

INTRODUCTION

BRINGING THE PEASANTS BACK IN?

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FOR 20 YEARS NOW PEASANTS HAVE BEEN ALMOST COMPLETELY ABSENT from Ottomanist historiography. Since 1996 almost no major monograph has been devoted to Ottoman peasant history. This is in sharp contrast with the importance given to the study of Ottoman rural society and economy by earlier Ottomanist historiography. In his classic *History of the Ottoman Empire*, published in 1973, the doyen of Ottoman studies, Halil İnalcık, described the Ottoman Empire as a ‘peasant empire’.¹ However, for the Ottomanist historiography of the beginning of the twenty-first century, it looks as though the Ottoman Empire was rather an ‘empire of difference’.²

This historiographical shift is apparently the result of the more general ‘cultural turn’ in modern historiography. As Suraiya Faroqhi puts it in her paper in this volume, since “villagers before the late 1800s – or even the twentieth century – have left very few traces of their cultural orientations, including even religious practice, with a few notable exceptions, once culture and identity dominated the scene, Ottoman peasants disappeared from the historiography.”³

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I wish to thank my colleague Antonis Anastasopoulos for his comments on this introduction.

- 1 H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (1973, reprinted with new preface (New Rochelle, NY 1989), xiv. Reference from Amy Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge - New York 1994), 2. See also H. İnalcık, ‘The Çift-Hane System: The Organization of Ottoman Rural Economy’, in H. İnalcık with D. Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge 1994), 143-154; idem, ‘Village, Peasant and Empire’, in idem, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington 1993), 137-160.
- 2 K. Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge 2008).
- 3 See below, p. 10. See also eadem, ‘Ottoman Peasants and Rural Life: The Historiography of the Twentieth Century’, *ArchOtt*, 18 (2000), 153-182; ‘Agriculture and Rural Life in the Ottoman Empire (ca 1500-1878) (A Report on Scholarly Literature Published Between 1970 and 1985)’, *NPT*, 1 (1987), 3-34.

This volume follows an initiative aimed at putting the peasants back on the agenda of Ottoman history.⁴ However, we do not seek (how could we?) to reinstate the historiographical *status quo ante* nor to attack the many achievements of contemporary historiography. Moreover, unlike the earlier approach of some ‘classic’ works on this subject, which focused on the state as a central actor in rural societies, our symposium, the Eighth Halcyon Days in Crete Symposium of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FO.R.T.H., held in Rethymno on 13-15 January 2012, sought to investigate economic and social relations in the rural countryside of the Ottoman Empire not only from the viewpoint of the central administration, but also from that of rural societies.⁵ In the present volume, our aim is to highlight themes that are still today unexplored or deserve revision, and throw light on the diverse trajectories of rural economies and societies in the long history and vast lands of the Ottoman Empire.

Of course, research into Ottoman rural societies and economies does not have to start from scratch. Just before turning its back on the peasants, in the 1990s Ottomanist historiography produced some very important works on the history of Ottoman rural societies and economies, and their impact is much felt in many of the contributions in this volume. These include Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert’s seminal *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, H. İslamoğlu-İnan’s *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire*, the volumes edited by Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak on *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, and by Halil Berktaş and Suraiya Faroqhi concerning *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, Amy Singer’s dissertation concerning *Palestinian Peasants*, and Linda T. Darling’s detailed study of the nature and transformation of Ottoman tax-collection mechanisms.⁶

The issue of the legal and real rights to agricultural land has been a central issue for the study of the Ottoman society and economy in the historiographical tradition of the

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- 4 Following Nicolas Michel, ‘Introduction. Ottomanisme et ruralisme’, in M. Afifi *et al.* (eds), *Sociétés rurales ottomanes/Ottoman Rural Societies* (Cairo 2005), 1-16. In this introduction, Nicolas Michel shows that in France, Germany, and Britain, rural historiography has been reviving during the last 20 years. The volume by Afifi *et al.*, with its emphasis on the Arab rural lands, and the present volume, with an emphasis on the ‘central’ Ottoman rural lands, should be read as complementary.
 - 5 For a sharp critique of earlier approaches to Ottoman rural history focusing on the state rather than the peasants, see H. Berktaş and S. Faroqhi (eds), *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History* (London 1992), 109-184. This publication has also appeared as *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 18/3-4 (April/July 1991).
 - 6 İnalçık with Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*; H. İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia during the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden 1994). For a new edition in Turkish with an extensive introduction by the author see: eadem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Köylü* (Istanbul 2010), 19-100; Ç. Keyder - F. Tabak (eds), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East* (Albany 1991); Berktaş and Faroqhi (eds), *New Approaches*; Singer, *Palestinian Peasants*; L. T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1550-1650* (Leiden 1996).

twentieth century. It has been examined in detail, mainly in the light of the Ottoman legal codes (*kanunnames*), which reflect the claim of the Ottoman dynasty, in accordance with the Islamic law,⁷ that all agricultural (grain) land belonged to the state (*miri*).⁸ However, as John Chr. Alexander, our symposiarch, emphasised in his introductory paper at our symposium, this claim was not accepted without dispute: both the officials of the state and the peasants were always trying to circumvent, undermine, and, in the last analysis, deny this claim. This gave rise to a constant tension concerning the definition of property in Ottoman society, reflected in the ambiguity of the related terms (*miri*, *mülk*, *vakıf*, *tasarruf*) in the Ottoman documents. It is characteristic that, in the Ottoman landholding system, the legal rights of both the *sipahis*, or any tax-takers (described as ‘lords of the land’, *sahib-i arz*), and the peasants, to the state lands (*miri*), were described by the same term, ‘usufruct’ (*tasarruf*); the latter had the ‘usufruct’ of their plots and the former the legal right to enjoy the revenues of the same lands, in return for their military or other services to the state. According to Alexander, “in the end, the essential question is, perhaps, the significance, in all its possible extrapolations in time and at the various levels of Ottoman society, of *I have, mine, and ownership*.”⁹

The Ottomans used for the peasants the terms *ra’iyet* and *reaya*, terms which refer more generally to the taxpaying population and the subjects of the Sultan (literally, they mean ‘the flock’), as opposed to the *askeri*, the military tax-takers.¹⁰ In the Ottoman centuries, peasants were tenants,¹¹ who had the obligation to cultivate certain plots of land,

7 B. Johansen, *The Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent: The Peasants’ Loss of Property Rights as Interpreted in the Hanafite Legal Literature of the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods* (London 1988).

8 H. İnalcık, ‘The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-1600’, in İnalcık with Quataert (eds), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, 103-107; C. Imber, *Ebu’s-su’ud. The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford 1997).

9 See below, p. 2. Recent research has shown that there were important exceptions to the general characterisation of grain land as *miri* land, including the Aegean islands, and Crete after 1669. See E. Kolovos, ‘Beyond “Classical” Ottoman *Defterology*: A Preliminary Assessment of the *Tahrir* Registers of 1670/71 concerning Crete and the Aegean Islands’, in E. Kolovos, P. Kotzageorgis, S. Laiou and M. Sariyannis (eds), *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Toward a Social and Economic History; Studies in Honor of John C. Alexander* (Istanbul 2007), 201-235.

10 In the Arabic sources, peasants were referred to more precisely as *fallah*, plural *fallahun*, cultivators. Singer, *Palestinian Peasants*, 11-12.

11 Ottoman peasants were not serfs, since they did not belong personally to anyone. However, since they were tied to the lands they cultivated, and these lands were actually controlled by tax-takers, they were implicitly attached to the latter. A farmer could not abandon his plot and move to another area, unless he paid a rather heavy penalty (*çift-bozan resmi*). Dariusz Kołodziejczyk makes, in his paper in this volume, a comparison between Ottoman peasants and serfs in seventeenth-century Eastern Europe, see below, p. 59-60 For the debate concerning feudalism and Asiatic mode of production and Ottoman rural society, see H. Berktaş, ‘The Feudalism Debate: The Turkish End - Is ‘Tax - vs. - Rent’ Necessarily the Product and Sign of a Modal Difference?’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 14/3 (1987), 291-333, versus C. Wickham, ‘The Uniqueness of the East’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 12 (1984), 166-196.

without altering their original use, or selling, donating, endowing, or mortgaging them; however, Ottoman peasants had the right to transfer their plots to their children, and even to other farmers as well (*ferağ*). Moreover, peasants, as well as the tax-takers, had also the right to acquire land as a private property (*mülk*) in the case of vegetable plots, vineyards, or fruit trees. In this respect, peasants could be put in the centre of historical research as social actors who fought to expand their rights against both the tax-takers and the state (and their fellow-villagers as well). According to Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, the Ottoman landholding system, which left the organisation of production to the peasants themselves, with hereditary rights, provided the peasants with a ‘minimal space’ for productive initiative. This was an important space for social action.¹²

Unfortunately, in Ottomanist historiography we do not have (and are unlikely to have in the future), a study similar to that of Montaignou by Emmanuel Le Roy-Ladurie. However, the *micro-history* of Ottoman peasant communities constitutes a promising area for further research. Suraiya Faroqhi, in her paper in this volume, embarks on such a micro-historical study, introducing us the district of Gebze, in the vicinity of Istanbul, during the eighteenth century. Faroqhi focuses especially on the contested character of Ottoman peasant life, analysing the disputes concerning the legal status of the lands between the local tax-takers with one another, and, more importantly, with the peasants. She shows us, for example, peasants planting trees on agricultural land, or making them fruitful, in order to acquire them as their property, actions that gave rise to the legal reaction of the tax-takers, who claimed their right to control the crops cultivated on their lands. Faroqhi focuses especially on the strategies that the peasants used to avoid the ‘hated’ *resm-i tapu*, the transfer tax on their lands. Other disputes examined by Faroqhi include the case of peasants who refused to return their plots when they had been left uncultivated for more than three years, because of drought, lack of oxen, or illness in the family. Faroqhi’s research also reveals women who fought for their right to inherit their deceased brother’s lands. Disputes over land reflect the contested character of Ottoman landholding and they are to be found quite often in the judicial documents. Faroqhi examines a special case of a border dispute between two pious foundations (*vakıfs*) in Gebze, which went so far as to remove the stones that marked the limits of the lands. Such disputes were also very frequent between Christian Orthodox monasteries, as examined in the relevant section of this volume below.¹³

Overall, Ottoman peasants were not eager to pay their taxes without complaint, or even a fight. The perfect example was given by Amy Singer in her book on the Palestinian peasants, and is cited in this volume by Dariusz Kołodziejczyk: in 1531, in the village of Bayt Jālā, south of Jerusalem, some of the local peasants chased away the Ottoman surveyor with the following curse, which tells us a great deal about the legitimacy

12 İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire*, 243-245.

13 See below, p. 163-208. Border disputes were also common between peasants and nomads or semi-nomads who entered the village pastures with their flocks. Faroqhi examines cases in the area of Gebze, where, in one example, the peasants of a certain village were almost ready to leave their fields because of the attacks of migrant Kurds and Turcomans.

of the Ottoman landholding system for the peasants: “your writing down (*kitābatukum*) is like the wind from a donkey” (!).¹⁴ In this volume, Faroqhi gives an account of a case in Gebze where the peasants of a village refused to pay one-eighth and insisted that they should pay only the true tithe, ten per cent. In another case, villagers resisted an attempt to collect more than a flat rate for the produce of their orchards, invoking tradition. The administration, however, as Faroqhi notes, refused such claims, since, in the eighteenth century, they wanted to support the newly instituted life-time tax farmers by guaranteeing their revenues. On the other hand, provincial elites were struggling to acquire control of the lands. Faroqhi examines a case of a local ‘strongman’ in Tuzla, who tried to prevent the villagers from pasturing their animals on the village commons, which he attempted to retain for his own use, usurped agricultural lands belonging to the peasants, and overcharged the latter on their tithes.

Village autonomy, i.e., self-governance and self-regulation of rural communities, was a cornerstone of Ottoman rural societies. Rhoads Murphey, in his contribution in this volume, argues that many aspects of village life were unaffected by the gradual process of Ottomanisation. Interestingly, he suggests that this was a fact not only acknowledged, but also supported by the pre-modern Ottoman state, which actually held a position more of a passive observer than of an active regulator of the social norms and practices in the rural societies of the ‘protected domains’. This approach stands in sharp contrast with the earlier state-centred and literalistic interpretation of state-peasant relations, especially by Ömer Lütfi Barkan, who argued for an all-centralising land-tenure regime fully controlled by an almighty Ottoman state.¹⁵ Instead, Murphey argues that “to rule its diverse empire effectively and to minimise the potential for controversy, fiscal expectations and even normative values had to be modified and occasionally set aside to achieve the greater good of smooth governance. With respect to the fine tuning and micro-managing of many aspects of its relations with the inhabitants of the rural and provincial spheres, the [Ottoman] state could not afford for practical reasons to be overbearing or over-intrusive and had to learn to accept what it was incapable of changing.”¹⁶

14 See below, p. 57, quoting Singer, *Palestinian Peasants*, 37. See also another case-study in E. Kolovos, ‘Riot in the Village: Some Cases of Peasant Protest Around Ottoman Salonica’, in A. Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Political Initiatives ‘From the Bottom-Up’ in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete VII, A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2009* (Rethymno 2012), 47-56.

15 See Ö. L. Barkan, *Türkiye’de Toprak Meselesi* (Istanbul 1980) [a collection of his papers]. Cf. also the sharp critique by H. Bertkay, ‘The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/Historiography’, in Bertkay and Faroqhi (eds), *New Approaches*, 109-184.

16 See below, p. 36. The work of the Greek scholar Spyros Asdrachas is very important for the analysis of the autonomy of the Greek rural communities under Ottoman rule. See especially Sp. I. Asdrachas, ‘Φορολογικές και περιοριστικές λειτουργίες των κοινοτήτων στην Τουρκοκρατία [Taxation and restrictive functions of communities under Turkish rule]’, *Τα Ιστορικά*, 3/5 (1986), 45-62; idem, ‘Νησιωτικές κοινότητες: οι φορολογικές λειτουργίες [Island communities: taxation functions]’, *Τα Ιστορικά*, 5/8-9 (1988), 3-36, 229-258. Asdrachas has edited a collective volume entitled *Greek Economic History, 15th-19th centuries*, transl. D. Sloman

Earlier Ottomanist historiography worked especially with the Ottoman tax registers (*tahrir defterleri*). Ömer Lutfi Barkan, for example, systematically studied these sources, using them more to show the supposed might of the Ottoman state over the rural economy than as a source for Ottoman rural history.¹⁷ As a consequence, this historiographical trend did not meet sufficiently with the methodology of economic history, with one notable exception: the experimental study of Bruce McGowan, who tried to estimate with the methodology of economic history production and consumption in the Middle Danube; McGowan, however, found no followers.¹⁸ Heath Lowry has successfully described the studies based on the *tahrir defterleri* as *defterology*; he was, however, the same scholar who stressed their pitfalls and limitations.¹⁹ On the other hand, economic historians like Metin Coşgel have recently suggested that the data from the Ottoman tax registers, which include estimates of agricultural production at different dates (and not actual production measurements), can be used *adequately* as data by economic historians, who actually *prefer* average data in order to make useful generalisations.²⁰ Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, revisiting in this volume his earlier publication of the *defter* of Kamanice, embarks upon these new vistas in order to compare the agrarian productivity in seventeenth-century Ottoman Podolia with that of sixteenth-century Hungary and Anatolia, to the advantage of the latter. Kołodziejczyk, in his paper, experiments also with a grain production model comparing Podolia with Mazovia, suggesting that the Podolian peasant household did better than the Mazovian one in the same century.

Moreover, scholars, like Stefka Parveva in this volume, have attempted to include new sources in the earlier *defterology* sample, from the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, which add new potential to the study of rural society, especially as regards the

(Athens 2007), with many chapters on the rural history of the Greek lands; see also Vol. II, *Sources*, ed. E. Liata, trans. J. Davis (Athens 2007).

- 17 See Ö. L. Barkan, 'Türkiye'de İmparatorluk devirlerinin büyük nüfus ve arazi tahrirleri ve hakana mahsus istatistik defterleri', *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 2 (1940-41), 20-59 and 214-47; idem, 'Essai sur les données statistiques des registres de recensement dans l'empire ottoman aux XVe et XVIe siècles', *JESHO*, 1 (1958), 9-36; idem, 'Research on the Ottoman Fiscal Surveys', in M. A. Cook (ed.), *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, (Oxford 1970), 163-71. The 'classic' edition of the registers of the *sancak* of Bursa was published after the death of Barkan. Ö. L. Barkan - E. Meriçli, *Hüdavendigâr Livası Tahrir Defterleri*, I (Ankara 1988).
- 18 B. McGowan, 'Food Supply and Taxation on the Middle Danube (1568-1579)', *ArchOtt*, 1 (1969), 139-96. McGowan has also published an exemplary transcription of the register of Srem, *Sirem Sancağı Mufassal Tahrir Defteri* (Ankara 1983).
- 19 H. Lowry, 'The Ottoman *tahrir defterleri* as a Source for Social and Economic History: Pitfalls and Limitations', in idem, *Studies in Defterology: Ottoman Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Istanbul 1992), 3-18. Another important study, showing that the study of the *defters* as a source for economic history has to be very careful was that of John Alexander, 'Counting the Grains: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Reading the Ottoman Mufassal Tahrir Defters', *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies*, 19-20 (1999), 55-70.
- 20 M. M. Coşgel, 'Ottoman Tax Registers (*Tahrir Defterleri*)', *Historical Methods*, 37 (2004), 87-100.

economic and social stratifications in the countryside.²¹ (Additionally, Socrates Petmezas in his paper in our volume uses non-Ottoman sources, i.e., the Venetian *Cadaastro* of Vostizza, completed in 1700, to study the land tenure and land settlement patterns of late seventeenth-century Ottoman and early eighteenth-century Venetian Vostizza in the Morea.) Stefka Parveva's study suggests that in the south-western Peloponnese in the early eighteenth century, villages had a grain surplus before the payment of the poll-tax and the *ispence*, but not after subtracting from this surplus the necessary amount for the payment of the aforementioned taxes. These findings corroborate earlier suggestions by Spyros Asdrachas also concerning the Peloponnese.²²

The Ottoman survey registers have also been traditionally used for the study of settlement patterns in the rural countryside. Oktay Özel, in his paper in this volume, revisits the earlier studies of Ottoman Anatolia by the historical geographers Xavier de Planhol and Wolf Dieter Hütteroth.²³ Anatolia was a region which, after demographic growth during the early sixteenth century, experienced major settlement destruction during the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, which actually lasted well into the nineteenth century. This was a phenomenon termed 'The Great Flight' (*Büyük Kaçgunluk*) by Mustafa Akdağ.²⁴ Recently, Sam White has suggested that the climate change described as the 'Little Ice Age' was a direct cause of the *Celali* rebellions and settlement destruction.²⁵ Özel's study of the abandoned settlements in the province of Amasya, based on rich data provided in the *mufassal avarız* and *cizye* registers of the seventeenth century, corroborates Hütteroth's findings regarding the Central Anatolian plateau to a striking extent: "The number of ruined, and partially or wholly abandoned, villages in the Anatolian provinces had indeed reached to the extent where any seemingly exaggerated portrayal of the phenomenon by contemporaries was thoroughly warranted." (p. 107).

It has been already argued that the Ottoman survey registers are a very important source for a variety of issues. A further use of the registers is for the study of conversions to Islam in the countryside. In this volume, Phokion Kotzageorgis embarks upon such a study through the survey registers, focusing on a comparative study of two cases of conversion among rural populations in northern Greece: the Greek-speaking 'Vallahades' of the province of Voion and the region of Grevena (who, according to tradition, were given their name by the Christians, because of the fact that the only Turkish-Arabic word the 'Vallahades' knew was 'wallahi'), and the Slav-speaking 'Pomaks' of the Rhodope

21 See also E. Kolovos, 'Insularity and Island Society in the Ottoman Context: The Case of the Aegean Island of Andros (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)', *Turcica*, 39 (2007), 49-122.

22 S. Asdrachas, 'Le surplus rural dans les régions de Méditerranée orientale: les mécanismes' in *Actes du IIe Colloque International d'histoire. Economies méditerranéennes équilibrées et intercommunications XIIIe-XIXe siècles*, Vol. 2 (Athens 1986), 32-40.

23 X. de Planhol, *De la plaine pamphylienne aux lacs pisidiens. Nomadisme et vie paysanne* (Paris 1959); W. D. Hütteroth, *Ländliche Siedlungen im südlichen Inneranatolien in den letzten vierhundert Jahren* (Göttingen 1968).

24 M. Akdağ, 'Celali İsyanlarından Büyük Kaçgunluk, 1603-1606', *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, II/2-3 (1964), 1-49.

25 Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge 2011).

Mountains. Kotzageorgis argues that the conversion phenomenon in the Balkans does not easily lend itself to any typology: the particular socio-economic, spatial, and cultural conditions affected the time, the motive, and the manner of conversion to Islam. It is important to note, however, that, according to Kotzageorgis, “economic deficiency was a phenomenon that characterised both rural societies; however, the question is to what extent it was the case in previous centuries.” (p. 154).

A separate section in this volume examines monasteries as social and economic units in the countryside of the Balkans and the Aegean Sea. Elias Kolovos reviews the recent Greek historiography of the monasteries in the Greek lands under the Ottomans, focusing on their social and economic functions. Big monasteries had important landed assets in the countryside and were involved in a variety of economic activities, agriculture, stockbreeding, fishing, woodcutting, in order to secure their autarchy in times of crisis. In relation to that, historiography has described the monasteries as ‘enterprises’ and has embarked upon research into their contribution to the development of the rural landscape, the expansion and the improvement of cultivation. The latest achievement of efforts in exploiting the Ottoman archives of the monasteries of the Greek lands, the publication of the Ottoman archive of St John’s Monastery on Patmos,²⁶ is presented in this volume in the papers of Elizabeth Zachariadou (who was the first scholar to highlight the value of monastic archives for Ottoman history), Nicolas Vatin, and Michael Ursinus. Zachariadou and Vatin describe the geographical expansion of the monastic economy of Patmos into the world of the Aegean islands. Ursinus, on the other hand, focuses on the island of Patmos itself and makes an attempt to map the monastic lands of Patmos and their topography.

The nature of Ottoman landholding, which was based mainly on the *timar* system, has been investigated sufficiently in earlier historiography. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that no study in this volume is devoted solely to the *timars*. On the other hand, in our volume, Nicolas Michel investigates in detail the involvement of the military in sixteenth-century Egypt, through a study of the inheritance inventories (*daftar muḥallaḫāḫāt*). He concludes that the city-based military elites in Egypt were actually involved in rural investments. Michel’s findings are in contrast with the traditional view of the sixteenth-century Ottoman military as a *rentier* group, living from the revenues granted to them, without any day-to-day involvement in the rural economy.

A major debate in earlier historiography of Ottoman rural societies and economies concerned their transformation during the slow transition to capitalism. In this debate, Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein suggested that the rise of demand for cereals in Western Europe caused the formation of big landholdings in the Ottoman Empire, which prompted the supply of the European demand through the commercialisation of agricultural production. On the other hand, Ottomanists who have studied the sources for the formation of big estates (McGowan, Veinstein, Keyder, Kasaba, Tabak) concluded that the Ottoman Empire remained an empire of generally small landholdings, with only

26 N. Vatin, G. Veinstein and E. Zachariadou, *Catalogue du fonds ottoman des archives du monastère de Saint-Jean à Patmos. Les vingt-deux premiers dossiers* (Athens 2011).

relatively few big estates. Thus, “commodity production by small-owning peasantry represented an alternative mode of integration into the market”.²⁷

In their paper, Antonis Anastasopoulos and Eleni Gara focus on the ‘chiftlicisation process’ in the case of eighteenth century Karaferye, where the local Muslim elite had obtained control of a considerable part of the countryside. The sources they have examined in detail suggest that this major change in the Ottoman landholding pattern was caused by an unprecedented increase in taxation, combined with population decline. The collapse of the free peasantry in Karaferye under the heavy exactions of the central administration is to be dated to the years of the war with the Holy League in 1684-1699.

The paper by Theocharis Stavrides in this volume provides a detailed example of how European merchants created links with small producers in the case of Cyprus. Stavrides shows that credit from European merchants was one of the primary ways of financing agriculture in eighteenth-century Cyprus. In return for the cash provided by the European merchants, the small landholders gave the merchants marketable agricultural products, necessary for their mercantile activities. In this way, the European merchants were able to safeguard their supply well before the harvesting season. Stavrides links this phenomenon directly with the increase in international trade, leading to the abandonment of subsistence agriculture and the rise of commercial agriculture and cash crops, such as cotton. For the peasants, this resulted to their transformation from small-time independent farmers to agricultural workers. As shown in the penultimate section of this volume, this was a trend which continued during the nineteenth century.

A series of three papers in this volume, all from a dynamic research group from Boğaziçi and Ege Universities, examine the ‘great transformation’ of Ottoman agrarian relations during the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century has been described by Eric Hobsbawm as an era of ‘legal revolution’, among other revolutions;²⁸ all around Europe, feudalism and serfdom were abolished in favour of installing markets in land and labour. Yücel Terzibaşoğlu suggests that we should attempt to understand the Tanzimat reforms, and especially the Ottoman land code of 1858, within this comparative framework.²⁹ The Tanzimat reforms led to the institution of individual ownership of land, through a transformation, first, from multiple rights to individually exclusive rights, and second, from communally-held rights (commons) to individual rights. Terzibaşoğlu, in his paper researching nineteenth-century Ottoman provincial councils in the Balkans as law-makers and courts, observes a trend in the course of the nineteenth century towards the criminalisation of customary practices of agrarian communities. Alp Yücel Kaya’s research on *çiftlik*s and sharecropping in nineteenth-century Ottoman Tırhala (Gk. Trikala) shows that the traditional labour bondage to the soil survived well into the mid nineteenth century, in favour of the profit of the Ottoman *çiftlik*-holders. Moreover, it is of extreme importance to note that these agrarian relations and the social questions they entailed were

27 Keyder and Tabak (eds), *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture*, 3.

28 E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (London 1962), 151-160.

29 See H. İslamoğlu, ‘Property as a Contested Domain: A Re-evaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858’, *Ottoman History as World History* (Istanbul 2007), 210.

inherited after the annexation of Thessaly to Greece in 1881, when the absentee Ottoman pashas sold all their *çiflik*s to major financiers of the Greek Diaspora, at least until the post-World War I agrarian reforms. Last, but not least, Meltem Toksöz, examines in her paper the 1858 Ottoman Land Code from the regional perspective of Çukurova. According to her study, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman Çukurova gained unprecedented access to economic incentives, commercial mechanisms, and infrastructural improvements. As a result, by 1908, Çukurova, according to Toksöz, “became a land of shared hegemony between foreign capitalists, the burgeoning indigenous classes, and the state” (p. 395).

The final section in our volume examines two particular challenges for the future of the historiography of Ottoman rural societies and economies. The first challenge is that of the robust field of environmental history. How environmental and rural history (and even beyond...) can be interrelated is, I believe, magnificently shown in the *opus magnum* of the late Faruk Tabak on the *Waning of the Mediterranean*.³⁰ More recently, two contributions concerning more specifically Ottoman environmental history have been published: Alan Mikhail’s *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt* and Sam White’s *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*.³¹ Alan Mikhail has kindly contributed a paper for our volume as well, researching the role of rural engineers in the environment of Ottoman Egypt between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Mikhail, these early modern engineers “helped to make the rural world” of Egypt: “They served as crucial intermediaries between imperial desires and ambitions and local ecological realities and economic interests.” (p. 413).

The other challenge I would like to address for the future of the study of rural societies and economies is that of the digital humanities.³² The prospects and limitations of the challenge of Digital Humanities are examined in the paper of Antonis Hadjikyriacou and Elias Kolovos. The authors have embarked upon a project of studying the Ottoman rural economies with the help of digital humanities. They emphasise the fact that the unprecedented level of sophisticated and complex mathematical calculations provided by new

30 Faruk Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870* (Baltimore 2008).

31 Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (Cambridge 2011); White, *The Climate of Rebellion*.

32 See the recent paper by C. Gratien, M. Polczynski, and N. Shafir, ‘Digital Frontiers of Ottoman Studies’, *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 1:1-2 (2014), 37-51. Another challenge for the future of Ottoman rural studies should be that of Ottoman archaeology, which is still in its infancy. See U. Baram and L. Carroll (ed.), *A Historical Archeology of the Ottoman Empire: Breaking New Ground* (New York 2002). See also A. K. Vionis: ‘The Archeology of Ottoman Villages in Central Greece: Ceramics, Housing and Everyday Life in Post-Medieval Boeotia’, *Hayat Erkanal’a Armağan: Kültürlerin Yansıması/Studies in Honor of Hayat Erkanal: Cultural Reflections* (Istanbul 2006), 784-800; idem, *A Crusader, Ottoman, and Early Modern Aegean Archeology: Built Environment and Domestic Material Culture in the Medieval and Post-Medieval Cyclades, Greece (13th-30th Centuries AD)* (Leiden 2012). Also F. Zarinebaf, J. Bennet, and J. L. Davis, *A Historical and Economic Geography of Ottoman Greece: The Southwestern Morea in the 18th Century* (Athens 2005); however, see my review of this publication in *IJMES*, 40 (2008), 139-140.

digital tools in processing masses of numerical data from Ottoman land and fiscal survey registers has to be put to use. The potential practical results of the use of Digital Humanities in the study of Ottoman rural economies are shown in the paper of Socrates Petmezas, who has used Geographical Information Systems (G.I.S.) to visualise the structures of land tenure and land settlement as per the 1700 Venetian Cadastro of Vostizza. The efforts of his Institute for Mediterranean Studies team have managed to relate the structures depicted in the 1700 Cadastro with present-day patterns of land settlement, as shown in the modern Greek Cadastre (see <http://vostizza.ims.forth.gr>).

In the year 2000, in the closing sentence of her review of the historiography of the twentieth century on Ottoman peasants and rural life, Suraiya Faroqhi duly noted that “The ‘search for the Ottoman peasant’ is likely to continue for a long time to come.”³³ We sincerely hope that this volume is a contribution to this research project, which, of course, has still a long way to go.

33 S. Faroqhi, ‘Ottoman Peasants and Rural Life: the Historiography of the Twentieth Century’, *ArchOtt*, 18 (2000), 153-182.