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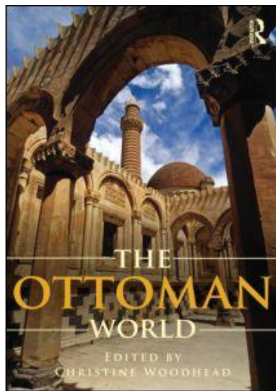

The Ottoman World

Christine Woodhead

Royal and Other Households

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PART II

OTTOMANS AND OTHERS

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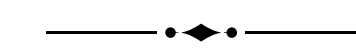
CHAPTER SEVEN

ROYAL AND OTHER HOUSEHOLDS*



Metin Kunt

LIVINGS AND RETINUES

Households were the building blocks of the Ottoman political edifice. Therefore the basic unit for the study of the sociology of political life is the household. In a dynastic empire the role of the ruler is rightly accorded central place, and the royal household is the keystone of the edifice. While paying due attention to this imposing keystone, we must not neglect humbler bricks in the walls: the sultan maintained a huge personal staff and retinue, but he also insisted that all his officers did the same, proportionate to their rank and allotted revenues.[1]

The Ottoman military-administrative system was founded upon the principle that an officer's income would support a retinue appropriate to his office. 'Income', in this context, meant tax revenues, fines and fees generated in a locality and assigned to an officer. The Ottoman term for such revenue grants was '*dirlik*' – literally, 'living'. The holder of a revenue grant was expected to reside on location and to collect his share of agrarian produce as well as ground rent from the peasants. In towns there were market dues on trade and crafts production in addition to small-scale agriculture, orchards and vegetable patches. Larger cities on international trade routes, such as Salonica, Bursa, Aleppo and Cairo, had considerable customs revenues.

At the lowest end of the *dirlik* allotment pyramid was the cavalryman (*sipahi*), with a basic revenue grant, commonly a village. There he was to live; at harvest time he received his tithe in kind, and he kept the peace in his village, collecting fees and fines for transgressions. When called to military duty, he presented himself to the district commander, ready for campaign with his horse, arms and equipment, all paid for out of his revenue grant. With some seniority and good service on campaign, he might achieve a rise in his basic revenue from an additional source; if his income increase was as much as double the basic grant, he was required to bring with him on campaign an extra fighting man, whom he would also maintain out of his revenue grant. The revenues of a town, as opposed to a village, would be assigned to a commander, both because his income should be higher and because the administration of a town required a more experienced officer; it was rare that town revenues were divided up into smaller livings. Some of the commanders of a district also had duties beyond

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their town, such as overseeing the proper presentation of all revenue grant-holders in the district while on campaign, ensuring that they were well equipped and with the correct number of extra armed men. Commanders might have incomes ten times more than the basic revenue grant and therefore have personal retinues of ten men or so. Each district had a governor-commander in the chief city, with revenues at least a hundred times the basic grant; a district governor might thus be required to have a personal military household of 100 to 200 men on the basis of his official revenues. A district governor who made more out of booty would have a retinue much larger than the expected number. All in all, a district might have 100 to 200 basic revenue grants and ten to twenty town commanders. Therefore, when the district cavalry force was mobilized for campaign it might field 1,000 men or more, most of them not revenue grant-holders themselves but serving in a commander's personal retinue. Several districts, perhaps a dozen, made up a province, about twenty in number throughout the realm in the mid-sixteenth century. The governor-general, who held the chief city and district of the province, might have revenues five times that of a district governor and his own personal army also approaching 1,000 men.

All these numbers are deliberately vague, since there was considerable variation both in geography, from district to district, and in history, from age to age; they merely provide a sense of overall magnitude and proportion. Revenues were estimated, based on past produce and on administrative regulations for each district specifying local tithing and ground-rent rates, as well as enumerating other taxes and fees. They were expressed in *akçe*s, the small Ottoman silver coin called asper in European writings. While the basic revenue grant was a few thousand *akçe*s a year, a governor-general was allocated a million or so. When moving from the provinces to the centre, as a governor-general might do when elevated to the imperial council as a vezir, in the sixteenth century the seven vezirs were each allocated around 2 million *akçe*s; each therefore was required by regulation to have a household of several thousand men. At the apex of this system of livings and retinues was the sultan, with revenues (which he allocated to himself) of 100 million *akçe*s or more and, in the early sixteenth century, a royal household of about 15,000.

We may make some general observations based on this sketchy outline. The Ottoman revenue grant system developed in circumstances similar to feudalism in Europe, when a limited amount of precious metals allowed only a limited supply of coin. The difficulty of transporting large amounts of grain and other agricultural produce, added to a limited market, necessitated that revenues in kind should be collected on the spot and consumed locally. But Ottoman livings and retinues were fundamentally different from European feudalism: the grants were not hereditary, nor were they of fixed location. An Ottoman officer moved about the realm holding different offices in different districts; his heirs, sons and daughters, inherited his private estate but not his official status. However, in the father's lifetime, sons themselves may have advanced in the system. It was therefore allowed that, at least in the case of higher revenue grants, one or two sons may be provided with a small grant at the death of the father, especially if he died in battle.[2] As the rank of the officer advanced and the size of his revenue increased, so did the proportion of revenues in cash, because his living included towns with markets and cities with customs revenues. Increases in precious metals, in coin in circulation and in trade, both regional and international, allowed a greater amount in cash to be allocated to higher revenue grants, especially to the revenues reserved for

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the sultan. Greater revenues meant larger households; larger households meant greater influence and political power; concentration of the largest revenues and households in the centre, in vezirial establishments as well as the imperial palace, meant greater centralization in the polity.

In the first half of the fifteenth century the definitive conquest of Smyrna and Salonica, the main outlets for Anatolia and the Balkans respectively, and the capture of Serbian silver mines helped Murad II (1421–51) strengthen his position as ruler, richer and more powerful than his frontier warlords. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 gave Mehmed II enduring fame as *the* 'conqueror' *par excellence* throughout the Islamic world as well as in early modern Europe; it also allowed him to garner much greater revenues personally. He then captured the copper mines of north Anatolia by incorporating the Candaroğlu principality of Kastamonu. His grand plan also involved the elimination of the Genoese from the Black Sea, taking over trading posts not only on the Anatolian coast but also in Crimea, by the capture of Caffa, the main port for export of the grains, furs and dried fish of Eastern Europe.[3] Selim I's capture of Syria and Egypt in 1516–17 laid the foundations of the 'magnificence' of his son and successor, Süleyman. The sultan received a major share of the trade revenues of Aleppo and Damascus, and from Egypt millions of gold ducats directly into the imperial coffers.[4] Their treasury thus enhanced, the sultans were able to invest in a brand new navy and also increase their households.

'HOUSES' AND HOUSEHOLDS

Ottoman households were originally military establishments, made up of troops loyal to their master. In the Muslim tradition of the ruler's household, the original impetus may have been to create a troop distinct from the dominant ethnic element, tribal Arabs, who had supplied the main fighting force in early Islamic expansion.[5] By this means the caliph raised his political power above tribal rivalries in an age when Islamic society was also facing the challenge of becoming truly universal, no longer identified by Arabness. Caliphs recruited captives from the Eurasian steppe, from among peoples whose lifestyle on horseback made them amenable to training as a personal guard. During the several centuries before the emergence of the House of Osman, these *mamluk* (literally, 'owned') guards served their masters, became involved in dynastic politics, founded their own rule, and even established states without dynastic rule but with acclaimed sultans.[6] A second distant tradition came from the steppe heritage itself. There young men displaced from their own tribes were adopted by the leader of another tribe as his own men, termed *nöker*. The eponymous founder of the Ottoman state, Osman Bey (d. 1324), himself had various men in his modest household, some as *kul* servitors (the Turkish for *mamluk*) and some as *nöker*. The Ottoman bey's household grew during the fourteenth century by absorbing more displaced young men from other lands and more 'owned' servitors.[7]

An important development came in the second half of the century, when the bey's advisors began to claim a fifth share of the spoils gathered by frontier lords in the Balkans and sold in Anatolia, either as a quantity of coin or as a number of men. Scions of Byzantine aristocracy in captured towns were also incorporated into the Ottoman ruler's palace. Around 1400, an Ottoman 'innovation' in recruitment for the palace was *devşirme* (literally, 'gathering') – that is, the forcible removal of adolescent village boys

for training and education. This peculiar Ottoman practice may have first come about in the frontier zones, where frontier lords could not always distinguish – or did not choose to do so – between what had already been incorporated into Ottoman lands and what was outside and still open to raiding; otherwise it is very difficult to explain the *devşirme* phenomenon.[8] Islamic tradition, which the Ottomans elsewhere followed scrupulously, assigned a specific, protected, if second-class, status to non-Muslims submitting to Muslim rule as *zimmi*s: they paid a head tax (*cizye*) per adult male, and in return could practise their religion relatively freely, albeit with certain restrictions and impositions. Taking children away from law-abiding *zimmi*s was never a practice condoned or even contemplated before the Ottomans. This is in contrast to rebellious non-Muslims or those conquered by force: in those cases, the enslavement of persons was considered as legitimate as the plundering of property. The ambiguity and fluidity of a frontier zone may have provided the initial impulse and instances of *devşirme*.

Even if this peculiar practice was started by frontier lords, it soon became a royal prerogative. Other households sometimes listed *zimmi* 'volunteers' among their members. Was this a euphemism to disguise what might be termed 'private *devşirme*'? Probably not, since such lists also specified other sources for the master's retinue.[9] Contemplation of non-Muslims 'volunteering' for service in a household at the cost of conversion to Islam leads to the bigger issue of how *devşirme* was perceived by the *zimmi* population in general. Even after the practice was regularized, with certain rules to soften its impact on the non-Muslim peasantry, there can be no doubt that most families felt that they had lost a son not just to an unknown fate but to total alienation. Families hid their eligible sons when a palace official approached their village. His purpose was to choose one in forty boys from the locality, excluding those already married and only sons, and not taking more than one child from each family. At least, such were the established rules. However, it is also true that Bosnian Muslims, conversely, saw *devşirme* as a privilege that they wanted to share. The palace official on *devşirme* duty was ordered to ensure both that all eligible non-Muslim boys were presented for inspection and that only Bosnian Muslims who were granted the right to *devşirme* (and no other Muslim boys) should be taken for palace service. 'Bosnian Muslims' were specified as those who had been living there at the time of the Ottoman conquest in the mid-fifteenth century but not later Muslim settlers. The recruiting (collecting) officer had to ensure that, with the exception of true Bosnians, only non-circumcised boys were drafted.[10]

Voluntary or not, incorporation through conversion into any great household, not just entering the sultan's service, was a sure way of changing status from that of subject to one of the ruling stratum. What, to many, may have seemed the loss of a son was evidently for some a great future for the child. While joining a grandee household did not necessarily guarantee great fortune, it certainly offered the possibility of one for those whose brains matched their ambitions. Newly recruited servitors became Muslim and gained a new identity, served their masters, and rose in political rank under their aegis. Those who served an illustrious master, sultan or pasha over a long period remained associated with him even after leaving his household and gaining independent office. As the sultan's sisters and daughters were married to vezirs and pashas trained in the royal household, so too the loyal servitors of a grandee were further rewarded by being married into his family. An Ottoman 'House' was thus joined at the top with its 'household'.

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TRAINING IN A HOUSEHOLD

Boys drafted into royal service or joining a grandee household were separated by ability and inclination. In the case of royal recruits, this selection was done in several stages: in the first instance, brawny but not necessarily brainy boys were apprenticed (as *acemioğlanı*) to the janissary household infantry; the more promising were then sent to various royal establishments for education and training. For these selections, officers used physiognomy (*ilm-i kiyafe*), the knowledge of inner qualities apparent in the visage. The initial stage in creating a new person, after circumcision and formal conversion, was the naming: a Muslim should not carry a non-Muslim name or patronymic. They all became 'sons of Abdullah' – Abdullah being a common first name but also having the meaning of 'slave/creature of Allah', and by extension 'any person' or 'A. N. Other'. For the personal name, as well as the common Muslim names (Mehmed, Ahmed, Ali, etc.), newly converted boys were often given the Muslim form of biblical names (Davud for David, Yahya for John, Isa for Jesus, Süleyman for Solomon, etc.) or heroic names from the great Persian epic *Şahname*, the Book of Kings (particularly Behram, Rüstem, and Iskender for Alexander). Abdullah could never be the first name of a convert, *devşirme* or otherwise, although it was often used as a given name in Muslim families; thus not all 'sons of Abdullah' should automatically be considered converts.[11] A boy who might have been entered in the *devşirme* register as 'Dimitri, son of Petro, Albanian, blond, round-faced, tall, mole on right cheek' now became 'Hasan, son of Abdullah', but with all the other attributes recorded in the janissary register. If a 'Halil' used to be 'Vassilis', was the rhyming coincidental? Was a new 'Hizir, the 'green man' of the Koran (who found the elixir of life) and was conflated with St George in Muslim lore, originally a Giorgos or a György? Did the naming officer have a sense of humour, or a sense of history, or an understanding of trans-cultural connections?

The most select of the 'sons of Abdullah' came to the central royal establishment, the Topkapı Palace. There they were entrusted to the white eunuchs of the imperial harem, the inner sanctum. The men's section of the harem was more commonly called *enderun*, the inner service, to distinguish it from *birun*, the outer service of the palace, where special guard units as well as royal troops were attached. In the *enderun* the boys, now palace pages, were at first without any special duties but received basic education under the supervision of the white eunuchs. Later they were divided into several chambers named for the services they performed for the *enderun* itself and for attending their master, the sultan. Pantry Chamber boys received the meals cooked in the great palace kitchens in the *birun* and served them to the eunuch tutors and classmates; the Campaign Chamber boys were in charge of laundry duty, especially on imperial campaigns; the Treasury Chamber boys, older and wiser, cared for the valuables in the imperial collections – precious objects, books, luxury cloth and special garments. While they performed these services their education and training continued, under outside tutors as well as the white eunuchs, and including not only book-learning but also palace etiquette. The elite of the palace pages, those who stayed in the *enderun* longest and were therefore the best educated and trained, were admitted to the Privy Chamber, charged with the care of holy relics of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions brought from Cairo in 1517 by Selim I, and in general attending to the wishes and pleasures of the sultan.

All boys acquired the rudiments of an education; with the exception of a few who had little interest in books, most also pursued studies in languages, literature and history. Ottoman 'humanities' was based on Persian classics. The *Şahname*, the source of names for some of them, remained the most valued reading, with its tales of heroism as well as wise kingship, of good rule based on justice. Persian verses by Sadi and Hafiz, the revered poets of Shiraz, were the exemplars Ottoman gentlemen had to learn well: not only Ottoman sultans but also many officials dabbled in poetry themselves, a few with commendable results. Penmanship and calligraphy were encouraged as much as archery and horsemanship. As at any good school, most of the boys balanced book-learning and field pursuits, some gaining a reputation for knowledge of the arts, while others excelled in sports.

THE NEW OTTOMANS

The late sixteenth-century writer Mustafa Ali, deliberating on what made the Ottomans great, considered the blending of races to create a new '*Osmanlı* man' to be the secret of Ottoman success.[12] Although commoners in Ottoman society, in Anatolia and Rumeli, also experienced a certain degree of blending through intermarriage, voluntary or otherwise, what the writer had in mind was the Ottoman ruling elite. The household system was the cradle of this new elite. Its language was Turkish, but the elite were not, and did not refer to themselves as Turkish. The Turkish ethnic element in the realm was only one among many other ethnicities, and at least until the seventeenth century Turks were deliberately excluded from the royal household. It was cause for scandal that, when Selim II ascended the throne in 1566, he enrolled thousands of Turks from his inordinately large princely army into the imperial Janissary corps. Servitors of the royal household were meant to be a blend, certainly not Turkish.

The educated *Osmanlı* was a Turkish-speaker and a Muslim and therefore a 'Turk' in European eyes, but his written Turkish for literature and history was a cultural blend and considerably removed from ordinary spoken Turkish. Persian and Arabic phrases and expressions, even grammatical constructs, infiltrated written Ottoman Turkish, bureaucratic and literary, more so than Latin and French expressions did English. By around 1600, however, not only had literature completely shed the Persian shadow but even religious treatises came to be written in Turkish rather than in Arabic, the language of the Koran and therefore traditionally of religious scholarship. As in Europe, where the title of a book may be Latin while the content is in the vernacular, so Ottoman books often carried Arabic titles and Persian sub-headings but the text would be in Turkish, albeit a flowery one distinct from the language of the Turks among the subjects. The Ottoman elite may have seemed Turkish to the outsider, but they had a distinct new identity.

Even the Islam of these new Ottomans could be considered to contain some idiosyncratic elements. Indeed, Turkish settlement in the land of Rum (i.e., Anatolia as the Byzantine Rome) from the eleventh century had given rise to syncretic impulses both in popular Turkish Islam and in courtly culture, expressed mainly through mystic movements coalescing into brotherhoods. The urban culture of thirteenth-century Konya, under Turkish Seljuk rule, was the original setting of Mevlana Jelaleddin-i Rumi, whose descendants and disciples developed his approach to universal godhead

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through artistic expression, in poetry and music, in the Mevlevi brotherhood (or 'way' in Islamic terminology). Meanwhile, social and political protest movements in rural areas of Seljuk Anatolia had a leadership with a religious tinge and were influenced by pre-Islamic inner Asian practices. By the early sixteenth century, such movements and their dervishes came together under the rubric of Bektashi. These two main brotherhoods, Mevlevi and Bektashi, and others, became active in South-East Europe under the Ottoman aegis and facilitated conversion in both rural and urban Balkan society. But in addition to the conversion of Anatolian and European Christians to Islam, in Anatolia there was the phenomenon of many Turkish speakers as members of the Armenian and Greek churches, either as Turks converting to these churches or as some Greeks and Armenians converting to Turkish speech. All these various types of conversion, religious and linguistic, as well as intermarriages across ethnicities, helped to create an Ottoman society in its Byzantine-Roman core areas which developed a character distinct from older Muslim areas of West Asia.

What was true of Ottoman *Rumi*/Roman society as a whole was also true for the *Osmanlı* ruling class and its new converts. For the janissary corps, the Bektashi dervishes became chaplains and guides, promoting an easy-going, tolerant version of Islam appropriate for new converts. The Bektashis even offered an alternate 'trinity' in the form of Allah–Muhammad–Ali, and incorporated in its symbolism the number twelve, significant both for Christians and Shi'is. In the palace itself the cultured Mevlevi way held sway; many court poets, musicians and sultans themselves were adherents. Other brotherhoods were also represented, most with music and hymns and rhythmic movement in their services. In the seventeenth century there is even mention of people referred to as *hub-mesihi* – literally, 'Christ-lover'.[13] Yet the *Osmanlı* could also be a very devout Muslim. The powerful grand vezir Sokollu Mehmed Paşa (d. 1579) invited the strict and austere scholar Birgivi Mehmed Efendi to Istanbul, and honoured him. The grand vezir's piety is attested by his apologist Feridun Bey, although there might have been a political motive, to use the 'puritanical' scholar as a counterpoise to the equally great and influential legislator *şeyhülislam* Ebussuud Efendi. Two generations later, in the mid-seventeenth century, Birgivi's moral descendants and the followers of his disciple Kadızade Mehmed Efendi divided the palace people as much as they did Istanbul society. When the fundamentalist Kadızadeli movement threatened a massacre of those they saw as lax sufis, they were suppressed by the government, but then the sultan, the palace and the whole ethos of the Ottoman establishment turned quite conservative, at least temporarily. The palace was big enough to include austere Muslims as well as 'Christ-lovers'.[14]

GRADUATION

The sultan's purpose was to train and educate his own men to become the commanders and administrators of his palace and his empire. Pages looked forward to 'graduation' (*çıkma* – literally, 'leaving') from palace service, in the first instance from the inner training ground to functional service in the outer courts. Lesser recruits had already been sent to the janissary infantry companies, but palace pages left to fill the elite ranks of the six *sipahi*, household cavalry, regiments. Daily wages were low, but they were still the sultan's own troops and as such their master still fed and clothed them in a style befitting the glory of the head of household. Pages who had spent longer in

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enderun service graduated to office in various special guard units (the 'left-handed' *solak*, the 'fast-runner' *peyk*) or to companies in charge of campaign tents (*mehteran-ı hayme*), the military band (*mehteran-ı alem*) or the stables (*istabl-i amire*), or were appointed gatekeepers, kitchen administrators, etc. Those pages who had exhibited an inclination to learning, arithmetic and calligraphy were employed in the scribal service, taking notes, drafting *ferman*s (imperial decrees), keeping account books of revenue grants or imperial accounts. When leaving the palace or re-entering, on extended hunting trips or on campaign, the sultan would be surrounded by troops, officers and secretaries, many of whom he would recognize from their years in *enderun* service.

The second step in *çıkma* graduation was to an independent office and source of income in the form of a *dirlik* revenue grant. A simple Janissary would receive a modest grant somewhere in the provinces. Members of the elite cavalry regiments and officers of the various imperial troops expected more substantial revenue grants and even posts in provincial administration. However, the 'graduates' of the sultan's palace were not the only people receiving provincial revenue grants; in provincial service they joined local Muslim-born (and, up to about 1500, even Christian) young men who had volunteered for campaigns, hoping to change status from subject to imperial official. Beys and pashas, district and province governors, not only had their own large households and retinues but also the right to place their 'graduates' in revenue grants. In a frontier district up to half the fighting force could come from the district governor's own retinue.[15] Although in theory any sixteenth-century provincial officer could be promoted to a position of command according to merit, most eventual governors had received their initial training in the palace or in a grandee household. The most select of the province governors, those who became vezirs, thus returned to their starting point in the capital. They attended council meetings in the second court of the palace, separated only by the Gate of Felicity from the setting of their earlier years of education in the inner sanctum, *enderun*/harem of the palace.

HOUSEHOLDS BEGETTING HOUSEHOLDS

Before 1600 it was the custom for an Ottoman prince to leave his father's house on puberty (and circumcision) and be appointed governor in a significant Anatolian *sancak* district. This represented a sedentarized version of the inner Asian tradition of the wider ruling clan sharing in government. In Ottoman practice a prince did not actually share in rule at all, but he did receive training as a potential ruler under the guidance of an experienced pasha. The question of dynastic politics and the tradition of open, competitive succession is best treated elsewhere; in our specific context we should look at how the prince-governor's household was formed. While growing up in his father's household he had no opportunity to choose his own men; the princely household was composed of people from the royal palace. As a small replica of the imperial establishment but with no musket-bearing infantry, a princely household in the early sixteenth century initially numbered about 500 men, and possibly 1,500 later in the century. If the prince grew to maturity and even to middle age at his provincial posts, the household might grow with his own recruits, even with gifts of servitors from various statesmen.[16] Even so, a prince's household amounted to no more than a small fraction of the sultan's establishment.[17]

Upon succession to the throne, the successful prince brought his own household and retinue to be (re)incorporated into the royal household. A major ‘graduation’ from the palace also occurred, both to reward service through independent revenue grants and to make room for the new sultan’s retinue, albeit at lower ranks than in the former princely household. Additionally, because in the succession struggle there was only one winner, to ensure strict father-to-son succession the losing prince(s) and their male offspring lost not just the political fight, but also their lives. Their own, now headless, households were also considered royal property. Some servitors were punished if they had been closely involved in the succession struggle, but most were also given revenue grants and palace positions.

Supplying an initial household from the palace was not confined to royal princes. Upon leaving for the provinces, a senior palace page or an officer of the outer service was also given junior palace servitors to staff his first official household. In such cases relationships formed within the palace played a part. Ethnic origin, the sharing of a mother tongue, or *devşirme* recruitment from the same village were all reasons for potential friendship and solidarity in the *enderun*. Indeed, on occasion palace pages supplied information on specific families and boys who should be considered for *devşirme* recruitment.[18] Palace service also required *enderun* pages to establish ties with those in the outer service. The Pantry Chamber pages, for example, dealt with kitchen personnel in the course of performing their duties. A senior page leaving the palace would therefore have formed various ties with a group of palace personnel, on personal or professional grounds, whom he would take with him to a provincial posting, as the nucleus of an official retinue to be developed further as he progressed through the ranks.

More importantly, there were the white eunuchs, the supervisors and tutors of the *enderun*, who left the imperial palace for high provincial office as *sancak* district governors just like royal princes, and some of whom rose to great office, including the grand vezirate. The chief white eunuch, officially titled Commander of the Gate of Felicity, maintained a household even while at the palace. On the death of a certain Cafer Ağa while still in palace office, members of his retinue were listed according to their status and functions and the resulting register presented to the sultan for his decision. As Cafer Ağa was still technically a slave of the sultan, the latter inherited the eunuch’s own slaves, and, as in the case of defeated princes, this inherited retinue was incorporated into the royal household. Perhaps the most interesting aspect is the fact that some of the slaves of Cafer Ağa were already in the palace. The fact that there were subsidiary ‘households’ within the large royal household is significant in showing that, while the sultan was everyone’s master, there were also lesser loyalties to various masters.

ULEMA HOUSEHOLDS

The previous discussion has focused upon the royal household and the establishments of the *ümera* commanders. The military-administrative career was undoubtedly the most important in Ottoman government at its height, but it was certainly not the only one. The men of learning (*ulema*), studying in colleges (*medrese*) and following a career alternating between teaching and serving as magistrates (*kadı*), formed a second branch of government, fully developed into a bureaucratic hierarchy by the

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sixteenth century. The highest members of the *ulema* career had in earlier times also been given political positions, some rising to the vezirate. From the time of Mehmed II the vezirate was reserved for the *ümera*, but the *ulema* continued to be represented in the imperial council by the two *kazasker*s who headed the learned hierarchy. Upon elevation to the post of *şeyhülislam*, the pinnacle of the *ulema* career, a *kazasker* ceased to hold his membership in the council; he was now above routine politics. It was the *kazasker*s who prepared their appointment lists for all *ulema* positions as *medrese* lecturers, magistrates and administrators of public endowed foundations. The members of the *ulema* had personal retinues too, though considerably smaller than those in *ümera* households. Ambitious, bright *medrese* students were chosen as assistants by senior *ulema* and served their masters just as young pages did in an *ümera* household. As the master rose through the ranks, so did the chances of the apprentice-assistants of appointment to independent office. Senior *ulema* were allocated posts as *medrese* lecturers and as magistrates, the number commensurate with their rank, to be distributed to a dozen or so of their protégés. The impetus behind this convention may have been simply recognition of the natural phenomenon of senior scholars favouring their most brilliant pupils. Once the practice became regularized, however, it became absolutely necessary for younger scholars to seek patronage; an unattached man was an unsupported man in the struggle to find appointment. As *ümera* household membership became a necessary step in attaining a revenue grant, so *ulema* appointments came to be reserved for protégés. Patronage became indispensible. In other ways, too, *ulema* households functioned like *ümera* retinues; when not forming marriage alliances with other high-placed scholarly households, the master chose sons-in-law among his most favoured students.[19]

In later centuries there was a noticeable shift in the Ottoman style of government, away from those in military-administrative positions to civilian bureaucrats and magistrates. Men from the scribal service or with a *medrese* education, rather than those trained in an *ümera* household, rose to the highest positions of government. Bureaucratic patronage ultimately became the most important element in Ottoman politics, until it was deliberately though not altogether successfully breached during modernizing reforms.

HOUSEHOLDS IN LATER PHASES

In the seventeenth century, the practice of *devşirme* recruitment fell into disuse. One can speculate that there were by then too many volunteers for palace service, especially once Selim II had incorporated large numbers of his Turkish princely servitors and troops into the royal establishment in 1566.[20] He had opened palace service to Muslim-born subjects, mostly Turks. This was a situation criticized and condemned by tradition-minded Ottoman commentators like Mustafa Ali, but into that breach others followed, so that in a few generations Turks became a common sight at Topkapı. During the seventeenth century a second new development occurred in practices of palace service and graduation to provincial office. Palace pages tended to stay in royal service for much longer periods and on leaving the palace were no longer young, but had reached a mature, middle age. Senior members of the *enderun*, the sultan's sword-bearer and cloak-bearer in the Privy Chamber, routinely went out as full provincial governors, and of great provinces such as Egypt. This may have been partly a result of

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the fact that the white eunuchs, supposedly their supervisors, had been downgraded in the palace hierarchy, losing their influence to the black eunuchs of the women's harem. In this new situation there were no more white eunuchs going out to the provinces as governors. Nor were the new power-holders, the black eunuchs, ever granted provincial office or a seat in the imperial council; they wielded their power from behind the closed doors of the harem. Earlier there had seemed to be no prejudice against white eunuchs as commander-governors, but were black eunuchs only to be trusted indoors? Would they have met with too much resistance in the provinces? It is impossible to know whether there might have been racial prejudice at a provincial post or whether they themselves preferred to wield power at the centre, within the palace, where they might dominate the councils. Black eunuchs normally left palace service only to retire, usually to Egypt, where they might still have some political clout, but not as office-holders.

A further novelty of the seventeenth century was that important officials of grandee households came to be appointed to high provincial office. Vezirs and pashas had promoted their own household members in earlier times, and it was normal for their men to receive revenue grants. The new situation, as in the case of the palace 'pages', was that they moved directly from service in a pasha household to important governorships, having held posts neither in the palace nor in lower-level provincial service. Alongside the imperial palace, grandee households thus became a fast track to high provincial office.

As for the royal troops, the tens of thousands of janissary infantrymen and the six regiments of household cavalry, the sheer weight of their numbers and the consequent difficulty of paying their wages adequately rendered them dysfunctional. Instead of adjusting their pay for the inflation and silver devaluation experienced during the time of troubles at the turn of the seventeenth century, the sultan and his advisors chose to extend to them certain financial benefits. Household cavalrymen, the senior service, were routinely employed in the collection of royal revenues, for which they were handsomely remunerated.[21] The Janissaries, left out of this arrangement, expressed their resentment in various violent uprisings. Ultimately the palace turned a blind eye to janissary dealings in the marketplace. Both in the capital itself and increasingly also in important provincial centres where they were stationed, in Belgrade, Aleppo, Cairo, Damascus and on Crete, Janissaries dominated economic life, especially in the market place. So, while the household cavalry turned into royal tax collectors, Janissaries became artisans and craftsmen.

Finally, one can talk of a relative 'Turkicization' of the Ottoman establishment from 1600 onwards, but this would be a very partial view. Even when Turks and other Muslims infiltrated major households, the ideal remained to include non-Muslims as well. In any case, Muslim-born household members also needed to be made into cultured 'Ottomans', much like non-Muslims. There may have been few *devşirme*, but foreign-born or subject non-Muslims still came to the palace and to other households. By the mid-seventeenth century, Albanians and Bosnians from the western reaches of the empire and Georgians and Circassians from the Caucasus formed the largest groups in great households. The conquest of Crete, completed in 1669 after a prolonged struggle, furnished a fresh source of recruits. By 1700 there were many Cretans in the harem, both men and women, some of whom rose to great prominence during the eighteenth century.[22] Rabia Gülnuş Sultan, the mother of Mustafa II (1695–1703)

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and Ahmed III (1703–1730), was the most prominent Cretan in Mehmed IV's harem. During the 1820s, the Greek revolt gave rise to a new wave of slaves. Rebels were suppressed in various localities, most ruthlessly on the islands of Chios and Samos, in response to the massacre of Morean Muslims; Chiote and Samian women and children, lawfully enslaved because they were rebels, filled great households and furnished some prominent Ottomans in later decades.[23]

As the boundaries of the empire continued to shrink after the Karlowitz treaty of 1699, Hungarians resisting Habsburg rule sought refuge in Ottoman lands. Some kept to themselves in areas allotted to them, but others entered Ottoman service in the palace or in other households. In the nineteenth century there were further waves of Hungarian and Polish immigrants escaping Habsburg or Romanov wrath in the aftermath of the 1848 uprisings. Once again, some immigrants kept to themselves, most famously in the Polish Village (Polonezköy) not far from Istanbul. Many Hungarian and Polish leaders converted to Islam and became prominent Ottomans, now not necessarily going through Ottoman households but establishing their own upper-class Ottoman families.[24]

The household as a socio-political unit came to an end by the mid-nineteenth century with the conscious efforts of *tanzimat* statesmen to replace the paternalistic old Ottoman way with a new, modern, functional bureaucracy. The Ottoman system that had looked to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European observers wonderfully meritocratic, because it was not aristocratic, now seemed to reforming Ottomans themselves hopelessly old-fashioned and subject to factionalism based on personal interests. As in European societies, the slave trade was abolished, though not slave status as such;[25] the bureaucracy came to be organized not around households but in ministries; promotion was to be based on merit and not on patronage relations. Great houses gradually disappeared, and with them households, though patronage, sometimes based on family and household connections, declined much more slowly.[26]

NOTES

* I thank the Collegium Budapest Institute for Advanced Study for their fellowship and gracious hospitality in spring 2008 when I worked on this essay.

1 I have discussed revenue grants and households at greater length in *The sultan's servants* (Kunt 1983), chs 2 and 3; also in 'Turks in the Ottoman imperial palace' (Kunt 2011).
2 For a grant of 1531, see Kunt 1983: 35–8.
3 İnalcık 1990a; on the economy, see also chapter 2, by Rhoads Murphey, in this volume.
4 Shaw 1962a.
5 Crone 1980.
6 Jackson 1999; Ayalon 1994.
7 İnalcık 1980b.
8 Ménage 1965; Demetriades 1993.
9 Kunt 1998: 164, n. 3.
10 The most comprehensive studies of the palace and imperial household remain the works of İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, on household troops (1943) and Ottoman palace organization (1945).
11 Kunt 1986.
12 Fleischer 1986a: 255–7.
13 Ocak 1998: 228–30; Ocak 2009.
14 Baer 2008.
15 Dávid 1982–8: 57–61; Dávid and Fodor 2005.

16 Fodor and Sudar 2006.
17 Kunt 2007.
18 Kunt 2011.
19 On the *ulema* career, see Uzunçarşılı 1965; Zilfi 2006.
20 For additional comment on this, see chapter 13, by Oktay Özel, in this volume.
21 Darling 1997; Khoury 2006; Adanır 2006; Masters 2006.
22 Aksan 1995.
23 For a fuller discussion, see Findley 2006. The most illustrious Ottoman family of Chiote origin is the grand vezir Ibrahim Edhem Paşa (d. 1893) and his descendants, including Osman Hamdi Bey, painter and founder of the School of Fine Arts and of the Istanbul Archeological Museum.
24 Mustafa Celaleddin Paşa, a Polish convert, married into a high Ottoman family; he was the grandfather of the poet Nazim Hikmet.
25 Erdem 1996; Toledano 1982.
26 Findley 1980; Erdoğdu 2005; Bouquet 2007.

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