



Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East

Joel Beinin

THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST

Joel Beinin is Professor of Middle East History at Stanford University. His publications include *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (1998) and *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-65* (1990).



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To the spirit of the Thälmann Battalion
and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade,
and those who carry it forward today

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As always, Miriam has supported me with her care and love.

Glossary

‘aliya – wave of Zionist immigration to Palestine

amir or *hakim* – commander or prince, the hereditary ruler of Mount Lebanon

‘ammiyya – commune, the name for peasant uprisings in nineteenth-century Mount Lebanon and Hawran

aradi al-filaha or *athar* – lands on which peasants had usufruct rights in Egypt

aradi al-usya – lands granted to the mamluks in Egypt

ayan (Tur.), *a‘yan* (Ar.), also called *derebeys*, *ağas*, or *mütegalibes* – provincial notables or warlords who enhanced their power at the expense of the central Ottoman state

bilad al-sham – greater Syria, including current-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel

boyars – local notables who became absentee landlords in Wallachia and Moldavia

çift-hane system – the normative agrarian land-tenure system of the Ottoman Empire. Each peasant household (*hane*) had the right to perpetual tenancy on a farm (*çift*) large enough to sustain the family on state-administered land as long as taxes were paid and cultivation maintained

çiftlik – a farm, sometimes, but not always, a large, market-oriented estate

colon – a European settler in Algeria

dira – the collectively held tribal domain in North Arabia and lower Iraq

dunam/dunum – Palestine: 1 dunam = 0.23 acres; Iraq: 1 dunum = 0.618 acres

effendiyya – primarily an Egyptian term, the urban middle strata educated in a western style and adopting European dress

esnaf (Tur.), *tawa‘if* (Ar.) – urban guilds of artisans, merchants, and service workers, rarely peasants

faddan – the standard Egyptian land measure, 1.03 acres

farda (Ar.), *ferde* (Tur.) – head tax imposed by the Egyptian regime during the occupation of greater Syria in the 1830s

- gedik* – originally, the tools necessary for a craft; subsequently, the right to practice it
- Hatt-ı Şerif* – 1839 Gülhane Edict, marking the onset of the Tanzimat reforms
- Histadrut – the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in (the Land of) Israel established in 1920
- hospodars* – wealthy Greek merchants who ruled Wallachia and Moldavia indirectly for the Ottoman state
- ib'adiyya* – a tax-free grant of uncultivated lands in mid-nineteenth century Egypt
- iltizam* or *muqata'a* – tax farming or the plot of land itself
- imara* – the hereditary principality of Mount Lebanon
- iqta'* – the land-tenure and administrative system in Mount Lebanon, often misleadingly translated as feudalism
- irad-ı cedit* – the fiscal apparatus established to finance the *nizam-ı cedit* military unit
- Islahat Fermanı* – 1856 Reform Decree, the second of the major Tanzimat measures
- izba* – an Egyptian estate where peasants were given a dwelling and land to grow subsistence crops in exchange for labor service on the landlord's cotton or other cash crops
- Jabal Nablus – a district in the north of the central mountain chain of Palestine
- Janissary Corps – a musket-bearing infantry unit of the Ottoman army
- jiflik* – Arabization of *çiftlik*, an estate given to members of the royal family in mid-nineteenth-century Egypt
- kharajıyya* – peasant lands defined by the 1854 Egyptian land law
- malikâne* – life-term tax farm
- mamluk* (Ar.), *memlük* (Tur.) – an elite warrior-slave
- mevat* (Tur.), *mawwat* (Ar.) – waste or uncultivated land
- milk* (Ar.), *mülk* (Tur.) – privately owned land
- miri* – state-administered land
- mugharasa* – a cultivation contract common in Mount Lebanon: an owner would engage a peasant to plant trees on his land and cultivate them in return for a portion of the land and the trees
- mültezim* (Tur.), *multazim* (Ar.) – holder of a tax farm
- muqata'a* – a district in the land-tenure and administrative system of Mount Lebanon administered by a hereditary local notable, or *muqata'aji*
- musha'a* – collective form of landholding in Syria and Palestine
- musharaka* – sharecropping
- mutamassirun* – permanently resident Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Syrian Christians, and Jews in Egypt

mutanawwirun – in Syria, the term for the urban middle strata educated in a western style and adopting European dress

nizam-ı cedid – the European-style military unit established by Sultan Selim III (1789–1807)

Rumelia – the European parts of the Ottoman Empire

salam – a contract in which a merchant lends a peasant money and the peasant agrees to deliver a harvest to the merchant in return for a specified price or portion of the proceeds from the sale of the crop

sarifa – a hut made from palm branches (Iraq)

sened-i ittifak – 1808 Document of Agreement confirming the powers of the provincial notables

shari‘a (Ar.), *şeriat* (Tur.) – Islamic law

Sipahis – Ottoman cavalry soldiers

sufi – a Muslim mystic. Mystical orders (*turuq*) were often mobilized for political and social purposes

Tanzimat – mid-nineteenth-century elite-initiated legal, administrative, and fiscal reforms of the Ottoman Empire

timar – a rural land holding used to support a *sipahi* and his retainers. Larger holdings were called *ziamet* or *hass*.

tujjar – long-distance merchants of Cairo

‘uhda – a land grant to a military or civilian official in mid-nineteenth-century Egypt

‘ulama’ (Ar.), *ülema* (Tur.) – Muslim scholars

‘ushr (Ar.), *öşür* (Tur.) – Ottoman land tax calculated as a percentage of a crop, variable by region

‘ushuriyya – privileged estates (*ib‘adiyya*, *jiflik*, and *‘uhda*) according to the 1854 Egyptian land law

vakıf (Tur.), *waqf* (Ar.) – a public or family endowment established in accord with Islamic law

Wafd – the leading nationalist party of interwar Egypt, named for the delegation formed to negotiate independence at the Versailles peace conference

Acronyms and abbreviations

- ASP – Arab Socialist Party (Syria)
ASU – Arab Socialist Union (Egypt)
AWC – Arab Workers' Congress (Ittihad al-‘Ummal al-‘Arab, Palestine)
COLA – cost-of-living allowance
CPI – Communist Party of Iraq
CUP – Committee of Union and Progress (Ottoman Empire)
DİSK – Devrimi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions, Turkey)
DMNL – al-Haraka al-Dimuqratiyya lil-Tahrir al-Watani (Democratic Movement for National Liberation, Egypt)
DP – Democrat Party (Demokrat Partisi, Turkey)
EMNL – al-Haraka al-Misriyya lil-Tahrir al-Watani (Egyptian Movement for National Liberation)
FATULS – Ittihad al-Niqabat wa'l-Jam'iyat al-‘Arabiyya (Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies, Palestine)
FLN – Front de Liberation Nationale (National Liberation Front, Algeria)
GFETU – General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (al-Ittihad al-‘Amm li-Niqabat ‘Ummal Misr)
JNF – Jewish National Fund
JP – Justice Party (Adelet Partisi, Turkey)
LP – Labor Party (Egypt)
MİSK – Milliyetçi, İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Nationalist Workers' Unions, Turkey)
MTWU – Niqabat ‘Ummal al-Sana’i‘ al-Yadawiyya (Manual Trades Workers' Union, Egypt)
NCWS – al-Lajna al-Wataniyya lil-‘Ummal w'al-Talaba (National Committee of Workers and Students, Egypt)
NLL – ‘Usbat al-Taharrur al-Watani (National Liberation League, Palestine)
PAWS – Jam'iyat al-‘Ummal al-‘Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya (Palestine Arab Workers' Society)
PCGFETU – al-Lajna al-Tahdiriyya lil-Ittihad al-‘Amm li-Niqabat ‘Ummal

Misr (Preparatory Committee for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions)

PCP – Palestine Communist Party

PSD – Parti Socialist Destourien (Destourian Socialist Party, Tunisia)

RPP – Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Turkey)

TLP – Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Turkish Labor Party)

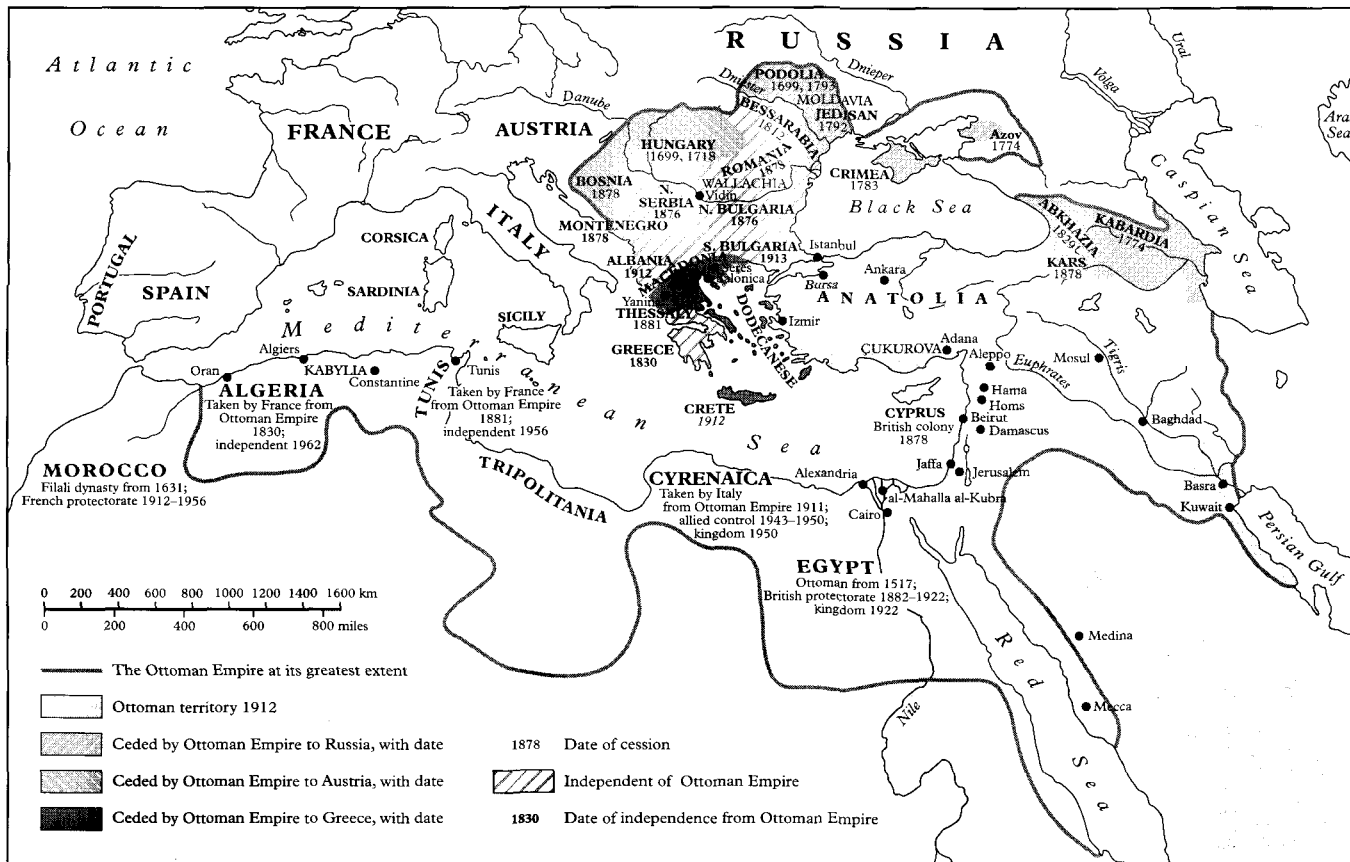
Türk İş – Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions)

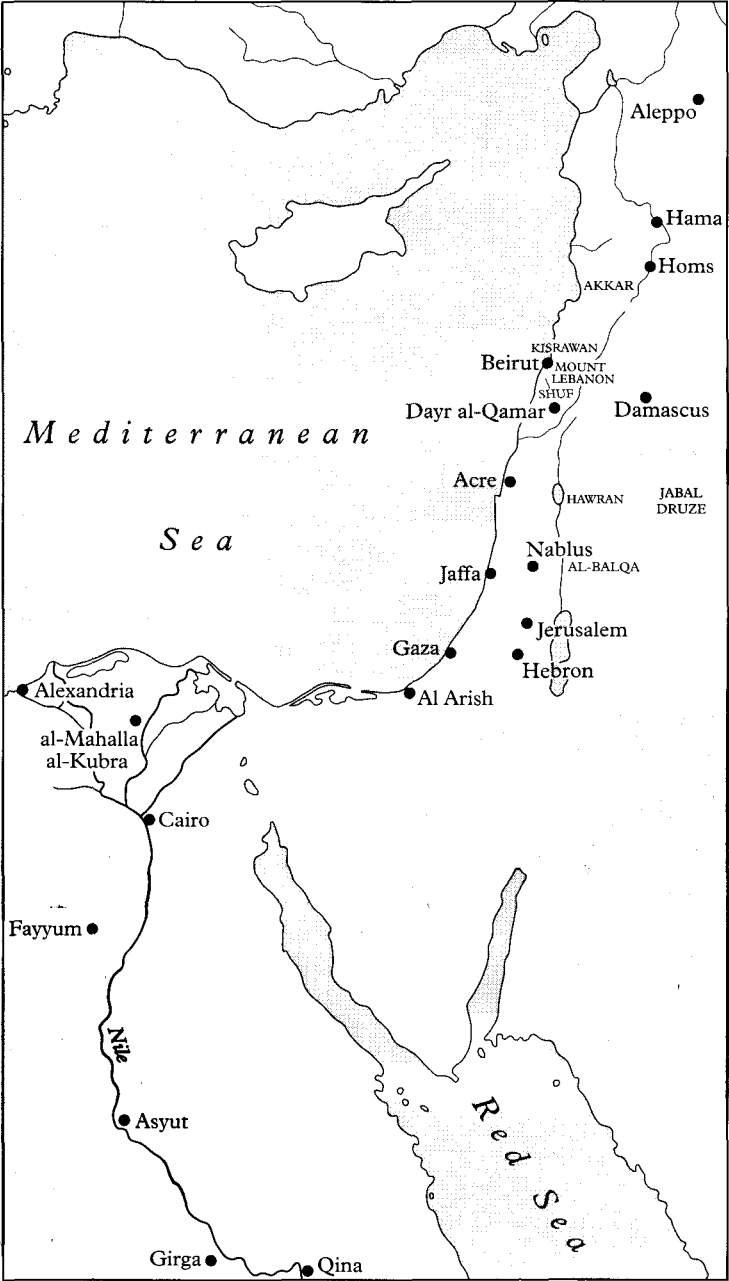
UAR – United Arab Republic

UGTA – Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (General Union of Algerian Workers)

UGTT – Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (General Union of Tunisian Workers)

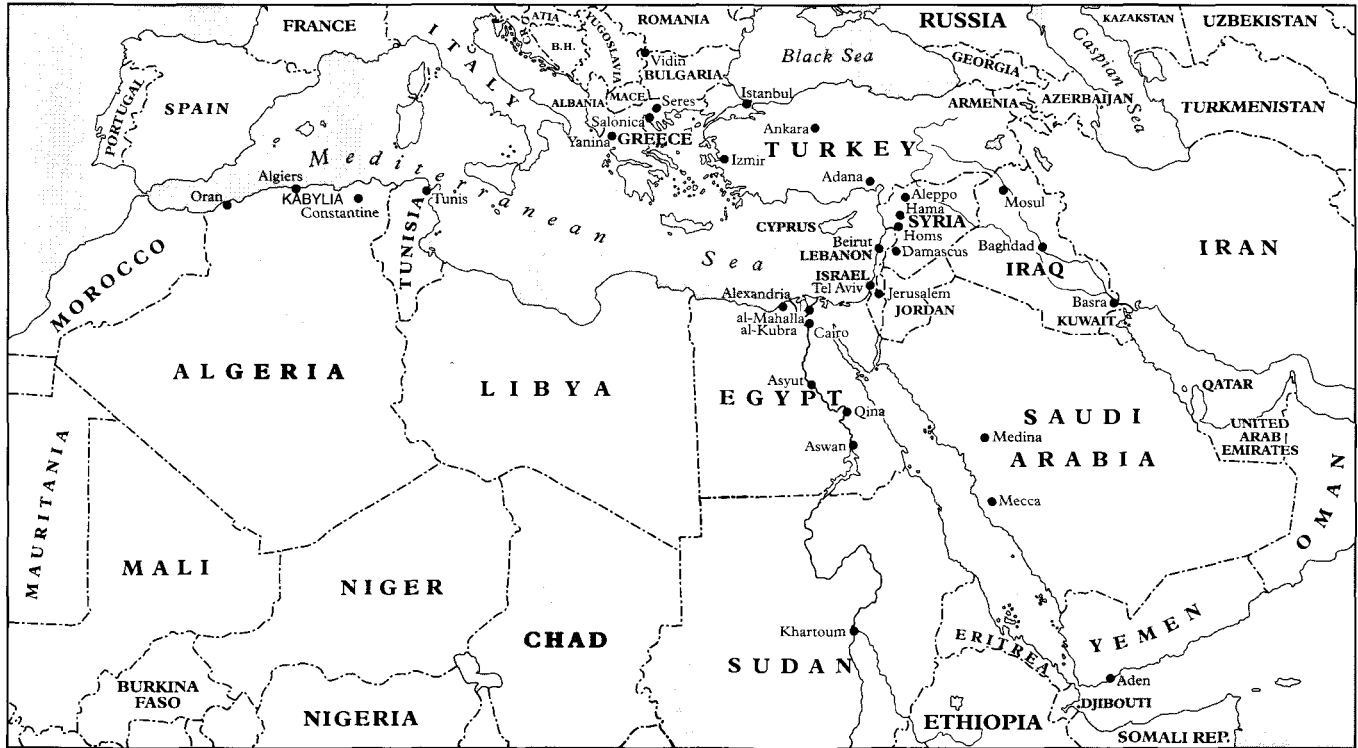
The Ottoman Empire, 1699–1914





Egypt and Bilad al-Sham

The Middle East in the Twentieth Century



Introduction

The working people who constitute the majority of any society can and deserve to be historical subjects. Many aspects of their lives can not be represented by the methods typically deployed to write histories of the political activities and ideas of elites and lettered classes. Investigations into the experiences and consciousnesses of working people cannot retrieve their "true" voice and should not aspire to remake them into the universal subjects of history. But such investigations can tell us many important things about common people and their position in society. Rethinking historical understandings from these premises can demarcate the limits of the powers of states and other institutions of authority and discipline or the ideas of elites and their organic intellectuals. It can also reveal relations of hierarchy and power, processes by which they are established and maintained, and instabilities, tensions, and struggles within societies.

Until the late 1970s most histories of the Middle East took as their subjects either the religious, legal, philosophical, and literary texts of Islamic high culture or the political histories of states. Concentrating on such topics virtually ensured that peasants, urban artisans, small merchants, service workers, and slaves were peripheral to the main concerns of "history." The rare appearances of common people in historical writings were usually refracted through the vision of elites or intellectuals close to them, who had an interest in obscuring prevailing social hierarchies and discourses of power.

Historians of Europe and the Americas dissatisfied with these limitations developed a "new social history" that sought to give more prominence to experiences and cultures of working people. They adopted various methodological approaches: reinvigorated liberal, social democratic, or Marxian labor history, British cultural Marxism, French structuralist Marxism, populist nationalism, peasant studies, feminism, ethnic studies, etc. Just as it began to go out of fashion in European and American studies, new social history made its way to Middle East studies (Batatu 1978; Abrahamian 1982; Tucker 1985; Beinín & Lockman 1987; Baer 1964; Baer 1969b; Baer 1982; Porath 1966).¹

Some new social historians assumed that class was a material reality that ultimately determined all else. Until challenged by feminists, proponents of ethnic studies, and others, they typically focused on white working men in the public sphere and devoted inadequate attention to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, generational difference, and sexual orientation – categories often identified as “cultural” (Scott 1988). Writing primarily about public struggles such as strikes or political campaigns tended to obscure the activities of daily life in neighborhoods and families, accommodation to structures of power, and weapons of the weak: everyday forms of resistance that avoid direct confrontation and overt collective defiance such as “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage” (Scott 1985: xvi). Many new social historians hoped that examining neglected documentary evidence or reading previously known evidence against the grain would allow them to retrieve the experiences of workers, peasants, African slaves, women, ethnic minorities, etc., speak for them, and restore them to the historical record. This often resulted in an act of ventriloquism. Subordinate subjects were presented as saying what sympathetic historians thought they would or should say.

This book seeks to synthesize some of the achievements of the new social history and its legatees in Middle East studies and simultaneously to mitigate some of the limitations of these approaches by adopting the following propositions. Ideas and materialities do not constitute an absolute dichotomy. They are mutually interpenetrable and interdependent. The spheres of culture, politics, and economics are historically constructed and intertwined, but become relatively autonomous forces once the ideas and social relations they configure win broad acceptance. Classes, nations, modes of production, religious communities, gender identities, and other such categories are formed by an amalgam of historical processes, social relations, and discourses. They are not objective entities independent of consciousness. They acquire social force as people understand their experiences through them and engage in debates over their “true” meaning. The actual beliefs and practices of individuals who identify with or are identified as members of any historically constituted group are unpredictable, though certain combinations are observable historical patterns. Neither the working class nor any other social group has a historical mission. I agree with Salman Rushdie that “description is itself a political act” and “re-describing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it” (Rushdie 1991: 13, 14). It is possible, though not in any final and definitive way, to describe a world. We need not be limited to analyzing texts or representations of a world.

Workers, peasants, subalterns, classes

This book presents a synthetic narrative covering a broad geographical and chronological range. Can there be a unified history of workers and peasants whose lives were configured largely within highly diverse localities, even if they were not nearly as isolated and self-sufficient as traditional conceptions commonly assert? According to Antonio Gramsci, “the history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic.” Gramsci offers a long list of topics that are formally external to the subaltern strata, but which must be examined to approach an understanding of subaltern experience and consciousness (Gramsci 1971: 54–55). Several sections of this book adopt this method.

The term “subaltern” suggests that the subordinate social position of artisans, workers, peasants, and other social groups – slaves, tribal nomads, heterodox religious minorities, women – cannot be explained solely by class relationships. I use it when seeking to emphasize other aspects of social domination or the shared subordinate status of peasants, artisans, and workers with others. Appropriating Gramsci’s terminology, the Indian Subaltern Studies school proposes that histories of these groups cannot be written either from the point of view of European imperial powers or entirely in terms of the nationalist movements that eventually arose in opposition to imperialism and established independent states in the image of western Europe. Subalterns are typically only incidentally and indirectly the subjects of archival records or cultural productions of the lettered classes. This makes their experiences and consciousnesses very difficult – some would argue impossible – to retrieve (Spivak 1988).

This book owes a great conceptual debt to the ideas of the Subaltern Studies school and those who have engaged with them. Can those interested in other parts of the world learn something from a history of the Middle East informed by these ideas?² Several distinctive features of the Middle East are of comparative interest. The economic, political, and cultural ties of the Middle East with Europe are more substantial and more long standing than is the case for any other part of the world. The central Ottoman Empire was never subjected to colonial rule. It maintained its nominal independence until its demise, albeit over a shrinking territorial base from the late seventeenth century on. Many developments commonly attributed to British colonial rule in India were brought to the Middle East by elites of the Ottoman central government or virtually independent provincial rulers. The settler colonial experiences of Algeria and Palestine are distinctive. Useful comparisons have been made between them and with the cases of South Africa and Ireland

(Lustick 1993; Younis 2000). Other comparisons that consider the particularities of the Middle East are also possible. In most of the Middle East, colonial rule arrived later and was briefer and weaker than in Latin America, India, and parts of Africa. Muslims preserved a literate, high cultural tradition that was both independent of European modernity and in historical tension with Christianity. This may have enhanced the capacity for cultural resistance to European imperialism in the Middle East. Movements of politico-religious revivalism that arose in many parts of the world in opposition to colonialism, imperialism, and the consequences of Euro-American modernity appeared in the Middle East (and some Muslim regions of Sudanic Africa) much earlier. Do these differences matter for the subaltern strata? Insofar as they are subordinated in comparable ways, they may not. However, it is worth investigating whether any relevant differences can be attributed to variations in regional histories.

The category of social class is imbedded in a certain way of understanding the history of Europe. It is common to write the history of the Middle East and all of Asia, Africa, and Latin America against a standard established by the categories and processes of European history. Many scholarly debates in Middle East history are concerned with when and how successfully one or another part of the region entered on the same historical trajectory as Europe and its white settler extensions. This approach virtually ensures that the Middle East will be judged deficient or inferior in comparison to Europe, and it obscures many complexities and local specificities of the region that do not fit the European model, which is often an idealized abstraction in any case. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that certain ideas and institutions – the nation-state, capitalism and its attendant social classes – which originated in Europe spread to other parts of the globe and became a part of their local histories.

I agree with Dipesh Chakrabarty that history as a category of knowledge is, like economics, inseparable from the coerced imposition of modernity on non-Europeans in the colonial era and from the power of colonial and post-colonial states (Chakrabarty 1992: 57). This is because history is most commonly written using the records of modern structures of domination, especially the nation-state. But precisely because the concept of history and the institutions associated with it have become globalized, those who were the subjects of Euro-American domination now seek to empower themselves by, among other things, developing a sense of their own historical identities. Histories of subaltern groups tend to undermine the discursive power of states, social hierarchies, and nationalist mystifications, and this book is offered in that spirit.

Where is the Middle East?

The mapping of politico-cultural zones is not an innocent process. It is a modern technique of power that asserts the boundaries of sovereignty and "civilization." In this book the Middle East, with some qualifications, refers to the territories of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states in which Islam is the dominant cultural tradition. This definition privileges a state and a religious tradition, though I do not essentialize either of them and fully acknowledge the ethno-linguistic and religious diversity of the region. Like any abstraction, this definition can be critiqued by local empirical details, and I offer it provisionally.

Many definitions of the Middle East include Morocco and Iran, which, though they never came under Ottoman rule, share much with the Ottoman Empire and its successor states. Desert areas of contemporary Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and the Arabian Peninsula are on the margin of this definition because of the weak Ottoman presence there, and they are peripheral to this book because of the irregular character of agriculture and the paucity of any stable group that might be designated as artisans or workers. Sudan partially entered the Ottoman realm only in the nineteenth century. Israel is in the Middle East, but its ruling circles have sought to ensure that it is not an integral part of the region culturally or politically.

Focusing on regions that were once part of the Ottoman Empire somewhat artificially excludes regions – such as Iran and Morocco – that could quite reasonably be included. I do so partly to enhance the coherence of the narrative in this book and partly to emphasize that much of Europe was politically, economically, and culturally connected to the region for hundreds of years. That is to say that the boundary between Europe and its others is not nearly as sharp and impermeable as it is often thought to be.

The Ottoman Empire, the longest continuous dynastic state in human history, extended its rule from its Anatolian and Balkan heartland to much of the Arabic- and Berber-speaking regions from 1516–17 until World War I. Ottoman rule was not, as commonly portrayed by Arab nationalists, an era of political oppression and economic stagnation for Arabs, nor was it, as Islamists and Turkish nationalists assert, a golden age. Muslims of many ethno-linguistic identities – Arabs, Berbers, Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Abkhazians, Albanians, Bosnians, etc. – considered Ottoman rule legitimate in Islamic terms. Christians and Jews found secure and recognized places for themselves under the Ottoman umbrella, though certainly not as citizens with equal rights – categories which are equally anachronistic for both the Ottoman Empire and pre-modern Europe.

The territories comprising post-World War I Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Romania, Bulgaria, and other parts of the Balkans were central components of the empire. These regions – Rumelia, in Ottoman parlance – share with Anatolia and some of the predominantly Arab areas the lack of a landed aristocracy, a peasantry relatively free from personal dependence and serfdom, and cities that were fully integrated into the structure of state power, unlike medieval western Europe (Todorova 1996: 60–61). Therefore, from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, it is reasonable to consider topics such as the state of the peasantry, the landholding regimes, and urban guilds in the Balkans in conjunction with those questions in Anatolia and the predominantly Arab provinces of the empire. I do not do this as fully as possible because of intellectual limitations shaped by training in area studies. Despite their common Ottoman heritage and majority Muslim populations, it would be idiosyncratic, though not necessarily unfruitful, to consider Albania and Iraq part of the same politico-cultural zone in the twentieth century. The primary focus of attention in this book is Anatolia, greater Syria (*bilad al-sham*), the Nile valley, the Tigris–Euphrates valley, and the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula. Other regions are addressed when it is analytically useful.

Orientalism and its critics

Traditional Orientalist scholarship argues that the Ottoman Empire, after an exceptional period of florescence, began a period of protracted decline in the late sixteenth century (Lewis 1961). In the 1950s this conception was buttressed by the postulates of modernization theory, which divides history into two periods: “tradition” and “modernity” (Lerner 1958). Scholarship guided by these conceptions viewed the eighteenth century as a period of economic, political, and cultural stagnation in the Middle East (Gibb & Bowen 1950). According to Orientalism and modernization theory, Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 and its corollary, Egypt’s occupation of greater Syria in the 1830s, marked a radical rupture and initiated the modern era by providing the impetus for the ideas of secularism, nationalism, and liberalism, the state system as we know it today, economic development, and scientific and technological progress (Safran 1961; Lewis 1961; Vatikiotis 1969 and subsequent editions; Polk 1963; Maoz 1968; Polk & Chambers 1968; Hourani 1962; Shamir 1984).

Since the late 1970s, the Orientalist conception of Ottoman “decline” and the dichotomy of “tradition” and “modernity” posited by modernization theory have been largely discredited. Scholars inspired by rejec-

tion of Orientalism and modernization theory have established that at no time was the Ottoman Empire or any of its component parts frozen in timeless tradition. On the contrary, the years between 1600 and 1800 "were the point of departure for the modern experience" (Barbir 1996: 101).

Political economy

Edward Said's denunciation of hostile and essentialist representations of the Muslim world in the West, though it is the most widely known and influential, is not the first or the most intellectually powerful critique of Orientalism and modernization theory (Said 1978). Some scholars working within the Orientalist tradition wrote economic and social histories that shed light on the experiences of ordinary people or demonstrated that the normative prescriptions of Islamic texts were very broadly interpreted and did not constrain daily life in ways commonly imagined (Rodinson 1978; Goitein 1967–93). Studies of political economy – liberal, empirical versions and several varieties of neo-Marxism – argued for a new periodization of the modern history of the region and focused attention on the economic relations between Europe and the Middle East and the connections between economic exploitation and political domination (Chevallier 1968; Chevallier 1971; Owen 1969; Owen 1972; Owen 1981a; Raymond 1973–74; Davis 1983).

One political economy school – world systems and dependency theory, developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, and others – was very influential for a time. In opposition to the traditional Marxian focus on relations of production, this approach argued that through relations of circulation regions of the globe where capitalist production did not prevail became peripheral parts of the world capitalist system as early as the sixteenth century. Indeed, the development of industrial capitalism in Europe and North America depended on unequal trade with the noncapitalist world and forms of coerced labor such as slavery, indenture, or debt peonage. Several of Wallerstein's Turkish students brought a research agenda inspired by his theory to Middle East studies (Wallerstein 1979; Wallerstein & Kasaba 1983; Kasaba 1988; Islamoğlu & Keyder 1987; Keyder & Tabak 1991). World systems theory situates the Middle East in relation to the emergent European center of the world capitalist economy. The principal question posed in this conceptual framework is when the region or some part of it was incorporated into the capitalist world economy. While it directs attention away from the Ottoman state apparatus and Islamic high culture, world systems theory is ultimately Eurocentric and teleological. It reduces complex local histories to a

single, albeit a very important, dimension: integration into the capitalist market. Focusing on long-term economic trends shaped by dynamics at the capitalist center and on the undeniable fact that western Europe did come to dominate the Middle East economically and then politically draws attention away from the diverse local processes and chronologies in particular regions. Though their conceptual framework was flawed and the explanations they proposed proved empirically unsustainable, those who adopted or developed Wallerstein's ideas posed a useful question. The debate over world systems theory and other political economy approaches stimulated research on the economic and social history of Ottoman provinces in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (McGowan 1981; Schölch 1982; Schölch 1993; Thieck 1992; Gerber 1987; Schilcher 1985; Schilcher 1991a; Marcus 1989; Khoury 1991; Cuno 1992; Khoury 1997; Doumani 1995; Khater 1996; Fattah 1997).

What is modernity?

As its intellectual proponents conceived it, Middle Eastern modernity is a derivative project seeking to remake the region and its people in the image of Europe by deploying science and technology to achieve economic development, enhanced military prowess, and cultural and moral revival. Modernity was to be inculcated by educational and political reforms: study of the European curriculum, revision of the Islamic curriculum, and selective introduction of responsible government, human rights, citizenship, and moderate women's emancipation – ideas and institutions cultivating individuals, mass politics, and nation-states. These reforms were organized by a belief in the idea of progress that assumed that the Middle East must follow the trajectory of European history, with some nonessential modifications to accommodate the local culture.

The elite and new middle-class promoters of Middle Eastern modernity sincerely desired to change their societies. Simultaneously, as the rulers and teachers of their peoples, they acquired and maintained an array of privileges by deploying modernity as a political strategy. Recalcitrant, "traditional," primarily lower-class sectors of the population were often coerced into adopting "modern" practices, exemplified by the conscription of peasants for factory work and the army in nineteenth-century Egypt and restrictions on women wearing the veil in republican Turkey and its outright ban in Pahlavi Iran. Such coercion is inseparable from the developmental or liberatory content of expanding education, emancipation of women, increased income from wage labor, etc. Because new ideas and institutions can not remake the world *ex nihilo*, Middle Eastern modernity, like modernity everywhere, is an untidy phenomenon incorporat-

ing attitudes and practices that its local and Euro-American promoters label "traditional" or "backward." Modernity is constituted by an ensemble of ideas, built physical structures, institutions, social relations, and public and private practices. It is simultaneously a discursive strategy deployed by elites and middle classes to reshape their societies and create new social hierarchies and a field of social struggle. The experience of modernity is inseparable from the contest over its meaning.

When does the modern era in the Middle East begin?

As is the case with mapping regions, periodization is both a necessary and a provisional element of historical understanding. No single moment or event changes everything of significance for all the topics addressed here in equal measure. The chronological scope of this book and the periodizations of the chapters are offered as approximations and arguments that draw attention to conjunctures which are often rather different from those that are commonly emphasized in narrating the political histories of states and their elites or the development of high culture and its prominent figures.

Rejecting the proposition that the experiences of Europe and its white settler extensions constitute universal terms of modernity requires us to locate at least some of the constituent elements of Middle Eastern modernity in the region and in the dynamic interaction between Europe and the Middle East. In the mid-eighteenth century the internal structure of the Ottoman state and society and Ottoman-European relations were reconfigured. These changes should not be understood as leading inevitably to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. However, from this period on, the spread of capitalist relations of production, circulation, and consumption, the formation of new social classes and hierarchies, and the reformation of understandings of political community and self did produce changes that can be associated with the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the contemporary Middle Eastern state system. Substantiating this proposition requires investigation into: (1) the Ottoman state and central government; (2) regional particularities; (3) the relations of production, circulation, and consumption; (4) the changing character of elites and social hierarchies; (5) the daily lives and culture of peasants and artisans; and (6) the production and circulation of ideas and other cultural forms. Some of this work has been done, though vast areas of relative ignorance remain. Here I will only outline the major events and processes that justify this periodization.

The main features of the Ottoman Middle East in the mid-eighteenth century are: the diminished power of the central government; the rise of

provincial notables and warlords; accelerating trade with Europe and localized economic growth; the first sustained period of self-conscious adoption of European styles and techniques by elites; and the rise of Islamic movements challenging the legitimacy of the state. Towards the end of the century the loss of Ottoman capacity to challenge Europe militarily and the declining power of the central government over the provinces led successive sultans and their bureaucratic elites to institute military and administrative reforms modeled on their understanding of European practices.

After the failure of the second Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683 and the associated efforts of the Köprülü grand viziers to revive the centralized system established by Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver (1520–66), the Ottomans experienced even more decisive military defeats by the Hapsburg Empire resulting in the loss of Hungary (1699) and parts of Serbia and Wallachia (1718). Consequently, some Ottoman elites began to look towards Europe as a source of techniques and technologies that might restore the power of the central state apparatus. During the Tulip Period (1718–30) the central government attempted to restore its power through innovations such as the first Turkish printing press and the appointment of the first European military advisor to the Ottoman army. The recentralization efforts of the Tulip Period were blocked by the 1730 Patrona Halil revolt.

Consequently, around the middle of the eighteenth century provincial notables (*ayan*, Tur.; *a'yan*, Ar., also called *derebey*s, ağas, or *müteğallibes*) were able to consolidate power and undermine the authority of the central Ottoman state. Some notable families – the Kara Osmanoglus of western Anatolia (1691–1813); the Jalilis of Mosul (1726–1834); the 'Azms of Damascus and Hama (1725–57, 1771–83); the Shihabs of Mount Lebanon (1697–1841) – had established themselves in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The number and power of provincial notables increased after 1760 (Hourani 1968: 42–44). They formally acknowledged the sultan but established virtually independent rule over key regions. Loss of control over the provinces and confirmation of Ottoman military inferiority by defeat in the first of three wars with Russia (1768–74) led Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) to establish a new European-style military unit (*nizam-ı cedid*) and a new fiscal apparatus to finance it (*irad-ı cedid*) – the first systematic adoption of western European military and administrative techniques. Selim III was deposed by notables and others who opposed his efforts to restore the authority of the central government. His successor confirmed the rights of the provincial notables in the 1808 Document of Agreement (*sened-i ittifak*) – the acme of the decentralization process (İnalçık 1991: 24).

Some provincial regimes were based on coalitions built by skillful individuals or households of elite warrior-slaves (*memlük*, Tur.; *mamluk*, Ar.). Zahir al-‘Umar (1745–75) began his career as a tax farmer (*mültezim*, Tur.; *multazim*, Ar.) in northern Palestine and then established his capital in Acre. His successor, Cezzar Ahmed Pasha (1775–1804), extended his power from Damascus to Acre. In Baghdad, the governorship was held by a dynasty of Georgian mamluks (1748–1831) whose power peaked with the rule of Süleyman Pasha (1780–1802). Egypt was the most important quasi-independent provincial regime. The neo-mamluk Qazdaglis – ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir (1760–72) and Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab (1772–75) – attempted to assert their autonomy from the Ottoman central government in ways that were consummated by Mehmed ‘Ali Pasha (1805–48). By far the most successful of the autonomous provincial governors, Mehmed ‘Ali came to power during the anarchic period created by the demise of the Qazdaglis and Napoleon’s invasion. The first Wahhabi state in the Arabian Peninsula (1745–1818) was both an autonomous provincial regime and an Islamic movement critical of Ottoman laxity. Provincial notables and warlords were also prevalent in the Balkans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The best known are Isma‘il Pasha of Seres in Macedonia, Osman Pazvantoglu of Vidin, and ‘Ali Pasha of Yanina in Albania/Greece.

The diminished power of the central Ottoman state is not equivalent to the decline of the empire. Provincial regimes with a local social base often provided greater security and economic prosperity. Several eighteenth-century provincial governors – Zahir al-‘Umar, the Shihabs, and ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir – exported agricultural products directly to Europe and retained the taxes on this trade locally. Izmir, Acre, and other port cities flourished in the eighteenth century. Important differences among Ottoman regions, historical developments before trade with Europe became substantial, and local determinants of social and economic change cannot be addressed in this capsule summary.

Some of those who reject Orientalism and modernization theory assert that there was a potential for an independent Middle Eastern modernity by arguing that economic and cultural impulses towards the development of an indigenous Middle Eastern capitalism and modernist Islam can be discerned in the mid-eighteenth century (Gran 1978; Voll 1982; Levzion & Voll 1987). Recent research by meticulous scholars refutes this notion. The eighteenth century now appears to be a period of both continuities with earlier periods and locally varied, incremental changes. Thus, Kenneth Cuno finds “no evidence in the countryside of a development – that is to say, a gathering momentum – towards capitalism in . . . eighteenth century” Egypt, though cash-crop farming, markets, and money

were familiar to peasants in the eighteenth century and as early as the Ptolemaic period (Cuno 1992: 4; Cuno 1988a: 114–15). In the realm of cultural production, Ahmad Dallal argues that

The problems that informed eighteenth-century reform ideas bore no resemblance whatsoever to those that inspired and drove later reformers. Thus, Europe is notably absent from the thought of all the major thinkers of the eighteenth century. Even when some of these thinkers were aware of the infringements on Muslim lands, they did not appreciate the extent of the threat presented by these infringements, nor did such events influence their thought: Europe was completely absent.

The intellectual “outside” of the eighteenth century was not European but Islamic, and it was not threatening but redeeming. For most eighteenth century thinkers, the Islamic past was still a continuous reality . . . For the thinkers of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries . . . this past had to be rediscovered and reconstructed. (Dallal 2000: 9–10)

The end of the period I am designating as the beginnings of the modern Middle East and the transition to a new period are configured by the destruction of the Janissary Corps in 1826, the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Trade Convention, which imposed free trade on the Ottoman Empire, the 1839 Gülhane Edict (*Hatt-ı Şerif*) which initiated political and administrative reforms known as the Tanzimat, and the 1841 Treaty of London, which both radically limited the regional power of Mehmed ‘Ali and installed his family as hereditary rulers of Egypt. The new period is marked by diminished provincial autonomy (except for Egypt), sustained efforts of sultans and bureaucrats to enhance the power of the central government, economic subordination to Europe leading in several cases to political subordination and military conquest, and a politico-cultural debate over the reform and revival of Islam and the appropriate place of European ideas and culture.

Peasants and agrarian production

Peasants are not an undifferentiated mass. One useful distinction is between horticulture and open-field cultivation, primarily of grains. In greater Syria and some other regions this corresponds to the difference between privately owned (*milk*, Ar.; *mülk*, Tur.) and state-administered (*miri*) land. Syrian horticulturalists (dubbed peasant-gardeners by Hanna Batatu) lived on the outskirts of cities, provided their food supply, had close ties with urban life and mores, and were more immediately affected by trade with Europe. Peasants who farmed open fields in the Euphrates valley or the Hawran plain were more mobile. Some were sedentarized or semi-sedentarized bedouin. Many other distinctions

among peasants can be made: pacific or martial, orthodox or heterodox, and clanless or clan-linked (Batatu 1999: 10–37).

Agricultural production in the Ottoman Empire was normatively conceptualized as the *çift-hane* system.³ Each peasant household (*hane*) held a theoretical right to perpetual tenancy on state-administered land as long as cultivation was maintained (İnalçık 1991: 18). The size of the archetypical peasant farm (*çift*) – originally defined as the land one man and a team of oxen could plow in a day – was to be adequate to sustain a family. In return for the right of usufruct, peasants paid a regionally variable percentage of the crop as a land tax (*öşür*, Tur.; *ushr*, Ar.). Other forms of land tenure included collective holding (*mushaʿa* in Syria and Palestine, *dıra* in the northern Arabian Peninsula and lower Iraq), freehold – usual for vineyards and orchards but otherwise uncommon – and family or public endowments (*vakıf*, Tur.; *waqf*, Ar.). Uncultivated or waste land (*mevat*, Tur.; *mawat*, Ar.) was sometimes granted as freehold to individuals in or close to the ruling elite.

In the classical era, the *çift-hane* system was allied to the *timar* system. Cavalry soldiers (*sipahis*) were granted revokable rights to a share of the revenue from a rural area (*timar*, *ziamet* or *hass* for larger holdings). The income from this military land grant supported the cavalryman, his retainers, and their military equipment. In return, a *sipahi* had to answer a sultan's call to arms.⁴ From the late sixteenth century on, military strategy relied more heavily on musket-carrying infantrymen, the Janissary Corps. To raise cash to pay the enlarged Janissary Corps, tax farming (*iltizam*, *muqataʿa*) was introduced. *Timars* and tax farms coexisted for many years in some localities. A prospective tax farmer competed in an annual auction for the right to collect the land tax of a rural region or sometimes an urban tax. Tax farms were renewed at the pleasure of the sultan and were not, in principle, hereditary. In 1695 a new category of life-term tax farm (*malikâne*) was established. *Malikâne* holders managed their lands as they saw fit, and their heirs had preferential rights to renew the lease. This was one of the institutions that enabled local notables to consolidate power while remaining integrated in the Ottoman system.

In the late sixteenth century large farms known as *çiftliks* were established. As proponents of world systems theory identify these farms as the site of export-oriented commercial agriculture that integrated Ottoman regions into the European-centered world capitalist system, it is important to clarify this term. *Çiftlik* does not have a fixed meaning: the size of the farm, the timing and mode of its creation, and its relations of production varied. Some *çiftliks* were created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by notables who received grants of wasteland beyond the boundaries of traditional, state-administered land, often in Balkan regions

close to routes of communication and markets such as Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, the Maritsa valley, Danubian Bulgaria, the Kossovo–Metohija basin, the coastal plains of Albania, and parts of Bosnia (İnalçık 1991: 25). The mid-eighteenth century seems to be a period of accelerated formation of large farms, when some life-term tax farms were turned into *çiftlik*s.

How should this agrarian system be classified? Even the cursory description offered here indicates a dynamic process of change over time.

Clearly, it is not a static, “traditional” mode of production, as anthropological studies using equilibrium models derived from functionalist theory and Orientalist premises propose (Eickelman 1998: 55–65). Some ethnographers have gone to great lengths to deny the existence of any historical dynamic and social change in peasant villages before the arrival of western modernity. A particularly egregious example is Richard Critchfield’s life history of an upper Egyptian peasant youth, Shahhat, which is full of stereotypically negative characterizations of “the peasant personality” (Critchfield 1978). Timothy Mitchell demonstrates that Critchfield heavily plagiarizes Henry Ayrout’s widely read study of twentieth-century Egyptian peasant life and other works written well before the period Critchfield professes to be writing about (Mitchell 1990a; Ayrout 1963). While Critchfield did spend time in an upper Egyptian village, Ayrout conducted no direct investigation of rural life. He grew up in Cairo but left Egypt at the age of eighteen and wrote his book as a dissertation in Paris ten years later. His information was apparently based on correspondence with former schoolmates whose families owned large agricultural estates (Mitchell forthcoming). Thus, there is a well-established western discourse imputing changeless tradition and other negative characteristics to peasants without serious investigation of rural histories.

If rural life was not timeless, why was there no transition to capitalism, as in western Europe? Some seek to answer this question by defining the Ottoman agrarian system more precisely.⁵ Both Orientalists, who note important empirical differences from the European model, and some Marxists, who emphasize state administration of the land and collection of taxes, not rent, from peasants and therefore prefer the terms tributary or Asiatic mode of production, criticize the loose use of the term “feudalism” to describe Ottoman agrarian relations. Chris Wickham adopts the classical Marxian view that the key factor determining a mode of production is the form of surplus extraction. Western feudalism is defined by rent collection, not by its political–juridical aspects – fiefs, vassalage, military service, private justice, serfdom, and labor service. Asian tributary modes of production are defined by tax collection. Thus, according to

Wickham, the Ottoman system was not feudal (Wickham 1985). Halil Berktaý replies that most Ottoman peasants were legally tenants of the state. Though the claim on their surplus was called a tax, it was functionally indistinguishable from rent. Hence, the Ottoman agrarian system was feudal. "The Western transition to 'private' feudalism . . . is the exception . . . the various Oriental transitions to 'state' feudalism . . . are the rule" (Berktaý 1987: 317).

French structuralist Marxism inspired anthropologists and others who reject static functionalism and kindred theoretical approaches that inadequately attend to rural social structure and social conflict to construct precise definitions of modes of production and to specify how different modes are articulated with each other. Proponents of the articulation of modes of production school often seek to locate a zone of peasant life not subsumed by the expansion of capitalist relations of production and circulation (Glavanis & Glavanis 1990). This approach is problematic because well before the twentieth century many peasant villages were not isolated from markets, cities, and broader cultural currents. Today, hardly a village in the Middle East has not been touched by capitalism, the nation-state, and the mass media, though the attendant changes in village life do not necessarily conform to the expectations of modernization theory. Village studies that avoid formalist, theoretically abstract idealization of peasants (positively or negatively), account for links of peasants with the world beyond, and give due consideration to social structure and social conflict provide important local micro-social studies which are essential to a historical understanding of subalterns.⁶

Debates over modes of production would be unintelligible to peasants, who may have experienced no difference between tax and rent. Both were collected by the same methods. But Ottoman peasants who farmed state-administered land had more rights than European feudal tenants because they could not be evicted so long as they maintained cultivation and paid taxes. Talal Asad suggests a useful approach that avoids the formalism of debates over modes of production:

The history of noncapitalist societies can not be understood by isolating one a priori principle . . . the important thing always is to try and identify that combination of elements (environmental, demographic, social, cultural, etcetera) in the past of a given population that will serve to explain a particular outcome . . .

There is no key to the secret of noncapitalist societies . . . Only in capitalist societies, based as they are on production for profit, on the drive for unceasing growth, on the penetration of money-values into various spheres of life, and on the continuous transformation of productive forces, is there something approaching "a key" to its [sic] understanding . . .

The concept of "the capitalist mode of production" is a way – the most powerful way – of writing a particular history of relations, institutions, processes, that

have hegemonised (but by no means homogenised) the world. There is not and cannot be any conceptual parallel to it in the form of "precapitalist modes of production" (Asad 1987: 603–04).

This insight leads me to suggest that the Ottoman agrarian regime was neither an Asiatic nor a feudal mode of production. The state administered the largest share of the land. A tendency towards feudalization developed in certain regions in the mid-eighteenth century, as provincial notables tried to wrest control of the land and the peasants from the central government. But that tendency was blocked and reversed as the central government regained power in the nineteenth century. This formulation preserves the specificity of local practices and avoids defining the Ottoman experience in relation to the trajectory of Europe.

Artisans, guilds, and workers

The history of pre-industrial artisans, craft workers, and service providers is a part of the subject of this book. They do not comprise a single social class but include relatively prosperous masters who employed other workers, skilled journeymen, wage laborers, and those with no fixed place of work.

Until the 1830s, manufacturing in the Middle East consisted almost entirely of small, labor-intensive, artisanal enterprises using hand, animal, or water power. But there is no clear break between the pre-industrial and industrial periods. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, artisanal and industrial production simultaneously competed and coexisted. Although artisanal work was often disparaged as "premodern," or "traditional," it was sometimes required to sustain industrialized production. Artisans often filled niches left open by large-scale industry or undertook aspects of the production process unsuitable for factory production in Middle Eastern conditions (El-Messiri 1980; Koptiuch 1994; Vatter 1994).

Before the introduction of mechanized industry and well afterwards, most of the urban working population – not only artisans of every sort, but also merchants, service providers, and professionals – were organized into guilds (*esnaf* Tur.; *tawa'if*, Ar.). Because guilds are a well-known medieval and early modern European institution, most studies of Middle Eastern guilds are either explicitly or implicitly comparative, almost always to the detriment of Middle Eastern guilds. Several scholars of early modern and modern guilds concur that a guild is "a group of town people engaged in the same occupation and headed by a *shaykh*" (guild master) (Baer 1964: 18; endorsed by Raymond 1973–74: 507; and with reservations by Ghazaleh 1999: 37; Rafeq 1991: 495 emphasizes the element of

guild autonomy). This definition does not account for the diversity of guild forms, social practices, and relations with the state. It also excludes the guilds of horticulturalists who provisioned Damascus and Aleppo from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and peasants on the outskirts of Homs, Hama, and Antioch may also have been organized in guilds (Batatu 1999: 98).

Ottoman guilds may have grown out of popular religious or social solidarity associations that became consolidated as craft associations between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, depending on the locality. In the seventeenth century, there were 260,000 artisans in Istanbul organized into 1,109 guilds and 119,000 members of 262 guilds in Cairo. In the mid-eighteenth century, there were 157 guilds in Aleppo and a similar number in Damascus. The French savants enumerated 193 guilds in Cairo (excluding suburbs) in 1801. In the 1870s, there were 198 guilds in Cairo with 63,487 members, 116 guilds in Salonica, and 287 guilds in Istanbul (Faroghi 1994: 590–91; Raymond 1973–74: 204–05; Marcus 1989: 159; Baer 1964: 24; Ghazaleh 1999: 30; Quataert 1994a: 894; Rafeq 1991: 498).

There is considerable debate about what guilds actually did and how they functioned. The basic assumption of the guild system was that every producer had the right to a certain share of the market. Guilds often acted to restrain unfair competition, regulate entry to professions, and establish standards of quality. They could also be responsible for administrative tasks such as collecting taxes (though not in Istanbul), fixing prices and wages, supplying labor and services, supplying and distributing goods, and arbitration of disputes among members. Guilds offered mutual assistance, though the character of such aid could vary widely from redistribution of income to loaning money. Guilds also provided a social framework for members.

The norms and regulations of specific guilds and localities changed over time. The powers of a guild master were not fixed and depended on the craft and the power and interest and capacity of state authorities to regulate the guild. No single model is adequate to define the functioning of guilds throughout the Ottoman period. The available research deals only with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Cairo. Even for Cairo, the vast documentary record has been only partially examined and does not support comprehensive generalizations.

Despite their associations with Islamic popular cultural practices and the affiliation of some guilds with *sufi* orders, until the nineteenth century Christians and Jews usually belonged to the same guild as their Muslim colleagues, with the obvious exceptions of kosher butchers and the like (Raymond 1973–74: 522–26; Marcus 1989: 159; Quataert 1994a: 893).

Women often worked in their families' shops and sometimes worked for wages, especially as spinners or in other branches of textile manufacturing. But they usually were not permitted to be guild members.

Guilds were quite specialized. In seventeenth-century Istanbul there were sixty-four guilds for makers of different musical instruments and twenty guilds for cooks and sellers of different foods. In the eighteenth century, one guild specialized in weaving ribbons for the fire brigade (Baer 1982: 152). Makers of each style of footwear, headgear, or garment had their own guild.

Orientalist scholarship has commonly viewed guild monopolies as causing the stagnation of production techniques – the social history counterpart of claims about Islamic intellectual decline. In addition, the inflexibility of the guild system is among the reasons adduced for the collapse of Middle Eastern crafts in the face of the influx of European manufactured goods. Bernard Lewis's association of guilds with "the unchanging character of the forms of production in the Islamic lands from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries" is surely overstated (Lewis 1937: 36). In his monumental study of artisans and merchants in Ottoman Cairo, André Raymond argues that the reluctance of Cairo's powerful long-distance merchants (*tujjar*) to invest their profits in production was the primary cause of technical stagnation in eighteenth-century Egypt. Nonetheless, he also seems to endorse Lewis's negative view of guilds (Raymond 1973–74: 225, 585).

Guilds were neither islands of civil society in an ocean of Oriental despotism nor merely administrative units that served the state by collecting taxes and supervising the urban population. Under certain circumstance they exercised a high level of autonomous regulation over their crafts and their members. Guilds were linked to the state through the confirmation of masters in office by a state-appointed judge. This allowed considerable room for maneuver between the practices of election, imposition by governmental authority, and hereditary accession. Ottoman authorities tended to control certain strategic guilds more tightly than others. In nineteenth-century Cairo, guild masters collected taxes for the state, but their loyalties and obligations to their members influenced their behavior and outlook (Ghazaleh 1999: 35–53). Their location between the state and craftspeople may have allowed guild masters to develop a conception of the "national interest." Participating in guild life provided members some training in democratic practices that became a component of nationalist politics (Cole 1993: 167–74).

Abandoning a search for defects in Ottoman guilds compared to those of Europe enables us to see the ambiguous cultural and institutional legacy of the guild system in the formation of a modern working class.

Guilds sometimes formed the basis of resistance to the penetration of manufactures and labor processes imported from Europe. Sometimes they could not withstand the competition and collapsed altogether. Sometimes artisans successfully maneuvered to remain in the market by finding specialized niches or performing ancillary functions for mechanized industry. Sometimes the introduction of mechanized industry and transport was accompanied by new organizations called guilds but which functioned very differently from earlier guilds. As elsewhere, the transition from the culture, institutions, and production processes of artisans to those of a modern working class was complex and uneven.

The traditional model emphasizing abrupt technological innovation and urban factories is as inadequate to explain industrial development in the Middle East as it is for Europe. Labor-intensive production in rural areas, often by women, and improved or coercively sped-up manual techniques rather than technological innovation were responsible for a large share of increased output in Britain from 1760 to 1830. In the Middle East, as in Europe, the transition to large-scale mechanized production was prolonged; older and newer production methods coexisted for some time, especially in the textile industry (Quataert 1991a; Quataert 1994b: 14–15; Quataert 1994a).

Trajectory of the book

Working people, with all the variations in their local experiences, are a major force in the modern history of the Middle East. Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rulers understood the need to mobilize them for state-building projects. Subsequently, the salience of working people as producers, consumers, and citizens increased, as modern forms of production and circulation, political association, and culture – capitalism, the nation-state, political parties, trade unions, peasant associations, women's unions, novels, newspapers, cinema, and television – proliferated. While this has not necessarily entailed expansion of democratic political rights, "the masses" have become the indispensable subjects of political regimes seeking legitimacy. Mass production, mass politics, and mass culture have enlisted the participation of the subaltern strata. In the process, they have undergone continual social and discursive reformation.

Peasants comprised the overwhelming majority of the working people of the Middle East until the 1960s. Since then, their demographic and economic weight has rapidly declined due to migration to cities and to other countries and the growth of capitalist manufacturing, transportation, petroleum extraction, and services. In Egypt, historically the agrarian society par excellence, a shrinking minority of the economically active

population now engages in agriculture. Throughout the region, peasant family farms, which were rarely totally unconnected to markets, have increasingly been displaced by commercial agriculture, while the proportion of agriculture in national economies has declined. In some cases the expanded role of markets and cash has increased the economic dependency of rural women; in others the migration of men and enhanced access of women to cash has increased their social autonomy.

The relative decline of agriculture increased the social weight of urban wage workers and expanded the use of wage labor in both the countryside and cities. There has been a substantial interpenetration of cities and villages (El-Karanshaw 1998). Women increased their participation in the wage-labor force in both industrial and service occupations, but at a lower rate than in East Asia and Latin America (Moghadam 1993). While urban wage labor gave women somewhat more control over their lives, they were often subjected to oppressive patriarchal forms of discipline at work (White 1994). Turkey and Egypt underwent the most extensive industrialization in the region. However, by the late twentieth century this had not brought about the same the kinds of qualitative or quantitative social transformations popularly associated with the Euro-American industrial revolution.

Books like Frederick Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, and E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* teach us that the advent of industrialization in England is not a tale of unmitigated progress. Hardly any such texts exist to tell us about the experience of factory work in the Middle East in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.⁷ Industrialization in the Middle East, like other topics of comparative interest, should not be judged by the standard of an idealized European model. At the same time, we cannot lose sight of the fact that capitalism, the nation-state, and their attendant cultural forms did become hegemonic, while collective action and daily behaviors of working people affected the course of their development. Workers and peasants constrained – and in certain conjunctures enhanced – the power of state builders, entrepreneurs, and elite intellectuals as production processes, consumption patterns, political and social institutions, associational patterns, gender relations, public and private practices, experiences, and consciousnesses were transformed.

1 The world capitalist market, provincial regimes, and local producers, 1750–1839

The large-scale economic and political processes that characterize the period of this chapter are the rise of autonomous provincial regimes, the expansion of agricultural production, and the intensification of links between several parts of the Ottoman Empire and the world capitalist market. Although this was a time of political weakness for the Ottoman central government, it was not an era of unmitigated political and economic decline, as traditional Orientalist studies of the eighteenth century maintain (Gibb & Bowen 1950). The political stability and enhanced physical security established by powerful local notables and provincial governors contributed to increased agricultural production. Parts of the empire favorably situated to benefit from trade with Europe including Macedonia and Thrace, lower Egypt, Izmir and its hinterlands, and Acre and the Galilee experienced economic growth and prosperity. However, there was no qualitative departure from the relations of production and circulation of earlier periods.

A long wave of European economic growth began in the 1740s and lasted, with ups and downs, until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, followed by an economic contraction lasting until the early 1840s. The central development of this mid-eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century economic expansion is the Industrial Revolution. European economic growth generated increased demand for agricultural products from the Middle East. During the subsequent contraction, prices of European manufactured goods dropped more sharply than prices of Middle Eastern agricultural goods. Low-priced European manufactures, especially finished textiles, began to appear in Middle Eastern markets in significant quantities. But the terms of trade for Middle Eastern agricultural products remained favorable. Consequently, in the Middle East the century from 1750 to 1850 was marked by rising prices of agricultural products and increasing exports to Europe (Tabak 1991: 138).

Periodization of long-term economic trends can only be approximate, and general tendencies must be modified by local histories and conditions. Cairo and western Anatolia are the only Middle Eastern regions

where pre-twentieth-century local periodizations of economic expansion and contraction have been attempted. In Cairo, after frequent crises due to currency debasement, high prices, and food shortages from 1690 to 1736, there was a return to prosperity and high, but stable, wheat prices from 1736 to 1780. This period was ended by the demise of the mamluk regime, the French invasion of 1798, and the rise of Mehmed 'Ali Pasha (1805–48) (Raymond 1973–74: 81–106). After Mehmed 'Ali stabilized his rule, Egyptian economic expansion resumed, primarily due to investment in military industries and the export of newly developed long-staple cotton and other agricultural products. However, the Pasha established a command economy, regulating production and marketing closely by his orders. Efficiency and equity were not his highest priorities. Hence, there were many crises, and growth could not be sustained.

There was a major commercial boom in western Anatolia in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Izmir became the most important port for European trade with the Levant, which was dominated by France before the Napoleonic Wars (Frangakis-Syrett 1991: 97). From the 1750s commercial crops – cotton and other fibers, maize, tobacco, grapes, and livestock – were added to previously established contraband exports of wheat and other grains from Izmir, Salonica, and Macedonia to Europe (Kasaba 1988: 19). Cotton cultivation tripled in Macedonia and western Anatolia from 1720 to 1800. Most of the crop was exported, primarily to France and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The periodization I propose has some similarities with world systems theory conceptions that view the period from 1750 to 1839 (or 1815) as marking the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world economy (Wallerstein & Kasaba 1983; Kasaba 1988). World systems theory also argues that Ottoman local notables responded to growing demand for agricultural products from Europe in the mid-eighteenth century by establishing large, commercialized estates (*çiftlik*s) on which they sought to establish private property rights and impose harsher forms of labor control over peasants. Although something of this sort happened in parts of the sub-Danubian Balkans, it was not a general phenomenon throughout the Ottoman territories (İslamoğlu-Inan 1987: 12; Keyder 1991: 2). Even in the Balkans, many *çiftlik*s were small (McGowan 1981). Local notables in western Anatolia, such as the Kara Osmanoglus, did not have the capacity to oversee peasant labor and introduce large-scale capitalist production methods (Kasaba 1991: 115).

The character of eighteenth-century commerce between Aleppo and Europe, primarily France, also does not conform to the predictions of world systems theory. Aleppo's international trade increased markedly,

but intraregional trade was more substantial and stimulated Aleppo's commercial relations with its agricultural hinterland and cities as distant as Mosul, Diyarbekir, and Basra. In the early eighteenth century, Aleppo's trade with Europe conformed to the typical colonial pattern predicted by world systems theory: exporting agricultural and pastoral raw materials and importing finished goods. But at the end of the century, Aleppo sold more finished goods to France than it imported (Marcus 1989: 146–50). Similarly, in Jabal Nablus in Palestine the active regional trade in soap and textiles involving Cairo and Damascus was not disrupted by the activities of European merchants in the coastal cities of Jaffa and Acre (Doumani 1995). These cases confirm that "the social classes and institutions of the Ottoman provinces were not simply remolded as a consequence of trade with Europe . . . They are not a dependent variable, as a reading of Wallerstein's theory might lead one to suppose" (Cuno 1992: 11).

In most of Anatolia and the Fertile Crescent large, privately owned estates producing cash crops for export to Europe were exceptional, though some were formed when market conditions were favorable. However, market relations in agriculture were a common feature of many regions. In the Bursa region and elsewhere in Anatolia, small commercial farms supplying local urban markets coexisted with peasant family farms (Gerber 1987: 30, 39). In lower Egypt, as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cash crops such as sugarcane, rice, and flax were cultivated. Processed sugar and linen as well as foodstuffs were exported to other parts of Ottoman Empire. Total agricultural output was far larger than subsistence (Hanna 1998: 85). There was a stratum of wealthy peasants in eighteenth-century lower Egypt (if not earlier), and villages around Mansura produced cash crops for markets including rice, sesame, and wheat (Cuno 1984). Sectors of the agrarian economy of the hinterlands of Mosul were integrated into a market economy before the Ottoman conquest (Khoury 1997: 27). Basra merchants advanced credit to owners of palm trees and shipped dates throughout the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean regional market in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Fattah 1997: 85–86). Similar credit practices were common in the olive oil agro-industry of Jabal Nablus (Doumani 1995). There was a market in usufruct rights for agricultural land in lower Egypt, Mosul, Jabal Nablus, and the hinterlands of Bursa at least as early as the middle of the eighteenth century and probably much earlier (Cuno 1992; Khoury 1997; Doumani 1995: 8; Gerber 1987: 23).

Linkages between the Ottoman Empire and the world capitalist market intensified during a period of rising agricultural prices and increasing production. This tended to benefit primary agricultural producers and

enhance the viability of peasant family farms (Tabak 1991: 135–37). Agricultural commodities for export and local markets were generated primarily from the surplus of small peasant production, rather than centrally managed, large-scale, privately owned commercial farms. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries most peasants retained control of their production process and usufruct rights. “Fiscal domination of the peasantry and not the organization of large estates to serve the export trade . . . was the primary rural source of power and fortune” (McGowan 1981: 171–72; see also Veinstein 1976; McGowan 1994: 672; Doumani 1995: 161). Hence, there was no wholesale restructuring of agricultural production and agrarian social relations in response to demand from Europe. In contrast to Europe, the Ottoman social formation embodied “a logic in which privatized large property was marginal . . . Commodity production by small-owning peasantry represents an alternative mode of integration into the market” (Keyder 1991: 2, 3).¹

Detailed examinations of local relations of production and circulation and the cultural systems in which they were embedded reveal differences so substantial as to call into question the viability of the category of “the Ottoman peasant.” Lower Egypt, Mount Lebanon, and Jabal Nablus represent very different agrarian regimes, yet the three cases converge in refuting the predictions of both the Orientalist paradigm of eighteenth-century economic decline and world systems theory. Well before the French invasion of Egypt and the Egyptian occupation of greater Syria, peasants in these regions produced commercial crops for regional markets and export to Europe, especially France. Commercial agriculture was not an innovation brought about by increased contact with European markets or the entrepreneurial activity of large landowners, although these factors stimulated and influenced its development. Peasants in regions more remote from transportation were less engaged in commercial agriculture. But there were no structural or ideological barriers to commercial agriculture in the mid-eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries.

Egypt: the peasants and the pasha

By the mid-seventeenth century Egyptian mamluk households had established considerable fiscal and political autonomy from Istanbul, collecting the land tax as tax farmers and spending much of it locally. Peasants had usufruct rights on their own plots (*aradi al-filaha* or *athar*) and paid their takes to the tax farmer. They also worked on the lands of the mamluks (*aradi al-usya*) sometimes for wages, sometimes as sharecroppers, sometimes as unpaid corvée laborers. The tax-farming system

imposed many burdens on the peasants, not the least of which was the tendency of the mamluks to increase taxes to expand their military power and establish a competitive advantage over rival mamluk houses.

There is no evidence of a decline in the status of peasants, increased coercion of labor, or formation of large estates in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² Peasants retained control of production and marketing on the lands on which they held usufruct rights, which they commonly bequeathed, sold, rented, and pawned (Cuno 1984: 314–15; Cuno 1992: 10–11, 66, 82–83). While *shari'a* law recognizes a distinction between ownership and the right of usufruct, peasants commonly disregarded it with impunity. In lower Egypt, where the area of annual Nile inundation and the cultivated land overlapped in a stable and predictable pattern, peasant plots were demarcated and families were individually responsible for the land tax. From what we know of Cairo prices, it seems likely that the prices of agricultural commodities in lower Egyptian villages rose in the eighteenth century. This would imply an increase in the income of peasant producers and the value of their usufruct rights, which may have been partly offset by increased taxation.

From 1780 to 1805, political instability, disruption of trade with France, and natural disasters resulted in recurring economic crises (Raymond 1973–74: 100–04). The mamluk chief, Murad Bey (1779–98), imposed a monopoly on customs collection and purchased and resold a large portion of the wheat crop to raise revenues for the military. When the French invaded, they seized many tax farms and declared them state-owned lands (Owen 1969: 15–16). In the same period Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) tried to finance his military reforms by restricting military land grants and tax farms in the face of strong opposition from provincial notables (Rivlin 1961: 37; Shaw 1971: 132).

These practices were more systematically and effectively implemented by Mehmed 'Ali Pasha after he became the Ottoman governor of Egypt in 1805. The status of peasants began to improve considerably after he consolidated his power and restored political stability by eliminating the warring mamluk factions in the infamous 1811 massacre at the Cairo citadel. The irrigation system was repaired and expanded, and idle land was brought under cultivation. From 1814 on, Mehmed 'Ali abolished tax farming and instituted a regime of direct collection of taxes from peasants by salaried government employees, monopolization of domestic and foreign trade, and compulsory delivery of harvests to state-operated depots at prices below the market rate.

The introduction of long-staple cotton in 1821 is associated with dramatic changes in the lives of peasants, though the effects of this innovation were not fully realized until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Cotton cultivation requires large inputs of water, fertilizer, and labor and is best undertaken on large plots. Cotton plants remain in the ground from February to September and must be watered heavily in the summer, when the natural level of the Nile is low. To increase the supply of summer water, the government recruited peasant workers by *corvée* to construct canals, barrages, water wheels (*saqiyyas*), and water-lifting apparatuses (*shadufs*). By the early 1830s cotton and other summer crops (rice, indigo, sugar) were cultivated on 600,000 *faddans* compared to 250,000 in 1798.

Detailed rules governing cultivation, harvesting, and marketing of cotton and other crops as well as more stringent tax-collection practices were codified in the 1829 Regulation of Peasant Agriculture (*La'ihat zira'at al-fallah*), though peasants did not simply dutifully obey the Pasha's directives (Richards 1987: 216; Cuno 1992). The monopoly system imposed low prices on peasant crops, and the state attempted to regulate every aspect of production and marketing. Peasants had always *performed corvée labor to repair irrigation canals in their villages and the like*. But in the 1820s the number of *corvée* laborers increased to some 467,000 annually; many were compelled to work for two months a year or more far from their villages for nominal or no pay (Owen 1969: 48). Mehmed 'Ali raised taxes to support his large and modernized army and its expedition to Morea in support of the Ottoman sultan's failed effort to thwart the Greek independence movement (1824–28). Peasants were conscripted into the army for the first time. These massive intrusions of the state into the lives of peasant families reversed the improvements in their economic and social well-being.

Peasants responded through a combination of resistance and resort to the "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985). The Pasha's Albanian cavalry massacred upper Egyptian peasants who rebelled following the government's seizure of their entire grain crop for the first time in 1812. In 1816 the army compelled recalcitrant peasants to grow government-specified crops. There were five peasant revolts during 1820–26 against increased taxation and the introduction of conscription, including three large uprisings in the upper Egyptian province of Qina. As many as 40,000 people participated in a two-month-long uprising in 1821 led by one Ahmad. Two years later an even larger revolt was led by another Ahmad, who sought to overthrow Mehmed 'Ali and appealed to Muslim salvationist sentiment by calling himself the *mahdi* (Baer 1969b: 96–98; Baer 1982: 77, 254; Richards 1987: 218–19; Cuno 1992: 125; Fahmy 1997: 95).

Commercial crops grown in Qina were marketed in Cairo, Istanbul, and Europe, especially *durra* (the local variety of wheat) and sugarcane. Qina was also a commercial hub linking upper Egypt with Sudan and the

Red Sea–Arabian Ocean commercial network; and it was a manufacturing center for textiles, pottery, and charcoal. Handicraft textile production in Qina province, including the export of some items beyond Egypt, prospered during the Napoleonic Wars and was seriously damaged by the influx of European textiles to Egypt after 1810. The profitability of grain exports diminished around 1820 due to competition from Russian wheat. The rise of sugarcane as the principal cash crop and the conversion of lands from food crops to sugarcane caused local food shortages. Thus, economic decline following a prosperous period may have motivated the revolts in Qina. In contrast to all others who have studied them, Fred Lawson argues that the Qina revolts should not be understood as peasant revolts against taxation and conscription, but “revolts by village artisans and pieceworkers against the supervisors and merchants in whose hands the control of the local sugar, wheat, and cloth industries rested” (Lawson 1981: 145). This is a functionalist argument unsupported by direct evidence about the social composition of the revolts: those most affected by economic decline should initiate a rebellion. Artisans may very well have collaborated with peasants in rebelling against the expanding power of Mehmed ‘Ali’s state under the banner of Islam. But the general consensus that Qina was a center of peasant resistance to conscription and taxation by Mehmed ‘Ali seems well founded.

Peasants opposed the demands of the Pasha’s regime in ways other than open revolt. Desertion from the army was common. Peasant conscripts mutinied in 1827 and 1832. When resistance to conscription was ineffective, peasants fled their villages or maimed themselves. Cutting off index fingers, removing teeth, and putting rat poison in an eye to blind one’s self were common techniques of mutilation (Fahmy 1997: 99–103, 256–63).

The combination of peasant resistance/avoidance, hence a shortage of labor and declining revenue, the opposition of European powers to the exclusion of their merchants from the interior of the country, the power of the British navy, the administrative and technical weaknesses of the Pasha’s regime, and the global capitalist crisis of 1836–37 forced Mehmed ‘Ali to abandon the monopoly system and devise a new decentralized rural administration. These developments are the local markers of the end of the period treated in this chapter.

Lebanon: peasants and the emergence of communal politics

The Ottoman central government did not concern itself with the internal social structure and local customs of Mount Lebanon. It regarded Mount

Lebanon as state-administered land and the local notables as tax farmers. The northern part of the mountain was subject to the pasha of Tripoli; the southern part to the pasha of Sidon (whose actual seat was Acre after 1750). Christian historians have usually argued that Mount Lebanon was a single unit with a self-conscious identity and an autonomous and locally legitimized political regime and that the land was private property (Holt & Lewis 1962; Salibi 1988: 108–29). This view is becoming increasingly discredited.

The system of social hierarchy and decentralized political leadership in Mount Lebanon is commonly characterized as a feudal exception within the Ottoman Empire. This terminology tends to minimize the Ottoman context and accentuate the association of Lebanon and Latin Christian Europe. In the heyday of modernization theory this affiliation was commonly adduced as an explanation of Lebanon's "successful" adaptation to modernity – an interpretation that has lost credibility since the second post-independence civil war of 1975–91.³ To avoid this misleading association, I use the local terms for the system, *iqta'*, its districts, *muqata'at*, and its notables, *muqata'ajis*.

The mountain was divided into *muqata'at* where hereditary Druze and Maronite *muqata'ajis* were responsible for collection of taxes and the administration of justice. Whereas most Ottoman tax farmers lived in cities, Lebanese *muqata'ajis* lived in their rural districts and held large plots of land (*'uhdas*) in their own names. Though not juridically tied to the land, peasants were required to perform labor service and buy marriage licenses and baptismal oil from their *muqata'ajis* and to offer them holiday gifts. From 1711 to 1841 the Shihabs were the leading *muqata'aji* family. The Maronite *muqata'ajis* concurred that Mount Lebanon was a hereditary principality (*imara*) and that a member of the Shihab family was the legitimate paramount ruler (*amir* or *hakim*); the Druze *muqata'ajis* accepted the Shihabs as tax farmers and did not seek to set up an alternative regime.

Maronites were originally concentrated in Kisrawan and northern Mount Lebanon and the Druze in the Shuf and southern districts. From the late seventeenth century, Maronite peasants began to migrate southward, where they became subject to Druze *muqata'ajis*, the most powerful of whom were the Junblats. The Maronite population increased more rapidly than the Druze and constituted the majority in Mount Lebanon by the nineteenth century. Reforms in the administration of the church initiated by the Council of Luwayza in 1736 led to expanding the network of church schools, and Maronite peasants began to be educated. Consequently, Maronites became the dominant force in the administration of Mount Lebanon. One expression of the increasing power of the

Maronites in the late eighteenth century was the secret conversion of a branch of the Shihab family, including the amirs Yusuf (1770–88) and Bashir II (1788–1840), to the Maronite faith.

The principal agricultural product of Mount Lebanon was raw silk produced from cocoons spun by worms who fed on the leaves of mulberry trees. Since the time of Fakhr al-Din Ma'n II (1593–1633) the amirs encouraged silk production in the religiously mixed Junblati *muqata'a* of the Shuf and in the Maronite district of Kisrawan, controlled by the Khazin family. Cultivation of mulberry trees and the export of raw silk from Sidon and later Beirut, primarily to France, was dominated by Maronites. The Junblats encouraged Maronite peasants to settle on their lands and even donated lands to Maronite monasteries to promote production of silk (Salibi 1988: 104–05). Until the late 1830s itinerant, seasonal peasant-laborers reeled raw silk into thread by hand (Polk 1963: 172).

Some peasants in Mount Lebanon owned small plots of land. But as they were usually too small to sustain a family, sharecropping (*musharakat*) arrangements with monasteries or aristocratic families who held most of the land were common. In the eighteenth century peasant holdings expanded, primarily through the use of cultivation contracts (*mugharrasat*): agreements stipulating that a landowner supply the land, tools, and materials for a peasant to terrace and plant trees and tend them for three to twelve years, depending on the type of tree. During this period the peasant planted suitable food crops between the trees. When the trees were fully mature, a quarter to half of the land, or sometimes only the trees, became the property of the peasant (Firro 1990: 158; Dubar & Nasr 1976: 29; Chevallier 1971: 138–39). Mulberry, fig, almond, and olive trees as well as grape vines were planted under this system. *Muqata'ajis* maintained their rights to peasant labor and other forms of economic and social dominance if they expanded the area of cultivation in this way or sold parcels of land to peasants when they needed cash.

The reinvigoration of the Maronite church following the Council of Luwayza contributed to expanding agricultural production. The Lebanese Order of Monks, primarily comprising men from peasant backgrounds, began to enlarge their originally meager holdings through cultivation contracts, efficient organization of their collective labor, and pooling their savings and donations from the faithful. They acquired new properties from the *muqata'ajis*, who were pleased by the monks' productive activities and the educational and other services they provided. By the mid-nineteenth century the Lebanese Order owned fifty monasteries with large plots of land (Harik 1968: 112–14).

Most peasants were poor and socially and economically subordinated

to the *muqata'ajis*. During the early years of Bashir II's rule, the governor of Sidon (Acre), Cezzar Ahmed Pasha (1775–1804), pressed the amir for increased tribute payments. To meet these demands, Bashir II increased the levies on the *muqata'ajis* and the peasants, confiscated the lands of rival *muqata'ajis*, and removed some of them altogether, consolidating their former holdings under his personal control. Ahmed Pasha's successor, 'Abd Allah Pasha (1818–32), also demanded higher tribute, forcing Bashir II to attempt to collect additional taxes to pay the pasha. Due to these repeated demands for extra-legal taxes, peasants lost much of their lands. By the first half of the nineteenth century about 10 percent – a high proportion by local standards – of the peasantry owned no land at all and supported themselves by sharecropping or as agricultural day laborers (Dubar & Nasr 1976: 28).

These conditions formed the context for peasant uprisings ('*ammiyyas*, or movements of the common people) in 1820 and 1821. The revolts were directed against both Amir Bashir II and his most important ally, Bashir Junblat. The Maronite bishop, Yusuf Istfan (1759–1823), played a leading role in the first revolt. He organized the peasants into village communes and had them choose a representative (*wakil*) to lead and represent each village. The Druze *muqata'ajis* blocked the collection of additional levies from Druze peasants or paid them themselves. The taxes were collected only from the Maronite peasants of Maronite *muqata'ajis* in the northern districts, who Bashir II thought lacked a leadership capable of opposing him. Therefore, although some Druze peasants and one *muqata'aji* family participated in the revolts, they primarily involved Maronite peasants in districts with Maronite *muqata'ajis*. This gave the movements a sectarian character, which was enhanced by the active participation of Maronite clergymen (Harik 1968: 208–22; Khalaf 1987: 33–35).

The 1820 and 1821 revolts challenged the *muqata'aji* monopoly on political leadership and expressed both peasant class and Maronite communal consciousness, which were sometimes mutually contradictory. The Maronite Khazin and Abillama' *muqata'ajis* opposed the revolts, but peasants in their districts participated nonetheless. The pact between the people of Bash'ala and their representative made during the second revolt is a rare expression of peasants' political voice and their capacity to articulate some surprisingly new ideas.

We the undersigned, all the natives of Bash'ala . . . have freely accepted and entrusted ourselves and our expenses to our cousin, Tannus al-Shidyaq Nasr, and whatever is required of us . . . with respect to the '*ammiyya*. His word will be final with us in all [matters] of expenses and losses . . . [W]e shall obey him in the recruitment of men . . .

This is what has been agreed upon between us and him, and he shall act according to his conscience, not favoring anyone over the other . . . Whatever he arranges as the tax, we shall accept; and if he relents in pursuing our interests, we shall hold him accountable. (Harik 1968: 213–14)

This radical departure from the previously prevailing political culture of Mount Lebanon led Ilya Harik to view the revolts as the first Lebanese expressions of the modern ideas of nationalism, the public interest, and individual rights. Harik acknowledges that some Maronite peasants understood their revolt to be directed against the privileges of the Druze *muqata'ajis* (Harik 1968: 220–21). This communal aspect of the movements makes the dichotomy of “tradition” and “modernity” inadequate for the understanding of the 1820–21 uprisings. They were limited revolts against increased taxes, not revolutions against the social structure of Mount Lebanon. The deployment of ideas and institutions derived from the French republican tradition coexisted with communalism and sharpened tensions between Maronites and Druze (and Muslims). This undermined Lebanese national identity as much as it promoted it.

Bashir II fled Mount Lebanon in 1822 but resumed his demands for increased taxes when he returned in 1823. This led to a military clash with the Junblat family and its supporters in 1825 in which the Junblat partisans were decisively defeated and their lands distributed to supporters of Bashir II. Bashir Junblat was strangled to death by 'Abd Allah Pasha at the request of Amir Bashir II, and his sons and other Druze notables went into exile. Bashir II's attacks on the *muqata'ajis* and his repeated demands for additional revenues undermined the cohesion of the ruling class of Mount Lebanon and intensified conflict between Druze and Maronites that had been building since the mid-eighteenth century.

Bashir II's alliance with the 1831–40 Egyptian occupation further diminished his popularity. The Egyptians imposed a new head tax (*farda*), and despite its generally favorable attitude towards non-Muslims, the need for revenue to finance the army led it to insist on collecting the poll tax (*jizya*) from Christians and Jews, which Christians in Mount Lebanon had not previously been required to pay. In May 1840 Ibrahim Pasha ordered the Druze and Christians of Dayr al-Qamar to surrender their arms, widely understood as a precursor to conscription. Christians, Druze, sunnis and shi'a met at Intilyas on June 8, 1840, drew up a covenant expressing their grievances, and resolved “to fight to restore their independence or die” (Khalaf 1987: 37). The revolt and the withdrawal of Ibrahim Pasha after Ottoman troops landed in Beirut with European naval support in September 1840 allowed the sons of Bashir Junblat and other Druze notables to return to Mount Lebanon and forced Bashir II into exile. To recover lands they had lost and over which they claimed

ownership, the Druze *muqata'ajis* rallied Druze peasants to their banner, provoking widespread sectarian conflict that allowed the Ottoman central government to end the rule of the Shihab family in 1841.

Mount Nablus: peasants and merchants

Jabal Nablus, a predominantly Muslim region in northern Palestine, had some similarities with Mount Lebanon and Qina province in upper Egypt. It was a district of the province of Sidon whose regional economy and inland mountainous location fostered a high degree of political autonomy. In the lowlands of Palestine and Syria, an indeterminate portion of peasant lands were held as communal holdings that were redivided annually (*musha'a*). In the hills, communal holdings were less common; neither olive groves nor vineyards, which were widespread in Jabal Nablus, were communally held (Schölch 1986: 142). Commercial agriculture, a cash economy, social differentiation among the peasantry, commoditization of land, and links to markets beyond Palestine predated the Egyptian occupation (1831–40), the Ottoman Tanzimat, and Jewish colonization. Court cases in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indicate that, as in lower Egypt, peasants of Jabal Nablus disposed of their usufruct rights on state-administered lands as though the land was their private property (Doumani 1995: 8, 157–59).

Local merchants constituted the economic and social links among peasant producers of agricultural commodities, artisans, and local notable families. The expansion of commercial agriculture, the primary source of wealth in Jabal Nablus from the second half of the seventeenth to the twentieth century, allowed merchants based in the town of Nablus to establish their control over its agricultural hinterland (Doumani 1995: 20). The most important agricultural product of the region was olive oil, the raw material for the high-quality soap manufactured in factories in the town of Nablus and renowned from Damascus to Egypt. Peasants cultivated olive trees and other agricultural products and sold their harvest to city-based merchants. Until the 1830s most of the soap factories belonged to the notable families of the district – the Tuqans, Nimrs, Qasims, 'Abd al-Hadis, etc. From then on, merchants began to enter the lucrative soap manufacturing business.

Merchants and peasants were bound together by patron–client relations in which merchants clearly held the upper hand. These relations were the social vehicle for marketization of the economy.⁴ Nabulsi merchants bought and stored goods for peasants, provided them with credit

and references, and served as their hosts when peasants came to town. The commercial relationship was part of an elaborate fabric of economy, culture, and moral values.

One of the principal mechanisms that allowed the merchants to dominate peasants was the *salam* contract: a merchant lent a peasant money and the peasant agreed to deliver a harvest to the merchant in return for a specified price or portion of the proceeds from the sale of the crop. This arrangement left peasants in perpetual debt. Until the 1860s merchants did not usually expropriate lands of indebted peasants. Debt assured a merchant access to a peasant's crops, while the need to maintain a peasant's capacity to produce meant there was always room to renegotiate the relationship (Doumani 1995: 55–56, 140–42, 161).

Jabal Nablus was occupied by Egyptian forces led by Ibrahim Pasha in 1832. The local notables welcomed Ibrahim, and the 'Abd al-Hadi family established its influence by becoming his principal local allies. Before the Egyptian invasion, Qasim al-Ahmad, a sub-district chief of the Nablus hinterlands and head of the Qasim family, had risen to prominence, bought a soap factory, and moved into the city. Ibrahim Pasha appointed him district officer (*mutasallim*) of Nablus but in 1834 replaced him with Sulayman 'Abd al-Hadi. In response, Qasim al-Ahmad organized notables from Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron, who informed the Egyptians in May 1834 that they were unable to disarm and conscript the peasants and collect the head tax. Al-Ahmad then led the peasants of Jabal Nablus in a revolt against Egyptian rule. The uprising spread to Hebron, Jerusalem, and other mountain districts in what is known today as the West Bank. In July, the Egyptian army crushed the revolt, burning sixteen villages to the ground on the way to retaking Nablus. Qasim al-Ahmad lost his soap factory; 10,000 peasants were deported to Egypt; and the population was disarmed (Doumani 1995: 46, 208; Kimmerling & Migdal 1993: 7–11; Hoexter 1984: 192–93).

As in Mount Lebanon, sectarian factors played a role in the opposition to the Egyptians. Egyptian rule generally improved the status of Christians and Jews throughout greater Syria by measures such as including them in the local councils established in towns of more than two thousand inhabitants. Muslims and Druze felt their status was threatened, and this was expressed in sectarian conflict. During the 1834 revolt one zealous Muslim tried to mobilize the people of Nablus to join the revolt by denouncing Ibrahim Pasha as an infidel from the minaret of a mosque (Shamir 1984: 230). Peasants from the surrounding area invaded Jerusalem, attacked the Christian and Jewish populations, looted property, and raped women (Rustum 1938: 60).

Peasants and state formation in the Ottoman provinces

Peasants were hardly quiescent or isolated from politics. They resisted efforts of aspiring state builders to impose new taxes, to conscript their sons, and to tell them what to plant and to whom and at what prices to sell their harvests. The Lebanese revolts of 1820–21, the Palestinian revolt of 1834, and the Qina revolts of the 1820s indicate that peasants were not totally isolated from other sectors of society. The peasants of Mount Lebanon used new organizational techniques and ideologies as well as their existing relationships with the Maronite clergy to mobilize for rebellion. The economic and social integration of Jabal Nablus seems typical of smaller provincial towns where peasants, bedouin, and town-dwellers collaborated in producing and circulating commodities with relatively less regulation by guilds or the state. Such networks were probably mobilized in the 1834 rebellion. Similar links among peasant agriculture, rural artisanal production, and regional commercial networks in Qina were probably mobilized in the revolts of the 1820s.

The concentration of revolts in provincial towns and rural districts in the 1820s and 1830s may be due to the recent intensification of their contact with the state and their greater capacity to resist the encroachments of the early nineteenth-century state builders: Mehmed 'Ali, Ibrahim Pasha, and Bashir II. Revolts of 'Alawi peasants in the Nusayriyya mountains in 1834 and 1835 and Druze peasants in Hawran in 1837–38 against the Egyptian occupation were part of the same pattern. The resistance of 'Amir 'Abd al-Qadir to the French occupation of Algeria (1830–47) was both a continuation of previous rural and tribal resistance to the extension of Ottoman state authority and a transition to a new phase of engagement with a European occupier more typical of the later nineteenth century (Burke 1991: 28).

The presence of an occupation army, whether Egyptian or French, introduces the question of incipient nationalism. Some have characterized 'Abd al-Qadir's resistance to France, the Lebanese revolts of 1820–21, and the 1834 Palestinian revolt against the Egyptian occupation as the first steps towards self-conscious nationhood (Ruedy 1992; Harik 1968; Kimmerling & Migdal 1993). This is as improbable as the view that peasants were politically passive. The use of ideas and institutions derived from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution by Maronite peasants of Mount Lebanon to justify and organize their revolts is distinctive, yet far from an assertion of Lebanese nationhood. The Palestinian revolt of 1834 was concentrated in the hill country and did not involve the major urban centers of Jaffa or Acre. 'Abd al-Qadir's resistance to the French occupation of Algeria relied heavily on his leadership

of the Qadiriyya sufi order and was only effective in what is today western Algeria; resistance to the French in eastern Algeria was led by al-Hajj Ahmad.

Artisanal production in major cities

Textiles and apparel constituted the leading sector of production in almost all early modern Ottoman towns and cities; the other main manufacturing sectors were food, leather, and construction. Typically a male artisan owned his own shop and tools, bought raw materials, and produced and sold commodities on demand using his own labor, that of family members, and a small number of journeymen or apprentices. Capital investment was generally low. Exceptions to this pattern of small-scale production included the Cairo manufacturers of licorice, beer, starch, wax candles, and sugar, leather tanners, casters, dyers, carpet weavers, and bottle makers, who employed an average of 12.5 persons per workshop. These activities engaged only 14.5 percent of the workforce (Raymond 1973–74: 223). Wealthy Aleppine merchants sometimes organized production of commodities, especially textiles, by supplying working capital, cloth, and other materials, coordinating the different elements of the manufacturing process, and marketing the finished products (Marcus 1989: 164–65, 168). This was not common in Cairo despite the great wealth of its long-distance merchants, perhaps because they could make bigger profits by purveying luxury products (Raymond 1973–74: 213–14, 225).

Guild monopolies, like other practices and structures, emerged through specific historical circumstances and processes and were not a fixed characteristic of the guild system. In the seventeenth century entry into crafts and membership in guilds were loosely regulated. Around 1750 Istanbul guilds cooperated with the state to establish a certification process for those who wanted to practice a craft or open a retail shop. A similar process seems to have occurred earlier in Cairo, perhaps at the end of the seventeenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century a certificate (*gedik* – the term originally applied only to the tools necessary for a craft, not the right to practice it) was required to engage in most urban occupations in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities (Raymond 1973–74: 271, 549–50; Akarlı 1985–86: 223; Marcus 1989: 178–79; Rafeq 1991: 503; Faroghi 1994: 588–89; Quataert 1994a: 895). Around 1805, perhaps motivated by the opening of many new weaving workshops to produce cloth for the market void created by the withdrawal of French textiles from the Middle East during the Napoleonic Wars, the Ottoman government and textile guilds in cities in Anatolia and Syria agreed to

establish a central location in each town for polishing cloth where the state would tax and stamp it. Only cloth bearing this stamp could be sold legally until this system was abandoned in 1878 (Quataert 1994b: 7; Quataert 1994a: 895; Vatter 1995: 41–42).

The proliferation of *gediks* and the tighter regulation of textile production are examples of a general trend towards increased state control of guilds from the mid-eighteenth century on, most clearly evident in Egypt under Mehmed 'Ali Pasha. In 1800 the French occupation force in Cairo created the post of director of crafts (*mudir al-hiraf*) – a government employee who supervised the guilds but was not organically connected to them (Raymond 1973–74: 558). Expanding on this French initiative, Mehmed 'Ali's regime was more actively interventionist than had previously been the norm in the internal regulations of the guilds. In 1829 the Pasha issued a decree regulating prices and commercial practices (*La'ihat al-ihtisab*). Like the Ottoman sultan, he used the guilds to recruit labor for state construction projects. As state intervention increased, the power of the guild masters over their members grew, and they assumed more administrative functions. Wealth began to be more concentrated among certain guild members, not always the master, from the mid-eighteenth century on, and guilds offered less mutual assistance to their members (Ghazaleh 1999). There are no detailed studies of guilds in cities other than Cairo for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, so developments there can only suggest a possible general pattern.

Guilds never exercised absolute control over the quality of commodities or techniques of production. The guild structure was sufficiently flexible to accommodate new crafts and production processes (Raymond 1973–74: 225, 584–85); nor did guilds block expansion of production in the face of competition from European manufactured goods. There may have been some decline in the manufacturing output of males organized in guilds in the nineteenth century. But manufacturing activity by women concentrated in rural areas and urban areas outside the framework of the guilds flourished. Weaving of cotton and mohair cloth, wool spinning, silk reeling, shoemaking, and carpet making expanded in Salonica and the Macedonian countryside, western Anatolia, north central Anatolia, south-east Anatolia, and northern Syria (Quataert 1991a; Quataert 1994b).

Nablus: soap making in a regional town

The Nablus soap-making industry offers a sharp contrast to the guild-based production systems in major cities such as Istanbul, Cairo, Damascus, and Aleppo. In the late 1820s leading local notable families began to increase their investments in the soap industry, raising capital

through forming partnerships with merchants who, despite their increased wealth and power, still sought the political protection such business alliances might provide. The soap industry continued to prosper and expand throughout the nineteenth century, with spurts of growth in the late 1830s to early 1840s and the 1860s. Unlike mercantile practice in Cairo, soap merchants provided the major share of capital investment to finance soap production, and their activities resulted in the vertical integration of the industry.

Soap making was a capital-intensive but not labor-intensive process. Peasants produced the raw material – olive oil. Bedouin supplied barilla plant ashes, which were mixed with the olive oil and cooked to make soap. They also comprised the seasonal unskilled laborers – ash pounders, oven stokers, etc. Only a small group of skilled and semi-skilled workers – fewer than fifteen per factory – were required for the production process. The soap-factory owners were organized in a guild, but not the unskilled or the craft workers. Teams of soap makers organized and led by a skilled and experienced boss (*ra'is*) circulated among the factories according to the workload. Factory owners did not control their labor directly, but rather through the intermediary of the boss, who managed both the workers and the production process. Workers were paid in cash and kind after each batch of soap was cooked. Soap-making jobs tended to be monopolized in families, and patronage relations were deployed to resolve disputes among the workers and between workers and factory owners (Doumani 1995: 188–201).

Three conclusions emerge from this vignette of artisanal production in a regional town. First, many important commodities, including some with a high commercial value, were produced outside the major urban centers and the framework of the guild system. Second, certain kinds of artisanal production prospered throughout the nineteenth century despite the influx of European manufactured goods from the 1820s on. Finally, the Nablus soap-making process illustrates the concrete social connections among peasants, bedouin, urban workers, and merchants that both integrated society and formed potential points of friction between sectors with different interests.

Guilds and urban politics

By the eighteenth century guilds had become an important institution of urban political life. They were often mobilized during moments of urban popular insurrection. The guilds of Istanbul artisans and shopkeepers were active in the 1730 Patrona Halil revolt that ended the centralizing efforts of the Tulip Era (Olson 1974). The Cairo guilds of butchers, fruit

sellers, vegetable sellers, and grain carriers participated in the series of popular protests that erupted at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Ahmad Salim al-Jazzar and Hajjaj al-Khudari, masters of the butchers' and the vegetable sellers' guilds respectively, were among the organizers of urban protest during the anarchy of the late mamluk era, the French invasion of 1798, and against the new governor installed by the sultan after the expulsion of the French in 1801. Al-Khudari and Ibn Shama – al-Jazzar's successor as master of the butchers' guild – along with some of the Muslim scholars (*'ulama'*) and the dean of the descendants of the Prophet (*naqib al-ashraf*), 'Umar Makram, led the Cairo uprising of May 12, 1805 that deposed the incumbent and proclaimed Mehmed 'Ali governor of Egypt. The sultan accepted this *fait accompli* the following month (Raymond 1975; Marsot 1984: 44–50). The participation of the guilds and the *'ulama'*, and the Islamic justification of the 1805 Cairo uprising are typical of early modern urban social movements (Burke 1986).

The guilds' capacity to lead urban protest led Sultan Mahmud II (1808–39) to secure their agreement when he decided to abolish the Janissary Corps in 1826. Many guild members had become Janissaries in order to avoid taxation, thus impeding the Ottoman state's ability to control the guilds and weakening the fighting capacity of the army (Bodman 1963: 65, 143; Marcus 1989: 58; McGowan 1994: 701–2, 705, 706–7). Mahmud II compensated the Istanbul guilds for their members' loss of income as Janissaries by giving master artisans and shopkeepers full control over their shops through deeds of usufruct (*gedik senedi*) and strengthening guild monopolies over their trades. In return, the guilds accepted the liquidation of the Janissary Corps (Akarli 1998: 33).

Urban social structure and income distribution

Some data about wages and the distribution of wealth in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are available for Cairo and Damascus. Fragmentary information from Aleppo is consistent with that evidence. There are no quantitative data on the size of handicraft workshops, output, or wages in Anatolia until the last third of the nineteenth century (Kurmuş 1981: 85). Export–import merchants were the wealthiest and most powerful urban stratum, followed by retail merchants and artisans. Self-employed artisans earned more and had more prestige than wage workers.

In Aleppo, servants, doormen, and watchmen were the poorest wage workers and earned 1–3 piasters a month. Craft workers earned 4–6 piasters a month; assistants in retail shops, 8 piasters; and salesmen for import–export merchants, 17–20 piasters (Marcus 1989: 49, 162).

Artisans comprised over half the economically active population of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Cairo, but their estates as recorded in the *shari'a* court were only between 6.2 and 9.3 percent of the total value of estates recorded. Leather and food workers, except for the sugar refiners, were among the poorest artisans. Cairo artisans were economically subordinate to merchants. Their incomes declined from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth centuries, while the incomes of merchants remained relatively stable (Raymond 1973–74: 231–32, 237).

Based on the value of estates registered in the Cairo and Damascus *shari'a* courts, an index measuring inequality in the distribution of wealth has been calculated for several points in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (The standard social science measurement is the Gini coefficient of inequality. On a scale of 0.0 to 1.0, 0 indicates equal distribution of wealth, while 1 means concentration of all wealth in the hands of a single individual. The higher the number, the greater the inequality.) Distribution of wealth was very unequal. The Gini coefficient for men in Damascus in 1700 was 0.75. Women had less wealth but were considerably more equal than men, with a Gini coefficient of 0.50 (Establet & Pascual 1994: 124). Between 1624 and 1798 Cairo's Gini coefficient fluctuated between 0.68 and 0.81 and averaged 0.76. Disparities of wealth increased during periods of crisis and declined somewhat in periods of prosperity (Raymond 1973–74: 375–76, tables 7 and 8 following 382).

In the early nineteenth century there was also a high degree of concentration of wealth in Cairo (Ghazaleh 1999: 76–86). Artisans in the leather sector remained the poorest, followed in ascending order by perfumers, construction crafts, services, textiles, food, retail, wood, masters of all guilds, metals, long-distance merchants, and tobacconists. The real value of the legacies of textile workers, the “average artisans *par excellence*,” declined steadily from the late seventeenth century to 1849. Relative to other crafts, the legacies of textile artisans increased in the late eighteenth century and declined in the early nineteenth century because of the influx of European manufactured cloth and the monopoly policies of Mehmed 'Ali. Food workers' legacies also declined over time, but this cannot be attributed to competition from Europe. The wealth of metal workers increased steadily in both relative and absolute terms, especially during the period 1799–1849, perhaps due to the demand for their labor in Egypt's new factories.

Towards industrialization?

Industrial manufacturing was introduced to the Middle East as part of the drive to establish modern armies and extend the power of states.

Sultans Abdülhamid I (1774–89) and Selim III (1789–1807) brought European advisors to Istanbul to establish workshops to produce cannons, rifles, bombs, saltpeter, and gunpowder. The most technically advanced of these enterprises, the gunpowder works on the Sea of Marmara, used water power; the others used animal power (Shaw 1971: 10, 139–44). Selim III also initiated a woolen mill and a paper factory in the Istanbul area. Further industrial innovation was inhibited by the conservative forces that deposed him in 1807. Mahmud II waited until after he destroyed the Janissary corps in 1826 before establishing a spinning mill, a fez-making factory, a wool-weaving mill, a sawmill, and a copper sheet-rolling mill and converting the cannon foundry and musket works to steam power in the late 1830s. The state owned and managed these enterprises, and the army and the state were the principal consumers of their output (Clark 1974: 66). Guild artisans were recruited to work in them by paying them high wages and allowing them to continue to work in their own shops in their free time. Before being employed they took an examination to determine that they produced high-quality work (Shaw 1971: 140).

As in the arena of fiscal policy, Mehmed 'Ali adopted and extended these innovations with greater success than his nominal sovereigns. In 1815 he built a gunpowder factory on Roda Island in Cairo. Shortly thereafter he established a munitions foundry in the Cairo citadel, employing 400 men to produce high-quality cannons, swords, and muskets. The Pasha ordered new shipyards constructed at Cairo's port of Bulaq and Alexandria in 1829; the latter employed 4,000 workers who built twenty-two naval vessels (Owen 1981a: 71; Marsot 1984: 165). Other enterprises produced commodities with dual military-civilian uses: a soap factory, a fez factory, weaving mills for cotton, jute, linen, and silk, a textile bleaching and printing works, sugar refineries, rice mills, indigo works, tanneries, and a printing press. Cotton weaving was the leading sector of this effort. By the 1830s there were some thirty cotton mills employing 12,000–15,000 workers; at least three used steam power (Owen 1981a: 70).

Egyptian nationalist historians argue that there were a total of 180,000–260,000 workers in all Mehmed 'Ali's enterprises, some 4–5 percent of the population (Fahmy 1954: 84–85; Marsot 1984: 181). More cautiously, Roger Owen suggests that during the high point of operations in the 1830s there were only 30,000–40,000 workers (Owen 1981a: 72). Unlike in Selim III's Istanbul factories, many of the workers were peasants forcibly recruited from their villages. Their arms were tattooed with the names of their factories to enable them to be captured should they desert (Fahmy 1998: 162). Wages, generous to begin with,

were just adequate for subsistence by 1832–33. Hours were long and discipline was harsh. In many cases workers sabotaged production, stole the products, and set the mills on fire (Owen 1969: 45).

No guilds operated in Mehmed 'Ali's factories, and it is unclear whether any of the workers were previously guild members. Except for textile weaving, most of the enterprises were new activities for which no guilds existed. But neither the textile guilds nor hand-loom weaving were eliminated by the Pasha's efforts to monopolize this sector.

In contrast to these state-led initiatives, European entrepreneurs established silk-reeling mills powered by water and then later steam in Bursa, Izmir, Edirne, and Salonica. The first such mills were set up in Bursa in 1838 and Salonica in 1839. The workers – typically unmarried non-Muslim girls from peasant or poor urban families – were engaged seasonally to produce silk thread for export to Europe. The factories were managed by European men who recruited French women reelers to teach the locals and serve as forewomen. By 1845 Salonica had nearly 2,000 silk-mill workers out of a population of 70,000 (Quataert 1991a; Quataert 1994b: 116–32). There were no guilds in the mechanized silk-reeling industry, even though silk spinning and weaving were well-established Ottoman enterprises.

The silk spinning and weaving industry in Mount Lebanon was similar to that of Anatolia and Rumelia. The first French-owned hand-reeling mill was established in Kraye in 1810, followed by several others in the 1830s. Around 1840, the first mechanized silk-reeling mill was established by Antoine-Fortuné Portalis in the village of Btater (Labaki 1983: 434; Khater 1996: 326).

Debate over the significance of these efforts is centered on Egypt, the site of the most extensive early-nineteenth-century manufacturing initiatives. Historians with a nationalist or third-worldist outlook portray this development as an “industrial revolution” (Fahmy 1954; Marsot 1984).⁵ Others note that Mehmed 'Ali's factories were powered primarily by animals, by the workers themselves, and by a total of no more than seven or eight steam engines. By contrast, there were at least 10,000 steam engines and 2,000 power looms in England in 1822. Egypt had no class of bourgeois entrepreneurs, no “free” working class, and no free market. Most of the Egyptian factories as well as the state-owned enterprises in Anatolia failed by the late 1840s and 1850s, leaving an uncertain legacy when industrial development resumed in the 1860s. The nationalist tradition attributes this collapse to British intervention and the imposition of free trade through the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention. Certainly, British naval power was a relevant factor. Others point out that Egypt had a small local market and no sources of fuel.

Mehmed 'Ali's factories relied heavily on foreign managerial and technical expertise. The administrative capacity of the Egyptian state, though substantially greater than in the eighteenth century, was still limited (Owen 1981a: 72, 308 fn. 85).

This debate is partly about whether Egypt, based on its own indigenous cultural, political, and economic resources, would have followed the modern European trajectory of development, in which the central institutions are the capitalist market and the nation-state. Paradoxically, nationalist historians agree with their mainly European and American interlocutors that this is the appropriate measure of progress, development, and modernity. If we do not suppose that there is only one path to the modern world, then these early industrial efforts can be assessed in different terms. Autocratic state builders – Sultan Mahmud II, Amir Bashir II, and Mehmed 'Ali Pasha – seeking to compete with each other and with Europe, did see European technology and industry as a model to be emulated. But they could not replicate the trajectory of textile-based industrial development pioneered by England. Extensive coal deposits and a global empire provided fuel, capital, raw materials, and markets for English industrial development and military preeminence. Egypt had no coal, and its regional empire was weak and short lived. Its textiles were unable to compete with England's goods in the global market, and it had no independent capacity to develop the iron and steel industries that led the second stage of England's industrial revolution and extended its industrial and military lead over potential competitors. These circumstances do not describe the deficiencies of Egypt compared to England but the conditions of global capitalist development in the early and mid-nineteenth century.

The recruitment and mobilization of peasants and urban artisans was essential for the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century state building, military expansion, and economic development projects of Sultan Mahmud II, Amir Bashir II, and Mehmed 'Ali Pasha. These rulers were neither democrats nor nationalists and often used coercive measures to achieve their goals. Coercion continued and in some respects increased during the subsequent, more self-conscious period of elite-led "reform" – the Tanzimat era. It is not surprising that subalterns resisted or evaded demands aimed at securing the interests of ruling elites. This should not lead us to idealize life and work before this period. Life was difficult, and incomes were barely adequate for most working people. Pre-capitalist production processes continued to flourish in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and some sectors underwent considerable growth without any connection to the expansion of trade with Europe. Towards the end of the period, new techniques and products – primarily

mechanized silk reeling in Anatolia, Salonica, and Mount Lebanon and the cultivation of long-staple cotton in Egypt – were introduced which had a very substantial long-term impact on the reformation of economies, societies, gender relations, and political regimes.

2 Ottoman reform and European imperialism, 1839–1907

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sectarian conflict and economic competition in greater Syria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commercial agriculture, large estates, and peasant family farms

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

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

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

Late-developing serfdom in Wallachia and Moldavia

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

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

The 1858 land laws

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

Cotton and the formation of large estates in Egypt and Çukurova

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Expanding states and peasant resistance

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

Peasants and French colonialism in North Africa

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

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

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

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

Rural rebellion, religion, and nationalism in the Balkans

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

Following the proclamation of the 1839 Gülhane Edict, Christian

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

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

The Urabi revolt in Egypt

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

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

Radical peasant movements in greater Syria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Militant textile journeymen and women's work in Damascus

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