

2 Ottoman reform and European imperialism, 1839–1907

The mid-nineteenth-century legal, administrative, and fiscal reforms known as the Tanzimat are widely considered the beginning of the modern period, inspired by the ideas of secularism and progress promoted by the French revolution (Lewis 1961; Davison 1963; Berkes 1964; Shaw & Shaw 1976–77). The salient politico-legal markers of the Tanzimat era are the 1839 Gülhane Edict (*Hatt-ı Şerif*), the 1856 Reform Decree (*Islahat Fermanı*), and the 1876 constitution, which was abrogated in 1878 by Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). The Tanzimat decrees abolished tax farming, introduced military conscription, and promised legal equality for all the sultan’s subjects regardless of their religious community. They also marked the adoption of a European-influenced discourse of “reform” that justified practices elites hoped would strengthen the Ottoman state.

The Tanzimat decrees discursively authorized the central categories of a modern political economy: “citizens,” the constituent elements of nation-states; and “the economy” as an abstract entity distinct from the state and subject to its own rules. The Gülhane Edict’s promise of “perfect security to all the populations of our Empire in their lives, their honor, and their properties” resonates with phrases of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, though its origin as a royal decree is in tension with the spirit of the words (Hurewitz 1975: I, 270–71). The 1856 Reform Decree deems the sultan’s subjects to be “united to each other by the cordial ties of patriotism,” and proclaims freedom of religion and equality of Muslims and non-Muslims in admission to governmental schools, treatment before the courts, military service, and taxation. It also orders that “everything that can impede commerce or agriculture shall be abolished. To accomplish these objects means shall be sought to promote by the science, the art, and the funds of Europe” (Hurewitz 1975: I, 315, 318). These edicts became foundational documents legitimizing the subsequent elaboration of the categories of “the economy” and “citizens.”

Despite these discursive ruptures, the Tanzimat era is also an extension of earlier elite efforts to recentralize and enhance the capacities of the

Ottoman state. Fiscal and military reforms were introduced in the Tulip Period (1718–30) and again in the 1790s. These initiatives were successfully opposed by a coalition of regional notables, conservative scholars of religion (*ülema*), the Janissary Corps, and the Bektāşi *su* order. Sultan Mahmud II's abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826 removed the most formidable institutional barrier to modernizing the army and liberalizing the economy. He also introduced a census and revoked all remaining rural military holdings (*timars*) in 1831, enabling more efficient tax collection.

The Tanzimat was also shaped by military and diplomatic demands of the moment. The Ottomans needed British support for ousting the Egyptian army from greater Syria and in the negotiations for the Treaty of Paris following the Crimean War. In exchange for their support for the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire from 1840 to 1878, British diplomats demanded public commitments to uphold the legal equality of Christians and Jews. The same European pressures that contributed to the 1839 Gülhane Edict also introduced a regime of free trade and intensified economic linkages between Europe and the Middle East.

The 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention, whose terms were subsequently endorsed by other European powers, ended all local monopolies and protectionist trade practices, imposed a low uniform tariff of 5 percent on Ottoman imports, and established special courts to adjudicate commercial disputes involving Europeans. The 1840 and 1841 Treaties of London confirmed the expulsion of Mehmed 'Ali's army from greater Syria, extended free trade to Egypt, and limited the size of the Egyptian army to 18,000. These measures delivered the final blow to the Pasha's industrial program by reducing the size of the primary market for products of his new factories and disallowing the protectionist measures necessary to sustain import-substitution industrialization. Trade between Europe and the Middle East was facilitated by new communications links: steamship service to eastern Mediterranean ports from 1835; steamboat navigation on the Tigris River from 1859; and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

Long-term economic trends from 1839 to 1907 encompass three phases. The first, which substantially overlaps with the Tanzimat era, is the mid-Victorian expansion of 1838–73, when demand for Middle Eastern agricultural products increased sharply. Cotton and silk were the most important Middle Eastern exports throughout the nineteenth century. Egyptian long-staple cotton, first exported in 1823, commanded a premium because of its suitability to mechanical looms and luxurious fiber (Owen 1969: 34). Cereals, valonia (for tanning leather), madder and yellow berries (for dyes), and opium were also leading commodities. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, raisins, figs, and tobacco

became increasingly important. As European trade with the Ottoman Empire grew, Britain replaced France as the dominant European trade partner. Between 1835 and 1850 the declared value of British exports to the eastern Mediterranean more than doubled; manufactured cotton goods comprised as much as 75 percent of the total (Owen 1981a: 85). The Ottoman Empire became Britain's second-largest export market. European direct investment contributed to the expansion of cultivation and early manufacturing stages of silk, cotton, and sugar in Lebanon, Egypt, and Anatolia. In 1852 European banks began offering commercial loans to the Ottoman central government and the increasingly autonomous provinces of Egypt and Tunisia.

During the recessionary phase of 1873–96, known as the “Great Depression,” prices of agricultural commodities – the principal Middle Eastern exports – declined, and rates of economic growth in several countries diminished. “Both the rapid decline in world wheat prices and the establishment of European control over Ottoman finances were products of the same conjuncture, the post-1873 Depression” (Pamuk 1984: 116–18). The end of the mid-Victorian boom was accompanied by state bankruptcies and imposition of European financial control over Tunisia through the International Financial Commission in 1869, Egypt through the Caisse de la Dette Publique in 1876, and the Ottoman central government through the Public Debt Commission in 1881. These debt-collecting institutions consolidated “the economy” as a modern category separate from politics and dominated by Europe.

Financial domination followed by political and military interventions signaled the era of the “new imperialism” – an extension of the accelerated circulation of European commodities, capital, and people during the mid-Victorian boom and an intensification of European economic, military, and political domination over large parts of Africa and Asia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century involving increasing numbers of working people who were relatively unaffected by earlier commercial and financial interactions.¹ The loss of economic and then political independence was in part the consequence of intensified financial and commercial relations that undermined the stability of the old order as the mid-Victorian boom collapsed. The most salient Middle Eastern manifestations of the advent of the new imperialism were the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 and the British occupations of Cyprus in 1878 and Egypt in 1882. In addition, during 1878–82 the European powers supported the secession of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire, while Russia occupied Kars and Ardahan.

The third phase of this period is the resumption of economic expansion during 1896–1913, interrupted by the economic crisis of 1906–08: a

London-centered recession exacerbated by a collapse in the price of silver (the basis of the Ottoman currency) in relation to gold (the standard for British pounds). That crisis influenced the development of the Egyptian nationalist movement and the 1908 Young Turk revolution, the markers of the beginning of the next period.

Social transformations related to economic ties with Europe were limited in time and space and not necessarily the primary motive force of social and economic developments or changes in the lives of workers and peasants. Some inland regions, such as Mosul, felt the impact of the world capitalist market only faintly and indirectly (Shields 1991). In its diverse local economy, winter grains constituted more than half of all agricultural production, but rice, tobacco, sesame, cotton, and fruits and vegetables were also grown. No large estates producing crops for export developed. The leather-tanning and cotton-weaving crafts continued to prosper. Indian and British machine-spun yarns were sometimes imported, but as a supplement to local hand-spun yarn. Mosul leathers and cottons were sold throughout a 500-mile radius in regions located in contemporary Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Trade with Europe was secondary to local and regional trade. In other inland regions such as Transjordan, the extension of railway lines facilitated the cultivation and export of commercial crops and the settlement of bedouin (Rogan 1999). However, social changes linked to the impact of the world market in Transjordan were less substantial and of less regional significance than those in the port cities of Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, Beirut, Alexandria, Tunis, Algiers, and their hinterlands.

Sectarian conflict and economic competition in greater Syria

Free trade and the proclamation of the legal equality of all Ottoman subjects widened the economic gap between Muslims and non-Muslims. Non-Muslim minorities became more firmly entrenched as intermediaries between European capital and Muslim merchants, craftsmen, peasants, and large landowners, while Europeans intervened in Ottoman affairs under the pretext of “defending Christian rights.” From 1840 on, the relatively tolerant pattern of intercommunal relations was disrupted with increasingly violent consequences, reaching a crescendo with the ethnic cleansing of Armenians and Greeks from Anatolia in 1915–23.

A common assumption of the contemporary reports of European diplomats, merchants, and missionaries, subsequently accepted by many Orientalist scholars and more recently by proponents of the “conflict of civilizations” thesis, is that Muslims were always innately hostile towards non-Muslims.² Accordingly, they argued that in the mid-nineteenth

century this primordial hostility was aggravated by the Tanzimat edicts and new Christian practices such as ringing church bells and displaying crosses in public processions. Some Muslims did regard these practices as provocations, and in some cases they were so intended. But economic competition and the sense that ordinary Muslims fared badly as the Ottoman Empire was integrated into an economic order dominated by Christian Europe and its local allies were also factors in the sectarian violence of the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Aleppo had a history of religious toleration and economic collaboration among its several religious communities (Masters 1990). In October 1850 a demonstration against conscription developed into a riot. A Muslim crowd comprised mainly of bedouins, Turkmens, and Kurds from the eastern part of the city attacked a Uniate Christian neighborhood outside the city walls, massacred Christians, burned churches, and looted property – the first instance of Muslim violence against non-Muslims in Aleppo in Ottoman times. The rioters also demanded abolition of the head tax (*farda*, Ar.; *ferde*, Tur.) first imposed by the Egyptians.

The import of these events is best explained in the context of the city's economic decline. The head tax was less equitable than previous forms of collective taxation by city quarter or guild and fell disproportionately on less well-to-do strata. With the abolition of the Janissary Corps, former Janissaries, many of whom were guild members, lost their tax exemptions and military pay. While textile guilds persisted and found markets for their products, many service guilds disappeared. The guilds of the eastern quarters, where the caravanning and animal-products trades were concentrated, were among those most negatively affected. Thus, there was a general recession in the city which especially harmed Muslim residents of the eastern quarters of Aleppo, the main force in the riot against the Uniate Christians. Their guilds were dissolving, and they perceived themselves to be unfairly taxed while Uniate Christian merchants protected by European diplomats were prospering. Unlike the previous norm of religiously mixed guilds, segregation was increasing. These circumstances suggest that economic grievances are very likely to have been a substantial motivation of the 1850 riot.

In Mount Lebanon communal tensions, already evident in the 1820s and 1840s, erupted into civil war in the spring of 1860. The arrival of Lebanese Christian refugees in Damascus enhanced communal tensions there. The result was a large-scale Muslim attack on the Christians of the inner city on July 9, 1860 in which some 2,000 were killed.³

Antagonism between the various religious communities in Damascus was greatly exacerbated by “the growing gap between the rich and the poor” and competition between Christian and Muslim hand-loom textile

weavers (Fawaz 1994: 100). In 1859 there were 3,436 silk looms owned by Christians, nearly 3,000 of which were destroyed in the riot. By 1864 the looms were reestablished, but over 2,000 of the 3,156 looms were Muslim owned. One explanation for the greater prosperity of the Christian hand-loom weavers is that from the 1830s some weavers began to use imported English cotton yarns rather than local hand-spun thread. Lack of credit or access to foreign exchange may have limited Muslim weavers' access to imported yarn. Weavers in the Maydan quarter did not have such difficulty because merchants of the district sold grain to Europe and could supply them with foreign currency. There were no Christian weavers in the Maydan, and its Christian residents were not attacked (Schilcher 1985: 97).

Hand-loom weavers resented the introduction of mechanical looms, and Christian initiatives in this arena lent the issue a sectarian character. 'Abd Allah Bulad, a Christian protégé of France, imported three jacquard looms to Damascus which were destroyed in the 1860 riots. The ten jacquard looms functioning in 1860 in Dayr al-Qamar – the stronghold of Maronite power and wealth in Lebanon – were reduced to one in 1863, probably also as a result of communal conflict (Rafeq 1983: 429; Maoz 1968: 232; and Owen 1981a: 169 also note economic motives for communal conflict in Lebanon).

Throughout greater Syria, Muslims had grievances against Christians connected to European political, economic, and missionary activity. In the cases above and other less prominent ones, such as the anti-Christian riot in Nablus in 1856, Muslim anger was directed at Christians, specific Christian sects, or Christian neighborhoods, but usually not at Jews. Muslim–Jewish relations, while not problem free, remained good (Maoz 1968: 205–09, 226–28, 238). The stability of Muslim–Jewish relations strengthens the argument that intensified Muslim–Christian (in Lebanon, Druze–Maronite) conflict was not caused by primordial Muslim antipathy toward non-Muslims or blind resentment over the improved status of non-Muslims stipulated in the Tanzimat edicts, but by grievances of small merchants, craftsmen, and transport and service workers who fared poorly as the Ottoman Empire was integrated into the world capitalist market.

Commercial agriculture, large estates, and peasant family farms

Liberal economists view nineteenth-century changes in the agrarian regime as a linear-progressive response to the challenge of an industrializing and expanding capitalist Europe in which communal forms of land

tenure were replaced by private ownership and subsistence farming gave way to production for the market. The orthodox Marxist approach is structurally similar, though it is more attentive to the negative consequences for workers and peasants (Issawi 1982: 4; Issawi 1988: 9, 269–89; Smilianskaya 1966; Smilianskaya 1988). Both these interpretations are built on the faulty premises that Middle Eastern economies were stagnant in the eighteenth century and that production for markets was rare. Michael Gilsenan's study of the Akkar district of northern Lebanon suggests that the highly uneven development of capitalist agriculture created new forms of noneconomic subordination with many regional variations. However, for reasons given in chapter 1, I prefer the indigenous Lebanese terms – *iqta'* system, tax farming (*iltizam*), and sharecropping – over Gilsenan's loose use of the category of feudalism.⁴

Feudality arises . . . not as integral to some supposed "traditional" Akkari society, but as a product of a particular political and economic articulation with the growing power of Europe and of the capitalist world system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries . . . it is therefore a modern and in this form peripheral phenomenon made possible in its full development by factors transforming society in the area as a whole throughout this period. (Gilsenan 1984: 452)

Late-developing serfdom in Wallachia and Moldavia

Where export-oriented, large estates were established in the eighteenth century, they were expanded and advanced under the mid-nineteenth-century free-trade regime, and conditions of peasants deteriorated. The Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which were ruled indirectly by the Ottoman Empire through *hospodars* drawn from the Phanariot Greek mercantile oligarchy, exemplify this trajectory. In the eighteenth century the local notables (*boyars*) became absentee landlords and imposed a particularly harsh, late-developing serfdom on the peasants who leased their lands. In contrast to the traditional norm of three days annual labor service to the village headman, peasants now owed the *boyars* labor service of twenty-four to thirty-six days annually in Wallachia and over fifty days in Moldavia in addition to rent and taxes. By the late eighteenth century Romanian grain was being exported to Istanbul and foreign ports. The 1829 Treaty of Adrianople, which set the terms for Greek independence and the autonomy of Serbia and the Romanian principalities, also ended the Ottoman government's preemptive right to purchase Romanian grain. Production and exports increased dramatically. From 1830 to 1848 acreage of corn and wheat increased three to six times, as conditions of the peasants deteriorated. The

Organic Regulations adopted as stipulated by the Treaty of Adrianople recognized the *boyars* as legal owners of the land, not merely village headmen, and increased peasant labor service to between fifty-six and sixty days annually. The *boyar* leaders of the nationalist uprising of 1848 were afraid to mobilize peasants, and this was one of the reasons for its failure. After the principalities became united and virtually independent in 1859, 4 percent of the landowners held over 50 percent of the land. This was in sharp contrast to other Balkan lands, where the legacy of direct Ottoman rule led to more equitable distribution of agricultural lands (Stavrianos 1958: 341–44, 349–55; Shaw & Shaw 1976–77: II, 135; Jelavich 1983: I, 267–74; Quataert 1994a: 866; Todorova 1996: 60–61).

The 1858 land laws

The linear-progressivist account of agrarian development argues that the Ottoman and Egyptian land laws of 1858 legalized private property in agricultural land and were critical to the development of export-oriented estates (Gerber 1987). The more immediate (and probably intended) effects of these laws were to reassert the ownership rights of the state over nominally state-administered lands (*miri*), which had been eroded by tax farming (*iltizam* and *malikâne*), facilitate tax collection, and reinforce patriarchal authority (Baer 1969b; Karpát 1968: 86; Cuno 1992: 189–97; Quataert 1994a: 856–61). Both laws required that cultivation rights be registered by title deed and placed land in the hands of those able to cultivate it and pay the tax. These measures did ultimately contribute to consolidating property rights, but with differential consequences. In Anatolia and parts of Rumelia, consistent with historic Ottoman policy, the law consolidated the predominance of peasant family farms. By disallowing collective forms of tenure (*musha‘a* in greater Syria and *dira* in the northern Arabian Peninsula and lower Iraq) the same law facilitated large estate formation in the Fertile Crescent. The Egyptian law promoted large estates by disqualifying the claims of most peasants who lost lands during the rule of Mehmed ‘Ali and recognizing the privileged estates established after the late 1830s as private property. During the expansionary phases of 1838–73 and 1896–1913, formation of new export-oriented estates was stimulated by European demand and former recognition of private property rights in land. But large estates and private property in agricultural land were not an automatic response to the European market or the consequence of legal reform. They were also the outcome of local processes.

Cotton and the formation of large estates in Egypt and Çukurova

In Egypt, the breakdown of the monopoly system and the decline of agricultural exports during the global economic crisis of 1836–37 impelled Mehmed ‘Ali to raise revenue by granting lands to his family, military officers, and others in return for advance payment of taxes. By 1844–48 the combination of lands granted to military and civilian officials (*‘uhdas*), tax-free grants of uncultivated lands (*ib‘adiyya*), and estates given to members of the royal family (*ji‘iks*) comprised 53 percent of the surveyed land of Egypt and two-thirds to three-quarters of the most fertile, best irrigated cotton-growing lands of the Nile Delta (Cuno 1992: 163–64; Richards 1987: 220–21; Owen 1981a: 73–74; Owen 1969: 61). ‘Abbas Pasha (1850–54) abolished the *‘uhdas*, but many peasants lost their usufruct rights because they could not pay the land tax and fled their villages. In 1854 the government differentiated peasant lands (*kharajiyya*) from the privileged estates (*‘ushuriyya*). The 1858 land law recognized these privileged estates as private property.

During the American Civil War of 1861–65 the northern blockade of the Confederate states prevented their cotton from reaching British markets. The resulting boom in the cultivation and export of Egyptian cotton transformed it from one of several export crops to the overwhelmingly dominant factor in the economy and the decisive factor integrating Egypt into the world capitalist market (Owen 1969: 81). Khedive Isma‘il (1863–79) contracted several new foreign loans during the cotton boom. When American cotton returned to the market, cotton prices, exports, and tax revenues declined, creating a state fiscal crisis. To repay the foreign debt, Isma‘il raised taxes; by 1868 peasants paid 70 percent more land tax than in 1865 (Richards 1987: 233). The 1871 Exchange Law (*muqabala*) gave holders of privileged estate lands (*kharajiyya*) who paid six years’ tax in advance a perpetual 50 percent tax reduction. Few peasants benefited from this law, which effectively further concentrated agricultural holdings. By the early 1900s about half the agricultural land of lower Egypt was held in estates of 50 *faddans* or more, considered “large” by Egyptian standards, and cotton was grown on 45 percent of the cultivated area. Only 20–25 percent of all agricultural land continued to be exploited by peasant households, and they were concentrated in upper Egypt, where perennial irrigation did not arrive until after the construction of the first Aswan Dam in 1902 (Owen 1981b: 523–25; Richards 1987: 229–30; Richards 1982: 58–69). Thus, from 1840 until the enactment of the 1912 law banning seizure of lands of those who held 5 *faddans* or less for nonpayment of debts, cotton cultivation expanded while Egyptian peasants lost their lands through seizure by Mehmed ‘Ali, eight

to escape conscription, *corvée*, or taxation, and foreclosure for inability to pay taxes or debts.

Large landowners were well positioned to benefit from the cotton boom. In the 1850s they had begun to organize *izbas* – estates where peasants were given a dwelling and a small plot of land to grow subsistence crops in exchange for labor service on the landlord’s cotton or other cash crops. The subsistence plot was usually cultivated on a sharecropping basis, but sometimes the peasants paid rent. On some *izbas*, resident peasants, known as *tamaliyya* workers, owed a certain number of days of labor service to the landlord; on others the landlord’s estate was cultivated by sharecropping; in a few cases peasants received wages. At harvest or irrigation canal-cleaning time, additional migrant daily wage laborers (*‘ummal al-tarahil*) were employed. Their situation was, and remains, the worst among the peasants (Toth 1999). Most large holdings were operated by the *izba* system; a minority were rented out to peasants or intermediaries for cash.

Judith Tucker argues that *izbas* promoted a gendered division of labor. Women typically tended peasant family plots, receiving no wages or compensation in kind for their work. Men cultivated the landlord’s crops for cash or shares. Thus, women’s labor was relegated to the private sector and devalued, while men’s social labor had a market value. Reviewing Tucker’s evidence, Cuno concluded it is insufficient to prove that peasant women’s status declined in nineteenth-century Egypt and that her argument is inappropriately based on a paradigm derived from studies of middle-class women in the West (Tucker 1985: 43; Cuno 1988b). No other studies have been done on nineteenth-century peasant women in Egypt or elsewhere, leaving questions about the effects of commercial agriculture on gender relations unresolved.

In Egypt, the *izba* system is commonly considered a form of feudalism.⁵ Many forms of extra-economic relations of coercion and deference persisted on *izbas*. But extraction of surplus was based on private ownership of the means of production, production of commodities for a market, commodification of labor, rational calculation of profits, a tendency toward capital accumulation, and bureaucratically supervised large-scale enterprises. Therefore, *izbas* can be considered a form of “backward colonial capitalism” (Abdel-Malek 1969: 112; Owen 1981b: 537; Richards 1982: 65).

One motive for establishing *izbas* was the need to mobilize labor in conditions of scarcity (Alleaume 1999: 341–44). In Anatolia, however, labor scarcity allowed peasant families to retain control of most of the land. Therefore, two additional factors must be added: state policy and the technical requirements of cotton growing. In contrast to Ottoman

state policy, from 1840 to 1952 the Egyptian state was biased towards large landowners and came to be dominated by them (al-Disuqi 1975). Cotton requires large inputs of water, fertilizer, and seasonal labor as well as the capacity to keep a crop in the ground for seven months without an income. These conditions favored large landowners with access to capital and credit over peasants.

The most important site of large estates in Anatolia, the Çukurova plain on the southeast coast, was also a cotton-growing region. Because it was populated mainly by nomadic *yörük* tribes until the mid-nineteenth century, much of the land was legally waste land (*mevat*). Cultivation began after the state established control over the territory and drained the delta in the early 1870s. The high quality of the land, proximity to the sea, and, towards the end of the century, a good rail link encouraged entrepreneurs to buy land from the Ottoman state and develop cotton plantations. The social cost of establishing private property rights was low because there were no previous claims on cultivation rights. Sultan Abdülhamid II established large royal estates here as well. To alleviate the labor shortage, seasonal migrants were imported. During the economic expansion of 1896–1913 the Çukurova plain became a highly commercialized region with the support of the German-owned Anatolian Railway Company. Its export-oriented cotton plantations imported German farm machinery and employed 50,000–100,000 migrant laborers in the harvest season who came from as far away as Mosul. Large cotton plantations were also established by Italian entrepreneurs in the plain of Antalya in the decade before World War I (Pamuk 1987: 103–4; Quataert 1981: 75; Quataert 1994a: 875; Gerber 1987: 86–87).

Coexistence of peasant family farms and large estates in Anatolia, Rumelia, greater Syria, and Iraq

Peasant family production and small to medium-sized holdings remained the predominant form of agricultural production in Anatolia and much of Rumelia, even in some areas where commercial agriculture became important (Pamuk 1987: 82–107; Quataert 1994a: 861–75). Due to favorable agronomic conditions and proximity to ports, agriculture in the provinces of Salonica, Monastir, Thrace, and the Izmir–Aydin region of western Anatolia was relatively more commercialized well before the mid-nineteenth century. The most important export crops were tobacco, raisins, gs, cotton, silk, and olive oil. In 1859 three-quarters of the land of Monastir province was owned by large landlords, and in 1863 a British consular report estimated that 40 percent of all farms in Salonica province were larger than 200 hectares (Pamuk 1987: 100; Issawi 1980: 203).

In Thrace and western Anatolia the land-tenure regime was completely different. The Ottoman recentralization drive of the 1820s and 1830s succeeded in consolidating large tracts of land controlled by local notables, abolishing corvée labor obligations on the peasants, and redistributing land to peasant households in small parcels. Some tax farmers retained large estates, but they were broken up into smaller parcels cultivated by peasant families under leasing or sharecropping arrangements. Mid-nineteenth-century British consuls reported that peasant farms of no more than 8 hectares – the amount a household of four to five and a pair of oxen could farm on its own with only occasional outside help in conditions of the time – comprised the great majority of holdings in the regions of Edirne, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, and Gallipoli. In 1909, the first year for which comprehensive data are available, 72 percent of all farms in western Anatolia were under 5 hectares. The average size of a plot in seven different districts ranged from 1.1 hectares (Istanbul) to 5.4 hectares (Karasi) (Issawi 1980: 203; Kasaba 1988: 61–63; Pamuk 1987: 100).

Peasants retained some bargaining power in many regions of Anatolia because of a persistent labor shortage (Kasaba 1988: 64; Pamuk 1987: 100). For example, European investors bought lands from a leading notable family in the Izmir region hoping to develop a plantation-style estate by utilizing the labor service of peasants. As the Europeans could not perform the patronage functions of a local notable, the peasants refused their labor. The investors were forced to resort to sharecropping (Quataert 1981: 75).

Sultan Abdülhamid II held extensive estates in greater Syria, including the northern valleys of Palestine, the Jordan Valley, and along the Hijaz Railway in Transjordan. The sultan's largest Syrian estates were south and east of Aleppo, where he owned some 445,000 hectares in 567 villages (Batatu 1999: 111). Despite these considerable royal holdings, there is no consensus on the extent of large estates in the diverse land-tenure regimes of greater Syria in the nineteenth century.

Quataert and Gerber regard the large private estates of the Homs–Hama region, such as those of Abdülhamid II, as exceptional. Evidence presented by Rafeq, the Slugletts, Schilcher, and Mundy indicates that they were common in many parts of the country, though not in the wheat-exporting district of Hawran (Quataert 1994a: 867–68; Gerber 1987: 83; Rafeq 1984; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett 1984; Schilcher 1991a; Mundy 1994). The plain of Akkar north of Mount Lebanon was entirely owned by large landlords (Gilsenan 1984; Gerber 1987: 84). According to one rough estimate, plots of 100 hectares or more comprised 60 percent of Syria's cultivated area in 1913; 25 percent was held by peasant

farmers in plots of less than 10 hectares (Hannoyer 1980: 288). Many large holdings were rented out in small parcels to peasants for shares or cash, so the number of centrally managed estates is unclear. We may tentatively conclude that there was a tendency toward consolidation of land ownership in greater Syria from the eighteenth century on but, as in Jabal Nablus, sharecropping and fiscal domination of peasants were the principal mechanisms of surplus extraction until the late nineteenth century.

Sultan Abdülhamid II also established estates in lower Iraq. His holdings occupied nearly 30 percent of the cultivated area of Baghdad province (Quataert 1994a: 868). In Baghdad and Basra provinces, tribal shaykhs established ownership rights over large tracts of lands formerly held collectively.

The great diversity of land-tenure regimes surveyed here demonstrates that large estates and peasant family farms coexisted in the Ottoman Empire in the last two-thirds of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only with capital-intensive crops such as cotton and sugar is there a necessary connection between commercial agriculture and large estates. In Thrace, western Anatolia, Mount Lebanon, and Hawran export-oriented agriculture did not necessarily involve the formation of large estates and the expropriation of peasants or tribal populations. Localities where this did occur – Egypt, Çukurova, Antalya, lower Iraq, Homs–Hama and other regions of greater Syria, Algeria, and Tunisia (see below) – may have had a greater qualitative weight in determining the overall direction of the economy and society. Large landlords and land-poor peasants dominated the social agenda of twentieth-century Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, and Algeria. While this is not the case in Turkey, both circumstances are due to developments of the late Ottoman period.

Expanding states and peasant resistance

Peasant cultivators avoided and resisted when they could states' efforts to tax, conscript, and count them as a result of the centralizing thrust of the Tanzimat and their loss of agricultural land and freedom to choose their crop mix where large estates were formed.

Peasants and French colonialism in North Africa

Land-tenure issues in North Africa are complicated by the presence of European settlers, especially in Algeria. Following the French invasion of Algeria in 1830 – an old-style mercantile-imperial expedition like the 1798 invasion of Egypt – settlers (*colons*) established farms on the fertile coastal plain. The French confiscated additional land during the military

campaign against the anti-French resistance led by Amir ‘Abd al-Qadir and allocated them to *colons*. By 1851 some 428,000 hectares were distributed to 15,000 *colons* in plots averaging 28.5 hectares. After 1860, larger farms became the norm (Bennoune 1988: 43). The *colons* at first grew and exported wheat. From the 1880s on, settler viticulture replaced wheat as the leading agricultural sector, and wine became Algeria’s principal export.

Peasant opposition to the formation of large estates in Algeria was concurrently resistance to settler colonialism. In 1871–72 Muhammad al-Hajj al-Muqrani rallied the peasants of the Berber region of Kabylia and the Rahmaniyya *su* order to rebel against increasing *colon* power. The defeat of the Muqrani revolt consolidated a colonial capitalist agricultural economy based on exporting wheat and wine. The primitive accumulation for this regime was accomplished by expropriating peasant agricultural lands. The defeated belligerents had to pay an indemnity and lost some 70 percent of their property. By 1880, 882,000 hectares throughout Algeria were transferred to the 195,000 *colons* living among nearly 2.5 million indigenes (Ruedy 1992: 79; Bennoune 1988: 42, 46–48). The eastern Algerian economy was ruined. Kabyle peasants became sharecroppers, laborers on *colon* farms, or migrants seeking work in France.

Europeans began purchasing agricultural lands in Tunisia in the 1860s. After the French occupation in 1881, French entrepreneurs purchased large plots of state land to plant olive trees. By 1892 French interests controlled 443,000 hectares, of which 416,000 belonged to sixteen owners (Abun-Nasr 1975: 266, 281, 344). The process of displacing peasant farmers was less violent in Tunisia than in Algeria. Purchase as opposed to confiscation was the norm, and there were far fewer settlers in Tunisia. The tribal revolt of 1864 was in part directed against the extended reach of the increasingly autonomous provincial government through fiscal and military reforms comparable to those in Lebanon, Egypt, and the central Ottoman state in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Slama 1967). But there was generally less peasant resistance to the French colonial presence than in Algeria.

Rural rebellion, religion, and nationalism in the Balkans

In the Balkans, ethno-religious differences between peasants and landlords were common. Conflicts between Christian peasants and Muslim landlords came to be understood in national terms. Muslim peasants in Bulgaria and others whose identities were incompatible with this project were marginalized in the emergent Balkan national states.

Following the proclamation of the 1839 Gülhane Edict, Christian

peasants in Vidin province on the banks of the Danube in modern Bulgaria refused to render compulsory labor service and other dues imposed on them in the eighteenth century by their Muslim landlords, former cavalymen (*sipahis*) who had privatized their military land grants. The central government did not assert control over the landlords. In 1850 the peasants rose up, demanding an end to landlord rule and title deeds to their lands. The pasha of Vidin supported them, but the central government proposed a more gradual solution. In 1851 the Istanbul authorities belatedly agreed to sell the landlords' land to the peasants, but they now demanded to receive land without payment. Unresolved peasant demands contributed to the 1876 nationalist revolt. Exaggerated reports of massacres of Christian peasants in that conflict amplified by the rhetoric of William Gladstone turned British public opinion against the pro-Ottoman foreign policy in effect since 1840 and prepared the way for military expeditions to occupy Ottoman territories in the following years (Quataert 1994a: 878–79; Shaw & Shaw 1976–77: II, 160–62).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Muslim holders of privatized military land grants and tax farms urged Muslim and Christian peasants to revolt against Ottoman land-registration measures in 1858–59. The peasants rose up, hoping to expropriate their landlords. However, the landlords maintained their holdings, their domination of the peasantry, and their control over a majority of the agricultural surplus. In 1875 Herzegovinian peasants revolted against Muslim tax farmers who demanded full payment of taxes despite the poor harvest. The revolt spread and, supported by the Three Emperors' League, led to the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Hapsburg Empire (Quataert 1994a: 879; Shaw & Shaw 1976–77: II, 149–50, 158–60; Jelavich 1983: II, 352–61).

The Urabi revolt in Egypt

The formation of large estates in Egypt was accompanied by further revolts in the Delta and Minya in 1846, Giza in 1854, the Abu Tig district of Asyut province in 1863–65, Suhag and Girga in 1877–79, and the rice-growing region of the Delta in 1880. In 1882 tenants of the khedive's estate at Zankalun in Sharqiyya went on strike. Government orders to plant rice, demands for corvée labor, high taxes, economic hardship due to the collapse of the cotton boom, dispossession from lands, and poor wages were the targets of these peasant risings. The 1865 Abu Tig rebellion was led by Shaykh Ahmad al-Tayyib who claimed to be the *mahdi* and was hailed by peasants as a saint. The Islamic dimension of this movement resembles the upper Egyptian revolts of the 1820s (Baer 1982: 253–323).

Peasant grievances against large landowners were an element of the 1881–82 ‘Urabi revolt: a movement against khedivial autocracy, European economic control, high taxes, and discrimination by Turco-Circassian elites against indigenous Arabic-speaking army officers. However, peasant collective action in support of the ‘Urabi revolt was less important than the role of guilds, freemasons, cosmopolitan intellectuals, and other urban elements. The leaders of the revolt were not themselves interested in peasant issues, and village headmen, not poor peasants, were ‘Urabi’s principal rural supporters. Once peasants were mobilized, they took the opportunity of the 1882 British invasion in support of Egyptian autocracy and the interests of European bondholders to seize the lands and confiscate the crops of landlords, sometimes led by their village headmen (Cole 1993: 259–68; Brown 1990: 193–94; Richards 1987).

Radical peasant movements in greater Syria

Kisrawan and the plain of Hawran were the sites of the largest peasant revolts in greater Syria. Export-oriented agriculture predominated in these regions. But merchants or local notables exploited the land and the peasants without establishing fully privatized estates.

The peasant revolt against the Khazin notables (*muqata‘ajis*) in the Kisrawan district of Mount Lebanon in 1858–61 was one of the most radical nineteenth-century anti-landlord movements in the Arab provinces. Contraction of silk exports during the French Revolution impoverished the Khazins. When the trade resumed, European merchants began reexporting silk processed in Marseille to be spun in mechanized spinning mills in the Shuf and Matn closer to the port of Beirut than Kisrawan. The economic decline of Kisrawan impelled the Khazin shaykhs to sell lands to peasants and seek to recoup their income by increasing taxes and dues. The new Ottoman administrative regime established in 1845 allowed Christian peasants subject to Druze shaykhs to appeal to a Christian delegate (*wakil*) to protect them from such abuses. The peasants of Kisrawan had no such recourse because they and their Khazins shaykhs were Maronites. They rose up in rebellion when the Khazins refused to redress their grievances. On Christmas Eve 1858 they chose Tanyus Shahin, a village blacksmith who may have known something about the French Revolution, to lead their movement. With tacit but inconstant support from the Ottoman authorities and the lower Maronite clergy, the peasant rebels drove out the Khazins, seized their property, divided it among themselves, and proclaimed a republic. They demanded not only an end to the dues and payments recently introduced

by the Khazins, but abolition of all personal dues, better tenancy conditions, an end to shaykhs' rights to log and jail peasants, and full social equality: in short, a revolution against the *iqta'* system of Mount Lebanon. The rebels did not demand the abolition of private property altogether, perhaps because many of them were small owners who hoped to extend their holdings. Although the most radical aspects of the Kisrawan revolt – the peasant republic and the expropriation of all Khazin lands – were beaten back, the administrative regulations promulgated when Ottoman control was restored in 1861 proclaimed equality of all before the law and abolished the personal dues formerly received by the *muqata'ajis*. The power of the Khazin family was sharply curtailed (al-'Aqqi 1959; Porath 1966; Touma 1972: I, 259–78; Baer 1982: 266, 271–79; Dahir 1988: 188).⁶

The reassertion of the power of the central Ottoman state curtailed the most egregious abuses of the Khazin landlords and thus contained peasant radicalism in Kisrawan. After the Crimean War, the Istanbul authorities also sought to extend their reach in frontier areas of greater Syria which had previously been only nominally or marginally under their control. This prompted rebellions of peasants in Jabal Druze and Hawran in the 1880s and 1890s and bedouin around Karak in 1910 (Rogan 1999: 184–217). In both places, the rebels opposed the Ottoman drive to register land, which they quite reasonably feared would result in higher taxes and conscription. The peasant revolt in Jabal Druze in 1888–89 also had a sharp anti-landlord character comparable to the Kisrawan revolt.

During the Crimean War, wheat exports from Hawran grew along with an increase in the size of managerial, but not necessarily production or ownership, units. Holders of usufruct rights (*shaddads*) did not need to own the land in order to extract its surplus. They controlled the strategic points in the wheat trade by establishing sharecropping contracts with peasants and relationships with urban grain dealers, millers, and money lenders. After the 1860s an informal cartel of Damascene merchants dominated wheat production, though the land remained under state administration (*miri*) (Schilcher 1991a: 185–89).

Grain exports declined during the Great Depression, and the local economy reached a trough in 1887–89. The Ottoman state continued to extend its presence by introducing direct taxation in 1879, a plan for a railway in 1882, and an attempt to conduct a census in 1886. In response to the new tax system, Druze and Christian peasants sought guarantees that they would not become wage workers on the lands they cultivated. In 1888–89 they set up a commune (*'ammiyya*) and attempted to distribute cultivation rights among themselves while retaining three-quarters of the harvest (rather than the traditional two-thirds) in sharecropping contracts

with newly elected shaykhs. The Ottoman government crushed the rebellion and built a railway in 1892–94 to increase its control of the region. The first registration of lands in 1892–93 provoked new revolts. Bedouin and peasants did not pay taxes in 1894. The next year the state responded by launching a military campaign to isolate the Druze, regain control of the Hawran, and impose a new tax calculated at 10 percent of the average crop over five years (*takhmis*). Sunni peasants rallied to the Druze and bedouin rebels and abandoned cultivation in 1897. The government discontinued the new tax in 1898 and issued a general amnesty in 1900. Twenty years of resistance to Ottoman direct rule and higher taxes allowed the Hawranis to retain a measure of rural autonomy. Peasants succeeded in obtaining a portion of the lands hitherto controlled by the Druze shaykhs, and some obtained property rights over the lands they cultivated. But this did not prevent the consolidation of a new social hierarchy linked to commercial agriculture (Schilcher 1991b; Hanna 1990).

In Kisrawan and Jabal Druze, unlike in the Balkans, the common religious affiliation of peasants and shaykhs and the location of these districts in mountainous areas where direct Ottoman control was tenuous encouraged radical peasant movements with something of a class character. The similarity of the demands of Maronite peasants, who were exposed to French education, and the largely illiterate Druze peasants suggests that the ideas of the French Revolution were not necessary to inspire such revolts.

It is common to argue that peasant rebellions were rare in the Middle East and that the revolts that did occur were exceptional, inconsequential, and not motivated by a “proper” social outlook. Haim Gerber goes so far as to claim that “there were no known cases of revolt among the Syrian peasantry” (Gerber 1987: 134). In fact, from the late eighteenth century until the Syrian Revolt of 1925–27 there were over thirty Druze and ‘Alawi peasant revolts and half a dozen or more revolts in Mount Lebanon and the coastal mountains of northern Syria (Batatu 1999: 111, 367, fn. 9, 10; Hanna 1990; Dahir 1988). Gerber’s teacher, Gabriel Baer, is inclined to see more peasant rebelliousness and is more willing to notice similarities between Middle Eastern and European peasant movements. But they agree that the Kisrawan revolt is exceptional, and neither considers seriously the 1888–89 Jabal Druze revolt. Baer acknowledges the radical character of the Kisrawan revolt but compares its lack of an anti-clerical element unfavorably with European peasant revolts (Baer 1982: 277–78). Gerber agrees with Baer that Middle Eastern peasant movements “lacked not only clear demands for change of property relations but any well formulated ideology of social change,” until the 1950s (Baer 1982: 273; Gerber 1987: 134).

Comparing Middle Eastern, East Asian, and European peasant movements is a useful exercise in principle. And it may be that Middle Eastern peasant movements were weaker and less numerous than those of imperial China, czarist Russia, and early modern Europe, although further investigation would be required to sustain this proposition. However, Baer and Gerber use this comparison to compile a list of Middle Eastern absences measured against a European norm. Thus, according to Baer, the exceptional nature of the Kisrawan revolt is due to Lebanon's more "European" social formation. Its "social features differed from those of all other areas in the Middle East: an agrarian system with feudal features and private property of land" (Baer 1982: 312). As I noted in chapter 1, this is a problematic characterization of Mount Lebanon. In this context, it deflects attention from grasping the social and cultural dynamics of Middle Eastern peasant movements in their own terms. When they turn to the twentieth century, Gerber and Baer artificially separate the social and national-political aspects of peasant movements in Egypt (1919), Iraq (1920), Syria (1925-27), Palestine (1936-39), and Algeria (1954-62). Baer and Gerber's comparative and sociologically informed studies of peasant movements are a great advance over earlier Orientalist approaches. Their weaknesses result from viewing the trajectory of Europe as normative and perhaps also some anxiety, as Israelis, about the potential of Palestinian peasants for troublesome collective action.

Craft production, mechanized industry, and the gender division of labor

Soon after large quantities of European manufactured goods became available in Middle Eastern markets, European travelers and diplomats began predicting the imminent destruction of craft production and guilds (Owen 1981a: 93-95). Craft production, especially of textiles, the principal European manufactured import, did decline in the 1840s, but it was not permanently wiped out (Kurmuş 1981). By the 1850s, craft production began to recover and expand due to adaptive responses by urban guilds or reorganization of work outside the guild system.

These features of craft production in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are evident in the area around Salt in Transjordan (Rogan 1995). As part of its drive to assert control over the frontier areas of greater Syria, the Ottoman state established a new administrative district, al-Balqa', in 1867 and encouraged the reconstruction of nearly thirty water-powered flour mills in its villages. Historically, millers, like bakers and flour merchants, had a strong guild organization. These guild structures do not seem to have been restored along with the

mills. The reconstructed mills were often owned by urban merchants or other wealthy men living outside the villages where they were located, but were operated by local craftsmen. In a frontier area of marginal interest to Europeans, local merchants were able to mobilize capital and labor to produce wheat for the local and export markets and thus bring about an integration of towns and villages comparable to the case of neighboring Jabal Nablus, discussed in chapter 1.

The nominal abolition of guild monopolies by the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention was not strictly enforced. State-authorized certificates for practicing crafts (*gediks*) were used up to the 1860s. However, their number was allowed to increase, and shops were permitted to operate without them. The state's attitude towards guild monopolies was inconsistent. When the government adjudicated a jurisdictional dispute between two Istanbul guilds engaged in cloth printing, it did not protect the monopoly rights claimed by one of the guilds, although the cloth-printing guilds continued to operate through the 1880s. In other cases, the government defended guild monopolies. The motives for these contradictory policies are unclear (Quatert 1994b: 7, 54–55).

Militant textile journeymen and women's work in Damascus

Textile weaving in Damascus is a leading example of resurgent artisanal production within a guild framework. Some 10,000 Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Damascenes out of a population of 125,000 were involved in textile production in 1840. The leading commodity was a tie-dyed, luxury silk-cotton fabric: *alaja*. In the 1840s the number of looms fell from 5,000–6,000 to under 2,000 followed by a recovery that peaked in 1879 with nearly 7,000 looms and 4,000–5,000 journeymen members of the weavers' guild. Revival of the industry was accomplished by freezing journeymen's wages and relaxing enforcement of the requirement that workshop owners hold a government certificate. Merchants without certificates reorganized the craft by putting out different stages of production through jobbers or establishing large workshops supervised by master weavers. Journeymen's wages recovered somewhat in the 1860s and 1870s, but living standards remained far lower than in the 1830s. In January 1879, 3,000 journeymen struck against the masters' imposition of a cut in the piecework rate, claiming that the masters had not upheld their duty to protect the interests of all guild members from the merchants, whose profit margins were at least 30 percent in the 1870s. Textile journeymen continued to strike frequently until the end of World War I (Rafeq 1983; Vatter 1993; Vatter 1994; Vatter 1995).

Typically, only men were permitted to join the Damascus textile guilds, though women did much of the cotton spinning, silk reeling, embroidery, and other finishing tasks. Many women lost their jobs when weavers began to use imported cotton yarns in the 1830s. In the 1870s, introduction of stocking-knitting and sewing machines, both outside the guild system, provided new sources of women's employment. Merchants provided women who worked at home with a machine on credit, and they repaid the loan from their wages. The system was ideal from the point of view of capital because it required no investment in a workshop, and female labor was cheap (Vatter 1995: 51–53).

Silk reeling and working women in Mount Lebanon

Women's work was also critical to the success of the Lebanese silk industry. Between 1840 and 1914 almost 200 mechanized silk-reeling factories, mostly owned by Lebanese Christians and perhaps fifteen Druze and Muslims, were established (Owen 1987). The first European-owned factories employed only men until 1858. By the early 1880s, 12,000 unmarried female workers, nearly a quarter of all women of working age, and 1,000 male supervisors were seasonally employed in mechanized silk reeling. The Maronite clerical hierarchy opposed the employment of women for ten years, but relented when women's wages became an essential part of family income. By the 1890s, male intermediaries no longer negotiated the terms of women's work; factory women began to deal directly with employers and retain control of their own wages. They also organized strikes to improve their appalling sweat-shop conditions: seventy to eighty women commonly worked ten to twelve hours a day in a 200-square-foot workshop with fifty fetid, steaming basins to unravel cocoons. Lebanese women's factory work transformed prevailing patriarchal social relations, but it was not generally perceived as liberating. Enhanced women's autonomy in factories coincided with a decline in silk prices, which increasingly drove Lebanese men to emigrate to the Americas seeking work. Young, married, working women were separated from their husbands for years, and single Christian women (no Druze until the 1920s) emigrated to find husbands because there were not enough eligible men at home. Factory work then, was part of a complex of social changes commonly perceived by women as undermining their economic and social well-being (Khater 1996).

Women's work in small workshops, households, and factories outside the guild system predominated in carpet knotting in Sivas, silk reeling in Bursa, tobacco sorting in Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica, cotton and wool spinning in Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, and Adana, and mohair weaving in Ankara. Expanded production of these commodities in the nineteenth

century and their ability to compete with imported European goods depended on paying low wages to young, unmarried, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish women. Low wages were justified on the grounds that women's work was unskilled, temporary, and supplemental to the primary sources of family income. In fact, it was critical both in intensification of production using traditional methods and in early mechanized factories (Quataert 1991a; Quataert 1994b).

The uncertain formation of a “modern” working class

New transportation, communications, and urban utilities – the Suez Canal, railway and tramway lines, expanded port facilities in Salonica, Istanbul, Izmir, Alexandria, and Beirut, telegraph and telephone lines, water supply and gas lighting – created new occupations and social relations while previous institutions and relations of production persisted. The largest employer in Egypt at the turn of the twentieth century was the Egyptian State Railways. Its 12,000 workers operated and maintained 1,700 miles of track in 1914 including the first railroad in the Middle East, the Cairo–Alexandria line constructed in 1852–54. The Cairo Tramway Company, established in 1894 by a private Belgian entrepreneur, Baron Edouard Empain, operated over 63 kilometers of track and employed over 2,000 workers in the early twentieth century. Collective action of the railway and Cairo tram workers became an integral part of the Egyptian national movement after 1907 (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 38, 49–82; Lockman 1994b). The construction and operation of the Suez Canal and the port of Salonica demonstrate the complex amalgam of old and new social structures, practices, and mentalities that formed an emergent “modern” working class.

The Suez Canal: labor relations in a site of “modernity”

The Suez Canal was the most significant project of its kind during the mid-Victorian boom. When Sa'ïd Pasha (1854–63) authorized Ferdinand de Lesseps to build the canal, he also agreed to provide an annual *corvée* of 20,000 Egyptian construction laborers. The peasant/workers received pitiful wages, labored under harsh conditions, and thousands died during the ten-year construction period (1859–69).

Even more incongruous with the modern image of the Suez Canal was the continuation of slavery on its banks. The southern terminus of the canal, Suez, was major entry point for East African slaves into Egypt. As late as 1873, slaves were used on coastal sailing ships operating out of Suez (Baer 1969c: 166).

Dockers, coalheavers, and other unskilled workers along the Suez Canal were typically landless upper Egyptian (Saʿidi) peasants recruited by labor contractors (*khawlis*). The *khawlis* sometimes kept their laborers in debt peonage by functioning as money lenders. They served as the intermediaries between the peasant/workers and the subcontractors (shaykhs) who dealt with the foreign-owned port service companies (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 25–27).

The coalheavers of Port Said, a city founded when construction of the Suez Canal began, exemplify the uncertain identities and contradictory practices of working classes in formation. By the 1880s there were many guilds in the city, including both workers in traditional crafts and several categories of workers in new port service occupations, including coalheavers. In April 1882, the coalheavers struck for higher wages. Baer considers this the sole example of “a class struggle [which] developed between the workers and their shaykhs who had become contractors.” In contrast, Zachary Lockman and I saw this strike as an early expression of modern, working-class collective action (Baer 1964: 136; Beinin & Lockman 1987: 27–31). Baer’s understanding of this incident proceeds from his definition of a guild as a group of urban workers headed by a shaykh. From the point of view of the government, the coalheavers were organized as a guild (Najm 1987: 77–80). On this basis, both Juan Cole and Ellis Goldberg accept Baer’s view (Cole 1993: 250, 317 fn. 52; Goldberg 1996: 171). This interpretation assumes that despite the novelty of nearly everything in Port Said, organizations called guilds and persons called shaykhs functioned as they had elsewhere a generation or more ago.

Lockman and I erred in suggesting that the significance of laborers engaging in a strike was similarly comparable across time and space. Coalheaving was a new occupation. The guild members were most probably Saʿidi peasants whose relations with their labor contractors and shaykhs were governed neither by the mutual obligations of guilds nor by the norms of “free” labor in a market economy. Reconsidering this issue, one of the few in Middle East labor history to have generated a scholarly debate, Lockman emphasized the persistence of the coalheavers’ peasant identities and the ambiguous import of their actions. His reassessment, with its hint of the future role of urban workers in nationalist politics, applies to a broad range of relations between workers and employers in new transport and service industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

For the coalheavers themselves, the 1882 strike did not signal the emergence of a new self-identification as workers that replaced older identities as peasants or Saʿidis, nor does there seem to have been any significant shift in the course of the following decade and a half. Similarly, for Egyptian and foreign contemporaries,

the 1882 strike did not signal the emergence on the social scene of a coherent and active working class. It was grasped as basically a local affair, one in which national politics may have played some part – it is likely that the coalheavers were emboldened to act by the fact that a sympathetic nationalist government was in power in Cairo – but not as a portent of things to come. (Lockman 1994c: 87)

The Jewish porters' guilds of Salonica

Port service workers in Salonica – the railhead of three railroads and along with Beirut the third busiest port in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Izmir – were also organized in guilds. The porters (*hamallar*) were overwhelmingly Jews organized in guilds based on place of work or commodity carried and often controlled by one or another large Jewish family. Each porter belonged to a non-hierarchical group (*taife*) which kept accounts and organized members' social life, which centered around sunset prayers and drinking *raki* at a pub after work each day. Wages were paid to a representative of the group who distributed each individual's share after deductions for charity and collective expenses, including drinks. Porters received sick benefits and funeral expenses from the guild. Sons had the right to replace their deceased fathers on the quay. A widow without sons could hire a permanent substitute who would be paid less than a full wage and keep the difference or sell her husband's right to work. To preserve their jobs, the porters' guilds attempted to block the modernization and expansion of the port, which was nonetheless completed around 1904. The power of the guilds was weakened in 1909 when the Salonica Quay Company agreed to allow trains onto the quay to load freight directly onto ships in the port. The porters who had previously carried goods from the train station to the port lost their jobs, though other categories of Jewish dockworkers continued to work at the port of Salonica for several more years (Quataert 1995: 59–61).

Mechanized industry and the industrial working classes

The development of industrial manufacturing was much less successful in the second half of the nineteenth century than transport and services. Little was left of Mehmed 'Ali's industrial program by the 1840s. The Ottoman central government embarked on a similar effort in the 1850s. About 5,000 workers including males, females, Christian orphans, and criminals convicted of misdemeanors were employed in state-owned armament and textile enterprises, most of which failed by the end of the decade (Clark 1974; Quataert 1994a: 899–900). Except for mechanized silk reeling in Mount Lebanon and Bursa and cotton ginning in Egypt,

there was a hiatus in the development of new industrial manufacturing projects until the 1870s. We know little about the continuities, if any, between the first state-sponsored industrial efforts and later enterprises, many involving European capital seeking investment opportunities abroad during the Great Depression.

Khedive Isma'îl renewed state-sponsored industrialization in Egypt, establishing some forty state-owned enterprises by 1873. The most substantial were twenty-two sugar-crushing mills which processed cane grown on the royal estates in upper Egypt (Owen 1981a: 149–51). Only ten or eleven of the sugar-crushing mills survived the state bankruptcy in 1876. Together with a sugar refinery established at Hawamdiyya in 1881, they were eventually acquired by *La Société Générale des Sucreries et de la Raffinerie d'Égypte* – a private firm involving French, British, and local Egyptian-Jewish capital built on the ruins of the state-owned sugar industry (Beinin 1998c: 256–59). The state bankruptcy and the British occupation of 1882 shifted the initiative decisively to such multinational investment groups.

Along with modern transport, the cigarette industry was the center of gravity of the emergent Egyptian working class. Cairo's cigarette-rolling industry was established after European creditors imposed a reorganization of the Ottoman tobacco monopoly to secure revenues to repay the state debt, prompting several Greek entrepreneurs to move to Cairo. By the early twentieth century, five Greek firms controlled 80 percent of the export trade and employed some 2,200 workers. Perhaps another 2,000 were employed by others, including smaller Armenian and European firms who supplied the local market (Shechter 1999: 64–65). The elite hand rollers were primarily Greek, but included Armenians, Syrians, and Egyptians.

The least skilled workers, the tobacco sorters, were mostly Egyptian women. The 1907 census, the first to enumerate industrial workers, undercounted the number of cigarette workers and barely acknowledged the presence of women in the labor force. It enumerated 3,162 cigarette-factory workers including only 15 women (Egypt. Census Department 1909: 280). A French investigator observed twenty women working in only one of the thirty-seven factories (Vallet 1911: 95–96). Cigarette-rolling factories in Istanbul, Salonica, and Izmir employed women as tobacco sorters (Quataert 1983: 18; Quataert 1995: 71). The same Greek families and production methods prevailed in Cairo. There is no reason to think that social norms in Egypt posed a greater barrier to women's factory employment.

The statistical error of the Egyptian census takers may reflect the ambivalence and uncertainty of state authorities about women working

for wages in the public sphere and how to categorize a new urban social group still largely identified with foreigners. The Greek cigarette workers formed the first union and organized the first recorded strikes in Cairo. Their struggles were initially not considered to be an Egyptian social phenomenon (Beinin & Lockman 1987: 49–54).

Around 1879, the first successful privately owned cotton-spinning mill was established in Salonica, which became the most important industrial center in the Ottoman Empire until it was annexed by Greece in 1913. Twenty thousand workers, mostly Jews, were employed in over thirty enterprises producing textiles, alcohol, soap, tiles, bricks, nails, furniture, and cigarettes; 5,000 workers were engaged in the transport sector. Three-quarters of the cotton-spinning mill workers were girls aged twelve to eighteen. A Jewish girl usually worked until she accumulated a dowry and married at age fifteen. Cigarette manufacturing was the largest industry in the Salonica region and employed 4,000–5,000 workers, including many women (Quataert 1995).

In Anatolia, the major concentrations of factory production were Istanbul, Izmir, and the Adana area. Many factory workers, including most of the 1,400 workers in the Istanbul cigarette factory, were female. By 1913 there were 36,000 workers in at least 214 factories, 92 percent of which were privately owned (Quataert 1994b: 3; Quataert 1994a: 902–04).

In the early twentieth century the urban labor force in the Middle East consisted of guild workers struggling to maintain their livelihoods and social status, peasants recruited by intermediaries to work in construction and transportation services, female factory workers who received lower wages than males and were subject to patriarchal gender relations at work and at home, and a small elite of skilled workers, often comprising foreigners or minorities, such as the Greek cigarette rollers of Cairo. Their radically different life experiences and mentalities did not prevent some of them from engaging in strikes and other forms of collective action commonly associated with a modern working class. While craft and community were the primary basis for mobilizing early collective actions, trade unionism, socialism, and nationalism were already on the scene.

Peasants and urban working people did not know they were in need of reform. Hence, during and after the Tanzimat era they had to be cajoled or coerced to accept the enhanced presence of the state in their lives in the form of new taxes, enumeration, and military conscription along with legal equality. Because the Tanzimat was a project of bureaucratic elites with little interest in democracy and minimal social links to working people, it is not surprising that subalterns resisted or evaded aspects of

the reforms that extended the reach of the Ottoman state, its European allies, and their administrative, economic, and cultural practices. The economic regimes and military expeditions of European powers became increasingly invasive in the course of the nineteenth century, culminating in outright colonial rule in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Morocco by World War I. The enhanced European presence both continued and amplified the contest over attempts to impose European-style modernity on subaltern subjects begun by indigenous state builders such as Mehmed 'Ali Pasha, Amir Bashir II, and Sultan Mehmed II and the Tanzimat bureaucrats.