IN THE AFTERMATH OF A FORGOTTEN POTTERY TRADITION: THE QUARTER OF ÇÖMLEKÇİ IN TRABZON*

*Turan TAKAOĞLU***

ABSTRACT

The study of Ottoman pottery centres has lately become a growing field of interest within Ottoman archaeology. Two types of pottery centers could be identified for the Ottoman era, one producing for intra- and interregional markets and the other only for intra-regional trade and consumption. The Çömlekçi Quarter in Trabzon is one of the most common examples of the latter. However, our archaeological information on the potters' workshops at Çömlekçi is completely lacking. This work examines the aspects of pottery production that once flourished in the Quarter of Çömlekçi in the light of Ottoman written sources and the narratives of Western travellers who visited the city during the 19th century. Available historiographical records help us to shed light on several aspects of pottery making at the Çömlekçi workshops, including the scale of production, the types of pots, how the pots were used, the architectural features of a potter's workshop, the identity of potters, and the distribution of finished products.

Keywords: Trabzon, Ottoman Period, the Quarter of Çömlekçi, Potter's Workshops,

UNUTULMUŞ BİR ÇÖMLEKÇİLİK GELENEĞİNİN ARDINDAN: TRABZON ÇÖMLEKÇİ MAHALLESİ ÖRNEĞİ

ÖZ

Osmanlı dönemi çanak çömlek üretim merkezleri üzerine yapılan çalışmalar son yıllarda Osmanlı arkeolojisi dalında önemi giderek artan bir çalışma alanı haline gelmiştir. Osmanlı döneminde, biri hem bölge içi hem de bölgeler arası ticaret için, diğeri ise sadece bölge içi tüketime yönelik üretim yapan iki farklı çömlekçilik geleneği mevcuttu. Trabzon'un Çömlekçi Mahallesi ikinci geleneğin en yaygın örneklerinden biridir. Trabzon'un Çömlekçi Mahallesi, Osmanlı döneminde bir zanaat uğraşının bir yerleşim birimine adını verdiğini gösteren tipik bir örnektir. Buna rağmen, Çömlekçi seramik atölyelerine ilişkin

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** *Prof.Dr.* Çanakkale 18 Mart Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Arkeoloji Bölümü, ÇANAKKALE. turantakaoglu@gmail.com, *ORCID:0000-0002-2236-9154.*

herhangi bir arkeolojik bilgiye sahip değiliz. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma bir zamanlar Trabzon'un Çömlekçi Mahallesi'nde gelişen seramik üretiminin boyutlarını, adli, mali ve idari nitelikteki Osmanlı yazılı kaynakları ile 19. yüzyılda kenti ziyaret eden Batılı seyyahların anlatıları ışığında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Mevcut yazılı kaynaklar Çömlekçi atölyelerinde üretimin boyutları, üretilen seramiklerin tipleri, bir çömlekçi atölyesinin mimari özellikleri, çömlekçilerin kimliği, seramiklerin nasıl kullanıldığı ve seramiklerin kullanıcılarına nasıl ulaştığı gibi konularda bazı önemli bilgilere ulaşmamıza yardımcı olmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Trabzon, Osmanlı Dönemi, Çömlekçi Mahallesi, Çömlekçi Atölyeleri.

Introduction

Since the coining of the term "Ottoman Archaeology" with its own theory and method within the main trends of global historical archaeology in the 1990s, archaeological studies on the Ottoman Empire have started to focus on a wide range of issues related to the patterns of production, exchange, and consumption of artifacts. Pottery studies have taken on a special significance with this new look, since pots are among the most common artifacts to increase our knowledge of the past human behavior. Indeed, the Ottoman archives contain a wealth of information on aspects of pottery production, ranging from the location of workshops within a settlement to the names of the potters, and from the spatial layout of the workshops to the exchange of finished products. In addition to historical sources, it is necessary to read the lives of past Ottoman societies in the context of material cultural elements. As a result, the products of such major Ottoman pottery centers as Kütahya, Çanakkale, Dimetoka, Eyüp, Sille, and Tokat became important tools for providing insights into a variety of topics in past Ottoman societies, such as food preparation and consumption, storage behaviors, inter- or intra-regional trade patterns, and the social and economic status of their consumers.

For the sake of clarity, it must be mentioned at the onset that there were two distinct types of Ottoman production centers throughout the empire. The first type is characterized by large-scale workshops renowned mainly for their high-quality decorated pottery of high market value, producing both for inter- and intra-regional markets. This type of workshop is typically family-owned and operated, defined by labor specialization, investment in raw materials, a high volume of output, and standardization in the form of finished products. The second type is represented by family-based, small-scale workshops specializing mainly in the manufacture of utilitarian pottery of household character and distributed at the intra-regional level. Such small-scale workshops often cluster in a certain part of a city to benefit from marketing opportunities and to access to raw materials easily. The example of *Çömlekçi Mahallesi* (The Potter's

Quarter) in Trabzon, which is the point of focus of this work, falls into the latter type.

The name *Çömlekçi Mahallesi* undoubtedly evokes the same past image for anyone with a connection to Trabzon. This is because the name alone implies that pottery manufacture was an important craft activity here in the Ottoman era to such a degree that it somehow gave its name to a quarter. This way of naming quarters based on the prominent craft activity undertaken there was a common practice in the Ottoman era. This quarter, facing an important bay in the eastern suburbs of Trabzon, has long served as one of the main harbors of the city. An Ottoman archival source from 1486 signifies that the original name of this quarter, then populated by the Greek Orthodox Greek community, was Dafnunda prior to the annexation of Trabzon to the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror in 1461 (Fig. 1).[1] The Greek population continued to live in this part of Trabzon even after the establishment of the Ottoman system.[2] By the first half of the 16th century, the name appeared in Ottoman documents as *Mahalle-ı Dafnunda nam-ı diğer Çölmekçi*,[3] indicating a gradual transition of name from Dafnunda to Çömlekçi. Subsequently, the quarter consistently began to be called as the *Mahalle-i Çömlekçi* or *Mahalle-i Çömlekçiyan* instead of Dafnunda in the Ottoman records of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,[4] although certain 19th century western travelers continued to use this name in their accounts to describe the area.

Because the potters' workshops have long vanished from the architectural landscape of Çömlekçi, we are forced to rely on Ottoman written sources, as well as the narratives of western travelers who visited the city in the past, to learn about various aspects of pottery industry that once flourished in Çömlekçi. These sources all point to an intra-regional pottery industry, which differs from what we know from other Ottoman pottery centers, whose products were in high demand throughout the empire. The Ottoman archival sources present a unique opportunity to learn about various aspects of Çömlekçi pottery

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1 M. Hanefi, Bostan, *XV- XVI. Asırlarda Trabzon Sancağında Sosyal ve İktisadi Hayat*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2002, p. 147.

2 The name Dafnunda (Δαφνούντα) is derived from an accusative form of the Greek word *Daphnous* (Δαφνοῦς), meaning laurel or sweet bay. See: Savvas Iaonnidou, Ιστορία και στατιστική Τραπεζούντος και της περί ταύτην χώρας ως και τα περί της ενταύθα ελληνικής γλώσσης, İstanbul 1870; Heath Lowry, *The Islamization & Turkification of the City of Trabzon (Trebizond), 1461-1583*, The Isis Press, İstanbul 2005, p. 40. For a similar accusative use: Trapezunta (Τραπεζούντα) deriving from Trapezus (Τραπεζοῦς).

3 Bostan, *ibid*. 147.

4 Turan Açık, "Fetihten 19. yüzyıla kadar Trabzon Şehri'nin Mahalleleri", *History Studies,* N.: 9, Year: 2017, p. 28; Fatih Çiçek, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Trabzon Şehri (1700-1725)*, Atatürk University, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Erzurum 2020, p. 80; Ayşegül Bayraktar, *1917 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilinin Değerlendirilmesi ve Transkripsiyonu (H. 1161-1163/M. 1748-1750)*. Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2020, p. 117.

production, including the names of the potters, the locations of the potters' workshops, and the architectural features of a potter's kiln.

Trabzon as a Hub of Trade

Trabzon (ancient Trapezus) was an important commercial settlement at the onset, during its participation in the networks of trade after the foundation of an ancient Greek colony at the town towards the end of the 7th century B.C. The city facilitated commercial relations in this part of the Black Sea region throughout classical antiquity, particularly after the construction of an artificial harbor in front of the Lower Castle in the area of Moloz (μόλος, breakwater or mole). The city maintained its role as an important hub of trade in the Byzantine era, when it continued to serve as a redistribution center for commodities arriving by ships and caravans. The adequacy of port facilities in maritime networks of communication and the location of the city at the beginning of a land-based caravan route leading to the eastern Anatolian hinterland and beyond gave the city an invaluable role. The establishment of the Empire of Trebizond following the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire right after the Fourth Crusade (1204) brought Trabzon to a new level in international commerce. In particular, the diversion of the Silk Road northward toward Trabzon after the Mongolian sack of Baghdad in 1258 led the Empire of Trebizond to accumulate significant wealth. Trabzon thus became the starting point for journeys leading into Asia. So, the enterprises of the Italian maritime republics, Genoa and Venice, in the Black Sea area from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries helped Trabzon's economy grow even more.[5] This is best manifested in the establishments of sovereign Venetian and Genoese trading enclaves located just to the west of the Çömlekçi harbor area.

The incorporation of Trabzon into the Ottoman imperial system in 1461 did not stop the city from flourishing within the Black Sea commercial zone during the centuries to come. Prior to 1774, Black Sea maritime trade was completely under Ottoman control. The signing of the Treaty of Edirne with the Russians in 1829, which fully opened the Black Sea to international trade and all commercial vessels, was a turning point in the economic history of Trabzon. The subsequent commencement of the transit trade route connecting Trabzon and Tabriz through Erzurum in 1830 was a turning point for the growth of commerce around the Black Sea.[6] The establishment of this route, which placed Trabzon in its center due to its port facilities, clearly resulted in an upheaval in

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5 Antony Bryer, "The Latins in the Euxine", *Actes du XVe Congrès International d'études Byzantine I*, Athens 1976, p. 3.

6 Charles Issawi, "The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a Route", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* N: 1: Year: 1987, pp. 18-27; Necmettin Aygün, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Zamanlarında Karadeniz'in Güney Kesiminde İktisadî Faaliyetler", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Vol: 23, 2009, p. 41-43.

the commercial life of the city towards the middle of the 19th century. Trabzon, in this way, became both the main outlet for such commodities as silk and cashmere wool coming from Iran and an inlet for the European imports arriving through steam navigation operated by British, French, Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman companies. This was also a period when a series of European consulates were opened in Trabzon along with that of Iran to explore commercial opportunities in the region. Trabzon most likely experienced its most prosperous period in its socio-cultural and economic life during the 19th century. A valuable study by N. Aygün clearly illustrates the activities of the merchants of different origins who contribute to the economic transactions that place Trabzon at their center.[7]

Unfortunately, the economic benefits of Trabzon's vibrant commercial life did not catapult pottery production at Çömlekçi into a significant industry in the same way that they did in Çanakkale, another coastal city with a similar commercial history to that of Trabzon.

Testimony of Western Travelers

The commercial accounts of the consulates unfortunately do not provide significant information regarding the economic value of the pottery manufactured at Çömlekçi. However, casual information regarding the association of pot making with Çömlekçi can be encountered in the narratives of western travelers and merchants who visited Trabzon in the 19th century. There is a hitherto mention of pot making at Çömlekçi particularly in the accounts of French visitors who journeyed along the Black Sea littoral and into the Caucasus at the beginning of the 19th century to look for opportunities to initiate new trade relationships in the Black Sea region on behalf of their country. The first Frenchman to transmit information about the existence of pot making in Trabzon is Jacques François Gamba, who was then appointed as the Consul of France in Tbilisi to help French merchants arriving in Georgia to implement their trading activities as part of his task in the 1820s. He referred to Trabzon as one of the most important commercial centers of the region due to its proximity to Erzurum and its accessibility to Crimea and Istanbul through the sea. In his description of Trabzon, Gamba remarks on the Quarter of Çömlekçi in a passage when he describes the port facilities of Trabzon:[8] "…*The second port is located at the end of the city, to the east, and is called Çömlekçi, because it is the district where pottery is made: it is small and is only used as an anchorage for ships in the beautiful season*." This vague information only shows that pot making was an old tradition and was still being practiced in the first half of the 19th century.

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7 Necmettin Aygün, *Karadeniz'den Osmanlı Ekonomisine Bakış*, Vol: I, Trabzon Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Yayınları, Ankara 2016, pp. 149-210.

8 Jacques-François Gamba, *Voyage dans la Russie méridionale: et particulièrement dans les provinces*, C.J. Trouvé, Paris 1826, p. 411.

Another French traveler, Louis Vivien de Saint-Martin, repeated Gamba's remarks almost twenty years later with little variation.[9] Having been disappointed by the lack of any ruin representing Trabzon's classical antiquity, he remarked on the association of the quarter with pot making in his description of Çömlekçi: "*The second port touches the town on the east side; it is called Çömlekçi, from a Turkish word, çömlek, which means earthen pot, because it is the district where the pottery is made. It is small and is only used as an anchorage for ships in nice weather*."

Théophile Deyrolle, a French painter and potter who traveled around the eastern Black Sea region on behalf of the French Geographical Society in 1869, goes beyond and informs us about the shipment of pottery to regions surrounding Trabzon via the pier of Çömlekçi:[10] "*There, we see those caiqs and sandals from the villages of surrounding coasts unload goods of all kinds on the ruins of a small pier, the construction of which is attributed to the Genoese. Those coming from Platana (Akçaabat) and Sürmene bring heaps of vegetables, fruits, wood, and grains. Others ship tiles and coarse pottery that are manufactured in quantity at Trebizond.*" Her colorful description is valuable as it helps to visualize how the Çömlekçi pottery was distributed at an intra-regional level. One of her illustrations may be used to demonstrate one way the coarse pottery was used in mundane activities in the region (Fig. 2). The British historian and politician James Bryce also recognized coarse pottery production among several manufacturing activities left in Trabzon when he visited the city in 1876.[11] This information by Bryce is in accordance with what we learned from other French visitors who came to Trabzon before him.

Contributions of Ottoman Written Sources

No expert researching Ottoman pottery centers fails to consult the famous travel book of the 17th century Turkish traveler, Evliya Çelebi. Unfortunately, Evliya Çelebi makes no mention of pottery workshops at Trabzon during his visit in 1640, although he acknowledges pot making activities in Kütahya, Dimetoka, and Eyüp in his narrative. This may be due to the fact that pottery production was not a significant industry when he visited the city, since Ottoman archival sources dating before his visit point only to a small-scale pottery production activity.

Minas Bijişkyan, a Trabzon-born Ottoman Armenian traveler, author, and ethnologist, also speaks of Greek potters working in the Quarter of Çömlekçi in

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9 Louis Vivien De Saint-Martin, Louis, *Histoire des découvertes géographiques des nations Européennes dans les differentes parties du monde*. Arthus-Bertrand, Paris 1846, p. 437.

10 Théophile Deyrolle, "Voyage dans le Lazistan et l'Arménie", *Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau Journal Des Voyages*, Ed. Edouard Charton, Vol: 29, Year: 1875, p. 6.

11 James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat. Being Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, McMillan and Co, London 1896, p. 402

1819 without giving any details.[12] The Greek historian Savvas Iaonnidou also recognizes the existence of pottery production at Trabzon in 1870, although he neglects to mention whether the craft was practiced by the Greeks or Turks, or both. Ioannidou counted pot making among the economic activities that brought only small revenue to the city's inhabitants.[13] The pottery shapes of Çömlekçi workshops are also mentioned in a passage in the work of the local 19th-century Turkish historian Şakir Şevket. He mentions that although the water jugs, spouted pitchers, and some other pot shapes were manufactured at Çömlekçi, the water jug category was not in much demand because they were unglazed.[14] He also notes that earthen roof tile production was an old tradition in Trabzon, and this craft was pursued to a level where it fulfilled only the needs of the settlers of the city. The fact that Çömlekçi potters did not use glaze for pots in his day explains one reason why the pottery industry did not develop to the point where they became trade items at Trabzon.

In his systematic reconstruction of the social and economic life of 15th and 16th century Trabzon in the light of Ottoman archives, Hanefi Bostan demonstrated the existence of pot making among 82 different occupations that enriched the economic life of Trabzon.[15] The *Şer'iyye Sicilleri* (registers of the *kadı* courts) and the *Tahrir Defterleri* (fiscal registers) verify the presence of potters and the role of pottery production in the local economy of the city. A source from 1562 mentions four non-Muslim potters, whose work accounted for 2,43% of all professions in the city.[16] The ratio of potters in all occupations declines to 1,16% in the upcoming years, as shown by another source from 1564-1565 records, this time showing only two potters, one of whom was a Muslim and the other a non-Muslim.[17] There is no information about potters in the *Tahrir Defteri* from 1554 and 1583, which may be because potters did not continuously operate their workshops in the city in the second half of the 16th century.[18] References to pottery production also exist in the mid-17th century sources.[19]

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[12] Minas Bijişkyan, *Karadeniz Kıyıları Tarih ve Coğrafyası 1817-1819*, Trans. Hrant D. Andreasyan, İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, İstanbul 1969, p. 56.

[13] Iaonnidou, *ibid*. p. 206.

[14] Şakir Şevket, *Trabzon Tarihi*, Ghamran Matbaası, İstanbul 1887, p. 62.

[15] Bostan, *ibid*. p. 416.

[16] Bostan, *ibid*. p. 417, Table 106.

[17] Bostan, *ibid*. p. 417, Table 106.

[18] Bostan, *ibid*. p. 420.

[19] Kenan İnan, *Onyedinci Yüzyıl Ortalarında Trabzon'da Sosyal ve İktisadi Hayat*, Trabzon Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, Trabzon 2013, p. 65; M. Hanefi Bostan, "XVII. Yüzyılda Trabzon Şehri", *I. Uluslararası Geçmişten Günümüze Trabzon'da Dini Hayat Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*, Ed. Ş. Saylan and B. Saylan, Trabzon Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2016, p. 684.

The *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* from 1700 mentions a case about the demand for the return of two potters' workshops located in Çömlekçi to their owners from a man named Kabasakalzade Hasan Ağa, who allegedly seized them before.[20] According to this document, these two pottery workshops, which initially belonged to Ali Paşa, were later passed from hand to hand to Ahmed Ağa and then to Kabasakalzâde Hasan. The court ordered the return of the pottery workshops to the heirs of Ahmed Ağa. This document is important for showing that pottery workshops were rented to others.

The *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* from 1695, which records the sale of a potter's workshop (*kârhâne*) in Çömlekçi by its female owner, Mahtume, to another woman named Emine Hatun, for 140 *Esedi Kuruş*.[21] This document serves as an illustration of the sale of property to a woman, the purchase of property by a woman, and the sale of property by a woman to another woman. It also clearly demonstrates that women also owned such properties as potters' workshops. According to the text, the potter's workshop consists of a single-storey (*tahtani*) room, a two-storey (*fevkani*) woodshed, a bakery oven, and a courtyard.[22]

A *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* dating to the early 18th century mentions the transfer of the ownership of potters' workshops in Çömlekçi due to their debt. [23] This document does not provide any architectural features of the workshop. However, a second document from the same period, which also mentions the sale of two different potters' workshops due to their debt, provides us with rare information about the architectural features of a potter's workshop. It lists a potter's workshop that is composed of a kiln, a woodshed adjacent to it, a courtyard to display pots, and open areas,[24] whereas the second document mentions another potter's workshop characterized by a two-storey (*fevkani*) building composed of a clay barn on the first and a potter's shed on the upper floor, a potter's kiln, a courtyard to display the pots, and an open space.[25]

The *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* of 1708, on the other hand, present information pertaining to a potter's workshop being a *vakıf* (pious foundation) property. This document lists a potters' workshop as a property of the *vakıf* of

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[20] Emine Ak, *Ser'iyye Sicillerine Göre XVII. Yüzyılın Sonlarında Trabzon'da Esnaflar*, Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2019, pp. 89-90; *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilleri,* No: 1861, 57b/1, 59a/1, 72a/2.

[21] Ak, *ibid*. 81; *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilleri,* No: 1861, 19a/1.

[22] Ak, *ibid*. 74;*"bir bâb tahtanî oda ve fevkanî çardak ve bir çörekçi fırını ve avludan oluşan çömlekci kârhânesi".*

[23] "*Çömlekçi Mahallesi'nde vâki' iki çömlekçi kârhânesi*", See: Fatih Çiçek, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Trabzon Şehri (1700-1725).* Atatürk University, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Erzurum 2020, 146; *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili,* no. 1872, V7B-H5.

[24] Çiçek, *ibid*. p. 146; *Trabzon. Şer'iyye Sicili,* no. 1872, V7B-H5.

[25] Çiçek, *ibid*. p. 146; *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili,* no. 1883, V8A-H1.

El-hâc Musa bin Ali, along with a tile workshop.[26] It also records that the income obtained from the rents of the properties of this *vakıf,* established in 1698, was to be spent in charity works involving construction and repairs of public and religious monuments. This includes repair of a masjid in the Mağara quarter, as well as the construction of a *kündüba* (water tank?) and repairs of a fountain and a sidewalk in the village of Sulumna near Trabzon.

Unfortunately, the names of the potters appear rarely in the Ottoman archival sources. The Ottoman archival sources mention the names of certain Turkish potters appearing in courts mainly as witnesses (*Şuhudu'l-hâl*) or defendants from the 16th century onwards (Table 1). Çanakçı Hasan, whose name appears in 1554-1558, may be considered the first potter whose name appears in Ottoman archival sources that have been studied. The *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* from 1554-1558 concerns Çanakçı Hasan, who taught the craft of pot making at the *vakıf* of İmâret-i Hatûniye, being accused by two of his students of withholding the two pots made by them.[27] This document bears witness to the teaching of the craft of pot making during the second half of the 16th century.

Potter's Name	Date	Ottoman Source
Çanakçı Hasan	1554-1558	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 1815
Çanakçı Bayram	1564-1566	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 1818
Çanakçı Ahmed Beşe	1628-1630	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* no. 1826
Çömlekçi Yusuf	1697-1699	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 1863
"*Hasan Ağa'nın Çömlekçi Kârhânesi*"	1700-1711	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 1871
Çömlekçi Osman Beşe/Çömlekçi Osman Paşa	1756-1757	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 1911
Çanakçızâde Mehmed/Çanakçızâde Mehmed Efendi	1880-1883	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 2032
Çömlekçi Ahmed Mühür	1883-1888	*Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, no. 2039

Table 1: Some of the potters' names as they appeared in Ottoman archival sources

Çanakçı Bayram, who appears in a source from 1564-1566, is the second potter known by the name.[28] Çanakçı Ahmed Beşe, the third potter known by his name, was mentioned in several cases involving property sale, title deed, debt, and inheritance in sources dating between 1628 and 1630.[29] The fourth potter we

[26] Çiçek, *ibid.* p. 282. *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili,* no. 1869, V5B-H6.

[27] Ali Turan, *1815 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iye Sicilinin Transkripsiyonu ve Hukuki Değerlendirmesi*, Istanbul Üniversity, Unpublished Master's Thesis, İstanbul 2014, p. 361.

[28] Şeyda S. Hacıhasanoğlu, *1818 (H.972-973/M.1564-1566) No.lu Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilinin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi*, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Samsun 2019, p. 356.

[29] Murat Güney, *1826 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilinin Özet Transkripsiyonu ve Analizi*, Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2011, pp. 208, 210, 213, 263, 276, 293, 304.

know is El-hâc Mehmed bin Yusuf Çömlekçi, who appears as a witness in sources dating to 1697-1699.[30] The *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* dating to 1700-1701 mentions a fight near the workshop of someone named Hasan Ağa in the Çömlekçi quarter, although it is not clear if this person is actually a potter or the owner of this particular potter's workshop.[31] The *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili* from 1756-1757, on the other hand, records a potter named Çömlekçi Osman Beşe as wedding witness.[32] Çanakçızâde Mehmed or Çanakçızâde Mehmed Efendi is an important personage whose name is frequently encountered in *Şer'iyye Sicilleri* dating between 1880 and 1888 as a witness in matters of procuration.[33] There is also mention of Çömlekçi Ahmed Mühür in a source, which also mentions his father (Kemal Cemaleddin) and grandfather (Ahmedoğlu Halil) as potters before him, implying that the craft of pot making ran in the family.[34]

Despite the fact that the Çömlekçi was one of the quarters where the Greek population was dense, no name of a Greek potter has been identified among the Ottoman archival sources. As mentioned above, the only reference to a non-Muslim potter is the tax register of 1546. We will be able to make more detailed assessments of the practitioners of the craft of pot making only when we find the names of potters on gravestones.

Another type of information that could be retrieved from Ottoman archival sources is the types of exotic pottery found in Trabzon's houses. It should not be surprising to find out that the people living in Trabzon enjoyed ceramics from Ottoman centers such as Kütahya and Çanakkale in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The foremost source to obtain information on this is the accounts of *tereke* (inheritance). For example, there are mentions of a Kütahya bowl (*çanak-ı Kütahya*), a small Kütahya plate (*Kütahya sagir tabak*), a Kütahya plate (*Kütahya tabak*), a Kütahya cup (*Kütahya filcanı*), and a Çanakkale jar (*kavanoz*), although we also casually encounter pottery of

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30 İsmail Doğan, *1863 Numaralı Trabzon Şeri'yye Sicili'nin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi*, Binali Yıldırım University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Erzincan 2020, p. 79.

31 Çiçek, *ibid*, p. 379; *Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili,* no. 1871-V12B-H3.

32 Hilal T. Öztekin, *1922/108 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili'nin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi*. Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2017, pp. 108,116, 133, 143. His name also appears as Çömlekçi Osman Paşa in the same source.

33 Mustafa Gangal, *2039/225 no'lu Trabzon Şer'iyye siciline (Vr.1-70) göre şehrin idari, ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel yapısı (H. 1301-1305/M. 1883-1888)*, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Samsun 2004, p. 89, 145, 185; Mustafa Bülbül, *2039/225 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilinin (Vr.71–123) Transkribi ve Değerlendirilmesi. (H. 1303-1305/M. 1886-1888).* Ondokuz Mayıs University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Samsun 2007, p. 8, 10, 111, 112; Hakan Akdemir, *2032 No.lu Trabzon Şeriye Sicilinin Transkripsiyonu ve Tahlili*, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Samsun 2008, pp. 29, 48, 56, 57, 140, 160.

34 Bülbül, *ibid*, p. 34.

European origin, a Polish bowl (*Leh kasesi*).[35] It would not have been surprise to encounter pottery and porcelain from the eastern and the western worlds among the *tereke* accounts when further studies will be undertaken on the Ottoman archives on Trabzon.

The people of Trabzon also included the European tableware repertoire in their drinking and eating habits as early as the late 15th and early 16th centuries. This is because the deployment of exotic pottery and porcelain in houses was important for social display. Recent archaeological excavations at the fortresses of Trabzon and Akçakale have revealed examples of European-imported pottery, including Italian blue on white painted maiolica and polychrome sgrafitto. The commercial reports of British consulate at Trabzon occasionally mention European "crockery" or "earthenware" arriving at the city.[36] Trabzon apparently served as a redistribution center for these goods originating in regions such as Sardinia and Great Britain. It is also likely that some of these ceramics were intended for the consumption of the settlers of Trabzon. The British reports rarely speak of the exportation of earthenware from the Trabzon, although they do not specify if they were the products of the Çömlekçi workshops.[37]

New Light from Alaca Han

One of the most important sources of information to reveal what types of pottery were produced in the Çömlekçi workshops came from the Alaca Han restoration works in 2022. Alaca Han is a three-story high stone-built structure located in a district that was once the heart of Trabzon's commercial life and copper working activities (Fig. 2). It adds significantly to our understanding of this genre of Ottoman buildings. Although Alaca Han is not securely dated due to the lack of an inscription belonging to it, it is generally thought to have been built sometime in the 18th century.[38] The mention of Alaca Han in a *Trabzon*

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35 Yalçın Bazna, *1951/137 Numaralı (1810-1811 M. Tarihli) Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili*, Fırat University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Elazığ 2013, p. 246; Vildan Kara, *1916 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicili'nin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi (H. 1160-1161/M. 1747-1748)*, Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2019, p. 129; Cem Uzun, *1931 Numaralı Trabzon Şer'iyye Sicilinin Özet Transkripsiyonu ve Açıklaması,* Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2018, pp. 36, 45, 66, 84, 132, 147; Aygün, ibid. pp. 191 and 285; Abdurrahman Okuyan, *Arşiv Belgelerine Göre 19. Yüzyılın Son Çeyreğinde Trabzon*, Bilimkent Yayınları, Samsun 2018, p. 191.

36 Musa Şaşmaz, *Trade Reports of the Trebizond Province on British Documents 1830-1914*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2014, 49, 186, 220, 220-230, 238, 241, 253, 272.

37 Şaşmaz, *ibid*. P. 251

38 Necmettin Aygün, "XVIII. yüzyılda Trabzon'un Ticari Yapıları", *Trabzon ve Çevresi Uluslararası Tarih-Dil-Edebiyat Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, Trabzon 2002, s. 264; Murat Yüksel, *Trabzon'da Türk-İslam Eserleri ve Kitabeleri,* Vol: 1, Trabzon Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, No. 58, Trabzon, 2000, p. 221. Mustafa Özer, "Trabzon'un Osmanlı Donemi Ticaret Hayatı ve Ticaret Yapıları: Genel Bir Değerlendirme", *Trabzon Yıllığı*, Trabzon 1997, p. 90.

Şer'iyye Sicili has been accepted as evidence for the use of the building, at least towards the end of the 18th century.[39]

During the restoration project, dozens of complete or nearly complete pottery vessels were recovered from the fill that was used to make a sloped surface under the roof of Alaca Han in 2012 (Fig. 3). The main reason they were put here was probably to make a sloped roof and take some of the weight off the ceiling below the sloped roof. If this roof belongs to the 18th century or even the 19th century, it is highly probable that these vessels were the actual products of the Çömlekçi workshops. The first thing that stands out about these vessels is that they were fired at low temperatures, and there are examples of manufacturing errors derived from the firing process among them. All of these vessels were made from reddish-orange clay, the color of which was apparently resulted from the high level of iron in it. It is therefore likely that whoever constructed the sloping roof wanted to use misfired vessels from the Çömlekçi workshops in order to be more cost-effective. These vessels, representing firing errors, were clearly transported by boats operating between the Çömlekçi and Moloz harbors. Five main shapes could be identified among the Alaca Han assemblage, namely one-handled large water jars (Type 1), one-handled water jugs (Types 2-3), one-handled churns with a hole on the shoulders (Type 4), one-handed spouted jugs (*ibrik*) (Type 5), and truncated-conical cups or funnels (Type 6). These types of vessels could be attributed to the repertoires of the Çömlekçi workshops (Fig. 4).

One-handed jars stand in for Type 1. They were probably preferred to carry water from natural springs or fountains. The type is characterized by a hemispherical body, flat base, cylindrical neck, and a single applied vertical strap handle that extends from the neck to the shoulder. A long and narrow neck leads to a spout that flares out into a plain or trefoil rim. Incised and impressed decorations are casually applied to their shoulders in horizontal bands. They are available in a variety of sub-types and sizes ranging from 40 to 50 cm in height. The largest examples have a capacity of holding approximately 10 to 12 liters of water. An illustration by Deyrolle (Fig. 5) shows a local Greek woman carrying one-handled water jar on her shoulder in front of a natural spring. This large water jar carried by this woman could well be one of the products of the Çömlekçi workshops. A nearly identical piece of pottery appears in a photograph dating to the early 1900s from Trabzon (Fig. 6). There are also mentions of elderly local fishermen living in coastal towns to the east of Trabzon retrieving such large jars from the sea near or around the piers of their towns. A postcard showing the unloading of large one-handled jars from a small

[39] Melek Öksüz, 2006, *Onsekizinci Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Trabzon: Toplum-Kültür-Ekonomi*, Serander Yayınları, Trabzon 2006, p. 117.

boat on the shoreline of Moloz in front of the Lower Fortress demonstrates that this coarse water jar was still in existence as late as 1910 (Fig. 7).

One-handled small water jugs stand in for Type 2 and Type 3. Although there are variations in shape among the examples of these types, they have in general a capacity of holding roughly 3 to 5 liters of water. These jugs are represented in a variety of sub-types and sizes ranging from 20 to 35 cm in height.

The churn category (Type 4) is characterized by an elongated globular body rising from a flat base and narrowing into a short cylindrical neck that ends with an outturning rim. A horizontal strap handle is affixed to the shoulder, and a single hole is opened next to it before firing. This hole serves as an outlet for the compressed air generated during the churning process. The way this type of churn works is quite simple. After the churn is filled with milk, the hole on the shoulder is plugged, and the mouth of the churn is sealed with a piece of stretched garment. After the churn is placed on the floor on a sort of soft pad, it is shaken with both hands in a back-and-forth motion at an angle of approximately 70° to the horizontal. Analogous pottery churns have been discovered in parts of eastern Anatolia. The presence of such a pottery churn in Trabzon is quite striking since the traditional method of converting milk into butter has long involved wooden churns built by staves, which are held by several metal rings or split-branch hoops. Such wooden churns, which are still being made in the eastern Black Sea region of northeast Anatolia, are operated in back-and-forth motion after being suspended from the ceiling post in houses.

The third common shape in the Alaca Han pottery assemblage (Type 5), the one-handed spouted jug (*ibrik*), features a nearly globular body and overturned rim. An applied handle extends from the vessel's rim to the shoulder, while a small spout extends from the top of the shoulder. This type of jar may have been an unavoidable component of everyday domestic life for pouring water. This distinctive type of spouted jug was used for various purposes, such as pouring water into a basin during hand-washing in household life or serving a traditional drink of sherbet made of fruit juice on special occasions such as celebrating a birth or circumcision. A similar spouted jug appears in another drawing by Deyrolle, this time depicting an elderly coffee seller in Trabzon.[40] Recent rescue excavations carried out in the Trabzon Fortress uncovered comparable examples that could be attributed to the Çömlekçi workshops.

The fourth shape features a truncated-conical body with a flat outturning rim and a flat base (Type 6). This funnel-shaped vessel has a flat base. This is unfortunately represented only by a single example.

The coincidental discovery of a pottery assemblage at Alaca Han provides a new look into the forgotten Çömlekçi pottery tradition at least in

[40] Deyrolle, *ibid*. p. 4

terms of the shapes of the products. We also need to wait for fortuitous discoveries that could reveal the vestiges of what is left behind from the potters' workshops in future constructional activities in the area of Çömlekçi. It must also be emphasized here that the results of ongoing archaeological excavations recently initiated in the Upper Fortress citadel (*Yukarı Hisar, İç Kale*) by the Trabzon Museum under the scientific supervision of Mehmet Yavuz from the Department of Art History at Karadeniz Technical University, as well as of the ongoing rescue excavations carried out in the middle and lower parts of the fortress (*Orta Hisar* and *Aşağı Hisar*), will contribute to typological aspects of the Çömlekçi products. Methodologically speaking, such a typology building clearly will not be possible without a comparative study that involves both the pottery found in archaeological excavations and that of ethnographic character, employing multiple sourcing studies and metric analyses.

Concluding Remarks

The picture that emerges from this analysis of Ottoman archival sources, narratives of western travelers, and accounts of local historians suggests that the potters of Çömlekçi created their work to meet the needs of local markets, supplying people living in the city or in the surrounding villages and towns. Each workshop at Çömlekçi manufactured limited types of coarse unglazed kitchen wares suitable for storing, churning, cooking, and serving food, as well as carrying water from natural springs or fountains. The assemblage recovered from the roof fill of Alaca Han nearly a decade ago is useful as far as defining only several shapes that could be attributed to the Çömlekçi workshops. No example of a pottery that could be related to such tasks as storing, cooking and serving food turned out from this particular assemblage. This could easily be tied to the need for closed vessels or the fact that they were the only ones available when there was a need for discarded pottery to be used as fill material in the roof construction.

The type of workshops that existed at Çömlekçi generally requires little investment in raw materials. Such coarse pottery primarily met its consumers in the local bazaars in Trabzon, although it could have been picked up at the workshops themselves. The products of Çömlekçi workshops were also moved on boats to weekly bazaars established in major towns, where merchants and locals of the region would also gather to purchase and sell their produce in certain days of the week. The vagueness of the *Trabzon Vilâyeti Salnâmeleri* (Yearbooks of Trabzon Province), issued between 1869 and 1904, is another piece of evidence proving the low level of pottery production at Çömlekçi. For instance, the *Salname* of 1888 very briefly refers to manufacture of water jars and jugs.[41]

[41] *Trabzon Vilayeti Salnamesi*, No: 13 (1888), pp. 193-194.

There is certainly a need for systematic ethnographic research based on participant observation and interviews with elderly villagers living in Trabzon's remote, mountainous rural parts that still maintain their traditional mode of life. This approach could be profitable for grasping a knowledge of storage behavior and culinary practices that may have involved the products of the Çömlekçi workshops. Such a methodology is also central to establishing a typology for the products of the Çömlekçi workshops. Available ethnographic date related to traditional life in remote villages near coastal towns show that jars of small and moderate sizes were often used to store commodities such as butter, cheese, honey, and grape molasses (*pekmez)*, while large pottery containers were essential for storing wheat, barley, vinegar, and pickled vegetables.

It is at this point difficult to estimate whether or not any relationship existed between the Ottoman pottery workshops and those operated from the end of the Russian occupation to the beginning of the 1960s at Trabzon. We know that several potters' workshops existed in the 1960s throughout the city, including the one in the quarter of Çömlekçi.[42]

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[42] M. Reşat Sümerkan, *Trabzon Yöresi Geleneksel El Sanatları*, Serander Yayınları, Trabzon 2008; Nurçin Seymen, *Geçmişten Günümüze Zanaat ve Zanaat Mekânlarının Değişimi: Trabzon Kenti Örneği*, Karadeniz Technical University, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Trabzon 2018, pp. 56-57.

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EKLER



Figure 1: A view of Çömlekçi from the east in the 1880s (Source: Sultan Abdulhamid II Collection of Photographs).



Figure 2: Interior of Alaca Han after restoration (Source: Karadeniz Kültür Envanteri)



Figure 3: Some of the pottery vessels used as fill material in the roof of Alaca Han



Figure 4: Main pottery shapes identified among the assemblage from Alaca Han

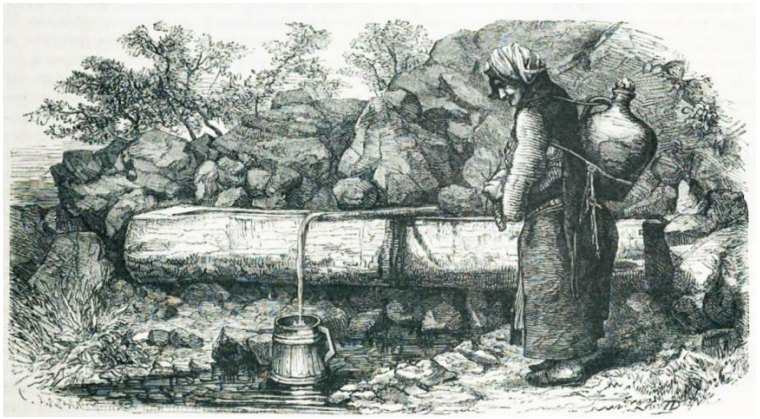


Figure 5: A local woman carrying one-handled water jug in front of a natural spring (Source: Deyrolle 1875, 32).



Figure 6: A photograph of 1910s showing a local woman carrying one-handle water jug (Source: Archive of Ali Işık)



Figure 7: Detail from a postcard from 1910 showing the unloading of one-handled water jugs from a boat along the Moloz shoreline (Source: Archive of Ali Işık)