

**POPULAR PROTEST AND
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

STUDIES IN HONOR OF SURAIYA FAROQHI

EDITED BY ELENI GARA - M. ERDEM KABADAYI
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Contents

vii Preface

**1 INTRODUCTION OTTOMAN SUBJECTS AS POLITICAL ACTORS:
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATIONS**

Eleni Gara - Christoph K. Neumann - M. Erdem Kabadayı

39 PART ONE PETITIONING PRACTICES

- 41 **1** Coping with the State's Agents "from below":
Petitions, Legal Appeal, and the Sultan's Justice in
Ottoman Legal Practice
Eyal Ginio
- 57 **2** Petitioning as Political Action: Petitioning Practices of
Workers in Ottoman Factories
M. Erdem Kabadayı
- 75 **3** Modes of Popular Intervention in the Ottoman *Millet* System:
The Greeks of Istanbul in the Beginning of the
Twentieth Century
Méropi Anastassiadou-Dumont

87 PART TWO CONTENTIOUS PROTEST AND REVOLT

- 89 **4** Popular Protest and the Limitations of Sultanic Justice
Eleni Gara
- 105 **5** Artisans' Networks and Revolt
in Late Seventeenth-Century Istanbul:
An Examination of the Istanbul Artisans'
Rebellion of 1688
Eunjeong Yi
- 127 **6** Political Participation, Public Order, and Monetary Pledges
(*Nezir*) in Ottoman Crete
Antonis Anastasopoulos

143 PART THREE FACTIONALISM AND VIOLENCE

- 145 **7** Bilateral Factionalism and Violence in Ottoman Egypt
Jane Hathaway
- 159 **8** Aleppo's Janissaries: Crime Syndicate or *Vox Populi*?
Bruce Masters
- 177 **9** Murder and Mayhem in Ottoman Rumeli: Local Political
Relations in Eighteenth-Century Macedonia
Linda T. Darling
- 197 **10** Local Factionalism and Political Mobilization in the
Albanian Province in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Consul
Caught up in a Conflict between Villagers and the
Ottoman Authorities
Nathalie Clayer

209 PART FOUR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF THE ELITES

- 211 **11** Canikli Ali Paşa (d. 1785): A Provincial Portrait in
Loyalty and Disloyalty
Virginia H. Aksan
- 225 **12** Elected, but never in Office: City Councils in Late Ottoman
Istanbul and the Election of 1878
Christoph K. Neumann

259 PART FIVE RESISTING THE STATE, DEFENDING THE EMPIRE

- 261 **13** Between Protest and Envy: Foreign Companies and
Ottoman Muslim Society
Yavuz Köse
- 285 **14** State Discipline and Villagers' Resistance to Mine Work
in the Zonguldak Coalfield, 1820-1920
Donald Quataert
- 303 **15** The Ottoman Politics of War in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918,
and Popular Reactions: The Example of Hilla
Christoph Herzog

319 Bibliography

349 Index



through shop leases and business relations within and outside of the guilds. To say the least, the artisans and city-people—who keenly observed the assassinations, large gatherings, and open assaults on state dignitaries—must have been influenced by those events. Perhaps the symbolic makeshift banner was welcomed with such enthusiasm partly due to the fact that it was a recently considered possibility. Moreover, when the revolt broke out it was led by a *seyyid* who was also an artisan, the likes of whom must have been common in the markets. While this obviously added to the authority of the symbolic banner, the participation of the religious leaders and *ulema* firmly authorized the legitimacy of the revolt. In the dialogue between the crowd and Atpazarî Seyyid Osman Efendi, we may be reminded of the preacher-congregation relationship in an expanded form. In addition, although the sympathetic elements among the military seem to have joined only after the holy banner was out, they apparently blended in quite easily, probably owing to the previous discussions under the leadership of Harputlu Ali. Even when the seriousness of the crisis is taken into consideration, such cooperation in revolt was indeed remarkable and would have been difficult unless based on various quotidian relationships.

Although artisans were by no means just passively pressed into a rebellion, nor were they able to stage a full-scale revolt alone and by themselves. They had to borrow ideas, symbols, legitimacy endorsed by religion, and even some physical force from their surroundings. But this fact does not necessarily diminish the success of the artisans: in fact, it could be seen to increase it, especially in the light of their networking ability. Thus the rebellion of 1688 represents the first full-fledged revolt by Istanbul city-people, thanks to inputs from various groups, and once again demonstrates the political potential of Istanbul's artisans.

6

Political Participation, Public Order, and Monetary Pledges (*Nezir*) in Ottoman Crete

ANTONIS ANASTASOPOULOS*

On 28 February 1782, Muslim representatives from the small town of Yerapetra and a few hundred villages of the twelve sub-districts (*nahiye*) of the district of Kandiye (modern-day Heraklion) on the island of Crete pledged an amount of between twenty and fifty *kese*s of *akçe* per *nahiye*, or a total of three hundred *kese*s,¹ in addition to acquiescing to all other appropriate punishment, if they ever were to fail to honor their promise to send to Kandiye with their own animals—that is, at their expense—the due quantity of wheat to be stored in the state granaries in that city, or a number of other relevant commitments which will be discussed later in this paper. Their declarations of mutual surety (*kefaletname*), followed by the names of the villages and their representatives, were then copied in the court register (*kadı sicili*) of Kandiye.² One month later, the local janissary officers (*yerli ağavat*) and the holders of tax revenues (*ashab-ı mukataat*)³ of Kandiye

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1 1 *kese* equaled 500 *guruş*, or 60,000 *akçe*, at a rate of 120 *akçe* per *guruş*.

2 Turkish Archive of Heraklion (henceforth TAH), vol. 32, pp. 51ff. This collection of Ottoman registers is kept at the Vikelaia Municipal Library in Heraklion, Crete. See *ibid.*, pp. 86-87 (28 March 1782) for the entering of the pledges in the court register.

3 Sixty-two of them are identified as *emin-i mukataa* against only three who are described as *mültezim-i mukataa*; in TAH, vol. 32, p. 89, entry no. 1 (30 March 1782) these persons are described as “malikâne ve mukataat ashabi.” Tax farming applied to Crete as all over the Ottoman Empire. Cf. Yolanda Triandaphyllidou-Baladié, *To emporio kai e oikonomia tes Kretes*

made a declaration, this time called an *ahdname*,⁴ on a related issue.⁵ According to this, the holders of tax revenues pledged, on pain of loss of their tax districts, to abstain from oppression and to discontinue the practice of buying summary pay registers (*icmal*) from local janissary officers and setting them off against their obligation to supply wheat to the state. The janissary officers in their turn promised not to sell summary pay registers, on pain of being removed from office.⁶ Finally, on 30 March and 5 April 1782 the people and janissaries of the city of Kandiye appeared in court and declared through their representatives that they would also respect what the villagers and the holders of the tax revenues had pledged, while the janissaries furthermore promised to honor an earlier pledge of theirs taken in 1762 and not to admit those who broke the law into their units.⁷

These statements came about following a riot⁸ which, as described in

(1669-1795), trans. M. Gyparake and Anastasia Karastathe, Heraklion: Bikelaia Demotike Bibliotheke Erakleiou, 1988, pp. 47-49; Murat Çizakça, *A comparative evolution of business partnerships: The Islamic world and Europe, with specific reference to the Ottoman archives*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996, pp. 171-172. For the various meanings of the term *emin*, see Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-raising and legitimacy: Tax collection and finance administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996, pp. 123, 129-130, 167.

- 4 Even though *ahdnames* are commonly associated with the Capitulations and the international relations of the Ottoman state, here the term may be taken to mean "pledge" (*herbirlirimiz ahd ve misak eyleyiüp*). For the various meanings of the word *ahd*, see Joseph Schacht, s.v. "Ahd," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 255.
- 5 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 62-64 (28 March 1782), and p. 89, entry no. 1, for the entering of their statement in the court register.
- 6 Wheat was distributed to janissaries as part of their annual payment, and the garrison commander (*dizdar*) was in charge of the state granaries. Cf. Nikolaos S. Staurinides, *Metaphraseis tourkikon istorikon eggraphon achoronton eis ten istorian tes Kretes*, 5 vols., Heraklion: Bikelaia Demotike Bibliotheke Erakleiou, 1975-1985, vol. 1, pp. 319-320, no. 403 (27 March 1671); vol. 2, pp. 171-172, no. 742 (21 January 1674); TAH, vol. 32, pp. 32 (4 November 1781) and 84-85 (24 November 1781); Mehmet Genç, "Osmanlı Maliyesinde Malikâne Sistemi" reprinted in idem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, Istanbul: Ötüken, 2000, p. 101 n. 3; Philippe de Bonneval and Mathieu Dumas, *Anagnorise tes nesou Kretes: Mia anekdote mystike ekthese tou 1783*, trans. and ed. Giorgos B. Nikolaou and Manoles G. Peponakes, Rethymno: Mitos, 2000, p. 214.
- 7 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 85-86, 88-89. The former entry includes summaries of the two pledges which preceded it, as well as of the events which led to them. A wide group of town representatives, janissaries and treasury clerks appeared in court: "mahruse-i mezbure sükkânından ma'lûmü'l-esami ve mahsurü'l-eşhas ulema ve suleha ve eimme ve hutaba ve ağavat ve âyan-ı vilâyet ve ocak huddam-ı hazine ve dergâh-ı âli yeniçerileri ve yerlû ocaklarının umumen zâbitânı ve ocak ihtiyarânı ve sair ahali-i belde biesrihim"; but further down the entry they are summarized as "derun-ı kalede sakin ocaklû ve sair ahali-i belde."
- 8 The execution of Arnavud Mehmed Ağa of Istiye in the context of this riot is echoed in Cretan folk poetry. Cf. Emmanouel G. Koutsantonakes, "To tragoudi tou Memetaka e (M)oustatselepake," *Amaltheia* 6 (24-25), 1975, pp. 194-208, and *Amaltheia* 7 (26), 1976, pp. 49-60; Theochares Detorakes, "Paratereseis sta tragoudia tou Memetaka," *Amaltheia* 8 (30), 1977, pp. 253-260.

a state decree, had its roots in a fifteen-year-old dispute between the land cultivators (*rençber ta'bir olunur ehl-i ziraat*) and the holders of the tax revenues (*ashab-i mukataat*) about the proper collection of the tithe, and who was to bear the cost of carrying the state wheat to the granaries in Kandiye.⁹ According to the decree, the riot was instigated by a Muslim named Ebu Bekr and his accomplices, and centered in three *nahiyes* (Manafoc, Rizo, and part of Pezye).¹⁰ The insurgents gathered at Manafoc and prepared for battle, but the riot was eventually put down and the villagers were made to pledge that they would henceforth honor their earlier commitment concerning the transport of wheat to Kandiye at their expense.¹¹

The collection of the tithe was a source of disputes not only in Kandiye, but in other regions of Crete as well. For instance, in 1765, Muslims and non-Muslims from the district of Hanya (present-day Chania) protested that tax collectors collected the tithe on cereals after the harvest, forced the villagers to thresh it themselves and then to carry it to whatever place the former saw fit, and not to granaries in the villagers' districts, as in the past. Furthermore, collectors weighed the tithe again at destination, and claimed that it was deficient, thus demanding an additional quantity of cereals from producers; on top of that, they demanded the straw left over from threshing or its monetary equivalent, which the villagers claimed that they were not obliged to surrender to them.¹²

In the wake of the 1782 riot, a number of social groups appeared in court, which usually convened in the council (*divan*) of the governor of Kandiye, and declared their commitment to order in the presence of other social groups involved in the case as well as of state representatives and central janissary corps emissaries. The main issue which needed to be settled was restoring order, but other problems connected with the underlying reasons for the revolt were also addressed: the transport of state wheat to Kandiye, the illegal sale of summary local janissary pay registers, and

- 9 For the difficulty and high cost of transporting cereals to the cities, see Nikos Andriotes, *Plethysmos kai oikismoï tes anatolikes Kretes (160s-190s ai.)*, Heraklion: Bikelaia Demotike Bibliotheke Erakleiou, 2006, pp. 33 n. 165, 264-265 n. 217.
- 10 These *nahiyes* represented the main areas where cereals were cultivated (Andriotes, *Plethysmos kai oikismoï*, p. 41). TAH, vol. 32, pp. 85-86, is the only entry where Kenurya is cited instead of Rizo. Kenurya lies to the west of Manafoc, Rizo to its east.
- 11 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 81-82 (28 May 1782), 82-83 (23 May 1782), 85-86.
- 12 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 5, pp. 260-262, no. 2840 (16 November 1765). For other grievances about the collection of the tithe on cereals, see, for instance, Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 1, p. 327, no. 411 (11 September 1671); vol. 2, pp. 404-406, no. 1077 (9 January 1692).

enforcing discipline on the janissaries.¹³ The groups which appeared in court can be categorized as (i) the inhabitants of the villages of the twelve sub-districts of Kandiye; (ii) the city dwellers, including janissaries; (iii) janissaries, mainly the local ones, because of the sale of their pay registers but also because the instigators of the revolt possibly were from among them; and (iv) the holders of the tax revenues, along with the officers of the local janissaries from whom they bought pay registers.

In this paper we will focus our attention on the village population. Not only was the pledge undertaken by their representatives a case of massive mobilization of the local population, as it involved more than 250 villages,¹⁴ but it was preceded by the coordinated activity of an unspecified number of individuals who gathered at Manafoç and were prepared for military confrontation with the state and its representatives. This obviously alarmed local state officials, but possibly the local elite as well;¹⁵ thus, the village representatives' declaration contains a statement to the effect that the local people would no longer tolerate or protect the "mischief-making outlaws" who disturbed the public peace, and that they would try to arrest and surrender them to the governor of Kandiye, or, if unable to do so, they would cooperate with the governor and the security officers towards apprehending these "bandits," as they are called.¹⁶ Furthermore, they promised that the people of each *nahiye* would refrain from interfering in the affairs, gatherings, disputes, and litigations of the others, and that they would not attempt to assemble in defiance of the law,¹⁷ while they also declared that whoever was

13 Another problem which is routinely cited in documents issued about the riot was the proper collection of tithe, but this issue officially had been settled a year earlier. See TAH, vol. 32, pp. 89-90 (25 March 1781).

14 According to the detailed study of Nikos Andriotes of the settlements and population patterns in eastern Crete, the number of settlements in eleven out of the twelve *nahiyes* (Milopotama is excluded) for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries ranges between 443 and 543 (but 560 were counted in 1670), while in the 1830s it amounted to 503 (Andriotes, *Plethysmos kai oikismoï*, pp. 17, 194, 197).

15 According to TAH, vol. 32, pp. 81-82, a military force was sent against the insurgents with the consent of the local notables (*vücub-ı abalı*).

16 *Eşkriya*, usually translated as "brigand" or "bandit," was a generic term to describe outlaws and people who opposed state authority. For the branding of political protestors as criminals, cf. Michael P. Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne te Brake, "Introduction" in eidem (eds.), *Challenging authority: The historical study of contentious politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp. xvii-xviii.

17 "Ve gerek husus-ı mezkûr için ve gerek mevadd-ı saire için şer'an ve örfen men-i küllî ile memnu olan cemiyet tedariki ile nahiyemizde ve mahall-i âharda tecemmü etmemek." The term *cemiyet* is used in Ottoman documents also to describe brigand (or alleged brigand) bands (*cemiyet-i eşkriya*).

to be found helping the outlaws and mischief-makers should be punished accordingly. This pledge in all likelihood echoes the fear that the specter of group mobilization against taxation or other state institutions (or of *reaya* political activity *per se*) generated in Ottoman authorities. The riot in the three sub-districts of Kandiye must have served as a reminder of the perils involved in protest which was not directed through the official administrative channels. As it is stated in a sultanic decree issued after the event, "it became apparent that if we were seen to condone such improprieties, they would spread to the other *nahiyes* as well."¹⁸

The issue of political participation has attracted much scholarly attention, but usually in the context of modern or contemporary politics. In one study, political participation is defined as "taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies," and is associated with "action by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, ultimately taken by public representatives and officials."¹⁹ Such an intentionally broad definition may work in historical retrospective, too, and be successfully applied to early modern (or pre-industrial) polities, only with minor modifications, such as substituting "state" for "public."

Admittedly, there is the question of political rights, which did not exist in the past as they do or in the way that they are meant today. But even though students of old-regime empires deal with imperial subjects and not citizens, it has been convincingly demonstrated that there did exist "political initiatives from the bottom up"²⁰—or "popular political practice"²¹—in societies which antedate the advent of the modern notion of citizenship. For the Ottoman case in particular, Suraiya Faroqhi has argued that political initiatives by subjects of the sultan covered a wide range of activities, with the lodging of complaints about fiscal excesses and acts of oppression being the

Cf. M. Çağatay Uluçay, *18 ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Saruhan'da Eşkriyalık ve Halk Hareketleri*, İstanbul: Berksoy Basımevi, 1955, p. 62 (n. 1 from p. 61); TAH, vol. 32, pp. 85-86, 90-92 (1782). I believe that the present context justifies its rendering as "assembling."

18 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 81-82.

19 Geraint Parry, George Moyser, and Neil Day, *Political participation and democracy in Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 16.

20 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Political initiatives 'from the bottom up' in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire: Some evidence for their existence" in Hans Georg Majer (ed.), *Osmanistische Studien zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte: In Memoriam Vančo Boškov*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986, pp. 24-33.

21 Wayne te Brake, *Shaping history: Ordinary people in European politics, 1500-1700*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, p. 8.

most frequent and readily observable among them, and that the absence of formal corporate institutions did not prevent various degrees of collective organization which could and did serve political goals.²²

In the study of political participation in the pre-modern or early modern context, emphasis has often been placed on the conflictual aspect of the relationship between rulers and their subjects,²³ and more specifically on revolt and rebellion against state authority,²⁴ but it has been pointed out that the interaction between these two factors may take various forms, including cooperation, and bargaining may actually be an appropriate term to better describe their relationship.²⁵ This is true of the Ottoman case as well. Political participation was multifaceted, and, as evidence from the published judicial registers of Crete alone suggests, it ranged from resistance, usually to tax demands or abuses,²⁶ through cooperation with the state authorities, to initiatives intended to alleviate the financial difficulties of the community, once again with particular regard to taxation.²⁷ In the case that we study here, for instance, the inhabitants and janissaries of Kandiye are presented in one entry as those who prompted the state to take action against the rioters through their petitions to the local governor (thus appearing to be a legitimizing factor for the intervention of the state, while also conforming to the image of law-abiding, order-loving subjects of the sultan).²⁸ Sometimes the notions of opposition and cooperation converged, and by this I mean central state and *reaya* action targeted at state appointees in the provinces:

22 Faroqhi, "Political initiatives"; eadem, "Political activity among Ottoman taxpayers and the problem of sultanate legitimation (1570-1650)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, 1992, pp. 1-39. Cf. Darling, *Revenue-raising*, pp. 298-299 (and pp. 246-280 for the receiving end of petitions about tax issues).

23 But then of course it is legitimate to argue that "disagreement ... lies at the heart of politics" (Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997, p. 3). For an overview of definitions of politics, see *ibid.*, pp. 3-12.

24 In the Ottoman context, the question why "peasant rebellions did not occur in Ottoman society" constitutes one of the major themes of Karen Barkey's much-discussed *Bandits and bureaucrats: The Ottoman route to state centralization*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, especially ch. 4 (the quotation is from p. 88).

25 Hanagan, Moch, and te Brake, "Introduction," p. ix; te Brake, *Shaping history*, pp. 6, 8.

26 See, for instance, Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 1, pp. 124-125, no. 170 (27 December 1659); vol. 2, pp. 50-51, no. 602 (3 July 1672); vol. 5, pp. 25-26, no. 2527 (26 December 1753).

27 We see, for instance, Christians turning against their fellow villagers who had converted to Islam and claimed tax discounts, or village representatives making arrangements with the *defterdar* for the payment of the head tax. Cf. Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 1, pp. 123-124, no. 169 (6 July 1659); pp. 399-400, no. 498 (1 December 1671).

28 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 85-86.

this includes group petitions to the sultan against office-holders, but also depositions against dismissed officials for whom the state sought evidence of misconduct.²⁹

I believe that it is worth dwelling a little more on three cases from the early decades of Ottoman rule in Crete, because, commonplace as they may be, they exemplify differing aspects of political participation. As noted above, petitions allow us to see subjects or groups of subjects exercising their right to protest against the oppression of *timar* holders, tax officials, and state representatives in general, or against wrongs that had allegedly been committed to their detriment. Court action brought against such officials may also provide useful evidence, as it often becomes apparent, or at least may be assumed, that behind procedural formalities lie clashes and antagonisms with political content or overtones. Consider, for instance, the case that a Christian priest from a village to the south of the town of Resmo (present-day Rethymno) brought against the Muslim administrator (*mütevelli*) of a religious endowment (*vakf*) in 1658 over lands that, as he claimed, belonged to his monastery and not to the *vakf*; ultimately, he failed to win the case as it was proved that the *vakf* had acquired the lands legitimately in accordance with the law which stipulated that all property abandoned by its former owners in the course of the Cretan war be seized by the Ottoman state and sold to the highest bidder.³⁰ Even though in strict terms this was a land dispute between two individuals and the institutions that they represented, it may also be viewed as a challenge on the part of the priest to the Ottoman regime and its newly introduced rules, even more so if we consider that, as stated in the judicial decision, it was the second time that he had brought his case before the local court of law only to see it being rejected twice, by two different judges.

On another occasion, those with a grievance, the inhabitants of a village, are silent, since it is their *timar* holder who protests to the commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army that various tax collectors are demanding from them the payment of illegal fees. In this case the sultan's subjects become "muted," as their voices reach the Ottoman authorities only through an intermediary who, furthermore, is not a member of their community, but the master of their fiscal revenues as designated by the state. Even though they complied with the image of weak, poor subjects in need of protection that

29 See, for instance, Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 3, pp. 6ff. Cf. Barkey, *Bandits and bureaucrats*, p. 105.

30 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 1, pp. 27-28, no. 42 (3 May 1658).

official Ottoman ideology projected for the tax-paying majority, it is reasonable to assume that they protested, or complained, to the *timar* holder about the illegal exactions.³¹

The third case is from 1684: it exemplifies the interactive nature of political participation in the Ottoman context, and allows us to speculate on its bounds. Three petitions from Crete concerning concrete accusations of fiscal abuses by the governors of the three districts of the island and their agents provoked the issuance of a sultanic decree which instructed that further investigation be carried out; in other words, the central authorities responded to the petitions by widening the spectrum of political participation through the encouragement of local communities to appear in court and testify.³² So it happened: in those cases which came from the districts of Kandiye and Hanya, it was admitted that there had been illegal exactions, but the two sides reached (obviously as a result of the sultanic decree) a compromise which included the payment of a restitution to the *reaya*, usually in the area of around 40-60 percent of the original amount; on the contrary, in the case of the Resmo district, the representatives of the local population declared that they had never suffered any tax abuse.³³ The fact that indemnities were paid can be seen as a positive outcome of political participation; but in the absence of any incriminatory evidence, we may only speculate about whether the authorities of Resmo were indeed innocent, or whether the acquitting testimonies were the result of pressure exercised on the local people by their oppressors, or fear of what the consequences of turning against those oppressors might be (or, maybe, of some form of out-of-court settlement which was not made public).

Dated a century later, the incident which forms the point of departure for this paper raises similar issues and questions. It can be argued that it includes two forms of political participation on the part of the agricultural village population. The early phase, the riot, is a spontaneous and violent act of resistance, and thus a form of "active" political participation in that the

31 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 1, pp. 110-111, no. 157 (17 July 1659); cf. *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 56-57, no. 611 (16 January 1673).

32 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 2, pp. 192-193, no. 773 (1 February 1684).

33 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 2, pp. 189ff. It is interesting to note that the decree was officially received by the court of Kandiye and copied in its register on 15 Rebiyülahir 1095, and the first of the declarations of compromise, with regard to the decree, was made in the court of law on the exact same day; I would be inclined to assume that the actual and official dates of receipt of a decree do not necessarily coincide.

initiative belongs to those who rebelled. On the other hand, the later phase, the pledge, a peaceful group action which signals the restoration of order, can be said to exemplify a case of "passive" political participation. By "passive" I mean that the local people gathered and proceeded to their pledge not on their own initiative, but following decrees and instructions by the state. But even such "passive" group action is a form of political participation which produces political results and promotes a sense of belonging to a certain political entity (even if loose and imperfect; and even if in groups which did not necessarily coincide with the ones formed in the context of the riot), while it may also lay the ground for future political initiatives. Besides, the possibility of the declaration signed by the village representatives being the product of some degree of bargaining between them and the Ottoman authorities cannot be ruled out.

Admittedly we do not possess any hard evidence which can positively support such a hypothesis for this particular case (furthermore, in the document itself it is stated that the pledge was made following a sultanic decree), but, otherwise, evidence both from Crete and elsewhere suggests that negotiation between the state or its agents and the subjects of the sultan was one of the options available to participants in the broader Ottoman political milieu.³⁴ Even though their suggestions were carefully worded and submitted in the form of a group petition, this is what the representatives of the Christian population of the island of Crete engaged in when, in the presence of the governor of Kandiye, they proposed in 1692 what in their view was the best arrangement for the collection of their taxes so that they would not be squeezed by tax collectors and the state would be able to make the most out of them.³⁵ This is not to overestimate the bounds of bargaining: the Venetian consul of Salonica reported that a pledge signed "voluntarily," as the document had it, by the population of the Balkan town of Karaferye in the late 1750s, had in fact been imposed on them by the pasha who had been charged with restoring order in the wake of a local incident.³⁶

34 Barkey, *Bandits and bureaucrats*, especially pp. 189-228; Faroqhi, "Political activity," pp. 29-32. Cf. Roger V. Gould, "Political networks and the local/national boundary in the Whiskey Rebellion" in Hanagan, Moch, and te Brake, *Challenging authority*, p. 40, for an instance of negotiation between government and rebels in a very different political context, even though not too distant in time.

35 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 2, pp. 404-406, no. 1077 (9 January 1692). Cf. Darling, *Revenue-raising*, p. 266, and, for examples, pp. 258, 260-261.

36 Antonis Anastasopoulos, "Lighting the flame of disorder: Ayan infighting and state intervention in Ottoman Karaferye, 1758-59," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (1-2), Spring 2002,

In fact, the defining line for the state seems to be to what degree a form of political participation could get out of hand, or was threatening to its legitimacy or integrity.³⁷ Riots were disapproved for obvious reasons. Public assemblies which had not been endorsed by the authorities could develop into riots, and this is apparently why the Muslim villagers of Kandiye pledged to abstain from assembling in 1782.³⁸ On the contrary, non-violent forms of “active” political participation, such as group petitions to the authorities or court action, were encouraged in the context of the very limited political role that the official Ottoman state ideology ascribed to the common subjects, who were often reduced to being the “poor subjects with whose protection God entrusted the sultan”;³⁹ the petitions of the Kandiye townspeople and janissaries against the village rioters and their earlier trial against the abuses of the holders of tax revenues⁴⁰ evidently were in line with the basic principles of Ottoman administration; thus it may be assumed that they were welcome.

Another form of political participation was also upheld by the state, because, even though it involved the bearing of arms by *reaya*, it was thought of as “passive,” initiated by the state with the view to facilitating the restoration of order.⁴¹ The *nefir-i âm*,⁴² or general call to arms of the Muslim population of a given region, was, in the state’s view, an administrative procedure which was formally triggered by a sultanic decree; the armed imperial subjects were expected to assist the state forces and disband after the

p. 82 (unfortunately printed with certain mistakes). Nagata suggests that the inhabitants of Maina in the Peloponnese offered to undertake a *nezir* pledge; Yuzo Nagata, “Greek rebellion of 1770 in the Morea Peninsula: Some remarks through the Turkish historical sources,” reprinted in idem, *Studies on the social and economic history of the Ottoman Empire*, Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1995, p. 113.

37 Cf. Patricia Crone, *Pre-industrial societies*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 71-72.

38 Cf. TAH, vol. 32, pp. 85-86. See Faroqi, “Political activity,” pp. 31-32, for a seventeenth-century ban on assemblies.

39 See, for instance, an *adaletname* issued in late December 1781 concerning the island of Crete (TAH, vol. 32, pp. 49-51).

40 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 84-85.

41 Cf. Işık Tamdoğan’s remarks about the *nezir* in her “Le *nezir* ou les relations des bandits et des nomades avec l’État dans la Çukurova du xviii^e siècle” in Mohammad Afifi et al. (eds.), *Sociétés rurales ottomanes/Ottoman rural societies*, Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2005, p. 268. Tamdoğan places emphasis on state action reinforcing a feeling of collective responsibility.

42 Halil İnalçık, “Military and fiscal transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6, 1980, pp. 304-311. Cf. John C. Alexander, *Brigandage and public order in the Morea, 1685-1806*, Athens: n.p., 1985, pp. 89-101, especially p. 91, for a case of *nefir-i âm* which was not officially proclaimed as such, apparently because it involved non-Muslims.

menace to order had passed.⁴³ However, Halil İnalçık’s remark that *nefir-i âm* decrees “were often issued after rather than before the people’s mobilization in self-defense” shows the limitations of a strict dichotomy between what we have termed “active” and “passive” political participation. In other words, there were instances when the state sought to save face by pretending to have initiated group action, thus dismissing the idea that it might be losing its grip on society.⁴⁴

Therefore, I believe that it is reasonable to support the view that political participation and/or political initiatives from “below,” be they “active” or “passive,” “mute” or “loud,” state-controlled or independent, did exist in various forms and expressions in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵ The fact that imperial subjects often become “muted” in state-generated documents does not necessarily mean that they were really mute or inactive as historical actors, limited or informal as their spectrum of political activity might have been. In the vast majority of cases, political participation—largely because of its fragmentation—was not about determining major issues of state policy⁴⁶ (but then, taxation often was the axis around which resistance or a revolt developed), but it seems that it could have an impact on, and usually reflected an aspiration to alter, governmental attitudes or the balance of power at the local level.

In this light, monetary pledges (*nezir*) may be treated as a defensive state strategy, which was aimed at disciplining local populations through the threat of not only physical, but also—and maybe more importantly—pecuniary punishment; furthermore, as Suraiya Faroqi has remarked, the state hoped that monetary pledges would pressurize provincial communities in such a

43 The *nefir-i âm*, like the *nezir*, did produce social results; for instance, it has been associated with facilitating the formation of militia bands under local *reaya* command (İnalçık, “Military and fiscal transformation,” p. 304).

44 İnalçık, “Military and fiscal transformation,” p. 307 (also p. 300).

45 Barkey, whose focus is on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has argued, amidst criticism, against the existence of civil society in the Ottoman Empire (Barkey, *Bandits and bureaucrats*, especially pp. 40-44). On the other hand, Abou-El-Haj endorses the existence of social resistance to state policies in the Ottoman Empire (Rifa’at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the modern state: The Ottoman Empire, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991, pp. 16-18, n. 29).

46 One exception was revolts aimed at the sultan; but such revolts were often spearheaded by the military and legitimized by the *ulema*. See, for instance, Rifa’at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 rebellion and the structure of Ottoman politics*, Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1984. The *celali* revolts could be seen as another exception, if we consider them as a challenge to the established rules of state appointments.

way as to create internal rifts between “law-abiding” and “unruly” elements, which would eventually force the latter to abstain from acts of public disturbance or disobedience.⁴⁷ Still, as has been argued, such pledges implicitly confirmed or even encouraged the “politicization” of Ottoman subjects vis-à-vis the state.⁴⁸ In actual practice, pledges did not always prove an effective means of enforcing obedience: if the signatories did not honor their pledge, it could not be taken for granted that the state agent would be able to collect the fine; occasionally, such an attempt might lead to a full-scale riot. This is what happened, for instance, in western Anatolia, in the region of Güzelhisar-ı Menemen, in 1722; the collector of the fine had to put up with a group of 1,500 armed men from fourteen villages who declared that they would not allow those liable to the *nezir* to pay it and that they were not willing to surrender them for incarceration.⁴⁹ But, regardless of their shortcomings, pledges had become fairly standard administrative practice by the late eighteenth century,⁵⁰ which is confirmed by the keeping of special *nezir defterleri* by the central authorities in Istanbul where pledges from all over the empire were entered.⁵¹

Pledges, not always of a strict pecuniary nature, had been forced on Crete at least since the late seventeenth century, as evidence from the Ottoman judicial registers suggests. For instance, in 1694, Christian representatives from the *nahiye* of Milopotama appeared in court and declared that, following an order by the pasha, they were to stand surety for

47 Suraiya Faroqhi, “Introduction” in eadem, *Coping with the state: Political conflict and crime in the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1720*, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1995, p. xxii. Unfortunately, language limitations have prevented me from consulting her “Räuber, Rebellen und Obrigkeit im osmanischen Anatolien” reprinted *ibid.*, pp. 163-178.

48 Işık Tamdoğan treats these pledges as bilateral contracts signed between state agents and local community representatives, but at least their *sicil* version is that of unilateral declarations in the form of *hüccets* (Tamdoğan, “Le *nezir*,” pp. 259-260, 262).

49 “[M]ezburun Mustafa ve Süleyman ve İsmail’e nezri verdürmezüz ve kal’eye göndermezüz deyü ...” (Uluçay, *Saruhan’da Eşkryalık*, p. 65). According to TAH, vol. 32, pp. 82-83, there were *nezir* pledges which antedated those of 1782, but no further details are given.

50 Faroqhi, “Introduction,” pp. xix-xxii; Tamdoğan, “Le *nezir*”; Uluçay, *Saruhan’da Eşkryalık*, pp. 65, 129-130, 190-191, 234-235, 263-264; Michael B. Sakellariou, *E Peloponnesos kata ten deuteran Tourkokratian (1715-1821)*, Athens: Ermes, 1978, pp. 243-244; Anastasopoulos, “Lighting the flame,” pp. 77, 82-83. A *nezir* pledge could also be imposed on individuals, as the Güzelhisar-ı Menemen case cited above suggests; cf. Svetlana Ivanova, “Varos: The elites of the *reaya* in the towns of Rumeli, seventeenth-eighteenth centuries” in 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, p. 235.

51 Tamdoğan, “Le *nezir*,” pp. 259-260, n. 2. Cf. Uluçay, *Saruhan’da Eşkryalık*, p. 130.

one another in their commitment towards the authorities to persecute and arrest those bandits⁵² who were active in their region, and compensate those who would fall victims to their attacks.⁵³ This and the other pledges of the kind discussed in this paper were concerned with activities which were considered illegal or rebellious, as well as with undesired persons and their exclusion from a given district; they were based on the notion of mutual surety, and as such, they can be seen as an evolution towards expanded application of the principle of collective responsibility within the boundaries of a given community, which was a basic pillar of the Ottoman fiscal system but also applied, for instance, to crimes whose culprit had not been identified.⁵⁴

In this respect, we should not overlook the fact that, from the early years of Ottoman rule, at least the Christian population of Crete had developed basic structures of semi-official self-organization which was essentially political in nature. On the one hand, the Christian population of each *nahiye* was represented towards the Ottoman authorities by a representative who was called *kethüda* (or *kastel kethüdası*), and to whom references in the court registers abound, at least for the early decades of Ottoman rule on the island.⁵⁵ In a slightly different arrangement, representatives of the Christian population of Kandiye and its *nahiyes* appeared in the court of justice in Muharrem 1169 (1755) in order to register the appointment of a certain Christian as their representative in their affairs with the Ottoman authorities as well in their litigations with third parties.⁵⁶

Moreover, there was a Christian secretary-dragoman (*kapu yazıcısı*) who served in the council of the Ottoman governor, and was also treated as a mediator between his coreligionists and the Ottoman authorities.⁵⁷

52 The term used is *hain* (traitor, deceitful person), which described those who had sided with the Venetians, and also brigands (Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 2, p. 78 n. 2), and, thus, is somewhat similar to the term *eşkrya*.

53 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 2, p. 450, no. 1152 (28 May 1694); cf. Molly Greene, *A shared world: Christians and Muslims in the early modern Mediterranean*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 71. See also Uluçay, *Saruhan’da Eşkryalık*, pp. 224-225.

54 Faroqhi, “Introduction,” p. xxii; Tamdoğan, “Le *nezir*,” p. 268. Cf. Barkey, *Bandits and bureaucrats*, pp. 112-113.

55 See, for instance, Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 1, pp. 259-260, no. 357 (3 April 1671); vol. 2, pp. 404-406, no. 1077 (9 January 1692). Greene downplays the role of these *kethüdas* and rejects the existence of self-governing bodies (Greene, *A shared world*, p. 33).

56 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 5, pp. 64-65, no. 2586 (11 October 1755).

57 Nikolaos Staurinides, “O thesmos ton grammatikon tes Portas sten Krete” in *Pepragmena tou D Diethnous Kretologikou Synedriou (Erakleio, 29 Augoustou-3 Septembriou 1976)*, vol. 3, Athens: Panepistemio Kretes, 1981, pp. 397-401; Greene, *A shared world*, pp. 33, 194-197.

According to a 1731 entry in the Kandiye judicial registers, this institution had by then fallen into disuse for some time, but a new secretary had just been appointed by *berat*, and the leaders and representatives of the Orthodox church and the Christian population of the island appeared in court in order to acknowledge him as their representative, but also to record that he had accepted a 25 percent reduction to the fee that secretaries traditionally collected from the local Christians.⁵⁸

So far our examples of political organization and participation in Crete have had to do mostly with its Christian population. It is, therefore, interesting to note that the pledge of 1782 was undertaken solely by Muslims, and the Christian population of the twelve *nahiyes* of Kandiye was excluded from it. As far as the Muslim side is concerned, the pledge indicates that Muslim communities, too, possessed at least basic mechanisms of representation towards the authorities. But who were the village inhabitants, those who are described as *rençber ta'bir olmur ehl-i ziraat* (land cultivators) by the Ottoman authorities? On the basis of the names of those who undersigned the pledge, it is clear that the signatories were by no means an undifferentiated mass of villagers, as one might have thought of them, but individuals who often bore family names (not a few among them with the characteristic Cretan ending *-aki*), and titles such as *el-hac*, *beşe*, and occasionally *ağa*. In fact, official documents issued about the riot claim that most inhabitants of the sub-districts of Kandiye were janissaries and military men in general,⁵⁹ which suggests that it would be wrong to treat the town and village populations as totally different in terms of their social profiles. Besides, a list of the confiscated property of the instigators of the riot suggests that some of them were wealthy farmers.⁶⁰

On the Christian side, the separation of the Muslim from the non-Muslim population was not a peculiarity of this particular case, but, as it seems, an established administrative practice of the Ottoman state.⁶¹ Such a separation was the result of the Ottoman frame of mind which set bounds between social and religious groups; for instance, the peasants and the tax-revenue holders along with the janissary officers signed separate declarations as a reflection of the distinction between officialdom and taxpayers (even though

these groups no longer coincided with the “classical” *askeri-reaya* division). What is interesting about the 1782 incident is that the Christians appeared in court along with the Muslim villagers, but did not sign separate pledges, as one might assume; in fact, they were altogether excluded from them for being weak and unable to prevent the riot, as is explained in two court register entries.⁶² On the one hand, Christians were spared the burden of the monetary pledge (possibly with the consent of their Muslim neighbors?), but, on the other hand, they were somehow politically passed over because of their weakness, as the ability to threaten public order appears to be the pragmatic criterion on the basis of which a social group was attributed a political role.

CONCLUSION

Karen Barkey has argued that in the seventeenth century a number of factors, or “structural barriers,” combined to largely inhibit “concerted political action” among Ottoman peasants.⁶³ Concerted political action with a view to a widespread revolt might indeed still be difficult for peasants in the late eighteenth century, but the incident of 1782, as well as the 1770 revolt of Daskalogiannes (which had a clear political agenda) in the south-western Cretan district of Sfakia,⁶⁴ demonstrates that it was not impossible. And if political action or participation did not substantially alter the political balance on the island, still it meant that, despite the primitive forms in which it often manifested itself, the local population was one factor that local officials had to take into account. In this respect, the *nezir* declarations were a means of restoring order and forcing the *reaya* (who in late eighteenth-century Crete may have formally been *askeri* through membership in the janissary or other military corps) to revert to the role that officially had been ascribed to them: loyal, submissive subjects who discharged properly their obligations towards the state, and who, whenever wronged by state officials and agents, petitioned the higher authorities in Istanbul for justice.⁶⁵ But, in

58 Staurinides, *Metaphraseis*, vol. 4, pp. 185-187, no. 2184 (6 June 1731).

59 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 81-82, 85-86.

60 Ibid., pp. 90-92.

61 Antonis Anastasopoulos, “The mixed elite of a Balkan town: Karaferye in the second half of the eighteenth century” in Anastasopoulos, *Provincial elites*, pp. 265-267.

62 TAH, vol. 32, pp. 85-86, 86-87. Cf. the picture of Muslims and Christians given by Bonneval and Dumas, *Anagnorise*, pp. 217-219. It should be noted, however, that there was one Christian among those punished for the riot (TAH, vol. 32, pp. 81-82).

63 Barkey, *Bandits and bureaucrats*, pp. 232, 85-140.

64 Greene, *A shared world*, pp. 206-209. It should be noted, however, that the leader of this revolt, which was inscribed in the context of the war of 1768-1774 between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, was a local merchant-ship owner and not a peasant.

65 In this respect, Barkey’s treatment of the Ottoman legal system as “an alternative channel of grievance release” (*Bandits and bureaucrats*, p. 234) and a “safety valve for the Ottoman state” (p. 103) is particularly useful; cf. Darling, *Revenue-raising*, pp. 297-299.

the light of the Menemen riot of 1722, how effective these pledges could be was an issue that very much depended on local conditions, including the degree and extent of “politicization” of local populations and their leaderships.

PART THREE

Factionalism and Violence