

A Profile of the Labor Force in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul*

Cengiz Kırıl
Purdue University

Abstract

This article attempts to offer a detailed profile of the labor force in early nineteenth-century Istanbul. The primary source upon which this study is based is the register of an original Ottoman survey, conducted in the Istanbul districts of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn, where some 2,000 shops along with their work force of 6,000 people as well as 1,500 peddlers (working as, among other things, boatmen, fishermen, and water carriers) were listed in a comprehensive fashion. Through an examination of the register, this article seeks to illuminate the general characteristics of employment and shop sizes, the ethno-religious profile of the labor force, occupational patterns in connection with religious allegiances and migration networks, and the degree to which the military corps were involved in commercial activities. It also questions the supposed existence of an “ethnic division of labor” in labor market and commercial activities, and demonstrates the centrality of regional allegiances in occupational specializations.

With its spectacular size and diverse population, Istanbul, the Ottoman imperial center, was a magnet for visitors and workers alike. Notwithstanding the lack of official or reliable statistics, it can be estimated that the city had a population of at least 300,000 around the turn of the nineteenth century.¹ It was the major consumer of wealth, thanks to the Ottoman governing principle of provisioning the capital to feed this gigantic city. Yet, it was also the major source of wealth, attracting an incessant flow of migrants hoping to find food and subsistence. While the soup kitchens and the hospices provided by pious foundations kept the poor from starvation at most times, it was always possible to find a job through connections as a peddler or as an apprentice in one of the thousands of shops that lined its narrow streets.

It was a city inhabited by a religiously, ethnically, and linguistically diverse population within which Muslims were outnumbered for a good part of its history during the Ottoman era. Until the mid-nineteenth century, along with Muslims, three non-Muslim communities were granted official community status: Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. The official Ottoman classification of non-Muslim communities was neither purely in religious terms, nor in ethnic terms in the modern sense. Both Christian Greeks and Armenians, for instance, were given separate community status by the Ottoman administration, although the former had not been composed only of ethnic “Greeks,” but also of other Orthodox Christian communities and ethnic groups, such as, most prominently, Bulgarians and Albanians. There were several other confessional, linguistic, and

ethnic groups who could claim a distinct “identity” of their own. In this regard, for example, one could cite Albanians, Serbs, and Bulgarians who spoke their own languages, but nevertheless were recognized only as part of the Greek Orthodox church. Armenian Gregorian, Catholic, and (later in the century) Protestants who all spoke the same language were again legally recognized as part of the Armenian community. Among Muslims, too, there was ethnic and sectarian differentiation, including distinctions among Turks, Kurds, Albanians, Arabs, and other Muslim groups in Caucasia.

How these different linguistic, confessional, and ethnic groups lived, and how the patterns of everyday life shaped labor relations constitute a field about which Ottoman scholarship has produced very little. More often than not, the extant scholarship presented a distorted picture largely tainted with a priori assumptions. The most commonly held assumption is that Istanbul’s confessional communities had lived separately, with minimum interaction with others, and developed exclusive social bonds and allegiances within their own communities. Assumptions such as these transpose modern sentimentalities about “identity,” as well as the legalistic perspective that views the functioning of society within the contours of legally defined limits, to the early modern era.

It is established that every society functions outside the formal organization designed by its state and the legal system. Ottoman society was no exception. Defining these communities only with reference to their confessional or ethnic allegiances, with the assumption that the social bonds and allegiances created by co-religious and co-ethnic identities prevailed over other possible forms of social bonds, obviously results in a static definition. This, on the one hand, prevents us from appreciating the mobile and relational aspect of community relations in the Ottoman Empire, and it does not tell us anything about people’s sense of “identity” and collective allegiances, on the other hand.

The preconceived notion of the primacy of religious differences in defining social relations has a direct bearing upon the assessment of labor relations in the Ottoman Empire. It has generally been assumed, for instance, that there existed an “ethnic division of labor” in labor market and commercial activities, where the different religious and ethnic groups were specialized in certain professions due to certain inherent qualities they possessed. While non-Muslims, it has been claimed, dominated trade and commerce, Muslims predominantly worked in agriculture. It is interesting to note that a 1917 article² proposing this perspective has gone unchallenged for decades, and, notwithstanding more recent suspicion, continues to inform recent scholarship.³

This article provides a snapshot picture of Istanbul’s labor force at the turn of the nineteenth century. By using an Ottoman register on Istanbul’s *esnaf*—a generic term that refers to a variety of small businesses, from shopkeepers, gardeners, and peddlers to boatmen and porters—it attempts, first, to question the unwarranted assumption that describes the Ottoman labor market primarily on religious and ethnic allegiances, and to show the primacy of regional allegiances that cut across confessional divisions. Second, it seeks to illuminate the general characteristics of the labor force in terms of job specialization, ethno-religious

profiles, employment patterns, and migration networks. And third, it attempts to uncover the degree to which the Ottoman military corps of the Janissaries was involved in commercial activities.

The *esnaf* register upon which this article is based lists 1,859 commercial shops, workshops, and gardens in various locations around the Golden Horn (particularly the Eyüp and Hasköy regions) and the west side of the Bosphorus, two major districts containing numerous neighborhoods in Istanbul.⁴ It contains information on the types of commercial shops and gardens, and the names and titles (if any) of the artisans, shopkeepers, and their employees. The same type of information has also been recorded for all boatmen and porters working at various piers in these two districts, water carriers in various neighborhoods, and freelance carpenters. For the entire work force recorded in the register, it is possible to find information on where they resided as well as their place or province of origin if they were recent immigrants. Furthermore, because the shops were sequentially listed according to their locations, it is possible to create a complete topography of Istanbul's *esnaf* in these two regions. Thus, it is perhaps one of the most comprehensive and detailed registers on Istanbul's *esnaf* that has been unearthed so far.⁵

The first region that the register covers extends from the Defterdar pier at the southwestern shore of the Golden Horn to Sütluce and Hasköy on the northeastern shore. Between these two points stood Eyüp, the most important district, in part because it was the largest settlement outside the old city, but also because it was a holy site for Muslim pilgrimages.⁶ It was populated overwhelmingly by Muslims, in contrast to the neighboring district of Hasköy, which was inhabited mainly by the Jews.

The western bank of the Bosphorus, the second area that the register covers, extends from Dolmabahçe-Beşiktaş to Rumeli Kavağı, the furthest northern point of the Bosphorus, connecting the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea. Witnessing a spectacular growth during the course of the eighteenth century, the Bosphorus waterfront was full of kiosks belonging to members of the upper class.⁷ The inhabitants of this region were ethnically and religiously mixed, although certain confessional groups predominated in certain parts. Ortaköy, for instance, was densely populated by the Jews, and Arnavutköy by Greeks. Thus, the economic, social, and religious demography of this region displayed quite different features from those of the Golden Horn.

Of the 1,859 commercial workplaces listed in the register, 148 were fruit and vegetable gardens. Owned mainly by members of the administrative elite and rented out to gardeners and fruit vendors, these gardens were scattered throughout the city. The remaining 1,711 workplaces were commercial shops. While some eighty of them were vacant at the time, the rest were operating in more than 140 different branches. Some 214 coffeehouses made up the largest subgroup in both districts, followed by grocery stores and barbershops. While a combined total of 4,367 laborers, masters, and their employees were working in 1,774 shops and gardens, some 1,377 were boatmen, fishermen, porters, water carriers, carpenters, and bricklayers. The register thus contains a record of 5,744

people altogether. Such a sizeable sample should allow us to make some observations about Istanbul's typical labor force at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, it would be difficult to use this sample as a basis for general observations about the whole empire. Istanbul's work force profile may have been unique, but in the absence of any comparable data we are unable to assess the validity of our findings in a comparative framework.⁸

General Characteristics of Labor

Most craft shops were sites of both production and retail. In contrast to purely commercial shops, such as coffeehouses, barbershops, and groceries, which lay scattered throughout the city, craftsmen tended to work side by side in the same locality. All shops and workshops were small-scale. Large-scale factories or workshops, such as state-owned military factories, which employed fifty to 100 workers, remained exceptional in the early nineteenth century. Overall, the number of laborers in a shop averaged around 2.5, which typically consisted of a master, a journeyman, and an apprentice. The majority of them, however, were run only by the master/shopkeeper. As Table 1 indicates below, whereas nearly forty percent of the shops in these two regions were run by shopkeepers alone,

TABLE 1. Distribution of Shop sizes

Golden Horn			Bosphorus		
No of worker*	Total	% Value	No of worker	Total	% Value
1	400	43.10%	1	313	37.00%
2	229	24.68%	2	286	33.81%
3	172	18.53%	3	119	14.07%
4	59	6.36%	4	44	5.20%
5	18	1.94%	5	23	2.72%
6	8	0.86%	6	12	1.42%
7	2	0.22%	7	14	1.65%
8	7	0.75%	8	11	1.30%
9	2	0.22%	9	4	0.47%
10	2	0.22%	10	2	0.24%
11	3	0.32%	11	8	0.95%
12	1	0.11%	12	2	0.24%
13	5	0.54%	13	4	0.47%
14	3	0.32%	14	1	0.12%
15	3	0.32%	15	1	0.12%
16	5	0.54%	16	1	0.12%
17	6	0.65%	20	1	0.12%
21	1	0.11%	Total	846	100.00%
26	1	0.11%			
Total	928	100.00%			

*Including shopkeepers/masters.

those employing more than five barely exceeded ten percent. The shops employing more than fifteen workers, almost all of which were bakeries, remained exceptional.

Shops run by Muslims and non-Muslim lined the streets side by side. The religious distribution of masters, including shopkeepers and gardeners, shows that all communities—Muslim and non-Muslim alike—were actively involved in commercial and artisanal activities, more or less in proportion to their actual demographic weight within Istanbul's population. The only exception seems to be the Jews, who constituted less than six percent of the population, but represented fourteen percent of the shopkeepers in early-nineteenth century Istanbul. Jews are overrepresented because the register covers the areas that were densely populated by the Jews (Hasköy and Ortaköy), and because they tended heavily to work in one-person shops. The religious distribution of workers in shops and gardens (Table 2) and peddlers—which include boatmen, porters, water carriers, and fishermen (Table 4)—appears to have been more balanced in comparison to the demographic weight of each group.

Almost all the shops run by Jews were located in Hasköy and Ortaköy and run either by the shopkeeper alone or by the shopkeeper and/or a journeyman/apprentice. Overall, the average number of people working in the shops run by Jews was 1.47 percent, far below the general average of employment of 2.5 percent in the two districts concerned. While this figure was 2.16 percent for Muslims and 2.9 percent for Greeks, it was around 3.3 percent for Armenians, largely because of their near monopoly on bakeries that employed numerous workers.

Shop sizes provide some, albeit not very reliable, clues about the approximate wealth that artisans and shopkeepers possessed. What we can more adequately ascertain on the basis of the available data are their respective social standings, which can be derived from the titles associated with their names. This source of data has its own limitations, of course, since these titles are almost exclusively given to Muslims.¹⁰ Nevertheless, from these titles, one can figure out whether the person in question was a member of military or religious orders or an ordinary taxpayer. Out of 803 Muslim shopkeepers, forty-two percent bore a title. More significantly, half of these titles were military titles such as *beşe*, *bostani*, *bölükbaşı*, or *odabaşı*. Put differently, about one out of five Muslim

TABLE 2. Religious Distribution of Employers⁹

	Golden Horn	Bosphorus	Total	Percent Value
Armenian	143	127	270	15%
Greek	208	322	530	30%
Jewish	151	94	245	14%
Muslim	426	303	729	41%
TOTAL	928	846	1774	100%

TABLE 3. Religious Distribution of Employees

	Golden Horn	Bosphorus	Total	Percent Value
Armenian	378	236	614	24%
Greek	454	598	1052	40%
Jewish	56	68	124	5%
Muslim	475	328	803	31%
TOTAL	1363	1230	2593	100%

shopkeepers was associated with the Janissary military corps. The involvement of Janissaries in commercial activities started as early as the seventeenth century and continued at an accelerated pace until the violent destruction of the corps in 1826. At the turn of the nineteenth century, their presence in trade and commerce was probably at a peak; thus, their high concentration among shopkeepers should not come as a surprise.¹¹ This did not necessarily mean, however, that they remained effective troops in addition to being artisans and shopkeepers. Many individuals entered the corps to obtain its privileges, such as tax exemption and judicial immunity, not to mention the advantages of being part of the potent political power that displayed itself in numerous Janissary rebellions in Istanbul.¹² Nevertheless, a number of shopkeepers bearing Janissary titles indicated barracks as their place of residence, demonstrating that at least some of them were more than nominal troops, and kept organic ties with the corps.

Craft associations apparently found it beneficial to have members from the Janissary corps. Many such associations tended to elect their stewards (*kethüda*) and deputy-stewards (*yiğitbaşı*) from among Janissaries in order to have a greater voice in their dealings with the state. The steward of water carriers, the steward of porters at the Defterdar pier in Eyüp, the deputy steward of porters at the Eyüp pier, and the stewards of boatmen at the Paşa, Piri Paşa, and Halıcıoğlu piers in the Golden Horn were all Janissaries. This tendency was also present in craft associations, the members of which were predominantly non-Muslim. Ömer Beşe, the steward of gardeners, for example, was apparently a

TABLE 4. Religious Distribution of Peddlers

	Golden Horn	Bosphorus	Total	Percent Value
Armenian	160	67	227	17%
Greek	35	272	307	22%
Jewish	106	19	125	9%
Muslim	279	439	718	52%
TOTAL	580	797	1377	100%

Janissary, although ninety-five percent of the gardeners were Orthodox Christians.

Equally important were religious titles, such as *molla* (student of the Islamic religion), *seyyid* (descendant of the prophet Muhammad), and *hacı* (one who completed the pilgrimage to Mecca), which enabled their bearers to acquire social and economic privileges. *Mollas* and *seyyids*, for instance, were exempted from taxation, and were likely to have accumulated more wealth than others. Similarly, the considerable proportion of *hacıs* suggests that these people must have possessed significant wealth, since pilgrimages were a religious obligation only for those who had the necessary financial means.

Religion and Occupation

As the figures given above make it clear, the assumption of a so-called “ethnic division of labor”—to put it more correctly, “religious division of labor”—that views Muslims predominantly as humble rural labor is far from true. Yet the question that remains to be answered in a more in-depth analysis is whether there was a meaningful correlation between specific occupational patterns and religious allegiances. As a matter of fact, a cursory examination of the register gives the impression that certain religious groups specialized in particular occupations. However, as the following section will make clear, the inaccuracy of the “ethnic division of labor” argument stems not only from its teleological bias in its analysis of a non-nation-state formation and its exclusive emphasis on ethno-religious bonds at the expense of other possible social allegiances, but also from its incompleteness. In other words, even though it is possible to observe the dominance of a religious community in a particular occupation, it is still superficial to talk about an “ethno-religious division of labor” without taking into consideration other possible forms of allegiances that may have played a role in job specialization and employment patterns. In what follows, occupational patterns will first be analyzed in connection with religious allegiances, and then in connection with workers’ provinces of origin.

For instance, Greeks ran 129 out of 148 gardens and vegetable gardens in the two regions. Out of the remaining nineteen gardens and vegetable gardens, Muslims ran eighteen and an Armenian ran one. As for the employees working in the gardens, the results are even more striking: one Armenian, thirty-four Muslims, and 303 Greeks. When the employers and employees are combined, out of the total work force of 486 people in gardens and vegetable gardens, approximately eighty-nine per cent were Greeks, and the remainder were Muslims.¹³

Similarly, Greeks were also heavily concentrated in grocery shops. There were 142 grocery shops in the two regions in the early nineteenth century, and 108 of them, over three out of four, were run by Greeks. Jews were also a significant presence with thirty-one shops, all of which were located in Hasköy and Ortaköy. There were only two Muslim grocers and one Armenian. The size of the grocery shops run by Greeks appears to have been much larger than the gro-

cery shops run by other communities. There were only thirteen Jewish apprentices working in the grocery shops run by the Jews, the remaining work force consisting entirely of Greeks. This means that in a typical grocery shop run by Greeks, three or four men were working, while in the grocery shops run by other communities, the number of workers did not exceed one or two. It is also worth mentioning that one of the two Muslim grocers had three employees, all of whom were again Greeks. Even this example alone is a good indication of the expertise and the indisputable dominance of Greeks in this business.¹⁴

Bakeries and mills in the two regions were also heavily dominated by a single community: Armenians. In the early nineteenth century, among the forty bakeries and mills that were operating in the two regions, thirty-one belonged to Armenians, six to Greeks, and three to Muslims. Five out of the six bakeries that belonged to the Greeks were located along the Bosphorus, where they lived predominately. As to the employment figures, we see, not surprisingly, that the work force was heavily dominated by Armenians. Out of the 424 people working in the bakeries and mills, 286 were Armenians, ninety were Muslims, forty-six were Greeks, and two were Jewish. In other words, Armenians formed nearly seventy percent of the work force.

Armenians were also represented in significant numbers in pottery shops. Out of forty-six potters, thirty (sixty-five percent), were run by Armenians, fourteen by Muslims, and two by Jews. As to their employees, we see again Armenians predominantly: seventy-six Armenians, thirty-one Muslims, four Greeks, and one Jew.

Bathhouses, on the other hand, were run exclusively by Muslims. All of the twenty-six bathhouses operating at that time in the two regions were in the hands of Muslim entrepreneurs. Not all of their employees were Muslims, however. Twenty-nine Armenians, two Jews, and two Greeks worked along with 137 Muslims.

The above examples show some of the occupations with the most numerous employees. It is also important to highlight that different confessional groups specialized, sometimes exclusively and sometimes to a large extent, in certain occupations. For instance, Muslims worked heavily at varying degrees, among other professions, as barbers, tanners, toy makers, ironmongers, blacksmiths, and tinsmiths; Greeks as cloak-makers, clotted-cream makers, candle-makers, and furriers; Armenians as locksmiths, tailors, and tobacco sellers; and Jews as silk-dealers, physicians, and tinplate makers. Nevertheless, several other professions were practiced by people from different religions. To give a few examples: herbalists by Muslims and Jews; taverns by Greeks and Jews; cooks by Greeks, Armenians, and Muslims; and greengrocers and butchers by Muslims, Jews, and Greeks.

On the one hand, there was a tendency—especially in small-scale shops such as grocery shops, tobacco shops, or barbershops—for the master and his employee(s) to be largely from the same religion. On the other hand, this was not the case in larger-scale shops such as bakeries, bathhouses, potters, and slaughterhouses employing more than five or six people. Moreover, it is impor-

tant to note at this point that the Ottoman government (as a measure to keep the work force under supervision) required each shopkeeper to stand surety both for his employees and for another shopkeeper he knew—which, in fact, seems to be one of the reasons for the preparation of the register in question. In nearly 2,000 shops recorded in the register, the person standing surety for a shopkeeper was usually his next-door shopkeeper, no matter what his religion, even in cases where a shopkeeper from the same religion would be present a few shops ahead. Moreover, partnership of masters from different religions was not infrequent, although partnership does not appear to have been a common phenomenon in early nineteenth-century Istanbul.

The occupational pattern in connection with religious allegiance was in fact similar to residential patterns of Istanbul neighborhoods with respect to the religious composition of their inhabitants. Overall, neighborhoods in Istanbul were mixed in terms of social classes, and usually predominantly inhabited by a single religious group. However, the terms that one frequently encounters in archival documents, such as Muslim neighborhood or Greek neighborhood, should not be taken to mean that they necessarily were inhabited entirely by a single confessional group, but refer to the confessional majority of its inhabitants.

Shopkeepers tended to live in close proximity to their place of work. In the majority of cases, the master's shop and home were either in the same neighborhood, or within walking distance, even if they were in different neighborhoods. It was, however, sometimes possible to find cases in which the master had to commute from his home in distant localities to reach his shop every morning. In the Golden Horn region, especially Greeks, and to a lesser extent Muslims, were among this category.

Yet most shopkeepers lived in their shops. Twenty-six percent of shopkeepers and ninety-seven percent of gardeners lived in a room in their workplace. When combined, then, nearly one-third of the shop owners did not have a separate house, and adopted their workplaces as their homes. Concerning the confessional composition of shopkeepers who lived in their workplaces, we reach even more striking results, as shown in Table 5.

Along with the shopkeepers, we also have data for nearly 3,000 employees working in the shops and gardens of the two regions. The proportion of employees who lived in the shops and gardens where they were employed was sixty-nine percent and ninety-seven percent, respectively, bringing the average tendency of living at workplace to seventy-three percent. The remaining twenty-seven percent resided in their master's house or in other places such as coffeehouses, inns, and bachelor chambers.

When masters and their employees are combined, we find that 2,457 of the total work force of 4,267 (fifty-six percent) were residing in their shops. Although it is hard to establish a one-to-one relationship between living in one's workplace and being an immigrant, there is no doubt that most of the shopkeepers and their employees living in their workplaces were immigrants, the subject to which we now turn.

TABLE 5. Religious Distribution of Shopkeepers Residing in Workplace

	Shop	Garden	Total	Percent Value
Armenian	59	—	59	10%
Greek	240	129	369	63%
Jewish	2	—	2	0.3%
Muslim	139	15	154	26%
TOTAL	440	144	584	100%

Immigration and Profession

In most cases, the register indicates whether the person concerned was a local or his province of origin, thereby allowing us to measure the volume of migration and the proportion of immigrants among the work force more authoritatively than living-in-workplace criteria had provided. There are some problems, however, that should be addressed to further refine the status of migrants. The first problem concerns the vague meaning of the term “local,” which does not necessarily prove Istanbul as the birthplace. Some workers identified as locals may have been born outside and migrated to Istanbul some time ago, but in the absence of information as to the time criteria for the passage from immigrant to local status, we are unable to differentiate locals and immigrants in a clearcut fashion. The second problem concerns the nature of migration: It is impossible to distinguish seasonal or temporary workers from those who intended to stay permanently. Gardeners, for instance, nearly all of whom were immigrants, may have been of temporary status, coming to Istanbul annually at harvest times.

Notwithstanding these problems, a quick glance at the register reveals how much the labor market consisted of newcomers. In a rough estimate, around two-third of the masters—shopkeepers and garden stewards—were local, and the remainder were immigrants. The proportion was much higher among employees and peddlers: fifty-six percent. Thus, nearly half of the total work force—masters, employees, and peddlers combined—were immigrants in the two regions at the turn of the nineteenth century.

It is also significant to point out that the volume of migration was high despite all the strong measures the Ottoman government had taken to prevent it. From the seventeenth century onwards, the Ottoman state, which formerly had encouraged migration to Istanbul, continuously tried to stop the massive flow of immigrants from Anatolia and Rumelia to the capital city. Preventing migration was a pressing problem for Ottoman authorities, especially throughout the eighteenth century. The abundance and frequency of the decrees issued to prevent the continuous flow of immigrants in this period indicate both how much importance the state attributed to stopping migration to Istanbul and how it constantly failed to achieve this end. The authorities were driven as much by eco-

conomic considerations—the problem of feeding an overpopulated city and the erosion of tax revenues from rural provinces—as by political factors in attempting to prevent migration. Immigrants were viewed by the authorities, first and foremost, as potential criminals without a fixed place of residence, upsetting the neighborhood life of Istanbul. Yet, the city needed these immigrants, without which it could not sustain its population, an impasse that most early modern governments had to confront.

As Table 6 shows below, the two regions received immigrants both from Rumelia and from Anatolia.¹⁵ There was not a single Jew who migrated from outside Istanbul. Most of those who migrated from the Rumelian provinces were Greeks and, to a lesser extent, Muslims. Anatolian immigrants, however, were usually Muslims and Armenians.

Considering the volume of migration to the city and the still massive territories of the empire, immigrants came from a limited number of districts.¹⁸ Moreover, a quick glance at the map further illustrates that the localities from which migrants came are concentrated only in a few regions (Map I). This phenomenon was related with the structure of chain migration through networks linking those at the point of origin with others at the destination.¹⁹ Being from the same village or town or region appears to have been the most important common factor informing the interaction of immigrants and those already settled in Istanbul. In fact, here is the single most significant characteristic of the structure of migration to Istanbul, as revealed in the register: Immigrants who came from the same town tended to work not only in the same profession but together as well. It was rare to find a workplace where the master and his journeymen and apprentices had migrated from different regions. This indicates the social arrangement between masters and workers in that the former provided employment as well as accommodation, which was, as we saw above, apparent in the high proportion of workers living in their workplace, in return for (probably) low wages and overwork. The following examples drawn from the types of *esnaf* employing large numbers of people are enough to illustrate this phenomenon.

Grocers: Of the sixty-five grocers in the Golden Horn, forty-five were “Greeks,” all of whom were immigrants, and, other than the two of them residing in an inn, all were sleeping in their shops. The remaining twenty grocers included nineteen local Jews and one Muslim, whose place of origin was unidentified, but who was probably a local, too. Half of the Greek grocery shopkeepers along with their journeymen and apprentices migrated from Grevena, and the rest from other towns in the Balkans, especially Yanina and Larisa.

In the Bosphorus region, too, we see a similar phenomenon. Sixty-three of seventy-seven grocers were Greek immigrants, who came predominantly from Agrafta, Larisa, Yanina, Morea, and Grevena. It is also important to note that while immigrants from Grevena, which provided Istanbul with most of its grocers, tended to settle both in the neighborhoods of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus, those who settled in the former worked predominantly at grocery shops, and those who settled in the latter worked at gardens and vegetable gar-

TABLE 6. Distribution of Major Towns Sending Migrants to the Golden Horn and Bosphorus¹⁶

Town	Golden Horn	Bosphorus	Total	Percent
Sivas (A)	137	59	196	9
Karahisar (A)	56	90	146	7
Geyve (A)	142	-	142	7
Yanina (Yanya-R)	37	101	138	7
Grevena (Grebeneş-R)	65	70	135	6
Permet (Premedi-R)	106	4	110	5
Monastir (Manastır-R)	78	19	98	5
Vlorë (Avlonya-R)	12	56	78	4
Plovdiv (Filibe-R)	27	51	78	4
Eğir (A)	29	45	74	4
Ohrid (Ohri-R)	34	32	66	3
Agrafa (R)	1	38	39	2
Niğde (A)	35	3	38	2
Larisa (Yenişehir-R)	8	25	33	2
Erzurum (A)	21	10	31	1
Kayseri (A)	26	4	30	1
Safranbolu (A)	5	23	28	1
Ereğli (A)	7	19	26	1
Tokat (A)	26	-	26	1
Kuruçay (A)	19	6	25	1
Chios (Sakız-R)	16	9	25	1
Kastamonu (A)	7	14	21	1
Tosya (A)	19	2	21	1
Wallachia (Eflak-R)	7	13	20	1
Diber (Dibre-R)	9	9	18	1
Morea (Mora-R)	4	14	18	1
Nevşehir (A)	9	8	17	1
Korçe (Görice) (R)	10	6	16	1
Bolu (A)	13	2	15	1
Divriği (A)	1	5 -	15	1
Turnovo (Tirnovi-R)	5	10	15	1
Trabzon (A)	4	11	15	1
Edirne (R)	5	6	11	1
OTHER ¹⁷			338	16
TOTAL			2102	100

dens, as we will see shortly. We find somewhat surprisingly that in the Golden Horn there was not a single immigrant working as grocer from Agrafa, the most frequently mentioned place of origin for the Greek grocers in the Bosphorus—thirteen out of a total of fourteen immigrants. This demonstrates how the networks of migration operated: Neither job specialization nor the place of settle-

ment at the destination was arbitrary or fortuitous. It explains why there were so many grocers from Grevena and not any from Agrafta in Eyüp, while there were few grocers but numerous gardeners from Grevena in the Bosphorus. Moreover, there was not a single emigrant from this town active in a type of profession other than grocer and gardener.

Gardens and Vegetable Gardens: Most of the gardens and vegetable gardens in the two regions were cultivated by members of the Greek community. Working as tenants in these gardens (which belonged to members of the high military and administrative class), all gardeners—masters and employees alike—were migrants and sleeping in makeshift houses that they built in the gardens. They migrated mostly from Permet, Ohrid, Grevena, Monastir, Vlorë, and Yanina (in that order), all geographically close to one another. It is also worth mentioning in passing that all of the migrants from Ohrid, ninety-five percent of migrants from Permet, and more than half of the migrants from Monastir were working only at gardens and vegetable gardens.

Bakeries and Mills: Out of the forty bakers and millers operating in the two regions, thirty-one were Armenians, six were Greeks, and three were Muslims. Except two Armenians whose places of origin were unidentified, all of them were migrants and residing in their shops. More than half of the Armenian bakers were from Eğin, and the remainder migrated from Karahisar, Kuruçay, Erzurum, Sivas, and Divriği (in that order). These towns, which supplied Istanbul with nearly eighty percent of its bakers, were all located in eastern Anatolia, and situated in a region with a sixty-mile radius. The Greek and Muslim bakers, on the other hand, were mainly from the Balkan towns of Vlorë, Yanina, Vize, Chios, and Monastir. Where their employees were concerned, the statistics are even more striking. Regardless of the religion of bakers, nearly all of their employees, whether Armenian or Muslim, migrated from the eastern Anatolian towns cited above.

We can extend our list of examples: While all bathhouse keepers were Muslim, their employees consisted of different confessional communities. Yet, almost the entire work force, regardless of religious affiliation, was from the central Anatolian town of Sivas. Similarly, twelve Armenian, Greek, and Muslim straw sellers and their employees were exclusively from Niğde, a town in central Anatolia. Again from religiously mixed groups, porters were from Divriği, Sivas, Eğin, and Erzurum; water carriers from Karahisar and Erzurum; bargemen from Kemah, Van, Karahisar, and Harput, all geographically close.

The strong presence of regional allegiances suggests that the general migration pattern was not shaped by individual decision-makers who were adventurous enough to take the risk of migrating alone to a gigantic city with a competitive labor market, but by groups of people linked by place of origin.²⁰ This was a survival strategy for most migrants who had little chance to make a living without resorting to networks connecting those at the destination to those at the origin. The kind of allegiance that defined these networks is the key to understanding occupational specialization and workers' identities.

It does not follow that these migration networks were immutable, or that

job skills acquired in the origin of province had any close relation to later occupational specialization. Job skills were most likely acquired at the point of destination, not at the point of origin. As migration networks changed, occupational specialization changed, too. For example, as we have seen above, Eğin, a town in eastern Anatolia, supplied most of the bakers through chain migration in early nineteenth-century Istanbul. Towards the mid-nineteenth century, however, most of the migrants from Eğin were butchers.²¹

Conclusion

A snapshot picture of the labor force in Istanbul at the turn of the nineteenth century, as presented in this article, provides some important observations as well as questions that need to be explored further. Most of the findings of this article should not come as a surprise for many Ottoman labor historians who have been striving hard to separate myth from reality in this undeveloped field, which is often tainted with faulty generalizations. Thus, this article provides an empirical basis for or statistical confirmation of Ottoman labor historians' recent intuitive skepticism concerning longstanding assumptions about the Ottoman labor force, especially the assumption of a so-called "ethnic division of labor."

In line with the supposed validity of the "ethnic division of labor" thesis, it has long been claimed that non-Muslims dominated manufacturing, trade, and commerce, while Muslims dominated agriculture and administrative positions. This division of labor purportedly corresponded to the respective competence and performance of the different religious communities living in the empire. However, Muslims were strongly present in commercial activities, and most of them could hardly be called humble, given the significant frequency of titles associated with Muslim craftsmen and the social and economic privileges attached to these titles.

Our data have also shown that regional allegiances were most central in occupational specialization and often prevailed over other social bonds stemming from confessional and ethnic allegiances. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of religious and regional allegiances among the work force should not lead us to easy conclusions. The point here is neither to ignore the role religious allegiances might have played in shaping workers' identities, nor to replace one essentialist notion, "ethno-religious division of labor," with another, "regional division of labor." What is important is to emphasize the multiplicity of social bonds and allegiances, which were not limited to religion and region. Working in the same marketplace, membership in the same guild, or residence in the same neighborhood are but a few examples of such bonds that coexisted with, and often cut across, religious or regional allegiances.²² Moreover, these bonds may have showed spatial variations and were constantly in the process of temporal transformation. Thus, the validity of the observations presented in this article is limited to the time period and geography we have studied. We can only hope that further studies provide us with a comparative framework that may improve our understanding of the Ottoman labor force.

NOTES

* I am grateful to Donald Quataert for his comments and criticisms. I also thank Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj, Biray Kırılı, and Nadir Özbek, who read an earlier version of this article and offered useful suggestions.

1. For estimates, see Cem Behar, *The Population of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara, 1996), 22, 70; and Halil İnalcık, "Istanbul," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1973), second edition, vol. 4, 243–44.

2. A. J. Sussnitzki, "Zur Gliederung wirtschaftlicher Arbeit nach Nationalitäten in der Türkei," *Archiv Wirtschaftsforschung im Orient* II (1917):382–407. An English translation appeared in "Ethnic Division of Labor," in *The Economic and Social History of the Middle East, 1800–1914*, ed. Charles Issawi (Chicago, 1966), 114–125.

3. Charles Issawi, "Transformations of the Economic Positions of the Millets in the Nineteenth Century," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York, 1982), 261–86; and idem, *The Economic History of Turkey, 1800–1914* (Chicago, 1980).

4. The Prime Minister's Archive, İstanbul, Başmuhasebe-DBŞM # 42648. This register is undated; its form and content, however, suggest that it was drawn up around the turn of the nineteenth century.

5. The standard work on İstanbul's *esnaf*, albeit for an earlier period, is that of Robert Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1962). However, he uses Evliya Çelebi extensively, whose figures are notoriously inflationary. For some other works covering Anatolia, see Suraiya Faroqi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting, 1520–1650* (New York, 1984); Ömer Demirel, *II. Mahmut Döneminde Sivas'ta Esnaf Teşkilatı ve Üretim-Tüketim İlişkileri* (Ankara, 1989); Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* (Ankara, 1991); and Yüksel Duman, "Notables, Textiles, and Copper in Ottoman Tokat" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 1998).

6. Tülay Artan, ed., *Eyüp: Dün/Bugün* (İstanbul, 1994); Tülay Artan, ed., *18. Yüzyıl Kadı Sicilleri Işığında Eyüp'te Sosyal Yaşam* (İstanbul, 1998).

7. Tülay Artan, "Architecture as a Theater of Life: Profile of the Eighteenth Century Bosphorus" (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989).

8. Detailed statistical data supporting the above analysis are available in the form of two appendices on "The frequency of types of activities in the Golden Horn and Bosphorus" and "Employment figures of *esnaf*." These are available from the author upon request, at *Ckir i@sla.purdue.edu*. By analyzing the register alone, what we can say about the organizational structure of this work force is rather limited. We do not know, for instance, to what extent the labor force recorded in the register was organized in a tight guild structure. Even though the term *esnaf* denotes more or less organized labor, it would be misleading to equate *esnaf* with guild.

9. The register does not indicate the religious identity of the person in question, with the exception of Jews in a few instances. While it is possible to distinguish Muslim names, and, to a large extent, Jewish names with a certain precision, this is not always the case when the Armenians and the Greeks are concerned, due to the commonality of certain names widely employed by both groups. Thus, the religious distribution shown in the tables may inevitably bear some errors. Further, it is impossible to distinguish between "Greeks" and other Orthodox Christians by names alone. In other words, the term "Greek" here, following official Ottoman classification, refers to all Orthodox Christians regardless of their ethnic origin and language. Last, names also show whether the person concerned was a man or a woman, but not much need arose for this, since there was only one record of a woman: Ayşe Hanım, a bathhouse keeper in Eyüp.

10. Non-Muslims could also be given titles, such as *acı*, which refers to those who performed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But our register does not mention any such non-Muslims.

11. On Janissary and *esnaf* connections, see Cemal Kafadar, "Yeniçeri-Esnaf Relations: Solidarity and Conflict" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1981); Donald Quataert, "Janissaries, Artisans and the Question of Ottoman Decline, 1730–1826," in *Workers, Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730–1914*, ed., Donald Quataert (İstanbul, 1993), 197–203; Robert Olson, "The Esnaf and the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730: A Realignment in Ottoman Politics?" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20 (1976):329–44; and "Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in İstanbul," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 22 (1978):185–207.

12. İnalçık, "İstanbul," 242.
13. The presence of two Armenians, who were working in a garden small enough to be cultivated by two people, is insignificant. It is also interesting to note that there was not a single Jew working in the gardens and vegetable gardens.
14. Compare Suraiya Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater İstanbul' as Reflected in the Kadı Registers of Eyüp," *Turcica* 30 (1998):176–77.
15. The ratio of migrants from Rumelia (fifty-one percent with 898 people) is slightly bigger than that of migrants from Anatolia (forty-nine percent with 866 people).
16. (A) refers to Anatolia, (R) to Rumelia.
17. This includes the localities from which less than ten migrants came, as well as those whose names I was unable to decipher and locate (around fifty) due to name changes since the nineteenth century.
18. Compare a similar observation for the mid-eighteenth century, Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century Greater İstanbul," 163–183.
19. For an insightful article on networks in the context of migration, see Charles Tilly, "Transplanted Networks," in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology and Politics*, ed. Yans McLaughlin (New York, 1990), 79–95.
20. See Tilly, "Transplanted Networks."
21. Zeki Arıkan, "Tanzimat Doneminde Eğin Yoresinden İstanbul'a Göçler," *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu* (Ankara, 1989), 467–81.
22. Bruce McGowan, "The Age of Ayans, 1699–1812," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, ed. Halil İnalçık with Donald Quataert (New York, 1994), 652.