

# THE UNOFFICIAL GIFT IN CANTEMIR'S HISTORY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

Zeynep Sözen\*

azsozen@medipol.edu.tr

**Abstract:** *The gift has been a subject of interest in sociology and anthropology especially since the seminal work of Marcel Mauss, who argued that gift giving is never free. The present paper shall focus on unofficial gifts Dimitrie Cantemir observed and reported in his History of the Ottoman Empire. Cantemir mentions two forms of unofficial gifts that gave rise to reciprocal exchange: peşkeş and bahşiş. The first one of these was a diplomatic gift of great value, a gift of investiture, which was offered to the Sultan and his high ranking officials by the tributary states, Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania and exchanged for insignia. The second one, in Cantemir's words was 'a gift not bestowed out of mere kindness but a customary gift', given by the Sultan to the Janissaries, in return for which the Sultan received loyalty and solidarity. Cantemir, as a keen and objective observer, was able to distinguish between official and unofficial gift exchanges in the Ottoman Empire, to diagnose the functions of peşkeş and bahşiş and to decipher the cycle.*

**Keywords:** *Gifts, Peşkeş, Bahşiş, Principalities, Dimitrie Cantemir*

## Introduction

The French socio-anthropologist Marcel Mauss, in his seminal essay, *The Gift* (1925) argued that gift giving is never free. On the basis of empirical examples from a wide range of societies, Mauss concluded that archaic societies are governed by the logic of gift exchange. The transaction is similar to a binding contract that is regulated elaborately, though the rules are not written. There are basically three obligations: to give, to receive and to reciprocate gifts. In other words, A gift is received 'with a burden attached'.<sup>1</sup> The cycle is iterative: it is repeated over time. If the cycle is broken, the relationship is damaged. Suspending or extinguishing obligations is a breach of contract, with serious consequences.

These gifts are distinguished from forms of commerce or barter in that they do not have to be of use. In other words, gifts remain outside the boundaries of utilitarianism.<sup>2</sup> Mauss observed that gifts accompanied a

---

\* **Head of Department of Architecture, School of Fine Arts, Design and Architecture, Istanbul, Istanbul Medipol University.**

<sup>1</sup> Mauss, Marcel, *The Gift*, London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 92.

multitude of major events such as marriage, birth, circumcision, funerals, arrival and trade.<sup>3</sup> The gifts were not necessarily extravagant. However, they were precisely calculated and recorded.

Then, of course, there is the issue of reinforcement and sanctions, when the gift cycle is broken. Penalties for breach could range from loss of reputation to very grave ones, as Mauss stated, 'To refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war.'<sup>4</sup>

So what does this all have to do with Cantemir's History? About two centuries earlier than the studies of gift giving in anthropology, sociology and social psychology Cantemir, in his analysis of the growth and decay of the Ottoman Empire, identified two forms of unofficial gift exchange, *peşkeş* and *bahşiş*.

Neither of these was altruistic according to Cantemir. Both of these forms developed out of usage or custom into norms with sanctions. At the apex of both transactions was the sultan. Maintaining equilibrium was by no means easy and both forms were bound to deteriorate.

Cantemir's first reference to *peşkeş* appears in an annotation:

... Among other numberless privileges granted them according to the times, the chief was that wherein it was expressly said, that Moldavia voluntarily and without compulsion offered her obedience to the Turkish Empire, and therefore it is the Sultan's will that all her Churches, religious Rites, and Laws be untouched, and nothing more required of the Prince, but that he send every year by faithful Boyars to the resplendent Porte four thousand gold Crowns, forty bred Mares, twenty four Falcons, in the name of Pishkiesh, a present of gift.<sup>5</sup>

Cantemir is describing a customary gift from a subordinate to a superior, which harbors a potential for degeneration. In 1693, when Cantemir was elected to the Moldavian throne, he was unable gather the required amount of *peşkeş*. Then there is his personal disillusionment with the system upon his second appointment in 1711. Although he was promised by the Sultan that he would be exempt from this obligation, the Vizier had demanded money as soon as he arrived at Jassy.

The second gift Cantemir mentions in his History is the accession fee distributed by the sultan upon his enthronement:

When the Sultan first mounts the throne, Bakhshish is given to all the chosen troops that are at the time at Constantinople, except

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire*, Nicholas Tindal, J.J., and P. Knapton, Book III, 1734, p. 189.

those belonging to the Bascha, and this is called *julus akchesi*, the Money of the new or renewed Empire... The hope of receiving the *Bakhshish* is a perpetual cause of sedition in the greedy soldiers... It has been found by experience that most of the rebellions and depositions of the Sultans have been raised and carried on by nothing so much as this, that the Janisaries, eager for a change in the government, have been allured by the expectation of this *Bakhshish* to join in conspiracies with the Sultan's enemies.<sup>6</sup>

What is significant here is the structural similarity between the two cycles, although they were seemingly quite different. Neither of the gifts was free. Both were rooted in custom, both were repeated over and over again, developing into norms with obligations and enforcements. Yet both were doomed to deteriorate due to several reasons that shall be discussed.

This paper shall attempt to address these two categories separately, defining the terms and analyzing the gift cycles. Cantemir's comments regarding each category shall be evaluated under each heading. Main reasons for exaggeration of the gift and the consequences of exaggeration shall be discussed with reference to Cantemir's comments on the subject.

### PEŞKEŞ

*Peşkeş* is a gift presented by an inferior to a superior. The word is derived from early new Persian *piskas* with an Urdu root *pēškaš* (Peš = front and kas = drawing), implying an advance payment. The word *peşkeş* is still in use in modern Turkish for benefits made available to supporters, usually in the pejorative expression *peşkeş çekmek* (to draw a *peşkeş*). Both Ottoman Turkish and Persian had a very finely nuanced sense of the gift. There were several words defining the status of the giver: *hediye* (*hadiya*), *atiyye*, *inām*, *don*, *tuhfa*, *hibe* (*hiba*), and *peşkeş* (*pīshkash*), among others.<sup>7</sup>

Gemil equates *peşkeş* with the "feudal gift"<sup>8</sup> and argues that *peşkeş* predated the *haraç* because "the *harach* was paid to 'ransom peace', and 'the gift' held special significance in ancient Turkish culture".<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Book IV, p. 453.

<sup>7</sup> Lambton, Ann, 'Pīshkash: present or tribute?' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Volume 57, Issue 1 February, 1994, pp. 145-158; For a comprehensive vocabulary describing gift exchange see Muslu, Cihan Yüksel, 2014, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World*, London: Tauris.

<sup>8</sup> Gemil, Tasin, *Romanians and Ottomans in the XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Bucharest, Enciclopedica Publishing House, 2009, p. 301.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

*Haraç* designated the official tribute rendered by the Principalities and was complemented by the unofficial gift due by the accession of the new prince. Gemil dates the earliest *peşkeş* to the time of Petru Rareş:

From a document, perhaps of 1532, we learn of the gifts the Moldavian Prince sent the Porte: 12 sable furs, 12 lynx furs, 12 marten furs, 12 thoroughbred horses, and money for the sultan; the Grand Vizier (Ibrahim Pasha), and Second Vizier (Ali Pasha) each received four sable and four lynx furs, twelve thoroughbred horses and 3,000 akçe.<sup>10</sup>

The gifts were sent on several occasions at periodic intervals, including St. George's day which corresponded to Hıdrellez, announcing the beginning of spring and religious days. Gemil lists the gifts added on Holy Virgin's day: four thoroughbred horses, 8 sable furs, 12 marten furs, 8 lynx furs, and 12 hawks for the sultan: four thoroughbred horses, two sable furs, two lynx furs, and two hawks for the Grand and Second Vizier.<sup>11</sup>

*Peşkeş*, therefore, was invoked more frequently. Maxim, for instance, refers to spring *peşkeş* (*bahar peşkeşi*)<sup>12</sup>. Before the middle of the 16th century, the amount of *peşkeş* used to be voluntary and occasional. Panaite draws attention to several documents dating to 16th and 18th centuries showing the sultans' anticipation of 'that what was usually given from old times.'<sup>13</sup> The Romanian chronicles and reports used the words *obiceiu*, *obicina*, *datina* to designate the customary relationship between the Porte and the Principalities.<sup>14</sup>

The quantities of specific gifts were regulated. For example, in 1793, the usage was not sending merely falcons, but sending 25 falcons.<sup>15</sup> A gift registry existed under the name of 'Peşkeş defteri', which recorded all gifts received.<sup>16</sup>

The scarcity of the gift (walrus tusks) and the difficulty in its procurement (furs from Russia) were more important than the monetary

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid p. 302.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p. 303.

<sup>12</sup> Maxim, Mihai, 'Nouveaux Documents Turcs sur les Cadeaux Protocolaires (Peşkeş) et les Insignies du Pouvoir (Hükümet Alametleri)' in *Romano-Ottomanica, Essays&Documents From the Turkish Archives*, Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2001, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> Panaite, Viorel, 'Custom in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries Ottoman-Roumanian Relationship: Starting Points for a Historiographical Debate', *Revue des Etudes Sud-est Europeennes*, 31, 1993, p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid p. 176.

<sup>16</sup> Turan, Ahmet Nezih, 'Bir Pişkeş Defteri için', *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 13, 2002, pp. 59-74.

value of the gift. Thus, at least in the beginning, the symbolic value of the gift seemed to dominate its economic value.

But by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the amount of tribute (*haraç*) was considerably surpassed by the total monetary amount of the gifts and “the values of the requisitions in kind, not always paid or deduced from the tribute by the Ottoman officials.”<sup>17</sup>

The main reason for the exaggeration was the rivalry for the throne:

But we must add to the tribute (*harac*, *cizye*) the extraordinary growth of other payments, notably of official gifts (*pişkeş*) with a total sum near to that of the tribute, and especially of unofficial bribery (*rüşvet*). For instance, according to some European sources, the prince Petru Cercel (1583-1585), supported by the French king, paid 1.160.000 gold pieces (4.060 kg. of gold) in order to obtain the Wallachian throne, while his rival, Mihnea II (1577-1583, 1585-1591), supported by the King-Mother (Valide-Sultan) and the grand vizir, had to pay another huge sum of 1.000.000 ducats (3.500 kg. of gold) in order to maintain his throne. Consequently, as a result of this terrible struggle for the throne, in the 1581-1590 decade, the total Wallachian expenses at Istanbul (including *harac*, *pişkeş* and *rüşvet*) reached their peak: some 650.000 of gold pieces, that is 2.275 kg of gold, per annum!<sup>18</sup>

Cantemir also drew attention to the thirst for power as a motivation to increase the amount of the gift voluntarily.

And, in time out of too great thirst of rule his successors so increased the sum, that tho' at present there are paid into the Imperial Treasury sixty thousand crowns by way of Tribute, and twenty four thousand as an Easter offering...<sup>19</sup>

Overdoses of *peşkeş* were, therefore, sometimes voluntary. There were gifts offered 'more than usage' during the Phanariot regime, e.g. Nicolae Mavrocordat offered 15,000 *quruş* more than the usual amount in 1716.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Panaitescu, Damian, 'Ottoman Policies And Wallachia's Public Finances (1714-1774)', in International Balkan Annual Conference (Ibac), Book Series 4, 2016, p. 207.

<sup>18</sup> Maxim, Mihai, 'On the Right to Strike Currency of the Reigning Princes of Moldavia and Wallachia during the Period of Ottoman Suzerainty', in *Romano-Ottomanica, Essays&Documents From the Turkish Archives*, Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2001, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, Book III, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Panaite, Viorel, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

Furthermore, the prolonged practice had turned into a customary rule. The Moldavian chronicler Grigore Ureche complained that Moldavia would have been able to satisfy the sultan's claim once, but once the duty became a usage, the Porte would create new usages.<sup>21</sup>

What were the consequences of violating the rule of gift exchange? To fall short meant deposition or resignation, to exceed meant ingratiating. Loss of office could manifest itself as abdication, e.g. in the case of Peter the Lambe, who abandoned the throne in 1591 to avoid the consequences of violating the bond<sup>22</sup> or deposition by the Porte as in the case of Cantemir's first nomination to the Moldavian throne in 1693 ('money was more prevalent at the Porte than the father's services and the son's merit').<sup>23</sup>

The Sultan, in turn, reciprocated by sending insignia, symbols of authority to the elected princes.<sup>24</sup> This custom also had its roots in ancient Turkish tradition. The custom of giving a ceremonial robe came from Iran but was also practised by the Byzantine Empire. Orhan, the second Ottoman ruler, had received a robe of this kind from the Byzantine Emperor.<sup>25</sup>

Mustafa Ali, the foremost historian of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire attributed the tax revolts of 1594 in Wallachia and Moldavia to the exaggeration of the demands by the Ottoman dignitaries. During the reign of Suleiman I, the Grand Vizier was due an accession fee of 100,000 florins upon the enthronement of the prince. The usage, however, had changed during the reign of Murat III, when the same amount was not only demanded two or three times a year, but was expected to be presented to viziers in addition to the Grand Vizier. The exaggeration of the accession fee led to very heavy taxation, which in turn, triggered rebellions in the Principalities.<sup>26</sup>

This is confirmed by Sugar, who noted that as corruption grew after Mehmed Sokollu's death, more and more officials of both the Birun and Enderun (the outer and the inner parts of the royal households, respectively, applying to the outer and inner administrative services) had to be satisfied with gifts. Furthermore long reigning princes were levied

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p. 183.

<sup>22</sup> Panaite, Viorel, *op.cit.*, p. 184

<sup>23</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, p. 455.

<sup>24</sup> For documents in the Turkish Archives, especially Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, see Maxim, Mihai, 2001, 'Nouveaux Documents Turcs sur les Cadeaux Protocolaires (Peşkeş) et les Insignies du Pouvoir (Hükümet Alametleri)' in *Romano-Ottomanica, Essays&Documents From the Turkish Archives*, Istanbul: The ISIS Press, pp. 69-151.

<sup>25</sup> Pedani, Maria, 'Sultans and Voivodas in the 16th Century: Gifts and Insignia', *The Journal Of International Social Research*, Volume 1/1 Fall 2007, p. 198.

<sup>26</sup> Özge, Elif, *Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Paşa and Factional Politics in the Court of Murad III*, unpublished Master's Thesis, Istanbul: Bilgi University, 2010, p. 78.

additional payments. According to Sugar, peşkeş payments had reached an amount of 650,000 akçes when Şerban Cantacuzino assumed his rule<sup>27</sup>

The imposition of the peşkeş seems to be at least one of the causes that brought the relationship between Cantemir and the Porte to a profound crisis:

On the other hand the Sultan promised Cantemir, that the Principality should be Ebedi, and no tribute nor Pishkiesh demanded while he should continue in Moldavia...<sup>28</sup>

...Hence it was that Demetrius was so far from making the usual presents to the Sultan and the Turkish Ministers that he was allowed by the Port twenty purses towards his expense.<sup>29</sup>

But then, the oath was broken by the time Cantemir arrived in Jassy:

He was no sooner arrived at Jassy, metropolis of Moldavia, but he received orders from the Port to build a bridge over the Danube for the pillage of the Turkish army; and withal was commanded by the Vizir to send him the money due to him and the other officers for his advancement to that Principality» although earlier the Sultan had promised that no peşkeş would be demanded. Demetrius was extremely incensed with the last order, and from that moment resolved to be revenged by the Vizir, and embrace the present opportunity of freeing his country from the Turkish yoke.<sup>30</sup>

Subtelny argues that Cantemir's treaty of alliance with Russia and the subsequent manifesto issued to the inhabitants of Moldavia in 1711 were manifestations of the contractual principle that existed between the Porte and Moldavia. It may safely be said that Cantemir perceived the contractual principle and was disillusioned by its breach by the Porte. The principle could be summarized as: 'we should serve our sovereigns because they protect us, but if they no longer defend us, then we owe them no more service.'<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Sugar, Peter, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977, p. 130.

<sup>28</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, Part II, p. 452.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p. 456.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Subtelny, Orest, 'The Contractual Principle and Right of Resistance in the Ukraine and Moldavia', in *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Eds. R.J.W. Evans, T.V. Thomas, New York: Springer, 1991, p. 290.

## BAHŞIŞ

'Then he distributed to the Janizaries and Spahi the usual Bakhshish or donative but presented the Ulema and rest of the Ecclesiastics, who officiated his father's funeral with silk robes and money' wrote Cantemir, describing Selim II's accession to the throne.<sup>32</sup>

The type of *bahşiş* Cantemir refers above to is the accession fee distributed to the janissaries by the new sultan (also known as *cülus akçesi/cülus bahşışı*):

'Bakhshish, or largess, usually given to the soldiery, on the election of a new Emperor.'<sup>33</sup>

The word *bahşiş* derives from the Persian verb *bakhshidan*, "to bestow" or "to grant".<sup>34</sup> As the polar opposite of *peşkeş*, it is a gift from the superior to the subordinate. *Bahşiş*, as in the case of *peşkeş*, was given on several occasions, including enthronement, celebrations, religious days, military victories and in general for service performed or anticipated. *Bahşiş* is a commonly used word in modern Turkish for the ordinary tip (drink money) or gratuity.

The term *cülus* meant accession to the throne and was borrowed from the Arabic verb "to sit". *Akçe* (white/silver coin) was the standard monetary unit of the Ottoman Empire and remained so until the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> The term used by Western sources was *aspre* or *asper*, from *aspron* in Greek, meaning "white".<sup>36</sup>

*Bahşiş* was not the regular payment of the janissaries (*ulufe*), which was distributed every three months. The elaborate mechanism of payment was explained in *Kavânîn-i Yeniçeriyân* (laws and regulations of the Janissary Corps), an anonymous manuscript written by a janissary in the 17th century. The accession fee amounted to a yearly salary of a janissary.

A passage from the History makes the distinction between the official payment and the gift:

Each Janizary (and there are forty thousand) receives twenty dollars, and each of the fifteen thousand Spahi, twenty five. Sometimes also at the Sultan's pleasure their daily pay is increased

---

<sup>32</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, Book III, p. 219.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* ann.4

<sup>34</sup> Bowen, H., 'Bakhshīsh', in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Eds. by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 01 June 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Akkaya, Tolga, *The Evolution Of Money In The Ottoman Empire, 1326-1922*, unpublished Master's Thesis, Ankara: Bilkent University, 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Grierson, Philip, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection V: Michael VIII to Constantine XI 1258-1458*, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1999, p. 24.



with an Asper, which however is seldom done, but when the Sultan wants to ingratiate himself with the army.<sup>37</sup>

The first accession fee was distributed by Bayezid I (Thunderbolt) upon his enthronement in Kosovo in 1389, but institutionalized by Mehmed II or Bayezid II.<sup>38</sup>

As Cantemir shrewdly observed, *bahşiş* was a 'gift not bestowed out of mere kindness but a customary gift, which cannot be reckoned alms.'<sup>39</sup> The gift was offered by the new sultan upon his accession to the throne in the hope that the janissary corps would remain loyal to him during his reign. The anticipated counter gift, in other words, was allegiance.

How sustainable allegiance was, however, depended on certain conditions. First of all, the accession fee evolved quickly into a norm, while both parties started and kept breaching the contract. From the sultan's viewpoint, there was no limit to the janissaries' demands, mainly because the janissaries had a 'vested interest in changing sultans, since a new Sultan meant an accession bonus' as Mansel observed.<sup>40</sup>

At the same time the number of janissaries kept increasing, with Muslims joining the Corps in place of Christians. According to David Nicolle, the number of Janissaries in the fourteenth century was estimated around 1,000, increased to 6,000 in 1475, swelling to 113,400 in the eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> There is disagreement over the exact size of the Corps because recruitment had become hereditary and the pay slips were freely sold in the market.

Bernard Lewis remarked that the Corps of Janissaries, 'once a select corps d'élite, had swollen in size beyond all reason by enrolling any riff-raff willing to pay a bribe', referring to the criminal elements in the composition of the Corps by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup>

From the janissaries' angle, on the other hand, the contract was breached by the sultans. From 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, exhaustion of the fighting capacity, increases in fronts supply costs, delays in regular

---

<sup>37</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, Book III, p. 219, ann.4.

<sup>38</sup> Özcan, Abdülkadir, 'Cülus', İstanbul, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8, 1993, pp. 110-113.

<sup>39</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, Book IV, p. 351, ann.4.

<sup>40</sup> Mansel, Philip, *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 222.

<sup>41</sup> Nicolle, David, Hook, Christa, *The Janissaries*, Elite series, London: Osprey, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, Bernard, *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East*, Chicago, Open Court Publishing, 2001, p. 215.

payments and debasement of the coin led to led to financial crises, sparking a series of janissary rebellions.<sup>43</sup>

The first Janissary revolt dates back to 1446 (in Adrianople) ousting the young Mehmet II and bringing back his father, Murad II.<sup>44</sup> Their demand for an increase in pay was accepted, 'setting a dangerous precedent that would trouble the Ottoman Sultanate for centuries to come'.<sup>45</sup>

This event marked the beginning of a vicious circle, materializing in a series of rebellions. Cantemir observed the causal nexus of the accession gift cycle, underlining the seductive nature of *bahşiş* as a 'perpetual cause of sedition'.<sup>46</sup> From 1588 on, Janissary rebellions began to shake the Ottoman state. Between 1622 and 1807, Janissaries took active part in the ousting of sultans.<sup>47</sup> By the early nineteenth century, janissaries were perceived as a threat by the inhabitants of Istanbul and the Ottoman administration.

Some of the sultans even came close to transferring the capital to a safer location. Osman II (r. 1618-22), for instance, threatened to move the capital elsewhere in order to bridle the army. Mahmut II (r. 1808-38) threatened the janissaries that he would move out of Istanbul 'if they did not restrain their excess'.<sup>48</sup>

The corps was finally abolished by Sultan Mahmud II in 1826 in the so-called Auspicious Incident (in Turkish "Vaka-i Hayriye") in which 6,000 or more perished in the bombardment of their barracks and the ensuing executions.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Serim, Nilgün, 'The Causes of the Financial Crisis that Began in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century and Continued until the Tanzimat Era in the Ottoman Empire', *Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, Vol: 10, no: 20, 2012, p. 189.

<sup>44</sup> Emecen, Feridun, 'Defter-i Köhne: Pirlepe-Kırçova Kesiminin En Eski Timar Defteri 1445-1455', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, XLIII, 2014, p. 345.

<sup>45</sup> Freely, John, *The Grand Turk: Sultan Mehmet II - Conqueror of Constantinople, 2009, Master of an Empire and Lord of Two Seas*, IB Tauris: London, 2009, p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> Cantemir, Dimitrie, *op.cit.*, Book IV, p. 453.

<sup>47</sup> Somel, Selçuk Akşin, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press" xxxiii, 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Kafadar, Cemal, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, California: University of California Press, 1996, p. 149.

<sup>49</sup> For conflicting approaches to the decline of the janissary corps, see Kafadar, Cemal, 2007, 'Janissaries And Other Riffraff of Ottoman İstanbul: Rebels Without A Cause?' *Int. J. Turkish Studies* Vol. 13, Nos. 1&2, pp. 113-134 and Sunar, Mehmet Mert, 2009, 'When grocers, porters and other riff-raff become soldiers: Janissary Artisans and Laborers in the Nineteenth Century Istanbul and Edirne', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*(17)/1, pp. 175-194.

## **Conclusions**

The model of gift exchange Cantemir sketches in his *History* enables us to explore the practices of the Ottoman Empire from a different perspective. Though they were diametrically opposite in terms of the status of the giver, *peşkeş* and *bahşiş* exhibited a number of common features. Both were justified by custom or usage, both were regulated and were reciprocated. Both *peşkeş* and *bahşiş* were gifts that accompanied accession: the former complemented the accession of princes, while the latter complemented the sultan's enthronement. None of the gifts was a charitable donation: the ascending prince offered the gift in token of solidarity and the sultan offered the gift to the janissaries in anticipation of solidarity. The gifts were not only compulsory, but by the passage of time had to be exaggerated to such an extent that the gift cycles were no longer viable, creating vicious circles on their own.

The focal point in both of these relations was the Ottoman state. And finally, both practices developed into norms, where the failure to adhere led to serious consequences, including abdication, abandonment, denunciation, revolt and war.

Mauss had argued that gift giving was a central feature in constructing and maintaining social relationships. Cantemir's critical comments on both cycles, however, invite a number of interesting questions about the sustainability of the relationship: How and why do customary practices develop and change over time? Are gift cycles sustainable? What makes these customary practices so susceptible to degeneration?

Cantemir's progressive perspective on social relations provides fertile ground for the discussion of institutions, norms and practices between unequal social statuses, in particular allowing us to rethink the gift.

By identifying the unofficial forms of gift exchange of the Ottoman Empire, Cantemir predated studies of gift-giving in anthropology, social psychology, and sociology by two centuries, raising new questions not only about the institutions of the Ottoman empire, but also gift exchanges in the pre-modern age.

## **References**

Akkaya, Tolga, (1999), *The Evolution Of Money In The Ottoman Empire, 1326-1922*, unpublished Master's Thesis, Ankara: Bilkent University.

Berument, H., Ocaklı, N., (2006), 'Ottoman Budgets And Deficits Sustainability in A Period Of Fiscal Transition: Wars And Administrative Changes', *Archives of Economic History*, XVII /2, pp. 67-84.

Bowen, H., 'Bakhshīsh', in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 01 June 2019.

Cantemir, Dimitrie, (1734), *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire*, Nicholas Tindal, J.J., and P. Knapton.

Emecen, Feridun, (2014), 'Defter-i Köhne: Pirlepe-Kırçova Kesiminin En Eski Timar Defteri 1445-1455', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, XLIII pp. 341-474.

Freely, John, (2009), *The Grand Turk: Sultan Mehmet II - Conqueror of Constantinople, 2009, Master of an Empire and Lord of Two Seas*, IB Tauris: London.

Gemil, Tasin, (2009), *Romanians and Ottomans in the XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries*, Bucharest, Enciclopedia Publishing House.

Grierson, Philip, (1999), *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection V: Michael VIII to Constantine XI 1258-1458*, Washington: Dumbarton Oaks.

Kafadar, Cemal, (1996), *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, California: University of California Press.

Kafadar, Cemal, (2007), 'Janissaries And Other Riffraff of Ottoman İstanbul: Rebels Without A Cause?' *Int. J. Turkish Studies* Vol. 13, Nos. 1&2, pp.113-134.

Lambton, Ann, (1994), 'Pishkash: present or tribute?' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Volume 57, Issue 1 February, pp. 145-158.

Lewis, Bernard, (2001), *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East*, Chicago: Open Court Publishing.

Mansel, Philip, (1995), *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Maxim, Mihai, (2001), 'On the Right to Strike Currency of the Reigning Princes of Moldavia and Wallachia during the Period of Ottoman Suzerainty', in *Romano-Ottomanica, Essays&Documents From the Turkish Archives*, Istanbul: The ISIS Press, pp. 47-65.

Maxim, Mihai, (2001), 'Nouveaux Documents Turcs sur les Cadeaux Protocolaires (Peşkeş) et les Insignies du Pouvoir (Hükümet Alametleri)' in *Romano-Ottomanica, Essays&Documents From the Turkish Archives*, Istanbul: The ISIS Press, pp.69-151.

Nicolle, David, Hook, Christa, (1995), *The Janissaries*. Elite series, London: Osprey.

Özcan, Abdülkadir, (1993), 'Cülus', İstanbul: *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol.8, pp. 110-113.

Özge, Elif, (2010), *Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Paşa and Factional Politics in the Court of Murad III*, unpublished Master's Thesis, Istanbul: Bilgi University.

Panaite, Viorel, (1993), 'Custom in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries Ottoman-Roumanian Relationship: Starting Points for a Historiographical Debate', *Revue des Etudes Sud-est Europeennes*, 31, pp. 171-185.

Panaiteescu, Damian, (2016), 'Ottoman Policies And Wallachia's Public Finances (1714-1774)', in *International Balkan Annual Conference (Ibac)*, Book Series 4, pp. 205-214.

Pedani, Maria, (2007), 'Sultans And Voivodas in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century: Gifts and Insignia', *The Journal Of International Social Research*, Volume 1/1 Fall 2007, pp. 193-209.

Serim, Nilgün, (2012), 'The Causes of the Financial Crisis That Began in the 16th Century and Continued until the Tanzimat Era in the Ottoman Empire', *Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, Vol: 10, no: 20, pp. 181-194.

Somel, Selçuk Akşin, (2003), *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, xxxiii.

Subtelny, Orest, (1991), 'The Contractual Principle and Right of Resistance in the Ukraine and Moldavia', in *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Eds. R.J.W. Evans, T.V. Thomas, New York: Springer pp. 287-299.

Sugar, Peter, (1977), *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.

Sunar, Mehmet Mert, (2009), 'When grocers, porters and other riff-raff become soldiers: Janissary Artisans and Laborers in the Nineteenth Century Istanbul and Edirne', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* (17)/1, pp. 175-194.

Turan, Ahmet Nezihi, (2002), 'Bir Pişkeş Defteri için', *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 13, pp. 59-74.

© 2019. This work is published under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>(the “License”). Notwithstanding the ProQuest Terms and Conditions, you may use this content in accordance with the terms of the License.