

## **An Ottoman Merchant Guild: Istanbul's Grain Merchants in the 18th Century**

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In Ottoman economic historiography, we often encounter guilds. However, they almost exclusively refer to the craft guilds. This paper will argue that we can conceptualize Istanbul's grain merchants as a merchant guild. This will be done in three parts. First, the internal organization of the grain merchants will be discussed. Their head and members will be shown through the registers in the Ottoman archives. This will allow us to shed a light on their relationship with the state and help us argue to their certification as a merchant group. Once we establish the existence and certification of such a group, we will delve into their enterprises and activities to assert them as an active merchant guild. Therefore, secondly, we will analyze their collective actions. Referring to the concerted investments of grain merchants in Hocabey and Karaharman we will argue that Istanbul's grain merchants are acting as a group. Lastly, in response to some claims that take the grain merchants of Istanbul to be mere officials who are coerced to do this commerce and that they do not yield profits, we will argue that the grain trade was profitable and the merchants indeed did profit by using trade permits, accounting books and other archival documents. In conclusion, Istanbul's grain merchants will be presented as a pre-dominantly Muslim merchant guild, recognized by the central authority and that acted collectively.