TRACING A 'MIDDLE CLASS':

AN INQUIRY ON THE OTTOMAN CITY OF KAYSERİ

17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this study is to develop a definition of an early modern 'Ottoman middle class' in the context of Kayseri through an examination of the changing consumption patterns. Whether the 'middling sort' constituted a distinctive social group in regards to their consumption habits and material well-being, and whether class boundaries can be defined in the basis of the amount of personal consumption goods possessed, are the main questions dealt with. The data examined in this study come from three sets of probate inventories taken from 33 registers. The three sets cover the periods 1660-1680, 1700-1720, and 1780-1800. It is argued that compared to wealth, stocks of personal and household belongings is a better indicator of living standards.

The results indicate that from the mid-seventeenth to the late eighteenth century, personal wealth in Kayseri fluctuated in tandem with the ups and downs of the overall economy: rising from the late seventeenth century onwards, and then falling in the late eighteenth century. During the period, the 'middle class', defined through wealth brackets, considerably expanded, whereas the 'middle class', identified on the basis of stocks of consumer durables, expanded in the late seventeenth, and than shrank in the late eighteenth century. Despite the decline in personal wealth and the mean value of consumer durables observed in the inventories belonging to the 'middle class', an analysis of the composition of consumer durables, through an index of amenities, demonstrate signs of improving material standards of living from 1700-1720 to 1780-1800.

Furthermore, 'middle class' presented distinguishing consumption patterns, justifying the assumption that classes can also be identified on the basis of consumption habits. The decision to acquire more of the goods mentioned in the index shows a significant shift in tastes of the inhabitants of Kayseri belonging to middle class, who by the end of the eighteenth century, moved beyond the level of sufficiency and owned a range of luxury goods besides the ordinary amenities.

ÖZET

ORTA SINIFIN PEŞİNDE:

17. VE 18. YY.'DA KAYSERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Pınar Ceylan

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih

Tez Danışmanı: Yard. Doç. Dr. Hülya Canbakal

Bu çalışmanın amacı 17. ve 18. yy.'da Kayseri'de değişen tüketim alışkanlıklarının incelenmesi yoluyla bir Osmanlı orta sınıfı tanımı yapmaktır. Tüketim alışkanlıkları ve yaşam standartları açısından bakıldığında orta sınıfın ayrı bir sosyal grup oluşturup oluşturmadığı ve sahip olunan kişisel tüketim mallarının miktarı üzerinden bir sınıf tanımı yapılıp yapılamayacağı burada ilgilenilen temel sorulardır. İncelenen veri tabanı 33 kadı sicilinde alınmış 1660-1680, 1700-1720 ve 1780-1800 dönemlerine ait terekelerdir. Çalışmanın temel argümanı, zenginlikle karşılaştırıldığında, kişisel tüketim malları stoğunun yaşam standardını değerlendirirken daha iyi bir gösterge olduğudur.

Sonuçlar Kayseri'de kişisel zenginliğin ekonominin yükseliş ve düşüşleriyle paralel şekilde dalgalandığını göstermektedir. Tereke başına düşen zenginlik, geç 17.yy.'dan itibaren artmış, 18.yy. sonunda ise düşüşe geçmiştir. Söz konusu dönem boyunca, zenginlik düzeyi yoluyla tanımlanan orta sınıf beligin biçimde genişlerken, tüketim malları stoğu yoluyla tanımlanan orta sınıf, 17.yy.'da genişlemiş, ve 18.yy. sonunda daralmıştır. Orta sınıf terekelerinde gözlemlenen kişisel zenginlik ve tüketim mallarının tereke başına düşen değerindeki düşüşe rağmen, mal endeksi oluşturularak yapılmış ve sahip olunan tüketim mallarının içeriğine ilişkin bir inceleme 1700-1720 ve 1780-1800 aralığı için de yaşam standartlarında bir yükseliş olduğunu göstermiştir.

Ayrıca bu çalışmada ortaya çıkan sonuçlar, 'orta sınıf'ın kendine özgü tüketim kalıpları sergilediği ve dolayısıyla, sosyal sınıfların tüketim alışkanlıkları temelinde tanımlanabileceği varsayımlarını doğrulamıştır. Endekste belirtilen malları daha çok sahiplenme yönündeki eğilim Kayseri'de orta sınıfa mensup kişilerin zevk ve kararlarında belirgin bir değişikliğe işaret etmektedir. Bu sosyal grup temel ihtiyaçların ötesine geçmiş ve bir dizi lüks tüketim malına sahip olmuştur.

Ali'yle, Ali'ye, Ali için

“Rüyası ömrümüzün çünkü eşyaya siner”
Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar

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INTRODUCTION

"The analytical terrain on which consumption is being discovered is one devoted to the 'post'-, rather than to the past. This has been the period of post-Marxism, postmodernism, post-Fordism,"[1] says Ben Fine in his path-breaking work, *The World of Consumption*. Consumption studies emerged during the rise of criticisms directed at modernism and have expanded over the last three decades. It was no coincidence that the gaze of scholarship has turned from producer to consumer at a time when literary theories increasingly focused on the 'reader', and not the 'author'. Growing dissatisfaction with the methodologies giving priority to production has led to a new perception of modernity, one that relies on consumption and consumerism, rather than production. Historians of early modernity and modernity have also been touched by the growing interest in consumption. For European, North American and East Asian historians, study of consumption has become "an important new key to unlocking the past".[2] That materialist consumerism is a key feature of modernity, and that consumption is integral to the very shape and development of capitalist societies, are assumptions widely accepted today.

Works on the history of consumption in Western Europe are divided into two categories: those focusing on early modern consumerism or the emergence of a consumer culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and those concentrating on modern consumerism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The early modern origins of consumerism are located in the expansion of the size of the consuming public, spread of consumer goods, emergence of consumerist desire, models of new luxury consumption, development of domestic luxury industries and the creation of urban retail shopping. This

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1 Fine, Ben, *The World of Consumption, the Material and Cultural Revisited*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p.58

2 Quataert, Donald (Ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922, An Introduction*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2000, p.1.

first period, focused on clothing and household items, is defined as a "consumer revolution". As to the nineteenth century, it is taken to be characterized by the lowering of the price of the manufactured goods, a result of the industrial revolution. Stage two saw the expansion of consumerism and witnessed a profusion of goods and leisure, the proliferation of retail outlets and the spread of consumerist values into social spheres as diverse as child-rearing and pornography.[3]

Neglecting the production side of the equation, the first wave of studies focused on independent and ambiguous effects of consumption, distinct from economic and social relations, and enclosed it within the field of cultural studies. Consumption, in this group of studies, was treated as an activity in its own right, with its own practices and symbolic and representational systems. In contrast, recent studies approach consumption as material culture and increasingly seek to integrate material and cultural factors. As Trenntman states, the centrality of consumption to the making of the modern world, and its essentiality to modern identity are among the rare points of agreement between theorists of modernity and those of post-modernity.[4] Another point that justifies the approach presuming consumption studies as a terrain of intersection is that consumption studies bring together a number of classical themes - gender, mass society, class- and new themes such as media studies, popular culture, ethnography of conformity, and resistance in everyday life.[5]

The question of class from the perspective of consumerism constitutes the subject of this study. How class relations shape consumption patterns, or how consumption shapes class relations are important questions that have drawn scholarly attention in the last decades. One of the reasons lying behind the attempts to establish a relation between class and consumption was the need to overcome the traditional dichotomy of the classical sociology regarding the definition of 'class': Marxian vs. Weberian approaches. While the first focused on the process of production and defined classes in terms of their position vis-

3 Stearns, Peter, "Stages of Consumerism: Recent Work on the Issues of Periodization", *Journal of Modern History*, 69 (1997), pp. 102-17.

4 Trentmann, Frank, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption", *Journal of Contemporary History* 39 (2004), pp. 373-401.

5 Fine, *The World of Consumption*, p.3.

a-vis the means of production, the latter emphasized the importance of differential wealth, political power and social status in maintaining class distinctions. The neglect of consumption patterns in defining classes were common to both approaches. “Important are a series of academic trends that have led to an overwhelming concentration on the area of production as the key arena for the emergence of the dominant social relations and a comparative neglect of consumption.”[6]

The earliest attempt to associate consumption patterns with social class can be attributed to Veblen. Published in 1899 in *Theory of the Leisure Class,* Veblen argues that in establishing social status, expenditure is more important than income and that enhanced status was often achieved through 'conspicuous consumption' and public demonstration of leisure time activities.[7] Among the contemporary scholars, Bourdieu's works are pioneer of studies on the role of the consumption habits in social differentiation. Bourdieu too, conceives consumption realm as field of power relations. Yet going further, he develops theories of social stratification based on aesthetic taste. According to him, classes are formed by people who experience similar material and cultural conditions, have similar dispositions and interests, but do not necessarily share a strong identity, or are not mobilized for action. Tastes and consumer choices are socially conditioned, and they reflect a symbolic hierarchy. Consumption is a social weapon that defines and separates the high from low, and is used by the dominant classes in order to enforce their distance from other classes.[8]

'Middle class' stands at the center of historical studies that try to define class identity through the prism of consumption. Influenced by the works of Veblen and Bourdieu, many early modern historians have emphasized the importance of consumption in civic bourgeois culture and explored the ways in which new consumption patterns, more particularly, the practice of 'conspicuous consumption', enforced middle class solidarity. Trying to connect consumer revolution with the rising middle class, these studies point out the fact that same social dynamics lied behind these two phenomena: break down of the

6 Miller, Daniel, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1987, p.3.

7 Veblen, Thornstein, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1973.

8 Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste,* Routledge, London, 1984.

traditional social hierarchy at the dawn of modernity. At this point, the 'luxury debate' in eighteenth-century France is taken to be a manifestation of conservative reactions against the bourgeois new comers, who consumed beyond what their status allowed, and thus, attacked traditional and fixed signs of identity.[9]

In the field of Ottoman history, both works taking class as a category of analysis and those devoted to consumption are very limited. As to works combining these two questions, they are even more rare. Fatma Müge Göçek's book, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of the Empire*[10] and Emine Gül Karababa's unpublished PhD Thesis, *Origins of a Consumer Culture in an Early Modern Context: Ottoman Bursa*[11] are the only historical works endeavoring to study consumerism in the light of Ottoman class structure or visa versa.

If one of the reasons for this situation is lack of interest in class analysis in the field of Ottoman history, which will be discussed in the first chapter, the other reason lies in prejudices that dominated the consumption studies until very recently. The dichotomy at the hearth of traditional historiography, namely, the dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' society, East and West, or societies defined by reciprocity and status versus societies driven by individualism and markets, has been reproduced in many of the works in the field. According to these studies, the upsurge in consumption in eighteenth-century Britain, Europe and America was uniquely a Western phenomenon.[12] Thus, the consumer society was born in early modern Western Europe and the Atlantic world and spread in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the rest of the world.

New trends in world history has led to a radical shift in our understanding of early

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9 Maza, Sarah, "Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France", *The Journal of Modern History,* Vol. 69, No.2, (Jun 1997), pp.199-229.

10 Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire – Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996.

11 Karababa, Eminegül, 'Origins of a Consumer Culture in an Early Modern Context: Ottoman Bursa,' unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Management, Bilkent University, Ankara, 2006.

12 Stearns, *Stages of Consumerism,* p.109.

modern consumerism. Recent literature on consumption history suggests that multiple early modern consumer cultures were formed throughout the globe as an aspect of 'multiple modernities'.[13] This general sea change in historiography was accompanied by the rise of critics directed at the 'decline paradigm'. Attempts to relocate Ottoman Empire in the early modern Eurasian context, emphasizing the commonality of the socioeconomic changes has led to the recognition of early modern consumerism in the Ottoman realm. Hamadeh summarizes this view in the following passage:

> "By the eighteenth century, the system of hierarchies that had exemplified the Ottoman world order was eroding...Greater mobility among social and professional groups led to new social and financial aspirations, increasing material wealth, changing habits of consumption and of recreational and cultural practices, and the wearing out of stable marks of distinction. These patterns became integral to the social landscape of the city and began to crystallize in its physical fabric."[14]

Karababa's findings relying on probate inventories of Bursa confirms that an early modern Ottoman consumer culture existed during the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. She demonstrates that not only the ordinary consumer goods, but also luxury goods spread throughout the whole society, including the lower classes, which is an important indicator of emerging consumer culture.[15]

The objective of this study is to develop a definition of an early modern 'Ottoman middle class' through an examination of the changing consumption patterns. Whether the 'middling sort' constituted a distinctive social group in regards to their consumption habits

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13 Karababa, *Origins of a Consumer Culture*, p.1.

14 Hamadeh, Shirine, Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the "Inevitable" Question of Westernization, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Mar., 2004), p.37.

15 Karababa, *Origins of a Consumer*, p.147.

and material well-being, and whether class boundaries can be defined in the basis of the amount of personal consumption goods possessed are the main questions that I will try to answer here. Assessing the cultural and intellectual transformations that accompanied the proliferation of consumer goods in the Ottoman realm from 17th century onwards is beyond the scope of this study. The study is limited to the material changes brought by the changing consumption patterns, and questions such as how the emergence of a consumer culture shaped the ideas, attitudes and social consciousness of the people will not be addressed.

SOURCES

This study is based on probate inventories of Kayseri from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Terekes*, probate inventories are lists of the possessions of a deceased individual recorded by a judge to distribute the inheritance among the heirs of the deceased. Probate inventories are included in the *şer'iye* registers (judicial court registers), which were compiled in all major *kadi*-ships of the Empire. These inventories were registered either together with other judicial court records or in separate books known as *tereke defterleri* (probate books). Sometimes probate inventories for the *askeri* and *beledi* classes were registered separately. Probate inventories of the *askeri* class were recorded by the *kadiasker*, and probate inventories of ordinary people were recorded by the *kadı*.[16]

Inventories are obligatory in the Islamic law if one of the heirs is a minor. The court also intervenes upon request of the *emin-i beyt-ül-mal* (the local representative of the state treasury) or of the heirs (1) if no heir exists other than the spouse(s), (2) if no heirs are known, (3) if the heirs are far away, (4) if the deceased is a traveler, and (5) in case of discord among the heirs.[17] Churches and synagogues were responsible for distributing the inheritances of their communities. Yet, non-Muslims were free to apply to the court for distribution of the estates. They applied to the *kadı* to distribute their inheritances,

16 Ibid, p.31.

17 Matthews, Joyce Hedda, "Toward an Isolario of the Otoman Inheritance Inventory with Special Reference to Manisa (ca. 1600-1700)", in Quataert Donald (Ed.), *Consumption Studies and the History of the Otoman Empire 1550-1922, An Introduction*, State University of New York Pres, New York, 2000, p.52.

especially when taxes paid to the *kadı* were lower than the ones paid to synagogues and churches, or when the distribution of the estate according to the Islamic law was more profitable for the heirs.[18]

The first step in the preparation of a probate inventory is the following: *kassam*, a judicial official, expert in inheritance matters arrives at the home of the deceased and ascertains the particulars of any property possessed by the deceased by reference to copies of court warrants (*hüccets*) in the hands of the family, and possibly, to the testimony of witnesses. He makes a record of the description and values of all items. Each of the legal heirs is summoned, as required by law to act as eyewitnesses themselves.[19]

The probate inventory constitutes a summary of four main operations executed by the *kadı* following this: the identification of the deceased and heirs, the listing of the assets, the enumeration and the deduction of debits, and the apportioning of the shares. In the initial section, "introductory protocol", the deceased is identified by given name and father's name and the place of residence (by neighborhood or village and the city). In the following lines, the names and degree of affinity of the legatees, the title of the treasury agent (*emin-i beytülmal*) and the date of portioning are recorded. Occupation and cause of death are usually not mentioned.[20] The second section, "inventory" describes The decedent's patrimony in detail: Buildings (houses, shops, watermills), vineyards, trees and crops, livestock, personal and household goods, stores, commercial goods as well as outstanding loans *(der zimmet)* and the name of the borrower. All items are recorded with their worth.[21] The values assigned may reflect a price estimate or the actual amount for which the item was sold at auction. The third section, "personal liabilities", constitutes the claims against the inheritance: debts incurred by the deceased (*Düyun*), outstanding bride price to the wife, claims on the estate, bequests and sundry expenses (funeral costs, the cost

18 Karababa, *Origins of a Consumer*, p.75.

19 Matthews, Towards an Isolario, p.66.

20 Ibid., p. 56.

21 Establet, Colette and Pascual, Jean-Paul, "Damascene Probate Inventories of the 17th and 18th centuries: Some Preliminary Approaches and Results, *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 24, No. 3 (1992), p. 375.

of the probate registry process and taxes). In the fourth section, the net amount of the assets is divided among the heirs.[22]

Probate records, which have been used for many years for historical research in European countries and United States, are also important sources for the Balkans and the Middle East. According to Establet and Pascual, the development of "new history", focusing on the quantitative economic and social history of the everyday life of ordinary people, including technical innovations, consumer patterns, and the way workers lived and labored, explains the increasing interest on the study of these resources.[23]

Probate inventories, as rich sources of information on material culture, interest researchers in many fields. They enable us to provide an outline for economic, sociological and ethnological analysis. They give us an insight into everyday life, as notes Braudel: *"The probate inventories represent a source of exceptional information to lift up the roofs, allow us to peek into the most intimate corners of a household."*[24] First, the inventories show the total amount of wealth accumulated by each individual throughout their life time, thus provide information on the value of assets, distribution of wealth within a society among different groups as well as the differences of composition of wealth between these groups.[25] Second, they are very informative in determining the consumption patterns of people belonging to different social groups. Third, studying a single town, county, or small area across time can show changes in these socioeconomic patterns and economic life. These records conjure up city life in the neighborhood, in the shops and at home. Fourth, they yield information on house and room functions and equipment.[26]

However, probate inventories also have limitations as historical sources. First, not

22 Matthews, Towards an Isolario, p.57.

23 Establet, and Pascual, Damascene Probate Inventories, p.374.

24 Braudel, Ferdinand, *Civilisation matérielle et Capitalism*, Paris, 1967, p.212, referred by Establet and Pascual, op.cit.

25 Karababa, *Origins of a Consumer Culture*, p.31.

26 Jones, Alice Hanson, "Estimating Wealth of the Living from a Probate Sample", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn, 1982), p. 275.

all the estates are registered. Second, elderly are generally overrepresented and the poor underrepresented, since the poor are less inclined to register the estates of the deceased, just as they are less inclined to take their disputes to court for settlement. One of the reasons is that the heirs do not want to reduce the inheritance, by paying fees and taxes. Besides, the decedents are generally older, hence richer than those who survived them.[27] Third, without knowing the exact value of the currency and its possible fluctuations through time, it is impossible to attribute a value to the sums of the assets in long term studies.[28] Fourth, Non-Muslims, women and rural population are underrepresented. Yet, these limitations do not invalidate the analysis.[29] As Ergene and Berker mention, despite their shortcomings, *terekes* constitute a unique data source for reconstructing the economic and social history of pre-modern Ottoman provincial life.[30]

The data examined in this study come from three sets of probate inventories taken from 33 registers. The three sets cover the periods 1660-1680, 1700-1720, and 1780-1800 with 57, 52 and 211 probate inventories each (Table 1). The first two sets involve all the available records from those periods as identified by Hülya Canbakal in her project on the distribution of wealth in the Ottoman Empire.[31] Inventories of the 1780-1800 period are taken from the sample compiled by Canbakal. The periodization also follows her periodization. I chose the three periods mentioned above out of her nine cross sections, because these three intervals can provide a general impression for the period from the mid-seventeenth century, which was a period of recovery from the 'seventeenth century crisis' , to the end of eighteenth century, which marks the end of the period of growth, and the end of early modern period, at least, as commonly understood in European studies. I have taken the asset totals as well as the values of real estate, commercial goods, loans and cash

27 Canbakal, Hülya, "Reflections on the Distribution of Wealth in Ottoman Ayntab", *Oriens*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2009, pp. 239-240.

28 Establet and Pascual, Damascene Probate Inventories, p.376.

29 Gradeva, Rossitsa, "Towards the Portrait of "the Rich" in Ottoman Provincial Society: Sofia in the 1670s", in A. Anastasopoulos (Ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete University Press, 2005, p. 156.

30 Berker, Ali and Ergene, Boğaç, "Wealth and inequality in 18th century Kastamonu: Estimations fort he Muslim Majority", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40 (2008), p.26.

31 Canbakal, Hülya, "Distribution of Wealth in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1840'. Project in progress.

directly from the database of Canbakal's project. For the consumer goods in these inventories, that is the main focus of this study, I have set up my own database, since the former does not cover consumer goods.

TABLE 1- Probate inventories used in the study

	1660-1680	1700-20	1780-1800
Registers used	70, # 77, # 79, # 81, # 84, # 87	# 107, # 108, # 109, ##1 111, # 112, # 113, # 114, # 116, #118, # 120	60, # 161, # 162, # 163, # 164, # 165, # 166 # 167, # 168, # 169, # 170, # 171, # 173, # 174, # 175, # 176, # 177
Number of Probate Inventories	57	52	211

<u>SETTING THE SCENE</u>

Seventeenth century, in the Ottoman Empire, like many parts of the world, was marked by 'crisis and recovery' [32]. This century was a period of political difficulties, social unrest and economic turmoil for the Ottoman Empire. A series of rebellions known as "*Celalis*" swept the countryside, causing incalculable destruction in Anatolia. Interruption of inter-regional trade, the dramatic decline of agricultural and craft productions, as well as the fall of the amount of taxes collected, were symptoms of this crisis. Large-scale depopulation of Anatolian villages and towns, the real extent of which remained unknown, was another major aspect.[33]

However, from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, economic and social life in the Ottoman Empire showed signs of recovery, with re-settlements to

32 Faroqhi, Suraiya, "*Crisis and Change, 1599-1699"* in İnalcık, Halil, and Quataert, Donald (Ed.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1914 Vol.2*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1994, p.440.

33 Ibid., p. 440-452.

depopulated regions, increase of agricultural production, and flourish of certain sectors of the economy. This period of growth which lasted until the late eighteenth century, is also considered, by many historians, as a period of integration to commercial capitalism. The decline in the costs of production and transportation resulted with an unprecedented upsurge in the volume of Ottoman exportation.[34] In the eighteenth century, the spread of this later in the Ottoman Empire created such conditions that the urban wealth generated, triggered down to social groups, other than merchants, tradesmen and producers.[35] Eighteenth century as a period of relative peace, stability, and economic expansion came to an end with the decades of war, fiscal difficulty, and inflation after 1770.[36]

During the period under study, Kayseri was a medium city in its size, population and economic importance. Compared to Tokat and Ankara, *sancak* of Kayseri was a secondary center for inter-regional trade. The volume of the commerce was limited, since neither of the two major Anatolian caravan routes passed through Kayseri. Only a secondary route linked the city with Sivas. Even though in the late sixteenth century Kayseri was a city of respectable size, as the largest city in Anatolia after Bursa, it was largely affected by the 'seventeenth century crisis', which caused destruction and depopulation of many of the Anatolian towns.[37] Trend of recovery that started in the second half of the seventeenth century accelerated in the next century. The population of the city in the eighteenth century was slightly over 20,000.[38]

As to the economic structure of the city in the first half of the eighteenth century, agriculture constituted the major economic activity. The majority of the population was engaged in rural activities. Viniculture, market gardening, sheep and goat breeding

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34 İnalcık, and Quataert, Introduction, in *An Economic and Social History*, p.410.

35 Hanna, Nelly, *In Praise of Books, A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2003, p.27.

36 Özmucur, Süleyman, and Pamuk Şevket, "Real wages and standards of living in the Ottoman empire 1489-1914", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.62, No.2, (Jun 2002), p.296.

37 Ibid., p.43.

38 Karagöz, Mehmet, *XVIII. Asrın Başlarında Kayseri (1700-1730)*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1993.

occupies an important place.[39] Faroqhi underlines the continuity between countryside and the town. In the late seventeenth century Kayseri:

> "...the rural features were apparent even at a casual glace. Quite a few of townsmen were not craftsmen or merchants at all, but made their living by cultivating gardens, vineyards, and even fields. These were combining residence in the city with agricultural occupations. One of the reasons of agriculture being a main source of income for a large number of townsmen, was that gardens and vineyards tended to be more profitable in the vicinity of a town."[40]

Observations relying on the probate inventories support this thesis. By the late 17th century, the custom of owning fields as freehold property constituted a well-established peculiarity of the Kayseri district.[41] The main commercial goods were textile products such as cotton, linen, fabric, cloth, *tülbent*, leather, *pastırma*. Leather processing (*debbacılık*) was the most developed craft in the city. Leathers and particularly Morocco leathers (*sahtiyan*) from Kayseri were a well-known commodity in the Istanbul and Edirne markets. In addition, weaving, especially cotton weaving was a considerable source of income.[42]

As a city of medium size and importance, Kayseri can be taken as an exemplary early modern Ottoman city. The fact that city's distance from the capital kept it away from the demands of the Istanbul grain market is also important.[43] Since "the resources of the Kayseri hinterland was available for local consumption"[44], and hence, the city was secured from the economic intervention of the center, local economic structure and dynamics

39 Ibid., p.242.

40 Faroqhi, *Men of Modest Substance: House Owners and House Property in Seventeeth-Century Ankara and Kayseri,* Cambridge University Pres, 2002, Cambridge, pp. 50-54.

41 Ibid. p.52.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., pp. 42-5.

44 Ibid., 62.

prevailed. Thus, studying early modern Kayseri can be indicative of the socioeconomic conditions in many other cities of the empire. In that regard, Kayseri's situation is very similar to what Canbakal mentions in her study on seventeenth century Ayntab. According to her, that Ayntab was never considered as part of the core regions of the empire explains the lack of direct governmental intervention, and allows the researcher to examine the power relations within the society without being 'shadowed by the state'.[45]

OUTLINE

The first chapter is devoted to a review of the secondary literature on 'Ottoman middle class'. I identify different approaches in the literature regarding the Ottoman class structure, and summarize how these approaches define the 'Middle Class', that is, if they recognize its existence. In the second chapter, I explore changes in the level of material well-being of the inhabitants of Kayseri, during the period under study. The central concern of this chapter is to analyze the evolution of the accumulation of wealth held by the ‘middling sort of people’, and changes in their choices regarding their assets. Here, I try to elaborate class boundaries with reference to the value of personal consumption. In the third chapter, through a qualitative analysis of the consumer durables possessed, I search for signs of improvement in living standards of the middle class -defined according to the boundaries established in the previous chapter- and changing attitudes of the people in this group towards home. Finally, I question whether the findings of the two chapter correspond to each other.

45 Canbakal, Hülya, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town : 'Ayntâb in the 17th Century'*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2007.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW:

OTTOMAN MIDDLE CLASS

Urging for a precise definition of 'middle class', Stearns states, “we're dealing with a peculiar beast and quite possibly with several beasts. Yet, we have made little headway toward anatomical precision.”[46] 'Middle class' is a term that we use everyday, but hardly anybody ever defines. Literally, the 'middle class' is any class in the middle of a social scheme of stratification. Yet, the term has several and sometimes contradictory meanings. The difficulty of defining this 'beast' arose from three main reasons. The first one is related to the difficulty of defining class boundaries in general. Whether to adopt Marxian or Weberian approaches, whether to take wealth, property, cultural values, outlook and behavior patterns, self-consciousness or capacity of action as definitional criteria depends on the researcher's objectives and orientation.

Second, the concept depends strictly on the context in which it is used. In the context of early capitalism, 'middle class' is employed to describe a new social class, the rising bourgeoisie, associated with developing capitalism, and in an intermediate position between the aristocracy and the peasantry;[47] whereas in the context of developed capitalism, it refers to social groups such as labor aristocracy, professionals, white collar workers, which emerged as a result of the growth of finance capitalism and the proletarianisation of the petit bourgeois world and which stand between the working class

46 Stearns, Peter N., “Middle Class: Toward a Precise Definition”, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Jul., 1979), p. 377

47 Cashell, Brian, “Who are the Middle Class?”, Congressional Research Service report, March 2007, p. 2.

and the upper class.[48] Last, but not least, the concept is fraught with ideological overtones. The term 'middle class' is 'heuristic', and connected to a certain perception of 'social change', associated with Western historical development. It is often seen as the key social actor that generates social change towards modernity, and is assumed to have a significant role in structuring the conditions leading to a specific political outcome, or in Weberian terms, the development of a rational rule.[49]

Broadly speaking, the early modern Western 'middle class' can be defined as follows: new urban social stratum, characterized by novel consumption patterns, a new mode of accumulating capital founded on financial and commercial activities, and a new way of participating in public life grounded on a unique definition of change.[50] It consists of wealthy commoners living on their investments, including judicial administrative officials, lawyers, notaries, doctors, merchants, apothecaries, innkeepers, grocers, shopkeepers, and artisans. This social stratum is in the 'middle', in the sense that it developed in contradiction to the major division in feudal Europe between aristocracy on one side, and commoners on the other. While the aristocracy owned the countryside, and the peasantry worked the countryside, "town-dwellers" arose around mercantile functions in the city.[51]

Defining 'middle class' in a non-Western context is even more problematic. Both in Weberian and Marxian analysis, 'middle class' is associated with capitalism and Western social structure. They emphasize its lack in the non-Western context as an explanation for the 'stagnation' of these societies. Weber identifies the Ottoman society as an example of 'traditional authority', whose main features are patrimonialism and sultanism. According to him, personal and arbitrary exercise of power inhibits the development of a bourgeois class, which could generate change. In this perspective, the crucial role in the non-development of capitalism and thus, that of the middle class is attributed to Islamic

48 Gidens, Anthony, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, Hutchinson University Library, London,1973, 54.

49 Stearns, “Middle Class”, p. 380.

50 Göçek, Fatma Müge, *Rise of the Bourgeosie,* p. 8.

51 Ibid, p.9

institutions and traditions. In the absence of an independent engine of change, the transformative role belongs to the state. Non-western societies attempt to replicate the Western experiences often through initiatives launched by the state.[52]

Similarly, Marx's concept of 'Asian mode of production' leads to state-centered approaches. In opposition to Western historical development shaped by economic processes and conflicts, non-Western societies are considered as a static system with no intermediate forces between autarchic villages and the state. If the state in the Western context is taken as an instrument of the dominant class and not as an agency of its own, in non-Western societies it is attributed an independent historical role. It is the state that structures the forces of production, and the strength of the state inhibits the development of capitalist forces and independent actors such as the middle class. In this context, change can only come from the outside, and the emergence of a middle class can only be engendered by external factors, most notably through integration to the world system with commerce.[53]

Approaches to Ottoman history was for a long time, colored by the framework proposed by Weberian and Marxian analysis, which led to state-centered interpretations of Ottoman society, neglecting the societal processes. Nevertheless, recent historical studies have severely challenged this view. This chapter focuses on the question of 'Ottoman middle class' in the secondary literature and the evolution of the scholarship on the subject. I will identify different approaches regarding the Ottoman class structure, and summarize how these approaches define the 'middle class' when they recognize its existence.

1.1 Mosaic Theory

The ideas that Ottoman Empire offers an example that does not resemble the historical evolution of Western Europe, and that it was subordinated to different forces, remained unchallenged assumptions for a long time. Mosaic theory, which suggests that

52 Ibid, pp.12-17.

53 Ibid.

European society developed with an idea of class identity whereas the Islamic world grew paying importance to the ethnic, religious and tribal character of a society on the one hand, and the theory of Oriental despotism, which admits the existence of Ottoman social classes, but defines them on the basis of their position vis-à-vis the state are two facets of this “West and the Rest” rhetoric.

Mosaic theory was formulated by Gibb and Bowen during the 1940s, and presented in the the first volume of *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East.* The main argument is as follows: Ottoman society cannot be understood in terms of social classes as in the case of Western societies, since the most natural system of demarcation was based on a dual principle, namely an occupational division followed by a cultural division. These divisions created officially sanctioned, clearly demarcated and vertically -rather than horizontally- constituted groups.[54]

Gibb and Bowen put specific emphasis on the role of profession and culture in defining the social position of an individual. According to Gibb and Bowen, occupational division finds its reflection in the 'corporative' aspect of the Ottoman structure. The guilds are considered as primary groups :

> “[The population] was all organized into bodies such as guilds...and it was to these bodies rather than the state or even the Sultan, that they were inclined to accord their most vivid allegiance. The guilds were, of course essentially urban. Though in some places at any rate there were guilds of farmers, in general their place was taken in the country-side by village councils or, in the case of nomads, by their tribes. But all, guilds, village councils and tribes, were to a great extent autonomous, though naturally they were supervised by the local governors and their autonomy, which was reinforced by the fact that both towns and villages in most places tended to be economically self-

54 Gibb, H.A.R, and Bowen, H., *Islamic Society and the West, a study of the impact of Western civilization on Moslem culture in Near East, Vol.1*, Oxford University Press, 1950, pp. 3-4.

contained, split up the populations into many semi-independent units."[55]

This definition of social stratification draws heavily on the Weberian conception of status order. If 'classes' are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods, 'status groups' in Weberian analysis, as units of organization in pre-industrial societies, are stratified by life-styles, social esteem and positive or negative estimation of honor accorded to them by others. In a society which is organized into status groups, social intercourse with other status group is restricted, and social mobility does not exist. Sumptuary laws are an example of how, in the Ottoman society, 'status' attributed externally by custom, law and state, determined the social stratification. These laws ordering that members of a profession wear the characteristic insignia of their trade, or members of a *millet* keep their distinctive clothing is considered as a reflection of the state's role in keeping "everyone in his proper place" by not letting a group appropriate the status symbols that belonged to another group.[56]

With the Marxian sea change in social sciences which took place in the 1960s, the idea of a classless Ottoman or Turkish society was seriously shaken, and lost its dominant position. Yet, it was not wiped away totally. Among the contemporary scholars, Masters is one of the most important protagonists of the theory. In *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, he holds that the Ottoman individual identified himself primarily, through membership to one or more of the groups along religious, professional, tribal, gender or city-quarter lines. *Taifes,* fiscal units established by the Ottomans, or formed locally with their encouragement in order to facilitate tax collection, were another source that created solidarity and identity in people's dealings with the government. Moreover, men and women, free persons and slaves constituted other legal categories defined by law.[57] Masters' main argument is that commonality of economic roles and

55 Ibid., p.159.

56 Mardin, Şerif, "Historical Threshold and Stratification, Social Class and Class Consciousness", in Mardin, *Religion, Society and Modernity in Turkey***,** Syracuse University Press, New York, 2006, p.13.

57 Ibid, pp.44-45.

interests was subordinated to these alternative social identities.[58]

Among the demarcation lines mentioned above, Masters gives priority to ethnicity and religion in reconstructing the Ottoman society. He insists that religion served as the primary criterion of both identity and attachment to a larger political community, for most of the history of the Ottoman Empire. The daily life of the Ottoman subjects, as well as their legal and social status were shaped by being a Muslim or a non-Muslim. According to him, a religiously ordained cosmology lay at the heart of physiological world-view of each individual. Hence, according to him, in writing the Ottoman history, the religious identities should be placed at the center.[59]

The defense of Mosaic Theory is constructed around the idea that the Ottoman society should be comprehended on the basis of building blocks employed by the Ottomans themselves.[60] That's why, according to him, in understanding the Ottoman society, institutional distinctions and inequalities on the one hand, and contemporary constructions of social identity on the other, should be privileged. Underlies this argument, the assumption that the social identities corresponded to the institutional distinctions. Both Gibb and Bowen and Masters implicitly suggest that construction of identity was shaped by custom, law and the state. In their understanding, the central place is accorded to Islamic law in the establishment of these officially sanctioned and insurmountable lines, since Muslims, like non-Muslims, were governed by Muslim legal norms and logic categories. Islamic law defined unequal rights for various groups while the Ottoman state conferred ranks, titles, tax exemptions, dress privileges, and various other formal marks of inequality.[61]

Attributing Islam an autonomous role in shaping the social, economic and political spheres, which is an essentialist and Orientalist attitude, constitutes the major weakness of

58 Masters, Bruce, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East, Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750,* New York University Press, New York, 1988, p. 4.

59 Ibid., p.5.

60 Ibid..

61 Ibid, p.4-7.

the 'Mosaic theory'. That interpretation and application of Islamic law was shaped by societal processes, more than it shaped them, has been demonstrated by recent studies. Besides, processes of identity construction is far more complex than a simple reflection of institutional distinctions and inequalities. Identifying social identities and religious demarcation lines is misleading, since these lines were not insurmontable nor definitive and clear, as have been argued. On the other hand, it should be underlined that the argument of a 'classless society' on which the Mosaic theory is based is historically determined. According to Mardin, repeating the “myth of classless society”, this theory was a reflection of the political rhetoric of the early republican era.[62] Finally, as Marcus insists, besides the officially defined categories, there existed various forms of differentiation which had their roots in rules of etiquette, social prejudices and notions of status that were culturally-embedded.[63] Moreover, economic differences constituted an important part of the construction of identities for the Ottomans. For instance, Aleppines spoke of the poor (*fuqara*) as a natural part of society, whose existence was recognized by religious communities, neighborhoods and trade guilds which founded charities to accommodate the needy. Besides, even the government did not ignore the existence of different wealth groups. That various taxes were arranged according to three brackets justifies this point of view.[64]

1.2 Oriental Despotism

In contrast to this first approach which holds that the Ottoman society should be seen as a 'mosaic' of officially sanctioned and clearly demarcated status groups, a second approach that found its source in a Marxian analysis of Turkish history emerged from 1960s onwards. Pioneered by Mardin, this approach advocated that the Ottoman society can be analyzed in terms of classes. Yet, Mardin too emphasizes the divergence of the Ottoman social model from the Western experience, and insists that it should be understood

62 Mardin, “Historical Threshold”, p. 1.

63 Marcus, Abraham, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity, Aleppo in the Eighteenth century,* Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p.64.

64 Ibid., p.49.

in terms of “Asian mode of production” and “Oriental despotism”. According to him, as a result of the dominant and independent historical role attributed to the state, Ottoman social classes are defined on the basis of their position vis-à-vis the state.

In this view, in economic systems such as existed in the Ottoman Empire, where the state appropriated the surplus and controlled the means of production there could be no class formation on economic basis, or in the Marxian sense. “Profit is dependent on controlling strategic positions in the state rather than on controlling the production apparatus.”[65] Mardin suggests that the Ottoman Empire falls strictly into the category of 'Oriental despotism': “no feudalism, no legitimate firm position in the system of succession for princes and an institution staffed with slaves and an executive organ”.[66] In this vein, Mardin argues that the Ottoman society was split by a traditional dichotomy between the ruling and the ruled, a rivalry among the members of the governmental elite. Only two social strata can be identified, the ruler and his executive machinery on the one side, and the ruled on the other. The divide is between *askeri* and *reaya*, and within the *askeri* class itself. A struggle is waged among components of administrative class. The dislike for the ruling group provides the ruled groups a unity of outlook that allows us to consider them as a class.[67]

Mardin's dichotomous scheme, where the individual is either the topdog or the underdog, emphasizes the lack of an Ottoman-Turkish equivalent of the Western civil society, a part of the society that could operate independently of the central government. This is formulated as the lack of middle or intermediary stratum, defined either on the basis of a material sources of power outside the state structure or of an intermediary role between the ruling and the ruled classes.

According to Mardin, the struggle on the part of the central state to eradicate centrifugal forces, in other words, 'exceptions' that do not fit in the dual model, is the main strand of the Ottoman social and economic history. Among these exceptional forces,

65 Mardin, “Historical Threshold”, p.3.

66 Ibid., p.6.

67 Ibid., pp. 4-8.

merchant and artisans, and *ayans* are the two social categories that had a potential to nurture civil society. Yet, rigid structures of economic and political control obstructing the development of capitalism, etatist policies and the dichotomous cultural structure combined, did not allow these intermediate or middle stratum to flourish, as it did in the early modern Europe. In Mardin's words, the merchants and artisans constituted an 'embriyonic social class', that had never been granted the opportunity by the authorities, to blossom out in full as a class. These groups were united by their 'dislike of central authority' which hindered their economic expansion. Particularly e*snaf* had a consciousness of their status in Ottoman society. However, the circumscription of their activities by the state, and the obstruction of forces that could have led to capitalism caused the decline of these groups.[68]

The idea of the the absence of a bourgeois class, the direct result of the failed transition to capitalism can be traced back to Lewis, who emphasizes the weakness of a Muslim middle class that can be associated with capitalist forces. According to him, European economic influence in the empire from the sixteenth century onwards led to the rise of a new native middle class as buyers, agents, importers, distributors and as financial and commercial representatives of foreign interests. This middle class, particularly the merchants, remained predominantly non-Muslim. In the course of the 19th century it was among this class that the nationalist movements flourished. The rise of a new Christian middle class, prosperous, self-assertive, and potentially disloyal went hand in hand with the ruin of the 'old' middle class, Muslim craftsmen and small merchants because of the competition of European industry and commerce under a capitulatory system.[69]

As to the *ayans*, Mardin views them as a buffer between the provincial tax-payers and the government, who rose due to the weakness of the central authorities during the decline of imperial power. They were elected by tax payers to represent them vis-a-vis tax officials and to plead their case during tax assessment. Yet, Mardin argues, *ayans* never acquired legitimacy or real power in the context of the dichotomous cultural structure.

68 Ibid, pp.11-12.

69 Lewis, Bernard, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, New York, 2001, pp 454-456.

Besides, they too “operated on the strenght of state patents.”[70] Their existence was considered by the central state authorities as an affront to themselves. Eventually, the liquidation of the power of the *ayans* by Mahmud II reestablished the legitimate framework of centralist administration, even though the functioning of the state still depended on their support.[71]

1.3 Critique of Oriental Despotism thesis:

The rise of the critique of 'decline' paradigm, the efforts to relocate the early modern Ottoman Empire in the Eurasian context, and to see the socioeconomic and political transformations in the post-Sulaimanic era as reflections of state-formation processes, instead of signs of 'decline' drew scholarly attention to decentralization and center-periphery relations. From the end of the 1960s onwards, the questions of urban autonomy and local elites as representatives of local power have become privileged subjects.

Opposing the dichotomous scheme of the Oriental despotism, 'urban notables paradigm' presented by Hourani attributes the urban notables, the intermediate and effective role between the state and the society. Inspired by Weber's 'patriciate', Hourani suggests that notables had a considerable degree of freedom of action, which was derived from their function as intermediary body between the Ottoman sultan and their clients. According to him, notables belonged to three social groups, the *ulama,* local garrison leaders (*agawat*), and the secular notable, the *ayan*.[72] Lapidus too, insists that local politics in the major towns were dominated by notables in competition with each other for power and influence. He considers the notables as the 'middle group' between the state and the

70 Mardin, “Historical Threshold”, p.16.

71 Ibid.

72 Hourani, Albert, "*Ottoman reform and the politics of notables*," in Polk, William R., and Chambers, Richard L. (eds.) *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, pp. 41-68.

civil society, whose power relies on a combination of economic activities associated with state and/or trade: namely control of land, land tax, urban real estate, local handicrafts, regional long distant trade and waqfs.[73]

This view still can be considered as state-centered, since, instead of seeing the notables as members of the 'upper class' of a society, defined by wealth and power, and prefers to focus on the relations between the center and the local elites. As for the mass below, its differentiation is of no interest. Considering as 'middle stratum', a group of local elites, who are distinguished from the rest of the society with their wealth and power, is an illogical and inconsistent position.

Even though 'urban notables paradigm' questioned the assumptions of Oriental despotism thesis, the real challenge to this later came from revisionist works, demonstrating the development of capitalist forces, and hence, the emergence of an Ottoman bourgeois class in the empire, which can be accounted as the counterpart of the European bourgeoisie. In this vein, Hanna and Khoury construct their accounts around the formation of an 'Ottoman Middle Class' that went hand in hand with the commercialization of Ottoman agriculture. The defining feature of the 'Middle Class' is making a living through capitalist activities and being 'outside the state structure'.

Khoury suggests that classes are meaningful units of analysis in the Ottoman case, only after 1860, with the implementation of Land Code of 1858. Here, private property, particularly land-ownership becomes the key element of the definition of class. According to his analysis of Syrian politics, it was after this date that a particular class whose material resource base was large-scale private land ownership and office holding in local and regional administration emerged. According to Khoury, agrarian commercialization coupled with the development of modern means of communication and transport created the framework for acquisition of private property and for the accumulation of capital in the hands of urban notables, who, in turn, rose as the new dominant class in the local scene.[74]

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73 Lapidus, Ira M., "Muslim cities and Islamic Societies", in *Middle Eastern Cities*, University of Columbia Press, New York, 1969, pp.47-51.

74 Khoury, P.S., "The urban notables paradigm revisited", *Revue du monde musulman et de la mediterranee*, 1990, Vol. 55, p. 221.

In Hanna's work, 'Middle Class' is strictly associated with commercial capitalism. Living beyond subsistence and enjoying a level of material comfort, ability to afford a certain measure of leisure and indulge in spending on non-essentials, are the main features of this class, which came about due to commercial capitalism. The formation of the 'Middle Class' in Cairo was linked on the one hand, to the profits provided by the spread of commercial capitalism and on the other, to the dynamics of taxation, particular to the 18th century, that allowed these social groups to keep the profits.[75]

This view too, defines the 'middle class' by its position vis-a-vis the state, instead of its position in the social hierarchy. The emergence of a new material base of power, one that is not dependent on the state, but deriving from the market forces, is what enables the formation of a 'middle class'. For instance, *ulema* and soldiers who were involved in commercial activities and shared similar socioeconomic conditions are not considered as part of the middle class, since they belonged to the ruling elite. Thus, they are taken as 'elite' merchants.[76] In that regard, this perspective on the question of social stratification can not escape from 'state-centered-ness' of Oriental despotism thesis, and addresses the same questions, though answering them in a different way. On the other hand, this approach adopts the Marxian view, arguing that the social change and class formation in the non-Western society may occur, solely, through an external catalyst, in this case commerce with the West. Moreover, this definition of 'middle class' is heuristic, in the sense that its main concern is the existence or lack of 'civil society'. Hanna herself, declares this point:

> “The question is whether or not a dynamic role can be attributed to this class, whether or not this class could have an impact on society, and whether or not it could have an influence on the modern period -in other words whether this class had a role in the historical process in the early modern or the modern period. The issue is controversial because it touches on the existence of absence of some sort of civil

75 Hanna, *In Praise of Books*, pp.26-28.

76 Ibid., pp.42-44.

society."[77]

1.4 'Middle Class' as Middling Wealth Group

From the '70s onwards, critics of the Orientalist interpretation of the history of Middle Eastern societies paved the way for a criticism of state-centered perceptions and allowed an understanding of the Ottoman society in terms of economically defined classes. The fourth approach to the question of 'class' in Ottoman society, has grown out of this new understanding. With their common emphasis on wealth and common research methods Raymond, Todorov, Establet and Pascual constitute a distinct group. Studying distribution of wealth through probate inventories, they identify a scale of social stratification on the basis of the level of wealth, supposed to be corresponding to a certain standard of living. *Artisans et Commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siecle,* Andre Raymond's work on urban economy and urban social groups divides the society into three social categories: proletariat, middle class and commercial bourgeoisie (lower, middle and upper classes). He shows that the economic middle class played a significant role in eighteenth century Cairo. Commerce was the main channel through which wealth accumulated. A significant proportion of the population, about one-quarter to one-third of a million of inhabitants were involved in production or trade. Standing on a number of trade routes, the city offered important opportunities to the merchants who prospered considerably and made great fortunes during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The owners of these great fortunes (more than 50,000 *nisfs*), particularly coffee and spice merchants constituted the 'upper class' who enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle. This group is followed by the 'middle class'. Raymond includes in this bracket people whose estates were between 5,000 and 50,000 *nisfs*, and whom he supposed to have had comfortable living conditions. In Raymond's description, middle class families lived in individual houses they fully or partially owned. These houses included multiple living units and certain number of services such as toilets, storerooms and courtyards.[78]

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77 Ibid, p.4.

78 Raymond, André, *Artisans et Commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siecle*, Institut français de Damas, Damascus, 1974, pp.204-205.

Similarly, Establet and Pascual, who study two sets of Damascane probate inventories of from seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, divide the Damascene society into three social categories: those whose assets were worth more than 1,000 *guruş*, those worth between 200 and 1,000, and those who owned less than 200. However unlike Raymond, a class perspective is absent in their study.[79] Instead, they establish correlations between the level of assets and place of residence in the city (intra- or extramuros), occupation, religion.[80] Todorov in *Balkan City* divides the populations of Vidin, Sofia and Ruse into groups of 'property owners', which, he argues, corresponds to the socioeconomic structures. The propertied upper stratum whose assets exceeded 5000 *guruş* lived in expensive homes and owned commercial property and other real estate. The Middle stratum was divided into two categories: one between 501 and 1000 *guruş* and one between 1000 and 5000 *guruş*. Beside their houses, the commercial properties of these stratum were limited to their shops, tools, raw materials and finished goods. These strata predominantly consisted of the 'urban productive population', i.e. the artisans. Those with assets less than 500 *guruş* belonged to the lower stratum whose real estate was limited to a house, if they had one at all.[81]

Although this approach constitutes a serious challenge to Orientalist understandings of the Ottoman society, it has its limits in drawing the contours of the social classes. First, none of the authors mentioned above explain how they construct the wealth categories corresponding to social sectors. Therefore, the limit values they choose to define classes seem to be arbitrary. Second, even when the material conditions are considered as the defining criteria of class, relying on probate records these studies take wealth and not the income as an indicator.

1.5 An Integrative Approach

79 Establet Colette, and Pascual, Jean-Paul, "Damascene Probate Inventories of the 17th and 18th Centuries: Some Preliminary Approaches and Results", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), p. 384.

80 Ibid, pp. 385-390.

81 Todorov, *Society, the City and Industry in the Balkans, 15th-19th centuries*, Voriorum, 1998, pp. 147-182.

In the political context of the 1990s, which was marked by challenges to the accepted views on modern state institutions, critiques directed at the statecentered-ness of the Ottoman historiography have flourished. The privatization of not only the state industries of the Eastern Europe but also of the interventionist welfare states of the West under the pressure of forces of globalization, has resulted in a change of paradigm in social sciences. Even though not a field much explored in the Ottoman context, the 'politics of everyday life' entered the agenda of the Ottoman historians. Canbakal states:

> "Everyday politics was embedded in public "processes involved in determining and implementing public goals and in the differential achievement and use of power by the members of the group concerned with these goals," and it operated not through instruments of the state alone but also through structured encounters between ordinary people and the powerful, i.e. those 'who could get things done the way they wanted'."[82]

A fifth approach, which responds to the question of social stratification in the Ottoman society in terms of 'asymmetrical power relations', is rooted in the recognition of the significance of 'everyday politics'. This approach does not take the individual solely as the member of this or that 'estate' and consider his social position as a reflection of his affiliation to one or more groups. Rather, one's place in the society is considered to be shaped by several economic, social and political factors that are mutually dependent and inseparable from each other. Status, circles of social relations, cultural traits, social identity and level of material well-being are taken as different facets of unequal relations. [83]

Todorov's understanding of social stratification in *Society, the City and Industry in the Balkans, 15th-19th centuries,* where he attempts to develop a perspective combining

82 Canbakal, *Society and Politics*, p.7.

83 Marcus, *The Middle East*, pp. 37-38.

economic and social power, can be seen as a pioneer of this approach. For him, property and monetary resources gave the upper stratum economic power and weight in society. As a result of their wealth, the propertied urban elite, composed of provincial representatives of the Ottoman ruling class, who were predominantly Muslim, obtained privileged positions, since the urban population became dependent on them. .[84]

Marcus in his work, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity, Aleppo in the Eighteenth century*, divides the society into groups on the basis of a combination of wealth, social esteem and political influence. The social groups cut across the categories, utilized by traditional historiography such as religious, ethnic or occupational groups, or *askeri* and *reaya.* These categories are taken into account, to the extent that they affect one's relation to economic, political and cultural power sources.[85] For Marcus, religious affiliation, sex, and the level of wealth were three attributes that account for social distinction in Ottoman society. Distinction based on gender and religious segregation, which had its roots in the strong communal attachments and Islamic law and placed non-Muslims in a subordinate social position, were only a part of the story. Uneven distribution of wealth fostering vast differences in material and social circumstances was as a key ingredient in determining one's position in the social hierarchy.[86]

Marcus draws a three level structure for the eighteenth-century Aleppine society. On the one hand, a small group of elite holding high positions in the religious establishment, administration and the military, and distinguished by wealth and prestigious lineages, and on the other hand, a vast mass who had no claim on wealth and social power. 'Middle class' stood between these two poles, upper and lower classes, as in Western Europe. A substantial number of people who possessed property, a comfortable lifestyle, learning, good occupations and other desirable attributes belonged to this middle group which was neither affluent nor needy.

This approach suggests a three level structure which is not rigid, or defined

84 Todorov, *Society, the City*, p. 180-182.

85 Marcus, *The Middle East*, pp.56-64.

86 Ibid, pp.60-62.

exclusively by economic criteria, or limited to the division into ruling and ruled classes. Combining 'class' and 'estate' indicators, avoiding Orientalist and state-centric interpretations, and enabling us to see the Ottoman society in terms of power relations, this approach seems to be the most appropriate one for the purpose of this study, which focuses on the relation between class boundaries and consumption patterns. Taking 'class' as a social group composed of people who share similar material and cultural conditions, and a common position in the power distribution in society, is particularly legitimate in the early modern context, where consumption is increasingly associated with social status, and where people sought social distinction through consumption. In this perspective, the recognition of an in-between class is not only possible but also inevitable, since without it "subtleties in power relationships and outlook are eroded".[87] The 'middle class' ceases to be an 'heuristic device' or a clumsy term.

87 Stearns, "Middle Class", p.382.

CHAPTER 2

WEALTH, STOCKS OF CONSUMPTION GOODS AND MIDDLE CLASS

All other things being equal, increase in real income is conventionally considered to indicate an increase in the standards of living. In the absence of reliable information on income, other measures are substituted, in order to survey changes in welfare. In Ottoman socioeconomic historiography, studies on living standards are very limited. Özmucur and Pamuk argues that, real wage series of urban unskilled construction workers, serve as the best indicator available for long-term trends in standards of living, even though one need to be cautious about using them for the entire country.[88] A decline in real wages would result in a decline in household welfare, either because "each unit of labor commanded fewer consumption goods or, because more labor had to be supplied to command the accustomed basket of goods"[89] Both of the cases imply a sacrifice, of consumption, non-market income, or leisure, on the part of the household. According to the findings of Özmucur and Pamuk, real wages of unskilled construction workers, declined by 30 to 40 percent during the sixteenth century. They remained roughly unchanged until the mid-eighteenth century, after which they increased by about 30 percent up to the mid-nineteenth century.[90] Hence, the picture presented in this study suggests that living standards in the Ottoman realm, fell in the sixteenth century, and, rose only from the mid-eighteenth century onwards.

If real wages may serve as an important indicator of welfare, a broader and perhaps,

88 Özmucur, and Pamuk "Real wages and standards of living", p.316.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

more direct range of measures are required to be able to evaluate the living standards and prosperity in the Ottoman Empire. In this context, probate inventories can be reliable sources to study the living standards of the Ottoman population. Thus, this chapter explores changes in the level of material well-being of the inhabitants of the city of Kayseri using probate inventories from the late 17th through the late 18th centuries. More specifically, it examines changes in the overall wealth, the distribution of wealth and allocation of the resources held by households. Its central concern is to analyze the evolution of the accumulation of wealth held by the 'middling sort of people' and the changes in their choices regarding their assets. In addition, search for a reliable statistical tool to indicate the living standards and to define class boundaries is a light-motive of this chapter.

2.1. Methodology

Since different units (*guruş, akçe, esedi guruş*) are used in these registers, all the values are converted to *akçe*. The exchange rates used are taken from Pamuk.[91] 1 *guruş*=150 *akçe* (1660-1680), 1 *guruş*=120 *akçe* (1700-1720), 1 *guruş*=120 *akçe* (1780-1800). Then, *akçe* values are deflated, in order to remove the price effect from the data series. Here, the Consumer Price Indices calculated by Şevket Pamuk is taken in consideration.[92] The nominal *akçe* values are multiplied by an indicator, (0,16 for the periods 1660-1680 and 1700-1720, and 0,05 for the period 1780-1800) to obtain inflation adjusted or, real *akçe* values. '*Akçe*' in the rest of the rest of the study refers to real *akçe* adjusted to its sixteenth century value unless otherwise stated.

In the analysis of the distribution of wealth in Kayseri, according to probate inventories, this study is based on the wealth brackets used by Nikolai Todorov in *Balkan City*.[93] Todorov divides the populations of Vidin, Sofia and Ruse into groups of 'property

91 Pamuk, Şevket, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Paranın Tarihi*, Tarih Vakfi Yurt Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1999.

92 Pamuk, Sevket. 2004. "Prices in the Ottoman Empire 1469-1914." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 36: 451-468.

93 Todorov, Nikolai, *The Balkan City, 1400-1900*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press,

owners'. Those whose assets valued over 5000 *guruş* are considered to belong to the upper stratum, while the Middle strata was divided into two categories, that between 501 and 1000 *guruş*, and that between 1000 and 5000 *guruş*. Those who have assets of 500 *guruş* belonged to the lower stratum.[94] The reason for which I preferred Todorov's classification among others,[95] is that, Todorov's main concern was analyzing social differentiation in the Balkan cities, in the light of property ownership. Since this study's aim is also exploring the relationship between consumption and social hierarchy, Todorov's categories which are elaborated in a similar perspective seem to be the most appropriate. These brackets in *guruş* are converted into real *akçe* units following the exchange rates mentioned above. In accordance with this classification, an estate of 3001-30,000 real *akçe*s is considered to represent the middling group. On the other hand, the threshold of 250/300 *guruş* (about 6000 real *akçe*s), suggested by Establet and Pascual, for marking the people of modest means is also covered here.[96]

Yet, there are also some potential problems one should take note of. Even though I use real *akçe*, due to changes in relative prices over time, what constitutes the 'middling' in one period mat not be so at another time. Besides, there may be regional variations. Finally, there is also the possibility that the propensity of different classes to register their probates have changed through time, which might effect the reliability of the results. At the current stage of research in the field, there is nothing to do regarding these problems. Gender distribution of inventories is another possible problem that could undermine the findings of the study. Yet, the proportion of the inventories belonging to women are very close to each other for the three periods under study.

The terms 'consumer goods', 'consumer durables', or 'personal and household belongings', mentioned in the second part of this chapter, implies house furniture, clothing, books, arms, jewelry and other personal accessories in other words, all that remains in an

1983.

94 Ibid., p.158.

95 See Raymond, *Artisan et Commerçant*; Establet, Colette and Pascual, Jean Paul, *Familles et Fortunes à Damas, 450 Foyers Damascains en 1700*, Damas, Institut Français d'Etudes Arabes de Damas, 1994.

96 Establet, and Pascual, *Familles et Fortunes à Damas*, p. 114.

inventory when real estate, commercial property, animals, liquidity, slaves, and debts owed are excluded. Hence, in order to calculate the amount of personal belongings in a probate inventory, the total value of the items mentioned are subtracted from the total value of the asset.

2.2 Distribution of wealth and Middle Class in Kayseri

Polarization of Wealth

Wealth in Kayseri was highly polarized. Quintile and decile distribution of wealth gives us a clear idea indicates this. Table 2.1 shows the wealth disparities among the inhabitants of Kayseri. The sample probate inventories are divided into seven different wealth groups. The first five rows divide observations into quintile groups from poorest to wealthiest. The last two rows provide information on the poorest and wealthiest 10%. According to this table, the poorest decile held 0,07 per cent of the total wealth registered during the period 1660-1680, whereas the richest decile held 71 per cent, namely, more than 100 times the poorest. This means that one tenth of the estates held almost two thirds of the whole wealth.

Table 2.1-Quintile and decile distribution of wealth in Kayseri

	Poorest 20%	Second 20%	Third 20%	Fourth 20%	Richest 20%	Poorest 10%	Richest 10%
1660-1680	0,34%	2%	5%	11%	82%	0,07%	71%
1700-1720	4%	7%	11%	23%	55%	1,27%	35%
1780-1800	2%	7,00%	10%	18%	63%	0,98%	45%

Same table indicates a less polarized wealth distribution for the following two periods. Total wealth of the richest 10% is less than 28 times that of the poorest 10%, for

1700-1720, and the same ratio is around 1/48 for the period 1780-1800. We can also compare the three periods in terms of the share of the total value of assets of the richest quintile within the overall wealth. The richest quintile controlled 82 per cent of the total wealth for the first period. This ratio regressed to 55 per cent for the period 1700-1720, and rose to 63 per cent in the period 1780-1800. The accumulation of wealth of the third and fourth quintiles taken into account, it is again the period 1700-1720, that represents the most balanced wealth distribution among the three periods, with 34 per cent of the total wealth held by these quintiles, while this number is only 16 per cent for the first period, and 28 per cent for the third period. Polarization of wealth for the data set 1660-1680 becomes more evident when the ratio of the value of the smallest estate to that of largest estate is concerned. This ratio is 1:7238 for the period 1660-1680, 1:78 for 1700-1720, and 1:789 for 1780-1800.

In brief, the data provides evidence for significant wealth disparities and polarization for 1660-1680. It is the only period where the middle group is smaller than the poor. Nevertheless, the picture changes considerably within the 40 years that follow. Among the three periods, it is in 1700-1720 that the polarization of wealth and inequality of wealth distribution is at the lowest level. In the period 1780-1800, we see that wealth is more polarized than 1700-1720, but less polarized compared to 1660-1680.

Changes from one cross-section to next can also be followed through the median value of estates. The latter was 3528 *akçe* in 1660-1680, 6794 *akçe* in 1700-1720, and 6705 *akçe* in 1780-1800. While the median estate for the period 1660-1680, is under 6000 real akçe -the threshold marking people of modest means, according to Establet and Pascual; median estate values for the periods 1700-1720 and 1780-1800 are above this threshold. That the median value for the 1780-1800 is lower than that of the period 1700-1720 should also be underlined.

Evolution of the Middling Wealth Group

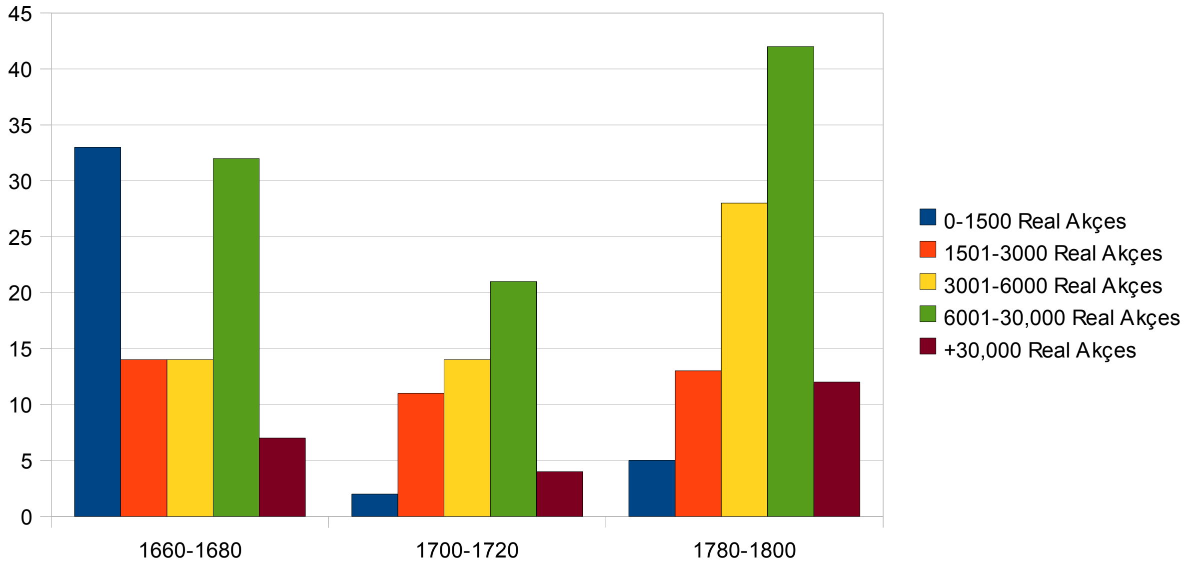
From 1660-1680 through 1780-1800, the middling wealth group in Kayseri, grew considerably. If the wealth brackets suggested by Todorov are to be followed (3001-30000 real *akçes* representing the middling group), then 36 per cent of the inventories in 1660-1680 can be classified as belonging to this group. This ratio almost doubled, rising to 67 per cent and 70 per cent in the next two periods. On the other hand, according to the wealth interval suggested by Establet and Pascual to mark people with modest means, (250/300-1000 *guruş* or 6000-24,000 real *akçe)*, 26 per cent of the inventories between 1660-1680 belonged to this category. This ratio rose to 35 per cent in the period 1700-1720, and to 40 per cent in 1780-1800. While the poor constitute a larger group than the middle group in the first period, in the second period, the middle group is more than 2,5 times, and in the third period more than 4 times as large as the poor. (See Table 2.2)

Table 2.2- Size distribution of probates

	(1) 0-1500 Real *Akçe*	(2) 1501-3000 Real *Akçe*	(3) 3001-6000 Real *Akçe*	(4) 6001-30,000 Real *Akçe*	(5)30,000+ Real *Akçe*	Total

1660-1680	19 **33,33%**	8 **14,04%**	8 **14,04%**	18 **31,58%**	4 **7,02%**	57 **100%**
1700-1720	2 **3,85%**	11 **21,15%**	14 **26,92%**	21 **40,38%**	4 **7,69%**	52 **100%**
1780-1800	11 **5,21%**	27 **12,80%**	58 **27,49%**	89 **42,18%**	26 **12,32%**	211 **100%**

Figure 2.1 Distribution of wealth according to probate inventories



Comparing the periods 1660-1680, and 1700-1720, we can state that the ratio of the wealthy within the whole estates remains almost the same, while the poor and the middle groups underwent considerable change, namely, the lower strata narrowed significantly in favor of the middling group.(See Figure 2.1) In the period 1780-1800, a rise is observed in the wealthy and the poor groups, as a reflection of the increase in the polarization of wealth. Yet, it should also be emphasized that despite the rise of wealth polarization in this period, the middling group continues to expand.

Table 2.3- Distribution of wealth among wealth groups

	(1) 0-1500 Real Akçe	(2) 1501-3000 Real Akçe	(3) 3001-6000 Real Akçe	(4) 6001-30,000 Real Akçe	(5) 30000+ Real Akçe	Total Assets
1660-1680	10,268	17,577	35,275	245,886	592,548	901,556
Share in Total Wealth	1%	2%	4%	27%	66%	100%
1700-1720	1,862	24,487	60,340	321,917	175,901	584,508
Share in Total Wealth	0%	4%	10%	55%	30%	100%
1780-1800	11,589	61,470	256,722	1,176,312	1,565,755	3,071,847
Share in Total Weath	0,03%	2%	8%	38%	51%	100%

Similarly, the ratio of the total wealth of the middle groups to the overall wealth, increased significantly between 1660-1680 and 1700-1720. While only 31 per cent of the total wealth was owned by the middling group in 1660-1680, this figure reached 65 per cent in the period 1700-1720, and declined to 47 per cent in 1780-1800. The average estate value for this group was 10,814 real *akçes* for 1660-1680, it slightly increased to 10,922 in 1700-1720, and declined to 9749 real *akçes* for 1780-1800. The Middle group became wealthier from 1660-1680 to 1700-1720, and in 1780-1800, although it expanded as a group, its average wealth declined. This picture is in accordance with the analysis of wealth polarization above as well as with the general economic trends.

Distribution of Wealth within the Middling Group

Distribution of wealth within the middling group did not change from 1660-1680 through 1780-1800. For the period 1660-1680, the mean estate value (22,659 real *akçe*) of the highest 20 per cent of the middling group is almost 6 times the mean estate value (3798 real *akçe*) of the lowest 20 per cent of the same group (See Table 2.4). For the periods 1700-1720 and 1780-1800 this ratio remained the same. The share of the highest and lowest quintiles in the overall wealth of the middling group were also quite stable. While the lowest quintile held 4 per cent in 1660-1680, this ratio rose to 7 per cent in 1700-1720, and remained at that level in 1780-1800. As to the highest quintile, it held about 40 per cent of the total wealth of the middling group in all the three periods.

Table 2.4- Distribution of wealth within the Middling Group

	Lowest 20% of Middling Group	Highest 20% of Middling Group
1660 -1680	4%	40%
1700-1720	7%	42%
1780-1800	7%	41%

2.3 Composition of Estates and the Stocks of Consumer Durables

Composition of estates

Establet and Pascual claim that the wealth bracket groups were characterized by the composition of the assets as much as the inequality of the value of the assets.[97] In case of early eighteenth-century Damascus, commercial goods, real estate and loans represented the essential part of the possessions of the rich. On the side of the poor, their assets were essentially limited to the household and personal goods providing the basic needs, such as clothing, alimentation, etc. All were items of low value. The share of the real estate in the overall inventory was very limited for this group (See Table 2.5).[98] The top quintile for

97 Establet, Colette and Pascual Jean-Paul, "Les inventaires après décès, sources froides d'un monde vivant", *Turcica*, Vol. 32 (2000), p. 131.

98 Ibid.

Kayseri in the periods 1700-1720 and 1780-1800 had a wealth composition similar to that of Damascus, except for the higher proportion of household and personal goods in the total assets for all of the three periods. In Kayseri too, real estate and loans constituted the majority of the assets of this group in three periods. As to the poorest quintile, the most significant deviation from the pattern in Damascus was the proportion of real estate, which is considerably higher than that of the poorest quintile in Damascus. Of the total value of the estates of this quintile, real estate constituted 15 per cent in 1660-1680, 16 per cent in the 1700-1720, and 37 per cent in 1780-1800, which is a significant shift. The composition of the estates of the top quintiles did not change radically from 1660-1680 to 1780-1800. (See Table 2.6)

For the sampling groups as a whole, value of consumer goods as a proportion of the total wealth, slightly rose from the mid-seventeenth through the early eighteenth century, which is not a surprising result in the atmosphere of recovery from the seventeenth century crisis; but in the last quarter of the eighteenth century this proportion fell significantly. Inhabitants of Kayseri as a whole, favored real estate and means of production over consumer goods, while allocating their resources.

Table 2.5- Composition of estates in the late seventeenth-century Damascus

Damascus	TOTAL Assets (guruş)	Real Estate	Jewelry	Commercial goods	Loans	Household and personal goods	Cash
The richest 20 %	210,577	38,413 (18%)	10084 (5%)	30399 (14%)	89512 (43%)	25,302 (12%)	16863 (8%)
The poorest 20%	1563	56 (4%)	22 (1%)	164 (11%)	113 (7%)	1202 (77%)	9 (1%)

As to the composition of the estates of the middling group from the first cross section to the third, a statistically significant evolution took place in the proportion of the real estate, loans and personal belongings within the total value of the assets (See Table 2.6). Interestingly, the proportion of the commercial goods and the means of production remained the same for all the three periods. The real estate which constituted 43 per cent of the whole assets in 1660-1680 decreased to 35 per cent in 1700-1720 and 34 per cent in 1780-1800. The proportion of cash also declined from 9 per cent to 3 per cent in the same period, while the value of credits doubled. This rise in the loans can be a reflection of the fact that lending at interest was increasingly a common practice in the eighteenth century. Credit-giving was a means of investments for the wealthy, as suggested by its considerable proportion in their estates. The rise of the proportion of credits in estates of the middling group shows that usury increasingly became a means of investment for this group too. The personal and household belongings rose from 28 per cent to 40 per cent in the period 1700-1720. This shift in the proportion of the personal belongings within the total assets can not be merely explained by the opposite trend in real estate ownership. In other words, as much as it signifies a change in the mode of property ownership, it also points to a serious transformation in the consumption patterns, a rise in the living standards of the middling groups. Nevertheless, in the following period, middling wealth groups in Kayseri invested in loan and reduced their stocks of consumer durables.

Table 2.6-Composition of estates of the middling group in Kayseri

Middling group 3,000-30,000 real akçe	Total value of assets	Real Estate	Commercial goods	Loans	Personal and household belongings	Cash
1660-1680	281,161	43%	11%	9%	28%	9%
1700-1720	382,258	35%	11%	12%	40%	2%
1780-1800	1,433,034	34%	11%	18%	34%	3%

Stock of consumer durables

Karababa states the indicators of the emergence of an early modern consumer culture as follows: (1) spread of consumer goods throughout the population; (2) increase in the number of various consumer goods possessed by an Ottoman consumer; (3) proliferation of luxury consumption; (4) commercialization of fashion goods and leisure time activities.[99] An increase in the value of consumer durables as percentage in the total estate does not directly indicate any of these. Nevertheless, a shift in the share of consumer durables within the whole estate can be taken to reflect a change in the spending choices of individuals. That people assigned a greater portion of their wealth to personal belongings denotes a general tendency towards consumption, or, a rise of interest in the acquisition of consumer goods. It shows that people favored consumer goods over real estate and other productive assets. On the other hand, it signifies a change in basic standards of living, in what people considered as a desirable life and emergence of material aspirations beyond the satisfaction of basic needs.

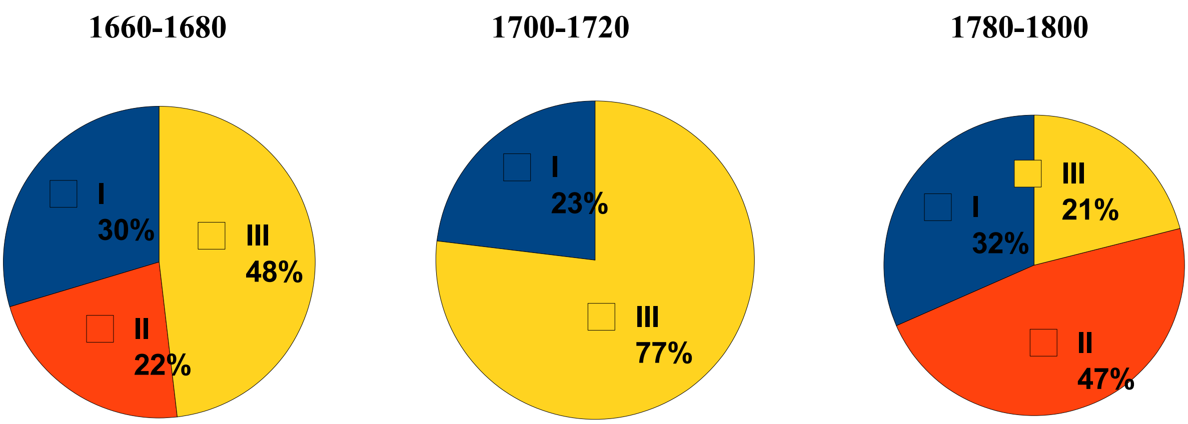
Tables 2.7-2.9 and Figures 2.2-2.4 indicate the distribution of the inventories of the different wealth groups, according to the value of the consumer durables as proportion of the total estate value. The estates are divided into three groups: (Group I) those in which personal belongings constitute less than 25 per cent, (Group II) between 25 and 50 per cent and (Group III) above 50 per cent.

Table 2.7- Consumer durables in poor estates

	0-25% GROUP-I	**26%-50% GROUP-II**	**51%-100% GROUP-III**	**TOTAL**
1660-1680	8 (30%)	6 (22%)	13 (48%)	27 (100%)
1700-1720	3 (23%)	0	10 (77%)	13
1780-1800	12 (32%)	18 (47%)	8 (21%)	38

99 Karababa, *Origins of a consumer culture*, pp. 25-26.

Figure 2.2- Consumer durables in poor estates

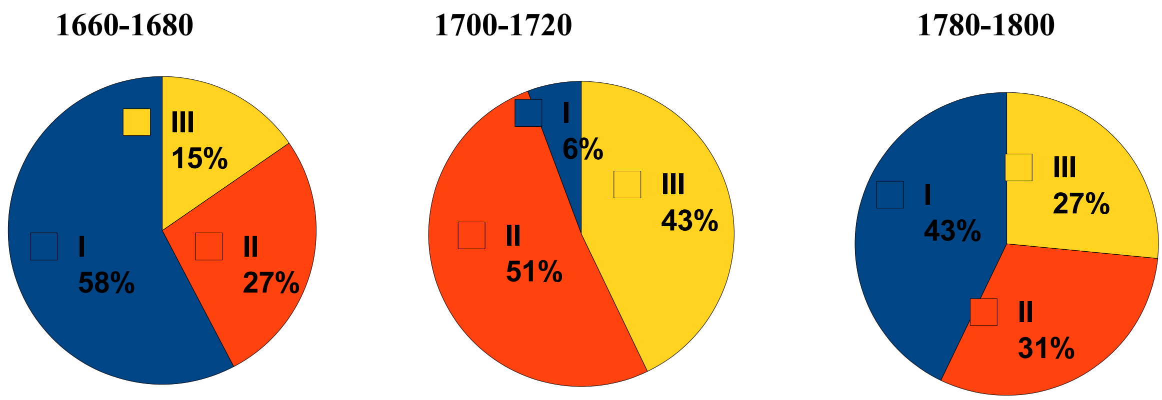


In the period 1660-1680, in almost half of the estates of the poor, personal belongings constituted more than half of the assets. Moreover, from 27 estates in this category 13 of them, consisted solely of personal goods. It means that they did not posses any real estate or means of production. This tendency was strengthened in the period 1700-1720. Estates with a high rate of personal belongings (Group III) rose to 77 per cent, more than three quarters of the poor estates. No estates are observed in the 25-50 per cent range in this period. A fluctuation in the real estate prices might have caused this change. In the period 1780-1800, estates belonging to Group II, whose quarter to half consist of personal belongings, rose to 47 per cent, due to the increase in the property ownership of the group. It should be also noted that this figures may not be very representative since my sample is very small.

Table2.8- Consumer durables in estates of the middling group

	0-25% GROUP-I	**26-50% GROUP-II**	**51-100% GROUP-III**	**TOTAL**
1660-1680	15	7	4	26
1700-1720	2	18	15	35
1780-1800	63	45	39	147

Figure 2.3- Consumer durables in estates of the middling group



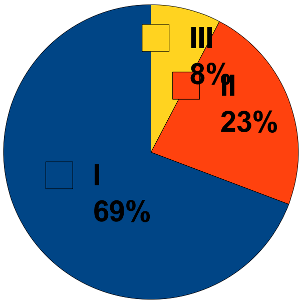
While in 1660-1680, only 15 per cent of the estates of the middling sort, belonged to Group III, this ratio rose to 43 per cent in 1700-1720, and then, regressed to 27 per cent in 1780-1800. Whereas 85 per cent of the middling group inventories belonged to Groups I and II, (whose value of consumer durables constituted less than half of the total estate value), this ratio declined to 57 per cent in 1660-1680, and rose to 74 per cent in 1780-1800. The shift from 1660-1680 to 1700-1720, and the decline from 1700-1720 to 1780-1800 can be explained partially by trends in property ownership and partially by general economic trends. These fluctuations correspond to the changes in the mean and median value of the middling group, which rose from the first period to the second, and declined considerably from the second period to the third. We might state that, there was a correlation between the real wealth and personal belongings. As personal wealth increased, people tended to spend a greater proportion of their income to consumer goods.

Table 2.9-Consumer durables in the estates of the wealthy

	0-25% GROUP-I	**26-50% GROUP-II**	**51-100% GROUP-III**	**TOTAL**
1660-1680	1	0	3	4
1700-1720	0	1	3	4
1780-1800	18	6	2	26

Figure 2.4- Consumer durables in estates of wealthy

1780-1800



In the absence of sufficient data for the first two periods, only 1780-1800 period is taken into consideration. For this period, in majority of the estates of this group (77 per cent), personal belongings occupied half or less of the total value. Only in one fifth of the estates in this group, personal belongings made up a quarter of the whole estate. This is mainly because real estates and loans had a large share in the estates of the wealthy.

2.4 Defining 'Middle Class' through Stocks of Consumer Durables

One of the major problems in using probate inventories as a source for defining the standards of living is the fact that they do not show the current values but the stock values. In other words, they do not show the income and expenditures, but the wealth of their owners. Yet, in economic terms, standards of living is not a function of wealth, but that of income. Thus, the total estate, even in real value, cannot be conceived as a reliable indicator of the standard of living. This problem poses itself primarily when defining social classes according to wealth brackets. To overcome this problem, Main and Main in their analysis of economic growth and standards of living in Southern New England from 1640 through 1774,suggest that increase in the total stocks of material goods represents an improvement in welfare.[100]

They argue that portable physical wealth, rather than total estate, provided more stable class boundaries for early modern western societies. They begin their analysis by dividing into thirds the frequency distribution of the estate values of portable physical wealth in the *full* sample, noting the boundary values in constant sterling which defined each third. They applied these as class limits to the subsamples, organized into time periods. Finally, they calculated the mean index for each class in successive cross sections.

In this part of the study, this method is adopted with a slight modification. Leaving the means of production out, stock of personal belongings (total wealth less real estate, cash, debts receivable and means of production), instead of physical portable wealth (total wealth less real estate, cash, debts receivable) is preferred[101].

As a result, 1188 and 3045 constant *akçes* appear as boundary values between poor, middle and wealthy classes. According to these boundaries, in the period 1660-1680, 25 per cent of the estates belonged to the category of middle class, while this ratio rose to 50 per cent in the period 1700-1720, and 35 per cent in the period 1780-1800. For the middle class, mean estate value of personal and household belongings rose from 1619 to 1895 *akçes* around the turn of the century, and then, sank to 1758 constant *akçes* in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. A similar rise and decline is observed when all three classes are considered together. Average estate value of personal and household belongings evolved from 3068 constant *akçes* in 1660-1680, to 6148 constant *akçes* in 1700-1720 and declined to 4345 constant *akçes* in 1780-1800.

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the mid-seventeenth to the late eighteenth century, personal wealth in

100Main, Gloria L., and Main, Jackson T., "Economic Growth and Standard of Living in Southern New England, 1640-1774", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Mar., 1988), pp. 27-46.

101In Main and Main's study means of production are noted under the rubric of "physical capital".

Kayseri fluctuated in tandem with the ups and downs of the overall economy. The picture presented here, is quite compatible with what most economic historians agree regarding the long-term trends in the Ottoman empire: sixteenth century as a period of demographic and economic expansion, followed by a century of "crisis and recovery", marked by stagnation or decline in population and economic activity in many parts of the empire, and eighteenth century as a period of relative peace, stability, and economic expansion that came to an end with the decades of war, fiscal difficulty, and inflation after 1770.[102]

In terms of wealth per estate and the distribution of inventories among the poor, middle and wealthy classes, the most prosperous period of Kayseri, among the three periods under study, was that of 1700-1720. It was also the period in which the distribution of wealth was least polarized. As to the middling wealth group, this group expanded considerably over the period under study, both according to the wealth brackets mentioned in the studies of Establet and Pascual, and Todorov. In terms of acquisition of consumption goods, our data conforms to the hypotheses concerning early modern Europe, namely, that it was an overall increase in wealth that yielded an increase in the acquisition of consumer goods and interest in leisure time. From mid-seventeenth century through the value of consumption goods per estate, increased in accordance with the increase in material prosperity in the city. In the last quarter of the century, with the decline of overall wealth, these indicators of standards of living declined as well.

Going back to our initial question of whether one can define an early modern Ottoman 'Middle Class' on the basis of the standards of living and consumption patterns, it has been argued in this chapter that the stocks of personal and household belongings provide more reliable class boundaries than wealth brackets. The share of consumer durables within the total estate (as a reflection of the choice of the households to allocate their basic resources) and the value of consumer durables per estate (as an indicator of the amount and value of goods that can be acquired by a moderate Ottoman) can serve as statistical tools in measuring the early modern Ottoman standards of living. If we define a middle class in Kayseri, based on the boundary values established in this study, this class grew considerably in the turn of the century, and shrank in the late eighteenth century.

102Özmucur and Pamuk, “Real Wages”, p.296.

Average estate value of consumer durables for the middle class, as for the whole society, increased in the early eighteenth century and then, decreased in the following period. The question remains: Did the downward trend in the average estate value of consumption goods and total value per estate, constitute a real decline in material standards of living? Can households adopt new ways of life without making significant changes in the way they allocated basic resources or without increasing the overall value of the consumer durables? What does this tell us about the emergence of an early modern Ottoman consumer culture? To be able to answer these questions we should deal with the changes in the makeup of the stocks of personal and household belongings, which will be the main concern in the next chapter. A qualitative analysis of the personal and household belongings will also give us the opportunity to test the values established here as class boundaries.

CHAPTER 3

NEW CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND MIDDLE CLASS

Consumption studies associate the emergence of a consumer culture in the early modern Western context with a new distribution of wealth, the formation of new classes and break down of the traditional order and a change towards modernity. Similarly, Quataert suggests that the introduction of novel consumption patterns to the Ottoman Empire took place in the seventeenth century with changes in trade, production and income distribution, and that it continued to expand during the eighteenth century with an emerging commercial bourgeoisie, who generated goods, income and an increasing taste for consumer goods.[103]

The phenomenon of consumption in general and luxury consumption in particular are considered by many early modern historians as important indicators of social and cultural processes.[104] As established boundaries among social classes were demolished due to increased social mobility, and as people gained access to goods, positions and social standing on the basis of their ability to purchase, due to the rise of money economy, objects ceased to reflect given social hierarchies.[105] Hence, consumption gained a social role and began to be used for social differentiation. The access of middle and lower classes to consumer goods gave way to a competition among classes. The old elites tried to distinguish themselves from the lower classes, while the newly rising bourgeoisie expressed their aspirations of status through imitation of certain consumption patterns of the aristocracy. Consumption of luxury goods or leisure time activities which were previously an elite prerogative, turned into signs of status. This process of top-down movement of fashion goods and their spread to the middle and lower ranks of the society is described as “trickling-down”.[106]

Despite this emphasis in the literature on the relation between 'conspicuous consumption' and the rise of bourgeoisie, it is not the only way to relate changing consumption patterns to the formation of a middle class in the early modern world. Changing objective conditions of a considerable proportion of society, increase in domestic comfort that spread among 'men of modest substance', their changing lifestyles and perceptions regarding a desirable life are also important aspects of an early modern consumer culture that shaped the early modern foundations of the middle class.

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103 Quataert, Donald (Ed.), *Consumption Studies*, p.15.

104 Faroqhi, “Consumption and Elite Status in the Eigteenth and Nineteenth Centuries”, in Faroqhi, *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women: Establishing Status, Establishing Control*, Eren Yayınları, Istanbul, 2002, p.40.

105 Karababa, Origins of a Consumer Culture, pp.11-12.

106 Ibid., p.20.

Thus, the appearance and distribution of consumer goods can be studied in terms of the owners' social and economic rank along with other factors such as occupation and title. In this chapter, I will search for signs of improvement in living standards of the middle class in Kayseri, and changing attitudes of the people in this group towards home. For this purpose, I will study the composition of the consumer goods appearing in the probate inventories under study. More specifically, the following questions will be addressed: is there evidence of a marked improvement in living standards of the middle class, as defined in the previous chapter, in terms of the value of the stocks of consumption durables? Did this group adopt distinct consumption patterns and enjoy a typical way of life? Did the evolution of the standards of living correspond to fluctuations in the overall level of material wealth in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kayseri?

3.1 Methodology

In order to reduce the data to a manageable size that generates easy comparisons, I follow in this chapter the method proposed and used by Göçek in her study, *Rise of the Bourgeosie, Demise of the Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, namely, I construct an index of amenities.[107] The "index of amenities" is an item-by-item counting method which identifies the presence or absence of consumption goods. The I choose to include in the index comprise ten groups: household linens, mattress, interior lighting implements, floor covering, sanitation utensils, cookware, cutlery and serviettes, brasiers, coffee utensils, watches and clocks, books. (See Table 2.1) The first seven items on the list can be assumed as minimal equipment for comfort and cleanliness, and the next three are considered to be indicators of luxury, leisure or conspicuous consumption. The presence in an individual inventory of an item from a group scores one point. The presence of a second item belonging to the group of household linen scores an additional point, since this group presents a great variety and appears frequently in the inventories. As a result, the sum for

107This method is utilized by Fatma Müge Göçek to measure the level of Westernization, which she defines, in her study based on probate inventories of Istanbul, as the adoption Western goods, institutions and ideas. The index including the following eleven items of European manufacture is considered to indicate the level of Westernization: watches and clocks, mirrors, chairs, cloth, binoculars and telescopes, pistols and muskets, eyeglasses glassware and flatware, books, and maps, furniture beds. Göçek, Fatma Müge, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie*.

each inventory, ranged from zero to twelve. In order to compare classes, as defined according to stocks of personal consumption items, and to measure changes in their consumption patterns over the three periods, I have calculated the mean index for each class.

Table 2.1-Index of Amenities

Household linen	*çarşeb, yasdık kılıfı, minder yüzü, sofra örtüsü, perde, makrama, peşkir*
Second household linen	*çarşeb, yasdık kılıfı, minder yüzü, sofra örtüsü, perde, makrama, peşkir*
Mattress	*döşek, şilte*
Interior lighting implements	*şamdan, fener, çirağ*
Floor coverings	*döşeme, kaliçe, kilim, keçe, zili, halı*
Sanitation utensils	*futa, peştemal, hamam keçesi, hamam döşemesi, hamam leğeni, ayna, nalın, sabun, el ibriği*
Coffee utensils	*kahve ibriği, cezve, fincan, zarf, kahve takımı*

Cookware	*tencere, kazgan, börek tebsisi, sahan, etc.*
Cutlers and serviettes	*batman, şerbet ibriği, tabak, tas, kaşık, bıçak, sini, maşraba etc.*
Brasiers	*mangal*
Watches or clocks	*saat*
Books	

That this method measures the acquisition and variety of amenities, not the amount or quality of the goods registered, has several advantages. First, it enables us to compare groups or classes and measure the change in their consumption habits. Second, it serves as aN index to measure spread of consumer goods to a broader segment of the society, and thus to follow "trickling" processes. Finally, it helps us to explore whether households may adopt new ways of life without making significant changes in the allocation of resources, in other words in their patterns of spending.

3.2 Progress in the Mean Index Scores

Figure 3.1-Mean Index Scores

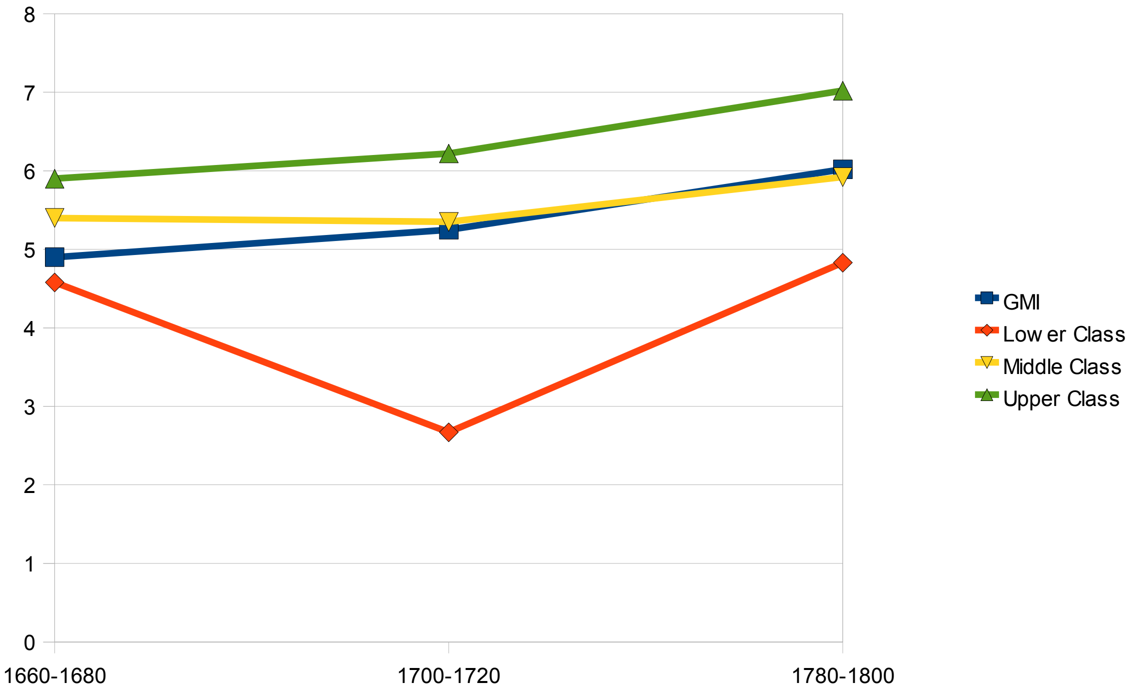


Table 3.2-Mean Index Scores

	1660-1680	1700-1720	1780-1800
General	4,9	5,25	6,02
Lower class	4,58	-	4,83
Middle class	5,4	5,35	5,92
Upper class	5,9	6,22	7,02

Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1 indicate overall progress for all three classes in terms of acquisition of the amenities concerned, based on mean index scores over time. It must be noted that, since the recorded number of cases (3) is too small for the 'lower class' in the period 1700-1720, this score is not reliable, and should be ignored. Table 3.2 shows that the index of amenities registered a steady increase in all three classes from mid-seventeenth through the end of eighteenth century. The general index score for the three sub-samples,

rose from 4,9 in 1660-1680 to 5,25 in 1700-1720, and to 6,02 in 1780-1800. The greatest improvement of the index was observed in the group of inventories that belong to the upper class. The mean score for this group rose from 5,9 in the first period to 7,02 in the turn of the nineteenth-century. In contrast, the index of amenities for the lower class rose only very slightly over the century, from 4,58 to 4,83. This means that it was the upper class that profited the most from the improvement of living standards, and enjoyed proliferation of the consumer durables the most. On the other hand, the fact that the discrepancy between the scores of these two classes increased considerably over the period, suggests that the elite began to acquire a greater array of material goods that enabled a style of living that distinguished them more clearly from the ordinary folk.

As to the middle class, the mean score rose from 5,4 in 1660-1680 to 5,92 in 1780-1800, remaining at about the same level as in 1700-1720. This signifies an increase greater than what we observe in lower-class inventories, but smaller than those of the upper group. That the index score for this class in the late eighteenth century was slightly higher than that of the upper class in the second half of the seventeenth century should be underlined. This indicates that middle class had achieved greater variety in their consumer goods than had the richest third in the previous century.

The rise of the mean index scores for all the three classes can be a sign of changing attitudes towards home as well as of improving material standards of living for the whole society. Even though inhabitants of Kayseri from all classes enjoyed A rise in the level of material comfort, it was the upper class who benefited most from the process. This scheme is in accordance with what most of the studies on early modern Europe reveal. Namely, initially only the rich participated in the increasingly lavish expansion of consumption. Then, however, middling families got into the act and eventually, even the poorer sort were finding a wide variety of non-essentials increasingly desirable.[108] Thus, it can be argued that the emergence of the consumer culture in the Ottoman Empire followed the model suggested by the "emulation thesis", which sees consumer innovation as a top-down process, initiated by high status. However, studies relying on similar indexes of amenities

108 Walsh, Lorena S., "Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1643-1777", The Journal of Economic History, Vol. 43, No. 1, The Tasks of Economic History (Mar., 1983), p.112.

reveal much higher rates of increase for Europe and British America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[109]

3.3 Incidence of Selected Consumer Durables

When broken down item by item, the index also tells us something about the characteristics of the classes, as defined by the value of consumer durables. Besides, it enables us to explore whether a process of spread and democratization of consumer goods took place in eighteenth-century Kayseri. Table 3.3 compares the changing proportions of households from the three classes that owned specific groups of items making up the amenities index.

Firstly, certain items in the index were used by a greater proportion of the society in the eighteenth century compared to the mid-seventeenth century. Furthermore the spread of these goods was not restricted to the upper class and affected the middle and lower classes too. These latter began to acquire greater amounts of goods. This picture is fully in accordance with Karababa's findings regarding the spread of consumer goods throughout the society in seventeenth century Bursa. She demonstrates that many of the consumption goods were democratized among the Bursian people during this period, because the use of a number of items spread not only among the high status group but the low status group as well, which was an indicator of the emergence of an consumer culture in the Ottoman context.[110]

Household linen, mattress, brasier, interior lightening implements, sanitation utensils, watches and clocks, coffee utensils and books are the items that spread through a broader segment of the society in Kayseri Over the period under study. The first four

109See Main, and Main,, "Economic growth"; Walsh,, "Urban Amenities", Horn, James P. P., *Social and Economic Aspects of Local Society in England and the Chesapeake: A Comparative Study of the Vale of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, and the Lower Western Shore of Maryland, c. 1660-1700,* Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, University of Sussex, 1982; Nash, R.C., "Domestic Material Culture and Consumer Demand in the British-Atlantic World: colonial South Carolina, 1670-1770", Manchester Papers in Economic and Social History, No.59, Sept 2007.

110Karababa, *Origins of a Consumer Culture*, p.108-110.

groups comprises essential goods that a household would perceive as necessary. Thus, increase in their acquisition signify a rise in the traditional standards of comfort. In this first category, the most significant increase took place in the occurrence of mattresses and brasiers. Proportion of the whole inventories that included at least one mattress rose from 51 per cent in 1660-1680, to 75 per cent in 1780-1800. While no brasiers were observed in 1660-1680, it was observed in 16 per cent of the inventories in 1780-1800. As to the second category, coffee utensils, watches and clocks, these are indicators of luxury and leisure consumption. Significantly, the ownership of these goods spread at a higher rate than the first, which can be associated with new consumption patterns. Ownership of coffee utensils rose from 32 per cent to 45 per cent, whereas watches and clocks which were absent in 1660-1680 were seen in 17 per cent of the whole inventories in the period 1780-1800. As for book ownership, there was no increase over the eighteenth century.

Table 3.3- Incidence of selected consumer goods

	1660-1680	1700-1720	1780-1800
Household linen-1			
Overall	39%	66%	55%
Lower	24	-	38
Middle	60	68	53
Upper	57	68	70
Household linen-2			
Overall	14	34	34
Lower	12	-	23
Middle	10	27	35
Upper	21	40	51
Mattress			
Overall	51	72	75
Lower	64	-	72
Middle	60	77	81
Upper	57	72	85
Interior lightning implements			
Overall	18	34	28
Lower	15	-	17
Middle	30	14	33
Upper	14	52	40
Floor coverings			
Overall	82	82	76
Lower	85	-	81
Middle	90	82	72
Upper	71	84	89
Cookware			
Overall	88	70	83
Lower	91	-	81
Middle	90	68	84
Upper	79	76	85
Cutlery and serviettes			

Overall	56	52	58
Lower	48	-	37
Middle	80	45	61
Upper	57	64	79
Brasier			
Overall	0	6	16
Lower	0	-	4
Middle	0	5	26
Upper	0	8	22
Sanitation utensils			
Overall	60	62	66
Lower	52	-	49
Middle	60	59	75
Upper	86	79	83
Coffee utensils			
Overall	32	42	45
Lower	24	-	28
Middle	30	32	53
Upper	43	56	64
Watches and clocks			
Overall	0	2	17
Lower	0	-	2
Middle	0	5	14
Upper	0	0	22
Books			
Overall	18	14	18
Lower	9	-	8
Middle	50	9	16
Upper	14	8	31

On the other hand, the spread of goods were not restricted to the upper class. Middle and lower classes too started to enjoy greater acquisition of certain items. By the end of the eighteenth century, some of the most ordinary households were using goods such as coffee utensils, watches or brasiers, which could be seen as luxury by the standards of the seventeenth century. For instance braiser, which is absent in the inventories from the period 1660-1680, appeared not only in the inventories of the upper class (22 per cent) but also those of the poor and the middle strata (respectively, 4 and 26 per cent). Likewise watches, representative of new consumer goods, were owned by these classes to a certain extent, even though it was still a luxury confined primarily to the rich. This picture indicates a change in the social definition of what was a luxury, which is an indicator of the rising consumer culture.

Yet, this trend of democratization of certain goods did not affect books. On the contrary, book ownership increasingly became a feature of the upper class. Respectively, 9 and 33 per cent of the inventories that belonged to the lower and middle classes included books in 1660-1680. This ratio fell to 8 and 16 per cent, while it rose for the upper class from 14 per cent in the second half of the seventeenth century to 31 per cent in the end of the eighteenth century. That books increasingly became a luxury item, is in contradiction with the general trends. This can be explained by the limited size of the data, which might not always produce representative results.

In brief, by the late eighteenth century, inhabitants of Kayseri at all levels were both able and willing to buy a wide range of essential and non-essential consumer goods. Some of these goods were either unavailable or considered unimportant in the previous century. The use of amenities and often luxuries increasingly elaborated and differentiated life styles.

3.4 Middle Class and Changing Consumption Patterns

According to Matthews, mod produces the correct measurement of central tendency, and thus, is an appropriate statistical tool for the analysis of inheritance inventories. She argues that, identifying the mod, the most frequent objects occurring in the inventories, will provide us typology of the life ways. [111] In all the three periods, the items that we encounter the most in the inventories belonging to the middle class are the following: Floor coverings, cookware, cutlery and serviettes, household linen, mattresses and sanitation utensils. These are also the items that occur most frequently in the inventories of the lower and upper classes.

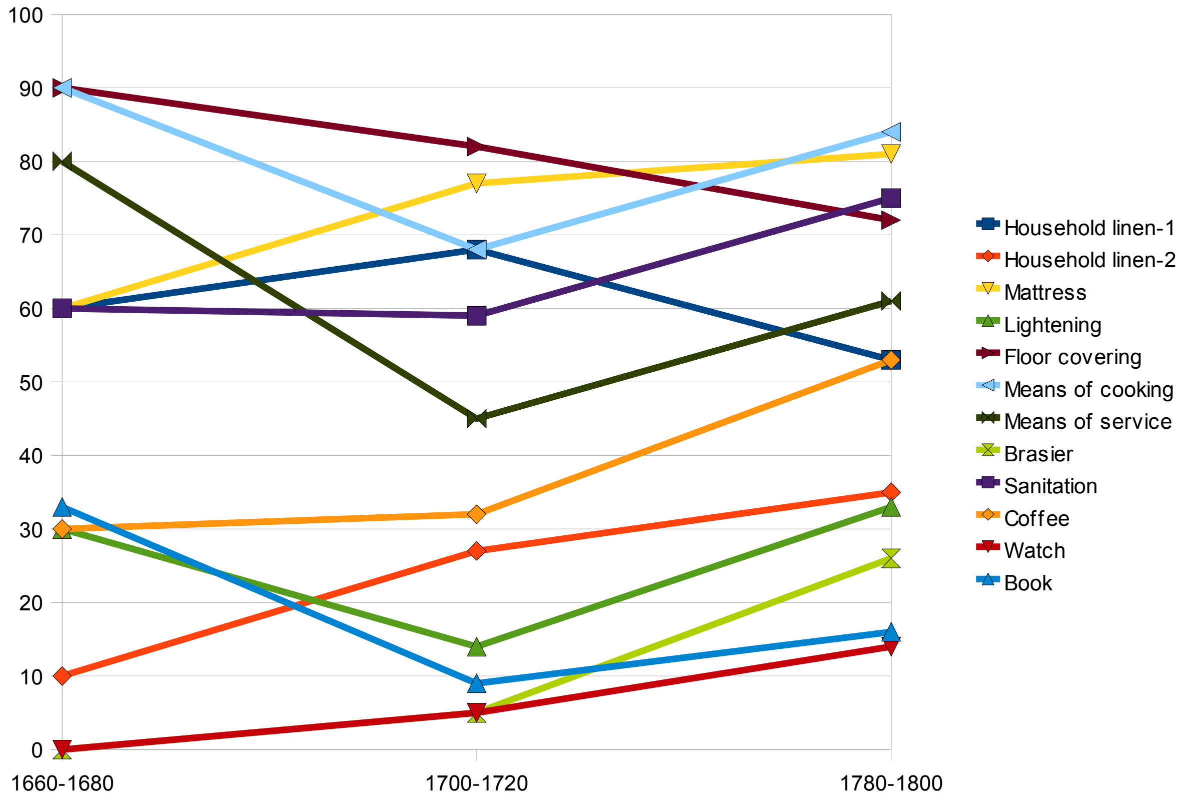
Mattress and floor coverings are the most popular of all domestic equipment and nothing replaced them in that regard over more than a century. Cookware and cutlery and serviettes remained second in importance, and sanitation utensils and household linen followed them. We might conclude that, at least some of these items were elements of even the most rudimentary domestic life in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kayseri.

From the second half of the seventeenth to the turn of the nineteenth century, the most important change in the pattern of acquisition by middle class people took place in the categories of mattress, sanitation utensils, coffee utensils, watches, and brasiers. Mattress, an essential good present even in houses of the poor by the late eighteenth century, occurred in 80 per cent of the middle class inventories in the same period, whereas this ratio was 60 per cent in 1660-1680, and 77 per cent in 1700-1720. By the late eighteenth century a quarter of the middling sort disposed brasiers. As to the appropriation of sanitation utensils, conventionally considered as a sign of modernity and rising living standards, it was the middle class who leaded the increase in the overall percentage. While the proportion of lower- and upper-class inventories that included at least one sanitation utensil remained almost the same over the period, such middle class inventories rose from 60 per cent to 75 cent. As to the coffee utensils, their use spread considerably among the middle class. About a quarter of the middling sort disposed a coffee utensil by 1660-1680. A century later one in every two people whose inventory fell in the middling category owned a coffee utensil, which shows that the middle class was increasingly engaged in luxury and leisure consumption. Similarly, a second item of household linen was

111 Matthews, Joyce H., *The Ottoman Inheritance Inventory as an Exercise in Conceptual Reclamation*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Binghampton University, 2001, pp.336-340.

increasingly more common in this class.

Figure 3.2 Incidence of amenities in the middle class inventories



The data reveals interesting results for cookware, and cutlery and serviettes which are considered by many studies as indicators of modernity and modern consumer culture in Europe. The transition from coarse to fine earthenware, increasingly widespread use of forks, table cloths and napkins are seen as instances of the 'trickling down of politeness and gentility' in Western Europe and North America. Nevertheless, in the case of seventeenth-eighteenth century Kayseri, Ownership of cookware, and cutlery and serviettes seem to be in decline among the middle class. This might be partially explained by modifications in the way probate inventories are registered. In the periods 1660-1680 and 1700-1720, cookware, cutlery and serviettes are frequently registered under 'copperware" (*evani nühasiye*). This is why it is harder to identify these items in the last two periods.

Which may indicate that they become more common.

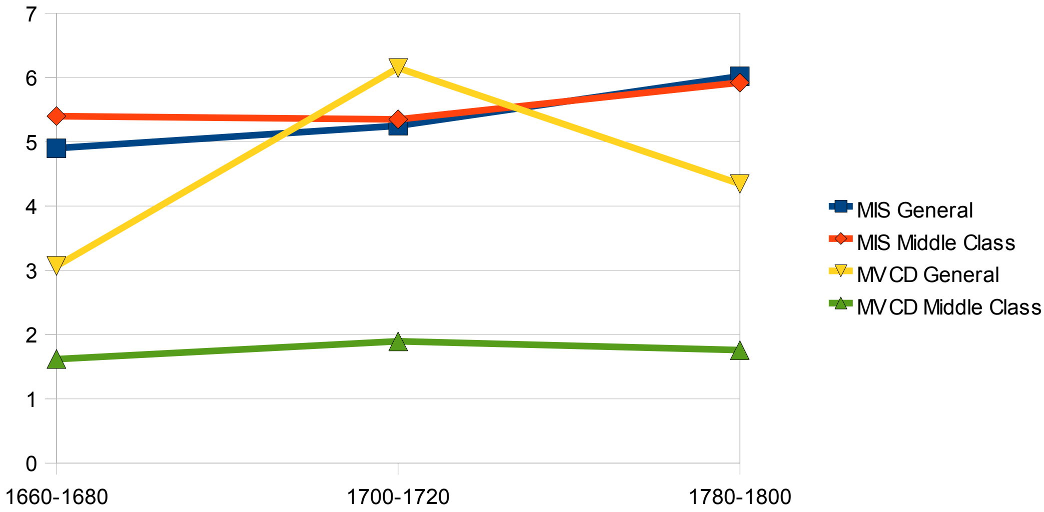
It can be argued that the decision to acquire these goods represented a significant shift in tastes of the inhabitants of Kayseri belonging to middle class. Furthermore, by the end of the eighteenth century, this group owned a range of luxury goods besides the ordinary amenities; thus, it had moved beyond the level of sufficiency. We might also ask whether the changes that took place in the composition of the consumer goods owned by the middling group were characteristic of this group, or put differently, whether the new consumption patterns distinguished this group from the lower and upper classes.

When we look at the changes that took place in the consumption patterns of the lower class, we realize that these changes were far smaller, even insignificant, compared to the middle and upper classes. Besides, the improvement affected mainly the essential goods, and only a very slight increase took place in the consumption of the non-essentials. As to the upper class, the improvement in their consumption, was to a great extent related to the increase in non-capital spending, a tendency which was only evident among this group. Their changing tastes for expensive consumer goods (silver dishes, decorative goods of precious materials, household linen made of valuable cloths, watches and jewelry) brought about some shifts in spending priority. Thus, contrary to the lower class, the improvement in the upper class's index scores through out the period was rooted in the expansion of non-essential goods.

3.5 Explaining the Improvement of Middle Class Consumption

A final question is, how to explain the improvement of the middle class consumption. Figure 3 compares the mean index scores and mean value of consumption durables for the middle class and the overall sample. The chart indicates that for the middle class, appropriation of a greater variety of goods was not proportional to the trends in personal consumption spending. Into the late eighteenth century, members of the middle class in Kayseri steadily raised their standard of consumption as revealed in scores. Yet, their inventories show level, decreasing, or only slightly rising mean value in stocks of consumer goods. This is most evident when we compare the periods 1700-1720 and 1780-1800. We see that the mean index score for the middle class improved while mean value of consumer durables was in decline.

Figure 3.3-Mean Index Score and Mean Value of Consumption Durables[112]



Thus, a decline in the average estate value of consumption goods does not necessarily mean a fall in the standards of living or in the level of domestic comfort. Households might acquire a greater variety of household and personal goods than they had earlier, despite the shrinking relative value of their total stock of such goods in overall inventory.[113] Carr and Walsh in their study on the living standards in colonial Chesapeake also suggest that households may adopt new ways of life without making significant changes in the way they allocated basic resources or without increasing the overall value of consumer durables.[114]

Changes in relative prices can explain the situation. A general fall in the relative

112In the graph, the mean values of consumption durables are divided by 1000.

113Main and Main, "Economic Growth", p. 40

114Walsh, "Urban Amenities", p.112.

prices of consumer goods from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century, as a result of the increase in productivity, was what underlay the "consumer revolution" in Europe. Similarly, the possibility that some modest trend for productivity increases did exist in the eastern Mediterranean before the Industrial Revolution has been put forward by some recent studies. Further research is needed on the subject to be able to make more precise evaluations. Nevertheless, there is highly likely that it was, to a great extent, this trend in relative prices resulting from learning by doing, innovation or the diffusion of new technology from Western Europe[115] That enabled the middle class to improve its standard of consumption.

On the other hand, some of the amenities contributing to the level of comfort might be remarkably cheap, either in terms of price, so that an increase in the value of stocks of consumer durables might not be necessary to appropriate them.

CONCLUSION

115Özmucur and Pamuk, "Real Wages", p.324.

This study, relying on Kayseri probate inventories of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and aiming to identify an 'Ottoman middle class', adopted an approach that takes material well-being, social esteem and political influence, as determinants of social distinction. According to this approach, position of individuals within the social hierarchy was determined by a combination of their level of material well-being, and their symbolic assets, such as political and religious titles and honorifics. In this view, 'Ottoman middle class' appeared as the social group between a small group of elites who were distinguished by wealth and prestigious lineages, and who hold high positions, and a vast mass who had no claim on wealth and social power. Hence, Ottoman middle class was taken to consist of a substantial number of people who were neither affluent nor needy.

Leaving the questions of social esteem and political influence aside, here, I have focused on the material conditions, more particularly on the evolution of the standards of living and changing consumption patterns of the 'Middle Class'. Identifying a middle class in Kayseri in the light of the information provided by probate inventories, was the main concern of the study. I argued that stocks of personal and household belonging is a better indicator of living standards than wealth alone. If we take 'class' as a social group composed of people who share similar material conditions, then establishing class boundaries according to stocks of personal consumption, appears as a more appropriate than applying wealth brackets used by Ottoman socioeconomic historians, such as Todorov, Raymond, Establet and Pascual. This is particularly legitimate in the early modern context, where consumption is increasingly associated with social status, and where people sought social distinction through consumption.

The data under study show that mean and median stocks of personal and household belongings, as well as personal wealth in Kayseri, fluctuated in tandem with the ups and downs of the overall economy: rising from the late seventeenth century onwards, and then falling in the late eighteenth century. Probates belonging to the members of the 'middle class', who are identified according to their spending in consumer durables, repeat this pattern. At this point, there arises the question of whether the downward trend in the average estate value of consumption goods and total value per estate constitutes a real decline in material standards of living in the late eighteenth century.

An analysis of the composition of personal and household belongings, using an index of amenities, demonstrate signs of improving material standards of living for the whole society, despite the decline in personal wealth. Different social classes enjoyed this improvement at different levels, and it was the upper class whose material conditions changed the most during the period under study, and the middle class followed this group. Furthermore, all three social classes, presented distinguishing consumption patterns, justifying the assumption that classes can also be identified on the basis of consumption habits. The decision to acquire more of the goods mentioned in the index shows a significant shift in tastes of the inhabitants of Kayseri belonging to middle class, who by the end of the eighteenth century, began to own a range of luxury goods besides the ordinary amenities, thus moving beyond the level of sufficiency.

Two points should be underlined. First, the picture presented in this study is in many respects in accordance with what we know about the early modern Europe and North America. That people disposed increasingly a greater variety of goods and that consumer durables spread throughout a broader segment of the society are taken to reflect a "consumer revolution" in the Western world. Hence, the shift in consumption patterns can be indicative of the emergence of a consumer culture in the Ottoman realm. Nevertheless, it should also be mentioned that the shift in the disposition of consumer durables is far less pronounced than in Western societies.

Second, the fact that the level of material well-being rose despite the decline in wealth and value of the stocks of consumption durables is not unique to the Ottoman case. Many histories of consumption in Western societies conclude that the emerging importance of consumer goods occurred independently of wealth. Quateart makes a similar point; "the mounting acquisition of goods [in the early modern Western world] is oddly disconnected from economic well-being and sometimes occurred in times of general depression and decline and failing family fortunes. Thus, there are two distinctly different pictures of the seventeenth-eighteenth century past. The production image is one of real wage decline while consumption historians see a rising abundance of consumer goods." [116] In the

116 Quataert, Introduction, p.2.

Western context this situation is explained by a rise in productivity, leading to a decline in relative prices of manufactured goods, which preceded and prepared the Industrial Revolution. Further research is required in order to understand whether the same process took place in the early modern Ottoman Empire.

Finally, the results of this study are consistent with the optimistic revisionism regarding Ottoman standards of living, both in the early modern era and in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. As Kafadar states:

> "The distinction between the share of the Ottoman economy relative to the world economy and the nature of Ottoman economic development over time is crucial for analytical precision; most historians tend to confuse the two or neglect the second issue...In the eighteenth century Ottomans lived better than their ancestors of the Suleimanic era, in terms of material culture and means, [even though] their lot was not improving relative to the lot of those living in other parts of the world."[117]

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