Continuity, Change, and Informality in a Historical Bazaar: The Grand Bazaar in the 2020s

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The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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Abstract

Continuity, Change, and Informality in a Historical Bazaar: The Grand Bazaar in the 2020s
Ebru Özgenç, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2025

Associate Professor Berna Yazıcı Tepeyurt, Thesis Advisor

This thesis focuses on informal economic activities and their underlying dynamics through the experiences of economic actors in the Grand Bazaar. It examines the various forms of informal income generation in this traditional bazaar, the processes by which transitions from informal to formal structures occur, and the perspectives of numerous actors from different occupational groups regarding informality. The thesis aims to elucidate the complex structure of economic activities in the Grand Bazaar by first defining, and then analyzing them - drawing particularly on the literature surrounding the informal economy and its conceptual frameworks. The fieldwork is based on 21 in-depth interviews conducted between 2024 and 2025. Ultimately, the thesis seeks to explore the informal labor force as it diversifies within the unique economic and cultural context of the Grand Bazaar, focusing on the bazaar's economic actors, and thereby contributing to the enrichment of academic literature in this field.

50.000 words

Özet

Tarihi Bir Çarşıda Süreklilik, Değişim ve Kayıt Dışılık: 2020'lerde Kapalıçarşı

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Doçent Berna Yazıcı Tepeyurt, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, Kapalıçarşı'daki ekonomik aktörler üzerinden kayıt dışı ekonomik faaliyetlere ve bunların altında yatan dinamiklere odaklanmaktadır. Bu geleneksel çarşıdaki, kayıt dışı gelir elde etme biçimlerinin neler olduğu, kayıt dışı ve formel faaliyetler arasındaki akışkanlığın nasıl gerçekleştiği ve çarşıdaki farklı meslek gruplarından birçok aktörün bunlara dair bakış açısı incelenmektedir. Tez, özellikle kayıt dışı ekonomi literatüründen ve bu literatürün kavram setlerinden faydalanarak Kapalıçarşı'daki ekonomik faaliyetlerin girift yapısını önce tanımlayarak ardından analiz ederek açıklamayı hedeflemektedir. Tezin saha çalışması, 2024-2025 tarihleri arasında gerçekleştirilen 21 derinlemesine mülakata dayanmaktadır. Tezin nihai amacı, Kapalıçarşı'nın kendine özgü ekonomik ve kültürel bağlamı içerisinde çeşitlenen informel emek gücünü, çarşının ekonomik aktörlerine odaklanarak araştırmak ve bu sayede, bu alandaki literatürün zenginleşmesine katkıda bulunmaktır.

50.000 kelime

To little-footed Mansi

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I am deeply grateful to my mother Solmaz, my father Hasan, and my sister Eda for their unconditional love and constant support, which have carried me through every stage of my life. I am also deeply thankful to my beloved Deniz and Mansur, who have guided my life with love and compassion in so many different ways. You have been a source of joy and happiness not only during this thesis, but in all aspects of my life. To my dear friends Ulaş and Alper, who stood by me with motivation, kindness, and encouragement every step of the way, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

1

Introduction

> *It has become a lifestyle for us. At home you spend 3 hours in the evening with your family. Here you are together for 10 hours a day. You share more things.*
>
> – Mehmet,[1] *Interview*, 2024

As the ferry approaches the Eminönü Pier, you are greeted by the iconic New Mosque, casting its grand shadow over the bustling square. The moment you step off the ferry, the calls of fishermen inviting you to their seaside restaurants fill the air, mingling with the delicious aroma of freshly grilled mackerel wafting over the Golden Horn. Crossing the road, you come upon the red-bricked façade of the Spice Bazaar. Turning left from the bazaar, you pass first the Flower Market, then the Türkiye İş Bankası Museum, and shortly after, the Grand Post Office. After ascending a few gently sloping streets, you arrive at the magnificent Nuruosmaniye Complex. Located adjacent to the Grand Bazaar - one of the city's major commercial hubs - the construction of this complex was initiated by Sultan Mahmud I on January 19, 1749. After his

1 All names are pseudonyms.

death, his brother, Sultan Osman III, completed the project, and the mosque was inaugurated on December 5, 1755.[2]

Sultan Osman III named the mosque "Nûr-ı Osmânî" (Nuruosmaniye), thereby commemorating both the dynasty and his own legacy. Clad in gray marble and reflecting a strong influence of European Baroque architecture, the mosque exudes a distinctive elegance. A narrow path runs alongside it, marked by an arch that spans overhead.[3] As you walk beneath the arch, you come upon the Nuruosmaniye Gate - one of 22 entrances to the centuries -old Grand Bazaar.[4] This gate, one of the main entry points to the sprawling complex with its orange-tiled roofs and lead-covered domes, leads you into a vibrant scene. Here, you are greeted by the hum of conversations between shopkeepers, customers, and tourists. Sunlight filters into the bazaar through windows set beside the stout vaults supporting the roof. As you wander through the narrow shopfronts, you take in the bazaar's unique atmosphere - an intoxicating blend of history, commerce, and culture.

While the cultural description of the Grand Bazaar is extraordinary, it is equally important to recognize it as a living historical center of commerce. In this regard, commercial statistics can provide valuable insight into its economic significance. According to a 2001 study cited by researcher Önder Küçükerman, the Grand Bazaar has 3,285 shops and 24 *hans*.[5] At its busiest times, it can hold up to half a million people, showing how lively and active the space still is today.[6] Different parts of the bazaar have different values.

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2 Semavi Eyice, "Nuruosmaniye Külliyesi," TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, accessed October 23, 2024.

3 Eyice, "Nuruosmaniye Külliyesi."

4 Önder Küçükerman "Büyük Bir Kültür, Tasarım ve Ticaret Mirasının Ana Ekseni: Kapalıçarşı," in Geçmişten Geleceğe Kapalıçarşı, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk, (Istanbul: Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2019), 17.

5 Küçükerman, "Büyük Bir Kültür, Tasarım ve Ticaret Mirasının Ana Ekseni: Kapalıçarşı," 51.

6 Mike Gerrard, *The Traveler's Atlas: Europe* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 2009), 119.

Kalpakçılar Street is worth about $264 million. “Kuytu Bölge” with 1,000 shops, is valued at $180 million, and “Yorgancılar Arkası” with 1,011 shops, is worth $90 million. Other areas include Kuyumcular Street ($72 million), Yağlıkçılar Street ($60 million), Orta Kazazlar with 100 shops ($49 million), and Cevahir Bedesteni ($46 million). The 663 shops located in the *hans* are worth $330 million. Altogether, the total value of the 3,285 shops is around $1.5 billion.[7]

Like many others who may read this thesis, I first visited this fascinating bazaar at a young age. Years later, when I chose it as the site for my academic fieldwork, my focus turned to its intangible cultural heritage. Before beginning this thesis, I made frequent visits to the bazaar to conduct interviews and observations as part of a pilot study. One day, I visited the shop of Alex, a ceramic shop owner, for an interview. While we were making small talk before the interview, two American tourists - a mother and her son - entered the shop. A young man working there immediately approached them with a warm smile. Rather than overwhelming them with a hard sell, he politely offered help if they needed it. The tourists browsed the items on their own for a while. Then the salesman asked, “Are you looking for something specific?” The young tourist replied that they were just looking. The salesman began engaging them in friendly conversation.

Since it was early in the morning, he offered them a drink, saying, “If you want, you can have the first coffee or tea of the day with us.” Speaking in accented but fluent English, he cracked jokes and made the tourists feel at ease. He allowed them to handle the fragile ceramics one by one and began sharing stories about his travels in the United States. It felt less like a shopping experience and more like an encounter with a host. The young man seamlessly became part of their experience, creating a relaxed and personal atmosphere.

7 Küçükerman, “Büyük Bir Kültür, Tasarım ve Ticaret Mirasının Ana Ekseni: Kapalıçarşı,” 51.

Though they initially declined the offer of coffee, the tourists eventually asked for two cups of Turkish coffee. The salesman brought out two stools and served them. Within ten minutes, he had completely charmed the visitors. After purchasing a few items, they left the shop smiling as he wished them a pleasant holiday.

After they departed, he winked at me and said, "I knew they would buy something," before stepping out. I was genuinely impressed. He had just made a $200 sale in ten minutes, and he did it effortlessly. I turned to the shop owner and remarked, "You have a very good salesman." He replied, "No, he is not a salesman. He works on commission. He is a *hanutçu*." It was then that I realized the individuals who draw people into shops or assist customers are not always called "salesmen." With encounters like this, the direction of my research began to take shape. From then on, while interviewing shopkeepers, I also made a point to ask about *hanutçus*.

This encounter, which reshaped both the questions and the framework of my research, redirected my focus toward the informal economic activities within the Grand Bazaar. I became particularly interested in the relational dynamics among economic actors, the bazaar's self-regulatory mechanisms that sustain these relations, and the ways in which kinship ties and social networks are mobilized and instrumentalized. These informal activities are not peripheral but are deeply embedded in the bazaar's social fabric, making them essential objects of ethnographic inquiry. Accordingly, beyond the more visible economic actors such as shopkeepers and apprentices, my attention extended to often-overlooked figures like *hanutçus*, porters, and intermediaries, and the labor and survival strategies they employ in navigating this economic milieu. It is thus crucial to identify and classify these informal activities and to examine how they are interpreted, legitimized, or contested by those who engage in them. This thesis is guided by the central research question: What are the in-

formal economic activities within the Grand Bazaar, and how are these practices operationalized, negotiated, and perceived by its diverse economic actors?

In this context, the concept of informal economy, which represents the backbone of this thesis, was introduced in the early 1970s to describe economic activities that fall outside the boundaries set by official institutions.[8] Although it was initially assumed to be a characteristic of peripheral economies such as Latin America and Africa, the character of informality has been re-evaluated and it has been argued that it is something that can be observed at all economic levels and has a very broad framework.[9] Although it is therefore difficult to propose a clear delimitation of the boundaries of the informal economy, in short, the term is used to describe the production of value added that is outside government regulation and supervision, that ignores the obligation to pay taxes, and that is therefore often not included in official gross national product statistics.[10] Although professions such as peddling are associated in the collective memory when it comes to the informal economy, this concept is not something that is limited to economic activities carried out by people on the periphery of society in order to meet their basic needs or something that is seen as criminal by the state. In other words, informal economy is not an euphemism for poverty or illegality.[11]

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8 Keith Hart, "The Informal Economy," The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology 10, no. 2 (1985), 54.

9 Alejandro Portes and Saskia Sassen- Koob, "Making It Underground: Comparative Material on the Informal Sector in Western Market Economies," American Journal of Sociology 93, no. 1 (1987), 32.

10 Ceyhun Elgin, The Informal Economy: Measures, Causes, and Consequences, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 7.

11 Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes, "World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy," in The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries, ed. Alejandro Portes, Manuel Castells, and Lauren A. Benton (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 12.

Broadly speaking, some jobs are seen as informal because they are largely invisible to the bureaucratic gaze.[12] For instance, selling lemons on the street is not perceived as immoral or criminal. However, since it is not subject to direct taxation from a bureaucratic point of view, it is labelled as an informal activity. In addition to taxation, working in an unregistered way without worker benefits or social protection also falls within the scope of informality.[13] For example, editing books as a freelancer, working as a software developer in a company while at the same time designing a website for someone else for a fee, or taking care of the neighbor's child some evenings for a fee all fall within the framework of the informal economy.

When informality is identified as a research topic through the case of the Grand Bazaar, it can be observed that in a traditional trade center, both formal and informal activities manifest themselves in a distinct way and that there is fluidity between these two forms. For example, a young man who works unregistered part-time in his father's jewellery shop benefits from most of the economic opportunities provided by his father's business. From a bureaucratic point of view, however, they are contributing to the informal economy, as the added value of the child's contribution to his father's business is not reported to the relevant organizations. On the other hand, after the official declaration is made on an unspecified date, the child's position in the business flows from informal to formal and then to ownership of the shop.

In addition to these, due to some unique dynamics, the Grand Bazaar, unlike other trade centers, provides opportunities for informality through many

12 Keith Hart, "Bureaucratic Form and the Informal Economy," in Linking the Formal and Informal Economy: Concepts and Policies, ed., Basudeb Guha- Khasnobis, Ravi Kanbur, and Elinor Ostrom, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22.

13 Martha Alter Chen, "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment," in Linking the Formal and Informal Economy: Concepts and Policies, ed., Basudeb Guha- Khasnobis, Ravi Kanbur, and Elinor Ostrom, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78.

professions and practices. Therefore, in the following chapters of the thesis, taking into account the framework of the informal economy literature, it is aimed to present other informal activities in the Grand Bazaar, the motivations and practices of these activities with the contributions of the interviews of the relevant workers.

To understand the Grand Bazaar anthropologically, one must consider it holistically, encompassing all of its human and material components from the shopkeeper to the porter, the apprentice to the customer. This historic commercial complex should not be treated as a static or frozen image; rather, it should be interpreted as a living organism, animated by its architectural structure, its workers, its sounds, smells, and rhythms of daily life. Accordingly, this thesis will recount the stories of those who contribute to the identity of the Grand Bazaar: the individuals who work, live, socialize, sell their labor, and exchange goods within its walls. Before turning to their narratives, however, it is important to provide the contextual backdrop - that is, the story of the Grand Bazaar itself, a historical site that has endured and evolved over centuries.

§ 1.1 A Brief History of the Grand Bazaar

When the construction of the Grand Bazaar began, it was not originally planned as a complex structure comprising *hans* and streets, as it appears today. Over the centuries, with additions and removals, it has been continuously reshaped to reach its current form, covering an area of 30.7 hectares, with 61 streets and three main sections - the Inner Bedesten, the Sandal Bedesten, and other sections.[14]

14 Çelik Gülersoy, *Story of the Grand Bazaar* (İstanbul: İstanbul Kitaplığı, 1990), 17.

Following the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the Grand Bazaar was established around the *bedesten* built by Mehmed II to be a source of income for Hagia Sophia, which was converted into a mosque.[15] This *bedesten*, built near the Old Palace, was also known as the Inner Bedesten or Cevahir Bedesten[16] due to the majority of shops selling precious goods.[17] The people would entrust their savings to the jewellery merchants of the Cevahir Bedesten, all of whom were honest and well-known wealthy people, in exchange for bonds, and the money would be invested by these merchants at a small interest rate permitted by the Islamic Sharia, which was considered legitimate, and both the merchant and the owner of the money would benefit.[18] Therefore, this bazaar was considered important in every respect.

Next to Cevahir Bedesten (the Inner Bedesten), Sandal Bedesten (New Bedesten, Bezzâziye Suğra, Küçük Bedesten, Bedestan-i Cedid) was built during the reign of Mehmed II. [19] The construction of Sandal Bedesten was started in 1472 and completed in 1478.[20] During the Ottoman period, a type of luxury fabric woven with cotton and silk was called *sandal*, and the bedesten was called Sandal Bedesten because it was allocated for the sale of this special fabric. [21] However, after its establishment, not only *sandal*, but also traditional

15 Gülay Kurt, "Tarihsel Süreç Işığında Çarşı Kavramı ve Kapalıçarşı," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Kapalıçarşı*, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk, (Istanbul: Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2019), 65.

16 "Ol Şehr-i İstanbul Ki.." in *Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul*, ed. Atilla Özbey, (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 44.

17 While its first name was Cevahir Bedesten, it was called Inner Bedesten after the bazaar came into being and Eski Bedesten after centuries, see *Kapalıçarşı*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu, 1972), 6. See also *Bedesten-i Atik: Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Bedesten ve Kapalıçarşı", Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul*, ed. Atilla Özbey, (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 33.

18 *Kapalıçarşı* (1972), 8.

19 Kurt, "Tarihsel Süreç Işığında Çarşı Kavramı ve Kapalıçarşı," 65.

20 Kurt, "Tarihsel Süreç Işığında Çarşı Kavramı ve Kapalıçarşı," 67.

21 Haluk Y. Şahsuvaroğlu, *"Kapalıçarşı ve Tarihi," Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul*, ed. Atilla Özbey, (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 25.

fabrics such as *damgahane*, *kesmesud*, *peşni*, *belder*, *yemeni*, *çatma* and *çuha* were sold in this bedesten.[22] As a guarantee of the quality of these special fabrics, their production was stamped with registration stamps approved by the government. [23] However, the fabrics imported from Europe from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, starting with the Tanzimat, extinguished the aforementioned traditional local fabrics and the shops where they were sold.[24]

From 1914 onwards, auctions started to be held in the Sandal Bedesten with a decision made by Cemil Topuzlu, the city mayor of Istanbul. [25] It is said that Topuzlu turned this place into an auction hall by emulating the famous auction house Drouot in Paris. [26] The interior of the Bedesten was divided into wooden partitions and used as auction hall, goods hall, jewellery hall, carpet hall and Halk Bank branch.[27] Following this situation, Reşat Ekrem Koçu evaluated Sandal Bedesteni as an ordinary auction hall that had completely lost its personality and remained a meaningless name, leaving the bazaar and remaining under the supervision of the municipality. [28] Auction halls were abolished in the 80s. Since 2018, the Bedesten has been used as a branch of Nusr-Et,[29] the meat restaurant of Nusret Gökçe, who became famous for his "Saltbea" trend, by placing building elements (such as wooden door, window wings, and marble *selsebil*) that are not related to the place.[30]

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22 Orhan Erdenen, *İstanbul Çarşıları ve Kapalıçarşı* (İstanbul: Yenilik Basımevi, 1965), 12.

23 Erdenen, *İstanbul Çarşıları ve Kapalıçarşı*, 12.

24 Erdenen, *İstanbul Çarşıları ve Kapalıçarşı*, 12.

25 Çelik Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Nuri Akbayar et al. (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 425.

26 Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 425.

27 Erdenen, *İstanbul Çarşıları ve Kapalıçarşı*, 12.

28 Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Bedesten ve Kapalıçarşı", in *Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul*, ed. Atilla Özbey, (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 33.

29 Sayit Durmaz, "Yeni Şube Kapalıçarşı'da," Hürriyet Kelebek, May 11, 2018, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kelebek/magazin/yeni-sube-kapalicarsida-40832430.

30 Acar Avunduk, "Kapalıçarşı İçinde Sandal Bedesteni, Sandal Bedesteni İçinde Nusr-Et Kebap Salonu," Arkitera, April 15, 2022.

Built in the fifteenth century and bearing the aesthetics of the Fatih period, these two bedestens are the heart of the bazaar. Following the construction of Cevahir and Sandal Bedestens, this area literally became the commercial center of the city.[31] From the earliest years, the bedestens were surrounded by a commercial fabric of shops and stalls.[32] In the 15th and 16th centuries, the amount of these shops was one third of today's Grand Bazaar.[33] Hence, the Grand Bazaar is not a uniform trade center built in accordance with a regular plan at the time of its foundation; on the contrary, it has been shaped by gradually growing or shrinking over the centuries.

The bazaar, the construction of which started with Cevahir Bedesten and Sandal Bedesten, was first shaped around these two bedestens. The ruler and the rich people of the period first had streets built around these bedestens, and shops, *hans*, and cellars built on the streets.[34] The bedestens were built in masonry, as they are today, but the rows of shops were originally wooden, covered with tiles.[35] Each street was filled with shops engaged in a particular trade, and so for centuries they carried the name of that trade or craft, for example: *Kalpakçılar* (the fur cap makers), *Terziler* (the tailors), *Keseciler* (the purse makers), *Sahaflar* (the book sellers), *Terlikçiler* (the slipper makers), *Kavaflar* (the condwainer), *Takkeciler* (the hat makers), *Perdahçılar* (the polishers), *Koltukçular* (the chair makers), *Feraceciler* (the mantle makers), *Yağlıkçılar* (the linen makers), *Yorgancılar* (the quilt makers).[36]

When disasters such as fire and earthquake occurred, the fact that many buildings were wooden caused great destruction for the bazaar many times.

31 Kurt, "Tarihsel Süreç Işığında Çarşı Kavramı ve Kapalıçarşı," 67.

32 Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

33 Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

34 *Kapalıçarşı* (1972), 5.

35 Feridun Akozan, "İstanbul'un Kapalı Çarşısı," Tarih Dergisi, no. 32 (1979), 764.

36 *Kapalıçarşı* (1972), 22.

In 1509, during the reign of Bayezid II, the earthquake that devastated Istanbul also damaged the bazaar. [37] Although the *bedestens* were masonry, fire was a great danger as they were surrounded by wooden shops and one of the most important ones occurred in 1546. [38] In this way, the destruction caused by disasters gradually led to the reshaping of the bazaar. The 1660 fire, which occurred after the 1618 and 1652 fires, was described by Mehmed Khalifa, who witnessed the disaster, as "the nights turned into daylight because of the flames and the days turned into night because of the smoke." [39] The wooden roofs and tiled roofs of the *bedestens* affected by this fire were covered with masonry vaults after the fire. [40] Subsequently, the bazaar suffered great damage due to the fires in 1694 and 1701. [41] On 3 December 1701, a fire started in the Sorguççu Han near the Cevahir Bedesteni due to the fire of a watchman's lantern, [42] and the *hans* and shops between the old and new *bedesten* were completely burnt down. [43] Upon the devastation of the bazaar, in 1702, a decree sent by Mustafa II to the district governor of Istanbul ordered that the construction of wooden shops and even houses should be banned as a serious measure and that from now on, houses and shops should be built of masonry.[44]

Although the transformation of the shops, which were initially built in wood, into masonry began in this way, the bazaar was not yet covered. The transformation of the streets of the Grand Bazaar into a covered bazaar by

37 "Fires in the Grand Bazaar," The Grand Bazaar Magazine (2004), 51.

38 Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

39 "(…) geceleri alevlerden dolayı nur gibi gündüze, gündüzleri de dumanlardan dolayı geceye çevildi." Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

40 Çelik Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

41 Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, "Kapalıçarşı'nın Felaket Tarihçesi," in *Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul*, (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 117.

42 Semavi Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı" TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi, accessed October 23, 2024.

43 "Fires in the Grand Bazaar," (2004), 51.

44 Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı."

covering them with masonry vaults started as of this date (1702).[45] Therefore, the term "Kapalıçarşı" (Covered Bazaar) in the documents related to the fires is much more recent; at that time, the bazaar was called "Çarşu-yı Kebir," that is, the Grand Bazaar.[46] However, with the eighteenth century, there are also statements that the bazaar was covered. Şemdanizade, one of the writers of the period, mentions in 1766 that the bazaar was both masonry and its streets were covered.[47]

One of the events that caused the greatest damage to the Grand Bazaar occurred in 1894. From the reign of Mehmed II until that year, Istanbul has experienced 12 earthquakes, but none of those earthquakes damaged the bazaar to that extent.[48] After this earthquake, the face of the bazaar changed drastically. After the earthquake of 1894, which is called the "küçük kıyamet" (small apocalypse) that changed the old form of the bazaar and caused it to take its present form, important changes were made.[49]

The bazaar suffered major damage due to disasters not only during the Ottoman period, but also during the Republican period. On 9 September 1943, the historical bazaar suffered a fire disaster[50] and the Tarımtaş and Ali Paşa *hans* along with Yeşil Tulumba, Mutevelli, Sarı Hasan, Ağa Han and Cebeci streets were burnt down.[51] After this fire, the historical bazaar partially lost its old picturesque appearance and the old atmosphere in it changed.[52] An even

45 Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı."

46 Akozan, "İstanbul'un Kapalı Çarşısı," 765.

47 Akozan, "İstanbul'un Kapalı Çarşısı," 765.

48 Çelik Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

49 Atilla Özbey, "Deprem Bizi Göçertecek Mi?" in *Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul* (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 127.

50 Kapalıçarşı (1972), 6.

51 Gülersoy, *Story of the Grand Bazaar*, 14.

52 Kapalıçarşı (1972), 6.

bigger fire occurred at 22.10 on the night of 26 November 1954.[53] Due to the fire, Kalpakçılar Street was devastated until Kürkçüler, and the streets of Terziler, Kolancılar, Kavukçular, Koltukçular, Hazırelbiseciler, Hacı Hüsnü Emirşah, Püsküllü were also burnt.[54]

After the fire, in the report dated 30 November 1954 written by the Council for the Protection of Antiquities (Eski Eserleri Koruma Encümeni), it was stated that two-fifths of the Grand Bazaar was devastated.[55] This fire was one of the biggest disasters that occurred in Istanbul during the Republican period, so much so that the then President Celal Bayar described it as "a great blow to the city not only in economic terms, but also in historical, touristic, cultural and social terms."[56] The restoration after this fire cost 3 million dollars at the exchange rate of the time and the bazaar was reopened 5 years later on 28 July 1959.[57] The wooden extensions added towards the street in order to expand the volume of the shops, which was one of the reasons for the spread of the fire, and the wooden advertisement boards around the shop windows were arranged in such a way that they did not extend beyond the arch of the shop after this repair.[58] After the 1980 coup d'état, İsmail Hakkı Akansel, who was appointed as the Mayor of Istanbul Municipality, had the extensions of the shops in the bazaar removed, so that the streets were widened, albeit slightly.[59]

53 Fatma Ürekli, "Kapalıçarşı'nın Geçirdiği Deprem ve Yangınlar ile Sonrasında Gerçekleştirilen Tamiratlar" in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Kapalıçarşı*, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk, (Istanbul: Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2019), 161.

54 "Fires in the Grand Bazaar," 51.

55 Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı."

56 Celali Yılmaz, "Ticaret, İmalat ve Turizm Merkezi: Kapalıçarşı," Yeditepe Fatih 4 (2021): 8. "Şehre sadece iktisadi açıdan değil, tarihi, turistik, kültürel ve sosyal açılardan da büyük bir darbe"

57 Gülersoy, "Kapalıçarşı," 423.

58 Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı."

59 Ürekli, "Kapalıçarşı'nın Geçirdiği Deprem ve Yangınlar ile Sonrasında Gerçekleştirilen Tamiratlar," 165.

The Grand Bazaar has been an active trade place since the reign of Mehmed II until the present day. It has been shaped according to the conditions, needs, trends, and events of the period. Just like a living organism, it has adapted to the conditions in order to survive.

As a 600-year-old trade center, architectural structure of the bazaar has changed over the years, while the products sold in it and the composition of the shopkeepers have also changed. In the Ottoman Period, the number of workplaces specific to a certain good or service was kept under control by the state and this was called the *Gedik usul*.[60] For example, in the middle of the seventeenth century, when there were 200 slipper shops in İstanbul, it was not possible for the number of slipper shops to change. Moreover, a shop could not be moved from one location to another, such a thing required state permission.[61] In the past, in this system, where each street was restricted to a certain craft or trade, shopkeepers were not only prohibited from selling another type of goods, but were even prohibited from displaying them in their shops.[62] However, today, instead of the street planning separated according to each profession, shopkeepers have settled on the streets in a mixed manner, and the shops with open stalls seen in old engravings have been replaced by metal-framed showcases.[63] Naturally, the products sold in the bazaar have also changed along with the shops.

After all, as stated at the very beginning, the bazaar is not a frozen historical commercial space, but rather behaves like an organism. It grows, develops, some of its cells die - just like the crafts that are no longer practiced or the collapse and destruction of some parts of the building - and some of its cells are recreated. Naturally, while the bazaar changes so much, the occupational

60 Kapalıçarşı (1972), 10.

61 *Kapalıçarşı* (1972), 10.

62 Gülersoy, *Story of the Grand Bazaar*, 27.

63 Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı."

groups within it also change. Some of these are crafts, so their disappearance over time can be observed more clearly, while others are more informal and thus overlooked by researchers and visitors to the bazaar. Therefore, in this anthropological study, I will first describe and then analyze the formal and informal functioning of the economic actors in the bazaar.

§ 1.2 Methodology

For the fieldwork of this thesis, in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 21 participants working in the Grand Bazaar between 2024 and 2025. While planning who would be in the interviewee group, some characteristics were prioritized. Therefore, care was taken to identify people from different professions, age groups and ethnic origins. 5 of the participants were jewelry, 3 carpet, 2 ceramic, 2 watch, 2 textile, 1 antique shop owners. In addition, 1 salesman of textile shop, 2 porters, 1 *hanutçu* and 1 intermediary were interviewed. In order to better analyze intergenerational relations, one focused group interview was conducted. The majority of these participants were middle-aged men, the rest were young men and one woman.

In order to conduct the field research successfully, I made some preliminary preparations before going to the bazaar. First of all, I wrote down my insights that I expected to be said by the participants during the interviews. Writing down the comments I expected to hear from the participants gave me an idea of where I should scrape during the interview. In addition, I designed the questions I would ask in the interview to be open-ended and focused on the experiences and ideas of the participants. I made sure to order the questions according to a certain flow so that the fieldwork would be more conversational.

The Grand Bazaar, which I chose as the case for my thesis, had both advantages and disadvantages for an ethnographic study. To mention the advantages, the shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar were quite familiar with subjects such as interviews, documentaries and research. Therefore, they did not feel uneasy or unfamiliar when you asked for an interview. When I asked them if I could take audio recordings during the interviews, they all agreed without hesitation. Since they were working in a historical bazaar, they were in contact with hundreds of people from many countries around the world every day. As a result, they were well mannered, friendly, humorous and easy to get along with. Another advantage was that when we met with shopkeepers, there was no need to make an effort to arrange a place as we conducted the interviews in their shops. They also felt more comfortable because they were in a familiar environment.

Conducting fieldwork in the Grand Bazaar also had some disadvantages. Since the porters (*hammal)* and intermediaries were mobile, access to them was quite difficult. They were more tense than the shopkeepers and we had to interview them in a noisy environment as they were not working in the shop. When we interviewed the shopkeepers in their shops, customers often caused interruptions. While this was a good opportunity to observe shopkeeper - customer relations, it sometimes distracted the interviewees. Questions about informal activities sometimes made these people uneasy. Although they seemed eager to answer most questions, questions about informality were often answered through "others."

I used snowball sampling while conducting fieldwork. Prior to this study, I did not have any friends or acquaintances working in the Grand Bazaar. When I decided to examine the Grand Bazaar as a case for my research, I asked people around me if they knew anyone who worked in the bazaar. Then I learned that a friend's father was a shopkeeper in the bazaar. I was lucky to find a gatekeeper. Because Mehmet, the father of my friend, was very helpful

and excited when he learned about my research topic. When I told him what kind of interview sampling I wanted to determine for my study, he helped me meet people who were suitable for that sampling. The people he introduced me to also made efforts to help me reach other people.

§ 1.3 Limitations

Through the application of ethnographic methods, this thesis adopts fieldwork as a central strategy to investigate its core research questions. As detailed in the previous subchapter, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with 21 participants representing a broad spectrum of professions, specializations, ages, ethnicities, and genders. While the majority of participants were middle-aged men, the interviews collectively yielded a substantial and valuable data for analysis. Nevertheless, certain temporal and contextual factors inevitably introduced limitations to the research process.

One of the main limitations of the interviews - widely used throughout this thesis - emerged during the data collection phase. All relevant interviews were conducted in and around the Grand Bazaar, primarily inside shops. As a site of intense human traffic, especially during the tourist season, the Grand Bazaar presented frequent interruptions. The constant circulation of tourists often disrupted the interviews. While I attempted to use these moments as opportunities to observe interactions between customers and shopkeepers, regaining the participants' focus afterward proved difficult. As a result, many interviews lasted significantly longer than originally planned.

The second challenge in terms of data collection was related to the shops where the interviews were conducted. While interviewing shopkeepers, I mostly visited them in their shops. I observed that they felt much more comfortable being in their own space, which allowed them to answer questions

and not disrupt their work. However, most shops in the Grand Bazaar are extremely small - typically less than three square meters in size - which created spatial constraints. As a result, some interviews had to be conducted partially outside the shop or involved shifting between sitting inside and standing outside. This constant movement introduced a level of distraction that likely affected participants' concentration and the overall flow of the interviews.

Moreover, negotiating with shopkeepers was generally easier than negotiating with porters and intermediaries. This was primarily because, when planned in advance, I knew where to locate the shopkeepers, as they were stationed at fixed locations. In contrast, porters and intermediaries did not work in fixed positions throughout the day. Even if a prior agreement had been made, it was often difficult to locate them at the designated time. During the day, intermediaries typically transported goods between shops within the bazaar or from a shop to a location outside the bazaar. Porters, on the other hand, were often found in groups near a wall in the bazaar or inside a *han*; however, due to the highly mobile nature of their work, they may not have been available at the agreed time. As a result, I frequently had to reschedule interviews with porters. When working with such occupational groups, it is crucial for researchers to maintain a highly flexible schedule.

In addition to the limitations of the interviews, there are significant gaps in measurable data. Physically observable figures, such as the total number of shops, warehouses, streets, and *hans* in the Grand Bazaar, are generally similar across most sources but still exhibit variation. Moreover, obtaining data on informal income earners is nearly impossible. Information regarding the total number of *hanutçus*, intermediaries, and porters was gathered through interviews, with interpretations differing from one individual to another. Furthermore, it was not possible to determine the number of individuals working unregistered in family businesses, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

While data on formal workers is somewhat more accessible than data on informal workers, it remains ambiguous. There is no definitive information on the number of masters, apprentices, and shop assistants employed in shops and workshops. Consequently, throughout the thesis, the term "approximately" is used for some numerical data.

The second limitation of this thesis emerges to the sampling and representation process. A total of 21 participants were interviewed, encompassing a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, including Turkish, Jewish, Armenian, and Kurdish individuals. The age range of participants was also broad, covering young, middle-aged, and elderly individuals. However, the sample lacked sufficient diversity in terms of gender and sexual orientation. Only one female participant was interviewed. This reflects the gender dynamics of the Grand Bazaar, where male dominance is clearly evident. The vast majority of shopkeepers, apprentices, and workers in the service sector are men - a fact corroborated by several male interviewees. Although no official data exists, it is widely acknowledged that the number of female shopkeepers in the bazaar is extremely limited. The only female participant in this study began working in the bazaar following the death of her father, who had previously owned the shop.

Another limitation in sampling emerged in relation to participants' professions. As I mentioned before, shopkeepers were generally more willing to participate, as many had previously been interviewed for newspaper articles, academic theses, or documentaries. Their prior exposure to such engagements made them more receptive to the interview request. In contrast, *hanutçus*, intermediaries, and porters exhibited greater skepticism and hesitation, even when approached through a trusted gatekeeper. Consequently, most declined to participate. As a result, I was able to interview only 4 informal income earners, compared to 17 shopkeepers.

In addition to other considerations, temporal constraints also played a significant role in the planning of the fieldwork. The Grand Bazaar, where the research for this thesis was conducted, is a prominent touristic and commercial hub that attracts thousands of visitors throughout the year. As a result, interview scheduling had to account for these high-traffic periods to ensure participants could engage more comfortably. Notably, the peak tourist season in the historical peninsula, including the Grand Bazaar, occurs between June and September. During these months, participants expressed reluctance to participate in interviews, citing limited availability due to customer-related responsibilities. Similarly, periods coinciding with public and religious holidays - such as Easter, Christmas, New Year, Eid al-Adha, and Eid al-Fitr - were also deemed unsuitable for interviews. Consequently, researchers should be aware that although these peak times offer rich opportunities for observational data, they are generally not conducive to conducting interviews in the Grand Bazaar or similar dynamic commercial environments.

Finally, in anthropological research, the position of the researcher is a significant factor that can directly influence the study's limitations. Position is inherently dynamic; it encompasses both the self-conception of the researcher and the ways in which they are perceived by others in the field. These perceptions are shaped by the cultural, social, and personal backgrounds of the participants. In my own fieldwork, I conducted research as a young female student, which influenced my interactions, particularly in a setting predominantly composed of male staff. This dynamic often led participants to adopt a more formal tone during interviews. While most were friendly and eager to share their knowledge, some made a conscious effort to moderate their language, avoiding harsh expressions, slang, or explicit content.

§ 1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis, which is briefly introduced above, will be discussed in detail in the following chapters through the dynamics of informal economic activities in the Grand Bazaar and the relationship between informality and the economic actors of the bazaar. In the second chapter, a review of the literature that will contribute to the theoretical framework of the thesis will be mentioned. The theoretical foundation of this thesis is shaped around the following two main academic fields: (1) economic anthropology - including bazaar anthropology - and (2) informal economy. Economic anthropology and bazaar anthropology are indispensable disciplines for this thesis, which focuses on the Grand Bazaar as a historical and economic space and tries to analyze certain aspects of this trade area by using ethnographic methods.

In addition, the concept sets of the informal economy literature are quite functional in order to understand the economic activities in the bazaar and to analyze the duality and transitivity between formal and informal. In addition to providing theoretical insights, studies in these two academic fields methodologically facilitate the identification of the subtleties of ethnographic research in an economic space. In addition, literature on the Grand Bazaar, focusing on its history, architecture, and economy, and narratives of Western accounts are used to enrich the study in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the bazaar.

The following section analyzes the economic and social relations in the Grand Bazaar through three main axes: shopkeeper identity, intergenerational commercial relationships, and working dynamics. It argues that these themes are not independent, but rather deeply interwoven and mutually reinforcing. Each section explores how trust, reputation-based social regulation, and the continuum between informal and formal economic practices shape everyday

life in the bazaar. Within this framework, the chapter examines how shopkeeping is constructed as a mode of belonging and performance, how trades are transmitted across generations, and how labor is organized through processes of socialization, transition, and embeddedness. Finally, it addresses the representation of women in the bazaar, analyzing its predominantly male-dominated nature.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I focus on the narratives of individuals who earn informal income outside the visible roles in the bazaar, such as shopkeepers and apprentices. Insights into these often-overlooked actors are presented through an examination of three informal activities that are deeply rooted in the Grand Bazaar's culture and traditions. First, I outline what these activities entail, their operational dynamics, and the challenges and benefits associated with them. Next, I explore the moral, humanitarian, economic, and cultural perspectives of shopkeepers - who operate within the formal economy - regarding these informal practices. Finally, drawing on interviews with individuals engaged in informal work, I analyze their self-perceptions, their place within the bazaar ecosystem, and the strategies they employ to adapt to changing conditions.

In the final chapter, the findings and analysis of the previous few chapters are reviewed. The contribution to the literature of researching the Grand Bazaar and its labor force dynamics using the ethnographic method is briefly mentioned.

2

Literature Review

This thesis aims to contribute to two interconnected academic fields. The first is economic anthropology,[64] given that the Grand Bazaar serves as a site for examining economic relationships. Within this spatial framework, the thesis explores economic activities, interactions among shopkeepers, and the roles of invisible actors in the bazaar. The second, and equally significant, field is the informal economy.

§ 2.1 Studies on Economic Anthropology

Harold Schneider, emphasizing that all human behavior can be analyzed and understood in economic terms, opens his work *Economic Man: The Anthropology of Economics* with the statement, "As behavioral sciences go, economics

64 See also, Harrie T. van der Pas, *Economic Anthropology 1940- 1972: An Annotated Bibliography* (Oosterhout, The Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1973).

is ancient."[65] Consistent with this idea, the influence of economics can be observed not only in areas where economic activities are explicitly conducted but also in micro-areas where groups of people interact.

In its broadest sense, economic anthropology seeks to explain human economic behavior from a cultural perspective. Its roots trace back to the expansion of European colonial empires, particularly from the eighteenth century onward. As a term, economic anthropology was first used in the 1920s and replaced earlier terminology such as primitive economics after Melville Herskovits included it in the title of a compilation in 1940.[66]

Until the 1950s, economic anthropology remained largely descriptive, relying on a general social-structural theoretical framework and focusing on exploring how each culture managed its economic subsistence. Economic anthropology, as a subdiscipline, has been theoretically shaped around the formalist-substantivist debate.[67] The theoretical discussions were ignited by Karl Polanyi. His 1944 work, *The Great Transformation*, which had a profound impact upon its publication, declared the collapse of the nineteenth century civilization and focused on the political and economic causes of this event, as well as the significant transformation it brought about.[68] In doing so, Polanyi connected economic history with social anthropology. According to Polanyi, individuals did not act to preserve the privilege of owning material goods on an individual basis; rather, they acted to maintain their social status, social

65 Harold K. Schneider, *Economic Man: The Anthropology of Economics* (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 11.

66 Chris Hann, "Economic Anthropology," in *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. Hillary Callan (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 1708-09.

67 Richard R. Wilk and Lisa Cliggett, *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology* (Westview Press, 2007), 4.

68 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 3.

claims, and social existence.[69] In other words, material interests are meaningful only as long as they confer social status. The closeness Polanyi established between the disciplines of economics and anthropology in this way would also strengthen theoretical discussions.

In "The Economy as an Instituted Process," Polanyi combined two independently rooted terms to provide a coherent definition of the term "economic": the substantive and the formal meanings. The substantive meaning of economy refers to humans' dependence on nature and communal life for survival and to meet their material needs. The formal meaning of economic derives from the logical character of the means-ends relationship and refers to a specific decision-making situation arising from the scarcity of these means.[70] In short, the formalist-substantivist debate can be seen as the core of economic anthropology theories.

The first glimpses of the formalist-substantivist debate can be traced to Bronisław Malinowski's critiques of Western economics while studying the economy of the Trobriand Islands.[71] Malinowski's landmark 1922 work, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, is an ethnographic monograph about the Trobriand Islands, located near present-day Papua New Guinea. In this monograph, Malinowski shifted his focus from analyzing relationships between islanders in terms of magic, kinship, politics and sexuality to their economic activities, seeking instead to elucidate the dynamics of a specific exchange system termed

69 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 46.

70 Karl Polanyi, "The Economy As Instituted Process," in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, (Glecoe, Illinois: Free Press & The Falcon's Wing Press, 1957), 243.

71 Wilk and Cliggett, *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*, 5.

Kula exchange. This system involves the trade of valuable items, including the *soulava* (a long red shell necklace) and the *mwali* (a white shell bracelet). [72]

Malinowski detailed the various ramifications of *Kula* according to the rules, traditions, beliefs, practices, and even the mythology shaped around it by the islanders. In doing so, he produced a foundational work for economic anthropology. Malinowski's study is not only essential for understanding the economic activities of the Trobriand Islanders but also serves as a manual for ethnographers, offering valuable insights into how ethnographic research should be conducted and what aspects require attention.

The second key work in the literature of economic anthropology is Marcel Mauss's *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, published in 1925. In his study, Mauss examines the principles, obligations, and reasons behind gift-giving in primitive societies, focusing specifically on Melanesians, Polynesians, and Northwest American Indians. He demonstrates how these exchanges influence intertribal relationships. Similar to the *Kula* described in Malinowski's work, Mauss names the ceremonial exchange of gifts potlatch. These exchanges occur not between individuals but among tribes, clans, and families, and the gifts given and received are closely tied to notions of honor and prestige.[73] In this sense, Mauss argues that the exchange of gifts is not merely an economic activity rooted in financial interests but also encompasses moral dynamics that contribute to the formation of sociality.[74]

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72 Bronisław Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

73 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 11.

74 For more information, see: Raymond Firth, ed., *Themes in Economic Anthropology* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967), 8-17, published following the economic anthropology conference organized by the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA).

These foundational works have significantly strengthened the bonds between economics and anthropology. They have expanded theoretical debates, initially constrained to the "formalist" and "substantivist" schools, to provide a new perspective for understanding not only the dynamics of primitive societies but also those of modern societies.[75]

One of the most significant criticisms directed at the "formalist" and "substantivist" schools of thought is their assumption that economics is solely the study of explicit markets. Both groups have largely ignored the economics of nonmarket institutions (such as marriage, the household, and law) as well as the economics of information. However, in 1974, Harold K. Schneider contributed to the economic anthropology with his book *Economic Man*, advocating for the expansion of the formal economic approach within anthropology.[76]

In "The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing," anthropologist Clifford Geertz emphasized that developments in economic theories regarding the roles of information, communication, and knowledge in exchange processes rendered the formalist and substantivist dichotomy meaningless. These advancements not only provided a more suitable analytical framework for explaining how markets function but also enabled the integration of sociocultural factors into the discussion, rather than relegating them to the status of mere boundary matters. In this sense, Geertz heralded the potential for a much more holistic theoretical system to expand the economic anthropology literature.[77] In parallel with Geertz, other scholars introduced significant new perspectives to the discipline. For instance, in 1976,

75 Richard A. Posner, "Anthropology and Economics," *Journal of Political Economy*, 88, no. 3 (1980), 608.

76 "Recent Contributions in Economic Anthropology," *Current Anthropology*, 16, no. 3 (1975), 427.

77 Clifford Geertz, "The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing," in *The Sociology of Economic Life*, ed. Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg (New York: Routledge, 2018), 119.

Becker and in 1978, Grossbard applied the economics of marriage and family to polygamy, a typical primitive institution. In 1979, Friedman discussed the economics of primitive law enforcement, and in 1980, Posner provided a general analysis of primitive social institutions, particularly with reference to law. These studies exemplify the broader perspectives brought to the field.[78]

§ 2.2 Studies on Bazaar Anthropology

In addition to economic anthropology theory, studies on bazaars are particularly valuable for the subject of this thesis. In this context, the ethnographic works of Clifford Geertz are especially significant, as many of them focus directly on ecology and production and exchange systems in markets.[79] Geertz's 1963 work, *Peddlers and Princes*, examines processes of socioeconomic change in two towns, one in Java and the other in Bali. He compares Modjokuto, a bustling Muslim commercial market town in Java, with Tabanan, a Hindu temple town in Bali inhabited by nobles and peasants. Modjokuto reflects the *homo economicus* pattern, characterized by support for democratic liberalism, individual freedom, and intellectual autonomy - qualities seen as conducive to long-term economic creativity and dynamism. On the other hand, economic growth in Tabanan represents the *homo politicus* pattern, shaped by the traditional political and social privileges of the Tabanan elite. Through this comparison, Geertz depicts the economic levels of societies by examining their traditions, cultures, and social organizations.

In his spatially focused studies on bazaars, Geertz explored peasant market systems - or, in his terms, bazaar economies - in his 1978 article.[80] Since the mid-1960s, he had conducted research on the bazaar economy in Sefrou, a

78 Posner, "Anthropology and Economics," 609.

79 Wilk and Cliggett, *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*, 140.

80 Geertz, "The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing," 119.

town located at the foothills of Morocco's Middle Atlas mountains. According to Geertz, the most dramatic aspect of a bazaar economy is not the utility balances found in standard economic activities but rather the information flows.

In bazaars, there are neither the reliable information and tangibility enabled by the ritualized character of non-market economies nor the detailed mechanisms for the production and distribution of information found in industrial economies. Consequently, bargaining becomes necessary to obtain accurate information about the quality and price of products in bazaars.[81] Through this work, Geertz demonstrated the dynamics within bazaars, the relationships between sellers and customers, and the role of these elements in understanding the regional economy.[82]

Rachel Black examines Porta Palazzo, a traditional market in Turin, Italy, to explore how social relationships are shaped through market activities from various aspects. In her study titled *Porto Palazzo*, Black discusses how sellers, customers, and those involved in the supply chain interact with one another through the market. She highlights that markets, as both physical and social spaces, enrich urban life.[83] In addition, in the sections where Rachel Black explains the methods she employed during her study, she provides valuable insights into how an ethnographic study should be conducted.

Furthermore, in "The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre Is the Bazaar Really?," Frank Fanselow examines the goods bought and sold in bazaars to explain some features that may seem nonsensical when viewed out of context.

81 Geertz, "The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing," 119.

82 For more information see: Clifford Geertz, "Suq: The Bazaar Economy in Sefrou," in *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society: Three Essays in Cultural Analysts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

83 Rachel E. Black, *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 8.

Fanselow argues that the lack of standardization and the absence of mechanisms to ensure qualitative and quantitative reliability in bazaars lead to a general loss of trust in these spaces. Consequently, he states that this distrust not only creates structural limitations for business expansion but also reinforces stereotypical features associated with bazaars. These include the specific roles assigned to traders, the merging of households and businesses, and the spatial clustering of enterprises dealing in similar types of goods.[84]

Besides, Patricia Scalco, "The Grand Bazaar: A Crosslocated Market," focuses on the traditional *Hereke* carpet trade in the Grand Bazaar, offering insights into both the way a traditional commodity has been transmitted from the Ottoman period to the present day and the unique trade ethics and behaviors of the bazaar through the carpet trade. The evolution of production methods over time and the spatial transformations that led to the peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire shed light on how the sellers of the bazaar re-regulated and circulated carpets.[85] Scalco explains the layers of trade that were sustained and recreated through the stories told by carpet sellers in the Grand Bazaar.

In "Knots, Threads and Meaning: Liminality and Value in the Carpet Trade of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar," Scalco once again engages with the subject of the Grand Bazaar and the carpet trade within it. Noting that visitors to the Grand Bazaar often embody both the roles of tourist and customer simultaneously, Scalco mentions that carpet sellers are part of the liminal experience.[86] The narratives woven into the sales process by these sellers serve as a

84 Frank S. Fanselow, "The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre Is the Bazaar Really?," *Man,* New Series, 25, no. 2 (1990): 250–65.

85 Patricia Scalco, "The Grand Bazaar: A Crosslocated Market," in *An Anthropology of Crosslocations* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2024), 208.

86 Patricia Scalco, "Knots, Threads and Meaning: Liminality and Value in the Carpet Trade of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar," in *Egalitarian Dynamics: Liminality, and Victor Turner's Contribution to the Understanding of Socio-Historical Process* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2024), 213.

pivotal element in the perceived value of the carpets. Scalco's argument posits that these narratives facilitate not only the purchase of a carpet but also the experience of the bazaar itself. This is due to the fact that the tourist/customer has an authentic experience when buying an authentic product. This phenomenon can be regarded as a manifestation of storytelling and the expertise of the seller, despite the possibility of it occasionally signifying fraudulent activity.[87] In conclusion, the successful narratives and performances of the carpet sellers in the Grand Bazaar have a positive impact on customers' expectations of authenticity.

In 2018, Özge Yalınay, Ian W F Baxter, Elaine Collinson, Ross Curran, Martin Joseph Gannon, Sean Lochrie, Babak Taheri, and Jamie Thompson published an article titled "Servicescape and Shopping Value: The Role of Negotiation Intention, Social Orientation, and Recreational Identity at the Istanbul Grand Bazaar, Turkey" in which they aimed to shed light on the relationship between negotiation intention, recreational shopper identity, and social shopping orientation in the context of the Grand Bazaar.[88] After interviewing 300 people, a data set on shopping behavior was created and the relationship between hedonic and utilitarian orientations was shown. This situation, which is particularly prevalent in bazaars visited for tourist purposes, was supported by the data, which established a direct relationship between the performance of the seller and the expectations of the customer. Thus, tourists visiting the Grand Bazaar not only consume products and services but also experience the intangible aspects of a historical and architectural space, such as negotiation.

87 Scalco, "Knots, Threads and Meaning: Liminality and Value in the Carpet Trade of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar," 214.

88 Ozge Yalinay et al., "Servicescape and Shopping Value: The Role of Negotiation Intention, Social Orientation, and Recreational Identity at the Istanbul Grand Bazaar, Turkey," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 35, no. 9 (2018): 1140.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there has been a notable shift in the scholarly literature, with increased attention to the transformation of bazaars in the former Soviet republics. In the post-Soviet context, many researchers have examined these marketplaces as case studies to explore broader themes such as economic restructuring, socio-cultural change, transnational trade, and informal networks. A prominent example is Hasan Karrar's 2019 study, *"Between Border and Bazaar: Central Asia's Informal Economy,"* which investigates the dynamics of informal economic practices across Central Asia's borderlands. Karrar reports that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, bazaars in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were places where informal economic activities took place and were designed by the state as an economic strategy. Karrar describes these bazaars as relatively uninvested or unregulated economic spaces that provide a means of income for countless people.[89] Trust, networks, access to goods and services, and individual connections are prominent components of bazaar economies, as are the ways in which negotiations with states evolve in the context of cross-border mobility.[90] With this study, Karrar brings a different perspective to the understanding of bazaars as a transitional space for the narrative of modernization.

Furthermore, in their 2019 article "The End of the Bazaar? Morphology of a Post-Soviet *Marketplace,"* Vera Skvirskaja and Caroline Humphrey explore the transformation of large open-air bazaars with transnational characteristics that emerged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Using the Odessa bazaar in Ukraine as a case study, the authors examine issues such as gentrification, local attitudes toward "outsiders," and the adaptation of bazaars in the

89 Hasan H. Karrar, "Between Border and Bazaar: Central Asia's Informal Economy," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49, no. 2 (2018): 289.

90 Karrar, "Between Border and Bazaar: Central Asia's Informal Economy," 289.

context of the rise of e-commerce.[91] Their study is particularly valuable for comparative research, as it employs anthropological and historical methodologies to analyze how this marketplace has evolved in response to shifting geographical, economic, political, and socio-cultural dynamics in the post-Soviet era.

§ 2.3 Studies on Informal Economy

The scholarship that constitutes the theoretical underpinning of this thesis is shaped around labor force and informality. A brief history of this literature will be illustrative. Informality debates date back to the "traditional sector" theories of the 1950s, when it was believed that the large pool of labor in developing countries - including jobs such as petty traders, small holders and casual wage workers - would gradually be absorbed into the modern industrial sector.[92] The "informal sector" as a term began to gain importance in the early 1970s with African studies. While Keith Hart, who conducted an ethnographic study on Ghana at this time, aimed to bring the idea of informal sector to the attention of economists, the International Labor Office (ILO) published a report applying the concept to Kenya in 1972 and used it for the first time.[93]

The informal economy has also been expressed through various other terms. In 1973, Patricia and Louis Ferman used the term "the irregular economy" to describe activities involving the production of goods and services for money but not captured in societal economic metrics.[94] In 1977, Gutmann coined "the subterranean economy" to refer to undeclared income, jobs, and

91 Vera Skvirskaja and Caroline Humphrey, "The End of the Bazaar? Morphology of a Post- Soviet Marketplace," *History and Anthropology* 35, no. 1 (2021): 166.

92 "Decent Work and the Informal Economy" (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2002), 3.

93 Hart, "Bureaucratic Form and the Informal Economy," 25.

94 Patricia R. Ferman and Louis A. Ferman, "The Structural Underpinnings of the Irregular Economy," *Poverty and Human Resources Abstracts* 8, no. 1 (1973), 4.

employment.[95] In 1982, Simon and Witte introduced "the underground economy" for activities involving payment, either monetary or otherwise, that are not recorded in official economic statistics.[96] Similarly, in 1981, Dilnot and Morris used "the black economy" to describe activities unreported in official taxation and economic governance contexts.[97] Frey, Weck, and Pommerehne, in 1982, introduced "the shadow economy" to denote economic activities contributing to value-added that should be included in national income but are not recorded by measurement agencies.[98] In 1973 Bullock coined the term "the subeconomy" for an informal form of welfare for people who have difficulty accessing largely legal income;[99] in 1978 Henry coined the term "the hidden economy" for a special kind of illicit behavior that is distinct from other forms of illicit trade such as black marketeering and fraud.[100] In addition to these words, there are other aliases used to describe the same phenomenon that can be nuanced from one another: unrecorded, parallel, submerged, clandestine, unobserved, consealed, dual, cash, twilight, moonlight, second economy, counter economy and the back door.[101]

The term "informal economy" first emerged in response to the widespread prevalence of self-employment and casual labor in the major cities of Third World countries. It became a widely recognized concept in the 1970s, referring

95 Peter P. Gutmann, "The Subterranean Economy," *Financial Analysis Journal* 33, no. 6 (1977), 26.

96 Carl P. Simon and Ann D. Witte, Beating The System: The Underground Economy (Boston, Massachusetts: Auburn House Publishing Company, 1982), XI.

97 A. Dilnot and C. N. Morris, "What Do We Know About the Black Economy?," *Fiscal Studies* 2, no. 1 (1981), 58.

98 Bruno S. Frey, Hannelore Weck, and Werner W. Pommerehne, "Has the Shadow Economy Grown in Germany? An Exploratory Study," *Review of World Economics* 118 (1982), 499.

99 *Paul Bullock, Aspiration vs. Opportunity: "Careers" in the Inner City*, (Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Michigan, and Wayne State University, 1973), 18.

100 Stuart Henry, *The Hidden Economy: The Context and Control of Borderline Crime*, (London: Martin Robertson, 1978), 20.

101 Peter Gutmann, "The Subterranean Economy, Redux," (1985), 1.

to activities taking place outside the framework of formal institutions.[102] In his 1973 article, "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana," Keith Hart examines the urban migration of the Frafra people from northern Ghana to southern Ghana. He demonstrates how factors such as inflation and inadequate wages led the sub-proletariat to engage in informal activities to earn income.[103] The term "informal sector" gained widespread recognition after being used in a study conducted by the ILO in 1972, which analyzed economic activities in Kenya, around the same time as Keith Hart's work.[104] In his 1973 study, Hart proposed a "dualistic" model of income opportunities within the urban labor force, largely based on the distinction between wage employment and self-employment.[105] Hart applied the concept of informality to self-employed individuals, uncovering the variety, depth, and distinct dynamics of these activities, which extended far beyond "underemployed shoeshine boys and sellers of matches."[106]

Subsequently, the Legalist school of thought argued that informality consists of micro-entrepreneurs trying to avoid the costs and legal responsibilities of formal registration.[107] According to the Legalist school pioneered by Hernando de Soto, the informal economy is not only exploitative, but also causes economic stagnation and disrupts economic development plans.[108] According to de Soto's 1989 study, mercantilist economies, which gave the privilege of participation in the economy to small elite groups, stagnated because they

102 Hart, "The Informal Economy," 54.

103 Keith Hart, "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (1973), 61.

104 "Decent Work and the Informal Economy," 2.

105 Alejandro Portes and William Haller, "The Informal Economy," in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 404.

106 Hart, "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana," 68.

107 "Decent Work and the Informal Economy," 3.

108 Julie Rogers, "The Legalist Approach to the Informal Economy: An Affirmation of Universality," (Washington, D.C.: American University, 2011), 2.

were constrained by regulations when they could have produced more. [109] Thus, formal enterprises were suppressed by taxes and regulations, while informal work solidified. Therefore, de Soto proposes to change legal institutions in order to lower the cost of generating and acquiring wealth and provide access to the system so that people can participate in economic and social activities and compete on equal terms. [110] This means reforming bureaucracy and property rights and applying a nuanced and context-specific approach to the informal economy.

Initially, it was assumed that informality existed only in underdeveloped countries and that these activities were destined to disappear with the progress of modern, industry-focused growth. However, there is significant convergence in the predictions regarding the industrialization characteristics of mature market economies and the labor market impacts of less-developed economies.[111] For this reason, the structuralist school, in contrast to other perspectives, argues that the informal sector is an inherent feature of capitalist development and is even exploited by the formal sector.[112]

Empirical studies by Hart, Portes, Walton, and Schauffer similarly demonstrate that informal activities are not simply extensions of traditional subsistence strategies, nor are those engaged in these activities universally doomed to poverty and marginalization.[113] In their 1989 study, Castells and Portes

109 *Hernando de Soto, The Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 220.

110 Julie Rogers, "The Legalist Approach to the Informal Economy: An Affirmation of Universality," (Washington, D.C.: American University, 2011), 3.

111 Portes and Sassen- Koob, "Making It Underground: Comparative Material on the Informal Sector in Western Market Economies," 31.

112 "Decent Work and the Informal Economy," 3.

113 Dorothy McCormick, Erick Manga, Radha Upadhyaya, Paul Kamau, Herbert Wamalwa and Samuel Ngigi "Informality and Development in Africa," in *Research Handbook on Development and the Informal Economy*, ed. Jacques Charmes, (Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), 93.

highlight that, in many contexts, self-employment grows faster than salaried employment, the institutionalization processes of economic activities slow down, horizontal networks replace vertical bureaucracies as the preferred model, and subcontracting in various industrial sectors surpasses union agreements.[114]

When this broader picture is considered, informal activities are predominantly viewed as a method of income making in economically underdeveloped societies. However, studies conducted in both developed and underdeveloped countries reveal that the income levels of many informal entrepreneurs exceed those of workers in the formal economy.

When examining contributions from Turkey to the informal economy literature, the work of Ceyhun Elgin deserves particular attention. Since 2012, Elgin has published numerous articles and books on informality, discussing not only the definition and interpretation of the informal economy but also its measurement, determinants, and effects.[115]

Additionally, the scholarly literature on the informal economy in Turkey is often intertwined with migration studies. Following the Syrian Civil War, the mass migration of Syrians to neighboring Turkey made Syrian migrants a significant topic in research both in migration and informal economy. In 2018, Kuvvet Lordoğlu and Mustafa Aslan compiled data on Syrian migrant children working entirely within the informal sector in three cities with high Syrian populations: Urfa, Mardin, and Istanbul. Considering that 45% of migrants from Syria are under the age of 18, understanding the extent of migrant children's participation in the informal economy provides crucial insights into the living conditions of Syrian families in Turkey and the educational conditions

114 Castells and Portes, "World Underneath: The Origins, Dynamics, and Effects of the Informal Economy," 11.

115 Elgin, *The Informal Economy: Measures, Causes, and Consequences*, 11.

of their children.[116] Furthermore, a 2020 study by Altındağ, Bakış, and Rozo investigated the impact of the migration wave from Syria to Turkey on the country's business landscape. Using annual firm census data from 2006 to 2015, they documented the effects of refugees on firms' extensive margins of production and the increase in firms' informal activities.[117]

In addition to economic perspective, it is crucial to understand how the literature on the informal economy is discussed and interpreted across different disciplines. Informal activities in collective memory are often limited to peddlers or unregistered workers in production spaces. However, it must be recognized that the scope extends far wider, from freelance software developers to individuals working unregistered in family businesses. For this reason, the concept must be considered in a much broader context.

In this regard, *Laleli-Moskova Mekiği* (*The Laleli-Moscow Shuttle*) by Deniz Yükseker, published in 2003 and based on interviews conducted in Istanbul, Trabzon, Ordu, and Moscow, is a particularly significant work. Yükseker examines the largely informal trade relations between Turkey and the post-Soviet countries, particularly Russia, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. She explores how Laleli, a commercial area with a dense economic network, was reshaped through its evolving relationship with Russia. While researching the shuttle trade in Laleli, Yükseker sheds light on the trust-based relationships underlying this informality. She also scrutinizes the entrepreneurial methods employed by those involved in shuttle trade and the economic, individual, and social relationships they build with one another.[118]

116 Kuvvet Lordoğlu and Mustafa Aslan, "Görünmeyen Göçmen Çocukların İşçiliği: Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Çocuklar," *Çalışma ve Toplum* 57, no. 2 (2018): 715.

117 Onur Altındağ, Ozan Bakıs, and Sandra Rozo, "Blessing or Burden? Impacts of Refugees on Businesses and the Informal Economy," *Journal of Development Economics*, 146 (2020), 1.

118 H. Deniz Yükseker, *Laleli-Moskova Mekiği: Kayıtdışı Ticaret ve Cinsiyet İlişkileri* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

Additionally, in *Mendile, Simite, Boyaya, Çöpe...: Ankara Sokaklarında Çalışan Çocuklar*, Betül Altuntaş provides a general depiction of children working on the streets of Ankara following migration from eastern Turkey.[119] Due to social, political, economic, and cultural reasons, these children often become part of informal economic networks through activities such as shoe shining, garbage collection, *simit* (pretzel) vending, or selling band-aids and paper tissues - sometimes voluntarily, other times under coercion. Altuntaş explores the demographic characteristics, family structures, and reasons behind these children's work while illustrating in detail the various dimensions and implications of their participation in informal activities.

The two aforementioned fields - informal economy and economic anthropology - offer valuable methodological and conceptual insights for analyzing traditional bazaars. By their very nature, bazaars function as spaces where practices of buying and selling goods occur outside the framework of modern supermarkets. Therefore, understanding the functioning of bazaars, the relationships between customers and shopkeepers, and the formal and informal dynamics within these spaces is significant. Based on this perspective, scholars in these fields have examined various bazaars by focusing on different spatial contexts. Since this thesis focuses on the Grand Bazaar, it is essential to discuss the existing research on this traditional marketplace.

§ 2.4 Studies on the Grand Bazaar

It is undoubtedly possible to come across many sources about a 600-year-old bazaar located in the heart of an empire. First of all, in order to understand the general history of the bazaar, its architecture and the transformation it has undergone over the centuries, it would be useful to look at two comprehensive

119 Betül Altuntaş, *Mendile, Simite, Boyaya, Çöpe...: Ankara Sokaklarında Çalışan Çocuklar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018).

compilation studies on the bazaar. The book *Geçmişten Geleceğe: Kapalıçarşı* (*From the Past to the Future: Grand Bazaar*), edited by Ali Şükrü Çoruk in 2019, provides information about the history of the bazaar. The authors' articles provide explanations in a wide range of areas, from the repairs the bazaar has undergone after earthquakes and fires to suggestions on its preservation. Additionally, the book sheds light on the bazaar's commercial legacy and its role in shopping tourism, given that it continues to function as an active commercial space today, alongside its historical significance.[120]

Likewise, the edited volume *Dünden Bugüne: Kapalıçarşı* (*From Yesterday to Today: Grand Bazaar*), published in 2009 and edited and authored by Atilla Özbey, is also highly valuable. Similar to the aforementioned anthology, this work delves into the detailed history of the bazaar. It also includes a section dedicated to old stories about the bazaar. For this reason, Özbey, through interviews and observations with craftsmen such as polishers and weavers, succeeds in presenting the bazaar not only from the perspectives of writers and academics but also through the eyes of its own craftsmen and shopkeepers, integral parts of the bazaar.[121]

Furthermore, in addition to exploring the physical, socio-cultural, and economic transformations the bazaar has undergone since its construction, the accounts of Western travelers who visited Ottoman Istanbul at various points in time are significant. These narratives provide valuable testimony to the crafts, craftsmen, shopkeepers, apprentices, porters, and many other elements of the bazaar. Jean Henri Abdolonyme Ubicini, who described the social life of the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul in the 1850s, gave extensive space to the Grand Bazaar in his work. He was quite impressed by the people in the

120 Ürekli, "Kapalıçarşı'nın Geçirdiği Deprem ve Yangınlar Ile Sonrasında Gerçekleştirilen Tamiratlar," 133.

121 Atilla Özbey, "Fotoğraflarla 1954 Yangını," in *Dünden Bugüne Kapalıçarşı İstanbul* (Istanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Odası, 2009), 152.

bazaar rather than its architecture. He describes in great detail how the shopkeepers sell, their general behavior and demeanor. In doing so, he portrays Greek and Armenian shopkeepers as more greedy, while Muslim shopkeepers are solemn and dignified as if they came out of Jean-Léon Gérome's painting:

> You see this Ottoman sitting there in front of his shop, crouching next to his Armenian or Greek neighbor, with a solemn demeanor. While the other two look round with shrewd eyes and call out to passers-by, 'Hey! Captain! *Çelebi*! *Kaptan Efendi*!' while the Ottoman continues to calmly smoke his pipe or count his prayer beads.[122]

Especially when he talks about bargaining in the bazaar, he underlines this difference in attitude. However, this profound difference between people living in the same city and trading in the same place can also be considered as a result of the orientalist point of view. Besides, he speaks admiringly of the people working in the bazaar other than the shopkeepers. He comments on the diligence and honesty of the porters, water carriers, sugar sellers, halvah sellers, in other words, all the components of the bazaar.[123]

Edmondo de Amicis, who visited Istanbul in 1874, covers the Grand Bazaar in detail in his work, just like Ubicini. He relates, for instance, the people as soon as he steps into the bazaar. He mentions the *hanutçus* who greet him when he enters the bazaar and follow him persistently; the Armenian, Greek, Muslim, and Jewish shopkeepers selling various kinds of goods in their small shops, the porters walking with their loads on their backs, and the brokers (*tellal*) travelling around the bazaar. He tells about the methods and tricks used

122 Jean Henri Abdolonyme Ubicini, *1855'de Türkiye*, trans. Ayla Düz (Istanbul: Tercüman Gazetesi, 1977), 78: "Bu Osmanlı'nın, orada dükkanının önünde, Ermeni veya Rum meslektaşının yanıbaşında çömelmiş olarak ciddi bir edayla oturduğunu görürsünüz. Öbür ikisi kurnaz gözlerle etrafını kollayadursun ve geçenleri, "Hey! Kaptan! Çelebi! Kaptan Efendi!" diye çağıradursun, Osmanlı sakin sakin çubuğunu içmeye veya tesbih çekmeye devam eder."

123 Ubicini, *1855'de Türkiye*, 79.

by the shopkeepers while selling. He gives information about the physical structure of the bazaar and the products sold throughout his work. It can be easily said that the people of the bazaar, with their good and bad aspects, influenced the author.[124] Western travelers, who were clearly influenced by this picturesque Grand Bazaar, where countless goods were sold, presented colorful narratives in their works. At the same time, these first-person accounts, in which the authors convey their likes, dislikes, comments, and observations, also provide information about the businesses, shopkeepers, and traditions of the artisans in the bazaar.

In addition to Western travelers, the *Seyahatname* by the seventeenth century author Evliya Çelebi is one of the most comprehensive works of its time on Istanbul and the Ottoman geography. In his work, Evliya Çelebi traces the history of the Grand Bazaar from its foundation to his own time, providing detailed descriptions of the bazaar.[125] A significant portion of his writing is dedicated to the shopkeepers of the bazaar. He offers extensive information about various tradespeople, including *peştemal* sellers, *abacı* (woolen cloth makers), *kebeci* (felt makers), *sofçu* (cloth merchants), *aynacı* (mirror sellers), and many others. He categorizes the tradespeople in the Cevahir and Sandal Bedestens according to their crafts, noting how many shops existed for each trade, how many people worked in them, and who their guild leaders were. In doing so, he recorded specific data about the bazaar of his era.

In addition to these historical accounts, Feridun Akozan's article, which highlights the role of the Grand Bazaar as one of the significant structures of Istanbul's historical peninsula and examines its history and transformations,[126]

124 Edmondo De Amicis, *İstanbul (1874)*, trans. Beynun Akyavaş (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1993), 82-108.

125 Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı, eds., *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi: İstanbul*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008), 617-622.

126 Akozan, "İstanbul'un Kapalı Çarşısı," 759.

Orhan Erdenen's monograph, *İstanbul Çarşıları ve Kapalıçarşı* (*İstanbul Markets and the Grand Bazaar*); and Çelik Gülersoy's *Story of the Grand Bazaar*, among his many works on the subject, serve as useful sources for understanding the historical background of the bazaar.

After this brief survey of the sources on the Grand Bazaar, it is essential to note the objective of this thesis and its contribution of the Grand Bazaar literature. Primarily, this thesis aims to portray the Grand Bazaar's current state. Most of the studies on bazaar are related to its historical,[127] architectural,[128] economic anthropology[129] and urban planning[130] aspects. Another portion of

127 Mustafa Cezar, *Typical Commercial Buildings of the Ottoman Classical Period and The Ottoman Construction System*, (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Cultural Publications, 1983); Önder Küçükerman and Kenan Mortan, *Kapalıçarşı* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2007).

128 Çiğdem Akkurt, "The Saga of the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul: Now and Then," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 6, no. 1 (1994): 60–60; M. W. Wolfe, "The Bazaar at Istanbul," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 22, no. 1 (1963): 24–28. Sharon Wohl, "The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul: The Emergent Unfolding of A Complex Adaptive System," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 4, no. 1 (2015): 39–73.

129 C. J. Charpentier, "Three Commercial Sectors: Some Structural Observations in the Bazaar of Istanbul," *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie* 99, no. 1/2 (1974): 224–53. Patricia Scalco, "The Grand Bazaar: A Crosslocated Market," in *An Anthropology of Crosslocations* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2024); Samuel Joseph Williams, "Istanbul Incorporated: Minorities and the Market in the Grand Bazaar and İstiklâl Street" (Princeton University, 2016). Kenan Mortan and Önder Küçükerman, *Çarşı, Pazar, Ticaret ve Kapalıçarşı* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010).

130 Eda Ünlü- Yücesoy, "Constructing the Marketplace: A Socio-Spatial Analysis of Past Marketplaces of Istanbul," *Built Environment* 39, no. 2 (2013): 190–202; Müge Akkar Ercan, "Relational Space, Sustainable Place: The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul," in *Architecture and Urban Transformation of Historical Markets: Cases from the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Neveen Hamza (London and New York: Routledge, 2023).

the literature addresses changes in the products sold, shopkeeper demographics, and other elements in the context of Ottoman modernization, the Republican era, and the impact of the neoliberal economy.[131]

This thesis underscores that the Grand Bazaar is not a frozen historical marketplace. By emphasizing intergenerational dynamics and the flexibility provided by informality, it reveals the mechanisms behind the bazaar's continuity, showing how the work done within it is sustained by these dynamics. By positioning informality beyond its pejorative connotation, this study sheds light on the economic and social relationships developed within the bazaar - a space of labor and economic production - through informal practices and dynamics. Furthermore, through interviews conducted, the thesis analyzes the relationship between the visible actors of the bazaar - its shopkeepers - and the less visible actors representing the bazaar's informal labor force. In doing so, it aims to contribute to the literature on the bazaar economy, economic anthropology, and informal economy, as well as to the studies on the Grand Bazaar of İstanbul.

131 Ali Şükrü Çoruk, "Huzur Romanında Mümtaz'ın Kapalıçarşı Yolculuğu," in *Geçmişten Geleceğe Kapalıçarşı* ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk (Istanbul: Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2019), 239.

3

Visible Dynamics of the Grand Bazaar: The Narratives of Shopkeepers

> *We do not know bonds. Word is important for us. It is a matter of trust.*
>
> – Ellis, *Interview*, 2024

My first encounter with the Grand Bazaar, like that of many others, was through a television program. The program showcased shopkeepers standing in front of their stores and products spilling out beyond the shop doors while discussing the bazaar's history. In Turkey, where the culture of shopping malls began to slowly spread in the 1990s,[132] places like the Grand Bazaar occupied a unique position. A historical site with a 600-year legacy, the bazaar serves as a major commercial hub where a wide variety of goods

132 Tülin Vural Arslan, "Türkiye'deki Alışveriş Merkezleri İncelemelerine Eleştirel Bir Bakış:Yorumlar, Eleştiriler, Tartışmalar," *Uludağ Üniversitesi Mühendislik-Mimarlık Fakültesi Dergisi* 14, no. 1 (2009): 147.

such as jewelry, gold, silver, carpets, and ceramics are sold. Specifically in the context of jewelry, it also plays a significant role in shaping market trends. Additionally, its historical significance makes it a frequently visited public space. For these reasons, the Grand Bazaar functions not only as a shopping destination but also as a museum-like stop on the touristic routes of the historic peninsula, attracting the attention of visitors. Similar to Rachel E. Black's *Porta Palazzo,* the Grand Bazaar is unique both as a relic of the past located in the heart of the modern city and as a living economic public space rather than a static heritage site.[133]

Visiting the Grand Bazaar offers an opportunity to experience a sensory-rich encounter that will leave lasting impressions on your memory of smells, sounds, and visuals. Upon entering the bazaar, a continuous hum fills your ears. The clinking sound of tea glasses as a tea boy serves tea on the go mixes with the calls of shopkeepers trying to draw tourists into their shops. Like the visitors, the shopkeepers within the bazaar are not a homogeneous group. Artificial lights inside blend with the daylight filtering through the windows set into the edges of the domes. Under this light, you often see cheerful shopkeepers inviting you to their stores. Some are young, others middle-aged; some hail from eastern regions, while others have been Istanbulites for generations. Some sell carpets, others fabrics. They start by trying to speak English to approaching tourists, and if that does not work, they switch to German, French, Arabic, Italian, or Russian, depending on their estimation of where the visitor is from, inviting them in and marketing their goods. From the moment the bazaar opens to its closing time, the crowd of customers, tourists, shopkeepers, and workers creates a lively chaos. All this vibrancy constitutes the unique identity of the Grand Bazaar.

133 Black, *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market*, 8.

This anthropological study will primarily take shape through interviews conducted with shopkeepers and workers at the Grand Bazaar. While offering a retrospective perspective in many respects, the study aims to present a snapshot of the current state of the diverse actors within the bazaar - individuals of different religions, nationalities, generations, and professions. It is essential to convey the background of the interviews I will use while explaining the visible actors in the bazaar. Therefore, in the following sections of the thesis, I will depict the physical and human landscape of the Grand Bazaar.

§ 3.1 "Bazaar Shopkeepers" as an Identity

"Madam! Madam! Excuse me! What are you looking for? I can help you!" During the research process, whenever I entered one of the gates of the Grand Bazaar, this sound greeted me and other visitors not even a minute later. Mostly young men were inviting me into the shops and trying to show me their products. According to a tourist guide I met while observing the bazaar,

> If you want to visit the Grand Bazaar away from these invitations, you should walk right in the middle of the streets and alleys in the bazaar, as I recommend to the tourists participating in my tour. If you walk close to the shops, shop windows and stalls, it will not be difficult for them to impress you.[134]

Indeed, the employees of the bazaar can attract customers and tourists to their shops with a speed that you can find in very few places in the world. The employees first try to communicate with you in English. If you do not react to this language, they quickly switch to another language that they assume you know. They first impress you with their language skills, then with a little joke

134 Eğer bu davetlerden uzak bir şekilde Kapalıçarşı'yı gezmek isterseniz, turuma katılan turistlere önerdiğim gibi, çarşıdaki cadde ve sokakların tam ortasından yürümelisiniz. Eğer dükkanlara, vitrinlere, tezgahlara yakın yürürseniz sizi etkilemeleri çok da zor olmaz.

or compliment. This is so common in the bazaar that Scalco, who conducted an anthropological study on the *Hereke* carpet trade in the Grand Bazaar, includes similar anecdotes about the way people in the bazaar greeted her.[135]

Similar to the fact that the people visiting the Grand Bazaar are highly heterogeneous in terms of language, religion and nationality, the shopkeepers of the bazaar also have highly heterogeneous identities. I met shopkeepers of Armenian, Jewish, Greek, Turkish, Kurdish and many other ethnicities and religions without having to make any special effort when contacting the people I could interview. This alone gives a good idea of the cultural structure of the bazaar.

While identity is the backbone of many anthropological studies, it is also something that needs to be mentioned in this study while conveying the dynamics of the bazaar. When we look at the people who have been working in this historical place since their youth, we can see that when they are in the bazaar, they all emphasize their identity as "bazaar shopkeepers," which is their collective identity. Of course, this does not mean that they ignore or downplay their other identities. However, since being a shopkeeper in the bazaar requires performativity, they internally behave accordingly. When I looked at my notes in which I recorded my expectations, predictions and assumptions about the bazaar before starting the fieldwork, I foresaw that I would hear some phrases frequently. The first of these phrases is, "We are all brothers here. There is no distinction between us." In an atmosphere of increasing polarization not only in Turkey but also globally, could the Grand Bazaar be an exception when it brings together people of many different ethnic and religious identities? According to Mehmet, who is a carpet seller in the Grand Bazaar:

135 Scalco, "The Grand Bazaar: A Crosslocated Market," 188.

> There are many Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, and Jewish shopkeepers here. The vast majority of them have worked in the Grand Bazaar since they were children. For people who have breathed the same air and drunk the same water here, there is no difference. For a man who has never met an Armenian person in his life, there may be a difference. But we have dozens of Armenian friends here. How can we discriminate? We grew up together. We trade together. This is the same for most people. We look at whether they are good or bad shopkeepers. Is he reliable? Is he a good neighbor? These are important. Religion and race do not matter much. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[136]

When Mehmet uttered these words, one may think that he felt the need to say politically correct words. However, it was not difficult to check the veracity of these words. Mehmet is the father of a friend of mine from my university years. When I started to work on the Grand Bazaar, he sincerely agreed to be my gatekeeper. Therefore, when I took into consideration the identities of the owners of the shops that Mehmet took me to by saying "I have a friend, you can also meet him" - one of them was Armenian and the other Jewish - it showed that what he said was indeed true. Similar to Mehmet, the other participants I interviewed expressed similar things about the absence of discrimination.

I would like to apply the advice of Cemil to the problem of discrimination based on identity: "You can only tell whether a handmade carpet is good or

136 Burada Türk, Kürt, Ermeni, Rum, Yahudi çok fazla esnaf var. Çok büyük çoğunluğu çocuk yaşlardan itibaren Kapalıçarşı'da çalışmış. Buranın havasını solumuş, suyunu içmiş insan için arada fark olmuyor. Hayatında hiç Ermeni birisini tanımamış bir adam için fark olabilir. Ama bizim burada onlarca Ermeni arkadaşımız var. Nasıl ayrımcılık yapalım. Birlikte büyüdük. Birlikte ticaret yapıyoruz. Çoğu insan için de bu böyledir. İyi esnaf mı kötü esnaf mı diye bakarız. Güvenilir midir, iyi bir komşu mudur bunlar önemli. Dininin, ırkının pek bir önemi yok.

not by looking at the knots on the back of the carpet." (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[137] As a Turk from the city of Malatya, Mehmet is not in a disadvantaged position in terms of identity in Turkey. Therefore, I turned the carpet round and talked about the issue of discrimination with shopkeepers with minority identities. Their answers were not very different from those of Turks. In my interview with an Armenian family who have been working as jewellers for 3 generations in a 5 square meter jewellery workshop in a *han* in the Grand Bazaar, I received similar answers to Mehmet's.

Ellis, an Armenian jeweller said, "There can be no discrimination here. There was no discrimination yesterday either. There is no discrimination today either. Not only as a shopkeeper. Here, regardless of your religion or sect, when there is a religious holiday or celebration, everyone celebrates. People here are used to it." (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, originally from Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[138] His grandson Daniel supported his grandfather by saying, "There has never been such a distinction in the bazaar." (Daniel, born 1991 in İstanbul, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2013)[139]

The interview I conducted in a small 2 square meter traditional shoe shop on a busy street of the bazaar is similar to the previous ones. David, one of the 2 Jewish shopkeepers running his father-in-law's shop, said about discrimination:

137 Bir el yapımı halının iyi olup olmadığını ancak arkasındaki -halı sırtı- düğümlere bakarak anlayabilirsin.

138 Ayrım olamaz burada. Dün de yoktu. Bugün de yok. Sadece esnaflık olarak değil. Burada dinin, mezhebin ne olursa olsun bir dini bayramda ya da kutlamada herkes kutlar. Buradaki insanlar buna alışıktır.

139 Çarşıda öyle bir ayrım hiçbir zaman olmadı.

> There is no difference between being a non-Muslim and not being a non-Muslim in the bazaar. There is no advantage or disadvantage. Being Armenian or Jewish is not strange in the bazaar. Maybe in other places it is. But not here. Because there are many non-Muslims here. There are many Armenians, Greeks, Jews. (David, born 1951 in Istanbul, originally from Istanbul, Jewish, the owner of a traditional shoes shop, worked in the bazaar since 1997)[140]

In addition to this, Osman from Malatya, who is engaged in textile business, said, "It makes no difference for us. No matter what. We are friends. It does not matter what they believe in." (Osman, born 1953 in Malatya, Turk, the owner of a traditional textile shop, worked in the bazaar since 1986)[141] After he said that, he started laughing. Then he continued:

> We have a Jewish friend here who is also in the textile business. He brings his food to his shop every day in a lunchbox. So the other day we hid the lunchbox so that he could come to the restaurant with us. The man's face was as red as a tomato. He is looking for the lunchbox. So we pretend, "What happened?" We say, "It is a lunchbox. What will happen?" He said, "I was hiding my dollars in the lunchbox. My money was stolen!" We immediately confessed that we were joking. He chased us to the exit gate of the bazaar. He was carrying the dollars in a lunchbox. Why do not you bring them in a bag? (Osman, born 1953 in Malatya, Turk, the owner of a traditional textile shop, worked in the bazaar since 1986)[142]

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140 Çarşıda gayrimüslim olmakla olmamak arasında hiçbir fark yok. Ne avantajı var ne dezavantajı var. Çarşıda Ermeni olman, Musevi olman yadırganmaz. Belki başka yerlerde yadırganır. Ama burada olmaz. Çünkü burada gayrimüslim çok. Ermenisi, Rumu, Musevisi çok.

141 Bizim için bir farkı yok. Ne olursa olsun. Arkadaşız yani. Neye inandığı önemli değil.

142 Bizim burada bir tane yine tekstil işiyle uğraşan Yahudi arkadaşımız var. Yemeğini her gün sefer tasıyla getirir dükkanına. Biz de geçen gün bizimle lokantaya gelsin diye sefer tasını sakladık. Adamın yüzü domates gibi kıpkırmızı olmuştu. Sefer tasını arıyor. Biz de rol yapıyoruz "Ne oldu?" diye. "Bir sefer tası yani. Ne olacak" diyoruz. O da demez mi ki "Sefer tasında

He laughed as he told the story, offering signs of the friendship and sincerity they had established.



Figure 3.1 A shop in the Grand Bazaar that sells fabrics adorned with traditional patterns.

The shopkeepers of the Grand Bazaar are often described as canny and swindling. But not enough is said about how humble, open-minded and competent some of them are. I can easily say that I have witnessed how open-minded they are when discussing the issue of discrimination. Minorities emphasized that they did not feel any discomfort in the bazaar. Turks, on the other hand, as carpet seller Cemil put it, "This is our home. When we enter the door of the bazaar, it is like coming home. No one is different from anyone else." (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet

dolarlarımı saklıyordum. Çalındı paralarım!" Biz hemen şaka yaptığımızı itiraf ettik. Bizi çarşının çıkış kapısına kadar kovaladı. Dolarları sefer tasında taşıyormuş. Çantayla getirsene!

shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[143] Parallel to the interviews, many sources also mention that the bazaar artisans developed a very close and reliable cooperation among themselves, and moreover, the ethnic and religious differences among the artisans of Jewish, Armenian, Anatolian and Persian origin who came and settled in Istanbul in the sixteenth century did not pose an obstacle to their solidarity.[144] It is evident that the dynamics of this solidarity have changed over the centuries. Nevertheless, it is difficult to talk about discrimination based on ethnic and religious origin among the shopkeepers.

As a result of both the interviews and my visits to the Grand Bazaar over a long period of time, I can say that it is not possible to talk about discrimination against minorities, although it is difficult to completely deny that there is discrimination. However, with one exception. I will go into more detail in the following sections, but to mention briefly, there are some basic dynamics of trade in the bazaar. In this context, Stuart Plattner's definitional distinction of "market" in *Economic Anthropology* proves particularly useful. He defines a "market" as a social institution of exchange in which prices or exchange equivalencies are established, whereas a "marketplace" refers to the specific, customary setting - defined by time and location - where such interactions occur.[145] Thus, the concept of a "market" encompasses, but also transcends, particular social, legal, and political processes that facilitate economic transactions.[146]

143 Burası bizim evimiz. Çarşının kapısından içeri girdiğimizde eve gelmiş gibi oluyoruz. Kimsenin kimseden farkı yoktur.

144 Necdet Sakaoğlu, "Bedesten Esnafı," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 119.

145 Stuart Plattner, *Economic Anthropology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 171.

146 Theodore C. Bestor, "Markets: Anthropological Aspects," in *International Encyclopedia of The Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Amsterdam, New York, Netherlands: Pergamon, 2001), 9227.

Consistent with this perspective, ultimately, the primary objective of the commercial activities conducted by shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar is income generation. However, pure economic actions are not the sole determinant of market behavior. According to Mark Granovetter, markets are embedded within patterns of cultural meaning, indicating that the actions of market participants are deeply intertwined with social, political, and cultural structures.[147] Therefore, within this historically significant bazaar, cultural and social dynamics - often articulated by shopkeepers as "traditions" - serve as key influences on economic behavior and decision-making, with trust-based relationships emerging as the primary mechanism.

Trust relations are a central component in the formation of bazaar shopkeepers' identities, playing a crucial role in structuring social dynamics within this economic space. The construction and maintenance of trust can be observed through the rapid circulation of information among bazaar actors, which facilitates the emergence and reinforcement of shared behavioral norms.[148] For instance, many shopkeepers noted that within the bazaar, lending substantial sums - whether in cash or gold - is typically done without formal bonds or contracts. Regardless of the amount, even when it involves several kilograms of gold or hundreds of thousands of dollars, introducing formal documentation is considered dishonorable and contrary to the ethos of the bazaar. This informal credit system is rooted in a deep-seated culture of mutual trust and personal reputation. Anecdotally, it is often said that in the bazaar, "$50 means $50,000" and "$100 means $100,000" a shorthand that reflects the magnitude of trust and the scale of transactions conducted informally.

147 Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," *American Journal of Sociology* 91, no. 3 (1985), 486.

148 Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," 492.

In this context, the informal credit system practiced among shopkeepers - rooted in mutual trust - is so prevalent that it can be considered a foundational tradition of the bazaar. A comparable dynamic was observed in the Italian market of Porta Palazzo. Anthropologist Black, who conducted fieldwork there, highlighted that once an individual is vouched for by a trusted member of the market community, they are swiftly integrated into this trust-based economy.[149] In some cases, an apprentice may be given access to the cash box within just an hour or two of beginning their work.[150] However, any breach of trust is quickly detected and widely circulated within the bazaar network, underscoring the fragility and social vigilance that sustain such informal systems.

In this sense, Clifford Geertz's analysis of local marketplaces in *Peddlers and Princes* offers a foundational perspective on the trust-based mechanisms that underpin bazaar economies. Focusing on Indonesia, Geertz highlighted the significance of complex, ramified networks of trust and reciprocity between traders of different scales.[151] In similar contexts such as the Grand Bazaar, credit and lending practices are not governed by formal contracts but by socially embedded norms. When one shopkeeper lends money or gold to another, the exchange is rooted in an informal agreement based on mutual trust. If the borrower repays the debt reliably and on time, this act not only facilitates future financial transactions but also enhances their reputation as a dependable and trustworthy member of the commercial community. In this system, reputation functions as a key form of social capital, reinforcing both individual credibility and the broader moral economy of the bazaar.

149 Black, *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market*, 19.

150 Black, *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market*, 19.

151 Clifford Geertz, *Peddlers and Princes: Social Development and Economic Change in Two Indonesian Towns* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 36.

According to Pierre Bourdieu in his seminal work "The Forms of Capital," Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or, in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.[152]

In this context, the trust-based commercial relationships among bazaar shopkeepers function as a form of social capital, enhancing their credibility and social standing within the marketplace. These relationships foster social capital, which not only facilitates the expansion of trade and access to informal credit but also embeds the individual within a network of mutual obligations and shared norms. Despite the apparent risks involved in lending without formal guarantees, shopkeepers rely on collective mechanisms of accountability embedded within the bazaar's social fabric. The identity of being a "bazaar shopkeeper" carries with it implicit expectations and communal oversight. If obligations are unmet, the informal yet potent sanctioning power of the broader bazaar shopkeeping community is activated, thus reinforcing trust and compliance. These practices exemplify how informal economies are regulated not merely by market logic but through deeply rooted social institutions and cultural norms.

The identity of the "bazaar shopkeeper," which can be explained within the theoretical framework of trust, reputation and social capital, is still not inclusive of all shopkeepers in the bazaar. In this bazaar with thousands of employees, there is also a mass that has changed with the changing world. When the

152 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 248.

composition of identity in the Grand Bazaar is analyzed in detail, one black sheep stands out among thousands of white sheep: Zazas.

As I mentioned above, shopkeepers of different identities displayed a clear and consistent attitude towards discrimination. Indeed, I have witnessed both the invitation of a Turkish textile manufacturer to an Armenian ceramicist "Shall we go for a raki tonight?" and the Armenian jeweller giving half a kilo of gold to a Turkish jeweller's apprentice who came to his workshop. However, there was one group that almost all the participants I interviewed emphasized and saw as a "problem."

Talking about the ethnic origins in the bazaar, Mehmet, who has been working as a carpet seller for 50 years, said:

> There were many non-Muslim shopkeepers such as Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. When we came to the bazaar as kids, the migration from Anatolia had just started. After the events of September 6 -7, in the 50s (i.e., the İstanbul pogrom),[153] there were many Greek shopkeepers who had to leave the bazaar. Then immigrants came from the Balkans. Then people from Anatolia came. Currently, most of the businesses selling fake brand bags are from the East. They are of Zaza origin. They are from Siverek in Urfa. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[154]

With these words, he superficially describes the transformation of the ethnic groups. Then I ask him what kind of a network the groups coming to the bazaar have and what kind of a path they follow in order to become shopkeepers

153 For more see: Erik J. Zürcher, Turkey: A Modern History (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1998), 242.

154 Ermeni, Rum, Yahudi çok fazla gayrimüslim esnaf vardı. Biz çocukken çarşıya geldiğimizde Anadolu'dan göç yeni yeni başlamıştı. 50'lerde 6- 7 Eylül olaylarından sonra çarşıdan gitmek zorunda kalan çok fazla Rum esnaf oldu. Sonra göçmenler geldi Balkanlardan. Sonra Anadolu'dan insanlar geldi. Şu anda marka çanta satan işletmelerin çoğu Doğu'dan gelme. Zaza asıllılar. Urfa Sivereklilер.

in the bazaar. Mehmet laughs and says, "These people mostly pay the annual rent of the shops in advance. When the shopkeeper sees the cash, he rents out his shop. Thus, they become shopkeepers in the bazaar." (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[155]

Cahit, who has been working in the bazaar since his undergraduate years, said:

> You know there is a group we call Zaza. I do not know where they get the money from, but they keep this and that bag all the time. You have a hard time even paying the rent of 2 thousand dollars, but that man pays a year's rent in advance at 4 thousand dollars a month and after a year he does not pay at all. (Cahit, born 1961 in Istanbul, Turk, the salesman of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1978)[156]

Cemil expressed similar opinions to those of Cahit:

> So how did these new men come here? The man (shop owner) will pay the rent for his shop. I say give it to me for 100, he will not. He goes and gives it to Siverekli for 150. But he says he will pay one year's rent in advance. He pays one year's rent in advance. He never pays it again. The renter also regrets it. Among them, there are also those who take over the shop. There are also those who buy from the shopkeeper. There is also such a situation. This is very troublesome. (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[157]

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155 Bu insanlar çoğunlukla dükkanların yıllık kirasını peşin veriyor. Dükkan sahibi de peşin parayı görünce dükkanını kiraya veriyor. Böylece çarşıda esnaf oluyorlar.

156 Zaza dediğimiz bir grup var biliyorsunuz. Parayı nereden buluyorlar bilmiyorum ama o çanta şu, bu devamlı tutuyorlar. Siz 2 bin dolarlık kirayı öderken bile çok zorlanıyorsunuz ama o adam aylık 4 bin dolardan bir yıllık kirayı peşin veriyor ve bir sene sonra hiç ödememeye başlıyor.

157 Peki buraya bu yeni adamlar nasıl geldi? Adam (dükkan sahibi) dükkanını kirayı verecek. Bana 100'e ver diyorum. Vermiyor. Gidiyor Siverekli'ye 150'ye veriyor. Ama bir yıllık kirayı peşin vereceksin diyor. Bir yıllık kirayı peşin veriyor. Bir daha da ödemiyor. Kiraya veren

On the same issue, Murat, a Kurdish watch seller, said:

> The old shopkeepers were the gentlemen of Istanbul. When they died, their children closed their shops in the bazaar. They said, "Let us collect our rent and withdraw from the bazaar." They rented their shops to Siverek people. But now nobody is trying to give shops to Siverek people in the bazaar. Their number has increased a lot in the last 10 years. They gather 50 people in a fight. It has something to do with the *sociology* of where they come from. I have very close friends among them. I go to their houses and sit with them. I also talk to them to their faces. I have this conversation. They have never had anything *sociologically*. You know there is landlordism in the East. They have no land. The *ağa* (landlord) manages those lands for them. They do whatever the *ağa* says. When they come here and get into a BMW or Mercedes, they feel like an *ağa*. They speak Zaza language." He says that they know 4 Turkish words: "The first is 'hello', the second is 'are you okay?', the third is 'I do not answer', the fourth is that they get stuck and start swearing." Why did the deterioration in the bazaar happen? It happened because the owners are fond of money. For example, his tenant pays 1000 dollars. Just because the other man (Siverek people) gives 1500 dollars, he kicks him out of the shop. Thus, it causes people who do not deserve the bazaar to enter the bazaar. (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[158]

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pişman da oluyor. Bunların arasından dükkanı ele geçiren de var. Dükkan sahibinden alan da var. Öyle bir yapı da var. Çok sıkıntılı bir durum bu.

158 Eski esnaflar İstanbul beyefendileriydi. Onlar ölünce çocukları çarşıdaki dükkanlarını kapattılar. "Biz dükkan kiramızı alalım, çarşıdan çekilelim" dediler. Dükkanlarını da Sivereklilere kiraya verdiler. Ama şu anda çarşıda Sivereklilere kimse dükkan vermemeye çalışıyor. Son 10 yıldır sayıları çok arttı. Bir kavgada 50 kişi toplanıyorlar. Geldikleri yerin sosyolojisiyle alakalı bir şey. Benim çok samimi arkadaşlarım var içlerinden. Evlerine gidip oturduğum. Bunları yüzlerine karşı da konuşuyorum. Bu muhabbeti yapıyorum. Bunlar sosyolojik olarak bir şeye sahip olmamışlar. Biliyorsun Doğuda ağalık var. Toprakları yok. O toprakları ağa bunlara işletiyor. Ağa ne derse o oluyor. Buraya gelince BMW, Mercedes'e binince kendilerini ağa gibi

Based on my observations in the bazaar, I saw that the people from Siverek were mostly engaged in the business of imitation bags, shoes and clothes. They were mostly young men between the ages of 25 and 35 who had migrated to Istanbul from their hometown Şanlıurfa in early 2000s. In terms of identity, while other groups embrace the identity of "bazaar shopkeeper," which is a superior identity within the bazaar, young men from Siverek prioritize being "from Siverek." The complaints of the other participants about Siverek people are not actually a reaction due to their ethnic origin. They are interpreted negatively by other shopkeepers due to their inability to engage in the bazaar, their lack of behavior in accordance with the ethics of shopkeepers, their harassing and insulting attitudes towards customers, and the fact that they have both a tight bond and big fights among themselves. Mehmet, the carpet seller, said:

> We are nothing to them. They sell products with high profit margins: "You have been in the bazaar for 50 years. I am a newcomer. I did in 2 years what you could not do in 50 years." If Allah wills it, we will stay here. These [people] will disappear. Because the brand business is like a straw flame. It is unethical in every respect. In my opinion, it is a rightful due (*kul hakkı*). You've spent your life and created a brand. I'll have the same one made under the counter (*merdivenaltı üretim*) and make a profit. "Mehmet Abi, the original costs 10,000 dollars, but I am selling it for 1,000 dollars." We have seen it a lot here. The person who deals with lies, deceit, and scrap is incorrigible. I say this with faith. Commercial ethics are important. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul,

hissediyorlar. Zazaca konuşuyor bunlar. Diyor ki "Biz 4 kelime Türkçe biliyoruz. Birincisi merhaba, ikincisi iyi misin, üçüncüsü cevap vermiyorum, dördüncüsü tıkanıp küfretmeye başlarım." diyerek şikayetini dile getiriyor. Çarşıda bozulma neden oldu? Mal sahiplerinin para düşkünlüğünden dolayı oldu. Mesela kiracısı 1000 dolar veriyor. Sırf diğer adam (Sivereklilер) 1500 dolar veriyor diye onu dükkandan çıkarıyor. Böylece çarşıyı hak etmeyen insanların çarşıya girmesine sebep oluyor.

> originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[159]

He criticizes the commercial ethics of Siverek shopkeepers. With these words, he emphasizes his belief that the shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar should not ignore the moral parameters while trying to make a commercial profit.

> This is the culture of the Grand Bazaar. You speak according to who you live with. For example, my wife is from Kars. I speak to the people from Kars, according to them too. You will be a good observer to learn the language in the bazaar. You will carefully observe how people speak and how they behave. (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[160]

With these words, he emphasizes that newcomers to the bazaar should make efforts to adapt. Murat, who repeatedly stated that Siverek people do not make efforts to adapt to the bazaar culture, and this eventually creates problems within the bazaar. Then he mentions that efforts are being made to engage Siverek people in the bazaar culture.

> They called Siverek people to the Grand Bazaar Shopkeepers Association. They said, "Tell your children to be calm. Kicking, slapping, spitting, and insulting customers and women is not appropriate." But these are big young men. I do not know how much they care and how much

159 Onlara göre biz hiçiz. Onlar kar marjı yüksek ürünler satıyor. "Sen 50 senedir çarşıdasın. Ben yeni geldim. Senin 50 yılda yapamadığını 2 senede yaptım" gözüyle bakıyorlar. Yok öyle bir şey. Allah izin verirse biz yine burada kalacağız. Bunlar kaybolup gidecek. Çünkü saman alevi gibi marka işi. Her bakımdan etik değil üstelik. Benim nazarımda direkt kul hakkı. Siz ömrünüzü verip bir marka yaratmışsınız. Ben merdiven altında aynısını yaptırıp kar elde edeceğim. "Mehmet abi orijinali 10.000 dolar, ben satıyorum 1000 dolara." diyor. Biz burada çok gördük. Yalanla, hileyle hurdayla uğraşan kişi iflah olmuyor. Ben bunu inanarak diyorum. Ticari ahlak önemli.

160 Kapalıçarşı'nın verdiği kültür budur. Kimle oturuyorsan ona göre konuşursun. Mesela benim eş tarafı Karslı. Ben Karslılarla da onlara göre konuşurum. Çarşıda dil öğrenmek için iyi bir gözlemci olacaksın. Kim nasıl konuşuyor, nasıl davranıyor bunları dikkatli bir şekilde gözlemleyeceksin.

> they will change their behavior. (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[161]

From this perspective, it can be observed that the perceptions surrounding Siverek shopkeepers are largely constructed around notions of trustworthiness, social reputation, and adherence to locally defined norms of conduct. Instances such as failure to pay rent on time and perceived inappropriate behavior toward customers were commonly cited as key reasons for their marginalization by other shopkeepers. These perceptions echo broader patterns seen in other commercial contexts. For instance, in *Laleli- Moskova Mekiği: Kayıtdışı Ticaret ve Cinsiyet İlişkileri*, Deniz Yükseker documents similar dynamics among merchants in Laleli. Based on her interviews, Yükseker notes that a primary concern among traders was the presence of "bad" or dishonest shopkeepers.[162] In that economic sphere, actors identified as "Easterners" or "peasants who had sold their sheep and land" were stigmatized as unreliable traders.[163] Similarly, within the Grand Bazaar, shopkeepers from Siverek are often perceived as outliers, or "black sheep," due to their perceived failure to cultivate trust and conform to the established behavioral norms of the bazaar community. Consequently, the previously established relations of trust and mutual obligation are suspended, and - analogous to the dynamics observed in lending and borrowing practices - the bazaar community's internal regulatory mechanisms are activated.

More according to the interview data, the shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar do not face any problems in the bazaar due to their religious and ethnic

161 Kapalıçarşı Esnafları Derneğine, Sivereklileri çağırdılar. Dediler ki "Çocuklarınıza söyleyin sakin olsunlar. Müşteriye, kadına tekme tokat atmalar, tükürmeler, hakaret etmeler falan yakışık almıyor yani." Ama bunlar da kocaman genç adamlar. Neyi ne kadar umursarlar ve tavırlarını değiştirirler bilemiyorum.

162 Yükseker, *Laleli-Moskova Mekiği: Kayıtdışı Ticaret ve Cinsiyet İlişkileri*, 210.

163 Yükseker, *Laleli-Moskova Mekiği: Kayıtdışı Ticaret ve Cinsiyet İlişkileri*, 210.

identities. For the shopkeepers, being a "bazaar shopkeeper" is an upper identity. They emphasize this identity in their contacts with customers in the bazaar. As far as I have observed, when a customer enters a shop in the bazaar, they first encounter a kind and hospitable shopkeeper or apprentice. For example, if a customer enters a carpet shop, they are not immediately asked what kind of carpet they are looking for. First, the customer is offered tea and coffee - a similar anecdote is quoted by Scalco in her article.[164] Then, if the customer is a foreigner, they are asked where they are from, when they came to Turkey and where they have visited. With years of experience, the shopkeepers are really good at making contact with the customer. Then they show the customer how much they know about carpets. They show a few sample carpets and talk about what is important when buying a carpet. At this stage, the customer opens up completely. They both get information about the products and explain what kind of product they are looking for. During this whole buying and selling process, the seller almost never breaks eye contact with the customer. A second person does not intervene between the customer and the seller. This is one of the biggest tricks when selling. Finally, the customer is farewelled with a smiling face whether they buy or not. This whole process is similar in most shops. This is about adopting the identity of a bazaar shopkeeper and the characteristics that come with that identity.

In addition, shopkeeper identity is also defined through communication with other shopkeepers. Most of the participants I interviewed define other shopkeepers as "my neighbors." They really develop a neighborly relationship. They can easily go to each other in case of need. They see each other as friends and neighbors rather than competitors. They get involved when there is a bad

164 Scalco, "The Grand Bazaar: A Crosslocated Market," 188.

situation or a disagreement and try to mediate. Most of them develop friendships outside of work. Regarding the relationship between shopkeepers, Mehmet said:

> I have been here for 50 years. I am one of the oldest people on this street. So the bazaar is a disease. For example, you are sick at home. You come to the bazaar and enter through the door. It is a completely different world. It has become a lifestyle for us. At home you spend 3 hours in the evening with your family. Here you are together for 10 hours a day. You share more things. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[165]

For all these reasons, it can be claimed that the shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar mostly prioritize the identity of "bazaar shopkeeper" as an umbrella identity.

In conclusion, when economic actors operating within a complex and historically significant trade environment such as the Grand Bazaar are examined anthropologically, several key themes emerge within the broader discourse of identity. Foremost among these is the central role of trust, which governs not only economic transactions but also social interactions within the bazaar. The prevalence of an informal credit system, sustained almost entirely through interpersonal trust, is a defining feature of bazaar life. Participation in this system is not merely a practical necessity but also a marker of one's embeddedness in the moral and social fabric of the bazaar. This ability to operate independently of the banking system, particularly during times of crisis, has

165 Ben de 50 yıldır buradayım. Bu sokaktaki en eski kişilerden biriyim. Yani çarşı bir hastalık. Hastasınız evdesiniz mesela. Çarşıya gelip kapıdan giriyorsunuz. Bambaşka bir alem. Bizim için bir yaşam tarzı oldu. Evde ailenizle akşam 3 saat geçiriyorsunuz. Burada günde 10 saat berabersiniz. Daha çok şey paylaşıyorsunuz.

been a significant source of resilience for the bazaars.[166] So, when trust is successfully maintained, it yields both economic capital and social capital - the latter functioning as a kind of symbolic currency or reputation, vital for continued operation in this commercial community. Social capital facilitates access to networks of mutual obligation and exchange, reinforcing the shopkeeper's standing and legitimacy. In this context, trust and reputation become core elements of bazaar identity, shaping the contours of everyday practice and long-term belonging.

Moreover, adherence to behavioral norms - such as showing respect to customers and the other actors of the bazaar - plays a crucial role in sustaining one's status. Deviations from these expectations are addressed through informal regulatory mechanisms, often enforced by the bazaar's association and the bazaar community. These actors may issue warnings or, in cases of persistent misconduct, socially ostracize the individual. Such sanctions reflect a collective commitment to preserving the moral economy of the bazaar. Thus, the identity of the bazaar shopkeeper, understood here as a composite of ethical comportment, social embeddedness, and economic practice, operates as a kind of umbrella identity. It functions not only as a marker of individual belonging but also as an informal governance structure that underwrites solidarity, maintains social order, and enables the smooth functioning of economic relations among bazaar actors.

§ 3.2 Intergenerational Commercial Relationships

When you visit the Grand Bazaar, colorful mosaic lamps, a variety of spices, carpets woven from bright yarn catch your eye. At first glance, most of them look like products reflecting the traditional texture of the bazaar. However,

166 Maryam Gahasassi, "Informal Financial Institutions in Bazaar," *Cahiers d'Études Sur La Méditerranée Orientale et Le Monde Turco-Iranien* 26 (1998), 4.

mosaic lamps are not a traditional product, even though they promise an oriental look. Spice shops, on the other hand, have only recently started to open. Adnan the guide even complained about this situation, saying, "I do not understand what spice sellers are doing in the Grand Bazaar. These people have turned the Grand Bazaar into *Mısır Çarşısı*!" Bright carpets woven with traditional patterns are machine woven carpets made of synthetic silk called "*floş*." Cahit says:

> Now a lot of our neighbors are selling machine made carpets. This did not exist in the 1970s and 80s. It has increased in the last five or six years. This happened when Western tourists stopped coming. Eastern tourists like the softness and cold feeling of the synthetics. (Cahit, born 1961 in Istanbul, Turk, the salesman of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1978)[167]

Over the years, as in these examples, the products sold in the bazaar have changed drastically. Regarding this, Mehmet said with some regret:

> There used to be calenders here in the past. Secondly, there were slipper sellers. All of Istanbul used to buy slippers here. These are the sections where there are always shopkeepers bearing the name of their own street. Street of Carpet Sellers for example. There is *Yağlıkçılar* Street on top. *Yağlık* is a woven fabric that women cover themselves with. There were knitters, for example. A melted place would be knitted and repaired. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[168]

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167 Şimdi bir sürü komşumuz makine halısı satıyor. Bu 1970'lerde 80'lerde yoktu. Son beş altı yıldır çoğaldı. Batılı turist gelmeyince böyle oldu. Doğulu turistler seviyor yumuşaklığı ve sentetiğin soğuk halini.

168 Eskiden perdahçılar varmış burada. İkinci olarak terlikçiler. Bütün İstanbul buradan terlik alırdı. Hep kendi sokağın ismini taşıyan esnafların olduğu kesimlerdir bunlar. Halıcılar Sokağı mesela. Yağlıkçılar Sokağı var üstte. Yağlık bayanların üstüne örttüğü dokuma kumaş. Örücüler vardı mesela. Erimiş bir yer örülürdü, tamir edilirdi.

The first reason behind the changing product range is that customers are no longer interested in those products. For example, the Grand Bazaar used to be one of the addresses where people came to buy shoes. However, as modern sneaker models have become more popular over time, the demand for traditional shoes has decreased. Thus, shoe shops gradually closed down. Another reason is that there are no more candidates from the next generation to continue the business.

For most trade groups in the bazaar, it is crucial to hand over the business to the next generation. This has ensured that there are families who have been handing over their business to the next generation for many years, thus ensuring the continuity of the business. Looking at the bazaar today, it can be observed that intergenerational trade has decreased. The bazaar adventure of 70-year-old Bülent, who owns an antique copper shop, began in 1957. From an early age, he worked in the 2 square meter copper shop that his father opened in 1944 in Cevahir Bedesten. However, he claimed that after he left the business, there was no one to continue the copper business because there were no products that attracted the attention of customers.

> Here, especially in the so-called Inner Bedesten, during my childhood, there used to be products taken from old houses or mansions, given to scrap dealers, sorted and brought here. Those items are now scrap, but the people who were experts in that business would revive that product in whatever way it could be revived. They would enter the showcases as the most beautiful objects. People in the circumstances of that day, those who enjoyed such items, buy them. There is something called *temaşa*. Looking, seeing and being happy with it. He looks at them for years, after a while he gets tired of them and comes back here for a new one. Right now you are in a part of the Grand Bazaar that has managed to preserve itself. But 50% of this area has also changed. Copper is no longer preferred as a home accessory. This shop will hardly continue after I leave. It will close down. (Bülent, born 1954 in İstanbul, Turk,

> the owner of an antique copper shop, worked in the bazaar since 1964)[169]

The shops in the Grand Bazaar, where traditional products such as antique, traditional shoes, quilts and *fez* were exhibited, have closed down one by one over time because people today do not show interest in them. When there is no demand from customers, the production and supply of these goods has lost its meaning. Therefore, the next generation does not want to do these professions. Eventually, all work is done to make money. It is not a reasonable future plan for young people to put effort into products that customers will not show interest in and buy. Therefore, as in the copper example, it does not seem possible to pass on some professions to the next generation due to economic concerns.

Copper craft is no longer a preferred profession in the Grand Bazaar as it is difficult to sustain. The situation is not much different in tile shops, which, unlike copper, have good profits. When I went to Vahap's shop to interview him, he had a bigger space compared to the other shops in the bazaar. There were colorful and varied Kütahya-made tile products. Plates, bowls, wall panels, cups were decorated with traditional patterns. Vahap, the owner of this shop, said:

> After a generation, these products will be gone. My child does not know what these are. Even if they know, they do not care. My daughter does not say, 'Dad, let's go to Topkapı Palace. She says, 'Dad, let's go to

169 Burada, özellikle İç Bedesten denen yerde, benim çocukluğun döneminde o zamanki eski evlerden veya konaklardan alınan ve hurdacılara verilip ayıklanan ve buraya getirilen ürünler olurdu. O eşyalar artık hurda ama o işin erbabı olan kişiler o ürün nasıl canlandırılabilecekse canlandırıyordu. En güzel objeler olarak vitrinlere giriyordu. Bunları o günün şartlarındaki insanlar, o tür eşyalardan keyif alanlar alıyorlar. Temaşa denen bir şey var. Bakma, görme ve ondan mutlu olma. Yıllarca bakıyor onlara, bir süre sonra bıkıyor ve tekrar yenisi için buraya geliyor. Şu anda Kapalıçarşı'nın kendini koruyabilmiş bir bölgesindesiniz. Ama buranın da %50'si değişti. Bakır artık bir ev aksesuarı olarak tercih edilen bir şey değil. Ben gittikten sonra da bu dükkan zor devam eder. Kapanır.

> Zorlu Center. I am also to blame. That's why I have no hope that we will be able to continue this business in the next generation. (Vahap, born 1979 in Istanbul, originally from Antalya, Turk, the owner of a ceramic shop, worked in the bazaar since 1996)[170]



Figure 3.2 A tile shop located within a *han* in the Grand Bazaar.

Similar to Vahap, many of the participants I interviewed complained that the new generation has lost interest in traditional products. Mehmet explains his arrival to the bazaar as follows:

> We have been here since 1973-74. At that time, there was such a culture throughout Turkey. When schools were on vacation, we used to come here because there was no television or anything like that. When we came here and drank a gazoz from the coffee shop, we were the happiest people in the world. My father wanted me to study very much. I studied Business Administration at Uludağ University, but I was always here in the summers. This is how it was passed down from father

170 Bir jenerasyon sonra bu ürünler de kalmaz. Benim çocuğum bunların ne olduğunu bilmiyor ki. Bilse de önemsemiyor. Benim kızım 'Baba hadi Topkapı Sarayı'na gidelim.' demiyor. 'Baba Zorlu Center'e gidelim.' diyor. Bende de suç var. O yüzden bundan sonra gelecek nesilde bu işi devam ettirebileceğimize dair umudum yok.

> to son. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[171]

It is difficult to say whether this colorful shop, which exhibits entirely special, handmade carpets, including local Anatolian carpets such as Balıkesir, Niğde, Uşak, Konya, as well as Turkmen and Afghan carpets, will be able to continue trading in the future. The carpet trade that Mehmet and his family have been carrying on for two generations does not seem to be preferred by the younger generation of their family. Regarding the transfer of the profession to the next generation, Mehmet said:

> In our time, it was difficult to study. The business was passed down from father to son. There was such a time in this country that people were ashamed to say they were insured. The insured man was a working man and was ordinary. I was insured in 1995, and then I got married. I got married so that we could benefit from health care. Then a crisis started and the earthquake of 1999 kicked in the behind. The skyscraper incident in 2001, the September 11 incident, was also added. When the world changed, insurance changed, everyone was insured. With these, those who used to say "Come and do your father's job" now started to say "Study, my child." There used to be respect for fathers and elders, but now you can't keep young people. Of course, there is a third generation, but we've run out at two. For example, I have two sons now. They do not even know the way to the shop. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[172]

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171 73-74'ten itibaren buradayız. O zamanlar Türkiye genelinde böyle bir kültür vardı. Okullar tatil olduğunda televizyon vs. olmadığı için buraya geliyorduk. Buraya gelip kahveciden bir gazoz içince dünyanın en mutlu insanı oluyorduk. Babam okumamı çok istedi. Uludağ Üniversitesi İşletme'de okudum. Ama yazları hep buradaydım. Babadan oğula da bu şekilde geçti.

172 Bizim zamanımızda okumak zordu. İş olayı babadan oğula aktarılıyordu. Öyle bir zaman yaşandı ki bu ülkede insanlar sigortalıyım demeye utanıyordu. Sigortalı adam işçi adamdı ve sıradandı. 95'te ben sigortaya girdim. Evlendim sonra. Evleneceğim için sağlıktan

Another participant who emphasized that the interest of the younger generation in their families to trade in the Grand Bazaar has decreased was Cemil. Cemil, who learned the carpet trade from his father, has been a shopkeeper in the bazaar for 35 years. While being interviewed in his shop, he proudly shows the "only handmade" sign he hangs in the window next to the colorful carpets he displays. He spoke excitedly about how most carpet shops sell machine-woven carpets, but he resists this and that this is what suits the spirit of the Grand Bazaar. He then explained the intergenerational trade in the bazaar through the history of his own shop:

> When my father first came to Istanbul from Malatya, he worked for an Armenian carpet shopkeeper here. He apprenticed with him for years. He opened and closed his shop. Even after he opened his shop, he did not leave Uncle Aram, he said, 'First you find an apprentice. So my father had a shop on one side, he was the boss. On the other hand, he was an apprentice. That Uncle Aram used to come and go to this shop. I opened the shop and he used to come. He used to come every morning. With his tie, suit, etc. He used to tell me a lot at that time. Do business like this, treat people like this, talk to people like this. Of course, my father was with me, but on the other hand, there was also such a situation. That culture was different. My son is here now. He is a civil engineer, we are sending him to London. It looks like he will not continue the carpet business. (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally

yararlanalım diye girdim. Sonralarda bir kriz başladı ve 99 Depremi üstüne tuz biber oldu. 2001'deki gökdelen olayı yani 11 Eylül olayı da eklendi. Dünya değişince sigorta olayı değişti, herkese bir güvence oldu. Bunlarla birlikte eskiden 'Gel oğlum babanın işini yap.' diyenler şimdi 'Oku çocuğum.' demeye başladı. Eskiden babaya ve büyüklere saygı vardı ama şimdi gençleri tutamazsın. Üçüncü jenerasyon da var tabii ama ikide bitti bizim. Mesela benim şu an iki oğlum var. Dükkanın yolunu bilmezler.

from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[173]



Figure 3.3 A carpet shop located in the Grand Bazaar.

Looking at the current state of the Grand Bazaar, it is now mostly functioning as a tourist souvenir complex rather than responding to the needs of local people. In parallel to this, products such as carpets and tiles are actually interesting for tourists. However, it is possible to observe the shopkeepers who are engaged in this business passing on their profession to the next generation.

173 Babam Malatya'dan İstanbul'a ilk geldiğinde burada Ermeni bir halıcının yanında çalışmış. Senelerdir ona çıraklık yapmış. Dükkanını açmış kapamış. Hatta dükkan açtıktan sonra bile Aram Amcayı bırakmamış. 'Önce sen bir çırak bul' demiş. Yani babamın bir yanda dükkanı var, patron. Diğer tarafta çıraklık yapıyor. İşte o Aram Amca gelip giderdi bu dükkana. Ben dükkanı açardım o gelirdi. Her sabah gelirdi. Kravatıyla, takım elbisesiyle falan. O dönemde bana çok anlatırdı. Ticareti şöyle yap, insanlara şöyle davran, şöyle konuş diye. Babam yanımda tabii ama bir taraftan ayrıyeten böyle bir durum var. O esnaflık, o kültür başkaydı. Benim oğlum da şimdi burada. Kendisi inşaat mühendisi, onu Londra'ya gönderiyoruz. Halı işine devam etmeyecek gibi.

The young generation prefers to work in an office job as a white-collar instead of coming to the Grand Bazaar and selling products such as carpets, rugs and tiles that do not interest them much. As a result, the new generation does not want to continue their family professions even though they do not have a big financial problem.

Another reason why intergenerational trade in the Grand Bazaar does not continue among the younger generation is that the old sterile environment of the bazaar is no longer preserved. The fact that the new shopkeepers are prone to violence and have attitudes that can disturb the peace of both shopkeepers and customers in the bazaar makes the bazaar far from being a safe environment where children can be entrusted. Born in 1977 in Malatya, Murat came to the Grand Bazaar in 1991 and worked first in leather, then textiles and finally watch business. In 2001, he opened a watch shop with a partner. Then he left his partner in 2010 and opened his own watch shop. For 33 years, Murat, who has been a shopkeeper in various shops in the bazaar, was worried about his own children working in the bazaar.

> No one wants to give their children here anymore. For example, if my child wanted to come here, I would not bring them. He learns more evil than good. He learns swearing. He learns bad things. This has become the place where marijuana is smoked the most. They have dealers from Esenler, from here and there. They make a call. They get marijuana right away. They use it here. Nobody wants to bring their children here because of the bad people inside. Imagine, I have money, I own a shop, I have reached a certain level. My child's next door neighbor is armed. Who would risk their child in such a situation? Right now one shop in the bazaar has a gun. They pull guns in every fight. Siirt people go to kill people in Çadırcı Street. They send 16, 17 year old kids. When the kid gets stabbed, he takes the gun out of the safe in the shop. If I am going to die, you die too, so he shoots and kills 4 children. Their fathers are waiting in the other corners. There is a place to drink tea a little bit down. They wait there. It was over a toilet issue. And it was

> someone else who made a mess and someone else who died. While waiting in line for the restroom, he shouts "Come on, hurry up!" And the person inside says, "What are you shouting for?" and there's a face-off. "Man! We are from Siirt. How dare you talk to us like that?" Then he calls and sends the children away. Their fathers are waiting at the tea place. Even in a normal fight, guns fly in the air. How can you trust and entrust your child to such an environment? (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[174]

In summary, there are some main reasons that hinder the continuation of businesses in the Grand Bazaar by the next generation. The first of these is that traditional products are no longer preferred by customers. Since these businesses also work to make a profit, if there are no buyers for their products, they naturally have to close down. The second reason is that in order for the shopkeepers to be able to pass on the business to the next generation in their families, the business needs to be of interest to young people. However, the new generation is more inclined to work as white-collar workers than their

174 Artık kimse çocuğunu buraya vermek istemiyor. Mesela benim çocuğum buraya gelmek istese getirmem. İyilikten daha çok kötülüğü öğreniyor. Küfrü öğreniyor. Kötü şeyler öğreniyor. Esrarın en çok içildiği yer oldu burası. Esenler'den şuradan buradan torbacıları var. Bir arıyorlar. Hemen esrarları geliyor. Buralarda kullanıyorlar. İçeriye kötü insanların girmesinden dolayı kimse çocuğu buraya sokmak istemiyor. Düşünün benim param var, dükkan sahibiyim, belli bir seviyeye gelmişim. Benim çocuğumun yan komşusu silahlı. Kim riske eder çocuğunu böyle bir durumda? Şu an çarşıdaki biri dükkanda silah var. Her kavgada silah çekiyorlar. Siirtliler adam öldürmeye gidiyorlar Çadırcılarda. 16, 17 yaşlarındaki çocukları gönderiyorlar. Çocuk bıçaklanınca dükkandaki kasadan silahı çıkarıyor. Ben öleceksem siz de ölün diye 4 tane çocuğu vuruyor ve öldürüyor. Babaları da diğer köşelerde bekliyor. Biraz aşağıda çay içilen bir yer var. Orada bekliyorlar. Bu olay tuvalet meselesinden çıkmıştı. Ve ortalığı karıştıran başka, ölen başka biri. Tuvalet sırasında beklerken "Haydi çabuk" diye bağırıyor. İçeride olan da "Ne bağırıyorsun" falan derken bi restleşme oluyor. "Vay biz Siirtliyiz. Sen bize nasıl böyle konuşursun," diyor. Sonra arıyor çocukları gönderiyor. Çay içilen yerde bekliyor babaları. Normal bir kavgada bile silahlar havada uçuşuyor. Böyle bir ortama güvenip çocuğunuzu nasıl emanet edebilirsiniz ki?

fathers did. Therefore, after their fathers become unable to work due to reasons such as old age or illness, they will have to close down as there will be no one to take care of the shop. The third reason is that the new shopkeepers who come to the bazaar with migration cannot keep up with the culture of the bazaar and even have habits and attitudes that will cause deterioration in the bazaar. For this reason, the safe atmosphere in the bazaar has started to deteriorate and some shopkeepers do not want to send their children to work in a deteriorating and unsafe bazaar.

Nevertheless, we can observe that intergenerational relations continues in some occupational groups. According to Bestor, marketplaces are embedded within and shaped by the values, norms, and social relationships of a society, reflecting and contributing to the broader cultural milieu.[175] In this context, the practice of inheriting and continuing the family profession was historically a common cultural tradition within the bazaar setting, frequently passed down from one generation to the next. Although this practice has declined over time, it continues to persist, particularly within the jewelry sector. In the jewelers I interviewed, I saw that the third generation continues the business. Rupen, a 27-year-old young jeweler, is the third generation representative of the family business after his grandfather and father. Like him, his older brother also works in the same business. I interviewed him at the end of the working day in his jewelry shop, which is spacious compared to the other shops in the bazaar but small compared to any other jewelry shop outside. As a member of an Armenian family engaged in the jewelry business in the Grand Bazaar, he said about his field:

> In our sector, the Grand Bazaar is the capital. There is no other place that can be compared. You do not know because you are not here, but

175 Theodore C. Bestor, "Markets: Anthropological Aspects," in *International Encyclopedia of The Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Amsterdam, New York, Netherlands: Pergamon, 2001), 9229.

> there are shops (jewelry stores) the size of bathtubs in the bazaar. But you cannot even imagine the business volume of the owner. Maybe his annual profit is more than a factory. (Rupen, born 1997 in Istanbul, originally from Diyarbakır, Armenian, the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2019)[176]

For many other professions and crafts, equivalent production and sales venues can be found. But in the jewelry business, the Grand Bazaar functions as an institution that determines gold prices. This makes the people working in this field both more profitable and reputable. Rupen said:

> If I think about a century ago, Mecidiyeköy did not exist, but the Mecidiyeköy of that time was here. Finance was also here. Now it is only about gold, but at that time, the Grand Bazaar was not only the center of gold but also the center of finance. Now there are retail shops inside the bazaar, but it was not like that in the past. There were people who were bankers rather than jewelers. The Grand Bazaar has been here for hundreds of years. For example, Gedikpaşa is the capital of leather-working. Even though the production places have shifted to other places, all the stocks are there. If you go to another production place, you cannot find leather, but you can find it in Gedikpaşa. The Grand Bazaar is the same for jewelry. (Rupen, born 1997 in Istanbul, originally from Diyarbakır, Armenian, the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2019)[177]

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176 Bizim sektörde, Kapalıçarşı kuyumculuğun başkenti. Kıyaslanabilecek başka bir yer yok. Siz burada olmadığınız için bilemiyorsunuz ama çarşıda küvet kadar dükkanlar (kuyumcular) var. Ama adamın iş hacmini tahmin bile edemezsiniz. Belki yıllık kârı bir fabrikadan daha çoktu.

177 Yüzyıl önce için düşünsem Mecidiyeköy yoktu ama o zamanın Mecidiyeköy'ü burasıydı. Finans da buradaydı. Şimdi sadece altın üzerine ama o zamanlar altın değil finans merkezi de Kapalıçarşı'ydı. Şimdi çarşının içinde perakende dükkanları var ama eskiden öyle değildi. Kuyumculuktan çok bankerlik yapan insanlar vardı. Kapalıçarşı, yüzlerce yıldır burada. Mesela dericiliğin başkenti Gedikpaşa. Ne kadar üretim yerleri başka yerlere kaysa da bütün stoklar orada. Başka üretim yerine gitsen deri bulamazsın ama Gedikpaşa'da bulursun. Kapalıçarşı da kuyumculuk için öyle.

In general, it can be said that jewelry making is one of the professions that can be transferred to the next generation within the Grand Bazaar. The reason for this is that the Grand Bazaar is the center of jewelry. Since its establishment until today, the Grand Bazaar has acted like a financial institution. Especially in the news and newspapers, you can often come across the phrase "The Grand Bazaar price of gold (or foreign currency)." This is because the Grand Bazaar is a price-setting scale for gold and foreign exchange. In this sense, it is valuable for Turkish markets. As a natural consequence of this, people who work in the jewelry business in the Grand Bazaar see a more promising future for their profession. This is the driving force for the next generation to continue the family business.

Another example of intergenerational trade was Ellis and his family, who have been in the jewelry business in the Grand Bazaar for 3 generations. In 1957, at the age of 16, Ellis started his apprenticeship with an Armenian jeweler in the Grand Bazaar and years later he took his nephew Agop and his 33-year-old grandson Daniel, the youngest member of the shop, and they have been working together for years. The interview with all 3 members of the family took place in a small jewelry workshop on the upper floor of a *han* in the Grand Bazaar. Inside, 3 jewelry masters were placing small diamonds on gold rings on tables with bright white lights. While they were listening to our conversation on one side of the workshop and continuing their work, Ellis, representing the first generation of this jeweler, and I were sitting across from each other drinking our coffees. We conducted the interview in the workshop filled with the hum of the gold processing machine. 83-year-old Ellis begins by briefly summarizing his story in the Grand Bazaar:

> (Pointing to everyone in the workshop) Everyone here, including me, was very young when they came here. I came to the Grand Bazaar in 1957. I finished primary school in Kayseri and came to Istanbul to the

> Grand Bazaar. My life story is long. When my mother died, we 4 siblings were all left destitute. We came to my uncles in Istanbul. When I came to my uncles, I started to work here. And so on and so forth, a neighbor's son brought us to the bazaar. We were 2 girls and 2 boys. They studied. I worked in the bazaar. I came to the bazaar at the age of 16. I started working as an apprentice for an Armenian jeweler. I worked for my master. It was time for my military service. I worked for my master for 3 months. After that I left and opened my own workshop in the bazaar. (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[178]

Then he continued by introducing his nephew:

> A jeweler is a *sâdekâr*. A *sâdekâr* has to do everything. But now watermelon sellers have become jewelers. (Pointing to his nephew) This is my sister's son. My nephew. He was small when he came here. Now he has grown into a man. He opened a workshop. Now he is a master. He is the boss. Now I am the oldest in the bazaar by my count. I am not always here. I come once in a while to check on them. See if they are slacking off. Are they reading the newspaper, smoking? Are they doing something else? (pointing to his nephew) This is the head boss here. If a tax inspector comes and says, "What are you doing here?" I have two things. First, I have a certificate of mastership. And there is a photo of

178 (Atölyedeki herkesi göstererek) Buradaki herkes ben de dahil buraya geldiğinde çok küçük yaşlardaydı. 1957 yılında Kapalıçarşı'ya geldim. İlkokulu Kayseri'de bitirip İstanbul'a Kapalıçarşı'ya geldim. Benim hayat hikayem uzun. Annem ölünce biz 4 kardeş ortada kaldık. İstanbul'a amcamlara geldik. Amcamlara gelince de burada işe başladım. Şöyle böyle derken bizi komşunun oğlu aldı çarşıya getirdi. 2 kız, 2 erkek kardeştik. Onlar okudu. Ben çarşıda çalıştım. 16 yaşında çarşıya geldim. Bir Ermeni kuyumcunun yanında çırak olarak işe başladım. Ustamın yanında çalıştım. Askerlik zamanım geldi. Askere gittim. Askerden geldim. 3 ay ustamın yanında çalıştım. Ondan sonra ayrıldım, kendi atölyemi açtım çarşıda.

> me with the old apprentices of our workshop. I have nothing else. (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[179]

Then Daniel, Ellis's grandson, spoke: "My cousin's master is my grandfather. My master is not my grandfather. They did not take me to my grandfather. We have a system: Grow up under someone else." (Daniel, born 1991 in İstanbul, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2013)[180]

For three generations, Ellis and his family had passed on not only the profession, but also the customs of the craft. Throughout the interview, they repeatedly mentioned their respect for their masters. Daniel, the younger member of the family, said:

> 60% of the Armenians in the Grand Bazaar are already related to each other here. That's why my master was also our relative. Do you know what my master's first sentence to me was? 'From nine to six [Referring to the working hours] we are master and journeyman. After 6 we are relatives.' Journeymen and apprentices show the respect to the master that his wife does not show. I am telling you this seriously. I still button up my shirt when I see my master coming from a distance, but not out of fear. Out of respect. That's how you were brought up. That's how you grew up. I used to hear my master's footsteps when he came in the morning. I used to take his tea from the stove, add one sugar, stir it and

179 Kuyumcu dedin mi sadekardır. Sadekar dediğinin her işi yapması gerek. Ama şimdi karpuzcular kuyumcu oldu. (Yeğenini gösteriyor) Bu benim kız kardeşimin oğludur. Yeğenimdir. Buraya geldiğinde ufacıktı. Şimdi kaç yaşında adam oldu. Atölye açtı. Şimdi usta oldu. Patron oldu. Şimdi çarşının hesaba göre en eskisi benim. Ben öyle hep gelmem. Arada bir kontrol için geliyorum. Bakıyorum kaytarıyorlar mı? Gazete mi okuyorlar, sigara mı içiyorlar? Başka bir şey mi yapıyorlar? (Yeğenini gösteriyor) Buranın baş patronu budur. Ben arada geliyorum. Bir maliyeci gelip "Senin burada ne işin var?" derse iki şeyim var. Birincisi ustalık belgem var. Bir de şurada atölyemizin eski çıraklarıyla çekilmiş fotoğrafım var. Başka bir şeyim yok.

180 Kuzenimin ustası dedem. Benim ustam dedem değil. Beni dedemin yanına almadılar. Biz de şey sistemi vardır. Başkasının yanında yetiş.

> put it in front of him. (Daniel, born 1991 in İstanbul, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2013)[181]

Ellis, who is one of the oldest jewelers of the bazaar and has trained 22 master jewelers in his workshop, emphasized one of the dynamics of the master - apprentice relationship:

> Do you know what we have here? We first learn the art here. Then we learn how to make money. Now my apprentice and my nephew are both the same. He brought a job, a good job. When I say, "My boy, you did a good job," this will last him for the rest of his life. Money is not important." (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[182]

Family members, who have been continuing their business with great devotion for years, have repeatedly expressed the professional satisfaction of being appreciated in the jewelry business. Daniel said:

> As a matter of fact, we also tell this to our customers, of course we are doing this job to make money. But because what we do is a craft, an art. For example, four craftsmen work to finalize a ring. Therefore, when the work is finished, we are proud of finishing the work very well before the money. We also tell this to our customers. Making money is another side of this business, but you will wear the ring I made for you for the rest of your life. When they say who did this, when they say

181 Kapalıçarşı'daki Ermenilerin %60'ı zaten birbirleriyle burada akrabadır. O yüzden benim ustam da akrabamızdı. Benim ustamın bana ilk cümlesi neydi biliyor musun? "9-6 usta kalfayız. 6'dan sonra akrabayız." dedi. Ustaya karısının göstermediği saygıyı kalfalar, çıraklar gösterir. Ciddi söylüyorum bak. Ben hala ustamın uzaktan geldiğini gördüğümde önümü iliklıyorum. Ama korktuğumdan değil. Saygıdan. Öyle büyümüşsün. Öyle yetişmişsin. Ben ustam sabah geldiğinde ayak sesini duyardım. Ocaktan çayını alırdım, tek şekerini atar, karıştırır önüne öyle koyardım.

182 Burada ne var biliyor musun? Biz burada evvela sanatı öğreniriz. Sonra para kazanmayı öğreniriz. Şimdi benim çırağım, yeğenim ikisi de aynı. Bir iş yaptı getirdi, güzel bir iş. "Aslanım ne güzel yapmışsın" dediğimde bu ona ömrünün sonuna kadar gider. Para mühim değil.

> Ellis Master did it, it is much more important than money. (Daniel, born 1991 in İstanbul, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2013)[183]

This jewelry workshop, run by Ellis, his nephew and grandson, should not only be considered as a place where the profession is passed on to the next generation. A transfer of mentality and culture also takes place here. This jewelry workshop sells wholesale, not retail. In other words, they do not only sell a bracelet they make, their sales volume is quite large. They are quite well-known names in their profession. Despite this, Ellis does not think of himself as a jewelry shopkeeper, "I am a jewelry worker. I am a jewelry master." Although they are financially strong, you can see that they are quite humble as soon as you enter the workshop. Despite their busy work schedule, they answered my questions in a very willing and warm manner. Ellis pointed out another important point about the culture of the Grand Bazaar.

> We do not know bonds. Word is important for us. It is a matter of trust. You come to us and say, "Make 10 kilos of stuff. I will give you the money when it comes." I will make 10 kilos of product and give it to you. You come and get it. But these things are changing now. (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, originally from Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[184]

Then he added:

183 Aslında işin aslın şu. Biz bunu tabii müşterilerimize de söyleriz. Biz tabii ki para kazanmak için bu işi yapıyoruz. Ama yaptığımız iş bir el işçiliği, bir sanat olduğu için. Mesela bir yüzüğün son haline gelmesi için dört zanaatkar çalışır. Bu yüzden iş bittiği zaman, parasından önce işi çok güzel bitirmenin gururu olur bizde. Biz müşterilerimize de söyleriz. Para kazanmak bu işin başka bir tarafında, ama sana yaptığım yüzüğü sen ömür boyu taşıyacaksın. Bunu kim yaptı dediklerinde, Ellis Usta yaptı dediklerinde paradan çok daha önemli oluyor.

184 Biz senedi bilmeyiz. Bizde söz önemlidir. İtimat meselesi bu. Gelip bize "10 kilo mal yap. Para gelince vereceğim" dersin. Ben sana 10 kilo malı yapıp veririm. Gelip alırsın. Artık bunlarda değişiyor ama.

> It has changed. Everything has changed. Everyone deceives each other in whatever way they can. Now, madam, there are no more jewelers. There are no artisans left. There are machines. There are no apprentices. The last apprentice to enter this *han* was my grandson. (He points to Daniel.) Take this as an example. Machines do everything now. No one does anything by hand. No one knows. (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, originally from Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[185]

Although Ellis has passed on his business and craft to the next generation within his own business, he regretted that this is not the case for other jewelers in the bazaar in general.

Consistent with this vision, the transfer of businesses in the Grand Bazaar from generation to generation, it is possible to talk about two groups. The first one is those who have been continuing their business for two or three generations but cannot pass it on to the current younger generation. The reasons for this are that customers no longer demand the products sold, as well as the new generation are not eager to work as shopkeepers in the bazaar, and the peace and safety in the bazaar environment is gradually decreasing.

The second group consists of artisans and shopkeepers who have managed to pass on their work to the younger generation. In this sense, especially jewelry making differs from other professions. In the Ottoman period, the Grand Bazaar was like a semi-official trade organization in the relationship between the state and artisans.[186] In the Republican period, a significant portion of the gold reserves are located in the Grand Bazaar.[187] As such, just like

185 Değişti. Her şey değişti. Herkes birbirini nasıl kandırabilirse kandırıyor. Şimdi hanımefendiciğim artık kuyumcu kalmadı. Sanatkar kalmadı. Makinalar çıktı. Çırak yetişmiyor. Bu hana giren en son çırak benim torunum oldu. (Daniel'ı gösteriyor.) Buradan pay biç. Artık her şeyi makineler yapıyor. Elle bir iş yapan yok. Bilen yok.

186 Küçükerman, "Büyük Bir Kültür, Tasarım ve Ticaret Mirasının Ana Ekseni: Kapalıçarşı," 17.

187 Mortan and Küçükerman, *Çarşı, Pazar, Ticaret ve Kapalıçarşı*, 285.

in the Ottoman period, the Grand Bazaar has been a key player in the gold market in modern Turkey. With the strength derived from this, jewelry making is a craft that makes economic sense to continue from generation to generation.

In addition, trust plays a crucial role not only in intergenerational relationships but also in the social and economic interactions among shopkeepers in the bazaar. While a number of informal norms, mutual obligations, and loyalties help maintain order within the marketplace, these mechanisms are inherently fragile and may not guarantee long-term stability. The trust-based relationships can be disrupted. In contrast, family businesses operate at the intersection of trust and kinship, forming a denser and more resilient web of obligations. Here, trust is not merely strategic but deeply embedded in social ties and shared identity. Granovetter, drawing on the logic of "the Prisoner's Dilemma,"[188] notes that in contexts lacking trust, individuals who act in self-interest and adopt protective behaviors are not necessarily irrational.[189] However, families often function as an exception to this logic. For instance, during crises such as fires or disasters, news reports rarely describe family members abandoning or endangering each other in panic.[190] This suggests a fundamental confidence in mutual support within kin groups, which alters the calculus of risk and reciprocity. In the bazaar, the most reliable forms of trust are often found in familial economic relations, where the cultural and emotional weight of kinship fosters a high-trust environment that transcends transactional rationality.

188 For more information see: "Prisoner's dilemma," Britannica, March 28, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/topic/prisoners-dilemma

189 Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," 490.

190 Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," 490.

According to Fanselow, the inherently uncertain and easily manipulable nature of commodities in bazaars makes personal loyalty - often grounded in kinship ties - essential to sustaining trade relationships and addressing structural challenges like long-term labor recruitment and business continuity.[191] As seen in the example of jewelers, particularly among shopkeepers dealing in high-value goods, both economic and social capital - often accumulated within families and transmitted across generations - serve to reinforce trust-based relationships. The economic capital amassed through years of operation in spaces like the Grand Bazaar is typically inherited by the next generation, ensuring continuity. Similarly, the commercial and social networks cultivated by earlier generations are also bequeathed, enabling successors to leverage established ties. This intergenerational transmission of capital and trust not only sustains the business but also facilitates its expansion, contributing to the broader prosperity of the family unit.

Another way to approach intergenerational commercial relations in the Grand Bazaar is through the lens of unpaid family labor as a culturally embedded and socially normalized practice. As Martha Alter Chen discusses in "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment", unpaid family members comprise a significant segment of labor within self-employed and informal enterprises.[192] While such labor is often framed as a contribution to the family's economic well-being, it also serves as a means of intergenerational apprenticeship and socialization into occupational roles. In the context of the Grand Bazaar - where most workplaces are formally registered - family members, particularly younger generations, frequently assist during school holidays or after classes,

191 Frank S. Fanselow, "The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre Is the Bazaar Really?," 258.

192 Chen, "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment," 75.

not only to support the business but to absorb the tacit knowledge and embodied skills associated with the trade. Many of the participants I interviewed recalled starting their involvement in the bazaar in this manner. Though not reducible to exploitative labor, these early experiences are often narrated in casual or understated terms, highlighting their normalized and unremarkable character within family and bazaar life. As will be elaborated in the following sections, such practices play a crucial role in shaping the temporalities and textures of intergenerational continuity in the bazaar.

§ 3.3 Working Dynamics of Shopkeepers

Shopkeepers play a key role in shaping the ethos and practices of the Grand Bazaar as a historic and dynamic site of commerce. In everyday discourse, the term *shopkeeper* blurs the boundaries between skilled craftsmanship and mercantile activity, encompassing both formal and informal actors.[193] This subchapter focuses specifically on shopkeepers as situated within the labor dynamics of the Grand Bazaar, foregrounding their roles not merely as economic agents but as participants in a socially embedded marketplace.

An analysis of shopkeepers' narratives reveals recurring patterns that help articulate the theoretical framework of this study. First, the Grand Bazaar operates through an economic structure characterized more by fluidity than by rigid dichotomies, particularly between formal and informal spheres. Second, there is a socially recognized trajectory of occupational mobility - akin to an institutionalized career path - where individuals ascend from apprentice to journeyman, from journeyman to master, and ultimately to shopkeeper, contingent upon the accumulation of social and financial capital. Third, the enduring significance of trust, kinship, and informal networks – the elements

193 Müge Neda Altınoklu, "Esnaf," in *Toplumsal Yapı: Türkiye'de Eşitsizlik, Tahakküm, Değişim*, ed. Cem Özatalay (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2024), 395.

previously discussed - continues to shape commercial relations and reinforce the social fabric of the bazaar.

The term informal economy is generally used to describe income, labor and employment that is not declared to government authorities.[194] The term informal economy was first introduced by Keith Hart, emerging with the proliferation of self-employment and temporary labor in large cities of third world countries and was used in the 1970s to describe economic activities that took place outside the control of official institutions.[195] He proposes the term informal economy as a substitute for the previously dominant term "marginal sector", which had been widely used in an earlier period and adopted by social scientists such as Mübeccel Kıray and İlhan Tekeli in Turkey.[196] Over time, it has come to be recognized as a phenomenon that occurs in all societies, not just in underdeveloped countries.

In addition, the term informal economy should not be considered to be the equivalent of illegal or criminal economy.[197] In the context of the Grand Bazaar, the boundary between formal and informal economic activities is inherently fluid and not easily delineated. Reflecting the dynamic and adaptable nature of labor within the bazaar, formal activities cannot be simplistically equated with "white" and informal ones with "black." Rather, the degree of informality is often defined by its visibility or invisibility to the bureaucratic gaze.[198] It is precisely this entanglement that creates a gray zone, where economic practices evade neat categorization and thus demand closer ethnographic and analytical scrutiny.

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194 Gutmann, "The Subterranean Economy," 26.

195 Hart, "The Informal Economy," 54.

196 Cem Özatalay, "Toplumsal Yapının Sömürüleni Olarak İşçi Sınıfı ve Dönüşümleri," in *Toplumsal Yapı: Türkiye'de Eşitsizlik, Tahakküm, Değişim* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2024), 323.

197 Chen, "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment," 77.

198 Hart, "Bureaucratic Form and the Informal Economy," 22.

Interview with Cemil, took place in a shop where colorful handmade carpets, some of which cost thousands of dollars, were stacked. As the smell of carpets dyed with natural dyes filled the whole shop, we started talking about Cemil's story of entering the bazaar while having some tea. He tells his story of becoming a shopkeeper in the bazaar as follows:

> My bazaar story started like this: When I was 3 years old, my father brought me to this shop. My journey in the bazaar started there. I used to come to the bazaar during school vacations. Then we had a smaller shop back then. The staff there were repairing carpets. I also repaired carpets and rugs there for a while, especially rugs. Because carpet repair is more difficult, rug repair is easier. After that, I did chain pulling, strengthening the head of the carpet. Of course, the most important thing is that when the military service was over, I came here, to the bazaar. I mean, I was opening the shop, closing it, taking care of all the work. In other words, I was both an apprentice and a shop assistant. This is how my adventure in the bazaar started. (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[199]

It is a common phenomenon to start working in the bazaar at a young age. Cemil's story can be considered as an example of a common situation in this regard.

199 Çarşı hikayem şöyle başladı. 3 yaşındayken babam beni bu dükkana getirmiş. Çarşıya girişimiz orada başlıyor. Okul döneminde tatillerde geliyordum çarşıya. Sonra bizim o zamanlar bir tane daha küçük bir dükkan vardı. Orada halı tamiri yapıyordu elemanlar. Ben de bir zamanlar orada halı, kilim tamiri yaptım. Özellikle kilim tamiri. Çünkü halı tamiri daha zordur, kilim tamiri daha kolay. Ondan sonra zincir çekmek, halının başını sağlamlaştırma yaptım. Tabii sonra en önemlisi askerlik bitince buraya, çarşıya geldim. Yani dükkanı açıyordum, kapatıyordun, tüm işlere bakıyordum. Yani hem çıraklık hem tezgahtarlık yapıyordum. Çarşı macerası böyle başladı.



Figure 3.4 Anatolian carpets with traditional regional motifs in a shop

Engaging in sales and crafts at an early age allows these people to master their craft in a short period of time. This is often referred to as "cutting eyeteeth on." According to Cemil's statement:

> I liked doing repairs alongside the workers. They taught me how to repair. Growing up with your father, you learn a lot of things. Like how to make carpets. My father would always ask me things like, "Son, bring this Sivas." He would always say it by name so that we would know where that carpet came from, which region it belonged to. Because this work cannot be learned from a book. You have to look closely at the carpet, you have to touch it. You have to touch it, feel it. Its wool, its quality, everything. The quality of the back is also very important in carpets. It is difficult to see this in the pictures. Things like

> that. That's how repair work was. (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[200]

Indeed, traditional carpets, one of the most beautiful and rare products sold in the bazaar, are now part of a niche market. The pattern of a carpet, the colors used, the weaving technique can be examined like a painting and various meanings can be deduced. For this reason, it is very important for carpet sellers to know their products well, to know their stories, to be able to interpret the patterns on the carpet, in other words, to know all the subtleties of this business. In this respect, coming to the bazaar at a young age to get an idea about the family profession of carpet weaving and to help with the work in his family's shop is something meaningful for Cemil and other shopkeepers like him and something that can be instrumentalized in the future.

Mehmet shares his personal history of the bazaar, which we can find parallels with Cemil's story, as follows:

> We have been in the bazaar ever since I could remember. My father came to the bazaar in 1957. My father was born in 1940. He has been in the carpet business since 1957. When we were children, we were in the bazaar when school was on vacation and on weekends. I studied at Bursa Uludağ University during my university years. I was not in the bazaar only during that period. When I finished school, I returned to

200 Elemanların yanında tamir yapmak hoşuma gidiyordu. Onlar öğretti bana tamiri. Babanın yanında büyürken bir sürü şey öğreniyorsun. Halı nasıl yapılır gibi. Babam hep şöyle şeyler isterdi benden "Oğlum şu Sivas'ı getir." Hep isimle söylerdi ki o halının nereden geldiğini, hangi yöreye ait olduğunu bilelim. Çünkü bu iş kitaptan öğrenilmiyor. Halıya yakından bakacaksın, temas edeceksin. Dokunmak lazım, hissetmek lazım. O yününü, kalitesini, her şeyini. Halılar da bir de arka sırt kalitesi çok önemlidir. Resimlerde bunu görmek anlamak zor. Bunun gibi şeyler. Tamircilik öyleydi.

> the bazaar. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[201]

Like many other shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar, Mehmet started his business at a young age by coming to his father's shop and trying to help him. Mehmet explained his experience of working with his father as follows:

> We started working as apprentices, even if it was alongside our father. When a carpet arrived, we would not take care of it, the father would. We would go out. The father would get angry, he would say, "Why are you going out?" An elderly peer would come. If there was going to be a conversation, we would go out. He would say, "Do not go out, stay and learn something from that conversation." Nowadays you can't say anything to anyone. You abide by them. In our time there was no such thing as child psychology. I find it very strange now. There is a different system. You can't tell the child to come now. The little boy is at home preparing for university. He will never come to the bazaar. When we were young and stayed at home instead of going to the bazaar when we were free, we were ashamed to face our father when he came home. Now there is a reaction to the slightest thing. We let it go rather than face to face. But there was no such thing in our time. It ended when the father got angry. It is a bit more patriarchal. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[202]

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201 Kendimizi bildik bileli çarşıdayız. Babam çarşıya 1957'de gelmiş. Babam 1940 doğumlu. 1957'den beri halı işiyle meşgul. Biz de çocukken okul tatil olunca ve hafta sonları çarşıdaydık. Üniversite döneminde Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesinde okudum. Sadece o dönem çarşıda değildim. Okul bitince yine çarşıya döndüm.

202 Babamızın yanı da olsa çırak gibi işe başladık. Bir halı geldiği zaman biz ilgilenmezdik. Baba ilgilenirdi. Biz dışarı çıkardık. Baba kızardı. "Niye çıkıyorsunuz?" derdi. Yaşlı akranı biri gelirdi. Bir konuşma olacaksa biz dışarı çıkıyorduk. "Çıkmayın durun bir şeyler öğrenin o sohbetten." diyordu. Yeri geliyordu dayak da yiyorduk. Öyle bir kültür aldık. Şimdi kimseye bir şey diyemiyorsunuz. Siz onlara uyuyorsunuz. Bizim zamanımızda çocuk psikolojisi diye bir şey yoktu. Ben şimdi çok yadırgıyorum. Farklı bir sistem var. Çocuğa şimdi gel diyemiyorsun. Ufak oğlan evde üniversiteye hazırlanıyor. Çarşıya asla gelmez. Biz gençken boşken çarşı

Patterns similar to those of Cemil and Mehmet can be observed for many shopkeepers. Most of them start working in the bazaar at an early age due to their family relationships, to contribute to the household economy, to learn the family trade and to become a performer of that trade in the future. From the outside, this can be seen as a child helping his father with his work. But it also means taking part in an economic activity. In "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment", Martha Alter Chen, while discussing the main characteristics of the informal economy, emphasizes as key terms: its significance and permanence, the continuum of employment relations within it, and its segmented structure. [203] Explaining segmentation, she argues that the informal economy is composed of a number of informal enterprises and informal jobs, the first of which - also relevant to my research topic - is self-employment in informal enterprises. According to Chen, the self-employment in informal enterprises categorization includes own account operators and unpaid family workers. [204]

In line with Chen's claims, unpaid family workers are indeed one of the most neglected types of labor in the informal economy. This is particularly evident in commercial areas, where traditional taboos and customs are still strongly observed. As in the cases of Cemil and Mehmet, there are many people who start working in the family enterprise at a young age. This situation in the Grand Bazaar - although of course it can be discussed with many different

yerine evde kaldığımızda baba eve geldiğinde utanırdık karşısına çıkmaya. Şimdi en ufak şeyde etkiye tepki oluyor. Yüz göz olmaktansa boş veriyoruz. Ama bizim zamanımızda öyle bir şey yoktu. Baba kızdığı zaman bitti. Biraz daha ataerkil.

203 Chen, "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment," 75.

204 Chen, "Rethinking the Informal Economy: Linkages with the Formal Economy and the Formal Regulatory Environment," 78.

discourses - is seen as a step towards continuing the family business and having a profession rather than labor exploitation. It can be even argue that it is an obligatory natural way to continue the business.

At an early age, family members start apprenticeships in the Grand Bazaar to help their families, and after completing their education, they start working full-time in the family business. In this way, there is a smooth transition from informal to formal. For example, Mehmet, who was born in 1966 and started working in his father's carpet shop as a child, was insured in 1995, at the age of 29. In other words, it took a long time for him to become a legal employee according to the state. This situation is also quite common among other shopkeepers.

When we take a look at people who did not work in the family business but apprenticed in someone else's shop and became shopkeepers in the bazaar today, we realize that the situation is no different. They first started working as an apprentice in a shop in the bazaar through their vouchers. Then, after years of learning the business, they became part of the formal economy. Murat mentioned that:

> After finding two vouchers here, I started working in the bazaar. My brother's friend was working in the bazaar. He became a voucher for me. In other words, in the past, "Here's an apprentice. Let's start!" did not exist. 2 or 3 men must be vouchers for you. There is no sign on the door saying "Looking for a worker" here. The apprentice must be a trustworthy person who will not damage the shopkeepers' property. The voucher will say, "This boy is my acquaintance. No harm will come to your property from him" so that you can start working. (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[205]

205 Burada iki kefil bulduktan sonra çarşıda çalışmaya başladım. Benim abimin arkadaşı çarşıda çalışıyordu. O bana kefil oldu. Yani eskiden "Al çırak. Haydi başla" diye bir şey yoktu. 2- 3

Murat's case was a little different from those who passed on both capital and know-how between generations from father to son. Murat started working in the bazaar as an apprentice in a leather jacket shop owned by a Assyrian from Diyarbakır. After leather business, he worked as an apprentice in textile and watch shops. In 2001, he was a part of the informal economy until he opened his own shop with a partner. He explained the transition from informal to formal through the dynamics of the Grand Bazaar as follows:

> In the Grand Bazaar, there were phases like the birth, growth and death phases of human life. You are an apprentice, a shop assistant, then a shop owner. In this process, everyone supports each other. If you were already working in the bazaar, there was no need for capital to open a shop. Now I need to have a big capital to open a very big shop in Caddebostan. But if you had completed the stages in the bazaar, your capital was not money, it was your respectability. You opened a shop and you are going to put goods in it. Someone will hear you and say, "Oh, you opened a shop? Good luck to you. Here's some money for you." He would immediately give three or five things. So there was no need for money. Respectability was an important capital. If you grew up in the bazaar, you weren't accumulating money, you were accumulating prestige. That prestige made you put goods in your shop or get a discount on rent. It was because of that respect. Having money was not important in the bazaar. If you had respect, if you weren't a thief, if you did not damage anyone's property, if no one came to your door and asked for your money, you were already a shopkeeper. (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[206]

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adam sana kefil olacak. Kapıda "Eleman aranıyor" yazısı yok burada. Esnafın malına zarar vermeyecek güvenilir biri olması gerekir çırağın. Kefil "Bu çocuk benim tanıdığımdır. Ondan senin malına zarar gelmez" diyecek ki işe başlayabilesin

206 Çarşıda insan yaşamının doğum, büyüme, ölüm evreleri gibi evreler vardı. Çıraksın, tezgahtarsın sonra dükkan sahibisin. Bu süreçte muhakkak herkes birbirini destekliyor. Zaten

Many shopkeepers told similar stories to Murat's. One of them was Mehmet. Although he had taken over his father's business, he described the transition of the apprentices in the bazaar to the trades as follows:

> A man working in a fabric shop would ask his master for a license after he learned the job, saying, "I am going to do this job too." The boss would help him. After a certain point, you want to start your own business. The boss would provide the necessary help in such cases. He would give advice. The apprentices were all eager to learn something. They were pushed around because they came at a young age, but there are many people here who came from apprenticeship and became shop owners on the main street. In the past, children used to come from Anatolia who wanted to make a living. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[207]

Ellis, also expressed his own bazaar story in this way. In 1957, Ellis, who started working as a jewelry apprentice in the Grand Bazaar, told his own professional history as follows:

> I will briefly tell something that I experienced. I came back from the military service. I realized that I had mastered this profession. I said,

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çarşıda çalışan biriyseniz dükkan açarken sermayeye gerek yoktu. Ben şimdi Caddebostan'da çok büyük bir dükkan açmak için büyük bir sermayeye sahip olmam gerekiyor. Ama çarşıda evreleri tamamlamışsan sermayen para değil, saygınlıktı. Dükkan açtın içine mal koyacaksın. Biri duyar gelir "Ooo sen dükkan mı açtın? Hayırlı olsun. Al sana sermaye olsun." Hemen üç beş bir şey verir. Yani paraya ihtiyaç yoktu. Saygınlık önemli bir sermayeydi. Çarşıda büyüdüysen para biriktirmiyordun, saygınlık biriktiriyordun. O saygınlık dükkanına mal da koyduruyor, kirada indirim de yaptırıyordu. O saygınlıktan dolayıydı. Paranın olması önemli değildi çarşıda. Saygınlığın varsa, hırsız değilsen, kimsenin malına zarar vermediysen, kimse kapına gelip paranı istiyorum demediyse sen zaten dükkan sahibisin.

207 Bir kumaşçıda çalışan adam işi öğrendikten sonra ustasından icazet isterdi. "Ben de bu işi yapacağım" şeklinde. Ki patron yardımcı olurdu. Bir yerden sonra kendi işinizi kurmak istiyorsunuz. Patron böyle durumlarda gerekli yardımı sağlardı. Akıl verirdi. Hepsi bir şeyi öğrenmeye hevesliydi. Küçük yaşta geldikleri için itilip kakıldıkları da olurdu ama burada nice insan var çıraklıktan gelip ana caddede dükkan sahibi oldu. Eskiden bir baltaya sap olmak isteyen Anadolu'dan çocuklar gelirdi.

> "Master! I am going to leave and open my own shop." He told me, "Son, take a bracelet from here and lower its setting to 14 carat." I said, "I do not know, master, I can't do it." Pardon me but he said, "You pimp! Then how are you going to open a shop? Pick up a pen." There were no machines like this back then. He said, "You will do this. You will do this, you will do that." I wrote them down, and I learned the business. I opened my own jewelry workshop. (Ellis, born 1941 in Kayseri, Armenian, the jewelry master and the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 1957)[208]

Working in a family-owned shop in the bazaar is an advantageous situation. But the unique dynamics of the bazaar also offered advantages for other apprentices. The most important thing is that they develop both professional skills and networking in the shop where they work. If these are provided, the channels of transition from apprentice to journeyman, from journeyman to master, from master to shopkeeper are opened. This provides a unique example of the smooth transition from informality to formality in the beginning.

Another case that supports the examples I have given above is that of Cahit, a carpet seller who came to the bazaar without the help of his family. Born in 1961 in Istanbul, Cahit graduated from high school in 1978 and started working as a part-time apprentice at a carpet shop in the bazaar to earn his pocket money. "I came here as an apprentice at the age of 17. I worked full-time in the summers. After the university started, when I had two or three free classes, I would come and help out. If I sold something, I would earn." Cahit's professional life, which started as an apprentice in the bazaar, continues as a

208 Ben başımdan geçen bir şey anlatacağım kısaca. Ben askerden geldim. Artık bu işte ustalaştığımı anladım. Dedim ki "Usta ben ayrılacağım, kendi dükkanımı açacağım." Bana dedi ki "Oğlum şuradan bir bilezik al ayarını 14 ayara düşür." Bu daha önce yaptırmadığı bir şeydi. "Bilmiyorum usta, yapamam," dedim. Affedersiniz "Pezevenk o zaman nasıl dükkan açacaksın," dedi. "Kalemi al eline," dedi. O zaman böyle makineler falan yoktu. Şöyle yapacaksın, bunu böyle yapacaksın dedi. Ben onları not aldım. Aldım derken derken ben öğrendim bu işi. Kendi mücevherat atölyemi açtım.

shopkeeper, similar to Ellis and Murat. An analysis of the interviews with the apprentices of the past and the shopkeepers of today reveals the following insights, based on the perspectives shared by the interviewees.

Starting to work in the Grand Bazaar is largely accomplished in traditional ways. The first one is to go to the shop of one's father or grandfather already in the bazaar and work there from an early age. The second is to start working as an apprentice with a shopkeeper in the bazaar through networks without the ties of kinship. The first of these paths has the advantages of intergenerational trade. In addition to the capital passed down from the previous generation, the younger generation can master the business by acquiring knowledge and skills in its content and execution. Although it is thought that they learn the business in a comfort zone with their family elders, as Ellis, a jeweler, puts it, "In the workshop, we are master-apprentice. Outside of the bazaar, we are grandfather and grandson." In other words, an apprentice who is a family member is treated in the same way as an apprentice who is not a member of the family.

Apprentices who start working in the bazaar through their own networks acquire professional skills by respecting the master-apprentice relationship. In this sense, there is not much difference between the two groups I mentioned, although I acknowledge the advantages of the first group. Almost all apprentices work as part of the informal economy when they come to the bazaar. Especially with the effect of the old periods, they were people without any insurance. Since most of them came to the bazaar at a young age, they were not working full-time and - especially those who worked with their families - were considered to be contributing to the shop. However, when they became adults and learned the business, they moved from informal to formal activities. Some become partners in the shop, some open their own shops, and some continue as insured employees. All this official paperwork formalizes the legal way of earning a living.

Patricia Scalco's article "Knots, Threads and Meaning: Liminality and Value in the Carpet Trade of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar" yielded parallel results to my own study. In her interview, she described Ahmet, who began as an apprentice at 13, first learning to repair carpets, then advancing to a *yancı,* where he assisted in sales, and later became a main seller, with each transition bringing increased social prestige within the Bazaar.[209] Throughout my fieldwork, I consistently observed a recurring pattern in participants' accounts of the bazaar: even individuals whose families own shops typically begin their involvement as apprentices, progressively acquiring skills and responsibilities over time. The people I interviewed in the bazaar did not complain about this procedure. As they stated in many points, this is the way to become a shopkeeper and craftsman in the bazaar. What they emphasized was not that they had been employed without any insurance, but that they had learned how to work thanks to their masters.

Moreover, as an anthropological term, "rite of passage" represents the initiation process by which a social group, age group, religious group or occupational group moves from one stage to another.[210] In the case of the Grand Bazaar, many of today's shopkeepers - whether the shop has been passed down from generation to generation or not - have followed a progressive path from apprentice to journeyman, from journeyman to master, from master to shopkeeper. When starting as an apprentice in a shop in the bazaar, it is important to be honest and hardworking. To become a master, one must excel in their craft. These transitions do not take place at predetermined times, but after a

209 Scalco, "Knots, Threads and Meaning: Liminality and Value in the Carpet Trade of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar," 205.

210 Alessandro Falassi, "Festival: Definition and Morphology," in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festivals*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 4. For rites of passage also see: Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

consensus has been reached that the person is now experienced in their work. After the transitions, those who prove to be good at what they do are elevated in social status. Therefore, for people who are usually part of the informality when they start working in the Grand Bazaar, this situation is not as disturbing as one might think. They do not perceive this situation as illegal, bad or highly exploitative. On the contrary, rising from apprentice to master or becoming a shopkeeper is embodied as a rite of passage. After spending a certain amount of time in the bazaar and learning the intricacies of the business, an apprentice becomes known as a master. After becoming a master, he becomes a shop owner if he has enough capital and network. With these transitions, he moves his financial gain from informal to formal.

§ 3.4 On the Underrepresentation of Women in the Bazaar

One of the most striking - albeit seemingly trivial - indicators of women's visibility in the Grand Bazaar relates to the availability of restrooms. While men's restrooms are scattered throughout the bazaar, there is only a single women's restroom in this vast complex, which spans approximately 45,000 square meters.[211] Travel writer Josephine Parr highlighted this issue in her article for *TravelAge West*, where she described the difficulty of locating a women's restroom within the bazaar and ultimately recommended the facility near the entrance of the Nuruosmaniye Mosque as a viable alternative.[212] This seemingly minor detail offers insight into the broader question of women's representation and presence within the space. However, it is important to clarify whom this representation encompasses. If we consider visitors to the Grand

211 Kapalıçarşı, "Kapalı Çarşı Hakkında," accessed March 26, 2025, https://kapalicarsi.com.tr/kapalicarsi-hakkinda/.

212 Josephine Parr, "A Grand Guide to Istanbul's Grand Bazaar," March 20, 2023, https://www.travelagewest.com/Travel/Europe/grand-bazaar-istanbul.

Bazaar - particularly tourists and customers - women and men appear in roughly equal numbers. Yet, when examining visibility through the lens of labor participation, it becomes evident that women are significantly underrepresented, with very few female employees present in the workforce.

In 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the International Süleymaniye Symposium, which focused on the theme of the Grand Bazaar.[213] The event featured presentations from numerous researchers, and one session included invited shopkeepers from the Grand Bazaar. This session provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with key stakeholders within the bazaar. During the discussion, I asked the shopkeepers about the number of female employees working in the Grand Bazaar. One replied, "Not more than the fingers of one hand," indicating the extremely limited presence of women in the workforce. Another shopkeeper added, "I own a café in the Grand Bazaar. I employ female workers in there. However, yes, female employees are not common throughout the bazaar." Similar responses emerged in several of my interviews with other shopkeepers, further confirming the underrepresentation of women in the bazaar's labor force.

During my fieldwork, I spent a significant amount of time in the Grand Bazaar and made several observations regarding gender dynamics within the space. Beyond the notable absence of female employees in retail shops, I also observed a low visibility of women working in cafes and restaurants. This vast historical complex - comprising artisans, shopkeepers, apprentices, sales assistants, porters, and intermediaries - functions as a predominantly male economic zone.[214] The Grand Bazaar exemplifies a gendered division of labor, with male dominance particularly evident across various sectors, including

213 The event was organized by KOCAV (Kültür Ocağı Vakfı) and held on October 26–27, 2024.

214 For male dominance also see: Sanday, Peggy Reeves. "Male Dominance," in *International Encyclopedia of The Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, 9143–47. Pergamon, 2001.

jewelry and carpet making. To gain a deeper understanding of gender representation in the bazaar, I was eventually able - thanks to the assistance of my gatekeeper - to connect with a rare female shopkeeper. Aylin, who operates a modest one-square-meter watch shop, has worked in the Grand Bazaar for 16 years, having taken over the business following the death of her father, the original owner.

Aylin, emphasizing the scarcity of women working in the Grand Bazaar, shared her personal experience in a notably warm and reflective tone.

> This Grand Bazaar feels like another republic to me. It is a shopping center that lives by its own rules. It is not like the shopping centers we are used to. Everyone here is like a big family. When I arrived, almost all the shopkeepers in the *bedesten* treated me as if I were an heirloom from my father. It has a very possessive structure. I love this place. (Aylin, born 1952 in Istanbul, the owner of a watch shop in the Grand Bazaar, since 2009).[215]

Through this statement, Aylin illustrates a strong sense of solidarity within the bazaar, while also - perhaps consciously or unconsciously - highlighting how masculinity is reproduced in this public space. Although all 21 individuals I interviewed referred to a sense of solidarity in various ways, only the female participant was described and perceived as an "heirloom of her father," a figure to be protected rather than recognized as an independent economic actor.

It is important to emphasize that the categories of "man" and "male" are not synonymous; rather, they possess distinct theoretical implications. As Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe assert in their 2009 article "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts," while being a "man" is primarily a result of biological factors, being "male" entails benefiting from membership in the

215 Burası Kapalıçarşı olarak bana başka bir cumhuriyet gibi geliyor. Kendi kurallarıyla yaşamını sürdüren bir alışveriş merkezi. Diğer alışık olduğumuz alışveriş merkezleri gibi değil. Burada kocaman bir aile gibi herkes. Ben geldiğimde neredeyse bedestenin bütün esnafı bana babamdan yadigarmışım muhabbeti yaptı. Çok sahip çıkan bir yapısı var. Seviyorum burayı.

dominant gender group, performing masculinity to uphold one's privileges, and reinforcing these privileges through the possession of a male body.[216] In "The Arrangement between the Sexes," Erving Goffman conceptualizes the performance of masculinity as the enactment of tasks within both the public and private spheres that serve to establish and maintain one's reputation.[217] In this context, a re-evaluation of Aylin's statements reveals that the female shopkeeper, who began working in the bazaar following her father's death, is regarded as an "heirloom" and shielded from potential threats. This reflects the reproduction of masculinity within the public sphere.

An additional point supporting this observation is that when I inquired about solidarity networks within the bazaar, Aylin mentioned that she was not affiliated with any association. In contrast, all of the male shopkeepers I spoke with were members of either the Grand Bazaar Shopkeepers' Association or professional associations specific to their trades, such as those for carpet making or jewelry crafting. For female shopkeepers, solidarity was primarily limited to receiving protection from male shopkeepers against potential harassment while conducting business in their shops. Aylin explained:

> This place is like our neighborhood. I spend more time here than at home. Now I am with Murat; he is like a brother to me. But if I am alone and there are only a few customers inside, the next-door neighbor will come and check on me because I am a woman. (Aylin, born 1952 in Istanbul, the owner of a watch shop in the Grand Bazaar, since 2009).[218]

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216 Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe, "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts," *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009), 279.

217 Erving Goffman, "The Arrangement between the Sexes," *Theory and Society* 4, no. 3 (1977), 313.

218 Mahallemiz gibi burası yani. Burada evimden daha çok vakit geçiriyorum. Şimdi Murat'la birlikteyiz, kardeşim gibi o. Ama yalnızsam içerde birkaç müşteri varsa mutlaka karşı komşu gelir kadın olduğum için gözler.

Aylin expressed no dissatisfaction with this situation; on the contrary, she appreciated the protective attitude of the male shopkeepers, which made her feel safer. Although this protection served a practical function, the performance of masculinity by the male shopkeepers appeared as a precautionary measure, responding to specific, tangible circumstances. However, against whom were the shopkeepers protecting Aylin? Who did they perceive as the most likely group to harass her? While it is difficult to answer this question directly, based on the interviews I conducted, my observations in the bazaar, and my personal experiences as a female researcher, I suggest that, despite the potential for harassment by visitors, the individuals from whom the shopkeepers sought to protect Aylin were primarily other members of the bazaar community. In numerous interviews and accounts, the perpetrators of both verbal and even physical harassment within the bazaar were often other shopkeepers. Consequently, the potential sources of harassment included not only other shopkeepers but also men who played roles in the functioning of the bazaar, such as cleaning staff and security guards. In this context, while men in the bazaar contributed to creating an environment of insecurity for women, they simultaneously assumed the role of protectors to address this issue. Thus, the performance of masculinity, which seemed to represent two opposing ends of the spectrum, was central to both the creation of vulnerability and the provision of protection.

In terms of women's visibility in the bazaar, Aylin represents as an example of formal income generation, working in her father's shop in his absence, in accordance with intergenerational trade practices. However, it is uncommon for businesses to be passed down from father to daughter within the bazaar. As highlighted in several examples from the "Intergenerational Commercial Relationships" subchapter, it is typical for both the craft and the physical premises in the Grand Bazaar to be inherited by a son. Aylin's case is different: the watch business was passed down from her grandfather to her father, and

then to Aylin, as her father did not have a son. Based on other cases, it seems unlikely that a daughter would take over a shop if a son were available. In other words, Aylin's exceptional situation can be directly attributed to the absence of a brother.

Examining both informal and formal economic activities through a gendered lens can offer valuable insights into the exceptional and typical experiences of individuals - particularly women - in the Grand Bazaar. However, gathering reliable data on participation in the informal economy remains challenging, as such activities are frequently unrecorded. As Hoyman emphasized in "Female Participation in the Informal Economy: A Neglected Issue," efforts to understand women's motivations for participating in informal economic activities, as well as to determine gender-based participation rates, are hindered by the scarcity of available data.[219] While the lack of comprehensive data continues to be a significant obstacle today, a few studies have managed to provide limited but useful insights into this understudied area.

Most studies examining informal economic activities from a gender perspective argue that women's participation in this sector is highly concentrated. For example, Gallaway and Bernasek, in their article "Gender and Informal Sector Employment in Indonesia," assert that while the presence of an infant or toddler at home does not influence men's decisions to work, it significantly affects women's labor force participation.[220] Consequently, women are more likely to engage in informal employment, which offers greater flexibility, whereas men's participation in the informal sector remains unaffected by family responsibilities.[221] Similarly, Swetnam, in "Women and Markets: A Problem

219 Michele Hoyman, "Female Participation in the Informal Economy: A Neglected Issue," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* 493, no. 1 (1987), 65.

220 Julie H. Gallaway and Alexandra Bernasek, "Gender and Informal Sector Employment in Indonesia," *Journal of Economic Issues* 36, no. 2 (2002), 319.

221 Gallaway and Bernasek, "Gender and Informal Sector Employment in Indonesia," 319.

in the Assessment of Sexual Inequality," contends that women working in local markets are limited in their economic performance due to the burden of domestic responsibilities.[222] From this perspective, it becomes clear that women not only face barriers to entering the formal labor market but also encounter gender-based inequalities within informal economic activities.

In the context of gender and informality, Georgios Kouzas, in "Women Street Vendors: An Ethnography of Informal Trade in Athens," argues that while women street vendors face the same challenges as men - such as the absence of labor rights, health insurance, and pension benefits - they are additionally subjected to gender-based discrimination.[223] This highlights that women are active at various levels within informal markets, although their experiences are often shaped by systemic inequalities. However, in the case of the Grand Bazaar, the visibility of women participating in informal economic activities is notably limited. While some women may occasionally assist their husbands or fathers in their shops, it is rare to observe women engaging in such work as their primary source of family income, unlike their male counterparts.

One primary reason for this is the intense pace and high volume of trade in the Grand Bazaar. Women are frequently expected to shoulder the responsibilities of household management and childcare, which can make it difficult for them to accommodate the nearly 12-hour work shifts typical in the bazaar. In *Money Makes Us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey*, Jenny White highlights how women's labor - both domestic and extra-domestic - is often rendered invisible, with societal expectations placing greater emphasis on

222 John J. Swetnam, "Women and Markets: A Problem in the Assessment of Sexual Inequality," *Ethnology* 27, no. 4 (1988), 334.

223 Georgios Kouzas, "Women Street Vendors: An Ethnography of Informal Trade in Athens," *Urbanities* 12, no. 5 (2022), 53.

their roles as devoted mothers and wives.[224] The dual burden of managing full-time domestic duties - such as cleaning and cooking - while simultaneously engaging in the demanding and informal labor of the Grand Bazaar proves especially challenging and often unfeasible for many women.

Supporting this point, a 2016 report by the International Labor Organization on home-based workers in Turkey reveals that 2.6% of all private sector employees in the country worked from home, 89% of whom were women.[225] "The most popular sector is domestic worker (29%), manufacturing textiles (22%), services to buildings and landscape activities (17%) and manufacturing of apparel (10%). Traditional home-based piecework is mostly clustered in the categories of manufacturing of textiles (22%), of apparel (10%), of food products (3%), of leather and related products (2%) and other manufacturing activities (2%), which comes to a total of 39% of all homeworkers."[226] These figures suggest that even when women engage in informal economic activities, they predominantly do so within the home, allowing them to simultaneously manage childcare and domestic responsibilities.[227] Consequently, the demands of full-time work in high-traffic commercial spaces such as the Grand Bazaar - characterized by long hours and intense activity - are often incompatible with the gendered expectations placed on women in Turkish society.

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224 Jenny Barbara White, *Money Makes Us Relatives: Women's Labor in Urban Turkey* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 51.

225 Saniye Dedeoğlu, "Home Bounded - Global Outreach: Home-Based Workers in Turkey," ILO Working Paper 21 (Geneva: International Labor Office, December 2020), 7.

226 Dedeoğlu, "Home Bounded - Global Outreach: Home-Based Workers in Turkey," 9.

227 For home-based workers also see: Kuvvet Lordoğlu, *Eve İş Verme Sistemi Içinde Kadın İşgücü Üzerine Bir Alan Araştırması* (Istanbul: Friedrich Ebert Vakfı, 1990); Mübeccel Kıray, "The New Role of Mothers: Changing Intra-Familial Relationships in a Small Town in Turkey," in *Mediterranean Family Structures*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 261–71; Nilüfer Kuyaş, "Female Labor Power Relations in the Urban Turkish Family," in *Sex Roles, Family, and Community in Turkey*, ed. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı (Indiana: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1982), 181–206.

Another significant factor contributing to the limited participation of women in informal activities within the Grand Bazaar is the nature of these activities themselves. Many involve physically demanding labor, such as portering, or intermediary and brokerage work that generates sufficient income to support a household. Scholarly research on gender and informality has often concentrated on peasant markets and street vending, where high-income informal occupations have typically been dominated by men. As Kouzas notes, while both male and female street vendors experience financial insecurity and precarity, women additionally face gender-based challenges rooted in systemic sexism.[228] Male vendors are often unwilling to share their limited market opportunities with women and may actively attempt to exclude them. Similarly, in the context of the Grand Bazaar, men engaged in informal economic roles may seek to preserve their income by discouraging or obstructing women's participation in these spaces.

The Grand Bazaar continues to function as a historically significant yet profoundly gendered economic space, where women's visibility and participation remain constrained by both formal structures and informal social norms. While the presence of female visitors and a few exceptional female shopkeepers - such as Aylin - demonstrates a degree of inclusion, systemic obstacles persist. These range from inadequate infrastructural support to deeply rooted gender norms and the perpetuation of male privilege through intergenerational inheritance practices, all of which collectively hinder women's active engagement in the labor market. The reproduction of masculinized social relations within the bazaar not only reinforces male-dominated networks of solidarity and protection but also sustains a paradox in which women are simultaneously marginalized and symbolically "protected." Additionally, broader societal expectations regarding domestic responsibilities and childcare, when

228 Kouzas, "Women Street Vendors: An Ethnography of Informal Trade in Athens," 53.

combined with the physically taxing conditions of informal labor in the bazaar, further restrict women's ability to participate meaningfully. Thus, the Grand Bazaar serves as a microcosm of the wider gender disparities characterizing Turkey's urban informal economy and underscores the urgent need for more inclusive and equitable frameworks that promote women's labor force participation in traditionally male-dominated public arenas.

§ 3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the Grand Bazaar not simply as a marketplace, but as a dense social and economic field where trust, identity, and labor relations are continually constructed, negotiated, and reproduced. Across the four subchapters - shopkeeper identity, intergenerational commercial relations, working dynamics, and the underrepresentation of women - common themes emerged that reveal the bazaar as a paradigmatic site of embedded informality, relational economic practices, and gendered exclusions.

A central theme running through each chapter is the moral economy of trust. Trust operates as a foundational principle in commercial transactions, social interaction, and labor mobility. Whether manifested in informal credit exchanges, apprentice-master relations, or family-based business continuities, trust not only facilitates economic activity but also functions as a mechanism of moral regulation. It enables actors to navigate uncertainty, sustain reputations, and gain legitimacy within the bazaar's close-knit community. Yet, this same trust economy is fragile and exclusive - only extended to those perceived as culturally and socially "fitting" within local norms.

A second key theme is the importance of embeddedness and social capital. Echoing Granovetter's and Bourdieu's frameworks, economic success in the bazaar cannot be understood independently of social networks and recogni-

tion. Shopkeepers derive not only material but symbolic value from their positioning within durable webs of interpersonal relations. These networks shape opportunities, enforce behavioral codes, and ensure continuity. Social capital, in this context, is both a resource and a constraint - enabling inclusion for some while enforcing marginality for others.

Intergenerational continuity emerges as another crucial yet increasingly threatened axis. In the past, family-based apprenticeship and early informal labor allowed commercial knowledge and reputational capital to be transmitted across generations. Today, however, this model faces erosion due to shifting labor aspirations, urban precarity, and changing values among youth. Nonetheless, in certain sectors - most notably jewelry - strong kinship ties and economic viability still make intergenerational trade possible, suggesting that this continuity is not uniformly lost, but unevenly maintained.

Throughout these dynamics, gender remains a structurally defining line of exclusion. The Grand Bazaar is not only male-dominated in demographic terms, but in its spatial organization, institutional culture, and the symbolic language of trade. While women may appear in familial or exceptional roles, their broader economic agency is constrained by cultural norms, domestic responsibilities, and limited access to informal networks that men dominate. Masculinity, as performed and institutionalized in the bazaar, both generates and regulates the moral parameters of commercial life, reinforcing hierarchical gendered access to space, capital, and legitimacy.

Lastly, the blurring of formal and informal boundaries defines the Grand Bazaar's institutional logic. Apprenticeships, unpaid family labor, informal credit systems, and trust-based hiring practices reflect a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Informality here is not only a practical response to regulation but a socially embedded way of organizing labor, risk, and value. In sum, the Grand Bazaar reveals itself as an economic institution - simultaneously resilient and vulnerable, inclusive and excluding. The ethnographic materials

presented in this chapter illustrate the ways in which this historic site continues to mediate between tradition and transformation, anchoring its actors in a shared moral economy.

4

Other Actors Behind the Scenes for Informalization

When describing the panorama of the Grand Bazaar, it usually includes shopkeepers, shops, traditional products, the centuries-old walls and domes of the historical building. However, some elements that complement this traditional bazaar on the historical peninsula of Istanbul, both economically and culturally, remain outside the frame of that broad picture. When I went to the bazaar to conduct a pilot study for this thesis, as a researcher with limited field experience, I was aiming to conduct a cultural study on the Grand Bazaar by interviewing mostly shopkeepers. However, as I went to the bazaar for weeks to conduct interviews, I realized that there were different business groups. This brought other questions about the bazaar to the surface and changed the framework of my academic study.

The bazaar did not only consist of the formal business of wholesale and retail traders, which is taxed by the state. During the time I was conducting interviews in the bazaar, I had the opportunity to observe the environment both while I was in the shops and in the bazaar cafes where I sat after the interview to work on my notes. In the meantime, I saw that there were people

other than shopkeepers, apprentices and masters who earned money by working in the bazaar. As a result, my thesis evolved from a cultural study of the Grand Bazaar to an ethnographic study of the informal activities of people who work in the Grand Bazaar.

In terms of informality, there are actually many important places to visit in and around the Grand Bazaar. Perhaps the most famous of these is the 'Tahtakale Stock Exchange" or more commonly known as the "Ayaklı Borsa." Tahtakale, located close to the Grand Bazaar on the historic peninsula, became an important center in 1930 with the passing of the Law on the Protection of the Value of the Turkish Currency. This law made all foreign currency transfers within Turkey, regardless of the reason, subject to the approval of the Ministry of Finance. [229] Until the amendment of this law in the mid-1980s, Tahtakale became a district known for its unofficial foreign exchange transactions, which lost their illegal character when the ban on foreign exchange transactions was lifted.[230]

In this respect, "Ayaklı Borsa" can be shown as a very clear example of informality. In the period from the 1930s to the 1980s, with the effect of the previously mentioned law, both the official exchange rate and the market exchange rate were differentiated, and foreign exchange trading was being carried out as a criminal activity.[231] Since it was a criminal activity, these shopkeepers and the people working under them had to develop certain linguistic codes when making foreign exchange transactions. For example, "tam" (full) was used for the US dollar, since it was one fourth of the US dollar at that time even though it is out of circulation today, "çeyrek" (quarter) for the German

229 Bahar Şanlı, "Türkiye'de Uygulanan Kur Politikaları," İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası 49 (1998): 185.

230 "Tahtakale," in Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 192.

231 Yılmaz, "Ticaret, İmalat ve Turizm Merkezi: Kapalıçarşı," 9.

Mark, "hacı" (hadji) for the Saudi Arabian rial, "pejo" (Peugeot) for the French Franc, "makarna" (pasta) for the Italian lira, "çikolata" (chocolate) for the Swiss Franc, and "kraliçe" (queen) for the British pound.[232] All these provide examples of how, in places where informal economic activities are carried out, employees develop their commercial activities by producing a brand new discourse about the content of the work.

Today, although the old glorious days of the Grand Bazaar and the stock market around it are gone, it is still possible to observe some informal economic activities. Therefore, this chapter of this thesis aims to shed light on the informal activities that are still take place in the Grand Bazaar today, after first defining what the informal economy is. In doing so, this study will analyze both the perceptions of shopkeepers - who constitute one of the most integral elements of the bazaar - regarding informal business, and the perspectives of individuals engaged in informal economic activities concerning their work and the social dynamics of the bazaar, based on insights gathered from interviews.

§ 4.1 Porters

Before the development of modern transport systems, the people who ensured the transport of goods from one place to another were called porter (*hammal* in Turkish).[233] Evliya Çelebi claims in his *Seyahatname* that there were at least 600 porters around the Grand Bazaar, 300 in the Cevahir Bedesten and 300 in the Sandal Bedesten.[234] Ubicini, in his book about his travels in the Ottoman

232 Nuran Kekeç, "Grup Folkloru Bağlamında Tahtakale Esnafı ve Geliştirdikleri Dilsel Kodlar," *Millî Folklor* 12, no. 94 (2012): 53.

233 Uğur Göktaş, "Hamallar," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 535.

234 Kahraman and Dağlı, eds., *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi: İstanbul*, 618-621.

Empire in the mid-1800s, states that the porters were generally Turks or Anatolian Armenians and that the porters were in groups under the supervision of a chief porter.[235] De Amicis, on the other hand, mentions that Armenians, called "the camels of the empire" by the Turks, could lift legendary loads.[236]

In the past, since transportation was a human-powered labor, there was a wide range of job opportunities for porters, especially in the trade centers of cities. In parallel to this, Istanbul, the heart of the Ottoman Empire in terms of trade, had a great job potential for porters. Therefore, porters were both numerous in number and were the workers with the most effective *gedik* organization. Even after the abolition of the *gedik* method with the Law on the Abolition of *Gedik*s dated 1 March 1913 under the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress government,[237] the porters continued their *gedik* customs and practices. Today, they continue their informal organization called company or squad in the historical peninsula, around Eminönü and the Grand Bazaar.[238]

4.1.1 *The Perspective of Shopkeepers about Porters*

Today, the need for porters has greatly decreased due to the use of motorized vehicles for the transport of heavy loads and the construction of wide roads for the easy movement of vehicles. However, although the Grand Bazaar is a place with around 60 streets, it is a suitable working place for porters, even if the need for them has greatly decreased, since it is not possible for vehicles to enter it. Especially shopkeepers with fabric, shoe and carpet shops need por-

235 Ubicini, *1855'te Türkiye*, 80.

236 De Amicis, *İstanbul (1874)*, 148.

237 Haydar Kazgan, "Gedikler," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 387.

238 Göktaş, "Hamallar," 536.

ters to transport the goods they bring from different parts of İstanbul and Anatolia or from the *hans* and warehouses around the bazaar to their shops in the Grand Bazaar.

According to the outputs of the interviews I conducted, in the perception of the shopkeepers, portering is still an important profession for the bazaar. It is perceived as a 'decent' profession by the shopkeepers in the bazaar since it is a job that requires intensive human labor. Except for jobs that do not require transport - such as jewellery and watch-selling - most of the respondents mentioned that they often need porters. Since the working areas of the groups of porters in the Grand Bazaar are defined, shopkeepers usually communicate with the porters who are responsible for the area of their shops. Ohannes, owner of a fabric shop, describes his co-operation with the porters as follows:

> Fabric is heavy work. If I tell you to lift a cloth batch, you cannot lift it. Therefore, porters always do this heavy work. There is an *han* three streets to the right of the shop. The porters usually wait there. I call, 'There is a small job. Come.' They come and carry it. (Ohannes, born 1948 in Kayseri, Armenian, the owner of a textile shop, worked in the bazaar since 1962).[239]

Similar to the fabric sellers, carpet sellers also frequently get help from porters when they need to transport goods. Cemil, one of the carpet sellers I interviewed, answered my question about porters as follows:

> Take a look around you, madam. There are hundreds of carpets in the carpet piles here. All of them are folded as you can see. If I unfold them, we have carpets that are 4 to 5 square meters in size. All of them are wool woven. There are no machine made carpets here. These are heavy things both in cost and burden. Not every man can carry them. But our porters can carry several of them at the same time. Their bodies

239 Kumaş ağır iştir. Bir top kumaşı kaldır desem kaldıramazsın. Ondan, bu ağır işi hep hamallar yapar. Dükkanın üç sokak sağında bir han var. Hamallar genelde orada beklerler. Arıyorum, "Ufak bir iş var. Gelin," diyorum. Geliyor onlar da taşıyorlar.

> are used to carrying loads. We entrust our goods to these men. Depending on the type of carpet, we have carpets worth hundreds and thousands of dollars. We select and buy hand-woven carpets from all over Turkey and bring them to this shop. That's why you need to trust the porter. He should not damage his goods. I have been in the bazaar since my childhood. I have never once witnessed a porter stealing a carpet. They are reliable men. (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989).[240]

The emphasis on physical strength and reliability in Cemil's statements was similar for all participants who commented on the porters. In addition to these mentioned characteristics of porters, the way they were organized was also important. Each porter knew the limits within which they would carry loads and they would take work in accordance with those limits. When they did not act accordingly, they would enter the work area of other porters. This leads to disagreements and fights between groups of porters. One participant said about this:

> Porters are a part of the culture of the bazaar. A porter without a permit cannot enter. Something has to be carried from inside to outside, something has to be brought from outside to inside. The porters do that too. The porters of the bazaar do not let people into the bazaar.

240 Etrafınıza şöyle bir bakın hanımefendi. Buradaki halı yığınlarında yüzlerce halı var. Tamamı gördüğünüz gibi katlanmış halde. Bunları açsam 4- 5 metrekare büyüklüğünde olan halılarımız var. Hepsi yün dokumadır. Makine halısı yok burada. Hem pahada hem yükte ağır şeyler bunlar. Her adam taşıyamaz bunları. Ama bizim hamallar birkaç tanesini aynı anda sırtlanır. Alışmış vücutları yük taşımaya. Biz mallarımızı bu adamlara emanet ediyoruz. Halının cinsine göre yüzlerce, binlerce dolarlık değerli halılarımız var. Türkiye'nin her yerinden el dokuma halıları seçip satın alıp bu dükkana getiriyoruz. Bu yüzden hamala güvenmen lazım. Malına zarar vermemesi gerekir. Taşırken yırtık, sökük, leke yapmaması lazım. Ben çocukluğumdan beri çarşıdayım. Bir kere olsun bir hamalın halı çaldığına şahit olmadım. Güvenilir adamlardır bunlar.

(Salih, born 1966 in Isparta, Turk, salesman in a traditional textile shop, worked in the bazaar since 1996).[241]

In addition, it is also possible to come across people who started working as porters in the Grand Bazaar and became shopkeepers after accumulating sufficient capital. Therefore, some shopkeepers are quite familiar with this profession due to their family stories, even if they have not worked as a porter themselves. Osman, who has been a shopkeeper in the bazaar for many years, answered as follows when I asked him a question about porters:

> My grandfather was a porter in the bazaar in 1950. This is how we came to the bazaar. He made some capital here. In 1970, my father came to the bazaar. He opened a textile shop. In 1971, I came to Istanbul for an education in medicine. Then I left my job as a doctor and came to the bazaar. So even though textile was my father's profession, being a porter opened the door of the bazaar for us. (Osman, born 1953 in Malatya, Turk, the owner of a traditional textile shop, worked in the bazaar since 1986).[242]

As noted by other participants, the bazaar exhibits a social structure that facilitates vertical mobility across class boundaries. Through the cultivation of a strong work ethic, persistent labor, and the strategic development of social networks, individuals have been able to ascend from roles such as porters to shopkeepers, often without the need for substantial capital accumulation. Mustafa also gave an example of this socio-economic class movement:

> We used to have an uncle Aziz from Taşpınar village in Aksaray. May God rest his soul. He used to work as a porter by Mercan Gate. Then

241 Hamallar çarşının bir kültürü. İzni olmayan hamal içeri giremiyor. İçeriden dışarıya bir şeylerin taşınması, dışarıdan içeri getirilmesi gerekiyor. Onu da hamallar yapıyor. Çarşının hamalları da çarşıya adam sokmaz.

242 Benim dedem 1950'de çarşıda hamalmış. Bizim çarşıya gelişimiz böyle başladı. O biraz sermaye yaptı burada. 1970'te babam geldi çarşıya. Tekstil dükkanı açtı. 1971'de tıp eğitimi için ben geldim İstanbul'a. Sonra da doktorluğu bırakıp çarşıya geldim ben de. Yani baba mesleği tekstil olsa da çarşının kapısını bize hamallık açtı.

> he owned 2 hotels and 3 or 4 shops in the bazaar. We lived through those times. There used to be money in portering. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[243]

In parallel to the previous participants, Mustafa also mentioned that the bazaar provides opportunities for porters to pursue a different line of work, and gave an example from his own family story. "My father was also a porter. His father had also worked as a porter. Half of Malatya grew up working as a porter. They took over whatever they were portering." (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991) [244] As mentioned earlier, some streets in the bazaar are places where certain crafts are clustered. In addition, porters also carry loads in certain areas. When analyzed in this context, it can be said that porters are generally engaged in the transport of similar products. For example, a porter who constantly carries carpets has the chance to learn many things about carpet making over time. In addition, he meets on a common ground where he can develop a relationship with carpet shopkeepers. Thus, when he accumulates sufficient economic capital, he has both knowledge about the product he will sell and a network specifically related to the work he will do.

When considered collectively, the evidence suggests that the foundation of the economic relationship between shopkeepers and porters is rooted in trust. According to the majority of participants, porters are individuals whom shopkeepers not only trust but also entrust with their goods - tasks that include transporting merchandise to and from warehouses and ensuring its safety

243 Eskiden burada Aksaray'ın Taşpınar Köyü'nden Aziz Amcamız vardı. Allah rahmet eylesin. Mercan Kapısı tarafında hamallık yapardı. Sonra iki tane otel, çarşıda üç dört tane dükkan sahibi oldu. Biz o dönemleri yaşadık. Eskiden hamallıkta para vardı.

244 Benim babam da hamallık yapmıştı. Onun babası da hamallık yapmış. Malatya'nın yarısı aşağıda hamallık yaparak büyümüşlerdir. Neyin hamallığını yapıyorlarsa o işin başına geçmişlerdir.

throughout. This recurring reliance fosters a mutual trust that becomes institutionalized within the everyday operations of the bazaar. As a consequence, when porters express a desire to become shop owners themselves, shopkeepers often extend their support. There is a clear preference for familiar, trusted individuals to assume such roles rather than allowing outsiders to enter and disrupt the social fabric of the bazaar. However, it is important to acknowledge that while the trust-based dynamics of the bazaar may enable social mobility for some, this pathway is not universally accessible. Not all porters experience such upward class transformation, and structural inequalities continue to shape who can successfully make this transition.

In the interviews, it can be argued that the shopkeepers evaluated the porters through a more positive perspective. Similar to the shopkeepers, many authors, from Evliya Çelebi to Edmondo de Amicis, have mentioned the porters in the Ottoman Empire and especially in the Grand Bazaar. Ubicini, while talking about the porters, underlines that they were honorable and did not cause accidents or losses while transporting goods.[245] However, they also mentioned that their numbers were decreasing as a result of changing conditions. As one interviewee put it:

> There is a lot of news and documentaries about the bazaar. Everyone's attention is on the crafts. They want to work on crafts that are disappearing. However, there are many different professions in the bazaar. They do not pay attention to these. The cargo business has grown a lot. Especially after the pandemic, porters started to turn into cargo companies. Portering is one of the oldest professions in the bazaar and it is dying. No one says anything about it. (Aylin, born 1952 in Istanbul, the owner of a watch shop in the Grand Bazaar, since 2009)[246]

245 Ubicini, *1855'te Türkiye*, 80.

246 Çarşı hakkında çok fazla haber yapılıyor, belgesel çekiliyor. Herkesin dikkati zanaatların üzerinde. Kaybolan zanaatlarla ilgili çalışma yapmak istiyorlar. Halbuki çarşıda bir sürü farklı

In parallel to what Aylin said, many interviewees made similar statements. It can be observed that porterage, one of the oldest professions in the Grand Bazaar, has lost its importance over time due to developments in transport activities. Especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant growth in transport activities. Curfew practices, which are applied in many places around the world, have also been implemented in Turkey. Therefore, people who could not leave their homes visited e-commerce websites and placed orders to meet their needs. Changing customer behavior due to the pandemic increased the demand amount excessively, resulting in unpredictable growth in the transport sector. In the post pandemic period, the side effects of the growth in the transport sector started to be seen. These people, especially those who are organized and working according to informal rules such as porters, who do not have any union and legal rights officially, can be shown as a disadvantaged group after the pandemic. The growth of transport on a sectoral basis led to a contraction in the business volume of porters working according to informal dynamics.

That's why, the growth of e-commerce platforms has also had a negative impact on the future of porters. About this, David said:

> We have two warehouses in that *han*. The *han* also has two porters. The men sit all day. In the past, you used to make a phone call and say, "There are two goods to be transported." They would say, "Brother, I am on my way, wait half an hour." We could not find a man, but now the men are sitting. There is no work. The work related to the porter was meaningful when there was wholesaling. Now there is no wholesaling anymore. The internet has finished all wholesaling. People can now find what they want first-hand, from the factory. That product will go to the wholesaler, and the wholesaler will distribute it all over the

meslek var. Bunlara dikkat etmiyorlar. Kargoculuk çok büyüdü. Özellikle pandemiden sonra hamallar kargo şirketlerine dönüşmeye başladı. Hamallık çarşının en eski mesleklerinden biri ve ölüyor. Kimse bununla ilgili bir şey demiyor.

> country. In this way, goods come and go. To the retailer and the wholesaler and so on. Couriers come and go. So the porterage is dead. For example, I have these made in Antep. My master in Antep sends them by cargo. A porter brings them here from the cargo. Because I can't carry that parcel. However, this is very rare now. You pay 100, 200, 300 liras depending on the job. He carries it. So that profession has also come to an end. Half of that street was textiles and fabric. These were heavy jobs. If you tried to pick up three cloth batches, you could not lift it off the floor. There are only a few left now. This profession is dead too. If it rains, it rains everywhere. As these professions die, so does portering. But more or less everyone gets their lot. (David, born 1951 in Istanbul, originally from Istanbul, Jewish, the owner of a traditional shoes shop, worked in the bazaar since 1997)[247]

From the shopkeepers' perspective, porters are perceived as reliable and honorable individuals whose labor is defined by intense physical effort. This perception underpins a sense of trust and confidence in their working relationships. Notably, the shopkeepers did not recount any incidents that might undermine this trust. Instead, they shared narratives - both personal and familial - of porters eventually transitioning into shopkeeping roles themselves.

247 Bizim şu handa iki depomuz var. Hanın da iki hamalı var. Adamlar bütün gün oturuyorlar. Eskiden bir telefon açardınız. "İki mal var bunlar taşınacak" derdiniz. "Abi geliyorum. Yarım saat bekle" derlerdi. Adam bulamazdık. Ama şimdi adamlar oturuyor. İş yok ki. Hamalla ilgili işler, toptancılık varken anlamlı. Şimdi artık toptancılık kalmadı. İnternet bütün toptancılığı bitirdi. İnsanlar artık birinci elden, fabrikasından istediği şeyi bulabiliyor. Şu mamul toptancıya gidecek, toptancı bütün ülkeye dağıtacak. Böyle olunca mal geliyor, gidiyor. Perakendeciye toptancıya derken. Kuryeler falan gelip gidiyor. Hamallık mesleği de öldü yani. Şu var hamallık mesleğinde, bazen şehirlerarası mal geliyor. (Bir ayakkabı gösteriyor) Mesela ben bunları Antep'te yaptırıyorum. Kargoya veriyor benim Antep'teki ustam. Kargodan buraya hamal getiriyor. Ben o koliyi sırtlayamam çünkü. Ancak böyle çok azaldı artık. İşine göre 100, 200, 300 lira verirsiniz. Taşır. O meslek de sona geldi yani. Şu sokağın yarısı tekstil, manifatura, kumaştı. Ağır işlerdi bunlar. Üç top kumaş almaya kalksan kaldıramazsın yerden. Birkaç tane kaldı şimdi. Bu meslekle de öldü. Yağmur yağarsa her yere yağar. Bu meslekler öldükçe hamallık da ölüyor. Ama az ama çok herkes nasibini alır.

These stories reflect a broader social mobility and suggest a consistently positive attitude toward porters, particularly those with whom shopkeepers engage on a regular basis.

4.1.2 *On the Self-Reflection of the Porters*

One of the most primitive jobs in and around the Grand Bazaar is porterage. It is both old and completely based on physical endurance and strength. However, it has a structure shaped entirely around informal dynamics. Who the porters will be, how their working systems will be scheduled, and which boundaries they will work within are shaped entirely by the consensus among themselves. Therefore, in this subchapter, firstly, the working patterns of the porters and the role played by the relations of fellow citizens will be mentioned. Then, by describing being a porter in the bazaar, the relationship between this profession and informality will be revealed.

As porterage is a completely informal occupation, working patterns are not determined according to formal regulations, but according to the dynamics between and within groups of porters. Groups of porters are called squads. The people responsible for leading these groups are called sergeant (*çavuş*), chief porter (*hamalbaşı*) or squad chief (*bölükbaşı*). Generally, those who came to Istanbul at a young age through their acquaintances and started working as porters were single or married men whose families were not in Istanbul. For this reason, the company chief helps them to live in the so-called bachelor rooms (*bekar odaları*) around the bazaar. The rooms and *hans* where men who came to Istanbul for various jobs met their accommodation needs for a monthly or annual fee are called bachelor rooms or bachelor houses. Those who share the same space together in bachelor rooms are mostly from the same hometown or work in the same line of business. When many of the porters working in the bazaar come to Istanbul, they stay in these bachelor rooms and find the opportunity to live close to the bazaar and save money. However,

later on, when they get married or their families move to Istanbul, they move to their own houses.

Although porters are constantly on the move in and around the bazaar during the day, there are places where they gather together as a group, where they both rest and wait for a new job. These places can sometimes be a small room in an *han* or a corner of a street. For example, they can be found in places such as Vezir Han, Istanbul Han, Zaza Han, located near the Grand Bazaar in the historical peninsula, as well as in the *hans* within the bazaar. In these places, they keep their traditional apparatus called *sırtlık* or *arkalık*, which are worn like backpacks and help their backs not to be damaged while carrying loads, and wheelbarrows that facilitate their transport work.



Figure 4.1 Porters resting besides the porter statue near the Grand Bazaar. SOURCE: *The personal archive of Adnan Özerler*.

After the shopkeepers, interviewing highly mobile professions brought about different challenges. Shopkeepers were able to keep up more easily when a meeting date was set at an earlier date. The interview could be interrupted by customers who only came from time to time. But this also meant that there was a favorable opportunity to observe the relationship between shopkeepers and customers. The situation with the porters was quite different. They were usually busy carrying loads in and around the bazaar during the day. Therefore, it was quite difficult to catch their free time during working hours. On several occasions, we tried to arrange a meeting time for their free time, which they could predict through the gatekeeper, but their free time could change quickly due to a last minute transport job. Another challenge was that I was able to interview and audio-record shopkeepers in relatively quiet shops. However, since the porters were on the streets, in crowded, noisy places, it was necessary to refocus them when their attention was distracted during the interview.

Akif, one of the participants I interviewed, had worked as a porter in the Grand Bazaar for almost 50 years. Although he had a job that relied entirely on muscle power, he did not seem physically strong. We met for the interview at the entrance of an *han* on the Mercan Gate side of the Grand Bazaar. He told the beginning of his story of being a porter in the bazaar as follows:

> I came to Istanbul in 1979. A fellow we knew in Adıyaman helped me. He knew a porter from the bazaar. The porter was also from Adıyaman. May God have mercy on him. He vouched for us. I was working as a shepherd in Adıyaman, but my father was a porter. He knew these things. When such a person became an intermediary, he told me to go. That's how I came to Istanbul, but we were poor. Being a porter is hard work. That's how we made a living as porters here. We stayed here.

(Akif, born 1957 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1979) [248]

As in the case of Akif, being able to work as a porter in the Grand Bazaar often brings with it relations of fellow citizens. The question "Where are you from?" serves as a CV for people who want to be a porter. People who wanted to work as a porter usually contacted the chief porter through their fellow citizens. In addition to this, when a new porter was needed in the porter group, the head porter would prioritize his own fellow citizens. In this way, they build a social and emotional bond not only through working in the same line of labor, but also as people who came to Istanbul from the same city or village. In a completely informal business, being a fellow citizen can also be seen as a control mechanism. A porter knows that if he commits an act that would damage the relations of trust, the people in his hometown and his family will be aware of this situation.

The self-regulating nature of informal work, such as porterage in the Grand Bazaar, fosters a heightened dependence on social ties. This reliance stems from the fact that informality is primarily governed by verbal commitments rather than formal agreements. In their work "The Informal Economy," Portes and Haller argue that trust within informal economies is cultivated through shared identities and emotions, alongside the understanding that those who violate trust will face exclusion from social networks and future transactions.[249] For porters in the Grand Bazaar, maintaining these relation-

248 1979 yılında İstanbul'a geldim. Adıyaman'da tanıdığımız bir abi yardımcı oldu. O çarşıdan bir hamalbaşı tanıyordu. Öyle bize kefil oldu. Allah razı olsun. Adıyaman'da ben çobanlık yapıyordum. Ama babam hamaldı. Bilirdi bu işleri. Böyle birisi aracı olunca git dedi o da. Öyle İstanbul'a geldim. Gariptik ama biz. Hamallık ağır iş. Öyle burada hamallıkla taban tutturduk. Kaldık burada.

249 Portes and Haller, "The Informal Economy," 407.

ships is crucial; any action that undermines the kinship and citizenship networks that initially facilitated their entry into the profession would jeopardize the trust that sustains their livelihood. In such informal, self-regulated economic and social environments, breaching trust often incurs significant social costs, which act as a deterrent to dishonest behavior.[250]

Considering the interviews with the shopkeepers, Akif's account and what the shopkeepers said were parallel in many respects. One of the most important things that the shopkeepers underlined was that the porters did not allow anyone who did not belong to any group to work as a porter in the bazaar. In this way, they highlight self-regulation mechanisms within a context where formal regulation is notably absent or weak. Like all places of trade, the Grand Bazaar has a limited volume of business. Since a new porter working independently means disrupting the balance between porters and groups of porters, they do not allow such incidents. Besides, a new porter can join the porter groups only when needed.

> We work according to the rules here. Not every person who takes an *arkalık* (porter's saddle) on his shoulder can work as a porter. There has to be a need first. If someone does not work yet, if he leaves, someone else is taken in his place. Porter's saddles are sold like taxi license plates. You can buy them with a deposit. They are in a certain number. One of them will be free so that you can buy it. You take it over like a taxi license plate. (Akif, born 1957 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1979)[251]

250 Yükseker, *Laleli-Moskova Mekiği: Kayıtdışı Ticaret ve Cinsiyet İlişkileri*, 200.

251 Kurala göre çalışılır burada. Her omzuna arkalık alan hamallık yapamaz. Önce bir ihtiyaç olması lazım. Biri daha çalışmazsa, giderse onun yerine biri alınır. Arkalıklar taksi plakası gibi satılır. Para yatırarak alabiliyorsun. Belli bir sayıdalar. Bir tanesi boşa çıkacak ki alabilesin. Taksi plakası gibi devralacaksın onu.



Figure 4.2 Porters taking off their saddles (*arkalık*) and resting around the Grand Bazaar.

Products such as furniture and leather, which were in the product range of the bazaar until the last 20-30 years, are almost non-existent in today's bazaar. Therefore, the porters used to describe the products in the bazaar with the

words "There is nothing left to carry in the bazaar anymore." This situation triggered rivalry among the porters. In addition, the working areas of porter groups are informally restricted. A group of porters can carry loads in certain *hans* and streets. If he enters and works within the working boundary of another group of porters, he violates an informally established rule between the groups. Since this would cause inter-group conflicts, each group carries out transport work within the limits set for them.

Since there was no formal regulation on the working order of porters, they organized themselves according to the most practical methods. The porters in a porter squad take turns to work under the direction of the chief porter. Taking turns in this way prevents unfair gain within the company. The money earned is delivered to the squad chief. At the end of the day, the squad chief divides the earnings equally among the porters in the squad. Sefer, another porter I interviewed, said:

> The man pays 300 liras for the job. Even if the customer he goes to the other porter carries more loads, he pays 200 liras a day. Even if we carry 500 kilos of load, the customer bargains with us. He does not want to pay the right price. Therefore, we divide the earnings among ourselves and ensure justice. That man is a porter, I am a porter too. Making money is a matter of fate. One day you earn 1000 liras a day, the next day you do not even get 100 liras. (Sefer, born 1966 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1993)[252]

Informality leads to some disadvantages in terms of earning. While a shopkeeper can say "This is the price of this product" and call it a day, the situation for porters seems to be completely different. The first reason for this is that

252 Ben bir işe çıkarım. İş için adam 300 lira öder. Diğer hamala gittiği müşteri daha fazla yük taşısa bile gün geliyor 200 lira ödüyor. Sırtından 500 kilo yük geçse bile müşteri bizimle onun pazarlığını yapıyor. Hakkını ödemek istemiyor. Bundan dolayı biz kazancı kendi aramızda bölüp adaleti sağlıyoruz. O adam da hamal, ben de hamal. Para kazanmak nasip işi. Gün gelir günde 1000 lira kazanırsın gün gelir 100 lira bile alamazsın.

porters are not selling a product, they are directly selling their labor power. This makes their labor more negotiable. Although there are certain wage rates, they are not always strictly adhered to. As in Sefer's statement above, sometimes they get paid less even though they carry more loads. Because at the end of the day, making less money seems better than making no money at all. Therefore, the wage they receive varies from customer to customer. Even if they complain about this situation, they adapt to it due to the conditions.

The insecurity caused by informality causes difficulties for the porters in terms of wages. Therefore, in order to at least ensure fairness amongst themselves, the chief porter collects the earnings of the porters and divides them equally. According to this system, a porter may earn more wages than other porters during one week, but this does not mean that he works more. The next week, the customers who come across him may pay him less. Since this possibility is always on the table, they find it more reasonable to receive a certain average wage rather than earning more and less. As a result, they come up with a solution against the insecurity brought about by informality, although not completely.

In addition to all these, the groups of porters in the Grand Bazaar today are generally composed of men over the age of 55. Most of them have worked as porters in the bazaar for at least 30 years. However, the rate of insured porters is almost none. Regarding this issue, Sefer said:

> How can you be insured? What do we earn anyway? Being a porter is not an insured job. What you earn is already a small amount of money. At times we hardly earn 200 liras a day. Insurance premium cannot be paid with this money. That's why we could not get insured. Now we

> have to work as long as it takes. (Sefer, born 1966 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1993) [253]

Akif joined Sefer with a feeling of regret and complaint:

> We started working here at a young age. We were crushed under the load. Those who were lucky started a business or got an insured job. I could not do that. That's how I earned my bread. I could not get insurance when I could barely feed myself. Now I am still working at the age of 70. This was our fate. Still, I thank God. (Akif, born 1957 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1979) [254]

Especially after the aggressive growth of corporate cargo companies during the post-pandemic period, porters lost a significant part of their business volume. Akif expressed his complaint about this situation as follows:

> In the past, we used to receive and carry the goods from cargo branches in Eminönü. They did not employ that many men. Now it is not like that. They employ a lot of men. It seems pretty obvious. Now they carry the goods where we would carry them. (Akif, born 1957 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1979)[255]

However, porters had developed some practices against cargo companies. Some of the unique physical characteristics of the Grand Bazaar and the historical peninsula where it is located have led to the need for cooperation between porters and cargo companies. After the Pedestrianization of Ordu Street

253 Nasıl sigortalı olacaksın ki? Zaten kazandığımız nedir? Sigortalı çalışılan bir iş değil hamallık. Kazandığın zaten azıcık para. Zaman geliyor günde 200 lirayı zor kazanıyoruz. Bu parayla sigorta primi ödenmez. Ondan sigortalı olamadık. Şimdi gittiği yere kadar çalışmak zorundayız.

254 Burada küçük yaşta çalışmaya başladık. Yükün altında ezildik. Bitin pirenin içinde yattık kalktık. Şansı yaver giden bir iş kurdu veya gitti sigortalı bir işe geçti. Ben öyle yapamadım. Ekmeğimi böyle kazandım. Karnımı zor doyururken sigorta yaptıramadım. Şimdi 70 yaşında hala çalışıyorum. Kısmetimiz bu kadarmış. Yine de Allah'a şükrediyorum.

255 Eskiden Eminönü'nde kargo şubelerinden malı teslim alır taşırdık. O kadar adam çalıştırmazlardı. Şimdi öyle değil. Bir sürü adam çalıştırıyorlar. Bizim etimiz belli budumuz belli. Bizim taşıyacağımız yerlere onlar taşıyorlar artık.

and Connected Streets and Controlled Traffic Circulation Project, which was started in 2021 and completed in 2024, a large area in and around the Grand Bazaar is opened to vehicle traffic only within specified hours.[256] Since there is a time restriction for vehicle traffic, it is very important that cargo couriers can deliver to the relevant area within the specified hours. In addition to this restriction, although the Grand Bazaar is a large shopping center, the fact that vehicles cannot enter it causes the second obstacle. In other words, couriers can enter the vicinity of the Grand Bazaar at limited times, and in addition, they have to travel a long way when they need to deliver to the bazaar.

Due to all these restrictions, cargo companies prefer to cooperate with porters as a solution to this problem. The products brought by the couriers to a certain place are delivered to the address of the porters. Thus, couriers save both time and effort by not carrying heavy loads through a large bazaar. Similarly, some shopkeepers carry the products delivered to the cargo branches to their warehouses or shops in the *hans* through porters. Likewise, they carry out the transport of the products they want to ship to the cargo branch through porters. Sefer answered the question about cargo companies as follows:

> Couriers are everywhere now. They do the same job we do. They take a good from one place and carry it to another place. But it is sometimes difficult for them to do business in the bazaar. Their minibuses are not suitable for these places. The man has maybe 100 different packages to deliver in his car. Sometimes we talk to them and sometimes they talk to us. We carry their cargo. They already have difficulty in the bazaar. We have been doing this job for how many years. We know everywhere from shop to shop. They get lost in the bazaar. This is how we help each

256 "Pedestrianization Gave a Breath of Fresh Air to Laleli," Fatih Belediyesi, accessed March 21, 2025. https://www.fatih.bel.tr/en/main/news/pedestrianization-gave-a-breath-of-fresh-air-/2022.

> other. But not always, unfortunately. Some are willing to do it like this. Some deliver it themselves. Then there is nothing left for us to do. (Sefer, born 1966 in Adıyaman, Kurd, porter, worked in the bazaar since 1993)[257]

Porterage, as an informal occupation, presents both opportunities and challenges. The informal nature of this work means that porters are not tied to any formal institution or enterprise. This autonomy, however, comes with several disadvantages. One significant drawback is the lack of institutional support, such as employer-provided insurance. As porters are responsible for their own insurance, many prioritize immediate, short-term needs over long-term security, which can lead to difficulties in planning for retirement and accessing health services.

In addition to the economic challenges, the informal framework of porterage is characterized by a lack of formalized contracts. Work conditions are often shaped by verbal agreements, which creates a highly flexible but precarious labor environment. This informality can foster cooperation among porters, as it avoids rigid contracts that might lead to disputes. However, it also encourages the establishment of informal norms that, although not legally recognized, function as unspoken rules within the work community. While this flexibility can resolve conflicts and accommodate the dynamic nature of informal labor, it also leaves porters vulnerable to exploitation or uncertainty.

257 Kuryeler artık her yerde. Onlar da bizim yaptığımız işi yapıyorlar. Bir malı bir yerden alıp başka bir yere taşıyorlar. Ama çarşıda iş yapmak onlara bazen zor geliyor. Minibüsleri buralar için uygun değil. Adamın arabasında teslim etmesi gereken belki 100 farklı paket var. Bazen biz onlarla konuşuyoruz bazen de onlar bizimle. Taşıyoruz kargolarını. Zaten çarşının içinde zorlanıyorlar. Biz kaç yıldır bu işi yapıyoruz. Dükkan dükkan biliyoruz her yeri. Onlar kayboluyorlar çarşıda. Böyle yardımcı oluyoruz birbirimize. Ama her zaman değil maalesef. Bazısı böyle yapmaya yanaşıyor. Bazısı kendi teslim ediyor. O zaman da bize yapacak bir iş kalmıyor.

Also, this informal system highlights how social capital - through kinship ties and citizenship - plays a pivotal role in the creation of opportunities for new porters. Kinship, in particular, serves as a key form of social capital that facilitates entry into the profession. These family networks not only offer initial employment opportunities but also help to establish a self-regulating work environment where individuals maintain order through mutual agreements rather than through formal contracts.

In this sense, the social fabric of the Grand Bazaar operates as a self-sustaining system of informal regulation. Kinship and community ties act as mechanisms of control, helping to prevent conflicts and maintain an equilibrium within the workspace. This system of informal labor thus represents both a source of livelihood and a set of challenges, where social structures and networks are as crucial to the job as the labor itself.

§ 4.2 Intermediaries

The beginning of a sales process starts with the production of a good. The manufactured good is then transported to the shops to be offered to the customer. Customers who need this product also visit the shops where this product is sold in order to supply it. The customer who likes the product buys it or leaves the shop to take a chance in another shop. An ordinary shopping process is completed in this way. However, there is another line of business that is sometimes involved in this process in the Grand Bazaar: intermediation. People who sell products from one shop to another within the Grand Bazaar, or sell items directly from a shop to a customer - essentially serving as a link between shopkeepers and customers - are generally known as *intermediaries* or *middlemen*. This role, for which they receive a commission, is referred to as *intermediation*.

Intermediation is known by many different names in the jargon of the Grand Bazaar due to nuances. People who take the valuable goods they buy at auctions and auctions to the shops that sell those goods and sell them by adding a certain profit to them are called *koltukçu* or *oturakçı*. People who take the carpet they buy from a carpet dealer and sell it to another carpet dealer or to a customer who is not a carpet dealer by adding a profit on it are called *ayakçı* or *sırtçı*. Another type of intermediary is called *çantacı* or *ara çantacı*, who offers the precious jewellery taken from the jewellers' workshops in the Grand Bazaar to jewellers in Anatolia or elsewhere in Istanbul, and if the jewellers decide to buy the products they like after the presentation, they earn a certain profit on the sale because they act as an intermediary between them and the jewellers' workshops in the Grand Bazaar.

When shopkeepers buy a product through the intermediary, they also pay the intermediary's commission, so they sell products above their value in order to prevent their own losses. Therefore, the intermediary system causes an economic loss in which the customer pays more than its value for a product. This business, which has been carried out in the Grand Bazaar for centuries, has continued to the present day despite the fact that, with a law enacted in 1838, the bazaar shopkeepers and intermediaries were strictly monitored and punished.[258]

4.2.1 *The Perspective of Shopkeepers about Intermediaries*

We met with Cahit at his carpet shop for an interview. While we were chatting with a cup of tea, a middle-aged man entered the shop. "Brother, do you have anything to sell?" he asked Cahit. Cahit looked around a little and then took out a big pink Isparta carpet and laid it on the floor. After examining the carpet, the man said, "How much do you want for this?' Cahit replied, "150 dollars

258 Sakaoğlu, "Bedesten Esnafı," 119.

would be enough." Then the man picked up the carpet, put it on his shoulder and left. Feeling a little curious, I asked Cahit who that man was and what he was doing. Cahit said, "They are called intermediary *(ayakçı)*. He comes and buys a carpet from you and sells it to another shop. I asked for 150 dollars for that carpet. He sells it for 170 dollars. He keeps 20 dollars for himself. He comes and gives me 150 dollars." (Cahit, born 1961 in Istanbul, Turk, the salesman of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1978)[259]

This encounter was one of the reasons that led me to look at this thesis from the perspective of informal labor force. After this encounter, I started to ask questions to the participants about what kind of intermediation is intermediation, and what kind of a relationship they have with the shopkeepers. The interviews reveal that acting as an intermediary remains a common and culturally embedded practice, particularly within the carpet trade. This form of intermediation is not merely transactional, it reflects longstanding relational networks, trust-based exchanges, and social hierarchies that define commercial life in the bazaar. When I asked Mehmet a question about intermediation, he explained this business as follows:

> An intermediary is a man who does not own a shop, but comes and buys a product from one shop and sells it to another shop. For example, he buys a carpet from me. I say, bring me 800 liras for it. He sells it for 1000 liras and brings 800 to me. He puts 200 liras in his pocket. Or he says, "I found a buyer for 800 liras." Then the shopkeeper says, "Okay, fine." He gives 20-30 liras from his own pocket to the intermediary. Especially in the carpet business, this is very common. Here he takes the carpet from us. He takes it on his back to Nuruosmaniye, Avrasya

259 Ayakçı deniyor bunlara. Gelir senden bir halı alır, gider başka bir dükkana satar. Deminki halı için ben 150 dolar istedim. O 170 dolara satar. 20 doları kendisine kalır. Gelir bana 150 dolar verir.

> Bazaar. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[260]

Mehmet's answer raised another question: Why did carpet sellers need the help of an intermediary instead of visiting other shops and buying products? When a carpet seller buys a carpet through an intermediary, he knows that he is paying more for that carpet than its real price. However, they still buy carpets in this way from time to time. Cemil explained this question by emphasizing a more humane aspect:

> The men we call intermediary understand the carpet business. But they do not have a shop. They have to visit maybe 50 shops during the day just to sell one carpet. We try to help them among us. We give them carpets to sell once in a while so that they can make a living. Sometimes they have a Balıkesir carpet they bought from another shop. If I need it, I buy it even though I know I overpay for it. Sometimes there is a carpet business. There is a need for a daily laborer. I call these guys because they are always in the bazaar, they come and take care of that job. They need to be around to help with these jobs. In order to be around, they need to earn money, so it is important to be in contact with them. (Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[261]

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260 Ayakçı dediğiniz dükkan sahibi olmayıp gelip bir dükkandan bir ürün alıp başka bir dükkana satan adamdır. Mesela bir halı alıyor benden. Diyorum ki bunun için bana 800 lira getir. O da 1000 liraya satıp 800'ü bana getiriyor. 200 lirayı cebine koyuyor. Ya da diyor ki 800 liraya alıcı buldum. O zaman esnaf "İyi tamam," diyor. 20- 30 lira kendi cebinden veriyor ayakçıya. Özellikle halı işinde bu çok vardır. Burada bizden halıyı alır. Sırtlayıp Nuruosmaniye'ye, Avrasya Çarşısına götürür.

261 Ayakçı dediğimiz adamlar halı işinden anlarlar. Ancak dükkanları yoktur. Gün boyunca sadece bir halı satabilmek için belki 50 tane dükkana uğramak zorunda kalırlar. Biz de aramızda onlara yardımcı olmaya çalışıyoruz. Ekmek paraları çıksın diye arada bir satmaları için halı veriyoruz. Atıyorum bazen de başka bir dükkandan aldıkları Balıkesir halısı oluyor ellerinde. İhtiyacım varsa fazla ödeme yaptığımı bilmeme rağmen satın alırım halıyı. Bazen bir halı işi oluyor. Günlük bir elemana ihtiyaç oluyor. Bu adamlar hep çarşıda oldukları için

Although the relationship established between the intermediary and the shopkeepers causes a small amount of financial loss for the shopkeepers, at the end of the day, it shows the solidarity between these two groups. The intermediary can work in the bazaar if the carpet shopkeepers give them a job. Otherwise, they have to quit this job. For this reason, the shopkeepers occasionally give carpets to intermediary to sell or buy the carpets they sell. As a result, they both contribute economically to the people who work as intermediary, and when they need people who understand carpet business, they can easily access them because they are in and around the bazaar. Mehmet explained the other reason why carpet shopkeepers need intermediary:

> Shopkeepers have 2 doors. This intermediary has 100 doors. Therefore, someone who has never been to your shop, maybe someone who will never come to your shop, can buy products from your shop in this way. If you are an intermediary, if there are 100 carpet shops, 100 of them are yours. If not one, you can sell to the other. But the chance of another shopkeeper coming and buying from me is very small. The man does not know what's in my shop. When the intermediary comes and looks at your stack and goods, he knows very well which one to sell to whom. He can say that Mustafa will sell this carpet well, Mehmet will sell this one well. Mehmet tells me to take out this carpet. I take it out and give it to him. He knows where to take it and sell it. He is the porter of his own business. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[262]

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arıyorum. Geliyorlar o işimizi hallediyorlar. Bu işlere yardımcı olmaları için etrafta olmaları lazım. Etrafta olmaları için de para kazanmaları lazım. Bu yüzden onlarla temasta olmak önemli.

262 Esnafın 2 tane kapısı oluyor. Bu ayakçının 100 tane kapısı var. Bu yüzden hiç senin dükkanına gelmemiş biri, belki de gelmeyecek biri senin dükkanından ürün alabiliyor bu şekilde. Ayakçıysan 100 tane halı dükkanı varsa 100'ü de senin. Biri olmasa diğerine satabiliyorsunuz. Ama başka bir esnafın gelip benden alma şansı çok az. Adam ne bilsin benim dükkanımda ne

In an ordinary carpet shop anywhere in Turkey, the customer base consists of people who want to buy carpets for their homes. However, the situation is different for the carpet sellers in the Grand Bazaar. For the carpet sellers of the bazaar, not only people who want to decorate their homes are customers, but also carpet sellers can be customers of each other. Because the customers who want to buy carpets from the bazaar are interested in hand-woven carpets. Customers usually have information about the colors, patterns and weaving styles of the carpets and sometimes even try to find only one kind of carpet in the bazaar. For this reason, carpet weavers want to offer different traditional carpets such as Balıkesir, Niğde, Isparta, Sivas as well as Turkmen and Afghan carpets.

In order to provide a wide range of carpets in their shops, the shopkeepers often mentioned that they had travelled both around the world and Anatolia. Cemil said: "I have travelled every inch of Anatolia in the last few years. In the past, I did not travel, my father used to travel and buy wholesale goods. I would prepare a variety from that wholesale, and bring it to the shop."(Cemil, born 1968 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1989)[263] However, these trips are sometimes not enough. For instance, especially during the tourism season, an intermediary is used as a solution to an important problem for a shopkeeper who has no Niğde carpets left. Since the intermediary are people who understand the carpet business, they can find a carpet that a carpet seller needs by visiting other shops one by one and solve the problem. In return, they receive a certain

var. Ayakçı gelip senin istifine, malına baktığı zaman hangisini kime satacağını çok iyi biliyor. Bu halıyı Mustafa iyi satar, bunu Mehmet iyi satar diyebiliyor. Mehmet bana şu halıyı çıkar diyor. Çıkarıp veriyorum. O götürüp satacağı yeri biliyor. Kendi işinin hamallığını yapıyor.

263 Ben Anadolu'yu karış karış dolaştım son birkaç yılda. Eskiden ben gezmezdim. Babam gezerdi, toptan mal alırdı. Ben o toptan malın içinden bir çeşit hazırlardım. Dükkana getirirdim.

amount of commission from the carpet seller. After that, the carpet seller, who pays for both the carpet and the intermediary, raises the price in order to make a profit while selling the carpet. In other words, this relationship between the intermediary and the shopkeepers results in the sale of a carpet that is more than its value to the customer at the end of the day.

Another contact between shopkeepers and intermediaries can be observed in the jewelry business. The Grand Bazaar jewelers, who have a significant contribution to Turkey's gold exports,[264] are also highly influential on the jewelry that is presented in jewelry store windows in Turkey. Experienced jewelry masters in the Grand Bazaar design and produce a variety of products to be sold wholesale or retail. There are several different ways to sell the jewelry they produce. The first is for the customer to come and inspect the products in the workshops and jewelry shops in the Grand Bazaar. Second, jewelers in the Grand Bazaar participate in international jewelry fairs and exhibit their products. The third way, and the one that applies mostly to the Grand Bazaar jewelers because of the sheer volume of their business, is the intermediary, or the so-called *ara çantacı*, or *çantacı*, who mediates the commercial activities between the jewelry manufacturers and the jewelry artisans anywhere in Turkey. The interviewee responded to my question about *çantacı* as follows:

> In the Grand Bazaar market, they call them *çantacı*. They travel both in Kuyumcukent and the Grand Bazaar. They fill their bags and go to Anatolia. So they are just people who collect goods from the wholesalers, market them and make money. He is actually marketing your product for you. Let's call them personal marketers. (Daniel, born 1991 in Istanbul, Armenian, the jewelry master and owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in the bazaar since 2013)[265]

264 Kurt, "Tarihsel Süreç Işığında Çarşı Kavramı ve Kapalıçarşı," 79.

265 Kapalıçarşı piyasasında onlara çantacı derler. Onlar Kuyumcukent'te de Kapalıçarşı'da gezerler. Çantalarını doldurup Anadolu'ya giderler. Yani onlar sadece ara toptancılardan malı

The *çantacı*, much like the *ayakçı*, serves as a mobile intermediary who presents jewelry pieces to shopkeepers operating outside the Grand Bazaar. When these external jewelers express interest in purchasing an item, the *çantacı* relays this intention to the originating jeweler within the bazaar. Upon completion of the transaction, the *çantacı* receives a commission. Functionally, *çantacı* mediates the circulation of goods and trust between the embedded of the Grand Bazaar and the more dispersed jewelry trade beyond its walls - illustrating a layered system of exchange sustained by interpersonal networks and customary intermediary roles.

These people play a crucial role in the process of marketing and selling the products of the shopkeepers. To a certain extent, they are important people for the shopkeepers as they provide a different channel for the sale of the products in their shops. Although shopkeepers see intermediaries as part of their commercial relations, they do not find them morally correct. Because sales involving intermediaries create a situation of selling a more expensive product to the customer. At the end of the day, this relationship between producers and shopkeepers reflects negatively on the customer. Therefore, shopkeepers find intermediation morally problematic.

By extension, commercial relations within the Grand Bazaar are often perceived as direct transactions between shopkeepers and customers. However, this apparent simplicity conceals the involvement of intermediary actors whose presence shapes the dynamics of trust and ethical practice. These hidden dimensions of exchange give rise to what economists refer to as *moral hazard* - a concept generally applied in the field of insurance, where it denotes

toplayıp onları pazarlayıp para kazanan insanlar. Aslında senin malını senin için pazarlıyor. Şahsi pazarlamacı diyelim.

the reduced incentive to mitigate risk once protection is in place.[266] More pertinent to the context of the Grand Bazaar is Kenneth Arrow's broader interpretation of moral hazard in "The Economics of Agency," where he frames it as a problem of *hidden action* - when agents take actions that are unobservable to the principal.[267]

In the context of the Grand Bazaar, the relationship between shopkeepers and intermediaries is often ambiguous to the customer. This asymmetry of information enables practices where the price quoted to the customer includes hidden commissions for the intermediary. As such, the customer becomes the unwitting bearer of a concealed economic relationship. The transaction, while appearing crystal clear, is underpinned by a moral hazard: the customer cannot verify whether the price reflects the product's true value or the embedded costs of unseen actors. This dynamic highlights how informal networks and concealed obligations can subtly distort the moral economy of the bazaar.

4.2.2 *On the Self-Reflection of the Intermediaries*

In the Grand Bazaar, people who act as intermediaries, especially in the jewelry and carpet businesses, play the role of invisible actors for the customers in the bazaar. When you visit the bazaar, you can easily observe the products, shopkeepers and apprentices. However, intermediaries do not work in a certain place. They are constantly mobile, carrying goods from inside the bazaar to an outside shop or between shops in the bazaar and trying to sell them. Unlike porters, they do not have a specific group or solidarity network. They work completely individually. They have knowledge about the content of the

266 Ralph A. Winter, "Optimal Insurance Under Moral Hazard," in *Handbook of Insurance*, ed. J. Dionne (Boston: Kluwer, 2000), 155.

267 Kenneth J. Arrow, "The Economics of Agency," in *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business*, ed. John W. Pratt and Richard J. Zeckhauser (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1985), 38.

products they are intermediaries for. In addition, in order to make sales, they have to analyze well what products are needed in which workplace and what is in fashion. To understand intermediation, it is important to keep in mind that informal activities cover a wide range of scales, from manufacturing under the stairs to large corporate enterprises, namely, a large mass of people other than unskilled workers must be taken into account.[268]

An intermediary purchases the product from a knowledgeable shopkeeper and then markets it to another equally well-informed shopkeeper. Therefore, the role of the intermediary demands greater expertise than that of a typical salesperson selling to an average customer. If one is a *çantacı*, one has to have technical and cultural knowledge about jewelry making, and if one is an *ayakçı*, one has to have technical and cultural knowledge about carpet business. In support of this, Mustafa, who has been an *ayakçı* in the Grand Bazaar since 1980, responded as follows when I asked him how he learned carpet business:

> Before coming to the Grand Bazaar, I worked as a carpet wholesaler in the center of Niğde. I had a small office in Samanpazarı, Ankara. We used to go there from the center. People from Sivas, Niğde, Kayseri and 3 or 4 similar cities used to wholesale carpets. There was a carpet weaver in every village, every city, every province. I also know how to repair, weave and dye carpets. Every city, every village in Central Anatolia has a carpet as a memory. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, *ayakçı*, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[269]

268 Hart, "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana," 68.

269 Kapalıçarşı'ya gelmeden önce ben Niğde'nin merkezinde halı toptancılığı yaptım. Ankara, Samanpazarı'nda benim ufak bir yazıhanem vardı. Merkezden oraya giderdik. Sivas, Niğde, Kayseri ve buna benzer üç dört şehrin insanları halıcılık işini toptan yapardı. Her köyde, her şehirde, her vilayette halı dokuyan olurdu. Ben de halı tamiri yapmayı, dokumayı, boyamayı bilirim. İç Anadolu'da her şehrin, her köyün bir anısı olarak bir halısı vardır.

It was Mehmet who made it possible for me to interview Mustafa. Since Mustafa did not have a fixed place of work, I conducted the interview in Mehmet's carpet shop. While telling his story of learning carpet making, he started to introduce the carpets in Mehmet's shop. He was showing random carpets and giving detailed information about them. In doing so, he made us feel his enthusiasm for carpets rather than presenting a performance to show how well he knew about carpets. He showed a Sivas carpet and excitedly said:

> Look at the abundance in this carpet. Honestly, it affects your health more than the food you eat at the table. Do not eat the sheep, sit on the carpet woven with its wool. These carpets are healing. There is no rheumatism, disease, cancer. Sit on it, pardon me, it will eliminate the pain in your hips and hemorrhoids. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[270]

As mentioned above, Mustafa's relationship with the carpet industry began before he came to the Grand Bazaar. One of the most important prerequisites for being as an intermediary is to have specific knowledge of the product. Mustafa's previous job made him a suitable candidate to work as an intermediary in the bazaar. In addition, like many other jobs in the bazaar, intermediation requires a network. It is not possible to come to the bazaar and suddenly say, "I will be an intermediary here from now on." It was through networking that Mustafa started to work as an intermediary in the bazaar. Mustafa said, "There was Uncle Ali from Sivas. There was also a brother from Ordu. I was 25 or 26 at the time. They helped me. They said, 'There is better money in this

270 Şu halıdaki bet berekete bakın. Samimi söylüyorum sofrada yediğin yemekten daha fazla etkiler sağlığını. Koyunu yeme, onun yünüyle dokunan halıda otur. Şifadır bu halılar. Romatizma, hastalık, kanser hiçbiri yok bunda. Şunun üstüne otur, affedersin, kalçandaki ağrıyı da basuru da yok eder.

job than in your job.' Thanks to them, I started coming to the bazaar and working." (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[271]

Intermediation activities, which provided a considerable income until about 20 years ago, have started to change with today's conditions. As an exception, the situation is still not bad for *çantacı*, who act as intermediaries in the jewelry business. Eminönü, which can be considered the historical center of jewelry, the Grand Bazaar in Eminönü, where these activities are the most intensive, and finally Kuyumcukent, a clustering project of jewelry manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers in cooperation with the private sector and the government, are home to more than 50% of all jewelry companies in Turkey.[272] Therefore, it can still be seen as a profitable business for *çantacı* to engage in intermediation. However, the situation does not look bright for the *ayakçı* brokering in the carpet business.

During the interviews, many participants mentioned that the carpet industry was shrinking. For the shopkeepers, large numbers of tourists were no longer coming to Turkey from countries like the US, Italy and Spain, where the carpet culture is prevalent, as in the past. They cited the pandemic, terrorist incidents, the unstable political atmosphere in the Middle East, and Istanbul being a problematic city in terms of security as the reasons for this situation. As a result of these, there was a decrease in the number of tourists, which led to a decrease in sales and ultimately to a contraction in the carpet sector. This contraction has had a negative impact on the carpet sellers as well as the

271 Sivaslı Ali Amca vardı. Bir de Ordulu bir abimiz vardı. O zamanlar ben 25- 26 yaşlarındayım. Onlar yardımcı oldular. "Bu işte, senin işinden daha iyi para var," dediler. Onlar sayesinde çarşıya gelip çalışmaya başladım.

272 Bilge Armatlı Köroğlu, Tanyel Özelçi Eceral, and Çiğdem Varol, "Sanayi Kümelerinde Ağlarin Mekansal Örüntüsü: İstanbul Kuyumculuk Sektörü Üretim Ağları," *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* 29, no. 1 (2012), 124.

ayakçı who earn income from the same product. Mustafa explained this situation as follows. "Until 15 years ago, there were about 300 to 350 carpet shops in the Grand Bazaar. But since 15 years, the carpet business has gone backwards. It went backwards every day. People did not find hand labor worth paying any attention to. It was very good before." (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[273]

The decline in the demand for carpets affected the shopkeepers as well as the intermediary and caused a great disadvantage for the people who earned an income from this business. Another disadvantage of *ayakçı* business is that, like portering, it is a physically demanding job. The participant evaluated his work as a physical challenge as follows:

> Physically, in terms of strength, you get very worn out in this job. This job is also called *sırtçılık* because you carry the carpet on your back. We have been doing this for years, so the body gets used to it. Whatever you adapt to, you do it easily. Since we have been carrying carpets for years, even though it is heavy, it is not very difficult. But it still wears the body out. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[274]

The participant also mentioned insecurity, a pattern we often see in other informal jobs. Intermediation is not an occupation that is tied to an organization or business. Therefore, people who earn income from this job are required to invest a certain portion of their earnings in retirement funds. However, just

273 Bundan 15 sene önceye kadar Kapalıçarşı'da aşağı yukarı 300- 350 taneye yakın halı dükkanı vardı. Ama 15 seneden bu yana, halı sektörü geriye gitti. Her gün geriye gitti. El emeğini insanlar kayda değeri bulmaz oldular. Önceleri çok güzeldi.

274 Fiziksel olarak, güç olarak bu işte çok yıpranırsınız. Bu işe, halıyı sırtında taşıdığın için sırtçılık da denir. Yıllardır bu işle meşgul olduk. Ondan dolayı vücut alışıyor. Neye adapte olursan onu kolay yapıyorsun. Yıllardır halı taşıdığımız için ağır olsa da çok zor gelmiyor. Ama yine de yıpranıyor vücut.

like the porters, they did not invest in such funds in their youth. Therefore, they have to work to make a living.

Although Mustafa cited not being a registered worker as a disadvantage of not working for a formal business, he also mentioned that there are some advantages to this situation:

> Not having a boss is a big advantage. You are your own boss in a sense. You do not have a shepherd to say "Wipe the window, close the shutter of the shop, do the cleaning." You do not have an owner, you are free. For example, I come to the bazaar mostly in the afternoon, there is not much work before noon. But if you work in a shop, you have to come in the morning even if there is no work. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[275]

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that shopkeepers' perspectives on intermediaries were contradictory. According to the shopkeepers, intermediaries were people who facilitated sales and facilitated trade between buyers and sellers, but they also caused the product to be sold to the customer at a more expensive price due to the commission they received from their work. This was interpreted differently for each intermediary. For example, for Mustafa, his work did not generate much income for him. However, as a result of his activity, the shopkeepers were making a profit. When I asked him about this, Mustafa explained the situation by comparing old and new types of shopkeepers.

For Mustafa, the shopkeepers had changed morally during the 45 years he worked in the bazaar. According to him, in the past, carpet shopkeepers used to be fulfilled and ethical, looking out for the interests of others. However, today's shopkeepers are greedy and only look out for their own interests:

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275 Başında bir patronun olmaması büyük avantaj. Kendi işinin patronusun bir anlamda. "Camı sil, dükkanın kepengini kapat, temizliğini yap" diyecek bir çobanın yok. Bir sahibin yok, serbestsin. Mesela ben çarşıya çoğunlukla öğleden sonra geliyorum. Öğleden önce pek iş olmuyor. Ama bir dükkanda çalışsan iş olmasa da sabah gelmek zorundasın.

> In the past, the shopkeepers here used to know me very well. They knew that my word could be trusted. Since I knew this carpet business well, they would trust me when I gave them a price. Of course, I would say a price by putting my hand on my heart, so whatever I said, they would say "Okay." That's why our dialog was good. For example, I would bring 30 pieces of carpet, they would not open the carpet and look at it. They knew I brought clean goods. They would ask, "How many pieces are there?" Then I would leave them a receipt. 2 or 3 months later they would come and pay. There was such a reputation for this business. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[276]

When Mustafa described his relationship with the shopkeepers in the bazaar in the past, he emphasized that he was doing a reputable, important job that required expertise in carpets. His relationship with today's shopkeepers was much more negative:

> In the past, shopkeepers were thoughtful. They feared God and were ashamed of his subjects. They used to call me to their shops saying, "I did business today, let him do the same. Take this carpet. Carry it to this man's shop. If the man does not like it, bring it back." When I left the shop with the carpet on my back, he would call the man: "I sent him on purpose so that he could earn money. Buy the carpet." That's how decent they were. Now, when you walk in the bazaar, shopkeepers turn their backs to you in case you ask for something. Naturally, I do not go to their shops. 90% of carpet sellers are wealthy men who own

276 Eskiden buradaki esnaflar beni çok iyi tanırlardı. Sözüme güvenileceğini bilirlerdi. Ben bu halı işini iyi bildiğim için ben bir fiyat verdiğimde itimat ederlerdi. Ben de tabii elimi vicdanıma koyarak bir fiyat söylerdim. Bu yüzden ne söylersem "Tamam" derlerdi. Bu yüzden diyaloğumuz iyiydi. Mesela ben 30 parça halı getirirdim. Halıyı açıp bakmazlardı. Temiz mal getirdiğimi bilirlerdi. "Kaç parça var?" diye sorarlardı. Sonra ben onlara bir makbuz bırakırdım. 2- 3 ay sonra gelip ödemelerini yaparlardı. Öyle itibar vardı bu işe.

> property. But none of them know how to be grateful. This is an ungrateful business. (Mustafa, born 1953 in Niğde, Turk, intermediary, worked in the bazaar since 1980)[277]

According to the interviews with shopkeepers, the relationship developed especially with the intermediaries is shaped by helping them financially and getting some help for their own work. However, for shopkeepers in the past, the intermediary had a more important position. One of the reasons for this is the size of the carpet trade in the Grand Bazaar. A few decades ago, the bazaar was home to hundreds of carpet shops, and therefore carpet shopkeepers, apprentices and shop assistants. Today, this business volume has decreased considerably. One by one, carpet shops are being replaced by foreign exchange shops and shops selling imitation bags. In the past, because the cake was so big, the intermediary, who had a small piece of it, were able to make a significant living. Today, as the pie has gotten smaller, their share has become meaningless. This has brought about certain grumblings.

As a result, intermediary activities in the bazaar, such as *çantacılık*, have not lost their relevance as a large part of the jewelry business is still carried out here. However, jobs that do not represent a formal component of the carpet business, such as *ayakçılık*, are the first to be eliminated in the case of an economic crisis or a downsizing of the sector. Because in the specific case of carpets, it is essential for a trade to take place that there is a buyer and a seller. However, intermediaries are easily disposable in a crisis. In addition, when

277 Eskiden esnaf düşünceliydi. Allah'tan korkardı, kuldan utanırdılar. "Ben bugün iş yaptım. Bu da yapsın." diye beni çağırırdılar dükkanlarına. "Al şu halıyı. Şu adamın dükkanına bırak. Eğer adam beğenmezse geri getirirsin" derdi. Ben halı sırtlanıp dükkandan çıkınca adamı arardı. "Mahsus gönderdim para kazansın diye. Halıyı al" derdi. İşte böyle adam gibi adamlardı. Şimdi çarşıda yürüdüğünde bir şey isterim diye sırtını dönüyor esnaflar. Doğal olarak onların dükkanına gitmiyorum. Halıcıların %90'ı mal mülk sahibi, zengin adamlar. Ama hiçbiri şükretmeyi bilmez. Nankör bir iş bu.

these intermediaries are part of an informal activity, we can observe that it happens more sharply, as in the case of the Grand Bazaar.

§ 4.3 *Hanutçus*

In 1899, Knut Hamsun, a famous writer who visited Istanbul, wrote about a Greek guide who took him from his hotel and showed him around the historical peninsula. Hamsun complains that this guide took him off the itinerary he wanted in order to get commission from the shops. Hamsun, who is fully aware of the situation, mentions that all hotel guides make money off the backs of the people they take around the Grand Bazaar, that they get commission from every purchase and that they drag visitors around in order to make money.[278]

The person Hamsun describes in his memoirs is a *hanutçu*. *Hanut*, which means shop in Armenian, is a term that means that when a customer is brought to a shop, if the shopkeeper makes a sale, he receives a certain amount of commission on that sale.[279] The people who do this work are called *hanutçu* (brokers or commissioner). Especially in the Grand Bazaar, *hanut*, which has gained a large place in the jargon of shopkeepers, is a very common practice.

In certain respects, *hanutçuluk* differs from other informal jobs in the bazaar. First of all, people who work as porters or intermediaries are people who meet certain prerequisites. For example, a *çantacı* has knowledge about the jewelry sector, an *ayakçı* has knowledge about the carpet industry. These people are recognized in the bazaar within that sector. The same is true for porters. However, *hanutçuluk* is more flexible. Not only people who are *hanutçu*, but

278 Knut Hamsun and Hans Christian Andersen, *İstanbul'da İki İskandinav Seyyah*, trans. Banu Gürsaler Syvertsen (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), 60.

279 "Hanut," Nişanyan Sözlük, accessed December 15, 2024. https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/kelime/hanut.

also customers, tourist guides and shopkeepers in the bazaar can be a *hanutçu*. In this sense, although networking is needed in this job as in any other job, it is not seen as a necessity compared to others.

The second difference of *hanutçuluk* compared to other informal businesses is that a *hanutçu* do not need to have specific knowledge of the product for which they receive a commission. It is often enough to influence customers and bring them to the shop. If the shopkeeper is able to sell the product, the *hanutçu* receives his or her commission. In this sense, it does not require a physical and know-how qualification compared to the jobs mentioned in the previous subchapters. Since *hanutçuluk* is a very common practice in the Grand Bazaar, anyone who can influence the customer tries to earn an income from this business. However, there are also people who only do this job. These people offer help to visitors at the doorways of the bazaar and on the streets: "Welcome! What are you looking for? I can help you." They try to get in touch with potential customers by saying things like.

The third difference is that a *hanutçu* does not always work for shops in a certain area or for shopkeepers selling a certain product. The flexibility of the job gives a *hanutçu* a wider working area. This makes it easier to earn income from this work. As long as they can convince the customer, they can get a commission from every shop. In addition, some *hanutçu* can only work for a specific shop. To the extent that he or she sells the products in that particular shop and receives commission from the shopkeepers per product.

4.3.1 *The Perspective of Shopkeepers about "Hanutçus"*

When I visited the Grand Bazaar to conduct fieldwork for this thesis, I observed young male shop assistants warmly inviting me and other visitors into their shops. Initially, I considered these young men to be enthusiastic salespeople. Although at times their enthusiasm bordered on insistence, they were

generally not overly intrusive. These voices inviting you to their shops at the entrance of the bazaar followed you even in the narrowest streets of the bazar.

For shopkeepers, *hanutçuluk* is a business with a purely pejorative perception. However, this perspective itself contains many contradictions. The shopkeepers in the Grand Bazaar find the *hanutçu*, who make it easier for them to make sales, who bring a customer who may never come to their shop to their doorstep, morally weak. Because according to them, a *hanutçu* does not produce any value. Most of the *hanutçu* are people who are not interested in selling. They just impress the customer and bring them to the shop. There is no intensive use of labor for *hanutçu*, similar to that of porters or intermediary. Therefore, it is seen as a disreputable job by shopkeepers.

In order to understand shopkeepers' perception of *hanutçu*, it is first necessary to look at the working methods of *hanutçu*. There are two main branches of *hanutçu*. The first one is people who only engage in *hanutçuluk*, and the second one is people whose main job is not *hanutçuluk*, but who occasionally bring customers and receive commissions. In addition, people who only earn income from *hanutçuluk* are divided into two subbranches. One interviewee described the first group as follows:

> Kalpakçılar Street is a crowded place. They approach people there. They try to convince them. After convincing the customer, they help them. If they succeeded in establishing trust, if they want a carpet, they take them to the carpet dealer they agreed on. He leaves the customer there. If the shop makes a sale, they come after 1 to 2 hours and ask, "What did the customer do?" If the sale is made, he gets his commission. These are the guys who say "I would rather sell like this than wait in the shop." (Bülent, born 1954 in Istanbul, Turk, the owner of an antique shop, worked in the bazaar since 1964)[280]

280 Kalpakçılar Caddesi kalabalık bir yer. Orada insanlara yaklaşıyorlar. İkna etmeye çalışıyorlar. Müşteriyi ikna ettikten sonra yardımcı oluyorlar. Eğer güveni kurmayı başardılarsa ve müşteri

The second group was described by Mehmet as follows:

> There are *hanutçus* who work depending on the shop. For example, it seems like there are 5 people working in a fabric shop. One is the shop owner, the second is the main employee. The remaining 3 people seem to work depending on the shop. They get a share of what they sell. They do not get paid weekly or monthly. When they make a sale, they get paid at the end of the day or weekly according to their agreement. Depending on his practicableness and language, in most shops there are people who pocket their money without getting paid weekly. There are young boys like artists who walk in front of the shops when they are in the bazaar. Most of them get paid per day. They earn money as a percentage of the work. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988) [281]

In a nutshell, *hanutçu*s, who are not directly attached to a shop, try to interact with customers on the streets of the bazaar. In this respect, they can sometimes overwhelm people who just want to look around and get an artistic and cultural, rather than commercial, taste of the Grand Bazaar and feel that their personal space is being violated. This leads to a bad perception of the Grand Bazaar as a tourist landmark. Those who work in a shop are perceived by customers as shop assistants. This gives them an advantage. Customers are more likely to trust a *hanutçu* who they perceive as an employee of the shop than a

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halı almak istiyorsa, anlaştıkları halıcıya götürüyorlar. Müşteriyi orada bırakıyorlar. Eğer dükkanda satış yapılırsa, 1-2 saat sonra geri dönüp "Müşteri ne yaptı?" diye soruyorlar. Satış olduysa komisyonlarını alıyorlar. "Ben dükkanda bekleyeceğime böyle satış yaparım daha iyi" diyen tipler bunlar.

281 Dükkana bağlı olarak çalışan hanutçular var. Örneğin bir kumaşçıda çalışan 5 kişi var gibi gözüküyor. Biri dükkan sahibi, ikincisi asıl eleman. Geri kalan 3 kişi dükkana bağlı olarak çalışıyor gibi gözüküyor. Sattıklarından pay alıyorlar. Haftalık, aylık para almıyorlar. Satış yapınca gün sonunda ya da anlaşmalarına göre haftalık alır. Onun iş bitiriciliğine, diline bağlı olarak çoğu dükkanda haftalık almadan parasını cebine koyan insan var. Çarşıda gezerken dükkanların önünde gezinen artist gibi genç çocuklar var. Onların çoğu günlük para alıyor. İşin yüzdesi kadar para kazanan tipler.

hanutçu on the street. The *hanutçu*, on the other hand, is seen as a more enthusiastic seller because he or she works for a commission per item sold, not for a salary like a regular shopkeeper. In this way, the *hanutçu* deceives the customer over something that he or she is not.

In addition to those who practice *hanutçuluk* as a profession, there is a much wider group of people who see it not as a job but as something that can generate extra income from time to time when the opportunity arises. These people live their daily lives by doing their own business. However, sometimes they take their own customers, friends or acquaintances to the shops they have agreed upon in advance and demand a commission on the products they will buy. The first group who engage in this kind of *hanutçuluk* are other shopkeepers. Alex summarized how shopkeepers earn commission by bringing customers to shopkeepers as follows:

> I am busy with ceramic work. A customer came and I sold ceramics and he also wanted a bag. Then I bring the customer to the bag shop. When they sell a bag, they put 10-20% of the profit in an envelope and give the money. There is still a lot of *hanutçuluk* in the bazaar. These are the things we talk about before the sale. You talk to the man. When the customer comes, if he wants to buy a bag, you say I will bring the customer to you. The shopkeeper already understands this thing that is said in a subtle way. (Alex, born 1970 in Istanbul, Armenian, the owner of a ceramic shop, worked in the bazaar since 1990)[282]

282 Ben burada oturuyorum seramik işiyle meşgulüm. Müşteri geldi seramik sattım. Çanta da istedi. O zaman müşteriyi çanta dükkanına getiririm. Onlar çanta satınca kardan %10- 20 neyse bir zarfın içine parayı koyup verirler. Hala çarşıda hanutçuluk çok yaygın. Satış öncesinde konuşulan şeyler bunlar. Adamla konuşuyorsun. Müşteri gelince çanta satın almak isterse sana getireceğim diyorsun. Üstü kapalı bir şekilde söylenen bu şeyi esnaf anlıyor zaten.



Figure 4.3 In the 1950s, a *hanutçu* was inviting customers into a shop around the Grand Bazaar. SOURCE: *The personal archive of Adnan Özerler*.

Besides being a place of trade, the Grand Bazaar is also a historical monument. Therefore, it is frequently visited by local and foreign tourists. Depending on the preference of the tourists, some of them visit the bazaar individually and some in groups accompanied by a guide. Guides give them information about the history, architecture and culture of the bazaar. In this way, an intimacy is formed between guides and tourists. This makes it easier for the guides to engage in *hanutçuluk*. About this, David said:

> There are guides who take some groups of tourists around. Those guides take the groups to the shops they know and recognize. Let's say he has five people with him. He takes them around. Let's say he brings them to me. He introduces them. He says, "If you like anything, you can shop, you can trust him." He is inculcating his own group. If we sell something, we give him something as a gift. Sometimes tourists ask the guide's opinion to buy something. The tourist asks, "Do you know anyone who sells shoes?" The guide says, "Oh, of course I do. I

> will bring you there." He brings him to me. I give him something. (David, born 1951 in Istanbul, originally from Istanbul, Jewish, the owner of a traditional shoes shop, worked in the bazaar since 1997)[283]

In addition, some customers engage in a similar informal income-generating relationship in the shops where they shop frequently. They bring their relatives and friends to the shop and try to get a commission on their purchases:

> Women are the ones who do this. Something like that happened to me. The ladies nowadays say, "Look, I will bring a customer to you, but get me an earring or a quarter." If you do not say, "Okay," they say, "This shop owner is not good, he overcharges," and take the customer elsewhere. (Kerem, born 1996 in Istanbul, originally from Ağrı, Kurd, the owner of a jeweller's shop, worked in bazaar since 2018)[284]

Above, we have briefly categorized the forms of *hanutçuluk* that shopkeepers reported during the interviews. As can be understood from this, it can be argued that *hanutçuluk* is much broader in scope than other informal businesses in the Grand Bazaar. However, this broad scope does not imply a positive meaning from the perspective of shopkeepers. Shopkeepers are legally obliged to fulfill certain obligations for the supply of goods, as well as bearing the costs of taxes, rent, and labor. It is precisely for this reason that they characterize people who do not fulfill these responsibilities and make a profit as morally weak. One of the reasons for this assessment is that when a *hanutçu* is involved

283 Bazı turist gruplarını dolaştıran rehberler var. O rehberler kendi bildiği, tanıdığı dükkanlara grupları götürür. Diyelim ki yanında beş kişi var. Gezdiriyor onları. Diyelim bana getirdi. Tanıştırıyor onları. "Herhangi bir şey beğenirseniz alışveriş yapabilirsiniz, güvenebilirsiniz." diyor. Telkin ediyor kendi kafilesini. Bir şey satıyorsak hediye babında biz de ona bir şeyler veriyoruz. Bazen de turistler bir şeyler satın almak için rehberin fikrini soruyorlar. Turist "Senin ayakkabı satan tanıdığın var mı?" diye soruyor. Rehber, "Aaa var tabii. Getireyim seni oraya." diyor. Bana getiriyor. Ben de ona bir şey veriyorum.

284 Bu işi asıl bayanlar yapıyor. Benim başıma geldi öyle bir şey. Şimdiki bayanlar diyor ki "Bak sana müşteri getireceğim ama bana bir küpe ya da bir çeyrek ayarla." Eğer "Tamam" demezsen, "Bu usta iyi değil, pahalı veriyor" diyor başka yere götürüyor müşteriyi.

in the sales process, the shopkeeper tends to earn the money he would have paid for the commission from the customer. As a result, the customer buys the product at a higher price. Regarding this, Mustafa said: "Shopkeepers sell for 2 liras what they should actually sell for 1 liras, just because a *hanutçu* is involved. The *hanutçu*s are actually doing a bad thing to the bazaar and to Turkey. Because you are ripping off the customer." (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[285]

Another reason given was that *hanutçu*s suspend their civic responsibilities in order to make a profit. When I asked a participant about his thoughts on *hanutçu*s, he replied as follows:

> Everyone does it, but it is not a good thing. The return of the sale to the state is low. It is also a bad thing in terms of employment. If that man works with insurance, he will benefit both himself and the state. In other words, there are people trying to save the day. They do nothing for the state. Plus he makes a huge profit for himself. So when you think very broadly, it is ethically wrong. (Mehmet, born 1966 in Istanbul, originally from Malatya, Turk, the owner of a carpet shop, worked in the bazaar since 1988)[286]

In all of the interviews conducted with shopkeepers for the thesis research, *hanutçuluk* was portrayed as a negative business. However, it is interesting to note that at the same time, almost all shopkeepers earn income from *hanutçuluk*. When a *hanutçu* brings a customer to the shop, no shopkeeper re-

285 Aslında 1 liraya satması gereken şeyi, sırf araya hanutçu girdi diye 2 liraya satıyor esnaf. Hanutçular çarşıya da Türkiye'ye de kötü bir şey yapıyor aslında. Çünkü müşteriyi kazıklattırıyorsun.

286 Herkes yapıyor da iyi bir şey değil sonuçta. Yapılan satışın devlete dönüşü az oluyor. İstihdam açısında da kötü bir şey. O adam sigortalı çalışsa hem kendine hem devlete faydası olur. Yani günü kurtarmaya çalışan tipler türedi. Devlete hiçbir faydaları olmuyor. Artı kendine çok büyük karı oluyor. Yani çok geniş kapsamlı düşündüğünüzde etik olarak yanlış bir şey.

fuses. After selling goods to the customer, they pay the *hanutçu* his commission. In other words, no matter how negative their comments, they also contribute to the continuation of the these activities.

When all the interviews and observations are taken into account, it becomes clear that the negative perception of *hanutçuluk* - often viewed by shopkeepers as an informal or even parasitic activity akin to that of intermediaries - is underpinned by concerns about moral hazard. *Hanutçus*, who operate either between customers and shopkeepers or independently of established shops, are commonly perceived as salaried agents. Yet, in practice, they present themselves as enthusiastic salespeople simply eager to assist with a purchase. However, this performance, conceals their role in inflating prices: the *hanutçu's* involvement often leads customers to pay more than the product's actual value. Because the customer cannot see the hidden arrangements or motivations behind the *hanutçu's* actions[287], they are left with limited information - eroding both transparency and trust.

As Fanselow notes in "The bazaar Economy or How Bizarre is the Bazaar Really?", this is an indication that the bazaar trade has internalized an economically rational strategy. Therefore, the relationship between shopkeepers and *hanutçu*s in the Grand Bazaar is related to the operationalization of bazaar rationality, not the moral codes of the actors.[288] Therefore, although shopkeepers claim that *hanutçuluk* is unethical, they are part of this informal relationship.

4.3.2 *On the Self-Reflection of the "Hanutçus"*

During the fieldwork for this thesis, the group that was the most difficult to access for interviews were the *hanutçu*s. For the *hanutçu*s in the streets of the

287 Arrow, "The Economics of Agency," 38.

288 Fanselow, "The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre Is the Bazaar Really?," 262.

bazaar, every person in the bazaar meant a potential commission. Therefore, they did not want to spend time on anything else while they were in the bazaar. Those who are not full-time *hanutçu*s are very difficult for an outsider to identify. Therefore, in terms of accessibility, the most suitable candidate participants for the interview were the *hanutçus* working in a particular shop.

With the help of a shopkeeper, I met Alper, a *hanutçu* in a ceramic shop. Alper started his apprenticeship in a carpet shop in the Grand Bazaar in 2010 and had a plan when he left the bazaar to do his military service in 2015. Alper summarized his story of becoming a *hanutçu* in the Grand Bazaar as follows:

> When I left the bazaar for military service, I said I would not be a carpet apprentice (*yancı*) when I returned. It was a heavy job. Lifting, lowering, unfolding, folding the carpet... Our brothers in the bazaar said, 'Do not do this job when you learn English. If you have to do carpet work, do not do it as an apprentice or an employee, do not do it as an overburdened person. Do light work.' They were advising me. I was determined to do so. I was going to learn English when I returned from the military. Luckily, I had a very comfortable military service. While I was in the military, I bought an English book and started to study. I was watching English movies, listening to music. If we exclude the boot camp period, I studied English regularly for 7 months of a year. After the military service, I returned to the bazaar. I had improved my English well. When British customers come, I speak with a British accent, when American customers come, I speak with an American accent. Then I met Kemal, the owner of this ceramic shop. That's how I started working here. (Alper, born 1993 in Aksaray, Turk, *hanutçu*, worked in the bazaar since 2010)[289]

289 Askerlik için çarşıdan ayrılırken döndüğümde halıcı çıraklığı yapmayacağım dedim. Ağır bir işti. Halıyı kaldır, indir, aç, katla… Çarşıdaki abilerimiz "İngilizce öğrendiğinde bu işi yapma. İlla halı işi yapacaksan da çırak veya çalışan olarak yapma, yükün altına giren olarak yapma. Hafif işler yap." diye öğüt veriyorlardı. Ben de kafaya koymuştum. Askerden döndüğümde İngilizce öğrenecektim. Şansıma çok rahat bir askerlik yaptım. Askerdeyken İngilizce kitabı

As in the case of Alper, language proficiency is very important for being a *hanutçu*. Although most of the shopkeepers in the bazaar can speak English, it should be emphasized that a *hanutçu* is at a much higher language level than them. During the interview, many tourists came to the shop and Alper was very comfortable chatting with them, not only to make a sale but also about a daily topic. He was also a very good observer. After nearly 15 years of experience in the bazaar, he had learned to accurately analyze the customer profile. He did not treat a British customer the same way as a Greek customer. He would adopt a new attitude for each customer based on their cultural codes. This was not an act. His job was very much performance-based and Alper behaved accordingly.

In this context, one of the distinguishing features of *hanutçus* within the informal economy is, paradoxically, also a key source of their strength. While much of the literature on informal labor emphasizes a general lack of "soft skills" - including language proficiency, basic education, cognitive abilities, and verbal communication - *hanutçus* stand out as an exception.[290] Their ability to navigate diverse social interactions, communicate effectively with a wide range of customers, and adapt to shifting bazaar conditions requires precisely these soft skills. In this way, *hanutçus* challenge prevailing assumptions about informality as a domain of marginalization and instead reveal it as a space of complex skill deployment and social competence.

In addition, although it was considered a disreputable business by shopkeepers, it was a nuanced business in many respects. First of all, a *hanutçu* had

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alıp çalışmaya başladım. İngilizce filmler izliyordum, müzikler dinliyordum. Acemi birliği dönemini aradan çıkarırsak 1 yılın 7 ayında düzenli olarak İngilizce çalıştım. Askerliğin ardından çarşıya döndüm. İngilizcemi iyi geliştirmiştim. İngiliz müşteri geldiğinde İngiliz aksanıyla, Amerikan müşteri geldiğinde Amerikan aksanıyla konuşuyorum. Sonra bu seramik dükkanının sahibi olan Kemal ile tanıştım. Ben öyle burada çalışmaya başladım.

290 Jan L. Losby et al., "Informal Economy Literature Review" (USA ISED Consulting and Research and Aspen Institute, 2002), 13.

to behave in an absolutely proper manner. Although some of the newer *hanutçu*s in the bazaar caused complaints with their rude behavior, the people doing this job were generally good-looking, well-dressed and sympathetic. A participant I interviewed talked about the old *hanutçu*s as follows. "The *hanutçu*s used to come to the bazaar in suits. They spoke English very well. They were impressive people in terms of their manners. When they talked to a customer, they really attracted them." (Salih, born 1966 in Isparta, Turk, salesman in a traditional textile shop, worked in the bazaar since 1996) [291] However, shopkeepers had negative discourses about the current *hanutçu*s.

Alper agreed with the shopkeepers' criticism of the *hanutçu*s in certain respects. In recent years, *hanutçuluk*, which is seen as a way of making easy money, has caused the subtleties of this business to be lost. Based on his own experience, Alper explained what characteristics a *hanutçu* should have as follows:

> At first, the boy would be evaluated by the shopkeepers. They pay attention to his interpretation of the work, how open he is, how fast he acts, how fast he learns. They look at how he sits, stands up, how he treats those who come and go. You know, they look to see if there is any development in the boy. First they evaluate, they talk among themselves. After evaluating them in this way, they decide whether they can get a commission on the goods sold in the shop. (Alper, born 1993 in Aksaray, Turk, *hanutçu*, worked in the bazaar since 2010)[292]

291 Eskiden hanutçular takım elbiseyle gelirlerdi çarşıya. Çok iyi İngilizce konuşurlardı. Üslup açısından etkileyici insanlardı. Onlar bir müşteriyle konuştukları zaman gerçekten cezbediyorlardı.

292 İlk başta esnaflar çocuğu ölçüyorlar. İşi yorumlamasına, ne kadar açık olduğuna, ne kadar hızlı davrandığına ne kadar hızlı öğrendiğine dikkat ederler. Oturmasına, kalkmasına, gelene gidene nasıl davrandığına bakarlar. Hani çocukta bir gelişim var mı ona bakıyorlar. Önce bir tartıyorlar, kendi aralarında konuşuyorlar. Öyle değerlendirdikten sonra dükkanda satılan mallar üzerinden komisyon alıp alamayacağına karar veriyorlar.

Throughout the interview, Alper only said that he worked on commission. He did not define his work with the word *hanutçuluk*. Because *hanutçuluk* had a negative connotation in the Grand Bazaar jargon, meaning unjust income. The *hanutçu*s, like Alper, who worked for a certain shop, claimed that they deserved a commission instead of a salary because they were successful in their work. "I work more comfortably here due to the fact that I sell on commission. I am more independent. The more I sell, the more commission I get. But the shopkeeper also benefits from this. He would not employ me here if he did not make a profit." (Alper, born 1993 in Aksaray, Turk, *hanutçu*, worked in the bazaar since 2010)[293]

Observing the *hanutçus* working in the shops of the Grand Bazaar, it is possible to conclude that they are successful sellers. Although shopkeepers are not happy to pay commissions, Alper explained how much he contributed to the shop he worked in by talking about his earnings in his first year as a *hanutçu*.

> I am giving an example from myself. Actually, there is a weekly system. They calculate weekly sales for employees like us. When I returned from the military service, I started working here directly. I was earning 3 times the minimum wage every month. Why should I work as a shop assistant for minimum wage if I can make such sales? (Alper, born 1993 in Aksaray, Turk, *hanutçu*, worked in the bazaar since 2010)[294]

Alper was trying to justify his work to a certain extent by giving examples based on his income. According to him, his work required great skill in terms

293 Burada komisyonla satış yapma durumundan kaynaklı olarak daha rahat çalışıyorum. Daha bağımsızım. Ben ne kadar satış yaparsam o kadar komisyon alıyorum. Ama bundan esnaf da karlı çıkıyor. Kar etmese beni burada çalıştırmaz ki.

294 Ben kendimden örnek veriyorum. Aslında şöyle haftalık sistemi dönüyor. Bizim gibi çalışanlar için haftalık satış üzerinden hesap yapıyorlar. Askerden dönünce burada işe başladım direkt. Asgari ücretin 3 katı para kazanıyordum her ay. Madem bu kadar satış yapabiliyorum neden asgari ücrete tezgahtarlık yapayım?

of sales. Therefore, he fully deserved his monthly income. However, the people who were *hanutçu*s on the streets of the bazaar were disturbing the customers and this caused the image of the bazaar to deteriorate. The fact that the *hanutçu*s worked in different ways made a difference in the way they perceived each other. In short, there was a difference between *hanutçuluk* in a shop and trying to earn a commission by contacting customers passing by on the street.

However, no matter how it is practiced, *hanutçuluk* is the most common informal income-generating opportunity in the bazaar. Since *hanutçu*s on the street are not attached to any shop, they do not feel obliged to declare their income to the state. Those who are attached to a shop usually do not take responsibility for their bureaucratic procedures since they receive a share of the profits as if they were a partner of the business. They can voluntarily declare their income to the relevant institutions. However, since an untaxed flow of hot money attracts people, *hanutçu*s usually earn income in a completely informal way.

The relationship of *hanutçu*s to informality is slightly different from other jobs in the bazaar. This is because intermeadiation or porterage is only informal, but there is also an illegal aspect in *hanutçuluk*. If a person is found engaging in *hanutçuluk*, they are prosecuted in accordance with the Misdemeanor Law in the Turkish Penal Code. Local authorities also take administrative action to prevent customers from being victimized through such brokerage activities. In this regard, Mustafa described his experience as follows:

> I am the one who got the biggest fine for *hanutçuluk* in the bazaar, and I am the one who did not do it. They closed my shop for 3 days for no reason. The man is a very big businessman in Bulgaria. The car he came in was a Porsche. The man says, "I can't walk around the bazaar by myself. I already have 50 jobs tied up, my head is full." When he comes to the Grand Bazaar, he calls me at the door and says, "Murat, can you pick me up?" I would even treat him to kebab because he loved kebab

> so much. We still see each other. These police officers follow him. So they thought I was a *hanutçu* and closed my shop for 3 days. (Murat, born 1977 in Malatya, Kurd, the owner of a watch shop, worked in the bazaar since 1991)[295]

Not all informal economic activities are illegal. However, *hanutçuluk* - unlike other forms of informal labor such as intermediation or portering - occupies a more ambiguous position, raising both moral and legal concerns. Despite this, bazaar actors often overlook or tacitly accept such practices as part of the pragmatic logic of everyday trade. While shopkeepers frequently speak of *hanutçuluk* in disparaging terms, many simultaneously participate in it, revealing a gap between normative discourse and economic behavior. For those engaged in *hanutçuluk*, it is viewed as a legitimate form of work that demands persuasive skill and a knack for salesmanship - qualities that, in their view, negate accusations of exploitation or unfair gain. Nevertheless, as with other informal occupations, *hanutçuluk* entails precarities and uncertainties that shape the lived experiences of those involved.

§ 4.4 Conclusion

The ethnographic findings presented in this chapter regarding porters, intermediaries, and *hanutçus* demonstrate that informal activities in the Grand Bazaar are shaped not merely by economic necessity but by deeply embedded social, moral, and cultural frameworks. These actors operate outside the scope

295 Çarşıda hanutçuluktan en büyük cezayı yiyen benim, yapmayan da benim. 3 gün kapattılar dükkanımı yok yere. Adam Bulgaristan'da çok büyük bir iş adamı. Herifin geldiği araba Porsche. Adam diyor ki "Ben tek başıma gezemem çarşıda. Zaten 50 tane iş bağlamışım, kafam dolu." Kapalıçarşı'ya gelince kapıda beni arar "Murat beni alabilir misin?" der. Hatta üstüne ben adama kebap ısmarlarım kebabı çok sevdiği için. Hala da görüşürüz. Bu zabıtalar peşine takılıyor. Adamı alıp kendi dükkanıma götürüyorum. Bu yüzden hanutçuluk yaptığımı düşünüp dükkanımı 3 gün kapattılar.

of formal regulations. However, the patterns observed in the field reveal that their practices are far from disordered - instead, they are systematically organized, structured, and governed by local norms.

The internal organization and income-sharing practices among porters enable a reinterpretation of Keith Hart's definition of the informal economy. In this chapter, Hart's concept of informality as activities taking place outside the "bureaucratic gaze" is recontextualized to show how, within the Grand Bazaar, such labor is regulated not by legal codification but through internal norms and collective moral frameworks. The porters' modes of collective action illustrate that informal activities are not a passive condition of marginality but an actively maintained form of organization.

Intermediaries, on the other hand, carry out roles that may appear disordered or ethically ambiguous from the outside, yet are based on practical knowledge, reputation, and the ability to match customers with shops. These findings correspond with Fanselow's concept of "bazaar rationality," in which seemingly chaotic market behavior is revealed to be contextually logical and strategically informed. The intermediaries' ability to assess which customer fits which shop, and their role in facilitating the flow of information within the bazaar, illuminate an internally coherent rationality that operates beyond formal institutional frameworks.

Moreover, Arrow's framework of moral hazard finds a concrete manifestation in the practice of *hanutçuluk*. In the relationships *hanutçus* establish with customers, their actions are largely unobservable from the customer's perspective, creating a transactional environment marked by unequal distribution of information and implicit conflicts of interest. While many of the actors interviewed in the field described this system as "common" or even a "necessity," their narratives also made visible the ways in which economic and moral contradictions coexist within the inner workings of the bazaar.

The findings of this chapter do more than describe the everyday roles of porters, intermediaries, and *hanutçus*. They reveal that informal work in the Grand Bazaar is not simply unregulated or chaotic. Instead, it is shaped by social relationships, trust-based practices, and local norms that help organize economic life. Rather than relying on formal rules, these actors operate through practical knowledge, reputation, and experience gained over time. Their activities reflect a system that is structured, adaptive, and deeply connected to the specific conditions of the bazaar.

In sum, this chapter demonstrates that informal labor in the Grand Bazaar is not a transient or exclusionary phenomenon. Rather, it is sustained through mechanisms of social capital, reciprocity, reputational governance, and pragmatic strategies. In doing so, the study offers both a conceptual and contextual contribution to the literature on informality, showing how theory and ethnographic reality are co-constituted through grounded, empirical engagement.

5

Conclusion

One of the most important elements that distinguishes the Grand Bazaar from other economic venues is that the bazaar is not only a shopping center, but also a structure where architectural, economic and historical developments in the centuries-long Ottoman - Republic of Turkey period can be traced. This is why it is frequently visited not only for commercial activities but also for touristic purposes. However, understanding the social and economic structure of the bazaar and its internal dynamics requires exploring its numerous layers. The bazaar represents a dynamic socio-cultural institution where traditional spatial and economic structures intersect with modern influences. It reflects broader shifts in culture and demography, illustrating not a rigid dichotomy between formal and informal economies, but rather a continuum of fluid, overlapping practices. Central to the functioning of the bazaar are deeply embedded social relations - kinship ties, familial networks, and interpersonal connections - which continue to shape economic exchange and social organization.

Central to the functioning of the bazaar are deeply embedded social relations - kinship ties, familial networks, and interpersonal connections - which

continue to shape economic exchange and social organization. One of the central contributions of this thesis is its empirical elaboration of trust as a relational and norm-based foundation of economic life. Building on the theoretical insights of Bourdieu and Granovetter, the findings show that economic activity in the bazaar is deeply embedded within interpersonal relationships and reputation-based networks. Trust, in this context, is not a general disposition but a selectively distributed and carefully maintained resource, reproduced through shared moral expectations. As such, the thesis moves beyond abstract notions of social capital to demonstrate how it operates concretely within everyday market practices.

Regardless of the specific nature of these practices, they tend to follow identifiable patterns. Foremost among them is the central role of kinship, familial ties, and interpersonal networks, which function as vital forms of social capital. These relationships are essential not only for gaining initial entry into the bazaar but also for achieving upward mobility - whether that means transitioning from wage labor to shop ownership. Such networks are as indispensable to a porter transporting goods as they are to a shopkeeper managing high-volume transactions. Often, these ties are reinforced by shared ethnicity, citizenship, or long-standing personal acquaintance, collectively weaving a dense web of trust and reciprocity throughout the bazaar.

Moreover, this research recontextualizes Keith Hart and Martha Alter Chen's concept of informality by showing how informal labor is not simply residual or marginal, but internally regulated through non-state mechanisms such as collective moral frameworks and negotiated codes of conduct. The internal organization of porters and their income-sharing practices, for instance, defy dominant policy framings of informal work as disorganized. Instead, they reflect a system of grassroots governance grounded in mutual accountability and historical continuity.

The thesis further expands this analysis by centering the roles of porters, intermediaries, and *hanutçus* - actors who are often marginalized or rendered invisible in mainstream market analysis. By examining their narratives of entry, labor practices, and socio-economic integration, the study reveals how informal labor is not peripheral but constitutive of the bazaar's economic operations. These actors operate within hierarchically structured but self-regulated networks, in which kinship and trust function as primary mechanisms of governance. This perspective offers a critical re-reading of Keith Hart's conception of informality, not merely as exclusion from bureaucratic gaze, but as the preservation of historically rooted and relationally organized forms of labor.

This thesis also treats gender not as a secondary concern but as a constitutive element of space, economic relations, and moral order. The Grand Bazaar is not male-dominated merely in demographic terms; its gendered character is also embedded in its spatial organization, institutional culture, and the symbolic language of trade. While women may appear in familial or exceptional roles, their broader economic agency is systematically constrained by limited access to social networks and by prevailing cultural norms.

Finally, by analyzing intergenerational commercial relations, the thesis intervenes in debates on economic continuity and change. While family-based transmission of knowledge and capital once ensured stability, this study shows how such models are now unevenly maintained - resilient in sectors like jewelry but increasingly eroded elsewhere due to shifting aspirations and urban precarity. This unevenness adds empirical nuance to theories of institutional persistence and change in informal economies.

In sum, this thesis contributes to economic anthropology by grounding abstract concepts - trust, informality, social capital, moral hazard - in the textured realities of a specific ethnographic site. It demonstrates that the Grand Bazaar operates not through binaries of formal - informal, but through lay-

ered, negotiated, and morally coded practices that challenge universalizing accounts of market behavior. In doing so, the thesis offers both a theoretical and empirical intervention, showing how the bazaar continues to be a generative site for rethinking economic life, institutional resilience, and the social production of value.

Throughout this thesis, I have greatly benefited from interviews and participant observation. Conducting ethnographic research in a vibrant, densely populated historical bazaar presented both enriching and challenging experiences. Accordingly, this work offers reflections and practical considerations for researchers intending to conduct fieldwork in similar commercial environments. It is intended as a modest guide, grounded in lived experience, for navigating the dynamic interplay of formal and informal practices in such spaces. I hope this thesis serves as a preliminary contribution to broader anthropological inquiries into informality and the socio-cultural life of traditional bazaars.

Appendix A Information of Interviewees

Agop was born in Istanbul in 1971. At the age of 16, he started working as a jewelry apprentice in his uncle's workshop. Now he is both a master jeweler and the owner of his own jewelry workshop. He can communicate with his customers in Turkish, English and Armenian. I met Agop through a mutual acquaintance, and we conducted the interview in his jewelry workshop in an *han* in the Grand Bazaar.

Akif was born in Adıyaman in 1957. With the help of a voucher, he started working as a porter at the Grand Bazaar in 1979. Before coming to the Grand Bazaar, he worked as a shepherd in Adıyaman. I met him through Mehmet and we conducted the interview at the entrance of an *han*.

Alex was born in Istanbul in 1970. Through his grandfather's acquaintances, he started working in a ceramic shop in the Grand Bazaar in 1990. After working as an apprentice for a while, he became a master and then a shop owner. He speaks English, Turkish and Armenian. We met him through a mutual acquaintance and conducted the interview in his ceramic shop in the bazaar.

Alper was born in Aksaray in 1993. In 2010, he started working as an apprentice in the same shop through his uncles who worked in a carpet shop in the Grand Bazaar. After 1 year of military service, he has been working as a *hanutçu* in a ceramic shop in the bazaar since 2015. He speaks English and Turkish fluently. I met him through a mutual acquaintance. We conducted the interview in his ceramic shop in the bazaar.

Aylin was born in Istanbul in 1952. They have been running a watch shop in the bazaar for two generations. When her father, a watchmaker, passed away 16 years ago, Aylin took over the business and as one of the few female shopkeepers of the Grand Bazaar, she continues the business with the help of a relative she knows. Aylin states that her grandfather was also a watchmaker and emphasizes that her father learned the business from his grandfather. She speaks English and Turkish. I met Aylin through Mehmet and we conducted the interview in an antique watch shop.

Bülent was born in Istanbul in 1954. His father, who came to the Grand Bazaar in 1944, opened this antique shop in 1957 after working in various jobs. Bülent started working in the bazaar when he was 10 years old and has been working in the same shop for 59 years. They have been trading antique silver and copper objects, jewelry and souvenirs for two generations. In addition to buying and selling antiques, he also deals with repairs. He can communicate with his customers in Turkish, English and German. I met Bülent through Mehmet, and we conducted the interview in his shop in the Cevahir Bedesteni in the Grand Bazaar.

Cahit was born in Istanbul in 1961. In 1978, after graduating from high school, he started working as a carpet apprentice in the Grand Bazaar to earn his pocket money while waiting for his university exam results. While studying at the university, he continued to come to the bazaar and work in the time he had left over from his classes. After graduating in 1982, he started working full time. He has been working as a salesperson in a handmade carpet shop in the bazaar for years. He speaks English fluently. I met Cahit through a mutual acquaintance. We conducted the interview in the carpet shop.

Cemil was born in 1968 in Süleymaniye, Istanbul. Originally from Malatya, the family has been running the carpet shop in the Grand Bazaar for two generations. When Cemil was 3 years old, his father brought him to the bazaar for the first time. After that, he continued to come to the shop when he had time off from school. He first learned how to repair carpets and rugs from the shop staff. After completing his military service, he started working full-time in the carpet shop. In the beginning, he worked as both an apprentice and a salesman in the shop, learning most of the details about carpets and carpet-making from his father. He can communicate with his customers in English, Turkish and Italian.

Daniel was born in Istanbul in 1991. He is the last member of an Armenian family that has been producing and selling jewelry in the same *han* in the Grand Bazaar for three generations. In the words of his grandfather, he is the last jewelry apprentice to enter the *han* where they work. In 1957, his grandfather started working in the Grand Bazaar and opened his own workshop after becoming a master. However, when Daniel started working in the Grand Bazaar, he was apprenticed not in his grandfather's workshop, but by another Armenian jeweler. After mastering his craft, he started working in his grandfather's shop. In addition to working at the counter in the jewelry workshop, he is also responsible for the sales process of the products. Now he owns his own jewelry workshop. He can communicate with his customers in Turkish, English and Armenian. I met Daniel through a mutual acquaintance, and we conducted the interview at his jewelry workshop in a *han* in the Grand Bazaar.

David was born in Istanbul in 1951. He belongs to a Jewish family from Istanbul. His father-in-law, the original owner, opened the shoe shop around 1960. After David retired from his job at a company in 1997, he started coming to

the Grand Bazaar on weekends to help his father-in-law and learn the business. After his father-in-law passed away, the two brothers-in-law continue to run the shop. They do not know how to make traditional shoes. But they have detailed knowledge about the products. They can communicate with their customers in Turkish and English. I met David through Mehmet and we conducted the interview in his shoe shop in the bazaar.

Ellis was born in Kayseri in 1941. After the death of his parents, the Armenian-born jeweler moved to Istanbul in 1957 to live with his uncle. With the recommendation of a neighbor's son, he started working as an apprentice for an Armenian jeweler in the Grand Bazaar in 1957. After his military service, he took permission from his master and opened his own jewelry workshop. He engaged in wholesale jewelry trade. He trained 22 jewelry apprentices in his workshop. Together with his nephew and grandson, they have been continuing the same business for three generations. He can communicate with his customers in Turkish, English and Armenian. I met Ellis through his grandson Daniel. We conducted the interview in his jewelry workshop in a *han* in the Grand Bazaar.

Kerem was born in Istanbul in 1996. His family, originally from Ağrı, has been engaged in foreign exchange, jewelry and gold business in the Grand Bazaar for two generations. The Grand Bazaar story begins when his father came to the bazaar about 30 years ago and opened a foreign exchange shop. Then they expanded into the jewelry sector, also in the bazaar. He has worked in his father's shop in the bazaar since he was a child. I met him through a mutual acquaintance of ours. Since they were doing foreign exchange and gold business, it was difficult to conduct an interview inside the shop due to the physical conditions. So we met in a café and conducted the interview.

Mehmet was born in Istanbul in 1966. Originally from Malatya, the family has been running the carpet shop in the Grand Bazaar for two generations. Born in 1940, his father has been trading carpets in the Grand Bazaar since 1957. Mehmet came to the bazaar and worked in his father's carpet shop in his spare time from primary school onwards. After his university education, he returned to the bazaar to work full-time. He started as his father's apprentice and today he is one of the oldest shopkeepers on the street where his shop is located. In addition to wholesale and retail sales of handmade carpets, he has also repaired carpets. In addition to the carpet business, he also owns a shop selling ceramic objects. He can communicate with customers in Turkish and English. I met him through a mutual acquaintance and we conducted the interview in his carpet shop in the Grand Bazaar.

Murat was born in Malatya in 1977. Of Kurdish origin, Murat came to Istanbul in 1991 and started working at the Grand Bazaar. He was a shepherd in Malatya. He found 2 vouchers he knew in the bazaar and started working as an apprentice for an Assyrian leatherworker from Diyarbakır. He then worked as an apprentice in textile and watch shops. In 2001, he opened a watch shop with a partner. In 2010, he left his partner and opened his own watch shop. He can communicate with his customers in English, Turkish, Kurdish and Russian. I met Murat through our mutual friend and we conducted the interview in Murat's watch shop.

Mustafa was born in Niğde in 1953. After working as a carpet wholesaler for a while, he started working as an intermediary in the Grand Bazaar in 1980 through acquaintances. I met him through Mehmet. We conducted the interview in a carpet shop.

Ohannes was born in Istanbul in 1948. He is a member of an Armenian family who immigrated to Istanbul from Kayseri in 1955. He runs the textile shop his father opened in 1955. From the age of 13 or 14, he started to work in the bazaar when he was out of school. After graduating from high school, he worked full-time as an apprentice for his father. He can communicate with his customers in 5 languages - Turkish, English, Armenian, Italian, French. I met Ohannes through Mehmet and we conducted the interview in his textile shop.

Osman's family, originally from Malatya, has earned income by working in different jobs in the Grand Bazaar for three generations. After his grandfather came to the bazaar as a porter in 1950, his father started a textile business in 1970. Osman came to Istanbul in 1971. After completing his university education, he worked as a physician for a while before quitting his profession in 1986. Since then, he has been trading textiles in the Grand Bazaar. He can communicate with the customers in English and Turkish. I met Osman through Mehmet and we conducted the interview in the courtyard of a *han* in the Grand Bazaar.

Rupen was born in Istanbul in 1997. His family, Armenians from Diyarbakir, has been engaged in the wholesale jewelry business in the Grand Bazaar for three generations. Since his childhood, Rupen has been coming to the bazaar and working in the shop in his spare time from school, and after graduating from university, he started working full time. He can communicate with his customers in English, Turkish, Italian and Armenian. I met him through a mutual friend and we conducted the interview in his jewelry shop.

Salih was born in Isparta in 1966. In 1996, he started working as an apprentice in a textile shop in the Grand Bazaar. 28 years ago, his relative in the bazaar recommended him and he started working in the shop where he works now.

He speaks Turkish and English with his customers. I met Salih through Mehmet. We conducted the interview in his textile shop in the bazaar.

Sefer was born in Adıyaman in 1966. He has been working as a porter at the Grand Bazaar since 1993. I met him through Akif. We interviewed him at the entrance of a *han*.

Vahap was born in Istanbul in 1979. His family, originally from Antalya, has been engaged in various businesses in the Grand Bazaar for two generations. When his father came to the Grand Bazaar, he was doing foreign exchange. He has been in the bazaar since he was 17 years old. When he came to the bazaar, he first worked as a carpet seller and then became a tile shopkeeper. He can communicate with the customers in English and Turkish. I met Vahap through Kerem and we conducted the interview in Vahap's ceramic shop.

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