

A CONTESTED COMMODITY: LICORICE PRODUCTION AND TRADE IN
OTTOMAN WESTERN ANATOLIA, 1850-1914



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2025

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OTTOMAN WESTERN ANATOLIA, 1850-1914

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History

by
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Boğaziçi University

2025

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Licorice Production and Trade in Ottoman Western Anatolia, 1850-1914

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

A Contested Commodity:

Licorice Production and Trade in Ottoman Western Anatolia, 1850-1914

This thesis examines the transformation of licorice root production and trade in Ottoman Western Anatolia between 1850 and 1914. Originally regarded as a wild plant with limited economic value, licorice root rapidly became commercialized in the mid-nineteenth century, evolving into a highly demanded agricultural commodity in international markets, especially due to growing industrial needs in Europe and the United States. This study analyzes the multilayered nature of this transformation by focusing on tax policies, land regimes, peasant labor, corporate competition, and diplomatic interventions.

The thesis investigates the growing influence of foreign companies such as MacAndrews & Forbes in the Ottoman countryside, their interactions with local administrative structures, and their legal and political disputes with rival firms, based on extensive Ottoman archival documentation. It also examines how the Ottoman state's taxation and licensing policies concerning licorice were shaped by corporate pressures, labor organization practices, and consular-backed demands. Conflicts in regions like Umurlu and Nazilli illustrate how licorice evolved beyond being merely an economic good to becoming a legal and diplomatic issue.

By taking licorice root as a focal point, this study aims to demonstrate how rural production relations, commodity economies, and local-international power dynamics took shape in the late Ottoman period. Ultimately, it seeks to build a

conceptual bridge between Ottoman economic historiography and the broader literature on global commodity history.



ÖZET

Çekişmeli Bir Meta:

1850-1914 Yılları Arasında Osmanlı Batı Anadolu'sunda Meyan Kökü Üretimi ve Ticareti

Bu tez, 1850–1914 yılları arasında Osmanlı Batı Anadolu'sunda meyan kökü üretimi ve ticaretinin geçirdiği dönüşümü incelemektedir. Doğada kendiliğinden yetişen, başlangıçta ekonomik değeri sınırlı görülen bu bitki, 19. yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren özellikle Avrupa ve Amerika'daki endüstriyel taleplerin etkisiyle hızla ticarileşmiş ve uluslararası pazarlarda yüksek talep gören bir tarımsal metaya dönüşmüştür. Tez, meyan kökünün bu dönüşümünü; vergi politikaları, arazi rejimleri, köylü emeği, şirket rekabeti ve diplomatik müdahaleler çerçevesinde çok katmanlı bir biçimde analiz etmektedir.

Çalışma, MacAndrews & Forbes gibi büyük yabancı şirketlerin Osmanlı taşrasındaki etkinliğini, yerel idari yapılarla olan ilişkilerini ve rakip şirketlerle girdikleri hukuki ve siyasi mücadeleleri Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri ışığında ele almaktadır. Aynı zamanda, devletin meyan kökü üzerindeki vergilendirme ve ruhsatlandırma politikaları; şirketlerin köylü emeğini örgütleme biçimleri ve konsolosluk destekli talepleriyle şekillenmiştir. Umurlu ve Nazilli gibi bölgelerde yaşanan ihtilaflar, bu ürünün nasıl sadece ekonomik değil, aynı zamanda hukuki ve diplomatik bir meseleye dönüştüğünü göstermektedir.

Meyan kökü örneği üzerinden, geç Osmanlı döneminde kırsal üretim ilişkilerinin, meta ekonomisinin ve yerel-uluslararası güç ilişkilerinin nasıl şekillendiğini

göstermek amacıyla kaleme alınan bu tez, Osmanlı iktisat tarihi ile küresel meta tarihi literatürü arasında kavramsal bir köprü kurmayı da hedeflemektedir.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I want to express my earnest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Yaşar Tolga Cora, who has not only been an academic mentor but also a supportive guide when I needed it most. His lectures always pushed me more to learn about my areas of interest. In addition, his support and understanding helped me a lot in my M.A. years. I would also like to thank my thesis committee, Cengiz Kırılı and Cihangir Gündoğdu. Their valuable feedback made me realize my thesis' shortcomings and potential.

I also owe a great debt of thanks to Edhem Eldem, whose works and lessons gave me inspiration for my further academic endeavors, and his support in my undergraduate and graduate years. I extend my thanks to Paolo Girardelli for his calm guidance, eye-opening lectures, and support in my academic journey. I also want to express my appreciation to Hasan Karataş for his kind attitude and guidance while I was struggling with many anxious academic and personal matters in my undergraduate years.

I should also thank the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK) for giving me a scholarship for two years under the TÜBİTAK BİDEB 2210/A program. I am also very grateful to Özkan Akpınar and his coordinated TÜBİTAK project “Akdeniz Anadolu’sunda Nehirlerin Islahı: Osmanlı Son Döneminde Çevre, Siyaset ve Toplum, 1850-1914” (project code: 122K086). I worked on this project for twenty months, which provided me not only financial support but also facilitated my finding new primary sources for my M.A. thesis. I also want to express my gratitude to Aliye Eren and Kubbealtı Vakfı for providing me with financial support when I was in need.

Thanks to all my friends who supported me in my academic and personal journey, especially Cem Almurat, Emin Güngör, Özlem Ülkü, Peter Rogenbuke, Emin Toygar Akay, Mustafa Karakoç, and Okan Kozanoğlu. I might list a small portion of them, so I want to extend my gratitude to all whom I may have forgotten to include. One of my sincerest thanks to Muhamed Bedreddin Kaymaz, who greatly helped me with the thesis' format and shared my anger about the injustices.

My special thanks go to my long-lasting friend Berk Canseven, who was my roommate in many years in the dormitory and our shared 1+1 house; for his companionship and support has been a great gift for me. My other special thanks go to my brother and comrade Ozan Polat, who struggled with Boğaziçi's high academic standards like me; dealing with our academic struggles together makes us who we are today, and his support always means a lot to me. And my last special thanks to Oğuzhan Doğan, who has a beautiful voice but even more beautiful character and friendship; his vast knowledge of Turkish pop music, foodie tastes, and qualified cinema pieces always kept me intrigued, along with his kind friendship.

My sincerest gratitude goes to my family for their unwavering support during my educational life. Without my parents' support, my academic journey and this thesis would not have been possible. Especially to my mother, who had fought and won against the cancer and taught me never to give up on my dreams. I am indebted to them for my resilience and commitment to my goals as a first-generation university student in my family.

Last but not least, I wanted to express my wholehearted appreciation to my love and partner, Zeyneb Berre Tunca. Her never-ending support and love may be the sole reason for me being able to finish this thesis. And I believe her companionship is one of the greatest gifts for me.

Finally, I wanted to thank myself who had struggled and suffered from numerous anxiety attacks, political disarray, earthquakes, inflation, loneliness, discrimination, and fear of failure for overcoming them over the years and becoming a better person in a way.





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EDITORIAL NOTE

This study adheres to the transliteration system employed by the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES).



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Topic and scope

This thesis investigates the transformation of licorice root, a spontaneously growing wild plant that turned into an agricultural commodity in Ottoman Western Anatolia during the second half of the nineteenth century. Initially known as a simple source of healing or a weed for the fields, it quickly turned into an agricultural commodity in high demand, especially with the needs of European and U.S industries. This transformation profoundly affected not only the physical circulation of the commodity but also the associated tax policies, land tenure patterns, peasant labor, local-administrative mechanisms of domination and legal restrictions. This production activity soon attracted the attention of local and foreign companies. Specifically, MacAndrews & Forbes, established a decisive dominance in the licorice trade through trade networks and also through mechanisms such as land leasing, tax privileges and consular support.

The reason that licorice's high demand was derived from the tobacco, pharmaceutical and food industries that developed in Europe and U.S, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, transformed licorice into a raw material. This demand drove foreign trading companies operating in port cities, particularly İzmir, towards the interior of Western Anatolia. Initially carried out through intermediaries and local merchants, the procurement processes gradually allowed companies to penetrate the provinces through direct obtaining, contract production and land leasing.

This new production order also reshaped power relations in the Western Anatolia's countryside. The licorice digging and production process meant a direct intervention not only in the supply chain but also in the rural labor regime. The inclusion of *rençber*, or licorice digger peasants, as seasonal laborers in this production process, their temporary agreements with large landowners, and the involvement of local councils made these production relations both multilayered and fragile. In particular, the involvement of large corporations such as MacAndrews & Forbes in tax collection using administrative tools such as the *mültezim* (tax farmer) blurred the boundaries between the private company and the public administration. These boundaries became internationalized as companies sought protection directly through consulates or brought claims before the courts. These multi-layered structures have called into question both the power relations at the local level and the position of the central administration vis-à-vis these relations.

1.2 Locating the study: Research question, objective and theoretical framework

This thesis aims to provide a multilayered analysis of the journey of an agricultural commodity; licorice, which gained commercial importance in rural Western Anatolia during the late Ottoman period. The thesis' central research question is: How did licorice production and trade in Ottoman Western Anatolia between 1850 and 1914 develop in interaction and tension with peasants, tax farmers, company representatives and provincial bureaucracy at the local level, and with the central administration, foreign consulates and global market dynamics at the imperial level? It examines how a seemingly ordinary wild plant in the Ottoman rural economy was transformed into a commodity in high demand. Moreover, this thesis will reveal that how this transformation was shaped by the struggles of interests of different actors.

Thus, the study aims to show how the conflicts around a single commodity were intertwined with issues such as the state's tax regime, the organization of foreign capital at the local level, consular interventions and legal status' debates on licorice. In this way, the thesis aims to expand classical agricultural and commodity studies, imperial economics, environmental and rural social history through the cases of Ottoman Western Anatolia.

The theoretical framework of the thesis draws mainly from the global commodity history literature rather than Ottoman historiography.¹ The main reason is that although agricultural commodities have been the subject of research in the Ottoman economic history literature, these studies mostly focus on macroeconomic trends and processes rather than placing the specific product itself at the center of the analysis.² In other words, while long-term quantitative analyses of the production and trade processes of agricultural commodities have been conducted, a methodological framework that encourages the consideration of these commodities in their political, legal, social and ecological dimensions has been largely neglected. For this reason, this thesis focuses on a specific agricultural commodity such as licorice root and aims to trace the multilayered local relations shaped by international demand, thereby building a conceptual bridge between Ottoman historiography and global commodity history literature.

From this framework, it can be more clearly understood why the question of licorice should be asked in particular. Because this study aims to evaluate the possibilities opened up by commodity-centered historiography through the example

¹ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*; Ulbe Bosma, *The World of Sugar*; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*; Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*; Francesca Bray et al., *Moving Crops and the Scales of History*.

² Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*; Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914*; Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913*.

of licorice. The main starting point of this thesis is the approach of historians, which should reveal the social relations shaped around a particular product rather than its material properties, against the critics who consider commodity-oriented studies unnecessary. As Carmona-Zabala, reinterpreting Marx's critique of "commodity fetishism", argues that while it is true that capitalism operates with abstract categories of value, historians' intellectual projects require reflecting on the modes of production, uses, spatial distribution and historical contexts of specific commodities.³ From this point of view, a commodity such as licorice root in Ottoman Western Anatolia, which linked local production and global consumption, is an ideal analytical lens to understand how not only economic but also legal, environmental, social and political relations were shaped.

For all these reasons, the transformation of licorice in late Ottoman Western Anatolia provides a remarkable case study in terms of both the commodity itself and the social and institutional relations that took shape around it. Initially regarded as a medical herb that grew spontaneously in nature and had limited economic value, licorice root was rapidly commercialized and commodified in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially with the increasing demand in industries such as tobacco, pharmacy and confectionery. This wild plant had become open to intervention on many levels, from production to taxation, from trade to legal status. In this respect, it has become an example that reflects the political and cultural processes behind its transformation into a "commodity" in a specific historical context.⁴ Compared to other agricultural products, this commodification process has been both more sudden and more intense. Although crops such as cotton, tobacco, figs or grapes have been produced for the market for a long time, they have not been

³ Juan Carmona-Zabala, *"Introduction: Commodities in History,"* 8.

⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *"Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,"* 13–15.

at the center of such a commercial and legal debate with such a rapid transformation as licorice. On this basis, licorice offers a unique analytical lens through which to observe the transformation of agricultural commodities, social relations, and state interventions in the late Ottoman Western Anatolia.

The evolution of licorice from a local medicinal and wild plant to an agricultural commodity that is open to legal and financial interventions driven by global demands sheds light not only on the dynamics of transformation in the Ottoman provinces, but also on the analytical possibilities offered by commodity-oriented historiography. Therefore, the licorice example is suitable for generating questions on different layers such as rural capitalization, the social and legal consequences of commodity production, and the ways in which the imperial administration intervened in agricultural resources. The overall framework of the thesis attempts to make sense of these questions by situating them in the historical context of late Ottoman Western Anatolia.

1.3 Literature review

This thesis draws on a large body of literature to understand the Ottoman economic transformation. Among these, studies that examine the relations of production, labor and property in Ottoman society, especially from the perspective of political economy, occupy a decisive place. General approaches to the ways in which the Ottoman Empire articulated with the capitalist world system provide important analytical contributions to the conceptual and historical grounding of this thesis. The subject of the incorporation of Ottoman Western Anatolia into the modern-world system, especially the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, provides a meaningful

framework on a global scale.⁵ At this point, this thesis aims to explore the dynamics in Ottoman Western Anatolia through licorice root by developing my framework through more regional dynamics. In addition, the following works examine the economic transformation of the empire in the nineteenth century. Thus, they provide a framework for analyzing the commercialization processes of agricultural commodities.

First, the works of Charles Issawi and Roger Owen, the two main works that provide the general framework of the Middle East's integration into the world economy, constitute the important building blocks of the historical background of this thesis. Charles Issawi's *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa* analyzes the structural transformations brought about by the integration into the capitalist world system. Issawi examines the economic impact of industrializing Europe on the Middle East through the expansion of foreign trade, the development of transport infrastructure, foreign capital investment, and labor mobility, while emphasizing the late and often limited response of states to these pressures.⁶ This study provides a macro context for the commercial privileges, corporate-state tensions, and local transformations that emerged.

Similarly, Roger Owen's *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* addresses the complex relationship between capitalist expansion and economic transformation in the Ottoman provinces at both the central and regional levels. Owen details the impact of Western European capital on production, property and financial structures in the Ottoman provinces, describing this process not as colonization but as a process of integration through interaction with local actors.⁷

⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Modern World-System, Vol. 3*, 127–90.

⁶ Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, esp. 1–77, 118–193.

⁷ Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914*, esp. 83–121, 189–215.

Following the general framework presented by Issawi and Owen, more specific and economics-oriented approaches to the structural relations of the Ottoman Empire with the world capitalist system appear in the works of Şevket Pamuk and Reşat Kasaba. Şevket Pamuk's *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913* examines the Ottoman economy's relations with European capitalism in the nineteenth century through foreign trade, capital movements and transformations in production relations. Pamuk demonstrates the effects of the free trade regime that began with the 1838 Treaty of Balta Liman on the volume of foreign trade and agricultural composition, supported by quantitative data, and details the changes in the structure of production in the provinces brought about by foreign borrowing and foreign direct investments. In this respect, Pamuk's work allows us to understand the expansion of commercial agriculture in the Ottoman provinces and the commodification process of agricultural products within an economic framework.⁸ For this thesis, Pamuk's historical datasets and analytical framework are an important source of reference for assessing the role of state policies and infrastructure investments in the commercialization of products such as licorice root.

Another important work that complements Pamuk's macroeconomic analysis is Reşat Kasaba's *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Dünya Ekonomisi: On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl*. Drawing inspiration from world systems theory, Kasaba discusses how the Ottoman Empire became peripheralized in the global economy in the nineteenth century through the effects of this process on rural production relations, provincial governance and social structures. Focusing particularly on İzmir and its hinterland, Kasaba examines the transformation of commercial modes of production in the provinces together with the rise of non-Muslim intermediaries and local notables. In

⁸ Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913*, esp. 1–108.

this context, he presents in detail the shaping of Western Anatolia in the nineteenth century as an economic space where both European capital and local intermediary structures were reorganized.⁹ For this thesis, Kasaba's work is theoretically and empirically instructive in assessing how products such as licorice root were integrated into international markets as new commodities and how this process was shaped in interaction with local property relations, commercial intermediation mechanisms and provincial administration.

While the works of Issawi, Owen, Pamuk and Kasaba provide strong theoretical and historical frameworks for understanding the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the world capitalist system, their explanations in the context of Western Anatolia are in some ways limited. The works of Charles Issawi and Roger Owen rely heavily on Western archives and macro-level economic indicators. This creates a serious gap in analyzing local practices and social dynamics, especially in the late Ottoman provinces. While explaining capitalist transformation processes through foreign trade, transportation infrastructure and borrowing mechanisms provides an important general framework, it is insufficient to understand how this transformation was socialized in the provinces and what local conflicts it led to.

A similar situation applies to Şevket Pamuk's work. While the quantitative data presented by Pamuk contributes greatly to understanding the general trends of Ottoman foreign trade and capital movements, the analysis relies heavily on Western sources and quantifiable economic data. This limits his understanding of the local tensions, legal struggles, or multi-layered relations between the company-state-peasant in the commercialization of products such as licorice root in Western Anatolia, for example.

⁹ Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century*.

Reşat Kasaba's work constitutes an important attempt to adapt modern world system theory to the Ottoman context. He conceptualizes Western Anatolia as a kind of “frontier” zone within this system and traces its integration into the nineteenth-century world economy, largely through macro-level economic and political processes.¹⁰ However, the method he employs from Wallerstein results in a top-down narrative from theory to practice.¹¹ His approach, which draws predominantly on Western literature, offers only limited in-depth analysis of how commercialization was shaped in the Western Anatolia, relying mainly on the kadı registers of İzmir and therefore lacks a grounded analysis of how commercialization unfolded at the provincial level. In this respect, Kasaba's narrative becomes a theoretical model of the commercialization process in the nineteenth century Western Anatolia, but it does not fully benefit from the methodological possibilities and source diversity.

In light of these critiques, this thesis aims to rethink the process of commercialization and the transformation of commodity production in Western Anatolia through a micro-level approach that relies more on primary Ottoman sources and focuses on the positions, struggles and negotiations of local-level actors.

Following this general framework, the literature that examines the transformation of agricultural commodities along the axes of production, labor and environment makes an important contribution to better understand the structural relations of the Ottoman Empire with the global market. Especially in recent years, the increasing number of commodity-centered studies¹² makes it possible to analyze

¹⁰ Ibid., 75-91.

¹¹ Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, Vol. 3, 127-131.

¹² Cihan Özgün, “İzmir ve Artalanında Tarımsal Üretim ve Ticareti (1844–1914)”; Cihan Özgün, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e (1923) Aydın İlinde İktisadi Değişim”; Tacettin Talha Günaydın, “Fig Production and Trade in the Aegean Region (1852–1912)”; Utku Can Akın, “A Critical Perspective on Scientific and Technological Input in Late Ottoman Cotton Cultivation, 1840–1876”; Kaleb Herman Adney, “Habits of the Market: Commercial Networks, Regional Finance, and Resistance in the Ottoman Tobacco Trade (c. 1860–1925)”; Ümit Eser, “Nationalizing the fig commerce: Aram

the processes of social and environmental transformation through specific agricultural commodities in a more micro-level and actor-centered ways. The studies that will be reviewed below both examine the socio-economic effects of commodities by using historical materialism and address the economic transformations in the late Ottoman provinces by focusing on analytical dimensions such as labor and environment.

It is necessary to turn to studies that address the dynamics of commodification of specific agricultural products in the Ottoman provinces by investigating production, distribution and consumption processes. Such micro-level studies are important in terms of making visible both the role of local actors and the network of relations shaped around specific products. In this context, Tacettin Talha Günaydın's master's thesis, *Fig Production and Trade in the Aegean Region (1852-1912)*, provides an important example for understanding the process of agricultural commodification in late Ottoman Western Anatolia. Günaydın analyzes in detail how, with the modernization of agricultural production methods, a high-demand export crop; figs in Ottoman Western Anatolia. He examines the spread of a wider production area, how this expansion transformed local modes of production, and how the opening of new agricultural areas, the central role of the port of Izmir in accessing foreign markets, and cooperative initiatives played a crucial role in this process.¹³ The study is particularly valuable in showing how a commodity economy developed in rural areas, shaped by production processes, land use and the influence of foreign markets.

Hamparzum's Warehouse from the Empire to the Republic"; Safiye Kıranlar and Muhammed Bilal Çelik, "Fig trader Aram Hamparzum and his role in the global fig market".

¹³ Günaydın, *Fig Production and Trade*.

Indeed, my thesis focuses on licorice production and trade in a period and region that intersects both geographically and temporally with Günaydın's fig example. Günaydın's thesis draws attention to the more technical and planned production processes, especially with the establishment of agricultural schools, the systematic opening of new agricultural lands, and the central position of İzmir as a port city in Western Anatolia. In these respects, it shows how export-oriented agricultural production was structured in the Western Anatolian hinterland.¹⁴ On the other hand, my thesis analyzes the transformation of a plant like licorice, which grew spontaneously in nature and was initially considered of limited economic value, into a commodity that gained value in international markets from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The legal, financial and diplomatic repercussions of the competition between foreign companies such as MacAndrews & Forbes and Simon & Co. are analyzed together with the state's interventions, local bureaucratic regulations and the daily practices of the peasants. Therefore, Günaydın's framework on commodity economy is both deepened and discussed in a broader context by including the legal, environmental and political aspects of commercialization with the licorice root example in this thesis.

Similarly, Onur İnal's doctoral dissertation on the environmental history of İzmir and its hinterland provides an important ground for the context of this study. Defining İzmir not only as a port city but also as a "gateway city" that established a network of ecological, economic and social relations with its hinterland, İnal analyzes the expansion of export-oriented agricultural production in Western Anatolia in conjunction with environmental transformation. By showing how crops such as grapes, figs and cotton reshaped the geography of production and how

¹⁴ Ibid.

developments in transportation infrastructure and increased pressure on nature, he discusses nature not as a passive backdrop but as a historical subject.¹⁵ This approach is also important for understanding the environmental context established by the licorice case in this thesis. In particular, the effects of licorice excavations on soil erosion, land degradation and water regime show that the ecological consequences of this commodity became part of its economic value. In this context, İnal's approach to environmental history of Western Anatolia allows a reading of licorice production as an ecological intervention in its own, one that intertwined environmental change with the dynamics of market integration.

In parallel with this environmental perspective, Donald Quataert's work on agricultural transformation and labor history in the late Ottoman period is one of the main references for this thesis. In his research focusing on the agrarian reform process in Anatolia, he analyzes the state's agricultural policies, their impact on peasant producers through institutions such as the Ziraat Bank (Agricultural Bank), and the expansion of export-oriented agricultural production, revealing in detail the reshaping of the rural economic structure.¹⁶ On the other hand, in his assessments of the formation of the working class in the late Ottoman Empire, the dissolution of guilds and early strike movements, he emphasizes the multi-layered nature of labor regimes by addressing the processes of laborization in the industrial and transportation sectors as well as agricultural labor.¹⁷ Quataert's work provides an important analytical ground for making visible not only the local repercussions of

¹⁵ Onur İnal, "*A Port and Its Hinterland: An Environmental History of Izmir in the Late Ottoman Period.*"

¹⁶ Donald Quataert, "Agricultural Trends and Government Policy in Ottoman Anatolia, 1800–1914," in *Workers, Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730–1914* (Istanbul: The Isis Press / Gorgias Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Donald Quataert, "Labor and Working Class History during the Late Ottoman Period, c. 1800–1914," in *Ibid.*

state policies but also the everyday resistance practices of laborers and peasants. This thesis examines the seasonal and precarious labor of peasants engaged in licorice production, as well as the strategies employed by companies to organize them as a labor force. These labor regimes, which were often intertwined with tax collection practices, closely align with the framework proposed by Quataert.

Donald Quataert's doctoral dissertation, *Ottoman Reform and Agriculture in Anatolia, 1876-1908*, is the most directly relevant and methodologically sound work in this literature. In this dissertation, Quataert comprehensively analyzes the implementation and consequences of Ottoman agricultural policies in Anatolia during the reign of Abdülhamid II. The study consists of three main parts: In the first part, the economic structure of Anatolia, the agricultural taxation system, and the regional effects of European economic interests are evaluated; in the second part, the efforts of the Hamidian administration to modernize agriculture are discussed in detail. In this context, reform initiatives such as the establishment of agricultural schools and model farms, the provision of loans to small producers through the Ziraat Bank, and the training of expert staff are analyzed. In the last section, the production increases in export-oriented products such as cereals, grapes, tobacco, cotton, silk, opium and olive oil are evaluated in detail in light of tax revenues and price data.¹⁸

Quataert's thesis is striking in showing how the state's interventions in agricultural production combined with the demands of world markets to create new economic spaces in the Ottoman provinces. Moreover, through his analysis supported by both quantitative data and original archival sources, the links between the state's modernization policies, local practices and agricultural production are

¹⁸ Donald Quataert, "*Ottoman Reform and Agriculture in Anatolia, 1876–1908*."

presented in a multi-layered framework. In this respect, Quataert's doctoral dissertation constitutes a strong point of intersection with the central questions of this thesis in that it focuses on how agricultural commodities were redefined through state policies and the commercialization processes of agriculture.

Although the literature directly focusing on licorice production and trade is quite limited, there are still some studies on this topic. These studies are generally centered around two tendencies: First, there are secondary sources that deal with the licorice issue as part of broader economic or commercial contexts, specifically examining British activities in Western Anatolia through British archival documents. The second group consists of Ottoman Turkish sources that directly focuses on the production and trade of licorice and attempts to develop an analysis based on Ottoman archival documents. These two orientations complement each other in terms of understanding both the general trends of licorice's transformation into an international commodity and the specific issues of production, taxation, and company-state relations in the provinces.

In this context, Orhan Kurmuş's pioneerwork *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, one of the leading examples of studies based on British archival documents, draws attention first. In this study, on the development of capitalist relations in Western Anatolia, Kurmuş attaches special importance to the topic of "licorice honey production".¹⁹ He argues that especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, British capital encouraged forms of production based on export-oriented industry in the region. According to Kurmuş, despite its wild nature, licorice was successfully incorporated into capitalist relations of production; the MacAndrews & Forbes company was at the center of this process and its presence in Western Anatolia was

¹⁹ Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, esp. 186–89.

shaped as an economic extension of British imperialism. The way the company organized local production and labor is analyzed by Kurmuş as an imperial practice that was not entirely colonialist but produced a relationship of dependency.²⁰ This approach provides an important analytical framework for understanding both the nature of the foreign company presence in Western Anatolia and the linkages of commodity-based transformations with the global economic system.

Similarly, Elena Frangakis-Syrett's study provides a small but important assessment of the licorice trade in İzmir and its hinterland in the last quarter of the nineteenth century through British archival documents. Focusing on the activities of MacAndrews & Forbes in the region, the study details the company's extensive land leases, use of low-wage labor, and monopolistic control over local production. Frangakis-Syrett shows how foreign capital dominated the provinces through capitulations by evaluating the company's strategies to benefit from the tithe system by participating tax farming, legal and diplomatic disputes. Taking the property crisis in Umurlu in particular as an example, the analysis makes visible how administrative and judicial boundaries blurred in the Ottoman provinces.²¹

Both studies make important empirical contributions to the history of licorice trade, particularly MacAndrews & Forbes' monopolization strategies in Western Anatolia and the administrative and legal vulnerabilities created by capitulations. Based on British archival sources, Kurmuş and Frangakis-Syrett's works reveal the forms of economic domination of foreign companies in the provinces along with the tensions between the state and market actors. However, a significant limitation of this literature is that both studies only consider licorice in the context of the imperial

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Elena Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities in Izmir in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Centuries," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 5-6 (Fall 1991): esp. 200-205.

interests of British capital and largely ignore local social, legal and environmental processes. In addition, this thesis aims to contextualize the cases presented by these narratives - for example, the rivalry between Simon & Co. and MacAndrews & Forbes²² - in a more multilayered way by supplementing them with Ottoman archival documents.

Following the literature based on foreign archival sources, studies based on Ottoman archival documents and Turkish sources also make important contributions to the history of licorice trade. Günver Güneş's comprehensive article analyzes the transformation of licorice in Western Anatolia in the context of the commercialization of agricultural production and the penetration of foreign capital into Western Anatolia. Güneş provides a general account of MacAndrews & Forbes' use of capitulation privileges to lease land, employ local labor at low wages, and eliminate competitors through price policies and diplomatic initiatives. At the same time, the strategies developed by rival actors such as the Abacıoğlu family and German companies against this monopolization led to administrative and legal interventions by the Ottoman bureaucracy.²³

Another important contribution in this direction, based on Ottoman archival documents, is the work of Olcay Pullukçuoğlu. In her paper titled "Kapitalistlerin Rekabetine Batı Anadolu'dan Bir Örnek: Meyan Kökü Ticareti", Pullukçuoğlu examines the transformation of licorice from a "noxious weed" to an industrial raw material in the context of the commercial dominance of the British-owned MacAndrews & Forbes company in the region. The paper analyzes some cases of

²² Ibid., 202.

²³ Günver Güneş, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Meyan Kökü Tarımı ve Ticareti," *Kebikeç* 18 (2004).

competition based on Ottoman archival documents, such as legal disputes between foreign companies and disputed contracts with peasants.²⁴

Similarly, Süleyman Uygun's article titled "Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü ve Üzerine Yaşanan Emperyalist Rekabet" provides a multifaceted analysis of the transformation of licorice root from a traditional medicinal herb to an industrial raw material highly valued in international markets. Based on Ottoman archival documents and various foreign sources, Uygun examines the commercial activities of MacAndrews & Forbes in Aydın and its environs. He also shows the economic, diplomatic, and judicial conflicts with competitors such as Abacıoğlu and Simon & Co.; local labor relations, and the inadequate regulatory capacity of the state.²⁵ The article successfully reveals the transformations and socio-political tensions surrounding the transformation of licorice into a strategic commodity for the industrial tobacco and confectionery sectors. In terms of its scope and use of archives, Uygun's study is the closest and most direct contribution to this thesis in the existing literature. In this respect, the historical context of many of the diplomatic crises, rivalries and arbitration cases analyzed in the thesis is integrated with Uygun's assessments.

Although Günver Güneş's study provides an early assessment of the licorice trade, it lacks analytical depth on production processes as it is largely based on Republican archives and limited statistical data. This makes it difficult to historically analyze the production, collection and trade networks of licorice in Western Anatolia. Although Olcay Pullukçuoğlu's paper is one of the first comprehensive studies based on Ottoman archival documents, it offers only a limited analysis of

²⁴ Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, "Kapitalistlerin Rekabetine Batı Anadolu'dan Bir Örnek: Meyan Kökü Ticareti" (paper presented at *Birinci İktisat Kongresi Tebliğleri* 2, 2010).

²⁵ Süleyman Uygun, "Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü ve Üzerine Yaşanan Emperyalist Rekabet," *OTAM: Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 37 (2015).

how British capital operated in Western Anatolia within a broader imperial context. Its tendency to generalize the dynamics at the level of Aydın Province results in a somewhat superficial treatment of regional competitive strategies. Süleyman Uygun's article, on the other hand, stands out as the most qualified and comprehensive study in the literature due to its focus on the subject and its rich use of Ottoman archival documents. Yet, Uygun's approach focuses mainly on moments of crisis such as competition, ration lawsuits and public disorder. Due to this, the daily production relations, social networks and microeconomic dynamics of the licorice trade in the provinces are neglected.

At this point, this thesis aims to go beyond a purely conflict- and dispute-based narrative of the licorice trade and to examine the commodity itself, its production methods, its relations with rural actors, and the extensions of these networks at both local and global levels. Thus, in contrast to the top-down and crisis-centered approaches in the existing literature, it aims to overcome the limited framework provided by archival documents and reconstruct the multi-layered process that developed around licorice root in a more micro-scale, social context. In other words, existing literature's limitations point to the need for a new approach which combines commodity-centered analysis with micro-level archival detail. This thesis aims to respond to that need.

1.4 Sources and method

This thesis is mainly based on archival documents of the Ottoman Empire. Official correspondence, minutes, parliamentary decisions, petitions and provincial administration documents from the Directorate of State Archives (BOA), constitute the primary sources of the study. These documents shows the administrative

interventions, tax policies, legal processes and relations between the state and provincial communities that were shaped around licorice production and trade. In addition, British consular reports, company correspondence, and Ottoman newspapers of the period are used as complementary sources for both non-Ottoman perspectives and public opinion.

While the study is structured chronologically, the documents are also categorized thematically, with each chapter centered around a specific case. This approach makes it possible to analyze the economic, legal and political processes around licorice at both the local and imperial levels. Each case is treated not only as an example of historical narrative, but also as an analytical ground for examining the intertwined structures of labor relations, land regimes, corporate domination and state interventions in the late Ottoman countryside.

Methodologically, the thesis adopts a commodity-oriented approach that centers on a specific agricultural commodity and traces the multilayered relations shaped around it. Licorice is thus not only a commercialized natural product, but also an analytical lens through which to understand broader themes such as rural labor regimes, taxation practices, state domination, and international interventions. The micro-level traces of archival documents are linked to broader structures inspired by global commodity history, imperial political economy, and rural social historiography.

Nonetheless, this comprehensive document-based structure also has some methodological limitations. Since Ottoman archival documents mostly reflect the state's perspective, the experiences of the villagers, the everyday reactions of the local community or the details of the activities of the companies in the field can only be traced in a limited way. Therefore, although the thesis attempts to overcome these

silences by bringing together different types of documents as much as possible, the scarcity of sources on the subjective worlds of the villagers in particular is an important shortcoming. Another limitation is the lack of sources that directly reflect the environmental changes associated with licorice root. Although I attempted to address this gap through secondary literature and certain complaints voiced by villagers, the environmental history perspective is ultimately less prominent in this thesis than originally intended. Nevertheless, this limitation does not prevent us from understanding the documented tensions between the companies and the state, the transformation of the countryside and the institutionalization of a commodity-centered production regime. In others word, The thesis thus contributes to ongoing efforts to write commodity histories that move beyond economic data, and instead foreground the social, legal, and ecological entanglements that made such commodities historically meaningful.

1.5 Outline of the chapters

In the second chapter, the thesis provides a historical background to make sense of the transformation of agricultural production in the late Ottoman provinces. It provides information on the industrial uses, physical properties, and commercial value of licorice root, as well as a detailed account of how the plant was harvested and under what natural conditions it grew, particularly in Ottoman Western Anatolia. This chapter explains why licorice provides a striking example of the transformation of the Ottoman economy in the mid-nineteenth century. It also discusses the changes in the rural production and other valuable commodities in the same region.

The third chapter focuses on the institutionalization of licorice production in the Western Anatolia, between 1850-1880. The state's licensing initiatives, the

implementation of the tax exemption system, and the local bureaucratic crises that emerged during these processes are analyzed comprehensively. Based on Ottoman documents, local bureaucratic resistance to license requests, requests for tax exemption, and the state's contradictory practices on this issue are presented. The prominence of companies such as Forbes and Abacıoğlu reveals how the commercialization of the commodity led to a transformation in the Western Anatolia during this period. The relations between landowners, peasants, and the tax farmers provide concrete examples of how the commodity caused new conflicts within the rural socioeconomic order. This chapter contributes to the multi-layered analysis perspective of the thesis by revealing the impact of the economic structure formed around the commodity on the state and the provincial population.

The fourth chapter details the inter-company dispute in the village of Umurlu in Aydın in 1886-1887. The rivalry between MacAndrews & Forbes and the Simon Company was not just a commercial struggle; it turned into an international crisis with the intervention of consulates, the involvement of local administrations, and elements of violence. The Umurlu dispute is a critical case for analyzing the influence of foreign capital in the Ottoman provinces and the state's administrative responses to this process. Through legal proceedings, security measures, local grievances and arbitration attempts, the chapter reveals the multi-layered struggles of interests woven around a single plant.

The fifth chapter examines legal struggles and consular interventions through the cases of individual actors such as U.S consular translator Avadis Avadikyan and French merchant Henri Arakçin. It analyzes in detail how issues such as appropriation cases, property rights, and citizenship debates were shaped by an agricultural commodity. These cases show how legal loopholes and statutes such as

dual citizenship in the Ottoman provinces became part of commercial competition. At the same time, this chapter proves how licorice root became not only an economic but also a legal and diplomatic tool. This instrumentalization of licorice root stemmed from the Ottoman state's failure to recognize it as a commercial commodity. The resulting legal ambiguity is captured through the conceptualization of licorice root as *res nullius* which is a thing belonging to no one. In this respect, the chapter discusses the conflicts and gaps between citizenship and protection in combination with commodity-oriented analysis.

The sixth and final chapter deals with the rise of criticism against the Forbes company, the increasing interventionism of the state and bureaucratic tensions in the period between 1904 and 1914. In the light of primary sources ranging from official reports to temporary tax laws, it discusses the state's delayed reflexes, environmental concerns, and policies shaped by peasants' petitions. This chapter focuses on the environmental impacts of licorice production methods and destructive consequences methods on the land, together with the state's efforts to control the monopolization in licorice trade. Thus, the chapter comprehensively demonstrates how the structural problems caused by the commodification process are attempted to manage not only economically, but also administratively, socially and ecologically.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: LICORICE AND OTTOMAN ECONOMY

2.1 The long story of sweet root

The transformation of the Ottoman agricultural economy in the nineteenth century reshaped the modes of production, but also the products that gained commercial value. In this process, known agricultural commodities such as raisins, figs, cotton and tobacco considerably increased for the demand. At the same time, there was a wild plant that had a more limited use in previous centuries became the subject of international trade. Licorice reached a remarkable position in terms of production and trade in the Ottoman provinces and emerged as a new economic actor at the intersection of foreign capital and state interventions.

Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) is an ancient herb, notable not only for its sweet aroma but also for its versatile uses spanning thousands of years. Archaeological findings and written sources show that the use of licorice for medicinal and ritual purposes dates back to the earliest civilizations of Mesopotamia, China and India. It is mentioned in Babylonian tablets and Assyrian royal records, and in the Shen Nung Pen Ts'ao King, one of China's oldest medical texts, it is described as the most used medicine after ginseng.²⁶ Likewise, in Indian belief systems such as Brahmanism and Buddhism, licorice was included in divinely inspired healing prescriptions and used in religious ceremonies. In the West, licorice's fame dates to Ancient Greece. In the third century BC, Theophrastus wrote that the plant was effective against asthma and chest ailments with the information he learned from the Scythians, while in the

²⁶ Percy A. Houseman and H. T. Lacey, "The Licorice Root in Industry," *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry* 21, no. 10 (1929): 915.

Roman period, Dioscorides recommended licorice root for stomach ailments, mouth sores and hemorrhoids in his famous work *De Materia Medica*.²⁷ In Europe, licorice was widely sold in apothecary shops, especially during the Middle Ages, listed in the Frankfurt Pharmaceutical Book in the 15th century and documented as being consumed at the court of Henry IV in England²⁸

The licorice plant, botanically identified with the species *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (sweet root), grows naturally in a wide geography from the Mediterranean basin to the East Asia. There are about 14 species belonging to this genus, but most of the commercially obtained extracts are obtained from *Glycyrrhiza glabra* species.²⁹ Especially in licorice root extracts, which are divided into Spanish (typica) and Oriental (glandulifera) species in commercial classifications.

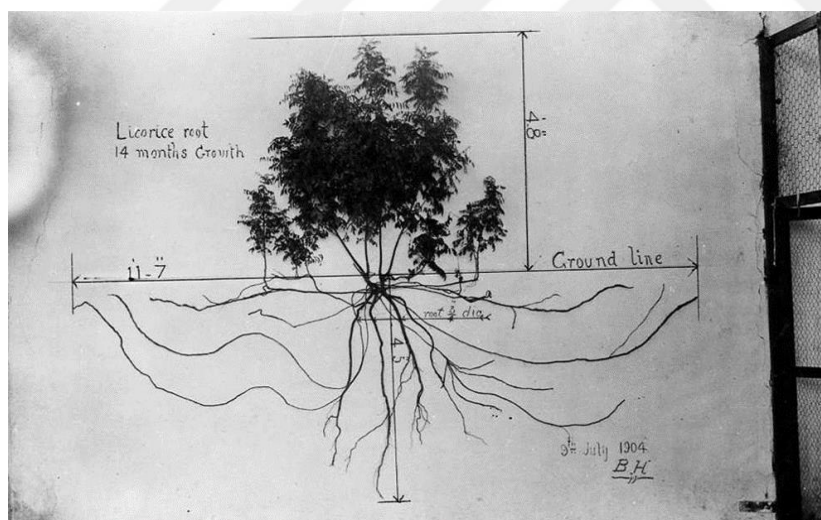


Figure 1. The drawing of the oriental licorice root³⁰

²⁷ Michael Radcliffe Lee, "Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*): The Journey of the Sweet Root from Mesopotamia to England," *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* 48, no. 4 (2018): 378.

²⁸ Adebayo Olukoga and David Donaldson, "Historical Perspectives on Health: The History of Liquorice: The Plant, Its Extract, Cultivation, Commercialisation and Etymology," *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* 118, no. 5 (1998): 301.

²⁹ Ibid., 302.

³⁰ Kidd, 'MacAndrews and Forbes and the Forbes Family,' <http://www.levantineheritage.com/forbes-history.html>

The Oriental one contains a higher proportion of glycyrrhizin, which makes it distinctly sweeter.³¹ As Figure 1 shows that the main parts were the roots and included glycyrrhizin acid, which is about 50 times sweeter than sugar. Licorice was also valued as a natural sweetener both in the food industry and in pharmaceutical formulations.³² On the other hand, the medicinal uses of licorice root were not limited to its sweetening properties; it has been documented to have been used for similar functions in different civilizations. According to Beal and Lacey, in ancient Mesopotamian, Chinese and Greek cultures, as well as among European peasants, licorice root was used as a blood purifying tonic, a soothing remedy for internal inflammation, an antiseptic mixed with honey and applied to external wounds, a thirst quencher, and an effective remedy for throat ailments.³³ The similarity of these versatile uses reveals that licorice is not only a local but also a global folk medicine.

Beyond its medicinal and ritual uses in its historical past; licorice was also used as an important raw material in modern industries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The tobacco industry was the biggest consumer of this plant: Approximately 90% of the mass of licorice produced in the United States was used directly in the tobacco industry; licorice had versatile functions such as adding flavor to tobacco leaves, softening the aroma and maintaining moisture balance. This extract was added in certain proportions to flavoring solutions called "casing liquor" and applied to the leaves by spraying or dipping.³⁴ At the same time, thanks to the natural sweeteners contained in licorice, it was also widely used in pharmacy to mask

³¹ Houseman and Lacey, *The Licorice Root in Industry*, 916.

³² Korhalkar Anagha et al., "Comprehensive Review on Historical Aspect of Yashtimadhu-*Glycyrrhiza Glabra* L.," *Global Journal of Research on Medical Plants & Indigenous Medicine* 1, no. 12 (2012): 688.

³³ George D. Beal and H. T. Lacey, *The History of Licorice in Pharmacy*, *Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association* 18 (1929): 147.

³⁴ Houseman and Lacey, *The Licorice Root in Industry*, 916-17.

the taste of bitter medicines. In particular, its emollient effect was utilized in products such as lozenges, cough syrups and throat lozenges; it was also used as a carrier and auxiliary ingredient in some compound laxative mixtures.³⁵ In addition, licorice-based confectionery, which had suffered a loss of reputation in the past due to being mixed with artificial anise flavoring, began to be seen as a healthy sweetener again in the mid-20th century.³⁶

All these industrial uses showed that licorice was not only a traditional medicinal plant but also gained value as an industrial raw material. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, increasing demand in Europe and U.S, especially in the tobacco and pharmaceutical sectors, made the supply of licorice a major issue on a global scale. These developments created a need for licorice root, which had to be supplied in ever-increasing quantities and on a regular basis. At this point, the Ottoman lands, particularly Western Anatolia with its natural growth zones and integration into the existing commodity economy, gained prominence. In this context, Ottoman Western Anatolia emerged as a key supply region that drew the attention of European capital.

2.2 Licorice in the Ottoman Empire

In the Ottoman geography, licorice root was mostly considered as a "*hüdayînâbit*" (God-given plant). This designation meant that it was a plant that grew spontaneously in nature and was exempt from the tax unless it was commercially excavated.³⁷ This plant, which sprouted without human intervention in swampy areas, river banks, wetlands and abandoned lands, was especially abundant in regions

³⁵ *The Story of Licorice* (Camden, NJ: MacAndrews and Forbes Company, 1952), 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ Süleyman Uygun, "Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü ve Üzerine Yaşanan Emperyalist Rekabet," *OTAM-Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 37 (2015): 338.

with favorable climate and topography such as Aydın, Baghdad, Basra, Aleppo, Mosul, Harput, Erzurum, Adana and Urfa. In the early 20th century, it is emphasized that the licorice roots grown in foreign countries were not of the same quality as those grown in Aydın region.³⁸



Figure 2. The map of railways, river valleys, and key centers in Western Anatolia, c. 1910³⁹

The map in Figure 2 illustrates the İzmir–Aydın railway and its extensions, along with the Gediz and Büyük Menderes valleys which were key regions for licorice root production. It also highlights urban centers directly connected to licorice-related activities in Western Anatolia, including Manisa/Alaşehir and Aydın/Umurlu, which later became focal points of commercial rivalry discussed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. Indeed, in an official report, it was stated that licorice, with its roots extending 2-3 meters into the ground and containing a sweet

³⁸ "Meyân Kökü," *İktisâdiyat Mecmuası*, Issue 62, August 30, 1333 [1917], 3.

³⁹ İnal, Raisins, Fruits of Empire: Figs, Raisins, and the Transformation of Western Anatolia in the Late Nineteenth Century, 556.

sap, was extracted from rural areas by peasants who were unemployed especially during the winter months, and that its production reached high figures of 15-20 million *kıyye* annually in Aydın province alone.⁴⁰ These data suggest that Ottoman lands, especially Western Anatolia, offered a favorable natural environment for licorice, both climatically and topographically.

Although licorice had medicinal properties, it was considered a wild plant for many agricultural workers in Western Anatolia.⁴¹ Nevertheless, by the second half of the nineteenth century, with increasing foreign demand, a "spontaneous" and "wild plant" such as licorice began to be commercialized and commodified. It is known that licorice root was gathered in the fall and winter months, although the digging processes of licorice root may vary periodically.⁴² The people who gathered this plant were considered unemployed or idle and were usually the poorest people in the rural areas.⁴³ The plant's long root structure, which could reach several meters below the ground, made it a source of livelihood for peasants who were unemployed during the winter months. Growing spontaneously on wet, abandoned or uncultivated land, licorice offered a labor-intensive but highly profitable production model for capital, as it did not require any agricultural investment or seeding. The root diggers were men, women and even children, often from the poorest sections of the villages. They dug deep pits with small picks and shovels to extract the roots, a process that required days of physical labor.⁴⁴ Licorice diggers could receive wages based on the number of kilos/okka they harvested.⁴⁵ However, this process involved not only

⁴⁰ BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

⁴¹ "The licorice plant tends to become a potentially persistent 'weed' and is difficult to eradicate completely, thanks to the ability of its roots to penetrate deeply into the soil and to reproduce easily from severed root fragments." Historical Perspectives on Health, 302.

⁴² Cihan Özgün, "*İzmir ve Artalanında Tarımsal Üretim ve Ticareti (1844–1914)*," 189.

⁴³ BOA., Y.EE.KP. 40/3940.

⁴⁴ BOA. SHD, 2889/49.

⁴⁵ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 188.

intensive physical labor on the land, but also other stages of post-collection processing and marketing. The roots were first transported to specific gathering and weighing stations, where they were both quality-controlled and weighed and charged. The roots were then left to dry over the winter months, with special protection measures taken during the rainy season to prevent them from being affected by moisture. Once sufficiently dry, they were pressed by hydraulic presses into bales of about 300 ounces, tied with wire or iron bands and made ready for trade.⁴⁶

This activity, however, not only offered a temporary form of employment, but also meant that the diggers were dependent on intermediaries, as they had no direct contact with the market.⁴⁷ This laborious "extraction" of licorice represented the first link in the transformation of the plant from a spontaneously growing plant in nature to a commodity that was part of the international trade chain. While this transformation points to the commercialization of not only land but also labor, it also reveals the ways in which the rural poor are incorporated into the economic process through seasonal, precarious and low-paid work. This dependence on intermediaries which were often local contractors or company agents, created a hierarchical structure of labor organization in which village laborers remained at the bottom (see Figure 3). These actors not only controlled access to the digging sites but also determined wages, working conditions, and the rhythm of seasonal employment. In many cases, foreign companies like MacAndrews & Forbes or their Ottoman partners relied on such intermediaries to manage licorice procurement across

⁴⁶ "Licorice the Versatile," 208.

⁴⁷ "In the early 20th century, according to a collection of short but seminal interviews with relatives of licorice factory workers, licorice diggers and harvesters were even identified as a distinct caste." Özgün, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Aydın İlinde İktisadi Değişim*, 113.

dispersed rural zones. These extraction activities were labor intensive, and the process were heavily depended on seasonal peasant-workers.



Figure 3. The photographs of peasant-workers collecting and transporting licorice roots⁴⁸

To sum up, the production of licorice in Ottoman Western Anatolia can be characterized as both environmentally demanding and labor-intensive. As illustrated in Figure 3, manual labor played a crucial role in the extraction and transportation of licorice root. While this allows us to better understand the production process and the structure of the regional commodity chain, the questions of where and how the commercialization process began remain only partially answered. At this juncture, the shifting economic order of the Ottoman Empire, the expanding commercial networks of foreign investors, and the region's broader integration into global agricultural trade may offer valuable insights into the rapid commercialization of licorice.

⁴⁸ Kidd, 'MacAndrews and Forbes and the Forbes Family.'

2.3 A changing economic order

The nineteenth century witnessed a fundamental transformation in the economic structure of the Ottoman Empire. The main pillars of the Ottoman classical order: provisionism, traditionalism and fiscalism, were based on the direct and strict regulation of the market by the state. İaşecilik (provisionism) is a principle that aims to ensure that the public is supplied with quality and cheap goods, keeps prices under control and envisages intensive intervention in the functioning of the market.⁴⁹ In other words, it is a system of state interventionism that aims to ensure the stable supply of large cities with food and basic consumer goods. Two of the most prominent tools of this system in practice were the yed-i vahid and tezkere procedures. Yed-i vahid was applied to products such as silk, cereals, cotton, mohair and olive oil, especially opium, before the Tanzimat. This method implies that the state is the sole buyer and seller, in other words, a complete trade monopoly. The tezkere method, on the other hand, stipulated that the products of the state were to be collected and marketed only by authorized merchants designated by the state. The merchant, who was assigned by the ihtisab nazırı, would go to the production region, buy the goods from the producer, pay the tax and send the product to Istanbul by delivering it to central warehouses. However, this system led to a decrease in production over time due to the ban on exports and low-price policy. It also began to be seen as an obstacle in the process of opening to foreign trade.⁵⁰

The abolition of yed-i vahid and tezkere procedures⁵¹ and the change in the Ottoman classical economic order was also associated with the expansion of the

⁴⁹ Mehmet Genç, “Osmanlı İktisadi Dünya Görüşünün İlkeleri,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 1 (1989): 175–86

⁵⁰ Melih Gürsoy, *Tarihi, Ekonomisi ve İnsanları ile Bizim İzmirimiz*, 124.

⁵¹ “Yed-i Vahid,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, accessed May 7, 2025, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/yed-i-vahid>.

Ottoman foreign trade volume. For instance, while the growth rate of the Ottoman Empire's trade in the 18th century was just over 1 percent per annum, in the period 1815-1913, annual trade growth increased to more than 3.5 percent.⁵² This is an indication of the quantitative change in the Ottoman economy, which expanded with the changing classical order of the Ottoman economy. In the first half of the nineteenth century, one of the countries that contributed the most to this trade growth was Britain. The Ottoman trade relations with Britain, which would also be a pioneer in the licorice trade, date back even before this century. However, they increased especially after the dissolution of the trade monopolies. There were two specific reasons for the growth of trade volume. The first was the withdrawal of France, the Ottoman Empire's largest trading partner after the Napoleonic Wars, from the Eastern Mediterranean trade. The other is the removal of the monopoly on trade for British merchants by the Levant Company, that responsible for Britain's trade in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵³ The doubling of the Ottoman State's imports from Britain between 1827 and 1838 is a natural consequence of these developments⁵⁴

The 1830s marked the beginning of a new era with the Ottomans' increasing centralization and reform movements in domestic politics and economic liberalization in foreign affairs. In other words, on the one hand, the Ottoman central government attempted to increase its political power through centralization, while on the other hand, it abolished the yed-i vahid and tezkere procedures in its economy and moved towards a freer market practice. The Edict of Tanzimat in the political sense and the Treaty of Balta Liman of 1838 (Ottoman-British Free Trade Treaty) in the economic sense played a major role in this process. In terms of trade volume,

⁵² Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, 23.

⁵³ Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 75; Onur İnal, "A Port and Its Hinterland: An Environmental History of Izmir in the Late Ottoman Period," 119.

⁵⁴ Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 43.

Britain was the largest exporter and importer through the port of Izmir in 1839.⁵⁵ At this point, it is important to note that the 1838 Treaty of Balta Liman not only increased the volume of British trade with the Ottoman Empire but also accelerated the pace of the Ottoman Empire's political reforms. It can even be stated that the Treaty of 1838 played an important role in the Ottoman State's initiation of the Tanzimat reforms. In 1832, Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, stated that in order to achieve more success in the reforms of the Ottoman Empire, which were partially successful in the army and finance, a definite policy should be determined and this determined policy should be followed regularly.⁵⁶ Palmerston's emphasis on the necessity of a decisive reform policy can be read not only as a diplomatic directive but also as one of the ideological underpinnings of the new economic order shaped by the 1838 Treaty of Balta Liman.

The Treaty of Balta Liman signed in 1838 symbolizes the beginning of a new era in the Ottoman economic system with the abolition of state monopolies and protectionist trade policies. With this agreement, the Ottoman administration moved away from the previous interventionist approaches and adopted a liberal economic orientation based on openness to foreign trade. Within the framework of the treaty, the export tax was set at 12% and the import tax at 5%; in addition, various tax facilities were provided to British merchants in the movement of goods between the provinces.⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, in the seventy-five years following the free trade agreements, the new trade regime enabled the total exports of the Ottoman Empire to increase approximately five times and imports six and a half times at current prices.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁶ Müjdat Engin, "1838 Osmanlı-İngiliz Ticaret Anlaşmasının Tanzimat Fermanı'na Etkileri," 78.

⁵⁷ For details of the treaty: Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Balta Limanı'na Giden Yol*; Necla Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire*, 21–22; Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913*, 19–20; Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 86.

This expansion shows how high the growth in foreign trade was despite the empire's territorial losses.⁵⁸ Following the 1838 Treaty of Balta Liman, until 1846, the Ottoman Empire signed trade treaties with many states other than the Britain, such as Russia, France, Italy, Belgium, Belgium, the United States, Sweden, Spain, Denmark, Prussia, the Netherlands, Austria, Mexico and Portugal, and granted similar trade privileges to these countries.⁵⁹

The transformation of the Ottoman economic structure in the first half of the nineteenth century was not limited to the redefinition of the role of the state in economic functioning; it also profoundly changed the nature of the empire's relationship with the world economy. With the abandonment of traditional control mechanisms, the adoption of free trade principles and the new foreign trade regime, the Ottoman economy evolved into a structure that was increasingly dependent on the outside and open to the intervention of external actors. In this new economic order, the removal of structural barriers to capital movements and the circulation of goods made it possible for foreign merchants to penetrate Anatolia's commercial geography more directly. Hence, in this new space opened by liberal economic policies, not only the Ottoman domestic producer but also the consulate-backed European merchant class from the Levant became a decisive actor. These new networks shaped around the port city of İzmir, transformed commodity movements in the provinces of the empire, while at the same time playing a critical role in reweaving the regional economic structure with external demand.

2.4 Foreign traders and the development of trade networks

⁵⁸ Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism*, 23.

⁵⁹ Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire*, 23-24.

Until the 1838 Trade Agreement, foreign merchants were prohibited from engaging in direct domestic trade within Ottoman territory. Due to this restriction, British merchants had to work with Greek and Armenian intermediaries, both in the procurement of agricultural products from rural areas and in the distribution of imported goods to markets in and around İzmir. However, with the removal of this legal barrier after 1838, the attempts of British capital and foreign merchants in general to penetrate local markets directly.⁶⁰ This increased the presence of foreign investors and merchants in the Ottoman economy, particularly in Western Anatolia.

With the advantages of free trade agreements in general, the means of investments for British investors also increased and they also started the necessary institutionalization efforts to establish their own trade networks. For instance, with the establishment of the İzmir Commercial Bank in 1843, British capital began to play an influential role not only in the purchase of goods but also in the creation of financial infrastructure. Subsequently, institutions such as Credit Lyonnais and the Ottoman Bank began to operate in İzmir, offering low-interest loans to foreign merchants.⁶¹ This not only sharpened competition with local Greek and Armenian intermediaries, but also facilitated the increasing control over trade by companies with foreign capital, as happened in the licorice trade. In particular, the Ottoman Bank's establishment of agencies in the hinterland to provide long-term loans to small producers amounted to direct intervention in the rural economy. Thus, while the traditional relations of domination of the local landowners over the peasants were weakened, foreign merchants gained the financial capacity to buy the products before they even left the fields. These new credit relations also allowed Levant merchants to

⁶⁰ Reşat Kasaba, "İzmir," in *Doğu Akdeniz'de Liman Kentleri 1800–1914*, 11.

⁶¹ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 136-37.

gain a decisive upper hand in their relations with the Ottoman finance as well as against local merchants.⁶²

Due to the privileges of the 1838 Treaty, there are also sources indicating that many people in Western Anatolia sought to benefit from commercial advantages and capitulations by becoming British subjects.⁶³ Although the exact number of Ottoman citizens who became British subjects for this purpose is unclear, according to Kurmuş, between 1844 and 1913, more than 700 Ottoman citizens from Izmir became British subjects.⁶⁴ The Ottoman central administration, on the other hand, first tried to prevent patronage by the consulates by sending official warning letters from Dersaadet. When these official warnings did not work, the government tried to control the employment and patronage by the consulates through legal regulations, but without success.⁶⁵ This increased the influence of Ottoman subjects who were already benefiting from British commercial privileges. As a matter of fact, this patronage relations brought along a structure based on mutual interest. For European merchants, intermediaries from Ottoman subjects, especially Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Arab and Persian intermediaries, had the capacity to establish relations with the local bureaucracy, reach producers and procure goods directly through the trading houses in the coastal cities.⁶⁶ Foreign merchants, therefore, combined their legal and diplomatic privileges, connections with the practical skills of local Ottoman elements to create a powerful trading network. The patronage system thus functioned not only as a mechanism of political protection but also as a basis for economic partnership based on interdependencies.

⁶² Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, “Tanzimat Devrinde Yabancıların Faaliyetleri,” in *150. Yılında Tanzimat*, 95.

⁶³ Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Majestelerinin Konsolosları*, 30–31.

⁶⁴ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye’ye Girişi*, 80.

⁶⁵ İbrahim Serbestoğlu, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Tabiiyet,” 35–36.

⁶⁶ Reşat Kasaba, *Dünya, İmparatorluk ve Toplum*, 58–63.

The trade networks formed in this process enabled not only the circulation of capital and goods, but also the construction of a multi-layered economic order shaped by diplomatic protection, legal privileges and local intermediary relations. This structure, which developed especially in Western Anatolia, facilitated the direct access of foreign merchants to rural production areas. At the same time, the efforts of the Ottoman central administration to limit this expansion often proved insufficient. The patronage or protection regime provided by the British consulates reinforced the commercial power of both foreign-funded actors and their local partners who came under their wing. In regions such as Western Anatolia, this led to the concentration of economic power increasingly in the hands of foreign companies and the local merchants they supported as subsequent chapters revealed.

2.5 Commercial integration of Western Anatolia: İzmir and Aydın

Throughout the nineteenth century, İzmir became the center of the Ottoman Empire's commercial relations with the West and maintained this position until the early twentieth century. Aydın, on the other hand, was the most important administrative unit supporting the production leg of the trade as a region containing many agricultural products produced in the hinterland of İzmir.⁶⁷ With the increase in export-oriented agricultural production, İzmir gained importance not only as a port city but also as a distribution and financial center controlling all channels of foreign trade. İzmir also became the main point for the shipment of high-demand goods such as grapes, figs, cotton, opium and licorice to European markets; it also functioned as a redistribution center where industrial products imported from Europe were delivered to the Anatolian interior. As a result of these developments, the city

⁶⁷ Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, *Aydın Sancağı 1845–1914*, 6-8.

became the empire's second largest banking center after Istanbul and an area where foreign capital was intensively active in service sectors such as credit, insurance and transportation.⁶⁸ Thus, İzmir not only served as a nodal point through which the Ottoman provinces connected with the world economy, but also played a decisive role in the transformation of the Western Anatolian hinterland.

With the increase in trade networks, İzmir began a remarkable period of commercial growth as the main outlet for Western Anatolia's agricultural production to world markets. In the half-century from the 1830s to the 1880s, the city's import volume increased nearly seven and a half times, while the value of its exports quadrupled.⁶⁹ During this period, exports and imports in Western Anatolia were almost entirely controlled by the British, leaving little room for merchants from other European states. In just forty years from the early 1840s, total exports from İzmir to Britain more than tripled and imports more than quadrupled.⁷⁰ İzmir's trade volume increased at such a rate due to the fact that as a port city, it was a thriving commercial center for both imports and exports, and was the sole point of origin for goods from its hinterland.⁷¹

One of the factors that contributed to İzmir's transformation into a center of commerce was that foreign merchants increased the pace of commercialization and commodification of agricultural production by owning land, especially in the İzmir's hinterland. It can be said that foreign investors sought to own land in many agricultural areas. For example, including Aydın and its surroundings which was known for its fertile valleys in the hinterland of İzmir. In fact, it was de facto

⁶⁸ Elena Frangakis-Syrett, "Uluslararası Önem Taşıyan Bir Akdeniz Limanının Gelişimi: Smyrna (1700–1914)," in *İzmir 1830–1930: Unutulmuş Bir Kent mi?*, 44.

⁶⁹ Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey 1800–1914*, 109.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 81.

⁷¹ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 87.

possible for foreigners to acquire immovable property in Ottoman lands even before the Tanzimat.

Despite legal obstacles, many foreigners managed to circumvent this restriction through indirect means. For instance, foreigners married to Ottoman subjects could acquire property rights by registering the land they purchased or cultivated in the name of their spouses or in-laws. Another method was that especially powerful families could dissuade the officials through consular intervention. This was a common practice that made it de facto possible for foreigners to own land even before the right of foreigners to acquire immovable property⁷² in 1867.⁷³ Nevertheless, land ownership, particularly by the British, seems to have increased by the end of the 1860s. By 1868, one-third of the land suitable for agriculture was owned by British title deeds, and the agricultural lands near Izmir came under the control of 41 British merchants in a decade.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, there are no direct corporate records of licorice companies or their founders, including the British MacAndrews and Forbes company. However, it is important to see the British influence on commercial agricultural production in İzmir and its hinterland in order to understand the background of the licorice trade that began around the same time.

The rapid acquisition of land by the British can be assumed to have been motivated by direct control over the entire commodity chain from the production of industrial crops for the foreign market to their sale to the port of Izmir for the maximum profit. However, some British investors stated that they abandoned their plans to operate farms on the grounds that agricultural activities were not sustainable. Some British landowners preferred to dispose of their land holdings in a short period

⁷² Aysun Sarıbey Haykıran, “*Aydın Vilayeti’nde Çiftlikler (1839–1918)*,” 66.

⁷³ Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, “*Aydın Sancağı 1845–1914*,” 79.

⁷⁴ Aysun Sarıbey Haykıran, “*Aydın Vilayeti’nde Çiftlikler*,” 69–70.

of time due to their discomfort with banditry activities, which were particularly prevalent in rural areas.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, not all British investors abandoned agricultural production. Those who were in partnership with the peasant's received half of their produce, and as the demand for export-oriented goods gradually increased, partnership agreements were made in favor of the British sides. Nevertheless, many British landowners suffered losses when harvests did not come in as expected due to disease or bad weather.⁷⁶

On the other hand, it was not uncommon to find Britons, notably MacAndrews and the Forbes company, profiting from commercial agricultural production through the use of intermediaries and the leasing of land on a contract basis.⁷⁷ This shows that British capital developed profit-oriented relations not only with classical plantation agriculture, but also with the production of herbal products such as licorice root. Since licorice root was a wild plant and did not require direct cultivation like other plantation-type commodities, a unique model of commercialization appeared through the use of intermediaries and local labor.

The acquisition of land by foreign capital in and around İzmir necessitated a systematic transformation in the production processes. It also needed in the transportation of these products to the ports. The efficient transportation of large volumes of export goods in the mountainous and fragmented geography of Western Anatolia necessitated new transportation solutions. The most important tool that came into play at this point was the foreign-funded railway projects. British investors planned to build a railway line between İzmir and Aydın to make more effective use of the fertile agricultural lands along the Menderes Valley. This project was shaped

⁷⁵ Cihan Özgün, "*Tanzimattan Cumhuriyet'e (1923) Aydın İlinde İktisadi Değişim,*" 13.

⁷⁶ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 151-152.

⁷⁷ BOA. ŞD, 431/8 (Galib Bey's report to the Ministry of Justice).

as a strategic initiative aimed at facilitating the transportation of the region's products to the port for export. In 1856, a British entrepreneur named Robert Wilkin, on behalf of himself and four British investors residing in Izmir, requested a concession from the Ottoman administration for the construction of a railway between Izmir and Aydin. With the concession granted a year later,⁷⁸ the British investor group started the construction of the line from Izmir under the company name "Ottoman Railway from Smyrna to Izmir of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan".⁷⁹

The other important railroad line was concessioned to a British merchant named Edward Price in 1863. This concession was later transferred to a company named "Smyrna-Cassaba Railway Company". This company started work quickly in 1864, and within a year, the railroad was running along the Gediz valley, connecting Manisa and Izmir.⁸⁰

The construction of the railway, as can be seen in Figure 4, led to a significant reduction in transportation costs by up to 76%, which caused both to transport British industrial goods to the interior regions more easily and to transport agricultural products to the port of Izmir faster and at lower cost. This cost and time advantage in transportation significantly increased not only the volume of trade but also the diversity of production in the region.⁸¹ Moreover, the Ottoman administration also had a great interest in railroads. One of the main reasons for this interest was the expectation that these transportation networks would increase agricultural production in Western Anatolia, making it possible to collect more taxes from the region. The railroads were expected to not only increase agricultural taxes,

⁷⁸ For details of the concession agreement: Gülçin Uzuntepe, "*Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İlk Demiryolu: İzmir-Aydın-Kasaba (Turgutlu) (1856-1897)*," 31-35; A. Nedim Atilla, *İzmir Demiryolları*, 57-58.

⁷⁹ İnal, *A Port and Its Hinterland*, 131-132.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 135.

⁸¹ Uzuntepe, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İlk Demiryolu*, 92.

but also trade-based tax revenues and customs duties on foreign trade. Indeed, as İzmir became a major foreign trade center, these economic expectations were largely realized.⁸² For example, İzmir's trade, which was 53 million francs in 1839, increased to 120 million francs by 1855 and did not fall below 100 million francs thanks to the railroads.⁸³



Figure 4. The map of İzmir-Aydın and İzmir-Kasaba railway lines in 1884⁸⁴

Although it is known that the railways in Western Anatolia increased commercial capacity, there is very little quantitative data on how much they affected the licorice trade. Yet, the transportation records of the Aydın and Kasaba railway

⁸² Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 113.

⁸³ Özgün, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Aydın İlinde İktisadi Değişim*, 48.

⁸⁴ BOA. HRT, 1744.

lines between 1903 and 1909 offer some insight into the scale and direction of licorice root trade in Western Anatolia. The quantities of licorice root transported, measured in both old and new kantar units⁸⁵, indicate that the Aydın line consistently handled significantly higher volumes than the Kasaba line. For example, in the first half of 1903, the Aydın railway carried over 609,000 kantars of licorice root (in old units), while the Kasaba line reported just over 3,300 kantars (in new units).⁸⁶ Similar disparities appear in subsequent years, suggesting that the Menderes valley served as the main corridor for the bulk shipment of licorice-related products. While the data does not allow for a clear long-term trend, it nevertheless underscores the infrastructural role of the railway system in expanding the commercial reach of licorice root from rural production zones to İzmir.

Ultimately, İzmir and its hinterland emerged not only as export nodes but also as spatial projections of the transformation of Ottoman agricultural production. The expansion of capitalist global trade reshaped the economic geography of Ottoman Western Anatolia with the help of foreign investors and railroad infrastructure. This shift laid the foundation for a new economic logic that diverged from traditional agrarian structures. One notable example of this transformation was licorice root, a wild plant increasingly commodified and exported through logistical corridors structured by foreign capital and rail connections. Its incorporation into international trade networks demonstrates how even naturally growing resources came to depend on external investment and transport infrastructure to enter global commodity circuits.

⁸⁵ The average weight of a weighbridge for coarse commercial products in İzmir was around 56-57 kg, Cengiz Kallek, "Kantar," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 319.

⁸⁶ Hüseyin Rıfat, Rıfat, *İzmir 1914*, 111-112.

2.6 Agricultural commodities and trade

The increasing volume of foreign trade in regions such as İzmir and Aydın began to transform not only urban centers and rural modes of production. One of the most striking aspects of this transformation is the mechanization and technical modernization observed in the agricultural hinterland of Western Anatolia, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁷ This partial mechanization of agricultural activities carried out with tools and equipment supplied by British and American companies in and around İzmir. It was encouraged both to increase productivity and to expand the commodity pattern that would meet the needs of the Western European-centered world economy.⁸⁸ This transformation was often spearheaded by foreign investors with capital and immigrant entrepreneurs with knowledge of agricultural techniques.⁸⁹ Thus, this new order, which evolved from subsistence agriculture to commodity production, aimed to circulate products no longer in local markets but into the global commodity demand.

On the other hand, as trade became more liberalized, the Ottoman Empire was prohibited from imposing restrictions on the export of raw materials and food products. This led to a significant increase in export-oriented agricultural production in the coastal areas of Western Anatolia and its hinterland. As a result of these developments, products such as raisins, tobacco, figs and cotton became the main commodities in the region's foreign trade, playing a decisive role in terms of both production volume and foreign market demand.⁹⁰ The use of modern tools in agriculture, the adaptation of production techniques to commercialization, market

⁸⁷ Murat Baskıcı, "Osmanlı Tarımında Makineleşme: 1870-1914," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 58, no. 1 (2003): 32.

⁸⁸ Özgün, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Aydın İlinde İktisadi Değişim*, 217.

⁸⁹ Reşat Kasaba, "Batı Anadolu'da Göçmen Emeği (1750-1850)," in *Osmanlı'da Toprak Mülkiyeti ve Ticari Tarım*, 127.

⁹⁰ Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism*, 99.

demands, and the development of the railway all played a decisive role in transforming the İzmir hinterland into a supplier region that could respond to the needs of world markets.

One of the most commercially demanded of these agricultural products was cotton. Although cotton was already an exported industrial crop before the nineteenth century, the American Civil War of 1861-65 increased the market demand for cotton, especially as the British textile industry could not find enough raw materials.⁹¹ This greatly increased the production and trade of the British cotton industry in Western Anatolia. Between 1861-63, the area of cotton cultivation around İzmir increased eightfold. This resulted in cotton accounting for more than fifty percent of Ottoman exports to Britain.⁹² On the other hand, the construction of the İzmir-Aydın and İzmir-Kasaba railway lines and their extensions in the same years significantly increased the influence of British capital in the region. The fact that British capitalists cultivated more cotton in areas close to the railroad lines also contributed to the growth of the trade volume of this agricultural commodity.⁹³

Tobacco, like cotton, was an industrial plant that had already been traded. However, while cotton production in and around İzmir was under the control of the British, the French were more interested in tobacco cultivation. From 1857 onwards, the French encouraged the cultivation of tobacco in the region through intensive purchases and began to take control of this field. Although the French were first interested in Samsun⁹⁴ and its hinterland, the commercialization of this region in terms of trade volume and agricultural production for export could never reach the

⁹¹ İnal, *A Port and Its Hinterland*, 162.

⁹² Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, 91.

⁹³ Özgün, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Aydın İlinde İktisadi Değişim*, 24; Uzuntepe, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İlk Demiryolu*, 97.

⁹⁴ Filiz Dıñoğlu, *Trabzon Reji İdaresi, 1883-1914*, 21.

levels of Western Anatolia.⁹⁵ In 1883, after the establishment of the Duyun-u Umumiye, the French took over the tobacco monopoly and became the largest shareholder of the company known as "Reji", which is a clear indication of their interest in the tobacco sector. The Ottoman state, on the other hand, was able to control the tobacco monopoly for only 12 years after it took control of it in 1871, and then had to relinquish this control.⁹⁶ By the end of the 1880s, the Reji Company purchased 55% of the approximately 2 million kilograms of tobacco produced in Aydın Province, i.e. 1.1 million kilograms, directly from the producers and started to process these products in its own tobacco factory, which became operational only one year after its establishment.⁹⁷ The main reason why only half of the tobacco produced could be processed despite the Reji monopoly was the problem of smuggling. The company even fought against smuggling with its own armed ranger units which also known as reji kolcuları.⁹⁸ Even though there was a decrease in the amount of tobacco exported from the İzmir region due to smuggling, it continued to maintain its commercial value.⁹⁹

Figs had been a valuable export commodity in previous centuries.¹⁰⁰ However, influenced by the rapidly commercializing agricultural production of Western Anatolia, figs became a luxury consumer goods exported to Britain and U.S by British entrepreneurs from the 1850s onwards.¹⁰¹ The highest quality fruit grown in Aydın and its environs was also internationally renowned.¹⁰² On the other hand, raisins and figs are often considered together in export charts, as they share the same

⁹⁵ Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism*, 103.

⁹⁶ Abdullah Martal, *Değişim Sürecinde İzmir'de Sanayileşme*, 159.

⁹⁷ Oktay Gökdemir, "19. Yüzyıl Sonunda İzmir ve Çevresinde Tütün Kaçakçılığı," *Çağdaş Türkiye Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 3 (1993): 328.

⁹⁸ Burak Altunsoy, *Osmanlı'da Tütün Kaçakçılığı: Reji Kolcuları ve Uygulamaları*

⁹⁹ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 259.

¹⁰⁰ Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century: 1700 - 1820*, 31.

¹⁰¹ Tacettin Talha Günaydın, "Fig Production and Trade in the Aegean Region (1852–1912)," 47–48.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 49.

harvesting method and harvesting seasons.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, after the 1876 period, especially in the fig trade, the value of exports quadrupled in a ten-year period.¹⁰⁴ Raisins trade, on the other hand, did not experience such proportional increases because many countries, including the Ottoman Empire, imposed restrictions on grape trade due to the phylloxera (vine weevil) epidemic in France. Nevertheless, it remained an important agricultural product, along with figs, for export from the western Anatolian hinterland until the early 20th century.¹⁰⁵

As a result, the predominance of agricultural commodities such as cotton, tobacco, figs and raisins economy transformed not only crop patterns but also capital investments, land ownership structures and local production relations across Western Anatolia. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the construction of railway lines, the mechanization of agriculture, and the expansion of trade networks positioned the region as an important link within the global commodity chain. However, this expanding agricultural economy was not limited to large-scale and renowned commodities. Over time, lesser-known products, such as licorice, which highly demanded in foreign markets, were also rapidly introduced into commercial circulation. The growth of the pharmaceutical, food, and tobacco industries in Europe and U.S together with its natural occurrence in the Ottoman provinces, turned licorice into a strategic raw material that attracted the foreign capital from mid-nineteenth century onward.

¹⁰³ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 258.

¹⁰⁴ Onur İnal, "Fruits of Empire: Figs, Raisins, and Transformation of Western Anatolia in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Environment and History* 25, no. 4 (November 2019): 567.

¹⁰⁵ Donald Quataert, "*Ottoman Reform and Agriculture in Anatolia, 1876–1908*," 240.

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY REGULATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF LICORICE IN OTTOMAN WESTERN ANATOLIA (1850-1880)

This chapter examines how licorice was rapidly commercialized and transformed into a commodity in the Ottoman Western Anatolia from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and how this transformation reshaped relations between the state, local actors and foreign capital. Initially regarded as *hüdâyînâbit* (God's given wild-growing plant) and limited to local use, it became a commodity from the 1850s onwards due to the growing demand for exports and the interest of foreign companies. The Ottoman central administration was also involved in this process and attempted to regulate this new economic field through licensing, tax collection and production control. However, the policies implemented to control licorice production encountered serious resistance and crises at the local level, testing the state's capacity to control rural areas. Against this backdrop, the chapter raises three main issues: The regulatory needs that emerged with the commodification of licorice; how these regulations led to implementation crises at the local level, especially in taxation; and finally, how foreign companies such as MacAndrews & Forbes began to transform the provincial economic order in their own interests. Thus, the period between 1850 and 1880 reveals the transformation of licorice production into not only an economic but also an administrative and political issue.

3.1 Licensing process and state intervention in the industry

The mid-nineteenth century agro-industrial ventures in the Ottoman provinces provide important examples to observe the state's attitude towards new forms of

commodity production and factories planned to be established in the countryside. In this context, the 1850 application of Şahinoğlu Artin, an Ottoman subject who wanted to establish a factory to produce licorice honey in Söke, near Aydın, is the earliest example of the state's attitude towards such industrial ventures.

Artin's application was evaluated by the Meclis-i Nafia (The Council of Public Works), and it was stated that such license requests could pose problems, citing the example of the concession granted to the foreign merchant, who had previously made a similar attempt in the Ioannina, which had caused various problems. The local council, therefore, suggested that Artin's initiative be investigated on the spot and left the final decision to the Sadaret (The Grand Vizierate).¹⁰⁶

A few days later, Artin submitted a new petition in which he emphasized that he could apply the technical knowledge he had acquired in Europe to the Ottoman lands. In this petition, he stated that he had learned how to remove the bitterness of licorice root and that he would be able to realize a successful production process; he also claimed that production would contribute to peasant incomes and local employment. The Council of Public Works acknowledged the potential benefits of this initiative, nevertheless stated that local conditions should be investigated in detail, taking into account previous bad examples.¹⁰⁷

In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a letter to the Governorate of Aydın to determine whether the establishment of the factory would cause any inconvenience for the people. The governor's office was asked to conduct a detailed investigation to determine whether the factory would disturb the peace of the people in the area where it would be built.¹⁰⁸ This correspondence shows how carefully the

¹⁰⁶ BOA. A.} MKT.NZD, 06/64.

¹⁰⁷ BOA. A.} MKT.NZD, 7/3.

¹⁰⁸ BOA. HR.MKT, 34/5.

state evaluated economic initiatives in terms of social stability.¹⁰⁹ While this process was ongoing, upon the death of Şahinoğlu Artin, the license process was restarted by his son-in-law Oseb. In the official report prepared by the Meclis-i Vâlâ (The Supreme Council, the factory would increase local employment and provide an annual income of 3,000 kuruş to the state treasury; however, it was emphasized that no foreign element should be involved in the operation of the factory.¹¹⁰

Subsequently, in a joint evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Finance and the Supreme Council, the establishment of the factory was approved under certain conditions. Among these conditions were provisions such as not trespassing on other people's lands during licorice extraction, compliance with customs obligations, operation of the factory only by Ottoman subjects, and protection of the purity of the products. It was also clearly stated that a special stamp would be used on the factory's packaging and that foreign partners would not be involved in the production structure.¹¹¹

The licensing process was formalized with a letter sent by the Minister of Commerce to the Aydın Governorate. In this letter, it was reiterated that the factory was licensed by the sultan's will and that the above-mentioned conditions should be meticulously implemented. The state's sensitivity towards the non-involvement of foreigners in the operation and capital structure of the factory is clearly expressed in this document.¹¹² When the whole process is examined, it is understood that the Ottoman State opened a limited space for domestic initiatives for the processing of valuable products such as licorice but encircled this space with strict bureaucratic

¹⁰⁹ A. Gündüz Ökçün, "XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İmalat Sanayii Alanında Verilen Ruhsat ve İmtiyazların Ana Çizgileri," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 27, no. 1 (January 1972): 159.

¹¹⁰ BOA. A.} AMD, 25/88.

¹¹¹ BOA. A.} MKT.MVL, 35/81; Ökçün, "İmalat Sanayii Ruhsat ve İmtiyazları," 160.

¹¹² BOA. A.} MKT.NZD, 20/37.

and administrative control. The state's approach was shaped by concerns for the protection of domestic order, social tranquility and the prevention of foreign influence as much as the promotion of production.¹¹³

In 1850, Şahinoğlu Artin initiated the process of establishing a factory, which is important for understanding the Ottoman state's approach to the first industrialization attempts in the production of licorice honey. Although Artin's request for a license was initially met with various cautious evaluations, when his brother-in-law Oseb applied with the same request, it was seen that the state offered support to local entrepreneurs with certain conditions. This support was limited to quite extensive conditions such as a five-year concession for a certain annual fee, no foreign involvement in the management of the factory, quality control of the factory products, and no interference with other commercial actors.¹¹⁴

This elaborate licensing process turned into a tool of not only economic but also political control. In the Artin/Oseb case, the state sought to support domestic production while at the same time preventing foreign elements from establishing economic influence in the Ottoman provinces.¹¹⁵ However, despite this restrictive framework, in the following years, foreign companies operating in Western Anatolia violated these rules and started to establish licorice factories and exploit local resources without a license.¹¹⁶

One of the most striking examples in this context occurred in 1860 in the town of Nazilli in the Aydın Province. Here, the British and Russian subjects MacAndrews & Forbes and Atanas established large-scale licorice honey factories

¹¹³ Kasaba, *The Ottoman and the World Economy*, 107-108.

¹¹⁴ BOA. A.}AMD, 25/88; BOA. A.} MKT.MVL, 35/81; BOA. A.} MKT.NZD, 20/37; Ökçün, "İmalat Sanayii Ruhsat ve İmtiyazları," 146-48.

¹¹⁵ BOA. HR.MKT, 34/5; Edhem Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 270.

¹¹⁶ BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

without obtaining any official licenses. Moreover, a coal mine in the same region was also started to be operated by these individuals without informing the administration.¹¹⁷

As a result of a formal investigation, it was determined that these factories and mines were operating without authorization, and it is clearly seen in the documents that the Ottoman state gave strict instructions to Edib Pasha, the Governor of İzmir, to stop these activities immediately.¹¹⁸ In these documents, it is clearly emphasized that no person or institution, whether local or foreign, can claim rights over the land and mines belonging to the treasury, and a legal basis is provided for this situation with the provisions of the Land Law.¹¹⁹ Such unauthorized economic activities of foreigners threatened not only the legal sovereignty of Ottoman territory, but also the competitiveness of local producers. Indeed, the fact that actors with large capital such as MacAndrews & Forbes operated by ignoring the obligation to obtain a license undermined the legal and economic equality of local enterprises that had already gone through the licensing process.

In this framework, it becomes clear how the restrictions imposed by the state on local actors such as Artin and Oseb in the 1850s were insufficient in the face of the arbitrary practices of foreign capital in the 1860s. This situation also reveals the tension between the state's desire for centralized control of economic activity and the weaknesses of local enforcement.¹²⁰

Following these documents that while the Ottoman Empire encouraged economic activity in emerging sectors such as licorice production and industry in the mid-nineteenth century, it also aimed to subject this activity to strict bureaucratic

¹¹⁷ BOA. MVL, 600/71.

¹¹⁸ BOA. A.}MKT. MVL, 120/78; BOA. A.}MKT.MVL, 120/79.

¹¹⁹ Oğuz Oyan, *Feodalizmden Kapitalizme, Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye*, 298.

¹²⁰ Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, 89-90; Eldem, *French Trade*, 270-71.

control. As in the case of Artin and Oseb, even the rights and privileges granted to local capital were tied to specific conditions, deadlines and strict regulations. There were issues such as the way the factory was run, the choice of personnel and product quality were restricted by detailed provisions.¹²¹ This approach shows that the state did not leave industrialization in the provinces completely free, on the contrary, it sought out to supervise and direct it. However, this control mechanism was often ineffective in the face of unlicensed attempts by foreign companies, as in the case of Nazilli in the 1860s.¹²² Powerful actors such as MacAndrews & Forbes, relying on capitulations and weak diplomatic position of Ottoman Empire, established factories without obtaining a license, not only violating the legal order, but also disadvantaging local entrepreneurs. Ottoman central administration's response to such situations was often interventionist and prohibitive, limited to measures such as halting operations and holding local administrators responsible. Therefore, this period can be interpreted as a striking transitional phase that reflects the ambivalent and sometimes inconsistent economic orientations of the Ottoman administration vis-à-vis domestic and foreign capital.¹²³

3.2 The beginnings of taxation on licorice and crises of enforcement

The Ottoman Empire's growing interest in agricultural and industrial production from the mid-nineteenth century onwards was also closely linked to the expansion of tax revenues. In 1859, the state decided to start collecting excise on licorice root, which had previously remained unrecorded or characterized as "*hüdâyînâbit*".¹²⁴ Licorice

¹²¹ BOA. A.} MKT.MVL, 35/81; BOA. A.} AMD, 25/88; Ökçün, "İmalat Sanayii Ruhsat ve İmtiyazları," 161.

¹²² BOA. MVL, 600/71; BOA. A.} MKT. MVL, 120/78.

¹²³ Kasaba, *The Ottoman and the World Economy*, 28-31.

¹²⁴ BOA. A.} MKT.MHM, 173/85.

had become a product with high industrial and export potential, growing naturally in Ottoman Western Anatolia, specifically Aydın and its environs. The Ministry of Finance considered that the extraction of this commodity in the farms belonging to the Emlâk-i Hümayûn (Imperial Estates) could turn into a source of income and a tender was organized for its auction.¹²⁵ However, this decision was met with different reactions by both the tax farmers and foreign fabricators, and many problems arose in practice.

With the new regulation of 1855, the Ottoman administration attempted to prevent the consolidation of multiple provinces within the province by the same person or group to prevent them from being taken over by the same person or group.¹²⁶ This reform aimed to limit the political influence of the financially empowered tax farmers with large capital and to establish a more balanced tax collection structure. It may have been intended to break the consolidation tendency of large capitalists, which was common in the *iltizam* system, and thus to strengthen centralized control over provincial finance. In this context, the fragmented auctioning of products such as licorice, which had previously been excluded from taxation and often defined as *hüdâyînâbit*, can be read as a reflection of this new framework in practice.

Nevertheless, in the 1859-60 crop season of the licorice root, along with cereals and similar crops in the Aydın region, was included in the scope of the *aşar* (tithe) and auctioned to Serkis (a local tax farmer) for 48 *yük* and 10,000 *kuruş*.¹²⁷ The fact that Mübaayacıoğlu Sarraf Agob (a bigger tax farmer), was the guarantor of

¹²⁵ BOA. A.} MKT.MHM, 173/85.

¹²⁶ Nadir Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli: Osmanlı'da Vergi, Siyaset ve Toplumsal Adalet (1839–1908)*, 54–55.

¹²⁷ Ömer İşbilir, “Yük,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 46-48; Şevket Pamuk, “Kuruş,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 458-59.

this *mültezim* (tax farmer) shows that even though there was a territorial restriction, people with high financial power indirectly maintained their control over these new taxation areas.¹²⁸ Despite the regulations, this did not prevent Agob, who probably had a larger capital, from capturing the licorice revenue through guarantees.

The main concern of the tax farmers was that they suffered significant losses due to the emergence of new crops like licorice on waqf lands.¹²⁹ and the uncertainty about the inclusion of by-products such as licorice honey. It was argued that the income from licorice was already taxed with a 9% customs duty, and that the additional application of the 10% tithe would create both double taxation and confusion in practice. In addition, licorice was not mentioned in the *ihale defterleri* (contract registers) was interpreted as a lack of a legal basis for the practice. Ultimately, this led to debates about the legal basis of the tax collection involving licorice itself.¹³⁰ The responses from the İstanbul were ambiguous on the issue of compensation for the losses incurred by the tax farmers. Although Agob, demanded retroactive compensation by stating that he had included licorice in the content of the tax and calculated accordingly, the report prepared by the *Dîvân-ı Muhâsebat* (The Council of Accounts)¹³¹ stated that there was no legal basis for this demand and that no retroactive collection could be made. However, this decision paved the way for licorice to be included in the tax system in the future due to its economic value. From 1864 onwards, licorice was operated by the state for one year on a trust basis, its income was determined, and it was planned to be auctioned in the future.¹³²

¹²⁸ BOA. MVL, 632/71.

¹²⁹ Oyan, *Feodalizmden Kapitalizme*, 29

¹³⁰ BOA. MVL, 673/71.

¹³¹ BOA. MVL, 632/71.

¹³² BOA. MVL, 673/71 (Document 2).

On the other hand, this new taxation practice put not only the tax farmers but also the factory owners in a difficult situation. In particular, foreign companies submitted petitions to the state, arguing that licorice could not be considered an agricultural commodity because it was a *hüdâyînâbit*, and therefore could not be subjected to the tithe.¹³³ In some documents, it was debated whether to collect the tax directly from the peasants who collected the roots or from the factory owners. At first, it was collected from the factory owners, but it was stated that this practice caused both tax loss and intense complaints.¹³⁴ As a result, the Council of Accounts concluded that the tax should be collected from those who harvested the licorice, that collecting the tax directly from the factory owners was both problematic in practice and unfair, and requested a new regulation in this direction.¹³⁵

To sum up, the attempt to collect the tithe on licorice reflects the transformation of Ottoman agricultural finance in the mid-nineteenth century and the efforts to define a *hüdâyînâbit* as a revenue item. However, this transformation faced serious crises due to the uncertainties encountered in practice, power asymmetries in the existing *iltizam* (taxfarming) structure, and the influence of capital owners. The subjection of licorice to tithe should be evaluated not only from a tax technical point of view, but also as a reflection of the tensions between local tender and representatives of foreign capital. This process also shows that licorice was transformed from a mere wild plant into a commodity that was rapidly commercialized and taxed due to increasing foreign demand and state intervention. The restrictions on capital concentration in auctions and the ongoing debates over tithe collection both reveal a tension between the state's attempts at economic control

¹³³ BOA. SHD, 2866/60.

¹³⁴ BOA. ŞD, 2866/60 (Document 2).

¹³⁵ BOA. ŞD, 2866/60 (Document 3-The Council of Account's memorandum).

and the resistance and maneuvering of provincial actors. This example is important in showing how classical tax practices were reshaped in the face of new economic realities and how the social, legal and fiscal crises that emerged in the process tested the limits of the central administration.

3.3 A monopolization in the countryside: The rise of MacAndrews & Forbes

The transformation of licorice root into a commercial product reaching international markets through its labor-intensive production in rural Western Anatolia cannot be explained solely by the availability of natural resources and local labor. One of the key building blocks of this transformation was the foreign companies that established the link between the gatherer peasants and the global market. These companies played a decisive role both in the organization of the production process and in making raw materials available for export. In particular, the British MacAndrews & Forbes became the most powerful actor controlling the licorice trade in the province of Aydın from the second half of the nineteenth century. Through its logistics network, warehousing infrastructure, and foreign trade connections, the company profited from a sought-after commodity in global consumption networks. In this context, the company's activities in the region provide an example of a multi-layered trade relationship with regional economy and also social and political connections.

The story of the MacAndrews and Forbes company began in 1850 when two young Scottish, William Edward McAndrew and his friend Edward Forbes came to Augustus Clark, who had a licorice factory in the village of Koçarlı in the Menderes Valley, to investigate the possibilities of licorice exports. The duo decided that the most suitable area for licorice production and a factory was Söke, which was also in

the same valley and logistically close to both Kuşadası and İzmir ports.¹³⁶ Thus, the MacAndrews and Forbes company opened its first factory in Söke (see Figure 5) in 1854, followed by factories in Nazilli and Aydın, by also buying out Clark's company. According to a local official report, from 1854 to 1875, MacAndrews & Forbes' licorice root and honey exports increased 12-fold, and the taxes it paid to the Ottoman government increased 10-fold.¹³⁷

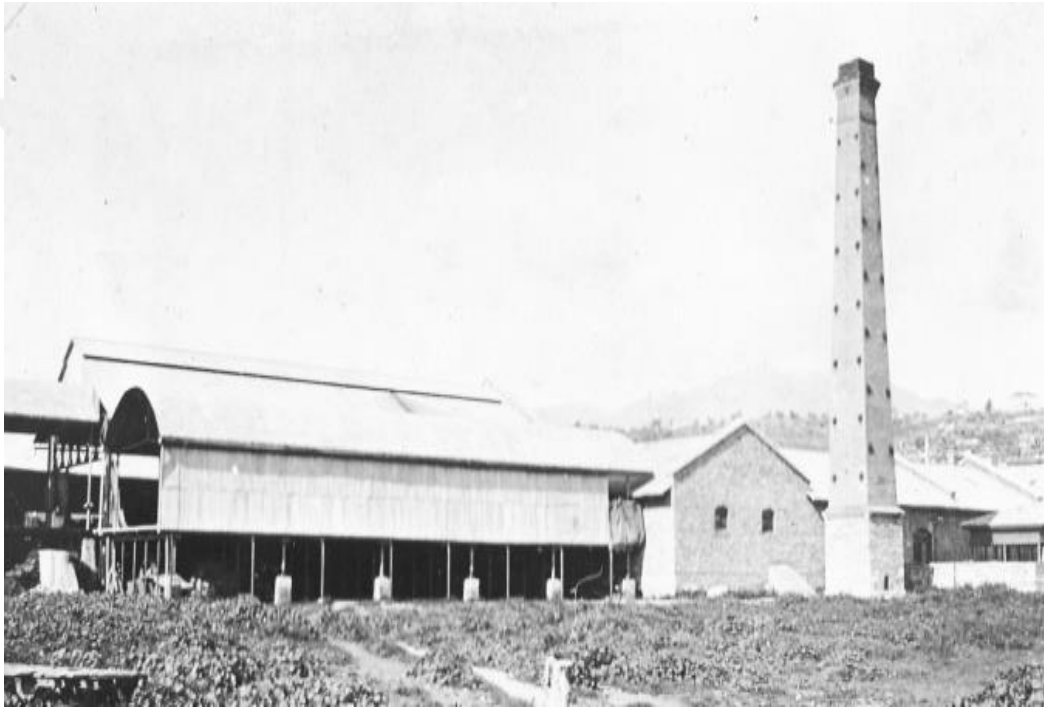


Figure 5. The photograph of MacAndrews&Forbes factory in Söke (Sochia)¹³⁸

The company's mode of operation was based on rented fields and peasant workers. Most of the time, they made an agreement with the landowners, and then the landowners collected the licorice roots growing in their fields and brought them to the warehouses that the company had set up in various places and received a fee

¹³⁶ Kidd, 'MacAndrews and Forbes and the Forbes Family.'

¹³⁷ Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 187.

¹³⁸ Helen Leggatt, ed., *Maudy of the Levant*, unpublished manuscript, 2012, 160. (Private copy in the possession of Musa Koçoğlu.)

according to the amount they brought. Additionally, the company hired peasant workers to work in these fields, dug and extracted the roots from the soil, and delivered them to the warehouses. They were paid according to the amount they brought as well. Thus, anyone who had a shovel to dig the soil and a sack to carry the roots to the warehouses could work for the company. The licorice roots, which were delivered from the warehouses to the factories, were cleaned and baled in factories or turned into licorice honey by steam-powered machines and then sent to İzmir to be exported.¹³⁹ As in Figure 6 seen, the licorice roots were dried before baled in factory's yard. The company controlled most of the licorice trade in Aydın province, leaving the collection to the poorest peasants and intermediary collectors, while making high profits by controlling the entire chain of purchase and sale of the product.

Furthermore, the MacAndrews and Forbes was not only attempted to influence Ottoman officials, but also pursued multi-layered strategies such as land leasing, legal foreclosures, and customs manipulations to create a market monopoly.¹⁴⁰ In particular, the company also used coercion and violence to force other local and foreign companies to withdraw from the market transformed the licorice trade, which will be illustrated in the following chapters. Thus, the licorice market has evolved into not only an economic, but also a social and judicial problem area. This structure also reveals how a plant that grows naturally and is considered *hüdayînâbit* among the people was turned into an international commodity and transformed many areas from rural labor to public law.

According to an official report, MacAndrews & Forbes employed four main strategies to establish a permanent monopoly in the licorice trade in Ottoman

¹³⁹ Ibid., 188.

¹⁴⁰ "Meyân Kökü" *İktisâdiyat Mecmuası*, Issue 62, August 30, 1333 [1917], 3-4.

territory. First, it took control of large farms and pastures in the Menderes and Gediz river basins through long-term leases, which enabled it to block competitors and gain the support of local influencers. Secondly, the company used these lease agreements as evidence in the courts to seize the goods of rival merchants on the grounds of "rationing" and thus judicially suppressed free trade. Third, by having the American government impose a 100% customs duty on licorice honey and exempt licorice root, MacAndrews & Forbes excluded local Ottoman factories and strengthened its own system of export monopoly. Finally, it created a model of industrial monopolization by placing licorice honey production directly under the umbrella of the American tobacco monopoly to prevent competition in the tobacco industry.¹⁴¹ Since licorice was indispensable as a flavoring agent for the tobacco industry in the U.S, MacAndrews and Forbes emerged as one of the most prominent suppliers of licorice imported from the Ottoman Empire. The company's growing influence in U.S also comes from both its influence in the market with the factory they opened in U.S in 1870 and in its incorporation as a subsidiary of the American Tobacco Company in 1902.¹⁴²

To sum up, MacAndrews & Forbes' economic and legal domination of the licorice trade in the Ottoman provinces was not solely the result of a single company's monopolistic strategies, but rather a reflection of deeper structural transformations in the empire's countryside. These strategies profoundly shaped rural labor relations, property regimes, judicial mechanisms, and state authority. The methods employed illustrate the entanglement of institutional coercion and capital accumulation, revealing how legal privilege, fiscal policy, and diplomatic protection

¹⁴¹ BOA. §D, 431/8.

¹⁴² *The Story of Licorice* (Camden, NJ: MacAndrews and Forbes Company, 1952, 11; Henry W. Taft, "The Tobacco Trust Decisions," *Columbia Law Review* 6, no. 6 (1906): 377-78.

could converge to secure economic control. At the heart of this dynamic lies a striking paradox: licorice root, a naturally growing, non-cultivated plant, was not only commodified and integrated into global capitalist circuits, but also became a point of contention between local producers, imperial authorities, and foreign capital.

3.4 Local agency and foreign enterprise: Atnaş for MacAndrews&Forbes

In the second half of the 1870s, licorice production and trade in the province of Aydın was not only determined by tax policies and export regulations, but also by conflicts of interest and fierce competition between local actors. As a company striving for monopoly, MacAndrews and Forbes aimed to expand their regional commercial networks in every way and to create a sphere of influence. At this point, local intermediaries and tax farmers became the most important figures for the company. One of the most prominent and influential figures in this period was Atnaş Hacı Dîmo, who acted both as the local representative of the MacAndrews & Forbes company and as the local tax farmer.¹⁴³

Atnaş's dual role gave him the power to transcend not only commercial, but also administrative and legal regulations, and allowed him to shape local competition in his favor. MacAndrews & Forbes was directly impacted by the introduction of the tithe, as the export value of products such as licorice root. It was initially considered *hüdâyînâbit* and did not require any agricultural production activity, increased. Assessing that this new tax regime was hampering its operations, the company began to bid for the tax bids itself in order to protect its commercial interests.¹⁴⁴ Thus, it aimed to avoid the arbitrary intervention of local tax farmers and to take direct

¹⁴³ BOA. MVL, 600/71.

¹⁴⁴ Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 201.

control over the production process. This made possible the emergence of figures such as Atnaş Hacı Dimo, who was both a tax farmer and a company representative.

One of the first open complaints about Atnaş's oppressive practices was made by Hilmi Efendi, a merchant from Karacasu. Hilmi Efendi reported unauthorized interference by Atnaş on his land behind the Dramazâdelers Inn in the town of Nazilli, damaging his property with construction activity and leaving parts of the inn in ruins. Despite the temporary reconciliation between the parties, Atnaş continued his interventions and forced Hilmi Efendi to apply to the state again.¹⁴⁵ This might show that Atnaş relied not only on the local balance of power, but also on the legal and diplomatic protection provided by his multiple identities (taxfarmer-company representative).

Atnaş's most systematic interventions were directed against the rival company, the Armenian Abacıoğlu Company. In the petition submitted by the company's representative Yovakim Dimitri in 1878, it was emphasized that Atnaş directly sabotaged the production processes of the licorice honey factories, that these sabotages paralyzed the company's commercial activities, and that all these actions were illegal. Dimitri's petition is accompanied by three separate memorials and a *lâyiha* (report), documenting Atnaş's direct interventions in the factories through the testimonies of local witnesses. Dimitri demanded a definitive end to such interventions to maintain the factories' operations and protect their commercial rights.¹⁴⁶

At first, Abacıoğlu's factory was a serious blow to MacAndrews and Forbes. In 1875, the company opened two factories in Söke and Aydın and started to pay higher wages to the peasants who dug and gathered licorice root. Therefore, many

¹⁴⁵ BOA. HR.MKT, 782/82.

¹⁴⁶ BOA. SHD, 2889/49.

peasants started to bring licorice to Abacıoğlu's warehouse.¹⁴⁷ At this point, MacAndrews and Forbes, facing a shortage of raw materials, first offered Abacıoğlu a partnership¹⁴⁸, but when Abacıoğlu refused, their pressure through their representative Atnaş began to directly target not only the companies but also the peasants in the region. In a petition dated October 29, 1876, a large number of farmers and peasants, including neighborhood imams, muhtars, and rençbers, stated that Atnaş arbitrarily determined the centers for collecting tithe, forcing peasants to travel to distant factories, where they were forced to sell their goods at low prices. They also emphasized that peasants who wanted to sell their products at a higher price to another center were subjected to various pressures and threats, and as a result, the livelihoods of "the poor people who lived only by collecting licorice " suffered great damage.¹⁴⁹

Similar pressures targeted the people of the village of Umurlu (Aydın). In two petitions dated July 1876, around 100 villagers reported that Atnaş had tied them to the Forbes company through individual contracts, so that they could no longer supply roots to the Abacıoğlu factory, where they had previously worked willingly. The contracts were in some cases coerced and constrained their livelihoods; the local

¹⁴⁷ Gürsoy, *Bizim İzmirimiz*, 74.

¹⁴⁸ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 186.

¹⁴⁹ ¹⁴⁹ "...Atnaş Hâcı Dimo zâten Forbes Kumpanyası'nın adamlarından bulunduğu hâlde kumpanyayı mezkûrun Aydın ve civârındaki fabrikalarını ve ta'yîn etdikleri mahalleri âşâr merkezi ittihâz ederek mâlımızı cebren oraya celb etdirüb insâf ve merhametinin müsâade etdiği derecede matlûbu mikdârı âşârını ahz ve istifâ etdikden sonra mâlımızın müşterisi olan diğer mahal ve merkeze li-eclî'l-fürûht götüreceğimizi anladığı sûrette gûnâgûn muâmele-i gayr-i lâyık ve ta'rîf olunmaz türlü türlü rencide ve ezâ ile bayağı cebrî meyanlarımızı başka merkezlerin fiyatından dûn fiyatla Forbes Kumpanyası'na vermekliğe veyâhûd kendisine satmaklığa mecbûr eylemekdedir. Şu hâl birtakım aceze ve amele gürûhundan olub evlâd ve iyâliyle idâre ve taayyüs bu cihetle münhasır bulunan bu biçâre fukarâ kullarının ne derece gadrini müstelzim olacağı suhûletle anlaşılabileceğinden ve merkûmün Antaş'ın münâsib mahalleri mevki' ittihâz etmeyüb de kumpanya-yı mezkûrun mesâfeli olan fabrikalarını ve ta'yîn etdikleri uzak mahalleri mevki' tutması bâlâda arz ve ifâde kılınan cebr ve rencideyi icâb ettirmekte olduğundan muâmele-i meşrûha kânûn ve adâletin hilâfında olub nezd-i âlî-i hidiv-i efhamilerin asla tecvîz buyurulmayacağından kullarının bu cebr ve rencide-i mütemâdiyeden kurtarılması esbâbının istihsâli ve bu bâbda bir çâre serîanın ittihâz ve icrâsıyla gadrden vikâye buyurulmaklığımız istirhâmına cesâret eder." BOA. ŞD, 2889/49 (Document 3).

factory was struggling to find raw materials and was in danger of closure.¹⁵⁰ These complaints illustrate how Atnaş breaks the supply chain of the local factory by limiting villagers' choices.

However, MacAndrews and Forbes were trying to strengthen their monopoly by using means other than local pressure from Atnaş. In Dimitri's supplementary petition to the Şurâ-yı Devlet (Council of State) dated May 31, 1878, he explains that Atnaş manipulated not only production but also the market. It was stated that Atnaş used multiple strategies. First, he prevented other factories from obtaining licorice root by leasing licorice fields en masse. Then, forced its competitors into bankruptcy by buying the root at exorbitant prices and putting them out of production. Lastly, exported these roots to U.S unprocessed.¹⁵¹ Dimitri stated that this situation not only harmed the domestic industry but also the Ottoman customs revenues; if these roots had been processed in Ottoman territory, the state would have earned an additional 60,000 liras a year. Finally, in a letter dated June 25, 1878, the Council of State requested that the Ministry of Commerce resend the second copies of the previous documents and the petitions received from the provinces.¹⁵² This request reveals that the issue has now turned into a serious administrative matter not only in the provinces but also at the central level and the state's intention to intervene in the matter.

On the other hand, Atnaş's repressive practices at the local level were part of a broader monopolization strategy that coincided with international trade decisions of the time. MacAndrews and Forbes began to move to restrict the Armenian company's exports to both U.S and Europe. In 1879, the Ottoman government abolished the tax

¹⁵⁰ BOA. ŞD, 2889/49 (Documents 4 and 5).

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² BOA. ŞD, 2889/49 (official opinion); BOA. ŞD, 2889/49, (second petition).

on licorice exports, allowing MacAndrews & Forbes to further expand its operations in the region. This step was followed in 1881 when the U.S government raised the customs duty on processed licorice honey, but exempted raw licorice root.¹⁵³ This particularly benefited the British company as Forbes already had a licorice factory in Newark, New Jersey, established in 1870.¹⁵⁴ Thus, Forbes not only excluded the licorice factories in the Ottoman territories from competition, but also began to export pressed licorice root directly from the producers through the port of İzmir. In the face of these developments, local factory owners appealed to the government, stating that they were unable to produce due to the wholesale sale of the root and that they should be supported to protect the local industry. However, when the Ministry of Commerce forwarded the requests to the Porte, the response was that the benefits of free trade were prioritized and that it was not deemed appropriate to prevent the sale of licorice root.¹⁵⁵

MacAndrews & Forbes restructured its marketing network to limit Abacıoğlu's exports in Europe, expanding its customer portfolio by speeding up deliveries and reducing prices. The company's £30,000 investment in machinery increased production capacity; these steps soon took effect and Abacıoğlu's export volume decreased significantly.¹⁵⁶ Thus, Forbes succeeded in eliminating its rival by controlling both the supply chain and international markets. MacAndrews and Forbes systematically liquidated Abacıoğlu's business presence by controlling not only the local supply of raw materials but also international markets. This process clearly demonstrates how monopolization was reinforced through both state policies and market strategies.

¹⁵³ BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

¹⁵⁴ *The Story of Licorice*, 12.

¹⁵⁵ Uygun, “Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü,” 349.

¹⁵⁶ Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye’ye Girişi*, 187-88.

In the face of MacAndrews & Forbes' dominant position in the region, the Abacıoğlu company became defensive not only on a commercial but also on an institutional level, seeking direct protection from the Ottoman central government. In 1878 and 1879, petitions were submitted to the central administration, asking for the operation of the factories in Umurlu to be secured and for the process to be re-evaluated due to lost documents. These petitions emphasized that the company had a public function, not just a private one, and sought to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the state.¹⁵⁷

Abacıoğlu's move against Forbes in the foreign market was to establish a factory for creating a foothold in the American market. However, by the time the decision was made, it was too late; MacAndrews & Forbes had established complete dominance in the market. As orders gradually dwindled, Abacıoğlu was soon forced to cease operations. In the meantime, the Ottoman government's abolition of the export tax on licorice honey in 1879 accelerated Forbes' expansion policy, and the company opened a second factory in Aydın, attracting actors from Abacıoğlu's supply chain.¹⁵⁸

This monopolization effort shows that MacAndrews & Forbes was not only a licorice trading company, but also a decisive economic and political actor both in the Ottoman provinces and in global markets. Through local representatives such as Atnaş, the company implemented coercive and domineering strategies in the provinces, while at the state level sought to shape the tax regime and the conditions of competition in its favor. The economic and institutional decline of local entrepreneurs like the Abacıoğlu Company is a direct result of this multifaceted pressure. This multi-layered domination of the licorice market by the

¹⁵⁷ BOA. SHD, 2891/5; BOA. SHD, 2894/17.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 188.

MacAndrews&Forbes transformed him into not only a producer and exporter, but also a locus of power that could influence administrative decisions.

3.5 Between diplomacy and force

As presented in the previous section, Forbes's representative Atnaş Hacı Dimo, in his capacity as the tax farmer of the licorice root tithe, both used his power to collect taxes and weakened local companies by controlling the supply chain through forced contracts with the peasants. These interventions had repeatedly complained about by the peasants and local factory owners and led to a quest for justice before the state.¹⁵⁹ By 1879, however, Forbes' economic influence was no longer limited to the local level; it reached a level shaped by direct coercive interventions against the central government and simultaneous diplomatic pressure.

In 1878, there was a serious dispute between Iraklis Varpatis, a Greek subject, and MacAndrews & Forbes over the ownership of licorice roots collected from some lands around Söke. Varpatis purchased licorice roots on behalf of the company he represented, offering higher prices to the villagers; Forbes, on the other hand, claimed ownership, arguing that these roots belonged to the lands they leased. According to Frangakis-Syrett, Varpatis was not only an important commercial competitor, but its European status made it a more difficult actor to intervene in the Ottoman provinces. At the local level, both companies had contact with the Ottoman bureaucracy to gain equal influence and even tried to secure support through bribery.¹⁶⁰ However, when such legal and bureaucratic means proved fruitless, the MacAndrews and Forbes company resorted to direct coercive intervention.

¹⁵⁹ BOA. SHD, 2889/49; BOA. HR.MKT, 782/82.

¹⁶⁰ Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 202.

As a matter of fact, the document dated September 12, 1879 records that MacAndrews and Forbes Company men forcibly confiscated approximately 50,000 kilos of licorice root collected by Varpati for export to Europe and threatened the local constable with a gun and drove him away from the area.¹⁶¹ This intervention was not only an obstruction of private trade, but also a direct violation of Ottoman state authority in the provinces. In parallel to these coercive interventions, Forbes was negotiating with the state directly on taxation during the same period. A document dated December 20, 1879, shows that the company, through the British Embassy, demanded that the licorice crop should only be taxed as tithe and that no customs duty should be imposed on exports. The Council of State, on the other hand, opposed this request; it rejected this concession request on the grounds that the taxation regimes of excise and customs duty were separate and that granting customs exemption only to Forbes would be contrary to the principle of justice and state revenues.¹⁶² While the document shows that the Ottoman central administration defended the principle of equality in tax policies, it also demonstrates that a powerful foreign company could directly request tax exemption from the Ottoman state through an embassy.

A similar content is explicitly stated in another document dated August 19, 1879; a translation of an application made by the British Consulate. In this application, it was requested that the local administrations should not interfere in the contracts Forbes and his partners made with the peasants and that the company should be exempted from customs duties in exchange for the payment of the tithe.¹⁶³ While the outright rejection of these requests demonstrates the Ottoman State's effort

¹⁶¹ BOA. HR. HMŞ.İŞO, 163/38

¹⁶² BOA. SHD, 2426/10

¹⁶³ BOA. ŞD, 2426/10 (Additional consular letter).

to maintain a certain degree of economic sovereignty, it also reveals the company's strategy of avoiding financial obligations through diplomatic pressure.

Finally, in a memorandum dated April 17, 1880, Forbes' contracts with villagers, leasing of village pastures, and strategies to exclude rival companies are evaluated in detail. In this document, Forbes, to the extent that it defended the principle of free trade, pursued a monopolization strategy that limited the scope of activities of other actors. While the Council of State considered Forbes' contracts with the villagers legally valid, it stated that public pastures could not be leased in this way and that the state was obliged to protect both the interests of the public and tax revenues.¹⁶⁴

Taken together, these documents show that Forbes used two different tools simultaneously: Direct coercive interventions with its armed men in the provinces, and efforts to shape state policies at the center through diplomatic networks and consular channels. This dual strategy shows how large capital groups operating in the Ottoman provinces complemented the extra-legal use of coercion with international law and diplomacy mechanisms to gain a competitive advantage.

As MacAndrews & Forbes saw the success of the multi-layered strategies, the company systematically continued to employ these methods and deepened its monopolization in the region. The company consolidated its economic control over the peasants and collectors at the local level by tax farmers such as Atnaş Hacı Dimo; it also used consular channels to manipulate legal processes in its favor. In cases where its interests were threatened, the company did not hesitate to pressure even the state authority through direct coercive interventions. The combined use of these

¹⁶⁴ BOA. ŞD, 2426/10 (Mazbata).

instruments enabled Forbes to become not only an economic actor but also a locus of power that exerted influence in the fields of law, diplomacy and administration.



CHAPTER 4

LICORICE, LAND, AND LAW: A CONFLICT OF IMPERIAL INTERESTS IN UMURLU, 1886-1887

In the late 1880s, the village of Umurlu in Aydın province became the scene of new tension in the Ottoman Western Anatolia, not only because of the fertile plains of the Gediz and the rich vegetation along the riverbanks but also because of the fierce competition between two European licorice companies. Many foreign entrepreneurs were seeking to capitalize on the profitability of the licorice trade, and it was undoubtedly the German Simon Company, founded with a capital of 30,000 liras, that gave the British-owned MacAndrews & Forbes the most trouble.¹⁶⁵

The tension between the İzmir-based German-owned Simon Company and the British MacAndrews & Forbes company started as a simple land dispute. However, this dispute was not only a commercial lease dispute but also a clear manifestation of an multilayered rivalry. MacAndrews & Forbes wanted to collaborate with the long-standing Ottoman merchants Abacoglou (possibly Abacıoğlu) and Seferiadi (possibly Yorgaki Sarandidi), but this offer was not accepted. A few years later, these local actors partnered with the German-owned Simon Company, calling the British company's lease rights into question. This rivalry was taken to a new level when the German company collected the licorice from the lands McAndrews & Forbes claimed to have leased directly to Abacıoğlu's (Abacoglou) factory.¹⁶⁶ Another situation that ignited the competition was that the Simon Company started to pay a higher price for fresh licorice root, which the

¹⁶⁵ Uygun, "Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü," 351.

¹⁶⁶ PRO, FO 195/1547, Consul Dennis to White, December 17, 1886, cited in Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 202.

Forbes Company was buying for 22.5 *kuruş* per kilo. As a result, the price of licorice suddenly went up to 45 *kuruş* a kilo. The price of dried licorice exceeded 300 *kuruş*.¹⁶⁷ This led MacAndrews and Forbes to confront the Simon Company, which they perceived as a threat to their monopoly in the sense of legally, politically, and locally.

In this chapter, I will analyze this competition, which intensified between late 1886 and 1887, in detail through Ottoman archival documents, company representatives' complaints, and consular reports. In this analysis, I aim to show that the issue was not only an inter-company dispute but was also directly linked to external pressures on the local administration, provincial legal practices, and the limits of state sovereignty. The competition also provides concrete insights into how the protective mechanisms of the capitulatory system functioned on the ground. The details provided by the archival documents show how this dispute became a crisis expanding from the inside out. In other words, this case reveals the economic rivalry between the two companies and the intertwined positions of consulates, local administrators, the central bureaucracy, and the Ottoman judicial system.

4.1 Property, power, and protest: The first crises over Umurlu fields

The German Embassy delivered the first official complaint to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 14, 1886. In the document, Simon and his partners wanted to engage in licorice trade in the ten thousand acres of land they had leased for nine years in Umurlu. However, the British MacAndrews and Forbes Company prevented their activities by threatening the workers and confiscating the licorice roots by force. It is also emphasized that Simon's complaints to the local authorities were tried to be

¹⁶⁷ BOA. ŞD. 431/8.

prevented by various means. After the investigation commission established by the governor and the petitions from the locals found the German company to be right.¹⁶⁸

MacAndrews & Forbes refused to allow a commission of Ottoman administrative officials to assess the validity of the lease agreements for the disputed fields in Umurlu. The company even declared the commission as unofficial, since it attempted to affect court process. According to the company, the Simon Company sought to influence the governor of Aydın with bribes to sway the process in its favor.¹⁶⁹ These accusations were reflected in the embassy correspondence and diplomatic protests of the period. In addition to that, the decisions of the commission established by the governor's office prevailed over the court decisions increased British Embassy's criticism of both the impartiality of the Ottoman administration and the rule of law.

Shortly after this development, in the first note sent to the Porte on December 23, 1886, the British Embassy stated that they welcomed the efforts to resolve the dispute between the two foreign companies through legal means.¹⁷⁰ However, this peaceful tone was replaced by a clear warning in the second note dated December 27. This time, it was stated that the governor of Aydın was intervening in the process through a "legally invalid local commission" and wanted to enforce the court decision against the British company. The Embassy found this to violate Ottoman law and demanded immediate intervention by the central administration.¹⁷¹

The January 13, 1887 correspondence from the Internal Affairs shows that the dispute's diplomatic and commercial dimensions were deepening. The German

¹⁶⁸ BOA. HR. TO., 143/50.

¹⁶⁹ PRO, FO 195/1547, Consul Dennis, Izmir, 17 December 1886 to White, Istanbul in Frangakis-Syrett, 202.

¹⁷⁰ BOA. HR. 331/17 (Note Verbale), 14 December 1886.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., (Note Verbale, No.147).

Embassy claimed that armed men prevented licorice shipments leased by the Simon Company in Umurlu and that MacAndrews and Forbes organized this. On the one hand, the British Embassy requested that trade be suspended to prevent the problem from escalating. A local commission was established to seek a solution to the dispute, but MacAndrews and Forbes tried to dissolve the commission and did not submit the lease agreements. On the other hand, Simon submitted valid lease agreements and requested permission to continue trading. In order to reach a fair resolution of the case, the products of the parties were stored in a neutral location, and the initial investigation concluded that Simon's contracts were valid and that he could continue his trade.¹⁷² In addition, although the details of the Simon Company's valid contracts are not clear, the company leased fields to produce licorice and convinced the local government. Thus, at the first stage of the process, a decision was taken in favor of the German side.

However, following this decision, the British Embassy sent a letter to the Sublime Porte on January 24, stating that the claims in favor of the Forbes company were not taken into consideration. The Embassy claimed that the local commission, established earlier by the governor of Aydın, had unlawfully transferred the use rights of the disputed licorice fields from MacAndrews & Forbes to the Simon Company, and demanded that the disputed lease arrangements be reinstated in favor of the British company. The document also noted that the dispute involved approximately 160 fields, of which only seven were left to Forbes. The Embassy emphasized that while maintaining public order is possible through criminal and judicial means, it recalled that the judicial authorities must take fundamental and permanent administrative decisions concerning property.¹⁷³

¹⁷² BOA. DH. MKT, 1391/75.

¹⁷³ BOA. HR.H, 331/17 (Note Verbale, No.14).

On February 1, the German Embassy sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs documenting that the process had once again begun to turn against the German company. According to the Embassy, the judicial and administrative authorities in Aydın handed over most of the fields to MacAndrews and Forbes without consulting Simon and without waiting for the legal process. Furthermore, the gendarmerie allegedly pressured the villagers in Umurlu to enter into lease agreements with MacAndrews and Forbes, thus systematically usurping the rights of the German company. The Embassy objected to these decisions and requested that no decisions be taken on the fields with valid Simon's contracts until the court process was completed and that a warning be sent to the local authorities.¹⁷⁴

On February 6, the German Embassy sent a second protest of similar content, this time directly criticizing the unilateral decisions of the Aydın Bidayet Court. Despite the previously valid lease agreements, the court transferred the fields to Forbes without hearing Simon's side. It also ignored the decisions of the Aydın Governor's Office and the commission that had previously upheld Simon's lease rights. The Embassy reported finding these developments “arbitrary” and “unlawful.”¹⁷⁵

On the same day, the letter sent by the Interior Affairs to the Grand Vizier described the dispute as a product of economic rivalry and mutual conflict of interest. According to the letter, both sides tried to resolve the issue through the central government and diplomatic pressures rather than taking the matter to the courts. It is stated that the allegations of the Aydın mutasarrıf's bias were examined, but no concrete evidence was found, thus emphasizing that the courts should be the

¹⁷⁴ BOA. HR. TO., 143/57.

¹⁷⁵ BOA. HR. TO., 143/58.

resolution authority.¹⁷⁶ This suggests that the Ottoman central government was well aware of the conflicting interests surrounding the dispute and sought to manage them in light of delicate diplomatic balances, although, one might argue, the initial administrative decisions in favor of the German company had already disrupted that balance and provoked British diplomatic concerns.

Following all these developments, on February 17, the British Embassy sent a letter to the Bâb-ı Âli, stating that they were pleased with the decision to refer the company to the court. However, they protested that an unofficial administrative commission in Aydın, which, although established by the provincial governor, lacked judicial authority, was still active and was preventing Forbes from collecting licorice root despite the lease agreements. The commission was accused of ignoring the court decisions and causing financial losses to the company. In this context, the Embassy urged that the governor's office be prevented from overstepping its authority and that only the judicial authorities should be involved.¹⁷⁷

Towards the end of this period, a letter from the German Embassy dated March 12, 1887, reported that Forbes had tried to seize some plantations with forged documents and that a criminal case had been initiated for the presentation of these documents in court. Even more remarkable is that the president of the Aydın Hukuk Mahkemesi (Civil Court of Aydın) had the interpreter of the German consulate, who attended the hearing as an observer, removed from the courtroom by the gendarmerie. Although consular officials typically held the right to observe judicial proceedings under the capitulations, the reason for this removal was not specified in

¹⁷⁶ BOA. DH. MKT, 1397/90.

¹⁷⁷ BOA. HR.H, 331/17 (Note Verbale, No.25), December 14, 1886.

the available records. Germany considered the incident as “insulting a diplomatic representative,” and as a result, the president of the court was dismissed.¹⁷⁸

This first phase of the conflict shows that the licorice business in Umurlu was not merely about agricultural production but rather about controlling the production process and securing dominance over the licorice trade. What began as a dispute over local economic activity quickly escalated into a complex diplomatic, judicial, and administrative crisis for the region. The decisions taken by the local commission against the external pressures of the central authority and the intense diplomatic pressure exerted by embassies over property rights reveal how flexible or contested the concepts of property and privilege were in the Ottoman provinces.¹⁷⁹ This flexibility actually became a field of capitalist competition, and through competition, the foreign companies were trying to open new legal avenues against the Ottoman political power. Moreover, the issue of the "submission of a lease agreement," which is prominent in these documents, makes the relationship between the legal validity of written documents and the central judicial authorities visible. On the other hand, the British side's avoidance of the submission of the lease agreement is continuous, according to the documents. In fact, according to an allegation made by the German Embassy on March 12, they attempted to acquire some fields with forged leases, but it is unclear why they refused in accordance with Ottoman archival documents.¹⁸⁰

On March 15, the British Embassy again complained to the Sublime Porte that the dispute over the licorice fields in Aydın, Umurlu lands was continuing and that court decisions in their favor were not being implemented. At this point, they state that they reserve the right to demand compensation in compliance with the

¹⁷⁸ BOA. HR. TO., 143/64.

¹⁷⁹ Tosun Arıcanlı, “19. Yüzyılda Anadolu’da Mülkiyet, Toprak ve Emek,” in *Osmanlı’da Toprak Mülkiyeti ve Ticari Tarım*, 132.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Sublime Porte. Although the Embassy expresses that they are pleased that the courts have ruled in their favor, they also state that the attitude of the administrative structures preventing or ignoring the enforcement of the provisions in question will lead to responsibility before international law. It explicitly states that the Ottoman Ministry of Justice should issue orders to comply with the court decisions, otherwise the British Government would have the right to demand compensation on behalf of its citizens who suffered damages. And the embassy felt the need to repeat this warning, stating that although they had written about this issue before, no results had been obtained.¹⁸¹

At the close of this period, in a letter dated March 24, 1887, the German Embassy argued that the property and rent disputes in Umurlu were now being heard in the criminal court and that the courts were not acting impartially in this process. In particular, the gendarmerie and members of the court were alleged to have attended banquets organized by the British side, and witnesses were pressured.¹⁸² On this ground, the German side requested the transfer of the case to İzmir and an end to what they saw as the interference of local authorities. However, it is important to note that these local authorities were not a single, cohesive body, but rather included various actors at different levels, such as the gendarmerie in Umurlu, the administrative officials in Aydın, and the judicial bodies in İzmir, who sometimes acted independently and even contradicted each other during the process.

From December 1886 to March 1887, the licorice production and lease relations in Umurlu went beyond an ordinary commercial rivalry into a multilayered conflict shaped by direct diplomatic interventions. Throughout the process, the Ottoman local administration, especially the administrative authorities of Aydın,

¹⁸¹ BOA. HR.H, 331/17 (Note Verbale, No.41), December 14, 1886.

¹⁸² BOA. HR.TO, 143/66.

sometimes made biased decisions that were decisive for the nature of the conflict. In this context, the Ottoman administration attempted to manage a local commercial issue and the power relations between foreign capital, local authorities, and diplomatic representations in Western Anatolia. Indeed, diplomatic power relations, on the one hand, sought to be used for the market, and on the other hand, they manifested themselves in a way that sought the legitimate and reassuring authority of the state.

4.2 The quiet before the storm

The dispute between the British and German companies over the ownership and exploitation rights over the licorice fields in Umurlu subsided for a while after being transferred to the court in İzmir in the spring of 1887. On the other hand, the British company McAndrews & Forbes was considering extending the legal battle not only against its German rival Simon Company, but also against the local landowners who were Ottoman subjects. This was because these landowners had signed valid lease agreements with the company while at the same time condoning the sale of licorice roots from the same lands to the Simon Company. McAndrews & Forbes initially considered suing the German company in the German Consular Court. However, they realized that such a ruling would not be binding on the local landowners, who were Ottoman citizens. Therefore, the British company chose to redirect its legal strategy and focus directly on these landowners instead.¹⁸³ This shows that the dispute was about competition between companies and the limits and application of Ottoman property law can be extended to the Ottoman subjects, if it was possible.

¹⁸³ PRO, FO 195/1620, Consul Dennis, Izmir, 24 March 1888 to White, Istanbul; see also FO 195/1620, MacAndrews & Forbes, Izmir, 10 July 1888 to Consul Barnham in Frangakis Syrett, 202.

The first Ottoman archival record from this period is a letter dated August 16, 1887, from the Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this document, it is clearly stated that the issue should be solved only by the courts, and it is pointed out that the intervention of local administrations caused problems in the past. It is also stated that the Simon Company has re-rented the licorice fields in Umurlu and that precautions should be taken to prevent a new coercive intervention like the one carried out by MacAndrews and Forbes last year.¹⁸⁴

This view is confirmed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs letter dated September 18, 1887. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Justice about the complaints received regarding the Simon Company's licorice exports in order to prevent a repetition of last year's bullying. The Ministry of Justice, on the other hand, stated that the case was still pending before the court and that only written warnings could be issued to the parties.¹⁸⁵

On September 27, 1887, the letter sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the province of Aydın clarified the central government's stance on the process. It is requested to prevent possible tensions that may arise after Simon's release from the fields. However, it is emphasized that, according to the response of the Ministry of Justice, all intervention authority lies with the courts.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, only the security forces are ordered to take preventive measures to maintain public order.

While all these developments were taking place, the British Embassy sent an official letter to the Sublime Porte on September 28, 1887, stating that local administrative authorities were attempting to illegally take back the plantations that the Forbes Company had legitimately acquired through the Ottoman courts. The

¹⁸⁴ BOA. DH. MKT, 1439/102.

¹⁸⁵ BOA. DH. MKT, 1448/34.

¹⁸⁶ BOA. DH. MKT, 1451/55.

Embassy stated that these attempts were incompatible with Ottoman law and amounted to direct interference with judicial decisions. It requested that the implementation of court decisions be guaranteed.¹⁸⁷

This is a “cooling off phase” in which the court process in the Umurlu licorice dispute takes center stage, diplomatic pressure temporarily subsides, and the parties prepare for the new season. However, this lull does not mean that structural problems have been resolved. In particular, the failure of local administrative authorities in Aydın to enforce court rulings in favor of MacAndrews & Forbes undermines the consulates’ confidence in the legal process. While the precise rulings are not always specified, the British Embassy frequently protested the non-enforcement of judicial decisions that had recognized the company’s lease rights.

4.3 Guns Are Out!

With the telegrams sent by the Simon Company on October 9 and October 24, the court proceedings in Smyrna and the measures taken by the Ottoman administrative structure proved inadequate. The October 9 telegram complained to the Umurlu karakol (Police Station) that the MacAndrews & Forbes company had built a gun tower.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, in a telegram sent on October 24, it was reported by the company officials that all the goods in the warehouses of the Simon Company were seized overnight. The Italian Martini Company, which had been actively trading licorice in the region for several months, also suffered. Unfortunately, there were no additional archival documents concerning how the Martini Company was involved in the competition. However, its mention in the context of physical assaults between

¹⁸⁷ BOA. HR.H, 331/17 (Note Verbale, No.121), December 14, 1886.

¹⁸⁸ Uygun, 356.

Simon and Forbes indicates that once the commercial conflict escalated into direct violence, other companies and actors in the region also became visible within this contested space of competition. The Simon Company's telegram also describes the incident as follows:

"Our goods were kept in the warehouse in Gülhisar (Gölhisar, Aydın).

Yesterday evening, our goods were removed by Circassians and transferred to the warehouses of the Forbes company in Aydın. Yesterday morning, Mehmet Abuloğlu, the agent of the Forbes company, took 60 Circassians with him and raided our weighbridges, blocking all the workers. Our guards informed us that they later attacked the Italian warehouses with about 30 bandits."¹⁸⁹

According to Uygun, two guards on duty at the Germans' factory were killed, and eleven guards were wounded during this raid. However, the British archival documents cited by Kurmuş¹⁹⁰ and the Greek source cited by Öndeş¹⁹¹ state that the raid occurred precisely two weeks after the MacAndrews and Forbes company complained in December 1886 about Simon, who was exporting licorice honey to Germany, where MacAndrews and Forbes had failed to establish a good marketing network.¹⁹² This discrepancy in timing suggests that the British company might have acted outside of formal diplomatic channels, or that other local competitors attempted to eliminate Simon through violent means. More broadly, the Ottoman archival documents confirm that such violent disputes were not isolated events: they frequently involved threats against peasants and the forceful confiscation of licorice

¹⁸⁹ BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 495/19, October 24, 1887 (German merchant Simon's petition to the Governorate of İzmir).

¹⁹⁰ Uygun, 354.

¹⁹¹ Osman Öndeş, *Asıl Efendiler Levantenler*, 61.

¹⁹² Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, 189-190.

root.¹⁹³ These patterns reveal that capitalist competition in the region often went beyond market rivalry and included coercive strategies to establish monopolies rather than pursue free trade. This dynamic challenges the conventional association of capitulations with liberal economic principles by showing how legal privileges were often accompanied by physical force and political pressure on local authorities.

Indeed, on October 28, 1887,¹⁹⁴ the Simon Company sent a telegram directly to the Yıldız Palace and a separate telegram addressed to the Sultan, complaining about the actual attacks it faced in the licorice fields in and around Umurlu and the lands of the Gazi Çandarlı Halil Hayreddin Pasha Foundation. The telegram stated that the British firm MacAndrews & Forbes had its armed men in the style of overlords and that these armed men threatened and assaulted the licorice root-digger workers. They even went so far as to forcibly take away the weapons of the police and gendarmes, who were government officials and tear their clothes.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, it was claimed that the provincial authorities were turning a blind eye to these acts, thus encouraging the aggressors. The Simon Company directly appealed to the Sultan for justice and mercy, arguing that these incidents resulted from the British desire to monopolize the licorice trade and that the situation was against the interests of the state and the people.¹⁹⁶ The fact that this is the only petition written directly to the Sultan is noteworthy in this case because it was sent directly by the Simon Company

¹⁹³ (The report of Galip Bey, a Justice Inspector sent years later, states that 400 people died during such clashes.) BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

¹⁹⁴ BOA. İ. DH., 1055/82829

¹⁹⁵ “...eski derebey tarzında kesb-i taarruz etmiş olan İngilizli Mekandros ve Forbis nâm kimesneler birtakım müsellaḥ ve sâbıkâlu adamlarıyla gasb ve zabt ve âdetâ şekâvet derecesinde her türlü fezâhata cür’et etmekte olduğu hâlde sâye-i satvet-vâye-i hazret-i pâdişâhîde mezkûr müsellaḥ adamları bir dereceye kadar dağıdılmışdı bu kere merhûm Gâzî Çandarlı Halîl Hayreddîn Paşa Evkâfî’nin livâ-yı mezkûr dâhilinde kâin arâzîleriyle Umurlu karyesi ve sâir mahallerde meyan kökü ihrâcî bâ-kontrato-yu resmî taht-ı isticârimızda bulunduḡu hâlde merkûmân çâkerlerinize meyan köklerini meşrûha üzerine ahz ve zabt ve müdâhale ve tervîc-i merâm zımnında polis ve jandarma neferâtını darb ve silâhlarını yedlerinden almak elbîselerini yırtmak gibi harekâta ictisâr etdikleri meydânda...” BOA. İ. DH., 1055/82829, October 28, 1887

¹⁹⁶ Uygun, 353.

officials without the intervention of the German Embassy. This confirms that the Sultan and the Yıldız Palace existed as an alternative and superior to the Ottoman state bureaucracy that applied by such incidents. Following this complaint, the matter was taken seriously at the Yıldız Palace, and the Sadaret was instructed to take the necessary measures, stating that it was unacceptable for British nationals to have armed men.¹⁹⁷

On November 14, 1887, Aydın Province sent an official letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs stating that three foreign companies (British MacAndrews & Forbes, German Simon Company, and the Italian company) were operating around Umurlu. It was clearly stated that the competition had turned into actual conflicts. In this context, it was stated that the companies started to hijack caravans carrying licorice with their armed men and that these conflicts seriously threatened the local public order. Aydın province requested that the operation of the fields be suspended pending a court decision and that an officer be sent from the Ministry of Justice. Meclis-i Vükela, on the other hand, considered the issue primarily as a matter of law and decided that the Ministry of Justice should intervene immediately.¹⁹⁸ In other words, the Ottoman central administration aimed to address its authority within the framework of law, which was also its sphere of power.

Although there is no direct archival evidence of a formal request, the actions of companies such as the Simon Company and MacAndrews & Forbes, particularly their use of armed men to protect licorice fields, suggest that they operated in ways resembling state authority. This behavior echoes the practices of the Reji Company, which, as a state-sanctioned monopoly in tobacco production and trade during the same period, similarly relied on coercive methods to assert control in the provinces.

¹⁹⁷ BOA. İ. DH., 1055/82829

¹⁹⁸ BOA. MV, 26/12

The Reji administration initially requested to have an armed force. However, the Ottoman administration rejected this request of the Reji Company, stating that "if monopolies similar to the Reji are established and they gain the right to use armed forces, they will become a state within the state."¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, this initial opposition proved ineffective in practice because an important pillar of the Reji Company, which was established in 1883, was the armed forces (kolcu kuvvetleri), allegedly used to suppress smugglers. Since these forces operated without formal statutes or regulatory oversight, they often engaged in arbitrary practices as they wished.²⁰⁰ In this context, it is not surprising that Simon and his partners or MacAndrews and Forbes, sought to ensure and expand their monopolies through similar strategies. Unlike the Reji Company, however, their capacity and the scope of their competition remained more localized. Nevertheless, the underlying logic, the use of force in the service of capital, was strikingly similar.

Indeed, as can be seen in the detailed investigation report submitted by the prosecutor's office of the Aydın Bidayet Court in the document dated November 16, 1887, it investigated the accusations of the parties against each other, and, in particular, the allegation of the British Ashbon (Hashbon?) that Simon, with his armed men, forcibly diverted the licorice to his scales (kantarlar). The investigation found that only six armed guards, three Montenegrin and three Albanian, were on duty at Simon's factory and that these were only for protection. On the other hand, there was no evidence that the MacAndrews and Forbes Company employed armed men. The report emphasizes that despite the mutual accusations of the parties, the

¹⁹⁹ Donald Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direniş, 1881-1908*, 55-56.

²⁰⁰ Burak Altunsoy, *Osmanlı'da Tütün Kaçakçılığı: Reji Kolcuları ve Uygulamaları*, 61.

investigations carried out so far have been conducted in a completely legal and impartial manner.²⁰¹

The report of Aydın Governor Mehmed Latif, which is included in the same folder, approaches the issue from a broader perspective and draws attention to the fact that this dispute, which had been going on for two years, could not be resolved without resorting to the courts. Unlike the earlier investigation by the Aydın public prosecutor, which identified only six armed guards at the Simon Company's factory, Governor Latif stated that all three companies employed hundreds of armed men and had effectively seized each other's products. He emphasized that local law enforcement was inadequate and even regular soldiers, if necessary, could not suppress the situation. The governor recommended either increasing diplomatic pressure through the consulates or halting licorice root-digging operations entirely. Otherwise, he warned, a major public order crisis could erupt. In discussions regarding property rights, he concluded that no intervention should be made without a court order.²⁰² While this reflects an attempt at centralization, it simultaneously reveals a lack of effective bureaucratic integration. The reliance on legal instruments to halt all trade was, in fact, an implicit acknowledgment of the central administration's limitations.

As can be seen, the judiciary, as well as the administrative authorities, have difficulties in finding a solution. None of the parties wanted to go to court, fearing that a possible verdict would go against them. In light of these developments, in a brief assessment made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it was warned that in the event of a possible conflict, the Ottoman government might face international pressure for compensation; for this reason, it was stated that an officer should be sent

²⁰¹ BOA. A.} MKT. MHM, 495/19, Novemeber 16, 1887.

²⁰² Ibid.

as soon as possible to speed up the judicial process. At the same time, it was stated that some people in the region tried to prevent the root-digging by claiming that the fields belonged to them and that these claims should also be examined in court.²⁰³

4.4 In lieu of conclusion: Law, capital, and crisis

Beginning in late 1886 and continuing until late 1887, the Umurlu licorice dispute is noteworthy for demonstrating how economic activity in the provinces of Western Anatolia could turn into a field of conflict not only at the local or regional level but also at the international level. The dispute between McAndrews & Forbes and Simon Company reveals how even an overlooked agricultural product such as licorice can become the site of a large-scale and overlapping diplomatic, legal, and administrative struggle.

The matter was ultimately not settled through the Ottoman judicial system but through an arbitration agreement reached between the two rival companies. This extrajudicial process, conducted by the German Consul in İzmir and the British Vice-Consul in Istanbul, represented a direct intervention by foreign diplomatic actors in lieu of local or central Ottoman institutions. The recourse to arbitration highlights not only the inadequacy of the empire's legal capacity but also the erosion of trust in its judicial impartiality. It further demonstrates the limits of bureaucratic centralization, revealing that even issues rooted in provincial land and property disputes could escalate into matters requiring high-level diplomatic mediation.

On December 24, both the German and British Embassy sent letters to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that they had decided to settle their dispute over the lease and cultivation of the fields in Umurlu through an arbitration process. We

²⁰³ Ibid.

learn from the British Ambassador White that on October 18, in response to a note from the Ottoman authorities on the matter, he shared the developments regarding resolving the dispute.²⁰⁴ The British and German embassies decided to refer the process to arbitration. In this context, M. Tarning, Assistant Judge of the British Consular Court in Constantinople, and S. Stannius (Astanius?), the German Consul in Smyrna, were instructed to conduct a joint investigation. Both parties (the companies) prepared and signed a joint arbitration deed.

According to the document sent by the German Embassy²⁰⁵, the agreement consists of the following articles:

1. Both parties shall submit the original lease agreements and relevant documents to the arbitral tribunal.
2. The referees will re-evaluate the 102 disputed fields previously submitted to Forbes.
3. The Simon side will give a written undertaking that its workers, the armed men, will not act against the agreement.
4. The parties shall not insist on criminal proceedings and arrests against each other and shall not seek re-arrest.
5. During the course of the proceedings, no party shall make new claims or apply to the court.
6. The financial damages resulting from the lawsuit will be calculated and compensated to the aggrieved party.
7. All these decisions would enter into force after being approved by one of the Ottoman courts.

²⁰⁴ BOA. HR.H, 331/17 (Note Verbale, No.155), December 14, 1886.

²⁰⁵ BOA. HR.TO., 143/89, December 24, 1887.

Many sources state that after the warehouse raid on the Simon Company in October, the company could not keep up with the demand and went bankrupt within three years or in a short period.²⁰⁶ However, the fate of the German Simon Company cannot be seen with certainty in Ottoman archival documents for the time being.

Ultimately, the Umurlu case stands as a compelling example of how property, law, and public order became increasingly fragile in the face of multinational capital, exposing the limits of administrative capacity not only in the provinces but also at the heart of the imperial bureaucracy. It demonstrates how economic competition between foreign companies in late Ottoman Western Anatolia evolved into a multilayered conflict, specifically; legal, diplomatic, administrative, and political in nature. The clash between the German Simon Company and the British MacAndrews & Forbes also reveals how even a seemingly marginal agricultural commodity like licorice could occupy the center of imperial concern, entangled in webs of foreign capital, local alliances, consular protection, and concessionary arrangements. The parties' persistent refusal to settle the dispute through Ottoman courts, and their reliance instead on diplomatic pressure, underscores the structural weaknesses of the legal and administrative order of the period.

In this sense, the Umurlu case is a commercial dispute between two companies and an example of the limits of Ottoman local administration and judicial mechanisms in the late nineteenth century. The gradual erosion of these institutional boundaries culminated in a localized crisis that occasionally turned violent. Ultimately, the resolution of the conflict through arbitration, not by Ottoman courts but under the supervision of foreign consuls, highlighted the growing influence of international commercial networks over imperial legal sovereignty. The Umurlu case

²⁰⁶ Kurmus, 190; Uygun, 357; Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, "*Kapitalistlerin Rekabetine Batı Anadolu'dan Bir Örnek*," 346.

thus exemplifies how foreign companies, through a strategic repertoire of legal claims, diplomatic pressure, and selective use of local alliances, were able to instrumentalize overlapping imperial institutions, not to bypass Ottoman authority entirely, but to reshape it in ways that served their commercial agendas.



CHAPTER 5

CONSULAR SHADOWS AND LEGAL LOOPHOLES: DISPUTED
SUBJECTHOOD AND COMMERCIAL CONFLICT IN THE LATE OTTOMAN
LICORICE TRADE

This chapter investigates how the ambiguous legal architecture of consular protection and contested subjecthood intersected with the licorice trade in the late Ottoman Empire. It focuses on two legal-diplomatic cases related to the licorice trade in the province of Aydın: one involving Avadikyan, the American consular interpreter in Manisa and the other concerning Arakçin, a merchant claiming French nationality in İzmir. Both cases illustrate how property and tenancy relations, consular patronage, and the nationality regime were transformed into de facto interventions in the late Ottoman Empire. These cases also demonstrate how imperial loopholes were operationalized in commodity conflicts. Through these conflicts, the chapter also examines how MacAndrews & Forbes deployed a multi-pronged strategy involving consular pressure, litigation, and administrative influence to reinforce its commercial monopoly in the region.

Rather than treating licorice merely as background context, the chapter highlights how legal ambiguity, rooted in licorice's status as a naturally growing, non-proprietary resource (*hüdâyînâbit*, *res nullius*), created a contested legal space involving multiple actors, from local peasants and merchants to imperial consuls and foreign companies. In this context, the chapter argues that the licorice trade laid bare the fragility of Ottoman legal authority in Ottoman Western Anatolia and revealed how overlapping claims of sovereignty were contested and negotiated.

5.1 Consular protection as a strategy: The Avadikyan affair in Manisa

The first case revolves around a licorice-related dispute involving Avadis Avadikyan, the honorary interpreter of the American Consulate in İzmir. In late 1899, Avadikyan and his associates were accused of extracting large quantities of licorice root from state-owned fields in Manisa that had already been legally leased to four other merchants: Hacı Davud and Yorgaki Sarandidi, both Ottoman subjects; Alexander Forbes, a British subject; and Hayim Nesim Polako, an Austrian subject.²⁰⁷ The plaintiffs claimed that Avadikyan's actions violated their exclusive rental rights and constituted an unlawful interference in a preexisting commercial contract. In response, they brought the matter to court, prompting the local authorities to seize the disputed licorice as part of the legal investigation.

The first official reports concerning the incident were sent by the Aydın Governorate to the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs in late 1899. According to a telegram dated December 31, Avadikyan had extracted approximately 60,000 kilos of licorice root from fields in Manisa that were under valid lease contracts held by Hacı Davud and his partners.²⁰⁸ In response, the plaintiffs filed a lawsuit in the Manisa court, arguing that Avadikyan had violated their exclusive rights over the fields. As part of the legal proceedings, the court ordered the seizure of the harvested licorice, which had been stored in the house of an Ottoman citizen in the village of Hamidiye. It also issued official notices to all parties involved.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ "... 'Avâdkîyân Efendi bir tüccar imiş hem de teb'aayi 'osmaniyyeden imiş fakat bir müddet evvel İzmir Amerika konsolatosuna tercümân olmuşdur. 'Avadkîyân efendinin bu suretle başka tarafla kontorâtlaşmış olan birtakım kimselerle tanzîm ettiği henüz müddet-i gelmemiş kontoratolara istinâdân işe başlamasından dolayı tehdit eden d'avâ üzerine ecnebilîğinden!..." "Serbest'i Ticâret Yâhûd Alaşehir Bîyan Kökü Mes'elesi," *İzmir Gazetesi*, March 5, 1900.

²⁰⁸ According to the kıyye-i cedîde, 1 kg=1 kıyye, i.e. 60 thousand kilos= there is a 60-ton stock of licorice root); Cengiz Kallek, "Okka," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 338-39.

²⁰⁹ BOA. BEO, 1433/107413, (telegram dated December 31, 1899).

However, the American Consulate challenged the court's actions, rejected the official notifications, and argued that the seizure of the licorice violated international norms of consular protection. Although the Consul had no authority to override a court decision, he was informed that he could submit his concerns regarding procedural violations. In response, the Foreign Ministry emphasized that no legal irregularity had occurred, noting that there was no American consulate in Manisa at the time and that the licorice had been extracted from state-owned (*mîrî*) lands, which were clearly under Ottoman jurisdiction.²¹⁰ Although the consulate's argument implicitly relied on the distinction between public (*mîrî*) and private (*mülk*) land, by the late nineteenth century this distinction had become increasingly blurred both in legal interpretation and administrative practice.²¹¹ The very fact that a dispute emerged despite the lands being classified as *mîrî* demonstrates how such categories no longer provided legal certainty and were open to contestation in cases involving formal leases and foreign protection.

Meanwhile, tensions escalated unexpectedly. In a subsequent telegram from Manisa, it was reported that two consular guards (*kavâs*) had broken the seal of the house that had been officially sealed by court order and forcibly removed the guard of the local enforcement authority (*İcra Dairesi*) assigned to watch over the confiscated licorice. The guards were arrested on the grounds that they were armed and later transferred to İzmir. At this point, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that the matter was under judicial rule and should be handled by the Ministry of Justice. Interestingly, the British and Austrian consulates also submitted complaints against Avadikyan's actions, likely in defense of their own subjects, Forbes and Polako, whose lease rights had been infringed. Finally, the Ministry

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Aytekin, *Üretim, Düzenleme, İsyân*, 180-181.

criticized the behavior of the American consul and noted that the situation could be clarified if the U.S. ambassador himself came to İzmir.²¹² This episode signaled a deepening diplomatic crisis, revealing the multilayered and contested nature of the case.

In a January 10, 1900, telegram from the Aydın Province to the Sublime Porte and the Foreign Office via the Internal Affairs, states that they were trying to find a solution to Avadikyan's licorice root case in accordance with the instructions received from the Foreign Office on December 25. The Foreign Office's demands were not to be found in the archives; however, it is underlined that negotiations were held with the deputy prosecutor (istinaf müddeîumumisi). As a result of these meetings, the seizure imposed by the court would be lifted and that the Consulate would be informed of the process. Therefore, the proceedings would be carried out correctly. For this purpose, the American Consul was invited to the office of the governor of Aydın for negotiations. It was also reported that he first sent news that he would come, but then he refrained from this meeting by stating that he would not come to the government mansion and discuss the licorice root issue. Upon the Consul's refusal to meet, the Governor's office could not take any administrative action, and it was reported that the matter was already a court case and, therefore, the judicial authorities should carry out the process.²¹³

When the administration of the Aydın province failed to resolve the case, tensions between the parties escalated. While the report states that the Manisa court continued to hear the case due to the American Consul's refusal to settle the case; a separate telegram from the Kula District (Manisa) Governor's Office informs that Avadikyan interfered in the licorice field of the British merchant Forbes and that his

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ BOA. BEO, 1433/107413, (Telegram dated January 10, 1900).

guards (deştân) attacked Forbes' workers, injured the headman of the village of Elçi, and seized the wild licorice roots by force.²¹⁴

A corporal and a sufficient number of gendarmes were dispatched to the area in response to these attacks. Moreover, a similar situation was reported to have occurred on the land of an Austrian merchant in the Alaşehir district. According to the document, Avadikyan, although he had recently received the title of "honorary interpreter" (fahri tercüman), abused this diplomatic privilege and sought to monopolize the licorice fields cultivated by the British and Austrian merchants and the Ottoman citizen Hacı Davud thanks to the US patronage.²¹⁵ The Aydın Province questions the seriousness of the situation and Avadikyan's possible intentions, implying that his aim was either to take over the trade in the region by force or to buy off the workers and plunge the region into chaos. Furthermore, it was deemed worthy of investigation whether Avadikyan was pursuing this goal or implementing some other diplomatic plan, and it was suggested that the chief interpreter of the US Embassy be sent to the region to conduct an on-site investigation.²¹⁶

Immediately after the escalation of events, a representative from the American Consulate came to meet with the Governor of Aydın. The Consul came to the Governor's office on orders from his embassy and asked what action was being taken regarding Avadikyan's licorice issue. The Governor replied that the resolution of the matter depended on a negotiation with the Consulate. The Governor also noted that they would attempt to lift the provisional seizure, though it was anticipated that

²¹⁴ Ibid., (Governor's report dated January 11).

²¹⁵ İbrahim Serbestoğlu, "Tabiiyet in the Ottoman Empire," 12-14. (The employment of interpreters by consulates was widely abused because these interpreters, patronized by embassies, could benefit from tax exemptions and capitulations. Normally, consulates could employ interpreters with a berat (permit) from the Ottoman administration. However, the embassies left the name part of the permits blank and sold them at prices ranging from 2,500-4,000 kuruş).

²¹⁶ BOA. BEO, 1433/107413

Hacı Davud and Forbes would reapply for the same measure shortly thereafter. For this reason, it was stated that to carry out the transactions per the law, the Consulate should first be informed, and then the seizure procedure should be carried out.²¹⁷ At this point, it is revealed that Hacı Davud and the British company MacAndrews and Forbes were partners.

On the other hand, if the seizure was lifted, Avadikyan could immediately dispose of the goods, in this case, the governorate insisted that the licorice roots should not be transferred to another location. In such a case, a legal risk might arise, such as demanding the value of the goods from the government. After explaining this situation to the Consul, it was recorded that he was not authorized to do so and that he would report the matter to his embassy and leave the meeting.²¹⁸

In the last telegram of the Aydın Governorate on the subject, the final stage of the negotiations between the Aydın Governorate and the American Consulate is reported. The American Consul came to the Governor's office, claiming that he had only recently become aware of the contents of the embassy letter he had received the previous day. During the meeting, he stated that he would agree to lift the seizure until the case in court was concluded but that the licorice root should not be taken elsewhere in the meantime. However, he also stated that to protect the property, he should send his guards to the village of Hamidiye and personally take the licorice root under custody. On the other hand, the governorate stated that this was unnecessary, that the goods would not be moved anyway, and that the court would carry out this process. Still, the Consul rejected this suggestion, saying that he did not trust this measure and that compensation could be demanded if the goods were removed. The Governor's office then told the Consul that it was customary for this

²¹⁷ Ibid., (telegram dated January 12).

²¹⁸ Ibid.

trade issue to be heard in the local court and that the consulates of other states also followed this path. However, the Consul remained silent on these explanations and left for Istanbul.²¹⁹

What happened during Avadikyan's licorice purchase process shows that he was not just an ordinary commercial actor; with his title of "honorary interpreter" and US consular support,²²⁰ he attempted to create a shield of diplomatic immunity that challenged the local judicial and administrative structure. The course of events illustrates the difficulties faced by provincial courts and Ottoman bureaucrats in maintaining legal order in the face of mounting foreign diplomatic pressure. The intervention by Avadikyan's representatives such as breaking the official seal and expelling the court-appointed guard, constituted a clear breach of sovereignty. Although the armed guards were briefly detained, the Ottoman authorities handled the situation with considerable caution in the overall process. Along the process, American consular protection functioned as an exception to legal norms. Protection as a exception allowed powerful individuals as Avadikyan bypass laws when formal procedures no longer served their interests.²²¹

The consistent communication between the Aydın Governorate and the central government, often articulated through careful legal and diplomatic language, reflects the sensitivity of provincial officials to both legal legitimacy and potential international fallout. At the same time, these reports highlight the limitations of the provincial administration in independently managing such complex disputes. What

²¹⁹ BOA. BEO, 1433/107413, (telegram dated January 13).

²²⁰ Serbestoğlu, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tabiiyet," 50-52. (Although Ottoman-US commercial relations developed relatively late, they signed trade agreements for the first time in 1830 and for the second time in 1862. However, the two states did not conclude a definitive mutual subordination agreement until the First World War. The main reason for this was the attitude of the Ottoman administration towards Armenians immigrating to the US. It can also be said that Avadikyan, an Armenian merchant and most probably an Ottoman subject, took advantage of this nationality dispute between the Ottoman Empire and the United States and the uncertainty it brought).

²²¹ Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality*, 210.

began as a licorice-related commercial disagreement quickly escalated into a confrontation entangled with imperial interests and diplomatic entitlements. This transformation was not accidental: the commodification of licorice which was accelerated by foreign demand, intensified extraction, and the formal leasing of state lands, had already turned licorice into a site of legal ambiguity and economic contention. In this shifting landscape, Avadikyan was not merely defending his commercial rights; he was actively attempting to outmaneuver competitors by instrumentalizing consular protection to secure a privileged position in the regional licorice trade.

Notably, the Ottoman archives contain no direct complaints from Hacı Davud or his foreign partners such as MacAndrews and Forbes, and Hayim Nesim Polako. This may be due to the ongoing legal proceedings in Manisa, but it also suggests that the dispute had already moved into a more diplomatic sphere. While Avadikyan relied on American consular protection to assert his claims, his competitors were themselves backed by the consular networks of more powerful imperial states such as Britain and Austria. Though largely absent from the archival correspondence at this stage, these actors may have pursued more discreet channels of intervention which is an issue that becomes more visible in the later phases of the case.

5.2 Official parties' attitudes on the case: The minister of foreign affairs, the US consulate and the Ottoman central administration

The previous section focused on telegraphic correspondence sent by the Aydın Governorate to the central Ottoman authorities, shedding light on how provincial officials attempted to manage the conflict through legal and diplomatic channels. This section turns to the attitudes and interventions of the highest-ranking official

actors involved in the Avadikyan case; namely, the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the American Consulate, and the Sublime Porte, through their formal written communications. These documents offer a closer look at how the dispute escalated beyond the provincial level and reveal the broader legal and diplomatic implications of the case.

On January 17, Foreign Minister Ahmed Tevfik Pasha sent a report to the Grand Vizierate outlining the events leading up to the seizure of Avadikyan's licorice in Manisa, the intervention of the American Consulate in the seizure, and the subsequent release of the American consulate guard. The report states that the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs investigated this situation, and the investigations revealed that Avadikyan was illegally collecting licorice on rented land belonging to others. Additionally, the seizure was carried out in accordance with court orders, that Avadikyan's officials broke the court seal on the seized warehouse, and that the police officers took action against this intervention. In addition, diplomatic negotiations with the Consul proved fruitless, and he returned to Istanbul. The report states that Avadikyan's intentions were "harmful and purposeful", and that the Consul was biased. For this reason, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to dispatch the U.S. chief interpreter in Istanbul to the region for a more comprehensive investigation of the incident. It was also stated that these developments had been communicated to the American Embassy through diplomatic channels, and that the American Consul General in Dersaadet would be sent to İzmir to help resolve the matter.²²²

The diplomatic note of the Consulate of the U.S, one of the most important parties in the Avadikyan case, received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January

²²² BOA. BEO, 1433/107413, (Report of Ahmed Tevfik Pasha dated January 17).

18, provides a better account of the incident. According to the Consulate, the incident began on December 10, 1899, when Avadis S. Avadikyan, the third interpreter of the American Consulate in İzmir. He had his licorice stems, which he had stacked in a rented shop in Manisa, seized by the Manisa Court without any prior notification to the Consulate.

The Consulate learned of the incident later, and on December 16, the Manisa Court issued a cease-and-desist letter to be sent to Avadikyan, informing him that the property had been seized and that he had been summoned to court. However, the American Consul argued that these proceedings, which had been initiated without prior notification, were irregular and, therefore, the cease-and-desist order was not served on Avadikyan. The Consul also applied to the Governor's office and demanded the return of the property. During the negotiations, the Governor of Aydın stated that he could not intervene in the court but that he could encourage the court to order restitution.

The Consul waited five days after this meeting with the Governor's Office on December 20 but received no official response. Then, on December 25, an interpreter and a guard went to the store in question, removed the court-imposed lien, and took back control of the store on behalf of the American Consulate. However, two days later, on the orders of the Aydın Governorate, military troops entered the shop, detained the guard, sent him to Manisa Prison, and confiscated the weapons he had with him, but did not use during the incident. After being detained in Manisa for 24 hours, the Consular's guard was sent to İzmir, where he was released after a brief four-hour detention, but his weapons were not returned.

Following these events, the American Embassy sharply criticized these developments. First, they stated that the court's seizure of an American consular

official's property without informing him was in violation of international agreements, the break-in of Avadikyan's rented house was a direct attack on the residence of their citizens, and finally, the detention of the consular guard and the removal of his weapons was a grave diplomatic insult to the United States. At this point, their demands are unequivocal: the immediate return of the seized licorice, the evacuation and return of Avadikyan's rented shop, and the immediate return of the weapons belonging to the escort to the Consulate.²²³ As can be understood from this, the American Embassy took the case to a more diplomatic and political sphere and was openly trying to put pressure on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to turn the matter in their favor.

On the other hand, in three different copies of a telegram dated January 21 sent by the Sadaret to the Aydın Province, it was stated that the Ministry informed the Ottoman central administration of Foreign Affairs that the American Consul General in Istanbul would be sent directly to the scene of the incident in order to investigate and resolve the dispute arising from the foreclosure. In line with this development, the Sublime Porte requested that the Aydın Province ensure the peaceful and orderly dispute settlement in a responsible manner by the local judicial and administrative authorities without attaching too much importance to the matter.²²⁴ The language used in the telegrams reveals the desire to settle the diplomatic crisis at the local level without escalating it and the cautious approach of the Ottoman central government.

This set of documents reveals how the Avadikyan affair, initially rooted in a commercial dispute in Manisa, rapidly evolved into a multi-layered diplomatic crisis

²²³ Ibid., (a diplomatic note of the American Embassy dated January 18, 1900, translated into Ottoman by the Translation Chamber).

²²⁴ Ibid., (copy of telegram dated January 21, 1900); BOA. Y. EE.KP, 10/980, January 28, 1900.

involving the highest ranks of the Ottoman central government. Avadikyan's ambiguous legal status as an honorary interpreter allowed the American Consulate to interpret his position broadly, framing judicial actions such as property seizure and the arrest of a consular guard as violations of international norms. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described Avadikyan's conduct as deliberate and disruptive, the American Embassy responded with sharp protests, escalating the issue to a matter of national honor and diplomatic immunity. The Grand Vizierate, in contrast, sought to contain the crisis through cautious local resolution, reflecting the Ottoman state's attempt to assert legal sovereignty while avoiding direct confrontation with a major foreign power.

5.3 Towards an interim solution

Roughly one week after the Grand Vizierate's telegrams, the anticipated meeting took place between the American Consul General from Istanbul and the provincial authorities of Aydın. During the conversation, the American side acknowledged the procedural misconduct of the İzmir Consul and agreed to lift the court-ordered seizure of the licorice roots claimed by Avadikyan. They also pledged to send a consular interpreter to court. While the seizure was officially lifted and a court date was set, the interpreter did not appear before the court but instead visited the governor, later stating that he could return on a rescheduled date.

When questioned, the Consul argued that the dispute arose from a land lease agreement and thus fell under the jurisdiction of the civil court, whereas the seizure of the licorice should be handled by the commercial court. The Aydın Governorate rejected this interpretation, maintaining that the plaintiff had defined the licorice as stolen property, placing the matter squarely within civil jurisdiction. Despite this

clarification, the Consul remained unwilling to proceed through legal channels. However, he could not be convinced; therefore, the American Consul General in Dersaâdet was requested to issue the necessary instructions to the İzmir Consul.²²⁵ Rather than participating in judicial proceedings, the American Consulate continued to favor informal administrative engagement. This preference was likely rooted in the belief that a commercial court might treat Avadikyan as a consular official and extend him protection under international legal norms, protection that would have been far less assured under Ottoman civil law governing property and lease rights.

Indeed, the concerns expressed by Ferîk Şâkir Pasha, the deputy governor of the Aydın Province, in his report to the Grand Vizierate around the time of the meeting, reinforce this interpretation. According to the report, the Governor of İzmir verbally promised the American Consul to refer the case to a mixed commercial court as a supposed solution to this issue. This development was considered a serious legal and diplomatic risk by Ferîk Şâkir Pasha.²²⁶ Because such a practice would mean adding a new one to the already existing privileges arising from the capitulations.²²⁷ If this example sets a precedent, foreign parties will be able to demand that every similar case be heard in a mixed court in the future. This would become a matter directly related to the legal sovereignty of the state.

Following these developments at the end of January, the exact course of the case remains unclear. However, based on the investigation report prepared by the gendarmerie commander dispatched to Alaşehir by the administrative council of the Aydın Province, a temporary solution was adopted until a more comprehensive arrangement could be made. Notably, these decisions, although not preserved in the

²²⁵ BOA. Y. EE.KP, 10/980, January 28, 1900.

²²⁶ Süleyman Uygun, 'Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü ve Üzerine Yaşanan Emperyalist Rekabet', *OTAM- Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 37 (2015):355

²²⁷ BOA. Y.PRK.MYD, 22/111, January 27, 1900.

imperial archives, were reported in the local press and thus were likely made public by the provincial administration. These decisions:

- In terms of licorice extraction, if individuals extract roots on their own property or on vacant mîrî lands, they are free to sell them to whomever they wish. However, this only applies to cases where the roots are extracted directly by the individuals themselves.
- On the other hand, if the roots are extracted from leased land, then only the lessee can extract the licorice roots by hiring day laborers. Alternatively, if the tenant has left the root extraction to the peasants and the peasants deliver the roots back to the tenant, they must be paid for them at the current market price. If the tenant does not accept this price, the villagers have the right to sell these licorice roots to another buyer, but any disputes that may arise between the parties in such situations will be heard and resolved in local courts.²²⁸

The Saruhan subprovince (mutasarrıflığı) was notified to implement these provisional decisions. It is also recorded that written notification was sent to the British and Austrian embassies on July 22, 1900.²²⁹ This detail shows that the consulates, which were directly involved in the matter, were informed and that the decision was of importance not only for local but also for diplomatic actors.

The British and Austrian consulates appear to have been dissatisfied with the decision, as a report submitted by Aydın Governor Mehmed Kamil to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred to their formal complaints. According to the provincial council's resolution, peasants were permitted to sell licorice roots to the buyer of

²²⁸ "Meyân Kökü Mes'lesi," *Izmir Gazetesi*, April 2, 1900.

²²⁹ BOA. Y. EE.KP, 10/980, January 28, 1900.

their choice. Furthermore, if a tenant declined the price offered, the peasant who had extracted the root could sell the product to another party. The embassies protested that this arrangement would undermine the commercial operations of foreign companies and demanded that the decision be reversed.²³⁰

5.4 MacAndrews&Forbes' view

Unfortunately, the Ottoman archival documents provide limited insight into how the British and Austrian consulates perceived the incident or the motivations behind their complaints. However, a letter sent by Alexander Forbes, representing the British firm MacAndrews and Forbes, to the British Embassy, written around the same time as the Aydın Governor's report, offers a valuable perspective on the companies' grievances conveyed through consular channels. In the letter addressed to Ambassador Cumberbatch, Forbes emphasized that despite their appeals in April, the Administrative Council's decision had remained in force for two months, during which it had not only caused direct financial losses but also triggered broader structural concerns. Central to the letter was the rejection of a lawsuit filed against Avadikyan at the İzmir Bidayet Court, in which MacAndrews and Forbes had a commercial stake as one of the parties claiming rights over the disputed licorice roots. On May 14, the court ruled that it lacked jurisdiction to hear the case, citing both Avadikyan's foreign status and the fact that the value of the licorice roots exceeded the thousand kuruş threshold (amounting to 700,000 kuruş).²³¹

While Avadikyan's initial admission that he had leased 20,000 acres of land legitimized the case in the Bidayet Court, his later abandonment of this strategy with

²³⁰ BOA. HR. TH, 243/37, June 23, 1900.

²³¹ TNO: FO 195/2090, (Regarding the Aydın Bidayet Court Decision)

the defense that "licorice is *res nullius* (nobody's thing)." ²³² referred the case to the mixed commercial court. However, according to Forbes, if licorice is deemed "*res nullius*", the claims of ownership and usurpation will be invalidated, and therefore the plaintiffs will not be able to claim any legal protection.

In his letter to Ambassador Cumberbatch, Alexander Forbes portrayed the unfolding legal developments not as isolated incidents, but as the outcome of a coordinated effort by a clique allegedly supported by senior Ottoman administrative and judicial officials, as well as the American Consul in İzmir. According to Forbes, this group aimed to institutionalize the "*res nullius*" principle, first introduced by the Aydın Administrative Council's decision, by pressing the central government and even the Yıldız Palace to pass legislation to that effect. He reinforced these concerns by reporting that, for the past four months, rumors had circulated within government circles about MacAndrews & Forbes being pushed out of the licorice trade. Fearing the loss of what he described as hundreds of thousands of pounds in investment and the potential bankruptcy of his companies, Forbes urged the British Embassy to intervene immediately. ²³³ The letter framed the issue not merely as a private dispute but as a broader threat to Britain's commercial presence in the region, and concluded with an appeal to the British government's longstanding commitment to protect its economic interests through effective diplomatic action.

The letter by Alexander Forbes, alongside related Ottoman archival references, suggests that MacAndrews & Forbes maintained commercial ties, if not a formal partnership, with Hacı Davud and his associates in licorice production in Manisa. British archival findings cited by Frangakis-Syrett further indicate that the company sourced licorice roots from suppliers who had leased highly productive

²³² Aaron X. Fellmeth and Maurice Horwitz, *Guide to Latin in International Law*, 253.

²³³ TNO: FO 195/2090, (letter by Alexander Forbes).

fields in the region.²³⁴ The roots, however, were often collected by independent diggers whose legal right to sell the product remained ambiguous due to the undefined property status of licorice as a wild-growing plant. Avadikyan exploited this ambiguity by offering higher payments directly to the diggers, thereby drawing supply away from the company's established network, which is also related to the complaint of Hacı Davud and his partners. The dispute between Avadikyan and the British-linked licorice trade network, therefore, stemmed not only from questions of diplomatic status but also from deeper uncertainties about the commodity's legal status and the rights of those involved in its extraction and distribution.

This ambiguity is further illustrated by a local newspaper report, which sheds light on the competitive tensions among various merchants operating in the Manisa region. Although the exact nature of commercial partnerships in the licorice trade remains unclear, the article suggests that a merchant named Yorgaki Sarandidi, who does not appear in the Ottoman archival record concerning the Avadikyan case, may have also been involved in this network. According to the report, Sarandidi and his associates were facing pressure from competitors who were reducing their profits by raising the wages of licorice diggers. The article even contains allegations of bullying and physical violence against Sarandidi's workers. It is also noted that the matter had been brought to the attention of both local and imperial authorities.²³⁵ While the newspaper does not specify who these competitors were or how they were mobilized, the timeline and circumstances suggest that they may have been linked to Avadikyan and his associates. This local press account underscores the multilayered nature of

²³⁴ PRO, FO 195/2090, Consul Cumberbatch, Izmir, April 14 1900 to O'Connor, Istanbul in Elena Frangakis-Syreett, "British Economic Activities," 203.

²³⁵ *Izmir Gazetesi*, January 29, 1900.

licorice-related competition in Manisa, and the extent to which commercial rivalries could become visible and politically important.

Furthermore, both the MacAndrews and Forbes company and Avadikyan received significant support from their respective consular authorities, and an agreement was reached regarding the licorice harvest in the vicinity of Manisa. A British consular document from October reports that Avadikyan transferred to MacAndrews and Forbes the licorice he had collected throughout the year, including stocks previously confiscated by the British company. In return, MacAndrews and Forbes committed to supplying Avadikyan with the quantity of licorice he needed to fulfill his existing commercial contracts in the United States.²³⁶ Thus, the resolution of the conflict not only highlighted the dominance of MacAndrews and Forbes in the region, but also revealed the diplomatic capacity of British commercial actors. These developments suggest that the company operated a more broader licorice network across Western Anatolia, far beyond local strongholds such as Söke or Umurlu.

The developments examined in this section reveal that the Avadikyan affair was far more than a localized legal dispute; it evolved into a multi-layered diplomatic crisis involving both provincial and central Ottoman authorities as well as multiple foreign consulates. Despite the Ottoman state's efforts to uphold judicial procedure, the American Consulate's strategy of bypassing the courts in favor of administrative interventions exemplified the broader trend of expanding consular privileges. The involvement of British and Austrian consulates further illustrates that this rivalry transcended local commercial tensions and reflected the competing interests of imperial powers. The Aydın Administrative Council's attempt to manage the situation locally highlights the limited autonomy of Ottoman officials in the face of

²³⁶ PRO, FO 195/2090, Consul Cumberbatch, Izmir, 24 October 1900 to Bunsen, Charge d'Affaires, Istanbul in *Ibid.*, 203.

escalating foreign pressure. Meanwhile, Forbes's letter strikingly demonstrates how legal categories such as *res nullius* were reinterpreted and mobilized to serve commercial advantage, suggesting that legal ambiguity a commodity had become a terrain of economic contestation.

5.5 From competition to subjecthood: The case of Henri Arakçin

The case of Henri Arakçin revolves around a dispute concerning the seizure of licorice that brought the question of nationality to the center of commercial conflict. Arakçin, who was regarded as French national, became the subject of a complaint by MacAndrews and Forbes. The American company²³⁷ seized the licorice of an Ottoman subject named İstelyo Yani by court order. However, the licorice was actually the property of Arakçin and was allegedly protected by the French Consulate. In response, MacAndrews and Forbes representatives pursued official channels to verify Arakçin's nationality. Reports from both British²³⁸ and American²³⁹ embassies emphasized that Arakçin broke the monopoly of MacAndrews and Forbes in Western Anatolia, highlighting the underlying reason for the American company's insistence on legal action. In this context, economic rivalry in the licorice trade refracted through the legal instruments and nationality delineation emerged as a key mechanism in the pursuit of monopolization. In other words, what started as a dispute over the seizure of licorice turned into a stalemate that illustrated the complexity nationality and subjecthood in the Ottoman Empire.

²³⁷ *The Story of Licorice*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University's New Brunswick Special Collections, between 1950-65), 11. (Although MacAndrews and Forbes opened the U.S branch of the company in 1870 with a licorice factory in Newark, New Jersey, it was known and operated as a British company until 1902, when they acquired and expanded a company in Philadelphia).

²³⁸ "...lower prices in consumption markets, while on the other hand the rural population gets better value for their produce due to the pressure of multiple buyers in the market." in Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 204.

²³⁹ "...the only competitor able to maintain its position against the natural superiority of the MacAndrews & Forbes Company with its vast capital." in Ibid., 205.

One of the important reasons behind the promulgation of the Ottoman Nationality Law (*Tabiiyet-i Osmaniyye Kanunnamesi*) in 1869, was to eliminate the legal confusion and ambiguity surrounding subjecthood in the Ottoman Empire. As Will Hanley has argued, the term *tâbiyyet* (nationality or subjecthood) itself carried several meanings, including nationality, subjecthood, affiliation, allegiance, and submission to sovereignty. Yet, none of these meanings fully aligned with the modern conception of citizenship.²⁴⁰ Thus, the law aimed to define the subjecthood in its legal framework. It was also precisely to prevent the exploitation of the capitulations through foreign protection claims, as in the Arakçin case.²⁴¹ However, as seen in this case, the implementation of the law continued to be challenged in practice.

Unlike previous cases, the Arakçin case is less documented in the Ottoman archives. Nevertheless, there are enough sources to give an idea about the general framework of the case and the processes. The first official document is an information letter dated June 21, 1906, sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Aydın Province. On June 5, 1906, the Mac Andrews & Forbes Company seized the licorice roots in the possession of a person named İstelyo Yani, who was one of the Ottoman subjects in the Menemen (a subprovince of İzmir), with a court order. However, it is stated that Henry Arakçin, whose nationality status was still under investigation, claimed rights to these roots. In line with this claim, the Consulate General of France in İzmir sent its interpreters and guards to remove significant portion of the licorice. Furthermore, it was alleged that the remaining licorice roots were also taken out of the scope of Ottoman jurisdiction and wanted to be exported

²⁴⁰ Will Hanley, “What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3, no. 2 (2016): 277–98.

²⁴¹ Gülşen Ulukaya, “1869 Osmanlı Tabiiyet Kanunun ve Büyük Devletlerin Bu Kanuna Bakışı,” *Anlambilim MTÜ Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2022): 138.

directly out of the empire.²⁴² While the exact procedural basis for this intervention remains unclear, the sequence of events suggests that the French consular authorities attempted to exercise extraterritorial privilege in a way that bypassed Ottoman legal authority.²⁴³ Similar to the Avadikyan case, this case also involves a direct intervention by the Consulate over the nationality of a licorice merchant, ignoring the decisions of local legal authorities. Upon this situation, Henry Baker, the representative of the MacAndrews and Forbes, submitted a petition to the Sadaret. He was arguing that both the existing legal order was violated, and the company suffered an apparent loss of rights. Baker demanded that the seizure must be protected, and the legal process must be secured. The Ministry of Interior forwarded the petition to the Sadaret, stating its content and that it should be evaluated according to existing laws and procedures, and requested the Aydın Province to show the necessary sensitivity to resolve the issue within the legal framework.²⁴⁴

Nonetheless, the issue of Arakçin's nationality began to become a matter of official investigation by the Ottoman authorities. A week later, Sadaret sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noting that Henry Baker had submitted a petition directly to the central government, requesting that the investigation already underway between the relevant consulates be concluded as soon as possible and the official clarification of Arakçin's nationality status.²⁴⁵ This correspondence indicates that the Ottoman central administration, under diplomatic pressure, was preparing to initiate an investigation to verify Henri Arakçin's nationality. More importantly, this formal investigation can be seen as a part of a broader strategic effort by MacAndrews and Forbes to eliminate a rival in the licorice trade by questioning his legal status. In this

²⁴² BOA. DH. MKT, 1096/92 (letter dated June 21).

²⁴³ Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," 284.

²⁴⁴ BOA. DH. MKT, 1096/92

²⁴⁵ BOA. BEO, 2860/214429 (document dated June 28).

way, the company's objective of reinforcing the monopolistic control occurred by utilizing the legal mechanisms on nationality verification.

According to the document sent by the Aydın Province to the Internal Affairs, the licorice roots in question were initially considered the property of the Ottoman citizen İstelyo Yani and seized by the Menemen Court. However, Arakçin, who was then said to be under French protection, claimed that these goods belonged to him based on a signed lease contract. Moreover, he claimed that he had not been officially notified of the seizure even though the goods were in his possession (zîl-yed). For this reason, it was deemed procedurally incorrect to prevent the export of the goods, and approximately 10,000 *kıyye* (approximately 10 tons) of licorice root was taken out of the country. Following these developments, upon a notification sent by the Ministry of Justice, the export of the remaining licorice root was stopped, and the remaining licorice root was taken under custody in the places where it was seized. On the other hand, the French Consulate reacted to the prevention of this export and took the matter to the French Embassy in Istanbul. The text of the Consulate's protest was forwarded to the Ministry of Justice with a letter dated July 12, 1906.²⁴⁶

Upon the request of the French Consulate, a committee of consuls convened under the chairmanship of the British Consul General M. Cumberbatch. As previously mentioned by the representative Henry Baker, this delegation stated that the property allegedly owned by a foreigner could only be seized if a legal notice was served and that this condition was not fulfilled in the current situation. The French Consulate agreed with this view and officially joined the protest. The decision of this committee was notified to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a letter dated July 29,

²⁴⁶ BOA. DH. MKT, 1096/92 (document dated August 2).

1906. In the light of all these developments, the Aydın Province reported the consular complaints about procedural errors in the transactions regarding Arakçin's properties and the existing legal confusion to the center and waited for the orders from the center.²⁴⁷

This consular protest illustrates not only the procedural tension between foreign representations and Ottoman provincial authorities but also reflects a deeper institutional challenge rooted in the unresolved legacy of the protégé system. As Will Hanley demonstrates, the Ottoman state's attempt to abolish the hybrid legal status of protégés through the 1863 regulation, by forcing individuals to either naturalize or submit to Ottoman jurisdiction, failed to bring about the intended clarity.²⁴⁸ Instead, it created new ambiguities, as many individuals converted their protection into full foreign nationality while continuing to reside in the empire and act as *de facto* Ottoman subjects. The Arakçin case mirrors precisely this post-1863 landscape in which consular authorities still felt empowered to act in defense of foreign rights despite the subject's strong legal ties to Ottoman sovereignty.

Although such a compromise was reached at the consular level, on September 22, MacAndrews and Forbes' representative in İzmir sent another petition of objection to the Ottoman central administration regarding Arakçin's nationality. In this petition, an official application is made for the annulment and correction of the decision on Henry Arakçin's nationality. In the course of a lawsuit pending before the Alaşehir Bidayet Court against MacAndrews & Forbes and Ottoman subjects Yorgi Sarandidi and Henry Arakçin of Aleppo origin, Arakçin claims to be a protectorate of France, and the Foreign Ministry's Subjecthood (Tâbiyet) Department feels the need to investigate the situation. As a result of the investigation, it is determined that

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," 285.

Arakçin's father, Joseph Arakçin, was from Aleppo, while he was born in İzmir and was registered as an Ottoman subject with his family in the İzmir population records. It is also stated that, until last year, he paid his military fees like Ottoman subjects, and that there were immovable properties registered in his name in the land records (Defter-i Hakanî), and that these deeds were issued in his capacity as an Ottoman subject. Arakçin himself declared that he was an Ottoman citizen in his official power of attorneys, and he is even recorded as such in the registry of the Latin community to which he belonged. The records of the security authorities also do not indicate that he was stripped of his Ottoman nationality.²⁴⁹

Arakçin's emphasis on tax payments, land ownership, civil registration, and military pay obligations is quite similar the criteria used elsewhere by Ottoman provincial authorities to establish de facto nationality in similar nationality disputes. As Aviv Derri has shown in the case of the Islambouli family in Damascus, provincial bureaucracies often rejected consular documentation. Instead, they relied on fiscal and administrative records to assert Ottoman jurisdiction.²⁵⁰ In both cases, the Ottoman state's insistence on tangible proofs of allegiance rather than long-standing but informal consular recognition reveals a bureaucratic logic that defined nationality not through paper protection but through accumulated obligations and embeddedness in the legal and fiscal structures of the empire.

To understand this confusion, we must consider the practical and inclusive nature of the terms 'subject' and 'protection' as they are used in administrative discourse and in the practice of making claims by different actors involved in

²⁴⁹ BOA. DH. MKT, 1096/92.

²⁵⁰ Aviv Derri, "Imperial Creditors, 'Doubtful' Nationalities and Financial Obligations in Late Ottoman Syria: Rethinking Ottoman Subjecthood and Consular Protection," *The International History Review* 43, no. 5 (2021): 1068–69.

negotiations over "doubtful" cases.²⁵¹ This dynamic is noticeable in this case where despite conclusive official documents, due to an error or oversight on the part of the Directorate of Foreign Affairs in the Aydın Province, Arakçin was recognized as a French protectorate. In addition, the Subjecthood Office treated him as a protectorate of France based on this statement. It is emphasized that this situation is contrary to both law and justice, and it is also argued that such incorrect practices can create dangerous precedents and undermine the credibility of the law. On these grounds, it was requested that all relevant documents be re-obtained from the Subjecthood Office and that the case be re-evaluated by the Administrative Affairs Department of the State Council (Şûrâ-yı Devlet Mülkiye Dairesi). The petition further demanded that the error in question be rectified, that Henry Arakçin be recognized as an Ottoman subject, and that the appropriate authorities be officially notified of this decision.²⁵² This request was also made because the consulate and local administrations did not consider nationality in their official procedures.

On March 26, 1907, the Subjecthood Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs submitted a much more detailed report to the State Council on the determination of not only Arakçin's nationality, but also that of his entire family. The document traces the origins of the Arakçin's family to Aleppo and states that their first history of patronage began through their grandfather, Jack Arakçin, with a certificate from the French Consulate in 1825 and a passport dated 1831. Jack Arakçin later became a Russian subject and remained under Russian protection with passports issued by the Governor and the Russian Consulate. Vinsan, one of Jack Arakçin's three sons, was able to present a French passport in 1881, certifying that he and his family were French citizens, and this status was confirmed. The other two

²⁵¹ Ibid., 1071.

²⁵² BOA. ŞD, 3042/31 (document dated September 22).

brothers (Michael and Alexander Arakçin) were admitted under French protection in Smyrna based on the 1846 recommendation of French Foreign Minister Guizot, but they were not recorded in the local Ottoman population registers.

After the death of these two brothers, their wives registered their children in the civil registry in 1889. Later on, whether their children were under French protection was disputed and the Ottoman authorities reconsidered their nationality.²⁵³ Although some members of the Arakçin family had French documents and statements, many official records (population, land registry, military service, etc.) show that they were, in fact, Ottoman citizens. For this reason, in correspondence with the French government stated that only a few individuals from the Arakçin family could be personally recognized as French citizens, but this status could not be transferred to their children and other family members.²⁵⁴

The report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Tevfik Pasha provides a detailed account of who was considered a French protectorate and who was considered an Ottoman subject. According to the document, after Henry Arakçin, the defendant in the lawsuit filed by the American MacAndrews & Forbes company operating in Aydın province in Alaşehir Bidayet Court, claimed that he was a French subject, an investigation was conducted on his family and individuals with different statuses were identified in this process. In particular, it was emphasized that Alexander's sons, Henry, John, Edgar, and Joseph, would only be considered French protectorates as long as they lived and chose to do so and that this status would only be specific to their individual identities. In addition, Vinsan Arakçin was also to be considered a French protectorate for the rest of his life. On the other hand, the widows and all other children of Michael and Alexander, who had previously

²⁵³ Hanley, "Ottoman Nationality," 297.

²⁵⁴ BOA. ŞD, 3042/31 (document dated March 26).

applied, were to be considered Ottoman subjects, and the Ottoman identity documents issued to the French protectorate members of the family were to be withdrawn through the French Consulate in İzmir. Finally, in order to implement these decisions, the relevant departments in the Aydın Province (population, tax, and land registry offices, the police, and the head of the community in Smyrna) should be informed and instructed.²⁵⁵

In this case, which started with the questioning of Arakçin's nationality, the extension of the nationality investigation to the entire family is actually an indication of the persistent efforts of the Ottoman official bodies to take precautions against individuals abusing the capitulations through the patronage of foreign states. Although there is no direct official document from the French Consulate, it can be said that they did not have any problems with the nationality determination procedures in question based on the correspondence made by the Internal Affairs. In addition, the French administration was already one of the countries that accepted the Ottoman law on nationality as it did not find it contrary to the capitulations and international law.²⁵⁶

On the other hand, the outcome of the licorice seizure case between Arakçin and MacAndrews & Forbes has no record in the available Ottoman archival sources. Yet, according to American consular reports cited by Elena Frangakis-Syrett, the American company attempted to take the matter to the local Ottoman courts over a real estate issue instead of the mixed commercial court. This strategy was to prevent Arakçin from taking advantage of the consular protections and support in the mixed commercial court, whereas the American company was confident that the local courts would rule in their favor. Nevertheless, it is reported that MacAndrews and

²⁵⁵ BOA. ŞD, 3042/31 (document dated April 15).

²⁵⁶ Ulukaya, "1869 Osmanlı Tabiiyet Kanunun," 140.

Forbes lost the case.²⁵⁷ This result demonstrates that despite MacAndrews and Forbes' extensive commercial and political networks in Western Anatolia, the company was not always successful against its competitors.

The case of Henri Arakçin provides a compelling example of how foreign patronage, commercial rivalry and nationality were deeply intertwined in the late Ottoman Empire. The complaint brought by MacAndrews & Forbes that Arakçin was exploiting capitulatory privileges by circumventing Ottoman subjecthood law in the licorice trade, illustrates the strategic use of legal status to fulfill economic interests. In this case, the fact that the Ottoman authorities subjected not only the nationality of an individual but also that of an entire family to long-term scrutiny. It also reveals the state's determination to limit the foreign protection regime. The detailed genealogical and documentary investigation of the Arakçin family also shows the practical difficulties in implementing the 1869 Nationality Law. At the same time, the fact that the correspondence with the French Consulate was relatively smooth and did not lead to a diplomatic crisis shows that such cases were carefully managed in the legal and international relations context. Ultimately, the Arakçin case is a striking example of the critical role of legal status played in determining the conditions of competition over licorice trade in Ottoman Western Anatolia.

5.6 In lieu of conclusion: licorice, protection, and subjecthood

The Avadikyan and Arakçin cases illustrate how the economic rivalry over licorice production and trade in late Ottoman western Anatolia could escalate into commercial, diplomatic, and legal struggles. In both cases, the MacAndrews & Forbes company, fearful of losing control of the local monopoly, sought to exclude

²⁵⁷ Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 205.

its competitors through a multi-layered strategy that involved consulates, courts, and the Ottoman bureaucracy. While Avadikyan's case exposed the limitations of consular privileges and the issues within the Ottoman local administration, Arakçin's case brought to the surface more profound legal questions concerning nationality/subjecthood status of the individual and the ongoing effects of capitulatory protections within the Ottoman legal order.

At the same time, licorice root, a commodity with high commercial value, was in gray areas in terms of legal position: as a naturally growing plant (*hüdâyînâbit*) and as a nobody's thing (*res nullius*). It was neither private property nor entirely under state monopoly. Licorice's legal ambiguity allowed various actors, such as peasants, tenants, merchants, consuls, and local officials, to claim control over its collection and sale. In both cases, licorice also became a site of contestation where diplomatic leverage, protection, and access were more critical rather than formal ownership. These examples indicate that power over licorice production and trade was not only determined by court rulings and property rights but also structured on a complex network of actors. Ultimately, these two cases illustrates how the boundaries between commercial activity, diplomatic protection, and imperial subjecthood could blur that allowed people to navigate between legal identities and political affiliations in pursuit of economic gain.

CHAPTER 6

THE CRISIS OF MONOPOLY: TAX, ENVIRONMENT, AND INTERVENTION DEBATES OVER THE LICORICE: TRADE BETWEEN 1904 AND 1914

6.1 The persistence of monopoly in the face of increased control

In the early twentieth century, Ottoman economic thought had begun to develop a growing sensitivity to the unchecked domination of foreign capital. The search for a national economy, which took shape a few years before the II. Meşrutiyet (Second Constitutional Era), aimed to limit the activities of foreign companies that had grown unchecked due to capitulations and foreign interventions. In this context, the examples of certain companies establishing de facto monopolies in agricultural production and exports in Anatolia drew particular attention in national economic supporters. The fact that these companies gained influence not only at the economic, but also at the judicial and administrative levels turned into a relationship of domination that undermined the authority of the state.²⁵⁸ However, the reactions against this domination did not always translate into an effective and institutionalized form of intervention; especially in commercial activities in the provinces, the state's silence combined with the relations established by the local notables and bureaucrats with the companies to create a structural state of uncontrol.²⁵⁹ This contradictory situation, as in the case of the MacAndrews & Forbes company in Aydın province, led to a situation in which both state institutions and the local population suffered direct losses.

In this case, MacAndrews & Forbes' control over the liquorice trade had become a permanent and disturbing structure, not only at the local level, but also to

²⁵⁸ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat 1908-1918*, 56.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 58.

the extent that it attracted the attention of central administrative units. In an official correspondence dated January 9, 1904, a report submitted to the Sadaret by the Aydın Vilayeti Heyet-i Teftişiyesi (The Provincial Inspection of Council of Aydın) stated that the de facto allocation of licorice exports to the Forbes Company resulted in serious revenue losses for the Ottoman Treasury. Emphasizing that this practice only worked in favor of the company and limited the state's potential earnings from export taxes, the report requested a review of this commercial arrangement.²⁶⁰

Subsequent correspondence shows that local reactions to this situation increased. In a letter dated January 19, 1904, a memorandum prepared by the Aydın provincial council, explicit objections to Forbes' monopolistic position and the emphasis on the public interest were included.²⁶¹ However, the failure of these objections to turn into an effective intervention in the bureaucratic process, coupled with the continued silence of the Maliye Nezareti (Ministry of Finance), points to a structure in which monopoly, although institutionally questioned, could be maintained in practice. Indeed, the dominance of foreign-owned companies in key areas such as transportation, agricultural credit and exports in certain regions prevented commercial competition and rendered state intervention ineffective.²⁶² For the Ottoman administration, MacAndrews and Forbes' monopolistic stance was anti-competitive in the licorice trade.

This state of administrative inertia and political hesitation is exposed in striking detail in the 1906 report of Galib Bey, Aydın Vilayeti Adliye Müfettişi (the Inspector of Justice of Aydın Province). Galib Bey reveals how the licorice trade was transformed into a "capital-backed de facto domination" through the Forbes

²⁶⁰ BOA. BEO, 2249/168614.

²⁶¹ BOA. BEO, 2255/169123.

²⁶² Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913*, 68.

Company in a multi-layered pattern of exploitation.²⁶³ The report concretizes the company's monopolization strategies under the following headings: large-scale land leases and the silencing of local notables; the seizure of the goods of rival merchants through the courts; the manipulation of import policies and the suppression of local producers through the American government; and finally, the disruption of the free market by fabricating unfair claims of ownership over licorice, which had commodified. The report also highlights the ease with which government officials were manipulated in favor of the company, the abuse of due process, and the fixed public damage.²⁶⁴

According to inspector Galib, although licorice was a public commodity, it was treated as "de facto private property" through the company's network of contracts and influence. This situation resulted not only in tax losses, but also in a multidimensional erosion, including legal dissolution, moral corruption and loss of authority in the provincial administration. One of the most striking aspects of the report is the definition of this exploitation as not only economic, but also as a "production of public damage" that is clearly in violation of criminal law. Referring to Article 239 of the Penal Code, the inspector argues that the company systematically committed crimes and that these activities could be limited not only through the courts but also directly by the political determination of the state.²⁶⁵

Indeed, the central administration, aware of the strategic value of licorice root and the income losses caused by foreign monopolies, began searching for institutional mechanisms to regain control of this area. According to a document dated 1907, the Ottoman central administration decided to allocate the revenue

²⁶³ Elena Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 204.

²⁶⁴ BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.; Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*, 155.

generated from licorice root exports to the Ministry of Military Equipment (Teçhizât-ı Askeriye Nezareti) , thereby officially recognizing the product's fiscal significance for the state.²⁶⁶ This decision was followed by a concession agreement signed with an Ottoman joint stock company that was planned to be established by Yorgaki Sarandidi and Hasan Tahsin Efendi. This thirty-year agreement granted the relevant company the right to collect licorice root on state lands and uncultivated lands. It also included obligations such as establishing the company on a partnership basis with the state and transferring a certain percentage of the profits to the Treasury along with the retirement fund to be established for the workers. One of the most striking aspects of this agreement is that licorice root was not yet a known agricultural product at the time the Land Code was prepared and, therefore, did not have a clear legal definition.²⁶⁷ However, with this concession agreement, licorice root was no longer just a plant that grows naturally but was recognized and controlled by the state as an agricultural commodity that could be commercially processed and whose production could be regulated.

In this framework, the decision of the Meclis-i Vükela (Assembly of Councilors) dated December 28, 1909 indicates that the attempt of establishing a joint-stock company was still questionable. Upon the proposal of the Ministry of Finance, the appropriateness of granting a long-term concession for the production and export of licorice was opened to discussion, and following the reports evaluated by various departments concluded that such a concession was objectionable in terms of both economic uncertainties and public interest.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ BOA. BEO, 3119/233890.

²⁶⁷ BOA. Y.MTV, 303/83.

²⁶⁸ BOA. MV, 135/32.

In early 1910, a committee representing the relevant organs of the Ottoman central administration (Maliye ve Nafia Nezaretleri) revised the concession agreement prepared in 1907 and not approved by the will of the Sultan, both in terms of its duration and content, and submitted a detailed report on the licorice trade. The report particularly emphasizes the uncertainty in the legal status of licorice, which is also consistent with Galib Bey's observations. Due to this uncertainty, the American company MacAndrews & Forbes established a de facto monopoly on licorice root. The company gained high profits by extracting the roots it wished from ownerless lands. Because of that, the Ottoman treasury suffered severe losses of income because the company only paid tithes and customs duties, and this situation also harmed local labor and landowners.²⁶⁹

In this context, the report stated that in the summer of 1907, a sultan's decision transferred the income from the licorice root trade to the Ministry of Military Equipment. In a few months, a tender opened to the public commercial, giving the commercial privilege to Yorgaki Sarandidi and Hasan Tahsin Efendi for the licorice trade. However, the most striking point emphasized in the report is that although the previous concession agreement was approved with specific revisions by the committee, concerns remained. The committee's concerns were regarding the transfer of the privilege to private individuals for an extended period of thirty years and the ambiguity surrounding the potential benefits that a joint-stock company, with government participation, might bring to the state in this process. For this reason, the relevant board did not find it appropriate to grant the privilege by a majority vote.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ BOA. BEO, 3686/276408.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

All these documents and evaluations reveal that the idea of the local economy that began to take shape in Ottoman finance after the Second Constitutional Era still had a limited institutional capacity in the face of de facto monopoly in licorice trade. The decisive position of the MacAndrews and Forbes company in Aydın caused severe discomfort not only at the local level but also in the central administration. While Galib Bey's report of 1906 revealed this structural problem with both its judicial and administrative dimensions, an institutional will was formed to take the licorice trade under state control with the decisions taken in 1907. Indeed, in the same year, a 30-year privilege would be given to the partnership of Sarandidi and Tahsin Efendi, and licorice root was granted legal status as an agricultural commodity. However, administrative reports in 1909 and 1910 indicated that this privilege should be reviewed in terms of its duration, balance of benefits and company structure, and a cautious approach was adopted in terms of public and state interests. The failure of voices within the existing bureaucratic structure to influence outcomes in the face of entrenched interest networks and externally backed corporate strategies renders this period one of “observation without intervention.” This lack of intervention would pave the way for the environmental destruction, agricultural oppression and peasant resistance that would become more visible in subsequent documents.

6.2 Depletion of production areas and agricultural pressure

As the previous events demonstrated, the economic monopoly that MacAndrews & Forbes achieved in Ottoman territory was not only a commercial dominance, but also a multi-layered form of domination that could be sustained through the abuse of the

legal order and the neutralization of the bureaucratic structure.²⁷¹ However, this process severely damaged not only competition but also the rural environment and agricultural balances. Documents from the first decade of the 20th century, in particular, show that caused great distress to the land and the relationship between the peasant workers and the state.

In a 1907 document, some landowners in the provinces of Aydın and Aleppo were criticized for renting out their land for the direct extraction of licorice, on the grounds that it led to a decrease in grain cultivation and a decrease in the fertility of the soil.²⁷² In the letter sent to the Orman, Maadin ve Ziraat Nezareti (Ministry of Forestry, Mining and Agriculture), it was clearly stated that this type of production model, although it provided short-term gains for the state treasury, posed a serious threat to the country's agriculture in the long term. Therefore, it was emphasized that a scientific evaluation should be made and decisions should be made accordingly.²⁷³ In another document dated 1911, a similar determination was brought to the agenda with a direct application from the public. The heavy destruction of the lands leased for licorice extraction within the borders of Denizli was brought to the Meclis-i Mebûsân (Chamber of Deputies) by farm owners and agriculturalists. The petitions, supported by seals, stated that the lands had become unsuitable for agriculture, the people were victimized and justice should be established.²⁷⁴ The petition was approved by the Aydın local council and communicated to the Ministry of Interior for the necessary action to be taken. In the same document, it was emphasized that

²⁷¹ Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, “*Kapitalistlerin Rekabetine Batı Anadolu’dan Bir Örnek*,” 347–48.

²⁷² Uygun, “*Batıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü*,” 361.

²⁷³ BOA. BEO, 2988/224072.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 362.

such damages should be dealt with not only through public complaints but also through direct administrative investigations.²⁷⁵

In the face of these problems, the Ottoman administration aimed to control activities such as pitting and land degradation in order to prevent environmental destruction. The correspondence between 1909 and 1913 was shaped by regulations that would limit the scope of licorice extraction, tighten the licensing system, and institutionalize the responsibility for pit closure.²⁷⁶ The Aydın's Provincial Administrative Council proposed that all workers should be considered as sureties for each other, that the land should be clearly indicated in the license documents, and that workers should be held collectively responsible for compensation in case of damage.²⁷⁷ The Ministry of Interior, on the other hand, stated that such measures were incompatible with the existing legal system, but that more reasonable solutions were required given the difficulty of detecting potholes and the state's limited control power.²⁷⁸

These documents show that licorice extraction is not only a tax and export issue for the state, but has also become an area directly linked to environmental regulation, the sustainability of local production and the effectiveness of public authority on the ground. Villagers' damaged fields and their reluctance to go to court also reveal the limitations of the provincial justice system. Moreover, the rejection of proposed administrative measures on legal grounds raises the broader question of how far the state can, or is willing to, intervene in cases of environmental destruction. As a result, the agricultural and environmental impacts of licorice production were not only limited to natural resource use, but also revealed the deep

²⁷⁵ BOA. DH.MKT, 2795/80.

²⁷⁶ Pullukçuoğlu, "Meyankökü Ticareti," 344.

²⁷⁷ BOA. DH. MUI, 63/2 (Document 3).

²⁷⁸ BOA. DH. MUI, 63/2 (Document 4).

tension between public interest and private interests in rural areas.²⁷⁹ The documents in this section reveals both popular resistance and the state's efforts to translate this resistance into institutionalized demands. Nevertheless, it is understood that these interventions mostly remained at the level of suggestions due to both legal and administrative limitations.

6.3 Tax exemptions, and the use of law

From the early 1900s onwards, MacAndrews & Forbes' absolute dominance of the Ottoman licorice market was not only limited to commercial control over the production and export processes, but also deepened by its influence over tax regulations and legal mechanisms.²⁸⁰ The company applied directly to Ottoman bureaucratic institutions for tax exemptions, it also attempted to manipulate administrative and judicial processes through consular channels and financial pressures. In this context, the company's strategies point to the pursuit of economic privilege which reveals a multi-layered interventionist effort to stretch the limits of public authority.

In a 1910 petition, MacAndrews & Forbes attorneys targeted Hacı Nuri Bey, the Tithe Director of Aydın Province, complaining of administrative pressure and excessive tax demands that prevented the company's exports from being loaded onto ships. According to the company, this high taxation demand (94%), based on the assumption that 250 kilos of licorice yielded one kantar(scale), approximately 56 kg of licorice honey, was both technically incorrect and economically disruptive to the company's operations. With these claims, MacAndrews & Forbes explicitly stated that they had to use consular support against local officials who blocked the

²⁷⁹ Pullukçuoğlu, "Meyankökü Ticareti," 348.

²⁸⁰ Frangakis-Syrett, "British Economic Activities," 205.

production chain. The company claimed that their licorice-root enterprise had evolved into a distinct and organized form of agricultural production, rather than being a mere act of foraging or extraction from the wild.²⁸¹ Although there is no direct information on the outcome of these requests, the provisional law enacted in 1914, covering a period of ten years, suggests that the company's demands were at least partially met. On March 4, 1914, the provisional law, which entered into force by decree, set a fixed amount of excise duty (iki para) for each kilo of licorice exported from Ottoman territory, which was to remain in effect until 1923.²⁸² This regulation not only aimed to prevent arbitrary practices by local tax officials, but also provided a legal framework to ensure the security of the company's exports.

On the other hand, the approach of the state bureaucracy in this process, recognizing the monopoly of the companies and addressing them directly, is also noteworthy.²⁸³ The detailed report prepared by the inspector Galib documents the multi-layered monopoly strategies developed by MacAndrews & Forbes over the years.²⁸⁴ These strategies include eliminating competitors through the courts by entering into long-term lease agreements with large landowners, tightly controlling the product supply chain through contract labor, and suppressing production within the Ottoman Empire by having the U.S government impose a 100% customs duty on licorice honey. It is made clear that these actions of the company not only had economic consequences, but also reduced the state's tax revenues, rendered the courts dysfunctional, and placed peasant labor in a pattern of heavy exploitation. Moreover, it was argued that making high profits in United States with the cheap licorice

²⁸¹ BOA. BEO, 3312/248337.

²⁸² BOA. A.} DVN. MKL, 58/19.

²⁸³ Toprak, *Türkiye 'de Milli İktisat*, 154-155.

²⁸⁴ BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

obtained in the Ottoman lands and that this should be considered as a systematic crime against the public interest.²⁸⁵

Finally, the provisional law of March 4, 1914, promulgated by the will of Sultan Mehmed Reşad, was the clearest step taken by the Ottoman administration to both clarify tax regulations and reduce legal uncertainties regarding the licorice trade. According to this provisional law, it was decided to levy a fixed tax of two coins for every kilogram of licorice exported, which was to remain in effect until 1923.²⁸⁶ This decision demonstrates that the Ministry of Finance was attempting a more centralized and systematic intervention in response to the distortions raised in Galib Bey's bill. At the same time, following MacAndrews & Forbes' attempts to manipulate the excise rates and tensions with local officials, the state's precise definition of licorice as a taxable commodity and the establishment of a fixed rate aimed both to limit the company's arbitrary demands and to eliminate injustices in the tax regime.²⁸⁷

The most critical aspect of this legislation is the legal status of licorice as "taxable income". This shows that the product is no longer considered a herb that grows spontaneously and is considered the property of the harvester, but an object of commerce that is integrated into the state's fiscal system, traceable and regulable. Thus, it is aimed to prevent arbitrary interpretations in appropriation cases and to legally limit the financial pressure exerted by MacAndrews & Forbes on the local administration.

²⁸⁵ Uygun, "Batılıların Gözdesi Meyan Kökü," 361.

²⁸⁶ BOA. A.} DVN. MKL, 58/19 ("Meyân Köklerinden İstihsâl Olunacak 'Öşrün Suret-i İstifâsı Hakkında Kanûn Muvakkat")

²⁸⁷ Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*, 343.

6.4 In lieu of conclusion: Deepening traces of capital

The domination of the licorice trade by MacAndrews & Forbes was not merely the economic success of one company, but a multi-layered manifestation of the influence of capital on the legal, administrative and ecological spheres of the Ottoman provinces. The monopolistic networks created by the company through land leasing, contract labor, ration lawsuits, and customs policies led to the state's tax losses and loss of legal authority. This situation also caused the devaluation of peasant labor, the destruction of cultivation areas, and the disruption of the environmental balance. As is evident in Galib Bey's detailed report, the company's activities produced structures that pushed the limits of public authority and dysfunctionalized the provincial administration; this situation created a growing awareness on the part of the state.²⁸⁸ As a part of state's awareness, a major institutional attempt was made in 1907 to reassert state control through a thirty-year concession agreement, which granted commercial privileges to Yorgaki Sarandidi and Hasan Tahsin Efendi.²⁸⁹

This agreement, while aiming to generate revenue for the Ministry of Military Equipment and formalize licorice extraction through a joint-stock company structure, also introduced important legal innovations: for the first time, licorice was recognized as a commercial commodity subject to regulation, rather than a wild and ownerless natural plant (*hüdâyînâbit, res nullius*). Nonetheless, the discussions in the central government reflect the ambivalence within the state, especially concerning the duration of the concession, the risks of a new private monopoly, and the unclear benefits of a government-partnered company.

In conclusion, the provisional law of 1914 is not only a technical regulation on the application of the tithe, but also the will of the state to define licorice as a

²⁸⁸ BOA. ŞD, 431/8.

²⁸⁹ BOA. Y.MTV, 303/83

taxable and regulable object of commerce, and no longer a mere hüdâyînâbit product. As one of the most consistent positions of late Ottoman finance, this decision documents the state's desire to re-establish its control over the legal sphere. However, this late intervention was not enough to eradicate the social and institutional influence that the company had already built in the provinces.

Indeed, with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, there were temporary disruptions in licorice production; the logistical and financial constraints of the war caused a certain degree of contraction, especially in the export chain.²⁹⁰ However, despite this interruption, Forbes's factory in Söke continued to operate and the company was able to continue its activities, especially until the World War II period.²⁹¹ Thus, the long-lasting economic and institutional dominance that MacAndrews & Forbes construct through licorice can be considered as a concrete example of not only the power relations in the provinces of the late Ottoman Empire, but also how global capitalism was able to penetrate the environmental and social fabric.

²⁹⁰ Güneş, “*Osmanlı Devleti’nde Meyan Kökü*,” 354.

²⁹¹ Leggatt, ed., *Maudy of the Levant*, unpublished manuscript, 2012, 56.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis examines the production, labor and property relations around licorice in rural Western Anatolia during the late Ottoman period as a multi-layered process intertwined with international demands, state interventions and the struggles of local actors. Initially considered of limited value, licorice root, which grew spontaneously in the wild as a "hüdâyînâbit" plant, was rapidly commercialized and commodified from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, especially with the increasing foreign demand in industries such as tobacco and pharmacy. This transformation not only increased the economic value of licorice, but also transformed rural labor regimes, land tenure patterns, tax collection, foreign companies' monopolization attempts and the capacity of the state to intervene in Ottoman Western Anatolia.

The introduction and first chapter explains how licorice root rapidly became a commercialized agricultural commodity in Western Anatolia in the second half of the nineteenth century, and how this transformation had not only economic but also legal, administrative and diplomatic dimensions. In this context, the thesis focuses on the connections between local production relations and global consumption networks, and examines the multi-layered power relations that took shape in the Ottoman provinces through this specific product. The introduction section also discusses within a theoretical framework what a commodity-focused historiography centered on licorice root can contribute to Ottoman historiography, and emphasizes the potential of this approach to make a methodological contribution to the existing literature.

The second chapter of the thesis provides the historical background to this transformation, focusing on the story of licorice and its commercialization along with local labor. This chapter has also shown how, with the dissolution of the classical Ottoman economic structure and how this process materialized in Western Anatolia. Here, licorice ceased to be merely a herb gathered from the wild and became a resource that was licensed, subjected to tithe, and opened to the control of corporations.

The third chapter analyzes how the state attempted to regulate this commodification process. Particularly in the period 1850-1880, licensing initiatives, the expansion of the scope of the excise system, and contradictory forms of state intervention. It shows that licorice was increasingly incorporated into a more institutionalized production regime. In this process, companies such as Forbes and Abacıoğlu gained power in the Western Anatolia, making visible the problems of state authority at the local level. The commodity itself, in this context, became not only an economic object but also a trigger for administrative tensions and an intersection through which state-society relations were reshaped.

The fourth chapter, through the crisis between MacAndrews & Forbes and the Simon companies in Umurlu, reveals the diplomatic and legal dimensions of the licorice trade. Consular interventions, the involvement of local administrations, armed groups, and arbitration processes clearly demonstrate how economic conflicts around the commodity took on a political dimension. At the same time, this conflict also raised the question of the extent to which the Ottoman Empire was able to maintain its legal sovereignty in Ottoman Western Anatolia and resist foreign capital under consular patronage.

The fifth chapter details how the legal status of licorice root became contested through property, citizenship, and appropriation cases surrounding individual actors such as Avadikyan and Arakçin. In addition, licorice root existed in a legal vacuum that often intersected with ambiguities in personal legal identity and imperial subjecthood. This chapter demonstrates how the commodity became not only an object of economic, but also legal and diplomatic status, and how consular protection became a strategic tool in economic competition. Thus, licorice was at the center of gaps in the property regime, citizenship ambiguities and legal system in the Ottoman Western Anatolia.

The sixth and final chapter, focusing on the period between 1904 and 1914, examines the long-term consequences of licorice becoming a commodity. This chapter discusses the state's increasing awareness and its regulatory intervention, peasant petitions, environmental destruction, and the weakening of provincial authority. Official documents such as Galib Bey's 1906 inspection report, the revised draft privileges prepared by the Ministry of Finance between 1907 and 1910, and the temporary tithe regulation of 1914 document shows the state's increasing concerns about the monopolized structure constructed by MacAndrews & Forbes. and its efforts to reintegrate licorice production into a controlled and taxed economic framework. The chapter also demonstrates that despite all these efforts by the central government, foreign companies maintained their strong influence at the local level and that these interventions were only partially effective in practice.

One of the main conclusions of this thesis is that the transformation of a wild plant into a mere commodity does not only entail an economic transformation, but also multi-layered social, legal, political and environmental consequences. Licorice, therefore, offers an ideal analytical lens for understanding the economic and

administrative transformations in the Ottoman Western Anatolia. Against the reductionist criticisms of commodity-oriented historiography, this thesis has shown that the networks woven around a commodity can shed light on a wide range of issues, from the structure of rural society to state sovereignty practices, from international diplomacy and legal identities to environmental regulations.

This study's reliance on a wide array of archival sources, which ranges from state reports to consular records and petitions, allowed for a layered reconstruction of licorice's commercial and legal trajectory. However, as outlined in the introduction, these sources also reflect the limitations of archival visibility, especially in regard to the lived experiences of rural laborers and ecological change. Despite this, the document-based approach made it possible to capture the structural tensions of Ottoman governance and the mechanisms through which foreign actors maneuvered within (and around) these structures.

This approach also brings together insights from legal anthropology and environmental history, particularly in exploring how legal uncertainty over the licorice plant, as a *hüdayînâbit* or *res nullius* legally, interacted with questions of subjecthood, jurisdiction, and corporate privilege. The thesis further situates legal pluralism and consular protection as central mechanisms by which foreign capital negotiated, contested, and at times bypassed Ottoman legal authority.

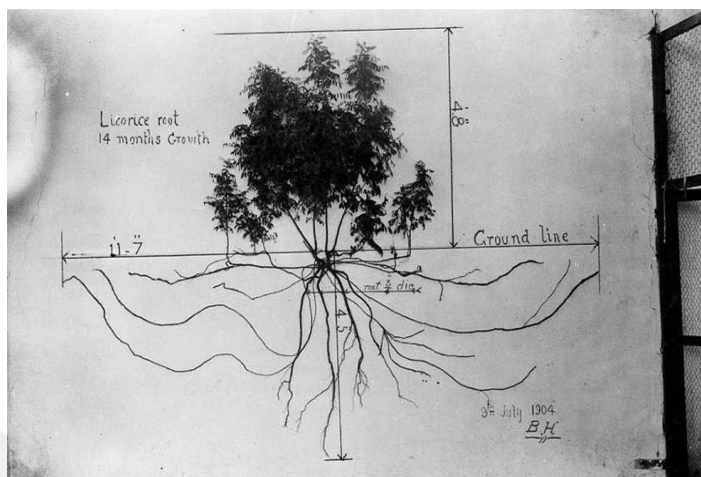
Finally, this study seeks to analyze the processes of commercialization in the Ottoman countryside not only through state policies or capital movements, but also through understanding how these structures intersect with everyday life, how local actors position themselves, and how labor regimes are constructed. The tensions and collaborations between peasants, tax farmers, local merchants and company representatives, combined with the contradictory interventions of the state and

diplomatic pressure from international actors, created a multi-layered economic regime centered around licorice. In this respect, the thesis demonstrates that agricultural commodities in the late Ottoman Western Anatolia were not only objects of trade but also carriers of political struggles, legal loopholes and social transformations.



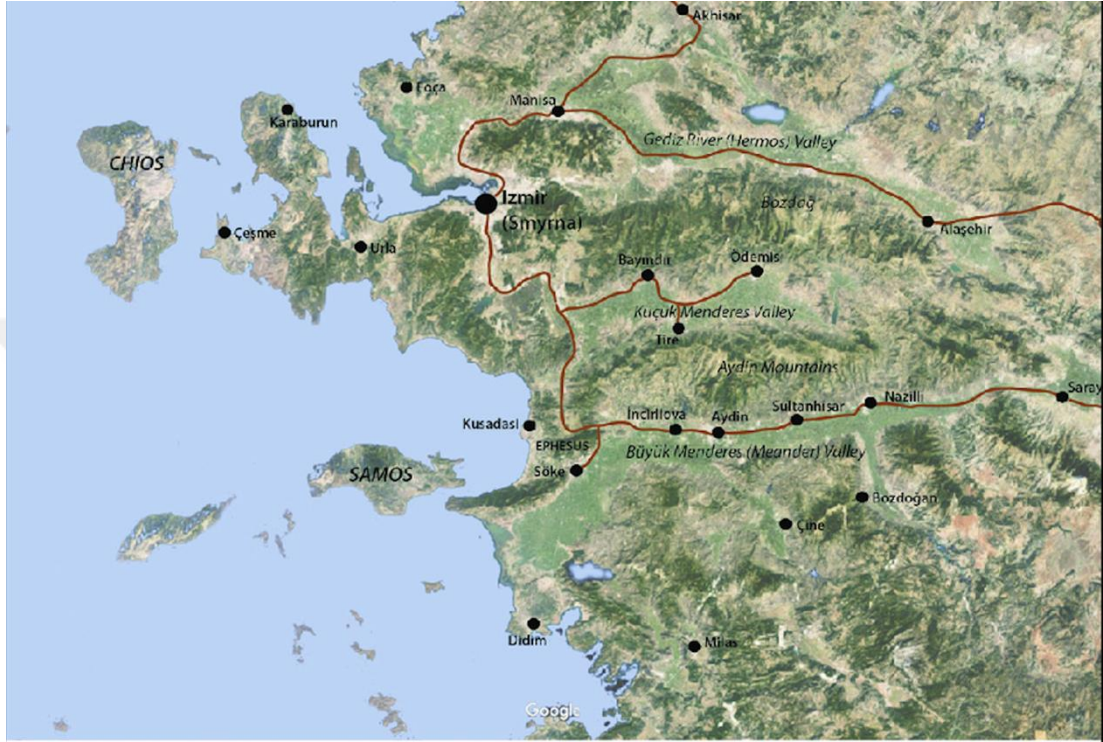
APPENDIX A

THE DRAWING OF THE ORIENTAL LICORICE ROOT



APPENDIX B

THE MAP OF RAILWAYS, RIVER VALLEYS, AND KEY CENTERS IN
WESTERN ANATOLIA, C. 1910



APPENDIX C

THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF PEASANT-WORKERS COLLECTING AND TRANSPORTING LICORICE ROOTS



Figure C1. A peasant-worker engaging in licorice root harvesting



Figure C2. Another peasant-worker carrying harvested licorice roots on his back to railway

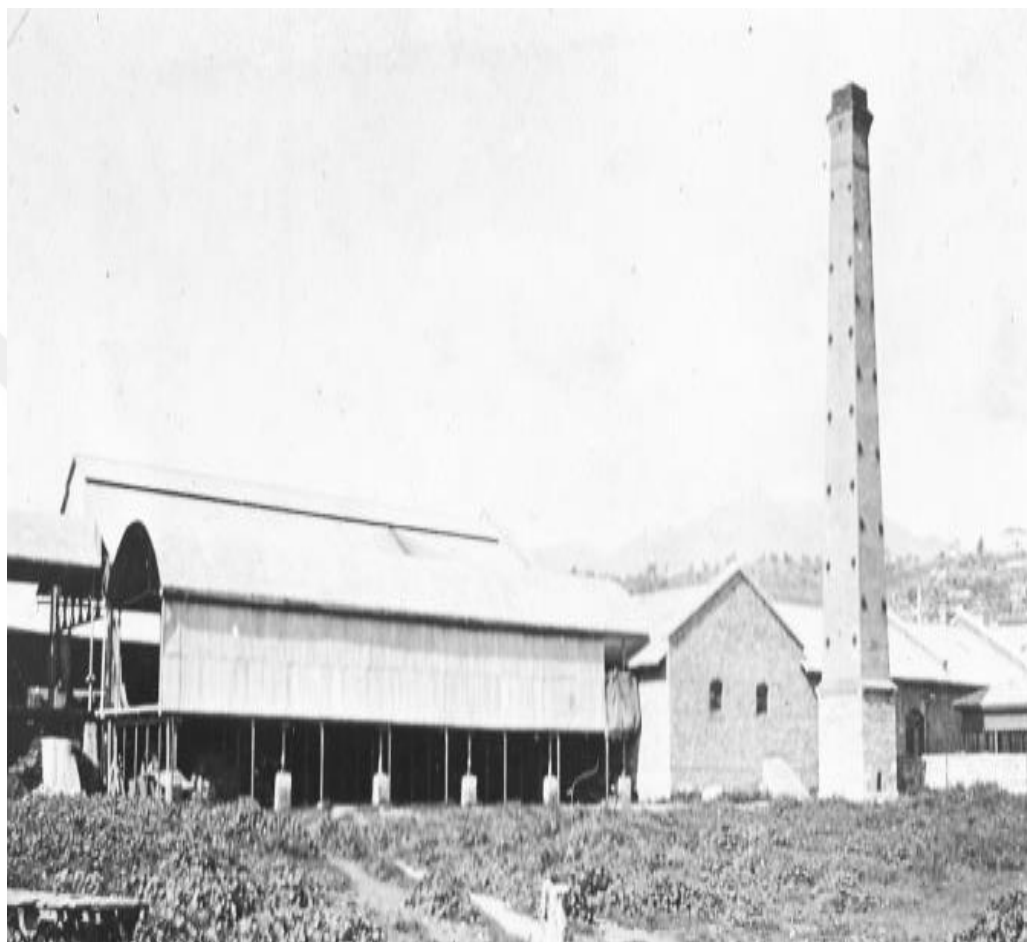
APPENDIX D

THE MAP OF İZMİR-AYDIN AND İZMİR-KASABA RAILWAY LINES IN 1884



APPENDIX E

THE PHOTOGRAPH OF MACANDREWS&FORBES FACTORY IN SÖKE
(SOCHIA)



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