THE MACHINE BREAKING ACTIONS OF WOMEN CARPET WORKERS IN UŞAK: 1880-1909

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

The Machine Breaking Actions of Women Carpet Workers in Uşak: 1880-1909

This study focuses on the class and political relations that emerged in the triangle of labor, capital and state in the Late Ottoman Empire, in the light of the machine breaking actions led by women carpet weaving and carpet yarn producers in Uşak in 1908. The main purpose of the study is to discover the continuity of the class conflict that spread over the years of these actions that took place a few months before the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908. Examining this historical period in which Muslim women workers organized against Muslim merchants has the potential to contribute to the class nature of labor movements in the Late Ottoman Empire. In addition, it aims to contribute to the history of the agency of Ottoman women workers. Rather than an action-oriented labor history study, the study focuses on the multifaceted character of the relationships that emerged in the production process and to reveal a more in-depth picture of the period. The historical role of Uşak merchants, both as a part of the class conflict and as a national economic will, also has been the subject of investigation. Finally, the interest of the study is to reveal the state's relationship with different layers of society in the midst of this class conflict and its strategic policy that were constructed between oppression and concession towards this relationship. This study draws mainly from Ottoman archive sources and newspapers of the period to evaluate this multi-layered relationship between labor, capital and the state.

ÖZET

Uşaklı Halı İşçisi Kadınların Makine Kırma Eylemleri: 1880-1909

Bu çalışma 1908'de Uşak'ta halı dokuma ve halı ipliği üreticisi kadınların öncülük ettiği makine kırma eylemlerinin ışığında, Geç Osmanlı'da emek, sermaye ve devlet üçgeninde ortaya çıkan sınıfsal ve siyasal ilişkilere odaklanmaktadır. 1908 İkinci Meşrutiyet'ten birkaç ay önce gerçekleşen bu eylemlerin yıllara yayılmış sınıfsal çatışma sürekliliğini keşfetmek çalışmanın temel amacıdır. Müslüman işçilerin Müslüman tüccarlara karşı örgütlendiği bu tarihsel dönemi incelemek, Geç Osmanlı'da işçi hareketlerinin sınıfsal niteliğine bir katkı sağlama potansiyeli taşımaktadır. Bunun yanında çalışma Osmanlı kadın işçilerinin failliğinin tarihine katkı sunar. Eylem odaklı bir işçi tarihi çalışmasından ziyade üretim sürecinde ortaya çıkan ilişkilerin çok yönlü karakterine odaklanmak ve döneme dair daha derinlikli bir resim ortaya çıkarmak çalışmanın temel hedeflerindendir. Uşaklı tüccarların hem sınıfsal çatışmanın bir parçası olarak hem de milli iktisadi bir irade taşıyan tarihsel rolleri de tezin önemli bir parçasıdır. Son olarak bu sınıfsal çatışmanın ortasında devletin, toplumun farklı tabakaları ile ilişkilenme biçimini ve bu ilişkiye yönelik stratejik politikasını ortaya çıkarmak çalışmanın ilgisini oluşturmaktadır. Bu sebeple, baskı ve içerme arasında gidip gelen bir toplum ve emek politikasının üzerine kurulu olduğu ilişkiler deşifre edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Çalışma, emek, sermaye ve devletin bu çok katmanlı ilişkilenmesini değerlendirmek için en temelde Osmanlı arşiv kaynaklarından ve döneme ait gazetelerden beslenmektedir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Three months before the Second Constitutional Era in 1908, on a Friday in Uşak, women and girls led a crowd of several thousand people to the carpet yarn factories. Armed with axes and spinning wheels, they attacked the factories of Muslim merchants they had been complaining about for thirty years due to issues such as usury, rights violations, and tyranny. They destroyed the machines in the factories with their axes and looted the wool. Carpet art, which had represented the district culturally for centuries, had been a source of income for women yarn spinners and weavers for decades. Now, at the beginning of the 20th century, both their traditional craft and their livelihood were under threat. British capital and local carpet merchants had displaced these women by establishing yarn factories. After a 50-year period marked by a transition from natural dyes to synthetic dyes, from hand spinning to factory production, and from skilled weavers to unskilled workers, women weavers organized against carpet merchants from the local nobility. Analyzing the 1908 machine-breaking actions, which continued violently for several days, offers insight into the organizing potential of social movements at the local level, the relationships they established, and their transformative power just before the Second Constitutional Era in the Late Ottoman Empire.

Uşak, known as one of the oldest traditional carpet-making centers in Anatolia, is located in Western Anatolia. Currently, it is positioned within the geographic triangle formed by the cities of Manisa, Kütahya, and Denizli. During the Beyliks period, it was under the control of the Germiyanids but became part of the Ottomans by the end of the 14th century. From the 16th century, it was governed as

part of the Kütahya Sancak. In 1836, with the transition to the provincial system, Uşak became an administrative unit within both the Kütahya Sancak and the Hüdavendigar Vilayet.[1]

Uşak's integration into the international trade network through the Aegean Sea was facilitated by the port city of İzmir. In the 19th century, İzmir was the busiest port in the country and had the highest export volume. The fact that half of İzmir's export volume consisted of goods such as acorn, carpets, wool, and opium from Uşak illustrates the strong economic link between the two regions.[2] This relationship was further reinforced by the İzmir-Aydın railway, completed in 1866, which enhanced connectivity between İzmir and the interior of Western Anatolia. The railway significantly expedited the flow of raw materials and capital to Uşak. While some scholars argue that the railway was crucial in the sense of increasing carpet production during the latter half of the 19th century,[3] Quataert shows that production growth continued even though the railway had not yet reached Sivas by the end of the century.[4] Thus, the impact of the railway should not be viewed as the sole factor in this production growth.

In the late 19th century, the majority of the population in Uşak district resided in rural areas. At that time, the town of Uşak, which was the district center, had a population of 16,291, representing about 22% of the total district population. According to the 1883 census, the total population of Uşak district was 73,719. This

[1] Tutsak, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Devirlerinde Uşak Kazası," 176.
[2] Tutsak, 177.
[3] Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye girişi.*
[4] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 248.

means that approximately 78% of the population lived in villages.[5] In addition to the settled population in towns and villages, the district also hosted nomadic tribes.[6]

According to the 1883 census, approximately 97% of the total population of Uşak district was Muslim. Following the Muslims were Greeks with a rate of 1.9, and Armenians with a rate of 0.8. The foreign population in the district consisted of only 22 people.[7] In the following years and during the first decade of the 20th century, the Greek and Armenian populations increased by approximately 1% each.[8] These increases can be attributed to the fact that Uşak carpet production became more dependent on foreign capital and their non-Muslim agencies in the same years. The gender distribution of the population is seen to be similar for each ethnic group. The female and male populations were approximately half-and-half in the Muslim, Greek and Armenian populations. However, it is seen that the number of women was slightly higher than the number of men in all ethnic groups.

The main sources of livelihood in Uşak included agriculture, small livestock farming, forestry, and carpet production. Agriculture was the dominant economic activity, as was common throughout Anatolia.[9] This agricultural production primarily involved growing dry grains like wheat, barley, oats, and rye. Additionally, industrial crops such as opium, cotton, and sesame were significant. Notably, cotton production saw a substantial increase after 1908 compared to the 1880s. Raki and wine production, largely managed by Greeks and Armenians in Uşak, were another means

[5] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 16; Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu 1830-1914*, 278-279.
[6] Çakmak, 16.
[7] Karpat, 278-279.
[8] Çakmak, 14-15.
[9] Çakmak, 115.

of livelihood. In 1880, Uşak district produced the majority of alcoholic beverages in the Kütahya Sancak.[10]

In addition to agriculture, carpet production was a key economic activity in Uşak. Until the 16th century, carpets were made primarily by young girls and women for their homes and dowries. However, after the 16th century, carpet production expanded to supply Ottoman palaces, mosques, state institutions, and orders from Europe and America. During the 16th to 18th centuries, Uşak carpets were known for their luxury and unique designs in the international market.[11] The shift to mass production of carpets, which involved nearly the entire population of Uşak, began in the 1860s. By this time, the socio-economic profiles of European and American customers had diversified, and carpets became accessible to people from lower socioeconomic classes.[12]

This shift was driven by commercial and industrial investments in the carpet sector in the late 19th century, as well as state incentives. Additionally, regional factors contributed to this change. Uşak's continental climate and less fertile soil were not ideal for agriculture, leading the region to import much of its wheat.[13] Since agriculture alone could not support the local population, the rise in carpet production provided a significant employment opportunity and became the district's primary economic activity.

Carpet production in Uşak was an area where the district used its own resources until the second half of the 19th century. Both labor and raw material supply were provided by organizing the resources in the town and surrounding

[10] Çakmak, 200-201.
[11] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 41.
[12] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 260.
[13] Quataert, "Machine breaking and the changing carpet industry of western Anatolia, 1860–1908," 474.

villages. This organization, which made it necessary to draw attention to the different steps of the production process, made the rural and the town population and their livelihoods part of a common production process. For example, small livestock farming of nomadic tribes living in Uşak and the surrounding districts constituted the source of carpet production in the region.[14] Carpet yarns produced with the wool shorn from the sheeps raised in the villages were the most basic raw material of Uşak carpet weaving. At the same time, the production of yarn constituted the livelihood of many peasant women. The wool shorn from these animals was sent to the women and girls weavers living in the town and villages and was woven in their hands and took its final form. Therefore, carpet weaving and animal husbandry, the peasant women spinning yarns and the women and girls weaving carpets have become inseparable parts of the same production process in Uşak.

Traditional carpet production in Uşak involved several handcraft stages: washing wool, spinning yarn, dyeing, and weaving. These processes used simple, manual tools and were typically carried out in homes.[15] The production system, known as "putting-out," organized almost all stages of carpet making at the household level, relying on the labor of women working from their homes.[16] The production and distribution of carpets, particularly for export, were managed through a multi-step process involving several intermediaries. There were four different intermediaries in this entire process, from the collection of wool to the ordering of

[14] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 77.
[15] Quataert, "Machine breaking and the changing carpet industry of western Anatolia, 1860–1908," 467-477.
[16] Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye girişi,* 214.

yarns, the delivery of these yarns to weavers, the weaving of the carpet according to the order and its sale.[17]

These intermediaries were sub-representatives of the companies in London that dominated the market. At the top of this chain were the companies in London. These London companies handled orders from businesses in England and America. They then forwarded these orders to trading houses called *komisyoncu* (middleman) in Izmir. The most important of these intermediaries operating in Izmir were the companies that were shareholders of The Amalgamated Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited, which was founded in 1907. The intermediaries gave the orders to carpet merchants operating in Uşak, the majority of whom were Muslims. These local merchants[18] arranged for the wool needed for the carpets. They worked with *kiracı,* often village *muhtars*, who bought wool from regions like Ankara, Sivrihisar, and Aydın and distributed it to spinners.[19] By the early 20th century, around 250 *kiracı* families were involved in this wool distribution work.[20]

The women living in the villages of Uşak were involved in the production of yarn from wool. Local merchants would deliver the wool they bought from animal husbandry peasants and nomadic tribes to these women who spun yarn. The wool washed and dried in the streams and creeks in the district would turn into yarn in the hands of these women. The women would spin this wool with simple mechanical equipment such as a spinning wheel and a *kirmen* in their homes to produce yarns such as *eriş* and *argaç*.[21] These women yarn producers earned money from the yarns

[17] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 103.
[18] Agents of middlemen who were located in İzmir.
[19] Kurmuş, 212; Yetkin, "II. Meşrutiyet Öncesi Egede Bir Şirket-i Milli Denemesi: Uşak Osmanlı Halı Ticarethanesi I," 15.
[20] Çakmak, 114.
[21] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları,* 48.

they produced in the form of a kıyye. The fee for each *kıyye* (1.28 kg) varied between 2-3 *kuruş*.[22] An average of seven hundred and fifty families made a living from the washing, combing and spinning of wool into yarn.[23]

The yarn spun by peasant women was collected by local merchants and taken to dye houses for dying. Most of these dyehouses were operated by local carpet merchants, and it became common for carpet merchants to open dyehouses after the mid-19th century. There were also independent dyehouses in the district. Until the second half of the 19th century, carpet yarns in Uşak were dyed with root dye. Peasant women who washed and spun the wool also dyed these yarns with natural dyes obtained from plants. *Çivit*, from which the blue color was obtained, was a type of dye imported from abroad. However, for colors other than this, yellow was obtained from shrubs called “golden trees" among the people, and different colors were obtained from vegetables and fruits such as fresh walnut shells, pomegranate shells, and onion peels. Therefore, the color range of the traditional Uşak carpet was not very wide. The commonly used colors were blue, red, yellow, and brown. Since the yarns dyed with madder were not subject to a chemical process, more durable and bright carpets could be produced.[24]

After the mid-19th century, yarn dyeing began to change in Uşak. Due to synthetic dyes imported from abroad and rapidly spreading dyehouses, yarn dyeing became a separate job area. After the 1860s, the increase in carpet orders caused women to focus more on spinning and weaving. Thus, male workers began to work in the washing and dyeing of wool in Uşak. It is known that the work of dyers working in dyehouses and specializing in dyeing had a very delicate balance. A

[22] Çakmak, “Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908),” 105.
[23] Çakmak, 114.
[24] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları*, 49-50.

meticulous application was required to ensure that the color tones of the yarns, which were boiled and dyed in large cauldrons, were kept the same. For this reason, dyeing masters would repeatedly check the color tones in front of the cauldrons and carry out production.[25] The dyed yarns in the dyehouses were received by the merchants and given to the women loom owners for the final stage of carpet production. These yarns were also sold in the bazaar set up every Thursday in the towns.[26] The women loom owners usually received these yarns without paying any fee. After the carpets were woven, when they were taken to the merchant's shop, the cost of the yarn and dyeing were deducted from the price of the carpet and the weavers were paid.

In Uşak, women who weaved carpets and spun yarns were different from each other. In this sense, the division of labor had clearer lines than in Kula, an important carpet production center nearby Uşak. Reflecting the fact that more than 95% of Uşak's population was Muslim, the vast majority of women who weaved carpets were Muslim women. However, Armenian and Greek women were also weavers, although in much smaller numbers than Muslim women. The total number of weaving workers varied from year to year. In 1896, 8,500 women, in 1906, 6,000 women, and in 1910, 5,500 women workers wove carpets on wooden looms.[27] The workers were weaving on wooden looms in the houses of relatively middle-aged women who were loom owners. These looms, which were located in the large rooms or gardens of the houses, had a very simple mechanism. Depending on the size of the loom, 1-10 weavers worked on them.[28] Carpet looms could be 3, 4-5 or 6-8 meters from small to large. The size of the loom also varied according to the size of the

[25] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları,* 52.
[26] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü.*
[27] Quataert, 245; Tutsak, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Döneminde Uşak'ta Halıcılığın Makineleşme Süreci," 90.
[28] Quataert, 278.

carpet to be woven. They could be made to order or purchased ready-made. The timber obtained from the forests of Banaz district of Uşak in particular provided a convenient source for the production of these simple-mechanized looms.[29] In 1906, there were 2 thousand looms in Uşak, employing a total of 6 thousand women workers.[30]

This multi-agent system was an important way of the carpet production process in Uşak. On the other hand, different processes operated simultaneously throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The loom and house owner women organized the production process. These women provided both the employment of workers and the supply of raw materials. They had a serious network with both carpet merchants and *kiracı muhtars*. Loom owners organized the production process in three ways. The first of them was the multi-agent system described above. This system was the final point of the carpet production process. Towards the end of the 19th century, with the spread of dyehouses and the opening of yarn factories, a transition towards this system occurred. In this system, dyed yarns were brought directly to the houses of the loom owners with order requests. In this type of production and distribution system, the loom owner women were very dependent on the merchants in terms of organization. They had no discretion in processes such as where to buy the yarn or how to dye it.

In a second production system, loom owner women borrowed money from local carpet merchants in Uşak. In return for this money, they accepted the condition that the yarns they supplied would be dyed in the dyehouses belonging to these merchants. In a third production method, women borrowed money from the

[29] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 79; Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları,*53-54.
[30] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 247.

merchants again. However, this time, they operated a process independent of the merchants in all stages from the supply of yarns to dyeing and weaving of the carpet. Their only obligation was that the woven carpets conform to the merchants' orders. All three of these production methods were implemented simultaneously in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[31] However, from the early 20th century onwards, the production process shifted towards a system with multiple intermediaries and loom owner women having very little control over the process. In this way, the merchants were able to increase the cost of yarn and dyeing and make the workers more dependent on them. This meant that the labor force became cheaper.

Although the most expensive carpet weaving worker in Anatolia was in Uşak, weaver women and girls were paid a very low wage.[32] It is known that in 1910, weavers earned 60 *para* at best as a daily wage.[33] It would be good to look at what this wage meant in terms of purchasing power. In the second half of the 19th century, the price of 1 *okka* (1.28 kg) of bread in the Ottoman Empire varied between 1 and 2 *kuruş*.[34] Considering that 1 *kuruş* was 40 *para*, a weaver's daily wage was approximately 1,5 *okka* of bread at best. "Widows and orphaned girls" worked day and night to support their families and earned a wage that could only buy about 2 kg of bread per day. Girls started this work tempo when they were only 6-7 years old. They learned the art of carpet weaving from their mothers or neighbor women and started earning money within two years. These girls and women who weaved from

[31] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 278-279; Quataert, "Machine breaking and the changing carpet industry of western Anatolia, 1860–1908," 479.
[32] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 99.
[33] BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66/9.
[34] Pamuk, "Kuruş."

morning till night on the looms received their wages at the end of the day from the house owner women.[35]

Since carpets were a commodity produced at houses, the weaving work that women did for a wage was intertwined with their unpaid domestic and care work. Women were taking care of their children, cooking, doing housework, and weaving carpets for the family's livelihood in the same place. In this picture, the weavers must have been working breathlessly. Both archival sources and observational narratives from the period contain information that proves these conditions. Atalay states that apprentice girls worked 7-8 hours a day or more. The days of these girls and women were passing without seeing the light of day, taking a vacation, having fun, or having the opportunity to spend free time.[36] Their rest day was once a week, on Fridays or Sundays. However, those days were also reserved for the domestic chores that had piled up in their homes, such as laundry and cleaning. So much so that, especially during periods when production was intense and orders increased, women would continue to weave carpets all night long wearing tin lanterns on their heads.[37]

In addition, carpet weaving in Uşak relied on a very low-paid and overworked labor force, primarily women and girls.[38] This intense and cheap labor attracted capitalists to the industry. Beside this, since production took place in homes, local carpet merchants and intermediary companies were not responsible for working conditions. Workers spent all day weaving carpets while sitting on unstable boards and without back support. The looms were unhealthy, and the work environment was exposed to the cold. As a result, probably many women developed

[35] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 279.
[36] BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66/9.
[37] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları,* 44.
[38] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 108.

occupational diseases, including waist, back, and neck problems from years of bending over the loom.[39] However, the putting-out system provided the advantage of shielding merchants from responsibility for these poor working conditions, allowing them to avoid significant costs. However, working outside of factories or workshops controlled by capitalists or the state had some benefits for the workers. Women could create their own shared culture and sense of community in their own homes or those of their neighbors. They would work together under the same lantern at night, weaving yarn and singing folk songs around the loom for hours.[40]

The fact that the house was a workplace also meant that the production environment was a private space. When women weavers and girls over the age of 15 were subject to dividend tax in 1907, women workers used this spatial privacy as a weapon.[41] As will be discussed in the fourth chapter, the state could not determine who had carpet looms in their homes in order to collect taxes. The reason for this was that the names of the women who were supposed to be liable for taxes were deliberately concealed by the *muhtars*. It is seen as a cooperation between women workers and *muhtars*. The workers knew that the state did not have the power to enter women's homes and make detections. Even if this had been done, it would not have been possible to determine whether the carpet looms in the houses were the women's personal looms. At that time, every woman in Uşak, whether she earned money from weaving or not, had a loom in her home. Weaving dowries for her daughters and rugs, prayer rugs and carpets for her own homes was also a handicraft belonging to the local culture. For this reason, women and girls who were obliged to

[39] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları*, 70.
[40] Atalay, 70; Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 279.
[41] BOA, *ŞD*, 446/51.

pay the dividend tax could not be identified. The document clearly shows the state's helplessness in this regard due to the fact that the production area was the home.

> "Despite the *muhtars* being repeatedly warned to record the names of the mentioned women workers, their names could not be registered. Moreover, although many measures were taken to record the names, these efforts were unsuccessful, and it was concluded that insisting further would lead to undesirable incidents. It is foreseen that there would be many difficulties in entering private houses and collecting taxes, and even if entry is achieved, it probably will be anticipated that the two looms found there would be claimed to be for the family's and the individual's personal manufacturing use."[42]

Traditional carpet weaving in Uşak required a highly qualified workforce. Uşak carpets were characterized by patterns created by master women based on their own dreams. These women produced new patterns based entirely on their minds, without any pictures or instructions. The vast majority of these were based on geometric shapes called hendese.[43] It is known that in this way, women weavers passed on to the next generations and that there were motifs specific to their families.[44] These patterns, passed down from mother to daughter through memory and practice, ensured that the characteristic motifs of Uşak carpets lived on for generations. These relationships and artistic style began to change in the late 19th century, when production boomed.

The orders of the companies in England caused changes in the artistic form and patterns of the carpets in Uşak. These demands also caused the production technique to change. English carpet companies began sending their preferred patterns to companies in İzmir. Expert pattern designers would then replicate these designs and distribute them to the weavers. The master weavers would create sample motifs from these patterns in a way that would make the weaving of the carpet easier. However, since the patterns sent by the companies did not have any measurements,

[42] BOA, *ŞD*, 446/51.
[43] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları,* 39.
[44] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü*, 252.

the master woman who made the calculations according to the size of the carpet and created the sample motif did all of this based on her memory and talent. Then she would direct the other women and girls who were weaving the carpet to weave in accordance with the sample motif.[45] This weaving technique changed in the early 20th century with the intervention of the Şark Halı Kumpanyası (OCM) which de-skilled the creative labor of women.

With the new technique, patterns were now sent with their exact measurements.[46] This shift undermined the traditional production process, which required both manual skill and mathematical ability. Instead, a technique emerged where only the fingers worked like a machine, weaving yarns in precise numerical sequences.This standardization of production not only weakened women's dominance in the production process but also caused the labor force to become cheaper. This is because, as women loom owners lost control over the production process, merchants could lower worker wages to suit their own interests. At the same time, standardization represented a form of mass production. In order to target a wider range of consumers, the quality of carpets and therefore their sales prices also decreased. The price decrease automatically meant that workers' wages also decreased.

Carpet weaving has ceased to be a family art and has become a commodity that provided a livelihood for the entire district. In the early days of Uşak, carpets were produced only for family needs. Each household wove rugs, carpets, prayer rugs for their own needs and for the dowries of young girls. Women and young girls wove carpets whenever they had free time.[47] However, this situation began to change

[45] Atalay, *Türk halıcılığı ve Uşak halıları*, 42.
[46] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü*, 252.
[47] Atalay, 70.

as of the 16th century. After this century, carpet production was still not as intensive as it was in the second half of the 19th century. During this period, women wove carpets to order and the traditional production method of carpets had not yet transformed.

However, after the second half of the 19th century, dyehouses began to open where yarns were dyed with synthetic dyes. Within a few decades, dyehouses became so widespread that almost every carpet merchant had one. The damage caused by synthetic dyes to the quality of carpets led to a discussion of the traditional-modern dilemma throughout the district. A similar dilemma arose in the late 19th century when Muslim carpet merchants began opening yarn factories. These factories not only damaged the quality of the carpets but also displaced many women who earned their living by spinning yarn. The decline in quality and the shift away from traditional production methods caused carpet prices to drop, labor force to become cheaper, and the distinctive characteristics of the "Uşak Carpet " to fade. Once a symbol of authenticity and luxury in Europe, America, and Ottoman palaces since the 16th century, the Uşak carpet was now at risk of losing its traditional reputation. In response to these threats to the local economic and cultural fabric, women workers, children, and men attacked three carpet yarn factories representative of this transformation in 1908. This thesis aims to analyze the historical roots and social dynamics of the conflict that emerged from these 1908 actions.

1.1 Methodological framework

The subject of historical research has been statesmen, heroes, wars and men for many years. The economy, culture and the layered and class-based nature of society had no place in the history of macro politics and those who implemented this politics. At the

end of the 19th century, society and the structures it was built upon were also included in the agenda of historical research. In social history studies, there were studies that interacted with different disciplines, especially sociology and economics. However, this model, which removed the subject of history from great men and politics and directed its direction to society, was also incapable of going beyond structures and macro processes. The history of ordinary people, workers, peasants, women, the unheard, those who did not have a scribe to write their own history, became the subject of historical research after the mid-20th century. This thesis is nourished by the "history from below"[48] approach, which puts "the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' handloom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan"[49] on its agenda.

The quality of historical research goes beyond its subject matter; it also depends on how the subject is approached and what sources are used. This thesis explores the machine-breaking actions carried out by women and girls who worked as carpet production in Uşak during the Late Ottoman Period. Rather than focusing solely on these events from 1908, the study uses them as a starting point for historical exploration in the relevant context. The quality of historical research goes beyond its subject matter; it also depends on how the subject is approached and what sources are used. This thesis explores the machine-breaking actions carried out by women and girls who worked as carpet production in Uşak during the Late Ottoman Period. Rather than focusing solely on these events from 1908, the study uses them as a starting point for historical exploration in the relevant context. While the actions themselves are significant, the thesis also emphasizes the historical context that led to these actions, including the material and cultural factors that united the workers.

[48] Hobsbawm, *Tarih Üzerine*, 307.
[49] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 12.

These factors include shared demands, common grievances against the same "enemy," and their collective efforts in weaving carpets. Thus, uncovering these underlying resources and presenting this 30-year period, which contributed to the social unrest leading up to the Second Constitutional Era, are key interests of this thesis.

The thesis' approach is far from seeing carpet workers in Uşak as victims, passive, or their actions under the control of a larger political will. The main starting point of the approach is the economic and political relations established by weaver and spinner women in the process in question, by accepting their agency as the basis. In this respect, the thesis focuses on the relations that emerged within the framework of carpet production in Uşak in a period covering the late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. In order to reveal these relations, it examines the areas of encounter of the three actors, both opposing and in line with common interests. The main contribution of the thesis is to reveal this network of relations. For this reason, local Muslim merchants, whose sphere of influence is seen as quite limited in studies on Late Ottoman, also constitute an important part of the study.

Muslim merchants have an important place both because they were actors with whom workers experience class conflict and because their voices have been lost in the dark corners of history compared to foreign capital and non-Muslim merchants. Revealing their historical roles also allows us to better understand capital, the opposite face of labor. The reason for this is that class can only be defined and understood with the other class it is in conflict with. Therefore, this thesis examines how political and economic transformations related to invisible actors of history such as workers, women, and local merchants in the context in question. The Ottoman State's share in this relationship is discussed in terms of its policies towards workers

and Muslim merchants. From this perspective, the state is evaluated through the mediation of workers and Muslim merchants.

The social relations this thesis examines are grounded in the existence of classes and class conflict. It is important to clarify the conceptual framework underpinning this class analysis. The concept of class is viewed as a dynamic relationship in this thesis. Carpet weavers and yarn spinners shared common interests, enemies, and roles in the production process. This shared experience fostered an integrated class identity, shaped by their similar cultural habits and experiences. Therefore, the working class is not considered a rigid category in this thesis.[50] Instead, it is seen as a social position whose nature can shift depending on context, production methods, and forms of property. What remains constant for the working class is their lack of property and capital. This commonality stems from their need to sell their labor within the capital enterprises of others.

Similarly, the capitalist class is examined in this context. Merchants involved in carpet weaving and factory operations in Uşak shared common property relations. Many of these merchants invested wealth gained from land ownership into trade and industry. In Uşak, both the landed bourgeoisie and the trade and industrial bourgeoisie are represented in a transitional manner. Their common interests were shaped by property, tax, and land laws, which led to shared consequences concerning the rights of peasants and workers or the restriction of these rights for their benefit.

It is important to note that class should not be viewed as a monolithic entity. The bourgeois class, comprising British carpet companies, non-Muslim merchants, and Muslim merchants, was also internally divided.[51] This internal conflict, driven by economic and political competition as well as local and national identities,

[50] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 40.
[51] Kaya, "Türkiye'de burjuva devrimi (1908-1923)," 23.

strengthened the position of workers in Uşak. This internal conflict of capital will be analyzed in detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

By focusing on women carpet workers from Uşak, this thesis aims to contribute to closing the distance defined by Gülhan Balsoy as 'mutual distancing.'[52] The mutual disinterest in labor history and women's history literatures categorically leads to an incomplete reading of these fields. The scope of the Ottoman labor history literature is mostly limited to studies on factories, union movements, and formal labor. Deepening the history of women's labor in the late Ottoman period actually allows for class analyses and the expansion of the scope of the labor movement. The reason for this is that women workers were working in small workshops and home-type production rather than factories. Therefore, one of the motivations of this thesis is to have an effort to expand the scope of working class history. Similarly, revealing the story of peasant and working women categorically provides the opportunity to establish a more realistic narrative of women's history. Women's studies conducted on the Late Ottoman have mostly been the history of pioneer women who were middle class, members of bureaucratic families, and in intellectual or professional circles. Therefore, the rarity of lower class, ordinary, peasant and worker women in women's history studies and the invisibility of their agency limits women's history to the history of a certain group of women. For this reason, analyzing the story of weaving workers and yarn producers in Uşak and revealing their agency is a motivation to contribute to both of these literatures.

[52] Balsoy, "Gendering Ottoman Labor History: the Cibali Régie Factory in the Early Twentieth Century," 46.

1.2 Sources

The evaluations in this thesis are based on two main sources. The first and most frequently used of these is the Ottoman State Archives. Various documents such as reports written by the Uşak local administration to the Hüdavendigar Province, loom owners petitions, *muhtar* petitions, inspector and police reports, and decisions of the relevant ministries on the subject were used in the State Archives. In addition, the Hüdavendigar Province Yearbooks were also used. Secondly, certain volumes of the Ahenk newspaper from the examined period were used as sources.

Ahenk is a newspaper published by Tevfik Nevzad in Izmir in 1895. Before Tevfik Nevzat published this newspaper, he and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil started publishing Hizmet in 1886. Tevfik Nevzat is known for his articles opposing the administration of Abdulhamid II and his political stance during his Hizmet years. In fact, it is known that Hizmet was closed down several times due to its connections with the Young Turks. However, after Tevfik Nevzat founded the Ahenk newspaper in 1895, he began writing conciliatory articles praising Abdulhamid II and the regime. Although the exact reason for this cannot be known, it can be considered a strategic position for the continuity of the newspaper.[53]

The newspaper is known in the public opinion of Izmir for opposing foreign capital and supporting national industry and capital. The first Turkish newspaper published in Izmir, Devir, was published in 1872. Before this newspaper, French, Greek and Armenian newspapers were published in Izmir. The founder of the newspaper, Mehmed Salim, explained the purpose of the newspaper's publication as the fact that there were many foreign newspapers but there was no national newspaper in Izmir. For this reason, the purpose of the newspaper's publication was

[53] Arıkan, "Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet dönemlerinde İzmir basını."

explained as "national effort and patriotism". Due to Izmir's ethnically cosmopolitan structure and the large non-Muslim and Levantine population, it is likely that the Turkish press that developed there was more nationalist than in other parts of Anatolia. Based on the volumes examined for this study, it can be said that this situation is also valid for the Ahenk newspaper. It is also certain that Ahenk's national political line was nourished by the Turkist and Turkish-oriented world of thought of its editor-in-chief, Tevfik Nevzat[54]

The newspaper adopted a position on the side of local merchants against foreign capital and on the side of the people against local merchants. It based this position on “national” discourse. For example, it made propaganda for local carpet merchants against the Oriental Carpet Manufacturer and for carpet weaving as a national art to be saved from the hands of these foreigners. The newspaper argued that the local capital should unite in order to get rid of the oppression of foreigners. As will be discussed in the third chapter, the attempts of carpet merchants, the majority of whom were Muslims in Uşak, to establish a national joint stock company were seriously supported in the Ahenk newspaper. The newspaper strongly advocated that “unity” *(tevhid)* should be adopted against the British capital.[55] At the same time, Ahenk took a stance against the tobacco Regie, which was a foreign capital institution. Articles criticizing the Regie were regularly written in the newspaper. Ahenk, who played an important role in the formation of the national discourse, was among the sources of the study in this respect.

It is accepted that studies of history from below have various difficulties and problems regarding sources. One of the most fundamental problems for studies of

[54] Huyugüzel, “Nevzat Tevfik.”
[55] Yetkin, “II. Meşrutiyet Öncesi Egede Bir Şirket-i Milli Denemesi: Uşak Osmanlı Halı Ticarethanesi I,” 18-19.

history from below is seen as a lack of sources. Because it is argued that the voices of ordinary people who did not have cultural and economic capital in society are not sufficiently reflected in historical sources.[56] The reality of this idea cannot be denied in any way. Historical sources present the story of men rather than women, of companies and the state rather than of workers and peasants. However, this thesis aims to show that these limits can be pushed through the use of sources, and that the voices of the subaltern, the workers and the women can be heard by using official state sources. In this respect, I claim that in cases where the voices of ordinary people cannot be reached directly, their stories can be reached indirectly, through representative voices. The effort to overcome these limitations constitutes the method of using sources in this thesis.

When examining the documents in the Ottoman State Archives for this thesis, the limitations in question were encountered. It is known that the loom owners in Uşak were women weavers. As explained above, the organization of production revolved around the women loom owners. However, as will be seen in the following chapters of the thesis, the petitions were written by men in order to complain about the carpet merchants. For example, a petition from 1895 was written by Ekmekçizade Hüseyin Hüsnü to complain about the injustices of a carpet merchant. In the document reporting this situation from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Hüdavendigar Province, Hüseyin Hüsnü was stated as a carpet loom owner.[57] Similarly, there is the petition of Hacı İbrahim, whose name was mentioned as the people's representative in 1893. Accordingly, there was a lawsuit between carpet merchants, middlemen and weavers that had been going on for two years. The reason for this was that the merchants were doing various injustices to the weavers. The

[56] Çetinkaya, "'Sefaletten ihyaya': Türkiye işçi sınıfı tarihi ve E. P. Thompson," 201-202.
[57] BOA, *DH.MKT*, 358/53.

weavers conveyed their complaints to the relevant authorities by appointing Hacı İbrahim as their representative. A third example is the petition signed by 12 village *muhtars* of Uşak in 1910. This petition, written against the dividend tax intended to be collected from women and girl weavers, includes many details about the workers.[58] The long working hours of the weavers, their non-stop work in summer and winter, and their low daily wages are among these details. More striking than these is the statement in the petition of the *muhtars* revealing the dual labor of women. Accordingly, women were weaving on the one hand and looking after their children on the other. As mentioned above, the fact that the carpet weaving workers' workplaces were homes intertwined their unpaid domestic and care work and paid weaving labor. This dual labor of women workers also shows that weaving was a job integrated with "feminine states" in the context of gender roles such as childcare and cooking.

Based on all these, it is necessary to see that the petitions written by the *muhtars* about women's working conditions and inadequate wages are actually complaints conveyed by women. Women workers voiced their working conditions and wage demands either through a man in their household or through *kiracı muhtars*, who were the lowest unit of the carpet production and distribution organization. If the workers had not conveyed the difficulties of their working conditions, the materials they used to make lanterns while weaving carpets at night, and the difficulties of looking after their children while weaving carpets, it would not have been possible to reflect these details in the *muhtars'* petitions. For this reason, it is possible to see *muhtars* as the representative voice of women workers.

[58] BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66/9.

The *muhtars* held an important position in the local area of the district and within the carpet weaving organization. Due to this position, they were the ones who had the most contact with women workers in the production chain. There was an order and supply chain from middlemen companies to local carpet merchants and from them to the *muhtars*. They contacted the weavers from the supply of raw materials to the payment of wages. For this reason, the *muhtars* were the first step to which workers could convey their complaints. At the same time, it is quite possible that the interests of the *muhtars* and the workers intersected many times. An evaluation will be made about this partnership of interests in the second chapter.

Finally, another source of hearing the voices of women workers from official state archives has been police and inspector reports. The reports of the officials who were assigned after the 1908 machine breaking protests in order to inspect the events are the one of the most important sources that reveal the historical roots of the conflict between workers and merchants. The reports identify the practices of the merchants that usurped the rights of workers over the years and provide a lot of information about the production and distribution process. The information was obtained after the investigation of the district. Therefore, it is understood that women spinning yarn and carpet weavers conveyed their complaints to these officials during the investigations. As a result, this thesis aims to contribute to the history of ordinary people by utilizing both official state sources and local newspapers. For this reason, the thesis was designed as three main chapters excluding the introduction.

First of all, in this introductory chapter, I will review the relevant pieces of literature. I will start with reviewing previous research on labor history for the relevant time period. This review categorizes the studies into three main headings: structure-based, movement-based, and intersectional studies. While these categories

are not entirely distinct, they help organize the studies according to their general structure and primary focus. The main distinguishing feature of these studies is their comparative analysis of issues such as the impact of different social actors on the political and economic structures of the period, conflict relations, and the state's economic policies.

The long-term mobilization of the labor movement that emerged in Uşak requires examining different layers of society. Therefore, this chapter also includes a discussion of the literature on merchants, who represent the other side of the class conflict. This section addresses topics such as the areas of activity of merchants in the Late Ottoman Empire, the division of capital along ethnic lines, and national economic policy. Many studies suggest that the Muslim bourgeoisie emerged as a class during the "national economy" period. Under Abdulhamid II, the economic and political environment was not conducive to the development of industry and trade. Instead, trade networks were dominated by foreign merchants and non-Muslim capital. My aim in this section is to highlight the role of Muslim merchants in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican periods.

After the literature review in the introductory chapter, the second chapter will explore the roots of the class conflict that emerged in Uşak, focusing on the 1908 machine-breaking actions. The main aim of this chapter is to uncover the motivations that organized the women who wove carpets on home looms and spun yarn by hand in their villages. I will also identify the foundational elements of the carpet workers' story. One key element is the class-based nature of the movement. Secondly, this class character is tied to a long history of social conflict. Thirdly, this chapter will show that the 1908 machine-breaking actions were not random but the result of long-term organization. Finally, the Uşak carpet workers' movement was not only driven

by economic demands but also demonstrated the ability to form strategic political relationships with local actors to enhance mobilization and legitimacy. This political projection provided the movement with significant maneuvering space.

In the third chapter, I will focus on another key player in the class conflict: the carpet merchants in Uşak. This part will primarily discuss the conflicts between Muslim carpet merchants in Uşak and foreign merchants in the carpet production sector. The competitive environment fueling these conflicts sheds light on the "national economy" discourse that Muslim merchants use to justify and expand their activities. Additionally, the chapter will explore the multifaceted local relationships of Uşak's carpet merchants. These merchants, who were local notables of *ayan* origin, occupied influential roles with significant social and economic capital in industry, trade, and local administration. Given these complex social roles, the movement against them was not limited to women spinning yarn. This chapter aims to unravel the intricate social positions of these merchants.

Finally, the fourth chapter will evaluate the state’s policies in the class conflict between carpet workers and merchants in Uşak. It will explore the context in which Abdulhamid II’s policies of oppression, inclusion, and consent-building emerged. This chapter will examine the Sultan’s paternalistic role as a protector of ordinary people during economic crises and political opposition. It will focus on the balance policy the Sultan pursued, mediating between merchants and workers, peasants, and ordinary people. The continuation of similar policies by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) after the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908 highlights both the strength of the labor movement and the adaptability of the state.

1.3 Labor history in the late Ottoman Empire

The focus of studies on late Ottoman labor history has changed significantly over the decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, research primarily focused on the Ottoman worker within the context of structural economic and political processes. By the 1990s, labor studies began to broaden, delving deeper into the lives and struggle practices of workers. Notably, Quataert's emphasis on worker agency and its impact marked a significant shift. Beside this, the influence of the state and foreign capital often overshadowed the agency of the workers themselves. During the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a noticeable trend towards exploring worker agency, albeit within a more structural framework. These studies, although centered on worker agency, often highlighted activism and strikes. Finally, research emerging around and after the 2010s introduced a broadening of Ottoman labor history. This new wave of studies examine how workers shaped their own existence with the role of gender, ethnicity, identities and culture.

Earlier studies regard the Second Constitutional Monarchy as a pivotal break, characterizing pre-constitutional worker activities as unorganized, scattered, and spontaneous[59]. They suppose that workers only began organizing in the more liberal environment of the Second Constitutional Monarchy. Recent studies, however, have moved away from this view, focusing instead on the continuities before and after the Constitutional period.

The most distinctive feature of recent labor history studies is their emphasis on workers' daily life practices, cultures, religious and ethnic identities, and gender dynamics that shape their working conditions. These diverse characteristics are also seen as factors in worker organization. Consequently, Ottoman labor history research

[59] Karakışla, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri".

has expanded into a more comparative and intersectional field, offering a richer understanding of the complexities of labor dynamics.

The purpose of this literature review is to present transformation in late Ottoman labor history studies through a comparative analysis. To achieve a more analytical portrayal of this transformation and to frame the discussion effectively, the studies are categorized based on their primary perspectives. These categories allow for a clearer evaluation and comparison of different approaches to the subject. The studies are grouped under three main headings.

The first one is structure-based studies which includes the works of Karakışla[60] and Quataert[61]. These studies primarily focus on the structural economic and political processes affecting Ottoman workers. The second category is movement-based studies which evaluates the studies by Chalcraft,[62] Nacar,[63] and Vatter.[64] These works emphasize movements, activism, and strikes, exploring how workers organized and mobilized. At the same time, the subject of these studies is how the movements that are the subject of the studies were related to the political and cultural dynamics of the period. The multifaceted forms of relationships they established with the different actors that created these dynamics are discussed. Finally, the intersectional studies encompass the studies of Quataert,[65] Cora,[66]

[60] Karakışla, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri".
[61] Quataert, "Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860–1908"; Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920.*
[62] Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914.*
[63] Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire.*
[64] Vatter, "Şam'ın Militan Tekstil Dokumacıları: Ücretli Zanaatkarlar ve Osmanlı İşçi Hareketleri, 1850-1914".
[65] Quataert, "Ottoman Handicrafts and Industry in the Age of European Industrial Hegemony, 1800-1914".
[66] Cora, "Female Labor, Merchant Capital, and Resilient Manufacturing: Rethinking Ottoman Armenian Communities through Labor and Business"; Cora, "1910 Kömür Hamalları Grevi: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Emeğin Tarihi ve Sol Siyasetin Dili".

Benlisoy,[67] Balsoy,[68] Alakom,[69] and Kabadayı.[70] These works delve into how the daily life practices, cultural, religious, ethnic, culture and gender dynamics related with labor.

While these categories help in distinguishing the main approaches, it is important to note that each study often intersects with other categories. The transitive nature of these works means that they share elements and insights across different perspectives. Nonetheless, the proposed categorization can provide a useful framework for understanding the distinct and overlapping features of the various studies on late Ottoman labor history.

1.3.1 Structure based studies

The main feature of studies in the structure-based category is their tendency to interpret labor history as primarily influenced by major political and economic relations. This perspective often limits the perceived autonomy of workers in addressing issues arising from production relations, reducing the emphasis on worker agency. However, it is important to note that these studies do not entirely ignore the role of workers agency; rather, they view it as dependent on structural and political contexts. The transformative power of workers is less prominent in these works, which is why they are classified under this category.

For instance, Karakışla's study "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri" examines workers' strikes within the political framework of the Second Constitutional Monarchy. This work relies heavily on secondary sources from the

[67] Benlisoy, *İstanbul'un Irgatları: II. Meşrutiyette Sosyalist Bir İşçi Örgütü.*
[68] Balsoy, "Gendering Ottoman Labor History: the Cibali Régie Factory in the Early Twentieth Century".
[69] Alakom, "Dünyanın Kahrını ve Yükünü Taşıyanlar: İstanbul'daki Kürt Hamal Topluluğu".
[70] Kabadayı, "Working from Home: Division of Labor among Female Workers of Feshane in Late Nineteenth-Century Istanbul".

1970s and 1980s, as well as news reports from the Tanin and Sabah newspapers.[71] By focusing on how the political environment influenced labor movements, Karakışla's work exemplifies the structure-based approach, emphasizing the overarching political context while acknowledging the constrained agency of workers within that framework.

This article comparatively evaluates the workers' strikes that took place after the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908. The author makes this comparison with before 1908. According to Karakışla, the strikes before 1908 did not have an organized character. However, he still attributes the strikes of 1908 to the pre-existing grievances of the workers. In this respect, although it distinguishes the striking character of two different periods, he also observes a continuity. The author evaluates the organizational character of the 1908 strikes, together with the political and economic atmosphere of the period. In addition, he talks about the reasons and targets of the strikes and seeks the reasons for their inability to have long-term success. His evaluation about the political and ideological consciousness of the workers also questions their organizational competence.

Karakışla attributes the failures of the workers in the 1908 strikes, the spontaneous and frivolous nature of the strikes, to the incompetence and disorganization of the workers' leaders. In addition, he considers the most decisive reason for the workers to strike as the environment of freedom brought by the Second Constitutional Monarchy. Therefore, despite the references he makes to the organized struggle of the workers between the lines, Karakışla includes them in an unorganized picture. However, in the example the author gives from the bread

[71] Karakışla, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri," 190.

workers' strikes, it seems that the workers organized and persistently stood up for their demands.

> "…They managed to persuade the angry bakery workers to choose representatives from among themselves and discuss the issue again together with the representatives of the Hibazan Society, formed by the bakery owners, and under the mediation of the members of the Committee of Union and Progress (Onur, 1977: 280)."[72]

> "Some bakers protesting the decision of the Bread Commission did not open their ovens (Tanîn, # 27: 4). However, the government, fearing that Istanbul's lack of bread would lead to larger-scale social chaos, immediately sounded the alarm. The police arrested some bakery owners for the crime of "attempting to engage in profiteering" (muâmele-i ihtikâraneye cüret) (Sabâh, # 6797: 2)."[73]

Karakışla argues that the workers' strikes of 1908 contained mostly economic-based demands. In addition, he does not deny that they included some social rights. However, the study does not engage in any discussion of how an economic-based movement or demand differs from a political one. In his work, Karakışla clearly shows the demands of the workers for wages, healthy working conditions and being a partner in the workplace management. In this respect, it is not a reasonable assessment to separate the economic and the political with such an exact distinction. In fact, Karakışla, who gives an example of the attitude of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) members against the economic demands of the strikers, shows the political position of the strikes in the eyes of the sovereigns. "In fact, personal and financial items that even old socialists in Europe could not suddenly demand were seen in the minds of our people. The statements that these are not currently applicable have not been taken advantage of by the defenses that have been made (İttihâd ve Terakki, # 14: 2)".[74] Therefore, if an economic and political distinction is

[72] References belong to the original text for this and upcoming direct quotations.
[73] Karakışla, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri," 191.
[74] Karakışla, 193.

to be made, it is one of the gaps of the study to at least have a discussion about its limits.

Secondly, Quataert's article "Machine breaking and he changing carpet industry of western Anatolia, 1860–1908"[75] is an important work, especially in terms of the case focused on in this study. This article examines how the changing economic and political conditions in the 19th century affected carpet workers and their working conditions. This study also includes the response of workers affected by changing structural economic situations to these conditions. Quataert also focuses on the agency of carpet workers, most of whom are women, in his evaluation of the machine breaking actions that took place in Uşak at the beginning of the 20th century.

Quataert talks about the massive structural transformations taking place in the carpet industry that have pushed workers to action. He argues that as a result of the increasing demand for oriental carpets in Europe and America, the restructuring of foreign capital in the Ottoman Empire on employment and working conditions had a great impact. The effects of macro-economic changes in the lives of Ottoman carpet workers at the economic, ethno-religious and family levels constitute the main subject of this article. In this respect, Quataert opened up a very innovative field for his time. This study, which deals with the effects of economic processes on the living conditions of workers and their daily relations, also gives a substantial share to the agency of workers.

Quataert accepts the 1908 Second Constitutional Monarchy and the actions of the workers as an inseparable process. The author deals with how carpet workers are affected by this process. However, he leaves unanswered how they affected this

[75] Quataert, “Machine breaking and the changing carpet industry of western Anatolia, 1860–1908”.

political process. The evaluation of the organization of workers' response to deteriorated economic situations, the strategies they used and their success is very limited in this study. It is a fact that the limited resources affect the access to information on these issues negatively. However, more in-depth research can reveal the effects of workers on economic and social processes in this regard more clearly.

In the “Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920”[76] which is the third study included in this category, Quataert examines the social history of the Zonguldak Miners in relation to the founding role of the state. While accepting the founding role of the state in this example, the author also defends the view of history from below. The book focuses on the character of mining and the role of the state in coal production. In addition, working conditions and the nature of the workforce are also the subject of the book. The author evaluates the compulsory and paid labor that constituted the workforce. In addition, the effects of the state and private sector on mining are also evaluated comparatively. Quataert particularly emphasizes the agency of peasant-miner workers and the story of these manual workers in the study. In this respect, the work is an example of "history from below".

Quataert has included issues such as the role of the state in the mining sector, working conditions of mining, and mining accidents. It depicts how the work is done in an atmosphere and order through manual laborers. The division of labor among these manual workers and the ways in which workers are employed form a large part of the work. A peasant-based division of labor emerged in the mining field, as the Ottoman state administrators could not provide enough workers and forced people from the surrounding villages to work. In addition, Quataert touches on many aspects

[76] Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920.*

of the division of labor, from the different working conditions of underground and surface workers to the employment of soldiers in mines.

The author also devotes a large area to mining accidents. He argues that the death and injury rates of Ottoman mine workers were very high due to poor working conditions, insufficient job security and capital. In this respect, this assessment of workers regarding occupational safety also sheds light on the dark side of mining for workers and their families.

1.3.2 Movement based studies

The main common thread among studies in this category is their focus on labor movements in the late Ottoman Empire. These studies analyze the multifaceted relations surrounding labor movements, addressing the transformations in economic, political, and social relations and their significance for different social actors. They focus not only on the economic basis of resistances but also on other factors such as nationalism, fellow countrymen-ship which workers united around them. While categorizing these studies can be challenging due to their broad scope, their most distinctive feature is that they collectively tell a story centered on the agency, strikes, and the daily, cultural, and production-oriented practices of factory workers, craftsmen, and service workers.

The first of these works is Chalcraft's "The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914."[77] In the book, Chalcraft examines crafts and guilds in Egypt during the late Ottoman period in the transforming political and economic conditions. In the book, he tries to disprove the myth that craftsmanship and traditional trade in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were

[77] Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914.*

dissolved in the world economy. One of the main contributions of the author is that he does not consider the economy as an abstract category and he sees it in a mutual relationship with political-social structures. According to him, while economic conditions affect workers and tradesmen economically and politically, the economy is also affected by their actions. The book deals with the dissolution and restructuring of the guild structure in the Late Ottoman Empire. It focuses on the story of tradesmen and service workers around issues such as state intervention in the economy, integration with the world economy, and finding new resources. He argues that like industrial workers, craftsmen and tradesmen also organized to change wages and working conditions and sought their rights in this regard. Focusing on the transformative power of human labor, Chalcraft conducts his analysis by feeding on the literature of social movements. It draws attention to the transformative character of not only the economy but also politics and struggle in processes such as restructuring and the transformation of production relations.

Chalcraft argues that under the hegemony of the capitalist world economy, craft and service workers in Egypt have not disappeared. It is seen in the book that workers from many sectors such as tailors, builders and coachmen acted according to the new economic conditions. In other words, workers showed their mobility by either creating new jobs or restructuring their work and production processes. In this respect, the book defends a very strong argument against views that pacify craft and service workers.

Regarding the disappearance of guilds, Chalcraft does not consider the death of craft professions, but the restructuring process as the cause. The creation of new professions and the transformation of old ones brought the end of guilds. In addition, the author argues that guilds are not the domain of collective organization, that

journeymen and sub-group workers are organized informally against guild managers. From this point of view, a more independent, civil organization narrative appears. Chalcraft provides examples of protests to these organizations and petitions and letters sent by workers. Thus, he establishes the historical position of ordinary craft workers and other workers from a very active place.

Finally, the most striking aspect of Chalcraft's work is that it links the construction of Egyptian nationalism against colonial rule with the labor movement.

> "After the Dinshaway incident of 1906, nationalist middle classes began to make common cause with popular groups for the first time. The resulting political opportunity was seized by crafts and service workers in spring 1907, when they joined a hitherto historiographically invisible six weeks of strikes, strikes, and protests."[78]

Therefore, it places the actions of the workers in the middle of this construction against the claim that Egyptian nationalism had a bourgeois character. This assessment of Chalcraft has some thought-provoking aspects in terms of the view that the Second Constitutional Monarchy, which took place in 1908, had a bourgeois character. What does the founding character of the social movements before and after 1908 mean about the claim that the revolution had a bourgeois character? Chalcraft offers a good guide to answering this question.

In the "Şam'ın Militan Tekstil Dokumacıları: Ücretli Zanaatkarlar ve Osmanlı İşçi Hareketleri, 1850-1914" Sherry Vatter[79] focuses on the textile journeymen of Damascus, who regularly went on strike during the late Ottoman period between 1870 and 1918. According to the author, the general structure of labor history studies focused on the industrial worker, and other craft workers were not evaluated within the working class. Basically, what the author is trying to show is

[78] Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914,* 196.
[79] Vatter, "Şam'ın Militan Tekstil Dokumacıları: Ücretli Zanaatkarlar ve Osmanlı İşçi Hareketleri, 1850-1914".

that these journeymen are organized and demand their rights because of their labor and production relations. Therefore, the author focused on both the production process and the hierarchical division of labor of workers. One of Vatter's most important contributions is that she shows the textile workers' strikes in Damascus to be organized and conscious actions, not spontaneous events.

Can Nacar's book "Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire"[80] is the latest work in this category. Nacar researched and evaluated the history of tobacco workers in the Late Ottoman period. He constructed this evaluation through the most important tobacco centers of Selanik, Kavala, Iskece and Istanbul. In the book, the author focuses on the divisive and unifying dynamics of the workers among themselves, as well as their interaction with the political power. He evaluates the ethnic-religious divisions of the workers and the patriarchal working conditions. In addition to this, the book deals with the ways and strategies of tobacco workers to resist the Reji administration and the political power in warehouses and factories. He examines the effects of different political conditions on the strikes and actions of the workers during the reign of Abdülhamid II and the CUP. We can say that one of Can Nacar's greatest contributions to literature with this book is that he does not focus only on the actions of the workers, but also writes the social history of the workers and the production commodity. The work can be seen as one of the important examples of writing history from below in terms of focusing on the memories and daily lives of workers.

The content of the book mainly focuses on two different categories. The first of these is the internal dynamics that determined the mobilization status of tobacco workers. The second is the relationship of major political and economic actors and

[80] Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire.*

processes with the workers' movement. In the first category, Nacar emphasizes the decisive role of gender roles in working conditions. He portrays the division of labor in factories as a space that produced gender inequality. In addition, the conflict between migrant workers and local workers, Greek workers and Bulgarian workers negatively affected the mobilization process of workers. In addition, their employment in factories and warehouses through family and acquaintance ties seems to have been effective in the working environment and organization of action. By focusing on these internal dynamics, Can Nacar sheds light on the positive and negative aspects of these resources in the mobilization process of a workers' movement. Secondly, in the study, it seems that political and economic actors have responded to the actions of workers in a way that protects their own positions. Abdülhamid II sought legitimacy for his political power by finding a position on the side of the workers against the opposition formed against him. However, it is emphasized in the study that labor leaders were punished. In addition, Nacar argues that workers were subjected to the main oppression under the CUP administration. While some of the CUP members stood by the workers locally, it seems that there was an attitude towards suppressing the workers in the center. As a result, in this study, Nacar shows the position of workers influencing the policies of political administrators and economic conditions.

1.3.3 Intersectional studies

Studies in this category approach class analysis in the late Ottoman period through an intersectional lens, incorporating various social strata such as gender and ethnicity alongside class. They reveal that, within production relations and working conditions, workers were exploited differently based on layers like gender and

ethnicity. For instance, while a male worker faced oppression from employers and the state, female workers experienced an even more complex form of inequality. As noted in Nacar's study mentioned earlier, female tobacco workers were never included in the same labor positions as their male counterparts. These differences also influenced their methods of resistance. This intersectional approach to labor history reveals various forms of oppression, but it is important to recognize that this internal division among workers often undermined their collective success and actions.

Quataert's work titled "Ottoman Handicrafts and Industry in the Age of European Industrial Hegemony, 1800-1914"[81] is the first article in this category. This study takes the transformation of Ottoman handicrafts from a different place than mainstream reading. In this article, a critique is made about how the Ottoman merchants, artisans and officials reproduced and organized themselves under the influence of European industrialization. Quataert criticizes the prevailing, conventional view in literature. This view includes that European industrialization negatively affected Ottoman handicrafts and industry and caused many jobs to disappear. The author does not completely deny this situation. However, he argues that European industrialization also brought new jobs to the Ottoman Empire. He explains this through several sectors. In general, the article finds the traditional view that European industrialization negatively affected Ottoman industry and handicrafts as simplistic and one-sided. He argues that the effect of industrialization on the Ottoman Empire had a much more complex structure. In addition, he also evaluates the position of gender and ethnicity in this great change in the Ottoman Empire. This

[81] Quataert, “Ottoman Handicrafts and Industry in the Age of European Industrial Hegemony, 1800-1914”.

article of Quataert has a contribution to Ottoman economic history, defending continuity and multi-faceted interaction against breakaway views.

Yaşar Tolga Cora, in his article titled "1910 Kömür Hamalları Grevi: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Emeğin Tarihi ve Sol Siyasetin Dili"[82] evaluates the strikes carried out by coal porters, mostly Kurds, in Istanbul in 1910. One of the main findings of the article is that the strikes caused by economic relations have caused a debate in the context of citizenship rights. The demands of the Kurdish workers, primarily for wage increases, were decisive for the strike. However, the author shows that the complaints about the mediators between the workers and the company are also decisive. Since the mediation of the CUP administrators was mainly aimed at the continuity of the economic order, the workers were disturbed by this situation. The author finds that this strike, which paralyzed the Istanbul port and the economy, caused a series of debates among the socialists, the state and the public. However, he adds that these discussions did not go beyond the ideals of Legitimacy. Therefore, it seems that the socialist movement in Istanbul remained in a discussion area determined by the CUP and the state. Thus, Cora focuses on the political discourses produced by the workers' strikes and demonstrates the transformative power of the strikes for the political discourse and conflict. In the article, the transformed attitude of the government during the strike and its approach to the workers are also discussed. The author states that the political discourses produced by the state and the socialist public miss the agency of workers and the article focuses on this agency.

In addition, Stefo Benlisoy focuses on a labor organization in Istanbul in the Late Ottoman period in his book "İstanbul'un Irgatları: II. Meşrutiyette Sosyalist Bir

[82] Cora, "1910 Kömür Hamalları Grevi: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Emeğin Tarihi ve Sol Siyasetin Dili".

İşçi Örgütü".[83] The author makes this analysis mainly on the activities of the Socialist Center of Turkey (TSM), which was majority formed by the Greeks, and the Ergatis newspaper, which is published every fortnight.

Benlisoy offers an alternative to the discussions on the existence of socialist organizations in the last period of the Ottoman Empire. Against the one-sidedness of the general narrative, Benlisoy points to the multinational, multi-religious layered structure of the movement. He seeks the influence of Ergatis, the media organ of the Socialist Center of Turkey, in the workers' strikes of 1910. In this respect, the book points to an important example in terms of feeding a socialist organization and a workers' movement from each other. He also shows that TSM's activities paved the way for worker activities and class-based organizations that emerged in later periods.

The main contribution of the author is to show that Greek, Armenian, Jewish and Turkish workers from different ethno-religious groups and different fields of work could exist in a movement. In this work, Benlisoy examines the activities of workers in three contexts. The first one is the Ottoman political and economic atmosphere during the Second Constitutional Period. The second is the political and social activities of the Greeks in Istanbul. The third is the context of the international socialist movement. The connection established by the Socialist Center of Turkey with this international network and the legacy it left behind to other regions and times constitute an important part of the book.

In the “Gendering Ottoman Labor History: the Cibali Régie Factory in the Early Twentieth Century”, Gülhan Balsoy[84] tries to give credit to the women workers, who are not mentioned enough in the history of labor. She states that the

[83] Benlisoy, *İstanbul'un Irgatları: II. Meşrutiyette Sosyalist Bir İşçi Örgütü.*
[84] Balsoy, “Gendering Ottoman Labor History: the Cibali Régie Factory in the Early Twentieth Century”.

aim of the article is not to write a comprehensive labor history. Instead, she tries to state a bridge between the field of labor history and women's studies. It can be said that Balsoy is constructing an intersectional perspective with this study. Therefore, the author uses the photographs of the Cibali Regie Factory as the main source and evaluates women workers and patriarchal working conditions through them. This article can also be considered as a feminist critique of mainstream labor history studies.

Balsoy's work is a very important article in terms of criticism and contribution to the labor history literature. However, Balsoy makes a very critical determination. She carries women, who are the most invisible faces of history studies in general and labor history studies in particular, from a very visible place to the present. She overcomes the belief that women are not included in historical narratives due to lack of resources, by reaching women through photographs. Thus, the source for historical study has also demonstrated the capacity and surprises of diversity.

In the "Dünyanın Kahrını ve Yükünü Taşıyanlar: İstanbul'daki Kürt Hamal Topluluğu" article, Rohat Alakom[85] studies the history of Kurdish porters in Ottoman Istanbul at the beginning of the 20th century. The author also evaluates the conditions of Kurdish migration to Istanbul, the working conditions of the porter profession and their social and political effects. In addition, the article explains that Kurdish porters are used in the context of conflicts between different political forces. While accepting the exceptions, the author argues that the Kurdish porters, whom he considers as the lowest level of the society and division of labor, were greatly affected by these political conflicts.

[85] Alakom, "Dünyanın Kahrını ve Yükünü Taşıyanlar: İstanbul'daki Kürt Hamal Topluluğu".

The author begins the story with Kurdish porters coming to Istanbul to create their living and working practices by using their countryman networks. Therefore, he says that these people have established a communication and solidarity network among themselves. The loss of their jobs with the Janissary Corps, which was abolished in 1826, constitutes an important turning point in the story. Armenian porters filled the place vacated by Kurdish porters. However, after the action of a group of Armenian revolutionaries in 1896, Kurdish porters returned to their profession with the guidance of Abdulhamid II. The author states that with this move of Abdulhamid II, Kurdish porters were used as a political tool against the Armenians. Therefore, Kurdish porters had a negative reputation in the world press, extorting the work of Armenian porters.

The author states that serious attacks against Armenians started after the events. He argues that the responsibility for these attacks is also placed on Kurdish porters. He argues that the state paved the way for these attacks against Armenians, but it is in their interests to know the Kurds as the cause of the events. Therefore, the opinion that the Kurds were used as the ax of Abdulhamid II became widespread in the world press.[86] The study shows that after these events, Kurdish porters were seen as the perpetrators of many crimes in Istanbul. We see that the punishment has gained a collective ethnic character by ignoring the individuality of the crimes committed. Alakom gives examples of mass exiles in these processes.

Finally, Alakom evaluates the relations of Kurdish porters with Kurdish intellectuals and members of the Kurdish national movement. He states that Kurdish intellectuals and Kurdish public opinion support the porters in the face of the harsh working conditions and political pressure that Kurdish porters live in.[87] Especially

[86] Alakom, "Dünyanın Kahrını ve Yükünü Taşıyanlar: İstanbul'daki Kürt Hamal Topluluğu," 172.
[87] Alakom, "Dünyanın Kahrını ve Yükünü Taşıyanlar: İstanbul'daki Kürt Hamal Topluluğu," 175.

after 1908, Kurdish intellectuals and student groups attempted to include porters in the Kurdish nationalism movement. According to the author, a nexus was thus established between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Kurdish workers. With the establishment of the Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti in 1918, Kurdish porters became a more active part of a political-national struggle. As a result, Alakom depicted the transformation of Kurdish porters, who had struggled for their lives since the end of the 19th century, into a political actor. In this respect, this history of porters as an exploited group and Kurdish porters as an oppressed ethnic group is one of the best examples of the intersectional perspective.

Erdem Kabadayı, in his article "Working from Home: Division of Labor among Female Workers of Feshane in Late Nineteenth-Century Istanbul",[88] makes an important contribution to the history of labor from an intersectional perspective. In this article, the author evaluates the ethnic and gender-based division of labor over Muslim and non-Muslim women workers in the 19th century. It makes this evaluation by considering the women workers from different ethno-religious groups working in the State Fez Factory. After an evaluation of the production processes of the fez, the author studies the effects of ethnic and religious conditions on employment and wages. According to the author, these ethno-religious features were not the main determinant. According to him, the main determinant was gender discrimination.

Kabadayı uses State Fez Factory wage ledgers as a source. The use of handicraft in the fez production process played an effective role in the employment of women in this field. The author reports from sources that Turkish, Greek, Armenian and Jewish women worked together to knit the fez in the factory. In this

[88] Kabadayı, "Working from Home: Division of Labor among Female Workers of Feshane in Late Nineteenth-Century Istanbul."

respect, he portrays the existence of an ethnic-religious diversity among female workers. The author analyzes the division of labor in the sector through the employment of women in the Ottoman fez production. The question of whether this division of labor emerged with an ethno-religious determination constitutes the main subject of the study.

The author identifies a small group of Muslim women among fez knitters. Among male workers, Muslim workers constitute the majority. He states that the Ottoman fez administration did not act according to any ethno-religious criteria when giving wages. Therefore, he questions the ethno-religious origin of the division of labor in the Fes Factory. Determining that the fez produced by Muslim female workers is 2% of the total production, the author argues that the division of labor is mainly determined by gender, not for an ethno-religious reason.[89]

Finally, Cora's study "Female Labor, Merchant Capital, and Resilient Manufacturing: Rethinking Ottoman Armenian Communities through Labor and Business"[90] focuses on the social history of textile production in the Yerznka (Erzincan) region. The study, which evaluates the society in terms of production relations, argues that the Ottoman textile economy remained strong with the effect of women's labor and the activities of local merchants-entrepreneurs. He also argues that the merchant-entrepreneurial characters and leaders of the local Armenian community reconstruct patriarchal sociology within these relations of production.

The article reads the intersectional construction of gender, class and ethnicity in Ottoman society through textile production in the aforementioned region. He associates the survival of Ottoman textile with the organization of capital owners. He

[89] Kabadayı, "Working from Home: Division of Labor among Female Workers of Feshane in Late Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," 78.
[90] Cora, "Female Labor, Merchant Capital, and Resilient Manufacturing: Rethinking Ottoman Armenian Communities through Labor and Business."

argues that this organization emerged in three areas. The first is cheap labor including child and female labor, the second is the hierarchical organization that ensured the dominance of merchant-entrepreneurs in the production process, and the third is that both workers and merchants were from the same ethno-religious community. According to the author, this situation could create an extra impetus in producing the patriarchal hierarchy and exploitative relationship.

All in all this section presents a comparative evaluation of a selection of labor history studies in the late Ottoman Empire. This evaluation was made over three different categories. The first of these is the "structure-based studies" category, in which there are mostly studies before the 2000s. In this part, I tried to deal with the works that depict the Ottoman worker mostly in the structural processes. What they have in common is that although they acknowledge the agency of workers in history, they focus on the impact of larger transformations, structures and politics. In addition, the fact that they examined the workers' movements mostly on the basis of activism is also a decisive feature. Secondly, I focused on the agency of labor movements that emerged in different geographies of the Ottoman Empire through the studies in the "movement based studies". These works not only give the workers a historical agency, but also reveal the history of the locals in the face of breakaway and modernist approaches. Finally, the studies I evaluated in the "intersectional studies" included gender and ethnicity in Ottoman labor history. These studies argue that the unequal conditions of Ottoman workers, craftsmen and porters are determined by gender and ethnicity as well as economic relations. In this respect, analyzing different areas of inequality in the context of labor history has both expanded the field of literature and provided a more realistic ground. So far, I have discussed studies on labor in the late Ottoman Empire. In the following section, I will

explore the other side of the labor-capital dialectics: the role of merchants in the existing literature. While the main subject of this thesis is the carpet workers of Uşak, on the other hand, the merchants, who were the other face of the class conflict, are equally important. An in-depth labor history study cannot be done without looking at the political and economic relations that these different actors established with each other. For this reason, the debate on the national bourgeoisie in the 19th and early 20th centuries is of great importance for the subject of the thesis. Thus, an evaluation of this discussion will be made in the next section.

1.4 Merchants in the late Ottoman Empire

The fields of activity of Ottoman merchants and especially the agency of Muslim merchants between the 19th century and National Economy Era *(milli iktisat)* have been a highly controversial issue. In the 19th century, the influence of foreign capital in Ottoman production and trade networks began to threaten the activities of local Muslim merchants. Especially in Istanbul and Izmir, the commercial and financial activities of non-Muslim merchants, as well as foreign capital, have increased and gained a dominant character in the markets and western international trade networks. Non-Muslim merchants increased their effectiveness by using the influence of European states and obtaining various privileges.[91] However, contrary to the traditional acceptance in the literature, Muslim merchants and industrialists continued their existence throughout the century during this transformation process of the Ottoman Empire.[92]

[91] Başaran Lotz, "Türkiye'de Burjuvazinin Gelişiminde Tüccarlar: Müslüman-Türk Aileler ve Ticaret Ağları," 211.
[92] Cora, "Nemlizadeler: Erken Cumhuriyet dönem ekonomi politiğinde milli tüccarı aramak," 251.

The main point of these discussions was shaped around the idea of "national economy",[93] which was developed during World War I and matured in *İktisadiyat Mecmuası* in 1915. During this period, the most convenient way for the CUP's political propaganda was to oppose the policies of the Abdulhamid II reign. In accordance with this propaganda, CUP claimed to be the creative subject of the "national economy" in various magazines and newspapers. According to this idea, the Ottoman economy before 1908 had a structure that did not allow the development of trade and industry. According to them, no state policy was carried out for the construction of the national economy until the Second Constitutional Monarchy. On the contrary, the opportunities of the national economy were destroyed by Abdulhamid II's policies.[94] In addition, the idea of "national economy" claimed that the indifference of Ottoman Muslims towards trade was built from the cradle, and therefore their predisposition to trade did not develop before 1908. Accordingly, the reason why the Ottoman Empire fell behind in industry and foreign trade was this indifference and love of bureaucracy ingrained in the structure of the society.[95]

The opinion in the literature that merchants did not exist as a class with political and economic power until the Second Constitutional Monarchy is a repetition of this political propaganda of the CUP. For example, Zafer Toprak dated the beginning of the commercial activities of Muslim merchants to the Second Constitutional Era. In fact, according to him, Muslim merchants could not have an active presence until the First World War because even the liberal economic model after the Second Constitutional Monarchy served to increase the dominance of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie. Therefore, according to Toprak, the Muslim bourgeoisie's

[93] Toprak, *Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi: Türkiye'de Ekonomi ve Toplum; 1908-1950,* 13.
[94] Toprak, 85.
[95] Toprak, 100.

entry into the trade was not caused by a class-based will, but was achieved by state intervention.[96] Similarly, according to Faroz Ahmad, the bourgeoisie did not form in the Ottoman Empire until 1908. According to him, before the 1908 revolution, even though commercial activities were suitable for the economic functions of the bourgeoisie, they did not have a class power in the political sense. The bourgeoisie, as a class that could influence the state economically and politically, was created by the CUP after 1908. Before that time, there was a comprador bourgeoisie consisting only of non-Muslim merchants. However, since their sense of belonging to the Ottoman Empire was weak, they cooperated with European states and engaged in activities that negatively affected the Ottoman Empire.[97] There are two points here that can be considered problematic. The first is that non-Muslim merchants did not have a self-appointed purpose and class activity independent of European guidance. Reşat Kasaba has shown that the competition between local intermediary merchants and foreign merchants for the trade networks in the inner parts of Anatolia made it difficult for foreign capital to penetrate these regions.[98] The self-interest of these intermediary merchants was a determining factor in the connection of both agricultural production and trade with European markets.[99] Therefore, it is not possible to consider the class position of non-Muslim merchants directly within the economic-political program of European capitalists.

The second problematic idea is that Muslim merchants did not act in line with a common class interest. Therefore, Muslim merchants did not have any political pressure that could affect the state. The establishment of the status of *"hayriye*

[96] Toprak, *Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi: Türkiye'de Ekonomi ve Toplum; 1908-1950,* 107.
[97] Ahmad, "Vanguard of a Nascent Bourgeoisie: The Social and Economic Policy of the Young Turks 1908-1918," 329-330.
[98] Kasaba, "Was There a Compradore Bourgeoisie in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Western Anatolia?," 73.
[99] Kasaba, 85.

tüccarı" is an example showing the incompatibility of this idea with historical facts. After non-Muslim merchants who used the protection of European states during the reign of Selim III abused these relations, the *"avrupa tüccarı"* status was created with the motivation of the state to control these relations. However, since this status provided additional privileges to non-Muslim merchants, it caused Muslim merchants to be in unfair competition. In the reign of Mahmud II, the privilege demands of Muslim merchants led to the creation of the *"hayriye tüccarı"* status, equivalent to the *"avrupa tüccarı"*.[100]

Therefore, it is possible to say that from time to time throughout the 19th century, Muslim merchants had a common class interest that put pressure on the state and had the potential to gain as a result of this pressure. Similarly, the tax privileges applied to the industrial investments of Muslim merchants in the first years of the 20th century constitute important examples of the demand-gain relationship.[101] As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, many such steps were taken to encourage the industrial production and export-oriented activities of Muslim merchants before the 1908 revolution. The basis for the economic privileges given to Muslim merchants by the Ottoman Empire was the development of national wealth and industry.[102] Similarly, during this period, Muslim merchants based their demands on contributing to *"menfaat-i umumi ve milli"* (public and national benefit). Therefore, it is not possible to see the Second Constitutional Monarchy as a moment that sharply divides the period before and after. For instance, could the Ottoman Boycott, which emerged immediately after the Second Constitutional Monarchy,

[100] Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayri Müslimler: Kapitülasyonlar-Beratlı Tüccarlar Avrupa ve Hayriye Tüccarları (1750-1839)*, 96; Cora, "A Muslim Great Merchant [Tüccar] Family in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Case Study of the Nemlizades, 1860-1930," 5.
[101] BOA, *İ.RSM*, 29/39.
[102] BOA, *BEO*, 3659/274355.

have been organized if Muslim merchants had not had widespread activity in Anatolia? The 1908 Ottoman Boycott is an example of a social movement aimed at Austrian goods, involving different layers of society in a very large part of the Ottoman territory. One of the most important subjects of this boycott was Muslim merchants. And the boycott emerged not from a political center, but as a social movement. The political power of Muslim merchants played a major role in the widespread response of this movement in the Ottoman lands. According to Doğan Çetinkaya, the foundations of the idea of "national economy" were laid during the boycott process and this boycott movement enabled it to become widespread among the people.[103] Therefore, the empirical basis of the narrative that the "national economy" project created the national bourgeoisie from nothing is quite weak. On the contrary, the social dynamics that made the "national economy" applicable and produced the policy of this idea began to form before the 1908 revolution.

The traditional narrative in question acknowledges the bureaucrat class, non-Muslim bourgeoisie, and European states and companies as key players in the process of the Ottoman Empire's integration in the world economic system.[104] One reason for this is the "national economy" discourse in question, and the other reason is that the literature focuses more on industrial type productions. The class existence of the Muslim bourgeoisie was measured by its presence in industry. Doğan Çetinkaya argues that this tendency in the literature stems from the fact that A. Gündüz Ökçün's Industrial Statistics of 1913 and 1915 were used as a basis when searching for the Muslim bourgeoisie.[105] However, reading the class activity of the bourgeoisie only through industry reveals a very incomplete evaluation of both the

[103] Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu: Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi,* 48.
[104] Çetinkaya, *Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak,* 45.
[105] Çetinkaya, *Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak,* 41; Ökçün, *Osmanlı Sanayi: 1913–1915 Yılları Sanayi İstatistikleri.*

economic history of the Ottoman Empire and the history of capitalist development. One reason for this is that industry was not the main axis of economic activity in the Ottoman Empire. Secondly, the class conflict arising from capitalist relations cannot be limited to industrial production. Focusing only on industrial production leaves the areas of existence of both the working class and capitalist merchants quite incomplete. Therefore, in order to better understand the Muslim bourgeoisie in the Ottoman Empire, it is necessary to look at areas such as trade networks, management and distribution of agricultural production.

Çağlar Keyder is one of those who argues that the Muslim bourgeoisie did not form before the Second Constitutional Era, based on its presence in the industrial field. According to him, the absence of the Muslim bourgeoisie and working class was so pronounced that the labor-capital dichotomy in the early 20th century Ottoman Empire was portrayed as a conflict experienced only among non-Muslims. He argues that this was due to the limited presence of Muslim merchants in the manufacturing sector and the predominantly non-Muslim composition of the workforce. Therefore, the predominance of non-Muslims in manufacturing and trade prevented the emergence of broader class conflict.[106] At this point, it is necessary to point out two problems that come to the fore in Keyder's thought. Firstly, Keyder restricts his examination of manufacturing activities to Istanbul, Izmir and Thessaloniki. This is because major industrial activity was concentrated in these urban centers. However, in this way, Keyder limits manufacturing activities to large factory-based production and keeps workshops and putting-out basis production and small scale factories, which spread to many provincial and city centers in Anatolia, outside the area of class conflict. As a result, the commercial and industrial activities

[106] Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar,* 62.

of the Muslim bourgeoisie and the organization of Muslim workers using methods such as protests, actions and complaints are underestimated. As Yaşar Tolga Cora said, this traditional view caused "class-based social conflict to be replaced by an ethnic/religious-based social conflict by ignoring Muslim capital".[107] Keyder's argument is part of this perspective that makes class conflict invisible. He asserts that ethnic/religious conflict prevented the emergence of class conflict and that the Muslim bourgeoisie did not exist as a class in this period. The previous chapter contains an evaluation of the workers, who are the other side of this debate. The power of class conflict to create a common feeling beyond ethnic divisions is discussed through the organization of Muslim and non-Muslim workers in Uşak against Muslim merchants. This common feeling caused the workers to share their economic and political demands, even though they were from different ethnic layers of society. Therefore, Muslim and non-Muslim workers were able to organize class unity and struggle. Contrary to Keyder's claim, this organization is an important example of the potential of class conflict to transcend ethnic divisions before the Constitutional Monarchy.

It is a fact that Muslim and non-Muslim merchants had different fields of activity due to the political and cultural conditions of the century. Understanding these conditions will answer why Muslim merchants were not seen in the studies of the late Ottoman period. Therefore, I will initially offer a brief comparative overview of the activities of non-Muslim capital and Muslim capital.

One of the main reasons why the non-Muslim bourgeoisie emerged as an important actor of this period was its position as an intermediary between the world market and the small farms, which were the basic structure of the Ottoman land

[107] Cora, "Nemlizadeler: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönem Ekonomi Politiğinde Milli Tüccarı Aramak," 249.

system. Through this commercial network, non-Muslim merchants served as agents of numerous European states, facilitating the expansion of foreign capital investments and their influence in Ottoman territories. According to Çetinkaya, another source from which non-Muslims gained power is their cultural capital.[108] Their linguistic, religious, and cultural similarities with European states provided them with an advantage in benefiting from European protection and obtaining privileges, as well as in becoming preferred agents when necessary. Therefore, it is a fact that non-Muslim bourgeoisie had dominant power in the market thanks to these advantages. However, another reason for the perception of non-Muslim bourgeoisie as the sole economic actor of the 19th-century economy, with reference to Quataert, is the focus of the literature on exports rather than domestic markets. Yet, the effectiveness of Muslim merchants in local trade networks was significantly substantial. At the same time, most of the Ottoman Empire's trade volume during this period was in this domestic market.[109] Therefore, the activities of Muslim merchants have become invisible as the literature focuses more on international trade. Furthermore, Quataert demonstrates that Eastern trade also had a significant share in the empire's trade volume. He indicates that Muslim merchants were more active in this trade network until the late 19th century.[110] Therefore, it cannot be said that the dominant position of non-Muslim bourgeoisie in foreign trade eliminated the effectiveness of Muslim merchants. At the same time, it cannot be asserted that Muslim bourgeoisie was a class which was created in the post-war period within the framework of the CUP's economic-political program. On the contrary, examples such

[108] Çetinkaya, *Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak,* 33.
[109] Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922 (Vol. 34),* 124-128; Mestyan, "The Muslim bourgeoisie and philanthropy in the Late Ottoman Empire," 212.
[110] Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire: 1600-1914, 838.*

as Nemlizades,[111] who were engaged in political, administrative, and commercial activities in the Black Sea region before 1908, Muslim merchants who were part of the 1908 Ottoman Boycott,[112] and Uşak Muslim merchants, which are the main subject of this chapter, have been pivotal actors in the political and economic landscape of the late Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic.

Looking at the history of the 19th and 20th centuries through the lens of "milli iktisat", focusing on Europe-centered international trade networks, and industry-based class reading made the existence of the Muslim bourgeoisie in the Ottoman Empire invisible. This trend of historical research affected not only 19th century studies. This state of indifference towards the activities of Muslim merchants has caused research on previous centuries to remain limited.[113] However, investigating the existence of Muslim merchants in the Late Ottoman Empire and the nature of this presence, it will be beneficial for many discussions about the period.

[111] Cora, "A Muslim Great Merchant [Tüccar] Family in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Case Study of the Nemlizades, 1860-1930."
[112] Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu: Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi.*
[113] Kafadar, "A death in Venice (1575): Anatolian Muslim merchants trading in the Serenissima," 191-192.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONTINUITY AND MOBILIZATION IN THE CASE OF UŞAK CARPET WORKERS

In March 1908, a large group of workers consisting of several thousand men and women attacked the three carpet yarn factories in Uşak.[114] The group, which destroyed the factories and machines with their axes, started a chain of actions that lasted for several days. This action, which is referred to as "machine breaking"[115] or "tarak yağması" in the literature, has an important meaning in terms of social, economic and political relations within the framework of carpet weaving in Uşak.

Uşak carpet weaving and spinning workers, mostly women, struggled with the increasing industrialization of the sub materials of carpet production (yarn production and dyeing) towards the end of the 19th century.[116] For this reason, they destroyed the factories that caused this change and were the symbol of industrial production. However, this study views the 1908 protests as more than just actions against factories. The workers in the carpet production sector had been embroiled in a class conflict with merchants for decades. The primary demand of the women producing carpet yarn was to shut down the yarn factories. Yet, it was not only the yarn-spinning women who participated in the 1908 protests. Carpet weaver women and girls also joined these actions. This involvement was due to merchants exploiting the labor of women in this sector for unfair profits over the years. Additionally, workers claimed that the quality of carpets had declined because the factories used synthetic dyes for the threads. The factories faced further criticism for threatening the

[114] BOA, *BEO*, 3269/245156.
[115] Quataert, "Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia", 1860–1908.
[116] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü.*

traditional field of carpet yarn dyeing, a trade predominantly held by men. Consequently, peasant women who spun yarn, women and girls who wove carpets, and the men who dyed carpet yarns, along with their families, all united in rebellion against this long-standing exploitation.

In this chapter, I aim to show through Uşak women carpet workers, who were the subject of labor history studies in the second half of the 19th century, were not a rare part of social movements, worker activities and the production process, and that they had an active and conscious policy. Ottoman labor history literature mostly focused on industrial workers. Craft, workshop, and house loom workers were not seen as part of the working class.[117] For this reason, the stories of many sectors and workers in the history of Ottoman labor remained outside the literature. However, this literature is expanding with new studies. Vatter's study showed that textile journeymen in Damascus went on strike in an organized, conscious and regular manner during the late Ottoman period. Similarly, Chalcraft[118] has shown that service and craft workers in Egypt organized to improve their wages and working conditions and formed a movement that extended into politics. Therefore, focusing on workshops or putting-out productions where women worked intensively has great meaning in closing the gaps in the history of the working class and the history of women who were a part of the Ottoman working class.[119]

The main purpose of the chapter is to show that the struggle of the carpet workers of Uşak was a continuous, non-random-organized struggle. I will also focus on the economic, political and cultural opportunities that have fueled the

[117] Vatter, "Şam'ın Militan Tekstil Dokumacıları: Ücretli Zanaatkarlar ve Osmanlı İşçi Hareketleri".
[118] Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt.*
[119] Balsoy, "Gendering Ottoman Labor History: the Cibali Régie Factory in the Early Twentieth Century"; Vardağlı, "Searching for Women's Agency in the Tobacco Workshops: Female Tobacco Workers of the Province of Selanik".

mobilization of this workers' movement. Looking at the multi-layered social ground on which they organized the movement will enable us to see them not only as individuals seeking their economic rights, but also as actors who have collectively made politics. Therefore, I argue that this movement, which gained momentum in the process leading to the Second Constitutional Monarchy, as a part of the Ottoman labor movement, nurtured the ground that transformed macro-political processes.

2.1 Machine breaking action in 1908 and its continuity

It is a general acceptance that carpet production in Anatolia started with the migration of Nomadic Turkish tribes to Anatolia in the Middle Ages. In the 16th and 17th centuries, carpets began to be exported from Uşak for European palaces and churches. It is possible to see a piece of Uşak carpets in the paintings of many European painters such as Holbein and Paris Bordone from these periods.[120] In addition to production for the foreign market, carpet production for the domestic market was widespread. Uşak carpets were produced especially for palaces, government offices and large mosques.[121]

In the second half of the 19th century, the volume of carpet production in Anatolia, including Uşak, experienced a significant increase.[122] According to the general approach in the literature, the fact that carpet production was one of the most important manufacturing activities in the last period of the Ottoman Empire was explained by appealing to the aesthetic interests of the West[123]. After the palaces and churches, carpets were imported from Uşak in the 19th century for the houses of

[120] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü*; Tutsak, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Döneminde Uşak'ta Halıcılığın Makineleşme Süreci".
[121] Çakmak, "XX. Yüzyıl Başında Uşak'ta Kurulan İp Fabrikaları".
[122] Cora, "The Market as a Means of Post-Violence Recovery: Armenians and Oriental Carpets in the Late Ottoman Empire (c. 1890s-1910s)."
[123] Quataert.

lower class people from Europe and the USA. Besides, based on the study of Cora, the increase in carpet production in Anatolia can be explained by local conflicts and dynamics, especially for Central and Eastern Anatolia.[124] It seems important for Uşak to ask the same question and look for local factors that may have increased production. However, this issue may be the subject of further studies.

In addition to this general situation of carpet production in Anatolia, Uşak remained the traditional carpet center with the largest production volume from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century.[125] For example, in the mid-1890s, at least four times more production was made in Uşak compared to important carpet centers such as Gördes, Demirci and Kula.[126] Likewise, in the Izmir Port, where carpet exports were made, three-quarters of carpet exports belonged to Uşak in the 1880s. By 1910, this rate had decreased to one in four. The reasons for this are that industrial production and cheap labor were more easily established in other regions. The reason why industrial production could not find a settled area in Uşak cannot be explained by a single factor. However, the reasons for this are that Uşak was a traditional carpet center and had an organized workforce. As mentioned above, the fact that workers' wages were higher than in other regions also indicates this. However, the effect of the local dynamics in the regions where carpet production has shifted is very important.[127]

By-products required for carpet weaving in Uşak were produced in houses until the last quarter of the 19th century. In this production process, which consists of washing, spinning, dyeing the yarns and finally weaving the carpet, approximately

[124] Cora, "The Market as a Means of Post-Violence Recovery: Armenians and Oriental Carpets in the Late Ottoman Empire (c. 1890s-1910s)."
[125] Quataert, "Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860–1908".
[126] Yılmaz, "The Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited (Şark Halı Kumpanyası) ve Osmanlı Halıcılığındaki Yeri ve Önemi".
[127] Cora.

11,000 workers were employed in Uşak.[128] It was also the livelihood of about 90,000 people.[129] However, with the establishment of dyehouses and yarn factories towards the end of the century, there have been significant changes in the production process and the quality of the material. In addition to this, many people who made a living from yarn manufacturing and dyeing in Uşak became unemployed. As a result, in the middle of March 1908, "several thousand men and women"[130] attacked three carpet factories, looted thousands of liras worth of materials and destroyed factories with machines.[131]

According to a petition written by the factory owners days after the protest, the conflict in Uşak started to intensify a year before the protest. It is seen that the meetings held at nights in various madrasahs, guesthouses and houses were a part of the process that prepared the 1908 actions.[132] It is known that the day before the action, the workers gathered in front of the Government Building and demanded the closure of the factories.[133] Beside this, one day after the destruction of the factories, a protest was taken with the demand for the release of 14 people who had been arrested due to the action. As a result of this action, those arrested were released.[134] The community, whose actions resulted in success, gathered one day later for the release of District Governor İshak Tevfik Paşa, who was thought to have encouraged the events. However, this action did not conclude the intended outcome.

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[128] Çakmak, "XX. Yüzyıl Başında Uşak'ta Kurulan İp Fabrikaları".
[129] BOA, *ŞD*, 2771/9.
[130] BOA, *BEO*, 3269/245160.
[131] BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1308/2.
[132] BOA, *BEO*, 3338/250325.
[133] BOA, *BEO*, 3269/245156.
[134] *"Ahâlî bugün de hükümet-i seniyyeye ictimâ' edip evvelki tahribata cür'et edenlerden tahkîkât zımnında mevkûf bulunan on dört kişinin tahliyelerini istirhâm etmeleri üzerine is'âf ile netice-pezîr olunmuş iken bu def'a da idâre-i işten el çektirilmiş olan kazâ kaymakamlığının ibkâsını istirhâma başladılarsa li'l-hamd bir gûna uygunsuzluğa meydan verilmeksizin dağıtılmış oldukları Uşak binbaşılığından alınan telgrafnâme üzerine ma'ruzdur fermân."* BOA, *Y.MTV*, 307/110.

Tangible examples of class conflict, which became more visible with the actions of 1908, seem to have continued in 1909 as well. In the petition written by Çalıkzade Mehmed Kemal, who was the representative of the factory owners whose factories were damaged, it is seen that the conflict continued with the same strength and an association called Uşak Fedayi Cemiyeti threatened the factory owners in Uşak.[135] It is seen in this document, the workers who made their living from carpet production in Uşak continued to organize after the 1908 protests. Similarly, according to the report signed by the Provincial Police, written in 1909, the closure of these factories was "a matter of life and death" for workers. They also had an exact stance against any state pressure to open factories.[136] Therefore, the machine breaking action that took place in March 1908 was neither the first nor the last action organized by the workers in Uşak against the factory owners. I argue that these events, which seem like a few days of actions, were part and result of the worker mobilization that started to take place from the 1890s. This workers' movement lasted too many years to fit into a moment and formed a tradition.

It is possible to see from the sources that many years before 1908, complaints and various protests were on the agenda of Uşak. These unrests were directed at the spinning mills attempted to establish in the last two decades of the 19th century.

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[135] *"Şimdi ise üç bin kesattan ibaret olan bu yağmagerân bu şerzeme-i kalîle Uşakça bir Fedâyi Cemiyeti nâmı alarak her kim fabrikalar lehine idâre-i kelâm eder ise "Uşak Fedayi Cemiyeti imzasıyla" onlara tehditâmiz varakalar göndererek beyân-ı haktan nükûl ettirmekte ve 'böylesi olanları katledeceğiz mahvedeceğiz' gibi alenî sözler söylemektedirler. Hatta bu babda Uşak Fedayi Cemiyeti imzası ile iki zâta yazılmış iki kıt'a varaka-yı tehdidiye elde edilerek bir mâh kadar evvel hükümete müracaat edilmiş ve bu cemiyetten bir ikisi meydana çıkarılmış iken diğer erkânı, hükümeti dahi 'Adana Vakı'ası'na döndürürüz' gibi sözlerle tehdit ederek haklarında tedbîr-i kanunî ittihaz eden sarf-ı nazar edilmiştir."* BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1308/2.

[136] *"Halı yüzünden geçinen Uşak ahalisinin bu fabrikalar yüzünden pek büyük bir infi'âli vardır. Şâyia duyulduğuna göre hükümet bu işi layıkıyla tedkîk etmeyerek hemen fabrikaların küşâdına kalkışırsa yani asker gönderirse kurâ halkıyla beraber kasaba sekinesi umumiyetle hücum edecek ve fakat bu defa binâ tamamen hedm ve kal' edilerek hâk ile yeksân edilecektir. Orada herkes bu meseleye hayat memat meselesi nazarıyla bakıyor. Böyle taarruz vuku' bulacağı evrâk-ı mütekaddime arasında bulunan mahalle polisi komiserinin tezkiresinden de müstebattır."* BOA, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

According to Quataert, one of the protests was to prevent the establishment of a carpet yarn factory. "Two capital owners in Uşak tried to establish a factory that would produce carpet yarn, but the state prevented the establishment of this factory due to the protests of the 'people'".[137]

In addition, the conflicts of the carpet workers with the factory owners and merchants did not develop only because of the establishment of the spinning mills. At the same time, the workers complained that the merchants used fraudulent measurements and calculations while purchasing the carpets, and that they constantly indebted the workers. For example, a document dated 1894 is about the complaint petition of the carpet loom owner Ekmekçizade Hüseyin Hüsnü against the carpet merchant Tiridzade Mehmed Ağa.[138] One of the important points here is that the merchant Tiridzade Mehmed Ağa, who was the subject of the complaint in 1894, was also one of the three factory owners whose factory was destroyed in the machine-breaking action in 1908. Therefore, it can be traced to the conflict between workers and merchants directly through the same actors. In a document from 1892, which contains similar complaints, there is also a case between the workers and the merchant, which lasted for two years. According to this document, the case was concluded in favor of workers and their receivables were collected from the merchant.[139] The dominant tone in all of these complaints is based on the duality of merchants and community (*ahali*). Even if the lawsuit was between individuals, it was expressed as "merchants' damages to the community". These statements show that the conflict between workers and merchants was a prevailing situation

[137] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü.*
[138] *"Halı tüccarından Tiridzade Mehmed Ağa'nın kendilerine i'mal ettirmekte olduğu halıları hîn-i misâhada yüzde sekiz on arşın kadar eksik tutmak ve rü'yet-i muhasebede daima kendilerini medyun çıkarmak gibi harekât…"* BOA, *DH.MKT*, 358/53.
[139] BOA, *DH.MKT*, 2024/74.

throughout the district. Therefore, it can be said that the carpet workers of Uşak had a tradition of class conflict.

2.2 Grievances and their sources

Carpet workers from Uşak tried to protect their jobs, wages, and the quality and reputation of Uşak carpets against the dyehouses and yarn factories established towards the end of the 19th century. In this section, I will make an assessment on the complaints that caused the workers' experience of organizing for nearly 20 years. These complaints were not only economically based, but also shaped by the aesthetic and artistic values attributed to carpet production. I argue that this artistic value and economic grievances were different from each other, but had a quality that built each other.

The earliest complaint record in Uşak that I could access from the sources is the document from 1892, which I discussed in the previous section. Since this date, carpet weaving workers have complained to the merchants about the carpet measurement, the price of the carpet and the products of the factories. We can see the most visible form of these complaints in the correspondence reflected in the archival records after the 1908 action. These documents were written by the police, the district governor, the provincial office director and aimed to inform the central state about the actions. One of these documents is the report written by the Inspector of Provincial Letter Office (Vilayet Mektubi Kalemi Mümeyyizi) and the Provincial Police Director (Vilayet Polis Müdürü) of 1909.[140]

According to this document, complaints of weaving workers consisted of four categories. The first of these is the measurement tricks of the merchants -as well as

[140] BOA, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

the factory owners- when they bought the carpets from the weavers. Selling carpets to merchants consisted of several stages. Primarily, weavers brought carpet to merchants' shops. The merchants measured this carpet, calculated its price, and paid the weavers their wages. The important point here is that the merchants measured the carpets after the weavers left the shop. Therefore, since there was no one to control them, they were constantly increasing their profits by making inaccurate measurements. Complaints about this situation seem to have reached the merchants and relevant authorities before. Because it is written in the document that the merchants agreed to make accurate measurements, but after a while they continued to cheat with the same method. In order to solve this problem after the Second Constitutional Monarchy, with the intervention of the Uşak Military Branch, the merchants agreed to make accurate measurements. For this, two people trusted by both the merchants and the weavers were provided to control the measuring process. However, in a short time, merchants continued to make fraudulent measurements in the old way.[141] As a result, merchants were not paying for a piece of carpet and the workers were also working a part of the weaving without being paid. In the second place, the complaints were based on the merchants' debt to the workers. According to the document, merchants were recording their debts to workers. However, they changed the rate they determined together with the workers in this record while collecting the debt. At the same time, while calculating the price of carpets, they used a different rate to increase their profits fraudulently.[142] In addition, the workers

[141] *"Destgahlarda nesc edilen halılar tüccarın mağazasında, fakat destgahdarın gıyabında ölçüyor. Bu misâha şimdiye kadar baş tarafları kalın bir demir arşınla icra edilmektedir. Halılar ya şekl-i murabba' veya mustatilîde yapıldığından misâha-yı [...]de tul ve [...] ölçülerek bulunacak miktarların yekdiğere hasrıyla elde ediliyor."* BOA, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

[142] *"Destgahlara verdikleri mevâd-ı ibtidâiyeye mecidiye yirmiden hesap tutmak fakat te'diyâtta mecidiyeye yirmi iki buçuk kuruş addetmektir. Yani meselen bir arşınlık halı için verdikleri üç kıyye ip kıymeti olarak mecidiye yirmi kuruş hesabıyla otuz dört kuruş zimmet kay ettikleri halde destgahtâra verdikleri paraya mecidiye yirmi iki buçuktan hesap ediyorlar. Binaenaleyh te'diyatta her yirmi*

complained about the cost of transporting the carpets from their homes to the merchants' shops. Although the distance between the weaving houses and the shops was quite close, the merchants made high deductions from the weavers' wages as porters' wages. In addition, even if the weavers carried out the transportation themselves, the merchants still deducted the price of the carpet as a porter's fee.[143]

The workers opposed the manufacture of carpet yarn by factories and the dyeing of the yarn in dyehouses. The source of this complaint took form by concerns about both economic and artistic values. Very concretely, the fact that factories produce carpet yarn has caused people who used to do this job at home to be unemployed. Before the factories were established, all stages of carpet production were carried out by people living in Uşak. The workers who worked for each part of this process, which consisted of stages such as washing, spinning, dyeing and weaving the wool, earned their living in this way. Merchants, intermediaries and headmen were also providing the wool and delivering the carpet orders to the weavers.[144] However, especially as the yarn factories and dyehouses established by the British capital in the Western Anatolia region became widespread, Muslim merchants started to open factories as well. The monopolization efforts of the British capital and the high profits of the carpet yarn factories in Bandırma and İzmir

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kuruşta yüz pare kesiliyor demektir ki bunun da destgahtarın hesabına bir zarar olduğu aşikardır." BOA, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

[143] *"Tüccarın hamaliye meselesinde de destgahdar hesabına tenzîlatta bulunmaları âdettir. Faraza bir destgahdar destgahında yaptırdığı halıyı kendi sırtıyla bile tüccarın mağazasına nakl etmesine hammâliye namıyla lâakal beş kuruş kıt'a ayırıyorlar ki bunun açıktan açığa bir hırsızlıktan farkı yoktur. Tüccar o halıya şayet destgahdar bizzat nakl etmeyecekse mutlaka kendi hammaliye-i nakl ettirirse gayet fâhiş bir ücret-i hammaliye kat' eder. Bir fakir destgahdarın i'mal ettiği elli iki arşınlık bir halıdan on dört kuruş otuz pâre hamaliye kesildiğini gördüğümüz bir sergide muharrer ve musarrih idüğü şâyân-ı dikkattir. Hâlâ buna Uşak kasabası küçük olduğu ve tüccar mağazaları kâin olan çarşısı kasabanın vasatında bulunduğu için destgahın bulunduğu mahal mağazalara -böyle gâlî ve her türlü insaf ve adaletten ârî hamaliye ahzini muhıkk gösterecek kadar uzak değil- yakındır."* BOA, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

[144] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü;* Tutsak, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Döneminde Uşak'ta Halıcılığın Makineleşme Süreci"; Çakmak, "XX. Yüzyıl Başında Uşak'ta Kurulan İp Fabrikaları".

encouraged the Muslim capital owners. In the first years of the 20th century, many factories such as Hamzazade Yarn and Şayak Factory, Bacakzade Yapağı and Şayak Factory, Yılancızade Yarn Factory started to produce yarn in Uşak.[145] The production of both the factories in İzmir and Bandırma and the yarn factories in Uşak left many women workers unemployed.[146]

Another issue that was the subject of workers' complaints was the negative effect of fabricated yarn production and the use of synthetic dyes on the quality of the carpets. Yarn factories have caused the quality of the yarns to deteriorate by mixing ordinary materials such as wool clippings in the yarn production process. In addition, because the carpet yarn produced by hand did not lose its natural oils, it had a longer life. Likewise, the dyeing of the yarns was a matter of conflict. In traditional carpet production in Uşak, carpets were always dyed with madder and other natural dyes. However, with the opening of the dyehouses, the yarns were started to be dyed with synthetic, cheap dyes. These dyes caused the carpet to fade in a short time and adversely affected its quality in this respect.[147] The decrease in the quality of the carpets caused many merchants in Izmir to cancel their orders. Weavers worried that the Uşak carpet would no longer be in demand economically.

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[145] BOA, *BEO*, 1542/115603.

[146] *"Öteden beri Uşak'ta nesc olunan halılar Amerika ve Avrupa'ya gönderilmekte ve imalatı dahi yine Amerika ve Avrupa'dan mümessil numune ve boyalara tasdik ve telvinatta sabit olmayan ma'den boyalar isti'mal edilmektedir. Uşak kasabasında bi'l-umum ahali-yi İslamiye ve Hristiyaniye bu sanatla me'lûftur. Ahâliden bir kısmı öteden beri ticâretâmiz halı nesci ve bir kısmı da levâzım-ı nesciyeden olan yün ve yapağıları tarayıp ve ip boyayıp ihzâr ve fürûhat ederek te'mîn-i mâ'işet ve kasabaya mütecâviz otuz kırk pâre kurâ ahâlisi kadınları dahi levâzım-ı nesciye i'malat ve ihzaratıyla iştigal edegelmiştir. Gerçi mevcut fabrikalarla halı örülmeyip usûl-ü kaydî vechile tüccar tarafından amele marifetiyle destgahlarda nesc edilmekte ise de yün ve yapağı tarayıp ip yapılmakta ameleye ve üç fabrikaya inhisar ve yakın zamanda İzmir'de İngiliz teb'asından bazı tüccarın bu halı ahz ve i'tâsı üzerine te'sîs ettikleri sendikaya Kıyyezade Osman Ağa ile üç nefer refîk dahil olub bu sendika namına vuku' bulan siparişatın yine İzmir ve Bandırma'dan gönderilen boyalı ipliklerle i'mâline mecbur edilmesi üzerine öteden beri yün ve yapağı tarayıp ip i'mâl ve fürûhat eden kasaba ve kurâ ahâlisi kadınlarının kısm-ı a'zamı işsiz kalmıştırlar."* BOA, *DH. ŞFR*, 395/34.

[147] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü;* Tutsak, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Döneminde Uşak'ta Halıcılığın Makineleşme Süreci"; Çakmak, "XX. Yüzyıl Başında Uşak'ta Kurulan İp Fabrikaları".

In addition, they were concerned about the deterioration of the traditional and artistic reputation of the Uşak carpet in the market. There are different opinions in the literature on this issue. According to Gümüş[148] weavers put such emphasis on the reputation of carpets in order to legitimize their demands and complaints in the eyes of the state. Beside this, according to Quataert the fact that carpets were hand-woven made a sense against industrial-type mass production.[149] It refers to the value attributed to Uşak carpets in Europe and America, since each carpet is a unique piece and an artistic production. In other words, the weavers of Uşak regarded carpets as prestigious based on the value that consumers put on them. There is no doubt that these views are part of the truth. However, besides this, carpet weaving on house looms had to have a self-appointed meaning as it was both the traditional and almost the only and the biggest means of livelihood of the people of Uşak. The flow of the district life was on carpet production. Weavers were explaining themselves and their socio-cultural capital through the artistic value of the Uşak carpet. Moreover, weaving carpets was also a work of artistic creativity for women weavers. Many weavers made new compositions from the patterns given to them by the merchants and weaved purely from their memories.[150] Therefore, carpet weaver women were performing an art on hand looms. However, especially as a result of Oriental Carpet Manufacturers (OCM) taking control of the production process, the weaving workers in the workshops of the companies became part of a fully automated production. British-funded workshops had spread to many parts of Anatolia. Although the OCM had not yet established workshops in Uşak, they were aware that large capital owners and carpet merchants were taking over handmade production, starting with yarn

[148] Gümüş, "An analysis of the Ottoman carpet industry, 1843-1914: Workers, merchants and the state".
[149] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü.*
[150] Quataert.

production. In response to this shift, they targeted the yarn factories owned by Muslim merchants in their local areas. Additionally, OCM and British-owned factories and workshops were also subjects of their complaints.

There was a transition to a production where creativity disappeared with ready-made patterns and the number of written knots. Therefore, carpet weaving was becoming unskilled. Uşak weavers must be aware of this situation, as they tried to protect not only their wages and work, but also their art. For this reason, the demand for the closing of yarn factories and dyehouses was one of the most important demands of the movement in Uşak.[151]

2.3 Political opportunity for mobilization

In this section, I will focus on the local political relations and opportunities that have fueled the mobilization of workers. The main complaints that enabled the mobilization of Uşak weaving workers emerged in an economic field. However, the organization and alliances of this economically based movement enable us to see them as political subjects. The workers did not just oppose the factories and the merchants. At the same time, they were able to strategically establish political alliances with other local merchants and the local administration.[152] Therefore, it seems meaningful to read this workers' movement as a movement that was fed with economic grievances and that was able to act strategically and get involved in

[151] *"Halı iplerinin fabrikalarda i'mâl olunması sanatın inkırazına ve revaçtan düşmesine bâdî olmak itibarıyla [...] olunduğundan ve halı ticareti heman memleket-i osmaniyeye mütehassır bulunduğundan sanatın ve bir kısım servet-i memleketin muhafazası içün iplerin gerek Uşak gerek Bandırma fabrikalarında ve Tiridzâde Mehmed Paşa tarafından ahiren Karahisar'da açılan fabrikada i'malinin külliyen ve şedîden men'i lazım gelir."* BOA, *ŞD,* 1228/8.
[152] BOA, *BEO,* 3338/250325; Gümüş, "An analysis of the Ottoman carpet industry, 1843-1914: Workers, merchants and the state".

politics. In this respect, the opportunities created by the political atmosphere and capital relations seem to have increased their mobilization power.

The workers seem to have cooperated with the local administration and a few merchants in the 1908 machine-breaking actions. The District Governor of Uşak, İshak Tevfik Efendi, who was dismissed immediately after the action, is one of the names with whom these relations are most visible. According to both the dominant opinion in the literature and the common opinion of the state and the merchants whose factories were attacked, the workers were provoked by İshak Tevfik Efendi, the Mayor, the *muhtars* and some opponent merchants.[153] For example, a letter sent by İshak Tevfik Efendi to the wife of the late Governor Osman Pasha, who lived in Istanbul's Sultanahmet district, prompted an investigation. The Governor of Hüdavendigar reported that in this letter, İshak Tevfik Efendi admitted to encouraging the 1908 events. This prompted the Grand Vizier's Office to initiate an investigation. In the letter that was eventually found, İshak Tevfik Efendi denied any responsibility for the events, claiming that the main responsible were the Governors of Hüdavendigar and Kütahya, and argued that he was being treated unfairly. İshak Tevfik Efendi's aim in writing this letter was clear. Using his network in Istanbul, he requested to be reinstated.[154] Even though there is no concrete evidence in the documents about a direct connection of İshak Tevfik Efendi with CUP, it is understandable that the state evaluated the issue in this way. Since these events were before the Second Constitutional Monarchy of 1908, it can be thought that the administration of Abdulhamid II connected the events with the CUP. It was thought that District Governor İshak Tevfik Efendi, who was appointed to Uşak 38 days before the events, was connected with the CUP group in Istanbul and that the

[153] BOA, *BEO,* 3338/250325.
[154] BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66-1.

movement was encouraged from Istanbul. For this reason, he was seen as responsible for the events and was dismissed from his duty.[155]

The shortcoming of the view that carpet workers acted under the guidance of a group of rival capitalists or the CUP can be better understood by looking at the class conflict that took place before 1908 machine breaking action. Quataert evaluates the CUP agitation and the impact of economic unrest together.[156] However, contrary to his claims, he still gives the CUP an engine position. On the contrary, the resistance of the workers in Uşak against the factories existed before İshak Tevfik Efendi and continued after him. Therefore, it is more reasonable to see the CUP in a position that only supported the workers for its own political activity. The fact that some merchants and local administrators were actors in the process did not mean that workers were under their control. On the contrary, it shows that the capital owners were not one body and had a conflict about local power fields and in the trade network. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

Beside this, it shows that the workers had an agency that had a power to affect the political processes. The workers allied with the local government for their economic demands and tried to ensure the power and legitimacy of the movement. Therefore, the movement of carpet workers from Uşak, which reached the peak of mobilization about four months before the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, also shows on which ground the Constitutional Monarchy was declared. A strong social mobility, the existence of economic and political conflict, the struggle for the rights of the workers and the people provided this ground.

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[155] *"...şu harekat tarafgirâne bir meslek ittihaz eylediği anlaşılagelen Kaymakam-ı kaza İshak Tevfik Efendi'nin su-i tedbir ve entrikası neticesi olduğundan..."* BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, 395/5.
[156] Quataert, "Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860–1908".

Finally, the macro-political ground of 1908 provided an opportunity to strengthen the hand of the movement. From this point of view, it seems meaningful to evaluate the policy of Abdulhamid II towards strikes and protests at the end of the 19th century. He had a position that sought legitimacy in the eyes of the people for reasons such as the political activity of the CUP against him and the economic unrest of the people. We can see the policy of Abdulhamid II to prevent social movements from growing and threatening his own power in the strikes of Cibali Tobacco workers.[157] (Nacar, 2019). In his work on this subject, Nacar shows that political and economic actors have responded to the actions of workers in a way that protects their own positions. In the face of rising opposition against him, Abdulhamid II took care of the workers and thus sought legitimacy for his political power. He followed a policy of balance that punished the leaders of the movement and tried to adjust the dose of this punishment. Chapter four covers this government policy in more detail.

2.4 Working class qualification

In this section, I would like to focus on the working class character of the movement formed by the Uşak carpet workers. The fact that 70% of the Uşak workers were Muslim women[158] and the fact that the merchants whose factories were destroyed were also Muslims allow for a class conflict-based approach to this movement. I argue that the main motivation of the workers was based on direct class conflict rather than being anti-imperialist, anti-foreign capital. It was their common position in the relations of production that enabled the workers to form a collective movement.

[157] Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire*.
[158] Quataert, "Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860–1908."

In Uşak, the opposition to foreign capital was mostly made by merchants. Uşak weaving and spinning workers also complained about the foreign capital factories established in İzmir. However, the difference between the two groups is that the workers established their grievance language not over the nation of the capital, but over economic demands. In addition, the fact that the target of the actions in 1908 was the factory of three Muslim merchants is reason enough to come to this inference. Merchants tried to organize workers against foreign capital, but it is a fact that this was an unsuccessful attempt. We can see this effort of the merchants in a letter sent to Tercüman-ı Hakikat in 1907, probably by a person close to Tiridzade Mehmet Paşa, and quoted by the Ahenk Newspaper.[159]

This letter is important in many ways. First of all, we can see the majority of the complaints of the workers in this letter, as well. However, it is understood that the letter was written from the perspective of a merchant who wanted to establish his own factories in Uşak and was competing with foreign capital. Therefore, in the letter, the *Halı Sendikası* (OCM) in Izmir was shown as the cause of the workers' complaints. Beside this, according to the letter, the local yarn factories led by Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa in Uşak as a solution to this situation. However, the workers showed that the reason for poor quality or unemployment was not foreign capital, by

[159] *"Bununla beraber bazı ecnebi İzmir halı tacirlerinin ahiren sarf-ı menfaat-i şahsiyelerinin te'mini içün bir Sendika teşkil ederek Anadolu-yu şahanenin bir rükn-ü mühim san'at ve ticareti olan halıcılığı yed-i inhisara almak yolundaki teşebbüsatı malumdur. ... Reviş-i hâle bakılırsa Sendika çok vakit evvel bu ciheti de tezekkür etmiş ve Sykes fabrikasında imal ettirdiği ipleri İzmir'de tesis eylediği boya fabrikasında telvin ettirip Anadolu halı imalat merkuzlarına sevk etmeye başlamıştır. Bari gönderdiği ipler sağlam olsa. Ne mümkün. Bunlar bir takım arıntı kırpık çürük şeylerle melhut olduğundan hîn-i imalinde dökülüp telef olması sebebiyle yalnız destgahtar mutazarrır olmuyor. İleride Anadolu mamulatının itibardan düşmesine dahi bir mukaddime teşkil ediyor. İşte Sendika'nın muhteviyatını pek çok zaman evvel keşf eden Uşak halı tüccarını, erbab-ı hamiyyet ve rüviyyetten Tiridzade Saadetlü Mehmed Paşa Hazretleri de dahil olduğu halde bu kere on sekiz zattan mürekkeb bir şirket teşkil eylediler. Ahali kemâ-fi's-sâbık yapak ve ipçilik ticaretinde serbest olacak ve mamulatın nefasetine muceb olacak hususata fevkalade dikkat edilecek, İzmir'de sendikaya dahil olmayan tüccar ile evvelden câri muamelata ilişmemek üzere doğrudan doğruya Avrupaca'da ahz ve i'taya girişilecektir."* Ahenk, 3361, 04.08.1907/24 C 1325.

destroying the factories of Muslim merchants doing the same production. Thus, the workers drew attention to the nature of the demands and complaints. For this reason, it was noted in police reports that workers complained about both the İzmir *Halı Sendikası* and Muslim-owned factories such as Tiridzade, Yılancızade and Bacakzade.[160] Therefore, the movement of carpet workers in Uşak, covering the last 10 years of the 19th century and the first 10 years of the 20th century, was directly organized around economic conflict and artistic values. The sources of this organization were that the merchants made a profit from the labor of the workers without giving them their due, the workers were indebted for years and finally their jobs were taken away by the factories. In addition, this unemployment caused the quality of Uşak carpets to decrease, the production process and the division of labor to change. The organizational power and bargaining power of women workers, who were in many stages of the production process until the second half of the 19th century, began to shrink with the factories. The workers, who did not want to lose this power, organized throughout the district and became an active agent in the conflict, either through petitions or by using violence.

2.5 Conclusion

The majority of late Ottoman labor studies tend to see the Second Constitutional Monarchy as a break. Accordingly, the activities of the workers had an unorganized and spontaneous character before the Second Constitutional Monarchy.[161] Workers started to organize only within the liberal environment provided by the revolution. This chapter, on the other hand, aims to show that the movement of carpet workers

[160] BOA. *ŞD*. 1228/8.
[161] Karakışla, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri."

from Uşak, which started in the last period of the Ottoman Empire and about 20 years before the revolution, had an organized and conscious mobilization.

The main purpose of the chapter is to show the continuity of the machine breaking action that took place a few months before the 1908 Second Constitutional Monarchy. I examined the character of the economic and political conflict in which this continuity was established, extending to the post-Constitutional period. The fact that the movement started before the Second Constitutional Monarchy also has a political meaning. Although the strikes and actions that took place after the revolution are seen as an expression of the pre-existing economic and social unrest, the founding role given to the revolution overshadows these movements. The continuity of the actions in Uşak and the mobilization organized by the people who made a living from carpet production over the years are ridding of this shadow. The story of the carpet workers of Uşak is a good example to show that the Second Constitutional Monarchy could only emerge on a social ground where there was a socio-economic and socio-political squeeze and class conflict.

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMY-POLITICAL SOURCES OF CARPET MERCHANTS AND A NATIONAL CAPITAL INITIATIVE

While examining economic and political processes in Late Ottoman, the official and central rulers, European states and foreign capital are generally given more priority as the actors. Especially in studies on the history of Western and Central Anatolia, the cultural, economic and political roles of actors on the Second Constitutional Era from various layers of society such as local eşrafs, local administrators, workers and the peasants need to be further investigated.[162] The relationships, conflicts and exchanges that these actors establish with the state and each other provide the benefit of discovering the underlying causes of social events in a multifaceted way. Reading this period of Ottoman modernization and integration into the world economy with local dynamics and understanding the interrelationship of the transformation process with these dynamics allows us to see the story more holistically. From this perspective, in order to understand the Uşak workers' movement in 1908, it is necessary to look at the other side of the coin, that is, the merchants who were in economic, political and administrative relations with the workers.

Until the end of the 16th century, the main economic and social structure of the Ottoman Empire was based on the *tımar*. As of this date, changes were made in the land system due to reasons such as military technologies necessitating structural changes and the state's need for cash. *Iltizam* was extended to the tithe tax levied on land. The widespread use of the *iltizam* led to an increase in the power of *ayans* and

[162] Cora, "A Muslim Great Merchant [Tüccar] Family in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Case Study of the Nemlizades, 1860-1930," 5; Başran Lotz, "Türkiye'de Burjuvazinin Gelişiminde Tüccarlar: Müslüman-Türk Aileler ve Ticaret Ağları," 207.

ayans families.[163] They emerged as powerful political and economic actors in the provinces from the end of the 16th century onwards. The collection of taxes by the *ayans* enabled them to become the intermediary of the state in the provinces and social relations were transformed along with this economic order. At the same time, since the *ayans* were the constitutive agents of the social structure in the provinces, they were political power with whom the state was in conflict. The wealth of the *ayans* was based on the taxes they collected from the peasants and the trade they carried out through this wealth.[164]

The 18th century was a period in which the Ottoman Empire experienced economic and military difficulties due to the wars on the Eastern and Western fronts. For this reason, land ownership opportunities for *ayans* were expanded as a way to cover the costs of wars and military planning focused on trained soldiers.[165] From the beginning of the century until the Tanzimat period, the giving of many properties, including *miri arazi*, to tax farmers on the condition of *"kayd-ı hayat"* strengthened the social position of the local notables. As a result, the power of the notables on land and agricultural production expanded and the state's need for cash was tried to be met in this way.[166]

While some of the notables were *fermanlı ayan* appointed by the state, many of them were political subjects who had strong local economic and social capital and dominated the local administration.[167] In the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire not only carried out the provincial administration through these notables in the

[163] Karpat, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Toprak Rejimi, Sosyal Yapı ve Çağdaşlaşma," 104-112.
[164] Wallerstein, Decdeli, Kasaba, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Dünya Ekonomisi ile Bütünleşme Süreci," 44.
[165] Göçek, *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi, İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme,* 104-105.
[166] Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Âyânlık,* 112.
[167] Hourani, "Osmanlı Reformu ve Eşraf Politikaları," 68.

provinces, but also used the military forces of the notables for the security of the provinces. The state's use of notables as an intermediary force against the bandits' threats[168] revealed a two-way relationship. First of all, the social capital and power of the notables against the state has increased. Secondly, the state remained in a supra-political position by keeping the notables in an intermediary position with the people. Thus, the notables became a power outside the state in many matters, from collecting taxes to resolving legal cases and ensuring public order. Therefore, solving the social conflicts was left to the internal dynamics of the society. At the point where social problems could not be solved with these dynamics, the state emerged as a power that dominated the people and the notables and solved problems. I will discuss this second form of relationship in detail in the next chapter, where I evaluate the policy of the state in the late Ottoman Empire.

Towards the middle of the 19th century, with the participation of the Ottoman Empire in the capitalist economic system, military, political and economic changes transformed the central and provincial policies. The existence of the notables in the provinces threatening the state authority[169] and the independence movements that emerged in the Balkan lands led the state to produce centralizing policies.[170] These centralization policies weakened the power of the provincial notables. After this period, when the power of the notables was broken, the increase in free trade, participation in the world economic system, and reformist policies regarding land and trade changed the social position of these subjects.

The origins of the local merchants and tax farmers who were active in commercial and industrial activities and local administrations in the second half of

[168] Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Âyânlık*, 306-307.
[169] Göçek, *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi, İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme*, 146; Hourani, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIIIth Century," 100.
[170] Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme (1820-1913)*, 151.

the 19th century were based on this notable class that accumulated wealth from the land. The wealth coming from the land was transformed into commercial capital and adapted to the changing economic structure of the century. An important reason for this was that tax farmers who collected the tithe tax in kind had to make cash payments to the state.[171] During this process, with the development of international trade, trade-facilitating infrastructures such as the construction of railways also paved the way for the emergence of these tax farmers as a merchant class. These merchants of *ayan* origin converted the in-kind products they bought from the peasants into cash in local and international markets and gained an intermediary position between the state and the people. Thus, they became important subjects of Ottoman trade and social structure.[172] According to Kemal Karpat, the destruction of the institutional structure of the *ayans* with the Tanzimat process does not mean the destruction of the social relations built upon it.[173] Even though the institutional status of the *ayans* was destroyed, these people adapted to the new economic and political process as entrepreneurs, merchants, tax farmers and administrators. Even though their names changed with the Tanzimat and were known as "ağa" or "vücuh-u belde", they continued to exist categorically. This social class, which has similar interests, continued to have a life practice separate from the ordinary people. Even though their political power decreased after Tanzimat, they preserved their economic and cultural capital and continued to be active forces in local politics.[174] Therefore, the social

[171] Çakmak, "Geç Dönem Osmanlı Taşra Toplumunda Eşrâfın Mahallî İşlevleri Üzerine: Uşaklı Tirîdzâde Mehmed Paşa," 11.
[172] İnalcık, "Capital formation in the Ottoman Empire," 102-103.
[173] Karpat, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Toprak Rejimi, Sosyal Yapı ve Çağdaşlaşma," 105.
[174] Kuran, "Ayanlığın Kaldırılmasından Sonra Anadolu'da Sosyal ve Ekonomik Durum (1840-1871)," 289-290; Kuran, "XIX. Yüzyılda Anadolu'nun Sosyal Tabakalaşmasında Ayanların Yeri," 164-167.

foundations of the *ayans* preserved their existence through local *eşrafs* and merchants after the Tanzimat[175]

Depending on this transformation process, carpet merchants of *ayan* origin continued to operate as a local power in Uşak. The diversity of the power areas they had and the way they consolidated this power over the people had made them a part of social conflicts. In what kind of economic-political process and against which actors were the weaver women and girls, the women spinning yarn, the men dyeing yarn, the villagers supplying raw materials part of a common resistance? The answer to this question will be aimed at understanding the founding role of the economic and political activities carried out by Uşak carpet merchants in the class conflict that has been visible in the region for years. For this, it is necessary to first look at the integration process of the 19th century Ottoman economy with the world capitalist system. This process took place with the penetration of European capitals into Ottoman trade and industrial networks. This situation brings up issues such as the privileges provided to foreign companies and non-Muslim merchants, and the efforts of foreign capital to form monopolies in the Ottoman lands. The impact of these efforts on the field of activity of Muslim merchants caused them to become involved in this field with both an accommodative and a conflicting approach.[176]

Since Muslim merchants in Uşak were engaged in both industrial and commercial activities, they emerged as the economic actors of this transformation process in Uşak. Due to this process of harmony and conflict, debates such as the effectiveness of Muslim Ottoman merchants in the international trade networks and Ottoman industry, the establishment of domestic industry, the existence of the

[175] İnalcık, "Sened-i İttifak ve Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu," 609.
[176] Çetinkaya, *Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak*, 20; Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direniş,* 22.

national bourgeoisie, and the ethno-religious separation of the capital hold a very central place in the Ottoman economic and political history of this period. In addition, the competitive relations among Uşak Muslim merchants will also be the subject of this chapter. One of the purposes of making these discussions in this chapter is to show that the Muslim bourgeoisie had political and economic activities at the intersection of the 19th and 20th centuries. Secondly, by demonstrating the multi-layered and internally conflicted character of capital, the aim is to seek the role of this character in the mobilization of a worker-peasant movement in the Ottoman Empire.

Finally, in this chapter, I will delve into the diverse spheres of activity among Uşak muslim merchants. Thus, it will be possible to see that the relationship between the merchants and peasants and workers was not only economic but also political and administrative. The names of merchants repeatedly were a subject of the complaints in various archival documents years before the 1908 machine breaking actions. The multiplicity of these dimensions contributed to tensions in Uşak stemming from various sources, prompted individuals across different stages of the production process to unite against the merchants. Identifying the origins of this tension that erupted in 1908 is crucial for comprehending the multifaceted dynamics of the relationship between workers, peasants, and merchants. Moreover, it sheds light on the extent of engagement of these actors in the social sphere, as well as the multi-dimensional struggle undertaken by workers in their seeking rights.

3.1 Economic integration in the world market

The 19th century marked a time of significant economic and political shifts within the Ottoman Empire. The interaction of the European capitalist economy's search for

raw materials and markets with the Ottoman Empire's economic and political conjuncture enabled the Empire's integration into the global economic system. This participation occurred not in a linear manner, but rather as a multi-faceted and multi-factor process. At the same time, this period witnessed political and economic reforms within the Ottoman Empire, leading to transformations in its social structure.

Taking a broader perspective on structural processes, we observe changes such as the land system becoming incompatible with the military and economic framework of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of a professional bureaucratic class actively engaging in politics, and alterations in Ottoman finance influenced by both wars and pressures from the global capitalist system. During this period, with the capitulations given to European states, foreign capital and non-Muslim merchants gained important commercial privileges. With the Baltalimanı Treaty of 1838, British capital was given the freedom to invest and trade in Ottoman lands. In particular, the construction of railways and port cities caused the inner regions of Anatolia to increase their production volume and facilitate their participation in international trade networks.[177]

In addition to the privileges provided to foreign capital, we also see that the Ottoman Empire tried to increase the domestic industry and the effectiveness of Muslim merchants. As we will see in the following sections, merchants who carried out commercial activities in Anatolia were provided with opportunities such as being exempt from customs duties, allocating land for factories and workshops, and obtaining licenses. The creation of these opportunities was both due to the economic policy of the state to suppress foreign capital and as a result of the persistent commercial-industrial activities and demands of local merchants. Therefore,

[177] Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa iktisadi yayılımı ve direniş.*

participation in the world economic system was a process in which external and internal factors should be evaluated together. On the contrary, Eurocentric views, which are the approach of modernization theorists and the dependency school, prioritize structural and external factors. Accordingly, the economic and social values that Europe had were ideal conditions that other societies should reach. Besides, without the need to attach such a positive meaning, the European economic system was a force to which other cultures were inevitably adapted. However, contrary to these views, it is also possible to read the relationship of the Ottoman Empire with the world economic system in terms of conflict and adaptation.[178] For this, it is necessary to focus on the micro-scale interaction of the macro political and economic context, from the centers to the locals. In this respect, it is important to recognize the dynamics that differ in effectiveness depending on class, cultural, ethnic and gender roles in society and to rewrite these social layers in a broader historical context.

3.2 Monopolization activities of foreign capital in the carpet sector and reactions

Until the early 20th century, carpet production, which was concentrated in Western and Central Anatolia, reached distribution points in Europe and America through the port of Izmir. Therefore, around the Izmir port, both local and foreign, Muslim and non-Muslim merchants and companies engaged in carpet trade through collaboration and competition. Examples include P. De. Andria & Company, founded in Izmir in 1836, and Habif & Polako, established in Izmir in 1840, both of which were British companies involved in carpet trade.[179] Additionally, T. A. Spartali & Company,

[178] Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa iktisadi yayılımı ve direniş,* 22; Göçek, *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi, İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme*, 241.
[179] Yılmaz, "The Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited (Şark Halı Kumpanyası) ve Osmanlı Halıcılığındaki Yeri ve Önemi," 293.

established in 1842, played a significant role in the international trade of Ottoman carpets produced in Anatolia. Six companies, including these three foreign capital companies, merged in 1907 and established The Amalgamated Oriental Carpet Manufacturers (OCM), which monopolized carpet production and trade in Anatolia within a few years. The establishment of this company, as we will see through the example of Uşak, significantly influenced the relations in carpet production and trade in Anatolia.

Prior to the establishment of OCM, the carpet trade conducted by the aforementioned six companies, centered in Izmir, was facilitated through agents interconnected with the inland regions of Anatolia.[180] Carpets procured via the networks of local merchants collaborating with carpet weaving houses were transported from Izmir and marketed in the stores of these foreign entities to countries such as England, France and Egypt.[181] Carpets woven by women workers in regions like Uşak, Gördes, and Kula reached global markets through Izmir via the extensive trade network predominantly governed by local Muslim merchants. Consequently, while the export activities of Muslim merchants towards the West were not intense, it is clear that they formed the determinant actors of this trade network at the local level.

In addition, Sykes & Co., a component of OCM and established in Izmir in 1902, took over a factory located in Bandırma for woolen carpet yarn production. This factory was established in Bandırma in 1898 by Ferik Muhiddin Paşa, Nazır of Fes, Bez ve Çuka Fabrika-yı Hümayunları, having obtained privileges from the state. Sykes supplied yarn to 14 carpet production centers across various regions of

[180] BOA, *HR.TO*, 225/54; Yılmaz, "The Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited (Şark Halı Kumpanyası) ve Osmanlı Halıcılığındaki Yeri ve Önemi," 294.
[181] Yılmaz, 88.

Anatolia through this factory. The yarn production in Bandırma accounted for 84% of the total yarn requirement of these production centers in Western and Central Anatolia.[182] Despite Sykes' dominance in yarn production and distribution, we see that the yarns from Bandırma could not enter Uşak.[183] The reason for this was the presence of three yarn factories in Uşak and the resistance shown by the owners of these factories against Sykes. This resistance and competition were organized by the carpet merchants of Uşak, who conducted a campaign in 1907 to preserve the domain of national capital within the carpet sector. Furthermore, the tension about yarn factories owned by Muslim merchants in Uşak from 1902 to 1907, caused by the complaints of women workers, should also be considered as a contributing factor to Sykes' inability to establish influence in Uşak. The basis for this interpretation is the reactions of yarn spinning women to the local merchants' yarn factories. It is possible that these reactions contained an organized force that prevented Sykes from selling yarn to Uşak. The passage in Ahenk newspaper belongs to an article written from Uşak. It is mentioned that carpet production regions outside Uşak were forced to buy Sykes' yarn. In the rest of the article, all Uşak people, from merchants to weavers, were called to stand against Sykes.[184] Since the owner of Sykes was also an important actor in the international carpet trade, he was a merchant who had agencies in many parts of Anatolia and gave orders to carpet weavers. Therefore, he imposed on the weavers that the carpets to be woven should be made from yarns produced in his own factories in Bandırma. In addition, some intermediary local merchants in

[182] Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında İmalat Sektörü,* 265.
[183] Ahenk, *3245*, 21.03.1907/6 S 1325; Yılmaz, "The Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited (Şark Halı Kumpanyası) ve Osmanlı Halıcılığındaki Yeri ve Önemi," 296.
[184] *"Destgahın menfaatine ve dokumacıların yevmiyesine göz dikildi. Fabrika ipinden gayrısını istimal ettirmemeye muvaffak olan İzmir'deki tüccarlar Bandırma ipini istedikleri bir fiyatla destgahlara satmaya kalkıştılar. İşte on beşten on sekiz kuruşa kadar elde bükülmüş ip dururken destgahtar bunu almaya cesaret edemeyip yirmi üç yirmi dört kuruşa Bandırma ipini alıp kullanmaya mecbur kaldı."* Ahenk, *3248*, 24.03.1907/ 9 S 1325.

Anatolia also worked to fulfill Sykes' demands in order to become his agents and ensured that the yarns were supplied from Bandırma. Thus, Sykes' effectiveness in the carpet production regions in Anatolia increased.

However, a telegram from the Governor of Hüdavendigar Province to the Ministry of Internal Affairs reveals that Sykes, the owner of the carpet yarn factory in Bandırma, was detained during the machine-breaking actions of 1908 and subsequently went missing.[185] This indicates that a key objective of the labor movement organized in Uşak was to disrupt the dominance of Sykes' yarn factory in Bandırma. Therefore, both the general opposition of Uşak workers against the yarn factories and the campaign of Uşak merchants against foreign capital factories seem to have prevented Sykes from entering Uşak. The majority of these Uşak merchants who opposed Sykes' dominance were Muslim carpet merchants. These merchants were also actors in the campaign against the OCM in 1907, as will be mentioned later in this section. This group of merchants, including three factory owners who were the targets of the machine breaking actions in 1908, carried out activities to promote the local and national economy against foreign capital.

By the year 1907, OCM had been established with six partners, consolidating their average of 50-60 years of experience and commercial connections. Consequently, the agents of these companies in the carpet production centers of Anatolia began to operate for the trade of OCM. Additionally, through the yarn factory in Bandırma, OCM started to produce the yarns of the carpets produced in workshops established in various regions or on household looms ordered by themselves. In this way, it became possible to establish a significant dominance in trade networks and monopolize the production of sub materials for carpet production.

[185] BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, 380/7.

In the early years of the 20th century, before the establishment of the OCM, Muslim merchants from Uşak began to establish carpet yarn factories with various privileges. In 1902, Yılancızade Osman Efendi applied for a license to establish the first steam-powered yarn factory in Uşak.[186] Over the next few years, merchants within local *eşraf* such as Tiridzade Mehmet Paşa, Hamzazade Hüseyin Hüsnü, and Bacakzade Ali Efendi established yarn factories. The exemption of customs duties on tools and equipment to be imported from Europe for these yarn factories demonstrates the strong relationship between Muslim Ottoman merchants and the state.[187] It is evident that the Ottoman administration supported domestic capital with these privileges. In addition, the Ottoman State, for the development of domestic industry, attempted to cope with European influence.[188] through the resources of Muslim merchants who obtained their wealth through tax farming and trade, rather than with its own resources. It is clear that the development and strengthening of national industry and trade against European capital had an important place on the state's agenda in terms of economic policy.[189]

Muslim merchants from Uşak have also constructed a discourse based on the development of national art and industry in order to break the monopoly of the OCM and to be influential in carpet trade. With this discourse, they have attempted to establish a legitimate ground both to receive state support against foreign capital and to dampen the emerging labor movement against them. For this purpose, they legitimized their production and trade within the framework of carpet weaving by emphasizing the strengthening of domestic industry and a sense of belonging to the

[186] BOA, *ŞD*, 1581/16.
[187] BOA, *İ.RSM*, 29/39; BOA, *ŞD*, 1217/2.
[188] Göçek, *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi, İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme,* 248.
[189] BOA, *BEO*, 3659/274355.

national art of carpet weaving. “It is well known that there are attempts to monopolize carpet weaving, which is an important art (craft) and trade of the magnificent Anatolia.”[190] This definition also aimed to portray foreign capital as integrated with a character that works only for its own benefit. On the contrary, according to them, the carpet trade and yarn production carried out by local merchants not only compatible with the traditional rules of art, but also included a common national feeling and a "national" policy such as developing Anatolia. For this reason, local merchants doing business with OCM were also accused of acting for their short-term interests. They argued that fighting against this would provide a common national interest. This common interest promised to protect the traditional division of labor and production system in all items such as woodcutting, dyeing, yarn production, weaving and trade required for the carpet production process.[191] Ultimately, they advocated for the necessity of establishing a similar joint company against the OCM as a means to protect Anatolian art and trade. Hence, in 1907, 18 carpet merchants and yarn factory owners, including prominent figures from Uşak such as Tiridzade, Hamzazade, and Bacakzade, came together to establish the Uşak Carpet Trading Company *(Uşak Necm-i Ticaret Osmanlı Anonim Şirketi)*.[192] The establishment of this company was declared through the discourse of *hamiyet*, which would be prominent during the 1908 Ottoman Boykott.[193] This discourse, used approximately one and a half years prior to the Ottoman Boycott for a similar conflict, provides an important source for the historical background of the boycott

[190] Ahenk, *3361*, 04.08.1907/24 C 1325.
[191] Ahenk, *3254*, 31.03.1907/16 S 1325.
[192] Çakmak, “XX. Yüzyıl Başında Uşak’ta Kurulan İp Fabrikaları,” 43; Çakmak, “Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908),” 140.
[193] Ahenk, *3254*, 31.03.1907/16 S 1325; Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu: Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi.*

movement. In addition, accusing local merchants who have engaged in business with the OCM of betraying *hamiyet-i vatan* clearly illustrates the fragmented character of capital. This fragmentation was caused by merchants engaging in conflicting interests among themselves. The internal conflicts of capital will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

Therefore, the discourse of "hamiyet-i vatan"[194] opened a legitimate space for Uşak Muslim merchants to seek support for their commercial and industrial activities. According to statements found in *Ahenk.*[195] Uşak Muslim merchants portrayed their investments in the carpet industry and their commercial activities as not serving their own interests but rather as efforts to establish a national economy against external enemies.[196] Through this discourse, *hamiyet* was instrumentalized to manipulate class conflicts and worker-peasant resistance against labor exploitation. Therefore, Uşak merchants tried to cover up the class conflict by using national discourse as a legitimate basis for their economic activities. However, this effort to obscure all societal conflicts except for the national/non-national conflict did not strengthen unlike the Ottoman Boycott. Instead, Muslim and non-Muslim workers joined forces to break ethnic conflict with class conflict. Their main target was not only opposing foreign capital but also the factories owned by Muslim merchants in Uşak.

One possible reason for the merchants' campaign not gaining enough strength could be the inability of Uşak Carpet Trading Company's capital to compete with

[194] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 140.
[195] Ahenk, *3254*, 31.03.1907/16 S 1325.
[196] *"Şirketin menafi'inden daha ziyade menafi'-i ve istifade-i fukarayı muhafaza ve asar-ı sınaiyyenin her türlü suistimalattan vikayesiyle terakkiyat-ı nesciyyeyi ve teksir-i ihracatı te'min ve sendika belasının tecavüzat-ı muzırrasını min-küllil-vücuh men edecek birçok mevad…"* Ahenk, *3254*, 31.03.1907/16 S 1325.

OCM capital.[197] Additionally, the disadvantage of the national campaign led by Muslim merchants being conducted against the presence of a single company also played a role. On the other hand, the 1908 Ottoman Boycott provided an opportunity for various actors from different segments of society to participate together. The publishing world, professional groups, workers, and merchants, despite having different motivations and expectations, could be part of the same movement.[198] While the carpet merchants campaign had contained a possible boycott, it ended up with the organization of a company among the merchants due to the lack of mass support. However, it seems that the campaign was perceived as a boycott movement in government circles, as an investigation was conducted on this matter. As a result of this investigation, the Vali of Hüdavendigar Province stated that it was not a boycott attempt. The campaign of Muslim merchants was described as an economic struggle against foreign merchants threatening the "poor people" and "national capital".[199] It is seen that, like the merchants, the state also supported their economic activities through a national discourse. Therefore, it can be said that in this process corresponding to the last years of the reign of Abdulhamid II, a political discourse was formed to strengthen the local and national bourgeoisie.

The campaign conducted by Uşak carpet merchants resulted in a similar outcome to the 1908 Ottoman Boycott. In both processes, workers gained strength for the mobilization of their own movements. Workers, drawing from the internal conflicts of capital, utilized the legitimate ground created by these processes to achieve their rights. During the Ottoman Boycott, despite the decision of the "*Boykotaj Cemiyeti"* to end the boycott, port workers continued their strikes and

[197] Çakmak, "Osmanlı Modernleşmesi Bağlamında Bir Batı Anadolu Kazasında Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı: Uşak (1876-1908)," 43; Ahenk, *3227*, 26.02.1907/15 M 1325.
[198] Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu: Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi.*
[199] BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66/1.

used the momentum gained from the boycott to obtain their rights.[200] A similar process occurred in Uşak as well. A year after the campaign against OCM by Uşak Muslim merchants, the 1908 machine-breaking actions took place.

During these actions, Uşak workers also used the legitimizing discourses that had become established in both government circles and newspapers during the campaign against OCM. Carpet workers were able to articulate from this legitimate ground that activities such as carpet yarn production and weaving in the hands of the natives which were the "sole livelihood" of the poor, were being destroyed not only by foreign capital but also by Muslim merchants. Therefore, the campaign process conducted by merchants as a means to suppress class conflict became a driving force for the destruction of their own yarn factories a year later. Workers used the same argument against Muslim merchants that carpet merchants used against the OCM, emphasizing the local value of carpet production. They argued that carpet weaving, an integral part of local and national art, was being devalued and lost in the hands of merchants. Therefore, continuing the home production of yarns and carpets was seen as preserving national art. Carpet workers used this legitimate national discourse to justify and support their actions.

Another factor that fueled the power of workers was the Muslim carpet merchants discursively advocating for workers' rights to gather support for their campaigns. They attributed this mistreatment to "a group of fraudulent merchants" *(bir takım muhtekir tüccar)* and the yarn factories of OCM. However, the merchants' frequent statements in newspapers about workers being treated unfairly helped establish a widespread acknowledgment of the legitimacy of workers' grievances

[200] Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu: Bir Toplumsal Hareketin Analizi.*

within the public sphere. This visibility contributed to empowering the workers' movement in 1908.

The internal conflict of capital has not emerged solely based on the dichotomy of national/non-national. As briefly mentioned above, it is also evident that merchants engaged in trade and industry related to carpet-making in Uşak were in competition with each other. There are two visible reasons fueling this competition and conflict. One of them, as mentioned above, has occurred between Muslim merchants who conducted their activities through the discourse of "development of the national economy" and merchants collaborating with foreign capital.[201]

From this perspective, the activities of local merchants who assumed the agency of OCM were contrary to *hamiyet*. Indeed, approximately a year and a half after its establishment, in 1909, some carpet merchants in Uşak became agents of OCM. Seven carpet merchants collaborated with OCM and participated in the export traffic of Uşak carpets.[202] This situation also demonstrates that Uşak merchants responded to the dominance of foreign capital in various ways. While some merchants, like Tiridzade Mehmed or Hamzazade Hüseyin Hüsnü, who established Uşak Carpet Trading Company, organized and competed against OCM, others, like Kıyyezade Osman Ağa, adapted to this process and preserved their commercial activities.[203] Therefore, the reactions of local merchants to foreign capital influence

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[201] *"Halı Sendikası'nın maksadı sa'y-ı zatiyyesiyle te'mîn-i maişet ve servet eden erbab-ı sanatı âmâl-ı şahsiyyesine feda ve bu suretle te'mîn-i servet ve menfaat etmek fikrine ma'tûf olduğu meydanda iken memleketimizde Sendikacıların efkârını müsîb görenlere maalesef tesadüf edilmektedir… Sendika'nın ileride işi kendi ellerinden alacaklarını, Gördes ve Temurcu'da olduğu gibi Uşak'ta dahi İzmir'den gönderecekleri boyalı, hileli iplerle keyfemâyeşâ' halı yaptıracaklarını biliyorlar ve bu hakikati itiraf ediyorlar. Bunları bu hale sevk eden sebep muvakkat bir menfaattir. Halbuki sanat ve ticaretimizi muhafazaya çalışmak daha ziyade menafi'imize muvafıktır. İlerde bir de anonim şirketi teşkil edivermeli."* Ahenk, *3361*, 04.08.1907/24 C 1325.

[202] Yılmaz, "The Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited (Şark Halı Kumpanyası) ve Osmanlı Halıcılığındaki Yeri ve Önemi," 301.

[203] *"Yakın zamanda İzmir'de İngiliz teb'asından bazı tüccarın bu halı ahz ve i'tâsı üzerine te'sîs ettikleri Sendika'ya (OCM) Kıyyezade Osman Ağa ile üç nefer refîk dahil olub bu sendika namına vuku' bulan siparişatın yine İzmir ve Bandırma'dan gönderilen boyalı ipliklerle i'mâline mecbur*

have differed due to their benefit and competition, and this difference has affected the local dynamics.

The second fact that established the conflict between Muslim merchants in Uşak was that some merchants stood against the merchants who were the direct target of the workers' actions in 1908. From the perspective of the government and the merchants who were the target of the actions, these "ingenuous people" *(sadedilan ahali)*, these few thousand people consisting of women and girls, could only have been mobilized by a group of troublemaker. The source of this sedition has been read within the framework of economic competition and political interests. According to this interpretation, the merchants who encouraged the protests had been organizing for a year to render three factories producing yarn inoperable, prioritizing their own economic interests. A team, including middle-upper class notables such as Nakib-ül Eşraf Ahmed Efendi, carpet merchant Helvacızade Ömer and *müderris* Bağdatlızade Mehmed Tahir, acted with feelings of "jealousy and competition" against the Muslim merchants who owned the yarn companies. Besides the conflict caused by economic competition, merchants also experienced power struggles for influence over the local administration. For example, among those who supported the workers, the former mayor Mehmed Efendi, who was dismissed by the *mutasarrıf*, is mentioned in the documents.[204] The mention of Mehmed Efendi's dismissal was probably not a coincidence. These individuals were thought to have encouraged machine breaking activities for their political positions and personal interests. As we will discuss in more detail in the next section, carpet merchants were also influential

edilmesi üzerine öteden beri yün ve yapağı tarayıp ip i'mâl ve fürûhat eden kasaba ve kurâ ahâlisi kadınlarının kısm-ı a'zamı işsiz kalmıştırlar." BOA, *DH.ŞFR*, 395/34.
[204] BOA, *BEO*, 3338.

figures in local administration and politics. Therefore, this political conflict combined with economic rivalry deepened the events.

3.3 Local politics of muslim merchants

In the previous section, I focused on the competition and conflict relationships among Muslim merchants involved in trade and industry in Uşak. These relationships are significant in terms of understanding their characteristics of organization, campaigning, and acting as a class before the Second Constitutional Era. Additionally, I mentioned how the intra-class conflicts of Uşak merchants contributed to the maneuvering space of workers. In this section, I will discuss the power struggles in various areas of local administration in Uşak and the effectiveness of the carpet merchant factory owners in these areas of conflict. I will demonstrate how the merchants' power in the administration of Uşak district was consolidated as a field where class-based and social conflicts emerged. Understanding this will shed light on the fact that political activity in the post-1908 period was not independent of capital and intra-class conflict.

First and foremost, it should be noted that the prominent merchants of Uşak, who are mentioned in the literature as the targets of the 1908 machine-breaking actions, occupied a significant place in the administrative and political agenda of the district for many years. Since the 1880s, merchants have become visible in the archives with their demands from the government regarding the Uşak administration and their interventions in the administration, as well as complaints filed against them. Moreover, it is possible to find the names of many carpet merchants in administrative positions in the Hudavendigar Province Yearbooks *(Hüdavendigar Vilayet Salnamesi)*. For instance, according to the yearbook of 1886, Tiridzade Mehmed

Paşa served as the Mayor of Uşak.[205] Similarly, merchants like Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa, Yılancızade Osman Efendi, and Bacakzade Ali Efendi served as members of administrative units such as the Education Commission *(Maarif Komisyonu)* and the Trade Court *(Ticaret Mahkemesi)*.[206] Following the machine-breaking actions of 1908, other merchants and prominent figures from Uşak's elite also served in various administrative positions. Comparing these names in parallel, it becomes apparent that merchants who supported workers and peasants during the 1908 events and those whose factories were destroyed served in the same administrative units for years. For example, Hafız Ahmed Efendi, who is believed to have incited workers for the 1908 events, and Yılancızade and Tiridzade served together in the Education Commission in 1907. Therefore, the data is important in understanding the diversity of areas where merchants and prominent figures from the elite interacted, competed, and collaborated. In this regard, as illustrated earlier, both the power that merchants sought to gain in administrative management and the commercial competition have been areas where the dynamics of intra-class conflict have emerged.

According to the correspondence of the Hudavendigar Province Governorship and the responses of government officials in the archive documents, Uşak was perceived as a difficult and troubled region to govern. The reason for this perception by central and provincial administrators stemmed from events such as the constant complaints filed by the elite of Uşak against each other, changes in district governors frequently, and the inability of *muhtar* to perform their duties.[207] Over the ten-year period between 1899 and 1909, a total of 20 district governors and their deputies were replaced in Uşak. This means that, on average, a new district governor

[205] *1303 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi*, 302.
[206] *1310 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi*, 198*; 1315 Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi*, 247.
[207] Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye girişi,* 212.

was appointed every six months. The systematic replacement of Uşak district governors over such a long period indicates the instability of administrative governance. However, the reasons for this instability were attributed to different factors by central and provincial administrators and the elite and merchants of Uşak. According to the Governor of Hudavendigar Province, Uşak had always been a region with "regularly restless" *(sızıltısı eksik olmayan)*. Therefore, the replacement of 20 district governors in ten years was not a coincidence. However, the merchants viewed the administrative issues in Uşak as stemming from the lack of change in the administrative structure of the region. The governor, on the other hand, did not attribute the problem to the administrative structure but rather saw it as a result of the intervention of certain prominent figures from the elite in governance and their prioritization of personal interests.[208]

There has been a longstanding debate regarding the administrative division of Uşak, dating back many years. A group of elites, predominantly consisting of prominent merchants of Uşak, had been advocating for the alteration of Uşak's administrative structure for years. According to them, due to Uşak's distinguished position in carpet production and trade, its proximity to Izmir, and the commercial network between Uşak and Izmir, Uşak should have been elevated to a district center *(liva)*. Besides this, it should be administratively separated from the Kütahya Sanjak to be attached to the Aydın Province. The petition dated 1871, which includes this request, bears the seals of over 100 prominent individuals from Uşak, including

[208] *"Uşak'ta on seneden ibaret bir müddet zarfında yirmi kaymakam ve vekil tebdiline mecburiyet hasıl olması ve sızıltının eksik olmaması sebebini taksimat-ı mülkiye itibariyle haiz olduğu şekilde değil başka cihetlerde aramak lazımdır. Şu halin başlıca sebebi Uşak ahalisinden bazı erbab-ı ağrazın âmal ve menafi-i hususiyeye münderic olan müracaat ve şikayat-ı mücerrede ve vâhiyelerine evvelce her nasılsa pek ziyade atf-ı ehemmiyet edilerek bi't-tedkik oradaki me'murinin azl ve tebdili cihetine gidilmesi ve bu vechile bu kabîl kesanın tezyîd-i cüret ve cesaretlerine ve oraya gelen her kaymakam hakkında şikayetlerine meydan verilmiş olması maddesi olmuştur."* BOA, *DH.MUİ,* 34-23/3.

muhtar and merchants. According to this petition, Uşak is considered a region that is both commercially and agriculturally fertile, contributing significantly to the national wealth. They argued that due to the commercial intensity with the İzmir market and Uşak's central position in Western Anatolian trade, separating from Kütahya would not only solve administrative problems but also benefit commercial and agricultural development. One of the justifications for this administrative restructuring was the complaints against administrative officials and merchants from Kütahya. They have claimed allegations of irregularities by the elites of Kütahya and the exploitation of Uşak merchants and farmers by these individuals. The grievances include allegations that the elites of Kütahya have taken over the tithes of many districts, causing the destruction of farmers' products in the process.

Based on these complaints, it can be said that there was competition between the elites of Uşak and Kütahya regarding the collection of taxes. To strengthen their position in this competition and achieve Uşak's independence from Kütahya, they proposed either turning it into a *mutasarrıflık* or annexing it to the Aydın Province.[209] Additionally, approximately two weeks after this petition, another group of Uşak elites wrote a petition expressing the opposite view, advocating to remain under the administration of Kütahya. According to their claim, a group of merchants involved in trade with İzmir, who sought Uşak's independence from Kütahya, had engaged in irregularities for their personal gain. They also asserted that merchants connected to İzmir had prevented the transfer of district taxes to the tax collectors in Kütahya. Furthermore, they argued that many seals of the *eşraf* members had been affixed to the petition without their knowledge. According to this petition, the aim of the merchants who wanted to annex Uşak to Aydın was to prevent the tax revenues from

[209] BOA, *ŞD*, 1376/5.

reaching the tax farmers in Kütahya and ensure that they remained within the region.[210] Despite frequently repeating these requests in the following years, Uşak merchants did not receive a favorable response. However, they continued to engage in political activities aimed at Uşak's administrative position in Western Anatolia. For example, in 1901, there was an attempt to annex Uşak to the Karahisar-ı Sahib Sancağı. However, prominent carpet merchants such as Tiridzade Mehmed, Bacakzade Ali, and Hamzazade Hasan organized and strongly opposed this request, reiterating their demand to be annexed to the Aydın Province. Although the request for annexation to Aydın was rejected, they also prevented attempts to annex Karahisar Sancağı.[211]

Based on these demands and objections, it can be said that the merchants of Uşak were able to organize a will to transform the administrative and commercial relations in Western Anatolia from the 1870s onwards. This willpower necessitated conflicts both with nearby regional merchants and with other notables within Uşak. Uşak was not transformed into a *mutasarrıflık* as desired by these merchants, nor was it annexed to the Aydın Province. However, the collective struggle of the merchants around a common economic interest through local administration made them significant actors in local politics. Due to the conflict-driven nature of their power in local politics and trade, these merchants played a central role in both intra-class and inter-class conflicts. Consequently, the name of Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa frequently appears in the desire for administrative transformation, the campaign of the Uşak Carpet Trading Company, disputes over tax farming, and the 1908 machine breaking actions. It is impossible to discuss an Uşak administration independent of their intervention due to the power they derived from their political, economic, and

[210] BOA, *ŞD*, 1535/3.
[211] BOA, *ŞD*, 1579/7.

cultural capital. The investigation conducted in 1903 regarding complaints against Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa contains noteworthy statements from villagers and headmen. These statements evince the significant influence of local merchants in politics and the economy at their time:

> "...if someone were to complain, they would say, 'The district governor is right there, go and complain to him. If you don't complain to him, then complain to God,' and they would chase them away and take what they wanted... Honestly, Sir, everyone is afraid of Mehmed Paşa, including the *muhtar* and others. He is a great man. The district governor, the judge, they are all him. They didn't dare to put on their seals because they thought he would exile them from here and not let them live. This is the true reason why they didn't seal it."[212]

3.4 Conclusion

The labor movement that emerged in Uşak should not be interpreted as a one-sided labor-capital conflict. The various dimensions of this conflict should be interpreted in direct connection with the interwoven structure of societal layers. Muslim merchants in Uşak, involved in carpet yarn production and trade, encountered a social conflict arising from the national versus non-national dichotomy amidst increasing competition with foreign capital, especially in the latter part of the 19th century. While Muslim merchants endeavored to protect their yarn factories from reactions of workers, they also fought with internal conflicts within capital and the monopolization of the OCM that was established in Izmir and extended its influence throughout the interior regions of Anatolia. The internal conflicts within capital resulting from this struggle provided an opportunity for maneuver for the social movement formed by women workers and peasants in Uşak. Benefited from the fragmented nature of capital, workers collaborated with certain merchants,

[212] BOA, *ŞD*, 1584/6; Çakmak, "Geç Dönem Osmanlı Taşra Toplumunda Eşrâfın Mahallî İşlevleri Üzerine: Uşaklı Tirîdzâde Mehmed Paşa," 15-16.

strengthening their position against larger companies and merchants. Hence, this chapter focuses on the relationship between merchants and capital groups to comprehensively analyze the multifaceted social conditions that led to the 1908 machine breaking actions and the actors involved.

Based on all of this, contrary to the established historiography, it can be argued that Muslim merchants involved in carpet yarn manufacturing and trade in Uşak were organized actors who utilized nationalist motivations and rhetoric as a means of this organization. Despite being weakened relative to non-Muslim and European capital, these merchants emerged not only as commercial entities but also as political actors. The campaign organized in Uşak against OCM and non-national capital illustrates that Muslim merchants transcended merely preserving their economic presence in this century. The establishment of the Uşak Carpet Trading Company and this campaign process became an inevitable part of the collective memory of intensified social movements post-1908. This memory constituted a historical link to the boycott movements of 1908 and onwards, as well as to the subsequent policy of "creating" a national bourgeoisie by the CUP rule.

This section aims to illustrate the power dynamics that brought together workers and peasants through an examination of the administrative and cultural activities of carpet merchants in Uşak. The fact that carpet merchants also held positions as tax farmers and acted as intermediaries between the state and ordinary people both economically and administratively, evinces the extent of their economic and political influence. However, merchants have often received support from the state by making economic, cultural and social investments in response to this accumulated unrest. This mutual relationship established with the state also demonstrates the recognition of merchants as political actors.

CHAPTER 4

ESTABLISHING LEGITIMACY AS A STRATEGIC STATE POLICY

This chapter challenges the tendency in Ottoman labor history literature to view the state and society as two separate and mutually antagonistic realms, using social conflict in Uşak as a case study. Late Ottoman and Early Republican historiography often overlooks the interaction points and the potential for common interests between the state and society in the public sphere. The notion that social groups, the working class, and civil society could not participate in state policies, and thus were not part of the Ottoman Empire's modernization process, stems from viewing the state and society as opposing and distinct entities.[213] One reason for this is the conceptual framework based on dichotomies such as East-West and state-society, which emerged from Eurocentric modernization theories.[214] The framework created by this dichotomy leads to an underestimation of the potential for a pre-modern, monarchical state to be influenced by society. Consequently, the emergence of a civil movement or a class movement in the social sphere is conditioned to occur only in opposition to this external force, the state.[215] This perspective also assumes that a despotic state did not need the consent of society or legitimacy for its own stability. Consequently, the potential for the state to control the social sphere by gaining the consent of society through strategic maneuvers is overlooked. According to Nadir Özbek, categorical approaches such as "Islamic culture" and "Eastern despotism" have resulted in an inflexible state model for the Ottoman Empire.[216] According to

[213] Kasaba, "A Time and a Place for the Non-State: social change in the Ottoman Empire during the long nineteenth century," 226-227.
[214] Özbek, "Philanthropic activity, Ottoman patriotism, and the Hamidian regime, 1876–1909," 59.
[215] Chakrabarty, "Labor History and the Politics of Theory: An Indian Angle on the Middle East," 322.
[216] Özbek, 60.

this understanding, due to the inflexible policy of the state, the emergence of a democratic social structure and the influence of social actors in the public sphere have not been possible.

However, there are also studies on the breaking points of the state-society duality. These studies identify areas where the interests of the state and a social group or class intersect, revealing the role of social actors within the state structure. According to this understanding, the state's cooperation with a social group is related to its need to gain societal consent. For example, Chalcraft's study on the protests of Port Said coal heavers is an important example. In the late 19th century, these workers, who organized protests to increase their wages, benefited from the government's centralization and reform policies. This example highlights a historical situation where the government's reform policies aligned with the workers' interests against their employers. The study shows that workers participated in the state-making process and used state intervention for their class interests. Similarly, the state utilized the workers' struggle against their employers to further its own political agenda.[217]

Building on this intellectual framework, this chapter aims to evaluate the search for legitimacy through the policies implemented by the state in the Uşak locality during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The growing opposition against Abdulhamid II since the 1890s, coupled with the state's economic challenges and minority issues, prompted the Sultan to embrace a more centralist policy.[218] While the despotism aspect of this centralist policy is often highlighted, this chapter delves

[217] Chalcraft, "The Coal Heavers of Port Sa'id: State-Making and Worker Protest, 1869–1914."
[218] Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in iç politikası: bir dönemlendirme denemesi," 388.

into the state's efforts to garner legitimacy within this political framework.[219] This chapter focuses on two different aspects of this legitimacy policy.

The first is that Abdulhamid II established his paternalist representation and the state's position as supra-class in the eyes of the public. Examining the factors that support this position is the main focus of the first section. The first of these elements is that Abdulhamid II used merchants as intermediaries within the economic structure on which the state relied. This intermediary role was supported by the state through the tax farming system, promotion of industrial investments and rewarding merchants. This not only strengthened the merchants both economically and politically but also ensured that the state was protected from the liability of potential social conflicts. The economic and social structure was built on the state-merchants relationship, due to both the demands of the merchants from the state regarding their commercial and industrial activities and the state's desire to make them intermediaries between itself and the ordinary people. Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to portray this social and economic structure in which the merchant acted as an intermediary. What kind of policy were the privileges given to merchants and the space provided to them for their economic activities? Which activities of the merchants and under what policy framework did Abdulhamid II support them? Searching for answers to these questions is the main purpose of this section. For this reason, in the first section, I will read the policy of the state through the activities of the merchants.

The second element that enabled Abdulhamid II to strengthen his supra-class position was the policy of *iane*. It was implemented by the state either directly or through merchants as intermediaries and allowed the Sultan to cultivate his role as a

[219] Özbek, "Philanthropic activity, Ottoman patriotism, and the Hamidian regime, 1876–1909."

benevolent and paternalistic figure in solving societal issues. By involving merchants in the distribution of aid, the state also shielded itself from potential problems that could arise during these processes. The second aspect of the legitimacy policy followed by Abdulhamid II was the balance policy. This chapter will analyze the social dynamics resulting from the labor-capital conflict in Uşak and the strategies the sultan used to manage this situation. By comparing the state's interactions with various social groups, a more comprehensive portrait of Abdulhamid II's relationship with society will be presented.

In the final section, the focus will be on how the CUP, which took over the administration after the 1908 revolution, managed the investigation process regarding the machine-breaking actions. During this period, the CUP had to develop policies to address various problematic issues, such as demands to reopen factories, pressure from workers, and the application of dividend taxes to women carpet weavers. It is important to see how the policies pursued by the CUP during the investigation of these issues demonstrated continuity with the pre-1908 period, despite the intervening revolution. In order to better understand the similar quest for legitimacy of Abdulhamid II and CUP, it is necessary to look at the economic atmosphere before 1908 and the state policy followed during that period.

Before the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, an atmosphere of economic unrest prevailed in the Ottoman Empire. With the impact of the financial crisis that occurred with the Panic of 1907 in America, the Ottoman Empire experienced a series of economic crises that affected both its international and domestic economy. The reason for this was the Ottoman Empire's dependence on the international financial market through the credit system.[220] Due to these economic

[220] Cora, "'It is Contraction Not Crises': The Panic in the Ottoman Markets in 1906-1908," 23.

crises, there has been a significant price increase in almost all consumer goods. Compared to the pre-crisis period, the prices of basic consumer goods such as bread, meat and wood have increased two-three times. With the drought in the spring of 1907, there was a serious famine in agricultural production. Due to this famine, the government restricted grain exports from certain cities in Anatolia and European lands.[221]

An environment of serious economic unrest has occurred in society due to reasons such as famine, trade restrictions, inflation and bankruptcy. This economic unrest also fed political unrest. Findley claims that CUP, which was in opposition to Abdulhamid II, was mobilized during these economic crisis periods.[222] However, Cora emphasizes a crisis of insecurity and legitimacy created by economic peace and the state policy carried out against this. An atmosphere of serious distrust was developing against the regime of Abdulhamid II due to the news that the merchants went bankrupt and the sultan's regime was held responsible for this. However, instead of banning news that undermined confidence in his own regime, Abdulhamid II pursued a policy of rebuilding the truth by discrediting them through rumors.[223] We will see a similar policy throughout this chapter. Abdulhamid II implemented an economic policy by both pushing the burden of economic crises to the actors within the society and rebuilding his own legitimacy. It is possible to see a similar policy being carried out by CUP. Although the CUP's labor policies became quite strict a few months after the 1908 revolution, the state continued to require similar responses in comparable social contexts. The reason for this is that social actors such as the working class, the public, merchants, and local notables, who were part of the social

[221] Quataert, "The Economic Climate of the 'Young Turk Revolution' in 1908," 1149-1150.
[222] Findley, "Economic Bases of Revolution and Repression in the Late Ottoman Empire," 102.
[223] Cora, "'It is ccntraction not crises': The panic in the Ottoman markets in 1906-1908," 29.

structure, had the power to compel the state to develop certain policies. Demonstrating an example of this power dynamic will also illustrate once again that the state pursued a strategic balance policy.

4.1 Supra-class position of Sultan Abdulhamid II

In this section, I will provide a more detailed look at the local administrative, political, and cultural positions of several merchants prominent in carpet yarn production and carpet trade in Uşak, some of whose factories were destroyed in the movements in 1908. Although these categories are not completely separate domains, each has its distinct significance. The social relations emerging in these separate domains have shaped the political and economic dynamics of the region as a whole. The activities of the notables, including the mentioned merchants, towards local administration and philanthropic activities have led them to play an intermediary role between the government and the people. Recognizing this role is also meaningful for the discussion I conducted earlier regarding the Muslim merchants being key political and economic actors of the time.

The reciprocal relationship established between Uşak carpet merchants and the central Ottoman government built a base to protect the economic and political interests of both sides. The aspect of this relationship concerning merchants can be explained by the social and economic power provided by the strong ties with the government. The philanthropic activities of merchants, as well as their appointment by the state to fulfill various social services, such as tax farming, industrial privileges, or the granting of rank, allowed them to strengthen their power in the social sphere. This power did not only encompass material interests but also enabled merchants to assert political visibility and prestige through philanthropic

investments.[224] Among merchants, those who more actively utilized their capital in this intermediary position between the state and society obtained more privileges from the government. This can be observed in the Ottoman Archive documents. For instance, Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa's frequent acquisition of tax farms and of high ranks from the state compared to other merchants can be attributed to his greater utilization of economic capital in this intermediary position. This interaction enabled him, as a Muslim merchant from Uşak, to both expand his wealth and became one of the most prominent figures in local politics of the time. Moreover, as previously discussed, this intermediary position led prominent carpet merchants and factory owners in Uşak to establish multifaceted relationships with the public. Due to their power dynamics across various layers where social conflicts emerged, they became targets for a wide range of individuals, from women spinning yarn to carpet weaver women and any individual liable for taxation. Therefore, it seems essential to evaluate the state's policies in the context of the trading relationship established with merchants.

During this period, the public complained about the merchants to the government frequently. However, the fact that the government did not impose significant sanctions on them and continued the exchange of societal services for privileges with them can be interpreted through the balancing policy of Abdulhamid II. As previously mentioned, this balancing policy was also carried out regarding strikes, protests, and labor movements.[225] Abdulhamid II pursued a policy of keeping his position in a safe zone against the political activities of the CUP. For this reason, he did not directly confront either the merchant class or the workers and the public. During times of crisis, the Ottoman State established relationships with the people

[224] Mestyan, "The Muslim bourgeoisie and philanthropy in the Late Ottoman Empire," 221.
[225] Nacar, *Labor Activism and the State in the Ottoman Tobacco Industry.*

through merchants. As a result, merchants became the tangible interlocutors of the people rather than the state. Therefore, any problem or societal weakness was attributed to merchants rather than the state. In this regard, the state attempted to keep itself in a supra-class position to avoid becoming the target of societal conflicts. Thus, ultimately, when societal conflicts could not be resolved through their internal dynamics, the state emerged as a problem-solving actor.

In the second half of the 19th century, the notables in Uşak seem to fit Hourani's characterization. One of the factors contributing to the political power of the notables is their intermediary position between central authorities and the people *(ahali)*. As a result of this intermediary position, the notables have the power to speak on behalf of the people, make suggestions, and exert influence on the state.[226] In the rest of the section, we will delve into the concrete manifestations of this intermediary position.

4.2 Tax farming and privileges

The initial source of social power for Uşak merchants was the wealth they acquired on land through tax farming *(iltizam)*. Diversifying the capital they accumulated in this way through trade and industry gave them different social statuses.[227] Their position in the tax collection system allowed them to establish a strong dominance over the peasants. Therefore, as we will see from archival documents, it is not coincidental that factory-owner merchants were targeted during the 1908 movement as prominent local economic and political actors. Throughout the 19th century, merchants obtained various commercial and industrial privileges both due to their

[226] Hourani, "Osmanlı Reformu ve Eşraf Politikaları," 68.
[227] Göçek, *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi, İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme*, 138.

dominance over land through tax farming and because of the state's economic policies, which allowed them to expand their spheres of influence. Consequently, merchants who consolidated this power through dominance in land, trade, and local administration became direct targets of the people over whom merchants held power.

The merchants who held tax farming rights were often the subject of complaints due to reasons such as collecting excessive taxes from peasants, miscalculating their produce, and indebting peasants to themselves with high interest rates.[228] For example, Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa became a common political and economic figure of conflict, as he had been collecting the tithes *(aşar)* of many villages in Uşak for years, leading to frequently conflicted with peasants, carpet weavers and yarn spinning women. Being both the most influential local Muslim capital owner in Uşak carpet trade and having administrative and political capital in Uşak town and villages made him a target of social anger. In 1900, 45 people united and complained about Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa due to the pressure he put on the people in the places where he was a tax farmer.[229]

The existence of many complaint records[230] indicates that the relationship between tax-farmer merchants and peasants through land and tax farming has created a serious conflict. Merchants like Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa have been subjected to investigations multiple times due to such complaints. As a result of these investigations, the state imposed sanctions such as confiscating merchants' products and sealing their warehouses.[231] However, the state's relationship with merchants was

[228] Çakmak, "Geç Dönem Osmanlı Toplumunda Köylünün Sosyo-Ekonomik Durumu: Yönetilen Zümre Olarak Kendi İfadelerine Göre Uşak Köylüsü," 68; BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1688/76.
[229] *"Uşak kazası aşarını iltizam eden Mehmed Paşa'nın mezalim ve tadiyatı neticesi olarak mülklerini mumaileyh terke mecbur olduklarından kendilerine bir mahal iskan ve iaşe gösterilmesi istidasına dair kırk beş imza ile Uşak'tan varid olup manzur-u ali buyurulan telgrafname leffen taraf-ı sami-i sadaretpenahilerine irsal kılınmış…"* BOA, *İ.HUS*, 84/37.
[230] BOA, *DH.MKT*, 699/32; BOA, *ŞD*, 1584/6.
[231] BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1586/22.

directly the source of the social conflict I mentioned. Although the state has occasionally punished merchants for irregularities and exploitation, it has not provided a fundamental solution. On the contrary, we can see that merchants have reinforced their class positions through certain "socio-cultural services".[232] I will make a more detailed evaluation of this policy of the state in the next section.

In addition, the Ottoman Empire systematically supported carpet merchants' investments in the industrial sector, including the construction of yarn factories. We can see tangible manifestations of this support in the material privileges obtained during the establishment and operation of these factories. Before the establishment of the first yarn factories in 1902, Uşak merchants would procure carpet yarns from women who spun them and deliver them to carpet-weaving women in exchange for payment. They would then sell the handwoven carpets to foreign merchants in Izmir. Izmir served as the meeting point for these carpets and the international market. Both local Muslim and non-Muslim merchants, as well as British-owned companies, conducted their trade through Izmir. Uşak merchants actively participated in this market. For example, the carpet trade between Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa and Mösyö Patriç (Patrick), an English merchant in Izmir, exemplifies this relationship.[233] The logistical advantage provided by the railway line extending from Izmir to the interior regions of Western Anatolia contributed to the effective role of Uşak carpet merchants in international carpet trade. We can observe an increasing trend in this export activity in the last two decades of the 19th century. From the early years of the 20th century onwards, after these Uşak merchants transferred their capital from land and taxes to trade, they entered the industrial sector. Thus, the capital transferred from land to trade was utilized in industrial investment through the establishment of

[232] Cora, "Nemlizadeler: Erken Cumhuriyet Dönem Ekonomi Politiğinde Milli Tüccarı Aramak," 250.
[233] BOA, *ŞD*, 2561/18.

factories. However, this transformation of capital did not cause the merchants to break their ties with the land. By 1900, Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa was still collecting most of the *iltizam.*[234] Beside this, during the establishment of the yarn factories, the Ottoman Empire gave various industrial privileges to Uşak merchants by allocating land and exempting them from certain taxes. As mentioned earlier, the widespread implementation of these privileges can be attributed to an economic policy aimed at supporting local Muslim merchants against foreign capital.[235]

The Ottoman State, aiming to promote local industry, exempted the tools and equipment of newly established factories from customs duties with an *irade* issued in 1873.[236] This exemption was persistently requested by carpet merchants in Uşak, and they benefited from it. In 1902, Yılancızade Osman owned the first factory established to produce carpet yarn in Uşak.[237] Yılancızade Osman Efendi imported the necessary tools and equipment for yarn production from Europe and he obtained an exemption from customs duties for this transaction.[238] Following Yılancızade Osman, another factory for yarn and wool *(şayak and yapağı)* production was opened in Uşak through a partnership involving Hamzazade Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi, Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa, Hamzazade Ahmet Ağa, and Hacı Gedikzade Hacı Hafız Mustafa Efendi. Similarly, the tools and equipment purchased for this factory were also exempted from customs duties.[239] Another instance of this exemption policy was observed with the third yarn and wool factory in Uşak, which was established by

[234] BOA, *ŞD*, 1584/6.
[235] Göçek, *Burjuvazinin Yükselişi, İmparatorluğun Çöküşü: Osmanlı Batılılaşması ve Toplumsal Değişme,* 248.
[236] Çakmak, "İktisadî Değişim ve Devlet: XIX. Yüzyılda Uşak Halıcılığı," 153; Göçek, 248.
[237] BOA, *ŞD*, 1581/16
[238] *"Uşak kasabası civarında arazi-yi emiriyyeden bâ-tapu mutasarrıf olduğu bağçe derununa ip imaline mahsus inşa ettireceği fabrika için Avrupa'dan celp olunacak âlat ve edevatın emsali vechle gümrük resminden istisnası Yılancızade Osman Efendi tarafından istid'â edildiği…"* BOA, *ŞD,* 1222/41.
[239] BOA, *ŞD*, 1217/2.

Bacakzade Ali Efendi, closely following the establishment of the first two factories.[240] Similarly, the machines imported for this factory from abroad, like other yarn factories, were exempted from customs duties.[241] This customs duty exemption for the import of factory machinery was initially provided for a period of 15 years after 1873. However, this period was gradually extended, and for 35 years, no taxes were imposed on factory materials imported from abroad. In 1910, this period came to an end, and for the following three years until the Law for the Encouragement Industry of 1913, customs duties were again levied.[242]

Abdulhamid II's support for merchants' trade and industrial investments, along with granting them various privileges, was not just an economic policy. It was also a strategy to integrate these local actors into his political agenda. By supporting merchants' activities and strengthening their local power, the Sultan aimed to manage a highly tumultuous political period. This approach effectively included merchants, who acted as a buffer between the Sultan and the workers and peasants.

An example of this containment policy is the various ranks and orders the Sultan bestowed upon the merchants. For instance, Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa obtained various privileges through services such as providing food for the people during times of scarcity, accommodating the homeless after fires, and constructing buildings needed by the district such as primary schools and municipal buildings. After the drought in Uşak in 1887, due to the social services he provided, he obtained the tax farming rights for almost all of Uşak's villages from that year onwards.[243] In addition

[240] *"Uşak kasabasında Bağçelerarası'nda mutasarrıf olduğu beş yüz elli bir zira' arazi-yi emiriyye üzerine neccarlı yapağı ve şayak fabrikası inşası için ruhsat itası tüccardan Bacakzade Ali Efendi tarafından istida olunmuş ve fabrikanın inşasında mahzur olmadığı…"* BOA, *DH.MKT*, 514/45.
[241] BOA, *İ.RSM*, 29/39.
[242] Çakmak, "İktisadî Değişim ve Devlet: XIX. Yüzyılda Uşak Halıcılığı," 153-155.
[243] Çakmak, "Geç Dönem Osmanlı Taşra Toplumunda Eşrâfın Mahallî İşlevleri Üzerine: Uşaklı Tirîdzâde Mehmed Paşa," 11.

to his social-cultural status and political power, important ranks such as *mir-i miranlık* and second-degree *mecidiye* were awarded to Tiridzade Mehmet Paşa by the state in return for these services.[244] Therefore, although his name is frequently mentioned alongside accusations of oppressing the people in many documents, he is referred to as a "respected merchant *(tüccar-ı muteberan)*" by the state.[245] Similarly, Yılancızade Osman Efendi, one of the leading carpet merchants in Uşak who owned a yarn factory, was awarded the third degree of the Ottoman Order.[246] Furthermore, in 1907, Mehmed Sadık Efendi, a carpet merchant, was awarded an industrial medal for supplying orders to the Foreign Minister *(Hariciye Nazırı)*, aiming to encourage industrialists *(erbab-ı sanayinin teşviki)*.[247]

During the reign of Abdulhamid II, Uşak merchants were awarded various ranks and medals in recognition of their public services and industrial investments. These honors were intended not only to encourage continued service from the merchants but also to integrate them into the state's economic and political agenda. By rewarding merchants, the Sultan aimed to gain their loyalty to the state.[248]

4.3 Philanthropy and Sultan

One of the most significant elements ensuring Abdulhamid II's supra-class position was his philanthropic activities. The Sultan emerged as a benevolent and paternalistic figure in addressing essential social needs. *İane* campaigns, or charitable initiatives, were the most visible aspect of this policy. It is seen that the sultan actively organized *iane* campaigns, especially in cases such as natural disasters, meeting

[244] BOA, *İ.TAL*, 366/51; BOA, *İ.TAL*, 77/48.
[245] BOA, *ŞD.DH*, 2561/18.
[246] BOA, *İ.TAL*, 266/35.
[247] BOA, *İ.TAL*, 426/57.
[248] Eldem, *İftihar ve İmtiyaz. Osmanlı Nişan ve Madalyaları Tarihi, 346.*

public services, education and housing needs. Through these activities, the Sultan and his administration aimed to create an image of an authority that actively responded to and resolved societal issues. This policy sought to secure the necessary loyalty and legitimacy for the state through a policy of containment.[249]

In some instances, these *iane* campaigns were directly conducted by the state. In other cases, the state played a supportive role in organizing these campaigns. In both scenarios, it is evident that the state mobilized both central and local actors to address various social needs. For example, during periods of famine and fires in Uşak, local notables and carpet merchants were enlisted to assist in the reconstruction of the city and to meet the housing and livelihood needs of the disaster victims.

The drought in 1887 provides a good example of this. During this drought, instead of meeting the needs of the people in Uşak with *iane akçesi*, the Ottoman State assigned tax collectors *(mültezim)* to fulfill these needs. According to the relevant archival document, the Armenian Patriarchate reported that the people in Uşak district would almost "perish from hunger" due to the famine. However, because *iane akçesi* did not meet the necessary needs of the people, the state later tasked tax collectors with fulfilling these needs to be collected from the people afterward.[250]

Thus, the state used the economic capital of merchants as a resource to solve a societal crisis. However, this situation reinforced the dominance of merchants over the people and ensured that the people remained in a constant cycle of borrowing. Injustices such as high interest rates and charging high prices for poor-quality products are reflected in archival documents. For instance, Hasanoğlu Ahmet who

[249] Özbek, "Philanthropic activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876–1909," 69.
[250] BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1498/80.

was a peasant in Uşak filed a complaint against Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa for these reasons;

> "...yes, we sent a telegram and complained about Mehmed Paşa. Because the Paşa distributes grain to the neighbors and makes them indebted. Then he buys their grain, opium and acorns at lower market prices and offsets them against their debts. The higher the price of grain he gives, the lower he gets from them. No one can say a word to him, he gives and takes as he wishes. He occupies our fields and our acorn groves. He confiscates our acorns and does not give them back, saying 'I will count them against your tax debts'. Finally, the government collects from us again. Now I have no debt. But two years ago, I owed him one thousand eighty *kuruş*. In return, I gave fifty weights of acorns worth ninety *kuruş* and one hundred and thirty *mecidiyes* worth of acorns. Even though I asked him to return the change, he hit me in the chest with his fist, saying "..."[251], so I got sick for a few days. He was not satisfied with this and captured my twenty-six acres of acorn land again. I'm still paying taxes. I want it, he doesn't give it. I appeal to the government, but no one cares. I have five sons. I have no protection left other than the field. I don't know who to tell and to whom to make a complaint. What else will happen? Allah gave us the Paşa as a tyrant, and that is enough for us."[252]

Thus, the intermediation of merchants fueled the conflict among local actors while allowing the state to maintain its position as arbitrator. Consequently, it is contextually meaningful that the targets of the machine-breaking actions in 1908 were these merchants who had been involved in tax farming, providing assistance, and obtaining privileges from the state in the 1880s and beyond. In conclusion, the state aimed to stay out of direct social conflicts by positioning merchants as intermediaries between itself and the workers and peasants. However, during critical crises, the state appeared both as a paternalistic authority meeting the needs of the people and as a problem-solving force mediating between merchants and the public. This intermediary role enabled the state to maintain its supra-class position and adopt a balanced approach to resolving issues. The next section will explore how Abdulhamid II implemented this balance policy in his role as an intermediary.

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[251] *"vay bilmem ne…"*.

[252] BOA, *ŞD.DH*, 2561/18; Çakmak, "Geç dönem Osmanlı toplumunda köylünün sosyo-ekonomik durumu: yönetilen zümre olarak kendi ifadelerine göre Uşak köylüsü," 78.

4.4 The balance policy through repression to concession

It is not possible to explain Abdulhamid II’s management and labor policies with a single approach. Although this period is often associated with centralized and authoritarian policies, there is another side to this picture. As I mentioned earlier, interpretations that explain the state's policy to control society solely through repression are incomplete. Abdulhamid II's labor policy embodied a dual political approach. On one hand, there was an authority that sought to prevent and control workers' protests, while on the other hand, there was a political strategy that aligned with these movements for mutual benefit, supporting the sultan's political position.

In addition, Abdulhamid II's approach to labor movements not directly tied to his political interests also involved a similar dual strategy. While sanctions were often imposed on workers considered as instigators in labor protests, the severity of these sanctions was adjusted based on the reaction of other workers. Thus, the practical forms of labor policy varied depending on the context during this period. However, it is possible to identify a consistent underlying strategy. This indicates that the Sultan was aware of the necessity to gain the consent of the working class amid rising constitutional opposition and broader political crises. Due to this awareness, a flexible paternalistic role was adopted, aiming to control labor movements through sanctions while also addressing workers' concerns and stepping back from harsh policies when needed. Additionally, Abdulhamid II pursued a similar strategy towards merchants, acting as a "balancing authority" in conflicts between merchants and workers. Therefore, Abdulhamid II's labor policy should be viewed more broadly as part of a balancing strategy, known as the "politics of

expediency" *(idare-i maslahat politikası)*. The immutable objectives of this policy were to maintain the status quo and preserve legitimacy in society.[253]

An example of this balancing policy is seen in the strike of Cibali tobacco workers on March 29, 1906. The strike was organized in response to the Régie administration's announcement that it would not make Easter payments that year. When the approximately 200-270 strikers decided to march to the Régie's headquarters in Galata, Abdulhamid II ordered that this initiative be stopped. Despite the Sultan's instructions to prevent the workers' strike and march, he offered to make the Easter payments to Régie. If Régie refused to make the payment, the state would cover these payments based on its share in Régie. It is clear that the Abdulhamid II regime did not want to antagonize the workers due to the rising labor protests and social unrest.

Instead, it has adopted a role that did not hesitate to take responsibility for the problems of the workers and protects the interests of the workers against the merchants and employers. As a result of this policy, Nacar notes that Abdulhamid II's popularity among the workers in Kavala and İskeçe increased due to the pressure exerted by local officials on employers and merchants during tobacco worker strikes in these regions. On the other hand, while the state did not want to confront the workers, it also did not want to confront the Régie administration, because there was a strong connection between Régie and the Public Debt Administration (PDA). Therefore, the Abdulhamid II administration did not support the wage increase demands of Régie workers to avoid souring relations with the PDA.[254]

This balance policy of Abdulhamid II, consisting of pressure, control and gaining consent, is clearly evident in the conflict between merchants and

[253] Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in iç politikası: bir dönemlendirme denemesi," 382.
[254] Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 98-99.

workers/peasants in Uşak. Some peasants were directly engaged in a class conflict with carpet merchants due to their involvement in carpet yarn production. The carpet weaving workers living in the center of Uşak also had economic and political ties with these same merchants. In addition, the complaints of people from Uşak peasants who did not work in carpet production, but were associated with these merchants through other mediations, are also quite visible in the sources. These peasants interacted with the merchants through power structures such as taxation and local administration. Therefore, the economic exploitation of peasants and workers by carpet merchants, who held a significant local economic and political power, resulted in an organized resistance from the people of Uşak.

In the sources, it is evident that at moments when public reactions against merchants in Uşak grew and crises reached a peak, the state intervened with a policy of balance. In many of these instances, the state is seen to be in a position that aimed to protect the interests of merchants while also not risking the consent of workers and peasants. For example, in 1900, the oppression inflicted by Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa on the peasants while he was collecting nearly all of Uşak's tithe taxes was documented. Due to this oppression, the aforementioned 45 peasants jointly filed a complaint directly to the Yıldız Palace. As a result of these complaints, an *irade* in 1900 acknowledged that Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa had oppressed the peasants. The *irade* took a serious stance on meeting the needs of the peasants who were forced to leave their villages due to the Paşa's tyranny and conducting an urgent investigation into the matter.[255] In 1903, there are numerous documents showing that an official appointed to investigate listened to the grievances of the peasants one by one, asked detailed questions about Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa, and noted down their answers.[256]

[255] BOA, *İ.HUS*, 84/37.
[256] BOA, *ŞD*, 1584/6.

Based on these documents, it can be said that the effort to address the grievances of the peasants after the investigation and complaint reflected Abdulhamid II's role as a problem-solving and benevolent sultan. Thus, although there may be questions about whether this effort succeeded in convincing the peasants, it is clear from the language of the documents that the Sultan pursued a policy aimed at making his hand felt above the peasants.[257]

However, even though the oppression by Tiridzade Mehmed Paşa was acknowledged and steps were taken to address the grievances of the peasants, it is clear that this was a strategic move rather than a fundamental solution. The state's approach was not designed to provide a systematic and profound resolution to social and class conflicts. This is why the state also sought to appease the merchants as well as the peasants. The intent behind this appeasement was related to policies of containment and control. Two years after the investigation into Tiridzade, in 1905, the state awarded him the Second Class Order of the *Mecidiye* for his various services to the government.[258] This move, as explained in the previous section, was aimed at securing the allegiance of the local elite. Therefore, despite the Sultan's repressive authority at the beginning of the 20th century, it is evident that the legitimacy he required was sought through this balancing policy.

A clear example of this policy can be seen in the arrests that followed the machine-breaking actions of March 1908. Documents indicate that 14 individuals were detained after the destruction of factories and the looting of materials necessary

[257] *"Uşak kazası aşarını iltizam eden Mehmed Paşa'nın mezalim ve ta'addiyatı neticesi olarak mülklerini mumaileyha terke mecbur olduklarından kendilerine bir mahal iskan ve iaşe gösterilmesi istidasına dair kırk beş imza ile Uşak'tan varid olup manzur-u ali buyurulan telgrafname leffen taraf-ı sami-i sadaretpenahilerine irsal kılınmış ve bu babda tedabir serian ittihaz ile bu gibi şeylerin herhalde önünün alınması ve mumaileyhanın mağduriyetten vikayeleri esbabının istikmali ve ne yapıldığının arz-ı atabe-i ulya kılınmış şerefsudur buyurulan irade-i seniyye-i cenab-ı hilafetpenahi icab-ı alisinden bulunmuş olmağla ol babda emr-ü ferman hazret-i minel emrindir."* BOA, *İ.HUS,* 84/37.
[258] BOA, *İ.TAL,* 366/51.

for carpet production. These 14 individuals, along with Uşak District Governor İshak Tevfik Efendi, were taken into custody on suspicion of inciting the action. The day after the action, the protesters gathered again in front of the Government House to voice new demands.[259] The purpose of this action was to secure the release of those detained. Following the protest, 14 local actors were released from custody. However, despite an additional day of protests demanding the release of İshak Tevfik Efendi, this request was not met. The radical nature of the workers' and local population's actions prompted the state to implement its balancing policy. The authorities considered that continuing to detain the 14 local actors could escalate the workers' anger and radicalism, so they were released after the protests. To compensate the factory-owning merchants for their losses, fines were imposed on those believed to have incited the actions. Meanwhile, in line with Abdulhamid II's policy of repression and legitimacy, the district governor, who had been in office for only 38 days, was removed from his position and remained in detention. This implementation aimed to intimidate the workers while avoiding local backlash.

4.5 CUP labour policy in the turning of 1908

Following the Second Constitutional Era, there was a brief period dominated by freedom of expression. During this time, there was a significant increase in strikes and protests by workers. Although local cadres of the CUP were supportive of these labor movements, the central administration perceived them as a threat. Within a few months after the revolution, the CUP's labor policy hardened, and it activated some measures including the Temporary Strike Law aimed at suppressing these

[259] BOA, *Y.MTV*, 307/110.

movements.[260] This policy was driven by fears that capital investments would be negatively affected. Consequently, the environment of freedom of expression, which was one of the CUP's major propaganda tools, lasted only a few months. Despite this, it is evident that, similar to the Abdulhamid II era, steps were taken during the CUP period to seek legitimacy. This policy continuity can be evaluated through the context of Uşak.

The machine-breaking actions in Uşak took place a few months before the 1908 revolution. When the revolution occurred, the crisis in Uşak was still unresolved. Therefore, the resolution of the conflict left over the CUP administration. After the events, the three carpet yarn factories targeted by the workers were shut down. However, by 1909, the factory owners requested the state to reopen their factories to continue carpet production. Despite a year and a half having passed since the protests, because the factories were not reopened, the merchants' activities were significantly restricted. The factory-owning merchants argued that the workers who wove carpets with factory yarns were suffering due to the disruption of carpet production, and they urgently requested the reopening of the factories.[261] In response to these demands, a series of correspondences containing critical information about the process took place between local and central administrations.

The document from the Department of Civil Administration, dated June 13, 1909, reveals that the conflict between workers and factory owners persisted. The workers aimed to legitimize their actions by claiming that the factories did not have the license to produce carpet yarn. Consequently, the state decided to initiate an investigation to both resolve the ongoing conflict and determine the factories'

[260] Quataert, *Workers, peasants and economic change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730-1914*, 50; Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 8, 133.
[261] BOA, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

licensing status. According to the document, attempts were made to reopen the factories before the investigation was completed, which led to another crisis in Uşak. Thus, it is evident that the conflict had not ceased in spite of more than a year after the 1908 actions. The document emphasizes that reopening the factories could lead to a recurrence of the actions similar to those in 1908. Therefore, it was stated that the factories should not be reopened until it was confirmed whether they had the license to produce carpet yarn and the investigation was concluded. Additionally, the document underscores the state's responsibility to uphold justice between workers and merchants. It demonstrates that the CUP took on a mediating role in this conflict.[262] The most prominent aspect of this mediation was its strategic stance directed towards appeasing the workers and local actors who supported them.

In conclusion, based on the 1909 investigation report, the Ministry of Trade and Public Works reached a decision. Initially, it was found that these factories lacked permits to produce carpet yarn. They were established solely for şayak and yapağı production. The unauthorized production of carpet yarn by merchants served as a legitimizing factor for the workers' actions. The Ministry determined that the carpet yarn produced in the factories degraded the quality of the carpets and caused a decline in their market demand. Consequently, it decided to prohibit the production of carpet yarn in these factories.[263] However, due to the inability to prevent merchants from attempting to produce carpet yarn, an offer was made. This offer aimed to differentiate carpets woven with factory yarn from those woven with hand-spun yarn. For this reason, it has been suggested to distinguish the carpets from each other with a state stamp. Thus, the Ministry offered a solution to prevent the value of hand-woven carpets from decreasing.

[262] BOA, *ŞD*, 1606/21.
[263] BAO, *ŞD*, 1228/8.

The CUP administration also employed a strategy of balance regarding the objections raised by female carpet weavers against the dividend tax. The Dividend Tax Regulation *(Temettü Vergisi Nizamnamesi)* was published in the final month of 1907. According to this regulation, women and girls over the age of 15, working on house looms, were obligated to pay the dividend tax.[264]cAs previously mentioned, carpet production in Uşak relied heavily on household weaving looms. Considering Uşak's economic structure was largely based on carpet weaving, the reaction to this tax obligation is understandable. On February 23, 1910, the *muhtars* from 12 neighborhoods in Uşak sent a telegram to the Ministry of the Interior, urging a resolution to this issue. Additionally, the Governor of Hüdavendigar Province expressed the opinion to the Ministry of the Interior that tax should not be collected from female carpet weavers. In the *muhtars'* telegram, it was emphasized that women carpet weavers worked for minimal daily wages and they wove on two planks at home from morning till night to make ends meet. Women either worked in their own homes or joined neighboring women to weave carpet. Therefore, it was emphasized that homes where carpet production took place were not factories. Additionally, there was also opposition to taxing both men and women.[265]

Following this telegram, on March 30, 1910, the Ministry of Finance rejected the requests to exempt women from taxes, categorizing their homes as workshops. It

[264] Düstur, *Birinci Tertib*, vol.8, 798-800.

[265] *"Bu halıcı kadınlar nesc eder ise de erkekler de bu işin Teferruatıyla hiç başka bir işe bakmaksızın iştigal-i mecburi olup erkeklerimiz umumiyetle temettü vergisiyle mükellef oldukları halde maktu' yevmiye altmış pareye çalışan kadınlarımıza vergi tarhı su-i tefehhüm ve telakki neticesi olduğuna şüphe yoktur. Bir kere gözünüz ile görünüz. Bizde böyle darüssanayi ve imalathaneler yoktur. Şimdi gerek halı tüccarlarımızın cehaleti ve gerek hükümet-i sabıkanın yüzünden bu ticaret [...] ederek ecanibin inhisarını geçip erkek kadınlarımızın netice-i mesaisi altmış pare ücret-i nesciyeden ibarettir. Bu işte pek büyük bir yanlışlık olduğundan bir kadının bir tarafta çocuğuna bakmak diğer taraftan yaz ve kış sabah akşama kadar [...] yüzü göremek suretiyle yevmiye alacağı altmış parenin temettü namıyla elinden alınması felaket içinde yuvarlanan bir halkı felakete sevk edip adalet ve şan ve [...] kabil-i tatbik olmadıktan başka yetim [...] dul kadınları mahv demek olan şu hal [...] olmasıyla beraber zulm-ü [...] idüğünden şu yanlışlığın izalesi ve dertlerimizin anlaşılması her neye mütevakkıf ise icrası ile levazım-ı ma'adaletin ifası ihale-i umumiye namına istirham olunur."* BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66/9.

was reiterated that, according to the Dividend Tax Regulation, these female workers were obligated to pay taxes.[266] However, the Council of State decided to exempt the female workers in Uşak from the tax.[267] The Council of State explicitly expressed its fear that attempting to collect the dividend tax from female workers could lead to social unrest in Uşak. As a result, it was not even possible to identify the names of the women liable for the tax. Therefore, despite a year and a half passing since the regulation came into effect, the dividend tax could not be collected from women. This can be seen as a successful example of locally organized passive resistance.[268]

In the rest of the document, it is stated that although women workers were technically obliged to pay taxes, it was not applicable to collect these taxes in Uşak under the given circumstances. As a result, it was decided to exempt the tax obligation from women who wove carpets in their homes. Following this, the Ministry of Finance issued a corresponding decision on August 10, 1910. Thus, after a year and a half from obligation, women carpet weavers were exempted from the dividend tax.

Considering Uşak's culture of protest, radical action, and organization, the state stepped back "to prevent bad events," as stated by the State Council. The state abolished the tax liability for female workers to prevent a recurrence of the 1908 events. This demonstrates that the balance policy implemented since the reign of Abdulhamid II effectively motivated workers to voice their demands more assertively. As seen here and in other examples, the CUP administration adopted a

[266] BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 66/9.
[267] BOA, *ŞD*, 446/51.
[268] *"Mezkur kadın amelenin esamisi yazılmak üzere muhtaran mükerreren celb ve tekid olunduğu halde yazdırılamamış ve haricen yazılmak üzere birçok tedabir ittihaz edildi ise de yine muvaffak olamayıp işin ilerisine gidilse galeyana karşı çirkin bir halin katiyen zuhuruna yakinen kanaat etmiş… Hususi hanelerin küşad ettirilmesinde salisen tahsilinde birçok müşkülata ba-tesadüf edileceği ve hanesi küşad edilse bile orada bulunan iki kamelyanın kendi ailesi ve sarf-ı kendinin umur-u hususuna aid olmak üzere imal ettirmekte olduğu iddia ve dermiyan edeceği misaliyle…"* BOA, *ŞD*, 446/51.

very cautious labor policy after the 1908 protests, aiming to gain the workers' consent and calm them down. Although none of these measures provided a systematic solution, the state's efforts to gain legitimacy among the workers highlight both the strength of this grassroots movement and the strategic capabilities of the state.

4.6 Conclusion

When evaluating the last 20 years of Abdulhamid II's reign, it is evident that the sultan aimed to secure his authority by gaining the consent of society, workers, and local notables. The period, marked by protests and strikes, shows that the state's approach was not fixed but adapted to the political and economic conditions of the time. This pragmatic strategy indicates that the state and society cannot be viewed as entirely separate or opposing realms. Instead, the state's policies were designed to gain public consent and legitimize its authority.

In this connection, in this chapter, it has been tried to overcome the essentialist approaches towards the Late Ottoman period and to make a comment on the monarchical state imaginations of the Ottoman Empire by revealing the strategic purpose of the state policy of the Abdulhamid period. It is aimed to evaluate the social policy of the state during the reign of Abdulhamid II through the class conflict that emerged around carpet production in Uşak. The main focus of this evaluation is to reveal that Abdulhamid II followed a policy aimed at gaining legitimacy in his policy towards the labor-capital conflict. Firstly, emphasis was placed on Abdulhamid II's preservation of his political position against social crises. Accordingly, the Sultan gained a supra-class position because the *eşrafs* and merchants were intermediaries between the people and the state. The Sultan left the

economic and political conflict to the internal dynamics of the society. Secondly, the focus is on the state intervention in events and mediation between classes in moments when social crises cannot be resolved by the internal dynamics of society. This intermediary position required a politics of balance between workers/peasants and merchants. It has been tried to be revealed through the state-worker-merchant relationship that emerged in Uşak, where this balance policy was built on a dual dynamic management in the form of repression and containment.

Finally, it is emphasized that the CUP administration, which came to power after the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, continued the balance policy of Abdulhamid II in resolving the class conflict in Uşak and in certain moments of social crisis. Finally, it is emphasized that the CUP administration, which came to power after the Second Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, continued the balance policy of Abdulhamid II in resolving the class conflict in Uşak and in certain moments of social crisis. Despite the state's sharpening labor policy after 1909, the CUP administration pursued a policy of gaining the consent of the people and acting cautiously due to the potential for social organization and radical grassroots movement in Uşak. Therefore, this evaluation aims to both reveal the power of the social movement in Uşak and capture the nuances of the state's labor policy in this period.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis focuses on the machine-breaking actions carried out by women carpet workers in Uşak in 1908. Focusing on these actions, the relations of the workers with local Muslim merchants and the state were analyzed within the economic and political process in which the actions emerged. The multifaceted nature of these relations formed the basis of the thesis' narrative. The main arguments of the thesis were shaped within the framework of this network of relations. The first of these arguments was that, before the Second Constitutional Era, workers working in non-industrial areas were able to organize long-term social movements around common class demands. Thus, the importance of local actors in the social ground that brought about the Second Constitutional Era was emphasized. In addition, the machine-breaking actions of 1908 were the result of a historical continuity that cannot be explained by a single moment or social explosion. Women carpet workers were part of a class conflict that lasted approximately thirty years and demonstrated a political will for their art and rights.

Secondly, the thesis argued that Muslim carpet merchants from Uşak had a will and organization to establish a national bourgeoisie before the Second Constitutional Era. At the same time, the power of this organization did not only stem from their economic capital. Muslim carpet merchants, who were the targets of the 1908 protests, acquired political and administrative powers that allowed them to act as intermediaries between the state and the people in Uşak. This multifaceted power relationship made them the target of people from different strata of society. Therefore, these conflict relations, which were examined by focusing on the process

leading up to 1908, cannot be reduced to economic reasons. In addition, capitalists were not considered as a categorical entity, but as patterns of relations that emerged around common interests. From this perspective, I aimed to show that factors such as nationality and competition could break class integrity both among Muslim carpet merchants and between foreign and local capital. During this period, the national discourse that emerged around the discourse of locality among Muslim carpet merchants cut the capital class vertically.

Thirdly, this thesis argued that the labor policies of the Abdulhamid II era were formed within the framework of a balance policy between repression and concession. In this period, representing the oppressive face of the state, the Sultan did not directly confront the workers in the face of opposition against him. In a social structure where merchants were made intermediaries between the people and the state, the state tried to keep itself in a supra-class position, outside of social conflicts. In a social structure where merchants and local notables were made responsible for social unrest, the Sultan adopted the role of a problem-solving actor. For this reason, he was a figure who brought society into line when necessary and rushed to help when needed. However, the thesis argued that one of the factors that forced the state to this balance policy was the organizational power of the labor movement in Uşak, like its counterparts. This balance policy emerged when the radical activism of the workers combined with the state's need for legitimacy.

This thesis has certain limitations due to both its scope and sources. Revealing these limits offers the opportunity to contribute to further studies. The first of these limitations is related to the scope of the thesis. Until the beginning of the 20th century, Uşak was the region with the highest carpet production and export volume in Anatolia. In the following period, production shifted towards Central

Anatolia. Some possible reasons for this have been touched upon in this thesis. However, it may be a subject of further studies to seek answers to the meaning of this spatial shift of capital both in terms of capital interests and the quality of labor. Finally, the source limitation has been attempted to be overcome in this thesis. However, there are some limits to this effort to overcome it.

Exploring the daily practices of women workers, their relationships with each other, and the emotions around which they organized the 1908 protests has been limited within the scope of sources. However, the possibilities of revealing these practices that constitute the collective consciousness of the class can be developed in further studies. Carpet weaving, which has been seen as both a cultural value passed down from mothers to daughters for centuries in Uşak and an economic activity, can be sought in the memories of later generations. Oral history studies can be conducted as a way of investigating how the stories of women weavers and spinners have a place in the memories of later generations and how weaving has built a life in Uşak households. How did the transformation of weaving, which women engaged in as a family art in their spare time, affect social relations starting in the second half of the 19th century? Did women starting to weave carpets without having time for anything else cause a transformation in gender roles? It was not possible to find the answers to these questions within the scope of this thesis. However, an oral history study to be conducted with elderly women in Uşak in further studies can provide answers to some of these questions.

As a result, Uşak, a small rural town in the middle of Western Anatolia, reflects a picture of the political and economic transformations in the last period of the Ottoman Empire. The transformations in question were among the founding dynamics of the Second Constitutional Era. In this thesis, I aimed to show how these

transformations, often analyzed through macro politics and under the influence of major actors, had a counterpart in terms of local actors and social movements. One of these actors was the women workers who broke the machines with spinning wheels and axes in their hands a few months before the revolution. The agency displayed by these workers, the vast majority of whom were peasant women and girls, carries the opportunity to transform the assumptions about the history of ordinary people in the late Ottoman Empire.

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