

To the History of Guilds in Istanbul According to a 19th-Century Register

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The history of the Ottoman Empire – a major political, economic and cultural entity on three of the globe's continents for centuries on end, still presents a major challenge for researchers keen on restoring details of the past or revealing its impacts on nowadays living in the former empire's territories and beyond.

The city of Istanbul has always been one of the mesmerizing urban pearls of the Mediterranean. The shift in times brought a shift in names – *Byzantium*, *Constantinople*, *Stamboul*, *Tsarigrad*, *Dersaadet* (not to mention but a few), but never a shift in this city's cosmopolitan and everlasting nature. Throughout history it offered a throne to ceasars and sultans, magnetized travelers, artists and adventure seekers, housed its millions of citizens of various origin, race, beliefs, life-stories and occupations. Being the heart of consecutive empires, the city reflected both their glory and decline.

The 19th century Istanbul must have presented a network of vibrant streets, flanked by picturesque architecture, occupied by multinational crowds. Torn between old traditions and modern influences, the metropolis with its flourishing trade and abundance of craftsmen's

workshops (*dükkân*) was among the largest and most significant market places in the Ottoman Empire¹. This paper deals with one particular aspect of the everyday life in Istanbul during the 19th century and namely the functioning of the guilds, which beyond any doubt have always been immanent to urban reality². The paper offers yet another opportunity³ to get a notion of the crafts and trade in the megapolis, based on a register (*defter*)⁴ of the number of guilds (*esnaf*), workshops (*dükkân*), masters (*usta*), journeymen (*kalfa*) and apprentices (*çırak*) in Istanbul, Eyüp, Galata ve Üsküdar (*Dersaadet ve bilâd-ı selâse*)⁵.

This 19th-century register is housed by the Oriental Department of the National Library of Bulgaria among other documents in Ottoman-Turkish language related to the history of the Ottoman empire and in this particular regard – to the Istanbul guilds in the period 17th-19th centuries⁶. In the course of the research on the topic about 50 documents of different types (such as *arzuhal*, *ilm-ü haber*, *ilâm*, *takrir* and others) were scrutinized. One such a document⁷ from 1722 outlines an example of the everyday issues that local

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- 1 Tuncer Baykara, “İzmir ve İstanbul’un XIX Yüzyıl Ortalarında Esnaf Listeleri,” *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi VII* (1992), p. 3.
- 2 Zarinebaf even calls the guilds “unchanging and uniform urban entities”, Fariba Zarinebaf, “Ottoman Guilds and the State in 18th Century Istanbul”. Accessed January 15, 2015, <http://www.iga.ucdavis.edu/events/Research/all-uc-spring-09-papers/zarinebaf%20paper.PDF>.
- 3 For a thorough review of the writings about Ottoman guilds and crafts from various perspective (religious, economic, social, etc.) see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire. Crafts and Craftspeople under the Ottomans* (London, 2009), 1-23; also Ahmet Kal’a, “Osmanlı Esnafı ve Sanayisi Üzerine Yapılan Çalışmalarla İlgili Genel Bir Değerlendirme,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, Cilt 1, Sayı 1 (2003), pp. 245-266.
- 4 National Library of Bulgaria, Department of Oriental Collections, Цг 25/6.
- 5 On historical urban division of Istanbul see Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Fatih Devri Sonralarında İstanbul Mahalleleri, Şehrin İskânı ve Nüfusu* (Ankara, 1958).
- 6 See Аспарух Велков и др., *Опис на османотурските документи за занаяти и търговия (XVI-XIX в.) запазени в Ориенталския отдел на Народната библиотека „Св. Св. Кирил и Методий”* (София, 1993).
- 7 National Library of Bulgaria, Department of Oriental Collections, 1A/18791, f. 1.



craftsmen were facing (see Fig. 1, 1A/18791). It presents an *arzubal* to the grand vizier of a bread baker from Istanbul, with which he pleads for the newly arrived bakers to be banned from selling bread in his marketing areas of the capital. The reason is that some of his daily baked amount of bread remains unsold due to the competition of newcomers⁸.

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8 Велков и др., *Опис...*, р. 161.



The register in question consists of four sheets (text on 1b, 2a and 2b), dimensions 73,5x25 cm, and includes a total number of 205 entries (see Fig. 2a and 2b, İr 25/6). Each entry gives information about the name of the craft or occupation, the number of workshops (*dükkân*) or particular place of service or work (e.g. *hamam*, *bağçe*, *dolap*) and people involved, according to their professional level

achieved – master, journeyman, apprentice. Although the register does not bear a date, the possible assumption is that it was compiled in the second half of the 19th century. It could be established with the help of other documents, similar in contents⁹. During that time period Ottoman authorities introduced an annual tax in return of the issuing of licenses (*tezkeres*) for practicing the given craft. The due amount depended on the level in the *esnaf* hierarchy¹⁰ and one reason for such kind of registers to be compiled was to ease the process of tax-collection¹¹.

Drawing on the established definition of the meaning of *esnaf* as a *common name of craftsmen as well as those who earn their living by producing and trading with goods and services*¹², the document helps us reveal about 200 different occupations (specialities) which include crafts, trade and services. Ten of the document's entries feature the word “*esnaf*” (e.g. *kuyumcu*, *kazzaz ve püskülcü ve şeridci*, *canbaz*, *hamamcı*, etc.). The question remains as of whether the rest of the makers, artisans or workers enlisted in the register have belonged to a professional organisation or have practiced their professions on their own. A couple of entries count local merchants and such coming from Egypt, as well as distinguish the workshops of muslim and non-muslim merchants.

In this regard a striking impression leaves the fact that in about one third of the 141 entries giving complete information, the number of workshops (*dükkan*) is equal (or differs by 1 or 2) to the number of masters. At the same time the average number of apprentices (if any) per master is less than 1, with very few exceptions (e.g. *hamamcı*

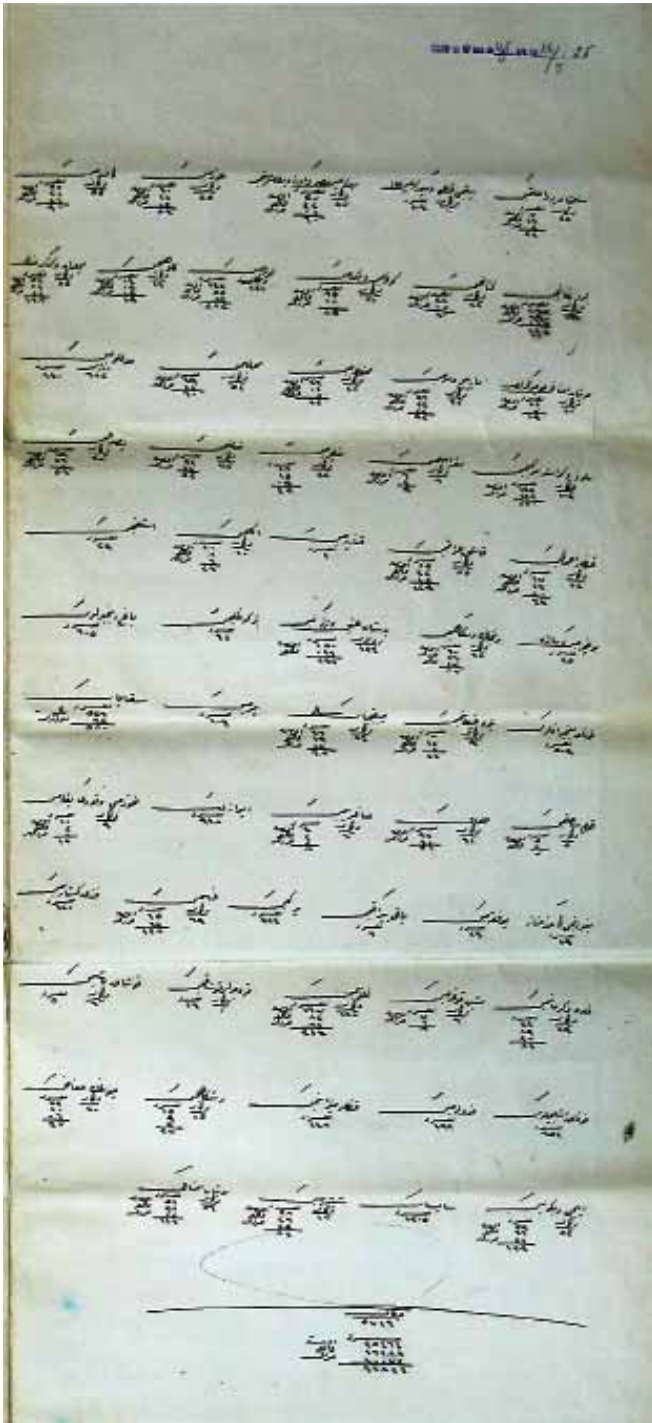
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9 National Library of Bulgaria, Department of Oriental Collections, 190/1 and Цг 77/1.

10 On the question of the established *esnaf* hierarchy see for example Aslıhan Nakiboğlu, “18. y.y.’da İstanbul Esnafının Sorunları,” *Turkish Studies – International Periodical For The Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic* 8/7 (2013), pp. 363-392.

11 Стефан Андреев, „Занаятчийски тезкерета от Троян – 1872 г.,” *Известия на Българското историческо дружество XXVII* (1970), pp. 359-368.

12 Ahmet Kal’a, “Esnaf,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara, 2002), XXV, 423.



– 8 apprentices per master; *paçacı*, *çörekçi* and *gözlemeci* – 4; *helvacı*, *pasdırmacı*, *işkembe şorbacı* – 3; *sucu* – 2,4). It seems that people involved in food industry could afford (or needed) a comparatively bigger number of apprentices per capita and still the figures set a prevailing picture of rather small-scale businesses¹³. Another aspect of the described situation may be well explained by the fact that very often members of the same or similar guilds would work together in a common workshop to cut the costs of instruments and utensils needed for setting up a workspace of their own, as suggested by Faroqhi¹⁴.

The analysis of the data that could be extracted from the spoken register goes in various directions. In terms of numbers, according to the register the most populated professional group is that of boat and bargemen (*kayıklı ve mavnacı*) – 6092 men, followed by porters (*hamal*) – 4605, and barbers and coffeemakers¹⁵ (*berber ve kahveci*) – 4080. On the other end of the least represented professions is the only one seller of canary birds (*kanariyecisi*), opium dealers (*afyoncu* – 5), the flag makers (*bayrakçı* – 6), sand clock makers (*kum saatçi* – 7) – all goods and services obviously of a comparatively rarer demand. The majority of the shops (*dükkan*) in Istanbul seem to belong again to barbers and coffeemakers; second to come are the tobacconists (*dübanacı*) with 1399 shops and the shoemakers (*kunduracı*, *yemenici*, *pabuşçu*, *mestçi*) with 1125 shops. Within the categories of craftsmanship, the largest group of masters (1982) is the one of barbers and coffeemakers, followed by shoemakers (1786) and tailors (1218). It goes without saying

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- 13 In comparison, the makers of woollen cloth (*abacı*) in Bulgaria in the 1830s worked on their own or from time to time with the help of 1-2 apprentices. Nikolay Todorov, “19. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Bulgaristan Esnaf Teşkilâtında Bazı Karakter Değişimleri,” *İÜİFM*, XXVII (1967-68): 1-36. See also Demirel, op.cit.
- 14 Suraiya Faroqhi, “Guildsmen and Handicraft Producers,” *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3. *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*. (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 336-356.
- 15 For an insight on why these two occupations go together since the 17th-century ban on public drinking of coffee issued by Sultan Murad IV, see Sadık Müfit Bilge, “Osmanlı İstanbulunda Berber Esnafı (Fetihten 1830'lara İstanbul Esnaf ve Sosyal Hayat Tarihine Bir Katkı)” in *Osmanlı İstanbulu II* (İstanbul, 2014), s. 187-206.

that the above mentioned figures could be interpreted in regard with the real, everyday demands or needs of a given service during the period¹⁶. The location of Istanbul as a sea capital throws light on the need of maritime labour, whereas popularity of barbershops might be explained with the array of services they offered, such as shaving, hair-dressing, leech bleeding, teeth pulling, etc.¹⁷

In terms of specialization of crafts the reviewed document demonstrates the variety already reached during the spoken period. Following the popular approach¹⁸ to have crafts categorized according to the prevailing type of raw materials used for the given production here is the range of types, according to the document: 38¹⁹ professions deal with textile (e.g. *terpoşçu*, *takyeci*, *çorapçı*); 13 – metal (*kazgancı*, *çivici*, *lenger timürcü*); 12 – wood (*selva sandukçu*, *iskemleci*); 7 – leather (*debbağ*, *saraç*); glass – 4 (*ayneci*, *şişeci*); paper – 3 (*kağıtçı*); wax – 2 (*balmumcu*); clay – 1 (*çömlek haffafi*). Fourty one of the enlisted professions could be referred to the food and drink industry (like *poğaçacı*, *şekerlemeci*, *sebzeci*, *kebabçı*, *aşçı* and so on) and 45 – to the group of workers (*ayvaz*, *konak işçileri*, *bağçevan*), merchants (*çerçi*, *canbaz*) and people offering various services (*kalafatçı*, *boyacı*) or even entertainment (*rakkas*, *çalgacı*).

Together with the aspects of history and sociology the register poses some issues of linguistic analysis. The terms of crafts and professions well illustrate the process of word formation of nouns with the corresponding meaning applying the Turkish euphonic -ci

16 In his paper on the Ottoman guilds (1750-1850) Ömer Demirel presents numbers of the guilds in Istanbul towards the end of the 18th century (based on *abkâm defterleri*) and suggests a tendency towards increasing the number of guilds catering for the basic needs of the population, followed by those involved in transportation by sea and land. Ömer Demirel, "Osmanlı Esnafı (1750-1850)", Accessed on January 20, 2015 <http://www.tarihtarih.com/?Syf=26&Syz=351623>

17 Bilge, op.cit.

18 It is applied among many others as well as by Amnon Cohen, *The Guilds of Ottoman Jerusalem* (Brill, 2001).

19 Figures may differ as a result of different interpretation: for example a *sahtiyan tüccarı* could be referred to both as a dealer and someone who is professional when it comes to leather.

particle – *balıkçı, boyacı, balmumcu*²⁰. This does not always allow for designating details about the profession by the document alone. Further sources need to be applied in order to establish whether the person was a maker/ an artisan/ a merchant/ a dealer/ a worker/ a farmer or an employee in the given field of occupation – for example *fincancı*²¹, *kayıkçı, mavnacı*, not to mention but a few. On the one hand as if language could not “catch up” with the high level of diversification of crafts and professions reached by the mid-19th century; on the other hand there was the common practice of offering the crafted goods predominantly in the workshop itself, by the people who made them. Other terms are of Persian and Arabic origin – *bakkal, ressam, attar* which not only comes to remind of that linguistic blend the Ottoman-Turkish represented, but also may reflect further relations to the origin or cultural influences on craft practices. Some of the nouns are presented in Persian plural form for animate beings – *an-nalbandan, kuyumcuyan*²². The document adds to the vast spectrum of terms for designating occupations in the field of crafts, manufacture and trade. This list of terms changes over times parallel to industrial and economic developments, and therefore it is an important (though indirect) source for restoring fragments from the living in the 1800s. One such peculiar detail is, for example, the specialization within the craft of shoemaking, as known today. The register mentions *kunduracı, yemenici, pabuşçu, mestçi* (see Glossary) who are indeed all shoe makers but of different and specific kinds of shoes²³. The same approach is largely applied to all textile industries and the impact of such a list of terms could be further expanded to the research of, let’s say, traditional types of clothing in the Ottoman Empire²⁴.

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20 James W. Redhouse, *Grammaire raisonnée de la langue Ottomane* (Paris, 1846): 179; R. Youssouf, *Grammaire complète de la langue Ottomane* (Constantinople, 1892), pp. 58-59.

21 This entry in particular says “*tuhafçı ve fincancı*” which gives relevance to interpret this occupation rather as the one of a merchant than of a maker.

22 Luigi Bonelli, *Elementi di grammatica Turca Osmanli* (Milano, 1899), p. 35.

23 Suraiya Faroqhi comments on the specialization of artisans in the cities. Suraiya Faroqhi, *History of Turkey*, p. 340.

24 Words like *dülbend* and *yağlık* are still used to designate parts of traditional clothing in some areas of Bulgaria and their origin and introduction to

In regard with the general research on historic documents in Ottoman-Turkish language it is worth mentioning some of the difficulties posed by the register. First, while it proved quite difficult to establish the meaning of some words, whereas others were interpreted by comparison to other known lists of *esnafs*²⁵, a real challenge present a certain number of entries that so far remain unclear in meaning. The word *hamamcı* can be pointed out as an example of a particular difficulty – actually this is an homonym with two different meanings – 1. *a director of a public bath*; 2. *a skilled brick layer or stone mason*²⁶. The additional mentioning of *hamam (bath)* in the register allows the assumption of the first meaning, although both are professions and correspond to the documents context. Second, no explanation was found why the overall figures at the end of the document do not match the addition of all the figures within the given categories. A further research in the field could possibly throw a light on this peculiarity.

No matter how abundant is the information about guilds (in terms of organization, function and role in socio-economic life of the Ottoman Empire) revealed by historians and anthropologists, according to Demirel²⁷ even more sources are still needed for the picture of professional distribution within guilds to be revealed at its fullest. Bearing on the fact that guilds and relations between members determined life and occupation of whole families for generations on end, their research could as well be extended to the general question of urban structure in empire towns. In this regard the spoken register presents yet another chance of raising the curtain of 19th-century history of Istanbul a little higher.

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Bulgarian language could be better explained within the broader context of crafts, trade and fashion in the 19th-century empire.

25 Вайкара, op.cit.; Demirel, op.cit.; Диаманди Ихчиев, „Еснафски документи и еснафски организации в турско време,” *Списанието на Българското икономическо дружество*, 7 (София, 1907).

26 James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (Constantinople, 1890).

27 Demirel, op.cit., p. 3.

*Glossary²⁸ of the terms for crafts and occupations
as listed in the register with signature Uç 25/6*

a

abacı – a maker or seller of
woollen homespun cloth or
garments

afyoncu – a maker or seller of
opium

ağ iplikçi – a maker or seller of
threads for making nets

araba imalci – a maker of
wheeled vehicles

arayıcı – a seeker, a searcher

arpacı – a dealer in barley, espe-
cially as food for horses

astarcı – a maker of linings

aşçı – a cook

ayneci – a maker or seller of
mirrors

ayvaz – servant, footman

b

bağcıvan – a gardener

bardakçı – a maker or seller of
mugs

basmacı – a maker or dealer in
printed matter or printed
goods

bakkal – a grocer

balıkçı – a fisherman; a fishmon-
ger

balmumcu – a wax-chandler

bayrakçı – a maker or seller of
flags

berber – a barber

bez gömlekçi – a shirt maker or
seller

bezzaz, ince ve kaba – a draper

bıçakçı – a maker or seller of
knives, cutler

boğçacı – a peddler who goes
from house to house with
small wares, handkerchiefs
and the like

boyacı – a dyer

bugaçacı – a maker or seller of
bugacha

c

cameşuyucu – a washerman

canbaz – a horse-dealer

celab – a drover of cattle or
slaves

ç

çadırıcı – a tent maker

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²⁸ The translation of terms from the register was compiled with the help of the following dictionaries: Ferit Devellioğlu, *Osmanlıca – Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat* (Ankara, 2013); *Dictionnaire Turc-Français* (Paris, 1850); James W. Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon* (Istanbul, 1992); *Türkçe Sözlük, 11. Baskı* (Ankara, 2011). Further reference: Abdullah Uysal, *Zanaatkârlar Kanunu (Kanun-nâme-i Ebl-i Hiref)* (Ankara, 1982).

çakmakçı – a maker or seller of steels for striking fire

çalgacı – a musician

çerçi – an itinerant dealer, especially one who deals by barter, a pedlar of small wares

çorapçı – a maker or seller of socks or stockings

çukacı – a woolen draper

çuval meramatçı – a sack mender

d

debbâğ – a tanner

devatçı – a maker or seller of pen-and-ink cases (cf *Red-house devatgâr*)

dubancı – tobacconist

dülbendci – a seller of muslins

e

elekçi – a maker or seller of sieves

enfîyeci – a maker or seller of snuff

esirci – a slave-dealer

eskici – a dealer in rags or second hand wares

f

fenerci – a maker or seller of lanterns

fesçi – a maker or seller of *fes* (red woolen cap worn in the Ottoman Empire)

fincancı – a maker or seller of coffee or tea cups

fodulacı – a maker or seller of *fodula* (a kind of cake of fine, white flour, served out at public soup-kitchens)

fuçucu – a cooper

fürceci – a maker or seller of brushes

g

gaytancı – a maker or seller of cord or braid used for trimming

h

haffaf – a maker or seller of shoes

halaç – a cleaner or dresser of cotton-wool, the work being done with a bow and mallet

halatçı – who makes or sells ropes or hawsers

hamal; arka ~, bargir ~ – a porter, carrier of loads

hamamcı – a director of a public bath; a skilled brick-layer or stone-mason

hasırcı; ~ kaba – a maker or seller of *hasır* (mat, woven of rushes, palm leaves etc.)

helvacı – a maker or seller of *helva*

ı

ıtırcı – a perfumer

i

iğneci – a maker or seller of needles or pins

imameci – a maker or seller of amber mouthpieces for pipes

işçi – a ropemaker

iskemleci – a maker or seller of chairs or stools

işkembe çorbacı – who cooks/sells tripe soup

k

kadayıfçı – a maker or seller of *kadayıf* (a kind of pastry made of eggs, honey and sesame seeds)
kağıtçı – a paper dealer
kahveci – a coffee-maker; a coffee-shop keeper
kahve değirmenci – a coffee miller
kalafatçı – a caulker
kalaycı – an artisan who tins copper vessels
kalemtraşçı – a maker of knives for cutting reed pens
kanariyeci – a seller of canary birds
kantar iamalcı – a maker of steelyards
kassap – a butcher; a slaughterer; a meat-salesman
kayıkçı – a boat-builder; a boatman
kayık yapıcı – a boat-builder
kazgancı – a maker or seller of copper caldrons or iron steam-boilers
kazzaz – a manufacturer of silk; a silk-mercer
kebabçı – a cook who roasts, bakes, broils
kiraz çubukçu – a maker or seller of cherry-stick tobacco pipes
kirişçi – a maker or seller of catgut
koçaç – a coachman, driver
kogacı – a maker or seller of

buckets; meşin ~ - a maker or seller of leather buckets
koltukçu – a hawker, a peddler or auctioneer of second-hand clothing; a keeper of a small and out of the way wine-shop
kömürcü – a charcoal burner or a charcoal dealer
kunduracı – a maker of shoes of European style
kurabiyeci – a maker or seller of *kurabiye*
kuru yemişçi – a dealer in dry fruits
kuyumcu – a gold and silver-smith; a jeweler
küfeci – a maker or seller of chip baskets
külahçı – a maker or a seller of *külah* (a conical hat or cap)
kürkçü – a furrier

l

Lahur şalcı – dealer of shawls, woven in the Indian town of Lahur
leblebici – a maker or seller of parched peas
lenger timürcü – a blacksmith who makes anchors
limoncu – a seller of lemons
lüleci – a maker or seller of pipe-bowls

m

makaracı – a maker or seller of ink
manav – a fruiterer

mavnacı – a bargee, a lighter-man

merkebcı – an owner or driver of donkeys

mestçi – a maker of *mest* (light, soleless boot, worn in the house or inside of overshoes)

mıkrazcı – a maker or seller of scissors

misk yağcı – a dealer in musk

mizancı – who weighs with scales

mücellit – a bookbinder

mürekabci – a maker or seller of ink

n

nalbant – a shoeing-smith, a farrier

nalçeci – a maker or seller of *nalçe* (an iron heel or clip nailed on to a boot)

nalıncı – a maker or seller of *nalın* (a pair of sandals, shoes, clogs, pattens, or horseshoes)

nişasteci – a maker or seller of starch

nobudcu ve koru baklacı – a seller of chickpea and beans

o

oturakçı – a maker or seller of seats/water-closets

oyuncakçı – a maker or seller of toys

ö

örücü – one who plaits, inter-neats or knits together

p

pabuşçu – a maker or seller of slippers

paşacı – a maker or seller of *paça* (a dish of food prepared from trotters)

pasdırmacı – a maker or seller of *pasdırma* (meat flavoured with spices and garlic and cured under pressure)

pekmezci – a maker or seller of *pekmez* (boiled grape juice, used as treacle)

peştemal havlıcıyan – a dealer in or keeper of *peştemal* (a large towel, used in baths as a waist-cloth)

püskülcü – a maker of tassels

r

rakkas – a professional dancer

ressam – a draughtsman, painter

s

saatçi – a watch or clock maker; kum ~ - maker of hourglasses (sand clocks)

sabuncu – a maker or seller of soap

sabhaf – a bookseller

sabtiyan perdahçı – who polishes leather

sabtiyan tüccarı – a dealer in Morocco leather

saka – a water-carrier

samancı – a dealer in straw

saraç – a saddler

sebzeci – a green-grocer

selva sandukçu – a maker or

- seller of chests/boxes of cy-
 press tree
- semerci* – a maker or seller of
 packsaddles
- sepetçi* – a maker or seller of
 baskets
- simsar* – a commercial broker
- sucu* – a seller of water
- süpürgeci* – a maker or seller of
 brooms
- sütçü* – a seller of milk
- Ş**
- şekerci* – a confectioner
- şeridci* – a maker of galloon, rib-
 bon, braid
- şirugancı* – a maker or seller of
 sesame oil
- t**
- takyeci* – a maker or seller of
takke linen skull cupps
- tarakçı* – a maker or seller of
 combs, rakes, etc.
- tavukçu* – a poulterer
- terazu iamalçı* – a maker of
 scales
- terpoşçu* – a maker or seller of
terpoş (an ornamental scull
 cap)
- terzi* – a tailor
- tohum pazarcı* – a dealer in grain
- tuhafçı* – a dealer in curiosities
 or pretty trinkets
- turşucu* – a maker or seller of
 pickles
- tuzcu* – a seller of salt
- u**
- uncu* – a dealer in flour
- usturacı* – a maker or seller of
 razors
- ü**
- ütücü* – an ironer, hot-presser
- y**
- yağlıkçı* – a manufacturer of or
 dealer in common pocket
 handkerchiefs
- yedekçi* – a man who leads a
 spare horse, a man who tows
 boats where a current is
 strong
- yelkenci* – a sailmaker
- yemenici* – a maker of eastern
 shoes
- yoğurtçu* – a maker or seller of
youghurt
- yorgancı* – a maker or seller of
 quilts; an upholsterer
- yufkacı* – a maker or seller of
yufka (a kind of pastry)
- yumurtacı* – a maker or seller of
 eggs
- z**
- zahireci* – a grain-merchant; a
 provision-merchant
- zeyt yağcı* – a seller of olive oil