

**REFLECTIONS ON THE OTTOMAN RAW COTTON  
PRODUCTION AND EXPORT DURING THE 1850-1913  
PERIOD\***

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**Abstract:**

The present study attempts to analyze raw cotton production and export in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The emphasis is given to the commercialization of the Ottoman agriculture while the peripheralization process of the Empire is evaluated. In this context, the effect of the world capitalist system on the Ottoman cotton production and export is considered. The problems of the raw cotton production can be explained with the administrative structure of the Empire in general, and the “traditional social order” that the Ottoman central authority had preserved throughout the centuries in particular.

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**Keywords:** Ottoman economic history, raw cotton, peripheralization process, commercialization of the cotton production.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Osmanlı iktisat tarihi, ham pamuk, çevreleşme süreci, pamuk üretiminin ticarileşmesi.

**Özet:****1850-1913 Dönemindeki Osmanlı Ham Pamuk Üretimi ve İhracatı Üzerine Düşünceler**

Bu çalışma, ondokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısından yirminci yüzyılın başına kadarki dönem içerisinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ham pamuk üretimi ve ihracatını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, İmparatorluğun çevreleşme süreci değerlendirilirken, Osmanlı tarımının ticarileşmesine vurgu yapılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, dünya kapitalist sisteminin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ham pamuk üretimine ve ihracatına yönelik etkisi irdelenmiştir. Ham pamuk üretiminin sorunları, genelde İmparatorluğun idari yapısıyla, özelde de Osmanlı merkezi otoritesinin yüzyıllar boyunca korumuş olduğu "geleneksel toplumsal düzeni" ile açıklanabilir.

**INTRODUCTION**

Several historians and social scientists have investigated various aspects of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. With a very few exceptions, they generally support the argument that the investigation of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century is useful for the exploration and interpretation of the current structure of the Turkish society. In a broader sense, relying on this argument and expecting to obtain certain findings, the present study concentrates on the analysis of the raw cotton production in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

In doing so, the emphasis is given to the commercialization of the Ottoman agriculture while the peripheralization process of the Empire is briefly mentioned. In this context, the effect of the world capitalist system on the changes of the cotton production and export of the Ottoman Empire is considered. Additionally, supports by the foreign countries, namely Great Britain and Germany, towards the improvement of the raw cotton production in the Empire, and the subsequent responses of the Ottoman State is examined in detail.

It should also be stressed that United Kingdom Parliament's *Accounts and Papers* based on the reports of the British Consuls is used as a principal source of reference throughout the paper.

In the following section, the significance of the cotton production both in the world economy and in the Ottoman economy during the nineteenth century

will be emphasized. In the second section, the trends in cotton production and export of certain provinces of the Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century will be analyzed. During this analysis, efforts of the British Government for the improvement of the raw cotton production together with the Ottoman Empire's reactions to these efforts will be pointed out. This attempt will also contribute to the evaluation of the Ottoman economy's peripheralization process. Third section is devoted to the examination of the prevailing tendencies in the Ottoman Empire's raw cotton production at the beginning of the twentieth century taking into account the growing influence of Germany especially after the construction of the Ottoman railways. The main findings of the study will be discussed and evaluated in the last section.

### **1. WHY TO EXAMINE RAW COTTON PRODUCTION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE?**

In this section, we attempt to explain the significance of cotton in the nineteenth century for the world economy and the Ottoman economy as well.

As it is well known, the beginning of the industrial revolution can be dated with Great Britain's industrialization process in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its immediate effects started to be seen in the world economy after the first quarter of the nineteenth century. More specifically, in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, the industrialized economies in Europe eagerly started to search for markets to sell their manufactured products, and for cheap and abundant supply of raw materials that allow them to expand their trade with the countries in the periphery. Cotton textile industry was at the heart of this process. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to identify industrial revolution, and especially British industrialization, with unprecedented developments occurred in the cotton textile industry (Hobsbawm, 1968: 40; Davis, 1973: 311). Fuelled by successive inventions and innovations, the technological improvements -the most peculiar aspect of the Industrial Revolution- firstly appeared in the cotton textile industry (Landes, 1969; Lilley 1976; Mantoux, 1973). Consequently, the first wave of the Industrial Revolution brought about great increases in productivity and more rapid reductions in the prices of the cotton textiles than in any other industry (Deane, 1965: 84-99). Associated with this trend, production of cotton textile products tremendously augmented. In Britain, during the 1760-1827 period, the production of the cotton textiles raised hundredfold (Lilley, 1976: 195), which in turn, obviously necessitated the creation of a large market for the raw cotton.

When the attention is shifted to the Ottoman Empire, it can be said that the most important structural characteristic of the economy was its being traditionally agrarian. The country had a favourable climate and fertile lands not only for the production of various grain crops, but also for the raw cotton which is predominantly an industrial crop. Even during the period prior to Industrial Revolution, Ottoman Empire was producing and exporting cotton (Faroqhi, 1979; Genç, 1975; İnalçık, 1981). At the end of the sixteenth century, raw cotton had totally brought to Great Britain from the Ottoman ports in Cyprus, Smyrna and Saida by the Turkish merchants (Mantoux, 1973: 194). Furthermore, Ottoman Empire had been the most reliable raw cotton supplier for Britain before the Industrial Revolution period (Kurmuş, 1982: 60-61). It is, therefore, not misleading to argue that the cotton was a critical product among the commercial products of the Ottoman economy.<sup>1</sup>

If the displacement of the local production towards the world markets associated with the specialization of an economy on the exploitation and export of the raw materials for the production of the manufactured commodities abroad is considered as one of the indicators of peripheralization process (Keyder, 1987: 30-32; 1981: 16-17), examining the Ottoman raw cotton production, may help the investigation of the peripheralization process and commercialization of the agriculture in the Ottoman economy as well.

## **2. ANALYSIS OF THE RAW COTTON PRODUCTION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there were considerable irregularities in the cotton production of the Empire. Another distinguishing characteristic of this specific period was the significant efforts by the British Government to promote the raw cotton production in the Ottoman economy. In order to clarify these features, the raw cotton production in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century needs to be analysed in detail. The analysis is concentrated on the regions where the production and export of the raw cotton were the dominant economic activities for the farmers and traders. The main regions which are included in this analysis are the areas around İzmir (Smyrna), Halep (Aleppo), Adana and Maraş (Marash).

As it is mentioned earlier, in the eighteenth century, cotton was being produced in large quantities in the Ottoman Empire. More importantly, Ottoman Empire was the main supplier of raw cotton in Europe (Pamuk, 1987:

109-110; Wallerstein, Decdeli and Kasaba, 1983: 44). The exported portion of the cotton was mainly produced in Western Anatolia. “Cotton cultivation in Western Anatolia was greatly promoted in the eighteenth century by the operations of the English Levant Company, large quantities of cotton being exported through Smyrna to England (Accounts and Papers -here after A.P.-, Vol.3, 8).” Furthermore, Western Anatolia was also producing for local consumption. British Consul, in a 1857 report, indicates this fact by the following words: “Twenty years ago, three times as much cotton was grown here, chiefly for local consumption, (...) (A.P., Vol. 18, 456).”

After the first quarter of the nineteenth century, raw cotton production in the Ottoman Empire started to decrease. The main reason behind this decline was the American competition. American cotton was both better in quality and cheaper in price. English spinners had been quickly adopted for spinning American cotton yarn. As a result, the demand for Ottoman raw cotton and cotton yarn rapidly reduced.

Another reason for the diminishing trend in the raw cotton production was the decreasing demand for the local consumption (Issawi, 1980: 233). Because of the climbing imports of the cheap British cotton cloth,<sup>2</sup> local cloth weaving in the Ottoman Empire had been contracted and domestically spun cotton yarn had rapidly been destructed (Pamuk, 1987: 119-120).

In contrast to this low production level in the first half of the nineteenth century, after 1860, and especially in 1862, 1863 and 1864, a “cotton boom” was realised in the Ottoman economy. From this point onwards, we concentrate on the reasons and consequences of this “boom”.

### **2.1. The Picture of the “Cotton Boom”**

It can be emphasized that the United States took the place of the Ottoman Empire, and dominated world raw cotton market in the first half of the nineteenth century. In that period, United States became the main supplier of raw cotton for the British textile industry. British Government, however, was anxious about the heavy dependence of its textile industry on a single source of raw material supply. Had any trouble arisen in this source, British textile industry would have faced with the danger of closing down (Issawi, 1980: 233). This anxiety rapidly grown on the eve of the American Civil War. Then, in order to find other sources of raw cotton supply, the British Government founded Manchester Cotton Supply Association in 1857. This Association directed its attention towards the Ottoman Empire.

Manchester Cotton Supply Association obviously ought to take initiatives to encourage cotton production in the Ottoman Empire. Various British experts wrote articles in the Ottoman newspapers about the appropriateness of the Ottoman soil for cotton production mentioning the need for their further improvement (Issawi, 1980: 236-240). Furthermore, British Government sent questionnaires to her Ottoman consul in order to determine the accessibility of the Ottoman soil for cotton production (A.P., Vol. 3). Moreover, limited amount of American seed was distributed to the cotton producers free of charge by the Manchester Cotton Supply Association.

After the breaking out of the American Civil War, a boost was observed both in the production and export of the Ottoman cotton. The situation in İzmir is described by the following words: “In İzmir, whereas the 1860 crop had been ‘trifling’, the 1861 crop was 15.000 bales and the 1862 crop 42.000 bales, or nearly 7.500 metric tons, and the area sown to cotton in 1863 was more than five times as large as in 1862. Exports amounted to 13.860 tons in 1865 (Issawi, 1980: 234).”<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1. Raw Cotton Production in Halep, Adana and Maraş During the 1862-1864 Period**

YEARS	WHERE GROWN	QUANTITIES (in bales)
1862	Halep	1.000
	Adana	10.000
	Maraş	500
1863	Halep	10.000
	Adana	70.000
	Maraş	6.000
1864	Halep	22.000
	Adana	65.000
	Maraş	5.000

**Source:** A.P., Vol. 18, “Report on the Trade and the Commerce of Aleppo for 1864.”

Similar changes can also be seen in Halep, as the Halep (Aleppo) Consul wrote in the 1863 report: “(...) principally on account a large quantities of cotton exported. Not less than 6.000 bales of cotton were sent to France. The annual produce of cotton in this province hardly ever exceeded 1.000 bales or 500 quintals (A.P., Vol. 18, 446).” In the 1864 report, he added his following observation: “Since the commencement of the Civil War in America, cotton appears as one of the prominent items in return of exportation from Aleppo (A.P., Vol. 18, 428).”

Also, in Adana and Maraş, nearly fivefold increase was observed in the raw cotton production during the period 1862-1864 (See Table 1).

A general panorama of the raw cotton production in Anatolia would be as follows: In the Anatolia, raw cotton production immediately rose to 80.000-100.000 bales during the American Civil War (Issawi, 1980: 234). Thus, American Civil War contributed to the sudden rise in Ottoman cotton production throughout the country and especially in Anatolia.

## 2.2. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of the “Cotton Boom”

At this point, it would be appropriate to ask whether the produced cotton in the Empire was adequate both in quantity and quality to take the place of American cotton.

Although the Manchester Cotton Supply Association distributed the best American seed, most of the exported cotton was the *yerli* (local) type. This cotton was coarse and short staple. This coarse cotton was chiefly sent to the Continental Europe and especially to France. The Halep consul explains this fact in the 1862 report with the following words: “The cotton grown here is of a very inferior quality (...) In the present scarcity in Europe however, manufacturers were driven to make use of it mixed with other better qualities. This caused a sudden demand for it in France (A.P., Vol. 18, 446)”.

Therefore, we reach the conclusion that the cotton produced in the Ottoman soil during the “cotton boom” period was not a suitable raw material for the British textile industry. To put it differently, the quality of the exported Ottoman raw cotton could not satisfactorily be improved even during this special period.

Similar disappointments could be found in the quantitative considerations. In 1860, 4.675.577 bales of cotton were shipped from the United States to England (Issawi, 1980: 237). In contrast, the total cotton production of Anatolia was 100.000 bales when it reached its climax during the Civil War (1861-1863). With this relatively very low production level, it was obviously impossible for the Ottoman Empire to compete with the United States.

The British Government’s opinion about the Ottoman cotton production, however, had been unexpectedly optimistic. This optimistic view was declared in one of the 1861 issues of the *Ceride-i Havadis* in the following way: “It is

clear that should cotton be grown properly in Tirhala, Salonica, and Serez in Rumelia, in many places in Anatolia and Arabia, and in Crete and other islands of Mediterranean, the produce would be adequate to meet the demand in Europe and would take place of American cotton (Issawi, 1980: 237).”

Therefore, it can be argued that, in order to compete in the world markets, Ottoman Empire should have improved the quality of cotton produced in the Ottoman soil on the one hand, increased the production level to a great extent on the other.

### **2.3. Problems of Raw Cotton Production**

At the outset, it should be mentioned that there were serious problems in regard to raw cotton production which were waiting an immediate care by the Ottoman Government. All the problems were somehow related with the production relations and the implications of administrative and economic structure of the Ottoman Empire.

One of the main problems was the credit problem, since the cultivation of cotton requires more outlay of ready money than that of other products. Secondly, as the cotton cultivation process is different from other products like sesame, grain etc., it required special education for farmers. The third problem was the irrigation problem. In order to increase the raw cotton production, irrigation of land was necessary for most of the cotton plantation areas. Another important problem was the labor force problem. Labor force was scarce, and not mobile enough for the extensive cultivation of cotton.

By considering these problems and the advices of the British Government, Ottoman Government issued a “decree” in order to encourage cotton production. The main points of this decree were as follows: (i) The person who wants to cultivate cotton in barren areas would not pay any charge and no charge would be collected from the first five years’ crop. (ii) Customs duty on cotton produce would not change in ten years and this rate would be the same for all kind of cotton produce. (iii) The highways between the districts in which cotton is produced and ports would be repaired. (iv) No customs duty would be levied on the import of machinery which sorts and cleans cotton; and (v) government would help the cotton production under every circumstances.

The above cited measures could be considered as the most significant measures to increase cotton production. But, it has to be mentioned that there



were other measures to encourage cotton production which we do not thoroughly treat them since they are less important.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Ottoman Government signed a series of Trade Treaties with the European countries in 1861. According to these Treaties, customs duty on exports would be reduced to 8 per cent in general, and in the following years it was going to be reduced by 1 per cent for each year.<sup>5</sup> However, one should not ignore the harmful effects of internal customs duties on the cotton production. Until 1870, domestically produced commodities transported over land within the Empire were subjected to a 12 per cent internal customs duty, those transported by sea were subject to a 4 per cent duty until 1889 (Pamuk, 1987: 113). Although this system seemed to be beneficial for raising the revenues of the Central Bureaucracy, it severely discriminated against domestic producers.

From this point onwards, in order to evaluate the efforts to encourage the qualitative and quantitative improvements in cotton production, we mainly focus on the reports of British Consuls in Ottoman provinces.<sup>6</sup> According to these reports, it seems that one of the main problems of the Ottoman raw cotton production was the credit problem. For the years when “cotton boom” was seen, there was not any regular and legal credit system for the agricultural production. As the cotton production necessitates an outlay of ready money during the cultivation process, absence of credit system was an handicap for the enlargement of the cotton production.

The Consul of Dardanelles, Consul Calender, writes on this subject as follows: “By the laws of Turkey no sale or assignment of growing crops by a cultivator is recognised in the local courts of laws. This is intended as a protection to the agriculturalists against improvident disposal of his produce, but the risk of the capitalist being thereby greatly increased, the terms for such transactions become doubly onerous to the agriculturalists in the need of advances (A.P., Vol. 3, 13).” On the same issue, Vice Consul Rosy, the Consul of Enos, indicates that “advances obtained at ruinous rate of interest, because the proceeding being illegal the lender has no security for his advances (A.P., Vol. 3, 35).” Therefore, it can be argued that the scarcity of the available credits associated with high interest rates created obstacles for the expansion of the cotton production in the Ottoman Empire. In short, absence of ready money during the cotton cultivation was one of the main barriers for its progress.

The need for ready money means that for the cotton production certain amount of investment is essential. For the reason that the cotton producers in the Empire were usually small landholders, they did not have financial

opportunities to extend the production and to improve the quality of crop. Furthermore, the large landholders were reluctant to make investment in cotton cultivation. The main cause of small landed property and reluctance for making investment on agriculture in the Ottoman Empire was the property rights relations. Ottoman political and legal system did never let the private property on land. Sultan was the only owner of the entire realm. Central authority was able to take back all the rights given to individuals as in the case of the possession of land. Peasants were using these lands by paying special tithes to government. Sometimes *Ayan* got some special rights which could be regarded as private property rights, but these rights never became long lasting (Keyder, 1991: 9-10). Because of these facts, small landholders were not able to make investment for cotton cultivation, and large landholders were unwilling to make investment on land which did not belong to them.

Reluctance and disability of cotton producers for making investment on lands was also an obstacle in finding solution for irrigation problem faced during the cultivation process. In most of the Ottoman provinces, cotton production was realized without irrigation. Baghdad Consul General Kemball declares this phenomenon in the following way: "Cotton cultivation is necessarily confined to ground irrigated by canals (...) (A.P., Vol. 3, 1)".

In another report by Major-General Sir H. Rawlinson, the following arguments can be found out: "All that is required to restore the ancient prosperity of province to convert what is now a howling wilderness into a rich cultivated plain, (...) is a just, firm, tolerant and enlightened Government. Life and property being assured, and means of irrigation being supplied by the opening of the old canals, cultivators would flock in from all the neighbouring countries (...) It has been calculated, that by the mere opening of old canals which reticulate the country between Tigris and Euphrates (...) country might be made to yield, in a few years, at least millions sterling of annual revenue (A.P., Vol. 3, 5)."

The solution for the irrigation problem was the construction of new canals or cleaning of old ones. All these activities meant making investment on lands. However, as it is already mentioned, due to the property rights relations, cotton producers were unwilling to make investment on lands which did not belong to them properly.

Property rights relation in the Ottoman Empire was also one of the main causes of labor force problem in the cotton cultivation process. Labor scarcity

was an important impediment for many of the provinces of the Empire to improve the cotton production (A.P., Vol. 3).

For the reason that factors of production had not been controlled privately in the Ottoman system (Arıcanlı, 1991: 131), there was no widespread wage labour experiences in the Empire like the European countries. Labour force was not usually commercialized, and as a result, it was immobile within the Empire. Almost all the peasants had small lands and they produced their subsistence from these lands. Sometimes, they were even able to sell the surplus product and earn additional income. So, by using their land, they were able to fulfill almost all their basic needs. Because of these reasons, they did not need to sell their own labour. These facts about the labour force were arisen due to fiscal objectives and the administrative structure of the Empire in which peasants usually worked in the lands of the central authority with paying special tithes. This structure prevented the rise of wage labour in the Ottoman Empire.

There were fiscal and ideological reasons for the malfunctioning of the Central authority which prevented efforts for finding solutions to credit, irrigation and labour force problems related to the cotton cultivation. If the central authority let private property on land, at first, it would have lost its economic power, mostly due to the loss of the revenue obtained from the agricultural surplus collected in the form of tax. It would also lost its absolute political sovereignty on the property rights (Arıcanlı, 1991).

Meanwhile, not only quantitative aspect of labor engaged in cotton cultivation, but also its qualitative deficiency created obstacles for the extension of the cotton production. The hindrance in the cotton production related with the qualitative aspects of labor force was the cultivation of cotton by whom who had no adequate knowledge about the characteristics of cotton as a plant. As it is mentioned before, cotton cultivation necessitates special education for farmers. But the farmers, in general, sow the seeds in wrong seasons and used primitive equipments in the cultivation process (A.P., Vol. 3). Moreover, government did not attempt to make any special effort for resolving this serious problem.

Furthermore, in a considerable number of Reports, British Consuls were disgruntled because of the unfulfilled promises of the Ottoman Government. Vice Consul Suter, Consul of Thessally-Carissa and Volo, wrote about this problem as follows: "(...) the talked of cession of Government waste lands rent free, and the suspension for a term of years of the levy of tithes, never has been

realized (A.P., Vol.3, p. 31).” Also the Consul Callander, Consul of Dardanelles, indicated his idea about the encouraging efforts of Ottoman Government with the following words: “The professions made by the Government of being desirous to encourage cotton cultivation, and the regulations framed for that purpose, are considered illusory, as every obstacle is put in the way of those who attempt avail themselves of them (A.P., Vol. 3, 13).”

In short, neither the decrees issued by the Government nor the Trade Treaties signed with the European countries sufficiently ameliorated the production of the raw cotton in the Empire during the cotton boom period.

In the aftermath of the cotton boom period, the problems related with the cotton production remained the same as Consul of Halep in his 1868 report indicates in the following way: “Cotton might be exported from here in a much greater quantity if agriculture were more encouraged and less burdened by the Turkish Government. It requires a greater outlay of capital than any other crop, and the villagers are so mulated by onerous taxation, vexatiously collected, that they have not the means of extending the cultivation of cotton (A.P., Vol. 18, 422).”

Therefore, it can be argued that there was no radical structural change in the Ottoman raw cotton production during the cotton boom period. But due to the conjuncture mainly originated from the American Civil War, this period marked a “relative” improvement in comparison with the production of the first half of the nineteenth century. Hence, in its very nature, “cotton boom” had no permanent impact on the production and export of the successive periods as it is shown in the following section.

#### **2.4. Patterns of Raw Cotton Export in the Post-Cotton Boom Period**

After the end of American Civil War, Ottoman cotton production and export did not continue to increase and even gradually decreased. The main reason behind this diminishing trend was the falling prices of the raw cotton originating both from the lack of sufficient external and internal demands.<sup>7</sup> As it is mentioned by Pamuk (1987: 118), in the early 1870s, imports accounted for more than 80 per cent of the total consumption of cotton textiles within the 1911 borders of the Empire.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the need of supplying raw cotton for the domestic consumption significantly diminished. Similarly, the European countries’ demand for the low quality Ottoman cotton also declined.

The trends in the raw cotton export from various regions of the Ottoman Empire can be observed by means of constructing detailed Tables.<sup>9</sup> The following three Tables are constructed depending on the Reports of the British Consuls. At this point it is necessary to point out that we are not able to find out all the figures for each year. That is why they are missing for certain years in our Tables. Furthermore, the figures are not given in standard units. Cotton export quantities are sometimes given as “bales”, sometimes as “kilos”, and for some other times as “tons”. To reach a standard unit, we converted all the units into “bales” in the following way: 1 “bale” is equal to 30 “batman”, and 1 “batman” is equal to 8 “kilos”. In this way, we found that 1 “bale” is equal to 240 “kilos”. As a result, all the quantities are given as “bale”. Although certain figures are missing, the Tables are satisfactorily well constructed to show the readers the “general trend” of the period under investigation (1864-1899).

Table 2 presents the raw cotton export figures from Halep. As it can be seen from the Table, there are sharp reductions in the exported quantities of the raw cotton from Halep after the American Civil War. This trend seems to be much more apparent for the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

**Table 2: Raw Cotton Export from Halep Between the Years 1864-1899**

YEARS	QUANTITIES (in bales)
1864	Whole of the last crop being still unsold.
1865	One fifth of the amount exported in the previous years since the commencement of American Civil War.
1866	Cotton export is very uncertain.
1867	-----
1868	10.000
1869	8.830
1870	16.275
1871	Not more than one fifth of the amount exported in 1870 from Halep.
1872	-----
1873	12.466
1874	6.619
1875	9.731
1876	16.431
1877	-----
1878	4.645
1879	350
1880	512
1881	2.295
1882	2.285
1883	2.550
1884	-----
1885	-----
1886	-----
1887	1.958
1888	812
1889	1.254
1890	275
1891	583
1892	179
1893	175
1894	108
1895	454
1896	2.262
1897	2.237
1898	870
1899	312

Source: A.P., Vol. 18-19, "Reports on the Trade and the Commerce of Aleppo."

Table 3 shows the raw cotton export statistics from Adana. But unfortunately, for the Adana region, we are not able to find out continuous series relative to the Halep case. For this reason, we are obliged to give some

figures just for the period between 1870-1892. Due to the missing values, it is very difficult to make inferences. However, it could be crudely proposed that cotton export from Adana declined towards last decade of the nineteenth century.

**Table 3. Raw Cotton Export from Adana Between the Years 1870-1892**

YEARS	QUANTITIES (in bales)
1870	20.170
1871	----
1872	----
1873	53.343
1874	----
1875	----
1876	46.368
1877	----
1878	18.760
1879	13.041
1880	12.083
1881	12.462
1882	----
1883	----
1884	----
1885	----
1886	17.708
1887	12.316
1888	8.583
1889	----
1890	----
1891	25.853
1892	35.416

Source: A.P., Vol. 18-19, "Reports on the Trade and Commerce of Adana."

For the cotton export from İzmir (Smyrna), we are able to get various information from the Consul Reports, and therefore, the values together with the quantities of the cotton export are also presented in the Table 4 when they are available.

As in the previous cases, exported raw cotton from İzmir decreased after the American Civil War. But this trend reversed to some extent in the 1870s with relatively high levels of export. More radical decline in the exported quantities of the raw cotton from İzmir can be observed after 1877.

**Table 4. Raw Cotton Export from İzmir Between the Years 1865-1899**

YEARS	QUANTITIES (in bales)	VALUES (in pounds)
1865	85.654	2.007.086
1866	34.850	521.600
1867	-----	-----
1868	47.195	321.270
1869	34.000	431.750
1870	33.840	461.320
1871	54.200	216.800
1872	55.100	770.000
1873	52.200	81.000
1874	57.430	631.730
1875	61.361	520.000
1876	75.000	655.751
1877	53.756	423.754
1878	34.980	278.326
1879	13.431	111.408
1880	13.711	116.169
1881	19.633	188.477
1882	18.500	185.355
1883	21.500	193.578
1884	51.038	465.650
1885	42.000	372.826
1886	28.300	232.807
1887*		
1888	26.347	210.776
1889	-----	-----
1890	20.177	197.734
1891	12.450	196.902
1892	20.934	192.593
-----		
1897	13.754	-----
1898	4.116	-----
1899	13.733	-----

\* For this year, we have not found any figure about the quantity or value of the exported raw cotton. But the Report says that cotton export -both in quantity and value- decreased for the year of 1887.

**Source:** A.P., Vol.13-14, "Reports on the Trade of Smyrna."

Consul Denis evaluates the performance of cotton in the "Report on the Trade and Commerce of Smyrna for the years 1877-1878", with the following



words: “The crop gradually declined till, in 1860, it fell to 12.000 bales, of which some 5.000 only were exported. But it revived when America, owing to her Civil War (...) In consequence of the high prices that then ruled, the cultivation of cotton was largely extended here, but now that prices have fallen so low that this cultivation is scarcely remunerative, the export is greatly diminished, sinking from 54.000 bales in 1877 to 35.000 in 1878 (A.P., Vol. 18).”

If we compare the figures that we have obtained from the Consul Reports with those of the official Ottoman foreign trade statistics collected on the empire-wide basis during the 1878-1899 period, following inferences can be made: First of all, it should be mentioned that the overall sample of the present study which includes Halep, Adana and İzmir regions constitutes approximately the whole cotton exports from the Empire.<sup>10</sup> When the data permits for such comparisons, that is to say, when it is available for all the regions under investigation for a specific year like 1878, 1879, 1880, our values often approached to the official statistical values obtained from all over the Empire. More importantly, the direction and the magnitude of the changes in the exported quantities present similarities in both types of statistical figures obtained from different sources. It can therefore be argued that the sample of the current study could be considered as a good representation of the population. Furthermore, it is not misleading to draw conclusions depending on the present statistical information about cotton cultivation and export in the Ottoman Empire.

As we see from the statistics presented in the previous Tables, Ottoman cotton export declined in the post-boom period and this trend roughly continued until the twentieth century. By using the information obtained from the export statistics, following inferences can be made for the Ottoman raw cotton production: the shrink in the cotton export implies a decrease in the raw cotton production beginning from the end of the American Civil War until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This argument is supported by the fact that the domestic usage of the raw cotton had also been diminished due to the expanding share of the imported cotton textiles in total domestic consumption until the early 1870s.

For the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, the rapid expansion in the share of cotton textile imports within the domestic market came to a halt while the levels of domestic cotton textile production gradually enlarged (Pamuk, 1987: 118). At this stage one can expect that the raw cotton production might have increased to some extent in order to provide necessary

raw materials for increasing output. Due to the lack of information, however, we are not sure whether this increase in demand satisfied with rising domestic production and/or decreasing export volume of raw cotton. Moreover, one should also notice that, compared with the early 1870s, imports of the cotton yarn raised nearly 50 per cent in the middle of the 1890s (Pamuk, 1987: 114). It can, therefore, be claimed that the domestic raw cotton production did not increase in order to supply necessary input for increasing production of cotton textiles; instead cotton yarn import expanded to provide raw material for the enlarged cotton textile production.

Furthermore, it can be speculatively argued that the production of the raw cotton remained more or less stagnant in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. More safely, it can be said that levels of the domestic raw cotton production in the last quarter of the nineteenth century hardly reached to those of the American Civil War period.

As it can be seen from the Tables we presented above, Ottoman raw cotton export did not completely disappear. But the exported quantities did not have a significant share in the world markets, since it never exceeded even one per cent of the raw cotton exports from United States to England in 1860. In fact, the share of the value of the exported raw cotton in total exports of the Empire rarely reached to 5 per cent in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (S.I.S., 1995: 37-39).

In summary, Ottoman Empire had had an opportunity to improve its raw cotton production and to compete with United States in the world markets. However, Ottoman central authority could not ameliorate the cotton production, and the quality of the produced cotton remained very low. Then, after the end of the American Civil War, demand for Ottoman low quality cotton started to decline in the world markets. Although the British Government tried to encourage cotton production in Ottoman provinces, after the end of the Civil War in America, produced cotton in Ottoman soil was mainly exported to Spain and France, for the reason that British textile industry could not use this low quality raw material.

In short, during the American Civil War, Ottoman Empire had have a chance to stimulate its raw cotton production; but she did not efficiently use this opportunity and could not able to restructure cotton cultivation for sustainable growth of its production within the country. Similar arguments can also be found in Quataert (1980: 54) as follows: "Government efforts to stimulate the production and export of various crops, it seems appropriate to

reiterate, was the only development path open and even here efforts were begun too late. Ottoman leaders at an early date recognized the lack of options but did not begin sustained development programs until nearly the end of the century, after the best revenues and most of their freedom of action had already been lost.”

In our opinion, the main reason for this deficiency was due to the traditional administrative and fiscal structure of the Ottoman Empire and its reflections on property relations which we mentioned before.<sup>11</sup> Policies such as provision of the necessary goods for the domestic markets rather than foreign ones, obtaining high fiscal revenues depending on the collection of taxes and the preservation of the “traditional order” can be mentioned as the most distinguishing characteristics of the economic policies that the central authority had followed for centuries. Obviously, such policies deferred the formation and the evolution of the capitalist property relations within the Empire.

### **3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE OTTOMAN RAW COTTON PRODUCTION IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

In this last section, we briefly describe the state of raw cotton production for certain regions of the Ottoman Empire starting from the beginning of the twentieth century until the First World War. In this period, although iron and steel industries started to dominate industrialization process of the Western economies, and hence determined the structure of the international economic relations, the importance of cotton had not totally disappeared in the world markets. However, Ottoman State was not paying special efforts to production of cotton anymore. For this period, the emphasis is devoted to the German efforts to improve the quality of Ottoman raw cotton.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany completed its Industrial Revolution and was on the path of being one of the most important industrialized countries in the world (Borchardt, 1976; Bowden, Karpovich and User, 1970; Claphman, 1968). She was naturally the biggest rival for Britain in the world markets. More specifically, the rivalry between Germany and Great Britain could be considered within the framework of inter-imperialist rivalry which directly determined the peripheralization process of the Ottoman Empire as it is proposed by Pamuk (1987).

In investigating periphery categories during the nineteenth century, Pamuk (1987: 4-7) argues that countries like China, Persia and the Ottoman

Empire could be placed in a different category where the penetration of world capitalism occurred under conditions of inter-imperialist rivalry. The countries in question were frequently characterized by a struggle between the central bureaucracy and those social classes that favour more rapid and direct integration into the world economy. Furthermore, the central bureaucracy was so strong with respect to imperialist powers and/or the competition among those powers was such that these countries did not completely integrate into the world capitalist system. Under these conditions, penetration of world capitalism proceeded slowly, and there were often limits to the concessions offered by the central bureaucracy to the capitalists of the industrialized countries. But in the long run, the inclination was towards increasing penetration of world capitalism and division of the country on the periphery into spheres of influence among various imperialist powers.

In this context, Germany attempted to establish dominance over the Ottoman Empire by struggling continuously with Great Britain. One of the important means for this struggle was the construction of the railways. Germans constructed railways mainly for getting revenues from the transportation and for taking concessions from the Ottoman Empire, and also, for supplying easier transportation conditions for the export-oriented agricultural commodities (Kaynak 1984). It should be mentioned that cotton was taking a considerable part among these commodities. Furthermore, it should be indicated that while the construction of the railways had limited contribution to overall development of the agricultural sector, it had a relatively significant impact on the improvement of the export-oriented agricultural commodities, and hence supported to the integration of the Ottoman agriculture into the world economy (Kaynak, 1984: 80).

In this framework, German Government, tried to promote cotton production around Adana region by taking concessions from the Ottoman Empire in return of the service they supplied with the railways. From the beginning of the twentieth century until the First World War, cotton production around Adana increased as a result of German efforts while the cotton production in İzmir was continuously falling.

In Adana region, Germans tried to increase cotton production by finding solutions to the problems observed in the second half of the nineteenth century. They tried to remove the credit obstacle by giving “long term loans” and they provided modern equipment to farmers.

**Table 5. Cotton Production in Adana and İzmir Between the Years 1903-1913**

	ADANA	İZMİR
YEARS	QUANTITIES (in bales)	QUANTITIES (in bales)
1903	40.000	-----
1904	42.000	-----
1905	45.000	-----
1906	46.000	42.000
1907	60.000	33.000
1908	75.000	45.000
1909	-----	38.000
1910	64.000	35.000
1911	80.000	34.000
1912	100.000	52.000
1913	105.000	40.000

Source: Issawi (1980: 242 and 245).

Professor Wyndham Dunstan, in his report (A.P., Vol. 3, 3), explains these efforts as follows: “The Deutsch-Levantinischen-Baumwoll-Gesellschaft of Dresden, has its head-quarters in Adana, and is giving, directly and indirectly, every encouragements to the cultivation, which is for the most part in the hands of native proprietors. Loans are advanced in the aid of cotton cultivation, arrangements are made for the ginning and baling and for the purchase of all suitable cotton by company, through which it is exported chiefly to Dresden and Chemnitz.” Naturally, the main foreign buyer of the raw cotton in Adana region was Germany.

The situation in İzmir, however, was quite different due to the absence of any significant effort. The production was rapidly declining. Wyndham Dunstan indicates that “as a result of smaller demand, lands formerly occupied by cotton are now devoted to cereals, vines and fruit trees (A.P., Vol. 3, 8).”

In this region, although the labor was fairly abundant in contrast to the case in the second half of the nineteenth century, other hindrances prevented the rise of the cotton production. The credit problem and the usage of primitive cultivation techniques still remained in İzmir. Additionally, produced cotton was low quality cotton, that is to say, it was *yerli* type (A.P. Vol. 3, 8). Thus, when we reached the twentieth century, there was no improvements in the quality and production of cotton in İzmir.

When we turn back to Adana plain, a revival was able to be observed in cotton production. Undoubtedly, it was the result of the efforts realized by Germans and also by the Ottoman Government. Towards the First World War, Adana plain became the most commercialized agricultural region of the Empire with the dominance of the big enterprises producing cotton for export (Pamuk, 1982: 43).<sup>12</sup>

However, the increase in cotton production and export was not as much as the Ottomans could get a considerable share in the world markets. When we examine the likely reason for this problem, following findings can be presented: The problems associated with the cotton production were not completely solved. Twin problems of tithe system and insufficient credit were remaining in a considerable degree (A.P., Vol. 13, 7). In most of the planted areas, primitive methods were being used. Modern methods were introduced in the cultivation process only in few localities.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, although the commercialization of the cotton production in Adana plain improved, exported quantities of the Ottoman raw cotton only gradually increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, and achieved to 23.479 tons in 1913 (S.I.S. 1995: 42). Of course, the amount of exported raw cotton can be considered as negligible with respect to the world raw cotton production.

To sum up, at the very beginning of the twentieth century, Ottoman cotton production revived especially in Adana region as a result of the German efforts. The rise of the cotton production, however, was insufficient to make Ottoman Empire a hard competitor for India and United States in the world markets.

According to us, many of the problems associated with the cotton production have originated from the main economic policies that Ottoman Empire followed throughout the centuries. Providing necessary goods for local and internal markets was the first economic priority of the central authority. Thus, while exports of the commodities were severely limited by the restrictions, quotas and duties; imports were often encouraged (Genç, 1984: 55).<sup>14</sup> Therefore, external markets had to be ignored by the domestic producers. Second distinguishing characteristic of the Ottoman economic policies was to obtain adequate fiscal revenues (Genç, 1999: 2). To increase fiscal revenues, central authority intervened into the economic activities, and heavily collected taxes especially during the crisis periods. This objective obviously prevented the improvement of the domestic production, and the emergence of the profit seeking capitalist entrepreneurs. Third characteristic of the Ottoman economic

policies can be described as the preservation of the “traditional order” (Genç, 1999: 3). Established social and economic relations were maintained and trends of change were tried to be hindered. Emergence of the new classes alongside the central authority and the improvement in their economic activities were tried to be prevented in the fear of the dissolution of the traditional order (Pamuk, 1999/2000: 135-136). Although these policies were started to change in the nineteenth century, they deeply affected the penetration of the world capitalism into the Ottoman Empire. In other words, main economic policies of the Ottoman central authority determined the pace and the direction of the integration process of the Empire to the world capitalist system.

### **CONCLUSION**

Raw cotton was an important commercial commodity of the Ottoman Empire throughout the centuries. The Empire was the main raw cotton supplier for European countries before the age of Industrial Revolution. But, cotton was not treated as a commodity having the potential of initiating radical economic and social changes for the Western countries until the age of industrialization.

Although the industrialization process first began in European countries, it deeply affected almost all the countries through becoming the dominant factor for the establishment of the world capitalist system. In that process, early industrialized countries placed themselves at the “center” of the world capitalist system. Other countries had no chance but to integrate into this new system at the edge with a varying degree and pace. These non-industrialized or slowly industrializing countries, which were under the penetration attacks of the world capitalist system, constituted the “periphery”. In this context, the industrialized economies in the center ardently started to seek markets for their manufactured products, and cheap sources of raw materials that led the expansion of their trade with the countries in the periphery.

Cotton textile industry could be considered as a perfect example capable of explaining this transformation process. Since the production of the cotton textile products tremendously increased during the industrialization period, center countries and especially Great Britain ought to search adequate markets for selling their cotton textiles on the one hand; and create an immense market for the provision of the necessary inputs on the other. Needless to say, raw cotton is one of the most crucial inputs of the cotton textile industry. Thus, beside other inputs, it is observed a colossally enlarging demand towards the

raw cotton, which in turn, obviously promoted and accelerated its commercialization process not only in Great Britain but also all over the world.

Although the climate of the Ottoman Empire was suitable to increase cotton production, and the country had a long experience of being the main supplier of raw cotton for the European countries before the Industrial Revolution, Ottoman raw cotton production started to decline after the first quarter of the nineteenth century, owing both to the introduction of the relatively better and cheaper American cotton into the world markets, and to the falling demand for the local consumption originating mainly from the invasion of the cheap British cotton cloths which led domestically spun cotton yarn shrink in the Ottoman Empire. Hence, the production of raw cotton in the Ottoman Empire significantly diminished towards the midst of the nineteenth century.

When American Civil War broke out, Ottoman Empire got a second chance to become an important cotton supplier in the world markets. However, the efforts of the Empire to augment cotton production, and to improve the quality of the produced cotton remained insufficient. Then, after the end of the American Civil War, demand for Ottoman low quality cotton started to decline rapidly in the world markets, and this trend continued until the end of the nineteenth century. In short, Ottoman Empire could not restructure its raw cotton production in particular and agricultural sector in general, and therefore, did not efficiently use the opportunity of taking a significant share in the world cotton markets.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Ottoman cotton production flourished again as a result of the German efforts particularly focused on the Adana plain. The revival of the cotton production, however, was not overwhelming, and to make Ottoman Empire a serious rival for India and United States in the world markets. The main reason of this fact could be attributed to the undurance of the traditional problems related with the Ottoman raw cotton production even in the twentieth century.

The problems of the raw cotton production, in turn, could be associated and explained with the administrative structure of the Empire in general, and the “traditional social order” that the Ottoman central authority had been harshly preserved throughout the centuries in particular. In this context, anti-mercantilist trade policies, pursuit of high fiscal revenues depended on heavy taxation system, maintenance of the existing social and economic relations by



preventing the emergence of new class relations should be especially emphasized.

As a conclusion, it can be argued that the Ottoman Empire could not adopt itself to the changing world order. To put it differently, Ottoman central authority tried to resist the rise of the capitalist relations and missed the opportunities of benefiting from them. This resistance, however, determined peripheralization process of the Empire and its integration to the world economy as well.

### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In analyzing the development of capitalist relations in Anatolian agriculture, Novichev (1966: 66) argues that the commercialization of one product can be best explained by “the ratio of marketing”, and this ratio is very high for cotton which is an industrial and garden crop. Novichev explains this phenomenon in the following way: “By contrast with grain crops, industrial and garden crops had a very high ratio of marketing, with few exceptions, they were almost wholly exported abroad (Novichev, 1966: 67).” Similar to Novichev, Kurmuş (1982: 59-60) also points out the high ratio of marketing for the Anatolian raw cotton.

<sup>2</sup> From 1820-22 to 1840-42, according to the estimates of Pamuk (1987: 115), annual imports of cotton cloth, mostly from Britain, into the area within the 1911 borders of the Empire had increased by about tenfold, and their share in the domestic market exceeded 25 per cent.

<sup>3</sup> Starting from the seventeenth century, İzmir (Smyrna) had becoming the most important export center of the Ottoman State. In that process, cotton export played a crucial role (İnalçık, 1981: 13; Frangakis-Syrett, 1991: 97).

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed information about the measures, see Issawi (1980: 239), and also *Türk Ziraat Tarihine Bir Bakış* (1938: 128-129).

<sup>5</sup> Until 1838 both exports and imports were subject to a 3 per cent ad valorem duty. Additionally, both domestic and foreign merchants paid 8 per cent duty on all commodities transported from one region to another within the Empire. According to the Free Trade Treaties of 1838-41, signed between the Ottoman Empire and European countries, however, tariff on exports raised to 12 per cent and that of imports to 5 per cent. Furthermore, while domestic merchants were to continue paying the internal customs duty, foreign merchants were exempted from this 8 per cent. Moreover, these Treaties removed a number of restrictions on Ottoman exports and imports, opening Ottoman markets and raw materials to trade with Europe (Pamuk, 1987: 18-20). In this framework, they were widely treated as a turning point in the integration of the Empire into the world economy.

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the significance of Consular Reports, see Dertilis (1990).

<sup>7</sup> For example in Halep, by the help of the information we get from the Consul reports, we learn that the price of cotton falls to “17 piastres the rotoli” in 1864 which was “50 piastres the rotoli” one year before.

<sup>8</sup> Although the discussion goes beyond the scope of the present study, it can be argued that the penetration of the world capitalism into the field of the Ottoman cotton textile industry which had already been initiated at the beginning of the nineteenth century accelerated towards the 1870s. It can further be proposed that the peripheralization process of the Ottoman Empire at the “industrial level” quickened in the midst of the nineteenth century. Consequently, it is not misleading to date the destruction of the Ottoman cotton textile industry after the middle of the nineteenth century. İnalçık (1981: 54) also gives the date of 1850 as the commencement date of destruction for the Ottoman traditional industries like cotton. Pamuk (1987), however, prefers to describe the developments of the nineteenth century Ottoman cotton textile industry with the words “decline” and “resistance”. Because, according to Pamuk (1987: 128), in some branches of textile production, the decline was more limited and resistance more successful. For details, see Pamuk (1987: 108-129).

<sup>9</sup> Before presenting the Tables, it is helpful to give brief information about the Ottoman foreign trade statistics. Official Ottoman foreign trade statistics began to be published after 1878. These statistics have firstly compiled and published by Celal Aybar in 1939 (Aybar, 1939). Later on, the same statistics were reprinted in the first volume of the *Historical Statistics Series* of the State Institute of Statistics (S.I.S. 1995). These statistics present useful information with respect to commodity composition of exports and the country distribution of both exports and imports. But, these statistics have serious shortcomings. First of all, there was apparently no comprehensive official foreign trade statistics for the period before 1878. Secondly, some important goods are not included in the officially published statistics. And finally, the price of exports are consistently undervalued, and the prices of imports are overvalued in the published Ottoman statistics. (S.I.S., 1995: 1-11). By relying on the published foreign trade statistics of all countries with which The Ottoman Empire maintained commercial relations, Pamuk (1987) also attempted to reconstruct Ottoman foreign trade statistics for the period 1830-1913. Although there is valuable information in Pamuk’s book, commodity composition of Ottoman foreign trade has not been given in a detailed manner for the period under investigation. It can, therefore, be argued that there still remains further research to be done for the individual commodity trade in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire.

<sup>10</sup> One should look at the S.I.S. (1995: 42) for the comparison of the figures.

<sup>11</sup> Same argument can be found in the answer of Baghdad Consul to the queries: “However promising, then, the attempts to promote and extend the growth of cotton here, and to improve the mode of its preparation for market, they must, I believe remain without practical result until some radical reforms are introduced into the administration and remedy applied to the state of things socially existing in the Turkish Arabia (A.P., Vol. 3, 5).”

<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, it should be noted that the large scale commercial agriculture was “marginal” in the Ottoman Empire (Keyder, 1991: 2). İnalçık (1991) thoroughly examines some of the big private farms in the Ottoman Empire willing to find analogies with the European estates. Also, Veinstein (1991) concerns with the genesis of the

Ottoman big farms, and he could not find a resemblance with the landlord managed estates in Europe.

<sup>13</sup> For example, in the experimental farm of the German Cotton Company, new and modern methods were used. But the size of this farm was limited to 100 acres (A.P. Vol. 3, 13).

<sup>14</sup> Depending on this tendency in the Ottoman economic policies, Pamuk (1999/2000: 142) argues that mercantilist policies had not a considerable impact on the Ottoman Empire.

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