

**THE DYNAMICS OF ECONOMIC STRUCTURE IN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF THE OTTOMAN STATE: THE EXAMPLE OF *AHİLİK* (CONFRATERNITY) AND GUILDS****Oğuzhan GÖKSEL\*****Müjdat AVCI\*\*****ABSTRACT**

The Ottoman political tradition is a system composed of Islam, old Turkish, Byzantine and Iranian traditions. At the center of the political arena is the sultan, who is to ensure social justice. The Ottoman society consisted of four elements that were expected to complement each other; military group, men of science and the pen, traders, manufacturers. The tax system is the basis of Ottoman social classification. The tax payer is called the flock (reaya).

Ahilik (Brotherhood) and guilds are located at the intersection of the social and economic system. Ahilik was established with the principles and understandings of futuwwa. The first ahi in Anatolia was Ahi Evran. Ahilik gradually lost its influence due to the conditions of the age and left its place to guilds. The guilds, operating within the framework of the Ottoman's economic and political understanding, succumbed to European capitalism with industrialization.

The aim of this study is to determine the emergence of the Ahilik and guilds, which used to be one of the important dynamics of the socio-economic structure of the Ottoman Empire, and reveal for what socio-economic and political reasons they lost their function.

**Keywords:** Ottoman State, Political Structure, Social Structure, Ahilik, Guilds

**OSMANLI DEVLETİ'NİN SİYASAL VE TOPLUMSAL ANLAYIŞI İÇİNDE EKONOMİK YAPININ DİNAMİKLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ: AHİLİK VE LONCA TEŞKİLATI ÖRNEĞİ****ÖZ**

Osmanlı siyasal geleneği İslam dininden, eski Türk geleneklerinden, Bizans ve İran geleneklerinden oluşmuş bir sistemdir. Siyasi arenanın odağında toplumsal adaleti sağlaması gereken padişah yer almaktadır. Osmanlı toplumu birbirini tamamlaması beklenen dört unsurdan oluşurdu; askeri zümre, ilim ve kalem ehli, tüccarlar, üreticiler. Osmanlı toplumsal sınıflaşmasının temelinde vergi düzeni yer almaktadır. Vergi veren kesim reaya olarak ifade edilir.

Ahilik ve Lonca teşkilatları sosyal ve ekonomik sistemin kesişim noktasında yer alır. Ahilik fütüvvetçilikten gelen ilke ve anlayışlarla kurulmuştur. Anadolu'da ilk ahi Ahi Evran'dır. Ahilik zamanla çağın şartları gereği etkisini kaybederek yerini lonca teşkilatlarına bırakmıştır. Osmanlı'nın ekonomik ve siyasi anlayışı çerçevesinde faaliyetlerde bulunan loncalar sanayileşmeyle birlikte Avrupa kapitalizmine yenik düşmüştür.

Bu çalışmada, Osmanlı Devleti'nin sosyo-ekonomik yapısının önemli dinamiklerinden olan ahilik ve lonca teşkilatlarının ortaya çıkışı ve hangi sosyo-ekonomik ve siyasi nedenlerden dolayı işlevini yitirdiklerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı Devleti, Siyasal Yapı, Sosyal Yapı, Ahilik, Lonca Teşkilatı

\* PhD Student, Political Science and Public Administration, Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, ogoksel2802@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0002-9175-1269

\*\* Prof. Dr., Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, mujdatavci24@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-4409-4523

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Ottomans, who created a strong state in its own period, owes their success to the political and economic system they established while it was still a small border principality in the northwest of Anatolia until the end of the 13th century, in the 16th century it commenced to rule from North Africa to the gates of Vienna, from the Caspian Sea to the northern borders of the Black Sea and included people of various races, beliefs and sects. The Ottoman political and economic understanding was formed in general by blending the cultural heritage from the past, religious rules, existing traditions and practices in the conquered regions.

It is seen that the political, social and economic system behind the successes of the Ottoman Empire has been investigated by many researchers from different fields in the relevant literature. In this study, the basic understandings and principles in the political, social and economic life of the Ottoman Empire are examined. The classes in the Ottoman social order are introduced, and the formations at the core of the system established by the Ottoman Empire are profoundly evaluated.

At the same time, the economic structure of the Ottoman Empire is compared with the contemporary Western systems, and the reasons for the changes in institutions and understandings in the historical process are explored.

## 2. OTTOMAN POLITICAL NATURE AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

### 2.1. Ottoman Political Nature

The political nature of the Ottoman Empire, which is seen as one of the most powerful states in history, is composed of a tradition that was formed by being influenced by the previous Turkish states, Ilkhanids, Islamic states and even Byzantium. The most important aspect of the political traditions of all these states is the exaltation of the ruler's place in the state. Likewise, Ottoman political thought emphasized the power of the sultan in the state. However, according to the Turkish political nature, it is seen that the sultans shared the political power with the members of the dynasty with the assignment of the princes to the sanjaks (Kunt, 1987: 130).

In the Ottomans, who belonged to the Kayı Tribe of the Oghuzes, the sultan was seen as the owner of the state according to the traditions. For this reason, the sultans had a right to dispose of the property and life of the people, and they used this right according to the Islamic laws and traditions. In the Ottoman Empire, which was an Islamic society, the social order and laws were shaped according to Islamic sources. However, the decisions to be made by the sultan in a way that would not contradict the rules of Shari'a were classified under the name of customs and consolidated the sultan's authority (Halaçoğlu, 1991: 1-2). The point here is that the Ottoman rulers enacted the rules that come from the tradition and have been applied for a long time. This concept is expressed as "*Kanun-u Kadim*" (*Eternal Law*) (Öz, 1999: 31). In the Ottoman state, the grand vizier and viziers were the assistants of the sultan in state affairs. State order was maintained within certain laws. The state administration, which continued to rule according to the traditions until the reign of Mehmet II, was forced to act according to a written law in this period. (Halaçoğlu, 1991: 7).

The idea of "Nizam-ı Alem" is another concept that should be taken into consideration in the Ottoman state. With this expression, the Ottomans meant public order. It is assumed that the universe has an unchanging order. Changes in the Ottoman state and society were seen as corruption and turmoil (Öz, 1999: 29-30). Another important concept in the political thought of the Ottoman Empire is the principle of "Rendering back the trusts to the owner". In accordance with the verse that Allah commands in the 58th verse of Chapter an-Nisa, "Surely Allah commands you to render back the trusts (i.e. the spirit, the physical body, the soul and the free will) to His Owner (to Allah) and that when you judge between people you judge with justice", the idea of justice and giving the trust to its owner has universal characteristics (Öz, 1999: 32).

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In Middle Eastern state traditions, society is basically divided into two classes. The first is the sultan and the sultan's assistants in the administration (vizier, governors), and the other is the people who pay taxes. That is the "protected flock" (reaya in Turkish). Nasireddin Tusi divides the assistants of the governing sultan into two as bureaucrats and soldiers, in accordance with ancient Iranian traditions. These classes do not pay taxes to the state. The flock, that is, taxpayers, are classified as merchants, farmers, nomads according to their production styles and financial activities. The Ottoman Empire also continued the legacy of this class understanding from the past, and divided the people in the conquered region into military class and flock, regardless of their religions. The state included the Christian or Muslim noble classes in the regions within its borders into the military class and ensured them to maintain their existing status, and also accepted the merchants, artisans and farmers in the newly conquered regions as the flock and subjected them to taxes (İnalçık, 2003: 74-75).

Based on such classification, it can be stated that society consists of four pillars, based on the opinion of Muslim thinkers. In response to the four pillars of the universe are (air, fire, earth, water) soldiers, scholars, merchants and farmers. Just as the order of the universe depends on the harmony of these four pillars, the social order also depends on the coexistence of these four groups of people in the society without conflict. Only the sultan can ensure its possibility. Justice is seen as the sultan's maintaining the balance by staying above these social classes. Justice requires the protection of the people. For this purpose, the sultans were glorified to protect the people and provide justice (Kunt, 1987: 131). The Ottoman social order within the framework of the concept of *Circle of Justice* is explained as follows:

"The monarch needs soldiers to establish and maintain his authority; it is the produce of the people who provided income needed to feed the soldiers; the monarch ensures the welfare of the people with justice; the state is the protector of society; The law, which is considered the pillar of the state, is set forth by the power of the monarch" (Özbaran, 2004: 38). "Finally, we return to the beginning of the order of justice, to the point that the monarch needs soldiers to deliver justice. The Circle of Justice is a concise statement that the ruler should be strong and that the ruler is the focal point of the society" (Kunt, 1987: 131).

## 2.2. Social Structure and Classes in the Ottoman State

It is seen that the ethnic and religious structure of the Ottoman society, which was composed of Turks during its establishment, took on a cosmopolitan identity, including Greek, Jewish, Armenian, Albanian and Serbian nations etc with the conquests. It can be said that different religious and sectarian communities took their place in the Ottoman *millet* system, but integration could not be achieved in the Ottoman society as a result of the addition of the centralized financial system to the centralized political system. In this centralist and patrimonial state structure, the sultan, who was the focal point of the society, took power and property with the authority he received from God, and the rest of the country was in the status of "servant". Thanks to the strong army, "military and bureaucratic" qualities were also added to the centralist and patrimonial structure formed with the *Gaza* understanding (Günay, 2003: 31).

According to Günay, the cultural basis of the classical period Ottoman society was built on the model of personal relations. The socio-cultural structure of the society is built on a network of patrimonial, personal and charismatic relations such as "the sultan-servant, father-son, teacher-student, sheikh-disciple". However, in the Ottoman State, which had an undifferentiated social structure and was not based on social stratification, social classes could not develop according to the examples in the west. There are mainly two social classes in society; "the military and the flock" (Günay, 2003: 31-32).

## 2.3. The Military Class-Administrators

In Ottoman society, the military refers to the class that is not subject to homage tax. This exemption separates the military class from the flock. The fact that this class does not pay taxes led

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to sensitive attitude in the appointment of those to be included in the military. Salary (*Ulufe*) and *timar* holders, the people of the palace, state officials, princes (*umera*) and the members of the Muslim learned (*ulema*) represent the military class. The important title that distinguishes the military class from the flock is to be appointed to a state service by obtaining the sultan's confirmation. In the early days of the state, many people from the public were assigned to military institution and assigned to the military class. Examples of these are "yaya and müsellems" from farmers, and "yoruks" from nomads (İnalçık, 1959: 595-596).

Since the Ottoman Empire implemented a policy of war and conquest, the influence of the ulema and umera was high in the ruling class. The *Ümera* class, also known as the *seyfiye* class, is divided into "kapikulu soldiers and *timarlı sipahis (Cavalry)*". Kapikulu (Slaves of the Porte) army refers to the soldiers formed with the *devshirme* system in the center. The weight of the Ottoman army consisted of the soldiers of the provinces, which were founded on the *timar* system. The *ulema*, more commonly known as the the Scribal class, is composed of "chief of Islam, kazaskers, kadis, muderris and clergy" (Akyılmaz, 2008: 394). Another group of the Ottoman ruling class is the Scribal institution, whose foundations were laid in the time of Orhan Bey. Professionals such as "clerks and marksman, bookkeeper" were formed from the the *İlmiye institution* at first, and this situation prevented the clerk class from rising to an active position in the state like *ilmiye* and *seyfiye* for a certain period of time (Akyılmaz, 2004: 4).

As a requirement of the Islamic tradition, within the social understanding and stratification in the society mentioned above, the sultan planned "gaza and jihad" for the survival of the state, and the *seyfiye* class contributed to that ideal by fighting. As a requirement of the political understanding of the period, the state used the sources of the treasury in works such as supplying the needs of the soldiers, paying the war expenses, and building the castles. However, it has not been in the position of a direct investor in matters that will facilitate social life (Köç, 2016: 305).

In this context, is useful to examine the *timar* system in detail in order to understand the Ottoman socio-economic structure. The roots of the *timar* system were based on the Eastern Roman tradition seen in the Peloponnese and Arab-Iranian geography. What used to be done to public officials was a form of payment equivalent to that "the Cathedral subsidized to the priest." In order to reduce the pressure on the state treasury, land began to be distributed to the commanders during the reign of Murat I, and after a while it became widespread and institutionalized as the "Timar System" (Karpas, 2006: 226-227). In the *timar* system, the land owned by the state was called *dirlik* and *sipahi* were called landowners. The *sipahis* took the tithe and the land themselves. In return, they took part in military missions and participated in wars, either by themselves or with the soldiers named *cebeli*, whom they trained, depending on the size of their fief. The revenue of the *timarli sipahi* ranged from one thousand akçe to 19999 akçe. Those producing from 20,000 to 99,999 akces annually were called *zeamets* and those bringing more than 100,000 akces were the *hasses* (Uzunçarşılı, 1988: 454).

This land order had an important place in terms of the state's control of the society and the continuation of agricultural production. The changes seen in the Ottoman Empire after the 16th century came from the deterioration of the existing land structure. With the effect of firearms on the battlefields, the cavalymen, the protectors of the fief lands, began to lose their importance gradually. As a result, a new tax system was established and local feudal lords called "*Ayan*" began to be seen. The notables formed a new social layer with the right to collect taxes and open the land for private use and became the basis of the new social order connected to the land. (Karpas, 2006: 222-223). Empowered notables bought the lands of the flock and started to reveal private property by shelving the principle of state monopoly of the ownership of the land. As a result, the state could not resist this change, the feudal formations attached to the land, and signed the document known as Deed of Agreement in 1808 by making an agreement with the notables. It is seen that the notables took part in the assemblies after the *Tanzimat* and strengthened the gentry (Tabakoğlu, 2017: 32).

## 2.4. The flock (Reaya)

It refers to the mass of the people who pay taxes to the flock in the Ottoman Empire. Those who resided in villages and cities and nomads belonged to this class. If one of these groups was given a duty by the state to be included in the military group, the status of the reaya ended, and by the end of term, they were included in the class of reaya again (Halaçođlu, 1991: 92).

In the multi-religious and multi-cultural Ottoman society, there is a distinction between the superiority of Muslims in tax practices, especially before the state. Non-Muslim Ottoman citizens were called dhimmis and lived under the auspices of the state, ensuring their safety. Dhimmis, who were evaluated together with Muslims in terms of fundamental rights, would pay *jizya* tax to the state. Legally, there is a "free-slave" distinction in society. With the understanding from the past, the state used slavery as an educational institution and an option besides its free labor and even placed this situation at the center of the administrative and political system with the "*devshirme* system" (Tabakođlu, 2017: 30).

The nomads, who made up a part of the *reaya*, were taxed differently from other sedantary reaya due to their lifestyles. Taxes such as *Ađnam* tax (animal tax), pasture-winter tax, *yave akçası*, *bad-ı heva* were examples of taxes paid by nomads. Peasants referred to the settled subjects responsible for making agriculture on lands owned by the state and paying the tax on the product they earned from this work. The peasants did not pay the tithe and tax to the state treasury, but to the landlords to whom the state transferred the land in return for a service, or to the foundation if the land was the land of a foundation. City dwellers, on the other hand, were charged with different taxes by the state, since they were not interested in agriculture and animal husbandry, and also because the cities constituted an economic center in the society. Members of the city were engaged in activities such as merchants, small industrial enterprises and paid the tax of the goods they sold in the bazaar to the state. The merchants of these cities were organized within themselves by forming organizations called "*Guild*" (Halaçođlu, 1991: 93-102).

## 3. DYNAMICS OF OTTOMAN ECONOMIC STRUCTURE - AHİLİK AND GUILDS

### 3.1. Outlines of economic thought in the Ottoman Empire

The geography of the Ottoman Empire is a difficult one. One of the main characteristics of the states that have been effective in this geography throughout history is that the political economy they pursued by determining their own priorities had a quality that was in harmony with the developments in the world in the relevant period and not in conflict with them. It can be said that there is a general parallelism between the effectiveness of the states that ruled in this geography in the world economy and the quality of the economic policies they pursued. It is observed that external dynamics as well as internal dynamics play an influential and sometimes even decisive role in the economic policies pursued. Policies that do not take into account the balances and developments in the world and prioritize flowing the river in reverse, due to circumstances or other reasons, have generally put the states in this geography in difficulty. In the Fertile Crescent (Diamond, 2003), which is historically regarded as the most important civilization basin, many societies belonging to different races and religions lived in the region, different states were established, and this basin surrounding the Mediterranean Sea played a central role in the world economy for a long time (Bulut, 2012: 65).

The Ottoman economic order, which was based on widespread statism and state ownership, and the nature and function of the Ottoman state were in perfect harmony. This is one of the fundamental balances that elevated the Ottomans: The state could only fulfill its duties thanks to the qualities of the economic order it established, and the economic order could survive as long as the state fulfilled its duties. Therefore, there is a mutual cause-and-effect relationship between them (Cem, 1999: 73). The Ottoman Empire, which was established as an agriculture-centered state during the formation and development of capitalism in Western Europe, did not hesitate to change and innovate the system when necessary. As a result, Western Europe, with the exception of England, was able to reach the

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productivity in agriculture of the sixteenth century only in the nineteenth century. This productivity was realized within the framework of the fief system. However, later on, radical changes in the fief system came to the agenda and the Ottomans tried to maintain their claims in the agricultural and economic sphere, first with Farming contracts and later with manoring practices (Bulut, 2012: 75-76). On the other hand, Ottoman statesmen blamed all economic and financial problems on capitulations and complained about Western countries from the 1860s onwards. However, the adoption of a modern and secular legal system could have eliminated most of the drawbacks of capitulations. Far from preventing such an initiative, on the contrary, Westerners strongly suggested it. However, neither the ruling class was ready for this change intellectually, nor the systems of interests integrated with the existing order could allow this radicalism. Undoubtedly, the capitulations provided Western merchants with very free trade opportunities. However, the same capitulations did not prevent the Ottoman rulers from granting even more of these privileges to local merchants (Timur, 2000: 224).

The economic nature of the Ottoman state in the classical period was shaped around the needs of the state and the nation. Accordingly, three principles in the economy came to the fore (Genç, 2014: 11):

- The provisionism refers to the provision of food. The principle requires that the production of goods and services be sufficient, high quality and affordable. Producers should engage in production activities that will meet the needs of themselves first and then other social elements in order of importance. The Ottomans implemented this principle with the land system and production control they established.

- The fiscalism is to increase the revenues of the treasury as much as possible. This situation depends on the increase in production and the rate of monetary exchange. The increase in the treasury revenues in the Ottoman economy followed a stagnant course as it was difficult to achieve an increase in productivity. In fact, after the 16th century, it was turned to a policy of protecting the keeping rather than increasing it. In addition, in cases where it contradicted the principle of provisionism, which was based on social welfare, fiscalism was abandoned.

- The traditionalism refers to the use and consult to the conventions and traditions. The Ottoman economic institutions, which reached a state of equilibrium with the previous two principles, took with them the principle of traditionalism as the third principle. The aim was to preserve the balances in social and economic life, to prevent the currents of change and, if there were changes, to destroy them in a way that would make it possible to get back to the old balance again.

It can be said that the Ottoman Empire, which was born and developed at a time when agriculture was the most important sector in the economy worldwide, maintained complete control over all factors of production together with land. Miri land (state land) was indivisible and could not be subject to foundation, inheritance or sale. As long as the Ottoman peasants cultivated the land, they had lifelong ownership of its use. In addition to the state's aim of maximizing production in the agricultural field, it can also be considered as a desirable situation for the peasants (Bulut, 2012: 77). In the Ottoman economic order, which was based on land and land-based production, in the words of Kanuni, "the peasant flocks are the real benefactors of humanity". For this reason, it was an important issue to try to increase agricultural production in Ottoman economic and political thought. The Europeans, on the other hand, focused on industry and manufacture, and brought the merchant class and the idea of mercantilism to the fore in society (İnalçık, 2004: 82). The Ottomans took various measures to increase agricultural production within the framework of this thought. Taking the land from a person who didn't cultivate the land for three consecutive years and giving it to someone else,

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collecting the "çift bozan" tax\* from the peasant who left the land, could be given as some of the examples. (Genç, 2014: 12).

Although it seemed to contradict its aims of being a power state, the Ottoman Empire, which was an Islamic State, was concerned about the welfare of its citizens and remained committed to the economy of abundance. Controlling the measure-weighting and prices by the state, preventing the shortage of necessities and creating an economy of abundance were among the duties of the Ottoman rulers (İnalçık, 2004: 83-84). For the Ottoman economic order to exist and function, the state had certain duties. These were to restrict the rampant behavior of individualism in order to ensure security, equality and justice in society; to protect the production order by retaining land ownership and prevent the emergence of overlords; to control manufacturing and craftsmanship; to organize artisans; to regulate domestic and foreign trade; to prevent famine and black market by securing the supply of large cities; to prevent the public from being deceived through price control, common warehouses and market controls; and to provide public services, social aid and solidarity to some extent by establishing a strong foundation system. In short, to prevent economic forces from destroying the existing social order and to protect society and the individual (Cem, 1999: 77-78).

The Ottoman state attached great importance to trade routes and constantly struggled with pirates in order to ensure the safety of the roads. This situation was essential for increasing the incomes, called the principle of fiscalism, and for meeting the need for food and raw materials in the domestic market. Regulatory interventions of the state towards the economy, regulations for guilds, setting upper limits on prices, inspection of product quality, quotas and controls in production and sales are different in content and purpose from the mercantilist state regulation. The basis of economic concern in the Ottomans was to increase the income of the state and to protect the citizens in the market. The state built the welfare in the economy not on increasing the income of agricultural and industrial products with the developing technology, but on the new tax resources in the lands joined to the borders of the state by wars (İnalçık, 2004: 87-89).

In short, while Europe was establishing a rich economy with an ever-expanding industry and market, the Ottomans were firmly attached to the ideal of expanding the country's territory by conquests and were attached to the guilds in the field of manufacture and it gave weight to the management of the land and state ownership in agriculture (İnalçık, 2004: 82).

### 3.2. Thought of Futuwwah and Ahi Brotherhood

Before moving on to the subject of the guilds, it is necessary to examine the "ahi guilds", which left its mark on the economic and social life and even on the political field in the early periods of the Anatolian Seljuks and the Ottoman Empire, considered as the predecessor of the guilds, and the phenomenon of "Futuwwah", which influenced the formation of the principles and thought of the *ahi*-guilds.

*Futuwwah* is a concept that has meanings such as generosity, full-heartedness, and bravery. As a term, it means being helpful, preventing injustice, not speaking bad words, not touching life and property. Futuwwah and its preceding organizations appeared as a civil organization formed against those who engaged in illegal activities in Islamic societies under the influence of mysticism (Anadol, 1991, p. 1-8). The fact that the formations we call *ahi* guilds are called "*the union of futuwwah*", the works that explained the rules and ceremonies related to *ahi*-guilds and "*futuwwahname*" revealed how important futuwwah was in understanding Ahi brotherhood (Güllülü, 1977: 29).

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\* Çiftbozan tax, also referred to as *levendiye* or *leventlik* currency, was a kind of tax levied on the peasants who did not cultivate the land for any reason, leave it empty or leave the land without any reason. (Op Cit. Çağatay, N. (1947): Karagöz, 2016: 498).

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In the years when the state was established, the sects, especially the "futuwwah rules", were influential on the guilds. "Perfect human being" in the morality of futuwwah was a person who had the qualities of being disciplined, respectful, hardworking and generous. Admission to futuwwah guilds was held with ceremonies and members were given the characteristics of being virtuous people. This movement was influential in Anatolian society in the early periods of the Ottoman Empire under the name of "ahilik" (İnalçık, 2003: 157-158). There is no doubt that *Ahilik* derives its ethical principles and qualifications from *futuwwahnames*. However, it cannot be fully expressed that *ahi* comes from futuwwah. The conditions for becoming an *Ahi* were different from futuwwah. In order to become an *Ahi*, it was necessary to have the qualifications of futuwwah as well as a profession and art. In short, ahi brotherhood referred to the merchant organizations that were established in the 13th century and worked with certain principles (Anadol, 1991: 61). We first come across the word *Ahi* in *Sühreverdi's "Risale'tül Fütüvve"*. The word means "my brother" in Turkish (Ortaylı, 2006: 95). *Ahis* aimed to teach people about morality and ethical values and to make them reasonable citizens. The teachers of the organization called 'muallim ahi' or 'pîr' would teach the members of the organization the principles of religion, reading and writing, human decency, cleanliness, the order and tradition of the organization (hearth), hymns, poems, raks, Sufi parables and sayings, and certain attitudes, thoughts and behaviors such as tying and untying the sash seven times (Akyüz, 2001: 48). It is seen that *Ahilik* was mentioned together with Ahi Evran in Anatolia. However, *Ahilik* did not emerge with the imagination of a person. It is the product of the common thought of the whole nation. Ahi Evran taught the people who made the philosophy of trade how to apply this thought (Anadol, 1991: 49-51).

The futuwwah guilds greatly influenced the structures of the Ahi guilds and in terms of clarifying the functions of these organizations, it was important how these guilds are organized. We see how this organization came into existence in the futuwwahnames. Units with futuwwah ideology are roughly divided into three groups. The main criterion in this grouping was occupation. Namely, the Kavli futuwwah group consisted of craftsmen, and the Seyfi futuwwah group consisted of swordsmen. The *Şurbi Futuwwah* group, on the other hand, was composed of other layers of the public other than artisans and soldiers (Güllülü, 1977: 36-37).

A person holding the title of *Ahi* was to have the ability to attach great importance to morality, reason and science in the futuwwah. *Ahis* were the people who knew their place and limits in society. The aim of the Ahi was to form the middle class by educating the person and making him productive, and to establish a balance between the classes in the society by establishing cooperation within the framework of understanding, trust and consent (Anadol, 1991: 64). It can be stated that the first ahi brotherhoods in Anatolia consisted of folk groups gathered around rich and powerful people with high moral values. These groups formed a common living space by gathering in *zawiyahs* established and financed by wealthy leaders. In these guilds, guests were hosted, musical entertainments were held, and feasts were given. With these aspects, it was necessary to emphasize the importance of ahi *zawiyas* in terms of the formation of national culture. Ahi guilds took on the task of moral school that influenced most of the people over time (Güllülü, 1977: 81). Along with its moral and cultural functions, it can be said that the *ahi* phenomenon had political and religious roles in Anatolia in the 13th century's political authority gap, and ahi leaders and ahi *zawiyas* filled the political authority gap. Likewise, in the following years, it was seen that the ahis made important contributions to the process in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottomans' political unity in Anatolia.

According to Güllülü, it cannot be said that the ahi guilds were independent political power centers. These units generally played a supporting role for the dominant political forces in the cities. This situation, which first occurred in regions that were not under the influence of the central authority, became valid in all Anatolian cities over time. In most parts of Anatolia, security was largely left to the ahi brotherhoods. This period coincided with the periods when the political authority of the Anatolian Seljuk State lost power and feudal-looking principalities emerged. For this reason,

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during the establishment of the Ottoman state, the ahi guilds appeared as local political power centers and they supported feudal movements in a way that prevented the Seljuk authority from gaining power again. The conflict between the values that made up the ahi brotherhoods and the official Islamic values on which the Seljuk authority was based may be effective in the formation of this situation\*. At this point, it is an understandable fact that the ahi guilds felt close to the *Karamanoğulları* and Ottomans in Anatolia (Güllülü, 1977: 88-89).

The relations between the apprentice, the specialized foreman, the master and the pir (head of an order) in the Ahis are parallel to the religious and Turkish national values. Just as it was not possible to reach God without being attached to the sheikh in Sufism, professional competence could not be reached in Ahi guilds without being attached to the Pir and the master. The masters of the Ahi brotherhoods would choose a leader called Pir, who could take care of his "hands, waist, tongue". These leaders enjoyed great respect among the Ahis (Anadol, 1991: 74-75).

The Ahis had great importance in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. Until the 18th century, ahi organizations continued to develop and left their mark on social and economic life. The Ahis produced quality goods and, adhering to certain production techniques, ensured that the goods produced were sold at a certain price. Those who behaved outside professional ethics were punished (Bayram, 2012: 95-96). The ahi brotherhoods, which we can consider as professional organizations, had qualifications of a superior organization over the merchants and ensured that moral principles were kept at the forefront in trade. In this respect, it can be easily stated that ahi unions had very important social functions.

### 3.3. Transformation from Ahilik to Guild and Guild Institution

While there are those who state that the origin of guild comes from the Italian word "Lociyè, Loggiya" in Turkish, there are also those who say that it derives from the French word "Loj, Loge". It is generally accepted that it emerged after the Ottoman contact with the Italian trade centers. After the guilds were established, the Ottoman state administrators were supported by other state bureaucrats because they provided benefits in various aspects, and the military was supported by the guilds in the same way that the needs of the army were supplied from the guilds in times of war. For this reason, while the guilds grew stronger and stronger in the 15th and 16th centuries, the ahi unions weakened on the contrary, and after a while, only the name remained among the merchants (Özdemir, 2004: 160-161). Guilds are a form of the phenomenon of "Futuwwah and Ahi Guilds", which existed for a long time among the merchants belonging to the Islamic world, were transformed according to the requirements of the age. The difference between the guilds and the Ahi brotherhood can be expressed as the decrease in the importance of their religious side (Yazıcı, 1994: 155). As the cause of this metamorphosis, we can show that the principles and understanding of the Ahilik, which included the understanding and principles of futuwwah, gained a different dimension over time due to the conditions of the age. Because in the changing Ottoman society over time, the merchants had to renew and change themselves. Changing social, political and financial conditions led the ahi guilds to a different position in terms of their principles and thought. In this framework, these trades unions became a structure where not only Muslims but also members of different religions and faiths took place under the same professional umbrella (Güler, 2000: 127-128). As a natural consequence of the increase in the ratio and importance of non-Muslim subjects in society and commercial life due to the expansion of the territory of the state, non-Muslims began to be influential in many branches of art. This new social outlook weakened the ideology of the *Ahilik*. The strong religious and mystical

\* For detailed information on the conflicts between the values of the Ahi brotherhood and the official Islamic values on which the Anatolian Seljuk State was based, see Güllülü, S. (1977). *Sosyoloji Açısından Ahi Birlikleri* (1. Baskı). İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat., p. 28-88.

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dynamics in the *ahi* guilds lost their importance. However, the importance of moral principles and thoughts never decreased in the guilds.

It is seen that in almost every Islamic society, groups with common ideals and interests are organized and the most important person in these organizations is the person representing the organization outside the organization. The person who used to manage the group was *ahi* in 13th century Anatolia, sheikh in Arabs, and *Kethuda* (chief) in the Ottoman guilds. In the guilds, masters of the arts used to choose a member of the organization who would apply the rules of the guild and represent them against the state. *Kethuda* elections were of great importance in guilds, as a guild without a *kethuda* was not considered an independent guild. In the guild organization, when the artisans affiliated to a guild wanted to form a separate guild, they chose a *kethuda* among themselves, applied to the *kadi* and registered themselves as an independent guild. These unions of tradesmen sought a spiritual basis for themselves. For this reason, a sheikh representing religious and spiritual authority was found at the head of each guild. These guild sheikhs organized the ceremonies in the guild together with the *nakib* who was their assistant and applied the punishments given to the members (İnalçık, 2003: 158-159). Although the influence and importance of the sheikhs in the guilds continued until the 17th century, it is seen that the religious influence in the administration of the guilds was less observed. However, it is symbolic that the sheikhs took place as leaders in the guilds, especially in ceremonies, after this date, and it can be considered as a respect for tradition. (Bayram, 2012: 104).

At the head of the *kethudas* in Ottoman cities was a chief *kethuda*, which represented the city before the state and in front of whom the issues of the city guilds were discussed. Another guild member was the "*Yiğitbaşı*" (deputy chief), who could act as a substitute for the *kethuda* when he was not on duty, chosen from among the experienced masters who organized the internal activities of the guild. *Yiğitbaşı* was responsible for purchasing the raw materials that the guild needed, inspecting whether the productions were within the guild rules and distributing them to other guilds. If the rules were broken by a guild member, they were responsible for notifying the *sheikh*. The forwarding of promotion requests to the *kethuda* was another duty of the valiant chief. In addition, one or a few masters who knew their job well in the guilds were chosen as "*Ehl-i Hirbe*". This person or persons expressed an opinion on the quality of production, mediated price disputes and helped determine the market (İnalçık, 2003: 159).

Production and sales activities in the Ottoman Empire were carried out for the population consisting of the town and the surrounding villages. Guilds were not always able to increase production for the expanding market as in the liberal economy. Since the prices decreased in case of more production than necessary, and prices increased in case of underproduction, even the number of guild masters was determined and limited in proportion to the town population. There are provisions in the state registers for the prohibition of masters, also called seat-makers\*, who opened surplus workplaces (İnalçık, 2008: 607-608).

The Ottoman State craftsmen guilds can be considered as completely autonomous institutions. The masters of the guilds chose the in-house responsables and managers themselves. There was no intervention of the state in this matter (İnalçık and Arı, 2005: 49-50). The state's intervention in the guilds was only by controlling the enforcement of "acquisition" laws regulating prices and taxes. *İhtisab* is a practice that comes from the Islamic tradition. Irregularities in matters such as the quality

\* With the increase in the population of Istanbul after the conquest of Istanbul, the demand for products of lower quality increased, and some groups that were not included in the guild started to open shops. In the said period, the artisans who made such low quality production were called "seat-makers". These groups, which produced low quality products compared to the artisans affiliated with the guild, entered into competition with the artisans affiliated with the guild. The artisans affiliated to the guild stated that the seat-maker artisans produced low quality products and complained about these artisans to the state through *kethüdas*. The state, on the other hand, abolished the seat-makers, taking into account the complaints of the artisans affiliated with the guild (İnalçık and Arı, 2005: 47).

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and prices of the products in the bazaars and markets, measuring-weighing were inspected in the practice of issuance, and those who violated the rules were punished. The "*Bac-ı Pazar*" tax, which was the sales tax paid by the shopkeepers, was meticulously focused on, and laws were put into force in this regard (İnalçık, 2003: 159-161). Controlling the quality of the goods constituted the most important part of the acquisition practices. With these regulations called "*Narh*", the state aimed to protect the citizens from price increases and thus to maintain social and political stability (İleri, 2019: 216).

The Ottomans aimed to protect their guilds and support their experienced guild masters. The guilds also wanted to increase their effectiveness in the affairs of the state. The aim here was that the guilds got state support against new understandings and orders that would harm financial interests. It is possible to say that the aim of the Ottomans in their efforts to preserve the guilds was the idea of the "order of the world" mentioned above, that the change would bring turmoil and unrest, and that this turmoil would negatively affect the state treasury. This thought persisted until the 19th century, when the liberal economic ideas of the West began to show their influence. It is this thought that prevented the economy from going beyond the limited rules of the guilds and forming a strong Ottoman bourgeoisie (İnalçık, 2003: 161). Afterwards, the European origin goods narrowed the movement area of the guilds, and the guilds, which were defeated by European capitalism during the *Tanzimat* period, could not survive (İnalçık, 2003: 160-161).

Capital movements due to mercantilism that emerged enabled the development of production and the implementation of new production techniques. With the mercantilist policies, which can be explained as buying more raw materials from abroad and selling more products abroad, the European industry did not disregard Anatolia while heading to different markets. Apart from taking precautions against this situation, the Ottoman state gave concessions under the name of capitulation and accelerated the disintegration of the craftsmen of the country and these guilds formed by the craftsmen. As a requirement of the capitulations, the Ottoman state became a large market, supplying only raw materials, and the domestic production of the country was adversely affected. When the raw materials, which were insufficient, were collected by merchants and sold to Europe, the prices of raw materials needed by domestic production increased and accordingly, domestic production was interrupted. As a result, the decreasing domestic production had no chance to compete with industrial products of European origin (Güllülü, 1977: 162-163). As a result, the goods imported from the industrialized Europe in the 19th century spread in the Ottoman market, and the traditional production of the guilds had difficulty resisting these industrial products. In some areas of production, products produced by the guilds were able to resist European industry, but in most areas they were destroyed. Due to the transportation conditions, Istanbul and the coastal port areas in the initial years, followed by the inner regions where the railways were located, were the places most affected by the competition of industrial products (İleri, 2019: 217).

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

For many years, and especially until the *Tanzimat*, the Ottoman economy had a few small-scale institutionalized economic practices. These economic institutions were mostly based on agriculture, manual labor and a spoils economy. Beginning with the first Muslim Turkic state, the Qarakhanids, economic revenues were tied to taxes collected, the *ikta* system\* and the manual labor of guilds, and the circulation of these and agricultural production from hand to hand. This economic practice formed

\* As a term, it is the administrative and military system applied by allocating the right of disposition of inherited land, which belongs to the state, to state officials under certain conditions. In various Muslim Turkic states, the Turkish equivalent of fief, which is also known as "*nânpâre*" (piece of bread), "*hubz/ahbâz*" (bread), "*suyurğal*" (donation), "*tuyûl/tyûl*" (donation), "*tîmar*" (maintenance), is "*dirlik*" and "*geçimlik* (subsistence)". Göksu, E. *İkta Sistemi*, ([https://ansiklopedi.tubitak.gov.tr/ansiklopedi/ikta\\_sistemi](https://ansiklopedi.tubitak.gov.tr/ansiklopedi/ikta_sistemi), Accessed: 25.12.2022, 22:04).

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the basis of Seljuk and Ottoman economic practices (Akyüz, 2008: 239). The economic structure in the Ottoman Empire developed within the framework of moral principles such as equality, solidarity, cooperation and tolerance. The state tried to protect the principle of equality by trying to distribute the factors of production equally among the artisans and also tried to avoid competition in the economy in order to maintain solidarity and cooperation (Akbaş, Bozkurt and Yazıcı, 2018: 191). From the early 19th century onwards, Ottoman institutions based on religious faith gradually lost their function and prestige. Military defeats, economic and financial collapse and internal unrest played a major role in this development (Timur, 2000: 221).

It can be said that the Ottoman approach, which envisaged the preservation of the balance established in the economic field within the borders of the empire, prevented the emergence of the capital accumulation process that developed in Western Europe during the same period in its own geography through control over all factors of production, export bans, harsh practices and profit restrictions (Bulut, 2012: 78). The Ottoman understanding of the state is a synthesis composed of the states that were established before, sharing the same geography, and the rules of *shariat*. The Ottoman economy was also shaped on the institutions and understandings that existed in the past. The Ottomans divided the society into two parts as the rulers and the ruled, continuing the Middle Eastern tradition. The basis of this distinction was tax. The ruled was the reaya (the flock) who were taxed. In the Ottoman Empire, when a person was included in the military group with any duty, he was exempted from the citizenship tax, and at the end of the duty, he would be subject to citizenship again.

The *timar* system made the Ottomans strong militarily and economically for a long time, and as mentioned above, its centralized structure prevented the formation of a land-bound bourgeois. With the *timar* system, the Ottomans had an inexpensive army that was not a burden to the state treasury, and at the same time, the continuity of agricultural production was ensured. In the Ottomans, which was an agricultural society, production was encouraged due to the principle of provisionism and the sultan's political tradition on the welfare of the people, those who interrupted production were inspected and punished. However, the deterioration of the fief system and the capitular bureaucracy limited the Ottoman State's ability to maintain highly efficient methods of administration and public order and created a problem that would not be solved until the last moments of the empire: The financial crisis of the state. In this process, the *mültezim* gradually appropriated the main sources of revenue; farms (large units of agricultural production for world markets, either privately owned or in the form of *waqf*) and *mâlikânes* (life-long charters) flourished, while *mirî* (state-owned) lands declined. The expansion of the manoring system led to the transformation of agricultural lands into private property and the growing scale of agricultural production dependent on world markets, which affected the Ottoman social organization. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was unable to resolve the contradiction between the politically based rationality of the social organization and the development of commodity production, which weakened the state's influence and control over production, distribution and administration (Kazancıgil, 1986: 175-176).

Despite the wide freedom of movement of merchants in Ottoman society, the developments in Western Europe were not observed in the Ottoman Empire. The bourgeois class, the central force of the capitalist system, did not or could not emerge in Ottoman society. It can be said that the state's practices aimed at preventing the accumulation of personal wealth and consequently the formation of a capital class in the Western sense in this geography continued for a long period until the middle of the 19th century with a conscious approach. While the basic element of European capitalism was the 'bourgeoisie', this was the 'ahi organization', which played a central role in the Ottoman system and was the most important inheritance from the Seljuks (Bulut, 2012: 68-79).

The *Ahilik* (confraternity), which used to be an important constituent of the Ottoman city life, was a guild of craftsmen formed with the idea of mysticism. These guilds played an important role in the establishment of the state and undertook important duties in many points from the quality of the products to the sale in the bazaar and market. It can be said that the guild, one of the most important

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actors in understanding the Ottoman political economy, originated from the understanding of brotherhood and sharing in Islamic society and this understanding deeply affected Ottoman society. It is clear that the ahi mentality, which created a difference between the Ottomans and Europeans in the individual, institutional and social spheres, had important consequences in many areas from the organization of the economy to labor relations, production to distribution (Bulut, 2012: 68). As the Ottoman State expanded and took on a multi-religious and multi-cultural structure to include non-Muslim subjects, Ahi unions also changed and were turned into guilds. Although there were signs of the principles and understandings of the ahi-order in the guilds, these institutions were no longer composed of only Muslim cfratsmen, as was the case with the ahi-order. The guild was supported by the Ottomans, and the administrators protected the guild members. The Ottomans controlled the production and price policies of the guilds within the framework of their understanding of economy, and prevented excess or unjustified earnings. However, it can be said that guilds were autonomous institutions because there was no intervention of the state in the elections within the guild.

As a result, Ahilik is an institution that passed to the Ottoman Empire from the Anatolian Seljuks, and after surviving in Ottoman society for a while, it was replaced by the guild organization due to the conditions of the period. In other words, with the conquest of Istanbul, we see that the guild organization emerged so that non-Muslim merchants could continue their commercial activities without any problems. Both of these organizations operated to ensure a certain order/balance in the socio-cultural and economic structure of the society. It can be said that these organizations, which carried certain social values within their structure, also contributed to the strong survival of the Ottoman state structure. The fact that the Ottoman Empire lagged behind the industrialization process in Europe, the cheap machine-made products of Europe took over the Ottoman markets, so to speak; the inability of the Guild tradesmen to compete with these products due to the reasons mentioned earlier and the loss of the function of the organization as a result of the abuses that occurred in this organization brought about the closure of these institutions. Confraternity and Guilds are institutions that were formed as a result of the socio-economic and political conditions of a certain period and disappeared after completing their mission, so to speak. Tradesmen or craftsmen associations have always existed in the life of societies since ancient times, according to the specific characteristics of the era and societies. These institutions will undoubtedly continue to exist in the life of societies in different forms and characteristics in the future, as they do today, according to the shape / functioning of socio-economic life. The main criterion that determines the existence of these institutions and some of their characteristics will undoubtedly always be the socio-economic needs of the society.

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