

# FROM ARCHAEOLOGY TO A “HISTORY FROM BELOW”

## II

The impetus for an archaeology of the Ottoman Empire is twofold. First, the archaeology contains the potential to illuminate the history of the last several centuries in the eastern Mediterranean. Second, the archaeology can critique *Orientalist* assumptions about the empire, the social relations of its subject people, and the impact and nature of the change for the region as it entered the “modern” age. While the potential for an Ottoman Archaeology to confront issues and understandings is discussed in the introduction to the volume, its success can come only from the results of excavations, surveys, and analyses of material remains. In this section, five chapters illustrate aspects of this endeavor. Some of the steps toward an archaeology of the Ottoman Empire are seen in the five chapters of this section.

One of the goals for an archaeology of the Ottoman Empire is to expose the details of past everyday life for the people of the empire. Exposing evidence of daily life—the mundane things that constitute social life for people—facilitates a greater understanding of social dynamics and social change. Historical Archaeology takes as one of its guiding assumptions that material culture is a significant record of behaviors, actions, and choices for peoples who rarely enter the documentary record. This approach has illuminated the lives of workers, women, minorities, and others in such regions as North America, western Europe, and southern Africa as Historical Archaeologists have connected artifacts to culture and history. Some archaeologists use such data to fill in gaps in the historical record; other archaeologists use material remains to confront dominant versions of history. For the Ottoman Empire both tasks are necessary. There is a wide gap between the robust views of the elite and ruling classes and the shadows that fall on the peasants and working classes, between the information on urban areas and the assumptions regarding the countryside, and between portraits of men and images of women. Filling those gaps require innovative approaches to uncover the broad

spectrum of peoples and their patterns of behaviors from the Ottoman past. In conjunction with the new social histories for the Ottoman Empire, material remains can aid in reconstructing change for the empire and yield insights into the choices and actions of its people.

To build a robust archaeology of the Ottoman Empire, archaeological remains need to be excavated, artifacts and documents need to be analyzed and interpreted, and frameworks need to be developed. The richness and complexity of the Ottoman period material record allows a variety of approaches for an Ottoman archaeology and require a wide range of techniques for recovering information. In this section, we include an example of excavations of a site (Ziadeh-Seely on Ti'innik), a survey of a region (Brumfield on Crete), and analysis of standing architecture (Kuniholm on wooden buildings) and artifact collections (Baram on clay tobacco pipes and Carroll on ceramics). Employing methodologies that radiate from history, Middle Eastern archaeology, and Historical Archaeology, the chapters illustrate some of the challenges and possibilities for archaeological research into the Ottoman Empire.

The first level of concern in archaeology is identifying material remains. Brumfield's survey on Crete provides the local history for agriculture and landowning patterns in rural eastern Crete. The field-houses, grain mills, olive mills and presses, wine treading vats, and bread ovens located by her survey indicate social strategies taken by peasants during the centuries of Ottoman rule over Crete. Locating archaeological sites is the first level of research. Ziadeh-Seely provides an example of excavations focused on the Ottoman period. Ziadeh-Seely not only provides the political and social context for the excavations at Ti'innik and the techniques used to access the history of the village, but also illustrates the range of variation for artifacts that come from Ottoman period levels of archaeological sites.

Identifying material variation and chronological change are the key tests for an Ottoman Archaeology. Breaking the notion of a monolithic sameness for the peoples of the Middle East is a significant contribution of excavations and surveys. In order to reach this goal, greater chronological control is necessary, both within the archaeological record of sites and among sites as variation across the Ottoman Empire is sought. Chronology, ironically, is one of the challenges for Ottoman archaeology; Middle Eastern archaeology has greater precision over the Bronze and Iron Age archaeological remains than that of the recent past. The lack of chronological control has allowed Middle Eastern archaeologists to dismiss the Ottoman period as undifferentiated and too modern for archaeological research.

An example of new research into chronology for the Ottoman period comes from Kuniholm's dendrochronology. The Dendrochronology Project has extended the dating of architecture back more than a millennium in Anatolia. As illustrated in Kuniholm's chapter, dendrochronology may prove to be an essential tool in dating structures. That can lead to chronological typologies of artifacts associated with buildings. Once chronological control is established for archaeological assemblages and classes of artifacts, analysis and interpretation of variation is possible.

Chronological control is particularly important since one of the dominant assumptions for the Ottoman Empire after the sixteenth century and for the peasantry of the Middle East and Southeast Europe, in general, is of stasis. By locating chronological change in material life, the archaeology of the Ottoman Empire can bring forward evidence of social change. This is made explicit in Baram's examination of the material correlates for commodities and Carroll's investigation of consumption practices. Baram presents a chronological typology for the clay tobacco pipes uncovered during excavations in Israel. The change in the objects over the centuries is interpreted in terms of global processes that entangled the peoples of the Middle East. That understanding is meant to be a model for other archaeological artifacts of the modern era; the ultimate goal of the exercise revolves around locating the agency of the people of the region. A further exploration of the social meaning of things is found in Carroll's discussion of ceramics. Carroll raises a series of questions for archaeological ceramics uncovered in Anatolia, questions which are meant to understand the lived experiences of Ottoman subjects. Together, these chapters indicate a concern for interpreting artifacts as goods consumed by the non-elite of the empire.

The artifacts and interpretations provide a 'history from below' which reveal the peoples of the region as fully part of historical and social processes of change. The chapters exemplify the possibilities for the archaeology of the Ottoman Empire even while illustrating the challenges faced by archaeologists. The selection illustrates the opening of avenues for research into social life and the uneven processes of change during the Ottoman centuries. Read them as a prologue for an archaeology of the Ottoman Empire which can recover the history for the peoples of the Middle East and Southeastern Europe.