

Antonis Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete V. A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 10-12 January 2003*, Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005

## INTRODUCTION

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The term ‘provincial elites’, when used in the Ottoman context, is most readily associated with the *ayan*, the Muslim notables who held a dominant place in the Ottoman provinces from at least the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. However, the twenty-one papers,<sup>1</sup> which were presented in the course of the Halcyon Days in Crete Symposium on ‘Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire’ (Rethymno, 10-12 January 2003), expanded the meaning of the ‘provincial elites’ well beyond *ayanship* by covering a wide range of topics extending over the period from the fifteenth to the early twentieth century.

Elite studies have mostly flourished in the fields of sociology and political science with particular reference to industrial and post-industrial societies, and the first thing which can be noted about the term ‘elite’ is that it is rather vague. In brief, its three basic meanings can be codified as follows: i. ‘top people’ in every category of human activity, ii. wielders of power, iii. those whose opinions and actions count most.<sup>2</sup> The elite is by definition a minority group, as it includes those who are thought of as belonging to the top of the social ladder, but it is not a social class. In fact, the concept of the ‘elite’ was originally developed in reaction to Marxist class analysis: the connotations of class are primarily economic, while the concept of the elite largely refers to political power.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the two notions intersect and there was a certain degree of amalgamation between Marxist and elitist approaches in the course of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

1. Professors John C. Alexander, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and İlber Ortaylı were unfortunately unable to submit their papers for publication.
2. The formulation of the three meanings of the term is from G. Moyser and M. Wagstaffe (eds), *Research Methods for Elite Studies* (London 1987), xi.
3. See J. Scott, ‘Introduction’, in idem (ed.), *The Sociology of Elites*. Vol. 1: *The Study of Elites* (Aldershot and Brookfield 1990), ix. For a defence of the notion of the elite and for its use in French historical writing, see J.-Ph. Luis, ‘Les trois temps de l’histoire des élites à l’époque moderne et contemporaine’, in M. Cèbeillac-Gervasoni and L. Lamoine (eds), *Les élites et leurs facettes. Les élites locales dans le monde hellénistique et romain* (Rome and Clermont-Ferrand 2003), 37-49. Cf. the apologetic tone of the ‘Introduction’ to G. Chaussinand-Nogaret (ed.), *Histoire des élites en France du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. L’honneur – le mérite – l’argent* (n.p. 1991).
4. Scott, ‘Introduction’, xi-xiii.

Defining the ‘elite’ too broadly as ‘top people’ in every category of human activity is of little analytical use from the point of view of the social sciences. The association of elites with power, political and economic, is on the other hand much more useful, and has in fact been extensively used, both theoretically and empirically, as a means of identifying elites. In this context, political power as a defining characteristic of elites needs to be extended beyond participation in formal government institutions, if it is to be meaningful;<sup>5</sup> actually, ‘power’ should be taken to also include ‘influence’, as suggested by the third of the afore-mentioned meanings of the word ‘elite’.<sup>6</sup> The elite is by no means simply a conglomeration of individuals who happen to possess wealth and prestige, but are otherwise socially inactive or negligible.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, the elite is a group of leading people with at least some self-consciousness of their status as such. They constitute a power group, which interacts with other social groups and classes, and defends its position, while at the same time its members belong to social classes (rather than to just one class).

In the Ottoman case, treating the *ayan* as a conscious, integrated elite group (very near to a class) which possessed the ‘three c’s’ (consciousness, coherence, conspiracy) of political elites according to Meisel<sup>8</sup> is, I think, best illustrated in historical narratives which interpret the *sened-i ittifak* of 1808 as the result of negotiation between *ayan* as a unified, rather homogeneous, Empire-wide bloc and the central Ottoman government (whose basic representative, Grand Vizier Bayrakdar Mustafa Paşa, however, also happened to be an *ayan*).<sup>9</sup>

Whether the elite is an integrated group drawing its members from a specific socio-economic pool or whether multiple competing elites may exist at the same time in a given place or entity has long been a matter of methodological discussion.<sup>10</sup> In the same vein, it is argued that elites serve among other things as “symbols of the

5. See the notion of ‘power elite’ introduced by Wright Mills (*ibid.*, xi).
6. According to Chaussinand-Nogaret, ‘Introduction’, 12, the elites are “cette fraction de la population où se concentrent puissance, autorité et influence”.
7. See Scott, ‘Introduction’, ix.
8. *Ibid.*, xiii.
9. See, for instance, B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London – New York – Toronto 1961), 441-42: Lewis refers to the *ayan* as a “social group or class of old and new landlords” and “gentry”. Compare the difference in tone in S. J. Shaw and E. Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Vol. II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge 1977), 2-3, and R. Mantran, ‘Les débuts de la Question d’Orient (1774-1839)’, in *idem* (ed.), *Histoire de l’Empire ottoman* (n.p. 1989), 437-38. More recently, A. Salzmann treated the *ayan*, in the context of the *sened-i ittifak*, as “the third estate” and “the gentry”: A. Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden and Boston 2004), 186-87.
10. Scott, ‘Introduction’, xii.

common life and embodiments of the values that maintain it”.<sup>11</sup> Whether such sets of values can be considered universal or not is an issue related to the one just mentioned. If we accept the existence of more than one elite group in a given social formation, we should be able to find variations or even conflicting interpretations of the prevailing values in different segments of the elite, and, thus, be able to draw a more nuanced picture of society.

The notion of the elite has universal application. The vagueness of the concept, on the one hand, weakens it as a tool for historical analysis and may obfuscate comparison, but, on the other, it renders it rather flexible and allows it to be used in a multitude of contexts, modern and pre-modern, Western and non-Western. Let me cite here two random examples, one Ottoman and one non-Ottoman, of the application of the notion of the elite to pre-modern Islamic societies. I think that these examples demonstrate the flexibility, rather than vagueness, of the notion (as they refer to specific social groups), and its adaptability to differing contexts. Petry and Marcus’ descriptions of Muslim elites do differ, predominantly in the relative position of the elite in the overall social hierarchy but also in some of its attributes, but they, too, coincide in the association of the elites with power, which is, in their cases, rather narrowly identified with authority emanating from or, at least, sanctioned by the state.

In his study of fifteenth-century Cairo, Petry treated as the elite those who stood between the “ruling Mamluk military caste” and the “masses upon whose labor and obedience the ruling class depended”; the elite “staffed the bureaucratic, legal, educational, and religious offices of the state, and determined the course of intellectual inquiry”.<sup>12</sup> Petry – like several other students of the Arab lands – benefited in his categorisation from the survival of contemporaneous biographical dictionaries, which can serve as guides as to whom Muslim authors of the pre-modern era considered socially important.

Marcus, in his study of eighteenth-century Aleppo, on the other hand, also refers to a tripartite division, but this time the elite are placed in the top social category, which may be explained by the fact that Ottoman Aleppo – unlike Mamluk Cairo – was not the seat of central government, nor did it possess a royal house or court of its own: members of the city’s elite “were distinguished by great personal wealth ... [but] ... also boasted prestigious lineages and held high positions in the religious establishment, the administration, and the military”. Second came a larger group of

11. S. Keller, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (ed. D. L. Sills), s.v. ‘Elites’.

12. C. F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J. 1981),

3. Petry notes that this threefold social division reflects the view of the chroniclers of the Mamluk state.

people whom we might call the ‘middle class’, that is, those who “possessed property, a comfortable life-style, learning, good occupations, and other attributes considered desirable by their community”. The mass of the inhabitants of Aleppo belonged to the lower social stratum, those who “could claim little or no wealth, prestige or influence”.<sup>13</sup>

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How then does the notion of the elite apply to the Ottoman case and the theme of this volume? What are the particular characteristics of Ottoman provincial elites, if we wish to go beyond very broad definitions with universal applicability, such as the one given by Peter Burke several years ago, when, in his book on seventeenth-century Venice and Amsterdam, he defined elites as “groups high on three criteria; status, power and wealth” (which is not that far from Marcus’ lineage, high positions, and wealth)?<sup>14</sup> The elite is, as already noted, a minority group with a leading role in society, but it is not easily delineated, because elites are in principle inclusive rather than exclusive. However, when examining formations where the applicability of class analysis is on the whole disputable,<sup>15</sup> the notion of the elite provides a useful analytical tool. As in most fields, Ottomanist historians generally tend to give priority to political over economic power as a primary characteristic of the elites – as Michael Ursinus puts it in his paper in this volume, provincial elites “have a vested interest in local affairs”.<sup>16</sup> Wealth is another important trait of the elites, but comes second in

13. A. Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York 1989), 38. Marcus does use ‘class’ as a social category, and introduces several further indicators, such as religion, profession, and sex, which render the overall picture more complex.

14. P. Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Élités* (London 1974), 9.

15. K. Barkey refers to ‘classes’ in her *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca and London 1994), but also points to the limitations of this notion in the Ottoman context: pp. 22, 23, 30 n. 15, 232-35.

16. Ursinus’ discussion of the notion of the Ottoman provincial elite (taken from his paper in this volume) is succinct and to the point: “the *çiftlik sahibleri* of Manastır constitute an obvious case in point [i.e., a provincial elite] since they were by definition locally rooted, had a vested interest in local affairs (not least for their own good), and tended to assume the role of intermediaries between what they regarded as their locus of (financial or fiscal) interest on the one side and officialdom on the other (unless they had been promoted to officialdom themselves). Predominantly Muslim, they include not only members of the military, the learned institution, religious personnel, administrative staff and artisans, but also, more occasionally, dervish *şeyhs*, women and even non-Muslims. Yet however many diverse elements of society and members of different social strata they may include, they are united in the fact that they are in possession of one or more former peasant holdings worked by farm labourers for which they are fiscally responsible”.

rank; even though power and wealth usually are interlinked, political authority or power or influence seems to be the elite's most crucial characteristic from a historiographical point of view. As for how wealthy someone needed to be in order to be counted among the elite, wealth, like power, is a relative rather than absolute quantity. In other words, what great power or wealth means depends on the particular conditions and circumstances of each locality and era. Besides, whether a certain level of power or wealth is a precondition for considering someone a member of the elite is connected with how restrictively one wishes to define the elite; some would argue that even within a single society, there are several layers of elite, and, thus, several layers of wealth and power should be taken into consideration.

But before proceeding further, we may ask whether the Ottoman state and society themselves recognised the existence of provincial elites in the Ottoman realm. I believe that they did, and that it does not take much to prove it. The very use of the terms *ayan* and *ayan-ı vilâyet* in describing a certain group of people is in itself one piece of testimony to this (the same applies to other words such as *derebeyler*, *vücuḥ*, *iş erleri*, *söz sahibleri*, *muteberan* and *kocabaşilar* in several historical stages and instances). The fact that central authorities addressed particular persons and groups other than state representatives when sending decrees to the provinces is another. Representation of the population of a region by a small or larger group of people from among themselves is yet another. But, having made this remark, I do not think that we absolutely need to seek to identify whom the Ottomans thought of as the provincial elite.<sup>17</sup> Such an endeavour is undoubtedly useful, but we should not forget that the term 'elite' as it is used by scholarship is a modern invention with a particular (even if vague) content. This modern notion is applied to the pre-modern (for the most part of its history) Ottoman polity and society for research purposes; in other words, we invent, we do not re-invent or unearth.

A second issue to be dealt with is whether we should refer to an Ottoman provincial elite or elites. I would rather speak of 'provincial elites' in the plural, in the sense that there was not just one monolithic elite either in space or time, given that the Ottoman Empire occupied a huge territory with a variety of political, social and moral traditions, and also was a constantly evolving state and social formation which covered a time span of over six centuries. The sole reason for using 'Ottoman provincial elite' in the singular would be, I think, in order to avoid the misconception

17. For an overview of how Ottoman elite intellectuals divided and viewed society, see M. Sariyannis, "“Mob”, “Scamps” and Rebels in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Some Remarks on Ottoman Social Vocabulary' (forthcoming in *IJTS*, 11/1 & 2 [2005]) in conjunction with his «Περιθωριακές Ομάδες και Συμπεριφορές στην Οθωμανική Κωνσταντινούπολη, 16<sup>ος</sup>-18<sup>ος</sup> Αιώνας» [Marginal Groups and Attitudes in Ottoman Istanbul, Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2005, 79-107.

that Ottoman society was a loose and fragmented entity, composed of various social and confessional groups with only nominal contact or interaction among them. On the other hand, it is incontestable that Ottomanist historians on the whole tend to associate the provincial elites with one particular group in different historical phases of the Empire; thus, the Ottoman provincial elite is, for instance, in the early centuries primarily but not exclusively associated with the *sipahi* cavalry. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provincial elites are mostly but again not exclusively associated with the *ayan*. In the late phase of the Empire, following the *hatt-ı şerif* of *Güllhane*, elites are associated, still not exclusively, with members of the state and local government apparatus, as well as with powerful landowners and the rising bourgeoisie.

Obviously, this picture is over-simplistic. It fails, for instance, to take non-Muslim elites into account. They, too, were part of the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-faith, multi-layered, yet unified Ottoman society, which, despite the existence of significant rifts within, shared certain basic common experiences and values, and above all what might be called its ‘Ottomanness’.<sup>18</sup> There is plenty of evidence which suggests that non-Muslim elites largely aspired to inclusion in the Ottoman elite and not to separation from it (consider, for instance, their participation in tax-farming and local security forces, as well as their attempts at assimilation in terms of attire, material culture and symbols of power).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, there are other categories of individuals, which expand even further the notion of the elite, and Ottoman provincial elite more particularly. Consider, in this respect, the issue of intellectual elites, as Aleksandar Fotić and Pinelopi Stathi point out in their papers in this volume.<sup>20</sup>

18. See also the argument of Pinelopi Stathi on p. 78 of this volume. On non-Muslim elites, see, in particular, Svetlana Ivanova’s paper.

19. This is also the view of Nikos Svoronos, whose brief overview of the history of the “Greek nation”, written in the 1960s, was only recently published and became the subject of much debate in Greek academia: N. Svoronos, *To Ελληνικό Έθνος: Γένεση και Διαμόρφωση του Νέου Ελληνισμού* [The Greek Nation: Genesis and Formation of Modern Hellenism] (Athens 2004), 90-91. Cf. G. Veinstein, ‘Le patrimoine foncier de Panayote Benakis, *kocabası* de Kalamata’, *JTS*, 11 (1987), 211-33, and, on the inapplicability of clothing laws, R. Murphey, ‘Forms of Differentiation and Expression of Individuality in Ottoman Society’, *Turcica*, 34 (2002), 137-38.

20. Both Fotić and Stathi discuss how ‘intellectual elites’ may fit into the notion of the ‘elite’. Even though the historical context differs significantly, it is, on the other hand, worth considering the methodological points made by I. Savalli-Lestrade, ‘Remarques sur les élites dans les *poleis* hellénistiques’ and É. Perrin-Saminadayar, ‘Des élites intellectuelles à Athènes à l’époque hellénistique ? Non, des notables’, both in Cégeillac-Gervasoni and Lamoine (eds), *Les élites et leurs facettes*, 51-64 (esp. 51-52) and 383-400 respectively.

Was nobility a characteristic of Ottoman provincial elites? There was no formal provincial aristocracy in the Ottoman Empire – with the possible exception of the *sipahi* cavalry with its peculiar state-dependent status (*seyyidship* was, of course, another distinctive kind of nobility, but not exactly an ‘aristocracy’), but descent was a factor in determining the members of the elite, even though it was not the only one and maybe not the single most important. Let’s say then that descent from a powerful family provided a good starting-point and an advantage over rivals who did not possess it. A tendency towards ‘informal’ aristocratisation is in fact obvious in the Ottoman Empire, particularly during the eighteenth century, both at the centre and in the provinces, as indicated by the fact that high offices and important positions were controlled by a limited number of powerful families, as well as by the increasing use of family names which identified important people as belonging to particular families.<sup>21</sup>

Could we say that members of the provincial elites were those who stood between, on the one side, the state and its agents, and, on the other, the populations of their regions, acting in fact as political brokers? I think that we could. Obviously, this is largely a state-centred approach, which emphasises par excellence the formal or semi-formal political aspect of the role of the elites. Elite are in this case those whom the state recognises (or at least accepts) as such, those to whom the people delegate authority of representation, those who are involved in formal procedures, such as tax-farming and tax collection, and interact with state agents as representatives of their districts. It may be a particularity of the Arab provinces – or, rather, of approach – but Ehud Toledano coincides with Marcus in providing an even more restrictive definition of Ottoman elites along these lines. Toledano, who distinguishes between “Ottoman elite” and “local elites”, with “Ottoman-local elites” being formed in later times, argues that elites are primarily identified with office-holding and government appointments, which are treated as “the key to power-elite status”.<sup>22</sup> The

21. Ottoman archival sources provide plenty of evidence for this phenomenon. For the aristocratisation of the *ulema*, see M. C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age (1600-1800)* (Minneapolis 1988).

22. E. Toledano, ‘The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700-1900): A Framework for Research’, in I. Pappé and M. Ma’oz (eds), *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within* (London and New York 1997), 150-51, 154-56, 159. Cf. T. Shuval, ‘The Ottoman Algerian Elite and its Ideology’, *IJMES*, 32 (2000), 323-44 (see, esp., n. 98) and also the division of the population “in a Near Eastern city” in H. İnalcık, ‘Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration’, in T. Naff and R. Owen (eds), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Carbondale and Edwardsville – London and Amsterdam 1977), 37. See, on the other hand, Martin Strohmeier’s description of Damascene notables (pp. 349-50 in this volume), and also Eleni Gara’s discussion of whether Balkan provincial elites may be restricted to office-holders and her juxtaposition of political to social elites (pp. 135-38 in this volume).

identification of elites with office-holding is, of course, a much more general trend,<sup>23</sup> connected with the features of power and self-consciousness that the elite as a social category needs by definition to possess, and also with a more strict definition of the 'elites' not simply as such, but as 'governing' or 'power elites' (even though the latter term in particular does not restrict the elite to those holding formal authority and state offices).<sup>24</sup> Besides, in state capitals, and major cities, where often a group of powerful office-holders are the dominant factor, it is methodologically difficult to include other wealthy and/or reputable social actors in the elite, as those appear to be lacking in authority/power when compared with the office-holders.<sup>25</sup>

An alternative way of defining the elite would be orientated more towards society. We would in this case consider as elite those with social power and influence, irrespective of whether they were involved in formal procedures or whether they were known to state agents; non-Muslims or dervishes and monks could then count as members of an Ottoman provincial elite. Obviously, sources of Ottoman history make it much easier to discern elites according to a state-centred rather than to a society-centred definition.

This is also reflected in the papers of this volume, as several among them refer to the issue of the relationship between the Ottoman state and provincial elites. Practically, what the two sides needed from each other and exchanged was legitimation (and, along with it, income). Provincial notables could facilitate the implementation of government policies and guarantee relative order in the provinces, while state acknowledgement or government appointment enhanced a local notable's prestige and authority. Thus, members of the provincial elites were appointed *sipahis* in the early centuries and *mütesellims* in later times (a few even became pashas),<sup>26</sup> or were involved in tax-farming and tax collection from a relatively early age.<sup>27</sup>

If provincial elites really stood between the state and the mass of the local population, they need to somehow be differentiated from both for analytical purposes; however, dividing lines are not always clear. As far as differentiation from the state is concerned, provincial elites – especially when we identify them with the

23. See, for instance, Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam*, 16-32, and M. Bernard, 'Les élites politiques locales à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : méthodes de recherche et premiers résultats', in Cébeillac-Gervasoni and Lamoine (eds), *Les élites et leurs facettes*, 277-87, where the problem of the inclusion in the political elite of those with an important informal political influence is also touched upon.

24. Scott, 'Introduction', x-xi.

25. See S. Faroqhi's brief discussion of "who, in which period, formed part of the Ottoman elite" in her *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London and New York 2004), 13.

26. See, for instance, the papers of Melek Delilbaşı and Yuzo Nagata in this volume.

27. See, for instance, the papers of Leslie Peirce, Eleni Gara, Yuzo Nagata, Michael Ursinus and Suraiya Faroqhi in this volume.

*ayan* – are usually taken to have acquired their power independently from the state, even though they may occupy state posts or be involved in tax-farming. On the other hand, nothing in principle prevents a *kadi* or another state official who comes from the centre to become with time (sometimes, but not necessarily, following retirement or when out of active service) a provincial notable; and once again, it is to be borne in mind that scholars such as Marcus and Toledano associate the elite with office-holding.

If we now turn to the boundary which separates the elite from the mass of the people, status, wealth, and power (and/or influence), i.e., the defining characteristics of the elite according to Burke, form important dividing lines, but once again limits are not always clearly defined, as normally the elite and the population of a certain district share the same roots and actual social mobility is a factor to be taken into consideration. For instance, do guilds belong to the ‘people’, but guild officials to the ‘elite’? Or, are, on the other hand, major merchants really members of the elite? As has already been said, wealth is a defining characteristic of the elite, but is insufficient in its own right. For instance, wealthy merchants who are not involved in the running of local affairs or in public life in general, constitute members of the social elite in the everyday sense of the word,<sup>28</sup> but from a ‘social sciences point of view’ they are rather members of a wealthy ‘middle’ or ‘upper class’. On the other hand, it has already been noted that wealth very often brings by definition political power or influence along with it, and this is exemplified in the Ottoman case in non-Muslim merchants of the eighteenth century who were able to pay for foreign protection under the capitulatory regime and thus challenge the principle of communal responsibility in the payment of taxes,<sup>29</sup> or to question the political domination of the ‘traditional’ elite at the end of the same century,<sup>30</sup> and in major merchants, landowners and businessmen who occupied in the nineteenth century seats in the representative councils of the Tanzimat era.

We have now returned to a discussion of who belonged to the elite and who did not on the basis of restrictions set by the Ottoman administrative, moral and social system (or should I say systems in the plural for the last two?). To give a few more examples, do elites in the Ottoman Empire include members of both sexes? Women

28. See the definition of ‘social elite’ cited by Eleni Gara in n. 3 of her paper.

29. References to this may be found in K. Mertzios, *Μνημεία Μακεδονικής Ιστορίας* [Monuments of Macedonian History] (Thessaloniki 1947), 312, 322, 324, 326, 336-37, 359-60, 362-66.

30. P. Iliou, *Κοινωνικοί Αγώνες και Διαφωτισμός: Η Περίπτωση της Σμύρνης* [Social Struggles and Enlightenment: The Case of Smyrna (1819)] (Athens 1986 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]), 10-12. At a later stage, the guilds of Izmir challenged the merchants as leaders of the Christian community of the city.

did possess property, and wealth, and they not infrequently administered their affairs in courts and other public spaces themselves, but can they actually be included among the elite (as distinct from both the ‘upper class’ and ‘wives of elite men/women of elite families’) of a given town or region, in view of the restrictions set on women by Islamic law and society, and, especially, their exclusion from political power?<sup>31</sup> In all likelihood, exceptions prove in this case the rule.<sup>32</sup> What about non-Muslims, who could be wealthy and influential within a certain group of co-religionists (and sometimes beyond), but were unable to occupy government posts or be treated by the state on an equal footing with Muslim *ayan* as representatives of a district’s population? And what about dervish sheikhs or religious scholars, who had influence over a number of disciples and enjoyed respect, but did not necessarily possess political power in the strict sense of the term? Or what about villages and the rural area? Are elites an exclusively urban phenomenon (several elite members resided in towns, but had control over rural land and the village population),<sup>33</sup> or is it that only urban elites have left their marks on the available sources? Accident is by definition an important factor in studying the elites and past societies in general: we know of whom we know first and foremost because particular sources have survived and have channelled their names and aspects of their activities to us.

The subjects of the papers in this volume help us think about the issue of defining the boundaries of the notion of ‘provincial elites in the Ottoman Empire’. What is it that connects a fifteenth-century *sipahi* in Thessaly, in particular a Christian one, with a sixteenth-century Ayntab notable, such as Seydi Ahmed Boyacizade, with major eighteenth-century *ayan*, such as the Karaosmanoğulları, with less important and powerful eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Balkan and Anatolian notables, such as the Tekelioğulları in Antalya and the even smaller-scale notables of Karaferye, with eighteenth-century erudite prelates, such as Antalyalı Serafim, Bishop of Ankara, and Chrysanthos Notaras, Patriarch of Jerusalem, with Jewish

31. Cf. the papers of Leslie Peirce, Suraiya Faroqhi, Eleni Gara, and Rossitsa Gradeva in this volume, and their depiction of and/or comments about women as members of the elite. See also H. Reindl-Kiel, ‘A Woman *Timar* Holder in Ankara Province During the Second Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century’, *JESHO*, 40/2 (1997), 207-38 and S. Faroqhi, ‘Two Women of Substance’, in her *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women* (Istanbul 2002), 151-66.
32. L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford 1993); S. Faroqhi, ‘Crime, Women and Wealth in the Eighteenth-Century Anatolian Countryside’, in her *Stories*, 198-200.
33. See, for instance, the papers of Michael Ursinus and Émile Thémopoulou in this volume. Rossitsa Gradeva mentions a rich Muslim Sofian who had moved out of the city to a village, while, in his paper, Nicolas Vatin refers to “l’élite du village” (n. 30). See also İnalçık, ‘Centralization and Decentralization’, n. 32 (p. 364).

entrepreneurs in Tanzimat Salonica, with a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Damascene *amir al-hajj*, such as Abd al-Rahman Pasha al-Yusuf?

Obviously, all of them and many more were subjects of the Ottoman Empire at various historical moments, and this is a very important reason why we study them together. The political link is not negligible, but it is self-evident and thus of little practical value from a scholarly point of view.

Maybe an attempt to define 'provincial elites in the Ottoman Empire' could be facilitated by distinguishing between primary and secondary characteristics of provincial elites; primary characteristics would in this case be those considered necessary for someone to be treated as elite, while secondary ones would be those which would most likely but not always accompany the primary ones. Admittedly, such an approach does not solve all the problems with classifying individuals among the elite of a given place (as noted, what about intellectual elites with influence and status but no wealth, for instance?), but it does provide a basis for discussion.

In any case, the three basic characteristics pointed out by Burke, i.e. status, wealth, and power, could be primary. Even though a state appointment could and did secure someone precedence over his elite rivals, the elite as a group cannot be restricted to office-holders only, and, thus, power as one of its basic traits needs to be interpreted liberally: other than occupying a government post, it might take the form of being a factor in determining or influencing the local balance of power or of representing the region before state authorities or of being involved in tax collection or of being able to mobilise a number of people; significant economic power normally entailed an ability to influence the political balance, too. To these three basic characteristics, I would add identification with a particular locality or region; the provincial elites' power base and interests were geographically specific and in the provinces, even though they themselves did not necessarily need to be indigenous to the locality where they flourished.

What would then in random order be the secondary characteristics of Ottoman provincial elites? Lineage could be one; members of provincial elites often formed local dynasties and power was transferred from one generation to the next, or among family members of the same generation. Control of the land and its products as a basic source of income and power would be another, at least for the period before the Tanzimat, but to a large extent also after 1839; control of the land could take several forms: direct landownership or a tax farm or providing loans to villagers or discharging their tax obligations in exchange for a fee.

Another secondary characteristic of provincial elites would be what we can call 'networking'. Members of the elite were usually not isolated individuals, but belonged to either or both of two types of networks: family networks and patron-client networks. It was usually one member of the family who was the leading figure (the 'frontman' so to speak) surrounded by other family members who assumed

secondary roles and performed tasks which were necessary for maintaining and augmenting their family's power.

Patron-client relations were also important in securing one's position or that of a family.<sup>34</sup> Elites needed to form networks and alliances in order to defend their prominence in adverse times or to expand their power to regions beyond their original base when circumstances permitted. There were always intra-elite rivals who aspired to supersede or eliminate a powerful notable, while state intervention could lead to confiscation of an elite family's property and execution of its leading members;<sup>35</sup> the victims of such a policy could – and very often did – recover, fully or partly, their wealth and status, but this presupposed connections both locally and at the imperial centre, as well as an ability to negotiate one's position.

A particular – and popular – form of patronage intended for a larger audience was architectural patronage and the establishment of *vakıfs*.<sup>36</sup> Establishing a *vakıf* was a means of protecting the family's property from confiscation and bypassing the strict Islamic inheritance rules, but it also increased the family's prestige and popularity as a benefactor and provider of urban and rural services to the population of a certain region.

Yet another secondary characteristic of Ottoman provincial elites would be acquiring titles, which also enhanced their prestige. One category of such titles were religious ones, such as *seyyid* and *hacı*.<sup>37</sup> Another category were titles with political overtones; for instance, several eighteenth-century *ayan* possessed the title of imperial chief gatekeeper (*serbevvaban-ı âli* or *kapıcıbaşı*),<sup>38</sup> which at the symbolic level implied a special bond to the House of Osman.

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As is the usual academic practice, freedom was allowed to Symposium participants to choose their topics within the general framework of this theme. It is, therefore,

34. See in this volume the relationship between the Tekelioğulları of Antalya with the more powerful Karaosmanoğulları (Suraiya Faroqhi), as well as the relationship of Seydi Ahmed Boyacızade with his client Hacı Mehmed (Leslie Peirce). Compare with the marriage alliance between the Yusufs and the Shamdins (Martin Strohmeier).

35. See, for instance, the papers of Yuzo Nagata and Suraiya Faroqhi in this volume.

36. See, for instance, the papers of Leslie Peirce, Yuzo Nagata, Suraiya Faroqhi, and Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu in this volume.

37. For the importance of *seyyid*ship see the paper of Hülya Canbakal in this volume.

38. See, for instance, İnalçık, 'Centralization and Decentralization', 40, as well as the cases of the Karaosmanoğulları (Yuzo Nagata), and the Tekelioğulları (Suraiya Faroqhi) in this volume. Nagata, in fact, argues that the conferment of titles by the state suggests that *ayan* were treated as *kapıkulları*, whose estates were expected to revert to their master after death; in other words, confiscation of properties was more than an act of punishment for misbehaviour on the part of the *ayan*.

interesting to note that, as this volume, one hopes, demonstrates, despite their diversity in covering several aspects of the history of provincial elites in the Ottoman Empire, the papers do complement one another to a significant degree and in more ways than one.

György Hazai focuses on the degree of bilingualism and multilingualism observed among provincial elites in the Ottoman Empire. The author points out that the Ottoman state did not seek to impose the use of Turkish to its subjects who did not speak it as their mother tongue; linguistic developments were determined by the political, administrative, ethnic, religious and social conditions which prevailed in each particular region.

Nicolas Vatin proceeds to a study of the mobility of Muslim elites in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the basis of tombstone inscriptions, thus collecting evidence and drawing conclusions on networks, itineraries, and circumstances which connected various settlements of differing sizes with one another. Furthermore, the author discerns in the formulas used in tombstones a growing tendency among members of the elite towards taking particular pride in their places of origin and in belonging to a specific local aristocracy.

Jane Hathaway shifts our attention from elites as an exclusive group to elites as members of wide social alliances/groupings, by analysing the phenomenon of bilateral factionalism, which she defines as “a political culture dominated by two rival blocs with no third alternative”; as the author notes, factions were neither exclusive to, nor led by the elite. By applying a comparative approach, Hathaway demonstrates that bilateral factionalism constituted an ancient political tradition of the eastern Mediterranean and the Iranian plateau: she relates the emergence of such rivalries to conditions of political and demographic fluidity, and stresses the fact that the opposing factions were inclusive in terms of membership, as well as that public rituals, such as processions, were crucial for the strengthening of factional allegiance.

Hülya Canbakal chooses to study claims to descent from the Prophet Muhammad – which entailed fiscal and, with time, other privileges too – as an aspect of elite identity and of the relationship between provincial notables and the state, since the latter sought to control the conferment of the title of *seyyid*/*şerif* through the imperial and provincial *nakibülşerifs*. The author discusses the limits of such surveillance policies, which reached their peak in the second half of the seventeenth century, and suggests that the spread of *seyyid*ship in the eighteenth century should be treated as yet another aspect of the integrationist policies of the state aimed at the provincial elites.

Aleksandar Fotić raises the issue of intellectual elites with particular reference to the Muslim and non-Muslim elites of Belgrade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Besides providing ample information about members of the intellectual elite of the town and their works, the author notes that communication between

different confessional groups on the intellectual level was scarce, and argues that even within a single denominational group the intellectual elite was not uniform. Even though religious institutions provided a strong focus of intellectual activity, not all intellectual production was of a religious nature.

Pinelopi Stathi argues that power and wealth should not be the only factors determining the inclusion of a given person in the elite, and moves on to discuss the case of Christian Orthodox bishops. After arguing that bishops did form part of Ottoman elite from an administrative, social, and intellectual point of view, she discusses the cases of various erudite prelates in order to disprove the view that all bishops of the Ottoman period were either uncultured or foes of knowledge and learning.

In her paper Melek Delilbaşı studies Christian *timar*-holders in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Thessaly. These constituted between one fifth and one seventh of the total number of *timar*-holders in the mid-fifteenth century, but, as proved by a comparative analysis of successive Ottoman registers, they had become practically extinct by the early sixteenth century because of a gradual Islamisation process. It is interesting to note in this respect that during the fifteenth century, members of old Byzantine families jointly held the family *timars* in Thessaly, even though some of them remained Christian while others had converted to Islam.

Leslie Peirce draws the portrait of a notable in sixteenth-century Ayntab, Seydi Ahmed Boyacı, whose story symbolises the successful adaptation of a distinguished local family to the advent of Ottoman rule in the region. Peirce explores the attributes of Ahmed's *ayanship*, symbolic, economic, political and social (such as the claim to a prominent lineage and *seyyidship*, rural and urban property ownership, performance of civic duties accruing from his social and ethical prestige, a town quarter and a mosque bearing the family name). Comparison with the activities of the other two major Ayntaban families of the time suggests that elite families of even the same locality did share common traits, but did not always adopt identical strategies in their quest for power and social prestige.

Eleni Gara investigates urban Muslim elites in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Balkans and points to the difficulty in determining their composition and identity. Of particular interest is her discussion of political v. social elites in the early modern Balkans, as she argues that political power in this period was still largely beyond the reach of local notables, since the important posts in provincial administration were controlled by the central state. The author proposes the study of real estate transactions and loans, as well as of *sicil* entries where the *ayan ve eşraf* or individuals with honorific titles are mentioned, as a means of collecting information on the make-up and activities of a given provincial elite.

Rossitsa Gradeva draws a portrait of the 'rich' of Sofia in the 1670s on the basis of inventories of estates (*tereke defterleri*). These inventories allow us insights into not

only the material culture, but also the values, professions, investments, and family status of the elite, which is in this paper defined as an economic one (and appears as predominantly urban Muslim, given that most entries refer to this group). The author concludes that wealth was gender and religion-related in seventeenth-century Sofia, but points out that the inventories suggest an absence of strict spatial segregation among 'rich', 'middle class' and 'poor', even though the first group tended to live nearer the city centre. Finally, the author notes that among honorific titles, *ağa* was the one more closely associated with wealth in Sofia in the 1670s.

Svetlana Ivanova discusses the *varoş* institution as a fiscal and 'self-government' non-territorial corporation of the urban Orthodox Christian population. This institution emerged in the course of the seventeenth century in response to the requirements of the Ottoman fiscal system, and necessitated a redefinition of the role of traditional territorial units of self-organisation, such as the neighbourhood. On the other hand, eighteenth-century sources reveal an overlap in the membership of the *varoş* leadership and the metropolitan council, which, according to Ivanova, suggests that what was termed *varoş* by the Ottoman state may have simply been a 're-invention' of the pre-existing metropolitan councils. The author compares the emergence of the *varoş* and its Christian leadership with the emergence of the *ayan* as leaders of the Muslim community, and stresses the fluidity and informal character of the authority of the *reaya* leadership in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Balkans with particular reference to the present-day Bulgarian territories.

Michael Ursinus focuses on the case of the *çiftlik* owners of the district of Manastir, and draws attention to *çiftlik* survey registers as an important source for studying the region's 'landed gentry' and power relations. Moreover, he argues that *çiftlik* owners based their economic and political power on a combination of direct landownership, fiscal 'mediation' for several 'free' peasant taxable households (they advanced their taxes in return for a considerable fee), and holding of local offices, such as the *ayanlık* and the *kaymakamlık*.

In my paper, I turn my attention to the difficulty of defining the provincial elite, which is usually identified with the political one, largely because of limitations of the source material – but obviously of approach, too. Furthermore, a literal reading of the sources may nurture a picture of strict division of the urban elite along confessional lines into two major groups (Muslims and non-Muslims). This picture, I argue, did not accurately reflect the social conditions in the eighteenth-century Balkans, but was to a certain extent fabricated in order to meet the precepts of the Islamic state and law. On the other hand, legal discrimination against non-Muslims was an integral part of state ideology, and as such it did affect society and the equilibrium between Muslim and non-Muslim elites.

Yuzo Nagata, our symposiarch, demonstrates the variety of resources on which an *ayan* family's wealth and power rested, more specifically focusing on tax farms, *çiftlik*s,

and *vakıfs*. The powerful Karaosmanoğlu *ayan* family of Manisa is his particular case-study, and the author argues that the variety of their economic undertakings explains why the waning of the political power of the family in the nineteenth century did not lead to the collapse of its social and economic influence. *Vakıfs*, in particular, allowed the family to maintain control over resources in the face of confiscation by the state upon a member's death, and also to create and maintain an extensive commercial infrastructure which facilitated the transport of agricultural produce from the hinterland to the urban centres, the Karaosmanoğlus not being indifferent at all to commerce, contrary to what is suggested by some of the sources on them.

Suraiya Faroqhi's paper focuses on the Tekelioğlu family of Antalya, and on their resources and investments (particularly in their landed property), as well as on the ways in which they sought to preserve and augment both their wealth and political power (for instance, by establishing *vakıfs*). As demand for grains was high in international markets at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Tekelioğulları invested in the cultivation of wheat and barley, which is, according to the author, an indication that much as political factors contributed to the formation of *çiftlik*s in the Ottoman Empire, the significance of market incentives should not be underestimated. The Tekelioğulları are an interesting case of medium-size *ayan*: even though they benefited from the distance which separated them from Istanbul in order to expand their power, their ambitions eventually made them overstep a certain limit and this led to their downfall through intervention of the central government.

Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu discusses Anatolian *ayan* as architectural patrons, focusing on the major *ayan* families of the Karaosmanoğulları, Cihanoğulları, Çapanoğulları, and Çıldıroğulları. The author points out that at the end of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century architectural patronage in the provinces shifted from the Palace and state officials to local *ayan*, who thus contributed to the development of provincial variations of the new Ottoman baroque style. The buildings sponsored by the *ayan* were meant to reflect their power and concern for the needs of the local population; this is corroborated by the fact that the patronage pattern (types of buildings and geographical distribution) of each *ayan* family corresponded to its priorities, as well as to the particularities of its geographical, political, social, and economic environment.

Émilie Thémopoulou studies the composition and characteristics of the social and economic elite of a major commercial city, Salonica, in the wake of the reforms of the Tanzimat period and further incorporation of Ottoman economy into world economy. The author argues that at a time of general change the emergence of new fields of economic activity and the introduction of new institutions transformed the urban elite, which was no longer composed almost exclusively of people associated with the state in one capacity or another.

Finally, Martin Strohmeier examines the life of Abd al-Rahman Pasha al-Yusuf,

a scion of one of the major elite families of Ottoman Damascus. The al-Yusufs, a family of Kurdish stock, were relative newcomers to the city, as they most likely arrived in the late eighteenth century, and rose to notability through association and alliances with other powerful local figures and families, and government appointments. A post with which the al-Yusufs associated themselves, thus gaining prestige and power, was the position of *amir al-hajj*, which they held for most of the second half of the nineteenth and in the early years of the twentieth century. The case of Abd al-Rahman Pasha exemplifies the transition of an opponent of Arab nationalism from supporter of the Ottoman regime and subject of the sultan to politician in post-Ottoman Syria. Abd al-Rahman, who was seen as a defender of the interests of the 'traditional', established elite families, was assassinated in 1920.

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To recapitulate, what is there to gain from studying Ottoman provincial elites? Since the elites were social actors, they are a factor to be taken into consideration when studying Ottoman society, especially if we treat elites as communal leaders, the embodiments of values which hold a society together and role models for the rest of the community. If we furthermore accept that provincial elites served as mediators between the central state and its subjects, then another aspect of their important role during much of the Ottoman period is that they acted as agents who contributed to the cohesion of the Empire.<sup>39</sup> Finally, we should not neglect the fact that the elites' political power or influence was intrinsically linked to possession of economic and fiscal power;<sup>40</sup> in other words, provincial elites were not only an important political and social factor, but also an economic one.<sup>41</sup>

Of course, I do not claim that it suffices to study the elite to understand a given society, nor that elites are the determining factor in history. Elites are an influential social factor, but still one factor among several others, and it is as such that they should be approached;<sup>42</sup> I by no means propose that we restrict ourselves to studying

39. See, for instance, A. Salzman, 'An Ancien Régime Revisited: "Privatization" and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire', *Politics and Society*, 21 (1993), 393-423.

40. The example of the Manastır notables studied by Michael Ursinus in this volume is most telling: the local elite accumulated wealth through a combination of forming *çiftlik*s and performing *deruhdeci* duties, i.e., discharging the fiscal obligations of villages in exchange for a fee.

41. See, for instance, the involvement of the Tekelioğulları in *mubayaa* purchases of cereals in Suraiya Faroqhi's paper in this volume.

42. Cf. P. S. Khoury, 'The Urban Notables Paradigm Revisited', *RMMM*, 55-56 (1990), 225-26, and S. Asdrachas, «Προλεγόμενα» [Foreword] to Svoronos, *Το Ελληνικό Έθνος*, 13.

the elite, and ignore other social strata or groups: the study of elites is meaningful only in the context of their interaction with these other groups within the wider social and state formation.<sup>43</sup> Besides, there was at all times social mobility, which means that no social group was immutable; some people's and groups' fortunes and influence waxed, while those of others waned, and this had an impact on their social standing.

From another point of view, the study of elites could be a fruitful field where theory meets empiricism. Micro-studies, such as most of those in this volume, contribute important information, interpretations, and points of view which can help us further elaborate on the role and characteristics of provincial elites in the Ottoman Empire;<sup>44</sup> not only this, but, as Yuzo Nagata suggests in his paper, Ottoman provincial elites can, for instance, be comparatively examined with their counterparts in China and Japan.<sup>45</sup> If we thus manage to amass a large number of empirical studies and combine them with a sound theoretical framework, the result will be a more profound knowledge of elites and society in the Ottoman context and beyond, and, at the same time, a test of the extent of the usefulness of the notion of the 'elite' in historical analysis.

43. 'Hegemony' might provide a useful additional tool of analysis of the relation of Ottoman provincial elites with both the state and other social groups, especially in view of the longevity of the Empire and its overall social stability; see, for instance, J. Haldon, 'The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives', in H. Berktaş and S. Faroqhi (eds), *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History* (London 1992), 34, and H. İslamoğlu-İnan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire: Agrarian Power Relations and Regional Economic Development in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden-New York-Cologne 1994) (I would like to thank Ms Marina Dimitriadou for providing these references). For a brief discussion of the term, see A. S. Sassoon, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought* (eds W. Outhwaite and T. Bottomore), s.v. 'Hegemony'; cf. J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London 1985), 304-50. The notions of 'negotiation/bargaining' and 'compromise' have been much more popular among Ottomanists in the last fifteen years or so; see, for instance, A. Singer, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials: Rural Administration Around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge 1994), and Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats* – the latter also refers to "the cultural context" and "cultural legitimation" (pp. 233, 239).

44. Cf. Burke's comment about Dahl's work in *Venice and Amsterdam*, 11.

45. See also S. Faroqhi, 'Seeking Wisdom in China: An Attempt to Make Sense of the Celali Rebellions', in her *Coping with the State: Political Conflict and Crime in the Ottoman Empire 1550-1720* (Istanbul 1995), 99-121; eadem, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge 1999), 215-20; Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 15-16, 133-34, 236.