

In memory of Donald Quataert (1941-2011)

A leading figure in the field of nineteenth-century Ottoman history, as well as friend and mentor to many associated with *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Donald Quataert passed away on February 10, 2011, at his home in Binghamton, New York. His legacy consists of several books, dozens of articles, numerous students, and a strong imprint on Ottoman social, economic, and labor history.

Donald Quataert was born in Rochester, New York, in 1941. To save money for his college education, he went to Samsun, Turkey, between 1961 and 1963 to work in the building of a radar station for General Dynamics at the height of the cold war. This experience turned out to be very formative, for following his return to the US he completed his undergraduate education at Boston University and went on to Harvard University in 1966 to pursue his graduate education under the supervision of Stanford J. Shaw, a leading Ottomanist. Two years later, he moved to UCLA, along with Shaw who had decided to join the department of history there. His decision to follow Shaw to UCLA presented an opportunity, not only to continue his graduate training under the guidance of Shaw who had encouraged him and drawn his attention to Ottoman history, but also to study with such eminent scholars as Andreas Tietze, Speros Vryonis, Richard Hovanissian, and Nikki Keddie, each of whom had been working, in their own special fields, concerning the territory that the Ottoman Empire had ruled from medieval to modern times. He also met his future wife and life-long intellectual companion, Jean Quataert, in one of the economic history seminars at UCLA.

Donald Quataert completed his dissertation, "Ottoman Reform and Agriculture in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1908," in 1973. He then joined the department of history at the University of Houston, where he taught until 1987. He published several articles based on his disser-

tation research,¹ but he never turned the dissertation into a book, probably because, perfectionist that he always was, he was not entirely satisfied with it and before publishing a monograph wanted to extend his research—particularly on peasant resistance, as he was inspired by the “history from below” approach of the British Marxist Historians.² As he would later recall, scattered archival documentation and the near absence of scholarship on the subject prompted him to abandon his early ambitions concerning peasantry and instead led him to focus on workers in urban environments.³

In the meantime, just like many other social and economic historians, he was preoccupied with the question of how the European economic penetration had affected the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century.⁴ At that time, scholarly attempts to address this question were largely informed either by modernization theory, or by the world-system approach. Donald Quataert, similar to many young scholars then, was thoroughly critical of modernization theory. Still, although he took Wallerstein’s world-system approach to heart and found its basic contours helpful, he was nonetheless unsatisfied with its characterization of the incorporation of the non-western world into the world capitalist economy as one-sided, disregarding the internal dynamics and removing any agency from the non-western world in this process. As he said, “the twin themes of resistance and disintegration” should “characterize the encounter of the Ottoman Empire with European economy.”⁵ In his first book, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration*, he tackled these “twin processes” by focusing on five case studies involving European

1 Donald Quataert, “Agricultural Reforms and Government Policy in Ottoman Anatolia, 1800-1914,” *Asian and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1981); Donald Quataert, “The Commercialization of Agriculture in Ottoman Turkey, 1800-1914,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 1, no. 2 (1980); Donald Quataert, “Dilemma of Development: The Agricultural Bank and Agricultural Reform in Ottoman Turkey, 1888-1908,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 2 (1975).

2 The dissertation was published in Turkish. Donald Quataert, *Anadolu’da Osmanlı Reformu Ve Tınnm, 1876-1908*, trans. Nilay Özek Gündoğan and Azat Zana Gündoğan (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008).

3 Yet, he occasionally turned to peasant resistance later in his career. For example, see Donald Quataert, “Rural Unrest in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Peasants and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Farhad Kazemi and John Waterbury (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991).

4 He addressed this question in several important articles in the late 1970s. Donald Quataert, “Limited Revolution: The Impact of the Anatolian Railway on Turkish Transportation and the Provisioning of Istanbul, 1890-1908,” *The Business History Review* 51, no. 2 (1977); Donald Quataert, “The Economic Climate of the ‘Young Turk Revolution’ in 1908,” *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 3, On Demand Supplement (1979).

5 Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 155.

companies that operated in various sectors such as tobacco, railways, and mining in Ottoman Anatolia and İstanbul, and showed how the government and the workers were affected by and resisted to company activities. Conducting research in the Ottoman as well as several European archives and employing a fresh approach in Ottoman studies by giving voice to local actors and internal dynamics, Donald Quataert established a solid reputation in Ottoman scholarship.

Following the publication of his first monograph, he intensified his research on labor history. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that he established labor history as a field within Ottoman social history. Especially at Binghamton University, where he started teaching in 1987, he excelled in research and writing. The department of history there—with its considerable number of scholars specialized in American and European labor history, the Fernand Braudel Center under the direction of Immanuel Wallerstein, and the Center's Research Working Groups undertaking various projects on the issue of labor around the world—provided an excellent environment to nurture his scholarly interests. While publishing several important articles on Ottoman labor history during the 1980s,⁶ he started researching more extensively Ottoman manufacturing, which resulted in the publication of *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* in 1993.⁷ In this book, he successfully showed that certain handicraft industries, especially carpet manufacturing, thrived thanks to the strong demand from European markets, contrary to the commonly held assumption that the entrance of European industrial goods into the Ottoman lands resulted in the wholesale destruction of the local manufacturing sector.

In the early 1990s, Halil İnalcık, the doyen of Ottoman studies, invited Quataert to join him in the preparation of *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, in its size and quality arguably the best and most comprehensive account summarizing the scholarly accumulation in the field over the past half century. Quataert not only nurtured the publication of the book, but also wrote a book-length essay about the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire, in which he ad-

6 For example, Donald Quataert, "Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860-1908," *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 3 (1986); Donald Quataert, "Labor and Working Class History During the Late Ottoman Period, C. 1800-1914," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 15, no. 2 (1991); Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Women, Households, and Textile Manufacturing, 1800-1914," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

7 Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

mirably meshed twenty years of his own research with the existing literature.⁸

By the 1990s, Donald Quataert already had an unwavering reputation in the field of social and economic history of the Ottoman Empire. But he did not limit himself to this particular field. Always enthusiastic about integrating Ottoman scholarship with that of other regions and fields, Quataert also played a leading role in the development of cultural history, especially consumption studies, in Ottoman historiography. He organized a conference as part of a series of meetings he held at Binghamton University every other year throughout the 1990s, edited a book based on this conference, and published a major article on consumption in the Ottoman Empire.⁹

In 2000, he wrote a very successful textbook on the last two centuries of the Ottoman Empire, which has been widely used and translated into several languages.¹⁰ His last book was on the coal miners of Zonguldak, a subject that was very dear to him and with which he had already dealt briefly in his first monograph. Tapping into previously little-known archival material located in Zonguldak, Donald Quataert paid several visits to the town, assembled uncatalogued and scattered documents, and wrote the so far most comprehensive account of coal miners in late Ottoman history.¹¹

And he continued to carry out all of these arduous tasks meticulously even after he was diagnosed with cancer. This was typical of him. His enthusiasm, sense of humor, and enjoyment of life never faded, even in the most difficult phases of his illness. In a way he fooled us and almost led us to believe that he was not ill. As his students, nearly twenty of us had been planning a conference in his honor last autumn in order to celebrate his accomplishments and to show our appreciation for all the hard work he had put into our intellectual development over the years, believing that there were still many good years ahead of him. When we told him of our plans, he was extremely happy and felt honored in his own humble way. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the conference.

8 Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, eds. Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

9 Donald Quataert, ed. *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Donald Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 3 (1997).

10 Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

11 Donald Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920* (New York: Berghahn Press, 2006). Also see the web page he prepared related to this volume: <http://bingiwas.binghamton.edu/~ottmiddl> or <http://bingweb.binghamton.edu/~coal/index.htm>.

We will hold the event in his absence at Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, on May 27, 2011.

Donald Quataert's superb scholarship fails to convey his persona as a whole. He was above all a gentle mentor, an exuberant teacher, and a very good friend. For those of us who are fortunate enough to have known him and worked with him, we will forever remain indebted to him. Our consolation is our belief that the fields of study he helped to establish will flourish and therefore maintain his important legacy.

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