

**WORK AND ORGANIZATION IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE:  
NOTES ON THE TRADE GUILDS OF SIXTEENTH- AND  
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BURSA**

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**ÖZET**

Esnaf teşkilatının en önemli fonksiyonu iktisadi hayatın gündelik faaliyetlerinin, mümkün olduğu kadar az ihtilaf doğuracak şekilde, sosyal dayanışma ve ahenk içerisinde gerçekleşmesini sağlamaktır. Bu sayede devlet ağır bir bürokrasiden kurtulduğu gibi üretimi yapılacak mallarda bir standart sağlanmış, haksız rekabet önlenmiştir. Esnaf teşkilatı kurduğu oto-kontrol sistemi sayesinde meselelerini kendi içinde halledebilmiştir. Bu makale Osmanlı esnaf teşkilatının temelleri, Bursa esnaf teşkilatının çalışmaları, esnaf yöneticilerinin idari fonksiyonları ve toplumda esnafın oynadığı rollere ışık tutmaktadır. Aynı zamanda esnaf arasında uyumsuzluklara kendi aralarındaki problemlere adli ve idari makamları karıştırmadan buldukları çözümlere değinilmektedir. Bu çalışma 16. ve 17. yüzyıllar arasında Bursa Şer'iyye Sicilleri'ne yansıyan orijinal tarihi belgelere dayanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çalışma ve Organizasyon, Ahilik, Loncalar, Esnaf Festivalleri, Bursa Şer'iyye Sicilleri.

**ABSTRACT**

The primary function of artisans' and commercial guilds was to perform and maintain daily activities of economic life in harmony and social consolidation with minimal conflict. Thus, the state would get rid of the heavy burden of bureaucratic procedures on the one hand, and yet would also have the guilds yield to a standard of production as well as eliminate unfair competition through their autonomous internal workings on the other. Through such an auto-control mechanism the guilds would solve their own problems with minimum resort to administrative and judicial institutions. This article sheds light on the origins of Ottoman guild system, workings of trade guilds of Bursa and the supervisory functions of their managers as well as on the various roles and activities played by the guilds in imperial public life. It also examines the conflicts of interest, unruly acts and forms of resolution taking place within and across the guilds,

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with or without having recourse to judicial and other imperial authorities. The study is based on a set of original historical documents surveyed from the Shari'a Court records of Bursa in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Key Words:** Work and Organization, Akhis, Trade Guilds, Guild Festivals, Ottoman public life, Bursa, Shari'a Court Records.

### 1. Introduction

The Ottoman control over the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern trade routes began to totter especially in late 16<sup>th</sup> century through the forcing of Western powers such as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British based on a number of new developments like military advances and geographic explorations. These developments led to a substantial reduction in the share of Ottomans in world trade. This was followed by a number of internal economic deteriorations such as the scarcity of some goods including, in the first place, silk, increase of prices, and devaluation of Ottoman *Akçe*.<sup>2</sup>

More importantly, the 17<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a number of economic crises all over the world. During the century, many upheavals began to burst out especially among agricultural populations in most European and Eurasian countries. Though subject to comparable or even heavier economic hardships, the Ottoman peasantry did not uprising. Barkey explains this chiefly on the basis of cohesive qualities characterizing the social structure of Ottoman society and the state's ability to manipulate these qualities during the times of socio-economic tension and unrest for integrative purposes.<sup>3</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, on the other hand, explains this in a different framework. According to her, the primary reason why the Ottoman peasantry did not revolt is that the peasantry, unlike the serfs in Europe, was not tied to the *sipahis* (cavalrymen in Ottoman army) with direct feudal bonds. On the contrary, it was quite able to appeal to the central judge or even to the *Dîvân-ı Hümayun* (the Imperial Chancery of State) in Istanbul when faced with any unjust demand from them. In addition to this, because the central government used to

<sup>2</sup> A. Gündoğdu, "Osmanlılar ve Dünya Ticareti" (The Ottomans and the World Trade), *Osmanlı (Ottoman)*, vol. 3. (Ankara, 1999): 45-50.

<sup>3</sup> K. Barkey, *Eşkıyalar ve Devlet (Brigands and the State)*, (Istanbul, 1999): 91. For under what circumstances such uprisals burst out and a comparison of French and Ottoman cases see also K. Barkey, "Rebellious Alliances: The State and Peasant Unrest in Early Seventeenth Century France and the Ottoman Empire", *American Sociological Review* 56 (1991): 699-715.

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attach great importance to the economic accumulation of peasants as a principle on which the Ottoman economy has based, it often used to favor peasants in cases of conflicts between them and the *sipahis*.<sup>4</sup>

The Ottoman industry was deeply shattered by the oscillations of prices in the sixteenth century. Particularly the guilds in coastal regions had to stop production due to shortages of input stemming from the export of raw materials in bulky amounts. According to Murat Çizakça, who studied textile industry based on silk, stresses that due to rapid increases in the prices of raw materials, the profit margins evaporated in that major sector which was producing for domestic consumption as well as for export, although the wages lagged far behind the prices.<sup>5</sup>

As can be seen, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, to which the present study often refers, are a critical time where the Ottoman state, economy, work life and organization were suffering great hardships. Yet, the Ottoman guild system, which had emerged as an autonomous pre-industrial mode of organization, could retain much of its qualities over the centuries. As noted by Haim Gerber, the guild system was not imposed by the central government from above, but grew from bottom up:

... guild law was not handed down by the Ottoman government to the populace; rather, in this field the Ottomans allowed a substantial measure of social and legal autonomy ... (G)uild law was the one major component of Ottoman law that was not either imposed from above or by way of a sacred tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Bursa was an important commercial center. Its proximity to Istanbul and the large supplies of various agricultural and industrial provisions to meet the needs of Istanbul turned it in practice into a large hinterland of the imperial capital. Thus, work and organization in Ottoman Empire is studied in this article with reference to the case

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<sup>4</sup> S. Faroqhi, "Anadolu'nun Iskan ve Terkedilmiş Köyler Sorunu" (Population Settlement and the Problem of Deserted Villages in Anatolia), *Türkiye'de Bilim Araştırmalarında Yaklaşım ve Yöntemler Sempozyumu (Symposium on the Approaches and Methods in Scholarly Studies in Turkey)* (Ankara, 1976): 289-302.

<sup>5</sup> M. Çizakça, "Price History and the Bursa Silk Industry: A Study in Ottoman Industrial Decline, 1550-1650", *The Journal of Economic History* 40 (1980): 533-49; Studies dealing with the trade of Persian silk, too, shed light on the situation in Bursa. For a detailed account see N. Steensgard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century. The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, (Chicago, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> H. Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany, 1994): 113.

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of Bursa that offers us not only a wide network of guilds in important economic sectors such as the textile industry, but also an abundance of archival sources to document the structure and workings of the guild system that made up the basis of Ottoman economy as in other pre-industrial societies.

## 2. *Akhis* as the Origins of the Ottoman Guild System

The origins of the guild system in the Muslim world are still fairly unknown or dark. Yet, one can observe important similarities between the Islamic and medieval European guild systems. A widely accepted theory is that the Greco-Roman guild system had been shaped under Muslim rule, gained a fully Islamic identity as of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The Carmelites<sup>7</sup>, who emerged as a religious, social, and political movement against the Abbasid caliphs, organized guilds around their cause. Thus, Muslim guilds not only functioned as professional unions but also as the Carmelite youth organizations. Religious brotherhoods and the *futuvva* (fütüvvet in Turkish) tradition in particular, exerted great influence over the guilds in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The *futuvva* unions founded by young unmarried men (*fetâ*, *yığit*) in big cities reminds us the youth organizations of the Roman Empire. According to *futuvva* morality, a perfect man (*insân-ı kâmil*) is someone who is generous, devoted, self-disciplined, balanced, and obedient toward his elderly. Acceptance to such an organization was conducted with a symbolic ceremony, and *futuvva* morality was inculcated to the entrant. This line of tradition was well established under the name of *Ahilik* (brotherhood in a religious order or trade guild) during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries as one of the marked qualities of Anatolian people.<sup>8</sup>

Among the members of the Akhi institution, which originates from the Arabic word ‘ahi’ (my brother) fraternity and solidarity played a great part. The institution, which served as the agent of transition from nomadic to urban culture in Anatolia, articulated itself into the moral values adopted by both cultures.<sup>9</sup> Although Akhis were

<sup>7</sup> The Carmelite movement in the Middle East left a great shattering impact on the medieval Muslim world as a messianic movement promising a better future suffused with equality and justice. For further details, see: A. Ekinci, *Ortadoğu’da Marjinal Bir Hareket: Karmatiler (A Marjinal Movement in the Middle East: The Carmelites)*, (Ankara, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> H. İnalçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klâsik Çağ (1300-1600) (The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age (1300-1600))*, (trans.: Ruşen Sezer), (Istanbul, 2003): 157-8.

<sup>9</sup> It has also been argued that the word ‘ahi’ was derived from the Turkish word ‘akı’, which means ‘generous’. The unions named ‘confrerie’ were probably the earlier equivalents in the West of the *ahi* institution M. S. Sarıkaya, “Osmanlı Devleti’nin İlk Asırlarında Toplumun Dini Yapısına Ahilik Açısından Bir Bakış Denemesi” (An

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an occupational or craft union, their religious, social, and political values seem to have outlined their economic qualities. They came to be known for their non-economic qualities and values such as generosity, helping the needy, and protecting the victims of atrocity and oppression.<sup>10</sup>

The *akhis*, who became visible in Anatolia as a religious and social institution during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, played important roles also in the foundation process of the Ottoman state. By maintaining security and order in Anatolia they shared the administrative burden of the Ottoman rulers especially when the latter had to concern themselves largely with external problems.<sup>11</sup> Following the foundation phase of the empire, the *akhis* whose administrative and security roles were not needed anymore began to undertake social functions becoming exclusively charitable trade and craft guilds.

After having converted to Islam and settled down in Anatolia, the Turks adopted the ideal of *futuvva*, and adorned it with the qualities of prowess, generosity and heroism that were their peculiar characteristics. It can be even argued that the *akhi* institution was improved by Turks from the *futuvva* institution and spread across Anatolia.<sup>12</sup>

The *futuvva* institutions (and the *akhi* institution as well), which derived all its principles from the primary sources of religion, issued special by-laws named *fütüvvetnames*. Customary observances and practices of *futuvva* were described in these guiding documents.

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Essay on the Religious Structure of Society from the Perspective of the Ahi Institution during the First Centuries of the Ottoman Empire), *Osmanlı (Ottoman)*, vol. 4, (Ankara, 1999): 393-5.

<sup>10</sup> S. Ülgener, *İktisadi İnhitat Tarihimizin Ahlak ve Zihniyet Meseleleri (The Moral and Mental Questions of the Demise of Our Economic History)*, (Istanbul, 1951): 48

<sup>11</sup> A. Tabakoğlu, "Osmanlı İctimai Yapısının Ana Hatları" (The Outline of the Ottoman Social Structure), *Osmanlı (Ottoman)*, vol. 4, (Ankara, 1999): 19.

<sup>12</sup> Sheikh Nasirüddin, who was born in the city of Hoy in Persia and later came to be known Ahi Evran, is the founding-father of the *Akhi* institution in Anatolia. Different opinions sprang among Turkish historians as to the *Akhi* institution. While Mehmet Fuat Köprülü and Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı see the *Akhi* movement, like Franz Taechner, as a distinct form in Anatolia of the *futuvva* institution, some later historians, under their excessive feelings of nationalism fervently argue that this has nothing to do with the *futuvva* institution; that the *Akhi* institution is a unique entity created by Turks in Anatolia. For further accounts, see: A. Y. Ocak, "Fütüvvet" (futuvva), *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13, (Istanbul, 1996): 262-3; N. Çağatay, "Fütüvvet –Ahi Müessesesinin Menşei Meselesi" (The Question of the Origin of the Futuvva-Akhi Institution), *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi (Journal of the Faculty of Theology University of Ankara)* 1-3 (1952): 58-84; Z. Kazıcı, "Ahilik" (the Akhi Institution), *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi (Encyclopedia of Muslim Piety)*, vol. 1, (Istanbul, 1988): 540.

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To be more specific, in these documents the old trade guilds and the *futuvva* laid down in detail the general principles of the professional art, its mysteries that must be kept secret, and the examinations to be passed in order to enter the profession were written down clearly.<sup>13</sup>

One who had qualifications of an art or craft came to be called *akhi* in the *futuvva* tradition; and conversely, in order to become an *akhi* one was required to be qualified in a productive and useful art or handicraft. The *akhi* institution took its place in Turkish history as an Islamic trade and craft institution based on the understandings of the *futuvva* morality and solidarity. Beginning with the reign of Mehmet II (the Conqueror) the *akhi* institution came to be a regulatory element running the administrative affairs of trade guilds, dispensing with its former political role and power. The *akhi* institution, whose foundations as well as moral and commercial principles had been laid down in their *fütüvvetnames*, used to regulate and supervise the activities of tradesmen and crafts people in the Muslim world and in the cities, towns, and villages of Anatolia in particular. It was engaged particularly in regulating the recruitment and training of the personnel in the guilds as well as carrying out periodic inspections. The principal goal of the *akhi* institution developed as the forming and spreading the understandings of mutual help and solidarity. Good treatment of the poor and destitute, of aliens and guests, and offering food, drink, and residence are some of the etiquette constituting or characterizing the fundamental rules and ideology of *akhi* tradition.<sup>14</sup>

*Akhis*, who were organized into various groups in large cities, had a dervish lodge for each group. In small towns, on the other hand, different professional groups could constitute a single union. Through these organizations, they dealt with the problems of their professions and ran their relations with the state. Activities such as product and quality control, assignment of prices were among the chief duties of these unions. The *Akhi* institution, which spread in Anatolia as far as to the villages, brought together many state officials, members of the military class, qadis and medresse teachers, and the sheikhs of religious brotherhoods under its roof. The institution continued to survive with these structural, titular and functional elements until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. From then on, the *Akhis* changed into organized professional unions under the name of *lonca* (trade or craft guild), and their economic activities began to occupy the forefront.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> N. Çağatay, “Fütüvvetnameler nedir, niçin düzenlenmişlerdir?” (What Is Fütüvvetnames, Why Were They Formulated?), *Makaleler ve İncelemeler (Articles and Essays)*, (Konya, 1983): 207.

<sup>14</sup> İ. Tarus, *Ahiler (The Akhis)*, (Ankara, 1947): 101.

<sup>15</sup> Kazıcı, “Ahilik” (the Akhi Institution): 541.

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The impact of the *Akhi* institution on the Ottoman trades and crafts people began to diminish from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The trades and crafts people set out to establish guilds, gradually leaving the dervish lodges and convents into which they had previously organized. With the weakening of the *Akhi* institution, the guild system, which was able to adapt itself to the centrist policies of the state and ready for instant government monitoring and surveillance, was established. The top managers of the guilds were appointed with the sublime consent of the sultan. The new system started to dominate traders and craftsmen as it became more established and powerful over the years.<sup>16</sup>

The Muslim/non-Muslim distinction in the guilds disappeared at least in practice if not in principle, as the Ottoman State's realm of sovereignty over non-Muslim populations extended and the number of professions as well as of professionals increased and proliferated. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, a common work life and organization began to emerge among people with varying religious affiliations. These developments led to the rise of a new system called *gedik*, which was not quite different from official guilds entitled to formal license and area of exclusive activity where religious discrimination among members was ruled out.<sup>17</sup>

The futuvva mentality was just one of the many aspects characterizing the relations among guild members. Disparity of wealth, the usual distance between guildsmen and merchants, and the ethnic or religious affiliations of tradesmen and artisans were some of

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<sup>16</sup> Only Muslim tradesmen were able to gather in dervish lodges and convents. From this perspective, especially after the conquest of Istanbul, it became difficult with the increasing number of non-Muslim professionals to handle the problems of the work life, to take common decisions and apply them. Also on par with this complicated situation was the fact that the ceremonies and rites held in the lodges started to disconfirm to the requirements of the time. For such reasons, the tradesmen (both Muslim and non-Muslim) began to convene at a special spot of the market place without holding any official or religious ceremony to negotiate the issues concerning their professions. Compared to dervish lodges and convents where the colors of religion had been overtly predominant, these guilds turned out to be entirely secular professional entities. In the meantime, the *Akhi* tradition began to fall short of adapting itself to the administrative system enforced by the imperial government due to a number of reasons such as the centralization of imperial policies and its own traditional internal structure which was based in part on the principle of secrecy F. H. Saymen, "Türkiye'de Sosyal Sigortaların Gelişme Hareketleri ve Yeni Temayülleri" (The Developmental Movements of Social Insurance in Turkey and Their New Trends), *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası (Journal of the Faculty of Law University of Istanbul)* 3-4 (1953): 1071.

<sup>17</sup> N. Çağatay, *Bir Türk Kurumu Olan Ahilik (The Akhi as Turkish Institution)*, (Ankara, 1989): 111-2.

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the other important aspects that concomitantly shaped the configuration or identity of a guild. Although there were a large number of mono-religious guilds, the number of mixed guilds where Muslims and non-Muslims and different non-Muslim groups worked together in varied ethnic weights was also worth noting. Hetero-religious alliances or partnerships within and between guilds were not also uncommon.<sup>18</sup>

The *Akhi* institution, which became dysfunctional, obsolete and alienated in light of new developments and governmental policies, was replaced by a new institution from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This new institution was the *lonca* (guild). The concept of *lonca* signified the unity and order established by trades and crafts people as well as the location (room) where they met to talk their problems. The *lonca* institution neither imposed strict rules for entry to and promotion in the professions to the same extent implemented by dervish lodges and convents, nor bounded itself up with religious and sectarian principles.<sup>19</sup>

The guilds, like their counterparts in Europe, established fund boxes for solidarity among members and their families to cope with the important risks and events of social life such as illness, marriage, birth, launching up a business, unemployment and death by supplying assistance in cash or in kind. Each guild conducted charity works by establishing and running charity boxes called *orta sandığı* (common box) or *teavün sandığı* (box for mutual assistance). The sources of revenue constituting the capital of these boxes were quite varied. They included, among other sources, the membership fees collected from the guild members weekly or monthly on the basis of the employers' and employees' revenues (one percent of each member's income), donations, fees collected from those who promote from apprenticeship to journeymanship and from this status to full mastery, and other amounts rendered by the well-to-do members, especially masters during special occasions and ceremonies.<sup>20</sup> Guild administrators were authorized to remit some of the funds at their disposal to the masters who wished to expand their trades or workshops but were unable to find the necessary capital. The masters had to repay the loans they received after a plausible period of time, adding a one-percent-interest to the original debt. When a guild member died, if his family did not have enough money, these funds were also used to meet the burial

<sup>18</sup> Y. Eunjeong. *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul : Fluidity and Leverage*, (Leiden, 2004): 111.

<sup>19</sup> Y. Özkaya, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Kurumları ve Osmanlı Toplum Yaşantısı (The Ottoman Institutions and Social Life in the 18th Century)*, (Ankara, 1985): 65.

<sup>20</sup> C. Talas, *Sosyal Ekonomi (Social Economy)*, (Ankara, 1972): 590-3.

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expenses. It would thus be fairly correct to say that these boxes used to serve as a full-fledged mechanism of mutual help and solidarity as well as an effective social insurance system covering the risks of illness, unemployment, and poverty.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. Structural Organization and Supervision of the Guilds

Guilds can be defined as the professional organizations that are specialized in particular branches of business sectors engaged in producing goods and services. The Ottoman guilds were organized in specialized and limited groups. If we take leather industry, for example, various stages of this industry from animal husbandry to making shoes as final consumer goods were organized in separate guilds. Drovers and cattle dealers (*celeps*) engaged in live animal trade, butchers (*kasap*) doing the slaughter, tanners processing raw skin and hide into leather, merchants distributing the processed leather, and shoe-makers producing the final goods were organized independently into autonomous guilds. Furthermore, professionals dealing with different raw materials or final products at each stage were organized into separate groups. For example, butchers dealing with sheep and cattle subscribed to different unions. Likewise, the artisans making final products were organized according to their specialization such as shoe-makers, boot-makers, inner boot makers, and slipper makers. What is more, producers of these goods were further branched according to the color and shape of the shoes matching with the dress code or tradition of different religious communities such as the Muslims, Greeks, Armenians, and Jews.<sup>22</sup> Guilds and their members proved to have the highest numbers and the most sophisticated organization in Istanbul, the capital city of the empire. As of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, according to Evliya Çelebi's travel accounts, the trades people of Istanbul constituted 57 groups and the latter included 1100 guilds.<sup>23</sup>

One was not allowed to be active in more than one profession.<sup>24</sup> This meant that everybody had to act in his professional realm and share the same responsibilities and financial obligations with his co-professionals. Each professional could thus be entitled to the rights assigned to the members of his own profession only in this

<sup>21</sup> R. Mantran, *17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul (Istanbul in the Second Half the 17th Century)*, vol. 1, (Ankara, 1990): 355.

<sup>22</sup> M. Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi (State and Economy in the Ottoman Empire)* (Istanbul, 2002): 293-4.

<sup>23</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesi (The Travel Account of Evliya Çelebi)*, vol. 1, (ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay) (Istanbul, 1996): 511.

<sup>24</sup> H. Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem, 1988): 38.

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way. It can also be argued that upward social and economic mobility was hardened in the same way. If someone wished to change his guild, he would have to end his association with his old guild. In an official document dating July 1755, this stipulation was clearly stated as follows: “For the common good of the empire none of the sultan’s subjects must execute two crafts at the same time.” However, there are examples depicting the breaches of this rule. As an example, the chief of the butchers’ guild in Jerusalem, Hacı Derviş, had recourse to the qadi in 1681 with the pretext that although he was also an expert tanner, he was not permitted to occupy with tanning. He brought two tanners who were specialized in making skin-bags for carrying water as witnesses to be heard by the qadi. The witnesses testified to his mastery in both tanning and skin-bag making. The qadi, who was convinced about his talents in both crafts, allowed him for membership to the new guild without quitting his old guild. The qadi only stipulated that he would be able to continue to execute both professions and no one would be able to stop him from this as long as he shared the same responsibilities and undertook the same obligations with other members.<sup>25</sup>

As for the shops in which tradesmen and artisans were doing their business: they were the spaces of trade situated side by side on two sides of a street or market quarter. The market quarters containing shops were generally named according to the sector or the guild concerned. This system was in principle born during the early periods of Ottoman Empire with the establishments of *wakfs* (pious foundations) by leading state figures such as sultans, mothers of sultans, and viziers in various settlements. In later periods, however, commercial buildings containing the members of different professional guilds were built in various quarters of a city.<sup>26</sup> With minor exceptions in small settlements and neighborhoods, the residential areas were clearly differentiated from business quarters. The house and its environs, that is the *mahalle* (neighborhood), was a world apart closed to arts and crafts as well as to commercial affairs concentrating in market quarters. Beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century, depending on the increase in the number and intensity of houses, commercial and manufacturing shops were placed on the basements of apartment buildings on the main arteries and boulevards in large cities

<sup>25</sup> A. Cohen, *Osmanlı Kudüs’ünde Loncalar (The Guilds of Ottoman Jerusalem)*, (Istanbul, 2003): 19-20.

<sup>26</sup> S. Faroqhi, *Osmanlı’da Kentler ve Kentliler (Cities and Citizens in the Ottoman Empire)* (Istanbul, 2000): 37.

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such as Izmir, Istanbul, Bursa, and Salonika.<sup>27</sup> This observation made by Cerasi is correct. However, on the basis of information derived from the sales of shops, we see that this was also valid during the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century at least for Bursa, if not for all. The frequency of shop sales in neighborhoods is almost equivalent to that of the sales in market quarters during the said period.<sup>28</sup> In Konya, on the other hand, almost all shops were clustered in business quarters like Haffaflar, Uzun Çarşı, Keçeciler and Abacılar at that time.<sup>29</sup>

It was a rule that in a number of specialized trades, shops or workshops were spatially situated together. These clusters took place at an assigned sector of a certain street or in a neighborhood. This served two purposes: First, to prevent the illegal competition that could exist in the same profession and to enable the co-professionals to control one another; second, to facilitate the official control over trade guilds exerted by the qadi, the *muhtesip* (technical and financial controller) and their retinue. This sort of spatial and professional grouping among trades and crafts people was an extension of long-surviving tradition. Even today, this tradition maintains its vividness in Istanbul and other cities of the Muslim Near East. We can encounter the traces of this tradition at *Kapalı Çarşı* (Covered Bazaar), *Uzunçarşı* (Long Bazaar) and *Hanlar Bölgesi* (area of commercial buildings) including *Kozahan*, *Geyve Han*, *Pirinç Han* and the like in Bursa, to cite a few examples. This tradition not only facilitated supervision and control, but also used to strengthen the feelings of cohesion and solidarity among tradesmen. These feelings were alarmed when, for example, one of the members received ill-treatments from a member of an alien professional guild or even from a state official.<sup>30</sup> Different professions required different spatial and distributive organizations. In meat trade, for example, animals were slaughtered at slaughterhouses spotted outside the city. The meat was then distributed to the butcher shops placed on the downtown. Unlike butchers, bakers were scattered all over the city's major neighborhoods. The underlying reasons for this were the regular consumption of bread by the whole population, and to facilitate

<sup>27</sup> M. M. Cerasi, *Osmanlı Kenti: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Kent Uygurlığı ve Mimarisi (The Ottoman City: Urban Civilization and Architecture in 18th and 19th Century Ottoman Empire)* (Istanbul, 2001): 83-5.

<sup>28</sup> Ö. Düzbakar, *XVII. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Bursa'da Ekonomik ve Sosyal Hayat (Social and Economic Life in Bursa during the Late 17th Century)*, (Ankara: Ankara University, unpublished doctoral dissertation, 2003): 112.

<sup>29</sup> R. Özcan, *17. Yüzyılda Konya'da Mülk Satışları ve Fiyatlar (1640-1665) (Property Sales in Konya in the 17th Century (1640-1665))* (Konya: Selçuk University, unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1993): 98-100.

<sup>30</sup> Mantran, *17. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul*: 359.

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women's buying bread at the closest spots to their houses with minimal encounters with forbidden men.<sup>31</sup>

The highest supervisor of guilds (*hırfet*) was generally called warden (*kethüda*). In some branches the same supervisory task was being performed by a sheikh or a chief (*reis*). The duties of the sheikh included resolving the conflicts that arose among tradesmen and artisans, having the rules of the central government applied in the guild, preventing the manufacture of non-standard goods, and testing and giving permission to junior colleagues who completed their apprenticeship successfully to launch up their own business.<sup>32</sup> Although the office of the guild warden became increasingly established both in terms of function and of name beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the office of sheikhdom, which was also common in the past, continued to exist in many guilds especially in provinces. In the guilds constituted exclusively by non-Muslims, the titular term sheikhdom was almost never used. One exception encountered in this context is the bakers' guild in Aleppo. The titular term wardenhood (*kethüdalık*) was also rarely used in the guilds of non-Muslims. Instead, the term foreman (*ustabaşı*) was preferred.<sup>33</sup> When one of the guild sheikhs died, the members used to appeal to the judge (qadi) for the election of a new one, often giving the name of a candidate they had determined by. For instance, barbers, public bath keepers (*hamamcıs*), and bath attendants (*tellaks*) in Bursa applied to the court in 1560 upon the death of their former chief, Seyyid Muhyiddin. They declared that they agreed unanimously to elect Seyyid Mustafa, son of Cafer, as their new chief to dismiss unqualified persons from their guild, to put those who act against the law and the tradition in their place, and to bring order to matters concerning their art. The court thus ratified the appointment of the proposed person as sheikh and chief (*reis*).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, Osmanlı Kudüs'ünde Loncalar: 26-7. For a discussion of relations between man and woman in society according to Muslim law, see: M. Ertaş, *İslâm Hukuku'na Göre Mahrem-Namahrem Kavramları ve Bu Kavramların Karşılıklı İlişkilere Etkisi (The Concepts of the Forbidden and Unforbidden in Muslim Law And Their Impact on Mutual Relations)* (Trabzon: Karadeniz Technical University, unpublished master's thesis, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> A. Yediyıldız, *Şer'iye Sicillerine Göre XVI. Yüzyıl İkinci Yarısında Bursa Esnafı ve Ekonomik Hayat (Trades People and Economic Life in Bursa during the Second Half of the 16th Century According to Shari'a Court Registers)* (Bursa, 2003): 23.

<sup>33</sup> Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi*: 296.

<sup>34</sup> Bursa Shari'a Court Registers (hereinafter BŞS) A 72 218b; See Table 1 for the list of examples of the supervisors appointed to the guilds in Bursa during the 16th and 17th centuries.

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Concerning the election of sheikhs, the degree of their expertise in their professions was one of the principal criteria. In 1649 herbalists and perfumers (*attars*) applied to the court when their sheikh Yumni Mustafa died. They asked the court for the appointment of Ali Çelebi, son of Abdurrahman, who had expert knowledge of medicine and pharmaceuticals, to this deserted place as the new sheikh, stating that “he is qualified and authorized for the office in every respect”. The court thus announced him the new sheikh of *attars*.<sup>35</sup>

The guilds used to attach great importance to the qualifications of new participants. One interesting example concerning this issue is the case of Ibrahim Çelebi (Mevlana Tacettin) whose father was one of the famous butchers of Bursa. His father wanted him to take his place as butcher when he came to old age. As required by the tradition of the time, he requested the guild members to annex his son as butcher to their union. For this purpose the son was first to give a banquet to all butchers at an excursion spot (*mesire*) and then to receive admission with their blessing. Other butchers asked Ibrahim Çelebi to slaughter a sheep to test his talent. He thus took the sheep to an empty spot to slaughter it. However, he soon returned with bloody hands, saying “I cut its throat showing no mercy to it but it still escaped, and I could not catch it. Come and catch it”. When they looked, they saw that he had first cut the tail of the animal, and it had run away due to acute pain. As a result, he was not accepted to butchery for he could not prove to be capable.<sup>36</sup>

Tradesmen and artisans used to go to the judge and submit complaints about their supervisors when they did any injustice to them. The gardeners of Bursa filed a complaint to the judge about the *çardak aghas*, *naibs* and *kethudas* (all are variants of overseeing positions) who began to oppress them by demanding several hundreds of *akças* under the name of ‘lump sale *akça*’ (*bitirme akçası*) when they took their fruits to the market place and sold them, although they were paying their regular taxes. Following this complaint, a decree was sent by the central government that ordered preventing the oppression of fruit dealers.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> K. Kepecioğlu, *Bursa Kütüğü (Bursa Registers)*, vol. 1, (Bursa: Bursa Yazma ve Eski Basma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Genel Kit., nu. 4519) (Library of Written and Old Printed Works in Bursa, General Collection, no. 4519): 196-7.

<sup>36</sup> K. Kepecioğlu, *Bursa Kütüğü (Bursa Registers)*, vol. 2, (Bursa: Bursa Yazma ve Eski Basma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Genel Kit., nu. 4520) (Library of Written and Old Printed Works in Bursa, General Collection, no. 4520), p. 288.

<sup>37</sup> BŞS B 103 140a.

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Every guild had a *sheikh* and *reis* as well as a *yiğitbaşı* (man responsible for carrying out the regulations and technical supervision of the guild). The duty of *yiğitbaşıs* was to supervise the know-how and technical requirements of their professions. While the sheikh was responsible for establishing discipline in the guild, the *yiğitbaşı* was to supervise the artistic technicalities of the profession. Beginners, pupils, and apprentices (*şakirds*) were let into professional life only after the inspection and consent of the *yiğitbaşı* concerning their competence and proficiency.<sup>38</sup>

In a firman sent in 1617 it was stated that due to the increases in the number of 'novices and false masters' among cloth merchants the order of the profession was broken down. It ordered the election of a *yiğitbaşı* in the guild with the unanimity of the members not to give a shop to novices until they complete two years as apprentice under the training of a master. The *yiğitbaşı* was entrusted with the following supervisory tasks: not to allow novices to open separate shops, to keep novices at apprenticeship to their masters for at least two years until they gain full mastery of the art, to distribute equitably the incoming raw materials among the cloth manufacturers, to fix the sale prices of the final goods adding the legal profit margins, and to prevent their sale above these fixed prices, to prevent sale of traps in bundle at streets to women who are forbidden to contact alien men, and to hinder the receipt of shares by novices. The firman also ordered those who broke these rules to serve food for the aura of Hazret-i Şit Aleyhisselâm. The firman addressed the *cadi* for inflicting punishment upon those who did not still correct their manners. That all the cloth merchants had accepted this with unanimity was entered into the official registers.<sup>39</sup>

Another supervisory position is that of the *pazarcıbaşıs* (chiefs of outdoor markets). They were entrusted with preventing commercial transactions outside the official markets. In 1575 it was learned that some of the fruit growers in Bursa had sold the fruits in their vineyards and gardens to some marketers before they ripened. It was officially stated that the sultan did not like the sale of unripe fruits on the market, and a ban on this was thus ordered. The firman dealing with this problem ordered that fresh fruits such as cherry, apple, pear, grape and the like not be taken to market and sold before they get ripe and edible. In case unripe fruits were still brought to the marketplace, the firman ordered the incumbents to throw them into sea. It also

<sup>38</sup> BŞS A 67 381a.

<sup>39</sup> BŞS B 38 7a.

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demanded the punishment of those who brought and sold them with prison sentence, plus submitting their names to Istanbul.<sup>40</sup>

Part of the service in the transaction among trade people was undertaken by the *dellals* (brokers, middlemen, town-criers). The *dellals*, who were engaged in a sort of commissioning between sellers and purchasers, used to act under the supervision of their own warden. One Ibrahim, son of Hamza, had retired from the 128<sup>th</sup> regiment of special cavalry corps in the imperial army with a pension of 13 *akçes* per month. He was granted for life the wardenship of brokers serving in the Gelincik market quarter of Bursa as a reward for his heroic and devoted services in arresting the brigands known as *Celali* in Bursa as well as for his perennial services of security, escort and comradeship in the halting places on the Istanbul highway.<sup>41</sup> From an official record of 1639 we learn that some women were also holding positions as *dellals*. It was observed that a 40 *miskal* (one miskal weighs 1 ½ drams for precious metals) golden bracelet was handed to the woman *dellal* who was named Ayşe, daughter of Süleyman, for sale on the jewelry market.<sup>42</sup>

Persons recruited from among experienced and long-time masters and supervisors who performed as experts in the court were called *ehl-i vukûf* or *ehl-i hibre* (both meaning expert in law). These people used to establish and deselect those who worked in partnership with guild wardens or sheikhs and *yigîtbaşıs* despite their lack of mastery in the art and unruly acts. A firman dating 1622 states that, one Süleyman, the patented *ehl-i hibre* of velvet producers in Bursa came to Istanbul and submitted a complaint. According to his complaint, velvet producers in Bursa did not weave the velvet as they had done in the past anymore. They began to cut short its width and length, and to dye the silk thread with false dye instead of pure dye. Furthermore, loom owners did not anymore consist of good masters as before, but included many novices. He concludes his complaint stating that with the influx of aliens into the profession the tissues began to be poorly processed, and they did not comply with his advices. Upon his complaint, it was ordered that tissues be produced as how they had been done in the past, masters and assistant masters not leave off during the mid-week before they completed their job, and they be put in their place by the legal duress of the *ehl-i hibre* if they breached these rules.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> BŞS A 107 215a.

<sup>41</sup> BŞS B 136 125a.

<sup>42</sup> BŞS B 146 114a.

<sup>43</sup> BŞS B 42 188a.

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Trades people and artisans working in the same area of specialization were in principle entitled to organize in separate unions. In practice, however, for a group of professionals to organize in an independent guild with their own supervisory cadres such as the warden and the *yiğitbaşı*, they had to meet a certain numerical size. If they were numerically undersized, they were annexed or patched to the nearest sector or spatially closest professional guild. If their number exceeded the limits of organizing in a single union or if they were scattered across an array of different spaces, they could organize in more than one separate union. What is more, even some sectors where no professional formation was necessary could occasionally be denied by state authorities any right to organization. As a matter of fact, when the chimney cleaners applied to the authorities in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century for establishing an official organization, the Council of State (*Dîvân*) rejected their application on the grounds that their sector did not require any qualified talents, and announced that whoever wished could freely work in the sector.<sup>44</sup>

The Ottoman army used to obtain some of the personnel and logistic provisions needed for supply service behind the front from the tradesmen and artisans in provinces and districts. Each province was required to send a certain number of personnel as well as a certain amount of materials. Nevertheless, this was not an ordinary practice but an obligation to be met during war time. The sending off of personnel to the service of the army was called '*ordu ihracı*' (military extraction) and such a personnel was named as '*orducu*' (tradesman accompanying the military people). Provinces were liable to afford the expenses and tents of the *orducus* they sent, and this stipend was called '*orducu akçesi*'. Concerning the payment of *orducu akçesi* some guild branches were patched to others. That is why they used to pay the *orducu akçesi* to their superordinates instead of paying it directly to the military tax collectors.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. The Control of the Guild Members: A Self-Correcting System

Although there were independent institutional mechanisms to carry out the control mechanisms concerning the control of the guilds, much of the control functions were performed by the guilds themselves within a kind of auto-control or self-correcting system. Guild wardens, *yiğitbaşıs*, *ehl-i vukûf*, guild notables and the elderly

<sup>44</sup> M. Genç, p. 297.

<sup>45</sup> Yediyıldız, *Şer'îye Sicillerine Göre XVI. Yüzyıl İkinci Yarısında Bursa Esnafı ve Ekonomik Hayat*: 15; for information about the amount of fees paid by tradesmen for *orducus* in 1688 see Table 2.

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were responsible first and foremost for the acts of the members. These figures had both to oversee the relations between tradesmen and to secure the standard high-quality in production. These administrative and supervisory agents were also responsible for, among other things, establishing and sanctioning those who acted against the guild by-law and professional ethics, and carrying their cases to the court when necessary.<sup>46</sup>

The autonomy of the guilds was established through the free will and decision of the members. Yet, the establishment of the guild autonomy was nurtured by three important sources. The first one was the local customs and traditions varying according to regions. These were of primary importance in constituting the guild autonomy. The second source was the Muslim canonical rules. The third source was the decisions of the imperial *Divan*. The latter almost always used to respect the first two sources, the nature of which was characterized by maximum continuity and minimum or no change over the centuries. Nevertheless, in accordance with the changing needs of the state and of society the Council of State enforced new rules and regulations that dominated the structural and organizational model of the guilds. In other words, the state used to interfere rarely in guild life, but when it interfered, it did so deeply as the ultimate authority with the final say. The state devolved some of its administrative authority to guilds in order to keep the society and economy in good order. By this devolution, the state was by and large able to free itself from the task of establishing and running a huge and expensive bureaucratic system to maintain security and order. Such a system would probably be far less effective than the self-control mechanisms of the guilds themselves.<sup>47</sup> In this way not only could the guilds run an effective internal solidarity and self-control mechanism but also the state could get rid of some of the heavy responsibilities it would otherwise have to undertake.

On the other hand, the state took a number of measures for the efficient functioning of the guilds and their activities. The state used to attach primary importance to the regular supply of inputs for the maintenance of production. It took great pains to protect the guilds from the scarcity of raw materials and business orders. It gave priority to meet the means of production needed by local guilds. Only after sufficient supplies of input were offered to local producers did the state allow the export of the local raw materials and other intermediary goods to other regions and then to foreign countries. The

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>47</sup> Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi*: 301.

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state developed a number of regular methods to implement these policies, such as quotas and restrictions of export. By contrast, it used to tolerate or even encourage the import of raw materials and other productive goods in order to secure and increase the productive activities of the guilds. The central government also made great efforts to maintain the security of interregional, inter-provincial and trunk trade routes. It made contracts with local communities, both sedentary and nomadic, to secure their help and cooperation in establishing peace and order on the highways passing through their vicinity. All these measures were put in force to support and facilitate the productive and commercial activities of trades people. The increased monopoly rights granted by the state to guilds in the 18<sup>th</sup> century should also be considered within this category of measures.

The fact that monopolization was allowed in guilds as far as to pass mastery from father to son almost hereditarily should be associated with the motivation of the state to support professional education and the functions of human capital according to the terminology of our day.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the master-apprentice relations were not limited to workshop but also extended to homes. Professional education could thus last almost twenty-four hours. Apprentices (*şakirds*) were paid certain sums in return for the work they did. Work conditions and the wages of apprentices were officially stated in mutual written contracts with their masters. We encounter with an interesting example in Bursa registers. The Musli, son of Duran, was an extremely short boy, an orphan and homeless. A public dancing man, named Sinan, put woman cloths on Musli and had him dance in public. This was negatively received by some Muslims in Bursa. A dealer in skullcaps named Mahmut, son of Bayezit, from among them, submitted a complaint about the case to the court in 1572. The court handed Musli to Mahmut as hired hand for 200 *akçes per annum* on the condition of teaching him the art of skullcap making.<sup>49</sup>

Qadis were the official resort of appeal for the guilds. The qadi was charged with a number of duties including supervision of guild leaders like wardens, *yiğitbaşıs*, *sheikhs*, and *ehl-i hibre*, handling the problems that occurred among members and could not be resolved by the warden, fixing prices (*narh*), and maintaining the order and regulations agreed on among trade owners. Qadi's footman (*ayak*

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.: 302-3.

<sup>49</sup> K. Kepecioğlu, *Bursa Kütüğü (Bursa Registers)*, vol. 3, (Bursa: Bursa Yazma ve Eski Basma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Genel Kit., nu. 4521) (Library of Written and Old Printed Works in Bursa, General Collection, no. 4521): 346.

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*naibi*) was incumbent to check the standard and exquisiteness of balance and drachmas, as well as to prevent the supply of fake or miscellaneous goods. This person used to appear on the market quarter at all sorts of times. He used to inflict pecuniary punishments and other sanctions that were entrusted to his discretion whenever he discovered a faulty act. Other cases that could not be handled in place were dealt with by ‘*Bab Naibi*’ (head of a certain lower court) in the local court. As of 1826, reckoning or fiscal police (*ih̄tisap aghas/muhtesips*) were also occupied with municipal affairs like the qadis as the Ottoman Empire did not have an autonomous municipal institution until after the *Tanzimat* (Reform Edict of 1839) in its Western sense. The fundamental difference between the judgments of qadis and the implementations of the reckoners was that while the former used to pass their verdicts on the basis of hearing both sides and their witnesses, and examining the evidence submitted, the *muhtesips* could make decisions and enforce sanctions on the basis of *urf* (customary law) and administrative principles without caring much about evidence and proof. *Muhtesips* were only and exclusively preoccupied with municipal affairs. The incumbent engaged in cleaning services was called ‘*Çöplük Subaşı*’ (the chief police of scavengery). The office of the chief *muhtesip* was called ‘*Muhtesip Çardağı*’ (literally, bower of the reckoner). The neighborhood near the *Ulu Camii* (Grand Mosque) in Bursa where the *naib* (assistant qadi) used to inhabit was called ‘*Küçük Mahkeme*’ (Small Court). Nearby the *naib*’s residence was ‘*Ihtisap Çardağı*’ (same as *Muhtesip Çardağı*). This shows that the control of the trade owners and the regulation of municipal functions were closely related.<sup>50</sup>

Another body of superintendents was the *Kuloğlanları* (sons of the Janissaries). They were in charge of controlling prices, standards of production, and of securing order and safety in market quarters. They were also entrusted with taking tradesmen and artisans who were acting against the law to the court, and with executing the punishments announced by the court. However, they used to abuse the authority rested with them from time to time. In such cases an official warning was sent to the qadi for the correction and non-repetition of their misdemeanors. According to an official record dating 1575, for example, it was a common practice that *muhtesips* used to take 7 *akçes* as fine from each cook or restaurant owner whose pots and pans were untinned or dirty and plates and dishes notched, but *Kuloğlanları* began to receive between 8-12 *akçes* from rich cooks by arbitrarily increasing this well-established amount. Upon a complaint concerning

<sup>50</sup> K. Kepecioğlu, *Bursa Kütüğü* (*Bursa Registers*), vol. 1: 257.

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this abuse, *Kuloğlanları* were warned with an official notice to stop receiving more than regular fines.<sup>51</sup>

When a murder was committed in the shops or in their extensions belonging to trades owners and the killer was not found, the *diyet* (blood money), to be paid to the heirs of the victim or to *beytümale* (the officer concerned with the canonical distribution of inheritances) if no heir existed, was to be collected from them according to law.<sup>52</sup> This practice put the shop owner under responsibility not only for doing good service to his customers but also for maintaining the security of their life.

The goods being produced by trade guilds were all subject to certain standards and average prices. When deviations from these standards occurred, the auto-control system developed within each guild interfered with these non-standard cases, even though there were no complaints raised by customers. There is an example in archival documents about the workings of this self-control system concerning the manufacture of coarse woolen garments, one of the oldest arts and crafts in Bursa. In 1559, the *abacıs* (producers of coarse woolen cloth) and *kebecis* (producers of thick felt) held a meeting where they stated: “no one should act against the old law and the new sultanic law which ordered that the caftans sewn be new and their two loins conform to customs, the good ones be separated from the bad ones. They decided that the guild sheikh Safer, son of Kasım, “must find out and correct those who impugn the standards. Sellers of *kepenek* (coarse cape or cloak worn by shepherds) and *kebe* (thick felt) should not sell at a price more than 11 *akçes* the cloth whose price is fixed at 10 *akçes*, and the sheikh must hinder and repel those who do.”<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, breaches of fixed prices were among the commonest controversies. We can argue that the principal cause of this high frequency observed in breaches of prices was the ten-percent profit margin in average assigned to tradesmen. In an economy where the terms of interest were moving along 15-20 per cent and the annual rate of inflation was often more than five per cent, it was of course not easy to prevent the increase in the number of breaches concerning prices.<sup>54</sup>

When the state officials acted against law in controlling trades owners, immediate complaints were filed against them to higher authorities for correction. One Hacı Abdullah Agha became infamous

<sup>51</sup> BŞS A 107 67b.

<sup>52</sup> Yediyıldız, *Şer'îye Sicillerine Göre XVI. Yüzyıl İkinci Yarısında Bursa Esnafı ve Ekonomik Hayat*. 38.

<sup>53</sup> BŞS A 72 13b.

<sup>54</sup> Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi*. 298.

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with his title of 'Bacci' (collector of tolls). He and his son had been collecting market dues since long. Nevertheless, they were not inoffensive and moderate officials. They began to enforce each time new rules that were against law, thus oppressing trades owners and people. The Mevlana Hafız Ibrahim, one of the leading notables of Bursa, filed their immoral and illegal acts as a complaint to the Sultan. The latter thus immediately sent a decree in 1767 to the qadi of Bursa banning their work from then on in municipal affairs including the collection of market fees, stamp duties as well as the supervision of tradesmen and artisans.<sup>55</sup>

The guilds were not inherently conservative or against practical changes. Although they employed traditionalist rhetoric whenever possible, and probably believed in a tradition-based order, they did accept changing situations and adopt new institutions. In response to the external challenges of this period, such as the influx of outsiders and increased state demands, individual guilds made impressive efforts to effectively address them with creative variations on existing institutional themes.<sup>56</sup>

The government-guild relationship during this period was naturally complementary, although the government by definition was in command. Guilds were expected to do business in their own way within the parameters that the government set and pay their taxes. The government was supposed to maintain order and justice in the marketplaces of Istanbul and keep taxes at reasonable levels. Such mutual expectations were not always met in real life, but they remained as vital standards.<sup>57</sup>

### **5. Conflicts of Interest, Unruly Acts, and Ways of Resolution**

One of the functional purposes of the trade guild was to secure the equitable distribution of raw material input among its members. Acts that were against this principle, and directed to earn unfair profits were immediately punished. For example, the materials coming to Bursa to supply the needs of woodworkers were distributed on the basis of unanimous agreement among members. A certain share was assigned to each member according to his productive capacity and need. Thus, the supply of raw materials was carried out in a working order. Yet, instances where some guild members had bought extra materials in secret and in this way had increased their shares at the

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<sup>55</sup> K. Kepecioğlu, *Bursa Kütüğü (Bursa Registers)*, vol. 1: 28.

<sup>56</sup> Y. Eunjeong. *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul : Fluidity and Leverage*: 164-5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: 235.

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expense of others' profits were brought to the court. Then a firman was sent to the qadi of Bursa. It ordered the election and appointment of a warden among woodworkers. The firman also dictated that raw materials had to be distributed among members according to their personal situation under the supervision of the warden and with their unanimity and no one could object to this consensus. Immediately after the arrival of the firman, a person elected by the members was appointed to the wardenship of woodworkers' guild in Bursa in 1619.<sup>58</sup>

In a case submitted to the court by tissue makers of Bursa, it was stated that in the past whatever tissues brought by merchants to Bursa were divided into five equal shares with the agreement of members. Gelincik and Uzunçarşı markets used to receive two shares each and the remaining one share was distributed among Tahtakale tradesmen. They submitted their former vouchers and bills to the court as proof of the past practice. They complained that some began to put others under trouble by coveting their shares and not being satisfied with their own. When the court notified Istanbul, the central government dispatched a firman in 1592 dictating that things had to be done as before, opponents had to be expelled from the sector, and the names as well as photos of those who did not comply with this had to be communicated to the Sublime Porte in a written document.<sup>59</sup>

In another case submitted to the court in 1561, Jewish artisans processing raw silken tissue whose names were Arslan, son of Ishak, David, son of Evraham, Musa, son of Ismail, another David, son of Yakup stated: "raw silken tissues brought to Bursa have been distributed equitably to us. A Jewish man named Bayram, son of Ibrahim, broke the rules of tradesmanship by purchasing and selling raw silken tissue in secret. We request the appointment of Yakob from among the Jews, son of Yahya, as the chief market superintendent". Their request was accepted and Yakob became their market superintendent.<sup>60</sup>

In yet another imperial order sent in 1598, it was stated that the skins of the sheep, lambs, and goats slaughtered by butchers in Bursa were being gathered at a certain place and distributed to tanners by leather dealers and tax officers equitably. However, a number of complaints have been submitted about some of these distributors who received some of the skins secretly in cooperation with butchers, and

<sup>58</sup> K. Kepecioğlu, *Bursa Kütüğü (Bursa Registers)*, vol. 1: 53.

<sup>59</sup> BŞŞ A 86 102a.

<sup>60</sup> BŞŞ A 113 140a.

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then distributed the rest to the guild members. The order demanded the ruling out of illegal and secret purchases and sales.<sup>61</sup>

Fixed prices were assigned for the goods sold on the market, and great efforts were made to prevent sales at exorbitant prices. By this way, both tradesmen doing business in the same sector and their customers were protected. Notables of Bursa applied to the court in groups in 1588 complaining that while fixed prices were in effect for all manufactured goods, no fixed price was assigned for shoes in Bursa contrary to the practice in other Ottoman settlements. They asked the qadi to secure the establishment of fixed prices for shoes and slippers that were being sold at quite exorbitant prices. When the qadi inquired calling the tradesmen in question, he discovered that fixed prices were being applied in Istanbul and not in Bursa. They added that they themselves also wanted reasonable fixed prices. Thus, the *Ehl-i Vukuf* calculated a “fixed price of 65 *akçes* for high-quality shoes, 60 *akçes* for average quality and 55 *akçes* for low-quality shoes”. Shoe-makers agreed to sell their goods at these prices.<sup>62</sup>

In 1581, the tanners and butchers of Bursa assembled, and fixed the prices of sheep hides. They determined the price of a ram’s hide to be 3 *akçes* and that of a ewe’s hide to be 2.5 *akçes* according to the rules and regulations concerning tailed sheep.<sup>63</sup>

Cooks also took up a process of standardization in their business. The standardization included the prices of food as well as those of the ingredients being used. In 1587, the Hacı Sefer, son of Nebi, was appointed warden or chief of the cooks to supervise the quality of dishes and whether or not the requirements and technicalities of cookery were being satisfied.<sup>64</sup> Great importance was attached to tinning the pots and pans used in kitchens. In 1851, 200 people bought fresh cheese from a grocery and got poisoned. Although many of them were immediately subjected to medical treatment and their lives were saved, unfortunately some still died. It was argued that the cheese was made in untinned pots and as a result it got contaminated with verdigris.<sup>65</sup>

The business areas of interest were strictly defined for each trade sector, and breaches were not allowed. For example, the sale of dried fruits was assigned to greengrocers while outdoor marketers (*pazarcıs*) were entitled to do fresh fruit business. The sale of dried

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<sup>61</sup> BŞS A 153 137b.

<sup>62</sup> BŞS A 148 43b.

<sup>63</sup> BŞS A 113 127b.

<sup>64</sup> BŞS A 145 65a.

<sup>65</sup> K. Kepecioğlu. *Bursa Kütüğü (Bursa Registers)*, vol. 1: 226.

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fruits on outdoor markets and that of fresh fruits at groceries were strictly forbidden. These restrictions were formulated and delivered to tradesmen in 1573.<sup>66</sup> In 1677, it was officially delivered to tradesmen while only tanners and not others bought coarse leather supplied to grand bazaar, this principle was broken over time. The official notice entitled only tanners to buy it and prohibited other tradesmen from buying it, thus restoring the old custom once again.<sup>67</sup> In another case observed in 1608, a greengrocer applied to the court and complained: “I have never bought and sold soap in my shop but the warden of soap dealers sent soap to me from the shares he must have distributed to soap traders. I am a greengrocer not a soap seller”. Eventually, he returned the soaps.<sup>68</sup>

Artisans were obligated to use the best raw materials in their production process. In a case in 1631, one Mehmet Çelebi, son of Ömer, and his friends, who were doing business on *altunlu arakiye* (linen cap with golden ornaments worn under a turban), *kadife kavuk* (quilted turban made of velvet), and *serpuş* (headgear), applied to the court. They complained that they buy good quality velvet and they cut three quilted turbans or headgears for adult males and four for children. They added that they put out these pieces to competent tailors for sewing, thus having high quality goods in their shops. They protested those who buy false or low quality velvet, and do the cutting as well as sewing on their own, thus decreasing production costs and selling their goods at cheaper prices. In a way they were exposed to unfair competition. They demanded that no one sell *turban* and *serpuş* made of false or low quality velvet in his shop anymore and sanctions be imposed on those who do not comply with this rule. The court accepted their demands on the grounds that they were compatible with the Shari’a, and delivered them as final decisions to the trade owners in question.<sup>69</sup>

We observe that some producers especially in textile industry were taken to the court by their guild sheikhs for using underqualified or outlawed materials in their workshops. In 1599, for instance, one of the producers of *arşın* fabric (a kind of thick fabric used in sewing tents), one Nasırüddin, son of Mehmet, filed a litigation against two of his co-professionals, Bali, son of Ali, and Bostan, son of Mehmet, with the pretext that “they process *arşın* fabric by adding cotton thread instead of twisted silk thread. It is forbidden to put cotton thread into

<sup>66</sup> BŞS A 98 82b.

<sup>67</sup> BŞS B 114 123b; see also Document 1.

<sup>68</sup> BŞS B 26 85a.

<sup>69</sup> BŞS B 52 13b.

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*arşın* fabric". When the opinions of experts inquired, they testified: "cotton is put into velvet pillow; it is absolutely forbidden to put it into *arşın* fabric". The court thus eventually warned the two defendants not to repeat this anymore.<sup>70</sup>

In 1596, silk apron makers in Bursa went to the court headed by their legal expert Abdurrahman, son of Halil, and their *yiğitbaşı* (technical supervisor) Hacı Bostan, son of Hacı Mustafa. They complained that although the standard number of comb teeth was 1550 for weaving silk aprons, "some from among us decreased their number to 1450, pulling out 100 of them; it is difficult to save one's private parts in the bath with a loosely woven apron". The court thus ordered the two artisans to increase the number of comb teeth they used in their weaving loom to 1550 again as in the past.<sup>71</sup>

%5 deviances in measures of the length, width, or weight of goods such as in the grams of bread or in the roll size of fabric were deemed to be normal human errors and were not therefore subject to any sanction. When deviations exceeded these limits, errands were not, contrary to common belief, heavily punished except for extraordinary hard times like states of war and scarcity of supply. Warning and advising not to repeat was among the most frequent ways adopted by public authorities. When deviations from fixed measures amounted to higher proportions and repeated, Muslim errands were given prison sentence while non-Muslim errands were sent on the galleys for penal servitude. However, punishments usually did not last very long. In general, punishments ranging between few weeks and few months were deemed sufficient. The key issue here is repetition. At times no punishment was given unless a few warnings had preceded while the number of repetition was the main factor for extending the duration of punishment at other times. If repetition were not at issue, even serious faults were pardoned after a short period of sentence or penal servitude. Just like the qualities of expediency and simplicity, tolerance which always put into account human fallibility was also an important characteristic constituting the reputation of Ottoman justice system.<sup>72</sup>

As a general trend, there were important differences between the attitudes of public authorities and those of the guild concerning tolerance. Trades owners often applied to the qadi with heavy demands like closing down the shops of fraudulent professionals and

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<sup>70</sup> BŞS B 136 55a.

<sup>71</sup> BŞS B 13 24b.

<sup>72</sup> Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi*: 298-9; see figure 1, 2 for the exposing to public ignominy of the tradesmen using defect or false measures.

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excluding them from the sector permanently, but the qadi generally used to make smooth and compromising decisions. When he resorted to punishment, most of the time he used to inflict far less or lighter terms than expected by complainants. Permanent expulsion from profession was implemented rarely and in extremely unusual cases. Severe public or moral crimes rather than professional ones used to lead dismissal from the guild.

In cases where professional crimes required expulsion from the guild, these punishments, like others, were often provisory, and offenders were pardoned soon. They were allowed to resume their activities in the sector.<sup>73</sup>

The reason behind the severe reaction of tradesmen to those who do not conform to rules can be explained in a number of ways, the most important of which is that the guild was not just a professional organization but it was also a social entity characterized by solidarity, mutual help, and attachment to moral values. These are the most familiar qualities of pre-industrial work and organization. The nature of this collective professional image and identity often made most guild members worry about the misdemeanors of their co-professionals. They believed that these wrongs could have stained the good reputation of the whole guild. Of course, the other side of the equation was constituted by competitive drives. Fraudulent and unruly acts did not only hurt their professional honor but also threatened their profit through unfair competition.

Each member of the guild was responsible to do some works of charity and philanthropy. Furthermore, he had to comply with a number of rules including a certain dress code and a variety of established manners. All these were subject to surveillance by the guild supervisors. This shows that trade guilds were functioning like agents of social controls, civil society organizations, and religious brotherhoods.<sup>74</sup>

A final but highly crucial point that needs to be stressed here is the position of non-Muslim tradesmen and artisans. As a general principle, Muslim and non-Muslim communities used to occupy separate residential areas especially before modern times. Nevertheless, Muslims and non-Muslims could do business in the same sector. There was no imposed sectoral or spatial segregation among different religious communities in the main. Clusters of various religious groups in certain sectors arose from naturally and

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.: 299.

<sup>74</sup> R. L. Heilbroner, *İktisadi Sorun, (The Economic Problem)*, (Istanbul, 1970): 35.

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traditionally grown professional specialization rather than from official policies of placement or segregation except in a few strategic sectors. Policies of tolerance were also at work in public and work life. The guild members were entitled to elect their supervisors by majority vote. Thus, supervisory cadres were renewed in parallel with the changes of religious demography in a guild. In 1657, for example, the skullcap traders in Istanbul applied to Council of State. They claimed that, in the past, non-Muslims constituted the majority in their profession and naturally guild supervisors were being elected from among them. They demanded the election and appointment of Muslim leaders for Muslims were in majority now.<sup>75</sup> The number of sales concerning shops in 17<sup>th</sup> century Bursa shows that non-Muslims were quite interested in opening new businesses or extending the existing ones. Seven sales were contracted from Muslims to non-Muslims, but no contract of sale in the reverse direction was recorded.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, let us have a brief look at women's place in trade guilds. As depicted by Haim Gerber:

Women in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Bursa were to a certain extent involved in artisanship. Membership in regular guilds was rare. One example is revealed in a litigation brought against Fatma Hatun by the candle-makers' guild of Bursa. They claimed that since there had never been women in this guild she pursued the occupation illegally. She answered that what she did was perfectly legal, since she inherited a *hisse* (a share) of candle-making from her father. Fifty years later a woman again sold two *hisses* of candle-making and declared that she was quitting the occupation. Most woman artisans were probably engaged in a cottage industry and their involvement seems to have been much more substantial. It was also called the "putting out system", a system of production in which the actual producer is dependent on a merchant-financier for the provision of raw materials and for marketing, but still work at home with his or her own tools. One extremely rare and valuable document gives a survey of silk-spinning implements (*mancınık*) in Bursa in 1678. Of a total of about 300 such implements in Bursa, as many as 150 were owned and/or operated by women.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> A. R. Altınay, *Hicri Onbirinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (Life in Istanbul in the 11th Century of Muslim Calendar)* (Istanbul, 1988): 55.

<sup>76</sup> Düzbakar, *XVII. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Bursa'da Ekonomik ve Sosyal Hayat*: 113.

<sup>77</sup> H. Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa, 1600-1700", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12 (1980): 237.

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64 shop sales were recorded between 1670 and 1698 in total. Of these sales, 52 were made between males. No sales were recorded between females. The number of sales from women to men, and from men to women was each recorded to be 6.<sup>78</sup> These sales reveal the status of women as property owners, while whether or not they were runners of businesses at the same time cannot be understood from the archival documents at hand. According to Haim Gerber, women were operating their shops via their slaves.<sup>79</sup>

### **6. Guild Festivals and Rituals as an Integral Part of Imperial Pride and Public Solidarity**

The guild festivals made up an important and regular part of ceremonial life in big cities, especially in Istanbul. Each guild used to hold periodic festivals, often annually but sometimes once in two or three years at special excursion spots such as the *Kağıthane Çayırı* (Sweet Waters of Europe at the tip of the Golden Horn) or *Ağa Çayırı* on the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus. These festivals had religious origins. Some of them used to last one or two days while others a full week. In his travel accounts, Evliya Çelebi talks about the festivals of the jewelry guild. The jewelers held an annual entertainment that lasted a couple of days. However, they used to hold a large festival once in every twenty years which lasted ten days and ten nights. A number of varied motivations underscored these festivals. Consolidation of organizational structure, strengthening the mutual relations among members, entertainment, and expectation of commercial gains were but a few of such motivations. The guildsmen were able to introduce their products to potential customers on these occasions. It was highly difficult and costly to organize such whole-scale festivals. That is why the generous support of the guild masters and of state authorities was of paramount importance for the realization of these massive festive events. More importantly, the guilds used to hold ceremonies, parades, and processions to celebrate and accompany imperial events of vital importance such as the ascendance of the sultan to the throne, his marriage, circumcision of the princes, and seeing the imperial army off for a campaign. During these activities, each guild used to give their best products to the sultan and other top state officials as gifts. They were no doubt given in return valuable presents as the elements of social prestation. The guilds also used to give some products gratis to common people from

<sup>78</sup> Düzbakar, *XVII. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Bursa'da Ekonomik ve Sosyal Hayat*: 113.

<sup>79</sup> H. Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa, 1600-1700": 234.

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their special vehicles prepared for the processions, and perform highly interesting shows.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to such processions and parades, the guilds were sometimes invited to the palace by the sultans to celebrate special events. The sultan gave them a feast as the mark of his greatness and responsibility. The guildsmen offered their *pişkeş* (presents) to the sultan as a good response. They ate the meal together, and the guildsmen exhibited their special works. Then, they performed their part in the celebration of the imperial event at stake. Examples of such famous celebrations abound in Ottoman history, including the circumcision ceremony of Prince Mehmet held in 1582 which lasted three weeks, and the hunting festival of Mehmet IV held in Edirne (Adrianople) in 1675 which lasted forty days and where the guilds joined the parade in alphabetical order.<sup>81</sup>

Besides these public processions and official parades, the guilds also used to perform festive events and rituals on special days. The offering of *şerbet* (a special drink made up of water and salt), for example, was symbolic of the solidarity within and among guilds. This drink had a long tradition among many Judae-Christian, Muslim, and pagan cultures in the Middle East, and was deemed to be sacred. Over the centuries, Muslims adopted drinking *şerbet* in lieu of drinking wine, both drinks representing mutual generosity, hospitality and solidarity. In other words, offering and drinking *şerbet* among guildsmen was an integral part of their *futuvva* morality and etiquette.<sup>82</sup>

Like *şerbet*, *helva* (sweat prepared in many varieties out of sesame, oil, honey or sugar) was another symbolic element of mutual social prestation among and across the guild members. *Helva* had its origins back to Noah's time. Even the guilds of different cities used to send *helva* to one another at special times as the mark of occupational solidarity.<sup>83</sup>

Guild rituals celebrating various phases of tradesmanship and craftsmanship, such as the rites of apprenticeship journeymanhood, and

<sup>80</sup> B. Evren, *Osmanlı'da Esnaf ve Örgütleri (Guilds in the Ottoman Era)*, (Istanbul, 1997): 26-7.

<sup>81</sup> Ö. Nutku, *IV. Mehmed'in Edirne Şenliği (1675) (The Edirne Festival of Mehmet IV (1675))*, (Ankara, 1987): 73-5.

<sup>82</sup> N. Turna, *Ottoman Craft Guilds and Silk-Weaving Industry in Istanbul*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, unpublished master's thesis, 2001): 31-2.

<sup>83</sup> A. Gölpınarlı, "İslam ve Türk İllerinde Fütüvvet Teşkilatı" (The Futuvva Institution in Muslim and Turkish Cities), *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası (Journal of the Faculty of Economics University of Istanbul)* 1-4 (1949-1950): 91.

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mastership were of great significance to the formal structure and function of the guilds. With these ceremonies acceptance to the guild, promotion within it and recognition of status in the guild hierarchy were established and institutionalized.<sup>84</sup>

The ceremony held for apprentices was a mark of recruitment to the profession as well as of the monopoly held by the guild over new beginners and individual entrants. The executive committee of any guild stipulated apprenticeship as part of professional training and as a prerequisite for one's right to open his own shop. These ceremonies were also supportive of masters' loyalty to their guilds because they were indications of to what extent they conformed to guild formalities through well discernible conventions. An apprentice was assigned one path master (*yol ustası*) and two path brothers (*yol kardeşi*). These guides were not only to teach the specialties of their art to the novice but they were also entrusted to train him in the *futuvva* values and morality. Thus, professional dexterity and *futuvva* etiquette such as honesty, charity, piety, and conformity were to be combined in the personality of the novices. A number of guild authorities, including the sheikh, the masters and the wardens used to be present during the ceremony. An experienced person was chosen to lead the ceremony. Each party joining the ceremony was assigned certain roles, gestures, and prayers to perform. As a symbol of purified, initialized and humble beginning the hair of the apprentice was cut.<sup>85</sup>

The ceremony of journeymanship was part of building the internal hierarchy of the guild. Through such hierarchical order the institutional existence of work life could be maintained, reinforced, and carried into the future. During the journeymanship ceremony, guild members placed themselves in the ceremony spot according to their rank and seniority. Part of the ceremony was conducted as follows: "After reciting *âşır* (a portion of ten verses in the Qur'an), the candidate kissed the hands of all [senior] members, and offered cups of coffee to all. Afterwards he was accepted as journeyman".<sup>86</sup> The ceremony was conducted both in the guild and in the mosque. According Refik Soykut, the session held in the mosque where the friends and relatives of the candidate also attended proceeded in the following way: "The ceremony started with the entrance of the candidate and his guide. The candidate entered the mosque at a step behind his guide, but his hands being at the guide's shoulders. First

<sup>84</sup> Turna, *Ottoman Craft Guilds and Silk-Weaving Industry in Istanbul*: 33-4.

<sup>85</sup> C. Anadol, *Türk-Islam Medeniyetlerinde Ahilik Kültürü ve Fütüvvetnâmeler (The Akhi Culture and Futuvvatnames in Turco-Islamic Civilizations)* (Ankara, 1991): 96-7.

<sup>86</sup> Turna, *Ottoman Craft Guilds and Silk-Weaving Industry in Istanbul*: 36-7.

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the guide prayed, and then they greeted each other four times. The guide took the candidate to the presence of the guild warden where he kissed the hands of the elderly in the mosque".<sup>87</sup> The candidate, as part of his promotion to journeymanship, was expected to offer a modest package of gifts to each guild master.

The ceremony of mastership was a sign of passage to independence on the part of a guild member. By becoming a master, he would be entitled to open his own shop. The mastership rituals were generally held in the spring at famous excursion spots. They were then continued in the mosque. When a member was considered to be qualified for mastership by the guild authorities, he was given a time of 30 days to find a new shop to establish his own business. When he could find one, his master informed the guild authorities of this. Then they decided the day of ceremony. Parts of this ceremony were held at different places such as a famous excursion spot, the *esnaf köşkü* (mansion of tradesmen) and the mosque. The session held at the *esnaf köşkü*, which was at the extra-mural section of Istanbul, is depicted as follows:

At the front sat down the guild *kahyas* [wardens], while the masters sat behind them. All participants made a circle in the middle of which was a round *sedir* [*divan/sofa*] for the guild dignitaries including the eldest warden, and the clergy including the *müftü* and the *imam*. Finally, the candidate entered the room as he was led by his master. The two greeted everybody in the court. During the ceremony prayers were recited, the *silsilenâmes* [genealogical tree / written pedigree] of the patron saints of crafts as well as the biographies of prophets were repeated. Then, the candidate was advised to be loyal to the ethic of his guild. The ceremony ended with the old master's girding the *peştimal* [destmal / vaste cloth] of the new master.<sup>88</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

This study shows that despite a number of internal and external troubles pressing Ottoman Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the order and function of trade guilds in Bursa could be maintained to a great extent. Only qualified people were allowed by guild members and supervisors to join the profession. The members did not hesitate to resort to the qadi when they thought that some injustice had been done in the guild. The guilds could solve much of

<sup>87</sup> R. Soykut, *Ortayol Ahilik (The Mainstream Akhi)*, (Ankara, 1971): 113-4.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*: 114-5.

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their internal problems through a kind of well-established auto-control system. When they could not, they applied to the qadi as a higher authority. In order to get organized into an autonomous guild, the members of a profession had to meet a certain numerical size. The guilds were required to participate in and support the imperial army during war times both in terms of personnel and logistic or material supplies. The state attached great importance to protect the interests of guilds especially in times of great hardships such as scarcity of raw materials. Goods and services produced within every guild had to meet certain standards of quality and price. These standards provided producers, sellers and buyers, alike, with a kind of predictability on the market, eliminating or minimizing negative acts such as unfair competition and arbitrariness. The chief interest of the guild members was solidarity rather than competition. This was characterized and enriched by a variety of institutionalized manners expected from each member such as helping the poor and destitute, supporting co-members whose business underwent bankruptcy due to fire, burglary, and other unfortunate causes. Muslim and non-Muslim tradesmen were well-integrated into work life together. There was no official segregation.

In medieval Europe, on the other hand, economic life was mainly revolving around the manorial system based on the principles of autarky. Guilds engaged in arts and crafts in cities constituted a second economic group. Independent tradesmen moving among cities as well as between Western and Eastern countries made up a third sector. Especially this last sector led to the substantial accumulations of capital, rise of large private enterprises, and the formation of the bourgeois class which supplied the major dynamics of Western capitalism over the centuries.<sup>89</sup>

These independent traders formed a dynamic merchant class over time, and settled around manorial estates. They organized fairs and other lucrative economic activities leading to larger accumulations of capital. The seigniorial class and the clergy which were two of the leading authorities in medieval Europe, detested commercial life and its agents. The aristocracy and the clergy, alike, looked down upon merchants. According to the legists of the Church, in particular, commerce was a kind of seizure or usurpation.<sup>90</sup> Although the Church and aristocracy imposed fixed prices with small profit margins on

<sup>89</sup> R. L. Heilbroner, *Iktisadi Sorun (The Economic Problem) (Istanbul, 1970)*; H. Pirene, *Ortaçağ Avrupa'sının Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi (Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe) (Istanbul, 1983)*.

<sup>90</sup> H. Pirene, *Ortaçağ Kentleri (Medieval Cities) (Istanbul, 1993)*: 93.

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merchants, the latter could often manage to do trade at free or quasi-free prices with larger profit margins, however.

The partitioning of the ruling authority among the king, the clergy, and the aristocracy was accompanied by a de-centralization in economic life, with major actors being guilds in cities, the manorial system, and the merchant class. In comparison, the centralized system of political authority in the Ottoman state did not allow or yield a similar stratification or independent segmentation in economic life. The trade guilds in cities were directly attached to the palace. All intermediary or local authorities dealing with economic life were ultimately occupying lesser administrative positions. They were most of the time in a position to report the cases to Istanbul rather than to solve them in place. The Western manorial system and the class of domestic and international merchants did not have any significant equivalents in the Ottoman Empire, save the fief-holding system, *timar*, that more or less characterized the classical period. While agriculture was being done mainly by small peasantry, much of domestic trade and almost all of international trade were being carried out by Levantines and other minorities protected or privileged by capitulations as well as by foreign merchants. Only part of this latter group could evolve over time into a rudimentary bourgeois class in Turkey.

All internal and external controls exerted over the guilds constituted a three-tier system. The immediate controls were exerted by guild members themselves and guild wardens or other technical and consultative supervisors. The internal controls were probably the strictest and harshest of all layers of control mechanisms. The second tier included the qadi and other state or municipal authorities especially when problems could not be resolved through internal mechanisms of conflict resolution. The qadi himself passed jurisdiction concerning mild and moderate controversies, but submitted heavier cases to Sublime Court for resolution. The Council of State was the ultimate resort functioning as a court of appeal. However, the guild members, both individually and collectively, were entitled to submit their complaints directly to Council of State, jumping off intermediary resorts of application. This characteristic of Ottoman justice system was quite unique and largely different from the practices of judicial system in the West. While strong feudal and religious authorities as firmly established intermediary sites of power set important barriers, which were almost insurmountable, for ordinary citizens in their access to top state or royal body of justice in the West, the higher level of centralization in Ottoman Empire often

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rendered a lower and temporary status to intermediary elements, whether aristocratic, bureaucratic, or even clerical.

Of course, competition did exist among the members of each guild. However, the nature of competition was certainly monopolistic. There was no free market competition as conceptualized by Adam Smith, a type of conceptualization that characterized the chief principles of modern capitalist economies rather than pre-industrial modes of economic activities. The Ottoman Empire would not probably allow unlimited competition for it could have created strong economic aristocracies challenging state authority as well as oppressing ordinary people and consumers. Since the margins of profit were fixed at ten *per cent* in average, competition among guild members often revolved around minor differences such as probity of tradesmen, quality of their goods, sociability of suppliers, personal connections and other forms of public relations.

The administrative status of Istanbul as the imperial capital and the geographic proximity of Bursa to Istanbul brought about important consequences for the organization and control of the trade and craft guilds. First and foremost, trades and crafts people in these cities were easy to monitor officially. Second, the guilds in these areas were able to communicate their problems and demands to state authorities. These communicative and interactive processes that marked the relations between the central government and the guilds people left almost no room for anti-governmental sentiments and political protests among the latter. What is more, the imperial regulations could be easily and effectively announced to working people. In this way rules and regulations were put into force promptly and checked effectively in Istanbul and Bursa alike. However, this mutual communication became weaker at distant provinces. The power of the central government became less felt, and the force of local authorities and of traditions filled in the lacunae left by the state authority. This sort of shift in the balance of power from the central to the local elements could elicit at times nonstandard applications or privileges in the farthest provinces, which were not to be found in Istanbul or Bursa. The granting of duplicate guild membership by the qadi of Jerusalem in 1681 to someone called Hacı Derviş is just an example.

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TABLE 1			
Sample of Guild Supervisors Appointed in the 16th and 17 <sup>th</sup> Centuries			
Date	Document no	Person appointed	The guild and the position
1552	BŞS A 67 381a	Hacı Veli, son of Süleyman	Sheikh of flower gardeners
1557	BŞS A 67 391a	Haydar, son of Selim	Sheikh of golden velvet dealers
1559	BŞS A 67 391a	Hacı Hüdaverdi, son of Satılmış	Sheikh of cupboard makers
1559	BŞS A 67 394b	Hüsam, son of Dedeşali	Sheikh of silver processors
1559	BŞS A 72 1a	Hacı Hüseyin, son of İne Hoca	Sheikh of silk thread dyers
1559	BŞS A 72 2b	Muhyiddin, son of Sinan	Sheikh of skullcap makers
1559	BŞS A 79 133b	Hacı Mustafa, son of Ahmet	Sheikh of cupboard makers
1559	BŞS A 72 15a	Osman, son of Resul	Sheikh of chest makers
1559	BŞS A 67 391a	Hacı Seydi, son of Hacı Mehmet	Sheikh of double-lined taffeta makers
1559	BŞS A 72 1a	Hasan, son of Abdi	Technical supervisor of dyers of silk thread
1560	BŞS A 72 218a	Seyyid Mustafa, son of Cafer	The sheikh and head of barbers, both attendants and bath owners
1560	BŞS A 72 226b	Hacı Hüseyin, son of Yahşi	Sheikh of cooked sheep's heads
1560	BŞS A 72 216b	Yusuf, son of Mehmet	Sheikh of smiths
1561	BŞS A 113 140a	Yakob, son of Yahya	Market superintendent to Jewish traders
1587	BŞS A 145 65a	Hacı Sefer, son of Nebi	The warden and head of cooks
1595	BŞS B 12 59a	Hasan Çelebi, son of Aydın	Legal expert of drapers

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1609	BŞS B 27 95a	Seyyid Hasan	Market superintendent of greengrocers
1618	BŞS B 38 7a	Mehmet Çelebi, son of Suca Efendi	Technical supervisor of cloth merchants
1649	BŞS B 74 84b	Mehmet, son of İbrahim	Head of bookbinders
1680	BŞS B 38 159a	Mehmet, son of Seyyid İbrahim	Warden of woodworkers

TABLE 2*		
Taxes Paid by Trade Guilds to the Imperial Army in 1688		
GUILDS	TOTAL TAX PAID IN KURUŞ	TENTS
Perfumers and Herbalists	17.000	2
Cloth merchants	24.000	2
Bakers	40.000	2
Iron tip makers for boots	14.000	2
Boot merchants	14.000	2
Makers and sellers of cheep shoes	14.000	2
Cotton and wool fluffers	12.000	1
Silk manufacturers	14.000	2
Candle makers	12.000	1
Packsaddle makers	6.000	1
Dealers in second hand wares	10.000	2
Drapers	20.000	2
Expert archers	14.000	1
Saddlers	10.000	1
Makers of horse shoes	10.000	2
Greengrocers	57.000	2
Dealers in barley	10.000	2

\* This table is based on the data obtained from the document, BŞS B 148 20a.

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Cooks	20.000	1
Hair rope makers	18.000	2
Barbers	11.000	2
Butchers	45.000	1
Sword makers	16.000	1
Sellers of cooked sheep's heads	20.000	1

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