TANNERS OF BURSA IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

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Abstract

Tannery, which is one of the most ancient occupations in the history of mankind, has an important place in Turkish-Islamic crafts because of the nomadic culture. Tannery maintained this status during the Ottoman period. Tannery also has an important position among other occupational fields because Akhī Awrān, who was regarded as the founder of Akhism, was a tanner. The Ottoman regulations bound by provisionism (i‘āsha) policy regarding meat consumption and raw skin deeply affected tannery and tanners. No emphasis on tannery has thus far been provided concerning Bursa, which was the first capital of the Ottoman Empire and was better known for its silk production. Examining the situation of tanners and tanneries in Ottoman Bursa, this article provides clues concerning the importance of tannery in Bursa during the Ottoman period, thus contributing to the field.

Key Words: Tanner, tannery, Ottoman State, Bursa

Introduction

Processing animal skin is as old as human history. The importance of skin is naturally crucial for human beings to meet their needs for clothing. The usage of skin was not restricted to clothing; many items, such as paper, shields, and water tanks, were manufactured from skin...
or covered with skin to be more strong and stylish. In this regard, tannery is considered one of the oldest occupations in history. This occupation was also necessary for Turks who bred stock and were nomadic people. Saddle scarves, kemis tülmuşs (leather bottles), metal appliqué belts, skin dresses, coats with furs, boats, and battle tools were recovered from Hun Pazırık kurgans in Middle Asia and demonstrate how extensive skin usage was at that time. This widespread usage led to the improvement of tannery craftsmanship, and Turks brought this craft to Anatolia when they immigrated there. Therefore, in the time of the Seljuqs, Beyliks and finally, the Ottomans, the tannery craft maintained its improvement and witnessed its golden age in the Ottoman period.

The fact that the respected Akhî Awран, who was the founder of Akhism and accepted as the pir of 32 guilds, was a tanner contributed to the high position of tanners throughout the Ottoman period.

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1 For goods produced from skin see Melda Özyemir and Nuran Kayabasli, Geçmişten Günümüzze Dericilik (Ankara: T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2007). For example, Sofrâ-i Bulghâri (Bulghâri is a type of Russian masbin (tr. mesin), which we frequently observe in sixteenth century terekes, is a table covered with leather. Bursa Shaîiyya Court Records (sijîl) (henceforth, it will be indicated as BSR). A 191, 20a-22a.

2 Kurgan is the name for small hills made by soil over graves in antiquity.

3 Özyemir and Kayabasli, Geçmişten Günümüzze Dericilik, 15.

4 Ibid.

5 His real name was Naşir al-Dîn Maḥmûd ibn Aḥmad al-Khûyî, and his personal record is Abû l-Hasâ’îq. He was born in 566/1171 in Khûy, which was in West Azerbaijan of Iran. With Mûhyî al-Dîn ibn ʿArabî and his master Awhad al-Dîn Kirmâni, Akhî Awran came to Anatolia in 602/1205 and began to work as a tanner. The organization he founded based on the teachings of futuwwa organization was helpful for the organization of craftsmen guilds. For detailed information, see Fatih Köksal, Ahi Ervan ve Ahbil (2nd edn., Kirsehir: Kirsehir Valiliği Yayınl., 2008).

6 As İlyan Şahin indicates, these references should be comprehensively reviewed to ensure the accuracy of our knowledge concerning Akhî Awran. Accordingly, we must adopt a cautious approach regarding information on Akhî Awran’s tannership; see İlyan Şahin, “Ahi Evran,” Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslâm Anıtklopedisi (DİA), I, 529-530. In fact, in a small matbûâ of 167 couplets on Akhî Awran in the early 14th century, Gulshâhî depicts him as a typical Sufi dervish. For further information, see Franz Taeschner, Gülschebris Mesnevi auf Achi Evran, den Heiligen von Kirshchehir und Patron der türkischen Zünfte (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1955).
There are many studies regarding the position of respected tanners’ guilds in the Ottoman State and the tanneries where the tanners perform their crafts. In Suraiya Faroqhi’s work, *Cities and Citizens in the Ottomans*, the chapter, “The production of skin, the skin crafts and the city bazaar,” offers important information regarding skin production in the Ottoman State. Faroqhi provides information concerning all Anatolia. In addition, there are also volumes that examine the tannery of a single city. However, these compositions generally address tannery in Istanbul, except the works that discuss it in Manisa or Denizli. Zeki Tekin authored a PhD dissertation on tannery in Istanbul up to the Tanzimat Period and an article on Istanbul tanneries. Moreover, “Ottoman Tanners” by Miyase Koyuncu evaluates the subject as an occupational issue and examines tanners and their problems as a guild in the Ottoman Period. Onur Yıldırım in his article “Osmanlı İşaseciliği ve Esnaf: On Sekizinci Yüzyıl İstanbul’unda Debbaglar” evaluates eighteenth century tanners in Istanbul in the context of the provisionism (i‘āsha) policy of the Ottoman State.

Melda Özdemir’s article on the craft of tannery in Turkish culture

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and her work on tannery in its historical context are informative for researchers in the field. In addition to all of these compositions, it is possible to obtain information regarding tanners in most studies on Ottoman guilds. There are several studies on tanners in the Ottoman period and the craftsmanship of leatherworking. However, none of these studies are limited to tanners in Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. Using the documents in the related periods, this article will evaluate tanners in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Bursa and identify the city’s importance in leatherworking.

**Tannery and Tanners in Bursa**

There is limited information concerning the local characteristics of tanneries in Anatolia. However, it is known that tanneries were founded near seas or rivers because the process of tannery required a lot of water. Because tanneries needed large amounts of water, the

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15 Tekin, “İstanbul Debbaghâneleri,” 350. For example, tanneries of Manisa, which are founded in three different locations, can be seen on the riverside. Gökçe, *XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıl Vesikalarına Göre Manisa’dan Deri Sanatları Taribi Üzerinde
first rule of founding a tannery was to find a location next to the water.\(^{16}\)

The tannery of Bursa was located in Çakır Hamam, east of Hisar, along a river that flowed from Pınarbaşı through Tahtakale until it converged with Gökdere.\(^{17}\) Because Bursa was located on the inner side of the wall at that time, this location was excluded from the city walls. However, the tannery of Bursa was close to the Sultanate Gate, which was one of the gates of the Bursa fortresses. Because of this proximity, another name of the Sultanate Gate was “The Tannery Gate.”\(^{18}\)

Similar to other cities, tanners of Bursa were situated along the river.\(^{19}\) Tanneries were built on city peripheries because of the bad odors and pollution they produced.\(^{20}\) Therefore, because of Islamic city traditions, tanners performed their craft in the city’s outskirts.\(^{21}\) Furthermore, tanneries could have ended up in the center of city because of expansion of the city’s boundaries. In this case, tanneries were generally moved to another location or their environments were cleaned.\(^{22}\) Some places near tanneries in Bursa were rented on the condition of forestation.\(^{23}\) However, thus far, no evidence exists regarding whether tanneries were moved because they disturbed the environment. In contrast, from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century Bursa tanneries remained at their locations even after their surroundings were populated. Therefore, it can be

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Bir Araştırma, 8, 9.

16 Tekin, “İstanbul Debbaghâneleri,” 351.

17 Ergenç, XVI. Yüzyıllın Sonlarına Bursa 57; BSR A 153, 23b, 110a.

18 Saadet Maydaer, Osmanlı Klasik Döneminde Bursa’da Bir Semt: Hisar (Bursa: Emin Yayınları, 2009), 177.

19 BSR B 18, 2b; B 18, 25a.


22 Tekin, “İstanbul Debbaghâneleri,” 351. Tanneries shared a similar outcome in many Ottoman cities. Initially established at a location inside city walls near the departure gates in Aleppo, Tunis, and Cairo, tanneries were soon moved outside of the castle because their malodour disturbed the public as the cities grew. For further information, see André Raymond, La Ville Arabe, Alep, à l’Époque Ottomane (XVI-XVIII Siécles) (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1998), 129, 131-136.

23 BSR B 18, 55b.
clearly seen where tanneries were located in a Bursa map of 1862. In his work about his journey to Bursa in 1901, Hüseyin Waşşaf stated that tanneries in Bursa were near Pınarbaşı Graveyard, and there was a very unpleasant odor in the area. A former tanner, Vehbi Take, indicates that the tanneries of Bursa were established in their usual places, i.e., the valley from Pınarbaşi to Çakırhamam, until 1937 and that Pınarbaşi water was used to wash the skins. This waterway extended to Ulucami (Grand Mosque) in some locations.\footnote{Hüseyin Vassaf (= Ḥusayn Waşşāf), \textit{Bursa Hatırası} (eds. Mustafa Kara and Bilal Kemikli; Bursa: Bursa Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2010), 36; Akin Kazikli, "Yüzyılın Debbagı Vehbi Take," \textit{Bursa Araştırmaları} 32 (2011), 59.}

Complaints concerning the water pollution that tanneries caused were occasionally recorded in court records. For example, in the seventeenth century, tanneries were the subject of complaints regarding how their used water affected clean water. After an investigation, it was determined that the water of the Mecnun Dede neighborhood was under the tannery's water; but there was no possibility that the unclean water affected the clean water because the clean water went underground and was properly covered. However, as a precaution, the tanner was required to fix the damaged side of the waterway with isolation equipment.\footnote{BSR B 32, 2a.}

The area where tanneries were located were also called Debbaglar Mahallesı (Tanners’ Neighborhood).\footnote{Ergenc, XVI. \textit{Yüzyılın Sonlarında Bursa}, 57; Neset Koseoglu, \textit{Tarihte Bursa Mahalleleri: XV. ve XVI. \textit{Yüzyıllarda} (Bursa: Bursa Halkevi Tarih-Müze Kollari, 1946), 16.} According to the first \textit{tabrīr} record of Bursa in 1487, there were 23 homeowners, 60 houses – 37 of them rentals – 10 single (unmarried) people, 5 tenants and 5 owners.\footnote{Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, \textit{Tabu Tabrīr Defterleri(TTD)} 23, 31.} Therefore, Debbaglar Mahallesı had a dense population compared with other neighborhoods in the fifteenth century.\footnote{For the population of other neighborhoods in Bursa, see Ömer Lütфи Barkan and Enver Meriçli (eds.), \textit{Hüdayiendigär Livası Tabrīr Defterleri I} (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1988), 1-9.} In subsequent years, the population of the neighborhood did not increase but decreased. According to 1521 \textit{tabrīr} records, there were 41 homeowners, 20 tenants, 8 owners and 5 single tenants.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 7.} In 1573, there
were 47 homeowners and eight tenants. A merchant at that time, Khoja Ece, donated a considerable amount of money to the foundation (waqf) of the neighborhood’s mosque.

The oldest document concerning Deβbağlar Çarşısı (Tanners’ Bazaar) is the foundation voucher (waqfiyya) of Mullâ Fanârî issued in 1430. In this waqfiyya, Mullâ Fanârî wanted a mosque built in Deβbağlar Çarşısı. Four tannery stores were built under the mosque built in Çarsi and would later operate for 500 years. According to the bookkeeping records of the waqf, these stores were active for a long time and provided money to the waqf. Mullâ Fanârî was not the only person who gave a store to the waqf in Deβbağlar Çarşısı. Çakhir Agha, who lived at the time of Murad II and Mehmed II and served as Bursa Subaşi, donated four stores to the waqf. Stores or their locations in Deβbağlar Çarşısı may have belonged to other waqfs as well. However, not all the stores in the tannery belonged to waqfs; there were also mulk stores. Sometimes, tanners gave their own tannery stores to waqfs. In this case, a tanner would donate all tannery tools with the tannery. Tanners announced that they would use these stores during their lifetimes, however, after their death, their children or their designee would use them.

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30 Ibid.
32 Başkanlık Osmani Arşivi, Vakfiyeler, 19/6.
33 Mullâ Fanârî, or Sheikh al-Islâm Mawlânâ Shams al-Din Mehmed al-Fanârî, was the first sheikh al-Islâm of the Ottoman State and a prominent scholar.
36 Kâmil Kepecioğlu, Bursa Kütüği (MS Bursa, Bursa Yazma ve Eski Basma Eserleri Kütüphanesi, Genel, 4519) I, 326. Several estates and tanneries belonged to the Çakhir Agha Foundation in the 17th century and were used illegally by other foundations. After complaints, the foundation regained its rights. BSR B 117, 20b; B 117, 52a.
37 BSR A 8, 143a, 145b; A 67, 448a; B 117, 52b; B 118, 93a.
38 BSR B 132, 34a.
39 BSR A 67, 448a; A 43, 37a.
The estimated number of stores in tanneries was approximately eighty. According to a document dated 13 Rabî‘ al-akhir 1069/8 January 1659, there were 86 stores in the tannery; however, 30 were eventually damaged.\(^{40}\) The number of stores in the tannery is very important for the tannery craftsmen because obtaining the skins that tanners would process, i.e., the required raw materials, was constrained by regulations of the guild. Accordingly, the skins were collected in a place called lonca yeri (place for guild)\(^{41}\) and divided according to the number of tannery stores after the tax was paid.\(^{42}\) If there were 86 stores in the tannery, stock was divided into 86 parts and every owner of the store bought the skins to process them in his own proportion. This proportion was generally a fraction of 120 sheep and 60 goat skins.\(^{43}\) In the seventeenth century, the structure of the tannery was so consistent that the place-owners continued to obtain their own proportions even after some stores were damaged. Naturally, this unfairness caused unrest among tanners, and afterwards, 30 damaged stores were required to become operative again or the skin parts would be divided into 56, which was the number of the active stores.\(^{44}\)

Not everyone had the liberty to open a tannery where he wanted because of the strict rules of the tanners’ guild. The number of stores and masters in an Ottoman city were defined according to the need at the time. Any increase in the number was related to the capacity of the economic situation.\(^{45}\) Several conditions controlled if a change in

\(^{40}\) BSR B 132, 34a.

\(^{41}\) Lonca yeri is a type of bourse where craftsmen exhibit their products and obtain the required raw material; see Tekin, Tanzimat Dönemine Kadaran Osmanlı İstan-
bulunda Dericilik, 46. Lonca yeri in Bursa was near İnebey Hamami in the 1930s; see Kazıklı, “Yüzyılın Dembağı Velibi Take,” 59.

\(^{42}\) In Bologna, the leathers were shared pursuant to a hierarchical order of the guild during the 16th and 17th centuries. Pursuant to regulations of 1557, 550 leather shares were distributed and allocated by splitting the guild members three ways. The first group comprised the guild master and council officials who obtained 215 leather shares. The eight members in the second group were given 191 shares whereas the third group of 14 tanners received 149 shares; see Poni, “Local Market Rules and Practices,” 91-93.

\(^{43}\) Gerber, Economy and Society in an Ottoman City; 52; Tekin, “İstanbul Dem-
baghaneleri,” 350; BSR B 132, 34a; B 53, 103a; B 118, 93a, 95a; A 153, 137a, 156b; B 18, 25a; B 59, 30b.

\(^{44}\) BSR B 132, 34a.

\(^{45}\) Mübahat Kütükoğlu, “Osmanlı İktisadi Yapısı,” in Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (ed.),
the ownership of the store was required. According to these conditions, after his death, a tanner’s right to operate the store could be transferred to his son or apprentice under the rule “if the master dies, his part or his store will be given to his son or his worker.” This right of operation could also be transferred to daughters of the owner.

In addition to inheritance, the transfer of the operation of the tannery store was also possible by sale. In this transfer, not only the right of the operation was conveyed but also the skin portion of the store. For example, if the mediety of a store, which has a 120-skin portion, was purchased, a 60-skin portion was also attained with the store.

The value of a tannery was different according to its location, size, and other qualities. When the mediety of a tannery was considered mumtāz (good quality) in documents, it could reach 20,000 akçes (asper); for example, one-third of another mumtāz store was valued at 5,000 akçes with the mediety of tannery tools and a 40-skin portion. The mediety of another store was sold for 8,000 akçes with a 60-skin proportion. There were also tanneries that operated as rentals. The annual rent of a tannery store belonging to Çakır Agha Foundation was 720 akçes. Because having a store in the tannery area also meant owning the skin portion, even a ruined, burned, or severely damaged store could have a buyer. In fact, it is not exactly known what tanneries in Bursa physically looked like, however, either the essence of their activities or the explanations in the documents show that they were somehow engaged with water. Principally, tanneries were built near rivers. In addition, there were other water sources, such as fountains, wells, etc. There were also many mills used in grinding acorn, which is important for the tanning pro-

_Osmanlı Devleti Tarihi_ (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1999), II, 610.

46 BSR B 14, 81a; Kütükoğlu, ibid., 610-611.
47 BSR B 14, 81a. In Bologna, when a guild member, such as a councillor died, his rights descended from father to the oldest son, then to other sons and brothers, and finally to other relatives. The only condition for inheritance was that the inheritor must be a man. Poni, “Local Market Rules and Practices,” 93.
48 BSR B 118, 93a.
49 BSR B 18, 2b, 25a.
50 BSR B 118, 93a.
51 BSR B 117, 52b.
52 BSR A 11, 230b; B 18, 55b.
53 BSR B 18, 2b, 25a.
cess. In addition, there were some buildings called ḥujra (room) in the tanneries. Some of these buildings were located above the stores, whereas others were established neighboring one another. The toilets required for tannery workers were placed in the Debboğlar Çarşı.\(^{56}\)

The sale of the processed leather in Bursa occurred in tanneries. When tanners received protests against this practice, they found a way to acquire a firman to remain at their tanneries to sell their goods; they obtained even a fatwā from sheikh al-İslām.\(^{57}\)

The sale prices of the skins were defined by narkb (price fixing).\(^{58}\) According to Qânûnnaña-i İḥtisâb dated 907/1502, the price of skin products were defined under the following statement:

… the best of sakḥtyān\(^{59}\) is red, and if it has no defect let its price be 20 akçes; if it is naftî, jighari, and other seven colors in a good condition without any defect let its price be 16 akçes. Let the price of the lesser quality ones be 12 akçes. Let the fixed price (narkb) of enormous masbîn be 6 akçes regardless of its color; the middle-sized be 5 or 4,5 akçes, and the smaller be 4 akçes. Let the narkb of sheep masbîn be 4 akçes if it is high quality, and the lower one be 3 akçes. Let the price of the rawhide of black female cattle be 12 akçes and 25 akçes if tanned. Let the price be 90 akçes and 130 akçes if tanned, for the rawhide of black male cattle.\(^{60}\)

A document dated 1006/1598 dictates the prices of the non-processed sheep skins that were bought from butcheries.\(^{61}\) According to this document, butcheries could sell to tanners untagged sheep skin for seven akçes, tagged skin for three akçes and ṭawīşdâni sheep skin for six akçes. In another document of 1581, a male sheep

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\(^{54}\) BSR A 8, 180a; B 122, 123b; B 18, 2b, 84b, B 118, 93a. Istanbul tanneries had a mill carried by animals, which was used for grinding acorn; see Tekin, “İstanbul Debbaghâneleri,” 351.

\(^{55}\) BSR A 67, 448a.

\(^{56}\) BSR B 18, 2b.

\(^{57}\) Faroqhi, Osmanlı da Kentler ve Kentiller, 199 (quoted from Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mübümmes Defteri, 90, 86, no. 291).

\(^{58}\) Narkb is the highest price for a good established by authorities. For detailed information see Küttükoğlu, “Osmanlı İktisadi Yapıları,” 562-565.

\(^{59}\) Sakḥtyān is processed, colored, and polished hide.

\(^{60}\) Kamûnname-i İḥtisâb-i Bursa, 22.

\(^{61}\) BSR A 153, 8a.
with tail could be sold for three akçes, and a female sheep could be sold for two-and-a-half akçes.  

Problems of Tanners

Secret Deals

The skins divided among tanners were slaughtered by butchers, and butchers could not have sold them to others. This necessary interaction between the butchers’ and tanners’ guilds did not occur between other guilds. This necessary dependence could cause problems between the two guilds and some guild members tried to disrupt the stable structure. For example, collected sheep, lamb, and goat skins had to be distributed to tanners by yiğitbaşşı and kethûdas (kad-khuda) after the animals were slaughtered by butchers of Bursa and the taxes paid. However, some tanners made secret deals to buy the skins before the distribution. These events surfaced after other tanners complained. Complaining craftsmen argued that the harm was not only to them but also to the state. The state’s interest in the unrecorded sales was because the goods were untaxed.

In the Ottoman State, it was prohibited to export products from where they were produced unless they were surplus. Thus, leather was subject to restraints because it was a strategic item. Skins from slaughtered animals were prohibited from sale to other cities. However, there were people who defied the ban in several ways. For example, Muṣṭafâ Beshe ibn ʿAbd Allâh, a janissary, wanted to sell 50

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62 BSR A 113, 127a.
63 BSR B 118, 95a.
64 Gerber, Economy and Society in an Ottoman City; 51.
65 A similar relationship is also present between the tanners and butchers in Bologna. For relations between tanners and butchers in Bologna, see Poni, “Local Market Rules and Practices,” 83-101.
66 BSR B 118, 95a; A 169, 87b, 173a.
67 Kütükoğlu, “Osmanlı İktsadi Yapısı,” 571. The same prohibition was also imposed in Bologna. Most of the leather produced by tanners was sold to shoemakers. Nevertheless, shoemakers were not compelled to purchase the entire amount of offered leather. This fact led to tension between the two guilds, especially when the unsold leather began to dry and lose its quality and weight. In these times of low local demand, the tanners tried to export at least some of the unsold leather. However, they needed the approval of the shoemakers’ guild for this export. For further information, see Poni, “Local Market Rules and Practices,” 89.
68 BSR A 153, 8a.
skins in another city. Tanners applied to the court to prevent the sale, then the court seized hides from Muṣṭafa and distributed them among tanners.⁶⁹ In the Ottoman State, priorities were given to local craftsmen, to the degree that many firmans issued prohibitions on the sale of skins to foreign locations unless local needs were met.⁷⁰ The primary goal of this prohibition was to provide the local people with varied and cheap products and services. With this policy called provisionism, the state accepts its responsibility to meet the needs of society as its primary duty and does not allow the random sale of raw skin, which has both primary and strategic importance.⁷¹ Therefore, the state enacted regulations centered in qadâs, which were selected as consumption areas. To maintain the balance between production and consumption, the state wanted the needs of people of the qadâ to be met primarily; if there was a surplus, the state allowed the good to be exported to other cities, primarily Istanbul. If still more surplus remained, it was exported to other countries after the taxes were paid.⁷²

When the price for the consumer is fixed, the profit margins of the craftsmen and the merchants in buying and processing the raw material were roughly defined. If some people damage the production chain, there is a general harm to all. Therefore, the craftsmen operate in strict cooperation and are ready to exclude anyone who would break the system. Following a protective policy, the state maintains the status quo and backs the craftsmen. In sixteenth and seventeenth century Bursa, complaints in the skin market were particularly raised regarding “secretly buying skins.”⁷³

The tanners had priority in buying all the skins of slaughtered animals in Bursa. Distribution of the skins to tanners was defined by specific regulations. According to these rules, all skins were collected and counted in a location called lonca yeri in the presence of tannery

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⁶⁹ BSR B 26.
⁷¹ Koyuncu, 18. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Osmanlı Esnafları, 164. Mehmet Genç, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Devlet ve Ekonomi (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2000), 60. For detailed information on the attitude of the Ottoman State in the raw material as part of provisionism policy; see Yıldırım, “Osmanlı İşaçılığı ve Esnaf.”
⁷² Genç, ibid., 61.
⁷³ BSR B 53, 103a; B 132, 34a; B 118, 95a; B 50, 30a; A 169, 87b; A 153, 8a, 137a, 156b; B 32, 70b.
craftsmen and then distributed to each tanner according to his share after the tax was paid.\textsuperscript{74} In this system, because how much one gets was regulated by rules, there was no chance to obtain more money by producing more skins; the provisionism policy of the state did not allow this. However, some craftsmen who wanted to increase their income by having qualified and more skins sought ways to escape the system. For that, the tanners arranged secret deals with butchers and bought the skins in places where animals were slaughtered. Buying in this way, the tanners could obtain the best quality skins.\textsuperscript{75} The price the tanners paid to the butchers did not create any loss because they evaded the tax. Furthermore, by taking their shares in the normal skin distribution, the tanners increased the amount of raw material they could process, thus, increasing their income. Therefore, “secretly buying skins” was lucrative. However, for the tanners who did not arrange secret deals, this lost opportunity meant an economic loss. Because of this loss, the secret deals were strictly controlled both by other craftsmen and the state, and the skins were seized by the government if any were found.\textsuperscript{76} This issue was not unique to the craftsmen in Ottoman Bursa. In the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, the rich tanners in Bologna were accused of purchasing leather in the secret rooms of butcher shops.\textsuperscript{77} This act was specifically prohibited by the tanners’ guild, and the offender was fined 10 golden scudi.\textsuperscript{78}

Another important fact is that in Bursa, these complaints were coming from only tanners, not from butchers. Butchers were not willing to complain because they were selling skins to one another secretly. This situation was not causing any economic harm to the butchers. Therefore, there was no difficulty for a butcher to sell his animal skin secretly or openly. However, the problem was what price was offered, and price was an extensive debate between butchers and tanners. For a time, complete liberty of prices applied.\textsuperscript{79} The fact that butchers raised no complaints when secret deals were made be-

\textsuperscript{74} BSR B53, 103a; A 169, 87b.
\textsuperscript{75} BSR B 118, 95a.
\textsuperscript{76} BSR B32, 70b.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 92. Scudi (singular: scudo) is the coin used in Italy until 19\textsuperscript{th} century. For further information regarding the relationship between guilds, see Eunjeong Yi, \textit{Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Léverage} (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004).
\textsuperscript{79} Gerber, \textit{Economy and Society in an Ottoman City}; 55.
tween tanners and them may be because most of them were occasionally engaging in unrecorded sales.

Similarly, tanners who complained to one another when buying raw materials were also subjected to complaints by keçecis for secretly trying to sell wool to them.\textsuperscript{80} Allegedly, some of the keçecis were going to the tanneries and secretly buying their goods, a situation that harmed keçecis. This practice damaged the system for keçecis and created injustice.

Skin, which is a raw material for tanners, becomes a valuable raw material for all craftsmen who make items from leather after it is tanned. The processed skin for every craftsman is different. Thus, there are problems regarding the sale among craftsmen who use different types of processed skin. For example, pabuççis (shoemakers) complained about merchants who bought skins by secretly paying more whereas it was the shoemakers’ right to buy the skins after tanning. Black particle sakbtyn and white mashin were allocated to shoemakers, and a merchant could buy only what was left over.\textsuperscript{81} Therefore, complaints concerning secret deals in buying skin were not only caused by problems among tanners. Difficulties also occurred because of the secret sale of skin between producers and merchants who sometimes participated in the production process and only when buying and selling goods.

\textit{Conflicts regarding the Sale of Rawhide}

Secret buying and selling were not the only activities that disturbed tanners. In some cases, legal sales caused economic harm to the tannery craftsmen. Postal sellers, smiths, and stallholders legally bought rawhide (gön),\textsuperscript{82} which was brought to the center of Bursa in the seventeenth century. However, the fact that all of these craftsmen bought rawhide created problems for tanners. After applying to the court, tanners had only the right to buy rawhide that was imported from other cities.\textsuperscript{83} Tanners wanted to have all the skins whether they came from the places they lived or from other cities. The judgments of the court seem to have preserved the rights of tanners. This result

\textsuperscript{80} BSR B 114, 56b.
\textsuperscript{81} BSR B 50, 30a.
\textsuperscript{82} The word gön has ambiguities. Faroqhi indicates that it is a type of rough skin; see her, \textit{Osmanlı’da Kentler ve Kentliler}, 200.
\textsuperscript{83} BSR B 114, 124a.
likely ensured the functioning of the current leather market without downswing. As the tanners in Bologna lost their privileges as the butchers had the right to sell leather to anyone without regard to guild membership, and as butchers obtained the right to process leather, Bolognese tanners suffered significant and long-term crises. In the coming period, the government restored the tanners’ former rights and power; as of 1656, butchers once again had to sell leather exclusively to tanners.\(^\text{84}\)

Thanks to these rights granted to tanners in Ottoman Bursa, tanners were able to maintain the advantage regarding rawhide purchase for a long time. However, occasional debates with butchers concerning prices and paying methods ended this monopoly and for a short time, led to a free-market economy.\(^\text{85}\)

The debates regarding skin were most likely because of skin scarcity. Those who caused these troubles were merchants called madrabaz, tanners who make secret deals, and other craftsmen such as shoemakers, boot-sellers, etc.\(^\text{86}\) When some tanners in Bursa expanded their business volume in the seventeenth century, they began to use more skins. These tanners turned out to be merchants. These wealthy tanners had many tanneries and began to dominate average-size tanners by having a larger portion of the skin trade.\(^\text{87}\) These large-scale store owners were not satisfied by the number of skins distributed in the guilds, and they tried to buy skins through other methods, thus, breaking the balance created by the guilds.\(^\text{88}\)

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85 Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City*; 55. The lack of raw materials caused serious problems through a rise in prices and unemployment in not only the tanneries but all sectors of the Ottoman cities; see Oya Şenyurt, “Onsekizinci Yüzyıl Osmanlı Başkentinde Taşçı Örgülenmesi,” *Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Mimarlık Fakültesi Dergisi* (METU JFA) 26/2 (2009), 104.
86 BSR B 50, 30a.
88 Bologna underwent a similar process in the 16\(^\text{th}\) century. Wealthier and stronger tanners were accused of buying large portions of leather from the butchers to the detriment of poorer tanners. At one time, nearly all leather was purchased by wealthy tanners, and the leather was sold to shoemakers at inflated prices and for loans; see Poni, “Local Market Rules and Practices,” 91.
Effects of Seasonal Availability of Meat on the Leather Market

Compared with other raw materials skin cannot be changed and increased if demanded. This difference is because animals are slaughtered for their meat, not their skin. Therefore, the amount of skin raw material must be restricted by the amount of slaughtered animals. In accordance with provisional policy, the Ottoman State created regulations to provide cheap consumption of meat to its citizens; the palace people and the military class had priority then the Istanbulites. The state established a system called jalabkabânness and through some agents, brought animals from farms to be slaughtered. These agents, called jalabkabân, had their own fortune and collected animals primarily from the Balkans, Middle Anatolia, and Cilicia Taurus. However, there were occasional problems with this system, especially concerning the red meat supplies. From the sixteenth century on, the government ordered sheep to be brought to Istanbul without any distribution. Indeed, when the number of livestock suffered a serious decline in 1595 because of epidemics and extreme cold, the Beys of Konya and Karaman received an imperial decree stating that 200,000 sheep were to be sent from the region to Istanbul. However, this situation is not typical because these large-scale orders were mostly allocated from rich pastures in the Danubian states. Anatolian supply was often at a secondary level; so, orders up to 100,000 were always provided by East Anatolia, especially by Turkmens. Therefore the high demand for livestock in 1595 at a time of scarcity, drought and lack of livestock was one factor that triggered the Jalâli revolts.

89 For the meat provisioning of Istanbul and jalabkabânness in the Ottoman Period, see Antony Warren Greenwood, *Istanbul’s Meat Provisioning: A Study of the Çelepkeşan System* (PhD dissertation; Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1988).


The fact that these orders concern more Balkan provinces indicates that Anatolia had a weaker relationship with Istanbul in meat supply. Only small amounts of sheep brought from Eastern Anatolia reached Istanbul; most sheep were being sold in other cities.

Meat prices in Bursa were required to be less than Istanbul narkh by 50 dirham to encourage animal shipping from Bursa to Istanbul. In addition, there were animal scarcities in some seasons because of the natural process of stockbreeding. This scarcity occurred because lambing season was at the beginning of spring. Accordingly, the flock cannot be moved before April or May. According to the transportation ability at the time, it would take until November to get the flock to where it was slaughtered. Thus, there was a genuine meat scarcity because of the decrease of the animal numbers from December to April. A firman dated 993/1585 indicates that butchers in Bursa began to give up their occupation. The state interfered and gave the Bursa judge the authority to direct all butchers who had given up back to their occupations. This situation shows how difficult it was to obtain meat in Bursa at that time. All of the issues that limited the amount of red meat necessarily affected the amount of skin as well. Animal scarcity for meat consumption caused difficulties concerning the raw material for the skin market. An evaluation of the skin market in Bursa is deeply connected to the number of animals consumed as meat.

**Conclusion**

Being one of the oldest crafts of Turks, tannery maintained its importance in the Ottoman period, and Bursa had its place as a tannery center. The problems of Bursa’s tanners were not different from counterparts in other cities such as Istanbul. All craftsmen had difficulties in obtaining skin. Bursa tanners were also angered by the problem of “secret deals” among craftsmen. The Bursa tannery was

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93 Faroqhi, _Osmanlı da Kentler ve Kentiler_, 279.
94 Ibid., 273; Greenwood, _Istanbul’s Meat Provisioning_, 27.
96 Greenwood, _Istanbul’s Meat Provisioning_, 34. There were some precautions such as grazing in nearby places to survive the scarcity.
97 Faroqhi, _Osmanlı da Kentler ve Kentiler_, 293.
98 Ibid.
founded outside the city by the river, similar to other cities. However, contrary to other cities, the Bursa tannery continued to be located in the same place and did not frequently change its area even after its surroundings were populated from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. In Bursa, the place where the skins were tanned and the place where they were sold was the same. This means that the tanner craftsmen sold their goods in the tanneries without taking their skins to the market.

Because Bursa is famous for the production of fabric and its sericulture, its place in tannery has not been examined properly. If Bursa, an important center for skin tanning and leather production, is thoroughly examined, it will contribute to understanding the economic life of a city that was at the top of the important trade routes.

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