

KİTAPLAR:

BOOK REVIEWS:

POPULATION PRESSURE IN RURAL ANATOLIA  
1450-1600

By M. A. Cook

Oxford University Press, London Oriental Series No. 27, London, 1972, 122 pp.

This monograph is an unusual contribution to current work in the historical demography and economic history of the Ottoman Empire. Its uniqueness comes from Cook's insight as both an economist and an historian and his familiarity with Ottoman archival sources. His acknowledged debt to Barkan and İnalcık is evident throughout the study, but the ease and exactitude with which he himself handles original Ottoman fiscal surveys of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is noteworthy.

This source material in itself is of importance and is presented in detail in the appendices. Cook goes to great lengths to indicate the difficulties and assumptions involved in assembling usable statistical series from the available documents. For the Ottoman scholar these are direct aids; for the more general reader from other fields they suggest intricacies of the problem not visible in the main text. Cook does not allow these details to impinge, however, on the logical development of the main text.

There the author sets out to examine Braudel's thesis that during the late sixteenth century the Western Mediterranean ceased to import corn from only the Ottoman Empire but turned to Northern European sources as well. Braudel had indicated population growth throughout the Mediterranean during this period as a cause for the shift in trading patterns. Cook reexamines the evidence available from Braudel and others in support of this thesis. He finds it not altogether convincing.

A deterioration in the provisioning of Istanbul, for instance, does not directly make a case for general shortage. It could be brought about by factors other than pure population increase, such as changes in the collection efficiency of the provincial administration or in the demands for supplying the Ottoman war machine. The change from a timar-sipahi dominated military system to one where a standing army

was the main backstay could also produce such an effect. On the other hand, Akdağ has put forward arguments for a decline in production rather than a rise in demand as an explanation for scarcity during the late sixteenth century.

It is the fiscal surveys which form the basis for Cook's own investigation. These surveys contain information from which population and land indices for rural areas of Anatolia can be drawn up for selected years from 1455 to 1575. He uses the parallel series to juxtapose population and agricultural activity from which he estimates changes in the degree of population pressure on the land.

The three areas of Anatolia Cook selects for study are located in the livas of Aydın, Hamid, and Rum, the latter corresponding roughly to the kaza of Tokat. He never states why he selected these three. Does he feel they represent different crop patterns, systems of tenure, relation to the center and periphery, or in some other way are representative for much of Anatolia? Or did the availability of documents dictate the selection? This will be an important question in the mind of any reader who is led from the book's title to expect more in coverage than the monograph actually contains.

The new evidence from these three areas is not formulated in simple terms, but relies on a wealth of detail contained in the surveys that may be used to estimate change in agricultural income and increases in area brought under cultivation as well as population. There are also indications of changes in land ownership patterns.

There are numerous problems involved in using such fiscal statistics and Cook is reassuringly forthright about them. In spite of these drawbacks Cook makes a fairly sound case for an increase in population pressure during the later part of the sixteenth century. Braudel's arguments are thus reinforced.

For the historical demographer the evidence for sudden growth in the rural population of a preindustrial society raises fascinating questions about the factors involved. Cook does not speculate about these. In fact, there are only occasional suggestions that he looks upon population growth and pressure as a phenomenon that must include the cities as well as the rural area. Furthermore, evidence of population pressure in the three case areas cannot *per se* indicate demographic saturation throughout Anatolia as long as any significant mobility operates.

Barkan's work has developed in more detail arguments for widespread population increase during this period. One would hope for some discussion of the causes behind the population growth itself. It might be closely linked from the start to agricultural resources and the array of system parameters prevailing. Furthermore, one would like to learn whether there were unusual changes in internal migration and settlement patterns for more of Anatolia. Was there a peculiar incidence of mortality for the period, caused perhaps by the slowing down of conquest; was the buttressing of central Anatolia's internal position within the Empire itself a factor promoting unusually rapid growth in the heartland? Or perhaps can one look for fortuitous factors such as a change in the frequency, duration, and geographical occurrence of epidemics. Were there particular changes in social organization which promoted births or lower child mortality? Some of these questions, such as those involving the age distribution and sex composition, are not open to study and must remain matters of speculation. Others seem open to investigation.

One area Cook touches upon himself. If population pressure could have played a part in precipitating the Celâli risings at the end of the century, can there be elements that were common to both population growth and the Celali risings? What effect, for instance, could the Persian War of 1578-90 had on population size and composition in Anatolia?

Cook has shown how far along the researcher can go from suggesting to testing theses for the early Ottoman period. The wealth of analytical possibilities in the records he uses are tantalizing for the social scientist who does not have the key to using Ottoman archival materials. Similarly rigorous studies will bring us much closer to understanding the internal dynamics of Ottoman social and economic history in its own right.

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