquired a premium and the weakening of the «slave» institution emboldened them.<sup>42</sup>

We thus have an overview of the sub-strata which in fact existed within the *soi-disant* monolithic official «set.» It may be helpful to clarify the picture by remembering that presence of professional strata within this set were legitimate but that a) in some cases a stratum had been transformed into a more or less closed hereditary caste, b) there were a number of hereditary strata which lived in the twilight of legitimacy, and were considered «exceptions» to the rule, c) «upper» stratum in the Ottoman Empire meant both the visible, legitimate structure and the illegitimate competing structure.

Side by side with this «official set» lived the social set of the ruled-over. Here again the lower part of the pyramid was not completely monolithic. There were at least two strata: that of the merchants and artisans and that of the peasants. But, as we shall point out later, the dislike of both of these strata for the ruling set provided them with a unity of outlook that allows us to consider them in one category. Merchants had at one time constituted an important stratum in the empire. The change in trade routes caused many of these to shift to internal commerce and to reduce drastically the scale of their undertaking. With time they almost became indistinguishable from the artisan craftsman class, the *esnaf*.\*

41. Tott, *Memoirs*, II, appendix, p. 36 ff.

42. Şerif Mardin, «Some notes on the modernization of communications in the Ottoman Empire,» *Comparative Studies in Society and History* III (1960), pp. 250 - 271. Wealth, however, was not a characteristic that usually came with the privileged status of an old *Ulema* family.

\* Sabri F. Ülgener, «14 ncü Asırdanberi Esnaf Ahlâkı ve Şikâyeti Mucip Bazı Haller,» *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* (1949 - 1950), pp. 388 - 396.



The *esnaf* were above the peasantry, but gravitated in an orbit distinctly removed from the «official set,»<sup>43</sup> recipients of heterodox currents, they were both heterodox and at the same time more deeply religious than the officials. They were also at the mercy of the «etatist» economic policy of the state, and economic adversity easily made them unite against it. Popular revolts in the capital, often started as alliances, of the *esnaf* and disaffected janissaries against the court functionaries.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, there was the peasant who, with time, increasingly bore the brunt of the special taxation introduced by the state as a poor substitute for an economic policy that would attempt to increase the national product.

Another structural component of the Ottoman Empire has to be mentioned in connection with the stratification picture, and that is the persistence of the influence of primary groups, sometimes referred to as the «corporative» aspect of Ottoman structure.<sup>45</sup> This has been described as follows :

The ruling class was only one of the many into which the Sultan's subjects were divided. For the ruled, in turn, were all organized into bodies such as trade guilds ... and it was to these bodies rather than to the state, or even the Sultan that they were inclined to accord their most vivid allegiance. The guilds were, of course, essentially urban. Though in some places, at any rate, there were guilds of farmers, in general their place was taken in the countryside by village councils or, in the case of nomads, by their tribes. But all guilds, village councils and tribes were to a great extent autonomous, though naturally they were supervised by the local governors. And their autonomy, which was reinforced by the fact that both towns and villages in most places tended to be economically self-contained, split the subject populations into many semi-independent units.<sup>46</sup>

43. See Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1, p. 276 ff.

44. See Juchereau de Saint Denis, *Révolutions de Constantinople*, (Paris, 1819) 2 Vols., *passim*.

45. For the sense in which I use «primary group» see Kingsley Davis, *Human Society* (New York, 1949), pp. 52 - 61.

46. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1, 159.



Within system, the above described mobility from the lower to the higher strata seems to have been high enough to impress visiting Europeans by comparison. It diminished with time as the «slave» system disintegrated and merit disappeared as a basis for advancement, but unquestionably an equalitarian feeling which had its roots in the long standing acceptance of the achievement criterion and the corporate kin group organization that came with it suffused the whole system.<sup>47</sup>

This brings us to a consideration of the «subjective» factors involved in the structure described.

### 3. Ottoman Models of Social Classes

It will be remembered that the image of class relations was one of the two important elements that the Turks had taken over from the Sassanids. The components of this image are essentially those found in the following passage of Aristotle's *Politics* :

States too, as we have repeatedly noticed, are composed not of one but of many parts. One of these parts is the group of persons concerned with the production of food, or, as it is called, the farming class. A second, which is called the mechanical class, is the group of persons occupied in the various arts and crafts without which a city cannot be inhabited - some of them being necessities, and others contributing to luxury of the living of a good life. A third part is what may be termed the marketing class; it includes all those who are occupied in buying and selling, either as merchants or as retailers. A fourth part is the serf class composed of agricultural labourers; and a fifth element is the defense force, which is no less necessary than the other four, if a state is not to become the slave of invaders...

We may pause to note that this is the reason why Plato's account of the parts of the state, in his *Republic*, is inadequate, though ingenious ..... The part which serves as a defense force is not introduced till a later stage, when the growth of the city's territory and its contact with the territory of its neighbors results in its being plunged into war. Nor is this all that Plato has

<sup>47</sup>. Under this particular arrangement, political, economic and religious activities are corporate, not individual. See Krader, **Social Organization of the Gogol-Turkic Pastoral Nomads**, p. 329 who refers to Radcliffe-Brown, **Patrilineal and Matrilineal Succession**, pp. 34-35.



omitted in his first city'. The four original parts - or whatever may be the number of the elements forming the association - will require some authority to dispense justice, and to determine what is just. If the mind is to be reckoned as more essentially a part of a living being than the body, parts of a similar order to the mind must equally be reckoned as more essentially parts of the state than those which serve its bodily needs; and by parts of a similar order to the mind, we mean the military part, the part concerned in the legal organization of justice, and (we may also add) the part engaged in deliberation, which is a function that needs the gift of political understanding ..... The seventh part is the group composed of the rich, who serve the state with their property. The eighth part is the magistrates, who serve the state as its officers.<sup>48</sup>

Now, obviously, this picture of stratification with its emphasis on the extent to which strata depend upon one another, even though they are placed within a status hierarchy, was not much in accord with Ottoman reality; Ottoman intellectuals, who had considerable admiration for the model, however, tried to use similar descriptions although they modified it - each taking out a bit here or adding a piece there.

Of the models thus devised two are particularly worthy of attention, the first by the Turkish reformer and statesman Koçi Bey, and the second by the bureaucrat and *littérateur* Kâtip Çelebi.

Koçi Bey speaks of three «classes» (*sınıf*): the common citizens (*reaya*), the *Ulema*, and the military class (*seyfiyye*) used here as the equivalent of İnalcık's *askerî*.<sup>49</sup> This is the closest that we come to the official ideology of the Empire of the two strata of the elite and of the masses. The *Ulema* nevertheless seem to have been given a special niche because of the preferred status which men of religion enjoyed in the Empire.

Koçi Bey's reference to what we would today call «professional strata» as «classes» is not due to a difference of linguistic usage, but, on the contrary, provides us with an important clue as to the consciousness of stratification that existed in the Ottoman Empire. Historians have pointed out that the consciousness of stra-

<sup>48</sup>. Aristotle, *Politics* (Barker ed., 1946), IV, 1291 a.

<sup>49</sup>. *Koçi Bey Risalesi* (Ed. by Ebüzziya, İstanbul, 1903), pp. 8 - 9.



tification was ideologically formalized as the consciousness of sub-strata of the officialdom. Thus the terms «Janissary consciousness,» «slave consciousness» were used by protagonists of Ottoman social struggles in the 17th century to define where they stood.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Consciousness of «class» in the Ottoman Empire

It may then be stated that while in Europe the objective recordable struggles connected with the decay of the Feudal system and the rise of modern capitalism led, inter alia, to *class* consciousness as a factor in European history, here, the particular nature of the struggle waged between components of the administrative class, between fief owners and «slave» executives, between local *eşraf* and *askerî* hardened the consciousness of the protagonists on a different axis, that of the *askerî* on the one hand and of their opponents on the other. In more abstract terms we may say that the discontinuity in the Ottoman view of political power as belonging exclusively to the Sultan and his executive machinery led to the creation of a view of strata in the Ottoman Empire as political, and to a conception of the game of politics as a «zero sum game,» an individual being by definition either top- or underdog. The saliency of these strata replaced the European saliency of strata connected with the production and distribution of goods and services.

A secondary awareness was that of sub-strata in the official set.

No separate mention is made of traders or *esnaf* by Koçi Bey in his description. Here, Koçi Bey was committing a grievous mistake which was to be repeated by other commentators of the Ottoman Empire, who like him had been brought up at the palace school and taught the dichotomous view of Ottoman Society. For the *esnaf* did, as we have already noted, have a consciousness of their status in Ottoman Society. This consciousness was much more important among the *esnaf* than among the traders whom the state did not control as closely. The *esnaf* had never been granted the opportunity to grow by the authorities. Although organized into guilds, their activities were narrowly circumscribed by the state. No Ottoman equivalent of the Medieval municipal institutions controlled by burghers existed, and the in-

<sup>50</sup>. Mustafa Akdağ, «Celalî Fetretî,» Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih - Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi XVI (1958), pp. 106 - 107.



ternal control structure of the guild was diffuse and amorphous. With the simmering resentment caused by the cultural aloofness of the ruling institution, economic discontent could quickly erupt into revolts. *Esnaf* consciousness, for example, was an important component of the Patrona Revolt of 1730, the first revolt against a modernizing operation by a forward-looking grand vizier.<sup>51</sup>

We may state then that the *esnaf* was an embryonic social class. Historical developments, however, never allowed it to blossom out in full as an Ottoman social class.

If Koçi Bey did not accept the *esnaf* and the merchants as legitimate strata, his contemporary, Kâtip Çelebi, who had not been educated at the palace, believed that, together with the other strata mentioned by Koçi Bey, the merchants were one of the «four pillars» on which the Empire rested.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the most realistic modification of the original Aristotelian model was given by Evliya Çelebi, the Ottoman traveller, in his descriptions of Turkish towns. For the town of Trabzon he stated:

The inhabitants are divided from the earliest period into seven classes. The first are the great and mighty Princes and sons of Princes (Beg and Beg-zadeh), who are dressed in magnificent pelisses of sables. The second are the *Ulemas*, the Sheikhs and pious men, who dress according to their condition and live on endowments. The third are the merchants, who trade by sea and land to Ozakov, into the country of the Cossacks, into Mingrelia, Circassia, Abaza and the Crimea. They dress in ferrajis of cloth and dolimans called kontosh. The fourth are the handicraftsmen, who dress themselves in ferrajis of cloth and bogassin. The fifth are the boatmen of the Black Sea ..... The sixth class are the men of the vineyards ..... The seventh class are fishermen, a calling in which many thousand men are employed.<sup>53</sup>

51. For the analysis of «*esnaf*» consciousness see Münir Aktepe, **Patrona İsyanı** (İstanbul, 1958), pp. 27 ff.

52. The «four pillars» were the ulema, the askerî, the traders and the subjects. See Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, **Political Thought in Medieval Islam** (Cambridge, 1958), p. 229.

53. Evliya Çelebi, **Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa**, (Trs. Hammer, London, 1834 - 1850), 3 Vol. II, p. 47.



In Üsküdar on the Asiatic side of Istanbul, Evliya notices the following structure :

The soldiers [mistranslation of *askerî*. Correct translation : member of the «Ruling Institution»] are the first class; they dress in rich brocades. The other classes are those of the gardeners, the divines, the fakirs, the boatmen, and the merchants, who dress according to their means in dolimans and ferajehs of cloth.<sup>54</sup>

Thus the «nobility» seems to exist in the provinces more or less on sufferance of the bureaucracy of the capital. In other reports on Anatolia, the people to whom Evliya pays visits during his peregrinations seem to fall into a relatively simple system of stratification: first the representative of the central government if there is one, then the fief holder and/or janissary officer, then the *âyân ve eşraf* who are sometimes described as «heads of dynasty»<sup>55</sup> (*hanedan sahipleri*), and then the *Ulema*, poets and fops living off officials. This order is not that of every statement by Evliya, who gives precedence to his own friends. By and large, however, it holds and shows considerable similarity with the situation in modern Turkish provincial towns. There, the spontaneously observed protocol of the Vali leading members of his civilian cabinet sitting side by side with the local military official, with the school teacher in a place of relative importance among the *vilâyet* employees, reproduces the scene of Evliya with fidelity. Today, however, the *âyân* and *eşraf* have no official position and would only be present if -and this rarely happens- they were members of the bureaucracy.

Before we go on to comment on the elements which determined stratum consciousness among the peasants, one final structural factor of importance in leading to stratum crystallization has to be mentioned.

A characteristic feature of the psychology of stratification in the Empire was the importance given by all involved in ruling-class in -fighting to «everyone keeping his proper place.»<sup>56</sup> This may be seen, for example, in the great stress laid on having members of a given profession wear the characteristic insignia of their trade, or

54. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

55. Evliya Çelebi *Seyahatnamesi* (Maarif ed., Vol. IX, İstanbul, 1935), p. 100.

56. İnalçık, «The nature of traditional society,» p. 42.



having members of a *millet* (religious group) keep their distinctive clothing or having members of lower classes refrain from wearing the type of clothes worn by the elite.<sup>57</sup> Such «sumptuary legislation» is characteristic also of the Middle Ages in Western Europe. In that case, it was a measure dictated by the control of the central authority over expenditures which were considered a luxury. But at the same time, sumptuary legislation everywhere had the function of not letting a class appropriate the status symbols which belonged to another class.<sup>58</sup>

In the Ottoman Empire, as in China, it seems to have been used «to limit the exercise of economic power to such an extent that wealth alone did not guarantee the right to consume.»<sup>59</sup>

The peculiarly mechanistic Ottoman way of looking at sumptuary regulations has elements of «caste» thinking. But its origins seem to lie elsewhere, specifically in the overwhelming importance of agnatic lineage in Turkic social systems.

In a system ultimately based on a clan order in which every clan had its place determined by protocol, and in a kinship system in which every member of the clan kept a genealogical map in his head to orient him in his relations with others, it falls into place. It is quite possible that «everyone keeping his proper place» is the ideational residue of everyone having to know very precisely to what extended family, to what kin village, to what lineage, to what clan, to what clan federation and to what principality or khanate he belongs. Here, then, is another factor which complicates the structural features of the Empire.

We can now go on to the study of peasant stratum consciousness.

A matter of considerable importance for an understanding of the extent to which a peasant consciousness had developed in Ana-

57. See, for example, the firman of the reformist and modernizing Sultan Selim III trying to check «abuses» in this respect in Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hat-tı Hümayunları - Nizam-ı Cedit - 1807*, p. 101. Sultan Selim was complaining that «low and high» (*edna ve âlâ*) now wearing the same clothes was a sign of «disorder» in the Ottoman Empire, he - from his own point of view - rationally argued that since a preliminary of the application of reforms was the reestablishment of «order» these tendencies had to be checked.

58. See Bernard Barber, *Social Stratification* (New York, 1957), p. 161.

59. Robert M. Marsh, *The Mandarins: Circulation of Elites in China 1600-1900* (Free Press, 1961), p. 51.



tolia, and a preliminary to any comparison with European peasants who found their identity in opposition to the interests of the feudal lord, is the extent to which the economic structure of the Ottoman Empire was an «Etatist» structure combining the most rigid structures of economic and political control.<sup>60</sup>

A recent spate of literature has appeared in Turkey concerning the misdeeds of the local gentry and the sufferings they inflicted on the peasant masses. The authors of these works have tried to find parallels between the situation in which the Turkish peasant found himself in the last three centuries of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the European serf.<sup>61</sup> And yet, the evidence investigated somewhat more carefully fails to indicate why - if this was true - there were no equivalents in Turkey of castle-burning and of the type of peasant revolt that is associated with the French Revolution and the demands of Russian peasants for a «black» partition. True, the Marxist statement that «peasant revolts» did take place in Turkey is formally correct.<sup>62</sup> But how and why and under what circumstances they took place is a horse of an entirely different color. The so-called Celâlî revolts were not, in fact, peasant revolts but revolts of disgruntled minor gentry who felt they had been wrongfully deprived of their grant of land. These *sipahi* took with them as allies peasant who had fled the tax farmers who had succeeded the *sipahi*. The bands thus constituted marched not on local feudataries but on the centers of power; they fought not local landlords, but the representatives of state authority. This was the first variant of a type of revolt which sometimes took the following form: after the classical system of military land grants began to change and the *sipahi* were antagonized, the general economic chaos which reigned in Anatolia allowed Ottoman officials who were sent there to believe that by allying themselves with discontented elements, they could seize political power from the Sultan. Campaigns of this type were waged with contingents of ex-peasants who were now roaming bands of ruffians. The

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<sup>60</sup>. See above p. 17, 18.

<sup>61</sup>. See for example F. Çağatay Uluçay, *XVII nci Asırda Saruhanda Eşkiyâlık ve Halk Hareketleri* (1944), *passim*.

<sup>62</sup>. For such statements see Mustafa A. Mehmet, «De certains aspects de la société Ottomane à la lumière de la législation du Sultan Mahomet II (1451 - 1481)» *Studia et Acta Orientalia* II (1960), pp. 127 - 160.



«real» peasants paid both for the war expenses of the rebels and for those of the legitimate government. Abaza Paşa's revolt<sup>63</sup> falls into this category.

A third similar type of movement was that precipitated by the short tenure of the Ottoman officials and the belief that they could extend it by foraging for themselves in an inaccessible province and eventually hope for a pardon.

In all of these situations the common denominator and the primary cause of the revolt was the upsetting of the *sipahi* system and the «wrong» done to the *sipahis*. In the light of the theory that the Ottoman peasant spearheaded typical peasant revolts, it is also remarkable that all of the leaders of these revolts had started in the initial stages of the outbreak as bearers of official patents and were appointed by the state.<sup>64</sup> Even more interesting is the fact that no one would join as a recruit in the uprising if the leader could not show that he had been appointed by the state.<sup>65</sup> These former members of the «ruling institution» were oppressing the population so as to enable them to hold out until they could regain the original benefits they had enjoyed in earlier times as employees of the State. We can surmise that all the noise going on at the level of official rivalries and jockeying for power gave an enduring hatred of things official to the peasant. But, on the other hand, the gentry (*ayâns*) and the peasantry were driven into the same camp, if only because their antagonism to official policy was more enduring than their differences.

A remark of a more general nature concerning social strife and its effects on peasant identity was that underlying all of these struggles was the problem of precarious vs. well-established tenure. The Ottoman state relied for its viability on this precariousness.<sup>66</sup> Not to trust anyone for too long in a position of authority was its most powerful latent maxim of government. The peasants did appreciate the short-sightedness of this outlook, especially when the benefits of less precarious tenure became evident.

This is one of the reasons for which even today well established families who did not «squeeze their subjects like lemons»,<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63.</sup> See «Abaza,» *İslam Ansiklopedisi*; I, p. 5.

<sup>64.</sup> Akdağ, A. Ü. D. T. C. F. D., XVI, p. 84.

<sup>65.</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *Celâli İsyânları (1550 - 1603)* (Ankara, 1963), p. 247.

<sup>66.</sup> Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, I, 1.

<sup>67.</sup> Palmerston used this expression to describe the activities of the Ottoman state vis-a-vis the tax farmers, but this no doubt also applies to



as did official appointees- have retained the allegiance of the peasants. This holds particularly true for *sipahi* families who were not involved in the Celali revolts and *eşraf* families who might have originated in someone holding a patent whose local wealth was not dependent upon office but on locally held property.

##### 5. *Developments during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century*

The situation which has been surveyed up to the present belongs to the time of the hey-day of the Empire. By and large the wane of the Ottoman state was accompanied by a process of feudalization and a rise in the strength of the local gentry. During this decline two new elements came to complicate this situation. The first of these were often functionaries, i. e., members of the ruling institution who had found enough strength locally to signify to the Metropolis at a time when it had lost all power of control over the provinces, that they had no intention of leaving their post whenever they were summoned to the capital, transferred or demoted. They were thereupon tactfully granted their post more or less in perpetuity. Due to their less precarious tenure, they were less rapacious than government officials in collecting taxes and acquired solid peasant and local support.<sup>68</sup>

Another development was the assuming by the *âyân* and *eşraf* of the function of go-between; they now served as a buffer between the provincial taxpayers and the rapacious tax farmers appointed by the center. A system developed in which *âyân*s were elected by taxpayers to represent them vis-a-vis tax officials and to plead their case during assessment.<sup>69</sup>

Due to the weakness of the central authorities, in this case also, as with the *Derebeys*, the central authorities depended on the collaboration of the *âyân* to enforce their policies.<sup>70</sup>

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subjects in their relations to tax farmers. See Sir Charles Webster, **Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question** (London, 1951), II Vols. paged consecutively, p. 540.

<sup>68</sup>. A. D. Mordtmann, **Anatolien : Skizze und Reisebriefen aus Kleinasien** (Ed. by Franz Babinger, Hanover, 1925), p. 113.

<sup>69</sup>. Gibb and Bowen, **Islamic Society**, I, 1, pp. 193 - 194. This was thought an improvement over the centralized practices prevailing in Europe by David Urquhart a rabid partisan of laissez-faire and the first secretary of the British Embassy in Istanbul. See David Urquhart, **Turkey and Its Resources : Its Municipal Organization and Free Trade** (London, 1833), pp. 121 - 122. That his opinion was not entirely fantastic can be seen in the arguments that follows here.

<sup>70</sup>. İnalcık, «Traditional Society,» p. 47.



But in a society where culture mirrored the dichotomy between ruling and ruled-over, no middle stratum, no intermediary class such as the *âyân* could acquire legitimacy or endure. The *âyân*, too, operated on the strength of state patents and slid with alacrity into the role of the ruling. Thus, too, they committed depredations, they, too, oppressed their clients and identified themselves with the official class, their mores and world view. Yet to the lower classes the *âyân* were evil only to the extent that they had become officials and sported their mannerisms.<sup>71</sup> Evidence is provided in a later section of this paper that the situation did not change in the nineteenth century: officials were the main bogey of the masses.

The existence of the *Derebey* and the *Âyân* was rightly considered by the central authorities to be a permanent affront to them. Not only were they illegitimate elements which did not fit into the ideal structure of the Empire, but they flouted their illegitimacy. The ancient fear of disintegrative influences gripped those honest and sincere members of the «ruling institution,» who were bent on reestablishing the power of the early days. Thus too, «reformist» Sultans who wanted to arrest the decay of the Ottoman Empire not only made efforts to adopt European methods of armament and organization but were also vitally interested in modern European centralized administrative practices. It thus comes as no surprise to find that Sultan Mahmud II (1807 - 1839), the most successful of reformists, was also the fiercest in his attacks against *âyâns* and *derebeys*.<sup>72</sup> But while Mahmud succeeded in reestablishing a legitimate framework of centralist administration, the day-to-day business of administration still depended on the support of the *âyân* and the *eşraf*.<sup>73</sup> During the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, new and complicating elements entered into the picture of stratification at the center of power. The bureaucrats now rejected

<sup>71</sup>. See the revealing statements of the 18th century poet Nabi quoted by Mehmed Kaplan in «Nabi ve 'Orta İnsan' Tipi,» *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* XI (1961), p. 32.

The *Âyân* were at first elected by the population of the provinces and then appointed by the governor. In the 1780's they were appointed by the Grand Vizier. But it is remarkable that when in 1786 the office of *Âyân* was eliminated and a city inspector centrally appointed took over *Âyân* functions the office had to be established as the result of a popular uproar. See «*Âyân*» *İnönü Ansiklopedisi* IV (1950), p. 355 which I quote in preference to Bowen's article in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* since all the information contained in the latter seems to already exist in the former.



their erstwhile «slave» status, seized the reins of political power and took over the leadership of the modernization movement. They brought Western conceptions of the protection of the rights of individuals into the Empire. When one looks closer at these moves, it is quite clear, however, that it was its own rights that this emerging modern bureaucracy wanted to establish and protect.<sup>74</sup> It was this stratum which began to establish the economic and social infrastructure of modern Turkey. Its former grip over the life and livelihood of the administrative machinery subordinate to it had to be loosened since administrative codes came to regulate the rights of the occupants of lower rungs of the ladder. But conversely, the upper ranges of this revamped Ruling Institution accumulated wealth that was now legally protected and could be transmitted to heirs. It acquired access to modern education and the study of foreign languages for its progeny. The latter were thus launched into life with an even more «crystallized» privileged status than had been the case with the *Ulema*. A bureaucratic aristocracy of sorts came into being in the capital. Military careers also were affected by these developments - but to a lesser extent, and later. Within the «establishment» there was one important change; once more, the in-fighting placed the civilian in opposition to the military who were on the wane, a sign of the rise in importance of administrative and financial skills.

On the other hand, the old *Ulema* families, who could not join this movement, began to decline and were able to maintain family luster only if they attached themselves to the bureaucratic apparatus of the Tanzimat by studying civil law side by side with religious law, and taking up careers-like judgeships in the new civil courts - where an understanding of both religious and western civil law was required.

Traders and *esnaf* were the embryonic classes who had dec-

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72. Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, 1962), pp.

73. İnalcık, «The nature of traditional society», p. 54. «Mahmud's war against the refractory *âyân* resulted in the dispossession of many of them and restored much of the Sultan's authority in the provinces. Yet hundreds of these notables remained at the head of the local administration and in possession of large leaseholds... they often appeared to the passive local population in the guise of protectors against oppressive governors.»

74. Mardin, *The Genesis*, p. 107 ff.



lined most in these times due to the competition of European industry and commerce enforced under a capitulatory system. Their dislike of the central authorities endured, particularly when the rare opportunities to expand economically were denied to them by an administration in search of revenue. This happened, for example, in the imposition of a monopoly on tobacco sales<sup>75</sup> or when small craft industries were undermined by European imports.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, stratum consciousness continued to run along the traditional lines. The ruling and the ruled were pitted against one another. Even what protest movements could be articulated by the Western-influenced intelligentsia were directed against the central bureaucratic apparatus. Such, for example, was the orientation of the Young Ottomans, the Ottoman equivalent of Young Italy. The Young Turks, their successors, took the same stand during their years of exile in the 1890's.

In the provinces, the most important change which occurred with regard to Ottoman stratification was that the state began to liquidate its former ownership of the majority of the lands of the Empire. This had already been proceeding either through usurpation or by grants given to statesmen who transformed state (*miri*) land into freehold (*mülk*).

«During the early nineteenth century, the growth of freehold estates was maintained from two main sources: One was the sale of *miri* lands as freehold, by the government, in order to meet deficits in the treasury. The other was the sale, by auction, of a special kind of lease conferring very extensive rights and powers on the purchaser.»

«It was by this kind of sale that many of the impounded timar estates passed into the hands of a new possessing class. Under Mahmud and his successors, such sales seem to have been very frequent. The pur-

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<sup>75.</sup> The great grand-father of the author of this paper - a merchant from the Black Sea hinterland (Tosya) - had a few unprintable things to say about Midhat Paşa who had imposed this monopoly.

<sup>76.</sup> As reported by Mordtmann for example in the case of locally manufactured coffee mills. See *Anatolien*, p. 30 ff.



haser, who was given a deed called *tapu temessükü*, had, in theory, no legal right to freehold ownership, but only a lease of revenues. In fact, however, his rights were steadily extended and confirmed, and the trend of most of the agrarian laws of the *Tanzimat* period was to transform these leases into something barely distinguishable from freehold. Changes in the rules concerning transfers and registration increased the value of the *tapu temessükü*, which became a veritable title-deed, while the laws were successively modified to allow inheritance by sons, daughters and other relatives.»

«These leases were often of some size. The Land Law of 1858 prohibits the acquisition of a whole populated village as an estate by an individual. This would seem to indicate an awareness, by the statesmen of the *Tanzimat*, of the growth of large estates, and a desire to restrict it. This ruling seems, however, to have had little practical effect. The commercial and financial developments of the time, including the expansion of Turkish agricultural exports, brought a flow of ready money and created a class of persons with sufficient cash to bid for leases, buy estates and lend money on land. The new laws gave them legal powers to enforce contracts of debt and sale; the new police protected them from the hazards which formerly attended such enforcements.»

«In this way, in the course of the nineteenth century, a new freehold landlord class came into existence controlling much of the countryside of the Empire. In the Balkan provinces this gave rise to bitter social struggles, which continued after these countries had won their independence. In Western and Central Anatolia, it produced the familiar figure of the Ağa ...»<sup>77</sup>

But a final argument may be advanced to show that even during the nineteenth century when the local *eşraf* tried to profit and appropriate state lands, the records of which were no longer kept, the peasantry still directed its wrath not at the latter but at government officials. The reason for this went back to the «etastic» features of the Ottoman economy. How this occurred is shown in a recent and extremely interesting study by Kenan Akyüz on the governorship of Amasya of Ziya Paşa,<sup>78</sup> an Ottoman statesman



whose later renown was gained in activities as a constitutionalist ideologue. When Ziya Paşa came to Amasya in the 1850's one of the complaints that he encountered was that the *müftü* (judge) of Zile, Lutfullah Efendi had been oppressive in his relations with the inhabitants. Lutfullah Efendi happened, as was very often the case, also to be a member of the *eşraf*. A careful examination reveals that his exactions were made possible by the opportunities provided by his *first* role, that of a government official, and not that of a member of the *eşraf*.

The following were the areas in which Lutfullah had shown his obnoxiousness :

2. Upon the orders he had received from the central government during his office to request that cattle and horses needed by the army should be gathered in the form of «voluntary» donations on the part of the population, he had first bought all available horses and cattle. He then had extended his hospitality to the official who was to gather these donations and had come to an agreement with him. The latter had conveniently found that the cattle brought in by the people were of so poor quality as to be unacceptable. Lutfullah Efendi had then spread the rumor that animals bought from his farm were considered acceptable. Thus, the owners of the animals had to buy these at three or four times the price they had received for their own cattle and were obliged to turn them in to the visiting official.

3. Lutfullah had illegally conspired with the tax farmers to have the privilege of tax farming transferred to his henchmen.

4. He had connived with brigands to be slack in his pursuit of them.<sup>79</sup>

All of these operations are possible only in an economic structure in which the state and the economy are so closely intertwined that profit is dependent on controlling strategic positions in the state rather than on controlling the production apparatus.

<sup>77</sup>. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, 1961), p. 444.

<sup>78</sup>. Kenan Akyüz, *Ziya Paşa'nın Amasya Mutasarrıflığı Sırasındaki Olaylar* (Ankara, 1964).



A similar development with regard to the *esnaf* in İstanbul was that the prosperity of the latter and business in general was dependent on state expenditures.<sup>80</sup>

Another change which occurred during this so-called *Tanzimat* era (1839 - 1878) was that a number of former *Derebeys* or *Âyân* and *eşraf* established residence in İstanbul and became indistinguishable in appearance from the ranks of the modern bureaucracy. Whether this resulted in a complete identification of these «nouveaux» with the outlook of the bureaucratic «set» of the Capital is less easy to determine.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the further modernization of Turkey brought with it a further change in the structure of the bureaucracy: a pyramid with a somewhat narrow base was transformed into one with an increasingly wider base. To staff the lower and middle echelons of the bureaucracy, new western-oriented schools were created. Since tuition was free and room and board were provided in addition, a number of provincials flowed to these schools. These provincials came mainly from the stratum of the lesser *âyân* and *eşraf* and a few prosperous peasants. This view is for the moment based on impressions acquired during work on the origins of the Young Turks only.<sup>81</sup> Quantitative studies will have to bring greater clarity to the picture. It is these new recruits who in the 1890's revolted against the upper reaches of the bureaucracy which had turned into a semi-aristocracy. The gap between the expectations generated by the general knowledge of western power among these young men, and the limited means for modernization provided by the creaky half-modern educational plants, seem to have impelled them to take a hand at reform. But the alignment was still the traditional alignment of the countryside against the metropolis, and to revolt meant to take to task the privileges of the higher bureaucracy. The students of the military-medical academy, for example, were aligned into two hostile groups of «provincials» and «city boys.» Grievances were that sons of *paşa's* and members of the Imperial family got commissions with less study. Later the Young Turks were to downgrade all officers<sup>82</sup> who had received such commissions.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

80. de Tott, *Memoirs*, I, 131.

81. Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri* (Ankara, 1965).



An important distinction which has to be made at this point is that between the higher and the lower grades of the bureaucracy. Obviously, since provincials had been recruited into schools which aimed to provide the personnel for Abdul Hamid's bureaucratic apparatus, a beginning had been made in the direction of greater mobility from the countryside into the ranks of the ruling elite. But the future Young Turks, the provincials, still felt discriminated against. And justifiedly so, for the higher palace, political, military and diplomatic appointments were filled by persons whose only qualification was that they belonged to the *Tanzimat* bureaucratic families. The equalitarian feelings of the provincials which were thus bruised were not primarily the product of their involvement with the West, of which they knew very little during their student days. It was, on the contrary, an echo of an expectation as to how the state would act toward candidates to state positions which went back to the fiction, still widely held in the late nineteenth century, that the Ottoman state did not brook any aristocracies. According to this concept appointments to state functions should have ideally been made only on the basis of ability. Mannheim might have expressed this by stating that equalitarianism in access to state positions was an important «ideology» of the Ottoman Empire, and that the Young Turks were acting here as ideologues, i. e., conservatives rather than modernist innovators.

The success of the Young Turk revolution did not really alter the fundamental dichotomy on which the stratification system of the Empire was based. The ruling class, which now included the former insurgents, the Young Turks, was still far removed from the ruled-over. More than anything, this was due to the identification of the new entrants into the ruling stratum with the ultimate goal of the bureaucratic citadel captured, namely the «preservation of the state.» As we have already seen this was another aspect of the basic Ottoman political ideology.<sup>83</sup>

But to state - as some Western commentators who have little regard for *nuances* do - that this is the only thing that happened at the time of the Young Turks is to neglect an important part of the picture. For the Young Turks were influenced by Western conceptions of liberty and equalitarianism during the long years that they spent in exile in Europe. After their seizure of power they came

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<sup>82.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.



forth with a new idea which was truly utopian in Mannheim's sense, that of populism. The cult of the common man was something new and began to acquire important roots in the years 1908 - 1918 when the Young Turks were in power. In keeping with this outlook, the Young Turks tried to bridge the gap between the ruling and the ruled - over and, in the last years of their rule, the peasant acquired an increasingly important place as the backbone of the country in official mythology.<sup>84</sup>

### Economics and Politics :

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, the Turks had not participated in the economic life of the Empire as owners of large-scale economic enterprises. These positions were left to foreigners or to non - Turkish, non - Muslim minority members.<sup>85</sup> In pursuance of their nationalist ideals, the Young Turks tried to create a new class of Turkish entrepreneurs. But economic development, even were the Turks to have taken over the whole of the economy of the country, was understood to exclude *laissez faire* policies. In fact, the economic philosophy adopted by the Young Turks, after some debate, was that of solidarism.<sup>86</sup> Later, a more restrictive note was sounded when, toward the end of the First World War, the Young Turks looked into the welfare state policies which in Germany were known as *Die Neue Orientierung*.<sup>87</sup> The establishment of a «national economy» i.e., a welfare state controlled by the state was the slogan with which the Young Turks were indicating their own variant of this idea, and the attempt to conciliate this state directed «national economy» with the growth of a native class of entrepreneurs, caused a tension which has marked the development of the Turkish economy since then.

By their repeated efforts and the repealing of capitulations,

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<sup>83.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>84.</sup> See my «Türkiye'de İktisadî Düşüncenin Gelişmesi» (Ankara, S. B. F. Maliye Enstitüsü, July, 1962, Mimeographed), pp. 61 - 62.

<sup>85.</sup> Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Atatürkçülük Nedir?* (İstanbul, 1966), p. 56.

<sup>86.</sup> Solidarism was a doctrine which attempted to reach a compromise between Marxism and the bourgeois elements in the ideology of the French Revolution by establishing the notion «of a plurality of reciprocal ties of solidarity» See J. E. S. Hayward, *The Official Social Philosophy of the Third Republic : Leon Bourgeois and Solidarism International Journal of Social History* VI, (1961), p. 31.



the Young Turks succeeded by 1918 in establishing in business a limited number of Turkish traders who rose above the provincial level in terms of the volume of production and capital of their enterprise. Enough time had not as yet elapsed, however, for the contradictions between the etatism of the Young Turks and their protection of a Turkish «economic class» to appear.

The class situation in Republican Turkey was marked by the same fundamental ambiguity with regard to the relations between the traditional governmental elite and the new class which it wanted to create, but which it hesitated to give full rein to. A telling myth indicative of the perspective in which the problem appeared to the governmental set in the 1920's and 30's was that Turkey had no social classes. This was true insofar as Turkish developments did not fit a Marxian model. Especially the simplified Marxian model in which Marx had surreptitiously eliminated an earlier category he had used, that of «Oriental feudalism.» But it was wrong to the extent that it disguised strong undercurrents of latent intra-group conflict in Turkish society. In this perspective, Turkish society was still split by a historical dichotomy between the ruling and the ruled, by a rivalry between the members of the governmental elite and by the latest dichotomy of those desiring to become entrepreneurs and those reluctant to share power with them. It is these conflicts which made up the latent social infrastructure of Turkish politics. It is, therefore, not entirely surprising that it is these conflicts which have kept recurring in the politics of the Turkish Republic.

N. B. The author regrets the manner in which words are split at the end of the lines. This is due to the limitations of local typesetting.

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87. Ziya Gökalp, «İktisadî Vatanperverlik,» *Yeni Mecmua* II (1918), p. 322; Tekin Alp, «Yeni İktisadiyat,» *Yeni Mecmua*, March 28th, 1918, p. 205.