

DOXA OF MODERNIZATION: THE SENSE OF POLITICAL REALITY
IN HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Doxa of Modernization:

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in the Historiographies of the Late Ottoman Empire

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Ethel Brooks

The notion of modernization has long been a hegemonic explanation for existing global and social hierarchies. Despite the apparent “failure” of “modernizing” countries to overcome a disadvantaged position in the global hierarchy through “modernizing” means, the political life in countries such as Turkey continues to be dominated by perspectives that take “modernization” as a solution for problems for granted. This dissertation examines the sense of political reality that produces an absence of formulations of alternatives to this seemingly “universal” path of historical development and social change through an analytical reading of selected historiographies of the late Ottoman Empire. This analysis relies on Bourdieu’s theory of doxa as the sense of limits shared both by “orthodoxy” and “heterodoxy.” It first examines the construction of the modernization perspective from an orthodox view in order to identify the limits of the sense of political and historical reality it entails. It then examines three historical studies

which are critical of modernizationist orthodoxy under the same criteria. What I call “doxa of modernization” emerges in the shared sense of reality among the orthodox and heterodox accounts. This doxa consists of the generalization of the particular social characteristics and historical conditions seen as constituting a process of “modernization” – namely, the history of power and capital – in such a way that they come to represent all of historical change and of politics. The study concludes by proposing to shift our perspective from a focus on capital to labor in order to bring into view social practices that produce political alternatives in the present.

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INTRODUCTION

Tell me if you heard this story before:

For decades now Turkey seems to have been on the verge of becoming part of the community of industrialized, democratic welfare states that make up the dominant core of the modern world. For decades experts have been talking about Turkey's potential, about its natural and human resources, and waited for that potential to be fully realized in terms of economic growth and political power. Somehow, it has never quite happened. Although Turkey has made massive strides in all aspects of development – in health, education, wealth, communications and legislation – it has never been quite enough. There were always factors that retarded development or even put the country back in its development: internal warfare, international crises, or financial mismanagement. Turkey always overcame these impediments in due course, but by then the damage had been done. Its efforts to join the core countries of Europe in particular always remind one of the fable about the tortoise and the hare. However fast the hare runs, by the time it almost catches up with the tortoise, the latter will have moved forward by a couple of inches and again be out of reach.

This story is here retold by a prominent historian, Erik J. Zürcher, as the tale of the “modernization” history of Turkey (2004, p.333-334). Written many times, in many languages and in many versions about most parts of the world, this tale of modernization is still one of the most popular stories today – probably even more so than the one of the tortoise and the hare. The purpose of this dissertation is neither to tell my own version of the story nor to challenge it as a misrepresentation, but to inquire about the reasons for its popularity. I will do so by asking what underlying sense of (political) reality corresponds to this tale.

Let us probe this in a cursory way with the help of Zürcher's version. There are three elements to this excerpt that give us a good sense of modernization tales more generally. First, we see an explicit comparison between Turkey and the “communities that are dominant.” The difference is set up in a hierarchical way, and Turkey is presented as not as powerful as the “dominant communities.” Thus, the purpose of modernization is

presented as one of overcoming a power differential. Second, Turkey is seen as a subject that had potentials to becoming modern. Its “efforts to join the core countries of Europe” implies an aspiration (desire and interest) of this subject to become like the dominant societies through modernizing reforms (“development”). Third, it is noted that Turkey nevertheless could not “join the dominant core” and thus remained in a non-dominant position. This is presented as a “failure to achieve” those societal qualities considered modern (in the areas of “health, education, wealth, communication, legislations,” democracy) despite “massive strides,” due partly to internal causes (warfare and financial mismanagement).

What is implicit in this story is a particular understanding of historical and political reality in which categories such as modern/non-modern or not-yet modern, East/West, developing/developed, first world/third world, are used to express global and local hierarchies. Although the entire story is about power and becoming powerful, there is no power relation to be found in it. Instead, we are told about a simple competition between the hare and the tortoise, in which the tortoise’s failure to catch up is presented as a paradox.

In the perpetuity of running after the “modern” hare, the state of becoming of the “not-yet modern” tortoise has turned into a state of being. Despite the apparent “failure” of “modernizing” countries to overcome a disadvantaged position in the global hierarchy through “modernizing” means, the political life in countries such as Turkey continues to

be dominated by perspectives that take “modernization” as a solution for problems for granted. The tortoise continues in its attempts to “catch up” and “join” the hare.

The first aim of this study is therefore to ask how modernization perspectives (represented here by the tale of the hare and the tortoise) produce the limits to the sense of political reality, so that both the formulation of social problems and the solutions offered are framed in relation to the means of so-called modernization processes, such as industrialization, democratization, secularization, urbanization, mass education.

As Partha Chatterjee asks: “why is it that non-European colonial countries have *no historical alternative* but to try to approximate the given attributes of modernity when that very process of approximation means their continued subjection under a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control?” (Chatterjee 1986, p.10) While Chatterjee poses this question for non-European colonial countries, it is very pertinent to Turkey as well, and this dissertation aims to contribute to an answer.

The second aim of this dissertation’s focus on the limits of the sense of political reality is thus to inquire into the absence of formulations of historical alternatives to the seemingly “universal” path of historical development and social change. I do so by examining not only visions that have celebrated that “universal” path, but also critiques that have shown that this “universal” path relies on the continuous (re)production of inequalities. I argue in this dissertation that these approaches present important critiques, but no true alternatives to a global order based on unequal power relations.

The third aim of this study is therefore to examine what constitutes the limits of such critiques of this “modernization” history and its narration from a modernizationist perspective. I argue that such critical perspectives have been able to show successfully how “modernization” history is not a universal path, but a history driven by relations of power and capital. However, this critical edge of their perspective also led them to construct a representation of reality constructed only by relations of capital/power. It is this vision of reality through the lens of capital/power only that makes it almost impossible to construct an alternative social reality without using the means of the dominant, as this dissertation shows.

My argument builds on an analysis of historiographies of the late Ottoman Empire as the period where the beginning of the transformation from a “pre-modern” state of being towards a “modern” one is usually located. I chose these historiographies as the object of analysis for two reasons. First, historiographies provide an entry point to show the limits of the sense of political reality because they entail assumptions about the dynamics that shape society, which, very broadly defined, is one way of understanding the political. As they were written recently, and are still widely read, I posit that they open a window onto the sense of political reality of the present (and for the future) from the standpoint of which the past is narrated (Foucault 1994).

Second, historiographies of the late Ottoman Empire have the advantage over other possible sources in that they explicitly try to understand the time period dominantly framed as the one of “modernization.” In trying to explain the historical transformations

of that time, such historiographies show most clearly how the categories of the “pre”- or “non-modern” and the “modern” are constructed, and what reality they correspond to. Thus, I analyzed the historiographies not in order to understand how this change actually occurred, but how it is perceived today.

My analysis of the historiographies relies on a distinction between “orthodox” and “heterodox” approaches (Bourdieu 1977, p.164-169). I first show the construction of the modernization perspective from an orthodox view in order to identify the limits of the sense of political and historical reality it entails. I then examine the critiques of modernizationist orthodoxy under the same criteria. What I call “doxa of modernization” emerges in a shared sense of reality among the orthodox and heterodox accounts.

I use the concept of doxa as a heuristic tool in order to understand the modernization perspective as a “system of classification” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.164) that contributes to the objectification, universalization and naturalization of a particular and arbitrary form of understanding politics and history. I use this concept in the way it is defined by Bourdieu:

Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents’ aspirations, out of which arises the *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*, i.e. the correspondence between objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order. Systems of classification which reproduce, in their specific logic, the objective classes, i.e. the divisions by sex, age, or position in the relations of production, make their specific contribution to the reproduction of the power relations of which they are the product, by securing the misrecognition, and hence the recognition, of the arbitrariness on which they are based: in the extreme case, that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call *doxa*, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs. (1977, 164)

Two characteristics of doxa, underlined in this definition, are important for my study: First, Bourdieu separates doxa, as the realm of taken for granted beliefs, from orthodoxy and heterodoxy, as the realm of argumentation. Many of the critiques of modernization have concentrated on the idea of modernization as a form of orthodoxy that is shared only by the mainstream approaches. I show that the ways of seeing social reality from a modernization perspective are shared by various theoretical and political positions; they can be found not only among the mainstream or uncritical approaches, but also among those that produce the heterodoxy of modernization. My analysis of modernization as doxa reflects on how such critiques, while producing heterodoxy, at the same time produce and reproduce doxic elements, unquestioned and taken for granted beliefs that set the sense of limits of historical reality. Written from a critical perspective, this analytical strategy aims at a “self-reflexive” approach to the heterodoxy of modernization.

Second, Bourdieu uses the concept of doxa to point out how an arbitrary sense of reality is naturalized and unquestioned. He problematizes this sense of reality especially to identify the limits of practices, not only to point at the limits of a perspective. In parallel to this view, my aim is to study the limits of a sense of historical reality from a modernization perspective in order to show how this way of perceiving historical reality produces limits for political practices. These limits emerge in the way a particular form of reality is objectified. The “objective chances and the agents’ aspirations” are shaped according to these limits.

A Self-Reflexive Critique: Pushing back the Limits of Doxa

Critiques of modernization as both concept and process have highlighted the economic, political, and symbolic processes through which the “modern” was constituted in and through a hierarchical relation with the “non-modern.”

As critical studies of capitalism have shown global economic inequalities do not stem from an inherent superiority of Western capitalism. Thus, dependency theory argued that the development of the center (the metropolitan Western countries) depends on the extraction of surplus value from the peripheral countries, i.e. the reason of underdevelopment of the periphery is the development of the center (Frank 1967). World system theory, inspired by dependency theory, explains the same phenomena as the development and expansion of a capitalist world system¹. Global hierarchies here are seen to rely on the ways in which different regions are incorporated into this system (Wallerstein 1979; 2004). Critics of colonialism have further highlighted the role of force in the formation of the existing global order, arguing that the capitalist system is not an internal product of the West, but that it actually started to develop in the relations with the colonies (Dussel 2002; Mintz 1986; Wolf 1982). This critique has been expanded by showing that the peripheries, and the people that lived there, were actually not just incorporated in, but producing and shaping the formation of Western capitalism (Quijano 2000, Mignolo 2000).

¹ See So, Alvin Y. (1990) for a review of dependency theory and world-systems theory.

The history of colonialism in the formation of “modernity” has been examined not only from the perspective of economic inequalities, but also in terms of the production of symbolic and political domination (James 1989 [1963; 1938]; Césaire 2000 [1955]; Fanon 2004 [1963]). Studies of racism and of the construction of racial-colonial difference within the colonial context showed its continuity in categories of East and West supporting global hierarchies (Gilroy 1993; Chatterjee 1993; Böröcz 2006). Subaltern studies emphasized the politics of subaltern social groups during colonial times in order to show the active involvement of the dominated classes in social change (Scott 1985; Guha and Spivak (eds.) 1988; Guha 1997, 1999). This perspective opened new approaches to historiography that challenge Eurocentric explanations of history (Prakash 1990; Sarkar 1998, 2002; Chakrabarty 2000a; Dirlik 2002).

These studies have already shown to an extent how categories such as the West and the East, the modern and the non-modern are produced in and productive of economic and political power relations. A discursively oriented strand of postcolonial literature, which originated from the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge, has analyzed the symbolic construction of these categories in more depth. Said’s work (1979) has been widely seen as the cornerstone of postcolonial literature that has developed especially in the comparative literature departments, which shows the discursive formation of the categories of modernization (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994; Coronil 1996). Others, following this tradition, have shown the “effect of reality” constructed by these discourses (Mitchell 1988, 2000; Escobar 1995). Those who do not rely on a Foucauldian frame of

symbolic domination have studied Eurocentrism as a form of ideology that distorts reality (Bernal 1987; Amin 1989; Wallerstein 2006).

My study aligns with such critical approaches to modernization at the same time as it examines historiographies informed by their and other critiques further in an attempt at producing a self-reflexive heterodoxy. I argue in this study that the very perspective – namely, the focus on various forms of capital – that has enabled critical approaches to modernization to denaturalize the hierarchies of the existing global order also produces the limits of their senses of political reality. I arrived at this argument through an analytic reading of historiographies in terms of what dynamics are seen to “shape society” in each work as a proxy to the sense of political reality entailed in them.

In presenting this argument, I use Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and of the field in order to show the (doxic) unity among various narratives of history in terms of their understanding of political and historical reality (1992, 1998).² In using these concepts as analytical tools, I do not wish to posit that the different texts studied all have an “implicitly” Bourdieusian character. This is clearly not the case. Rather, Bourdieu’s definitions of field and capital highlight in their *explicitness* particularly well the *limits* of the sense of political reality that, I argue, the different approaches to late Ottoman historiography entail, and *that he shares with them*. This limit, as the following chapters will show in detail, subsumes all of history to relations of capital and power, from within

² These concepts will be opened up in the following chapters.

which no historical alternative can be formulated. This constitutes, so the main argument of this dissertation, the “doxa of modernization.”

My critical stance towards the subsumption of all of history under relations of capital and labor in turn is informed by a Marxist understanding of labor as a process, and of capital as its reified and appropriated product (Marx 1977).³ Thus, I posit, the “doxa of modernization” fails to present the processes of labor that have produced capital.

Chakrabarty identifies two types of histories, “History 1” and “History 2,” in Marx’s presentation and critique of the history of capital. History 1, he argues, is a history of capital that is “a past posited by capital itself as its precondition” (2000a, p.63). This version, Chakrabarty indicates, is the “universal and necessary history we associate with capital” (ibid). This form of history for him entails the form of labor that is subsumed by capital. History 2, which Chakrabarty claims exists in Marx’s thought but is not studied as thoroughly as History 1, is the history that “does not belong to capital’s life process” (ibid). He sees in this form of history the production of life that cannot be fully subsumed by capital. Chakrabarty states that while History 1 relies on a historicist perspective that reduces history into a single “history of becoming” that is determined by the logic of capital, History 2, by multiplying possibilities of being, provides us with insights about how to challenge the historicist understandings of history. However, he underlines that “History 2 does not constitute a dialectical Other of the necessary of the logic of History 1. To think thus would subsume History 2 to History 1” (ibid, p.66). Instead, he

³ In this sense, I do not use the analytical framework that Marx has used to explain the process of capital as accumulation (M-C-M); instead, I use it in its ontological understanding of labor, as the source of value, and the historical analysis of capital, as the appropriation of the values in the form of capital.

conceptualizes History 2 as the “multiple ways of being in the world” that cannot be totalized by the history of capital, but cannot be considered without the history of capital either. He further notes that this multiplicity of “being-in-the-world,” a concept he derives from Heidegger, cannot be written fully; however, he states, it can provide us with a “ground” to think “multiple ways of being human” (ibid, p.67).

While I do not agree with Chakrabarty’s analytical distinction between History 1 and 2 and with his identification of History 2 with the production of the multiplicity of being (as I instead see the problem with the history of capital not in its homogenizing effects, but in its production of domination and exploitation, in singularizing or multiplying forms), his argument exemplifies the critical stance of this study in two ways. First, my argument that the modernization perspective abstracts all of historical and political reality into a history of capital/power needs to be understood as concurring with his critique that History 1 is “not all there is.” Second, I also see the category of labor as essential for the production of alternatives to the history of capital (as a history of domination and exploitation). As argued in the epilogue, a materialist ontology of labor developed by Lukacs in his later writings is essential to develop a critique that can produce an alternative.

The epilogue to this dissertation thus suggests that in order to see the multiplicity of politics, which is singularized by power and capital, we need to turn our attention to labor that produces capital – but not only capital. In giving emphasis to labor in the production of the social, we might push back the limits of the sense of political reality currently circumscribed by the doxa of modernization.

Selection of Historiographies

My study focuses on an analysis of historiographies of the late Ottoman Empire as the time period where modernization historiographies generally locate the transformation from a “pre-modern” to a “modern” state and society. However, not all of the historiographies analyzed explicitly aim to write a history of modernization. I thus did not choose historiographies on the basis of whether or not they entail an explicit modernization perspective. Instead, I selected works that represent different approaches to history writing that are central to the field of Ottoman historiography and that are widely read today.

Each of the following chapters derives from an analytic reading of one such central historiographic work. The first chapter examines the book *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* by Bernard Lewis, which is now widely seen as an example of an orthodox approach to modernization historiography. The second chapter analyzes *Turkey: A Modern History* by Eric Zürcher, who attempted to correct some of the biases of this approach. The third chapter is based on an analytic reading of an example of world-systems theory – *State and Class in Turkey* – by Çağlar Keyder as another central strand in historiographic writing in Turkey. Lastly, the fourth chapter examines an example of social history, the most recent development in historiography on the Ottoman Empire, through the example of the book *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* by Donald Quataert.

CHAPTER I: ORTHODOXY OF MODERNIZATION

Bernard Lewis' book on *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* is widely accepted as one of the classical works on Ottoman/Turkish historiography.⁴ Written in 1961, and revised in 1968, it is one of the works that carry the influence of modernization theory. The Turkish case, among the supporters of this theory, was considered a success story of the modernization of a non-Western country by following the Western model. It is a book written from an Orientalist perspective (İslamoğlu and Keyder 1987, p. 44-46), which had the aim of writing an objective account of the history of the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic history. As Meeker says, at the time of its publication, the nationalists opposed its arguments because it did not sit well with the claims of official historiography at the time (2002, p. xiii). However, today the book is seen as one of the original sources of an orthodox view that writes history from a teleological, state-centered and Eurocentric perspective, rather than through the adoption or articulation of heterodox arguments.

Many other classical studies in Ottoman/Turkish historiography have shared the main premises of this perspective, not only the ones written in the same time period when the critics of teleological, state-centered and Eurocentric history writing were not as widespread as today (Karpas 1959, Tunaya 2004 [1960], Berkes 1998 [1963], Shaw&Shaw 2005 [1977]). But more recent studies, such as those by Ahmad (1993) and Mango (2004), also share this perspective, even though they aim to develop it further by

⁴ As this chapter rests on an analysis of this book, I will only give the page numbers in referencing it.

considering the influence of critics and by using sources that have become newly available in the last decades, in order to develop a more accurate representation of history. Even though the study itself could be considered an “outdated” one, as Zürcher states in showing the developments in this literature in the last decades⁵, it provides us with a very good example of a portrayal of history from a point of view which is largely shared and reproduced by contemporary orthodox arguments.

Moreover, when we consider the number of publications of this book since 1990s in Turkish, the interest and demand in it seems rather increasing. Until 1991, the second edition of the book (1968) was published three times (1970, 1984, and 1988). Between 1991 and 2004, it was published six times, and the last one is the ninth publication in total of the second edition of the book. Its third edition was published in English in 2002. Recently (2008), this final edition of the book was published in Turkish by another publication house (Arkadaş Publications) with a new translation.

I use this study as an “ideal type” of orthodox approaches to modernization historiography. In this chapter, I aim to show the sense of political reality that this modernization orthodoxy represents and produces. Rather than to unveil what orthodoxy conceals or misrepresents, I aim to understand how it constructs political reality. I argue that Lewis gives intrinsic values to the categories of civilizations and the forms of capital these produce. By merging these, he veils the hierarchical relations that constitute what he calls modernization.

⁵ <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/tcimo/tulp/Research/Lewis.htm> As of February 20, 2008

The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I discuss the way in which the three dimensions or “substances” of “Turkish civilization” that Lewis identifies – local cultures, Turkishness, and Islam – serve him to construct a social entity of change (the entity to be changed in a process of modernization). The second part examines Lewis’ argument on the decline of the Ottoman Empire. I argue that the factors that he singles out as causing the decline of the empire also serve him to indicate the latter’s “non-modern” being. The decline of the Ottoman Empire is thus ultimately attributed to a failure to modernize. I show that the differences between the positions of the “modern” and the “non-modern” are identified by the criteria of (lack of) ownership over certain kinds of military, economic, administrative and intellectual capital, which are treated as resources for the acquisition of social and political power. I discuss that Lewis sees the capacity for success in relations of power inherent to the substances of the entities competing. The third section opens up this implicit understanding of capital that underlies Lewis’ approach through Bourdieu’s theory of capital and the field. The last section then examines how Lewis portrays the process of modernization as one of civilization transformation.

I. A Substantialist Approach to History

I.1 “The Sources of Turkish Civilization”

The substantialist perspective of Lewis’ account becomes particularly apparent in the first introductory chapter of his book, called *The Sources of Turkish Civilization*. He observes three cultural sources that have produced modern Turkey: local (the cultural forms that existed in the geography of Anatolia and Balkans, such as Hittites, Greek, and

Byzantium), Turkish, and Islamic (p.3). Lewis presents these three sources – which he also refers to as “strains” – as substances that are essential ingredients of an entity called Turkish civilization.

As it is explicitly put in the title of the book, Lewis narrates the transformation of Turkish civilization from the form it took as the Ottoman Empire into the one of modern Turkey. Lewis sees this transformation as resulting from the introduction of a new cultural/civilizational substance to Turkish civilization in modern times. This substance, called Western civilization, is presumed to fundamentally change Turkish civilization (p.16). Interestingly though, while Lewis devotes one section to each of the “three sources” of Turkish civilization, Western civilization is not explained in such a separate manner. Instead, he mentions it at the end of the chapter as a possible, not yet essential substance of Turkish civilization. This might indicate that Lewis was not sure whether or not Western civilization will be one of the essential substances of Turkish civilization. Although he is “optimistic” about the process of Westernization in Turkey, he observes that this process was in “jeopardy” by the time he was writing the book, due to the disputes around the Westernization reforms in the late 1950s and early 1960s (p.17). He underlines that the Turkish substance will determine the path of this transformation: “In the long run it will be the deeper rhythm of Turkish life, rather than the rapid surface movement of our time, which will determine the future relationship of Turkey with Islam, with the West, and with herself” (ibid).

As this quote shows, Lewis makes a distinction between Islam and Turkishness, which he sees as the defining characteristics of Turkish society and as underlying the dynamics of modernization: “The growth of the sentiment of Turkish identity was connected with the movement away from Islamic practice and tradition, and towards Europe. This began with purely practical short-term measure of reform intended to accomplish a limited purpose; it developed into a large-scale, deliberate attempt to take a whole nation across the frontier from one civilization to another” (p.3). Thus, in his description of the “emergence of modern Turkey,” Lewis tries to write the success story of a non-Western entity in a process of historical change called modernization. First he underlines the difference of this non-Western entity from the West; then he indicates the potentialities of this non-Western entity for transformation, which were inherent in the substances of this civilization and actualized in the form of emergence of modern Turkey. As we will see, Lewis, first, objectifies differences of social entities at the cultural/ civilizational level (as substances), second, evaluates these substances in terms of their potential for change, and third, determines the direction of change on the basis of the characteristics of the substances and of their interaction as separate entities. The following discussion of historicism and Eurocentrism by critics of modernizationist approaches will show that this perspective is an orthodox one.

I.2 Substantialism and Historicism

As becomes clear when we turn to a definition of historicism by Chakrabarty (2000a), Lewis relies on a historicist tradition in his view of Turkish civilization evolving through time. As Chakrabarty writes:

[Historicism] tells us that in order to understand the nature of anything in this world we must see it as an historically developing entity, that is, first, as an individual and unique whole –as some kind of unity at least *in potentia*—and, second, as something that develops over time. Historicism typically can allow for complexities and zigzags in this development; it seeks to find the general in the particular, and it does not entail any necessary assumptions of teleology. (2000a, p.23)

The subject of Lewis' book is clearly the presentation of the transformation of Turkish civilization, seen as a unique whole, into another form, in the process of becoming modern. There is a clear teleology in this view of a transformation process. However, it does not consist of 'modernity' as a necessary stage in the future; rather, Lewis imposes the *telos* of becoming modern as a *necessity* that should be *achieved* by the Turkish people. He sees this process as burdened with "complexities and zigzags" in a non-Western context, and the "deviations" from this necessary unfolding of historical time as resulting from the substances of non-Western civilizations. As we will see in more detail in the following sections, he explains the conditions and dynamics of historical change in reference to these cultural substances. He seeks the cultural factors that lead to resistance against and compliance with the process of modernization.

That Lewis' perspective is thus also a Eurocentric one is shown well by Samir Amin's definition of the latter. Amin sees Eurocentrism as "a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different peoples" (1989, p.vii). Thus, in Lewis' perspective, the distinct cultural invariants shaping historical trajectories are civilizational substances.

In turn, the overlap between Chakrabarty's definition of historicism and Samir Amin's description of Eurocentrism – in the sense that both assume that historical action

(transformation of society) is defined by the intrinsic and particular characteristics of an independent social entity – points at the fact that both historicism and Eurocentrism are substantialist perspectives.

We see this merging of historicism with Eurocentrism in Lewis clearly. First, Lewis defines the social entity, Turkish civilization, by its internal characteristics, which are cultural substances. He posits these substances in order to show the *difference* of Turkish civilization in comparison to other cultural/civilizational entities. In this way, he is able to talk about a singular and monolithic entity whose transformation he can observe. Second, he sees these substances as the sources of actions which determine the historical change of this entity, i.e. the *different* forms that it takes throughout history. The particularities of the variations of historical paths of each social entity in this way are defined by the multiplicity of (cultural) substances that differentiate not only the social entities among each other, but their transformation (on a linear historical scale) as well.

Both historicism (Chakrabarty 2000a) and Eurocentrism (Amin 1989; Dirlik, Bahn & Gran 2000; Sayyid 2003; Wallerstein 2006) have been identified by critics of modernization perspectives as aspects of orthodox approaches to history and social theory, because they were underlying the European project of colonialism and continue to structure unequal global relations. Because in both cases, inequalities between social entities are seen to result from their *substantial* characteristics, existing hierarchies between them are naturalized (that is, they appear not as a product of power relations, but

as a product of essential differences). Bourdieu, relying on Cassirer's philosophy of knowledge, describes substantialism as follows:

The substantialist mode of thought, which characterizes common sense [sic] –and racism- and which is inclined to treat activities and preferences specific to certain individuals or groups in a society at a certain moment as if they were substantial properties, inscribed once and for all in a sort of biological or cultural essence, leads to some kind of error, whether one is comparing different societies or successive periods in the same society (1998, p.4)

Thus, the notion of substantialism as a defining characteristic of orthodoxy of modernization goes parallel with the critiques of Eurocentrism and historicism. My particular emphasis on substantialism (rather than historicism or Eurocentrism) in the following discussion is a methodological choice through which I aim to highlight the *link* between definitions of substance and understandings of historical action. More particularly, I show how the categories of “modern” and “non-modern” are defined on the basis of historical action that is seen to result from the particular substances of civilizationally defined social entities, so that change from the non-modern to the modern then becomes understood as one of civilizational transformation – that is, substantial transformation.

I.3 Local Cultures

Lewis observes the local cultural components of Turkish civilization by tracing the earlier or contemporary civilizations that occupied the lands of the Ottoman Empire. He draws the limits of this geography roughly with the national boundaries of contemporary Turkey, with a focus on the cultural sources in Anatolia. He indicates that those who visit Turkey can see the “survival” of local traditions in the architecture of houses and mosques, the forms of music or the motives in handicrafts. He points out the visible

differences of the cultural artifacts in comparison to neighbor regions such as Syria or Iraq (p.4).

Among these local cultures, Lewis observes the continuity of the Hittites in Anatolia, which was one of the crucial elements in narratives of Turkish national identity in the early Republican time. He opposes the fictitious national thesis that the Hittites were Turks, but he indicates that a continuity is “revealed” by archeological and anthropological findings (ibid).⁶ In addition to this, he indicates that in Anatolia, despite the assimilation of Greek by Islamic and Turkish culture, the former was sustained as a part of the culture of daily life. In the Balkans, unlike in Anatolia, Lewis points out that there was no assimilation and people kept their religion and language. He underlines that the people in this region had been part of the ruling elite occupying positions in administrative and military units through the *devşirme* system.⁷ In addition to Hittite and Greek sources of culture, he further indicates the effect of Byzantines which he observes most explicitly in architecture (pp. 4-6). Finally, he underlines the effect of the contacts with European people. He indicates that both the occupation of “European lands” and continuous contacts with the European people (which according to him other Islamic societies lacked), in the forms of “trade, diplomacy, war, and –not least—immigration,” had an effect on Turkish civilization (pp. 6-7) He traces the effects of European material and immaterial culture on the formation of Turkish civilizations in the (limited)

⁶ See Ersanlı, Büşra (2003) for a study on Turkish official history writing.

⁷ The *devşirme* system refers to the so-called “child levy system” – the Ottoman practice of educating Christian boys for military purposes and converting them into Muslims. Quataert criticizes the frequent (Eurocentric) assumption that the end of this practice resulted in the decline of the Empire: “The stereotype overemphasizes the importance of the *devşirme* and asserts that Christina converts to Islam were responsible for Ottoman greatness” (Quataert 2005, p.99).

“borrowings” of warfare technology, and in knowledge of geography, history and medical science even before the nineteenth century (p.7), the century that marks for him the beginning of the modernization process in the Ottoman Empire.

Lewis here does not simply give an objective account of the cultural forms that have been passed on through generations. Instead, his study intends to give an historical account of the relative success of Turkish modernization. Defining Turkish civilization through these selected local cultures enables Lewis to show that this geography has already been carrying the influence of the “great” civilizations of world history. Turkey’s location in a geography that is considered either as close to or as within the realm of European civilization has been interpreted by many modernizationist scholars as its “advantage” in becoming modern, compared to other non-Western countries. The geographical/civilizational scale that Attila Melegh (2006) called “East/West slope” is implicitly being used to express the absolute superiority of Europe and the relative inferiority of other societies depending on their geographical and cultural distance from it. The civilizations identified by Lewis are thus the ones generally considered to be the archeological past of the entity called the West. Being in interaction in a diachronic or synchronic sequence with these cultures is seen as a factor that would orient the people living on this land towards Western civilization today. While it is not surprising to see the continuity of the cultural patterns throughout time, Lewis abstracts such patterns into forms of civilization and attributes continuity to the civilizations throughout time. In turn, it is this continuity of the substances that serves Lewis as an explanation of historical transformation towards modernity (identified with the West).

This discussion reveals the way Lewis understands historical action and transformation. He constructs a subject position on the basis of internal characteristics of a social entity (its substances) that he sees as the source of making history. More particularly, he attributes a subject position to those social entities that can *produce* and *possess* certain material and immaterial products, which for him are civilizations. By attributing the source of change to civilizations, Lewis implies that social change is the product of certain social entities who have achieved civilization. In this way, he is able to distinguish societies that can change and that can produce change from those that cannot. That is, civilization (as cultural achievement) is for him produced, while civilizations (as historical agents) are producing. The production of material and immaterial products becomes the indicator for the achievement of civilization at the same time as such production is linked to civilizations as producing agents. In this way, the historical conditions and contingencies – that create the *social needs* that motivate people to produce certain products in certain times and places; the *means* that are used for the production process; and the *social relations* that make a collective labor process possible – are not included in this historical narrative (thus following the logic of abstracting products from their relations of production that Marx called ‘commodity fetishism’ (Marx 1977)). This history is effaced in the account of Lewis and replaced by the identities of civilizations as the (unitary) subjects (owners and producers) of material and immaterial products. As we will see, this allows Lewis to see “modernity” (in turn indicated by certain material and immaterial products) as produced by Western civilization.

I.4 Turkishness

Lewis sees Turkishness as the second element of Turkish civilization. Turkishness in turn is identified with the Turkish language, “which, despite long subjection to alien influences, survives triumphantly” (p.7). More generally, he relies on an understanding of Turkishness that is used in the nation building of Turkey: ““The Turks are a people who speak Turkish and live in Turkey”” (p.1). He indicates that one may not see any “originality” or a “revolutionary content” in this definition, but he points out that in fact “the introduction and propagation of this idea in Turkey, and its eventual acceptance by the Turkish people as expressing the nature of their corporate identity and statehood, has been one of the major revolutions of modern times, involving a radical and violent break with the social, cultural, and political traditions of the past” (ibid). In this quote – the first paragraph of the book – Lewis not only tries to clarify what he means by Turkishness, but also the nature of change that he deals with.

First, if we consider his definition of Turkishness, what is striking is its “unoriginality,” as indicated by Lewis himself. In fact, Lewis relies on a doxic understanding of the nation, which seemingly corresponds to a reality today where most people are indeed speaking Turkish and living in a land called Turkey, but blends out the very violent and continuing oppressive nature of that nation formation and nation-state formation more generally (Aktar 2003, Akçam 2004). It is through blending out this history that he can construct Turkishness as a “self-evident” substance.

Second, Lewis then relies on the identification of this substance to explain historical transformation when he argues that “the propagation of this idea and its eventual acceptance by the Turkish people” led to a revolutionary transformation. According to Lewis, the recognition of their self-identity made this transformation possible. Again, Lewis identifies a subject position with a cultural entity – this time the “nation.” As the last quote shows, Lewis links that historical action to the acquisition of “self-awareness” on the part of the Turkish people. Thus, for him, the Turkish substance, while always there, lay dormant until recently. He observes a lack of “national consciousness” among Turks before modern times, in comparison to Arabs and Persians (p.8). The national identity is forgotten, he states, because people identified with Islam rather than as Turks. “Yet, save for a few fragments, all [pre-Islamic Turkish culture and societal organization] was forgotten and obliterated in Islam, until its partial recovery by European scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (ibid).⁸ As is clear in this sentence, Lewis interprets the nation as an ahistorical entity that exists in potential, until it is found again. Thus, in line with national historiography critiqued among others by Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983), Lewis posits a national folk culture that survived “among the common people, the rustics and the nomads” (p.2) that is awakened in the context of nationalist movements. He states: “The real importance of the Turkish strain in Turkey must be sought in uninterrupted survivals in the deeper layers of society –and these layers are now coming to the surface, with results yet to be seen” (p.11). Thus, it is the “deep layer” of folk culture that constitutes the substance of Turkishness that allows for Turkish people to

⁸ Again, this statement shows how Lewis emphasizes “Europeans” as agents of change in a clearly Eurocentric manner.

become a subject of historical change through a national awakening and the resulting “revolutionary transformation.”

I.5 Islamic Culture

Lewis portrays the Islamic substance of the Turkish civilization as distinct of both Turkishness and Christianity (as two other civilizational substances). Thus, he notes the difference of Turkish Islam in comparison to other Islamic societies, stating that “[t]he Turks were not forced into Islam, as were so many other people, and their Islam bears no marks of constraint or subjection” (ibid). In this way, he underlines that Turkishness and Islam are different civilizational entities, though they are merged at one point in history. He underlines that Islam is not imposed on Turks. This emphasis on choice and on the autonomy of Turkishness from Islam creates the effect of an autonomous subject – the Turkish people – who are not colonized by a superior civilization, but adopt it freely. The same argument will be crucial in his view of the later “free” choice of Western civilization by the “Turks” in the process of modernization in the absence of formal colonization.

Lewis describes the particularity of Turkish Islam with two characteristics that define its distance from Christian civilization: first, its militant character, and second, its location between two civilizations (Christian and Islamic). He emphasizes the particularity of Turks in comparison to other Islamic societies in their ability to keep the “superior” values of early Islam: “Theirs was a militant faith, still full of the pristine fire and directness of the first Muslims; a religion of warriors, whose creed was a battle-cry,

whose dogma was a call to arms” (p.12). In praising the characteristics of early Islamic civilization and their preservation by the Turks, Lewis identifies the essence of this civilization with militancy. This (orientalist) approach of associating Islam with war has been criticized widely (Aksan 2007, Asad 2003, Mamdani 2004). Thus, Lewis on the one hand essentializes a social entity by attributing the action of war-making to its cultural substance. He then explains the early success of the Ottoman Empire, manifested in territorial expansion, with this supposed essential characteristic.

As this territorial expansion took place into “Christian” lands, the substance of Turkish Islam further links to Lewis’ description of the Ottoman state and its relation to the West. He points out that the Ottoman state was founded at the frontier between Islamic and Christian civilizations and that “carrying the sword and faith of Islam into new lands” (p.26) was its main objective. As he notes, the very organization of the Ottoman state rested on this religiously defined purpose of expansion: “The Ottoman systems of military organization, civil administration, taxation, and land tenure were all geared to the needs of a society expanding by conquest and colonization into the lands of the infidel” (p.27). Lewis thus describes the Ottoman state as an Islamic “war-machine,” the main aim of which was expansion to Christian lands.⁹ In this interpretation of history, Lewis tries to prove the point that the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state and that the struggle with the Christian West was its *raison d’être* (ibid). In this way, he also posits an essential difference of Islam from Christianity and the West associated with it.

⁹ He points out that the Ottoman elite took this mission with “high seriousness” and a “sense of devotion.” To illustrate this devotion he gives the example of Sultan Suleyman, who in his old age and bad health initiated a military campaign against Hungary, instead of enjoying his last part of his life in his own place (p.13).

Lewis then interprets the Ottoman legal system as another expression of this essential difference (between civilizational substances). He sees the centrality of Islam in this system as expressed, first, in “the seriousness of the Ottoman endeavour to make Islam the true basis of private and public life” (p.13) through making the *Şeriat* the “effective law of the state” (p.14); and second, in the different treatment of Muslim and non-Muslim communities based on the practice of *Şeriat* law. He indicates that Christian and Jewish subjects were tolerated and their protection was secured by Islamic law; however, this was aligned with a strict segregation between these communities. He interprets this segregation (tolerated but kept separate) again as a particular characteristic of Turkish Islam (ibid).

Lewis thus establishes the *Islamic* character of the Ottoman Empire, and further buttresses this by arguing that the characteristics described above as “effacing Turkishness” (p.15) – and were thus not a result of the Turkish substance. Continuing with the same opposition of “Ottoman state Islam” to “Turkishness,” he further notes the continuation of pre-Islamic elements in popular Islam, which is repressed by the state (p.15-16).

The oppositions (between Islam and Turkishness and between Islam and Christianity/ the West) that Lewis establishes in his narrative on the Islamic substance of Turkish civilization is crucial to his argument on both the “decline” of the Ottoman Empire and the process of modernization, as we will see in the following sections, because he sees the Islamic substance as impeding and the Turkish substance as enabling modernization.

I.6 Western Civilization

Lewis' book is about the entrance of a Western substance to Turkish civilization through the process of modernization. While the rest of the chapter will discuss this in depth, I want to highlight here the substantial characteristics that Lewis sees as constituting the Western substance.

Lewis identifies two conceptual qualities (in the sense of intellectual capabilities) central to Western civilization and its sciences, namely, the capacity to see reality as a “process” and “organic structure” (p.16). The former captures it “as a process in time, or, in organic terms, as a development,” while the latter comprises “the ability to conceive a whole made up of interrelated and interacting parts, rather than a mere congeries of separate, disjunct entities” (ibid). He then states:

These qualities are central to the modern Western form of civilization. They are the prerequisites of our physical and natural sciences; they determine our vision of the individual and the group, of man and the universe, and thus shape our institutions and our thought, our government and our arts, our industry, our science, and – save the mark – our religion. They make, to name but a few examples, the difference between the Western novel and the Oriental tale, Western portraiture and Oriental miniature, Western history and Oriental annals, Western government and Oriental rule- and perhaps between Western restlessness and Oriental repose. (p. 16-17)

The influence of Orientalism and modernization theory is explicit in the way of formulating what is Western. It shows very clearly how Lewis attributes the capacity of production to civilizations, and in turn, how he sees the source of that capacity in cultural particularity of civilizations. Thus, Western and Eastern civilizations produced different cultural products on the basis of their substantial characteristics. We will see the importance that he places on such cultural-intellectual production in the modernization process in later sections of the chapter.

Lewis posits that these Western “qualities have, in the course of the last century and a half, become more and more effective in Turkish public life” and that they bring Turkey “nearer to both the merits and the faults of the Western world” (p.16). While Lewis underlines that these qualities are definitely Western; he also acknowledges that there already were similar characteristics among the Ottomans before the beginning of the modernization process. He notes these similarities through a couple of examples: “Ottoman chroniclers and memoranda writers,” like modern historians and novelists, had shown some “capacity for analysis and synthesis”; he further observes that the Ottoman state, “based on law and hierarchy, is in some ways nearer to it [the modern constitutional republic] than to the amorphous and shifting society of classical Islam” (p17). Lewis sees the potentiality of becoming modern – and thus of historical change – of the Turks as rooted in the similarity of such substantial characteristics to Western qualities. As we will see in the following section, he however analyses the late Ottoman period as one of decline because of the difference of in particular the Islamic substance from Western civilization.

To sum up: Lewis’ explanation of the sources of Turkish civilization relies clearly on a substantialist approach. The cultural characteristics that he defines as the substance of civilizational entities are seen as the sources of action. Hence, in the following we will see that ultimately the actions that Lewis sees as resulting in the decline of the Ottoman Empire are presented as failures of that civilizational entity as subject of history, which ultimately is due to the substance that shapes that action. More particularly, we will see

that Lewis attributes the failure of Turkish civilization to the particularity of its Islamic substance.

II. “The Decline of the Ottoman Empire”

II.1 “Decline” as Indicator of the “Non-modern”

One of the central critiques directed against modernization theory concerns the periodization of history into the categories of modern and non-modern/ traditional (e.g. Fabian 1983). Peter Osborne thus argues that “‘modernity’ as a periodizing category ... sets up a differentiation [in the quality of historical time itself] between the character of its own time and that which precedes it” (1992, p.75). This comparison between different time periods, he says, became the “basis for ‘universal histories with a cosmopolitan intent’.” In such universal histories, he states, “the results of synchronic comparisons are ordered diachronically to produce a scale of development that defines ‘progress’ in terms of the projection of certain people’s presents as other people’s futures” (ibid). This view of history constitutes an essential element of the orthodoxy of modernization. The categories of modern and non-modern are divided in terms of their respective qualitative characteristics on a spatial level (see also Ahiska 2003, p.347) at the synchronic level, which then are used as indicators to differentiate and compare forms of societies using a temporal scale.

Which qualitative characteristics differentiate “modern” societies from preceding ones have been discussed controversially (Kaviraj 2005, Mouzelis 1999). Reading such debates through Osborne’s critique, we can see them as attempts to find a *standard* that

would allow for comparison between allegedly modern and non-modern societies. The vagueness of the concept of modernity is reflected in such controversies over the standards for comparison; at the same time, the continuing strength of the concept is expressed in the belief that such a standard is necessary (Kaviraj 2005).

As critics have pointed out, the standard that divides the modern from the non-modern has been set up by the so-called Western model in the orthodoxy of modernization. Stuart Hall among others showed that this standard does not simply enable a differentiation of historical periods by comparing societies through a temporal scale, but rather constitutes a means of measuring achievement: “the difference of these other societies and cultures from the West was the standard against which the West’s achievement was measured” (Hall 1996, p.187). Thus, we could say that in turn, the difference of these non-Western societies appears as a failure to achieve (Western) modernization. The standard that divides the categories of modern and non-modern (measured against the model of the West) thus is a standard that decides on relative “achievement.” By analyzing Lewis’ argument of decline of the Ottoman Empire, I want to show how he identifies achievement and failure, which rely on an observed historical reality, and constructs this as the standard deciding on the ability of becoming modern.

Relying on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as an objective end point, Lewis narrates the last two centuries of the Empire as a trajectory towards its collapse. While presenting the process of the “decline of the Ottoman Empire,” which is the title of the second chapter of his book, Lewis states that he attempts to make “a broad classification and

enumeration of some of the principal factors and processes which led to, or were part of, or were expressions of the decline of Ottoman government, society and civilization” (p.22). In this way, Lewis makes it clear in the beginning of the chapter that he aims to point out “indicators,” as I call them, of a decline process. Throughout this chapter, as I show in the following, Lewis portrays the process of decline of the Ottoman Empire in comparison to the “modernizing” parts of the world as a failure to modernize. As he states:

Fundamentally, the Ottoman Empire had remained or reverted to a medieval state, with a medieval mentality and a medieval economy –but with the added burden of a bureaucracy and a standing army which no medieval state had ever had to bear. In a world of rapidly modernizing states it had little chance of survival. (p.36)

We see in this quote that Lewis uses the categories of modern and non-modern not only to periodize history, but more importantly to underline the *necessity* of modernization as a precondition of the survival of the Empire. The factors and processes that indicate the decline of the Empire are thereby the indicators of not becoming modern. My analysis in this section is to identify these *indicators* to see how Lewis constructs the categories of modern and non-modern as standard of achievement.

As Suraiya Faroqhi (2006) points out, the argument of decline has been proven incorrect especially by recent research in this field, which has shown that it relies on an interpretation of historical reality from the perspective of modernization theory. My aim in this chapter instead is not to correct historiographical flaws, but to show what kind of reality Lewis tries to grasp through these categories of modern and non-modern.

Lewis notes the decline of the Empire at the levels of government, economy, society and culture. He underlines the multiplicity of reasons and levels of decline in order to make sure that the process is perceived as a decline of government, society and civilization (p.22). In the following subsections, I argue that the categories of modern and non-modern correspond for Lewis to realities of military, economic, administrative, and cultural capital (which I will analyze in separate sections), defined for him through civilizational substances.

II.2 Decline in Military Power

Lewis marks the end of the Ottoman territorial expansion as the first explicit indicator of decline. He indicates that “in the sixteenth century the Empire reached the effective limits of its expansion, and came up against barriers which it could not pass” (p.24).¹⁰ Lewis presents the defeat of the Ottoman armies in Vienna as the first explicit indicator of the decline process which ends with the “inevitable” collapse of the Empire. He observes the limits of expansion in relation to all the borders of the Empire; however, he asserts that the end of expansion in the Western border was “decisive” for the decline of the Empire.¹¹ The trend towards the collapse is seen in the further loss of wars and loss of territories.¹² If one considers the earlier victories of the Ottoman armies, the most

¹⁰ Vienna was the final point in the Western part of the Empire that the Ottoman armies reached. They failed to conquer it first in 1529, during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent, then failed again in 1683.

¹¹ As I stated in the previous section, Lewis identifies the expansion of the Ottoman Empire towards the Western Christian lands as the *raison d'être* of the state. Therefore, he sees the end of expansion in the Western border as the beginning of the end of the Empire

¹² The first loss of territory came with the peace treaty of Carlowitz, in 1699, which is signed as a consequence of the advancement of Austrians and their allies towards the Ottoman lands. According to Lewis, it “marks the end of an epoch and the beginning of another” (p.36). Lewis identifies another turning

apparent reason of the later losses, he points out, was the new war technology that the enemies of the Empire now possessed. The new era of the Ottoman Empire, characterized by its decline, in this sense corresponds for Lewis to an era of “modernizing” of its European enemies:

It was after the halting of the Ottoman advance that the lag began to appear between the standards of training and equipment of Ottoman and European armies. Initially, the backwardness of Ottomans was relative rather than absolute. Once in the forefront of military science, they began to fall behind. The great technical and logistic developments in European armies in the seventeenth century were followed tardily and ineffectively by the Ottomans –in marked contrast with the speed and inventiveness with which they had accepted and adapted the European invention of artillery in the fifteenth century. (pp.25-26)

Lewis observes the decline of the Ottoman Empire by using the standard of the possession of “new” military technology. The decline of the Ottoman Empire started when Europeans began to develop new warfare technologies, and when the Ottomans did not adopt this new technology of their enemies. Thus Lewis indicates a qualitative change in war technology, which changes the conditions of the battlefield: the difference between the Ottoman armies and its enemies, Russia and Austria in this case, stemmed from this qualitative difference of the technologies they respectively possess; the technology of the Ottoman armies in this sense lost its value and seemed no longer appropriate in the battlefield.

In this narrative, we can thus observe that the superiority of this new technology, and therefore of the Europeans, is *objectified in the battlefield*; one wins, and the other loses. The losses in the battlefield are also objectified in the loss of territories. Thus, the categories of modern and non-modern are seen to correspond to the actual difference in

point with the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, signed after a “humiliating” loss against Russia. With this treaty, the Empire lost for the first time territory with Muslim habitants. These losses in the battlefield signify for Lewis the beginning of a new era for the Ottoman Empire.

warfare technology; and the hierarchical relation between these categories is objectified in the fact of losing wars and territory. The military technology in this case is used as an indicator of both decline and modernization. Lewis measures the difference between modern and non-modern civilizations, as the forms of social entities, according to this indicator, namely, the quality of war technology that they possess.

Lewis argues that the Ottoman's decline in military power was due to the loss of their "alertness" towards changing technology. "The *decline in alertness*, in readiness to accept new techniques, is an aspect – perhaps the most dangerous – of what became a general deterioration in professional and moral standards in the armed forces, parallel to that of the bureaucratic and religious classes" (p.26). This attitude, he identifies, created the basic difference between the non-modern Ottoman Empire and the modernizing Europe: "Reference has often been made to the technological backwardness of the Ottoman Empire—to its failure to invent, but even to respond to the inventions of others" (p.32). He finds the reasons of the Ottomans' "failure to invent," and to "respond to the inventions of others" in the Islamic substance. First, he acknowledges that "Islamic civilization ... in its earlier stages was so receptive to influences from Hellenism and Iran, even from India and China," adding however that "[Muslims] decisively rejected the West" (p.40). Thus, Lewis indicates that there was always animosity between Muslims and Christians. However, since in the early times of the Islamic civilization Christian societies were not "developed," this animosity by Muslims towards Christians did not have a negative impact on Islamic civilization. When Christian civilization started to

develop, “Islam was crystallized –not to say ossified—and had become impervious to external stimuli, especially from the millennial enemy in the West” (p.41).

In contrast to this attitude towards the West by Muslims “in general,” posits Lewis, the Ottoman Turks, “while rejecting Christianity, Christian ideas, and Christian civilization, still found many things in Christian Europe that were useful enough and attractive enough to borrow, imitate, and adapt” (ibid) during the “successful” times of the Empire. According to Lewis, this relation with Christians changed because the Ottomans started to see themselves superior and for that reason closed themselves to the developments achieved by the Christians. In this way, according to Lewis, they lived in a world of “illusions” while the Europeans were making achievements in the “real” world:

On the warlike but open frontier one could still exchange lessons with one’s counterpart on the other side; through renegades and refugees new skills could reach the Islamic Empire. But the willingness to learn these lessons was not there, and in time the sources also dried up. Masked by the still imposing military might of the Ottoman Empire, the peoples of Islam continued to cherish the dangerous but comfortable illusion of the immeasurable and immutable superiority of their own civilization to all others –an illusion from which they were slowly shaken by series of humiliating military defeats (p.34 -35).

Lewis explains why Ottomans did not adopt the superior military technology of the Europeans first by the hundreds of years of *hatred* between these civilizations and second by the Ottomans’ *feeling of superiority* towards the Christians. In both cases, the reason is seen to lie in the Islamic substance of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, these attitudes towards Christians and to their technology stemming from the Islamic substance are interpreted by Lewis as having produced the limits and the quality of the Ottomans’ war technology.

II.3 Decline in Economic Power

In addition to the decline in military power, Lewis observes the decline in economic institutions of the Empire, which was linked to a change in external conditions – the global organization of the economy. According to him, the most significant historical event that had a negative impact on the Ottoman economic system was the “oceanic voyages of discovery of the Western maritime peoples” (p. 27). One consequence of this event was the increasing control of the Western states over the Asian trade ways¹³. He observes this “objective” fact of the decreasing importance of trade in the East Mediterranean in the lower “volume of international trade passing this way” (p.28).

In addition to the change of trade routes, Lewis points out that the flow of gold and silver from America had a negative impact on the Ottoman economic structure. Having a currency based on silver, Ottoman currency lost its value. As a consequence of this, the Europeans gained advantage in trade relations because of obtaining raw materials cheaply. Consequently, local industries in the Ottoman Empire declined, while “fiscal pressure and economic dislocation, accentuated by large-scale speculation and usury, brought distress and then ruin to large sections of the population” (p.29).

Lewis shows how a phenomenon that is happening *outside* the geography of the Ottoman Empire led to a decline of the Ottoman system. He presents the negative impact of the

¹³ He notes: “From the seventeenth century, the establishment of Dutch and British power in Asia and the transference of the routes of world trade to open ocean deprived Turkey of the greater part of her foreign commerce and left her, together with the countries over which she ruled, in a stagnant backwater through which the life-giving stream of world trade no longer flowed” (p.28).

discoveries of new lands by the Europeans on the Ottoman economic structure as a “natural” consequence of this phenomenon. What is hidden in this “natural” flow of history is the history of capitalism and colonialism, which has been associated with these “oceanic voyages of discovery of the Western maritime peoples”: the relations of exploitation and domination are not seen. What we see is the success of the Europeans, and the negative effects of this success on non-Western societies. Those who were able to discover the new lands are seen as the modernizing people, and the others are declining. The discoverers changed the world, others could only experience the effects of it. The first implicit division between modern and non-modern in this case is made through this action of discovery. The subject of this action is seen to be the Europeans. The subjectivity left to those who did not discover is one of accommodation.

Thus, in Lewis narrative, the “achievement” of the Westerners provides them with increasing economic resources at the same time as the Ottomans lose them due to the loss of control over trade ways and the devaluation of their currency. In this sense, the decline of the Ottoman Empire is objectified in the loss of quantity and quality of the economic resources.

Lewis indicates that the Ottoman state did not appropriately react to these developments. For example, Lewis indicates the inability of the Ottoman rulers in overcoming the financial crisis: “The Ottoman rulers, accustomed to crises of shortage of silver, were unable to understand a crisis of excess, or adequately to tax the new commercial inflow; the traditional measures which they adopted only served to worsen the situation” (p.29). It

is this inability in dealing with the impacts of external change that Lewis sees as leading to the economic decline of the Empire. This inability in turn is explained by Lewis with the fact that the ruling elite only knew “traditional measures” which “only served to worsen the situation” (ibid).

In addition to the inability of the ruling elite in dealing with the financial crises, Lewis further sees the reason for economic decline inherent to the political and social structure of the Empire. He points out that the objective conditions (namely, “fall in the value of money, the growing cost of government and warfare, the sale of offices and farming of taxes” (p. 31)) that led to a decline of the Empire were seen in other Mediterranean states as well, where however “they have contributed to the rise of a new class of capitalists and financiers, with a growing and constructive influence on governments” (ibid). It was not the absence of merchants and bankers in Turkey that led to the decline of the Empire for Lewis, but the political and social structure that defined non-Muslims as secondary citizens, and placed a stigma on the economic activities they were exercising and that had animated the transformations seen in other Mediterranean states. He claims:

In the military empire, at once feudal and bureaucratic, which they had created, the Muslims knew only four professions –government, war, religion, and agriculture. Industry and trade were left to the non-Muslim subject, who continued to practice their inherited crafts. Thus the stigma of the infidel became attached to the professions which the infidels followed, and remained so attached even after many of the craftsmen had become Muslim. Westerners and native Christians, bankers, merchants, and craftsmen, were all involved in the general contempt which made the Ottoman Empire impervious to ideas or inventions of Christian origin and unwilling to bend his own thoughts to the problems of artisans and vile mechanics. Primitive techniques of production, primitive means of transportation, chronic insecurity and social penalization, combined to preclude any long-term or large scale undertakings, and to keep the Ottoman economy at the lowest level of competence, initiative, and morality. (p.35)

Lewis again finds the basic reason of economic decline in the relation between Muslims and Christians. According to him, the economic division of labor based on religion

hindered a possible formation of a bourgeoisie, like in Europe, and led to an inevitable collapse of the Empire. The assumption is that if non-Muslims living in the Empire were given the same chances and opportunities as those in the European lands, and if Muslims could have emerged out of “the lowest level of competence, initiative, and morality” by adapting to them, they would lead the Empire towards becoming modern. In this way, the subject position that allows for change towards modernization is again attributed to (non-Muslim) Europeans. In this sense, the decline of the Empire again is seen to lie in its “Islamic substance”: in the attitudes of Muslims towards non-Muslims which are institutionalized in the economic and social structure of the Empire.

This attribution of decline to an Islamic substance is also visible in Lewis’ explanation of the decline of industry as due to the traditional organization of the economic practice through the guild system. The guilds, according to him, “fulfilled a useful social function in expressing and preserving the complex web of social loyalties and obligations of the old order” (p.33), however, they did not fulfill criteria of efficiency in a modernizing world. The very organization of the guild system inherently entailed “well-known” non-modern characteristics, again linked to “Islamic substance”:

A man’s choice of profession was determined by habit and inheritance, the scope of his endeavour limited by primitive techniques and transport, his manner and speed of work fixed by guild rule and tradition; on the one hand a sufi religious habit of passivity and surrender of self, on the other the swift fiscal retribution for any sign of prosperity, combined to keep industrial production primitive, static, and inert, utterly unable to resist the competition of imported European manufactures. (p.33-34)

Economic decline for Lewis is thus not just attributable to a shift of power and access due to the “discovery” of new lands by the Europeans and the development of capitalism, but

to the inherent characteristics of the Ottoman Empire, where its Islamic substance is seen to define a (non-modern) economic and social organization.

II.4 Decline in Administrative Power

Lewis indicates multiple factors that led to decline in administrative power. He points out that changing warfare technology did not only force the Ottoman state to acquire new technology, but also to re-organize the military institutionally. Furthermore, Lewis notes that the entire state system was affected by that reorganization as the military constituted the center of the Ottoman administrative system. He further states that the new military technology – firearms and artillery – required larger professional armies and less feudal cavalry. As the latter were paid by fiefs, while salaried personnel were paid by coin, this led to increasing demands by the treasury: “Faced with a growing expenditure and a depreciating currency, the demands of the treasury became more and more insatiable” (p.30).

Lewis underlines that the Ottoman economy was not strong enough to compensate for the expenses of the new warfare technology and re-organization of the military institution. This was linked to a decrease in revenues resulting from decreasing control of the central state over agrarian production. According to him, at the same time as the expenditures of the state were increasing because of an inefficient administration system, the state lost its control over tax collection:

[t]he growing inefficiency and venality of the bureaucracy prevented the formation of any effective state system for the assessment and collection of taxes. Instead, these tasks were given to tax-farmers, whose interposition and interception of revenues became in time a prescriptive and hereditary right, and added to the number of vast and neglected latifundia. (p.31)

He indicates that the traditional Ottoman agrarian system, the *timar* system, was replaced by tax-farming, *iltizam* (p.33). The dissolution of the classical agricultural system, he states, led to the emergence of a new class, the country notables called *ayans*, who took control over the tax collection from the seventeenth century on. The emergence of this new class is another factor that serves Lewis as indicator for decline. Lewis explains the reason of increasing power of these local notables by identifying a “growing inefficiency and venality of the bureaucracy” (p.31). Implied in Lewis’ narrative is once again that a traditional system was unable to cope with the changes of a “modernizing” world, and as a result declined.

Furthermore, Lewis observes the decline of administrative power, and of the Empire, in the decreasing personal qualities of the sultans: “If the first ten of the house of Osman astonish us with the spectacle of a series of able and intelligent men rare if not unique in the annals of dynastic succession, the remainder of the rulers of that line provides even more astonishing series of incompetents, degenerates, and misfits” (p.22-23). The reason of the decreasing quality of the sultans, he finds, in the “system of upbringing and selection” (p.23) of the ruler. We can thus read in between the lines that the Ottoman state was losing control over its lands and tax collection because it failed to build up an efficient administrative system and capable ruling elite. While he is not making an explicit reference here to Islamic substance, his description of the bureaucracy as venal and of the sultan as characterized by deficient upbringing hints at his view of the collapse of the traditional system that becomes more apparent in his argument on the decline of Islamic civilization.

II.5 Decline of Islamic Civilization

Lewis identifies that the foundational reason of the decline in all institutions of the empire lies in a more general process of civilizational decline, linked to intellectual decline in the Empire (p.34-35). Although he mentions the intellectual decline in his more general discussion of the decline of the empire, he does not elaborate on it much. As mentioned earlier, Lewis points out that the Muslim world closed itself to the West. Therefore, intellectual production according to him was limited to the intellectual activities within the empire. He still finds valuable intellectual works in the Ottoman Empire until the late eighteenth century. However, starting from then, he observes “a real breakdown in the cultural and intellectual life of Turkey, resulting from the utter exhaustion of the old traditions and the absence of new creative impulses” (p.35). Even then he still observes the vividness of folk culture (ibid), which he identifies as the essence of Turkishness (and the basis of the Turkish nation), while decline is associated with the Islamic substance in particular.

The intellectual decline in the empire linked to Islamic civilization becomes visible for him in comparison to the supposed superiority of “Western ideas,” “objectified” in their increasing influence in the Islamic world subsequent to “the events of the French Revolution [which] were the first to bring these ideas dramatically before the rest of the world” (p.73). The “universal” ideas expressed in the French Revolution have for Lewis a clearly Western European origin, even though they can subsequently be adopted in places where they did not originate (ibid). If we remember that Lewis identified the substance of Western civilization with an “intellectual capacity” (and cultural works as expressing that

capacity in contrast to the works of the Orient) then it becomes clear that for him the Western ideas are an expression of that civilizational substance.

Thus, on the one hand, Lewis sees ideas as the products of a civilizational substance. On the other hand, he also implies that the quality of such ideas constitute a civilization (in contrast e.g. to folk culture), or civilizational superiority.¹⁴ He attributes the increasing influence of “Western ideas in the Islamic world” to the quality of intellectual production in the West rather than to “the advance of the material might of the West,” as, he notes, is frequently done (p.54). Hence, the superiority of the West in Lewis’ account does not simply lie in its successes in the battlefield, in the market or in the governmental sphere, but in the ideas that emerged from within the substantial characteristics of the West. Thus, in his narrative, the “achievements” of the West in acquiring “modernity” and in spreading that “modernity” are presented as a consequence of the quality of ideas (rather than force). As we will see in the following section, it is Western ideas, rather than “military might,” that initiate for him a true modernization process in the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, as we will see Lewis sees an actual modernization process not simply in the imitation of the material achievement of the West, but in a civilizational transformation towards West.

II.6 Decline in Resources – Loss of Social Power

There are five points to emphasize in Lewis’ view of the process of decline in the Ottoman Empire if we read Lewis analytically. First off, Lewis defines the Ottoman

¹⁴ See the section on “Local Cultures” for a parallel argument.

Empire as a civilizational entity in itself that is defined predominantly by its Islamic substance. As we have seen in the first section of the chapter, Lewis, in taking a substantialist approach, attributes a subject position to civilizational entities, i.e. he sees the sources of historical action in the substantial characteristics of a civilization. In his argument of decline, we see that the actions of the Ottoman ruling elite in particular are identified by him as stemming from the Islamic substance. Second, he posits a change of external context based on the actions of the Europeans, which are seen to result from their particular civilizational substance (defined in distinction to the Islamic one), such as the invention of new technologies and the “discovery” of new lands. This change in external context is identified by Lewis with “modernity” which, as the quote by Osborne in the beginning of this section indicated, sets up a differentiation simultaneously between time periods, and also between societies. It is seen to require transformations in the Ottoman Empire if the latter is not to lose power and decline, as the latter for Lewis does not suffer from a mere lack of economic and other resources, but from kinds of military technology and of economic, legal and administrative organization seen as inadequate in the new context. Third, he argues that the Ottomans fail to adapt to this external context (through changes in the economy, technology, and administrative organization) as due to the animosity of Muslims towards the Christians and their feeling of superiority against them – that is, as due to their “Islamic substance.” Lewis interprets this failure to adapt to the external changes (of modernization) as being stuck in the organizational form of a different (pre-modern) time period and the closure of Islamic civilization to Western civilization. In relation to this, fourth, what for Lewis underlies the decline overall is a civilizational decline, which for him consists in the inability to produce ideas (or

worldviews) and to adopt new ideas which are seen in his account as the actual sources of producing material wealth. Hence the original reason of the decline of the Ottomans is seen first in their inability to produce a worldview like the one of the Western civilization, and then further as the inability to follow them. Finally, in this account, we see that ideas are not seen merely as products of civilizations, but as their substantial properties. What is significant in this understanding is that while Lewis identifies material wealth with certain resources (technology, economic wealth, or administrative techniques) that can be possessed in the forms of capital, ideas cannot be simply possessed as resources from various subject positions, because they are seen as the substantial property that defines the civilization itself. Thus, they can only be owned as substantial properties that define not the position of the subject, but the subject itself. Therefore, the superiority of Western civilization seems to be inherent to its substantial properties, and a non-Western civilization which does not share its substantial properties, can only *adopt* the ideas of the latter in order to exist in the changing world. In other words, the assumption is that only by becoming modern can it become Western. The frequent association of the notion of modernization with Westernization in this sense derives from a particular understanding of ideas (worldviews) as the defining features of a civilization. From this perspective, it becomes possible to see hierarchical differences in a global order not as a product of relations (of domination and exploitation), but as inherent differences of the substantial properties of social (civilizational/cultural) entities. In order to understand better why the West appears to be inherently superior in Lewis' account, I will further open it up with Bourdieu's concept of capital and field.

III. Resources for Social Power: Implicit Understanding of “Capital”

III.1 Capital

Bourdieu describes “capital” as

accumulated labor (...) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a *lex insita*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. (1986, p.16)

As Craig Calhoun has argued, while Bourdieu starts out with a definition of capital in a Marxist sense, namely, as “accumulated labor,” in his actual usage of the concept, he “consistently sees capital as a resource (that is, a form of wealth) which yields power” (Calhoun 1993, p. 69). While this perspective limits Bourdieu’s theory of field fundamentally, which I will discuss later, his conceptualization of capital is useful to understand the implicit sense of reality presented by Lewis because both of them focus on the effects of capital, not on its production process.

This usage of the concept of capital – as a resource for power – needs to be understood in relation to Bourdieu’s conceptualization of the “field,” which is the object of analysis of his sociology. Bourdieu underlines that a form of capital acquires its value only in a “field.” The latter is conceptualized as a social space of power in which agents are positioned according to the quantity and quality of the forms of capital they possess and in which they struggle over the stakes (rewards) of the field. The field, he states,

may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions. (1992, p. 97)

Thus, the concept of varying *quantities* and *qualities* of capital serves as the standard to differentiate between positions in the field, while the competition over the acquisition or monopoly over forms of capital decides the trajectory of the agents occupying positions in the field (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 99-168). In other words, the possession of capital does not only make an agent “rich” or dominant, it also reproduces the conditions that make him dominant. Hence, similar to Marx’s definition of the social role of the capitalist, Bourdieu states that the “dominant” agents have to “re-invest” their capital by exercising it as power in order to be able to reproduce the conditions that provide them with an advantage in the field.

Now we can locate Lewis’ historical narrative into this analytic frame. We have seen previously that Lewis attributes the decline of the Ottoman Empire ultimately to a change in context or external conditions (modernization). We can argue that Lewis refers with this argument to an actual change in conditions in a field, or a production of a new field, which results in a revaluation of the forms of capital relevant to it. As Bourdieu states:

all societies appear as social spaces, that is, as structures of differences that can only be understood by constructing the generative principle which objectively grounds those differences. This principle is none other than the structure of the distribution of the forms of power or the kinds of capital which are effective in the social universe under consideration – and which vary according to the specific place and moment at hand. (1998, p. 32)

In his argument on modernization, Lewis attempts to grasp a reality in which the qualities of the forms of capital are redefined in the changed conditions of a field that he identifies as “modernity,” and in which what he identifies as the “West” occupies the dominant position on through the forms of capital it acquired. The Ottoman Empire is not able to compete successfully in this new political reality with its own forms of capital that had been produced by its substantial characteristics. In particular the Islamic substance,

according to Lewis, which had produced the existing resources – that is, the quality and quantity of capital in the Ottoman system – is interpreted by him as the reason for decline and thus loss of power. Thus, it is important to note that Lewis does not present the Ottoman Empire as devoid of resources – capital – for competition. However, the quality of that capital (e.g. feudal cavalry) differs from the quality of the one owned now by “modernized” Europe (e.g. artillery) that proves to be successful in competition (e.g. wars). As we saw in the decline argument, Lewis posits an inherent superiority of certain types of capital that is objectified in their “apparent” success in such areas as the battlefield, the market, or even in the sphere of ideas. In this sense, he observes the effects of the capital and in turn he attributes an intrinsic value to capital.

In contrast to this view of capital as possessing an intrinsic value (due to substantial characteristics of the civilization that produced it), Bourdieu underlines the relational character of capital. That is, differences of the values of capital do not pre-exist social struggles and determine them, but rather, they are constituted in social struggles by the exercise of capital (resources) as power. In other words, capital acquires its value only in power struggles, not before that. Bourdieu also underlines that the struggles furthermore decide which qualities of capital are “valuable” and which are not. Ignoring these relations of power, Lewis is able to objectify and universalize the values of the different forms of capital.

Furthermore, if we continue with Bourdieu’s understanding of capital in multiple forms, we can identify that the cultural forms of capital that Lewis constructs as substantial

properties of civilizations are exercised in the field (of power) in order to reproduce the existing conditions of the field. Lewis, by identifying them as inherent characteristics of civilizations, but not as forms of capital, attributes an “objectified” *value* of capital in the field of power to its owner. In other words, in this understanding, the dominant agent in the field is in a dominant position not because of the forms of capitals he holds and the power he exercises, but because he is already inherently superior because he holds those forms of capital. By merging civilizational substance with capital, Lewis is able to attribute an intrinsic (and universalized) value to the dominant. In this way, Lewis argues that the so-called achievement of the West and the decline of the Ottomans did not emerge in the exercise of power, but stemmed from their cultural substances. In not showing the constitution of value in relations of power, he locates the only source of value in the intrinsic characteristics of substances. In other words, what gives in his view value to a form of capital is civilizational substance.

III.2 Historical Change through “Achievement”

Lewis sees modernization as the acquisition of certain forms of capital which, according to him, have intrinsic values. Lewis interprets the production of these capitals as an original “achievement” of the West, due to its specific substance, while non-Western societies can only repeat this achievement if they follow the path of Western civilization. In turn, those who do not follow this path “properly” are seen to be doomed to decline and collapse as in the case of Ottoman Empire. In this way, the historical trajectory (of modernization) appears as a single line on which some achieve to progress forward, while others fail and fall back or remain backwards. In this sense, historical change is defined

through the criteria of achievement: either one achieves or fails to achieve. This achievement is “objectified” in the actual hierarchical organization of the social world through the exercise of capital.

We can see a more explicit example of this understanding of intrinsic values and the related objectification of “Western achievement” in a text by Charles Murray (2003), whose notoriety stems from his co-authored book *The Bell Curve* (1994) in which he “proved” racial hierarchy “scientifically.” In this more recent text, Murray targets critiques of Eurocentrism in questioning whether the observation of Western achievement is simply a Eurocentric argument. To prove the opposite, he attempts to make an “objective” analysis of human accomplishments in the fields of science, arts and philosophy (2003, p.66-67). Maybe not coincidentally, he chooses “non-economic” and “non-political” fields, to show that the superiority of the West does not lie in its material success, but in its substantial characteristics, which are reflected in cultural production. His study relies on a calculation of the accomplishments made in these fields in the period between 800 BC and 1950, in which he compares the distribution of the number of these accomplishments between the Western and non-Western parts of the world. The raw numbers “surprisingly” show that before 1500 there are not many accomplishments total. However, after 1500, we see the total dominance of the Western world in terms of the quantity of productions in these fields (ibid, p. 66-68). In order to make his study appear more “objective,” Murray checks the “qualitative,” rather than just the quantitative, value of these accomplishments by creating a scale of “eminence scores” from 1-100 “by measuring the amount of attention given to people” (ibid, p.69) who have produced such

scientific and artistic works. Again “surprisingly,” the resulting figure is seen to declare the superiority of the achievements of the Western world. In the end, Murray asks rhetorically: “Are these “Eurocentric” numbers?” (ibid, p. 71), with the joy of proving his point.

It would not take us long to reject the objective and scientific quality of this argument along the lines of the critiques that were made on his study of racial hierarchy. Here, I rather want to emphasize that this text reflects commonsensical thinking about Western superiority especially in the cultural fields. This view has been objectified in the eyes of many through the quantity and quality of cultural products produced in the so-called Western world. The extreme presentation of this commonsensical view by Murray also illustrates the way Lewis thinks about modernization. First, both attribute a capacity of ownership to cultural substances in the form of civilizations. According to them, *civilizations* produce the cultural products that can be quantified and qualified. As I pointed out early on, this perspective veils the historical conditions and contingencies that produce the needs, means and relations of such a production. Second, both consider the products as forms of capital having an intrinsic value. The objectivity of this value is “proven” in the hierarchical relations between different social entities. This is most explicit in Lewis’ discussion of war technology, where the superiority of the Western war technology is proven in the battlefield. To attribute an intrinsic value seems more difficult in cultural production. However, Murray “solves” this through the technique of the eminence scores. Lewis as well attributes something like “eminence scores” to the ideas of the French Revolution through their effect on the world (p.53-6).

When the value of capital is considered intrinsic, then the owner and producer of these values appear to be superior. What is missing here is of course again the whole history of domination and exploitation, identified by many critics, that has produced the “superiority” of the West. In this way, in Lewis’ “field” – unlike Bourdieu’s – everyone has the chance of acquiring capital (becoming modern) in the struggle over power, even though it is not necessarily an equal chance.

Achievement and failure here is determined by the way the agents in the field play the game. One can be weaker in a game, but this does not mean that one cannot, at least in theory, win the game. While Bourdieu shows the structural inequality in such fields that works always in favor of the strong player, who is strong because of his monopoly over the amounts and definitions of the capital and the rules of the game (1992, p.99), Lewis sees this game as a “just” one, as everyone has the chance of achievement. In Lewis’ logic of the game, each failure is seen as the objectification of the “weakness” of the weak, while the only way to succeed (“achieve”) is to be or become strong enough to win the game. In Lewis’ case, moreover, every failure turns into the objectification of the category of “not as modern” as the West (the victor).

IV. Modernization as a Project of Civilizational Transformation

IV.1 Imitation of the Means as Indicator for Inadequate Modernization

Lewis sees the beginning of the modernization process in the Ottoman Empire with a defeat (an “objectification of failure”) – that is, with the recognition by the “weak” that

they have to adopt *some of* the means of the “strong” to be able to regain their power vis-à-vis their enemies:

The first deliberate attempt at a Westernizing policy –the first conscious step, that is, towards the *imitation and adoption of certain selected elements* from the civilization of Western Europe– came in the early eighteenth century. The treaties of Carlowitz (1699) and Passarowitz (1718) had given formal expression and recognition to humiliating defeats of the Ottoman Empire by the Austrians and their allies. On the other hand the example of Russia under the Peter the Great suggested that a vigorous programme of Westernization and modernization might enable the Empire to throw off its weakness and once again become the terror of its enemies (p.45, my emphasis)

As is seen in this paragraph, Lewis interprets the necessity of the reforms, and thus of a program of modernization led by the state elite, as stemming from the weakening of the empire. Lewis thinks that it took Ottomans having humiliating defeats on the battlefield to recognize this objective decline of the empire and the *necessity* of imitating Western civilization. There are at least three noteworthy aspects to this argument. First, Lewis presents the beginning of the modernization process as an attempt to save the state on the part of the ruling elite, not about changing society. Second, this decision on the part of the ruling elite is portrayed as reflecting their insight into the superiority of (“selected elements” of) the West, objectified in its successes in the battlefield. This represents a shift in mental attitudes in Lewis’ narrative, as he before highlighted the Turks’ sense of superiority in relation to Christians. Third, the implication of this perspective is that the only means that might overcome the condition of weakness of the empire are the means of the dominant (the West). Adopting these means would (re-)enable the Ottomans to compete with them.

Lewis observes that during the early modernization process of the Ottoman Empire, the “Turks,” despite their attempts to imitate the material success of the West, still closed themselves to the ideas of the Western civilization: “Turning from gunnery and

typography to knowledge and ideas, we find far fewer traces of Western influence, for it is here that the Muslim rejection of Christianity and all that came from it was more effective” (p.52). However, this resistance was eventually broken, Lewis states, in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

IV.2 The Effects of the French Revolution as the Indicator for True Modernization

Lewis locates the actual beginning of the modernization process in the Ottoman Empire with the adoption of Western ideas in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Thus, he posits that “for the first time, we find a great movement of ideas penetrating the barrier that separated the House of War from the House of Islam, finding a ready welcome among Muslim leaders and thinkers, and affecting a greater or lesser degree every layer of Muslim society” (p.53).

In Lewis’ narrative, however, the success of the West (objectified in the accumulation of capital and the military successes) is a precondition for the spread of Western ideas. He states:

The Muslim, no less than other men, is inclined to listen with greater sympathy and respect to the beliefs of those whom God has favoured with power and wealth in *this* world, and the visible success of the West was certainly a contributory factor, if not indeed a prerequisite, in making Western ideas acceptable to him. (p.54)

Apart from highlighting once more how Lewis links historical practice to civilizational substance through the rhetorical figure of “the Muslim,” this quote points to a central aspect of Lewis’ modernization perspective: the centrality of the adoption of “ideas,” as the most immediate form of the Western substance, in the process of modernization.

The importance of the ideas of the French Revolution, the explanation of their resonance, and their modernizing impact consists for him in their secular character (p.54-6). This secular character, in turn, is portrayed by Lewis as linked to the substance of the West, while as non-immanent to Islamic substance and the socio-economic organization of the Empire that is produced by this substance: “The cultural tradition and political conditions of the Ottoman Empire was conducive neither to formulation nor to the expression of new political theories or programmes” (p.72-73).

As a consequence of associating the beginning of modernization with the adoption of Western ideas (which refers back to the intellectual capacities he defines as the substance of Western civilization, as shown in the first section), and of seeing these ideas as external to an Islamic society, becoming modern for him entails becoming Western. That is, rather than a superficial, because selective adoption of Western material culture, it necessitates a civilizational transformation that limits Islam (that is, disrupts the identification between the Ottoman state and Islamic civilization that was for him a central feature of the Ottoman Empire and a reason for the decline) and introduces the Western substance to Turkish civilization. Lewis states that only when the intellectual and ruling elite of the Ottoman Empire was internalizing the Western substance and the dominance of Islamic substance in Turkish civilization is thus pushed back, did the modernization of Turkey start. The modernization history up to the present is then identified as the history of this transformation of the substances of Turkish civilization: “[t]he history of the reform movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is largely concerned with the attempt by Western-educated intellectuals to impose a

Western pattern of secular political classification and organization on the religious community of Islam” (p.55) Thus, the Islamic substance becomes for Lewis subordinated to the Western one in a period of civilizational transformation.

As a consequence of this perspective, and as we will see in the following, Lewis narrates the history of modernization in Turkey as a struggle between “reformers” (who attempt to undertake that civilizational transformation) and “reactionaries (who resist that).

IV.3 Modernization Reforms as Struggle between Reformists and Reactionaries

Lewis situates the beginning of the modernization process with the military reforms of Sultan Selim III and the “first vital penetration of ideas” (p.56). He sees the importance of Selim’s reign not only in the aim to build a stronger army through “European” methods, but in the fact that he opened “channels of transmission” for Western ideas by establishing new schools with foreign (French) instructors as well as embassies in several European cities (pp.56-64). These “channels of transmission” for him helped to create those secularist cadres –composed of “civilian, lay-educated bureaucrats” (p.61) – that would be leading the reformist movement at the heart of the modernization project, as a Westernization project (ibid).

While Lewis had presented the earlier Ottoman state and its ruling elite as responsible for the decline of the empire, because they were products of the Islamic substance of Turkish civilization, he now presents the new elite, on the basis of their exposure to “Western ideas” as the agent for modernizing change. However, Lewis also points out the

difficulties of such a transformation in a context where the Islamic substance prevailed in Ottoman society and institutional structures. Lewis places special emphasis on characterizing the “reactionaries” as opposed to the ideas of the French Revolution, highlighting their detest of the French (p.71). In addition, he emphasizes the problems new ideas faced in the particular cultural and historical context of the empire: In this “authoritarian society,” he posits, the refusal of such ideas was only normal (p.73).

Thus, Lewis attributes the end of the first phase of modernization with the “deposition” of Sultan Selim by reactionary forces:

In the summer of 1807 the reform movement in Turkey seemed to be extinguished. The reforming Sultan was deposed, his newstyle army disbanded, his reformist ministers dead or in hiding. In their place the Chief Mufti and the Janissaries ruled the city –the two forces most bitterly opposed to social and military change. (p.74)

As this quote and the previous discussion shows, the dynamics of the modernization process are presented by Lewis as a struggle and opposition between the new elites open to Western ideas and civilizational transformation on the one hand and the reactionaries that oppose change, and thus want to keep the “traditional” substance and organization of the empire.

Despite the success of the reactionaries in overthrowing the Western-oriented Sultan Selim, Lewis emphasizes that the reforms he initiated were a “young” but a “vigorous plant” that did not simply fade away. The successful installment of Mahmud II to the throne with the help of reformist groups, and the beginning of a more comprehensive period of reforms following Mahmud’s “suppression of the [“reactionary”] Janissaries” in 1826 (p.78) thus indicates for him another turning point in the modernization history of

Turkey (p.75). Lewis describes in detail how the comprehensive reforms undertaken under the reign of Mahmud and during the *Tanzimat* period were targeting the institutions of the military, education, administration, law, agriculture and impacted social and cultural life as well (p. 80-103).

Lewis in particular indicates the fundamental effect of the *Tanzimat* edict on all aspects of the empire, and portrays it as the first indicator of a true civilizational change. Among the four principles of the edict, Lewis posits that the one on the “equality of persons of all religions in the application of these laws” (p.107) entails the most significant change away from the Islamic character of the empire, as accepting the equality between the “infidel and true believer ... was an offence against both religion and common sense” (ibid).

The result of these changes, so Lewis, made any return to the previous organization of the Empire impossible:

By 1871 the reform had already gone far enough to make a simple policy of reversion to the past impracticable. The destruction of the old order had been too thorough for any restoration to be possible; for better or for worse, only one path lay before Turkey, that of modernization and Westernization. She could move fast or slowly, straight or deviously; she could not go back. (p.128)

Lewis presents “modernization and Westernization” – thus, civilizational transformation – as the only possible path forward for the empire, as a consequence of the old order that for him had been based on the link between the Islamic substance of Turkish civilization and the Ottoman state. The only question that remains for him is whether Turkey/ the Ottoman Empire would “move fast or slowly, straight or deviously” on the path towards modernization as Westernization (ibid).

As Lewis sees modernization as a transformation of the substance of (Turkish) civilization into a Western one, he locates the dynamic of this history in the struggle between those social agents who are seen to respectively have the substantial properties of Islamic and Western civilization – the “reactionaries” versus the “reformists.”¹⁵ This struggle is necessary for him in a context where the Islamic substance had long prevailed. However, he also *believes* that the Turkish people, who he argues has kept its distinctive characteristic of Turkishness as separate from Islam, can have a (“positive”) impact on the outcome of this struggle.

What is changing in this history is thus the substance of a civilizational entity as it is moving along the line of history. As I argued above, what is essential to this formulation of history is the attribution of an intrinsic value to forms of capital and to the category of civilization. In this way, history is not seen as a struggle over capital (in a relational sense), but as a transformation from one state of being to another on a linear time of history. This perception of the linearity of history derives from his formulation of substance and forms of capital. However, if we read Lewis with the analytical tools of Bourdieu, then moving “fast” or “slow” in this linear time refers to the pace of the accumulation of capital. Lewis’ historical account is based on the distribution of capital in the field of power, and the trajectory of an agent (which is abstracted as a monolithic nation in his case) is determined by its struggle in this field.

¹⁵ In colonial contexts, we can see the same formulation of struggle between the colonizer and the colonized.

It is this “objectified” reality that Lewis relies on in his take of history as a process of modernization. “Turkey” always appears to be moving to somewhere in this scale, and Lewis is sure “she cannot go back.” If we again read this from Bourdieu’s view, what he means is that Turkey cannot get out of this field. Once she is caught up in the field, the only way to survive to stay in the field is to play the game, to acquire and accumulate capital. While this orthodoxy conceals that the so-called modernization process consists of processes of struggle in a field of power, we can see the replication of this orthodoxy in many of the formulation of political projects especially in “non-Western nations.”

In this formulation of history, modernization” is problematized as a “lack” of forms of capital (of the “modern”), while the relative acquisition of such quantities and qualities of capital serves to indicate the “degree of modernization” of the social entity that possesses them. Thus, the degree of accessing and acquiring the quantity and quality of capital are represented as the actual evidences of the degree of modernization which shows a never completed movement towards a modern state and society.

In this way, the degree of modernization – which is measured by the quantity and quality of the capitals of modernization possessed – not only indicates an existing not-yet modernized position in the objective structure of the field, but also determines the future aspirations of those who are categorized in this position. As Bourdieu points out, the aspirations of an agent are limited by the objective possibilities of the agent’s position. In our case, the degree of modernization appears to be the “concrete indices of [what is] accessible and inaccessible” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.64) for those who hold a not-yet

modernized position. The “logic of practice” in such a disadvantaged position, as Bourdieu argues, lies in the recognition and adoption of the forms of capital that are the means of its domination: “social categories disadvantaged by the symbolic order ... cannot but recognize the legitimacy of the dominant classification in the very fact that their only chance of neutralizing those of its effects most contrary to their own interests lies in submitting to them in order to make use of them” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.164-165).

Chatterjee makes a similar argument about the logic of practice of the dominated in his analysis of the ideology of nationalism in a colonial context. A reinterpretation of his analysis is useful to see how this logic works in the discourse of modernization. In his analysis, he analytically separates the “thematic” and “problematic” of the nationalist ideology. The former “refers to an epistemological as well as ethical system which provides a framework of elements and rules for establishing relations between elements” and the latter “consists of concrete statements about possibilities justified by reference to the thematic” (Chatterjee 1986, p.38). If we apply this conceptual framework to our topic, the thematic of modernization consists of an epistemological framework that defines the categories of modernized and not-yet modernized and validates specific forms of capital. The problematic of modernization on the other hand consists of political aspirations that are claimed from a not-yet modernized position in reference to the thematic. At the level of problematic, the not-yet modernized

is seen to possess a ‘subjectivity’ which he can himself ‘make’ ... while his relation to himself and to others have been ‘posed, understood and defined’ by others i.e. by an objective scientific consciousness, by Knowledge, by Reason, those relations are not acted by others. His subjectivity, he thinks, is active, autonomous and sovereign. (ibid)

The political aspirations (problematic) of the not-yet modernized are thus limited by the objective possibilities of his position which are defined and justified by the modernization framework (thematic): Since forms of capital are central to this thematic, these possibilities appear to be realized only through them. Hence, the forms of capital, the degree of ownership over which determines the (inferior) position of the not-yet modern, also appear as the only means to struggle in the field.

To relate the argument back to Bourdieu's framework, the objective conditions of a not-yet modernized position create the sense of "there [is] nothing else to do" (Bourdieu 1994, p.103) other than accumulating and using forms of capital. The arbitrary divisions of modern/non-modern and not-yet modern, West/East, are thus naturalized by the recognition of specific capitals as the only means of surviving and struggling in the field. These forms of capitals turn into concrete indices that define both the "objective chances" and the "political aspirations" that are associated with agents of a not-yet modernized position:

Every established order tends to produce the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents' aspirations, out of which arises the sense of limits, commonly called the sense of reality. (Bourdieu 1977, p.164)

Thus, it is the doxa of modernization – that is, subjective structures that correspond to objective relations defined by capital – that here constitutes the sense of (political) reality.

CHAPTER II: “GOOD” AND “BAD” MODERNIZATION

In the introduction to his book *Turkey, A Modern History*,¹⁶ Erik J. Zürcher acknowledges the “epochal” character of studies such as Lewis’ work, but sees his own study as correcting its modernizationist and Westernist biases¹⁷. First published in 1993, and now in its third edition, his book forms part of the critique of modernization that was prominent in Turkey at the time, which on the one hand was directed against orthodox views of modernization and on the other hand highlighted the authoritarian character of the modernization process in Turkey. In this revisionist project, Zürcher does not rely on any one particular theoretical approach. Rather, he draws on a range of different perspectives and claims to present in this way an “objective” account of Ottoman-Turkish history. As this “objective” account is also directed against the nationalist biases of official historiography, his book fits well with more general liberal perspectives prominent in Turkey since the 1980s, which aim at writing a non- or anti-Kemalist version of history (e.g. Kansu 1997; Üstel 2004, Parla & Davison 2004). In analyzing Zürcher’s approach, I am thus also speaking to this more general perspective.

In line with his attempt to give an “objective” account of history by correcting Western, secularist, and nationalist biases, Zürcher also aims to give a complete representation of society by analyzing all its spheres rather than focusing e.g. predominantly on economic

¹⁶ As this book is the main source for this chapter, I will reference it throughout only with page numbers, omitting the year. I am using the third edition published in 2004.

¹⁷ See his critique of Lewis at <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/tcimo/tulp/Research/Lewis.htm> As of February 20, 2008

relations. The fact that he apologizes early in the book for not including the sphere of the arts, because he does not consider himself sufficiently knowledgeable in that field (p.6), already shows this purpose of creating a “complete” representation of reality. Despite this claim, the chronology of events and the organization of his narrative are again mostly concentrated on the political sphere and on the state elite in particular, like in other state-centered historiographies.

Thus, a crucial characteristic of Zürcher’s declared perspective on modernization is its “objectivity” and “completeness.” Entailed here is also the assumption that such a view can present the “good” and “bad” sides of the modernization perspective, rather than condemning or celebrating it from an ideologically tainted standpoint. As we will see, Zürcher, like recent critiques of Kemalism, sees the problem of “bad” modernization as constituted by an *authoritarian imposition* of modernizing changes by the state elite *rather than as being inherent to* the modernization process itself. This view fundamentally conflicts with the thesis of this study, which is that modernization is necessarily a capital- (and thus power-) centered process. My analysis of the limits of this modernization perspective represented by Zürcher supports this thesis further.

The chapter will discuss these issues in three sections. The first one situates Zürcher’s book in the general debates on modernization prevalent in Turkey at the time of the publication, in order to show in which regards his approach is a heterodox one, at the same time as pointing out the limits of that heterodoxy. I will show in particular that he partakes in a view that makes a distinction between positive and negative sides of

modernization rather than condemning modernization wholesale, while “good modernization” is associated with the development of civil society as an indicator of democratic process.

In the second section, I discuss how Zürcher constructs the “pre-modern” Ottoman Empire on the basis of a comparison with what is seen to constitute “the modern.” This is visible first in his presentation of the socio-political system of the “pre-modern” Ottoman Empire as a static one and second in his comparison of state-society relations in the Empire to an ideal-type of the “modern” state. In this narrative, the fate of Ottoman society seems determined by the Sultan only, while the members of the ruling elite enjoy limited autonomy in state-society relations that the mass of the people lacks entirely.

In the third section, I show how Zürcher sees the modernization process as a reform process that produced “achievements” but was limited by the ultimate rationale of strengthening the power of the central state as well as by “handicaps” of the reformers constituted by the residues of “traditional” structures and insufficient means to overcome them. I then discuss his view of the “emancipated bureaucrats” as embodiments of “the modern” in Turkey, which are so because they acquired cultural capital through a secular, Europe-oriented education and could convert it into political capital in the “modernizing” Ottoman Empire. As these become the leading figures of Ottoman-Turkish modernization in the later decades, Zürcher appreciates their “achievements” in “catching up with the dominant civilization” (p. 336) of the time. I thus argue that Zürcher perceives the

modernization process as consisting of the accumulation and distribution of ‘generalizable’ forms of capital.

In line with the understanding that “good” modernization is associated with a broad civil society, “modernization” becomes a process in which some forms of capital are generalized so that more people can become “autonomous” in their relations with and within the state. In this view, capital functions as a resource that can be distributed. I conclude that, although Zürcher severs the immediate link between a Western civilizational substance/ Westernization and modernity, he still explains the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire/Turkey by referring to substantial properties. This becomes apparent in showing how his approach follows implicitly the theoretical perspective of “multiple modernities,” which, I argue, constitutes a limited critique of modernization orthodoxy because it continues to attribute intrinsic values to social entities and forms of capital. I conclude by pointing out the necessity of a relational and processual view of capital that enables us to see that the generalization of forms of capital – a *telos* entailed in both Zürcher’s text and the argument of multiple modernities – is impossible.

I. “Rethinking Modernity” in Liberal Heterodoxy

Zürcher’s approach to historiography needs to be understood in relation to the dominant way in which questions of “modernity” and “modernization” were addressed in Turkish social sciences and political life in the late 1980s and during the 1990s. The book *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, edited by Bozdoğan and Kasaba

(1997) and including texts from prominent scholars (e.g. Şerif Mardin, Nilüfer Göle, Çağlar Keyder, Deniz Kandiyoti) working on Turkey, reflects this intellectual atmosphere well. As the editors state, this was characterized by “the eclipse of the progressive and emancipatory discourse of modernity,” and a resulting “remarkably lively and pluralist climate in which new voices are being heard and deeply entrenched assumptions are being radically and, we believe, irreversibly challenged” (1997, p.3).¹⁸ However, that development is not seen without reservations. The question that motivates the edited volume as much as academic debate more generally at the time is whether the “eclipse of the discourse of modernity” can be impeded by showing that the modernizing project can be reconciled with the democratic pluralism now more salient in public life. As they put it, the question they thus ask is “whether it is possible to undertake a rigorous critique of the Enlightenment project of modernity without surrendering its liberating and humanist premises” (ibid, p.3).¹⁹

In the following, I will situate Zürcher’s study in relation to the points that Bozdoğan and Kasaba see as salient in the intellectual climate at the time in order to point out how he departs from previous approaches to modernity at the same time as his work is in line with dominant contemporary ways of framing questions of modernity. The introduction

¹⁸ The emergence of such critiques in Turkey is presented as related to globalization on the one hand and the rise of postmodern theories on the other hand. As they state: “As these global trends ensnarl the country with all their energy and unruliness, official modernization, with its singularity, austerity, and paternalism, appears woefully inadequate both as a source of inspiration and as a mechanism of control in economics, politics, and cultural production” (ibid, p.5)

¹⁹ This question of course has not been limited to the Turkish debate, but constituted a central paradox for scholars that wanted to reconcile a critique of modernity and the Enlightenment with a progressive politics. As Abu-Lughod (1998) formulates it: “The tricky task in all this is how to be skeptical of modernity’s progressive claims of emancipation and critical of its social and cultural operations and yet appreciate the forms of energy, possibility, even power that aspects of it might have enabled, especially for women” (1998, p.12).

by Bozdoğan and Kasaba should here be understood not as opposed to, but as constituting part of that dominant perspective.

I.1 Critiques of Turkish Modernization and Modernization Historiography

The central question that Bozdoğan and Kasaba identify as motivating both their edited volume and academic debate – of how to rescue the liberatory dimensions of the modernizing project – is based on a rejection of a strong “postmodern” Enlightenment critiques and their affirmation of difference, which they see as resulting in problematic cultural relativism (1997, p. 3,6). Entailed here is the understanding that the critique of “modernity” is relevant in particular as a critique of the “*instrumentalization*” of Enlightenment ideals – not of the ideals as such – for political projects that serve domination (ibid, p.6).

In recent years, Bozdoğan and Kasaba point out, Kemalism has been increasingly criticized as one such “authoritarian” modernization project of the state elite that aimed to shape society “from above” in a “patriarchal” and “undemocratic” manner (ibid, p.4), and in which “universalistic claims and aspirations” suppressed historical and cultural particularities among people in Turkey (ibid, p.5). This critique stands in contrast to the two main earlier approaches to modernization that they identify in Turkish historiography – historiography written from modernization theory and from Marxist perspectives, respectively.²⁰ These two approaches differed in their characterization of the

²⁰ See Aykut Kansu (1997) for a review of Kemalist and Marxist historiography, which he criticizes for their Kemalist-centered perspectives.

modernization process – while the former saw the Kemalist modernization project as a “success” testifying “to the viability of the project of modernity even in an overwhelmingly Muslim country” (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997, p.4), the latter critiqued the Turkish modernization process and the ruling elites, but not the figure of Kemal.²¹ Thus, only recently, Bozdoğan and Kasaba point out, was the leading figure of Mustafa Kemal and his modernization project criticized by a variety of scholars “ranging from advocates of liberal economy to Islamist intellectuals” (ibid)²². These critiques, they state, see the “Kemalist doctrine as a patriarchal and antidemocratic imposition from above that has negated the historical and cultural experience of the people in Turkey” (ibid). Kemalist modernization appears not as a success but as a “historical failure,” because it “undermined the normative order of Ottoman Turkish society” (ibid).

These critiques did not only contribute to opening a debate on “modernization” in Republican times, but entailed a more general challenge to the association of modernization with progress. In this sense, the critique of *authoritarian* modernization went parallel with critiques of the basic premises of modernization theory, or the orthodoxy of modernization. Zürcher’s book is in line with such heterodox critiques of both modernization historiography and modernization history on several accounts. First,

²¹ They see the two decades after WWII characterized by a modernization theory perspective represented by Lerner and Lewis (it corresponds to what I have called the orthodoxy of modernization) (ibid, p.3-4); though they indicate that the latter’s book discussed in this dissertation still “remains the best introductory text for the study of the late Ottoman and early republican eras” (ibid, p.6). They date the emergence of Marxist critiques to the 1960s and 70s. They see these as not yet “comprehensive,” as Kemal was spared from critique and in particular the “War of Independence” was treated “as a harbinger of the Third World revolutions to come” (ibid, p.4).

²² Akman 2004: “I have suggested that the problems of democratic participation and political rights are not the results of insufficient Westernization, but rather stem from the top-down imposition of Westernization by state elites for the people and despite the people.” (p.46) . See also Parla (1989), Göle (1998), Kadioglu (1998), Bulaç (1995).

in line with critiques of orthodox modernization historiography, he rejects orthodox assumptions such as binaries between reactionary and reformist political groups, a linear history, and the inherent superiority of the West (p.6). Zürcher, unlike Lewis, does not see modernization as defined by Western civilizational substance: thus, history is neither conceptualized as a struggle between progressive and reactionary forces nor as a civilizational transformation from “Eastern” to “Western.” Instead, he shows the relations of power among multiple agents of history. Agents are defined with their own interests, and history is represented as a product of the contingencies and patterns of these relations of power. In both economic and political history, he does not develop a Westernist approach that assigns an inherent superiority to Westerners; instead, he portrays the involvements of the European states in the Ottoman Empire as those of imperialist powers. Second, in contrast to official Turkish historiography, which presents Mustafa Kemal as a heroic figure and the initiator of Turkish modernization, Zürcher sees Kemalism as a product of, rather than break with, a modernization process that began during the Ottoman Empire. This perspective appears “heterodox” primarily in contrast to such official historiography rather than the “orthodoxy” of Lewis, who also did not treat the Kemalist Republic as constituting a break with the Ottoman Empire. Third, in line with recent critiques of Kemalism, Zürcher notes in an article the authoritarian character of modernization in Turkey in the Republican period. He states that the Young Turk’s and Kemalist leaders’

background as members of the administrative elite and their adherence to positivism, with its fundamentally undemocratic attitudes and deep-rooted mistrust of the masses, led them to see themselves as an enlightened elite on a mission to educate their people. In their eyes, the constitution was an instrument and an emblem of modernity, but not a goal per se. The history of both the Second Constitutional Period and the Republic would show that when the Young Turk and Kemalist leadership faced a choice between modernization and genuine democracy, they always opted for the former. (2000, p.151)

At the same time, he states that these negative aspects of the modernization project in Turkey should not make us overlook the real achievements of the reformers (p. 336). While Zürcher's narrative of the Republican period is not object of analysis in this chapter, it is an important backdrop to his view of modernization throughout.

Zürcher's book can thus be broadly understood as forming part of the heterodox approaches to modernization historiography at the time, and, as we will see, in particular of those approaches – represented by Bozdoğan and Kasaba – that aim to rescue “good” modernization as a project from postmodern critiques.

I.2 Achievements of Turkish Modernization

Bozdoğan and Kasaba acknowledge the importance of pluralist critiques of modernization and the “democratic premises” of the changes in Turkish society they are associated with (1997, p.5). However, they state that this should not lead us to ignore the “achievements” of modernization in Turkey. On the one hand, they state, modernization ideals are still central in Turkey as their “institutional, ritual, symbolic, and aesthetic manifestations of modernity have become constituent elements of the Turkish collective consciousness since the 1920s” (ibid). Such manifestations – which they see in images and photographs, propaganda films, or official modernization history, representing “unveiled women working next to clean-shaven men (...), healthy children and young people in school uniforms, the modern architecture of public buildings (...), spectacular performances (...), and proud scenes of agriculture, railroads, factories and dams” (ibid) - reveal the

ethos of modernization. They posit that such images have been “charged with a civilizing agency for the great part of Turkey’s republican history,” and “come to set the official standards of exterior form and behavior against which people, ideas, and events have been measured and judged” (ibid) Thus, what they emphasize here is the way in which the modernization project has been able to become a reality as a *standard* in collective consciousness.

On the other hand, they also emphasize the actuality of transformations in Turkey as “improvements” which they associate explicitly with “modernization” (ibid, p.5-6). It is the “achievements” in improving the quality of life in Turkey that constitutes for them the relevancy of modernization history. As they state, critiques of modernization cannot challenge the fact that “in Turkey today more people can read and write, and more people have access to modern means of transportation and communication (...). In other words, one would be justified in claiming that most people in Turkey now live lives that are qualitatively better than was typical in Anatolia during the early decades of the twentieth century” (ibid, p.6). These qualitative improvements are seen as particular to a *modernization* history which justifies its further study.

As we will see, Zürcher similarly views historical change in that time period as one associated with modernization, and in particular with modernization *reforms*, as becomes already apparent in the very organization of the book.²³ Thus, despite existing critiques of

²³ The first part of the book is called “Western influences and Early Attempts at Modernization.” This part covers the period from 1789 to 1908 (1908 is considered by many historians as the turning point in modernization history, the date when the Young Turks seize power). After giving a brief summary of the Ottoman social, political and economic structure in the first chapter, the second chapter, called “Between

“modernization from above” he does write such a narrative in his focus on reform movements, and in organizing his narration of the historical events around the political sphere, the relations at the inter-state and intra-state levels. It is this focus that reveals how approaches such as Zürcher’s keep their modernist position at the same time as they are sensitive to critiques developed by postmoderns and in the “democratization” process. The influence of such critiques becomes apparent in Zürcher’s avoidance of the theoretical frame that Lewis for example uses to interpret the reform process. At the same time, the organization of analytic epochs with different moments in the reform process, and the organization of the narrative around those reforms, implies the mainstream framework of modernization. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous subsection, he does ultimately evaluate these reforms as “progress” – as “achievements” of the reformers (p. 336).

I.3 Modernization as a Liberating Process and Objectivism

Bozdoğan and Kasaba’s emphasis on the achievements of modernization can ultimately be linked back to their critique of cultural relativism and their continued commitment to objective science and a liberal project of democracy. This becomes very clear in the following excerpt:

Tradition and Innovation: Sultan Selim III and the New Order” includes the reform movements by Sultan Selim. The third chapter, called The Early Years of Sultan Mahmut II: The Centre Tries to Regain Control, includes the territorial losses. As I noted before, in Lewis study, in this period the reform movements stopped and history turned into a history of wars. When the reforms re-started, after 1826, the history again turned to reforms movements. The fourth chapter, called “the Later Years of Sultan Mahmut II: The Start of the Reforms” is devoted to these reforms. The fifth chapter, called The Era of the Tanzimat, takes its name from the Tanzimat reforms. The period is called Tanzimat by many of the historians who associate this period with the reforms. All these chapters do not of course only narrate which reforms took place, but they are all organized around the reforms.

Just as we need to distinguish between modernity as a potentially liberating historical condition and its instrumentalization for a political project of domination, we also need to distinguish between the democratic implications of the recent postmodern critique, on the one hand, and its self-closure into a new form of orthodoxy, on the other. In order to take advantage of the openings created by the former while avoiding the pitfalls of the latter, we must work toward building a new consensus that makes communication across social, political, and theoretical divides possible while upholding the universal principles of justice and truth. The parameters of this consensus must originate not in a grand theory or the political project of an elite but in the very dialogue that would take place across societal divisions” (Bozdogan and Kasaba 1997, p.6-7)

This quote highlights in particular two aspects of critical liberal approaches to modernity, as formulated maybe most prominently by Jürgen Habermas. First, and as mentioned before, there is the argument that modernity, or modernization, has both “good” and “bad” sides. In the Habermasian formulation, modernity presents the danger of the colonization of the “lifeworld” by the “system” that represents the particular interests of a social group and works through instrumental rationality (1984). Thus, the danger of modernization is that instrumental rationality is taking over all spheres of society.²⁴ Second, and in contrast to poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches, liberal critiques do not undertake a wholesale critique of modernity, but aim to establish principles and institutions that would tame its negative sides while allowing its positive ones to flourish. Thus, for Habermas, the balance between the system and lifeworld could be secured by fostering the rationality of the latter – namely, communicative rationality – and by embedding that in the political system through procedural norms and institutions (ibid). Important here in particular is for him the concept of civil society, which he sees as essential for the functioning of democracy.

²⁴ This view links back to critiques of instrumental rationality and its use in bureaucracy that emerged in particular out of the experience of the Holocaust as a “modern” phenomenon (See e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer 2002).

The influence of this perspective is apparent in Bozdoğan and Kasaba's appeal to universal principles of truth and justice as well as to communication and consensus. Communicative rationality for Habermas (1973) is exactly about mediation between the particular on the basis of few universal principles. He is positioned against a strong culturally relativist position as well as against ideologies that he sees as destructive of communicative rationality because they do not rely on objective knowledge.

At this point, it becomes clearer why Bozdoğan and Kasaba continuously critique the cultural relativism of postmodern critiques of modernization. In radicalizing the critique of the Enlightenment, such approaches reject the possibility of objective knowledge as well as of truly universal principles. In this way, they touch at the very foundations of a Habermasian – and more generally liberal – understanding of democracy. This understanding rests on the notion that people at large – “civil society” – participate in shaping society and making history through democratic involvement, an involvement however that presupposes the capacity for communicative rationality and the search for universal principles.

Again, Zürcher shares this liberal critical approach in several respects. First, as mentioned before, he does not see modernization un-ambiguously as a positive process, and summarizes its negative aspects in Turkey under the heading of “authoritarianism,” which implies the lack of involvement of people at large in this process. Second, however, this view does not lead him into a postmodern critique but into a search for “objective” knowledge that could portray modernization in all its aspects, good and bad, political or

economic. He emphasizes the priority of the investigation of historical facts over “theoretical models,” which he sees as the only means to achieve the most correct way of representing actual history (p.6). Zürcher claims that he uses theoretical models in an eclectic manner in order to not “to put our interpretation of the past into a straightjacket” (ibid). In this way, he expects to produce a more scientific/objective representation of history.²⁵ Third, as will be shown in more detail in the next sections, he assumes (without however indicating the sources of change) that the process of modernization can ultimately be one of democratization, if the “bad” sides of the process are overcome, and the “good” ones – namely, political involvement by the people at large – are fostered.

I.4 The Limits of Liberal Heterodoxy

The approach represented by, but not limited to Zürcher, is heterodox in contrast to the orthodoxy of Lewis and in critiquing Kemalist and nationalist modernization. At the same time the limits of this heterodoxy are constituted by its adherence to the view that “good” modernization is possible, because, as I argue in the following sections, it fails to make explicit that modernization (even in its “humanist” side) is always a capital-centered process and thus implicated in creating unequal relations. Instead, by assuming that the achievements of modernization can be generalized (in the form of capital seen as resource), it posits the idea of modernity as a future reality. This perspective, and the continued deferral of that reality (that results from the fact that capital is a process),

²⁵ For example, Zürcher, like Keyder, uses world system theory in order to explain the economic transformation and its consequences. However, he does not aim with that to contribute to the further development of the theoretical/political aims of that theory, as Keyder in contrast does. He claims that he uses such theories where useful to reach a truer representation of history, but does not subscribe to any of them (p. 6).

continues to shape and legitimize existing hierarchies categorized as “modern” versus “not yet modern,” even in the absence of explicitly substantialist notions of “East” and “West” as we found in the orthodoxy of Lewis.

II. The “Premodern” Ottoman Empire

II.1 A “Static” System

As Quataert has argued in his book review (1995), Zürcher’s book is written from an explicitly teleological perspective, describing the path of modernization towards modern Turkey. This is visible among others in Zürcher’s differentiation between an Ottoman Empire “before” and “after” the beginning of a modernization process, and thus, in the construction of a “pre-modern” category of Ottoman society and state. As we will see, the category of the pre-modern is constructed from the perspective of the modern; as a consequence, the “pre-modern” becomes visible (as absence, lack, or essential difference) only in terms of that comparison.

Zürcher begins his chapter on the “pre-modern” Ottoman Empire with a snapshot of its characteristics in the end of the eighteenth century – before a systematic modernization process started (p. 9-20). What is noticeable is that much of the chapter resembles that snapshot in so far as it does not entail the description of any dynamics of social change (consequently, the process of change as modernization is seen to be initiated with external factors, namely, the ideological effects of French Revolution and the initiation of Westernization reforms by Sultan Selim III). In summary, Zürcher tells us in his snapshot

that social divisions were based on religion (a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society); the population was concentrated in rural areas (85%); the political system was patrimonial and based on a strict division between the ruling elite and the people (the masses), while intermediary groups (such as merchants, *ulema* (Muslim clergy) constituted the link between them; and the ideology of the state legitimized and stabilized social hierarchies. Furthermore, the economic system was pre-capitalist: it relied mostly on agrarian production, while the land was predominantly owned by the state and to a lesser extent by the *ulema*. Non-agricultural production was organized in the guild system, in which guilds were closely related to religious orders, while the division of labor was based on a strict hierarchy, and production was closed to new products and technologies. Trade was local and no mercantilist policies were developed by the state. Finally, the state was weakening in economic, military, and technological terms in comparison to European states, which he sees reflected in the loss of wars and territories.

In Zürcher's description of this "pre-modern" organization of society, he does not mention any factor or dynamic that could explain or bring about societal change. Instead, he portrays a society characterized by mechanisms that ensure stability – among them the specific characteristics of state rule at the time. As Abou El-Haj (1991) among others has shown, this does not result from mere 'historical fact' – as he himself has studied dynamics of change in classical Ottoman society – but from an identification of the modern with change, and resultingly, of the pre-modern with a static society.²⁶ Thus, it is

²⁶ Although Haldun Gulalp had pointed out that Abou-El-Haj, in focusing on the internal and independent dynamics of the Ottoman Empire in order to explain the roots of the modern state before the so-called modernization started in the 19th century, "implicitly ends up making the Eurocentric assumption that the Western model was a universal and inevitable one." He adds, based on Prakash (1990): "The attempt to

very common in modernization discourses (where the modern serves as a measuring rod) to blend out dynamics of change in the construction of the pre-modern category.

How Zürcher sees the static character of pre-modern Ottoman society is most explicit in his portrayal of state ideology and state-society relations. He posits that the Ottoman ideology relied on a “justice system” that legitimized and sustained the political order based on the idea that

within society, each group and each individual should remain in his place (within his bounds or *hudud*), without trespassing on the rights of others. The government should rule within bounds of law and enforce the *hudud*. A ruler (or his representative) who did not remain within the *hudud* was guilty of *zulm*, tyranny (p.13).

This justice system, according to Zürcher, valued stability, and he presents it as an evidence of “political conservatism” that produced a negative reaction to any kind of claim for change (ibid). The basic function of this ideology, as Zürcher points out, was to protect the absolute sovereignty of the ruler by preventing the development of an aristocratic class that would disturb “the exclusivity of the relationship between the ruler (and his servants) and the subjects” (ibid). In Zürcher’s narrative we see that this ideology was not always successful in inhibiting the formation of intermediary groups (who interfered e.g. in processes of tax collection); however, it seems to have managed overall to maintain the distance between state and society and to reproduce social roles. The stability of the pre-modern Ottoman Empire thus relied on a socio-political hierarchy that was successfully reproduced. This hierarchy consisted, first, of a “distinction between a ruling elite, which did not pay taxes and was entitled to carry arms, and the mass of the population (in Ottoman terms: *reaya*, ‘flocks’) for which the reverse was true” (p.11).

prove that the “oppressed nation” was equally capable of the same achievements as those that characterize the West ultimately *accepts* the teleological assumptions of eurocentrism” (1995, p. 155)

This distinction between the elite and the people was legitimized in reference to a supposed civilizational superiority (while being maintained through the former's monopoly over economic and political power), that the elite, in contrast to the people, possessed. Thus, they were presented as the

keeper of a classic civilization, a 'great tradition', based on written Islamic sources (of which the *ulema* were the keepers and which was reproduced through the systems of religious colleges called *medreses*) and on a more secular code of conduct and taste called *adab* (which was characteristic of the military/bureaucratic elite and reproduced through informal education and training). This civilization, which was really the set of values and opinions that made an Ottoman an Ottoman, constituted a strong integrative force in an empire made up of so many diverse elements. (p.12)

This claim to superiority could rest, as Zürcher underlines on an “exceedingly wide chasm between this civilization and the outlook of the almost totally illiterate rural population, whose horizon was limited by the surrounding villages and, at best, the market town” (ibid). For Zürcher, the separation between the elite and the people seems thus not a mere ideologically produced distinction, but an actual reality that rests on control over economic, political, and cultural capital on part of the ruling elite. In contrast, the people's lives are presented as determined by the unequal conditions of Ottoman society, in which their real lack of different forms of capital disables them to try and perceive or enact possibilities of change.

However, while the ruling elite is presented as relatively empowered through material and immaterial forms of capital, at least when compared with the “mass” of society, Zürcher notes that their power was limited in the Palace. He points out that in the beginning of the nineteenth century the Ottoman state was “still” based on a patrimonial system – rule through an “extended household,” in which “patronage through adhesion to such a household was a prerequisite for any governmental career” (ibid) and in which power was

concentrated in the hands of the Sultan. Thus, the autonomy of the two groups constituting the ruling elite²⁷ was limited by the will of the sultan: “the sultan’s servants did not yet constitute a more or less autonomous bureaucratic/military elite such as they would become in the next century; they were the instruments of imperial power, to be rotated, dismissed or executed at the sultan’s will” (pp.11-12).

What emerges thus in Zürcher’s description of the pre-modern Ottoman Empire is a hierarchical society and socio-political order in which power is centralized in the hands of the Sultan, and where the ruling elite, though privileged in terms of economic, political, and cultural capital that the mass of society lacks, does not (yet) have much autonomy. Most importantly, maybe, the system itself rests on a complete exclusion of this ‘mass’ from the political system. Zürcher’s focus on state-society relations and the centralization of power might here already reveal an implicit comparison with a “modern democratic state” in its relation to “civil society” (composed of autonomous individuals).

II.2 Constructing the Pre-Modern from the Perspective of the Modern

This implicit comparison of the socio-political order of the Ottoman Empire with the one of “modern” states becomes explicit when Zürcher states that he compares the Ottoman state to contemporary national states rather than the ones that existed next to the Ottoman

²⁷ Zürcher indicates that the ruling elite were divided into two categories: “the representatives of sultan’s power and the guardians of the moral order” (p.11). The first group had control over the military and scribal institutions and the royal household, while the other’s responsibility was the religious order, education, and justice.

Empire in the eighteenth century (p.13).²⁸ The fact that Zürcher does not undertake a maybe more evident comparison of the Ottoman state with the European states in the same time period suggests that he does not aim to establish a historical argument here, but rather bases his on an ideal-type of a modern state. This ideal-type, it seems, is in his view concretized in the present forms of states. In this sense, his comparison is an anachronistic one that observes and evaluates the past from the perspective of the present. From this perspective, he concentrates on three characteristics of the Ottoman state: first, its small size, second, its lack of providing services to the population, and third, the absence of a concept of “equality before the law” (p.14).

Thus, Zürcher underlines that the Ottoman state system, compared to a modern nation state, was very small both in terms of the number of people working in the government (1000-1500) and in terms of the percentage of the national product that funded it. He estimates (in the absence of clear figures) that “the part of the national product that went to the central government in taxes ... almost certainly did not exceed 3 per cent” (ibid). However, he notes that this was not because the people paid small amounts of tax, but because the taxes were appropriated by intermediaries and were used by the provincial governments (ibid).

Partly as a consequence of this small bureaucracy, he notes, the government was not involved in providing state services, such as “education, health care, welfare and housing” which are “normal tasks for a government” today, but “were of little concern to

²⁸ He puts it in the following way: “Compared with governments of modern nation-states (but not with those of other eighteenth-century states, the Ottoman Empire, certainly in the eighteenth century, was very different in three respects” (p.13).

the imperial Ottoman government” (ibid). This absence of (caring-for) state-society relations, he argues, is however not only due to the small size of the state, but also a result of the fact that in the Ottoman Empire, “as in most pre-modern societies, the individual was very much subordinate to the group, or the different groups, to which he or she belonged” (ibid).

Furthermore, as Zürcher emphasizes, people were subject to different legal regulations based among others on religion and gender. He notes thus the absence of a “concept of equality before the law” (ibid) as another lack of the pre-modern that indicates the difference of the Ottoman state from a modern one. He acknowledges that this characteristic of a state is ideal “even” for a modern state, but “in the Ottoman Empire it was not even an ideal” (ibid).

As becomes very apparent in this description of the Ottoman state, Zürcher views the pre-modern from the perspective of the modern. What is particularly important for the purpose of this chapter however is how he in particular views the socio-political system through a lens of the supposed characteristics of a liberal welfare state. What the Ottoman Empire thus “lacks” is the institutional infrastructure for (bureaucracy, effective tax system) as well as the interest in establishing state-society relations based on provisioning (state services) on part of the state as well as the existence or fostering of a civil society constituted by autonomous subjects (free of communal determination) and equal citizens (equality before the law). Thus, Zürcher’s view and evaluation of the “pre-modern” Ottoman Empire is shaped by very particular understandings of the state, of society, and

of the individual, which replicates common stereotypes such as the subordination of the pre-modern individual under the community that serve to construct the modern. At the same time, the comparison, in setting an (ideal-typical and idealized) view of the “modern” state as the norm, serves to objectify the success of the modern states, which is again universalized without questioning.

The question of “autonomy” in particular serves to implicitly structure Zürcher’s argument when he talks about what precludes, constrains and enables political practice for whom in the socio-political system of the Ottoman Empire. This implicit emphasis on “autonomy” or the “autonomous subject” indicates on the one hand a criterion of modernity in its most general terms. As Timothy Mitchell, among others, points out: “One of the characteristics of modernity has always been its autocentric picture of itself as the expression of a universal certainty, whether the certainty of human reason freed from particular tradition, or of technological power freed from the constraints of the natural world” (Mitchell 2000, p.xi).

On the other hand, Zürcher’s emphasis on the (absence of the) “autonomous subject” might be an expression of a more particular concern with the conditions of possibility of “good” modernization which, as elaborated earlier, is linked to processes of democratization through the formation of civil society, in turn composed of autonomous and formally equal individuals. Thus his concern with the supposed limited horizon (and thus autonomous practice) of the people at large, which lack both cultural capital and autonomy from communal bonds. Thus also his evaluation of the Ottoman state in terms

of those criteria (the provisioning of people at large with economic, cultural, political capital) that could foster a new type of individual, and through this a form of civil society.²⁹

III. “Relative” Achievement of the Modernization Reforms

Zürcher, like Lewis, organizes the narration of the history of the nineteenth century around the Westernization reforms. The beginning of the reform or modernization process is linked to the reign of Selim III and the impacts of the French Revolution. In the introduction to this chapter, we have seen that Bozdoğan and Kasaba were pointing out the necessity of seeing the modernization process in its entirety rather than focusing only on its progressive or its repressive sides. Zürcher’s narrative entails these two sides, although he usually refrains from explicit evaluations in his attempt to give an “objective” and “complete” representation of modernization history. One of his few explicitly evaluative statements however shows his overall perspective. After having discussed throughout the book the factors that limited the impact of the reforms – such as their “from above” nature – he states in the conclusion that, however, “it is important to recognize, as I hope this book does, the enormous achievements of the Turks. For almost two centuries now they have shown enormous adaptability and determination to catch up with the dominant civilizations of the age” (p.336). Thus, although he shows in his book

²⁹ While the criterion of autonomy as the dividing line of the modern from the pre-modern has been widely used in theories of modernity, such studies have often also highlighted the both enabling and constraining sides of modernity. This view again corresponds to the logic of differentiating between “good” and “bad” modernization. Thus, Marshall Berman claims that the “world historical process” of “modernization,” “nourished an amazing variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them” (1982, p.16). Anthony Giddens (1979) has been one of the most prominent theorists of this perspective with argument on the duality of structuration. This view again corresponds to the logic of differentiating between “good” and “bad” modernization.

that the modernization process in Turkey did have its limitations (both in terms of the manner in which it proceeded and in terms of its effectiveness, as we will see), he does overall evaluate it as an “achievement.” Furthermore, the statement also indicates another important element of his account, as we will see in the following: the process of modernization is presented by him as motivated by the aim “to catch up” with the West, and the determination and measures applied for that purpose are then evaluated positively by him in relation to that overall aim. In the following, I will show how Zürcher presents the reforms of the early modernization periods as such an attempt to acquire the kinds of capital that would allow for “catching up,” while also highlighting the fact that this in his perspective could not be achieved due to the limitations of the reforms. One of these limitations for Zürcher is the state-centered character of the reforms and the lack of generalization of modernization achievements (and desires) in the population at large.

III.1 “Limits” and “Achievements” of the Modernization Reforms

Zürcher notes that the aim of the reforms under Sultan Selim was the reformation of the military system. The distinctive characteristic of this sultan was, he states, that he was willing to accept European standards for the purpose of this reform. Consequently, Zürcher tells, he invited French officers to educate the Ottoman soldiers and established embassies in various European cities (p.23). These reforms were important according to Zürcher for the opening of “the channels of communication between Europe and the Ottoman ruling elite” (p.22). He points out that this interaction with the European officers opened a new worldview to Ottoman military students. (p.23)

Despite this important impact of the reforms, Zürcher observes that they continued to have a “traditional” character, as they constituted immediate solutions to immediate problems – namely, the threat to the central state constituted by external and internal enemies – rather than being aimed at a transformation of society as a whole (p.21-22). Thus, for example, Sultan Selim re-established the traditional justice system to fight “abuse and corruption” and in this way to strengthen the armed forces (ibid). Thus, “all groups and individuals were again forced within their *hudud* in an effort to show that the government was upholding the Islamic order” (p.22). Zürcher further emphasizes the failure of the reforms in this period, which he sees as due to “insufficient funds” and “the vested interests of powerful traditional institutions” (p.24). A lesser reason for the failure he attributes to the personal characteristics of Sultan Selim, who according to him had a “limited understanding of the European models he wanted to emulate” and “lacked the necessary ruthlessness and cunning for the task” (ibid). Thus, the limits of these initial reforms were set by the fact that they remained within the limits of the “traditional” system.

Zürcher observes that Mahmut II, Selim’s predecessor, continued with the process of reforms only after a period of his reign during which he dealt with conflicts within the ruling elite, with the *ayans* and with Russia, and with the nationalist uprisings in the Balkans. Then, the main purpose of the reforms was however again to re-establish central power vis-à-vis external and internal enemies. It was this aim that continued to determine the character of the reform process after Mahmut’s rule, as Zürcher states: “The policies of Sultan Mahmut II from 1826 onwards determined the direction that Ottoman reform

efforts would take for the next 80 years. Like the policies of Selim III and those of his great rival and inspiration, Mehmet [Muhammad] Ali Pasha,³⁰ they were ultimately aimed at strengthening the central state through building a modern army” (p.39). Nevertheless, in contrast to Sultan Selim’s reforms, Mahmut’s measures, more ample in scope, led to a more fundamental transformation of the existing system whose institutions he “abolished” or “tamed” (p.39-40). Mahmut, in contrast to Selim, was not undertaking “modernizing” measures in a continuing “traditional” setting, it is implied. As Zürcher notes: “Where Selim III had mainly tried to combat abuse of the existing system, Mahmut created new administrative and legal structures” (p.39). Zürcher describes the multiple reforms that took place in the military, administration and education, such as bureaucratic specialization, the introduction of new European technologies, the establishment of a postal service, the publication of the first official Ottoman newspaper, the invitation of foreign educators and the sending of Ottoman students to European schools (p.39-45). However, these reforms ultimately again served the purpose of strengthening the state by creating a “modern” army, only that Sultan Mahmut took a more “holistic” and “inter-relational” approach to achieving this aim:

All his reforms can be understood as a means to that end: building a new army cost money; money had to be generated by more efficient taxation, which in turn could only be achieved through a modern and efficient central and provincial bureaucracy. Better communications were needed to extend government control and new types of education to produce new style military and civil servants the sultan needed (p.39).

Zürcher underlines that “[I]t is certainly not true that the reforms [that Mahmut initiated and were continued throughout the *Tanzimat* period] were only window-dressing, that they were stillborn or that they stopped at the doorstep of the Porte” (p.45). He

³⁰ Zürcher points out that Muhammad Ali Pasha in particular posed a threat to Mahmut’s rule. However, as Muhammad Ali Pasha became powerful by establishing a modernized army, he also became the model of Mahmut’s reforms. (p.33)

emphasizes the wider ramifications that Mahmut's reforms had despite their ultimate aim of reforming the military, their more radical nature in overcoming the "traditional" structures of society, and the continuity of the path taken in future decades.

Thus, he notes that the *Tanzimat* reforms (1839-71) continued the same process through a wide range of reforms, such as the formation of regular troops endowed with European military technology (p.57); the rationalization and specialization of the bureaucracy (ibid); increased efficiency in the tax system as taxes were collected directly from the producers by the state (p.59); the secularization of the legal system (p.61) and of education; increased integration into the European markets, and the emergence of a social type (called *Tanzimat* type), who spoke European languages, dressed in European styles, and more generally symbolized imitative Westernization (p.57-66). The reforms, while continuing in the vein of those initiated by Sultan Mahmut II, did place "a much heavier emphasis on judicial reform and on consultative procedures" (p. 57).

Thus, a first step away from the focus on military reforms could be seen in the edict of Gülhane, which Zürcher, like most modernization historiographers, identifies as the cornerstone of the reform movement. This edict, also known as *Tanzimat* (from which the period of reforms between 1830-1871 takes its name) included four reforms: "establishment of guarantees for the life, honour and property of the sultan's subjects; [a]n orderly system of taxation to replace the system of tax farming, a system of conscription for the army; and equality before the law of all subjects, whatever their religion" (p.51). Thus, it included now also measures associated with a liberal democratic

society in the form of formal equality and civic rights. In this regard, the edict could be seen as a first step towards the kind of socio-political system and state-society relations that, as was shown in the previous section, constitutes an implicit measuring rod of the (good) “modern” for Zürcher. However, he notes that these and later reforms were partly initiated in response to the pressure by European powers that aimed to ameliorate the position of the Christian population in the Empire, and partly out of the “genuine belief [on the part of the Ottoman reformers] that the only way to save the empire was to introduce European-style reforms” (p.56).³¹ Thus, in both instances that Zürcher indicates, the motivation consisted in “saving the Empire”: on the one hand by avoiding “foreign intervention” by giving in to the European powers, on the other hand by adopting those institutions that were apparently seen as more successful.³² More liberal state-society relations however do not figure into this calculation as values in themselves – and were not demanded by the population at large, according to Zürcher. Thus, the reform continued to be imposed “from above” – the European powers and the Ottoman state. He highlights this as one of the “handicaps” of the reformers. The reforms, he argues “were based on the presumption on the part of the sultan and a number of his leading servants that the state had to be saved through the adoption of European methods. The reform policies were never the result of popular pressure and therefore lacked a secure basis in Ottoman society” (p.45).

³¹ His liberal perspective is again apparent here in so far as he emphasizes here that non-Muslims were second-class subjects in the Ottoman Empire that the European powers aimed to ameliorate out of Christian solidarity as well as in order to create client groups. In contrast, as we will see in the next chapter, Keyder emphasizes the role that non-Muslim populations played as intermediaries in the process of peripheralization due to the pressure of the European powers.

³² Zürcher narrates in detail the context of these reforms, namely, various conflicts and wars (nationalist insurrections, colonial expansion and the wars with *ayans* and other states) and the subsequent loss of territories or control over territories (such as Serbia, Greece, Egypt, Lebanon) (p.31-56).

Zürcher's narration seems conformant with a position (central to modernization perspectives more generally at the time of the publication of the book, as shown previously) that argues that ideals of modernity were instrumentalized in interest-based politics. He does not paint a positive picture of the early reforms in themselves, as in the end they served to strengthen the state (rather than truly liberalize society), but his final evaluation of this process as one of "achievement" seems to point to the fact that modern (liberal) ideals, when realized more fully, are still progressive.

His discussion of the "handicaps" of the reformers further shows us how he perceives the "not-yet-modernized" position. He identifies five "problems that hampered efforts to reform" (ibid) in Mahmut's and the *Tanzimat* period. Apart from the already mentioned lack of popular pressure, these are, second, "the lack of adequately trained and trustworthy personnel" (ibid), which is not entirely absent, but numbers too few; third, a continued patrimonial character of the bureaucracy despite a gradual spread of rational-legalism; fourth, a dualism in which new laws, regulation and institutions existed next to previous ("mediaeval," Islamic) ones; and last, the "lack of an economic and financial basis" (p.46), which again refers not to the absence, but to the insufficiency and mismanagement of funds for the tasks at hand (ibid). What becomes apparent in all of these "problems" is that the modernizing, thus not-yet-modern (in contrast to the pre-modern) position of the Ottoman Empire is characterized not by complete absence of, but by not sufficient degrees of "modern" qualities (instead of which there are residues of "the traditional"). The "modern" position, it is implied, can be achieved by acquiring more of these modern qualities (in the form of educated personal, rational administration,

better management of funds). Thus, modernization again appears in Zürcher's account, as a process in which the Ottomans attempt to "catch up with the dominant civilization" through acquiring the right kinds and amounts of capital, an attempt which is portrayed as not entirely successful, which constitutes the concrete indicators of the "not-yet-modern" position.

What characterizes "the modern" in this view can be shown in relation to Zürcher's portrayal of the educational and professional formation of the reformers, whose "modern" (and "emancipated") characteristic is objectified in the acquisition of cultural and political capital.³³ This is the subject of the next subsection.

III.2 A Concrete Model of the "Modern" in "Ottoman Modernization"

Zürcher emphasizes changes in the education system in the early times of the modernization project as a precondition for the execution of the reforms more generally. He notes: "The second most important condition, after the supply of funds, for the success of Mahmut's reforms was the creation of a cadre able to execute them" (p.43). The continuation of the quote expresses that for Zürcher this cadre needed to be trained in European ways to do so: "There was a desperate need for Ottomans with a knowledge of Europe, of European science and technology and thus of a European language" (p. 43). Such an education was provided on the one hand by new educational institutions and on

³³ This also constitutes an example at the micro level of how reforms produced a "modern" type of person (see also Ahmad 1993).

the other hand by professional experience in the Translation Office of the Empire and in the embassies (p. 44-5).

The creation of such a new “outward-looking” bureaucracy was however a gradual process according to Zürcher (p. 45). In Selim’s period, he notes reforms and the invitation of foreign teachers in existing schools (of the navy and army) as well as the foundation of new ones (of medical schools). As I mentioned above, these reforms were considered important by Selim in terms of establishing a relation with “modern” ideas and knowledge (p.23). Such a ‘diffusion’ of European ideas and knowledge did not take place on this path only. Zürcher also notes that the first diplomats of the Empire in European cities, who did not yet have a significant effect on political relations, however transferred their experiences to the following generations of diplomats (ibid).

During Mahmut’s reign, Zürcher observes the acceleration of the reform movements in the military education system. These reforms included a medical school (1827), a music school (1831) and a military academy (1834). Zürcher notes the importance of these schools, in which a Western language was prerequisite and in which foreign instructors taught (p.44), with consequent changes in the mentality of the students. As he states: “Studying modern medicine, biology and physics almost inevitably induced a rationalist and positivist mentality in the students, and the army medical school spawned an extraordinary number of reformist thinkers” (ibid). Thus, in fostering “Western” modes of thought and mentalities, the changes in the educational system were essential for the later and enduring continuation of reforms. It were the students graduating from such schools,

he notes, that became the “cadres” of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey (ibid). Many men that formed the ruling elite in the nineteenth century then started their careers in the Translation Office, founded in 1833, where they learned “to read, write and speak French—the diplomatic language of the day” (p.44-45), and in the Ottoman embassies in Europe. He notes that reformist bureaucrats of the Empire generally had this professional background that fostered an “outward-looking” cadre (p.45).

During the *Tanzimat* period, Zürcher indicates that the foundation of new secular schools accelerated. While the “traditional” schools were not abolished, “the reforming cadres that [led] the empire (and the Turkish Republic)” were the graduates of these secular schools, despite, according to Zürcher, their “mediocre” quality of education (p.63).

That this process of acquiring (the right kind of, that is “European) cultural capital is (nevertheless) seen by Zürcher as a process of emancipation is implicit in the following quote in which he describes a shift of power away from the Sultan in the *Tanzimat* period: “the centre of power within the government in this period clearly shifted from the palace to the *newly emancipated bureaucrats* of the Porte. Within the whole administrative structure of the Porte, the role and importance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are striking” (p.57, my emphasis). Whether “emancipation” here refers to the creation of an enlightened individual or increased control over political affairs, an increase of “autonomy” through the acquisition of cultural capital that can be converted into political capital is in any case implied. As the quote shows, Zürcher situates a shift of power not just to the bureaucracy in general, but to those parts of it (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

characterized by a “European” orientation and relations, which for this reason could take a “leading part in formulating the internal administrative, judicial and educational reforms” (p. 58). The “reformist” bureaucrats were thus able to become the subjects of the modernization process in Turkey on the basis of the cultural capital that had “emancipated” them.

While the rise of the reformist bureaucracy through the acquisition of cultural capital and thus autonomy signals a broader base of the state when compared with the “pre-modern” period that Zürcher identified with the absolute power of the Sultan, the possibility to shape the modernization process was by no means universalized for Zürcher at the time. Rather, it was based on the acquisition of particular forms of capital and in particular on cultural capital that could be converted into political capital. What we see in this example is that quantities and qualities of “cultural”/“political” capital turn into objectified indicators of being modern - a “modern self.”

As Chakrabarty argued in an article on the production of subjectivity in the documentation of suffering in nineteenth century India, as an aspect of modernity “inaugurated” by British colonial rule, the “modern self”

has to be generalizable in principle; in other words, it should be such that it signifies a position available for occupation by anybody (with proper training). If it were said, for instance, that it was only a particular type of person – such as Buddha or a Christ – who was capable of noticing suffering and of being moved by it, one would not be talking of a generalized subject-position, for to be a Buddha or Christ may not be within the reach of everybody. (2000b, p.51-2)

In the previously discussed narrative, the emancipated bureaucrats represent such a “generalized subject-position” of the “modern self.” It was not any particular personal quality which made them so central to the Ottoman Empire, but rather the acquisition of

the kind of capital that was valued in the field at the time. Of course, this subject position was only generalizable *in principle* – clearly, the possibility of attending the new schools was still quite limited. However, exactly that *principle* feeds the modernization *telos*.

III.3 Generalization of Becoming Modern: Multiple Modernities

The example of the “emancipated” bureaucrats shows how a “modern self” is constructed on the basis of the acquisition of capital. These “modern selves” can become leaders in a process of “modernization,” which in Zürcher’s view, has the potential of generalizing this modern subject-position, presumably through a generalization of access to the forms of capital that constitute the modern self. Thus, while the modern is always objectified in particular cases, the modernization perspective relies on the generalization of this particular to the whole (of the nation, or the globe).

The problem of modernization is thus posed as a problem of acquiring and generalizing the right kinds of capitals. However, as critical approaches to capitalism have shown, this is a social order which fundamentally depends on a division between those which can use capital and those that produce it. To assume that the forms of capital that are seen to indicate the “modern” are generalizable (an assumption that forms the core of the modernization perspective) thus relies on an understanding of capital as a resource rather than as a process enabled through unequal social relations. In turn, by assuming that

capital is a resource that can be acquired in principle, it implies that becoming “modern” is an achievement that everyone (and every society) has the potential to accomplish.³⁴

The idea of the generalization of the modern subject position as generating the possibility of non-Western modernization is also a characteristic of Lewis’ orthodoxy. However, it is important to note that Zürcher, in his critique of Lewis, does not see that process of generalization as one of Westernization. He rather conceptualizes the “values of modernity” – such as democracy – as universal categories that are not bound to (a substance of) Western societies. Although he sees these values as most concretely embodied and realized in Western societies – as the quote leading to the analogy of the process of modernization with the story of the hare and the tortoise, with which I began this dissertation, showed – he does not consider them distinctly (or substantially) Western. This view stands in contrast to Lewis’ substantialist perspective which equated modernization with Westernization and thus saw the process of generalization of the modern subject position as rooted in a transformation of the non-Western (i.e. Islamic) substance into a Western one. Zürcher breaks this essentialist link between the categories of the West and the modern, and in this way implies that non-Western societies have the same chances of becoming modern without necessarily changing their substantial/cultural characteristics. The problem of modernization for him is not the Islamic substance as such, as in Lewis, but the authoritarian modernization practices of Kemalism that have suppressed the Islamic substance as well (p.186-194).

³⁴ We should note thus that generalization here does not entail the achievement of a society with equal distribution. Rather, what should be generalized in this perspective is the *possibility of access* to such forms of capital.

Zürcher's separation of modernization from Westernization can be understood as situated within a larger debate on "multiple" or "alternative modernities." I will briefly review this theoretical perspective in the following in order to show more clearly the limits of the heterodoxy to which Zürcher contributes. One common point of diverging positions within the debate on multiple, alternative or non-Western modernities is the critique of a singular and linear understanding of modernization that implies that it is a process of simply following the "model" of the West. This critique relies on the observed fact that all contemporary societies are "modern" today, although they are not all similar to Western societies. S.N. Eisenstadt for instance argues that "[t]he actual developments in modernizing societies [after World War II] have refuted the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions" of theories of modernization, which assumed that "the cultural [sic] program of modernity" would eventually "take over" in all societies (2000, p.1). A second common point is that Western modernization is still considered the fundamental "reference point" (ibid, p.2) for non-Western forms of modernization (ibid p.3), although the "reflexive" characteristics of modernity have produced multiple modernities in different contexts (ibid, p.3-5). Dilip P. Gaonkar (1999), one of the leading authors of alternative modernities, has analyzed this "reflexivity" as a process of "creative adaptations." Relying on Foucault's understanding of modernity as an "attitude" rather than an epoch, he conceptualizes alternative modernization as the ability of "modern men" to question their own present and to adapt to an ever-changing (modernizing) environment by finding their own creative solutions. Nilüfer Göle (2002), a representative of this perspective writing on a Turkish context, further emphasizes in reliance on Fabian's critique of the "denial of coevalness" that "non-Western modernities" cannot be

understood in a chronological sequence with Western modernity. She argues that an understanding of the coevalness of modernities enables us to decenter Western modernization as the model and to see that modernity in its essence is a multiple process.

In the conceptualization of modernity shared by these approaches, we thus see a “multiplication” of modernity in different local conditions and cultural contexts, so that European modernity seems only one (cultural) expression among others. Although this perspective is heterodox in critiquing the singular, unilinear, and Eurocentric understanding of modernization central to orthodox approaches, it has its own limits. Thus, Timothy Mitchell has argued that this critique only expands the singularity of capitalist modernity into infinite multiple forms, which nevertheless take their reference from an abstracted Western modernity (2000, p.xii).

Ahiska further points out that “[t]he emphasis on coeval time and differential space reduces the power-stricken texture of history to a flat surface on which sameness and difference operate indefinitely” (2003, p. 361). Thus, European or Western modernity as well is presented as one isolated cultural expression of modernity, which veils the unequal processes and relations that have produced it. Critical studies on colonialism and imperialism have shown that Western modernity did not emerge from the particular dynamics of one region, but in global relations of exploitation, domination and violence (e.g. Dussel, 2000; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000). Only by ignoring this historical formation of Western modernity not just in Europe, but in its relation with all parts of the world, can Western modernity be singled out as just one form of modernity out of many.

The approaches of multiple/alternative modernities fall into this trap by ignoring the relations of power that have actually produced the West/modernity (Mamdani 2004, p.33; Asad 2003, p.13). In locating all forms of modernity to a single space-time, different entities are “equalized” in terms of a universal process of “societal modernization” (Ahiska 2003, p. 360-1), while their differences are considered as resulting from their particular (cultural) qualities and contexts (ibid, p. 361). Thus, we encounter here a more implicit and modified historicism: different social entities are considered to be moving in time, constructed as an empty space, towards multiple paths towards a “universal” modernity, not towards the West.

As Ahiska has argued, the multiple modernities approach tries to overcome the problem of conceptualizing “universal” versus “local” forms of modernity through a distinction between “societal modernization” and “cultural modernity” (ibid, p. 361). While this distinction aims to overcome the positing of an inherent superiority of the West in “achieving” modernity, as seen in the orthodoxy of Lewis, I posit that it maintains some of the features of the substantialist approach and of the logic of capital that form the subtext of this orthodoxy.

First, the multiple modernities approach breaks with Eurocentrism in its emphasis on different “cultural modernities,” i.e. through the argument that the cultural particularities of societies shape the path of “societal modernization” set as the universal aspect of modernity. However, although this approach therefore does not posit a link between

modernization and Westernization, it continues to link the particularities of the “multiple” modernizations to cultural substances.

Second, in obscuring the unequal relations that have produced the particularity of Western modernity, and in setting “societal modernization” as universal path, multiple modernities approaches continue to perceive it as a process of transformation based on the acquisition of “modern” forms of capital (objectified in “capitalism,” “democracy” and the like) that are seen to have intrinsic rather than relational values. As a consequence, the West continues to be the implicit reference point at least for “societal modernization,” which is to be achieved through the acquisition of those forms of capital characterizing (Western) modernity.

Thus, the location of differences between the “modernities” in empty-space time (of capital) again follows the logic of substantialist orthodoxy: the notion that particular cultural substances produced differences between the “modernization paths” of societies obscures the hierarchies between them at the same time as the continued adherence to the goal of “societal modernization” sets the logic of capital and power universal without acknowledging its relational logic. Thus, the “degree” of amounts and qualities of capital owned by the “modernizing” societies again gives the directionality to social transformation towards the acquisition of “more” such capital (though it can be then “creatively adapted” to the particular context). The “modernization problem” in this sense is again formulated as consisting of a lack of capital, and the political projects formulated

from this perspective are defined by the “multiple” ways of accessing those forms of capital.

When brought back to Zürcher’s narrative, his modernization perspective thus relies on a view in which differences in the spatial distribution of capital (between “Turkey” and “the West” or between regions and social groups within Turkey) are seen as indicators of “modern” versus “not yet modern” categories, which then constitutes a futurity for the “not yet modern”³⁵. The social group or identity categorized as such is seen in need of “catching up” and in this way becoming “modern” through accumulating capital. Thus, the category of the “not yet modern” indicates the process of generalization of capital as resources, where such a process is underway but not completed. That is, the category of the “not yet modern” corresponds to an objective structure of an unequal distribution of different quantities and qualities of capital. This can be observed on two levels. On the one hand, within a “not yet modern” society, we encounter differentiations between “modern” and “not yet modern” categories on the basis of who has access to particular forms of capital (which depends both on social and regional inequalities). On the other hand, this category refers to comparisons between societies, where the level of generalization of access to capital is seen as an indicator for a “modern” or “not yet modern” position. These two levels are interlinked in so far as the supposed presence of “not yet modern” groups/regions in a society is seen as an indicator for the “not yet modern” character of the society as a whole.³⁶

³⁵ See Chakrabarty 2000a for a critique of historicism over the category of not-yet modern.

³⁶ This view that “modernity” results from the generalization of (access to) different forms of capital becomes for example apparent in those statistics by international institutions (such as the UNDP human development index) that measure rates of GNDP, education, or human rights and codify them into a

When this view is present, “national development” becomes framed as the problem of the acquisition and generalization of capital in society. This perspective and aspiration can be clearly seen in the Turkish nation-building process. As Ayhan Akman argues: “Turkish Republicans were interested in creating a “modern society” in which all the citizens not only would be equal, but would be *equally modern*” (2004, p.42). A modern nation/society should be achieved through creating modern subjects, that is, through the generalization of the modern subject position. As we have seen, this subject position is objectified in particular kinds of capital.

A view of modernization as the generalization of the subject position might be the underlying reason for why Zürcher, despite all reservations, characterizes the reform process as one of “achievements,” as it might constitute for him an early step in a generalization process – that is seen as a precondition for the formation of civil society and thus democracy, the aim of “good” modernization – that might be realized further along the way. Not coincidentally, Zürcher identifies the *telos* of modernization with the creation of a “modern democratic welfare state.” As he posits: “For decades now Turkey seems to have been on the verge of becoming part of the community of industrialized, democratic welfare states that make up the dominant core of the modern world. (...) Somehow, it has never quite happened” (p.333). In this liberal perspective, it is state-society relations that guarantee citizens access to economic (through employment or social security), political (through a system in which positions of power can be in principle occupied by anyone), and cultural (through an education that enables to escape

measure of “development.” Here, aggregates of people with access to the kinds of capitals characterizing “the modern” are seen to indicate the level of “modernity” of a society.

“communal” bonds and “village horizons,” legal-rational bureaucracy) capital that provide the indicator for “good” modernization. Zürcher presents Turkey’s “not yet modern” position, when measured against this standard, as a paradox. He notes that Turkey’s “efforts to join the core countries of Europe in particular ways remind one of the fable about the tortoise and the hare. However fast the hare runs, by the time it almost catches up with the tortoise, the latter will have moved forward by a couple of inches and again be out of reach” (p. 334). This continuous “deferral” of modernity cannot be grasped through a perspective that treats capital as a resource, and modernization as the process of generalizing access to such resources. Thus, the following chapter discusses the heterodoxy of world-systems theories that have shown in detail that the gap between the “modern” and the “not-yet-modern” cannot be closed through the generalization of capital (as a thing), because the modernity of some depends on the not-yet-modernity of others in capitalist systems.

CHAPTER III: THE “VISIBLE” AND “INVISIBLE” SUBJECTS OF A HISTORY OF CAPITALISM

World systems theorists have developed a powerful critique of modernization theory since the 1970s³⁷. Çağlar Keyder’s work *State and Class in Turkey*,³⁸ first published in English in 1987 and in Turkish in 1989, is one of the classical works (Pamuk 1984; İslamoglu-İnan, ed. 1987; Kasaba 1988) which analyzed the transformation of the Ottoman Empire from a world-system perspective³⁹. Now in its 13th edition in Turkish (of which 8 were published in the last decade), it is still widely read today. At the time of its first publication, the study contributed to a debate among Marxist scholars in Turkey that was prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s on the question of whether the Ottoman/Turkish mode of production was essentially a feudal or an Asiatic one.⁴⁰ However, the book cannot be reduced to the narrow limits of this debate. Keyder undertakes an extended analysis of the political and economic structure of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey within the process of incorporation into the world system. World systems theory provides him with the “methodological” tools to analyze social transformation. As he states:

To reiterate my methodological bias: the world system provides a context and a set of constraints within which class struggle at the national level determines specific outcomes. Radical shifts in the

³⁷ For the critiques of modernization and dependency theories of the world-systems analysis, see the following books: Wallerstein, Immanuel M. (2001 [1991]); Wallerstein, Immanuel M. (2004); Wallerstein, Immanuel M. (1983); Wallerstein, Immanuel M. (1979).

³⁸ I will in the following only give page numbers when referring to this book, as it constitutes the main source for this chapter.

³⁹ Reşat Kasaba advanced Keyder’s work on the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world-system. For a condensed account of his arguments see Kasaba (1987). For a review of the world-systems studies in Turkey see Asım Karaömerlioğlu’s article that narrates the development of the approach (Karaömerlioğlu 2001-02). For a review that places world-systems analysis within the more general area of Ottoman history, see Özel; Çetinsaya (2001-02).

⁴⁰ See Aydın 1987 for a review of this debate. For other narratives of the debates see the following two articles: Berktaş (1992); Aydın (2001-02).

political balance of forces coincide with turning points in the world economic and political order, when a new set of constraints come into play and a local accommodation of these external developments is on the agenda. (p.4)

Thus, he focuses on the dynamics of both internal relations (of class struggle) and external conditions (of the world-system) that explain the social transformation of the Ottoman Empire in a process of “constraint” and “accommodation.”

Keyder’s analysis in the book covers the “pre-capitalist” period of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, the process of peripheral incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world-system, and subsequent historical changes in Turkey in response to global processes. My analytic reading of the book in this chapter will focus on the first two moments – the pre-capitalist period and the process of peripheralization – in order to address how Keyder views the transformation of the Ottoman Empire from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist society. My aim here is to show on the one hand the heterodox character of Keyder’s work, and on the other hand, how the way in which Keyder constructs subjects of historical change on the basis of a particular sense of political reality limits the possibility to see alternatives for that political reality.

The chapter has four parts. In the following section, I lay out the relational, and heterodox, character of world-system theory in contrast to the substantialism of the orthodox perspective, and show in which way Keyder’s study constitutes a particular example of such a relational approach. In the second section, I present Keyder’s historical narrative of the period that he terms “before capitalist incorporation” and in which he emphasizes the continuity between the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires in terms of their organization of the labor system and class structure. He sees this continuity as disrupted

only in the process of incorporation into the capitalist world system. Keyder portrays relations of power between the central elite and local lords that oscillate around the control over appropriation of the surplus (economic capital). Because the agents involved in these relations have a shared interest in maintaining the system, the local lords do not devise a revolutionary program that could lead to a feudal society (the next step in a developmental scale). As a result, for Keyder, an alternative to the existing order cannot emerge out of this field of power. A fundamental transformation occurs only when the rules of the game change with the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world-system. However, as the next section discusses, the stake of the field does not change: the agents he constructs are still those that can compete over control of surplus-appropriation. Social change is seen to result from the actions of those agents dominant in the field due to their control over the surplus. As a consequence, Keyder looks for a transformation of this system in a potentially revolutionary class. However, as I argue in the last section, because historical subjects are for him defined through their capacity to involve in the game of controlling the surplus, he again fails to see any alternative to the system due to the absence of a “sufficiently organized” working class in Turkey. Thus, the limits of the sense of political reality by Keyder are produced by the very aspects of his heterodox analysis: in focusing on dynamics of peripheralization, and constructing historical subjects from the perspective of control over the surplus in this process, his critique cannot find an alternative to the existing order from within the system.

I. The Relational Approach of World-Systems Theory

The central critique that world systems theorists have put forward against Ottoman/Turkish modernization historiography was that the latter focused on legal and institutional transformations and ignored how these were essentially related to the economic structure of society on the one hand, and shaped by the process of incorporation into the world-system on the other hand (Islamoglu and Keyder 1987, p.46). In this perspective, analyses such as Lewis' are not just partial historical narratives the faults of which could be corrected by paying more attention to economic processes; rather, they constitute wrong and distorted representations of historical reality, as the economic cannot be separated from the institutional and legal (ibid). As we will see, Keyder thus interprets the history of institutional and legal "modernization reforms," which orthodox approaches portray as emerging out of a struggle between modernizing versus traditional forces, as forming part and parcel of a process of peripheralization of the Ottoman economy in a capitalist world-system.

The fundamental characteristics that render Keyder's work heterodox consist in his emphasis on unequal relations rather than substantive characteristics at the basis of historical change, as a consequence of his adoption of the world-systems approach. We have seen in the chapter on Lewis that modernization orthodoxy tells the story of the "modernization problem of Turkey" as one of a lack of accumulation of (different quantities and qualities of) capital. In this formulation, Lewis was treating capital as a thing (resource) with an intrinsic value. In contrast to this approach, Keyder bases his analysis on a Marxist understanding of capital. He shows that the surplus produced by the

productive classes turn into capital when accumulated by the surplus-extracting classes and concentrated in the core zones of the world system in a context of capitalist re-organization of global economic relations. From this perspective, the problem of modernization for Keyder does not consist per se in a supposed lack of capital in one specific, peripheral zone (like Turkey). Rather, in adopting a world system perspective, he problematizes the mechanisms of surplus extraction and the transfer of that surplus from the periphery to the center, where it is then unequally concentrated. Thus, modernization is discussed as peripheralization.

Through this analysis, Keyder refutes the (orthodox) view of modernization as a linear and singular history that will lead to the progress (that is, accumulation of capital) of all societies. Instead, he views it as an uneven historical process, shaped by different modes of incorporation into the world-system, that leads not to a uniform, but unevenly developed and hierarchically organized international order in which the “modernity” (i.e. accumulated capital) of some depends on the “not-yet-modern” character (i.e. subordinate role in the accumulation process) of others. Lewis was able to describe this process as an achievement of the West, rather than as a process of domination and exploitation, by first defining the social entities he discussed through particular substantial characteristics that determine their capabilities, and second, by treating capital as a thing – a resource in the struggle for power – that can, or cannot, be acquired on the basis of these particular capabilities.

In contrast to this substantialist approach, the world-systems perspective is inherently relational. It analyzes the current world-system, which developed since the “long” sixteenth century, as constituted by a capitalist world-economy.⁴¹ Wallerstein defines a world-economy as “a large geographic zone within which there is a division of labor and hence significant internal exchange of basic or essential goods as well as flows of capital and labor” (2004, p.23). He indicates that the world economy consists of a variety of institutions – markets, firms, states, households, classes, status groups – that produce multiple economic, political and cultural patterns (ibid, p.23-24). He observes that what binds these multiple patterns together in one world-system is “the division of labor which is constituted within it” (ibid, p.23). Furthermore, Wallerstein emphasizes that the concepts of core and periphery which are central to the conceptualization of a world-system need to be understood relationally as expressing “the degree of profitability of the production processes” (ibid, p.28).⁴² Hierarchical relations in the world-system are seen to result from different organizations of production and trade in different zones of this system, and thus an unequal distribution of profitability. Unequal trade, Wallerstein states, results from quasi-monopolies that control core production processes, while peripheral production processes are “truly competitive.” He argues that in exchange, “competitive products are in a weak position and quasi-monopolized products are in strong position. As a result, there is a constant flow of surplus-value from the producers of the peripheral products to the producers of core-like products” (ibid, p.28). As this

⁴¹ As Wallerstein claims, world-system approaches aim to write a “total history,” relying on the tradition of Annales School, through which macro processes can be studied in their complexity without giving priority to any sphere of human activity (2004, p.21). Furthermore, in order to show that complexity, they construct the world-system – rather than the national state usually dominant in social analysis – as their object of analysis.

⁴² He notes that core and periphery are not spatial concepts, but refer to processes (although one can use them for analytic reasons as referring to zones) (ibid, p.17).

explanation on of unequal exchange shows, world-systems theory treats differences between core and periphery as differences in the organization of *processes*, and inequality as being realized in a *relation* between these. In this sense, the difference between core and periphery does not result from their substantial characteristics, but is produced relationally.

This approach to social reality aims to break the Eurocentric character of social sciences through a change in theory/methodology (Wallerstein 1997, p.93)⁴³. As Wallerstein indicates and as we have seen in the example of Lewis, one of the main assumptions in the Eurocentric version of history is that the formation of a “modern”/capitalist society was a form of progress achieved by the Europeans (ibid, p.104-105). World-system theorists argue that this assumption is an ideological construct that conceals the relations of exploitations and domination that produce structures of inequality (and in this way presents the “progress” of some as a “failure of achievement” of others). In turn, it is these relations and structures which make it impossible for those in the subordinate positions of the system to become what modernization theorists call “modern.” Modernization, from this perspective, is “not a step towards being more modern, but a step towards further integration into the precisely peripheral role the zone had been assigned” (Wallerstein, Decdeli and Keyder 1987, p 96-97).

This modernization critique is produced from a political perspective that challenges relations of exploitation and domination, based on a *telos* of the formation of an

⁴³ For the criticism of eurocentrism from the world-systems perspective see the following: Wallerstein, Immanuel M. (2006; 1996) and Quijano, Anibal (2000).

egalitarian society. As Ragin and Chirot state, the success of world-systems theory in the 1970s stemmed from this explicit political perspective (1984, p.277-279). They indicate that it allowed the younger generation of scholars to respond to problems of classical Marxism and to generate answers for the questions that time posed without abandoning a socialist vision. Keyder's book was published in a time characterized by a similar atmosphere in Turkey as the one described by Ragin and Chirot. Many scholars today continue to either directly or indirectly adopt the perspective of world-systems theory in different ways. Common to all these different readings and uses of this theory is their political perspective of socialism. This challenge of the unequal relations that constitute the existing order enables world-system theorists to see the limits of orthodox explanations of social reality.

I will in the following examine the perspective of change that his heterodox approach reveals in portraying a "continuous" system by analyzing its implicit understanding of political and economic capital. I rely here on the understanding of capital in the Bourdieusian sense as defined earlier in this dissertation as an analytical tool. That is, I am not implying that Keyder himself uses that understanding of capital, but that it allows us to grasp the sense of political reality underlying his narrative.

II. The History of a “Pre-Capitalist” Economic Structure

Keyder opens the first chapter of the book, called *Before Capitalist Incorporation*, by indicating the difference between the modes of production of the Ottoman Empire and of Europe in its pre-capitalist period:

The Ottoman Empire was not feudal: the nature of the state, its role in the determination of the class structure, in social reproduction and in that class structure itself was fundamentally different from the pre-capitalist order we have come to know as European feudalism. (p.7)

He sees the main reason of this difference, and of the “particularity” of the Ottoman Empire, in the organization of the labor force in the form of small independent peasantry rather than feudal serfs (ibid), which he attributes to continuity with the Byzantine Empire. This is in particular the relation between the productive class of the peasants on the one hand, and the central authority and the local lords on the other hand, as the classes that expropriate the surplus in the forms of taxes. Among the surplus-appropriating classes, Keyder further sees relations of struggle over the control of the mechanisms of tax collection, as the means of surplus appropriation. As we will see, we can find two forms of capital in this formulation of social relations: the surplus in form of taxes constitutes the economic capital and control over tax-collection forms political capital in his narrative. The social relations defined through these forms of capital define for Keyder the continuity between the Byzantine and the Ottoman Empire.

II.1 The Byzantine Empire

During the reign of the Byzantine Empire, Keyder notes, the small peasantry “was expected to pay an annual and proportional tax, collected directly by the political

authority through its delegated functionaries” (ibid). The basic characteristic of this economic organization was thus, according to Keyder, the direct relation between the central authority and the small peasantry. Continuity of this system was secured, Keyder argues, because the central authority and the peasantry had a shared interest in maintaining this order:

Any challenge to the established relationship between the rural producers and the central authority threatened not only the physical reproduction of the peasantry but also the social position of the bureaucracy. For this reason, attempts to transform the agrarian economy or the mode of surplus extraction were resisted not only by the peasantry (as in the Western European case) but also by the central bureaucracy, as threats to the reproduction of the existing system. (p.8)

Such attempts to “transform the agrarian economy,” Keyder indicates, were undertaken by “powerful Anatolian dynasties who, during the tenth century, undertook to collect taxes in their own name” (ibid) and thus interfered in the relation between peasantry and central authority. He argues that the increase in economic resources over which such local lords now wielded control led to an increase of their power, while the power of the central state was decreasing with its economic resources (ibid). Thus, for the local lords, newly acquired political capital (in the form of control over tax-collection) translates into economic capital (“enrichment,” ibid). In turn, the central state loses economic capital alongside its political one.

However, Keyder states that there was no fundamental change in the system as a consequence of the rise of the local lords. The only change he observes concerns the “destination of the taxes” (ibid). Instead of such social change, he observes patterns of “centralization and decentralization [that] would merely alternate as forms of organisation for utilizing the surplus” (ibid). He interprets the lack of fundamental change in agrarian and class structures with the absence of “conditions under which local powers could

establish themselves as progenitors of a rival social system” (ibid), and consequently with “the lack of an alternative social design” (ibid). Keyder posits that the only change to this “dialectic” of oscillations of power between the center and the local lords might have arisen from an “external incentive [that] might have provoked the instigation of radically different relations between the producers and the collectors of surplus” (p.9). There are two important points in this view. First, Keyder does not see any possibility for an alternative social order emerging from within the relations of power he describes. Second, it is implied that an alternative social order (had it materialized) would have consisted of a different labor and surplus-extraction system,⁴⁴ that is, different relations between producers and surplus collectors.⁴⁵

II.2 The Ottoman Empire

Keyder indicates that the Ottomans succeeded in (re-)centralization only after the conquest of Istanbul in the second half of the fifteenth century. He observes a clear continuity of the political and economic structure of the Byzantine Empire with the classical Ottoman system:

Like the Byzantine central authority, the Ottoman palace was instituted on the basis of its privileged relation with an independent peasantry. A strongly centralised bureaucratic structure was supposed to establish and secure the conditions for the healthy reproduction of a peasant society, whose surpluses would be extracted in the form of taxes. Once again the main threat originated in the local potentates who could interfere in this happy equation to deprive the centre of its revenue sources, while at the same time reducing the independence of the peasantry (p.10).

⁴⁴ Namely, feudalism as the only possible alternative system, as he posits (p.8,11).

⁴⁵ He explains the collapse of the Byzantine Empire by a gradual loss of control over tax collection by the central authority against the local lords, and loss of its territories against “Latins from the West and Turks from the east,” and by the final conquest of the Byzantium by the Ottomans in the fifteenth century (p.9).

Keyder thus perceives continuity in two regards: first, there is continuity in the agents and relations of power, which constitute the subjects of this history. Second, there is continuity in the interests of the subjects of this history: the control over the surplus. The first continuity is explicit in Keyder's narrative, the second implicit. Moreover, as the stability of the system relies on the shared interest of the central state and the peasantry, Keyder again locates the only possibility of change in the intervention of the third agent, who competes with the central state over the same forms of capital. As a consequence, he presents the Ottoman Empire, like the Byzantine one, as characterized by cycles of centralization and decentralization.

Keyder locates the possibility for fundamental change with the rise of the local notables called *ayans* in the 18th century. He states that despite their ascendancy within the Ottoman Empire, the *ayans* did or could not change the mechanism of surplus extraction along the lines of a feudal order (p. 16). He gives two possible explanations for that. The first one is that since the *ayans* did not control the land or the peasants, but only the taxation system, their interest lay in the continuation of that social system. They increased their power by collecting taxes that otherwise would have gone to the central authority, but did not change the "essence of the system," which is for Keyder the organization of agricultural production (p. 16). He concludes that therefore, "[a]t the height of their power, the *ayans* remained local replicas of the central authority" (p.16).

In his second possible explanation, Keyder states that "[i]t is possible to see the *ayans* as representing a failed attempt towards the formation of a feudal-aristocratic class" (p.16).

In contrast to the previous explanation, this entails the possibility that the *ayans* had an interest in transforming the system and the material and ideological capacities to do so. As he argues: “Not only did they fulfill the material requirements to emerge as a class, but they also seemed to have had the subjective intention of sharing in political power” (p.16-17). This intention he sees exemplified in the fact that the *ayans* in fact exercised urban government and in that they were able to force the Sultan to sign the Bill of Union in 1807 (a document often compared to the *magna carta*). However, these political attempts also signal the high time of their power, after which the central authority gradually regained control. Therefore, Keyder ascribes their inability to change the system to their failure in succeeding in the struggle with the central authority that had the support of the imperial powers (as discussed later). He states: “From this point of view, it may be more fair to ascribe their inability to substantially alter the agrarian structure to the resistance of the center” (p.17).

This example of the *ayans* shows two sides of Keyder’s view of historical change and his sense of political reality. First, when the (potential) subjects of historical change have the same stake in power relations (in this case, control over the surplus, or the acquisition of economic through political capital), and thus an interest in the continuation of the system, then no alternative can emerge to the existing order. By implication, change is possible when there is a historical agent that has a political project, an interest in changing the basis of the system.” In such cases then, and this is the second point, whether or not a fundamental transformation of the system will occur depends on the outcome of a power struggle between the agent that has an interest in maintaining the system (here the central

authority) and the one who aims to transform it (here, the *ayans* in the second explanation of their role in the Ottoman Empire). Thus, in this latter view, it is the one that is dominant in power relations that decides about social change.

II.3 A Perspective of Change

The way Keyder sees continuity stems from his observation that the basic rules of the (socioeconomic) system did not change. The only potential source of change he sees consists in an alternative project that would redefine the “rules of the game,” to use Bourdieu’s terminology, which we can see here as the ways in which the extraction of surplus is regulated (e.g. the duty of independent peasants to pay the taxes). This corresponds to Bourdieu’s understanding of change in a field. As Bourdieu argues, “a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified” (1992, p.98) – the “rules of the game” (ibid p.98-99). However, he further underlines that the rules of the game in a field are always subject to change in struggles between agents: “players can play to increase or to conserve their capital, ... in conformity with the tacit rules of the game ... but they can also get in it to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game” (ibid, p.99). Furthermore, he notes that “[a] good number of struggles within the field of power are of this type, notably those aimed at seizing power over the state, that is over the economic and political resources that enable the state to wield a power over all games and over the rules that regulate them” (ibid, p.100). There are three aspects to this understanding of the field and the rules of the game that are relevant to Keyder’s understanding of change. First, we do not see any changes in the organization of the field

as long as everyone plays according to the rules of the game, that is, as long as there are no conflicting interests over the rules of the game. Second, the field can be transformed when there are conflicting interests over the rules of the game which are translated into a project of transforming the field. Third, whether or not the field will be changed depends on the outcome of the struggle between the agents with the conflicting interests. We see these three points implicit in Keyder's narrative.

First, Keyder identifies fundamental social change with a change in the socioeconomic organization of society, in this case, the organization of agricultural production. The lack of the emergence of an alternative from within a system stems, in Keyder's view, from the fact that the social interests and the resulting program of the class that could effect change (the local lords) are in line with the existing system (as during the Byzantine Empire and the first explanation of the position of the *ayans*). Keyder sees the potential subject of history in this process in the social class struggling with the central authority over control over the surplus. However, since the interest of the (potentially revolutionary) class can overall be realized within the existing (non-feudal) social order, they conserve it in their attempts to maximize their interest within it. The "continuous" (that is, non-feudalizing) character of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires thus results in this perspective from the focus on practices of social groups/ classes whose actions are both shaped by the internal structural organizations of these Empires and in turn reproduce the particular characteristics of that order (in its difference from feudal Europe). In Bourdieu's terms, as the interests of the agents in the field can be realized through the rules of the game, we see a continuation of the organization of the field.

Second, as Keyder's second explanation of the position of the *ayans* suggests, this correspondence of interests, or agreement over the rules of the game, can also be absent. In this case, the non-materialization of alternative results from a failure of the social class struggling with the central authority to realize an oppositional political program directed at the transformation of the socioeconomic organization of society. Thus, Keyder's account of continuity indirectly conveys us his understanding of what produces change: namely, the existence of a class whose interests conflict with the existing system, a political program aimed at the transformation of the system, and the capacity to realize it within the particular historical conjuncture and existing power relations. In that view, an agent that aimed to transform the field and could have effected change in this way, failed to do so. This leads to the third point identified above, namely, that it is the outcome of the struggle between the agents of the field over the rules of the game that decides whether or not we see a transformation of the field, and thus change. In the case of Keyder's, the *ayans*' failure of producing new rules of the game, their attempts at transformation of the field did not succeed because they lost the struggle with the central bureaucracy which had an interest in maintaining the rules of the game.

As we will see in the following section, Keyder does see a reconstitution of the field with the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire to the world-system.

III. “The Process of Peripheralization”

As we have seen, Keyder posits the need for an “external incentive” for change, if from within the system no class emerges that has an interest in “changing the rules of the game” and the capacity to do so in a power struggle. Only with the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into a capitalist economy does he also see ideological threats to the existing order emerge as a “response to the needs of a new economic order” (p.13). For Keyder, the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire to the capitalist world-system constitutes thus such an “external incentive” that goes hand in hand with the emergence of a merchant class and produces the constitution of a new field. Thus, Keyder shows how the transformation of the Ottoman Empire in the process of her articulation to the world-system as a peripheral zone entails a fundamental transformation in the mechanisms of surplus extraction and in the class structure of the Empire that affected all classes in the region.⁴⁶ The fundamental reason for this transformation, he indicates, was the development of capitalism in the formation of the world-system. A central feature of this new context was a changed relation between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers.

⁴⁶ Apart from changes in class relations and positions, Keyder sees the impact of the peripheralization process on the built environment and regional differentiation in the Ottoman Empire. This proceeded in particular through foreign direct investment, which again was dominated by the interests and demands of merchant capital due to a lack of differentiation of the bourgeoisie (p.42)). As a consequence, foreign direct investments went to the construction of railroads and ports in order to “increase the volume of trade and open up previously local market-oriented producers to world commercial networks” (p.44), though he also observes that “the pace of construction was slow compared to India and Latin America, owing perhaps to the limited potential of export production” (p.44). Differentiation furthermore proceeded along the lines of concentration of merchant capital – in particular in the port cities of Salonika, Izmir and Istanbul. In these places the investments in municipal services produced an environment that was organized in line with European models. Thus, Keyder shows that regional differentiation is not best grasped through the concept of “modernization” and the assumption of progressive change, but through differential concentrations of capital in core-periphery relations and the interests of those who are able to monopolize and direct that capital.

Keyder sees the process of peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire as its incorporation into capitalist relations, which entailed change in the mechanism of surplus extraction and resulted in a flow of surplus to the European core. This process of incorporation was enabled by the weakening of the empire vis-à-vis the European powers and by its increased financial dependence on them. The latter used this advantage to establish mechanisms that would transfer surplus to the core of the world-system. Thus, Keyder narrates “modernization” as a process of peripheralization in which the Ottoman Empire, while becoming dependent upon the European market, found its surpluses increasingly directed into the hands of European capitalists and states.

The mechanisms that Keyder identifies for this surplus transfer, and as underlying the peripheralization process, are trade relations, the debt mechanism, and direct foreign investment. Primary among these mechanisms are for Keyder the mercantile activities, in the sense that merchant rather than industrial capital is dominant in all these mechanisms. The bourgeoisie emerged in Turkey as a merchant rather than industrial class (p.18). There was also no direct foreign investment made into production on part of the imperial powers. Instead, investments were made in railroads and the port cities in order to expand mercantile activities (p.44), while the debt mechanism was used by the imperial powers as a means to obtain influence on the Ottoman central authority to guarantee the privileges of (European and non-Muslim) merchants (p.38). Thus, with the emergence of merchant capital, as we will see, the stake has now changed from an emphasis on agricultural production to trade and finance, while political capital is still constituted by control over the surplus.

Thus, while Lewis had interpreted the problems of the Ottoman economy partially as due to a supposed Islamic rejection of innovation, Keyder shows how it is a process of subordination that resulted from the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire as a peripheral zone into a capitalist world system, a process in turn pushed by specific class relations and interests within and across particular states. Although Keyder's account thus implicitly refutes Lewis' view of civilizational transformations, Keyder's understanding of history continues to be shaped by a "transition narrative" (Chakrabarty 2000a) in which a pre-capitalist and pre-modern state of being turns into a capitalist and modern one. This narrative has been criticized for being Eurocentric and teleological⁴⁷. My analysis does not intend to replicate such relevant critiques. Rather, I aim to analyze Keyder's sense of political reality by analyzing in the following what kinds of historical subjects, relations, and struggles implicitly constitute the new field in Keyder's analysis, and how his explanation of social transformation is linked to this perspective. The three main agents that appear in his narrative are the new merchant class, imperial powers as representing the interests of capital in the core, and the Ottoman central bureaucracy. These are the main agents, as we will see, because they can influence mechanisms of surplus extraction (and thus the constitution of a new field) and compete over political and economic capital. As argued in the following section, only those agents that can become (dominant) players in the field are constituted as historical subjects in Keyder's narrative.

⁴⁷ Chakrabarty, among others, has argued that such Marxist narratives of capitalism have presented history based on a "structural unity (if not expressive totality) to historical process and time that makes it impossible to identify certain elements in the present as "anachronistic" (2000, p.12). As a consequence, the "non-Western" historical forms have been identified by "absences" and "incompleteness" (ibid p. 30-34).

III.1 The Rise of a Merchant Class

The new class that Keyder sees emerging with the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the world-system is merchant capital. Keyder explains the dominance of merchant rather than industrial capital in the process of peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire with the latter's agricultural structure based on small independent peasantry. He indicates that this labor system did not allow for a transformation towards capitalist agriculture or plantations because there was no "dispossessed peasantry, who would accept wage employment or subsistence level remuneration" (p.18). For the same reason, he adds, sharecropping was not an option: "As long as the peasantry was not dispossessed of its land, there would be a shortage of both wage workers and sharecroppers" (ibid).⁴⁸ Hence, this early stage of peripheralization is not characterized by the development of capitalist production.

The second characteristic of the economic structure of the Ottoman Empire that Keyder identifies is that there was no monopoly over production in the hands of few "large and commercialized landlords," while "the dispersion of the marketed surplus in the hands of small producers required a parallel dispersion of mercantile activity in the Empire" (p.19). This means that instead of the formation of monopolies, a large numbers of intermediary merchants were central to commercial relations. He argues that as a result, "merchant capital quickly became dominant in those areas where agriculture was integrated into

⁴⁸ He gives examples of failed attempts of European investors to establish large-scale agricultural production in the nineteenth century to support this view (p.18). He notes that although they did not have any trouble in finding appropriate land, they could not find workers that would commit themselves to work on such investments for low wages.

world markets” (ibid). Hence, the incorporation into the European market took place through mercantile activities, based on agricultural production, and carried out by large numbers of intermediaries.

Thus, the conditions of the emergence of the new merchant class – and with it the reconstitution of the field – was on the one hand linked to the “external incentive” of integration into world markets. On the other hand, the emergence of this specific class (merchant rather than industrial) was due to the particularities of the Ottoman labor system. Fundamental social change for Keyder stems from this development. The new merchant class was a central agent of change in the production and labor system, as Keyder underlines. He states that “merchant’s activity did not consist entirely of buying and selling existing surpluses. Peasant producers had to be attracted, cajoled, or forced to produce desired goods” (ibid). The merchants directed the agricultural production according to the dynamics of the market, leading to an overall increase in the volume of production and to change from subsistence to more export-oriented goods (p.30-31). Thus, agricultural production became increasingly organized according to the dynamics of the European market (p.31).

The emerging power of the merchants constituted also a challenge to the system of surplus extraction, described in the previous section, that was based on (more or less successful) prevention of third parties disturbing the relation between the state and the peasants. The third party that could now enter the scene in the process of peripheralization, the merchants, challenged the power of the central bureaucracy by

reorganizing the mechanism of surplus extraction according to the logic of the market and in this way weakening state control over agricultural production. Thus, the merchants also constituted a challenge to the class position of the bureaucracy in undermining their position as the surplus-extracting class. As Keyder notes: “The new situation was that of a growing economy, and the traditional tax, fixed in money terms for a number of years, was not equipped to capture larger amount of surplus” (p.35) Merchants were able to extract the growing surplus both by profiting from agricultural production directly through trade and by indirectly appropriating those parts of the surplus that went to the bureaucrats in the form of taxes by selling them luxury consumption goods. Thus, while the bureaucrats were able to maintain their dominant position in the Ottoman state, they lost relative power in relation to the newly emerging merchant bourgeoisie. In this regard, by changing the mechanisms of generating economic capital, the merchants also mounted a challenge to the political capital of the bureaucrats – the control over the surplus.

What compounded the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the central bureaucracy was that class positions here overlapped with the key ethnic/religious divisions of the Empire (p.47). While the bourgeoisie consisted predominantly of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, the central bureaucracy was composed of Muslims. Keyder argues that non-Muslim merchants gained advantage over Muslims merchants⁴⁹ (p.33-34) in trade relations with European markets on the basis of the transformation of the previously founded capitulation system between the Ottoman Empire and the European states in favor of the

⁴⁹ It is important to note however that while the merchant class was rising in importance in the Ottoman Empire, there was a differentiation within it along religious/ethnic lines, as Keyder indicates. In contrast to Lewis, he argues that there was no strict division of labor on the basis of ethnic groups, as Muslims were involved in trade relations.

latter.⁵⁰ As this example among others shows, the development of merchant capital cannot be disentangled from the second main agent of change in Keyder's account: the imperial powers.

III.2 The Influence of the Imperial Powers

The imperial powers, which, in line with Marxist theories of the state, constitute the political organization of European capital for Keyder, figure in his narrative as the main external agent of change that has provoked substantial socioeconomic transformations in the Ottoman Empire, and thus were implicated in the constitution of a new field. Keyder interprets the Anglo-Ottoman Convention in 1838, which reduced the taxes on and annulled state monopolies over trade, as a first step towards the institutionalization of the Empire's incorporation into the world system as a peripheral zone. The Convention was according to Keyder granted to the British in turn for their support of the central government against Muhammad Ali, governor of Egypt. Thus, imperial support enabled the central bureaucracy to re-centralize power, as a consequence of which the local lords, disempowered in the process and no longer able to compete for political capital in the field, disappear from Keyder's historical narrative as potential subjects of change.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Capitulations were the temporary privileges given to European merchants – lower taxes and exemption from Ottoman laws – which were meant to facilitate control over external economic activities (p.20). Keyder indicates that with the decreasing power of the Empire, the European states forced the central government to turn them into permanent privileges. Non-Muslim subjects of the Empire started to benefit from the capitulations on the basis of passports given to them, for both political and economic reasons, by the ambassadors of European states (p.21). Moreover, as Islamoglu (1987, p.11) explains, the markets integrated with the European ones were monopolized by non-Muslims, whereas the Muslim merchants were more dominant in internal trade.

⁵¹ Keyder indicates that in the nineteenth century, after the Bill of Union, the *ayans* started to lose power and central power was restored. He explains the main dynamic that led to a recentralization of power by showing the involvement of the “Great Powers” in Ottoman politics, who took the side of the central power

As Keyder notes, other European states subsequently also gained the privileges entailed in the Convention, which in the end turned the Empire into “an area of free trade” (p.29); this, according to Wallerstein, is one criteria for constituting a periphery of the world-system (2004, p.28). As a consequence, the Ottoman central bureaucracy lost another source of revenue – taxes on trade – at the same time as surplus was more easily transferred to the European core. Thus, the position of the central bureaucracy was weakened on the basis of a loss of political capital that now accrued to merchant capital and imperial states as the organization of core capital. The loss of political capital in turn is tied in Keyder’s narrative to the decreasing power of the Empire, manifested in the loss of wars and based on financial crises, which forced the central government to accept the demands of European states and thus helped to push the process of peripheralization.

Debt was a central means in that process. Keyder thus takes the debt mechanism established between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers as a second mechanism of peripheralization. He indicates that taking international loans turned into a necessity for the Ottoman Palace during the nineteenth century because of an increase in “state expenditures,” due to the increasing cost of the reforms in military and administrative institutions, and a decrease in the revenues collected (p.37). On the other hand, Keyder points out that the European powers also had an interest in stabilizing the Ottoman central authority vis-à-vis local lords through the granting of loans. The granting of loans fulfilled thus three “political” functions. First, it fostered a strong central authority that could ensure the stability necessary for foreign investments. Second, it

in opposition to local landlords. He observes that this change occurred especially when Muhammad Ali, governor of Egypt, became strong enough to overthrow the central power. When the governor’s army approached Istanbul, British support enabled the central government to survive.

protected the legitimacy of the Ottoman state, which was important for European diplomacy. And third, while loans strengthened the Ottoman central authority internally, they kept it in a weak and dependent state vis-à-vis the European powers. In this way, Keyder underlines, the debt mechanism turned into a tool used by the European powers to force the Ottoman government to accept their demands (p.38). Thus, the European powers could convert one form of economic capital – finance – into political capital – control over the surplus.

In this way, the European powers could impose the institutional and legal frameworks necessary for capitalism to function when trade with the Ottoman Empire increased. As Keyder notes, these so-called “modernization reforms” aimed to establish in particular “the primacy of a legal structure within which contracts could be enforced” (p.21). Thus, “... in 1839, 1856 and 1867 the Palace was pressured to declare its willingness to recognise certain rights of citizenship, freedom of religious practice, a degree of sanctity of private property, and the right of foreign nationals to own property” (ibid). Thus, Keyder posits that “modernization reforms” are in fact changes necessary for the development of a capitalist order in which the Ottoman Empire had a subordinate position.

Besides being used as a tool of enforcing the demands of the European powers, Keyder points out that the debt mechanism further enabled the concentration of capital in the European core. In servicing the debt with taxes collected from the peasants, the central authority played an intermediary role in the transfer of the surplus produced in the

peripheral zone to the center (p.38). This intermediary role of the state was replaced by a direct relation between the peasants and the European creditors when the central authority failed on its debt payments in 1875 (ibid).

Keyder however notes that the main profit of the Europeans did not derive from interests on loans, but from keeping an export market for European merchants open by channeling funds to the Ottoman economy (ibid). Thus, he posits, “the Ottoman economy did not suffer from the indebtedness episode by repaying more than the external finance it received” (ibid). He explains the relative advantageous conditions in terms of interest afforded to the Ottoman Empire with “rivalry among imperialist powers” (p.39). France and England, and later Germany as well – which were in “competition for political and economic advantage” (ibid) in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Keyder asserts that the specifics of the debt mechanism were not determined by “a unified decision-making process of European capitalism, nor ... the political preferences of a single hegemonic power” (ibid).⁵² While Keyder discusses the influence of imperial powers as a whole on the Ottoman Empire through their ability to impose the economic relations and legal conditions that would secure the flow of surplus from the periphery to the core, he explains the fact that the Ottoman Empire was not formerly colonized with competition

⁵² The relations and factors that Keyder argues shaped the debt mechanism are seen particularly clearly when he explains the functions of the Public Debt Administration (PDA), which was founded after the Ottoman bankruptcy in 1881 in order to control the revenues and expenditures of the government: “In time, the organisation built by the PDA was large enough to rival the Ottoman finance ministry, and controlled about one third of the total public revenue of the Empire. The PDA served as an alternative to the formation of a colonial apparatus: it reflected a compromise among rival imperialist powers in establishing a degree of stability in the financial relationship of the Empire with European sources of credit, while the commercial sphere remained open to competition”(p.40). PDA in this sense was used as a mechanism to regulate the conflicting interests of the imperial powers that had arisen in their competition with each other, while keeping a “free trade zone” open for their common interests.

between those powers (p.36). Hence, Keyder shows that the position of the Ottoman Empire in the world-system is not only determined by a unilateral relation with the core seen as an entity, but by the multiple relations of power and competition between the states of the core as well. We can again see this field of “the world-system” as operating according to a logic in which the shared interest is the extraction of surplus and political capital the means to gain control over it.

III.3 The Role of the Central Bureaucracy

Keyder situates the role of the central bureaucracy in the process of peripheralization in the tension between these two subjects of change – the merchant class and the imperial powers. The position of the bureaucracy in the new field that Keyder’s narrative implicitly sets up is clearly defined by the relations with these two other dominant agents. As mentioned earlier, Keyder shows that the central bureaucracy was negatively affected by the rise of the merchant class which acquired increased control over agricultural production. He then argues that they accepted the “modernization reforms” imposed by the imperial powers on the basis in exchange for support of the Ottoman state in the wars against the *ayans* and Russia because they colluded with their own class interests. Keyder identifies two aspects in this process. First, the insertion of the Ottoman Empire into the “European inter-state-system” (p.28) on the basis of the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1838 provoked the differentiation of the civil bureaucracy that dealt with the external relations of the Empire from the religious officials. He notes that this civil bureaucracy was not educated in religious *medreses* and thus had a more secular conception of the role of the state. They accepted the character of European political relations while rejecting

the “military and religious conceptions of authority” that political relations with Europe used to be based on (ibid). He notes that this orientation of the new civil bureaucracy however was not unproblematic:

They were thus pragmatic in their approach to the inter-state system, in the sense of accepting the parameters within which bargains were to be struck. Through this acceptance, however, they also unwittingly limited their potential success of their own internal efforts at reform: future reformers in the Empire would derive from the ranks of this secular wing of the bureaucracy, whose conceptions of the possible were circumscribed by the narrow limits of European power diplomacy (ibid).

Thus, it is a division within the ruling elite, sparked by changing relations with the European powers, that ultimately enables the acceptance of the latter’s mode of political and economic organization, the “rules of the game,” because one fraction of the bureaucracy “welcomed the institutionalization of economic integration into Western capitalism as a victory over the retrograde tenets of old Ottoman statecraft” (ibid).

Unlike Lewis, Keyder therefore does not see this “modernizing elite” as a group of reformists who intend to guide society in its transformation towards a “higher” civilization, but he conceptualizes them as a (state-)class on the basis of their shared position in a relation of surplus extraction and a shared ideological and political outlook (p.26). Conflicts between social groups – viziers, *kadis*, janissaries, tax-collectors, and the like – differently located in hierarchical and function positions, thus should be considered intra-class struggles “either relating to the distribution of the surplus or deriving from competing projects concerning system regulation” (ibid) The identification of the class character of the ruling elite enables Keyder to analyze the “modernization reforms” as a strategy of the (civil) bureaucracy, which allowed it to secure its class position. He posits: “The bureaucracy accepted a version of reformism which accommodated its class nature by allowing it to be the principal intermediary of incorporation, while they sacrificed,

rather too readily, various social groups privileged in the traditional order and the overall integrity of this order” (p.28). Thus, the civil bureaucracy, though now in a less dominant position than in the previous field, still figures as an agent to be reckoned with in the field due to its command over political capital.

III.4 The Impact on Social Groups and Relations

The rise of a merchant class, and the transformations associated with the process of peripheralization and “modernization reforms” pushed by the imperial powers, goes hand in hand in Keyder’s narrative with a decline of the position of other social groups in the Ottoman Empire. The result of the incorporation of the Ottoman agriculture into the world-system through trade relations, and of the “growth of trade in its destructive and constructive moments” associated with it, Keyder states, “was a substantial restructuring of the social division of labor” (p.32). Keyder outlines the impact of this process on a number of different social groups. First, while the independent character of the small peasantry did not change, it was now bound into capitalist relations (p.33). As a result, it was “subject to fundamental changes from the point of view of the degree and nature of their integration into commodity or money markets, with implications of unequal exchange and exploitation through circulation” (ibid). Second, Keyder indicates the most destructive effect of a change of trade relations on urban manufacturers, due to cheap imports of manufactured products on the one hand, and increased prices for raw materials on the other hand (p.31) which “destroyed local industry and led to de-industrialization” (p.32). As a consequence, the traditional division of labor collapsed, “disemploying tens of thousands of craftsmen and manufacturers” (ibid). Third, Keyder argues that Muslim

merchants were disadvantaged, by changes in trade relations and the legal system accompanying this, vis-à-vis non-Muslim merchants, due to a number of reasons. As non-Muslim merchants were privileged in trade relations through the now permanent privileges enshrined in the Capitulations, Muslim merchants lost their former privileges that were based on “monopoly rights” given by the Palace (p.33). Furthermore, as commercial activity increased in the regions connected to European markets and the agricultural production was reorganized accordingly, Muslim merchants were mostly excluded from these activities (ibid). Hence, the Muslim merchants constituted another class that was directly and negatively affected by the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into a world-system with a ‘European’ core. In contrast to the civil bureaucracy and the two dominant agents in the field, Keyder thus shows other agents as entirely “loosing out” as a consequence of the reconstitution of the field, and portrays them as a consequence as being “impacted upon” rather than as shaping the social transformations that ensue from the change in the field. They are thus not constituted as subjects of history in Keyder’s narrative because they are unable to compete successfully in the field.

III.5 The Role of the Dominant in Social Change

As this analytic reading of Keyder’s view of peripheralization has shown, we can understand it as a reconstitution of the field in which new agents compete on the basis of “rules of the game” that regulate the ways in which surplus can be extracted, which changed with the incorporation of the Ottoman Empire to the world-system, away from the extraction of surplus in form of taxes from an independent peasantry to the

commercialization of agricultural production and the flow of surplus to the core on the basis of unequal trade.

However, there is continuity in Keyder's account, and thus sense of political reality, between the "pre-capitalist" and the "capitalist" period on at least two counts. First, social change is seen to result from the action of agents which are dominant in the field. Thus, the oscillations between centralization and decentralization in the empire are seen to result from power struggles between the dominant agents of local lords and central authority during the pre-capitalist period. Similarly, the process of peripheralization is shaped by the imperial powers, (European and non-Muslim) merchants, (the reformist fraction of) the central bureaucracy as the agents that have some or a good measure of control over the extraction of surplus. In contrast, non-dominant agents in the field – urban manufacturers, Muslim merchants, (the reformist fraction of) the central bureaucracy –, along with the peasants that are excluded from the field, appear in his historical narrative only as impacted by, but not as shaping the course of social transformation. Social change is seen to result from the actions of the dominant forces. In turn, dominance arises from the control over the means to direct and appropriate the flow of surplus.

Second, the driving force of the (pre-capitalist as well as capitalist) history is the shared interest of the dominant classes in the extraction of surplus. The underlying condition that binds all the agents into a field, as Bourdieu argues, is the shared interest (*illusio*, sense of the game) that makes it seem worthwhile to "play the game" (2000, p.11). However,

while for Keyder, this interest is the same in pre-capitalist and capitalist periods, in line with a Marxist understanding, as well as singular, Bourdieu emphasizes that “[t]here is not an interest, but there are *interests* variable with time and place, almost infinitely so: there are as many interests as there are fields, as historically constituted areas of activity with their specific institutions and their own laws of functioning” (1990, p.88, emphasis is original). By ignoring this multiplicity of interests (and fields), Keyder constructs a meta-field that subsumes all of history under one interest. Here we see not simply an economic reductionism, but also a reduction of all social relations, including economic ones, to one interest.

As historical change is perceived only in terms of the changing rules, actors, and positions of the actors *within* this field, the field itself constructs the foundation of history that is left unquestioned. His narrative in this way is also unable to present an alternative from within this system, as we will see in more detail in the following section. As I will argue, this constitutes the limit of his sense of political reality.

IV. Sense of Political Reality

IV.1 Heterodox and Doxic Elements in the Narrative of the Peripheralization

Process of the Ottoman Empire

The unequal relations that are central to the heterodoxy of Keyder’s narrative are twofold. First, the extraction of surplus by the dominant class from the productive class is based on a vertical (inter-class) hierarchy. Second, the competition over the control over the

mechanisms of surplus extraction takes place within horizontal power relations, that is, between surplus-extracting rather than productive classes or class fractions.⁵³ In line with the analysis established in the previous section, we can argue that the positions in this field are determined according to the degree of control each social group has over the mechanisms of surplus extraction. The relevant groups, as we have seen, were the central bureaucracy versus the local lords during Byzantine and Ottoman times before peripheralization, and the merchant class, the imperial powers (as the organization of European capital), and the central bureaucracy during the process of peripheralization. The fate of the (productive) classes on the dominated side of the vertical power relations then is determined by the competition between the groups in the horizontal power relations. At the same time, the fact that both vertical and horizontal power relations are ultimately directed at appropriating what these classes produce, shows their implicit centrality to Keyder's historical narrative.

As the previous sections showed, the new agents that enter such horizontal power relations in the process of peripheralization produce fundamental change in the socioeconomic organization of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast, those agents that “lose out” and are not able to acquire dominance in the field are not portrayed as historical subjects, are not seen as effecting social transformation.

⁵³ With the term “horizontal,” I therefore don't want to indicate that these classes or class fractions are “equal” in terms of power, but that they are on the same ‘end’ – the surplus extracting one – in class relations.

In showing the relational character of capital – its extraction as a surplus and its unequal distribution in different zones due to the competition over the mechanisms of surplus – Keyder reveals the orthodoxy of Lewis’ account. Thus, not every one has the same chance of “becoming modern” in this system, as “becoming modern” does not stem from the substantial characteristics of the entities, but from their position in an unequal system. What Lewis ignores is the vertical relation of capital exemplified in surplus extraction; instead, he locates the reasons of (failing to) becoming modern in horizontal relations of competition over capital as a resource. In contrast, Keyder highlights the class relations underlying the process of peripheralization. He does not narrate change as emerging out of the relations between unitary societal entities, but as resulting from competition among and within social classes.

However, despite these central differences between Lewis’ and Keyder’s analyses, they both write the history of competition for capital and power, the former implicitly and the latter explicitly, though their interpretations of the agents, means, and outcomes of this competition depart in crucial ways. It is these differences which, in effect, render Lewis’ account orthodox and Keyder’s heterodox, while their shared emphasis on competition over capital as the driving force of history constitutes the doxic element of their approaches. This doxic element results from their shared sense of political reality in which only the dominant – those that are able to control capital – are seen to shape social relations and change. In characterizing this as doxa, I am not trying to say that the historical facts they use to buttress up their arguments are not valid (that is, I am not trying to critique them from within a historiographic perspective). Rather, I argue that

they present partial perspectives on social reality, but generalize that into the only and universal reality, which therefore turns their accounts into misrepresentations. In the following I will discuss in more detail the limits entailed in Keyder's sense of political reality.

IV.2. Limits of a Sense of Political Reality

As shown, Keyder sees the "modernization/ peripheralization process" as resulting from a competition between the *dominant* classes (in Europe and the Ottoman Empire) over the control over the mechanisms of surplus extraction. He makes this perspective, which excludes the working class or peasants *as agents of change*, explicit in the beginning of the book:

The narrative [of this study] also focuses on the relations among dominant classes and fractions, and their attempts to attain, maintain, and employ state power. The peasantry and the working class enter the picture only indirectly and in subordinate fashion. This is because neither of the two producing classes was sufficiently strong or organised directly to influence the outcome of the political struggle; it was either the bureaucracy or groups within the bourgeoisie who, through their conflict, defined the parameters of state policies, administrative forms and the political regime. *The options available to subordinate classes were more often determined by the outcome of the struggle for supremacy than by their own political activity.* (p.4, emphasis is mine)

Thus, Keyder feels the need to justify why his historical account does not involve the dominated classes in history-making. This, he seems to want to say, is not due to an oversight on his part, but to objective realities that prevented such agency on part of the productive classes. That is, because the subordinate classes were not able to "influence the outcome of political struggle," they were not able to shape their own destiny and history. His implicit assumption of history and politics is revealed in this particular emphasis on the actuality of politics that is determined by the dominant classes. Subordinate classes, not having the sufficient means of power, cannot constitute

themselves as agents in the field, and thus cannot enter into this picture of history; they cannot make history.

The “inability” of the productive classes to enter this historical narrative stems from the particular way in which Keyder observes political reality. In order to see the limits of this sense of political reality, we can re-consider the criteria that Keyder uses to “filter” it. What characterizes the field of this politics in his account is the forms of control over capital that the dominant classes possess and exercise in competition with each other, while the relation between resource-extracting and productive classes is characterized by vertical relations of exploitation and domination rather than horizontal relations of competition. In this sense, this field of politics is organized around the interest of control over surplus-extraction or capital. The producers are not part of that field because they lack the “strength” and “organization” (to refer back to Keyder’s terms) to participate in the struggle over control over the surplus. The competition over the control of capital changes the position of the agents in the field (constituted by horizontal relations), while the dynamic of these competitions does not change the position of the producers situated in a vertical relation to this field.

We can observe a similar sense of political reality in Bourdieu’s understanding of the possibility of the transformation of the field by the dominated classes. Bourdieu sees the possibility of this, similarly to Keyder, on the basis of the acquisition of appropriate forms of capital: “only when the dominated classes have the material and symbolic means of rejecting the definition of the real” (Bourdieu 1977, p.169). In this way, he sees the

possibility of any social change in the dynamics of relations of power and at the moments (of “crisis,” *ibid*) when the dominated classes can achieve sufficient means of power to challenge the established order. In other words, only when the social structure and existing order is already dislocated in times of crisis – and we could interpret the beginning of the peripheralization process in Keyder’s case as such a moment – so that new opportunities are opened to dominated classes as well, does Bourdieu see the possibility of change. Even then, the precondition for change consists for Bourdieu, like for Keyder, in the possession of appropriate forms of capital.

While both Bourdieu and Keyder appear in expectation of such changes, their analysis does not enable them to see a form of politics that is not determined within the limits of the field (of power). While both of them provide us with one of the better analyses of social reality by questioning the dynamics of the field, they do not question how the “field of power” itself hegemonizes our political imaginations and aspirations by reducing the political to relations of power. In other words, they take the field of power for granted and subsume all possibilities of social change to the existing conditions of this field.

We can thus identify three characteristics of Keyder’s sense of political reality, which again goes parallel with Bourdieu’s. First, the agents of the field compete over control over the surplus. “Pre-capitalist” political struggles differ from the ones during peripheralization in terms of the mechanism of and agents involved in surplus extraction, but not in terms of the fact that the object of struggle is control over the surplus. Thus, the interest of competition in the field is the control over the surplus, and thus, after the

articulation of the Ottoman Empire to the world-economy, over the accumulation of capital.

Second, the struggle between the agents in this field does not change this shared interest of competition (and thus does not lead to fundamental change of the system), but only decides which agent will occupy which position in the field in relation to the control over the surplus. Thus, we saw that the entrance of new agents to the field and the class struggles that were implicated in the process of peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire only changed the relative positions of dominant classes to each other, while the class position of the peasantry, though they were increasingly exploited and less independent than before, did not change.⁵⁴ Thus, what we see in this form of politics is a cyclical relation of competition that can effect the positions of those in the competition but does not lead to a transformation of the system.

Third, any social group that is not able to participate in this competition is seen as not forming part of the field of politics (and thus as not able to shape society). For this reason, Keyder indicates that only if the productive classes had been strong and organized enough (which in this sense means that they would have been capable to enter into competition over the control over the surplus, such as the organized working-class did in Europe) they could have shaped the history of peripheralization. As the subordinate classes lack control

⁵⁴ Wallerstein, Decdeli and Kasaba convey a similar sense of political reality as regards the world-system as a whole when they state: “the possibilities of transforming that peripheral role might be there at a later stage (as for other peripheral zones), but mobility within the world-economy of one zone has always been at the expense of counter-movement of other zones” (Wallerstein; Decdeli, Kasaba 1987, p.97)

over the surplus (and capital) they themselves created, they are not only kept in a subordinate position but also out of the history (of capital).

Thus, the political sense of reality implicit in Keyder's account as an instance of world-systems theory more generally, is one that situates politics in relations between the dominant. Although this form of politics in turn relies on the relations of exploitation and domination of the productive classes, it is presented as the only form that makes history and determines the lives of people.

CHAPTER IV: POWER POLITICS AS THE DYNAMIC OF “SOCIAL HISTORY”

This chapter turns to an analysis of an example of social history, which, in contrast to the studies discussed, aims to include the lives of non-elite people into its historical narrative. As post-structuralist and post-colonial critiques have highlighted, the frequent exclusion of such people is due to Eurocentric perspectives on what or who constitutes a historical subject⁵⁵. In response to such critiques, recent historical studies have attempted to represent multiple subjectivities and take into account social spheres other than macro-economic relations and the political sphere constituted through the state.

This chapter examines how such social history constructs historical subjects and change on the basis of the book *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*⁵⁶ by Donald Quataert (2000), who is one of the leading figures in initiating social historical studies in Ottoman historiography. His works mostly concentrate on labor history and detailed discussions of particular subjects (1993, 1994, 2006). In this chapter, however, I discuss his textbook style study on the Ottoman Empire as a means to capture the sense of political reality that emerges when social history is brought together with an analysis of the macro-processes usually seen to constitute a modernization process. Quataert himself however aims to avoid writing a modernizationist historiography in a heterodox approach directed at both a state-centered and a teleological reading of Ottoman history.

⁵⁵ See Adams, J., Clemens, S.C. & Orloff, S. (2005) for a review of such recent critiques.

⁵⁶ As this chapter rests on an analysis of this book, I will only give the page numbers in referencing it.

The book relies on a clear distinction between macro-history, which includes the overall transformations of the economic and political system of the Ottoman Empire through power struggles (chapters 2-6), and a social history part, which focuses on the effects of those macro-processes on non-elite people (chapter 7) and on the latter's social and cultural lives (chapter 8). I follow this separation in the organization of this chapter. The main argument established in the following is that Quataert generalizes the sense of political reality underlying his analysis of macro-processes, as history of capital and power, to all of social reality, as becomes apparent in the way in which he includes the non-elite to this history.

In the following, I first present two aspects of Quataert's work that constitute its heterodox character: how his critiques of state-centered and of teleological forms of history writing shape his own approach to the study of the late Ottoman Empire. I then present a conceptual framework based largely on Foucault's understanding of power that will allow us in the following sections to render his sense of political reality explicit. In the second section, I discuss his narrative of relations of power in inter-state and intra-state relations of struggle that are seen to drive history. I argue that he relies on an understanding of the political that is based on power politics in which agents devise strategies, based on different forms of capital, with the aim of maintaining or enhancing their power positions. He describes the shift from the "pre-modern" to the "modern" period as one in which the "toolkit" for such strategies and the exercise of power changed. In the third section, I discuss how he includes the non-elite into that history in the form of popular movements and economic, social, and cultural forms of life. I will

highlight three points about the sense of political reality implicit in this narrative. First, in the representation of daily lives, Quataert presents the social lives of the non-elite as a product of history, but not as productive of history. Second, Quataert sees the agency of people set within the constraints of the macro-processes linked to the history of power and capital outlined in the second section. They are seen to react and adapt to these processes; if they are presented as having an impact on macro-processes, this is an impact of reinforcement of their logic. Third, in the few cases in which the non-elite is presented as having an effect on the history of the empire, this is in the form of popular movements that adhere to the logic of capital and power central to his discussion of the inter-and intra-state relations of struggle. I thus conclude that the limits of the sense of political reality in Quataert's narrative are set by an understanding of the political as power politics that he generalizes to all of history and social life.

I. A Non-Teleological Social History: Heterodoxy and its Limits

The heterodox character of Quataert's work stems from his critique of modernizationist historiography of the Ottoman Empire as a teleological one (writing the history of the Ottoman Empire from the perspective of the Republic of Turkey) and from his aim to include social groups other than the elite into his history writing in a critique of state-centered historiography. I will in the following discuss these two aspects of his work, and then outline a conceptual framework that allows capturing the sense of political reality implicit in his narrative, which also constitutes the limit of this heterodoxy.

I.1 A Non-teleological History of the Ottoman Empire

Quataert explicitly aims to avoid writing a modernizationist historiography, an aim that he sees as relevant in light of the fact that Lewis, one of the leading scholars in this vein, is still influential today. Quataert, in critique of such historiographies, wants to present a new way of approaching European and Ottoman history in two ways: first, by treating Ottoman history as a part of European and global history, not as the history of Turkey (a critique of teleological history where the Ottoman Empire produces the Turkish nation-state) and second, by identifying and showing the significance of multiple subjects, not only the state elite or the European powers, in the making of this history (a critique of the state-centered perspectives in Ottoman history).

Quataert's first critical intervention targets those who see the Ottoman Empire and Turkey as "synonymous entities" (2003, p.16). The aim of the studies discussed in previous chapters is to tell the history of modern Turkey, and they include Ottoman history only in its relation to the latter. This perspective, as both Keyder and Zürcher confirm (or confess) for their own studies, narrows down their scope of analysis (Keyder, 1987, p.4; Zürcher, 2004, p.6). Although they acknowledge that this perspective implicitly carries a teleological understanding, they justify it with their aim to study *Turkey*. Quataert tries to overcome this bias by examining in his study the late period of the Ottoman Empire (1700-1922) without focusing just on those historical processes that are considered relevant to the formation of Turkey.

Quataert points out that the teleological approach had two consequences that have inhibited an understanding of the Ottoman state and society. First, in this perspective, the Ottoman Empire analyzed is limited to the geography of the Turkish Republic today (the Anatolian geography), which is then however treated as representing the whole empire (2003, p.17). In this way, the Balkan and Arab provinces, which were significant in Ottoman system, are not taken into account. Second, since such teleological studies aim to understand the formation of modern Turkey, they focus mostly on the Westernization reforms of the Ottoman state elite that are seen as the roots of modern Turkey, and exclude all the other “Ottoman experiences” that are not immediately connected to this (Quataert, 2003, p.16).

On the basis of this critique, Quataert does not limit Ottoman history to the geography of contemporary Turkey and he does not narrate this history as the sets of transformations towards modern Turkey. Instead, as he makes explicit in the first chapter of the book called “Why study Ottoman history,” he shows the importance of this historiography as a part of European and world history, not as the past of modern Turkey (p.1-11). In this way, he not only avoids reading history teleologically towards the formation of a nation state, but also locates the formation of Turkey, as a national unit, in this wider spectrum of global and local relations and processes. This constitutes a main feature of the heterodoxy of Quataert’s study that produces quite a different interpretation of historical processes if compared to Lewis or Zürcher. For instance, he does not interpret the so-called modernization reforms as steps towards the formation of modern Turkey, but as actions of the ruling elite to maintain power. Further, he does not interpret these reforms

as an imitation of the West (which constitutes the implicit model of the future in the other approaches), but only as means for the survival of the state. In contrast to a present-centered view that evaluates historical conditions through the normative systems of present (as we have seen in Zürcher very clearly), he aims to understand the historical conditions in terms of the patterns of action that constituted the limits of action at that time.

I.2 Critique of State-Centered Historiography and Inclusion of Multiple Subjects

In his critique of state-centered historiography, Quataert points out two of its biases: First, he argues, “change” as well as “stagnation” was explained through a focus on the state and to the neglect of most other social actors (2003, p.17). In particular, second, non-elite groups of people such as peasants and artisans, as well as women, were excluded from this history (ibid, p.17-18). Thus he asserts that “normative notions,” linked to a state-centered perspective, are still important in Ottoman history. These consist in, first, adopting “the state’s vision of itself, of society, and of the various social and economic groups and organizations (ibid, p.18), and second, an emphasis on “top-down change” that reduces the dynamics of change to the reforms by the state-elite, while all other forms of change in social, economic, political and cultural spheres are seen as the product of these (ibid).

In contrast to these biases, he therefore outlines a research agenda that includes non-elite people into narratives of macro history.⁵⁷ The inclusion of different social groups further affects how the history of the elite is written, as they are now seen not only as exercising power from above but as being affected themselves in their interaction with such non-elite groups. In particular, he mentions the importance of including women not just in “women’s history,” but “normalizing” them in analyses of themes ranging from consumption patterns to politics (ibid, p.18-19). He also critiques the continued marginalization of labor history as well as of studies that describe the daily lives of peasants rather than their role, from a government perspective, as “quiescent or rebellious subjects” (ibid, p. 19), and further questions the existing scholarship on the Armenian community in the late Ottoman period (ibid, p.20).

I.3 A Conceptual Framework to Capture Sense of Political Reality

Quataert’s critique of the teleological and state-centered biases underlying the modernization perspective leads him to a perspective that includes multiple agents, seen as acting within the limits of patterns of practice at that given time, into the making of history. “Macro-processes” such as those related to the emergence of capitalism, imperial states and nation-states, or to technological changes – central to modernization historiographies – appear in this narrative as transformations in economic, political, social

⁵⁷ He observes two factors in the historical context of the 1960s led to the emergence of history from below: First, he argues that the “democratization of university” during this period led to a heterogeneity in the student composition in terms of class, ethnicity and gender. Second, he states the civil rights movements and anti-war campaign in the US during this period produced a larger “concern for social justice.” As a consequence, he says “[m]any apprentice historians turned to the study of the oppressed and the weak and sought to tell the story of their lives” (1993, p.ix). My dissertation while emerging from similar (heterodox) concerns, questions further to what extent the “stories” of non-elite people are integrated to such historiography due to perception of change and politics.

relations that are presented not as structures, but as “trends” and “patterns” that provide the conditions for historical action.

As we will see, Quataert’s narrative of historical action focuses on the dynamics of power relations within the constraints of historical conditions. Overall, his understanding of the time period of the late Ottoman Empire seems to fit squarely into a Foucauldian approach to modernity that sees it as characterized by a shift in the organization of power from one of “sovereignty” to “governmentality.” As Quataert states for the period he analyses (1683-1798): “The political structure [of the Ottoman Empire] continued to evolve steadily, taking new forms (...). Central rule continued in a new and more disguised fashion as negotiation more frequently than command came to assure obedience” (p.37). As shown in detail in the next section, the characterization of this transformation goes hand in hand in Quataert’s narrative with a shift in emphasis from power struggles between the elite (following the logic of power politics) to state-society relations (entailing a more governmental relation, though in the ultimate service of power politics).⁵⁸

Though Quataert does not reference Foucault, the latter’s theoretical framework on power and action, when combined with Bourdieu’s theory of the field of power, allows us to render explicit the implicit sense of political reality in Quataert’s historiography. In the remainder of this subsection, I outline how these theoretical frameworks can be made

⁵⁸ While Quataert does not reference Foucault explicitly, he critiques historiography that lacks theory (2003, p. 17), and is influenced overall by post-structuralist and post-colonial theory.

applicable to an analysis of Quataert. I will then turn to such an analysis in the subsequent chapters.

There are two aspects to Foucault's understanding of power that are particularly relevant to understand Quataert's sense of political reality. First, Foucault sees power not as a property to be owned, but as a "relationship of power between partners, individuals or collectives: it is a way of in which certain actions modify others" (1983, p.219). These actions however take place within particular constraints. As he clarifies: "Power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures" (ibid). Quataert's historical narrative, as we will see, is centrally concerned with "action upon action" (ibid, p.220) of particular historical agents involved in power struggles within particular historical conditions and constraints. Quataert, in large part of the book, focuses on power relations that have hardened into adversarial relations of struggle (cmp. ibid, p.225), although in his analysis of the nineteenth century state, he also implies the exercise of "disciplinary" and "governmentalized" (cmp. ibid, p224; Foucault, 1991) forms of power.

Second, Foucault has argued that one can "interpret the mechanisms brought into play in power relations in terms of strategies" (1983, p. 225). He differentiates between three usages of the term. First, it can refer to "means employed to attain a certain end" (ibid, p. 224) and thus entails means-end rationality. Second, it can designate a way of taking the possible actions of others into account, assuming that they do the same, and orienting one's action according to that. Or, third, it can refer to the "means destined to obtain

victory” (ibid, p. 225) by making the opponent give up the struggle. All of these meanings of strategies can refer to the means adopted in situations of confrontation (ibid). Quataert explicitly outlines the strategies that different historical agents on the inter- and intra-state levels used to maintain or enhance their power positions in situations of struggle. In devising and implementing such strategies, they draw in his narrative on particular “means” of economic, political, social, or symbolic nature.

This view of power as a relational practice in which strategies are devised to change or maintain these power relations on the basis of particular resources or means clearly links to Bourdieu’s definition of the “field of power”:

The field of power is a field of forces structurally determined by the state of the relations of power among forms of power, or different forms of capital. It is also, and inseparably, a field of power struggles among the holders of different forms of power, a gaming space in which those agents and institutions possessing enough specific capital to be able to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields confront each other using strategies aimed at preserving or transforming these relations of power. (1996, pp.264-265)

Thus, the field of power is a field of relations in which power struggles are fought out on the basis of and for particular forms of capital with the ultimate aim of “preserving” or “transforming” the relations in the field.

Like in Bourdieu, “capital” in Quataert’s account is multiple (though he does not use the term “capital” himself): economic, political, social, symbolic. This distinguishes his approach from the perspective of Keyder, who focuses predominantly on economic and political capital. The very focus on capital and power relations in turn differentiates his view from Zürcher, who observed the effects of power, but not its dynamics.

In the following section, I will show how an understanding of politics that implicitly corresponds to Bourdieu's theory of the field of power, structures Quataert's historical narrative of the relations of struggle on inter- and intra-state levels.

II. Power Politics in the Inter-State System

II.1 Historical Conditions/ Patterns

Quataert, like the other historians of the Ottoman Empire, observes the most significant change in the eighteenth century for the empire in its "military defeats and territorial contraction" (p.37). However, instead of interpreting these as a decline of a traditional system, as Lewis did, he highlights two factors that refer to a shifting balance of power in economic and political terms. These are first, new developments in military technology on part of the European powers (based on their growing economic wealth) with which Ottoman military technology could not compete (p.37-8), and second, the growing power of European states due to centralization (in the form of absolute monarchies) (p.38). However, Quataert also points out that the loss of territories by the Ottomans could have been greater if it had not been for the competition between European states, which resulted in attempts by European diplomats to prevent concession to other European states. This in turn gave "the defeated Ottomans a wedge they employed to retain lands that otherwise would have been lost" (ibid). As this last example in relation to the previous points shows, Quataert adopts a perspective in which he describes how particular agents operate to maximize their interest within the constraints of a changing historical context characterized by a shift in the balance of power.

As Quataert implies, the possibilities for action of the Ottoman ruling elite became more circumscribed in the nineteenth century by the further increasing power of the European powers and by their imperial strategies. The process of territorial contraction accelerated and the successes of national movements and the rivalries and alliances among the European imperial powers gave shape to the Ottoman map. Quataert observes that the only space of action left to the Ottoman state elite consisted of diplomatic activities, due to their military and economic weakness in comparison to European powers, which set them the limits for action. Again, Quataert highlights how the different agents in intra-state relations patterned by particular historical conditions (defined through the relative absence or lack of particular types of economic, technological, and political capital in the hands of the relevant agents) adopt strategies as a means to retain power.

II.2 *Realpolitik* in Inter-State Relations

Quataert describes the pattern of politics in the inter-state level as one of *Realpolitik*, in which each agent pursues his own interest through strategies of confrontation. Power relations here followed a general pattern. Power struggles in the form of war of the Ottoman state with Russia and with local notables (in particular Muhammad Ali Pasha) as well in the form of local uprisings internal to the Empire, which threatened the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, sparked the intervention of European powers who were fearful of a weakened empire (and strengthened Russia) that would change the balance of power in Europe. Quataert summarizes this pattern in the case of the Balkans as follows:

Often a local revolt would meet success or the Russians would drive very deep into the southern Balkans. But then a troubled international community, fearful of Ottoman disintegration or Russian success, would convene a gathering, undo the worst results but allow some losses to ensue. Thus, the

empire retained its integrity, avoiding a world war of the Ottoman succession, but Russia was placated with some gains (p.56).

In the case of the threat that Muhammad Ali Pasha, governor of Egypt, posed to the Ottoman central state in 1832, Russia, the long-term enemy of the Ottoman Empire, supported the Ottoman army (p.58). Again, this was done out of self-interest, as Quataert argues that the Russians feared “a strong new dynasty leading a powerful state” (p.58) as their geographical neighbor. Quataert observes in this event the success of the diplomats as well, while the armies lost, it was the diplomats who had saved the state (p.81). In a succeeding war between Muhammad Ali Pasha and the Ottoman state, the European powers - “a coalition of Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia” (p.58) – intervened in favor of the central state, for the same reasons as previously Russia. According to Quataert, it was obvious that the Western powers did not allow the emergence of a powerful state in that region. “Although he may had the power to do so, Muhammad Ali, did not become the master of the Middle East, in significant measure because the European states would not allow it” (ibid).

The European powers were particularly intent to prevent the potential creation of a “gigantic zone of Russian puppet states in the Balkans reaching to the Aegean Sea itself” (p.59). They intervened in the aftermath of the Russian-Ottoman war in 1877-1878, which, so Quataert, was devastating for the Ottoman Empire. With the diplomatic activities leading up to the Treaty of Berlin, Quataert notes, the European states proved their power in “drawing lines on maps and deciding the fate of peoples and nations with seeming impunity” (ibid).

Foucault's understanding of the exercise of power as "a set of actions upon other actions" (1983, p. 220) is clearly illustrated here in a context of "power struggles" where power relations have hardened into adversarial relations. In particular the Europeans were able to "govern" (which Foucault presents as a model for how to think power) in the sense of being able to "structure the possible field of action of others" (ibid, p.221). However, their actions were also responding to actions of others; that is, they were sparked by power struggles in the region and the possible loss of power of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the relation he describes is not one of domination, but of confrontation. The rivals to the Ottoman Empire to be contained by them could also realize some of their interests: Muhammad Ali remained governor of Egypt, Russia realized some of its territorial aims, while the Ottoman state lost much of its lands without however being entirely dissolved. Exactly the continuation of this pattern according to the interests of the European powers sustains the relation of power. This situation is always under the threat of those who have certain capacities of action relying on their military and economic capital.

In terms of the strategies used in these relations of confrontation, Quataert highlights that the Ottomans acquired new "toolkits" fully available in the nineteenth century, a central element of which was diplomacy. I will discuss it in the following as an example of changing strategies of confrontation.

II.3 Diplomacy as example of changing strategies of confrontation

Quataert interprets the formation of diplomatic institutions as a change in the tool kit of inter-state politics available to the Ottoman state with a change of the patterns of power

relations due to the losses of the Ottoman Empire. Although diplomatic activities did take place on part of the Ottoman Empire before the nineteenth century, he argues, these were non-continuous (not institutionalized) and consisted of “unilaterally granted peace and trade concessions” by the will of the sultan (p.78).⁵⁹ In contrast, “modern diplomacy” operates on a continuous and reciprocal basis. In this new form of diplomacy, Quataert states, “no matter how weak or strong, each state is equal to the next when they meet on matters of international relations” (p.80).

Modern diplomacy, Quataert posits, developed in the late Renaissance period in the Italian peninsula from where it “spread to West and central Europe by the time of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and thereafter to the rest of the world (p.79-80). It was only full institutionalized in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, which he considers “relatively late” (p.77). Quataert explains the eventual development of modern diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire with Sultans Selim III and Mahmut II with on the one hand “long-term evolutionary patterns” in which discontinuous and unilateral relations were made continuous and reciprocal. On the other hand, he emphasizes agency in form of strategic decision, when Mahmut II established a diplomatic apparatus for the embassies and the Foreign Ministry in response to the context of the military failure of the late 1820s, early 1830s when “only diplomacy remained to save the state” (p. 81).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Again, he links these activities to a historical condition where relations between states were based on the assumption of “permanent war” (p.78).

⁶⁰ The diplomatic services that Selim III aimed to establish on the basis of permanent embassies in Europe were suspended in the 1820s (p. 81)

Quataert sees the emergence of this form of diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire “with the decline in Ottoman military power” and observes that “it became an important tool in the Ottoman arsenal of survival” in the long nineteenth century (p.80). In this way, unlike Lewis and Zürcher, he does not see the establishment of embassies, of the Translation Room, or of the Foreign Ministry as an imitation of Western institutions in a modernization process that would produce the cadres and reforms of modern Turkey. Instead, he interprets these institutions as a reaction to the changing conditions (game) of politics and the attempts of the Ottoman ruling elite to cope with their weakening position.

III. Power Politics in the Intra-Elite Relations

III.1 Historical Conditions / Patterns

Quataert observes that, while the Ottoman state was weakened in inter-state relations, it was actually growing stronger at the domestic level in particular in the nineteenth century.

As he states:

The central state employed the expanding bureaucracy and military – along with a host of other new technologies such as the telegraph, railroads, and photography – to control weaken, or destroy domestic rivals (...). There is no doubt that the late nineteenth-century central state exerted more power over its subjects and competing domestic power clusters than ever before in Ottoman history. The Janissaries were destroyed and the guilds badly weakened and (...) local notables in Anatolia and the Arab lands did not raise their hands against the state. Moreover, in the 1830s, state surveillance systems attained new levels of intrusiveness. Networks of spies, at least in Istanbul, began systematically reporting to state agencies on all manner of conversations among the general public. On the other hand, centralization was hardly a process of mere domination by the capital over the provinces. Thus, Istanbul, while extending itself more deeply into provincial politics, economics, and society, did so through compromises with local groups and elites. (p.63-4)

As this quote shows, Quataert sees a strengthened central state vis-à-vis the Janissaries, guilds, local notables, and the public at large through new technologies and forms of rule.

He thus opposes the general view that the central Ottoman state “declined” in the eighteenth century (p.37), but notes that such a view stems from “the international front where the Ottomans indeed were losing fronts and territories” (p.100). He also does not posit a “rupture” with previous “traditional” state and society structures, as is frequently done in modernizationist historiographies. He interprets the changes of the nineteenth century instead as “additional phases in the ongoing transformation of the Ottoman state since the fourteenth century – part of its ongoing effort to acquire, retain, or modify tools in order to control its subjects and defend the frontiers” (pp.61-62). Nevertheless, he states, the “tool-kit” of the nineteenth century state looked quite different from the earlier one (although elements of the previous one continued especially in the relation between notables and central state – see p. 64). He notes among others a starkly increased bureaucracy and an expansion of the state in terms of taking over services previously provided by religious communities (p.62).

Quataert concludes his description of these changes with the comments that the “state continued its evolution from a pre-modern to a modern form” (ibid). In line with this supposed shift from a “pre-modern” to a “modern” form is an emphasis on different kinds of power relations in his narrative. While his discussion of the eighteenth century highlights power struggles within the central elite and between the central and the provincial elites, his focus changes to state-subject and subject-subject relations in the nineteenth century. He further mentions, in a general reference to transformations in the time period of 1683 to 1798, that “[c]entral rule continued in a new and more disguised fashion as *negotiation* more frequently than *command* came to assure obedience” (p.37,

my emphasis). This shift in focus in terms of what kinds of relations of power are relevant in a “pre-modern” versus “modern” state might indicate an implicitly Foucauldian perspective on modernity as characterized by new relations of power and a “governmentalization” of the state (Foucault, 1991, 1995).⁶¹

In the following, I first show his perspective on power relations and strategies based on the toolkit of the eighteenth century, which consists for him in “competitive consumption,” “military forces of the provincial notables,” “vizier and pasha households,” and the “lifetime tax farm” (p.62). I focus here on the two main instances of political struggle in his narrative: the relation between the Palace and the central bureaucracy (vizier and pasha households) and between the central state and the provincial elites. I then turn to his analysis of power strategies in state-subject relations in the nineteenth century.

III.2 Palace versus Central Bureaucracy: Strategies of Distinction

Quataert indicates a shift in the locus of power from the Palace to the central Ottoman bureaucracy (the vizier and pasha households) starting from the mid-seventeenth century, when principles of succession changed (p.92). He notes that “[u]nlike the “slaves of the sultan” who had ruled earlier, these male and female elites did not remain aloof from society but were involved in its economic life through their control of pious foundations and lifetime tax farms and partnership with merchants” (p.43) As with the end of the

⁶¹ The use of the terms “technologies” of governance and “surveillance” in the quote in the beginning of this subsection might further be an indication of this.

territorial expansion of the Empire, “exploitation of existing resources rather than acquisition of new lands” (ibid) became the means to sustain the central state financially, the power of this fraction of the elite which had “administrative and financial skills” (ibid) increased. Thus, what we see in Quataert’s narrative is the increased power of the central bureaucracy on the basis of the economic and cultural capital they commanded. What is further noticeable about Quataert’s analysis is that he does not explain the rise of the bureaucracy as due to a process of modernization (the modernizationist perspective), but in relation to the particular requirements of the state at the time.

Quataert situates the start of a power struggle – the attempt of the sultan to reverse the political hierarchy – at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when “Sultan Mustafa II unsuccessfully sought to overturn this trend [which according to him goes back to at least the mid-17th century] and reconcentrate power in his own hands and that of the palace and the military” (ibid) However, his failure further confirmed the power of the vizier-pasha households and led to the disempowerment of the Sultan. The power struggle however did not end here, as Quataert emphasizes: “As the sultans lost out in the struggle for domestic political supremacy, they sought new tools and techniques for maintaining their political presence” (ibid). Quataert’s sense of political reality as constituted by power struggles where actors, in action upon action and through the use of strategies, seek to reverse relations of power becomes very apparent in this quote. We can call the strategy that he identifies for subsequent Sultans a “strategy of distinction” aimed at enhancing legitimacy and through that to consolidate power. The “subtle means” (p.44) used for that purpose, so Quataert, are particularly apparent in the Tulip era (1718-1730) known as the

time of conspicuous consumption of the Palace. Quataert argues that Sultan Ahmet III and Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha, who was married to Ahmet's daughter,⁶² employed consumption as a "weapon" (p.44). This "new tool" had two purposes: first, it aimed to control the Istanbul ruling elite "in the manner of King Louis, who compelled nobles to live at the Versailles seat of power and join in financially ruinous balls and banquets" (p. *ibid*). Second, consumption was to establish the Sultan and Grand Vizier as "models for emulation," which should establish them at "the social center" and "enhance their political status and legitimacy" (*ibid*). Thus, implicit in this narrative is the view that the Sultan and Grand Vizier forged a strategy in which they employed economic and symbolic capital as a means to achieve political capital. Later sultans tried to achieve the same aim, so Quataert, among others through the means of "clothing laws" which reflected social distinctions on the basis of religion, occupation, and rank, which allowed them to "present themselves as guardians of the boundaries differentiating their subjects, as the enforcers of morality, order, and justice" (*ibid*).⁶³ Here it is the use of limited political capital – the enactment of laws (which contrasts with the lack of power in relation to both the military and the bureaucracy (p.44)) – which allowed the sultans, in Quataert's narrative, to acquire symbolic capital (distinction). The symbolic capital in turn was to reinforce their hold over political capital (their legitimacy as sovereign) and thus to maintain their position in a relation of power and struggle.

⁶² Marrying their daughters to state officials according to Quataert was another strategy used by Sultans to enhance their power - through social capital, as we could add. It allowed them to "maintain alliances and reduced the possibility of rival families emerging." (p.101)

⁶³ Quataert further mentions a variety of other measures, such as ceremonies, events, and public constructions, which were used by Sultans to legitimize their positions at a historical juncture when they "were needed to reign" rather than rule (p.93-99).

III.3. Central State versus Provincial Elites: Strategies of “Negotiation”

Quataert states that the shift in power relations at the center was “paralleled” in the provinces (p.46). He observes:

Overall, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, provincial political power seemed to operate more autonomously of control from the capital. Nearly everywhere the central state became *visibly* less important and local notable families more so in the everyday lives of most persons. Whole sections of the empire fell under the political domination of provincial notable families. (p.46)

The power of some provincial groups, so Quataert, rested on a strategy of acquiring economic and social capital (my terminology) through marriage to women of notable families (who owned properties and administered pious foundations). They could use the “personal power” (or social capital) acquired in this process, Quataert argues, in its “negotiations” with the central state (p.48). The pattern was one of “negotiation” rather than “rebellion,” Quataert emphasizes, due to “mutual need” in economic and legitimacy terms (ibid). Thus, Quataert states, the provincial elites “recognized the sultan and central authority in general, forwarded some taxes to the center and sent troops for imperial wars” (ibid). In turn, they relied on the central state for the legitimation of their power. The central state further “maintained some control in the provinces” without military presence through life-time tax farms, the auctions of which the Istanbul elite controlled, but on the cash payments of which the treasury relied (ibid). Thus, a reliance on the same source of economic capital, together with the earlier reasons mentioned, here resulted in, Quataert argues, a “pattern of negotiation, mutual recognition, and control” (p.49) in the power relations between the Istanbul and provincial elites. Again, it is changing historical conditions, linked to the wars of the late eighteenth century, that for Quataert disturb that pattern. In the context of war, so Quataert, the “notables’ knowledge of and access to local resources” (ibid), they acquired greater power in their relation with the center.

Nevertheless, Quataert argues, although some notables pursued independent political and military aims, this should not be taken to signify an attempt to break with Ottoman central authority (ibid).⁶⁴ This continuity he sees as due to the “ongoing reciprocal and mutually profitable relationship” (p.49). Thus, while the center needed the economic and military capital (“monies, troops, and other services” (ibid) of the local notables, the notables relied on the political, economic, and symbolic capital (arbitration between “competing claims” (ibid), “formal recognition of their political power and access to official revenue sources” (p.50)). This pattern continued into the nineteenth century (p.64, 102), although Quataert now also indicates new efforts by the central state to gain “greater control over day-to-day life in the provinces” (p.102).

In highlighting the sources and strategies used in the power relations between local notables and central state in different historical conjunctures, Quataert is providing a more complex narrative than the one of “decline.” Thus, he shows that while the influence of the central state in the provinces was indeed reduced during this period, this does not signal a decline of central power, but a change in strategies of governing. Furthermore, I have aimed to make explicit in his account how the strategies used in “patterns of negotiation, mutual recognition, and control” involve access to different types of capital both as a means to power and as a stake in power relations.

⁶⁴ He supports this argument by referring to the document signed by the notables and the sultan in 1808, which is interpreted by many historians as the symbol of the peak point of the power of the notables. Quataert acknowledges that this document shows the power of the local elite, but he further points out that the same document also shows that, even when the central power was weak and the notables were powerful, the latter “relied on the central state and the sultan to arbitrate among the provincial elites’ competing claims by conferring formal recognition of their political power and access to official revenue sources. These were “local” Ottomans and, in however disguised a manner, sought to be and were part of an Ottoman system” (pp.49-50)

III.4 State-Subject Struggles

Quataert notes that “the nineteenth century state strove to eliminate intermediating groups –guilds and tribes, Janissaries and religious communities—and bring all subjects under its authority” (p.65). The issues seem to be in this point of Quataert’s narrative however no longer a mere questions of retaining central state power in opposition to its internal rivals.⁶⁵ Indeed, he does not give as any details on these processes of “elimination,” in contrast to the detailed description of adversarial power relations in the eighteenth century. Instead, he emphasizes that, through eliminating these “intermediary groups,” the Ottoman state “sought to radically transform the relationship between itself and its subjects” (p.65). Thus, the Ottoman social and political order should not longer be based on the complex hierarchies between different social groups and on a relation of “common subordination and subjecthood to the monarchical state” (ibid). Instead, he notes, a range of enactments – from clothing laws that now imposed uniformity to uniform systems of taxation and bureaucratic and military service for Christians and Muslims – now aimed at creating equality among (male) Ottomans (p.65-6).

Although Quataert emphasizes the new value of “knowledge of the West” (p.63) for example in the Ottoman bureaucracy, he does not interpret the state attempts to create equal subjects as an imitation of “Western ideals.” Rather, he remains true to his power-centered analysis by pointing out that the Ottoman state pursued equality among its

⁶⁵ The rivalries in the elites of the central state now disappear from the narrative. Quataert mentions a continuity in the relations between the central state and the provincial notables, but also points at a greater attempt of Sultans Selim III and Mahmut II to gain “control over *day-to-day life* in the provinces” (p.102, my emphasis, see also p. 109), which again seems to point at a change in where he locates power relations in the nineteenth century.

subjects for self-interested reasons. First, he argues, the French Revolution showed that armies based on universal conscription meant “vastly enhanced military and political strength” (p. 67) but that it required the granting of universal rights to men (ibid). Second, rendering Ottoman Christians “equal” also meant tying them to the Ottoman Empire as subjects that had been economically very successful as they had to rely on trade in lack of job prospects in the state bureaucracy and as they were protégés of European merchants (p. 68). Lastly, the Ottoman state attempted to “retain the loyalty” of Ottoman Christians in the Balkan region of the Ottoman Empire, which had been “courted” by Russia, the Habsburg Empire, and separatist movements (ibid). Thus, again, the state’s “granting” of equality can be understood in Quataert’s perspective as a strategy that ultimately aimed at maintaining state power.

Overall, Quataert conveys an image in his narrative on the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire of a state reaching deeper into society in at least three ways (thus invoking a sense of “governmentality” and “disciplinary power”). First, there is the fact that the state takes over services previously provided by religious communities, such as education, soup kitchens, orphanages, or hospices (p. 62). Second, he discusses, as outlined above, the attempt to restructure social relations along lines of “equality” but to serve the state’s interests. Lastly, he mentions in an only cursory fashion the “new levels of intrusiveness” of “state surveillance systems,” as spies “began systematically reporting to state agencies on all manner of conversations among the general public” (p.63). Although his emphasis on governmental relations as power relations reaching deep into social relations appears Foucauldian, he combines this with his continued vision of *Realpolitik* when outlining the

“reasons of state” for such measures (as discussed above). That Quataert does not have a sense of the Ottoman state as working only through “productive” (rather than “repressive”) power becomes particularly clear in his discussion of the violent way in which nationalist movements were suppressed (which however, he argues, needs to be seen in context of the violent character of nation-state formation more generally) (p.69).

III.5. The Paradox of the State

As this section has aimed to show, Quataert relies on an understanding of power politics where different agents (social groups and states), within the conditions and constraints of the historical conjuncture within which they find themselves, devise strategies in which they draw on multiple forms of capital in order to maintain or improve their position in power relations. Although his emphasis shifts from adversarial relations in the inter-state and intra-state relations to governmental power relations in state-society relations, the overall rationale of action in the aim of maintaining or enhancing power in particular as regards *the state* remains in his narrative. Thus, Quataert generally narrates the different power struggles outlined here from the perspective of a possible or actual threat to the central state and within the central state to the Palace. The strong presence of the Ottoman state, states in general, and ruling elite in Quataert’s portrayal of the Ottoman Empire presents us with a puzzle: how can we explain this centrality in the narrative by a social historian who explicitly criticized state-centered historiography?

IV. The Actions of the Non-Elite

In this section, my aim is to see how non-elite people are included in Quataert's history. I do not use the terms elite and non-elite in reference to persons but, informed by a Marxist tradition, as designating social roles. In this section, I show that the roles of the elite/dominant classes/powers (which as we have seen were defined by strategies of confrontation in relations of power) set the limits for an understanding of the roles of the non-elites even in this social history. It thus poses the question whether it is possible from this perspective to see a form of politics that differs from the power politics of the elites but can nevertheless produce a dynamic of historical change. However, although Quataert dedicated his career to the writing of social history, and labor history in particular, the following discussion shows that in his narrative on the late Ottoman Empire, non-elite groups remain located at the peripheries of historical reality.⁶⁶ This is despite Quataert's statement that "history is not merely about leaders and politics but also the masses of people and their everyday lives" (p.111). Indeed, Quataert includes a representation of their lives into his narrative. However, as this section shows, the role of people in shaping history is limited in his account. I will show the sense of political reality that underlies his inclusion of non-elite people into history in three steps. First, I discuss his view of popular movements as the most apparent way in which non-elite politics figures in his narrative. Then I move to his social history, highlighting first how he narrates the action

⁶⁶ The non-elite is thus discussed in chapters dedicated to that purpose at the end of the book, rather than included throughout in his historical narrative of change. Chapter seven, called *The Ottoman economy: population, transportation, trade, agriculture and manufacturing* is about the effects of macro processes on the lives of people. Chapter eight, called *Ottoman society and popular culture*, the other chapter that he dedicates to non-elite people, is about the cultural and daily life of the people. Non-elite groups are almost non-existent in the larger parts of the book, even in the form of struggle between dominant/ruling classes and the masses (chapters 2-6).

of non-elite as reaction to macro-processes of capital and power and second, how he depicts everyday life when such macro-processes of capital and power are absent from his narrative as a “scenic” picture. Through these examples, I show how he generalizes the understanding of politics analyzed in the second and third sections to all of social history.

IV.1 Popular Movements\Subaltern Studies

Quataert’s discussion of (nationalist) rebellions as well as of the role of the Janissaries situates them at the border between inter-elite and popular struggles. As he remarks about separatist “rebels”:

Seldom, if ever, had the rebels sought to break out of or destroy the Ottoman imperium. There had been revolts but, generally, these had worked within the system, claiming as their goal the rectification of problems within the system, claiming as their goal the rectification of problems within the Ottoman universe, such as the reduction of taxes and better justice. But in the nineteenth century—in the Balkan, Anatolian, and Arab provinces alike—movements emerged that actively sought to separate particular areas from Ottoman rule and establish independent, sovereign states subordinate to no higher political authority. Further, in almost every instance, one or more Great Powers supported these revolts, their assistance indeed was crucial to the success of the rebels’ effort. Thus, the nineteenth century is different in that many of the territorial losses resulted from revolts and rebellions on the part of Ottoman subjects against the suzerain or sovereign. (p.55)

There are a few noteworthy aspects to this quote. First, Quataert locates the emergence and success of nationalist movements in relation to the inter-state level that, as we have shown, is presented by him as constituted by power politics. However, in contrast to the struggles at the inter- and intra-state levels discussed in the previous sections, he does not portray them in much detail in the book, although he does mention above their fundamental effects on the empire. Second, although he characterizes nationalist struggles in the quote above as “rebellions on the part of Ottoman subjects against the suzerain,” he does not actually treat them as popular movements. Instead, he interprets them as “actions of certain groups in the societies who sought economic and/or political privilege that they

believed they could not obtain under Ottoman domination” (p.189-190). Thus, the nationalist rebellions remain within the logics of power politics – and as such are presented as producing social change – rather than presenting an alternative to it.

Quataert’s discussion of the Janissaries follows a similar logic. Throughout the book, the only popular movement that Quataert highlights is constituted by the reactions of the Janissaries to the ruling elite in coalition with other urban populations especially in the eighteenth century (p.139). The Janissaries, who once were the most important part of the Ottoman army in the period of territorial expansion of the empire and who also functioned as urban garrisons, are frequently seen as one of the most visible symbols and reasons of decline in Ottoman military power from the eighteenth century onwards. Quataert, like other historians, points out that they became “militarily ineffectual” (p.45). Instead of being “the terror of its foreign foes” they became “the terror of the sultans” (ibid), as “[t]hey repeatedly made and unmade sultans, appointing or toppling grand viziers and other high officials, sometimes as part of intra-elite struggles” (pp. 45-46). Although the Janissaries thus play a role in his discussion of intra-elite struggles, he nevertheless emphasizes a popular element to their impact on the empire. As Quataert states, during the eighteenth century, when they could no longer live on their declining military salaries, their

primary identity shifted from that of soldiers to civilian wage earners ... they became butchers, bakers, boatmen, porters, and worked in a number of artisanal crafts; many owned coffeehouses. They thus came to represent the interests of the urban productive classes, including corporate guild privilege and economic protectionist policies, and were part and parcel of the urban crowd. (p.45)⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See also the dissertations by Cengiz Kırılı (2000) and Mert Sunar (2006), which have analyzed the changing role of the Janissaries from a military corpus to an urban productive class.

As a consequence of their increasing integration in the urban economic fabric, he states, the “Janissaries began to pass on their elite status” (ibid), and they were now allowed to marry and to live “outside the barracks.” Based on shared interests in an urban context, he notes, “potent popular coalitions [of Janissaries and guildsmen] fought for guild privilege and protection, seeking to maintain prices and restrictive practices” (p.139). He further notes their actual impact on the empire as a “popular militia defending the interests of the people” (p.46) in the form of “[t]errorizing governors and deposing grand viziers and sultans” (p.139) and in sparking, in the eighteenth century, “a golden age of popular revolts in many Ottoman cities when the voice of the street, orchestrated by the Janissaries, was greater than ever before or since in Ottoman history” (p.46). Nevertheless, what we see here again is a political involvement that follows the logic of interest maximization in power politics by a group that, due to its “elite-popular identity,” had the capital to do so.

Quataert’s analysis of the Janissaries as situated in a space between intra-elite struggles and popular interests challenges state-centered and modernizationist historiographies which have categorized Janissaries as “fallen angels – corrupted elite soldiers and elements of the state apparatus run amok” (p.46).

His critical approach can be understood in line with the contributions of Subaltern Studies that aimed to show the autonomy of the “politics of the people” – “subaltern politics” – in differentiating it from the politics of the elite (Guha 1988, p.40). They argued that the exclusion of subaltern politics from elitist historiography on the one hand misrepresents

history and on the other hand reduces the actuality of history to the politics of the elite – which renders subaltern politics invisible. As Guha states:

the involvement of the Indian people in vast numbers ... in nationalist activities and ideas is thus represented as a diversion from a supposedly ‘real’ political process, that is, the grinding away of the wheels of the state apparatus and of elite institutions geared to it, or it is simply credited, as an act of ideological appropriation, to the influence and initiative of the elite themselves. (Guha, 1988, p.39)

As Guha rightly points out here, state-centered perspectives not only distort history, but produce a particular sense of political reality – one that subsumes all politics to the politics of the state. Subaltern Studies further reject the definition of the political from a modernizationist perspective, which categorizes subaltern politics as “traditional” or “pre-political” (Guha 1999). In modernizationist historiography of the Ottoman Empire, as Quataert points out, Janissaries have been portrayed as “corrupted soldiers” who turned into a reactionary force inhibiting modernization reforms for their particular interests. Quataert instead focuses on the form of politics on the part of the Janissaries and popular groups that make it into such historiographies is the politics of revolts (and their suppression by the state). Thus, politics is again located in the confrontation of the state and the popular movements.

This is not a selective perspective particular to Quataert, but rather can be seen as indicative of the Subaltern studies approach more generally. For instance, Guha measures the “failure” of subaltern politics in their inability to “take over” power from the national bourgeoisie in this way to initiate a “struggle for national liberation” against the colonizers:

[t]he initiatives which originated from the domain of subaltern politics were not, on their part, powerful enough to develop the nationalist movement into a full-fledged struggle for national liberation. The working class was still not sufficiently mature in the objective conditions of its social being and in its consciousness as a class-for-itself, nor was it firmly allied with the peasantry. As a result it could do nothing to take over and complete the

mission which the bourgeoisie had failed to realize. The outcome of it all was that the numerous peasant uprisings of the period, some of them massive in scope and rich in anti-colonialist consciousness, waited in vein for a leadership to raise them above localism and generalize them into a nationwide anti-imperialist campaign” (Guha 1988, p.42).

As this quotation clearly shows, political action is here also limited to its manifestation as power politics in struggles with the elite. Success of this political action is again measured by the objective conditions of the field of politics; and as he acknowledges himself, this subaltern politics, alongside the politics of the bourgeoisie, failed to overcome colonialism (ibid, p.43). This failure could be read as another historical evidence for the inability of the “not-yet modernized” to transform history; another evidence of why they are not-yet modern⁶⁸. The recognition of this failure is the recognition of the objective structures of the political field as the only form of politics. We perceive the objective conditions of this field as the natural realm of politics in which the powerful dominates the less powerful, which effectively forecloses the success of a subaltern politics.

As we will see, in Quataert’s main chapters on the lives of the non-elite, no such alternative can emerge either.

IV.2 Reacting and Adapting to Macro-Processes

One side of Quataert’s aim to write the history of the non-elite is reflected in his narrative on “how people in the Ottoman Empire made their livings and how these patterns

⁶⁸ See Chakrabarty’s discussion of “historicism as a transition narrative” which narrates the history of non-West as a history of failure (2000, pp.31-32).

changed over time” (p.111).⁶⁹ Although, unlike Keyder, he does not focus on an analysis of economic relations, I show in this section that Quataert locates the life patterns of the non-elite in the context of macro-processes over which they have no control. In this way, he sets their agency within the limits of *reaction* to such larger processes.

As Talal Asad has argued, arguments on agency frequently see it as intrinsically linked to an autonomous subject defined through consciousness. As Asad criticizes, while people of course have consciousness, action cannot be reduced to it (1993, p.15-16). He argues that “beyond a certain point, an act no longer belongs exclusively to its initiator” (ibid, p.15) and that therefore one needs to see the “*structures* of possible actions” (ibid, emphasis is his) which are produced by the “objective distribution of goods that allows or precludes certain options” (ibid). This view, he states, provides a different approach than the frequent one taken on the basis of the identification of action with a subject defined through consciousness, which sees “consent and repression [as] the two basic conditions of political domination” (ibid). As he puts it very clearly in one of his interviews: “The fact is that there are certain situations in which you simply have no options but to do certain kinds of things. By this I don't mean that you are forced to, but simply that this is what the options are; or at least the "force" is not a matter of oppression but of circumstance.”¹

⁶⁹ In contrast to Quataert's cursory analysis of non-elite politics as discussed in the previous section, his actual social history focuses on how “Ottoman subjects earned livelihoods in the various sectors of the economy” (p.111) on the one hand and on “social organization, popular culture, ... forms of sociability and... various forms of meaning” (p.142) in Ottoman society on the other hand.

While Quataert does not rely on a distinction of agency and subject in his narrative, I read his text from Asad's perspective to identify which "possible actions" he is able to show on the basis of his identification of the structures produced by macro processes. Thus, my reading of Quataert does not aim to highlight a lack of "agency" in his narrative – he sure is giving a more sophisticated account of it than most Ottoman historiographies. Instead, I want to analyze how his formulation of the structures (limited only to those made by capital/power) shows the limits of agency only in relation to them. Hence, the purpose is not to show how agency is limited according to these structural constraints, but how agency is limited in so far as it adopts or resists *only to these structures*.

I will illustrate this more general pattern in Quataert's depiction of the non-elite through the example of agriculture, which, Quataert states, which constituted the most significant sector of economic production in the empire and the livelihood for the "bulk of the population" in the form of subsistence agriculture (p.130). In opposition to mainstream understandings of a peasant society as simple, monolithic, and based merely on cultivation, Quataert points out that "cultivator families drew their livelihoods from a complex set of different economic activities and not merely from growing crops" (ibid), which also included migration for work to the cities.

Quataert posits that Ottoman peasant society has kept its main characteristics until 1900 (p.130), though he notes major transformations that dramatically changed the size of cultivated lands and increased productivity in the nineteenth century. First, Quataert notes that the sedentarization of nomads through programs of the central state played a

significant role in the expansion of cultivated lands. Quataert points out that the nomads played a crucial role in the Ottoman economy by raising animals and in transportation. However, he indicates that “[f]or the state, nomads were hard to control and a political headache, and long standing state pacification programs thus acquired new force in the nineteenth century” (p.131). State policies succeeded in sedentarizing the nomads only after acquiring new techniques of control and thereby increasing its power over society in the nineteenth century more generally (as discussed in the previous section). As a consequence of this state action, he observes, the nomads adapted to the new conditions by turning into cultivators like the majority of the population, increasing the total amount of cultivated lands (ibid). Here, the agency of the non-elite is shaped by the state’s capacity to “govern,” that is, by its capacity to “structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 1983, p.221) As a consequence of that, Quataert shows how the nomads react within the conditions set by the state, turning to cultivation as the only option left to them.

The second cause for transformation in rural livelihoods that Quataert identifies is the commercialization of agriculture resulting from new technologies in agricultural transportation that increased and in transportation that eased integration into markets (p. 119-126, 133). He identifies “three engines” of the resulting process of involving peasants in the market, expanding cultivated lands and increasing productivity, on the level of the market itself (p.131). First, he underlines the significance of the increasing demand of products both at the domestic and the international level. Second, he notes that a new taxation system relied more on payment in cash rather than in kind, as a consequence of

which peasants had to produce more for the market. While these two “engines” constitute factors external to the peasants – and constituted by a history of capital and power – to which they react and adapt, Quataert asserts that the third engine of this transformation was driven by the changing consumption patterns and increasing demands of consumer goods among the rural population. He notes that the peasants “worked harder than they had previously, not merely because of cash taxes but because of their own wants for more consumer goods” (p. 132). Thus, peasants here appear as agents that have an impact on macro-processes, as their actions constitute one of the “engines” of commercialization. However, there are two limits to this perspective, and reality. First, the action of the peasants is presented here as following a “logic of practice” (in Bourdieu’s sense, 1990) oriented towards the access of forms of capital – the peasants “work harder” in order to acquire more goods for consumption. Thus, what is presented as agency here constitutes a reformulation of the modernization perspective, as discussed throughout this dissertation, on an individual level. The point is here not to challenge that this description by Quataert is not based on historical reality, but rather to point out at a potential subsumption of all of history under the logic of capital now under the mantle of social history. Second, the agency of the peasants as presented here cannot constitute an alternative to the existing system, but rather contributes to pushing its dynamics along. Their practice, taking place according to the logic of capital, fired the engines of the process of commercialization based on the logic of capital.

As both examples show, the conditions for the production of livelihoods in Quataert’s narrative are set by macro-processes of capital and power. Action here takes the form of

reaction to such larger processes, an action however that remains within the logic of the system rather than producing an alternative to it. Moving to Quataert's depiction of everyday lives, we note in the following sub-section that, when the macro-processes of capital and power do not seem to play a role in the lives of people, his narrative turns into a scenic view that no longer shows dynamics of history.

IV.3 A Scenic View of Everyday Lives

In a critique of mainstream approaches in historiography that portray Ottoman society as defined predominantly through religious identities⁷⁰ and as stagnant,⁷¹ Quataert's presentation of Ottoman society and the non-elite is one of heterogeneous and dynamic social identities and relations. He gives this picture through a rendering of themes such as different occupations in the Ottoman Empire, forms of housing, the organization of public spaces, celebration rituals of holidays, and rates of literacy. He aims here to give a

⁷⁰ He emphasizes that people in the Ottoman Empire had multiple identities and in this way corrects a bias that sees "pre-modern" societies and individuals as characterized by religion only in opposition to "modern" societies in which religion is seen as only one aspect of social identity. Thus, he also points at the danger of using social categories (such as "the *ulema*"), as if they corresponded to an existing homogeneous social group. As an example, he points out that being a religious scholar, a member of *ulema*, in Istanbul or in Cairo, with a high education, is completely different from being such in other places, where they are almost illiterate (p.142-173).

⁷¹ Quataert's presentation of social history challenges views that present "pre-modern agricultural society" as a stagnant one in which each individual's position is pre-determined and can never change, in contrast to the mobility allowed in "modern" societies. In opposition to such views, Quataert shows the prevalence of patterns of social mobility in the Ottoman Empire in particular through non-elite persons acquiring positions in the state apparatus. He says that "[u]ntil the eighteenth century, social mobility mainly occurred via the state apparatus. In earlier years, until perhaps the mid seventeenth century, the expansion of the empire has offered enormous opportunities for advancement" (p.144). One pattern of social mobility, according to Quataert, was the *devşirme* system. In this system, "the best and brightest" children are selected from, mostly Christian, villages and raised in the "palace school system" to be employed in the military and administrative system (p.30-31). In this way, Quataert indicates, "thousands of Christian peasants' sons rose to high positions of military and political power, enabling the acquisition of wealth and prestige" (p.144). He further adds that many "poor Turkish nomads" also experienced upward mobility by achieving highest positions in the army and state institutions. He observes the decline in this form of mobility when the territorial expansion slows down. However, with the eighteenth century he observes another form of mobility by the emergence of new merchant classes and tax farmers. The new forms of accumulation wealth as he observes led to upward mobility of these groups.

representation of how people lived, and how such patterns changed over time. What is noticeable however in his account is that, while social relations and practices are changing over time, they do not themselves produce change. As we will see, the non-elite are not presented as producing history through the way they live their everyday lives.

Let me illustrate the style and content of his narrative on cultural and social themes in the book first, through the example of holidays in the Ottoman Empire, by listing in a cursory manner what he describes. He first mentions the multiplicity of both religious and non-religious holidays (official holidays, weddings, circumcision) and then describes Ramadan and the subsequent two-day long *Şeker Bayramı* as the most significant one of these holidays, that was observed by a variety of people and changed their daily routines. His narration here focuses on the activities of different groups of people (such as the sultan, the grand vizier, the poor, masters, servants, non-Muslim), and the narration of the kinds of activities that took place (such as public amusements, home visits, increasing religious activities, inter-communal relations) (p.165-167).

The narrative pattern outlined above can be observed in other descriptions of aspects and sites of daily life as well: he talks about the differentiation of activities along lines of gender, religion, social/class position, about the character and organization of private (such as types of houses in different regions) and public spaces (such as coffee houses and bath houses), and about the activities associated with different times of the year (such as in the case of the holidays). Thus, he looks at the temporal rhythms and spatial

patterns within which people's everyday lives take place, paying attention to "multiple identities" and differentiation.

This narration style provides us with a general overview over daily life in the late Ottoman Empire which allows us to *visualize* it as a scene (maybe not coincidentally, fourteen out of the nineteen pictures included in the book are to be found in this chapter on society and culture). In this description of daily life, power relations are not at the center of his narrative at all. Knowing Quataert's theoretical tendencies from earlier sections, we could assume that he relies on an understanding of the diffusion of power in daily life; however, this is not presented explicitly. Power relations thus do not appear as the defining features of these activities in his story. Moreover, in his narrative, the change of the patterns of these activities does not emerge from the dynamics of daily forms of power. Instead, as analyzed in more detail in the previous subsection, he sees the sources of change as stemming from macro-processes (such as changes in consumption due to changing patterns of trade and cultural contact) and the actions of the state (such as in the case of clothing laws or the changing supervision on fasting during the Ramadan) (p.143-168). As a consequence, it appears as if there is no "dynamic" to daily life that produces history unless there is a relation of power and/or capital.

We see thus an apparent shift in Quataert's narration style when power relations are *not* located at the center of social relations. First, it turns into a descriptive style giving a "scenic view" of history. That is, social lives are appeared as produced, but not as producing social life and history. The source of change is located outside of such social

relations, and here again in the form of the forces associated with the history of capital and power.

My aim here is not to critique a lack of agency in Quataert's account. Rather, I aim to point at the limits of a sense of political reality where the possibility to produce change seems to be circumscribed by the logic of power and capital discussed in the first section, to which from within the non-elite no political alternative seems possible to emerge.

V. The Generalization of Power Politics

We have seen in this chapter that Quataert locates the transformations that produced the ("modernization") history of the late Ottoman Empire as resulting from "action upon action" of powerful agents in the inter- and intra-state relations of power struggle, where different forms of capital are exercised and acquired in attempts to maintain or enhance power positions. We see that he generalizes this model of power politics as the only driving force of historical change in his discussion of the non-elite, when he either presents their political practice as following the same logic of power and capital (in the discussion of popular movements) or as lacking the capacity to produce an alternative dynamic of change or shaping the social (in his discussion of everyday life and the reactions of people to the conditions set by the history of capital and power). This insight on the limits of his sense of political reality now allows us to grasp the "paradox" mentioned in the end of the third section: the continued focus on the state by a critic of state-centered historiography. When the political, as the shaping of social relations, is identified with power politics, then the focus will immediately move to those agents seen

as capable to participate in such politics due to their access and command over the necessary forms of capital. The state obviously is one such “agent.”

In contrast to Keyder’s account, where the non-elite was absent from the narrative because he saw them as not having the sufficient means of power (capital) to enter into history, Quataert’s historiography does not render them invisible. They appear as populating history, and even, though in a minor role, as participating in the form of power politics that is seen to drive history. Nevertheless, in both accounts, the political is defined as the relations between powerful agents (which are powerful based on their access to capital). Prakash points at the limits of this form of history-writing, which he calls “foundational,” in which “history is ultimately founded in and representable through some identity—individual, class, or structure—which resists further decomposition into heterogeneity. From this point of view, we can do no better than document these founding subjects of history” (1990, p.397). Following this critique, we can see that while Keyder could not see a role of the dominated classes in history from within his understanding of a singular history of capitalism which is determined/made only by those who have an effect on and control over the mechanisms of the extraction of surplus, Quataert is able to see multiple ways of being a subject based on his attempt to show the multiplicities/heterogeneity in this historiography in opposition to the modernizationist singular history. However, while he is able to show multiple subjects including and making history, the singularity is not dissolved in terms of showing alternatives to the singular logic of history that is determined by capital and power.

EPILOGUE: CRITIQUE/ALTERNATIVE

The purpose of this study has been to identify the elements of a “doxa of modernization” underlying both orthodox and heterodox approaches to the study of late Ottoman history, as a means to understand the limits to the sense of political reality, and thus of political alternatives, in a “non-Western” context.

The first chapter analyzed an orthodox approach through the example of Lewis’ study, which has been critiqued widely for its construction of history through essentialist categories such as modern/traditional, modern/non- or not-yet modern or East/West. In reading Lewis’ text with the analytical tools produced by such critiques – in particular the critiques of historicism and Eurocentrism through the overlapping concept of substantialism – I highlighted that these categories correspond to objective structures that are hierarchically organized. It is this kind of reality, I argued, that Lewis’ narrative tries to capture. Thus, drawing on the concepts of capital and field by Bourdieu, I showed that the categories inherent and unquestioned in Lewis’ account refer to the concentration and accumulation of certain forms of capital and struggles over these forms of capital. However, rather than seeing the relational character of this reality, he attributes intrinsic values to civilizational substances and to forms of capital, which results in positing a superiority of “Western civilization” that is seen by him as having produced the “modern” forms of capital. Nevertheless, what we can see in his narrative is a correspondence between the categories of modern/traditional or East/West and that reality of capital. First, the association of the category of the modern with the Western refers to an actual

concentration of capital in the hands of certain groups of people and regions. Second, the differentiation between modern and traditional can be seen as distinguishing different values of capital that are relationally ascribed. In other words, the category of the traditional is separated from the modern in terms of the quality of the forms of capital, whose values are seen as objectified in the hierarchical positions as the outcome of the power struggles. Third, the teleology and idea of progress in Lewis' account appears objectified in the accumulation of different forms of capital over time. He considers this accumulation as a teleological path of history that all societies will have to pass through or else collapse. Thus, his narrative seems to be reflecting a history in which qualities of the forms of capital are changing throughout time, and in which those who are able to acquire the new forms of capital appear as progressing. In this sense, what we see implicit in Lewis' account is a social and historical reality that is based on relations of power and struggles over forms of capital, which are concealed through the taken for granted and objectified categories of modern/non-modern and the related teleological understanding of history.

Critics of such modernization orthodoxy have already identified not only the fallacy of these categories, but also that the categories themselves have been crucial in the reproduction of the existing hierarchies. As stated early on in this dissertation, my concern in this study was not only to critique modernizationist categories as biased. Rather, my concern was with the kind of reality that these categories do try to reflect. Thus, I showed throughout this study that doxa of modernization does not just lie in the unquestioned character of these categories, but more importantly in the generalization of

the reality identified as “modernization” to all of historical change. In other words, I showed how the limits of an objective reality (of power and capital) constituted the limits of a sense of political and historical reality. The doxa of modernization shared by the heterodoxies analyzed consists of a reliance on this sense of reality; thus, as summarized in more detail below, while the heterodoxies produced different accounts of this reality, they did not question its particularity.

The heterodox character of Zürcher’s study, discussed in chapter 2, results from a critique of modernization orthodoxy as represented by Lewis; in particular, Zürcher showed that the “substances” of the non-Western “civilizations,” as posited by Lewis, are not necessary barriers for a “successful” modernization. Rather, for Zürcher, social and cultural contexts shape the particularities of the process of modernization, but do not determine their “success.” In this way, Zürcher tries to overcome essentialist constructions of the categories of modern/traditional and East/West. His success in overcoming these essentialist categories however is questionable in so far as he continues to analyze modernization without questioning the “intrinsic” values of non-material forms of capital and their “possession” by certain groups of people. The values that are identified as modern are considered universal values that should be shared by all societies. However, what Zürcher clearly ignores are the mechanisms that transform such values into forms of capital in the existing global and local hierarchies. As a consequence, he also does not see the struggles and monopoly over such “values” through which they are exercised as forms of capital. This way of formulating modernization becomes most problematic especially in his formulation of the non-material forms of capital: while he

critically questions relations of power over material forms of capital, he considers non-material forms of capital (e.g. democracy in the capital form) as “pure” or “universal” values that are free from power. For that reason, his critique focuses only on those relations of power that entail an explicit interest in dominating the other in economic or political terms. As a consequence, Zürcher’s critique focuses on the authoritarian character of the modernization process in Turkey. In addition to this, he also sees the imperial strategies of the European states, which used their power for their particular interests, as problematic. However, although he critiques such practices that reproduce existing hierarchical conditions in society, he fails to question the capital character of non-material values (of, according to him, modernity) and thus how global and local hierarchies are reproduced through these. In this way, his approach shares the limits of “multiple modernities” approaches that continue to adhere to historicism by positing cultural substances as the agents of change and to the logic of capital in their emphasis on the universal character of societal modernization, though they are attempting to break the Eurocentric character of the modernization perspective.

In contrast to this approach, those heterodox perspectives that highlight the relational character of capital are able to produce a more radical break with the orthodoxy of modernization. They show that hierarchies are not intrinsic to the substances of societies or particular forms of capital. Instead, they are constructed in relations of power. We saw in chapter 3 that Keyder’s study, as an example of world-systems theory, relies on a relational view of capital by underlining that capital is produced and exercised in vertical (relations of domination and exploitation) and horizontal relations (relations of

competition over capital). He is able to show that a “not-yet modern” state of being is not a consequence of the supposed “substantial” characteristics of a society, but that hierarchical differences between societies at the global level and between social groups at the domestic level are a consequence of the organization of production and the struggles over the extraction of surplus. As I argued, the limits of Keyder’s analysis stem from his particular understanding of the “subject of history.” As we have seen, Keyder is able to show social transformation only when the interests of agents conflicted and, more particularly, when the agent whose interest conflicted with the existing system had sufficient amounts of capital to challenge the existing “rules of the game” that gave the advantages in the field of politics to the currently dominant agents. Furthermore, Keyder identifies the interest and prevailing form of capital in this history in exclusively economic terms: as the interest of the agents is to control the mechanisms of surplus extraction, struggles over economic capital are presented as the basic dynamic that produce history. From this perspective, Keyder is able to perceive a possible politics of the dominated only when they could acquire the necessary forms of capital to participate in “the game” and overturn its rules. We can interpret these “necessary” forms of capital as both material (in terms of being able to compete with the dominant agents in the field) and immaterial (in terms of being able to formulate an interest that challenges the existing order and produces a political project different from the one of the dominant classes).

With these limits to the sense of political reality, Keyder perceives the failure of the dominated classes to acquire such forms of capital in the historical reality he observes. Again, the problem is not that he is biased in that observation, but rather that he

generalizes that particular reality in such a way as to present it as the only possible basis of historical transformation. Thus, Keyder only foresees one way of becoming a subject of history, namely through the acquisition of (control over) certain forms of capital. However, because the condition of the dominated is exactly characterized by a relative lack of (control over) forms of capital in unequal relations of power, they are very unlikely to become subjects of history in this perspective. His implicit proposition of an “alternative” form of politics that challenges existing hierarchies in this way shares the limits of the orthodoxy of modernization in which the problem of the “not yet modern” is identified as a lack of capital. The “acquisition of capital” in Keyder’s case may not turn the dominated into “modern” persons or societies, as orthodox accounts have it; however, it remains the only acknowledged way of overcoming a dominated position. In this heterodox perspective, the binary categories of the modern and not-yet modern are thus reflected in and identified with the categories of the dominant and dominated. Historical change, like in the orthodoxy, is limited to the acquisition of capital.

Quataert’s narrative, as analyzed in chapter 4, entails in contrast to Keyder’s analysis multiple forms of capital. Thus, he does not see the control over mechanisms of surplus extraction as the only way of acquiring capital. Instead, in his narrative we can see that almost any means can turn into capital when it is used strategically in power struggles. The acquisition of capital in this view does not appear as the final aim of the agents, but as a means to maintain or enhance one’s position in a power relation. In the Foucauldian orientation of this understanding of power, the latter is not exercised only by the dominant over the dominated in a unidirectional manner; rather, it constitutes a practice

of “action upon action” – that sets the limits of the actions of others – that every agent can engage in within the limits of the capital that he can draw on strategically. We have seen that his approach allows him, in contrast to Keyder, to include the lives and practices of the non-elite into his history. However, his emphasis on relations and struggles of power, within which capital is necessary, produces a narrative that sees historical transformation only in the history of capital and power. That is, the non-elite figures into his story either as participating in history in line with the power politics he sees as driving macro-changes, or as acting within the constraints of these macro-processes with a limited impact that tends to reinforce the logic of the system, or as populating a “scenic view” that gives a more complete account of how it was to live at that historical time, but that is seen as devoid of dynamics that actually shape that history.

While Quataert, unlike Keyder, presents less of a singular and teleological logic of the history of capital/power by including multiple agents/subjects and multiple forms of capital in his narrative, I argued that he fails nevertheless to challenge the assumption that power relations are the only foundation of politics and the only dynamic of history. In this formulation of history and politics, we can again see that an implicit field of power is constituted that corresponds to the orthodox, modernizationist understanding of the field of politics; it differs mainly in so far as it does not identify the positions in that field through the categories of modern and not-yet modern, but through the capacity to exercise power through capital. As a consequence, Quataert’s narrative does not enable us to see a form of politics independent of the acquisition of certain forms of capital and their

exercise in relations of power – a view that characterizes modernization in the orthodox accounts that Quataert rejects.

This analysis shows that the various heterodox approaches share a sense of political reality in their perspective on social/historical transformation with the orthodoxy of modernization that they critique. The doxa of modernization thus consists of the generalization of the particular social characteristics and historical conditions seen explicitly or implicitly as constituting a process of “modernization” – the history of power/capital – in such a way that they come to represent all of historical change and of politics.

As I indicated in the beginning, the way we perceive social and historical change and thus politics sets the limits for practice, or, more broadly, the limits for political projections. In other words, what is possible and impossible is evaluated with the sense of reality that is shaped, in this case, by the limits of the modernization perspective.

The Gap between Critique and Alternative

The question I pose to the limits of doxa of modernization is the following: Can a politics that is conceived of as competition over capital between the dominant, and into which other agents can only enter by acquiring forms of capital (the means of the dominant), engender real alternatives to the existing order? Gramsci’s definition of politics can help us to illuminate some of the stakes in this question:

If one [the “active politician] applies one’s will to the creation of a new equilibrium among the forces which really exist and are operative ... one still moves on the terrain of effective reality, but does so in order to dominate and transcend it (or to contribute to this). What “ought to be” is therefore

concrete; it is the only realistic and historicist interpretation of reality, it alone is history in the making and philosophy in the making, it alone is politics. (1971, p.172)

Gramsci, like the heterodox approaches discussed in this study, sees the fundamental aim of politics in the “creation of a new equilibrium among the forces.” Being familiar with Gramsci’s political views, we can infer that this new equilibrium should work in favor of the dominated classes. At the same time, the very notion of politics as the aim of changing the equilibrium among the forces implies that these “forces,” as the agents of politics, will change their positions in the process, but they will not lose their ontological priority *as the agents of politics*. In this way, the “forces” are seen as ahistorical agents of politics understood as a process of historical transformation of society through the change of equilibrium in struggle.

In pointing out the ontological priority of the struggle between forces in Gramsci’s understanding of politics, I am not trying to make a point about whether the dissolution of such struggles might indeed be possible. My concern lies rather with giving priority to “forces” in the understanding of politics, with reducing politics to the relation between them, and with locating the formation of a new order only in the changing positions of these respective forces.

The second part of Gramsci’s definition of politics on the other hand can be useful for us to challenge the limits of this sense of political reality. Gramsci argues that the political *is* “what ought to be.” The logical consequence of this definition is that the projection of an “alternative” to the existing order is not a secondary, but a defining part of a political perspective. We see this political assumption in the heterodox approaches analyzed in this

study. Their critiques are directed against existing unequal relations from the standpoint of an alternative that envisions the concrete possibility of a more “egalitarian” and/or “democratic” society.⁷² In other words, they analyze “what is” or “what was” in a historical sense through the political lenses of “what ought to be.” In this sense, their *critique* of the existing system stems from an actual possibility of an *alternative* in the form of a more egalitarian social order. However, does the creation of a more egalitarian society out of the political reality as it is presented by these heterodox approaches appear as a “concrete” possibility? I argue in the following that, while these heterodox approaches present important critiques of the historical and conceptual framework of “modernization,” they are afflicted by a “gap” between critique and alternative.

As the three heterodox approaches share a critique of a teleological understanding of history (as a characteristic of orthodox approaches) – though Quataert is arguably more successful in writing such a non-teleological history than Zürcher and Keyder – they do not posit a more egalitarian society as the outcome of a necessary teleological trajectory. Thus, they are broadly in line with Wallerstein’s statement that there are always multiple possible futures (and his projection of “socialist society” is just one of these), and that we cannot know from the standpoint of the present time which one will materialize (2004, p.18). Nevertheless, all of the approaches discussed imply that the possibility of creating a more egalitarian social order might emerge when the dominated become powerful enough, through the acquisition of certain forms of capital, to become a true political force. The barrier between the present and future, between what is and what ought to be,

⁷² Though the aim of egalitarian relations is most explicit in Marxist approaches, the liberalism of Zürcher and the poststructural perspective of Quataert also imply such an impetus in the form of democratization. In the following, I will refer to “egalitarianism” in relation to all these political orientations.

in this sense is explained with the lack of capital of the dominated. This lack characterizes the temporal distance between what is now and what could be in the future. Thus, the possibility of a more egalitarian society is seen to be actualized in the future. In other words, this particular alternative is seen as “something to come” not yet in the present.

Thus, although the heterodox approaches criticize teleological history writing, the alternative they imply is a futural one, not one of the present. This futural existence of the alternative stems from the limits of the sense of political reality identified as the “doxa of modernization”: the dominated classes do not have the appropriate forms of capital “yet” to transform society. All of a sudden, the futurity of the alternative in heterodox approaches looks not so remote from the teleology of modernization orthodoxy: there, the “not-yet modern” does not “yet” have enough capital to become “modern,” so the political project should consist of achieving those forms of capital. While in heterodox approaches, the capital to be acquired is not necessarily defined from a Eurocentric perspective, but from a relational understanding of power and domination, the political questions to be posed continue to be disciplined by the dominance of capital/ power.

The implicit teleology of these approaches thus lies in their identification of the dominated with a lack of capital, and in their proposition that the dominated could produce an alternative form of politics if they acquired appropriate forms of capital. Here we see the formation of a temporal gap between the present relations of power based on unequal relations (among state and society (Zürcher), capitalist and worker/peasant

(Keyder), elite and non-elite or more powerful and less powerful (Quataert), or in general the dominant and the dominated) and the realization of a more egalitarian order.

There are two “limits” to these heterodox perspectives that lead to a “gap” between “critique” and the production of an “alternative.” First, their understanding of transformation, while showing a possible change in the balance of power between the forces, does not give any hint about why this struggle should lead to a more egalitarian society. I do not mean to say that this outcome is possible, but that we cannot see this in a historical understanding that is all about relations of power and thus inequalities (rather than an egalitarian politics). Thus, a politics that focuses on participating in the game of the field through the acquisition of capital does not show how the field itself – which is always characterized by inequalities – can be changed. That is, if politics is about power relations and relations of inequality between forces, then how can one overcome such relations through acquiring (more) power?

The second limit is constituted by the generalization of this reality of capital/power to all of politics, which leads to studies that fail to present us with an alternative *within* the existing system. Thus, while the critical position of heterodox perspectives stems from their implicit understanding of “what ought to be” as an alternative social order, we do not see in their analysis of “what is” the actual possibility of this alternative. Instead, they use their analysis of “what is” as the evidence of the lack of “what ought to be.” As the history of capital/power as the condition of “what is” is universalized, the possibility of “what ought to be” is posited in “unknown” historical contingencies. Here we see that the

temporal gap between what is and what ought to be is reflected in an analytical gap between critique and alternative.

The doxa of modernization underlies this gap between critique and alternative in three ways. First, the subject of history is defined in histories of “modernization” as a subject of power whose capacity to act is based on forms of capital. Thus, the social transformation that is categorized as modernization and seen as produced by these subjects of history is one of accumulation of capital as well as of the concentration of capital in particular geographical places and in the hands of particular social groups. In turn, the dominated in that history are identified by the lack of capital. Second, the field of politics is identified with a field of power in which the distance and difference between positions become visible in the amounts and qualities of capital the agents possess. Third, the means of politics that are seen as potentially available to the dominated for the transformation of existing reality are the forms of capital that are possessed to a greater degree by the dominant in this field. Hence, the transformation of society follows the logic of competition that characterizes the modernization perspective, as shown in this study. As a consequence, this field of power is seen as the only realm of transformation. Thus the logic of capital is universalized as the only form of politics.

As we do not see the possibility of egalitarian society within this reality of politics, because the latter is limited by the field of power, which is generalized as the only form of politics, the formulation of an alternative appears only as an “idea” which is abstracted from its material conditions.

Producing an Alternative through Labor

The process of developing an “alternative” is not simply a cognitive one of thinking about the possible options for the future. When Marx argued that “philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (1998, p.571), he was critiquing exactly such “idealist” perspectives and instead highlighting that alternative realities have to be *produced*, not merely pointed at. This understanding can be seen as reliant on his formulation of labor as the source of all values. Although Marx’s oeuvre has focused largely on the analysis of capital, the starting point of his theory is the primacy of labor in the production of values.

As Raymond Williams has argued, the notion of “production,” and thus labor, should not be understood only in economic terms (as the production of commodities) in Marx’s theory, but rather also as about “the primary production of society itself, and of men themselves, [as] the material production and reproduction of real life” (1980, p. 35). Thus, in opening up the role of “labor” in producing an alternative, I use it in this broader meaning, as the following discussion of Lukacs’ ontology of labor will show in more detail.

Lukacs developed Marx’s ontology of labor further in his later works (1975, 1980). We can understand his analysis of the labor process in three analytical steps. First, he indicates that “every work activity is a response and solution to an underlying need” (1975, p.25). He further underlines that “man becomes a responsive being precisely by formulating his specific needs and the possibilities of their satisfactions as general

questions” (ibid). In his response to these formulated questions, Lukacs argues, man posits a *telos* to solve the problem through his work. The first step that we can identify in this process then is the formulation of needs in the form of general questions and the setting of a *telos* to transform material conditions in such a way as to solve existing problems.

Second, Lukacs argues that the *telos* does not simply emerge in the mind of the person as an idea. Instead, he sees the production of the questions and their possible answers in the form of positing a *telos* as the products of material conditions that he identifies as historically produced “causal chains.” Teleological propositions according to Lukacs in turn serve “to set causal chains (of consequences) into motion” (ibid, p. 26). In this sense, labor does not produce a new reality that does not already exist; it transforms existing reality into another form.

Third, Lukacs sees labor as a process limited by the means at hand; however, at the same time, these means at hand are reevaluated according to the *telos*. To use his example, a stone in nature does not give any hint that it can be transformed into an axe. It only shows itself as such a potential axe as a consequence of the formulation of the needs of human beings and their perception of the world through this formulation. Only then can they choose the appropriate means to produce another form of reality which did not exist as such before. The potentiality of the stone to be an axe in this sense is possible by positing a *telos*, however, the *telos* is limited by the actual means at hand (Lukacs 1980, p.12).

Thus, we can only think of an alternative reality within the material conditions at hand. In this sense, the *telos* is not the product of a single human mind but a product of the entire history of labor that has produced the existing conditions of human beings. In other words, if people today are able to posit a *telos* of producing a more egalitarian society, there have to be the material conditions at hand that make people able to think in these terms; i.e. there has to be a concrete material basis for this thought that has *already* been produced.⁷³

However, we have seen that the only form of historical reality and politics identified by the modernization perspective is the hierarchical order of society in which the solution of problems is sought in the “model” of the dominant in this order. Thus, the political project emerging from this perspective is either one of imitating this objectified model or of accessing the appropriate forms of capital in order to be able to struggle against the dominant. In other words, the effects of capital have been generalized to all of society, so that the possibility of an egalitarian society appears only as utopia whose material conditions do not exist, or as a project of overthrowing the dominant after which the possibility of an egalitarian society could be actualized. In both cases the possibility of an egalitarian society is posited as a “model” that could be “achieved” in the future, but that does not characterize the present. Furthermore, the focus on capital/power in this sense of

⁷³ From the modernization perspective the possibility of a more egalitarian society is posited as a historical teleology – not as a necessary one, but as one out of many. Practices of egalitarian relations are seen “incomplete” or “absent” only by positing the *telos* of egalitarian society as another model that would replace the capitalist one. The ontology of labor that Lukacs points out is about reconsidering history in a non-teleological way. Lukacs underlines that in Marx’s philosophy history is not teleological. On the contrary, he sees the particularity of Marxist materialist philosophy as limiting teleology to the labor process. *Telos*, in his view, can only be posited in each work activity, in a labor process. In this sense, we cannot think of an egalitarian society as a stage of history that can be “achieved” in the future; it can only be produced at the moment through practices of labor.

political reality posits the futurity of an egalitarian society as the *outcome* of struggles between agents in a field of power characterized by inequalities. From this perspective, the question of an alternative turns to a focus on or search for the *subjects* of history who have the capacity, desire, or will to realize (or prevent) such an egalitarian order. What we are missing however in the resulting picture of history are the social *practices* that have already been producing what we call an alternative. In other words, by limiting the sense of political reality to struggles between *subjects* of history in a field of power constituted by relations of *inequality*, those social *practices* that already produce *egalitarian* relations among people are not visible in this field of power and thereby in history.

My critique of the sense of political reality in the historiographies (and the modernization perspective) is thus not that these works fail to include particular social groups as subjects of history. Rather, it is that the focus on *subjects* in producing history, which comes out of the sense of political reality identified throughout this dissertation, obscures particular social *practices* which might show egalitarian relations in the present and not as a future outcome of struggles. Thus I propose that a focus on labor, as production of the social, can help us shift the emphasis on such practices and to overcome the gap between critique and alternative.

However, it is important at this point that I neither posit “labor” as having an “intrinsic” value that provides us with a particular model of living together, nor is my concern to think labor as producing an alternative in opposition to capital.⁷⁴ Rather, the perspective

⁷⁴ Thus, I use Lukacs’ ontology of labor only as a theoretical tool that allows us to open up a new perspective for questions, rather than as providing us with a political project to be followed.

on labor is meant as a search for another realm of thinking through the formulation of different questions and projects (*telos*), about the ontology of social being or our “being (together) in the world.” This dissertation thus aims to be a very first step in this direction. It did not entail any solutions as to how an egalitarian society can be achieved. Rather, it showed that when we formulate our questions within the limits of the field, then we necessarily try to solve problems through the acquisition and exercise of capital and we formulate political projects as competition between subjects. In short, it showed that in a modernization perspective, we all turn into “capitalists” who try to survive by accumulating and re-investing our capital. It is about how when we talk about the egalitarian society, we construct our ideals by the forms of capital we have, and the non-actualization of this by the lack of capital we have, and we see the solution paradoxically by the overcoming those who have the forms of capital. In short, a critique from the standpoint of labor first shows us our “ontological complicity” (Bourdieu 1998, pp. 75-91) in the field of power that we perceive as the only form of politics.

In this sense, the formulation of history and politics would first provide us with a self-reflexive approach to any critique that aims to challenge the existing hierarchical social orders. Second, it allows us to particularize the history of capital. That is, a focus on labor as productive of the social more generally – not just of capital – allows us to see history as produced by multiple social practices, which, while implicated in unequal relations of power and capital, are also producing the alternative of equality in the present.

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Publications

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