POLITICAL INITIATIVES 'FROM THE BOTTOM UP' IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Halcyon Days in Crete VII
A Symposium Held in Rethymno
9-11 January 2009

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Edited by
Antonis Anastasopoulos

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A.A.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BOA: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey
TSMA: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey

ActOrHung: *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*
ArchOtt: *Archivum Ottomanicum*
BSOAS: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EB: *Études Balkaniques*
IJMES: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*
IJTS: *International Journal of Turkish Studies*
JAOS: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JESHO: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JTS: *Journal of Turkish Studies*
NPT: *New Perspectives on Turkey*
OA: *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*
RMMM: *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*
SF: *Südost-Forschungen*
SI: *Studia Islamica*
TD: *Tarih Dergisi*
TSAJ: *The Turkish Studies Association Journal*

EI^2: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition (Leiden 1960-2002)
EI^3: *Encyclopaedia of Islam – Three* (Leiden 2007-)
İA: *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul 1940-1979)
TDVİA: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul 1988-)

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

All terms and phrases originally written in non-Latin alphabets have been transliterated into the Latin script.

A simple system of transliteration from the Arabic into the Latin alphabet has been adopted, and most diacritical marks have been omitted.

No final -s- is added to plural nouns, such as *ayan*, *ulema*, and *reaya*.

INTRODUCTION

POLITICAL INITIATIVES 'FROM THE BOTTOM UP'

Antonis ANASTASOPOULOS*

THE TITLE OF THIS VOLUME, 'Political initiatives "from the bottom up" in the Ottoman Empire', reproduces that of a short, ground-breaking article of Suraiya Faroqhi of 1986.[1] This article provided the inspiration for the Seventh Halcyon Days in Crete Symposium of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH, held in Rethymno on 9-11 January 2009. It is hoped that this volume remains faithful to the purpose of the symposium from which its 19 essays emanate.[2] Rather than an enthusiastic endorsement of the feasibility of studying 'bottom-up' political initiatives from such an angle, the symposium and the subsequent volume should be seen as an invitation to the scholars involved to explore both what they take to be 'political initiatives' as well as the significance of and problems related to studying them in a 'bottom-up' direction. The result, it is hoped, is a collection of articles which are solidly grounded on archival and narrative sources of the Ottoman era, yet avoid a sterile empiricism, and fruitfully raise issues which surpass the limits of their particular case studies.

In her 1986 article, Faroqhi points out that it is misleading to interpret the Ottoman political system through the lens of Oriental despotism, and seeks to highlight the political role and initiatives of those who did not belong to the circle of governmental office-holders. Thus, her concept of the 'bottom' is not restricted to only the weak or poor members of Ottoman society; for instance, provincial notables occupy a central place in her discussion of 'political initiatives "from the bottom up"'. However, it is worth noting that in many cases they do so as representatives or leaders of the people of the settlements or regions where they lived, as Faroqhi stresses the importance of collective political ac-

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I wish to thank Drs Eleni Gara, Elias Kolovos, and Marinos Sariyannis for reading and commenting on this introduction.

1 S. Faroqhi, 'Political Initiatives "From the Bottom Up" in the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Some Evidence for their Existence', in H. G. Majer (ed.), *Osmanistische Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte. In Memoriam Vančo Boškov* (Wiesbaden 1986), 24-33. I would like to thank Suraiya Faroqhi and Harrassowitz Verlag for their kind permission to use the title of the article for this volume.

2 The Symposium also included papers by Cemal Kafadar and Onur Yıldırım, who were in the event unable to submit them for publication.

tion (within groups such as the guilds or local communities). As for the main mechanism through which the people expressed their political demands and initiatives, this was the lodging of complaints, about which Faroqhi dismisses the idea that it had to do only with grievances of a private nature. Furthermore, Faroqhi cautiously suggests that the crisis of the late sixteenth century may be a crucial explanatory factor behind an increase in the politicisation of Ottoman subjects, but claims that this increased politicisation concerned mostly the urban population, noting that, when under pressure, peasants usually did not have many options other than to abandon their lands or find themselves a patron. She also points to the fact that the main sources of information about political initiatives 'from the bottom up' are record books of the central administration (*mühimme defterleri*, *şikâyet defterleri*) or the local judges (*kadı sicilleri*), which often do not clarify the identities of the individuals or groups who petitioned the central authorities. Even though Faroqhi draws her examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as indicated in the title of her article, she actually extends the validity of her argument to the period up to the inauguration of the centralising policies of the nineteenth century. As for the examples of political initiatives that she cites, most of them refer to financial grievances about tax collection, the functioning of the market, prices, and the currency. These issues were not purely financial: in the view of the petitioners, they had repercussions which menaced social stability and the continuing existence of their communities and guilds.

The issues of politicisation in Ottoman society, the relation between the sultans and their subjects and sultanic legitimation continued to concern Faroqhi in her later work as well.[3] Thus, in a longer article of 1992 she focuses her attention on how the Sultan's subjects presented their arguments in their petitions so as to achieve their desired goals, and on how the phrasing of their petitions and that of the state decrees issued in response reproduced and interacted with the official discourse of legitimising sultanic rule.[4] The cases that she cites in this article as examples of "political activity among Ottoman taxpayers" can be briefly described as instances in which individuals (usually with a public role) or groups of townsmen or villagers complained to the Sultan about the abusive attitude of state officials and tax-collectors (but also of other law-breaking individuals, unrelated to the state apparatus) and their disrespect for the rights or privileges of the *reaya* and waqfs. The range of complaints discussed is quite broad: from exacting illegal amounts of taxes to breaking into houses and plundering them to denying a person the

3 See the studies collected in S. Faroqhi, *Coping with the State: Political Conflict and Crime in the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1720* (Istanbul 1995), but also her later publications, such as 'Coping with the Central State, Coping with Local Power: Ottoman Regions and Notables from the Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century', in F. Adanır and S. Faroqhi (eds), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne 2002), 351-381; 'Guildsmen Complain to the Sultan: Artisans' Disputes and the Ottoman Administration in the 18th Century', in H. T. Karateke and M. Reinkowski (eds), *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden and Boston 2005), 177-193; *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople under the Ottomans* (London 2009), esp. 142-159.

4 Eadem, 'Political Activity among Ottoman Taxpayers and the Problem of Sultanic Legitimation (1570-1650)', *JESHO*, 35 (1992), 1-39.

right to build a coffee-house against the town wall. Two features which bind these and many other seemingly disparate cases together are (i) that directly or indirectly, in one way or another, they concerned a local community or a group of people (rather than only an individual), often by menacing or upsetting public peace or order, and (ii) that the central authorities were asked to intervene and provide a solution.

In the context of the present volume, the question that Faroqhi's argumentation in these two articles immediately raises is that of the definition and use of the two terms which constitute the basic elements of the shared title of the 1986 article and this volume: 'bottom up' and 'political'. Obviously, a discussion of them as an introduction to the 19 essays which follow will be incomplete without being also expanded to the third significant constituent element of the title, 'initiatives'.

As a general comment, I think that the ideas, questions, and approach that Faroqhi has put forward in the two articles discussed above still provide a solid conceptual framework today. For the purposes of this brief introduction, I would like to dwell and expand on five interrelated points.

One, when one uses such sketchy terms as 'bottom' and 'up' in studying political relations in the context of an absolutist state with no recognition of the 'people' as a political actor, it makes sense to perceive the 'bottom' and the 'top' as categories in which political characteristics (principally office-holding) take precedence over socio-economic ones. This is not to say that political and socio-economic characteristics can be divorced from each other or that the different socio-economic identities of those who form the 'bottom' and the 'top' are irrelevant, but that, in exploring the forms and bounds of political expression of imperial subjects who did not have civil and political rights in the way that citizens in modern democracies do, it is permissible to put emphasis on who holds formal authority and who does not as a distinguishing line to the detriment of more refined taxonomic criteria. Furthermore, in this particular context, attention needs to be drawn to the fact that 'bottom' and 'up' should not be confused with describing social groups; had they done so, the absence of at least a 'middle' would have been all too obvious and even then the idea of the possibility of analysing society by dividing it in only three groups would still have been misguided. But in the case of the title of this volume, what 'bottom' and 'up' in fact do is to indicate a hierarchically upward direction in political activity.

Even though an approach which takes office-holding as its axis echoes the official separation of the population of the Ottoman Empire between *askeri* and *reaya* or between a decision-making sultan and the rest, it is simplistic to dismiss it as state-centred, since we have to consider that official ideology and the law were not mere theoretical constructs, but agents which affected the Sultan's subjects' everyday scope for legitimate or legally-protected political action.

On the basis of the above, the 'top' can be taken to be the central authorities in Istanbul and those who held state offices, high ones in particular,[5] while the 'bottom' can consist of

5 H. Gerber, 'Ottoman Civil Society and Modern Turkish Democracy', in K. H. Karpat (ed.), *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne 2000), 134, suggests that the state can be viewed "only as the sultan and his closest aides".

the large bulk of the population, the *reaya*, regardless of their socio-economic status, but also of minor officials who were subject to the authority (and abuse) of their superiors, as well as of such people as the many provincial Muslims who, from the seventeenth century onwards, had obtained janissary and thus technically *askeri* status, but in actual fact belonged to the middle and lower strata of their societies. In less strictly defined terms, the 'bottom' is all those who formally were or felt weaker than or inferior to the ones whom they addressed, denounced or moved against, and absolutely not (or, more accurately, absolutely not exclusively) a marginal social group, an impoverished proletariat, or the lowlife. Adapted accordingly (i.e., with taking the holding of local authority or power as an axis of analysis), this definition of 'top' and 'bottom' also applies to cases of local, intra-communal antagonisms, such as those analysed by some of the authors of this volume, in which the state authorities were not directly or not initially involved.

Two, still because in the pre-Tanzimat Ottoman state there were very few formal political processes which officially involved those who today would be described as 'the people', defining 'political' on the basis of strict, formal criteria would produce too poor and unrepresentative results. Instead, it is reasonable to define 'political' broadly as everything which concerned or affected the lives of local communities or groups of people and had a bearing on their position as subjects of the Ottoman Sultan as well as on their relations with the state and its agents, without excluding intra-communal relations, i.e., those situations which had to do with the internal, so to speak, social and power balance of local communities.[6] Certainly, it is important to distinguish between political initiatives and private grievances or disputes; not everything which happens within the confines of a community is political. For one thing, 'political' has by definition a public element built into it. It is not necessary that it involves people who hold state offices or other formal capacities, but it is inextricably associated with matters which trouble or preoccupy an individual or a group of people in relation to the narrower or larger political entities within which they live. In this respect, having recourse to political authorities, such as the Sultan or a district governor, is not a factor which automatically turns the private disputes of the Ottoman subjects into political affairs, but is, nevertheless, one which, through the involvement of the authorities, renders them public and, therefore, adds a 'political' dimension to them.

Thus, the fact that the Ottoman Empire was not a democratic polity did not mean that the people would not, individually or in groups, engage in political activity; what it meant was that, together with the technological limitations of the time, the lack of democratic institutions worked against co-ordinated political activity which would spread across the Empire or the establishment of formal political groupings.[7] Other than that, the politicisation of Ottoman society is evidenced by the forms of political expression cited in item Four below (petitioning, rioting, fleeing), but also by many other, such as the political antagonisms observed in the context of local communities, for instance, between *ayan* or between groups of differing social status and access to power. In general, Otto-

6 See also how Faroqhi defines "everyday politics" in *Artisans of Empire*, 142-144.

7 Cf. K. Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York 2008), 9-13.

man sources suggest that political processes among the Ottoman population, especially in the provinces, intensified from the seventeenth century onwards, as a result of various developments, such as the dismantling of the *timar* system and the overall decrease in the presence of the state in the provinces, as well as changes in tax collection; however, this is not to say that there was not political activity in Ottoman society in earlier periods, which after all are more poorly documented. In her latest book, which deals with the question of the longevity of the Ottoman Empire, Karen Barkey interprets the eighteenth century as a period of political empowerment of various social and professional groups, while flexibility, negotiation, and adaptation are key concepts in her analysis of the attitude of the state towards its subjects.[8] On his part, Baki Tezcan has made a bold statement by speaking of 'proto-democratisation' in the political structure of what he describes as the 'Second Ottoman Empire';[9] despite objections that one may have about his choice of terminology, Tezcan's discussion of the limiting of sultanic authority also sheds light on political processes 'from below' in Ottoman society with a focus on Istanbul. The essays collected in yet another recent volume revolve around the theme of 'popular protest and political participation in the Ottoman Empire', demonstrating how the Sultan's subjects actively expressed their demands and defended their interests in a number of ways, while the editors' introduction provides a critical discussion of the relevant literature and research questions and desiderata.[10] So, overall, it is important to stress that the existence of political processes and popular political initiatives does not depend on the formal existence of civic or political rights or of participatory procedures.[11]

Three, 'bottom-up' initiatives are principally accessible to us through the lens of the 'top', since most of the sources available to or actually used by scholars who base their research on Ottoman material emanate from the state authorities in Istanbul and the provinces or by Ottoman historians associated with the state. The original petitions of those petitioning the authorities or 'non-official' sources, such as memoirs, local histories or narratives, or private correspondence, are usually lacking, or become available only in later periods and not always in great numbers. This fact creates an imbalance of which the modern historian has to be aware so as to avoid an uncritical adoption of the state agents' narration and interpretation of the facts, but which is often difficult to overcome. Besides, one has to consider that various incidents, especially minor ones, have probably not left a written record (illiteracy and an absence in many local societies of a tradition of systematic record-keeping being factors which contributed to that as well), or that in some cases the formulation of the sources is such that either the political side of an incident is not evident or it is difficult to understand the details of what happened.

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8 Ibid. Chapter Six is entitled 'An Eventful Eighteenth Century: Empowering the Political'.

9 B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge 2010). The 'Second Empire' covers the period from 1580 to 1826. On p. 233, Tezcan specifies 'proto-democratisation' as "*relative* democratization of political privileges".

10 E. Gara, M. E. Kabadayı, and C. K. Neumann (eds), *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire. Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi* (Istanbul 2011).

11 Cf. Faroqhi, 'Political Activity', 1-2.

Four, individual or group petitions to the Sultan or provincial state authorities (often through their reproduction or summary in the decrees issued in response) provide the most easily detectable and tangible evidence of 'bottom-up' political initiatives in the Ottoman Empire.[12] Petitioning (with court action initiated locally against the abuses of the powerful qualifying to be considered a variation of it) constituted the legitimate form par excellence of expressing political initiatives, in accordance with the official ideology which represented the Sultan as the guarantor of justice and redresser of wrongs.[13] On the other hand, revolts, rebellions, and riots were the principal forms of illegitimate political action. Violence was a prominent feature of such acts of non-compliance, which in fact is a term which covers a wider repertoire of initiatives or reactions to state decisions or practices. For instance, fleeing individually or en masse one's village in reaction to excessive taxation or other forms of oppression was another expression of non-compliance, as shown by Faroqhi and others,[14] one which shared the peaceful nature of petitioning without partaking in the latter's legality and state approval.

Five, it is not always self-evident which cases of political activity can be classified as 'initiatives' and which not, as it is clear that there is no parthenogenesis in public life: all political actions are reactions to circumstances or incidents which spark them. What is important for the purposes of this volume is that political activity does not consist in submissively carrying out governmental orders (such as when the people of a district undertake a collective *nezir* commitment following a state decree which demands that they do so[15]), but that it involves the free will of and independent action by those who stand 'below' those to whom it is addressed. On the other hand, even when the inhabitants of a town, a village or a district perform an action following instructions by the government, there may be space for initiative, as when they decide themselves how exactly to mobilise and organise themselves as a group. In fact, how the people of a district organised

12 There is abundant literature on petitioning in the Ottoman Empire. See E. Gara, C. K. Neumann, and M. E. Kabadayı, 'Ottoman Subjects as Political Actors: Historiographical Representations', in Gara, Kabadayı, and Neumann (eds), *Popular Protest*, 21-22 and n. 62. For petitions in other political contexts see L. Heerma van Voss (ed.), *Petitions in Social History* (Cambridge 2001) [*International Review of Social History*, Vol. 46, Supplement 9].

13 On the questions of official ideology and legitimation of sultanic rule, see Karateke and Reinkowski (eds), *Legitimizing the Order*.

14 See, for instance, H. İnalcık, 'Adâletnâmeler', *Belgeler*, II/3-4 (1965), 86; A. Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge 1994), 107-108 ; K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca and London 1994), 147; L. T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne 1996), 290-291.

15 On the *nezir*, see S. Faroqhi, 'Räuber, Rebellen und Obrigkeit im osmanischen Anatolien', in Eadem, *Coping with the State*, 163-178; I. Tamdoğan, 'Le *nezir* ou les relations des bandits et des nomades avec l'État dans la Çukurova du XVIIIe siècle', in M. Afifi *et alii* (eds), *Sociétés rurales ottomanes/Ottoman Rural Societies* (Cairo 2005), 259-269; A. Anastasopoulos, 'Political Participation, Public Order, and Monetary Pledges (*Nezir*) in Ottoman Crete', in Gara, Kabadayı, and Neumann (eds), *Popular Protest*, 127-142.

themselves into self-governing and largely self-regulated groupings which constituted their localised political communities, as well as the factionalism involved therein, are important aspects of political initiatives 'from below' in Ottoman society. These collective institutions presumably fostered the further and more elaborate politicisation of local societies, and often served as the stable basis on which political initiatives of a more transient nature, such as petitions and revolts, rested.[16]

In conclusion, I would like to put stress on two of the points made above. One, the biggest gain in studying political initiatives 'from the bottom up' in the Ottoman Empire is highlighting the fact that in a polity where the vast majority of the population was without political rights or a formal political role, political processes still took place and there was space for developing political initiatives. Two, it is important to distinguish between 'bottom' and 'top' as social categories and 'bottom up' as an upward direction of political activity. This volume is concerned mostly with the latter, which obviously cannot, as noted above, be totally separated from the former. In this respect, it is also useful to point out that studying political initiatives 'from the bottom up' does not automatically equal 'telling history from below' in the way that subaltern studies and others who share similar ideas (seek to) do. Such methodological approaches have attracted attention among Ottomanists, but overall they have not had a very strong impact on Ottoman studies.[17]

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16 See T. De Moor, 'The Silent Revolution: A New Perspective on the Emergence of Commons, Guilds, and Other Forms of Corporate Collective Action in Western Europe', in J. Lucassen, T. De Moor, and J. Luiten van Zanden (eds), *The Return of the Guilds* (Cambridge 2008) [*International Review of Social History*, Vol. 53, Supplement 16], 179-212, esp. 191-193. De Moor calls the institutionalisation of guilds and commons in late medieval western Europe a "silent revolution".

17 The association between subaltern studies and Ottoman history has mostly concerned historians who work on the late period: see, for instance, U. Makdisi, 'Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate: The Revolt of Tanyus Shahin in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42 (2000), 180-208; Idem, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 2000); S. Deringil, '"They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45 (2003), 311-342; D. Quataert, 'Pensée 2: Doing Subaltern Studies in Ottoman History', *IJMES*, 40 (2008), 379-381; M. Fuhrmann, 'Down and Out on the Quays of İzmir: 'European' Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port-Cities', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 24 (2009), 169-185. But see also B. Ergene's essay in this volume. References to the work of James C. Scott, especially *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London 1985), are not infrequent in Ottomanist literature: see, for instance, Singer, *Palestinian Peasants*, 125; Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 147; S. Faroqhi, 'Introduction', in Eadem, *Coping with the State*, XVII; Darling, *Revenue-Raising*, 119, 290-291; B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1995), 290, 295; M. V. Petrov, 'Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864-1868', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46 (2004), 758-759. In *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700-1800* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 2010), F. Zarinebaf shows concern for "lend[ing] a voice to the man accused of theft, the woman accused of prostitution, and the vagabond rounded up

Volume Structure and Content

The essays in Part I deal with cases of political mobilisation in the Ottoman provinces, and cover the period from the mid seventeenth to the mid nineteenth century. More specifically, Leslie Peirce's essay centres on court action that various individuals and groups in Harput took in 1632 against the *sipahi* Halil (probably also involved in tax collection) and his men, who were accused of oppression and criminal behaviour towards the local people. Peirce places Halil's attitude and the *reaya*'s reaction within the wider context of governmental instability in Istanbul, the Celali revolts in Anatolia, and centre-periphery relations, but also focuses her analysis on other issues, such as the importance of obtaining consensus against Halil among the various social and interest groups of Harput in order to win the case against him, or the possible impact that the court's scribal practice has on the portrayal of the people's action against the *sipahi*.

Hülya Canbakal takes as her point of departure urban unrest in late eighteenth-century Ayntab, and the motif of the clash between two factions, janissaries and *sadat*. Focusing on an analysis of local conditions in the long duration and of the socio-economic characteristics of the town population, she demonstrates that a systematic examination of such parameters is necessary for investigating and interpreting instances of real or alleged popular unrest and rebellion. Furthermore, she discusses the concept of bottom-up political initiatives, and notes that even when factional politics prevail, the factions are not necessarily coherent in socio-economic and political terms.

Elias Kolovos examines some cases of peasant unrest in the district of Salonica in the early eighteenth century. All the cases are tax-related, and Kolovos argues that at the base of unrest lay the reform of the method of collection of the poll tax (*cizye*) in 1691, which resulted in higher quotas for the non-Muslim villagers, but also the abusive practices of the tax-collectors. The author discusses these incidents against the background of the literature about peasant protest and riots in the rest of early modern Europe, and also poses the question how the Ottoman peasants may have influenced, through their various forms of protest against tax officials, the development of the state concept of benign, *reaya* (or, more specifically, peasant)-centred sultanic justice.

Eyal Ginio describes how the Jewish community of Salonica gradually came to operate as a single entity, which was represented by one or more centrally appointed agents, while at first each congregation administered its internal affairs and external relations quite independently of the others. Ginio treats this initiative, which he dates to the second half of the seventeenth century, as a reaction of the Jewish community to deteriorating economic, social, and political conditions. A unified representation of the whole community fitted better the requirements of the Ottoman tax system, but also enhanced the Salonican Jews' political weight and efficacy in their relations with the state authorities and other denominational groups, like the Christian Orthodox.

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and expelled from the city" (ibid., 6-7), for "real voices from below" (ibid., 6), or for "who made up the underclass and the poor in eighteenth-century Istanbul" (ibid., 35), but does not inscribe this concern within a school of thought.

Sophia Laiou discusses the conflict between two factions within the Christian Orthodox community of the island of Samos in the early nineteenth century. The 'Karmanioloi', who represented the emerging, largely commercial, bourgeoisie which heretofore did not have access to communal offices, challenged the authority of the traditional leadership of the Christian community, the so-called 'Old Notables', or pejoratively 'Kallikantzaroi' (Goblins), while they also expressed their discontent with the abuses of the Ottoman officials, especially in the area of tax collection. Eventually, the Old Notables seem to have prevailed, as they managed to portray their rivals as a threat to public order, and, thus, obtain *ferman*s in their favour.

Finally, Andreas Lyberatos takes the deposition of the Archbishop of Filibe (Bg. Plovdiv; Gr. Philippoupolis) by the local guilds in 1818 as his starting-point, and interprets this incident as the culmination of the gradual strengthening of the guilds, with that of the *abacı*s at the forefront, to the detriment of the traditional hereditary lay elite of the '*çelebi*s', the Archbishop, and the local higher clergy. Lyberatos suggests that what was at stake was control of the affairs and funds first of the guilds and then of the Christian Orthodox community, as non-elite social strata who were represented through the guilds sought to translate their socio-economic progress into political power within and through the institutional framework of their community.

The next four essays, in Part II, focus on the right of the Ottoman subjects to petition the Sultan, and discuss the strategies that they adopted in this respect as well as the contexts and implications of their petitions. Thus, Nicolas Vatin analyses the circumstances under which the Jews of Istanbul were obliged to gradually abandon the cemetery of Kasımpaşa in 1582-1592, and start to bury their dead at a new one in Hasköy. More specifically, he argues that, as local Muslim activism put pressure on the authorities to this end, it eventually obtained the consent of the Sultan to discontinue Jewish burials at Kasımpaşa, thus influencing the imperial policy on this issue. In their petitions, the Muslims complained about the presence of an 'infidel' burial ground next to their houses and mosques, and, when the Jewish community continued to make use of its old cemetery despite the *ferman*s which forbade it, they accused the Jews of disrespect for sultanic authority.

Rossitsa Gradeva analyses the procedure according to which non-Muslims obtained permission to repair their houses of worship and, at times, even to construct new ones despite the prohibition imposed by Islamic law. Gradeva examines in detail each step of this procedure, and discusses possible variations. Given the legal discrimination that the non-Muslims suffered in the Ottoman Empire, the strategies that they pursued with regard to renovating their houses of worship were in essence political, since, at the practical level, they had to work their way through the local and central Ottoman political system, and, more important, in doing so they asserted the existence, self-consciousness, cohesion, and rights of their communities.

Demetrios Papastamatiou bases his argument on the study of the contents of the eighteenth-century *Mora Ahkâm Defterleri*. He argues that in various cases the petitions reflected local political antagonisms, even when this was not stated clearly. Furthermore, petitioning the Sultan was a form of political initiative from the bottom up, because, on the one hand, it allowed the weaker members of society to turn against powerful members of

the provincial elite and state administration, and, on the other, it was a channel of communication through which the subjects of the Sultan informed Istanbul about developments in the provinces, and, thus, indirectly influenced political decision-making at the centre.

Finally, Evthymios Papataxiarchis analyses the effect of the diffusion of the printing culture on the tradition of petitioning the authorities. Through the study of a revolt which emanated from factional strife within the Greek-speaking Orthodox community of Ayvalık in 1842, he shows that recent technological and political developments, such as the circulation of newspapers, the legacy of the Greek War of Independence, the ideals of the Enlightenment and constitutionalism, and the establishment of the Greek state as an antagonist of the Ottoman Empire for control of its Greek-speaking communities, influenced both the form and the content of the petitions, which were transformed from 'secret' administrative initiatives into 'public', published texts.

The essays in Part III analyse cases of rebellion against the Sultan, his authority and his entourage, and/or instances of popular political activism and unrest in the Ottoman capital. First, Dimitris Kastritsis places the Şeyh Bedreddin and Börklüce Mustafa uprisings in 1416 within the context of the politically turbulent period which followed the Ottoman defeat in Ankara (1402), but also within that of the religious and intellectual history of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Kastritsis argues that these uprisings expressed the political feelings and ambitions of lower and middle social strata, and poses the question why elite figures such as Bedreddin were involved in them. Furthermore, he demonstrates how a careful examination of the few existing fifteenth-century sources combined with a solid knowledge of the period can throw new light on the uprisings and their elusive protagonists.

Then, Baki Tezcan discusses the rebellion of 1622, which resulted in the deposition and murder of Osman II, from the point of view of historiography. More specifically, he analyses and compares seventeenth-century Ottoman narrative sources about this incident, and remarks that there were various factors, such as political allegiance, ideology, expedience, and distance from the centre of power, which determined which version of the events gained wide currency and which were disregarded. An important issue which was raised at the time, and which was discussed by the chroniclers, was whether the dethronement of Osman II and, especially, his subsequent execution were legitimate acts, and whether man or God (or fate) was responsible for them.

In his essay, Marinos Sariyannis discusses the 'second wave' of the Kadızadeli 'fundamentalist' movement in the 1650s, when, as he argues, the movement's popular following reached its peak, and associates the Kadızadeli-Halveti antagonism with the political goals of various groups and social strata in Istanbul. In this context, he focuses on the idea that the Kadızadeli ideology became a useful vehicle for new mercantile strata who wished to promote their interests and enhance their political role at a time of political and economic instability which had detrimental effects on their activities and wealth. In this respect, he also proposes to compare the Kadızadeli ideology with the Western 'Protestant ethic'.

Finally, Aysel Yıldız studies the military personnel of the forts of the Bosporus, the *yamak*s, who were the protagonists of the 1807 revolt that led to the dethronement of Se-

lim III. First, she analyses, in the light of Ottoman sources, the identity of the *yamak*s in order to demonstrate that many among them were rather young men of often lowly socio-economic background, who, to a considerable extent, also shared common geographical origins, which enhanced their homogeneity. Then, she examines acts of disobedience and disorder in which they engaged, and, finally, discusses the revolt of 1807 as a political initiative from the bottom up with emphasis on the characteristics, attitude, and targets of the insurgents.

The two essays in Part IV introduce a 'top down' perspective in their examination of the interaction between the state authorities and the Sultan's subjects. Suraiya Faroqhi, the Symposiarch, analyses the contents of a register of the central bureaucracy which lists the identities, professions, places of residence, and total cost of 399 men who were sent to Hotin in 1716 in order to repair and improve the local fortress and its infrastructure. Faroqhi does not limit her discussion to the information that the register provides, but also articulates research desiderata, such as knowing the criteria on the basis of which the authorities decided to draft and hire the people that they sent to Hotin. In relation to this, she puts forward a tempting hypothesis, namely that the authorities gave priority to unskilled young men, Albanians in particular, who, if in Istanbul, were viewed as likely participants in political upheavals or revolts.

Svetlana Ivanova investigates if the Ottoman subjects in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Rumelia were cognisant of political and military events. She argues that, since the sultanic decrees, especially those which imposed taxes, did not simply contain orders, but also discussed the political and military circumstances within which these orders were issued, they raised the political awareness of the subjects. The *reaya* communities were further politicised by the tax system, which was largely based on self-regulation regarding tax allocation and collection. The principal aim of the sultanic decrees was to legitimise sultanic rule, but, as they were popularised by the *kadı* court and the *reaya* elite, they also produced informed subjects.

The essays in Part V raise methodological and theoretical issues by critically examining certain concepts used in history-writing. Thus, Boğaç Ergene adopts a critical stance towards the concept of writing history 'from the bottom up', and centres his argument on the study of the Ottoman legal system. On the one hand, he points out the shortcomings of *kadı* court registers as a source for studying the inner workings and balances of local communities and their members, especially those belonging to subaltern groups. On the other, he criticises the bipolar separation of the court of law from the local community within which it functioned, as much of the literature does. Finally, Ergene notes that he does not reject 'history from below', but asks for caution in the study of subaltern groups when the sources do not favour investigating their attitudes, motives, actions, or ideas.

Next, Eleni Gara deals with collective action in the Ottoman Empire from the mid sixteenth to the late eighteenth century as an expression of political participation by the Ottoman subjects. She associates collective action with increased politicisation and factionalism within the *reaya* communities, as a result, among other factors, of the enhanced role of the representatives of the local population in the handling of state affairs and easier access to the loci of sultanic authority, such as the *kadı* court and the imperial council. Gara

argues that collective action had a large repertoire in terms both of form and substance, and points out that the image of the submissive *reaya*, as found in petitions to the Sultan, is principally the product of bureaucratic conventions.

Finally, Antonis Anastasopoulos treats 'civil society' as a concept which is compatible with a 'bottom-up' perspective of history, but also as one which is West-specific. The aim of his essay is to discuss whether this concept, as defined for the Western socio-cultural and political context, may be applied to the pre-Tanzimat Ottoman Empire. His conclusion is that, if one considers the key attributes of 'civil society' in a systematic fashion, it is not easy to argue for its existence in the Ottoman Empire, although it is possible to discern some traces of it. On a wider scale, his argument is related to the hegemony of analytical categories drawn from the Western paradigm, and the prerequisites under which these may be transferred and used for societies and states which fall outside it.