This book is the compilation of Yuzo Nagata’s studies about the Karaosmanoğlu Family of the Manisa region in western Anatolia. Nagata has published a lot of articles and books about the family over many years and the main parts were included in Tarihte Âyânlar: Karaosmanoğulları Üzerinde Bir İnceleme [Nagata 1997a]¹.

The historical study of âyâns (provincial notables) in the Ottoman Empire dates back to the 1930s and has been developed in discussions about “modernization” in the Middle East [p.7; Nagata 2005b]. Following this, trends have focused on their socio-economic bases, the rights of iltizam (tax-farming), or the çiftlik (big farm) managements. Especially influenced by the theories of F. Braudel and I. Wallerstein, there has been some discussion as to whether the agricultural productions of çiftlik had always been tied to the market-oriented crops for European markets. This argument was countered by B. McGowan in 1981, who suggested that the existence of plantation-like farms on Ottoman lands did not always and everywhere imply a connection with foreign trade [McGowan 1981: 135] As a result, generally speaking, the dominant topic for discussion has come to be about which of the âyân’s socio-economic bases depended on iltizams rather than on çiftlik managements. G. Veinstein, however, has confessed that “these first impressions would have to be confirmed by a more extensive study of the available historical sources, mainly
the Ottoman ones” [Veinstein 1991: 53]. It was Nagata [1997a] who responded to Veinstein’s remark.

Nagata [1997a] has been published in Turkish by the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) focusing towards international researchers. After that, Nagata published Nagata and Emecen [2004] and Nagata [1997b; 2005a; 2005b]. Based on these studies and recent trends of âyân study, this new book has just been rewritten in Japanese by Nagata. Although there is no comprehensive study about an âyân in Anatolia except for his, this book and Nagata [1997a] have not been fully appreciated or given their rightful place in current research trends. It is certain that this present book is based on Nagata [1997a], and its composition is quite similar. However, we can see new points in this book as follows. First of all, Nagata analyzes the Hacı Hüseyin ağa’s socio-economic activities based on the new sources. Second, it shows the area controlled by Karasmanoğlu Family more clearly on the map. Third, he reevaluates Nagata [1997a] and his other works in the recent research trends. Fourth, he raises the importance of “comparative ‘gentry’ study” in world history. I would like to emphasize here that it is a great loss to researchers of Ottoman history that the contents of both of Nagata’s studies have not been fully understood.

As for the recent research trend about âyâns, we have an article by Adanır and Faroqhi [2002] in the preface of which they single out Saltzmann [1993] as “an important study” and write that “local elites’ greater consciousness of the potentialities of ‘their’ respective regions can coexist with close and even intensifying ties to the Ottoman center” [Adanır and Faroqhi 2002: 5]. They have disregarded, or are perhaps unaware of, the fact that Nagata has already clarified that there was a political and economic relationship of coexistence between âyâns and the Ottoman government based on the Ottoman sources in [Nagata 1997a].

Khoury, who has written “The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power” [Khoury 2006], has studied about âyâns, but his discussion has been centered around the âyâns in the Arab regions. Nagata calls our attention to this problem as follows. In such recent trends focusing on the âyâns in the Arab region, the political relationship between the central government and provincial âyâns has been emphasized, but on the other hand, the socio-economic factors like iltizam or çiftlik, which had been discussed before, have been neglected. This may have been affected by the fact that in such discussion there is a lack of suitable geographical and natural conditions for çiftlik in the Arab region. However even for âyâns in the Arab region, the rights
of iltizams and foreign trades have been important as economic bases [pp.12–13]. Nagata cautiously argues against lumping different forms of the ayans in the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Arab regions, because of peculiar problems to each of those regions. At the same time, research on Anatolia has fallen behind the other areas. Therefore, first of all, we have to do a demonstrative study on âyâns in Anatolia that could give us clearer image of the real situation. That is this book’s aim [p.13].

In short, this book is a study on “âyân in Anatolia” regarding the “socio-economic awareness of this issue,” which has been neglected in the previous trend. I would like to introduce its contents in detail, as this book has been written in Japanese.

Provincial Notables in Premodern Turkey: A Case Study of the Karaosmanoğlu Family

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I would like to give an outline for each chapter. In the Preface, the above-mentioned research trends have been put in order in detail. Nagata has particularly criticized the fact that the socio-economic factors like iltizam or çiftlik has been neglected in recent trends. A lot of Ottoman sources are used in this book. For example, Nagata has used the Islamic court registers (Şeriyye Sicil Defteri) belonging to the National Library in Ankara, various sources (Hatt-i Hümayun Tasnifi, Cevdet Tasnifi, İrade, Maliyeden Müdevver Defteri, Mühimme Defteri, and Kamil Kepeci Tasnifi) belonging to the BOA (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi), various sources
belonging to the Archive Section of the Topkapı Palace Museum, the waqf registers belonging to the General Waqf Office in Ankara, and the documents belonging to the Public Record Office in London. Thus, if we want to do a comprehensive study of âyâns, we can understand how to use which sources and how to analyze them from this book. The truth of the matter is that we could not do a “comprehensive study of âyâns” without a lot of the Ottoman and foreign sources.

In chapter one, first of all, Nagata points out that the Manisa region, located on the hinterland of Izmir, has the most important international trading port and includes a mountainous district that is rich in natural resources. He emphasizes that both the rich nature and the geopolitical importance of Manisa paved the way for the rise of the Karaosmanoğlu Family. Nagata illuminates how such various merchant and professional groups as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, were active in international trade through Izmir, and clarifies that the family and other âyâns unified them and supported the basis of their livelihood.

In chapter two, using the researches by Çağatay Uluçay, a brief history of the Karaosmanoğlu Family is established. It may have been a Türkmen family which “settled in the village of Yayaköy located on the slope of a small mountain on the northern edge of the Manisa plain” [Nagata 2005b]. The family tree [pp.40–41] began from Hasan Ağa, who was the grandfather of Kara Osman (d.1706). Since his son, Mehmed Çavuş (d.1644), father of Kara Osman, the family frequently appeared in the Islamic court registers of Manisa. So it was said that the central government recognized the family as an âyân of Manisa in the first half of the seventeenth century. Kara Osman’s eldest son, Hacı Mustafa Ağa, “drew the Sultan’s attention by sending soldiers, provisions, and animals to the battlefront against Iran as a serdengeçti ağası (a leader of the troops-note by reviewer). He was appointed as the mütesellim (deputy governor-note by reviewer) of Saruhan in 1743, which he remained until 1755. During this period he extended his political and social influence over the entire province through the acquisition of tax-farming rights and commercial activities, in addition to his political power” [Nagata 2005b]. At last, he was “executed in 1755 by order of the Sultan as a result of numerous written complaints about him sent to Istanbul by local inhabitants” [Nagata 2005b]. Eventually, the family managed to recover the confidence of the Sultan through the Russo-Turkish War from 1768. The Janissary did not have complete power, so the government was obliged to keep fighting by employing soldiers, provisions, and animals sent by âyâns. In short, we can understand
the fact that the government depended on the āyâns to supply soldiers, provisions, and animals for the wars in this book. Although the family made use of these two Russo-Turkish Wars as a stepping stone towards their recovery, at the same time, it was true that the government was always watching for a chance to confiscate their property, and to make reforms in order to try to weaken the power of the Āyâns [p.52].

Since Hacı Ömer Ağa, who was a nephew of Mustafa Ağa, became the governor (voyvoda) of Bergama in 1780, the Karaosmanoğlu Family had expanded its influence not only in the Manisa region but also towards the Bergama region. Nagata points out that “after the death of Ömer Ağa in 1812 and Hüseyin Ağa in 1816, Sultan Mahmud II decided to confiscate their property and destroy the family’s influence in the region, in an attempt to establish sultanic hegemony over the province” [Nagata 2005b]. But in order to keep their property, some members of the family dedicated a lot of estates as waqf and some of the family escaped his pressure by going to Egypt. The most prosperous period for the family was between 1796 and 1816, when Hacı Hüseyin Ağa had become both the mütesellim of Saruhan and the tax collector (muhassul) of Aydın. During Hüseyin Ağa’s period, foreign consuls relied on the family rather than on the Ottoman government and tried to maintain good relations with them, respecting that Hüseyin Ağa was a senior executive official who had a thorough knowledge of international law [pp.62–65]. Furthermore, from the 1790s until 1806, when the Russo-Ottoman war broke out, in response to the central government, Hüseyin Ağa demonstrated his versatility not only by the supplying of provisions to Istanbul and the recruitment of soldiers but also by suppressing the “bandids” during the Paspanoğlu rebellion in Vidin [p.65]. As expected, after the death of Hüseyin Ağa in 1816, Sultan Mahmud II decided to confiscate his property and made cautious negotiations with the Karaosmanoğlu Family.

In 1816, when Hüseyin Ağa died, Mahmud II began an attempt to establish sultanic hegemony over the province, so it was said that “the age of Āyâns” had ended. However “in 1829, a rebellion led by Keî Mehmed occurred in Aydın province, and in order to quell this disturbance, the government was again forced to appoint two members of the family, Küçük Mehmed Ağa and Hacı Eyüb Ağa, to the posts of mütesellim of Saruhan and voyvoda of the Tire district in Aydın province, respectively” [Nagata 2005b]. After a short time, the government was obliged to give the posts of mütesellim of Saruhan and muhassul of Aydın to the family [pp.69–71]. Moreover, the positions of the members of the family were nearer to bureaucrat than...
âyân during the Tanzimat period. Nagata points out that the family was not ruined but their role had been changed by their relationship with the government [p.74].

In both the third and fourth chapters, Nagata examines the socio-economic base of âyân, whether iltizam or çiftliks, and it has been verified that those who possessed çiftliks were always in danger of having them confiscated by the government, and the tax-farming rights also had danger in the power struggle between the center and provincial regions. Consequently, the family’s socio-economic strength was not based on a single institution, but the family managed to keep their property in balance based on both iltizam and çiftliks, even while fully recognizing the dangers involved.

In recent discussions about iltizam, one of the characteristic research trends compares the iltizam system to the “privatization” of tax or to a “domestic loan” in the contemporary financial system. Murat Çizakça pointed out as follows. It is said that the decline of the Ottoman Empire began from the 1699 Karlowitz treaty, but it had begun to accept foreign loans since the Crimian War in the middle of the nineteenth century(7). In short, as mentioned above, the family had become prosperous through the supply of provisions and animals, and the recruitment of soldiers on the several wars against Russia as a stepping-stone towards the family’s revival. So I think that iltizam system had played its role as a “domestic loan”.

It is certain that the family made a great deal of profit through their tax-farming rights. For example, Hüseyin Ağa made a profit of 84,255 guruş through tax-farming operations in 1816, 1.9 times the profit raised that same year from his eight çiftliks. So of course, it was important for the family to get a profit from the tax-farming rights [pp.106-107; Nagata 2005b].

However, the real construction of the tax-farming of the family was complex. For example, I would like to introduce “the tax of Saruhan Province” in a document of 1743(9). The malikane tax collector of “the tax of Saruhan Province” in Istanbul, the main contractor of this tax-farming, was Yeğen Ali, an official of food supply in the Palace, and his co-holders, and they made a document giving the right to a sub-contractor who had been in the position of the deputy governor (mütesellimlik) of Saruhan. However, in the Document of Order from Yeğen Ağa, who had been Govenor (Beylerbey) of Rumeli, it was written that the sub-contract for this right of tax-farming had been given to the muhassil of Aydın. Furhermore, the mütesellimlik of Saruhan, was only a representative named by the muhassil of Aydın who was contracted to collect the tax. In short, Aydın and Saruhan were both located in nearby provinces in
Anatolia, but the position of the muhassıl of Aydın was higher than the mütesellimlik of Saruhan. Because of this situation, the head of the family could not ensure their role as the mütesellimlik of Saruhan until he had also assumed the post of muhassıl of Aydın [p.83]. As is mentioned in the second chapter, the most prosperous period of the family was from 1796 to 1816, when the family had gained both the mütesellimlik of Saruhan and the muhassıl of Aydın, because it was based on such a background of multilayered tax-farming rights. In connection with the unnatural death of Hacı Mustafa Ağā, Nagata reveals the data relating to the estate of “Mustafa Ağā being confiscated by the Government in 1756. And Nagata points out that Mustafa Ağā was eventually dismissed from the mütesellimlik of Saruhan and then put to death over a dispute involving tax-farming rights. To judge from this denouement alone, tax-farming does not seem to have been a very stable economic activity. Financially speaking, sarrafs played an important role in the tax-farming system and entailed enormous operating expenses. That is the reason why ayan tended to leave large debts to sarrafs upon their deaths” [Nagata 2005b].

From consideration on the relation between the family and sarrafs, I think we could interpret the tax-farming system as not only a domestic loan but also an indirect foreign loan connected with the network of international finance through sarrafs.

In chapter four, we find an outline of the çiftlik management, which were also explained in Nagata [2005b]. The family possessed about 50 çiftlik on the Manisa plain and in the Bakır River basin of the Bergama region. In this sense, the family should be regarded as a large-scale landowner. However, the share occupied by çiftlik in the family’s total wealth was not very large [Nagata 2009]. Nagata has clarified that the area of each parcel of arable land in a çiftlik was about the same as a peasant’s traditional small holding of one çift, or 60–150 dönüms. It shows that the “çift-hane system” (small peasant land ownership) defined by Halil İnalcık had continued.

Furthermore, on Karaosmanoğlu Family çiftlik, arrangements varied between “slavery” (kölelik), “service” (hizmetkârlık), and share-cropping (ortakçılık), but share-cropping seems to have been the most widespread custom. Although “service” involved “wages”, it does not seem to have been a form of “wage labor” in the capitalistic sense of the term [Nagata 2005b].

In chapter five, Nagata clarifies the waqf activities based on the data that he collected from 17 waqf deeds left by nine members of the family. All the religious
and public facilities built by them and all the family-held real estate assets endowed as waqfs are shown as in two tables [pp.176-177; Nagata 2005b]. The commercial buildings (han) and houses (hane) occupied sixteen percent of the real estate endowed as waqfs including 23 hans, 9 houses for Europeans (frenkhanes), 37 houses for Greeks (rumhanes), and 4 houses for Jews (yahudihanes). That means the family was closely connected with such moneylenders or international commercial networks.

As stated above, Nagata evaluated that the family’s socio-economic strength stemmed not from a single institution but rather from a multifaceted portfolio of iltizams, çiftliks, and waqfs. Nagata has pointed out that “the family’s power and influence were composed of a dual structure in the shape of the concentric circles” and shown that “the outer circle representing a superficial source of power based solely on the political vicissitudes of tax-farming rights, the narrower inner circle describing a firmer socio-economic sphere secured by both landholding (çiftlik) and religious foundations (waqf)” [pp.73-74; 2005b]. The family could extend their powers towards the outer circle including the Aydın and Bergama regions, but they had to abandon this outer circle area because of the centralization by Mahmud II, although their influence in the narrower inner circle continued until the twentieth century.

In chapter six, Nagata attempts to reconstruct the family’s history until the present day, something he could not write enough about in Nagata [1997b]. Against Faroqhi’s statement “but in spite of the power and wealth of some of these families, which even permitted them to sponsor mosques and other public buildings, these men and women have left very few texts in which they speak in their own voices,” Nagata has answered that that is true, but as the readers can see in this book, we can overcome the limitation of texts, using a lot of “public archives” from the scene in the provincial society [p.13]. In fact, Nagata has clarified from the heritage registers that the family had kept their balance by having a lot of property as both movable and immovable property and both in the towns and in the villages.

Furthermore, we can understand their relations of marriage and how their ordinary lives flourished with a French clock, a Polish down quilt, a Baghdadian silk fabric, and a lot of materials connected with the world trade [pp.212–215]. On the other hand, we cannot miss the local history. Nagata introduces a local historian Karaöz’s description as follows. Before he was appointed as kapicibası (a head of the place doorkeeper) and was called an ağa, the inhabitants of Manisa had called Hacı Hüseyin Ağ a an efendi, an honorific title for an Islamic scholar (ulema), since he
was a müderris (professor) of a medrese. It was said that he endowed his property to construct a library to keep manuscripts in Muradiye Mosque, located on the outskirts of Manisa and donated his own collection of 1000 manuscripts, and it was stated that this was not a rumor. Most of Manisa was destroyed by fire immediately after World War I, but this Muradiye library remained standing, and thanks to the library, more than 400 volumes of the Islamic court registers of Manisa were preserved there [Nagata 2005b]. In short, what we can read today are not only the Islamic court registers of Manisa but also other very important Arabic, Persian, and Turkish documents for which we owe our thanks to this library [pp.215–217].

In the last chapter, Nagata raises the importance of “comparative ‘gentry’ study” in world history and tells us that from the 16th century to end of the 18th century, we can see the rise of an intermediate class between the central governments and the rural societies of the world for example, the gentry in England, the qiangshen in China, and the gono(12) in Japan, and the âyân in the Ottoman Empire [pp.237–242].

I think that the Karaosmanoğlu Family’s role was indispensable for both the government and the inhabitants in Manisa, especially because their activities have led to Sustainable Development in the Manisa region. Of course, the Karaosmanoğlu Family might not have always been good âyân for the inhabitants, but Nagata suggests that under the family’s “governance” the fact that peace and order was kept means that the family had won recognition from the inhabitants [p.237]. The family’s role of keeping peace and order was also needed by the government.

As for the questions left not to be studied, Nagata points out the relation between the family and Egypt [p.62, 70]. After the death of Küçük Hüseyin Ağa in 1831, Nazif Ağa, who was his son, had escaped to Egypt with his brother and died there. So Nagata is interested in what connections he made there(13). We could imagine that he established political and economic ties with the inhabitants there, considering how the family kept good relations with Greeks, Armenians, and Jews in Izmir so that even the consuls had relied on the family. And we have a question about whether there was any connection between the family and Muhammad Ali or Ibrahim Pasha.

Furthermore, it has been heard that Nagata has begun reading the Income Registers (Temettütat Defterleri) of Manisa. These are indispensable sources for analyzing the socio-economic powers after the Mahmud II period. We will be able to know how much property the family had held in which town and in which village in the middle of the nineteenth century. It may be possible for us to know that even after
“the age of Ayâns,” the Karaosmanoğlu Family had remained powerful in the region.

From now on, it is no exaggeration to say that for those who wish to study about the ayâns, not only in Anatolia but also in both Arab and Balkan, it is impossible to begin without reading this book or Nagata [1997a].

Notes

(1) There are three reviews about Nagata [1997a] as follows; İlgürel [1999], Egawa [1999], and Yoshida [1999].

(2) Nagata and Emecen [2004] is an article on Hacı Mustafa Aga’s estates confiscated by the government.

(3) A book review on this book in Japanese is Kishimoto [2010].

(4) The book review of this book is Hayashi [2004].

(5) Nagata also points out that Adanır & Faroqhi [2002] was a book based on the panel discussion at the International Congress in 1992, so it might not be able to refer to Nagata[1997a] and Nagata’s other studies [p.251, note 31].

(6) These details are from Nagata [1976].


(8) I have introduced this case in [Egawa 2010; 2011].

(9) I do not think that the Malikane system is the ultimate style of privatization in tax systems, because considered from the point of view of ownership, the government is the real possessor of the ownership of the tax that had been collected as farming taxes, and the government never relinquished this ownership [Çizakça1999: 223]. This structure, in which the real ownership belonged to the government, is the same as the structure of the national land (miri arazi) system. Under the miri arazi system, the ownership of the field (tarla) belonged to the government and peasants as land tenants were obliged to pay taxes to the government. Similarly, while a tax-farmer might have obtained the right of tax-farming, at the same time, there was always a danger that this right might be confiscated by the government at any time. So it may be said that enforcing the malikane system was one of effects of the centralization process before the nineteenth century.

(10) The continuation of the “çift-hane system” in the çiftlik of Balikesir province until the middle of nineteenth century is verified in Egawa [2004].

(11) Faroqhi [2002: 367].

(12) Gono was the wealthy Japanese peasants and emerged in many regions in Japan from the latter half of the eighteenth century onwards [Nagata 2005b].

(13) For example, Yakub Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, who was a famous writer of modern literature was born in Egypt.
References


Book Review: Provincial Notables in Premodern Turkey: A Case Study of the Karaosmanoğlu Family (Egawa)


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