

TOBACCO LABOR POLITICS IN THE PROVINCE OF THESSALONIKI: CROSS-
COMMUNAL AND CROSS-GENDER RELATIONS

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COMMUNAL AND CROSS-GENDER RELATIONS

by

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Title: Tobacco Labor Politics in the Ottoman Thessaloniki Province: Cross-Communal and Cross-Gender Relations

This study examines the role of community and gender factors within tobacco labor politics. The sudden rise of tobacco exports towards the end of the nineteenth century had brought about a significant increase in the number of commercial laborers in the Ottoman province of Thessaloniki employed in tobacco processing workshops called *mağaza*. Rather than industrial cigarette factory workers, this study focuses on the socio-political history of the commercial tobacco labor force.

The theoretical framework of the study is mainly inspired by the “new labor history” approach, trying to reflect the life-worlds of the laborers in their unity. Therefore, the institutions and the representations of the labor are integrated into a common discourse, while a spatial distinction is made between the center and periphery.

Given the political and economic situation of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century, economic peripheralization and political disintegration themes constitute the main framework rendering the labor politics in question peculiar. The consensus of the tobacco laborers at a time of escalating national conflicts in the Ottoman Balkans is discussed in regards to notion of the “local patriotism” that developed as a reaction to the women and migrant laborers.

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Başlık: Osmanlı Selanık Vilayetinde Tütün Emek Politikası: Cemaatler ve Toplumsal Cinsiyetler Arası İlişkiler

Bu çalışma, tütün emek siyasetinde cemaat ve toplumsal cinsiyet faktörlerinin rolünü incelemektedir. Ondokuzuncu yüzyıl sonuna doğru kısa süre içinde yükselen tütün ihracatı, Selanık Vilayetinde mağaza adı verilen tütün işleme atölyelerinde istihdam edilen önemli bir işgücü meydana getirmişti. Bu çalışma, endüstriyel sigara fabrikası işçilerinden ziyade ticari tütün işgücünün sosyo-politik tarihine odaklanmaktadır.

Çalışmanın kuramsal çerçevesi, işgücünün yaşam-dünyasını kendi bütünlüğü içinde yansıtmaya çalışan, “yeni emek tarihi” yaklaşımından esinlenmiştir. Bu nedenle, çevre arasında mekansal bir ayrıma gidilirken, emeğin kurumları ve temsili ortak bir söylem içinde biraraya getirilmiştir.

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ondokuzuncu yüzyıl sonundaki ekonomik ve siyasi durumu dikkate alındığında, ekonomik çevreleşme ve siyasi dağılma temaları söz konusu emek siyasetini özgün kılan genel çerçeveyi oluşturmaktadır. Osmanlı Balkanlarında ulusal çatışmaların yükseldiğı bir dönemde tütün işçilerinin uzlaşısı, kadın ve göçmen işçilere karşı geliştirilen “yerel vatan-severlik” kavramı üzerinden tartışılmaktadır.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Prime Ministry Ottoman State Archives (BOA) (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*)

BOA. BEO: Document Office of the Sublime Porte.

BOA. DH HMŞ: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Legal Consultancy Office

BOA. DH MKT: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Chief Secretary

BOA. DH MUİ: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Administration of Correspondence

BOA. DH UMVM: Province Directorate of Local Affairs

BOA. HR SYS: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Office

BOA. HRT: Catalogue of Maps

BOA. İ AZN: Ministry of Justice, Imperial Edicts Office

BOA. İ DH: Rescripts of Internal Affairs Office

BOA. İ HUS: Edicts Special

BOA. İ RSM: Rescripts of Tax Office

BOA. İ TNF: Ministry of Trade and Agriculture, Imperial Edicts Office

BOA. MF MKT: Ministry of Education, Chief Secretary

BOA. MKT MHM: Chief Secretary of Important Affairs

BOA. ŞD: Council of State

BOA. TFR I A: Correspondence between Rumeli Inspectorate and the Grand Vizier

BOA. TFR I KV: Rumeli Inspectorate, Documents of Kosovo Province.

BOA. TFR I MKM: Directorate of Rumeli Inspectorate

BOA. TFR I MN: Rumeli Inspectorate, Documents of Monastir Province

BOA. TFR I ŞKT: Petitions to Rumeli Inspectorate

BOA. TFR I SL: Rumeli Inspectorı, Documents of Thessaloniki Province

BOA. TFR I UM: Rumeli Inspectorı, General Documents

BOA. Y MTV: Yıldız Palace, Combined Petition Documents

BOA. Y PRK ASK: Yıldız Palace, Military Documents

BOA. Y PRK BŞK: Yıldız Palace, Correspondence with the Grand Vizier

BOA. Y PRK SGE: Staff Documents of Yıldız Palace

BOA. ZB: Documents of Police

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study intends to present a contribution to the social history of laboring men and women in the Ottoman Empire. Tobacco workshop laborers of different communities and genders constitute the subject matter of this research. The operation of the community and gender factors among the tobacco laborers in the period of the political disintegration of the Empire are taken under close examination. It is intended to present a new approach and to challenge long presumed assumptions in this regard.

In this study, laboring men and women are presented within the larger context of their social and political settings. Drawing the socio-political settings of the laborers requires the contextualization of the study at first. Here at this point, contextualization by a specific period and locality can be viewed as an important asset. Ottoman Thessaloniki province is taken as the locality and the time-span starts with the 1890s and end with the starting of the First World War. Such a contextualization not only reveals the factual sides of the issues, but also grounds the discussions on a sound base. Applying this method, first hand material and archival sources become an indispensable task in this regard. Therefore, on the overall level, contributing to the expansion of little known facts and figures on the laboring men and women is considered one of the main tasks of this study.

Abiding the groundless debate over factual versus discursive analysis, this study positions these two alternative modes of analyses as two consecutive levels of a proper investigation. This is a multi-layer historiographic attempt at grasping the different

facets making up the life contexts of the laborers: workers and movements, rank and file leadership, socio-economic, political and cultural issues operate within a context given by the past. All these factors change over time in certain ways. The study is formulated around the collected data and discursive elements built upon them.

The factual part of the study has its own vices and virtues, openings and predicaments by its nature. As far as Ottoman labor history is concerned, it can be said that there are more predicaments than openings. First of all, there is no such thing as a written tradition of the Ottoman working-classes and oral tradition is also hardly attainable. The unavailability of self-representative documents of the working classes leads the researcher to the state archives mostly. Although they should be approached with a careful examination and precaution, official documents are quite informative and full of precious details about almost anything that comes to mind concerning the lives of the laborers. Although a researcher can be attached to this or that school of thought as a matter of formation, perspective, ideology etc., he or she is restricted by the material and sources at hand. Moreover, the availability of the sources determines the content of the study, which themes to include and to what extent to go further in research. For example, one can not easily study the working-class culture or cultural representations of the Ottoman working-classes as E.P.Thompson did for the English working class. Therefore, the availability of the data sets the first limitation when starting research.

The archives and sources of different countries were used in the study in order to be able to expand the data and the view point as well. The study tries to utilize a wide range of sources and material, from the Ottoman state archives to parliamentary registers and Ottoman and French year books to consulate reports and memoirs. Post-cards also took their place among this conglomeration of helpful materials, as the visual

material to reconstruct the social settings of the period and the locality in question. The Ottoman State archives were brought together with the sources of the Tobacco Museum in Kavala. Similarly, Ottoman year books (*Salname*) were cross-checked with the French year books (*Annuaire Oriental*). The integration of such different sources and the cross-checking of the material enabled the researcher to see some phenomena which would not have been visible otherwise.

Applying to the sources of different countries and different languages can be regarded as a must especially for studies on late Ottoman society, because not only the people, but also the sources were separated and dispersed - especially in the Balkans - with the partition of the Empire. Therefore, the sources of a single state and single language would not be satisfying for a comprehension of the social reality of the Empire. In that sense, sources of the Balkan states are crucial to reconstruct the social milieu of the Empire. If the Turkish and Greek material had not been brought together, the multi-communal labor organization of the Greek Orthodox, Muslim and Jewish laborers might have remained invisible at the overall level. Shedding light on this fact can be regarded as the greatest achievement of this study.

The articulation of the data here in this study is primarily guided by what is called as the “new labor history” approach. The development of “new labor history” in the 1960s paved the way for bridging several fields of study. Labor history today is quite receptive to interdisciplinary approaches. In fact, the same transformation concerns other fields of study as well, such as the intellectual history, gender and family history etc. Intellectual developments at the paradigm level do not make an impact on a single field, but influence many of them.

The revision of the labor history field first came onto the agenda in the 1960s. The publication of E.P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* in 1963¹ marked the coming of age for the "new labor history". What made the approach new at the time was the effort to reinterpret formal working class institutions- syndicates, parties and the socialist thought- in terms of the voices of the lay men and women and their peculiar experiences.

This study does not support the dualistic approach giving precedence either to the institutions or to the representations of the laborers. What displayed here is the unity of the laborer's life world. Family, community, state, syndicates, physical and social environment of the laborers all constitute the social setting taken under examination in this study. Heterogeneities, contradictions, conflicts and confusions also are included in this life world.² Real life situations contain heterogeneities and contradictions by their nature. As Hobsbawm underlines, the history of labor is part of the history of society.³ Therefore, this study gives place both to the institutions and the representation of the tobacco laborers as far as the material at hand enables us to do so.

The revision of labor history since the 1960s not only has refashioned the method, sources and the approach to the laborers but also opened up new agendas and debates. Previously, the industrial revolution and the factory labor force had dominated the thinking about the working classes. New labor historians have challenged the

¹ E. P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

² Christopher Johnson calls for expanding the boundaries of labor history in his discussion of the "life world" and the "everydaylife" historians in Germany. For further discussion on this debate, see Christopher H. Johnson, "Life-world, System and Communicative Action: The Habermasian Alternative in Social History," in *Rethinking Labor History*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 52-68.

³ Eric Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labor* (London: Weinfeld & Nicolson, 1984).

textbook view that the great turn in history occurred between 1780 and 1830 because of the introduction of mechanized manufacture. They have stressed instead the durability of pre-industrial patterns of work and leisure. The handicraft workers' confrontation with capitalistic development has framed much of the research in the field. The theme of the pre-industrial laborers facing the economic developments of the nineteenth century has encouraged studies of family life, social forms of solidarity and the different strategies developed by the laboring classes to cope with the new economic changes, so that the field necessarily has expanded to other fields and disciplines.

In fact, this new paradigm has brought two major themes to the field, the state of pre-industrial laborers in the age of industrialization and the impacts of European industrialization on the laborers of the peripheral world. Area studies such as the Middle East, the Balkans and the Ottoman labor studies have come onto the scholarly agenda in this regard. Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system perspective laid the ground for much of these area studies in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴

The 1990s witnessed another dramatic change in labor history, when the advent of what is called the linguistic turn in the human sciences resulted in another paradigm change. This change immediately overthrew the "new labor history" and rendered it old-fashioned. The new post-materialist labor history dismantled the relation between labor history and labor politics. This approach has not ever exempt from criticism either. Labor history today is oscillates between the attractions of discourse analysis and the promise of a renovated materialism.⁵ Here the question is how much of the familiar

⁴ See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

⁵ For an analysis of the post-materialist labor history and its critiques, see Lenard. R. Berlanstein, ed. *Rethinking Labor History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

we should discard to accommodate the new? This means that this study accommodates the different genres of labor historiography in its own way.

Firstly, this study does not cut off the relation between labor history and labor politics. As Hobsbawm suggests, labor history is political by its nature. On the other hand, it challenges some convictions of the new labor history as well. The new labor history put emphasis on the worker rather than his/her institutions. In this study, both the workers and their institutions are taken into account. Or in other words, workers are not isolated from their own life context and this context involves their organizations, political ideas and actions as well. It is suggested that if the aim is to reconstruct the life world of the laborers, they should not be isolated from their organizations, activities and political actions.

Secondly, this study appreciates the interdisciplinary approaches to labor history. In this regard, community and gender studies are regarded as a fruitful strategy to expand the limits of the labor historiography. It is crucial for reflecting the complexity and variety of working-class experiences in which all lines of inquiry- family, ethnicity, gender, mobility and so on- converge into a web of connections.⁶ Especially for the context of late Ottoman society, integration of these fields is more crucial. For example; given the national struggles in the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century, one can hardly make a distinction between nationalism and identity studies and labor studies. Or one can not search the impacts of the semi-peripheral industrialization on the labor force without applying to the field of gender studies. The

⁶ David Brody, "The Old Labor History and the New: In Search of an American Working Class," in *The Labor History Reader*, ed. Daniel J. Leab (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 1-16.

gender factor is regarded here as a transformatory “supplement” to this labor historiographic attempt.⁷

Thirdly, the scale of research is regarded as crucial in this study. It is regarded that micro-scale local studies better picture the life contexts of the laborers. Thompson has been one of the pioneers to demonstrate a best practice in this regard as well. He has done more than map out a new terrain of working-class life for us to explore. With his own attention to the concrete and specific he has helped legitimate the close local study of workers. He argued that many aspects of the working-class life we seek to explore tend to be rooted in the local community. This approach inevitably leads to the contextualization of the study by a local community. Therefore, the notion of tobacco laborers in this study is contextualized by a specific locality that enables the researcher to handle the complexity of the experiences on a sounder ground.

On the other hand, Aminzade puts forward that, “We need to look beyond the shop floor and the locality and supplement analyses of the proletarianization of workers and the rise and decline of different local industries with the study of shifting connections between local, national and global economies.”⁸ A web of relations from local to global is taken into account in this study.

Parallel to this framework of mind, the periodization of the study starts with the 1890s, the period of the dramatic rise of tobacco exports from Ottoman lands and ends with the changes brought by the Balkan Wars and the First World War. The wars

⁷ For the transformatory role of the gender category as a “supplement” to history writing, see Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1996), pp. 1053-1075; Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Woman Work and Family* (New York: Routledge, 1978).

⁸ Ronald Aminzade, “Class Analysis, Politics and French Labor History,” in *Rethinking Labor History*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (Chicago: University Illinois Press, 1993), p. 92.

changed the whole structure of the existing milieu. The administrative authority, tobacco market relations, production methods and the gender and ethnic composition of the labor force all changed with the wars. In terms of localization, the study is contextualized on the case of the Ottoman province of Thessaloniki province where the dramatic changes of the tobacco market were reflected on the lives of the thousands of men and women tobacco laborers and a labor movement.

The above mentioned theoretical context would not be complete without being positioned at the global level. In other words, the authenticity of the local context can not be grasped in the absence of the web of relations within the country and abroad. Therefore, a world-systemic approach was taken into account to display the Ottoman peculiarity in economic terms. In fact, much of the theoretical approaches have been developed from the historical experiences of Europe, including the ones mentioned here above. For this reason, they may not be able to apply directly to the Ottoman case. In this regard, the world-systemic approach enables the researcher to develop a discourse peculiar to the Ottoman case.

Parallel to the above mentioned theoretical discussions, the major question of this study is formulated around the themes of “economic peripheralization” and “political disintegration.” The organization and politization of the laboring classes in the industrial West has been studied extensively. Because the organization and politization of labor has been identified by the industrial classes, the same attempts of the laboring men and women in the peripheral economies have been neglected or unrecognized for a

long time. For this reason, this study focuses on the peripheral and semi-peripheral representations of labor in the context of the Ottoman Balkans.⁹

In a semi-peripheral country like the Ottoman Empire, the driving force of labor unionism was not the industry but commerce. Thus, one needs to look at the commercial economy and the commercial laborers to see the laboring men and women. In terms of commerce, creditors, debtors, entrepreneurs, in short the employers are discussed in the related literature but the employees are often neglected. The employment capacity of the commercial sector, from porters to bargeman and every kind of workshop laborer especially the agricultural processing workshops, have generally been underestimated. Parallel to this, the work and workplace notions were defined mostly by the workshop activity. Similarly, the laborer category was identified by the wage laborers of the commercial sector, particularly the tobacco workshop laborers in the context of this study.

The semi-peripheral position of the Ottoman economy brought about many peculiarities to Ottoman labor. Firstly, it should be noted that the largest of the tobacco workshops were owned by the foreign direct investment. This was especially the case in the tobacco sector at the turn of the twentieth century. The domination of foreign direct investment in the shop-floor activity had important results, one of which was the laborers become more open to international fluctuations. This is to say that the relations of work were determined in the international market rather than the domestic market and the laborers, devoid of national protectionist measures were often vulnerable in the

⁹ For the semi-peripheral and peripheral representations of labor, see Ellis Jay Goldberg, ed. *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996); Shadid Amin, Marcel van der Linden, ed. *Peripheral Labor: Studies in the History of Partial Proletarianization* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

face of the fluctuations of the international market. The peripheralization of the economy in this regard not only impoverished the craftsmen by the import of cheap industrial commodities but also subjugated the wage laborers to the exploitations of the international market. This fact underlines once more the significance of the operations of the world market for the laborers inside.

Another result of the foreign direct investment in the commercial economy was that the labor struggle against the employers often took the form of a national dispute because the employers were foreign, as in the boycott against Austria in 1908.¹⁰ Parallel to this fact, the laboring classes might not have easily and clearly positioned themselves between their foreign employers and the state. In one case, they were supported by the state against the foreign monopolies or international companies or in another case the state suppressed the labor activism and did not give way to the establishment of labor organizations.

In addition, given the level of industrialization in such a semi-peripheral country like the Ottoman Empire, workplaces could not grow into large scale factories. This brought about several results for the Ottoman laborers in terms working conditions and working class consciousness. Since the large-scale, assembly line production did not develop in the Ottoman country, alienation and the adjoining class consciousness took different forms in the Ottoman context. This means that the workers' identity displayed some variations and deviations from the industrial working classes of Europe.

While the economic peripheralization brought the above-mentioned results to the laboring men and women of the Empire in general and the tobacco workshop

¹⁰ For further information about this boycott, see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

laborers in particular, the fact of the political disintegration of the Empire brought different impacts. For the given period and locality of the study, the political disintegration of the Ottoman Balkans needed to be articulated into the analysis. The advent of nationalism and partition of the Empire were felt in the Ottoman Balkans more than elsewhere. If the first question is what was unique to the representation of labor in the periphery, the next question that needs to be followed is the responses of the organized men and women laborers to the question of nationalism and their responses to the political change from an empire to a nation-state.

From another point of view, this study intends to portray laboring men and women of the Empire in a period of economic and political change. In other words, this is a story of the change rather the description of long-standing structures in time. The subjectivity of the laboring men and women is best observed in times of dramatic changes. The focus is given to the responses and re-positioning of the peoples themselves in this process. In other words, it is attempted to reveal how the given economic and political changes intervened into the lives of the laboring men and women and how they responded to these changes.

Several aspects of the responses of laborers to the question of nationalism have been problematized by some scholars. Moreover, it is widely accepted that the triumph of the Balkan nationalisms disintegrated the already short-lived joint labor fronts starting with the declaration of the constitution in 1908 and ending with the Strike Law in 1909. This proposition is so internalized that if one speaks of labor movements and /or socialism in the Ottoman Balkans it is generally mentioned by the name of the communities such as Jewish socialism, Bulgarian socialism or Greek socialism. Although several parts of religious and sectarian communities in the Ottoman Empire

can be affiliated with particular establishments, institutions, movements or genres, this study tries to indicate that it may not always be the case and can not be generalized. It is suggested that the identification of a particular community with a particular institution, movement etc. does not stem from the presumed essence of this community but its peculiar life context. This study takes a different track in this regard and it takes the space or a specific locality as the unit of analysis to search for cross-communal relations.

It is asserted that communal influences are meaningful in a particular local context. When the roots of the so called Jewish socialism, Bulgarian socialism, and Greek socialism are investigated, it reveals that they all originate from Ottoman Thessaloniki in one way or another. This can not be a coincidence; on the contrary it must have something to do with the specific context of Ottoman Thessaloniki at the turn of the century. For this reason, although the relations between the members of the different communities are problematized in this study, the unit of analysis is a spatial one rather than an “imagined community.”¹¹ This suggestion does not of course leave the communal aspects out of the context, but it is indicated that the community as a unit is meaningful in a defined context and this definition is made for a spatial unit offering the researcher sound facts rather than assumed communal identities. Therefore, spatial and demographic changes are treated as the main tools for examining the communal relations among the laborers.

In the European case, the nationalization process helped the integration of the laboring classes in their respective country. Labor movements could take the form of

¹¹ Refers to the concept developed by Benedict Anderson. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

mass movements due to the nationalization process in a sense. So it comes out that, while nationalization was an integrating force for the European industrial classes, it was a dividing force in the Ottoman case.¹² As noted above, the triumph of nationalism in the Balkans over the Empire has been assumed to have disintegrated the already futile attempts of the labor front made up of different religious and ethnic subjects of the Empire. It is true that several labor movements vanished into the national atmosphere of the period. But this study tries to attract attention to the multi-communal labor movement of the tobacco workers of Kavala and its environs, which is the periphery of the Thessaloniki province. The partition of the laboring classes in the Ottoman Balkans is so emphasized that there is little information on what happened to the multi-communal labor front of Thessaloniki after 1909. The literature usually stops at 1909 with the enactment of the Strike Law. Therefore, one of the major tasks of this study is to reveal the unfinished story of the multi-communal front of the laborers of Thessaloniki province after 1909. In addition, the factors that brought them together in a multi-communal labor movement are examined closely. This study tries to answer these questions and proposes that a kind of “local patriotism” developed upon the “gender” and “migrant” exclusionism were keys to the establishment and survival of a cross-communal tobacco labor organization. Given the general conviction that the laborers of the Ottoman Balkans were divided on communal and /or national lines, this study tries to display a different case, where the gender and migrant cleavages divided the laborers more than the national schism. As will be explained in detail, the men of different

¹²In a comparison between Britain and the USA, James Holt makes the point that the relatively late nationalization and the communal conflicts between the immigrant communities constitute the major reasons of the belated organization and politization of labor in the USA. For further discussion, see James Holt, “Syndicalism in the British and U.S. Steel Industries, 1880-1914: A Comparative Study.” In *The Labor History Reader*, ed. Daniel J. Leab (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 167-185.

communities were much more willing to cooperate with their brothers from other communities than their fellow women. Women and migrant laborers constituted the “others” upon which the workers’ identity was built upon.

Consequently, this study tries to reconstruct the worlds of the tobacco laborers of the Ottoman Thessaloniki province in its own way. Different fields of study are integrated to achieve this end as far as possible. A little amplification of the liminal voice of the tobacco laborers under examination will be sufficient for this study to achieve its goal.

CHAPTER II

TOBACCO AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PHENOMENON IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This chapter examines the socio-political connotations of the commoditization and commercialization of tobacco production both on the world-wide and in the Ottoman context. Besides revealing the facts and figures about the amazing development of the tobacco exports from the Ottoman lands, tobacco will be portrayed as an overarching social phenomenon and the availabilities of socio-political historiography on tobacco will be discussed at length.

This study tells the history of the late Ottoman period in reference to a strategic good having an impact in almost all the facets of life from politics to economics and everyday life practices to gender and community relations. In other words, this is a kind of historiographic attempt in which tobacco and the world around are placed at the center of scholarly reflection. Especially in the nineteenth century, tobacco was a good that changed the lives of the millions of people in the Ottoman Empire. This means that tobacco was more than a mere good and it became an overarching phenomenon. The sudden rise in the economic significance of tobacco and the abrupt changes it brought to the lives of the people renders it a comprehensible reference point in terms of historiography. This is to say, the tobacco in the Ottoman context is an appropriate means by which to grasp social change in the overall level.

The production and consumption of tobacco is not only a functional key to understanding the Ottoman world in the nineteenth century. It was a significant good wherever it was produced, consumed or exchanged on earth. Tobacco had always come

to the stage with significant connotations since the very beginning of its appearance on the world.

Writing History about Tobacco

So far, the history of tobacco has enlightened the social, political and economic lives of many people in the USA, Europe and elsewhere. Libraries and museums of tobacco in several places abroad remind the contemporary audience of how tobacco was a strategic good determining the lives of the millions of people once upon a time. Because the tobacco industry is fading away today, it is more urgent than ever to write on tobacco and the world it generated in the past. A brief investigation of tobacco history around the world will enable us to see the possibilities of an Ottoman historiography on tobacco.

Tobacco production determined the social and economic history of the American South during the Civil War in the nineteenth century and the period of Great Depression in the twentieth century. Tobacco plantations in the American South had been ruined at the time of the American Civil War. While the tobacco plantations in the USA were devastated together with the lives of the people working on them, tobacco lands offered new life opportunities to the peoples of the Ottoman Balkans. The same plant that had been ruining lives in one part of the world heralded better life opportunities for people in another. Then the tobacco leaves made another cycle on earth and brought a precious survival strategy to the peoples of the American South at the time of the Great Depression. During the Great Depression, the individuals and families in the American South earned much needed income from tobacco cultivation,

processing or sewing drawstrings into small cotton tobacco bags used for its transportation.¹³

One can say that the history of the American South is not written on parchments, but on tobacco leaves. Breen writes about the independence struggle of the American South over tobacco. He shows that tobacco dominated not only the economy of the region but also shaped the culture as well. The great planters built a symbolic world around the tobacco leaves, attributed values to it and made it a mark of social distinction among various estates of the society.¹⁴ Kulikoff also wrote the history of Southern slave society in the USA in reference to tobacco production relations.¹⁵

Another liberation story has been written on tobacco leaves. Tobacco production was a key to the Cuban liberation as well. Cuban cigar-makers had a crucial role in the independence struggle of Cuba. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, increased tobacco exports revived the socio-economic relations between Cuba and Florida. Cigar factories opened up in Florida to process Havana tobacco. Ten of thousands of Cubans arrived in Florida to work in these factories and most of them established themselves permanently. The labor milieu of the Cuban cigar workers in the USA generated a highly developed proletarian consciousness along with the tradition of trade union militancy. In the 1890s, these cigar workers played a crucial role in the independence struggle of Cuba. Embracing a variety of radical ideologies including communism,

¹³ For further information about the issue, see Billy Yeargin, *Remembering North Carolina Tobacco* (Charleston: The History Press, 2008), p. 103. See also Carlton Stutz, Graham A. Barden, et al., *Tobacco Bag Stringing Operations in North Carolina and Virginia* (Virginia: n.p., 1939).

¹⁴ T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.216.

¹⁵ See Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake 1680-1800* (Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

anarchism and syndicalism, these workers also shaped the ideology in Cuba during the early decades of the twentieth century.¹⁶

In another part of the world, tobacco industry restructured the social and economic lives of the people. The growing tobacco industries of Europe acquired concessions and establishing monopolies in the Middle East. Concessions given to the British Tobacco Company in Iran generated a great social movement at the very beginning of the twentieth century. The social unrest in Iran occurred due to the tobacco concession turned into a large scale socio- political struggle in the country. The tobacco industry brought the “faithful” and the “infidel” into conflict in this part of the world.¹⁷

In another case, Lebanese women employed in the cigarette factory of the Régie Monopoly tied anti-colonial struggle to labor demands.¹⁸ The same Régie Monopoly also changed the lives of the people in the Ottoman Empire as well. As a result, the little tobacco plant grew into a significant matter throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century.

This study tries to estimate the influence of tobacco in the socio-economic and political life of late nineteenth century Ottoman society. In terms of historiography, the tobacco sector offers several opportunities to study the different facets of the Ottoman society in the given period. One can read about the semi-peripheralization process of the

¹⁶ Louis A. Pérez, *Essays on Cuban History: Historiography and Research* (Florida: Florida University Press, 1994), p. 74.

¹⁷ Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892* (London: Cass, 1966), p. 77.

¹⁸ See Malek Hassan Abisaab, “‘Unruly’ Factory Women in Lebanon: Contesting French Colonialism and the Nation State 1940-1946,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no.3 (Fall 2004), pp. 55-82.

Ottoman Empire through the tobacco industry.¹⁹ Ottoman fiscal policies, administrative and social matters between the farmers, traders and the state can be studied in relation to tobacco as well.²⁰ Or the same product enables one to study social stratification and matters of social conflict as well. Some of these issues have been studied elsewhere. The following section revises the existing literature on tobacco in the Ottoman context and proposes some novel fields of study.

What Tobacco Offers for the Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire

The first connotations of tobacco come to mind in economic terms in general. As the above section showed, on the world-wide scale, the impacts of the tobacco sector on societies transcended the boundaries of the mere economic or fiscal spheres. One can find tobacco even in the folk songs and tales of a society. Therefore, tobacco can be easily described as a social phenomenon.

Treated as a social indicator, tobacco can draw us a picture of the social stratification in the Ottoman Empire. One way of describing tobacco as a social indicator is to regard it as a consumer good. Tobacco as a consumer good addressed a

¹⁹ For example, see Hüseyin Avni, *Bir Yarım Müstemleke OluşTarihi* (Istanbul: Sinan Matbaası Neşriyat Evi, 1932). See also Donald C. Blaisdell, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Avrupa Mali Denetimi: Osmanlı Düyun-u Umumiye İdaresi'nin Anlamı, Kuruluşu ve Faaliyeti*, trans. Ali İhsan Dalgıç (Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaası, 1979); Vedat Eldem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında bir Tetkik* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1970).

²⁰ For example, see Fehmi Yılmaz, “*Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Tütün (1600-1883)*” (Ph.D. diss., Marmara University, 2004). For a local study on the Trabzon province in this regard, see Filiz Dıđırođlu, *Trabzon Reji İdaresi 1883-1914* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2007). For the tobacco sector in Egypt, the relations between the various actors of the sector and the state, see Relli Shechter, *Smoking Culture and Economy in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

wide-range of consumers from the lowest economic scale to the highest one. In this regard, tobacco consumption had a regulatory role in social stratification in the way and the quality of tobacco consumption signified social status and identity of its consumer. As seen in the case of Seville both beggars and aristocrats used tobacco but in different ways. In the period of the 1830 and 1848 revolutions, those who smoked outside on the streets were recognized as hard democrats. Or in Italy those smoking in the streets were considered by the local people to be either as Germans or spies.²¹ Similarly, tobacco consumption indicated the social status of the Ottoman subjects and the Turkish citizens afterwards. For example, the Turks of Crete under the Ottoman rule were identified by the long pipes of their narghiledes.²²

There are several claims upon the first use of tobacco in the form of cigarette.²³ According to one argument, it was first used by the beggars of Seville at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The beggars collected the stubs of cigars²⁴ from the streets and smoked them by wrapping them with paper. Another argument says that it was first used by Ottoman soldiers on the front during the Crimean War in 1856 and adopted by the foreign soldiers and brought into the form of a proper cigarette.²⁵ Anyway, wars,

²¹ Refik Baskın, “Hastalıklara Devadan Ölüm Nedenine Gerileyen Bir Düşüşün Adı: Tütün” in *Fabrikanın Zilleri Sustu Adı Kaldı Reji*, ed. Sanem B. Tilki (Samsun: Samsun Yerel Tarih Grubu Yayınları, 2000), p. 7.

²² *Eleftheria*, 10 December 1995. For further discussion on the consumption practices and social identities in the Ottoman Empire, see Haris Exertzoglou, “The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating, Class, Gender and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19th Century,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 1 (2003), pp. 77-101.

²³ For several types of tobacco consumption throughout the history, see E.C Corti, *A History of Smoking* (London: Sracken Books, 1996).

²⁴ Note that “cigar” is a previous form of the industrial “cigarette”. Cigar is rolled and wrapped with an outer covering of tobacco leaves.

²⁵ Kudret Emiroğlu, Ümit Uzay, “Tütün Keyfi,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 66 (1989), p. 41.

revolutions and migrations played important roles in the dissemination of tobacco consumption in general. It is also noted that 1830 and 1848 revolutions were very influential for the dissemination of tobacco consumption in Europe.²⁶

The tobacco leaves and cigarettes produced by the Régie Company for the domestic market varied between different qualities for the different categories of consumers. The Turkish State Monopoly, which replaced the Régie Monopoly after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, clearly manifested this stratification of consumption. In 1934, it is stated in Tobacco Law no.1701 that the prices of cigarettes were fixed throughout the country. But, it is noted that the purchase of some products was reserved for particular places and particular groups of people. According to this article, cigarettes were classified into peasant, people, soldier, military officer (*zabit*), parliament and ambassador cigarettes.²⁷

Not only the consumption manners but also the brand mark of the cigarette was of course an indication of social status.²⁸ The American tobacco companies produced different qualities of brands addressing the different classes. For example, while customers of Samaris Cigarettes were generally the new immigrants in the USA, Schinasi Brothers and Benardet Companies produced for the smoking connoisseurs and selling them in elegant stores. The figure below shows an instance of the elitism created by the tobacco industry.

²⁶ Atilla Türk, "Sigaramın Dumanı," *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 61 (1989), pp. 49-50.

²⁷ Turkish Monopoly Administration, *1701 numaralı İzahname* (Ankara: İnhisarlar Matbaası, 1934), pp. 5-6.

²⁸ For a detailed study on the emergence of luxury cigarette brand marks, see Relli Shecter, "Selling Luxury: The Rise of Egyptian and the Transformation of the Egyptian Tobacco Market 1850-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 35 (2003), pp. 51-75.

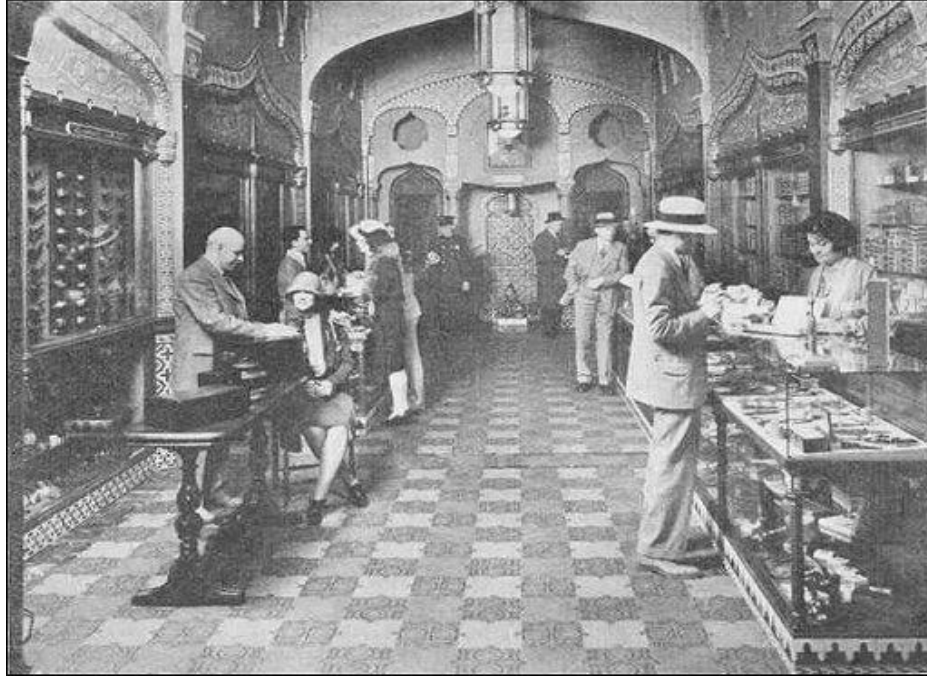


Figure 1. Tobacco store of the Benardet Company in San Francisco (Bryan McMullin, 2007)²⁹

Another way of defining tobacco as a social indicator is to regard it as a basic consumption good, as it became in the nineteenth century. It is this basic consumption good character of tobacco which makes it a good indicator for making observations about a given society. Tobacco became such a basic consumption good that it replaced bread in many cases. The consumption of tobacco became so widespread in many cases that people reacted to the failure of tobacco supply like they reacted to the failure of bread supply.³⁰ Nineteenth century European books wrote about the hunger preventing

²⁹ McMullin, Bryan. 21 April 2007. *Burnt Offerings*. Available [online]:<http://www.journalofantiques.com>[21 April 2007].

³⁰ Oktay Gökdemir, "Aydın Vilayetinde Tütün Rejisi" (Ph.D. diss., Dokuz Eylül University, 1994), pp. 69-71.

impact of tobacco besides other benefits.³¹ Therefore, bread easily could be substituted with tobacco. Tobacco even came before bread in some cases.

Another indication of the basic consumption status of tobacco was the purchasing basket of the Ottoman army. The Ottoman army supplied two basic consumption goods for the maintenance of the soldiers, bread and tobacco. In another case, it is observed that the emigrants from the Ottoman Balkans complained about the lack of tobacco and asked for cigarette before bread from the relief authorities, when they arrived to Anatolia. The newspaper *Ahenk* writes about how the emigrants were addicted to tobacco. It says that the newly arrived migrants did not suffer from anything but the lack of tobacco.³² This is to say that, tobacco production and consumption had become vital enough for the social and economic life of the lay men and women in the nineteenth century.

Tobacco consumption studies offer other opportunities for social observation. Marketing strategy, which is another aspect of tobacco consumption, enables one to observe the socio-political changes in the cigarette papers and boxes. Cigarette papers and boxes became an influential venue for political propaganda in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Printing political slogans on the cigarette papers and boxes was the most expedient way of disseminating political ideologies. For pragmatic merchants, those slogans were the best way to get the support of the political authorities and also the most efficient way of marketing to a huge addicted population.

³¹ Elisha Harris, *The Effects of Its Use as a Luxury on the Physical and the Moral Nature of Man* (New York: WB. Harned, 1853), pp. 30-32.

³² Kemal Arı, *Büyük Mübadele: Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), p. 79.

The relation between the marketing strategy of the tobacco sector and the political change is so obvious that one can see the propaganda of Young Turks on the cigarettes in the second constitutional period or the portrait of Venizelos in Cretan cigarettes in 1909³³ or the sudden end of America's fascination with the mystic Oriental Turkish cigarette when the Ottoman Empire was allied with the enemies of the United States in 1914.

The relation between the marketing strategy of the tobacco sector and the political power is also observable in the Ottoman context. First of all, the images of the cigarette papers and boxes were subjected to the state control. Cigarette paper and cigarette box producers had to submit the drafts of their products to the state authorities before putting them onto the market. In the registers of the Police Ministry (*Zaptiye Nezareti*), it is possible to follow which producers acquired license for their cigarette boxes or cigarette papers and which were not permitted. In general it is possible to say that most products were not permitted for the reason of being found morally inappropriate.³⁴ It is interesting to note that in the second constitutional period, the Young Turks produced cigarette paper with the slogan "*Hürriyet-i Osmani*" (Ottoman Liberty) on it and the others printed the sultan's signature on the cigarette papers.³⁵ In this way, tobacco as a commodity also carried messages that enable us to observe the social and political atmosphere of a particular society in a particular period.

Moreover, the marketing strategy of tobacco can provide some ideas about the representations of the Ottoman culture abroad. Since most of the high quality American

³³ *Eleftheria*, 10 December 1995.

³⁴ BOA. ZB. 50/13, 1324.4.22. BOA. ZB. 50/18, 1322.6.8. BOA. ZB. 50/25, 1323.4.2.

³⁵ R. Anhegger, "Eski Sarma Kağıdı Kapakları," *Tarih ve Toplum* 3, no. 13 (1985), p. 35.

cigarettes containing Turkish blend made of processed tobacco leaves were exported from Ottoman lands, Turkish and/or Oriental images were frequently used the cigarette boxes. They utilized from the good reputation of Turkish tobacco and underlined the Turkishness of their blends by making reference to oriental images such as the sultan, harem, camels and various Islamic symbols. Since the journey of tobacco did not end in Ottoman lands, we can also see the Ottoman and/or Turkish images on the American and European cigarettes, which enable us to observe how Ottoman and/or Turkish society was perceived abroad. So, the tobacco as a commodity provides us not only a picture or a snapshot of Ottoman society, but also informs us about the image of the same society abroad.

In any case, tobacco as a commodity gives us direct social and political messages. Therefore, tobacco can easily be proposed as a reference point for Ottoman social historiography. Especially, the field of consumption studies, which is a novel field for Ottoman history, seems a fertile area for scholarly debate. Most of the studies on the Ottoman consumption culture are concentrated on clothing, fashion and elite foodstuff. In this regard, the social aspects of tobacco consumption in its all facets wait to be explored.³⁶

The social history of tobacco in the Ottoman Empire generally is concentrated on matters of social conflict. Smuggling and several other reactions to the Régie Monopoly have been among the most studied subjects in this regard.

³⁶For a general discussion on the Ottoman consumption studies, see Suraiya Faroqi, "Research on the History of Ottoman Consumption: A Preliminary Exploration of Sources and Methods," in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1992*, ed. Donald Quataert (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 15-41; Zafer Toprak, "Tüketim Örüntüleri ve Osmanlı Mağazaları," *Cogito*, no. 5(1995), pp. 25-28.

So far, the social historiography on Ottoman tobacco has focused on smuggling and its social connotations. Especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the clashes between the tobacco smugglers and the police force of the Régie Monopoly became a matter of social security.³⁷ In the eyes of the tobacco producers, the police of the Régie Company were viewed as tyrants exploiting the peasants' labor. Smuggling and illegal manufacturing were so widespread that it was very hard to find legal cigarettes produced by the Régie Company.³⁸ In the Ottoman State Archives, there are many documents telling about the complaints of peasants about the Régie police. The arbitrary practices of the Régie police against the peasants and also the merchants and the organized violence of the peasants upon the Régie police generated a significant problem of security and increased the level of social violence in the overall level.³⁹

Besides the problem of security, the issue of the Régie police force generated a problem of sovereignty for the state since the Company obtained the power to use force against the people, which should have remained exclusively in the state itself in a sovereign state in the true sense of the term. Therefore, the state administrators also displayed an uncooperative attitude towards the police force of the Régie Company. The opposition to the Régie police force and the uncooperative attitudes of the state

³⁷ For further information about the smuggling activities in the tobacco sector, see Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire 1881-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 163-187; Gökdemir, "Osmanlı tütün tarımında Reji kolculuğu", pp. 51-58; Mehmet Temel, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Döneminde Tütün Politikası ve Artan Tütün Kaçakçılığı," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 158 (2001), pp. 4-11.

³⁸ Tiğınçe Otkar, "Osmanlı Devletinde Reji Şirketinin Kurulmasından Sonraki Gelişmeler," in *Tütün Kitabı*, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2003), p. 50.

³⁹ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 81/8048, 1324.1.3. BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 84/8346, 1324.2.13. BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 100/9984, 1324.10.5. BOA. TFR ŞKT. 104/10365, 1324.12.5. BOA. TFR I SL. 8/730, 1321.1.11.

administrators were contextualized in the framework of an anti-imperialist struggle against foreign capital.⁴⁰

Among the several socio-political connotations of tobacco in the history of the Ottoman Empire, this study concentrates on the tobacco laborers, their life world, institutions and ideas. Since the tobacco laborers were one of the most radical groups of the Ottoman labor movement, it is possible to find some references to this group within Ottoman labor history studies.⁴¹ It is suggested that a close examination of the tobacco laborers can reveal some unknown facts and also challenge some over-generalizations about the social history of labor in the Ottoman Empire.

Detailed examination of the tobacco laborers brings several openings to the social history of labor in the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the analysis of this sector enables one to challenge some long-established presumptions about the history of labor in general and Ottoman labor history in particular.

Firstly, the examination of the tobacco sector in the Ottoman Empire brings the workshops to the fore front as the main source of the related labor movement. So far, the small cigarette factories of the Régie Monopoly with an employment capacity between 300-400 laborers or state factories have been examined.⁴² Attracting attention

⁴⁰ This is the main argument of Quataert about the tobacco smuggling. See Quataert, “*Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire*,” pp. 79-113.

⁴¹ See for example; Donald Quataert, “The Workers of Salonica,” in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert, Erik Jan Zürcher (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies in Association with the International Institute of Social History, 1995).

⁴² For further information on the cigarette factories of the Régie Company, see Fatma Doğruel, A. Suut Doğruel, ed. *Osmanlıdan Günümüze: Tekel* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2000), pp. 77- 85; Gündüz Ökçün, *Osmanlı Sanayii: 1913-1915 Sanayi İstatistiki* (Ankara: Ankara University, 1970), pp. 69-71. For the *Feshane* (Fez) factory of the state, see Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı, “Working for the State in a Factory in Istanbul: The Role of Factory Workers’ Ethno-Religious and

to the tobacco workshops called as *mağaza*, this study tries to display the relevance of the workshops for the study of Ottoman labor movement rather than the industrial factories. As Quataert also indicates, scholarship on eighteenth and nineteenth century England and France shows that very large numbers of workers in industrializing areas labored in small-scale workshops and homes. He states that large-scale industry was not a historical norm but rather an aberration from the norm of small-scale production.⁴³ Most scholars have neglected the history of laboring masses in the Ottoman Empire for the fact that industrial factories were marginal in number and capacity in this part of the world. The argumentation about the marginality of large-scale industrial plants even in the Industrial Europe may help to change this view in the Ottoman labor history as well. Therefore, this study looks where the majority of labor force was employed rather than looking at a relatively small number of factory workers.

Secondly, among the other developing sectors of late Ottoman society, such as the textile, railway or tramway sectors, tobacco sector has a unique position in terms of gender division. Except for textiles, all of those sectors employed only men. The textile sector had an overwhelmingly female labor force. In this regard, it can be suggested that there was a gender division of labor among the prevailing sectors of the Ottoman economy in the nineteenth century. Unlike the other sectors, men, women and children worked together in the tobacco sector. In other words, the tobacco sector was a replica of the larger society, which enables us to take it as a sample of a universe of study for social observation. For the same reason, the tobacco sector is a valuable sphere in which

Gender Characteristics in State-Subject Interaction in the late Ottoman Empire” (Ph.D. diss., Munich University, 2008).

⁴³ Donald Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 15-19.

we can observe the position of the women laborers within the Ottoman labor movement. Moreover, the revealed tobacco labor activism in this study poses a challenge to the long-standing presumption about the underdevelopment of labor movement in the sectors where women constituted the majority of labor force.⁴⁴

Thirdly, the period of the development of the tobacco sector and the emergence of the large masses of tobacco workshop laborers requires one to delineate on the question of communal relations as well. At a time when the tobacco workshops were flourishing amazingly in the country due to the increasing international demand for tobacco, the empire was in a process of political disintegration because of the national question. For this reason, one has to delineate between the impacts of the nationalist propaganda among the different communities of laborers. So this study tries to answer the question of how the national factor operated among the laborers of different communities. The relations between the laborers of different communities constitute one of the two main questions of this study. The study examines this question which has been answered superficially with overgeneralizations so far. For a macro-scale study, this question may not be answered properly. But since this is a local case study taking the Ottoman province of Thessaloniki province under close examination, the relations between the laborers of different communities become more visible and attainable for the researcher. In this context, the study puts forwards the notion of “local patriotism” among the laborers of different communities probably for the first time in Ottoman labor history.

⁴⁴ For further details on this argument, see Feroz Ahmad, “The Development of Class Consciousness in Republican Turkey,” in the *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic 1839-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies in Association with the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 1995).

Last but not least, the study of tobacco laborers presents how the laborers engaged in the political sphere, because the tobacco workers were one of the labor groups who had a strong attachment to labor politics in the larger definition of the term. The labor politics followed by the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki helped in the participation of the tobacco laborers in politics. The group in question had access to parliamentary politics as well by supporting Dimitar Vlahof for the parliamentary elections in 1908 and 1911 and getting his support during his tenure in the parliament.

Anyway, none of the above mentioned phenomena would have come into being if the tobacco export sector had not undergone substantial development towards the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the study investigates the tobacco sector in economic terms also. Besides the dynamics of the world-wide economic developments and the market changes, Ottoman policies over tobacco changed constantly. These changes should be examined first to be able understand the peculiarity of this period.

Ottoman Policies on the Tobacco Production and Taxation

Tobacco began to be produced in Ottoman territory since the beginning of seventeenth century. Widespread production appeared after the eighteenth century and towards the mid-nineteenth century it became a real economic value, especially in Ottoman Macedonia, the Black Sea coast, the Aegean coast, Syria and Aleppo. The export of tobacco leaves to Europe considerably increased in this period, as a result of the two developments. Firstly, European tobacco importers were in search of alternative markets at the time of the American Civil War. Secondly, international industry and manufacture exhibitions were influential in the recognition of Ottoman tobacco abroad.

These international exhibitions were the main instruments of international marketing in the absence of today's mass communication technologies. Most of the Ottoman handcrafts and agricultural products came to be known in Europe by means of those exhibitions. In the first international exhibition of the Ottoman Empire in 1863, tobacco was given a special place among the other commodities. Sample products from Thessaloniki, Yanya(Ioannina), Edirne(Adrianople), Trabzon and Hüdavendigâr provinces were presented at the exhibition.⁴⁵ Those samples represented the highly qualified type of tobacco that was known as the "oriental" type in the European market. These two developments steadily increased the rate of tobacco exports.

The tobacco sector in the Ottoman Empire attained increasing prominence parallel to the rising foreign debts of the state in the second half of the nineteenth century. The state had already signed fifteen international credit protocols before the declaration of financial bankruptcy in 1875.⁴⁶ Compared to the other tobacco producing countries, the Ottoman state had been not been receiving enough as revenue. Thus, throughout this period, the state's policy on tobacco production was concentrated on increasing state revenue to be able to pay the foreign debts. On the other hand, tobacco producers were becoming increasingly impoverished as the state tried to utilize more from the expanding tobacco market through taxation. Extra taxes were levied on both the peasants and the merchants. In this case, smuggling appeared as a solution to the heavy taxation on tobacco. A relevant percentage of the tobacco producers were drawn to smuggling, which was so widespread that it almost became a job for some part of the

⁴⁵ Sevilay Kasap, "Sergi-i Umumi-i Osmani, 1863" (MA thesis, Marmara University, 2003), pp. 1-7.

⁴⁶ İ. Hakkı Yeniay, *Yeni Osmanlı Borçları Tarihi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1964), pp. 19-49.

producers. They started to achieve this job in a more organized way and established smuggler bands.

Before the establishment of the monopoly of the Régie Company with the January 1881 Decree (*Muharrem Kararnamesi*), the state attempted several arrangements to administer tobacco revenues. The first arrangement in this regard occurred in 1862. The Tobacco Ministries (*Duhan Nazırlıkları*) were established in eighteen places throughout the country to collect the tobacco taxes. According to this tax regulation, peasants would pay transportation tax (12 piasters for each *kıyye*)⁴⁷ and the merchants would pay a 30 percent sales tax. A year later, the sales tax was reduced to 15 percent.

In order to prevent tobacco smuggling, the administration took several measures. One of these was to collect all the products to be sold in state warehouses. Another was to take the entrance and exit points of the cities under control. These regulations, however, did not produce the expected results. The tobacco revenue of the state remained equal the half of the revenue of the smallest tobacco producing country in Europe (annually 250,000 Ottoman liras).⁴⁸

The tobacco smuggling issue was a persistent phenomenon from the early seventeenth century. It was the major problem of the tobacco sector in different countries, not only in the periphery, but also in the central economies of Europe. As Goodman puts it, “throughout the fiscal history of tobacco the only question asked by

⁴⁷*Kıyye (okka)* is a unit of weight equal to 1283 gram.

⁴⁸Dıġıroġlu, pp. 22-23.

the state was how great a tax burden tobacco could carry before it would become self-defeating.”⁴⁹

In 1870s Grand Vizier Fuat Pasha prepared a report on the reformation of the economy stating that other tobacco producing countries acquired enormous revenues from tobacco. Upon this international comparison of tobacco revenues, he charged the Customs Office (*Rüsumat Emaneti*) with doing whatever necessary to increase revenues.⁵⁰ Customs Office came with idea of the delegation of tobacco business to the private sector. It is intended to relieve the state from struggling with tobacco smuggling and to secure the tax revenues.

Then the second arrangement for the administration of tobacco revenues was introduced in 1872. According to this arrangement, which was called the Régie Regulation (*Reji kaidesi*); the state would buy tobacco from the farmers and grant franchise of marketing to particular merchants determined by auction. Two bankers from Galata, Hristaki Efendi and George Zarifi won the auction and acquired the right to buy and sell tobacco produced in Galata, Üsküdar (Scutari), Boğaziçi (Bosphorous), Marmara (Islands) districts and the surrounding areas located within three hours from these districts.⁵¹ In this way, a local monopoly was established in some parts of Istanbul.

This arrangement did not produce the expected results either. Smuggling could not be prevented in this way. On the other hand, some practices of the Régie administration, such as the searching of women in the course of struggling against the

⁴⁹ Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 43.

⁵⁰ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol.7 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), p. 228.

⁵¹ For further information about the group of bankers from Galata and their activities, see Haydar Kazgan, *Galata Bankerleri* (Istanbul: Türk Ekonomi Bankası, 1991).

smugglers, excess pricing of low quality tobaccos and the unfair measurement of the tobacco to be purchased created public discontent. Newspapers criticized the Régie administration and petitions were sent to the Sublime Porte. In addition, the two bankers realized that they would not be able survive in the market in the face of other competitors. As a result, the Régie regulation could survive less than one year and was abolished.

After the abolition of the franchise of the bankers, the state itself assumed the monopoly administration in Istanbul. The Customs Office (*Rüsumat Emaneti*) was responsible for the administration of the monopoly until the establishment of the Customs Directory (*Rüsumat İdaresi*) in 1879. This monopoly of the state included not only the buying and selling of tobaccos but also the right of tobacco processing that took place in the small workshops. The tobacco workshops were closed and the equipment was expropriated by the police.

This state monopoly was abolished in 1874 and the banderol regulation was introduced as another arrangement for the administration of tobacco revenues. According to this regulation, it was forbidden to sell to the external market or to the domestic market without the banderols issued by the state. Until this regulation, state received revenue from the production and the export (import also though marginal) of tobacco. This arrangement levied tax on the domestic consumption as well. The tobaccos without banderol were assumed to be as smuggled and their possessors punished accordingly. Therefore, the administration not only aimed at raising revenue by way of banderol but also preventing smuggling. Different from the previous arrangement, the banderol was not a local practice but extended all over the country. Several criticisms were raised against this regulation as well. Especially the foreign

traders objected to this regulation. Because when the import of unprocessed tobacco leaves from Britain had been forbidden in 1861 by a protocol, British merchants had received a tax exemption from the exports in return. A similar protocol with the USA on these terms followed this one. For this reason, the banderol regulation was not so favorable for the foreign traders.

In 1879 another arrangement came about for the administration of tobacco revenues. The Ottoman state had pledged tobacco, salt and post-stamp revenues as security for its debts in 1862. The administration of those revenues and the three others (tax revenue of fish in Istanbul, alcoholic drinks, and silks of Istanbul, Edirne, Samsun and Bursa) was delegated to the creditors, namely the Ottoman Bank and the Galata bankers. Collection of the revenues of these six items was called the regulation of *Rüsum-u sitte* (Taxes of the six). This regulation proved an unexpected success in its first year and then the European creditors offered to pay more than the Galata bankers and replaced them. M. Leonidas Baltazzi made the first offer and a contract was signed between the group of this banker and the state in 1881. The Public Debt Administration (PDA), however, rejected this arrangement and finally replaced the group of Baltazzi.

Thus, *Rüsum-u sitte* revenues were granted to the Public Debt Administration (PDA) that came into being with the above mentioned January Decree in 1881.⁵² According to the ninth article of the decree, the PDA established the Régie Company to administer the tobacco monopoly. Beginning from 1883, the purchase,

⁵²For a discussion on the role of the Public Dept Administration in Ottoman politics and economy, see Donald C. Blaisdell, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Avrupa Mali Denetimi: Osmanlı Düyunuumumiye İdaresinin Anlamı, Kuruluşu ve Faaliyeti*, trans. Ali İhsan Dalgıç (Istanbul: Istanbul Matbaası, 1979). See also Vedat Eldem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında bir Tetkik* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1970); Emin Kırbyık, “Parvus Efendi'nin ‘Türkiye’nin Mali Tutsaklığı’ Araştırmasına Göre Reji ve Düyun-uUmumiye” in *Fabrikanın Zilleri Sustu Adı Kaldı: Reji*, ed. Sanem B. Tilki(Samsun: Samsun Yerel Tarih Grubu Yayınları, 2000), pp. 11-19.

manufacture and sell of the Ottoman tobaccos reserved for domestic consumption was exercised under the monopoly of the Régie Company. Although little is known about their type of activity and the capacity, around 300 tobacco or cigarette producing ateliers were closed by the beginning of the Régie monopoly.⁵³ The Régie Company established cigarette factories in Istanbul, Izmir, Samsun, Adana, Damascus and Aleppo in 1884. The company utilized some of the existing factories and workplaces and the qualified labor. When the contract was signed between the government and the Régie Company, it was expected that the employment capacity of the cigarette factories would be increased, but it remained more or less the same. From then on, the domestic tobacco market of the Ottoman Empire was controlled by this company. Although the Company also was authorized for tobacco exportation, it could not monopolize the tobacco export market in legal or practical terms.⁵⁴

For the period in question, the international tobacco market was in the favor of the tobacco exporters of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the tobacco exporters followed their own course irrespective of the Régie Company. But this does not mean that the merchants and the Régie Company operated together in harmony in the tobacco market. Although it was not authorized to do so, it is observed that the Régie Company attempted to function as a monopoly in the export market as well. According to the statute of the Régie Company, both the agricultural producers and the merchants were obliged to obtain several certificates to carry out their jobs. The production, storage and transportation of tobacco had to be done by the certification of the Régie Company and

⁵³ Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Diğiroğlu, pp. 21-30.

the Company often raised difficulties with these certificates, which were its main instruments for controlling the export market.

So far, the tobacco sector of Ottoman Empire has mostly been examined through the Régie Company since it was the main actor of the Ottoman tobacco sector. Although the Régie Company is not main theme of this study, it is crucial to introduce it and the world around it properly, because it directly influenced tobacco production, manipulation and trade. Thus, it is necessary to look closer at the company and the issues around it.

The Domestic Market: The Régie Monopoly and Its Critique

The Régie Company came about as a solution to the foreign debts problem of Ottoman Empire in 1883. According to a decree issued in January 1881 (*Muharrem Kararnamesi*), Régie Company (“*Müşterekü’l Menfaa İnhisar-ı Duhan-ı Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye*” or “*Memalik-i Şahane Duhanları Müşterekü’l Menfa Reji İdaresi*”) obtained the monopoly of buying, manufacturing and selling tobacco reserved for domestic consumption in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁵ The company was a joint enterprise of Credit Anstald in Vienna, Banker S.Bleichroeder in Berlin and the Ottoman Bank for thirty years from 1884. Thus, the Régie administration would come to an end in 1914. Termination of Régie administration, however, became a public debate as early as 1902.

Upon the pressures of the complaints from the Régie administration, Abdulhamid II., who had been silent about the issue until that time, established a

⁵⁵ Note that Eastern Thrace, Lebanon and Crete were exempt from the Régie administration.

commission to investigate the problem and reassess the contract of the Company. The investigations of the commission lasted until 1908 without reaching a conclusion. Besides the rumors about the conflicts between the Company and society, the Company's reason for existence began to be questioned from the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period. The press openly criticized the Company and Abdulhamid regime.⁵⁶ On the other hand, other alternatives to the Régie Company administration, such as the monopoly tax label (*banderol*) model, were long discussed in the Ottoman Parliament.

In the registers of the Ottoman parliament, it is observed that several MPs openly criticized the practices of the Régie Company administration and the position of the state towards the Company. In the registers it is seen that Rıza Bey openly criticized the Régie Company administration as Drama MP. He argued that the Company did not operate according to the regulations of its constitutive contract and it did not fulfill its responsibilities in regards to the farmers.⁵⁷ Rıza Bey was one of the two organizers of the Tobacco Congress that took place in Drama in 1909. The complaints of the tobacco farmers and the merchants from the Régie Company were discussed in the congress in front of the Régie Company representatives.

Another MP who raised his voice in the parliament against the very existence of the Régie Company was Vlahof Efendi. He questioned not only the malpractices of the Régie administration but also the reason for the existence of the Company. Besides tobacco, Régie Company had the monopoly right of the tax revenues of the salt in Ohri

⁵⁶ Oktar, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Reji Şirketinin Kurulmasından Sonraki Gelişmeler," p. 48.

⁵⁷ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (Ottoman Parliamentary Registers), 14 Kanunusani 1324 (1909).

Lake. By making the point that the people should freely utilize the salt of Ohri Lake, he objected to the monopoly rights of the Company in general.⁵⁸ Vlahof Efendi was one of the most radical figures of the Ottoman parliament and actively supported the political struggles of the tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki province. He delivered public speeches to the tobacco laborers together with Abraham Benaroya, the leader of the Socialist Workers Federation of Thessaloniki. He would later be elected as the leader of the Tobacco Congress representing 30,000 tobacco laborers in the Ottoman Balkans.

On the other hand, it should be noted that although a critical sentiment against the Régie Company was occasionally voiced in the parliament, no serious measures could be taken against the Company. In the parliamentary registers, it is observed that a demand for 300,000 Ottoman liras advance payment from the Ottoman Bank, Deutsche Bank and the Régie Company⁵⁹ came just a few pages after Rıza Bey's parliamentary question about the malpractices of the Régie administration. In 1911, the parliament decided to abolish the Régie Company administration and prepared a bill on the establishment of a state monopoly for seven years in 1912. But this time the outbreak of the Balkan Wars obliged the government to comply with the Régie administration in order to be able borrow money to finance the war. In this situation, the terms of the contract of the Company was extended in 1913 for fifteen years beginning from 1914.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (Ottoman Parliamentary Registers), 14 Kanunusani 1324 (1909).

⁵⁹ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (Ottoman Parliamentary Registers), 20 Nisan 1325 (1909).

⁶⁰ Oktar, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Reji Şirketinin Kurulmasından Sonraki Gelişmeler," pp. 51-53.

Finally, the abolition of the Régie Company administration was decided at the Izmir Economy Congress (*İzmir İktisat Kongresi*) in 1923.⁶¹ The Company was bought and nationalized in 1925 by the Turkish Republic. In this way, despite the criticism of the parliamentarians, state officials and intellectuals about the malpractices, injustices and inefficiency of the Régie administration⁶² the Company managed to survive until the establishment of Turkish Republic.

Criticism of the Régie Company took place not only at the parliamentary or intellectual level. A broad social resistance existed against the Company on the part of the agricultural producers, merchants and the commercial and industrial laborers that constitute the main focus of this study.

To begin with the resistance of the agricultural producers and the merchants, the most prominent study about this issue was achieved by social and economic historian Donald Quataert at the beginning of 1980s. He developed the argument that the tobacco smuggling was a manifestation of a popular resistance of the peasants against the Régie Company. Similarly, the tolerance and uncooperative attitude of the government towards tobacco smuggling, despite the Régie's incessant calls for collaboration against smuggling, was a kind of a passive resistance against the European economic

⁶¹ Gündüz Ökçün, *Türkiye İktisat Kongresi, 1923, İzmir: Haberler, Belgeler, Yorumlar* (Ankara: Ankara University, 1971), pp. 359-390.

⁶² “The Smyrniot merchant G.M. Tranos believed that the main reason for the backwardness of all Ottoman *millets* was the Ottoman Public Dept Administration which through the Régie and direct taxes absorbed all the wealth of the Empire.” A. J. Panayotopoulos, “On the Economic Activities of the Anatolian Greeks Mid. Nineteenth Century to Early Twentieth,” *DKMS*, no. 4 (1983), p. 115. For the criticisms on the economic inefficiency of the Régie administration and the comparison of several different methods to replace the Régie administration, see İbrahim Necmi Dilmen, *Türkiye’de Tütün Meselesinin En iyi Çare-i Hali Hakkında: İnhisar ve Bandrol Usullerinin Mukayesesi* (İstanbul: Vatan Matbaası, 1340). On the other hand, for an analysis of public discussion on how to replace the Régie Monopoly, see Francois Georgeon, “Tütün Reji’sinden Tekel’e Cumhuriyet’in İlk Yıllarında Tütün Sorunu,” in *Osmanlı-Türk Modernleşmesi (1900-1930)*, ed. Francois Georgeon (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), pp. 179-186.

penetration. Quataert argued that the various social reaction cases encountered in the foreign owned businesses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ottoman Empire could be interpreted within the framework of the anti-imperialist struggle against European economic hegemony.⁶³ This is to say that there was a tacit consent between the peasants, merchants and the government against the Régie Company.

The same tacit consent between the parties against the Régie Company also can be formulated as an “everyday forms of resistance” in reference to the work of James Scott.⁶⁴ From the point of Scott, it can be argued that the material domination of the Company gave way to the act of smuggling. Tobacco smuggling was so widespread that the Régie Company had to create a police force (*kolcu*) to prevent it. Smuggling became an organized action of peasants called as *ayıngacıtaifesi* (smugglers’ band).

The smugglers received support from their fellow peasants and the public opinion. The folk songs, tales and verses praising the struggle of the smugglers show that the symbolic side of the resistance was also strong.⁶⁵ Merchants also collaborated with the smugglers in their attempts to save their products from the Régie Company.

Although the coalition between the peasants, merchants and the government against the Régie Company was the case in general, local studies indicate that this coalition could take different forms in particular circumstances. For example, the parties of the conflict were composed of the peasants on the one side and the

⁶³ See Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire*. The same argument also was put forward by Hüseyin Avni, even before Quataert. See Hüseyin Avni, *Bir Yarım Müstemleke Oluşturuluş Tarihi* (Istanbul: Sinan Matbaası Neşriyat Evi, 1932), pp. 40-42.

⁶⁴ James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 27

⁶⁵ For further details on the folk songs on tobacco smugglers, see Süleyman Şenel, “Ayıngacı Türküleri,” in *Tütün Kitabı*, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2003).

Régieadministration, governor of the province and the notables on the other in the Trabzon case. In the case study of Ali Karaca, we see that the governor of Trabzon, Kadri Bey, and Nemlioğlu Osman Efendi, who was one of the notables of the province, was collaborating on the Régie side. The Anatolia Commission for the Inspection of Reform (*Anadolu Islahatı Teftiş Heyeti*) revealed in 1898 that the monopoly of the Régie Company in the district practically had been delegated to Nemlioğlu Osman Efendi. On the other hand, the revenue of the Régie in Trabzon had risen 40 percent during the tenure of governor Kadri Bey. Kadri Bey had eliminated the smugglers with his “milky” or “non-milky coffee” methods. He interrogated the people accused of smuggling in his office and offer them “milky” or “non-milky coffee,” which meant beating. Those who received “non-milky” could not walk for three days and those who received “milky” could not walk for a week.⁶⁶

Although smuggling was the first and foremost problem between the Régie Company and the farmers, there were other problems also between the two. Although the jurisdiction of the Régie Company was determined in the statute, there were some cases in which the company did not respect the terms of the contract.⁶⁷ The problems started with the farmers to obtain cultivation certificate from the Régie Company. According to the statute, the Company had the right to prevent the cultivation of tobacco in the fields less than a half *dönüm*.⁶⁸ This regulation was legitimized on the ground that cultivation in small fields helped smuggling. Moreover, the Company

⁶⁶ Ali Karaca, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Reji ve Tütün Kaçakçılığında Trabzon Örneği: Bir Yabancı Sermaye Serüveni,” in *Tütün Kitabı*, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2003), p. 67.

⁶⁷ BOA. TFR I SL. 67/6601, 1323.1.20. BOA. TFR I SL. 43/4268, 1322.4.8.

⁶⁸ *Dönüm* is a unit of measure equal to 1000 or 920 meter squares.

would lose its potential consumers if the people cultivated tobacco on small lands for their own consumption. Therefore, the Régie Company preferred middle or large sized production. Parallel to this policy, the Company tried to prevent the cultivation of small lands even larger than half dönüm.⁶⁹

Then problems followed with the storage of the tobacco leaves. All of the tobacco had to be stored in the warehouses of the Company; either it would be sold to the Régie Company or to the merchant. The absence or the distance of the warehouses of the Régie and the spoilage of the tobacco in the warehouses were other problems. In addition, the Régie Company was not willing to accept tobacco to be exported to its warehouses.⁷⁰

Another problem both for the peasants and the merchants was obtaining transportation certificates; it was an instrument of the Régie Company to control exports. Dealing with the bureaucracy of this certification and being subjected to the arbitrary practices of the Régie administration were sometimes troublesome.⁷¹

Another point of conflict between the peasants and the Régie Company came along with credits. According to the statute, the Régie Company had to give some advance payment to the farmers in order to start cultivation. The Company, however, attempted to take the money back before the sale of the product. The products of the

⁶⁹ BOA. TFR I SL. 35/3486, 1322.1.24. BOA.TFR I SL. 40/3981, 1322.3.14. BOA.TFR I SL. 42/4110, 1322.3.24. BOA.TFR I SL. 11/1032, 1321.2.21.

⁷⁰ BOA. TFR I SL. 67/6615, 1323.1.2. BOA. TFR I SL. 35/3478, 1322.1.23. BOA. TFR I SL. 37/3650, 1322.2.10. BOA. TFR I SL. 38/3797, 1322.2.27. BOA. TFR I SL. 39/3890, 1322.3.7. BOA. TFR I SL. 40/3905, 1322.3.8. BOA. TFR I SL. 40/3985, 1322.3.14. BOA. TFR I SL. 41/4001, 1322.3.15. BOA. TFR I SL. 50/4936, 1322.6.15.

⁷¹ BOA. TFR I SL. 47/4693, 1322.5.18. BOA. TFR I SL. 48/4713, 1322.5.20. BOA. TFR I SL. 205/20454, 1327.1.23. BOA. TFR I SL. 214/21309, 1327.7.8.

peasants and even their lands could be expropriated in this way. This strategy was exercised against peasants who had been selling their products to the merchants. In 1909, the peasants of Drama, Serres (Siroz or Serez) and Kavala held a big protest march to receive advance payments from the Régie Company.⁷²

A contrary situation could also aggrieve the peasants. Sometimes the Régie Company was not able to buy all the tobaccos produced in the country especially in good harvest years or when new lands were opened to tobacco farming. The tobacco of the peasants could spoil in the Régie warehouses and they applied to the state to find a solution in such cases.⁷³ Underweight of the tobacco to be sold and underpaying accordingly were other problems aggrieving the peasants, even if their crops were sold.⁷⁴

Although the resistance against the Régie Company was expressed in various forms at almost all levels of the society, it did not result in a mass manifestation or in a revolution as in the case of Iran. The movement against the concession of a Tobacco Monopoly to a British company overthrew the government in Iran and paved the way for the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. Concession granting had been a matter of public discontent in Iran even before 1890. The British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia, navigation, railroad transportation concessions and exclusive mining rights to the Reuter Company had all created public discontent. When in 1890, a concession granting full monopoly control over the production, sale and export of all tobacco in Iran was granted to a British company, it was seen as a further sign that the country was

⁷² BOA. DH MKT. 2885/92, 1327.B.09.

⁷³ BOA. TFR I SL. 48/4775, 1322.5.27.

⁷⁴ BOA. TFR I SL. 7/698, 1321.1.7.

being sold to foreigners. The protest against the tobacco concession was the first successful mass movement in Iran and led to the defeat of the government and triumph of the protesters in their demand for a total cancellation of the concession.⁷⁵ The first communist party of Iran was born out of largely from these protests around 1906.⁷⁶

Both the Ottoman Empire and Iran experienced the results of peripheralization. European capital tried to capture the tobacco revenues of both countries nearly in the same period. But there were some significant differences between the two countries in terms of the given concessions and their social and political impacts. First of all, the terms of the contract were more favorable on some points in the Ottoman case. Tobacco export was not monopolized in the Ottoman case, whereas it was included in the concessions given to the Imperial Tobacco Corporation of Persia in Iran. Keeping export activity outside the concessions was an important asset for a peripheral economy, since agricultural export was the prevailing sector in the peripheral economies at that time. The concession of all the activities concerning tobacco, production, sale, manufacture and export, left no space for the local people in Iran.

In the Ottoman case, turning to the export sector was a way out of the monopoly both for the agricultural producers. Most farmers turned to high quality tobacco production, namely the İskeçe(Xanthi) seeds, in order to be able to sell their products to the exporter merchants at relatively high prices rather than being obliged to sell their lower quality products to the Régie Company. It should be noted that, the Ottomans applied to the several strategies to maintain the monopoly over the high quality tobacco

⁷⁵ Keddie, pp. 1-35.

⁷⁶ Valentine M. Moghadam, "Workers and the Labor Movement in Irani" in *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East*, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996), p. 67.

production in the international market. The export of valuable tobacco seeds of İskeçe and İzmir was prohibited in this regard.⁷⁷ Compared to Iran, the monopoly over the agricultural production of the oriental type tobacco was maintained. Although the tobacco production could not grow to the industrial level, the Ottomans could maintain what was at hand at least, so that the high quality Turkish brand could preserve its fame in the international market even after the abolition of the Régie administration.

Secondly, the difference stemming from the terms of contract concerns the price of the concessions in both countries. Persian newspapers abroad focused on the discontent against foreign concessions. Just before the tobacco protests in Iran, in July 1890, Makam Khan's newspaper *Qanun* made a general complaint against the concessions of the patrimony of Muslims to foreign adventurers. In November, another liberal newspaper, *Akhtar*, published in Istanbul, printed a long attack on the tobacco concession. The article quoted an item from the Turkish newspaper *Sabah*, showing that on the basis of the estimates by the Controller General of Customs of the amount of tobacco consumed and exported, the concessionaire should make a net annual profit of 50,000£ and noted the low return to the Persian government. Thus, the Persian Régie was unfavorable compared to the Ottoman one. In addition, the favorable financial terms granted the concession holders were noted in a prospectus issued by the Imperial Tobacco Corporation in November 1890. The prospectus contrasted the 630,000£ paid annually by the Ottoman Tobacco Régie to the Persian Company's 15,000£ per annum.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ BOA. DH MKT. 1018/38. 19.Ş.1323. BOA. MV. 115/18. 11.M.1325. BOA. DH MKT. 2611/113. 14.S.1325. BOA. ŞD. 2751/58. 28.M.1325.

⁷⁸ Keddie, pp. 39-44.

Thirdly, the Ottoman monopoly was granted to a joint corporation representing the main actors of international politics. As was pointed above, the Company was a joint enterprise of Credit Anstalt in Vienna, Banker S.Bleichroeder in Berlin and the Ottoman Bank for thirty years from 1884. This enterprise over a peripheral economy did not disturb the balance of the international status-quo, whereas it was destabilized in the Iranian case. The tobacco concession was granted to a British company in Iran at the expense of Russia. The competition over the Iranian tobacco between Britain and Russia prevented the functioning of the Company alone. The competition between the two countries reflected in the domestic affairs of Iran and generated violent conflicts. Russians denied that Iran had the right to grant monopolies and special privileges to one individual to the exclusion of others. Thus, Russian agents supported the tobacco protests against the British and vice versa.⁷⁹

Fourthly, the mass movement against the tobacco concessions in Iran had a leadership originating mainly from the ulema posts. Leaders such as Sayyed Jamal Ad-din Al-Afgani and Malkam Khan were the influential intellectual figures of the movement. The partisans of Malkam Khan who shared his liberal and reforming views were sought to open the eyes of the nation to the tyrannical and corrupt government and imbue the people with an idea of democratic power. On the other hand, the fanatical Mullahs', taking advantage of Ramadan preached everywhere against the surrender of the "faithful" to the "infidels." In this way, the movement against the tobacco monopoly attracted many different segments of Iranian society from merchants to farmers, liberals to mullahs. Above of all, those different segments that came together around a common

⁷⁹ Keddie, p. 51.

cause had a powerful leadership which was lacking in the Ottoman case. Although several intellectual, political and bureaucratic figures criticized the very existence of the Régie monopoly as was noted before, they did not turn to the people to solve the matter radically. They rather preferred to handle the issue at the bureaucratic and administrative levels.

Lastly, religious discourse was powerful in the Iranian case. Religion was an important factor for the mobilization of masses. Unlike the Ottoman case, the struggle against the tobacco monopoly had been articulated on religious grounds, especially by the mullahs and even by Afghani. Thus, protest against the Imperial Tobacco Company understood by most of the people as a war of the “faithful” against the “infidels,” as noted. For the believers, the monopoly administration was an example of the illegitimate superiority of unbelievers and all the transactions under it would be illegal according to the Koran, since the consent of the seller did not exist. Actually, this framework of mind legitimized by religion declared the very essence of all monopoly transactions in general as an illegal act.

So far, the tobacco sector of the Ottoman Empire has been studied within the framework of the Régie Company, or in other words, the monopolistic situation of the sector and its socio-political implications. In the above summarized literature on the Régie Company and the critique of it, the peasants, merchants and the state administrators have been positioned as the social agents against the Régie Company. This framework of mind undermines two points. One is that the social forces against the Régie Company did not constitute a unified body. For example, there were serious problems between the peasants and the merchants concerning the tobacco trade, such as the underselling, debts and the expropriation of the tobacco lands. The other neglected

point is the position of tobacco workers in this formulation. Although the number of tobacco workers employed in the factories of the Régie Company was marginal in comparison to the tobacco producers, their social and political influence exceeded their number. Tobacco labor activism in the second constitutional period which will be discussed in the following chapter is an apparent case in this regard. Although, there are some studies on the tobacco workers employed in the factories of the Régie Company in Istanbul and Thessaloniki, the large body of tobacco workshop laborers has been neglected.

This study examines a group of tobacco laborers who were not legally under the jurisdiction of the Régie Company, the tobacco processing laborers employed in the commercial workshops called as *mağaza*. In the case of Thessaloniki, the number of Régie factory workers did not exceed 400⁸⁰ which made up around three or four percent of all tobacco workers of the province.⁸¹ Considering the number of striking tobacco workers of Thessaloniki province⁸² in the second constitutional period, it is possible to assume that the workshop laborers made up 95 percent of the total tobacco workers. For example, a document telling about a strike by tobacco workshop laborers of Kavala in 1905 notes that the number of strikers was about 10,000.⁸³ The number of workers was

⁸⁰For a list of the factories in Thessaloniki and their employment capacity, see Metin Berke, *Selanik Bankası'ndan Interbank'a 100 yıllık Mazi* ([Turkey]: Interbank, 2000), pp. 18-19.

⁸¹ Relying on the registers of the Macedonian Tobacco Workers' Congress held in Kavala in 1911, the total number of tobacco laborers of the region was estimated to be around 30,000 (*İskeçe* included). See Yannis Vyzikas, *Chronico ton Ergatikon Agonon* (Annals of workers' struggle) (Kavala: Tobacco Museum, 1994), p. 17.

⁸²*Thessaloniki province* here refers to an administrative body which included the main tobacco producing regions of the Ottoman Balkans such as Drama, Kavala and Serres. See the table of administrative units in Appendix A.

⁸³BOA. Y PRK ASK. 227/86. 17.M.1323.

more or less the same in the tobacco workers strikes in Drama and Kavala between 1908 and 1912.⁸⁴

Thus, tobacco workshop laborers constituted the overwhelming majority of tobacco labor force and they had a significant place in the history of the labor movement and socialism in Ottoman Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century. As will be seen in the following sections, it was mainly the tobacco workshop laborers who provided the bulk of support for the labor activism and they also constituted the mass that the socialist intellectuals of Thessaloniki addressed as the target population and from whom they received support. This is to say what is more significant for the social history of labor is not the Régie Company but the tobacco exporters operating in the Ottoman tobacco market. Except the strikes of the cigarette factory workers, the opposition against the Régie Company took the form of passive resistance mostly in the form of smuggling and several other forms. On the other hand, the resistance against the tobacco exporters resulted in an active labor movement. Therefore, it is necessary to see the developments in the external tobacco market and the social reality around it.

⁸⁴ For detailed information on the tobacco workers' strikes in the second constitutional period, see Şehmus Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi 1908-1984* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), pp. 62-70.

The External Market: The Rise of Tobacco Commerce

Among the agricultural export items of the Ottoman Empire, first quality oriental type tobacco had primary importance. Parallel to the raising international demand, the tobacco sector was expanding further towards the end of the nineteenth century.

According to the statistics of the Régie Company, there was an increase in the amount of tobacco exports. The amount of tobacco export calculated as 10,046.6 tons between years 1884-1888 reached 36,639.1 tons in the period between 1909 and 1913.⁸⁵

The developing European cigarette industry provided a good opportunity for the export of processed tobacco leaves from the Ottoman country. Europe was the first to absorb the export potential of the Ottoman Empire, and then the USA entered the market with a relevant market share as an importer. Between 1884 and 1914, the Austria- Hungarian Empire became first among the other European importers. 40 percent of the all tobacco exports from the Ottoman Empire were realized by Austria. Britain, France and Germany, followed Austria. The Austrian Herzog Company had the biggest market share until the American Tobacco Company challenged it as a fierce competitor in a later period. When the two consecutive periods are compared, from 1884-1888 to 1909-1913, Ottoman tobacco exports to the USA increased 855-fold.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ H.N. Erkson, *Türkiye Tütünleri* (Istanbul: n.p., 1954), p. 51.

⁸⁶ For an estimation of the share of tobacco exports among the other export goods by country, see Şevket Pamuk, *19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Dış Ticareti* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1995), pp. 62-65.

Table.1. Amounts of Tobacco Exports by Country⁸⁷

Country	1884-1888 (Average ton)	1909-1913 (Average ton)	1884-1914 (Average ton)
Germany	782.5	2562.6	1745.1
USA	10.3	8816.2	1977.1
Britain	1192.3	2565.4	1402.5
Austria	3880.6	15,383.4	7844.7
Belgium	44.2	151.4	100.4
France	1047.7	255.8	536.0
Netherlands	548.4	577.5	614.2
Italy	234.4	1766.7	842.3
Russia	972.2	566.0	717.3
Sweden	16.9	9.7	14.6
Egypt	893.6	3345.5	3250.3
Balkans, Iran, Others	423.5	638.9	422.1
Total	10,046.6	638.9	422.1

Parallel to the expansion of tobacco production in the country and the abolition of the import of tobacco leaves, Ottoman tobacco imports decreased dramatically. Tobacco imports were quite marginal in comparison to exports. Only the importation of tobacco not produced in the Ottoman Empire was allowed. In this case, the Ottomans imported only cigar and snuff tobacco (*enfiye*) for chewing which was consumed only marginally due to the spread of tobacco consumption in the form of smoked cigarettes. This already limited tobacco importation was discouraged by the state also. In the period of 1884-1914, Ottoman state charged the imports of cigar by 75 percent and snuff tobacco by 100 percent tax. The depression of the Ottoman lira in 1909 and during World War I, together with the entrance of smuggled tobacco from Greece and Russia led to the further increase of import taxes.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Erkson, p. 54.

⁸⁸ I. Coşkun Ceylan, "Türkiye'de Tütün Politikasının Tarihsel Gelişimi" (Ph.D. diss., Ankara University, 1995), pp. 42-44.

Tobacco was processed and exported from most of the ports cities of the Ottoman Empire, but the heart of the sector was Thessaloniki province, especially the Kavala district (*kaza*) of Drama county (*sancak*).⁸⁹ During the late Ottoman period, tobacco exports skyrocketed. Between 1892 and 1909, tobacco exports from Thessaloniki and its environs increased 250 percent.⁹⁰ According to the external trade statistics of the Ottoman Empire, in 1909, the annual tobacco exports of Thessaloniki province reached about 17 million kilos. Kavala district alone exported more than 13 million kilos of this total amount. The second largest exporter after Thessaloniki province was Trabzon province, with seven million kilos of annual export.⁹¹

The number of exporters, including commercial companies and individual merchants, also increased in the same period. It is possible to follow the increasing number of tobacco merchants in Thessaloniki from the French Commercial Consular Reports (*Annuaire Oriental*). When the report of 1896 is compared with those of 1909, the excessive increase in the number of tobacco exporters operating in the Thessaloniki market becomes visible. From 1896 to 1909, the number of tobacco merchants increased fourfold in the central district of Thessaloniki⁹² and five fold in the district of Kavala.⁹³

⁸⁹ In 1864, a new law on provincial organization introduced a complete hierarchical system of provincial organization and sub-divisions, from *vilayet* (province) through *sancak* (county) and *kaza* (district) to *nahiye* (rural community) and *karye* (village). See Appendix A.

⁹⁰ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p.66.

⁹¹ For further details of these statistics, see Dıġiroġlu, p. 139.

⁹² The central Thessaloniki district is also known and written by the name *Salonica*.

⁹³ *Annuaire Oriental* (Yearbooks of the Orient) 1896; *Annuaire Oriental* (Yearbooks of the Orient) 1909. For the entire list of the tobacco merchants see, Appendix B.

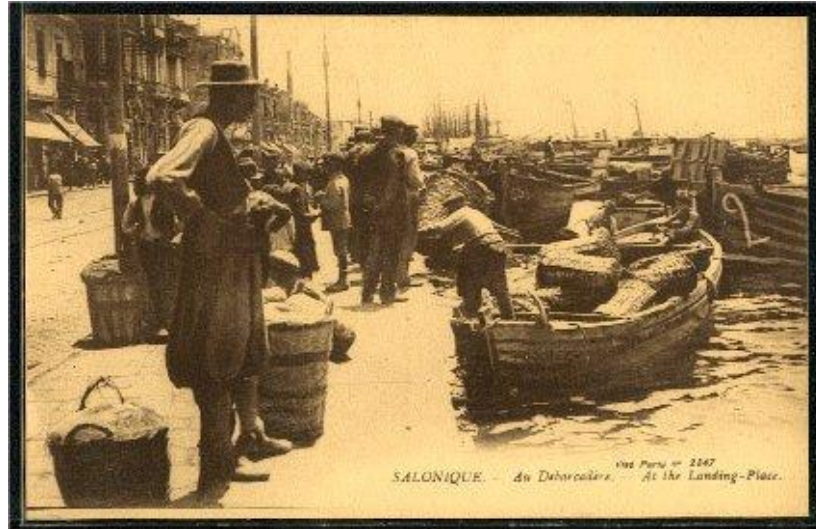


Figure 2. Port of Thessaloniki (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No.T007/009)

As noted above, tobacco exportation was not under the monopoly of the Régie Company. Although the Régie Company also was authorized to export according to its contract, its major domain of activities involved the production, manufacture and sale of tobacco reserved for domestic consumption. The Company tried to control tobacco exportation as well. Individual merchants and the companies involved in exportation had to obtain licenses from the Régie Company for the transportation and storage of the tobaccos they bought. The Company applied to some other means to impede the activities of the exporters and the exporters often complained about this situation. In the Ottoman state archives there are many cases indicating to the impediments of the Régie Company on tobacco exports.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ BOA. DH.MKT.1391/12. 15.R.1304. BOA. Y.A.RES. 39/42. 26.Z.1304. BOA. DH MKT. 1435/118. 11.Za.1304. BOA. DH.MKT. 1423/28. 06.N.1304. BOA. DH/MKT. 158/60. 01.Ca.1306. BOA. DH.MKT. 349/14. 28.Ş.1312. BOA. DH.MUİ. 83/31. 30.Ra.1328. BOA. İ DH. 1016/80181. 23.R.1304, BOA. DH.MKT. 1422/61. 29.Ş.1304.

However, the Régie Company was not able to hinder the development of tobacco commerce. While the Company was frustrated with its revenues in its first years, exports from the main Ottoman port cities was increasing. Tobacco exports were such a beneficial sector that a company applied to the government to acquire the monopoly of tobacco exports in 1907.⁹⁵ The Régie Company was not alone in the export market and it could not compete with the big tobacco companies entering into the market around 1900 such as the American Tobacco Company and the Austrian Herzog Company.

Another indication of the development of tobacco export was the flourishing cigarette manufacturers in the USA at the turn of the twentieth century. Most of the high quality cigarette producers in the USA used Turkish tobacco in their products imported from Thessaloniki, Kavala, İzmir and Samsun. The fame of these tobacco producing places was so widespread that they were used together with the brand names. The cigarette box of the Royal Nestor Company below obviously illustrates this fact. Samaris and Oxford Cigarettes (1894-1911), Minaret Cigarettes (1890-1911), Pall Mall Cigarettes (1899-2004), Natural Prettiest and Royal Cigarettes of Schinasi Bros. Company (1893-197) Mignon Cigarettes (1897-1944), Turkish Special Cigarettes, Andron Egyptian Specials, and the perfumed Jezebel Cigarettes (1905-?) Omega, Kef and Luxor Cigarettes of Turco-American Company (1904-1914), all included Turkish blend in their products and the utilized from the reputation of the high quality Turkish tobacco as a marketing strategy.

⁹⁵ BOA. Y PRK UM. 76/90. 30.Ca.1323.



Figure 3. Cigarette Box of Royal Nestor (Bryan McMullin, 2007)⁹⁶

While some foreign entrepreneurs were establishing their tobacco processing workshops near the Thessaloniki and Kavala ports, some other Ottoman merchants took their businesses to the USA and served the cigarette industry with their expertise on the tobacco blend. For example, Mr. Nestor Tsanaklis (1850-1932), a Greek from Thrace, began making his own brand of cigarette in Cairo, Egypt. In 1905, he opened a second factory on Roxbury Street in Boston, Massachusetts. The high tax on finished cigarettes

⁹⁶ Bryan McMullin, 21 April 2007. *Burnt Offerings*. Available [online]: <http://www.journalofantiques.com> [21 April 2007].

imported into the USA forced Tsanaklis to manufacture his cigarettes there too. His company also had branches in Frankfurt and London, along with a large warehouse in Kavala.⁹⁷

The Schinasi Brothers Company also took its business to the USA. In 1893 they established a small factory at 48 Broad Street in New York City. Solomon and Morris brothers arrived in America with a single secret cigarette blend of rich Turkish tobaccos that they developed after years of experimentation. By 1904 the success of their Natural, Prettiest, and Royal brands necessitated a move to a new and much larger six story building located on West 21st Street. The second floor of this modern factory was used to blend or mix the different Oriental tobaccos needed to make the popular Schinasi brands. The Egyptian style cigarettes were rolled on the fourth floor using ten Ludington machines. As many as three hundred girls packed the finished cigarettes into the colorful Schinasi boxes on the third floor. The junior partner, Morris, made a yearly trip to the Schinasi purchasing house in Kavala, where he supervised the selection of the varieties of Turkish tobacco leaves.

⁹⁷ Bryan McMullin. 21 April 2007. *Burnt Offerings*. Available [online]: <http://www.journalofantiques.com>[21 April 2007].

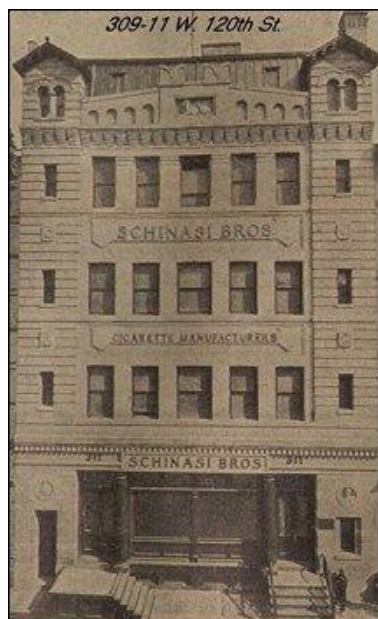


Figure4. Schinasi Brothers Company in New York (Bryan McMullin, 2007)⁹⁸

The Mignon Cigarettes of the Poulides Brothers, the Schinasi Brothers Company, the American Tobacco Company and also the Régie Company had workshops and warehouses in Kavala. The Poulides Brothers Company and the Schinasi Brothers Company maintained their warehouses in Kavala and resisted the monopolistic actions of the American Tobacco Company that reduced the rate of Turkish blend in its cigarettes and tried to eliminate the small companies that used the finest and the most expensive Turkish blends in their cigarettes by buying them. In March 1904, Solomon Schinasi stated in an interview that as long as he and his brother controlled their business, smokers could continue to expect the same high quality smoke first produced in 1893. The Poulides Company also managed to maintain its warehouse in Kavala until the 1940s. At that time, the imports were legally restricted by the USA administration.

⁹⁸ Bryan McMullin. 21 April 2007. *Burnt Offerings*. Available [online]: <http://www.journalofantiques.com>[21 April 2007].

In August 1940 this small company was being run by Mr. Themis Poulides, who found himself in trouble with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the USA. The FTC forced Mr. Poulides to “cease stating in any manner that he has a depot or branch at Kavala, or that the cigarettes sold by him are made at and imported from such locality.”⁹⁹

The tobacco business at that time was not limited with the USA market. As seen in the branches of the Royal Nestor Cigarettes, Turkish cigarettes were produced in Germany, England and Austria as well. In the first decade of the 1900s Ottoman-German economic relations were developing due to the building of the Hedjaz Railway. In the same period, German authorities demanded tobacco experts from the Ottoman Empire to supervise their cigarette production. They established a cigarette factory in Dresden and called the brand as Yenice (Yenidje, Janitza)¹⁰⁰ with the name of the famous tobacco producing district of Thessaloniki. The factory exported the processed tobacco leaves of Yenice-i Vardar¹⁰¹ district that were processed in the nearby workshops of central Thessaloniki port. At first seven tobacconists were sent to Germany to supervise the production activities. According to the German archives, 470 Turks were working in the Yenidje factory in 1907 and most of them were tobacco experts supervising the making of blend.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Bryan McMullin. 21 April 2007. *Burnt Offerings*. Available [online]: <http://www.journalofantiques.com>[21 April 2005].

¹⁰⁰ *Yenice* is one of the central districts of the Thessaloniki province located on the north along the Vardar River.

¹⁰¹ The proper name of the district is Yenice-i Vardar.

¹⁰² *Radikal*, 22 July 2007.

Consequently, tobacco exports developed dramatically in a short period of time. The tobacco workshops in the major Ottoman port cities became the primary supplier of processed tobacco for the cigarette manufacturers in the USA, Europe, and Egypt. As one can expect, this dramatic development of the tobacco export sector brought about dramatic social changes as well. In this period of development, a greater number of people were drawn to the tobacco workshops and constituted a relevant share of the labor force in the Ottoman Balkans. These developments increased the relevance of the Thessaloniki province as the major supplier of Ottoman tobacco for the external market. Therefore, the study focuses on Thessaloniki province.

Localization of the Study: Ottoman Province of Thessaloniki

As noted before, tobacco exports took on a relatively advantageous position at the turn of the twentieth century. In the literature concerning the introduction of tobacco into the Ottoman Empire, one can see a consensus on the point that tobacco agriculture first started in the Ottoman Balkans, more specifically in the regions of İskeçe and Yenice.¹⁰³ The expansion of the tobacco trade took place at first in the same region as well. This is to say that tobacco both as an agricultural product and a commercial commodity prevailed in the Ottoman Balkans and continued its prominence and strategic value until the end of the Ottoman administration in the Balkans and even after.

¹⁰³ Metin Ünal, “Tütünün Dörtüzyüz Yılı,” in *Tütün Kitabı*, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2003), p. 17.

The British consul in Kavala was one of the personalities indicated first to the commercial value of tobacco produced in Drama sandjak.¹⁰⁴ After 1896, tobacco exports especially from the Ottoman Balkans skyrocketed. The opening of the tobacco sector to the world market to such a great degree had an impact on the labor force as well. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the developments in the tobacco sector coincided with the intellectual and political developments of the era. This overlapping of the sectoral developments with the political changes and intellectual development makes Thessaloniki province a unique case to analyze the social and political repercussions of a certain type of sectoral development.

The dynamics of the market together with the political openings of the second constitutional period and the initiatives of socialist intellectuals in Thessaloniki brought about a radicalized body of tobacco laborers in that area. In other words, the tobacco labor movement in question took its most radical form in the Thessaloniki province, the heart of the tobacco export sector and the gateway of European political ideas in the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, this is an attempt to figure out the socio-political reflections of a case of sectoral development, or the interplay of labor history with the political and social history.

Parallel to this framework, the study introduces the Ottoman province of Thessaloniki first. The social and economic milieu of the province at the turn of the twentieth century enables us to better understand the dynamics of the tobacco labor movement in question.

¹⁰⁴ See İsmail Arslan, “İngiliz Konsolos Raporları Işığında XIX. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Drama Sancağında Tütün Yetiştiriciliği ve Ticareti,” *Turkish Studies* 4, no.3 (Spring 2009), p. 156.

Periodization of the Study

Nineteenth century economic developments brought about dramatic changes in the social texture of the Ottoman Empire. The tobacco sector was one of the leading sectors to undergo a dramatic expansion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The story of the increasing commercial significance of tobacco will be investigated in detail and the broad social and political implications of this process will be introduced briefly to lay the ground for the examination of the organization and politization of tobacco labor.

For a general overview of the nineteenth century Ottoman economy, it will be appropriate to position the Empire within the larger world economic system. The semi-peripheral position of the Ottoman economy is a key to understanding the Ottoman peculiarity. In other words, many aspects of the nineteenth century economic developments are closely related with the increasing integration of the Empire to the world economy and the process of peripheralization. Although it shared some characteristics with the other world empires, the Ottoman case had some peculiarities. The relative domination of the central state and bureaucracy over various social classes, the survival of the small and middle-scale peasantry and the maintenance of the political independence despite the European hegemony can be noted as the main peculiarities of the Ottoman Empire as a peripheral country within the world-system.¹⁰⁵ These peculiarities of the Ottoman example should be kept in mind for an extended investigation of the nineteenth century economy and society.

¹⁰⁵ Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme* (İstanbul:Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1994), pp. 159-160.

The governing mentality of the Ottoman economy in the classical period was based on the principles of provisionalism, fiscalism and traditionalism. While trying to maintain the status-quo by provisionalism and traditionalism, the Ottoman economy fell behind the struggle of comparative advantageous in the world economy. As a result, exportation from Ottoman lands failed to grow until the nineteenth century. In this regard, it can be said that this character of the classical Ottoman economy lay beneath the belated development of tobacco exports from the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁶

The modernization of the state apparatuses together with the emerging capitalist mode of production in Europe marked the beginning of a new era for the Ottoman economy and society as well. Especially the industrialization of the European economies brought about important changes. The process of peripheralization in the Ottoman economy went parallel to the industrialization of European economies. Due to the assigned role of world-systemic developments, the Ottoman economy no longer remained isolated. Although various parts of the Empire such as Rumeli, Anatolia, Syria may be said to have been incorporated into the capitalist world-economy at different points in time, it is for sure that the effects of this integration process were felt throughout the nineteenth century all over the Empire. Given the fragmented pattern of articulation with the world-economy, it is difficult to give one specific date of incorporation of the entity called the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world-economy. Although the process of incorporation occurred earlier, the actual emergence

¹⁰⁶ Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2000), pp. 87-90.

of a peripheral structure can not be said to have been completed before the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷

The region of the Empire earliest to integrate with the European economies was the Balkans. Tobacco played a strategic role in this incorporation process. Many European and also American tobacco companies with all their supporting facilities- such as the insurance firms and commercial diplomatic missions were deployed in the high quality tobacco producing areas of Thessaloniki province especially. Tobacco exports from the Ottoman Balkans caught a very advantageous flow in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1892 and 1909, tobacco exports from Thessaloniki and the larger Macedonia region increased 250 percent.¹⁰⁸ The advent of this flow is closely related with the nineteenth century peripheralization processes of the Ottoman economy in general. A brief review of these processes uncovers the logical behind the periodization of the study as well.

Ottoman integration to the world economy followed different courses throughout the nineteenth century. The first period of 1820-1853 was marked by British

¹⁰⁷ I. Wallerstein, H. Decdeli, R. Kasaba, "The Incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the World-Economy" in *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu İnân (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 88-97. Note that both the incorporation of the Ottoman economy to the world and its peripheralization have been periodized by the different scholars on different terms. While Immanuel Wallerstein argues that the Ottoman Empire was still outside of the world-economy in the sixteenth century, S. Faroqhi and H. İslamoğlu prefer to date the incorporation beginning in the sixteenth century. Similarly, Kasaba denotes the sixteenth century as the period of early contacts with the world economy. For further discussion, see Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ed. *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Albany; New York: State University of New York Press, 1988). On the other hand, nineteenth century peripheralization has also been periodized by Ş. Pamuk and R. Kasaba on different terms. For the periodization of this study, the categories of Ş. Pamuk are preferred because they fit best the general scheme of the rise of the tobacco commerce in the late nineteenth century. See Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1994).

¹⁰⁸ Donald Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic 1839-1950* (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies in Association with the International Institute of Social History, 1995), p.66.

economic hegemony in the Ottoman Empire. As a world hegemonic power, the British Empire returned to the peripheral economies in search of new markets, in response to the protectionist measures of the other industrializing European countries. The external trade of the Ottoman Empire displayed an unprecedented growth in the second quarter of the nineteenth century due to the expansion of the British Empire in the economy. While the urban crafts were losing ground, commercial agriculture showed a significant increase. The production of agricultural commodities developed especially in the major port cities because of the transportation facilities.

The second period includes the dates 1854-1876. This period can be summarized as a period of foreign debts and foreign direct investments. The Crimean War and the American Civil War brought about relevant economic consequences in this period. While the Crimean War led to the first foreign borrowings, the American Civil War increased the demand for agricultural commodities. In addition, first foreign direct investments were introduced to the Ottoman Empire. Starting from 1850s, these foreign direct investments were concentrated on railway construction. Since the transportation facilities were an indispensable component of international trade, foreign direct investment turned to the railway construction at first. Railway lines connected the major ports with the hinterland areas, thus carried the agricultural commodities of the inner lands to their commercial destinations. Commercial agriculture rose to 15 percent of the total agricultural production in the 1870s.

The third period includes the dates between 1880 and 1896. This was a period of stagnation and fiscal control over the Ottoman economy. Unable to pay its foreign debts, the Ottoman state declared a moratorium in 1876. Upon this development foreign creditors took control of the Ottoman fiscal system under the title of the Public Debt

Administration (PDA). The same period witnessed not only the bankruptcy of the Ottoman economy, but also the European economy as well. As the growth rate of industrial production was in decline in Europe, the growth rate of foreign trade was declining as well in the Ottoman Empire. The stagnation of the European economies changed the terms of trade to the disadvantage of the Ottoman economy. Especially, the decrease in the agricultural prices badly affected agricultural producer countries such as the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the hegemony of the British Empire in the Ottoman Empire was challenged in this period by Germany and France. These countries had also become foreign direct investors as railway constructors and paved the way for the division of the country into the several areas of influence between the years 1888-1896.

The last period starts with 1896 and lasts until the First World War. This period can be summarized as a period of commercial growth and competition between the imperial powers of Europe on the influence over the Ottoman economy. Although the foreign trade deficits of the Ottoman Empire continued in this period, it was much easier to find credit from the international market because of the competition between the European countries for the influence over the Ottoman economy. Moreover, as the effects of the stagnation in Europe disappeared after 1896, the trade volume of the Ottoman Empire expanded in parallel. In addition, the terms of trade turned to the advantage of the agricultural producers. More than 20 percent of the total agricultural production was exported in this period. The steady development of agricultural imports lasted until the next world economic crisis in 1929. This study scrutinizes the period of 1896-1913 during the time Ottoman economy caught a relatively advantageous flow.

Especially, the rise of export prices in this period changed the dynamics of the agricultural export sector.¹⁰⁹

The period of 1896-1914 is not only relevant for an economic analysis as described above. The same period was marked by some political openings and grass-root changes such as the declaration of the second constitution and the gradual falling apart of the Empire with the advent of various national movements. Therefore, this is a period in which the social and political representations of the economic relations deserve special attention. This study scrutinizes this special period.

So far, 1914 was regarded as a turning point in terms of the introduction of the new commercial processing method, *tonga*, changing the working relations within the sector. The same year commenced another period in terms of the tobacco labor activism. The great strike of the tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki that took place in 1914 indicated the beginning of a new era in which the multi-communal character of the movement was challenged by the newly established Greek administration in the city.

This study proposes 1890s as another turning point preceding 1914. This decade was characterized by a dramatic increase in the tobacco exports from the Thessaloniki province. It is suggested that the rapid rise of the commercial tobacco sector together with the flourishing tobacco processing workshops changed the lives of the lay man and women in the province. Commercial tobacco sector in this period provided new opportunities and also new challenges for laboring classes of the province. The following chapter examines the dynamics of the commercial tobacco sector in order to figure out its impacts on the laboring men and women in the sector.

¹⁰⁹ Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme*, pp. 153-159.

CHAPTER III

THE OTTOMAN PROVINCE OF THESSALONIKI: THE HEART OF THE EXTERNAL TOBACCO MARKET

This chapter presents a picture of Thessaloniki province at the turn of the twentieth century. The amazing development of tobacco exports contributed to the urbanization and modernization of the province in economic terms. This part of the study draws attention to the point that not only the center, but also the periphery of the province developed due to the ever growing value of the external tobacco sector. Among the periphery areas of the province, Kavala sub-district underwent dramatic economic development giving way to relevant social changes as well. The province in general should be introduced here at first.

This section gives place to the facts and figures of Thessaloniki province in order to contextualize the issues concerning the living conditions of the lay men and women. It should be noted that those figures providing us the structural elements of the social context underwent a dramatic change from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Rather than the structures and the centuries old social and economic establishments, this section focuses on the city in motion. Therefore, the next section examines this period of dramatic changes in the province and then comment on the impacts of these changes on the social texture. The labor activism in the province and the tobacco labor activism are examined in detail.

Above of all, the uniqueness of the tobacco labor activism in the Ottoman Balkans lies in the special position of Ottoman Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century. In other words, the social and political repercussions of the Ottoman tobacco

sector become visible and meaningful in the context of the Ottoman Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century. The scope of the case is rather extended. Contrary to much of the literature on Thessaloniki, this study refers to the Ottoman province that includes not only the central Thessaloniki sub-district¹¹⁰ as often referred to in much of the literature, but also involves the districts and the sub-districts.

There are a handful of sources presenting this or that aspect of the social texture of Ottoman Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century. At first, it should be noted that the community studies constitute a relevant share of the literature on Ottoman Thessaloniki. In other words, much of the sources concerning Thessaloniki are devoted to the Jewish, Greek Orthodox or Muslim communities that made up the population of the city.¹¹¹ Except for some recent compilations on the city, it is not possible to see the people of Thessaloniki as a whole as the dwellers of a city.¹¹² In this regard, there are several exceptions. For example, the study of Anastassiadou can be viewed as an exception. She takes Thessaloniki as a developing city and presents us the whole dynamism of a changing city and its people from the period of the Tanzimat.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Ottoman central Thessaloniki district (*kaza*) corresponds mainly today's Thessaloniki city.

¹¹¹ For a detailed study on the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, see Joseph Nehama, *Historie des Israélites de Salonique* (History of the Jews of Thessaloniki) (Thessaloniki: Molho, 1935). For the Greek community, see Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *A History of Thessaloniki*, trans. T.F. Carney (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963).

¹¹² See for example Gilles Veinstein, ed. *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, trans. Cüneyt Akalın (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999). Mark Mazower also emphasizes the multi-communal character of Thessaloniki. See Mark Mazower. *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christian, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). See also A. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis, ed. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982).

¹¹³ Meropi Anastassiadou, *Tanzimat Çağında bir Osmanlı Şehri: Selanik*, trans. Işık Ergüden (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2001).

More recently, Thessaloniki has become of interest in academia as one of the significant port cities of the Ottoman Empire. The economic interactions, especially the trade capacity of the city and its social impacts, have come under examination by social and economic historians.¹¹⁴ The same city has been included in volumes concerning the workers movement and socialism in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁵

Besides this second-hand literature, this study utilizes from the first-hand materials. Among these first hand materials, Ottoman yearbooks on Thessaloniki province (*Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik*), various documents found in the Prime Ministry Ottoman State Archives and several documents found in the Tobacco Museum of Kavala Municipality contribute to the content of the study.

The year books are one of the most appropriate sources of information for scholars to obtain facts and figures about the province as a whole. The lists and statistics concerning, geography, administration, military, population, education, trade, agriculture, economic interactions, infrastructure and architecture of the province enables the scholars of Thessaloniki to see the picture of the province as a whole. As will be explained below, the Ottoman year books describe not only the state of affairs, but also comment on the existing situation, recommend some strategies, support particular policies and try to legitimize some deeds. Besides the Ottoman year books, its French counterpart *Annuaire Oriental*, published by the French Commercial Consulates is also a relevant source of information for cross-checking the data and as a complementary source of information.

¹¹⁴ See for example Çağlar Keyder, Y. Eyüp Özveren, Donald Quataert, ed. *Doğu Akdeniz'de Liman Kentleri*, trans. Gül Çağalı Güven (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomi ve Toplumsal Vakfı, 1994).

¹¹⁵ See for example Donald Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica." See also Mete Tunçay, Erik Jan Zürcher, ed. *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1923* (London; New York: British Academic Press in association with the International Institute of Social History, 1994).

The Prime Ministry Ottoman State Archives is a rich source of information with its millions of documents. Because Thessaloniki province was one of the most relevant administrative units of the empire, it is not hard to find documents concerning the affairs of the province. Besides the large catalogues on the administrative, judicial and economic correspondence between the state offices and between the central and the provincial administration, Rumeli Inspectorate (*Rumeli Müfettişliği*) documents shed light upon the social life of the people of the province. The Rumeli Inspectorate was established in 1902. The documents date between 1900 and 1910. They include petitions and correspondence between the six provinces of Rumeli; Thessaloniki, Kosova (Kosovo), Manastır (Monastir), Edirne (Adrianople), Yanya (Ioannina), İşkodra (Iskodra) between the center and the periphery within the provinces. In those catalogues, one can see the economic activities of all the administrative units, demographic events and human mobility, conflicts between the communities and the voice of lay men and women in the form of petitions. The documents published by the Tobacco Museum of Kavala, especially the Greek consular reports of the time, constitute another precious source of information about the tobacco labor movement.

Before moving to the tobacco labor movement under examination, an overview of the state of economy in the province at turn of the twentieth century is examined in the below part. Urban and rural economies and their dynamics of development are analyzed comparatively.



Figure 5. Map of the Ottoman Thessaloniki Province (BOA. HRT. 0325)

Manufacture and Industry

The question of Ottoman industrialization has long been debated in the literature. When it comes to the major port cities of the Empire, there is consent on the point that the port cities were the most developed parts of the Empire in economic terms.¹¹⁶ As was explained in the previous chapter, this was a commercial development rather than an industrial one. It is possible to speak of some industrial and manufacture production in the hinterland of these ports. These production activities served to most basic needs of the local market. Thessaloniki was not an exception in that sense.

Most of the debates on the industrialization of the Ottoman Empire stem from the definition of “industrial plants.” If one needs to assess the level of industrialization in a particular place, one of the most reasonable methods is to look at the number of industrial plants. But which one of the workplaces to be counted as an “industrial plant” has always been problematic. The defining criterion has sometimes been the level of mechanization or sometimes the number of employed “workers,” which is another problematic definition.

Another complication concerning the number of industrial plants in Thessaloniki derives from a more general problematic that has been mentioned before in several cases in this study, that is the distinction between the Thessaloniki province in Ottoman administrative terms and the contemporary Thessaloniki city or the central district in the Ottoman definition. One can see quite big gaps concerning the numbers of industrial plants and workers. As Anastassiadou notices, while Hristodoulou gives the number of

¹¹⁶Çağlar Keyder, Y. Eyüp Özveren, D. Quataert, *Doğu Akdeniz’de Liman Kentleri. 1800-1914*, trans. Gül Çağalı Güven (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994).

workers in Thessaloniki as 2500, Quataert gives the number as 25,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century. Either the borders of Thessaloniki to which they refer or the definition of industrial workers must be different in the conceptualization of these scholars.¹¹⁷

At this point, it is interesting to note that the Ottoman administration had a totally different definition of industrial plant. The Ottoman year books giving the lists of industrial plants in the Thessaloniki indicate that the Ottoman administration did not count the workshops and even some prominent factories of the city under the title of industrial plants. Instead, some urban infrastructure are registered under the title of factories in the year book as seen in the below table. The only exception in the list is the Régie factory, referring to the cigarette factory of the company. The same institutions also are mentioned under the title of companies as well. This leads one to think that what the Ottoman administration regarded as industry was probably the foreign capital investment in the country.

¹¹⁷ Anastassiadou, pp. 300-301; Donald Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 69; Georgios Hristodoulou. *I Thessaloniki kata tin teleftea ekatonetia, Emporio, Viomihania, Viotehnia* (Thessaloniki in the last century: trade, industry, manufacture) (Thessaloniki: Enosis. 1936), p.136.

Table 2. Factories in Thessaloniki Registered in the Ottoman Yearbook¹¹⁸

Régie Factory
Thessaloniki-Monastir Ottoman Railways
Thessaloniki-Istanbul Ottoman Railways
Thessaloniki Water Supply Company
Port Construction Administration

Compiled from several sources, it is possible to list the industrial inventory of the city as such: one cigarette factory of the Régie Company, two flour factories of Allatini's, one brick factory of Allatini's, three thread factories (Saïas, Torres & Misrahi and B & Thourpalis), one silk factory (Torres & Misrahi), two beer factories (Olympos of Allatini's and Naoussa of Georgiadis), one textile factory producing socks and other materials to carry flour and tobacco (Torres-Misrahi&Fernandez), one textile factory producing fez and woolen fabric (Kapancı, Sami Telci, Saul Amar, Osman Derviş, Bensussan and Yiahel partners), one socks and umbrella factory (Fils Errera and its partners), one leather factory (Nousia and its partners), one macaroni factory (Kouskouras & Hashapiannis), one shoe factory (Kalderon & Aeroesti), one alcohol factory (Mammonas), one mosaic factory (Dilaveris & Giannoulis), one glassware factory (Mişon Levi & Ben Nahmias), one chair and brush factory (Rekanati&Boton).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 194.

¹¹⁹ For more information about the factories in Thessaloniki, see Donald Quataert, "Fabrika Bacalarından Tüten İlk Dumanlar," in *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, ed. Gilles Veinstein, trans. Cüneyt Akalın (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp. 186-204; Berke, pp.18-19; Gündüz Ökçün, *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları* (Ankara: Sermaye Piyasası Kurulu, 1997), pp. 64-66.

In addition to this list, in the Ottoman state archives, it is registered that some licenses were demanded for the construction of several factories. For example, it is understood from the archival registers that there were several attempts to build a paper factory in the city.¹²⁰ Besides that, there had been another attempt by Esad Muhlis Efendi and Ali Yaver Efendi to build another rope and sock factory as a subsidiary to the tobacco sector.¹²¹ A woolen fabric factory was established as a branch of the Karamürsel factory in 1901 and mainly supplied the needs of the Ottoman soldiers and civil servants.¹²² Another entrepreneur, Abdülbaki Bey from the translation office, started to produce bread in the modern mechanized factories by the year 1908 in Thessaloniki and also in Edirne (Adrianople) and Jerusalem.¹²³ In the same year another entrepreneur, Samuel Amar demanded tax exemption for the machines and equipment imported for his sugar factories to be established in Istanbul, Thessaloniki and Syria.¹²⁴

The Ottoman Empire granted monopoly rights or just licenses to the foreign and local industrial entrepreneurs in the second half of the nineteenth century. Especially the monopoly concessions granted to some entrepreneurs provided the growth of some industrial businesses. Another measure to support industrialization in the country was the practice of tax exemption for imported machines and equipment for the factories to

¹²⁰ BOA. İ DH. 1079/84689. 11.Ş.1305. BOA. TFR I MKM. 27/2623. 5.S.1326.

¹²¹ BOA. ŞD. 1213/4. 28.Z.1316.

¹²² BOA. DH.MKT. 2459/93. 19.Za.1318. BOA. TFR I SL. 128/12717. 20.L.1324.

¹²³ BOA. ŞD. 1216/51. 9.S.132. BOA. ŞD. 1217/9. 9.S.1326.

¹²⁴ BOA. DH.MKT. 2699/42. 9.Z.1326.

be established.¹²⁵ This is to say that the import of new technology was supported by the state. For example, the Allatini family directing its commercial capital to the industrial investments in Thessaloniki towards the end of the nineteenth century benefited from these tax exemptions each time they established a factory in the city.

Not only the Allatinies but also other entrepreneurs intending to establish industrial plants in the province were supported by means of tax exemptions.¹²⁶ But the relationship between the Allatinies and the state was of a different kind, because the Allatinies produced mainly for the state. They were the main flour and bread supplier of the state in the Balkans, moreover the creditor of the state as well.¹²⁷ Supportive policies of the state towards Allatinies seem to have been an important factor in the extension of their investments. For example, alcohol and bricks produced by the factory of the Allatini's in Thessaloniki were exempt from domestic taxes.¹²⁸ Moreover, the state displayed an opposition to the Public Debt Administration that insisted on collecting this tax from the Allatinies.¹²⁹

Besides the import of machinery other tax exemptions were introduced for the developing industry. Finding such measures as in sufficient, the industrial entrepreneurs of Thessaloniki demanded several tax exemptions in order to compete with the

¹²⁵ For more information about the monopolies and other concessions granted by the Ottoman state to the industrial entrepreneurs in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Ökçün, *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları*, pp. 57-85.

¹²⁶ BOA. ŞD. 505/5. 23.S.1303. BOA. ŞD. 505/14. 23.S.1303. BOA. İ RSM. 6/1314/B-4. 9.B.1314. BOA. İ RSM. 28/1325/CA-04, 6.Ca.1325. BOA. TFR I SL. 5/473. 3.Z.1320. BOA. ŞD. 1191/9, 19.C.1309.

¹²⁷ BOA. TFR I SL. 13/1219-1, 18.Ra.1321. BOA. TFR I KV. 21/2038, 22.Ra.1321. BOA. TFR I A. 12/1123, 16.C.1321. BOA. TFR I SL. 21/2002, 10.B.1321.

¹²⁸ BOA. ŞD. 572/48, 10.Ş.1302. BOA. MV. 57/64, 9.S.1308.

¹²⁹ BOA. DH MKT. 1356/62, 19.L.1303. BOA. DH MKT. 1398/121, 16.Ca.1304.

European industry. For example, a group of industrialists in Thessaloniki came together and submitted a petition demanding a tax discount in 1905.¹³⁰ The Textile industrialists of Thessaloniki, that is the first flourishing and most suppressed industrial sector of the city, demanded a tax increase for imported textile goods as early as 1894.¹³¹ In the same period, the Allatinies also demanded either a discount on taxes on the local wheat or an increase in the taxes on foreign wheat.¹³² A second negotiation between these industrialists and the state took place in 1905. The leading silk producer, Tores & Misrahi and their partners complained that they would go bankrupt if they were subjected to a tariff rating of 17 percent. It is known that they went bankrupt after this petition that they submitted to the Rumeli Inspectorate for the tax discount.¹³³

As is understood from the above inventory of the industrial plants of Thessaloniki, they served to the basic needs of the local market and tried to stand still against the penetration of industrial products from Europe. In this regard, food and textile were the leading sectors of industry in the city and the province as well. As is noted in the yearbook of the province, production of textile goods was quite wide spread in the province. Socks, flannel, scarves and umbrella factories operated in the province. Each of these factories employed between 50-200 workers. The products of those factories were consumed locally in the province and exported to Anatolia and Egypt as well. Since the manufacture of such goods was related closely to the

¹³⁰ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 71/7043, 23.C.1323.

¹³¹ BOA. BEO. 484/36273, 27.Ra.1312.

¹³² BOA. DH MKT. 406/70, 12.S.1313.

¹³³ BOA.TFR I ŞKT.75/7421, 10.N.1323. The factory of Tores & Misrahi ceased production in 1905. Berke, p. 18.

agricultural production of cotton, silk and the like as raw materials, some of the textile factories were located near the cotton and silk producing agricultural areas. In this way, the textile factories were located not only in the central Thessaloniki city but also in the nearby towns such as Vodina (Edessa), Karaferye (Veria) and Ağustos.¹³⁴

In addition to textiles, food production was another leading sector of industry in the city. Bread production was the most industrialized of all agricultural food production. There were 30 factories and 600 mills producing flour in the province. The largest flour production complex of the province belonged to the Allatinies, the leading entrepreneurs of the province in almost all sectors. The majority of the products of this factory were consumed locally in the province and some amount was exported to Europe, mainly to Italy. This factory was not only the largest of the agricultural food production plants; it was one of the biggest industrial plants of the Ottoman Empire at that time. Among the industrial plants of the central Thessaloniki city, this factory differed from the others with its location. As will be explained in detail in the sixth chapter, it was built in the newly established part of the city mostly populated by the emigrants.

¹³⁴ For a detailed analysis of the textile sector in these towns throughout the nineteenth century, see Micheal Palaret, *The Balkan Economies 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).



Figure 6. The Flour Factory of Allatinies (Sacit Kutlu, p. 137)¹³⁵

Most of the above mentioned industrial plants were located on the west side of the city, called the Tophanedistrict. The cigarette factory of the Régie Company, the Olympos Beer Factory and the flour and brick factories of the Allatini's were located there. These plants were surrounded by the port and railway facilities. The Telegraph Office and the Ottoman Bank was also located in this area. Besides Tophane region, Agora the neighborhood just next to it was also a working-center of the city. Different from the Tophane district, Agora was the center of crafts rather than industry and infrastructural services. The area was surrounded by various craft works such as the tailors, butchers, shoe-makers and food and sweet producers.

Consequently, although the province underwent a process of industrial development towards the end of the nineteenth century, the industrial sector was still marginal in comparison to Europe. It is understood that the Ottoman administration was

¹³⁵ Sacit Kutlu, "2008'den 1908'e Görsel Perspektiften Bakmak," in *2008'den 1908'e Bakmak*, ed. Mutlu Dursun, Tutku Vardağı (İstanbul: M Yayınları, 2009), p. 137.

also not satisfied with industrialization level of Thessaloniki, even though it had been among the most industrialized provinces of the Empire. It is noted in the year book that the number of employed in the overall industrial sector was about 60,000,¹³⁶ equal to seven percent of the total population of the province. It is stated that this number was as high as 30-35 percent in Europe. Thus the yearbook concludes that the industry was not developed properly in comparison to Europe.

Following this conclusion, some strategies were offered for the development of industry. The lack of capital was designated as the main handicap to the development of industry in the country. For this reason, small capital owners were encouraged to establish joint stock companies. They were encouraged to invest in the establishment of big factories. In this way, the small workshop production would be improved and it would be possible to compete with European industry. Leather manufacture and towel manufacture were given as examples of failing sectors in the face of the comparably cheap European products. It is stated that some of the leather and towel producers managed to survive in the market because they applied modern techniques in their production activities.¹³⁷ In this way, the modernization of production facilities and innovation were designated as the key to survive in the new market conditions dominated by the European industrial products. The relatively cheap labor costs were indicated as a key to success in the face of the European industrial domination. In short, low levels of the local labor costs would provide a comparative advantage to the local industry against the European products.

¹³⁶ Besides the employment capacity of the above mentioned factories, soap, olive oil, timber, several metal equipment, printing and tobacco processing activities which took place in the workshops must also be included in this number.

¹³⁷ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 616.

As was noted in the previous chapter, the Ottoman economy tried some strategies to prevent the European industrial penetration. The above-mentioned discourse of the state apparently stated in the yearbooks reveals that the cost of catching up with the European industrialization was levied on the laborers. It can be suggested that the state policies of industrialization were not labor friendly at all and provided the grounds for the labor activism of the period.

When the infant industry of the city was having trouble in the face of the European penetration, commercial activities especially the tobacco trade gained momentum. The commercial economy can be regarded as the real dynamic of the economy of the province. Therefore, the section below examines the commercial economy of the province.

The Commercial Economy: Rise of the Tobacco Sector

Thessaloniki province was the biggest commercial center after the capital of the Empire. Located at the cross-roads of the three main railway lines rendered the province a prominent trade center for internal as well as external commercial activities. When the modernization of the port and the construction of the railways were completed, Thessaloniki became the attraction point of not only the Ottoman Empire, but also Europe and the Mediterranean. In contrast to the above-mentioned industrial activities, the commercial economy had been flourishing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As the balances of the world economic system was taking shape, the role of the Ottoman Empire as an agricultural exporter became more apparent. The trade volume increased in parallel. In the early 1880s, Thessaloniki realized 40 percent of the foreign

trade in the Ottoman Balkans. Between 1900-1911 trades volume of Thessaloniki doubled.¹³⁸

According to the 1909 Ottoman yearbook, grains came in the first place among the export goods. Thessaloniki port exported agricultural products of a large hinterland. Grains were produced especially in the nearby provinces of Kosovo and Monastir and exported via Thessaloniki to Britain and France mostly. After grains, tobacco, cotton, silk, opium and sesame were the most important export items. The revenue of those export goods was equal to one and a half million Ottoman liras. Wax, red pepper, cheese, leather, wool and wine were the other export products that had a secondary value in terms of the volume of trade. The revenue produced by those goods was equal to half a million Ottoman liras. Most of the leather was exported to France. Exports of cannabis, linen and animals had marginal economic value.

The amazing development of tobacco exportation from Thessaloniki port was explained in the previous section. The greatest volume belonged to the tobacco exports among the other goods exported from Thessaloniki port. The major commercial sector in the city was tobacco processing. Numerous enterprises were occupied with tobacco processing at the turn of the century. Nearly 100 enterprises were involved in the tobacco business in 1903, making up the half of the industrial capital of the city. Twelve big enterprises prevailed in the sector, one American, two French, one Austrian, one Belgium, one Ottoman Turkish, two Ottoman Sabetaists, one Ottoman Jewish, three Ottoman Greeks.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Kostis Moskof, *Istoria tou Kinimatos tis Ergatikis Taksis* (History of the movement of working class) (Athens: Bokoumani, 1972), p. 261.

¹³⁹ Moskof, p. 264.

When the commercial activities of the province are considered as a whole, according to the Ottoman year books, it is possible to say that the majority of transactions took place at Thessaloniki port. On the other hand, 20 percent of the external trade took place at Kavala port. Britain was stated as the most important trade partner in terms of external trade. Germany and France came in second and third. It is noted that the volume of trade with Germany showed increase in recent years. Besides the province itself, export and imports of the nearby provinces, Kosovo, Monastir and Yanya were also realized through Thessaloniki port.

Textile goods were imported the most. The value of this import was about two million Ottoman liras. Most of the textile goods were imported from Britain, Germany and France. Woolen and silk textiles especially came from France and Germany. As was noted in the previous part, the penetration of European textiles had suppressed the developing textile industry of the city. Some of the imported goods were transferred to nearby provinces such as Kosovo and Monastir. Coffee and sugar came second among the imported goods. Coffee was imported partly from Brazil and mostly from Britain. Most of the sugar came from Marseilles and Trieste. Those imported goods were transferred to the inner lands of the province by railway. The total cost of those imported goods was about 0.5 million Ottoman liras. The import of petroleum and alcohol came in third place. Mines, dye, stout leather, furniture, glass, paper, rice and soap were in fourth place in terms of trade volume.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 618-621.

The financial sector also had been developing in parallel to the raising volume of trade. Recovering from the financial crisis of the 1870s, several European firms extended credit limits from three months to eight months. The availability of credits provided the increase of both production and consumption volumes in Thessaloniki. The Trade Chamber was established in the city in 1882. The Trade Club of Thessaloniki established in 1895 was more active and influential than the Trade Chamber. Local businessmen taking an active stand in the Club were influential in the protection of local capital and the businesses as far as possible. They set the rules of the game in the local market and played an intermediary role between the traders and their customers. The Club was endowed with the authorization of arbitration between parties.

Banking institutions developed in the city at the same time. The first was a branch of the Ottoman Bank, established in the city in 1862. It established branches in Thessaloniki, Aydın and Afyonkarahisar, namely the earliest commercialized parts of the Empire in the west.



Figure 7. The Ottoman Bank in Thessaloniki (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T008/028)

Besides the Ottoman Bank another banking initiative occurred in the Ottoman Balkans. In 1863, Mithat Pasha established the first credit union of the Empire in Nish, serving the financial needs of the agricultural producers. These credit unions, called *memleket sandıkları*, were aimed at relieving the agricultural producers from the heavy interest rates of the individual creditors and developing the agricultural capital. These credit unions were transformed into *Ziraat Bankası* (the Agricultural Bank), in 1888. The Ottoman Bank, which was granted the status of central state bank, assumed the mission of public banking in the Empire together with the *Ziraat Bankası*. While *Ziraat Bankası* provided credit to the large farms (*çiftlik*s) of Thessaloniki and Rumeli,

Ottoman Bank promoted the infrastructural development of the region.¹⁴¹ The Ottoman Bank participated in the investments of the Régie Company, Rumeli Railways and the Istanbul-Thessaloniki railway line.

In addition to those public banking activities, there were many private banks crediting mainly commerce especially after 1870s. It seems that the international banking capital displayed an interest in the Thessaloniki market just after the big financial crisis of Europe in the 1870s. The Allatinies, the leading businessmen of Thessaloniki both in terms of industry and trade, founded the Bank of Thessaloniki in 1888 as a joint initiative together with the Vienna Landerbank, Comptoir d' Escompte of Paris. Two Greek banks, Mytilini and the Industrial Credit Bank of Athens opened up two branches in Thessaloniki in 1899 and 1905, respectively. A branch of the Deutsche Bank followed these banks in 1906, and then came another foreign bank, Beogradska, in 1908. In 1910, Gounaris noted that there were ten more private banks in the city.¹⁴² The list of the banks and bankers operating in the Thessaloniki market was also registered in the Ottoman year book. It is stated that besides those big banks, there were eight or ten more small banks and hundreds of bankers operating in the financial market. Those banks stood in the city as monuments to trade and indicated the amazing development of the commerce in the province. Ottoman Bank, Bank Orient, Mytilini Bank and the Ziraat Bank operated in the central Thessaloniki, had branches in some towns of the province as well.

¹⁴¹ For further information about the early activities of the Ottoman Bank in Thessaloniki, see John Karatzoglou, *The Imperial Bank in Salonica* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Center, 2003).

¹⁴² Basil C. Gounaris, "Selanik," in *Doğu Akdeniz'de Liman Kentleri*, ed. Çağlar Keyder, Y. Eyüp Özveren, Donald Quataert (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomi ve Toplumsal Vakfı, 1994), pp. 106-107.

Table 3. Banks and Bankers in Thessaloniki¹⁴³

Banks	Bankers
Ottoman Bank	Allatini Brothers
Thessaloniki Bank	Saulzade
Mytilini Bank	Kapancı Mehmed Efendi
Bank Orient	Hikmet Haşmet İzzet Kumpanyası
	Vidal Fernandez
	Avram Haim Amar
	Mişon Tiano
	Isak Ben Susam
	Mişon Avram Salti
	Perikli Hacı Lazori
	Atanaş Sosidis
	Salamon Hasid
	Papasoğlu Kardaşlı
	Solomon Davi
	Şinasi Mertzi and Ahadzade

As a general rule of commercial development, financial institutions, transportation and communication facilities provide the necessary foundation for the proper functioning of commercial transactions. If the banking sector and transportation lines together with the communication facilities developed at the same time, the commercial economy of Thessaloniki would not have been able to grow at such an amazing speed. Therefore, the below mentioned transportation and communication developments are key to the growth of commercial activities in the city and also in the province as a whole.

¹⁴³ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 199-200.

Transportation and Communication

Besides the development of financial institutions, transportation and communication facilities were influential in the development of trade in Thessaloniki. In terms of transportation facilities, the modernization of Thessaloniki port provided great momentum for export and import activities. The Austrian Lloyd Company and the Ottoman Navigation Company established ferry lines operating between Thessaloniki and European ports, invigorating the sea trade in the 1840s. In 1853 French Messageries established another line. American Civil War was another incentive for the development of other ferry lines at Thessaloniki port. In the 1860s, Russian, Greek, Egyptian and Italian ferry lines entered the Thessaloniki market. Although the train line between the port and train station was not established until 1909, the trade volume of the port increased steadily from the 1870s. When the volume of trade was 900,000 tons in the 1870s, it exceeded one and a half million ton in 1908. The infrastructure facilities of the port was established in 1897 by a French company. The space of the port was extended and the customs buildings were reconstructed.¹⁴⁴

The state decided to connect Thessaloniki to the European railway lines as early as 1868. The construction of the railway also promoted trade in the province.¹⁴⁵ The first rail road was established between Thessaloniki and Mitroviçe (Mitrovitza) in 1874. This line was connected to Serbia through Üsküp (Skopje) in 1888 and Thessaloniki became directly connected to Europe. Another railway line was established between

¹⁴⁴ Gounaris, "Selanik," pp. 106-108.

¹⁴⁵ Alexandra Yerolympos, Vassilis Gounaris, "Kozmopolit Bir Kentleşme," in *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, ed. Gilles Veinstein, trans. Cüneyt Akalın (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp. 169-170.

Thessaloniki and Manastır (Monastir) in 1894. The last line connected Thessaloniki to the capital of the empire in 1896.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, the Thessaloniki railway was carried further to Vienna and Paris. To make a comparison with the railway connections of the other port cities, for example, the railway connection of Izmir- strongest competitor of Thessaloniki- combined only the hinterland with the port. So that, as Anastassiadou points out, the people of Thessaloniki in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had the privilege of observing the world around them getting smaller.¹⁴⁷

Table 4. Train and Ferry Lines in Thessaloniki¹⁴⁸

Train Lines
Thessaloniki-Vienna- Paris- England
Ferry Lines
Thessaloniki- İzmir- Beirut- Alexandria (Russian Ferry)
Tripoli- Egypt- Alexandria (Italian Ferry)

Communication was one of the most basic needs of the commerce in the city. European traders started to establish their own post offices there in 1850s. The second French post office in the city was established in 1855. A Russian post-office was established in 1862. Thessaloniki was connected to the major European cities by foreign telegraph lines in

¹⁴⁶ Gounaris, “Selanik,” p. 107.

¹⁴⁷ Anastassiadou, p.9.

¹⁴⁸ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Yearbook on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 553.

the 1860s. The Telegraph administration of the Ottoman state started operation in 1876 near the government office. Britain, was one of the major trade partners of Thessaloniki market, founded its own post office in the city in 1900 and continued operation until 1914. Not all of those foreign offices continued until the end of Ottoman administration in the city.¹⁴⁹ Those foreign post-offices were established either for the reason that the foreigners did not trust the official Ottoman post service or they found it inefficient and thus disruptive to the commercial transactions.

It is observed that the raising of international trade volume towards the end of the nineteenth century required the extension and professionalization of communication facilities. To give an example, the community representatives of Kesriye, a sub-district of the province, demanded the employment of foreign language speaking officers in the post office in order to be able carry out the commercial relations.¹⁵⁰

In addition to the other reasons, the language problems might have directed the foreign firms to establish their own post offices in the city. This was a greater problem for the countries that had the greatest volume of trade in the city. For example, there was a post office of Britain in the central Thessaloniki and a post office of Austria in the Kavala sub-district. Britain was the leading trade partner of Thessaloniki city and Austria was the most prominent trade partner of Kavala. For the reason that Britain and Austria carried out their commercial activities through the ports of Thessaloniki and Kavala, respectively, it seems that they preferred to administer their own communications rather than depending on the Ottoman administration. It seems that

¹⁴⁹ Berke, p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ BOA.TFR I ŞKT.82/8190, 22.M.1324.

allowing the foreigners to have their own post-offices was a convenient solution for the Ottoman administration as well. The registers indicate that the Ottoman post-offices were unable to manage the ever-increasing communication traffic in the province. For the reason, because difficulties and delays with deliveries occurred in such a big city as Thessaloniki, a new building near the Hamidiye Mosque was reserved for the post-services.¹⁵¹



Figure 8. The Post Office in Thessaloniki (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T024/001)

¹⁵¹ BOA. DH MKT. 631/13, 11.L.1320.

The activities of the foreign post offices were closely watched by the Ottoman state. Besides commercial communication, these post offices helped the flow of information and communication between several political groups about which the Ottoman state was skeptical. For this reason, the state attempted to close the British post office in Thessaloniki¹⁵² on ground that it was delivering detrimental correspondence.¹⁵³ Similarly, the post office of Austria in Kavala was under the close control of the state as well. It was revealed that some Armenian groups in Anatolia were getting in contact with the Armenian committee in Filibe (Plovdiv) by hiring a post box from this post office.¹⁵⁴

All those mentioned communication and transportation facilities helped in the development of something other than the improvement of commercial activities. As Mukerjee points out, the development of transportation and trade constituted an important stage towards the standardization which was a key to the modernization of a given locality. This means that the railway lines not only physically connected the center with the peripheral areas, but also integrated them into a standard time notion by the scheduled departures and arrivals.¹⁵⁵ As a result, these facilities helped the reinforcement of the relations between the center and the periphery of the province. Here at this point, a thorough examination of the periphery becomes an indispensable task.

¹⁵² BOA. DH MKT. 2342/53, 8.M.1318.

¹⁵³ BOA. DH MKT. 2355/82, 6.S.1318.

¹⁵⁴ BOA. ZB. 311/86, 5.14.1324.

¹⁵⁵ For further analysis, see Radhakamal Mukerjee, "Time, Technics and Society," *Sociology and Social Research* 27 (1943), pp. 243- 261.

Developing Relations with the Periphery

In order to evaluate the province as a whole, it is necessary to discuss the periphery of the province also. In other words, this part examines what was happening in the periphery, while the center was under the forces of the previously explained process of changes in terms of modernization, urbanization and economic development. Was the periphery of the province in a state of inertia as often imagined? The key role here resides in the sub-district of Kavala. Therefore, the next chapter examines this locality in detail.

The development of transportation and communication influenced not only the central district of Thessaloniki as is often referred to, but also strengthened the relation between the center and the periphery within the province and between the provinces in the Ottoman Empire and abroad.¹⁵⁶ In addition, travel between Thessaloniki and the capital of the Empire was easy and the mobility was high. Thessaloniki- Istanbul line completed in 1896 connected Rumeli to Anatolia. At Sirkeci Station, every evening there was a train departing from Istanbul to Rumeli and it was a very crowded station. In one of the petitions, it is stated that because there were only two ticket offices, there was always congestion in the station.¹⁵⁷ As will be explained in the following chapter, people from the interior of Anatolia, as far away as Konya and Erzurum could travel to Thessaloniki and even sought jobs in the Thessaloniki market.

¹⁵⁶BOA.TFR I SL. 51/5099, 1322.7.3.

¹⁵⁷BOA.ZB. 326/138, 1324.7.21

The railroad passed through the sub-districts of eastern Macedonia and connected the sub-districts with the central provinces. The transportation lines followed the route of the commercially developed areas by their nature. In this process, some of the sub-districts gained importance and some lost their prominence. For example, the people of the district of İstip¹⁵⁸ complained that their agricultural and commercial activities were affected badly by the construction of the Thessaloniki railway.¹⁵⁹ This means that the establishment of the transportation lines determined the fate of the periphery of the province and its nearby areas. While some of the commercially developed rural areas established stronger connections with the center, others were left to their own fates. Especially towards the end of the century, those small districts remote from the transportation fell into the hands of bandits more easily.

¹⁵⁸ Today's Stip city located in the Federal Republic of Macedonia.

¹⁵⁹ BOA.DH MKT. 177/17, 24.Ca.1311.

Table 5. Train Lines Connecting the Nearby Provinces and Sub-districts¹⁶⁰

Thessaloniki- Dedeğaç (Alexandropolis)- Istanbul Line
Kavala-Pravište (Pravi)-Sarışaban-Edirne (Adrianople)-Istanbul.
Thessaloniki-Üsküp (Skopje) Line
Ustrumca-Prizren-Priştine-Mitroviçe-Yenipazar-Satıca(Feyrouz)-Kirazoba.
Thessaloniki-Manastır (Monastir) Line
Yenice-i Vardar-Nasliç-Alasonya-Serfice-Kozana-Kesriye-Grebena-Kayalar-Pirlepe-Karacaova-Yanya-Göriçe-Debre-i Bala-Ohri-İlbasan-Berat-Jagor-Parmadi (Premidi) - Kolonya-Koniça-Lazkiye.

Transportation built the connection between the agricultural and commercial activities. For the improvement of the transportation facilities, the government put emphasis on road building activities. Here at this point, it should be noted that the people themselves built the roads of their own neighborhoods and the nearby areas. Those who were not able to pay the road taxes (*turuk bedelati*) were obliged to participate in the road and bridge building activities. All the tax paying males from the low income groups participated in the road building activities irrespective of their community, religion or ethnicity. Road building was not considered a public service provided by the state for the people. On the contrary, it was exerted as a duty of able bodied males. Unlike the railways and tramway lines, there were no big companies or public institutions to assume the road and bridge building jobs. This job was relegated mostly to the subjects of the Empire. It was legitimized on the ground that the people participate to the road

¹⁶⁰ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 554-555.

building activity for their own good. Consequently, the agricultural economy of the peripheral regions was integrated with the commercial economies of the center. The same facilities increased the mobility of the agricultural labor force within the province as well.

The Agricultural Economy

Agricultural production in the province had not only value in itself, but it was also crucial for the manufacturing and the commercial activities. Some of the agricultural products such as tobacco, cotton, currants and pepper were considered industrial products since they were processed in workshops of various sizes before being exported to abroad. The agricultural product processing business constituted a great deal of the commercial activity.

To give some figures, an area of four and a half million dönüm area in the province was reserved for agricultural production. This agricultural activity produced fourteen and a half million Ottoman liras annually, and husbandry produced about two million Ottoman liras in 1908. This is to say that the economy of the province relied on agricultural production to a large extent. It is stated in the Ottoman yearbooks that the majority of the agricultural activity was realized by outmoded technology and old agricultural equipment. Therefore, the capacity of the agricultural economy could not have been realized properly. The development of the means of transportation and the spread of modern agricultural techniques were proposed as measures to be taken for the improvement of the rural economy.

Silk and tobacco production were the most important agricultural activities as they produced considerable revenue. For this reason, silk and tobacco production were mentioned in the yearbooks under the title of agricultural products of industrial significance. This relationship between agriculture and the manufacturing and commerce means that none of those economic activities can be explained in isolation. As will be explained in the following chapter, the most forceful strikes of the tobacco laborers employed in the commercial workshops came into being during bad tobacco harvest years.

Silk production was one of the most important sources of income for the people of the province, as well as the most important production area providing the relation between the agricultural economy and the manufacturing. After the province of Hüdavendigar, Thessaloniki was the second largest silk producer. Silk production in the province was so popular that those who did not have mulberry groves, feed their caterpillar with the leaves they supplied somewhere else. The majority of the seeds were produced by the Hamidiye Agricultural School. Some of the seeds were imported from abroad.

Silk was produced mostly in the Gevgili, Vodina, Karaferye and Ağustos districts of the central Thessaloniki sandjak. Capital owners are encouraged to establish silk factories in the province. Silk was exported to Europe as the raw material and processed in European factories. In the yearbook, it is argued that if the silk factories were established in the province, it would be a more profitable investment. Production costs in Europe were compared to the local production costs in order to encourage local capital holders to invest in the establishment of silk factories. It is stated that the labor costs were higher in Europe because of the high cost of living. It is

claimed that while the workers in Europe were employed at 25- 30 or at least 15 piasters, it was possible in the Empire to employ workers for 10-12 piasters a day. In this way, local silk factories would be able to compete with their counterparts in Europe; moreover, they would have a comparative advantage because of the low level of labor costs.¹⁶¹

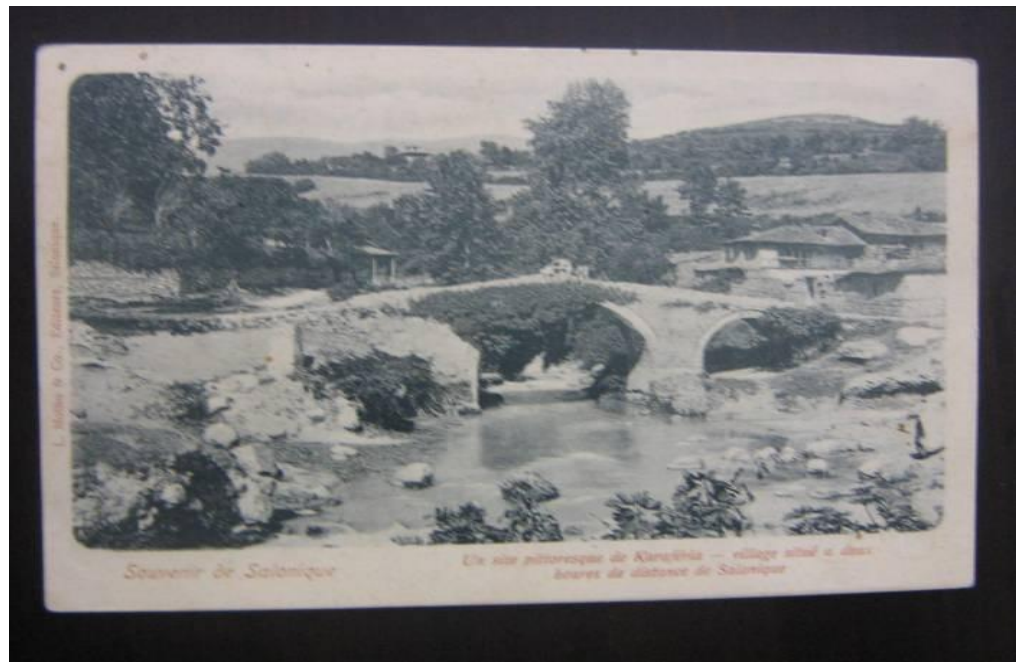


Figure 9. Postcard illustrating Karaferye (Veria) at the end of the nineteenth century

Towards the end of the nineteenth century one of the most important centers of silk production, namely Gevgili, became one of the most important sites of tobacco commerce and also tobacco labor activism. As will be explained in detail in the following chapter, the agricultural economy and the commercial activities in parallel

¹⁶¹ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 605-607.

shifted from textile to tobacco production towards the end of the nineteenth century.

A brief review of the rural regions of the province provides a perspective on the falling and rising significance of some agricultural products of commercial value.

Besides the central district, Gevgili, Yenice-i Vardar, Langaza, Karaferiye and Doyrandistricts were the most prominent districts of the central sandjak. Much of the economic activities took place in those districts. Gevgili was the biggest district after the central district of Thessaloniki. It was located on the east part of the Vardar River. The main economic activity was based on the production and trade of silk, tobacco and currants. There was a silk factory built by the Public Debt Administration. This factory was built in 1898 that worked by steam engine. The products of the factory were exported to Europe. The number of workers, all girls, employed in the factory was 400.

It is stated in the year book that the factory was run by different entrepreneurs. It is noted that because of the instability of the labor force and the lack of work discipline, the factory could not become a profitable business that was why it had changed hand several times. By 1909, it is noted that the factory was being run by an Italian entrepreneur. It is also added that, besides the factory, silk was produced in homes as well.¹⁶² Families produced silk out of cocoons as paid housework. In this way, the houses also supplemented the workplaces and family production also supplemented the labor force of the factories and workshops.

This pattern can be suggested as a general character of the economic activity of the region. Because the same practice- the supplementary production at home- is also observed in other sectors. In the year book of 1909, it is stated that 1700 persons were

¹⁶² *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 267-268.

involved in the local robe production in Mayadağ, a sub-district of Gevgili. Six or seven traders supplied wool for the local people and they produced for the needs of Thessaloniki province in the form of the putting out system. In the year 1909, Mayadağ was producing only for the Thessaloniki market, but previously it had produced for İzmir as well. From 1889 to 1909, the quantity of products transferred to İzmir fell from 15,000 meters to 5000 meters.¹⁶³ Therefore, at the turn of the twentieth century, people were in search of other sources of income and tobacco emerged as a promising sector at that time.

Another economic activity in the district was the production of tobacco. Tobacco was produced especially in Mayadağ. It is stated that more and more people in the region were attracted to tobacco production because of its economic value. The most prominent economic activity of the region had been the manufacture of robes (*aba*) until recently, before the rise of the tobacco sector. At the beginning of the twentieth century, demand for robes had been falling because of the diminishing demand from the army, which had previously prompted robe production for military purposes. In the archival sources, it is seen that the export of robes from Mayadağ was prohibited and the produced robes had been purchased by the army until 1877.¹⁶⁴ Then in 1889 it is observed that the local robe manufacture in Mayadağ had to compete with British woolen fabrics (*İngiliz şayağı*).¹⁶⁵ The government tried to support the local producers against the hegemony of British textiles in the market. For example, the state purchased

¹⁶³ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 271.

¹⁶⁴ BOA. DH MKT. 1322/71, 12.L.1294.

¹⁶⁵ BOA.DH.MKT. 1641/93, 25.Za.1306.

clothes for the army from Mayadağ.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, decreasing overall demand for local robe could not be prevented. In this way, the people turned to other economic activities. Among these newly adopted occupations, tobacco production was first. In the face of the diminishing local robe production, more and more people were attracted by the tobacco production as a new and promising economic activity.

Mayadağ was the heart of the tobacco production in the district of Gevgili. Archival documents concerning tobacco production and related affairs refer to Mayadağ frequently. Between the years 1886 and 1905, it is understood that there were ongoing conflicts between the tobacco farmers of Mayadağ and the Régie administration. The government took an active role in this conflict and clearly supported the farmers. As was noted in the previous chapter, the cultivation, transportation and storage of tobacco was subjected to the permission of the Régie administration. Cultivation licenses generated several conflicts between the farmers and the Régie administration in Mayadağ. In several documents, it is observed that the government prevented the demolition of the produced tobacco by the Régie administration, helped the farmers to store their products, delayed the deadlines and forgave some illegal or improper activities for the advantage of the Mayadağ farmers.¹⁶⁷

It can be assumed that the government supported the people's involvement in tobacco production in Mayadağ as a new source of livelihood. Protectionist attitude of the government is observed in several documents. Several decisions of the government on the matters between the tobacco farmers in Mayadağ and the Régie administration

¹⁶⁶ BOA. Y MTV. 46/31, 18.Ra.1803.

¹⁶⁷ BOA. DH MKT. 1539/53, 28.Za.1305. BOA. DH MKT. 1557/10, 17.S.1306. BOA. MKT. 1577/63, 19.R.1306. BOA. DH MKT. 1582/94, 7.Ca.1306. BOA. DH MKT. 1592/69, 8.C.1306. BOA. DH MKT. 2027/56, 14.Ca.1310. BOA. TFR I SL. 48/4713, 20.Ca.1322.

were legitimized on the ground of the protection of the people. In terms of transportation, Gevgili was in a quite favorable location. The district was connected to central Thessaloniki by the Thessaloniki-Skopje railway line and it was connected to Istanbul by another line. The railway lines facilitated the economic activity in the district. It should also be noted that most of the tobacco workshops of Thessaloniki sandjak were located in Gevgili and Kilkış. Modern educational institutions were established in both district. There was one *medrese* (madrasah), one boys' and one girls' lycee and one secondary school in the district. Besides that, the thermal springs of the district were visited by 800 people each year.¹⁶⁸

Another densely populated kaza of the central Thessaloniki sandjak was Yenice-i Vardar. The district was composed of 58 farms and 31 villages.¹⁶⁹ In comparison to the other central districts the high number of farms requires attention. For example, another kaza of the central sandjak Doyran with a similar sized population density had nine farms and 76 villages. Unfortunately, we do not have proper information about the size and capacity of the farms. Nevertheless, we can say that they indicate the overwhelming position of agriculture as the main economic activity in the district known for its high quality tobaccos that gave its name to well-known cigarette brands. As was noted before, when the Germans began to produce cigarette in Dresden in 1905, they invited tobacco experts from the region and called their product by the name of the district, Yenice.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 267.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

¹⁷⁰ For the story of the *Yenice* brand mark, see Tunca Varış, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Yadigar En Eski Sigaramız: Yenice," *Tarih ve Toplum* 25, no. 146 (1996), pp. 28-31.

Thasos was the smallest district of Thessaloniki province. It was composed of an Island across the Kavala gulf and is the mining center of the province. There were fourteen mining stations in the sandjak. The other economic activities concerned olive and tobacco production. It was closely connected to the Kavala district of Drama sandjak. There were regular shipping lines between Kavala and Thasos. The lines generally served the transportation of trade goods. Thasos Island attracted workers from away as far as Crete. People from other places went to the Island to work in the mines seasonally.

Serres was the most populated sandjak of Thessaloniki province. The population of the central district was 92,087 around 1908. There were five flour factories in the sandjak. The trade center of the sandjak was Orphani seaport, 12 hours from the central kaza.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 340-341.



Figure 10. Postcard showing Serez (Serres) at the end of the nineteenth century.

Cuma-i Bala and Razlık districts of the sandjak constituted the border with the Bulgarian state after 1908. These two districts were important in terms of human mobility. As is observed in the Rumeli Inspectorate documents, there was a considerable population movement between the borders. It is interesting to note that the people moved across the borders seasonally to cultivate their lands, feed their animals and cut wood.¹⁷² The district of Nevrekop was located on the northeast part of the sandjak. This district was the economic center of the sandjak. The main economic activity was concentrated around tobacco and cotton production. A fair was organized in the district three times a year between August and September and the main economic transactions took place at these fairs. The seaport of the district was at Kavala which was twenty

¹⁷² BOA. TFR I SL. 84/8355, 19.B.1323.

hours away from the central sandjak. Zihnewas another district of Serres sandjak. Its main economic activity also was centered on cotton production. Some parts of the produced cotton were either sent to central Thessaloniki sandjak or exported to Europe.

Drama was the third sandjak of Thessaloniki province with a total population of 165,032. The population of the central district was 63,387. There was a leather and rice factory in the central district. Seven casinos and 52 cafeterias along the river running across the city constituted the most popular excursion spaces of central Drama. Tobacco production was the main economic activity of the sandjak. The kind of tobacco produced in Drama was high quality. For the transportation of tobacco, sacks and rope were produced in the central town of Drama. Besides that, in the Pürsıçan (Prosoçani) sub-district, woolen socks were produced and exported. The seaport of Drama was Kavala port six hours away.¹⁷³

Kavala was the biggest district of Drama sandjak with a population of 32,408. It was the heart of the tobacco sector in the region. Harvested tobacco from the other tobacco producing regions such as Sarışaban, Drama and Serres was transferred to Kavala to be processed according to its kind and size in the workshops near the port. The main economic activity of the district of Kavala was tobacco export. Processed tobacco was exported from Kavala port to Alexandria, Dresden, Trieste, Odessa and New York. As was noted before, the Thessaloniki year book of 1909, states that the exported tobacco was processed by nearly 15,000 workers employed in various

¹⁷³ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 410-412.

workshops. It is noted that the daily wages of the workers ranged between 5- 24 piasters.¹⁷⁴



Figure 11. Postcard illustrating Kavala in 1905

Sarışaban was another tobacco producing district of Drama sandjak. The total population of the kaza was 20,903. In the year book, it is noted that the central district was populated by Muslim migrants (*muhacir*) made up of 40-50 households. Tobacco production was the main economic activity of the district as in the other nearby towns. The manufacture of socks as also seen in the Pürsıçan (Prosoçani) sub-district was another source of income for the people of the district. Because of its topography, it was also an efficient place for animal husbandry. The district was visited seasonally by outsiders to feed their animals. The district of Sarışaban had its own seaport three hours

¹⁷⁴ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 410-412.

distant from the central town. But at the same time, the same town center was four hours away from Kavala port.¹⁷⁵ Because of the geographical proximity of Kavala port, Kiremitliport of the district of Sarışabanlost its prominence. This is to say that, the Kavala port became the central station for the tobacco trade. Harvested tobacco from the nearby towns, tobacco processing workshops, tobacco labor force, tobacco merchants and the agents of the foreign companies, transportation lines, customs and duties all were concentrated in Kavala town, which developed at the expense of the other tobacco producing town centers. A register from the Rumeli Inspectorate on a tobacco worker boy found dead between the border of Kavala and Sarışabanindicates the mobility of the tobacco labor force between the two districts.¹⁷⁶

Another district of Drama isRopçoz with a population of 23,814 persons. The main economic activity of this district was the local robe production, as in the case of the Mayadağof Gevgili district. But the local robe production was not replaced by tobacco production in this locality. Tobacco production remained marginal in this area. Locally produced robes were sent to Istanbul, İzmir and Bosnia.¹⁷⁷

Pravište(Pravi) was another district of the sandjak with a population of 19,520 persons. This was another tobacco producing town. Besides tobacco production, sacks and mats were produced for the needs of the tobacco processing workshops. This is to say that the development of tobacco trade in the province in general generated its own

¹⁷⁵ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 435-436.

¹⁷⁶ BOA. TFR I SL. 58/5704, 15.N.1322.

¹⁷⁷ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 445-446.

supplier industry or manufacture. Praviştewas another trade center of the region that had annual fairs.¹⁷⁸

The majority of the economic transactions took place in the local bazaars and fairs. The annual trade volume of the bazaars and fairs amounted to 80,000 Ottoman liras. The local fairs were born out of the need to supply the basic needs of the inaccessible rural areas. But later on, they became the hearth of the domestic trade activities.¹⁷⁹ It is also observed that the people attended these fairs not only from within the province, but also from outside the province. Almost each small town had a fair organized on a particular date of the year. The operating dates of these fairs followed each other from one town to another. These fairs functioned as commercial events where the producers met with the traders, the sellers with the buyers. In general they provided a big bazaar for the people of the rural areas and for the traders and entrepreneurs wanting to access to the inlands. As a result, the fairs brought about the commercialization of the mainland and the rural areas and functioned as the main apparatus of the rural economy and also as an event of social gathering bringing together different people from the nearby places.

Besides the fairs, another socio-economic activity took place around the thermal spring waters found in the kaza. In the year book it is noted that the hotels had been built in the area to host visitors from Kavala and elsewhere. In the summer time, regular ferries shuttled between the Kavala port and Ropçoz to transfer visitors. This form of touristic activity is observed not only in Ropçoz but also in the places of the province

¹⁷⁸ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 451-452.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 586.

where thermal springs were found. It is noteworthy that the economic potential of such touristic places was recognized by the entrepreneurs, who were encouraged by the government to do so.

In terms of the mode of agricultural production and the property relations, it is stated that the majority of the farmers cultivate their own lands. Since the agricultural area was divided into small plots because of the topography of the region, small-scale ownership was wide spread in the high lands. In the plain areas, however, the relations of property were different; sharecropping was the general pattern here. People worked on the fields of the others in return for a particular share of the harvested product. The sharecroppers were given seeds and the fields by the property owner, who allowed them to keep a few animals to satisfy their needs and supplement their livelihoods. The sharecropping system, however, did not work properly. As noted in the yearbooks, the sharecroppers were always indebted to the property owner. It seems that the failure of the system to the disadvantage of the unpropertied peasants led to general discontent in the rural regions. Part of this population wandered the countryside seeking jobs as seasonal laborers either on the large farms or in the agricultural product processing workshops, especially in the tobacco workshops.

Rural Development

As noted before, the existing literature on nineteenth century Thessaloniki generally refers to the central Thessaloniki district. This emphasis on central Thessaloniki is understandable for various reasons. It was the more urbanized, socially and economically more developed, culturally and politically more influential,

demographically more populated and more cosmopolitan part of the province.

Although, much of the social and economic transactions and intellectual and political developments are more visible in the central district, the rest of the province also requires attention. The surrounding area of the central sandjak has remained almost untouched, as if there had been no connection between the center and the periphery.

The rural development of the province can be better understood within the context of the provincial modernization attempts of the Empire in the late nineteenth century. After the 1880s, the Ottoman state attempted to launch important agricultural development programs and established various institutions to this end. The Ministry of Forests, Mines and Agriculture was established in 1893 and it became an important administrative facility for the improvement of the rural economy of the Empire. The ministry established agricultural schools at first in the three main provinces of the Empire, Istanbul, Bursa and Thessaloniki.

The afore-mentioned international market opportunity, the growing commodification and commercialization of some agricultural products, was of course a primary stimulus for the rural and agricultural development attempts of the state. Moreover, the economic development policies of the Committee for Union and Progress consolidated this great leap forward of the periphery. The Unionists themselves supported the spread of modern agricultural schools and sample modern farms.¹⁸⁰ According to Duran, the iron plows which began to be used after the 1880s signify the transition to modern agriculture.¹⁸¹ In this period, the state opened model fields and

¹⁸⁰ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Milli İktisat 1908-1918* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), p. 206.

¹⁸¹ Duran argues that the first modernization of Turkish agriculture did not come with the tractors after 1950s but with the iron plows after 1880s. For further details, see Bünyamin Duran, “The Ottoman

employed agronomists used improved seeds and cultivation equipment. After various transmutations, the credit bodies reemerged as the Agricultural Bank in 1888. This was also another facilitator for rural development. As a result, an increase in efficiency was observed in late nineteenth century Ottoman agriculture. Although belated and limited in scope, the agricultural reforms launched by the state in 1909 were implemented more successfully in the Balkan provinces of the Empire. The program included the provision of security, transportation, agricultural credits and modernization of agriculture.¹⁸²

In the description of the agricultural economy of the province, the yearbooks emphasize the importance of agricultural schools for the farmers. According to this view, the education of the rural masses would provide not only the development of the agricultural economy, but also make a progressive impact on the manufacture and commercial activities. Since manufacture and trade were deeply affected by the success of the agricultural harvest, the provision of efficiency by the application of modern techniques was given special emphasis. For the purpose of the spread of modern agricultural knowledge, the government established agricultural schools (*ziraat mektepleri*) and exemplary farms (*numune çiftlikleri*). It is noted that the program of the agricultural schools were adopted from European agricultural education programs. For the spread of modern agricultural information, the government employed the bachelors of the secondary level agricultural schools as teachers in the rural areas. The

Agriculture,” in *Histoire Economique et Sociale de l’Empire Ottoman et de la Turquie*, ed. Daniel Panzac (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), pp. 165-176. Güran also indicates the improvement of technique. See Tevfik Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı Üzerine Araştırmalar* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998).

¹⁸² For detailed information on the Ottoman agricultural reform, see Ökçün. *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları*, pp. 191-202.

government targeted the education of agricultural laborers and the development of modern agricultural techniques in this way.¹⁸³

The program of the modernization of agriculture was implemented parallel to the educational activities in the periphery. The state initiated a program of spreading modern schools in the districts and sub-districts of Drama, Serres, Kavala, Gevgili, Pravi, Karaferiye, especially for the Muslim community that maintained traditional education, unlike the non-Muslim communities. New modern schools were established in these areas from the last decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁴ The Alliance Israélite and Feyziye Schools, the two prominent modern schools of Thessaloniki city also were founded in the sub-district of Kavala and Serres.¹⁸⁵ All these initiatives indicate that the periphery of the province was not in a state of inertia and it was not independent of the changes taking place in the largest urban center of the province, Thessaloniki.

Among the peripheral regions of Thessaloniki, Kavala district deserves special attention. Kavala owed its amazing development to the growing tobacco exports from its port. The largest number of tobacco workshop laborers was located in this sub-district. Besides the central Thessaloniki district Kavala was another place where the growing tobacco commerce produced a tobacco labor movement. Therefore, Kavala district requires a closer examination.

¹⁸³ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 591-593.

¹⁸⁴ BOA. MF MKT. 254/6, 1312.L.7.

¹⁸⁵ For the modern education institutions in Thessaloniki, see Mehmet Ö. Alkan, *İmparatorluk'tan Cumhuriyet'e Selanik'ten İstanbul'a Terakki Vakfı ve Terakki Okulları, 1877-2000*. (İstanbul: Terakki Vakfı, 2003).

Kavala was a district of Thessaloniki province. It was surrounded by Drama sandjak on the west, Praviştein the south-west, Sarişaban and the Mesta River on the east and south-east. Administratively, it is a sub-division of the Drama sandjak of the province. This locality had been connected to Thessaloniki and Drama regions in geographical, relational and administrative terms even before the enactment of the Law on Provinces (*Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) in 1864. Although, it was a small part of the province in administrative terms, the social and economic relevance of the city far exceeded its administrative status. In the late nineteenth century, Kavala went through major social changes under the influences of the increasing foreign trade and the coinciding urban development. Upon those developments, in 1902 it was officially suggested to grant sandjak status to Kavala, although this was not realized.¹⁸⁶ Leaving aside its administrative status, Kavala is regarded here as a developing port city in urbanization terms.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Kavala was no longer just a hinterland of the province, but competed with the provincial center as a developing peripheral region. A division of labor between the rural and urban areas had persisted in the Ottoman Empire throughout the centuries. For example, in some areas during the nineteenth century, villagers made coarser clothes of cotton or wool and nearby urban workers made the finer silk or silk-cotton fabrics. These nineteenth century patterns could represent continuities with previous centuries, but what is observed towards the

¹⁸⁶BOA. DH MKT. 469/10, 1319.Z.24.

end of the nineteenth century is a latent competition between the center and the periphery rather than a division of labor or specialization in particular fields.¹⁸⁷ In this regard, the changing relations between the urban center and the nearby periphery can be observed in the context of Thessaloniki province. Especially the late nineteenth century witnessed the rise of Kavala port at the expense of Thessaloniki port due to the massive European imports of tobacco. The same port developed at the expense of the other minor ports around it, such as the Karaağaç (Port Lagos) and Kiremitli ports.

The initial stage of the economic development of Kavala started in 1860s. According to Arslan, Kavala port was in the position of an export port for all of its tobacco producing hinterland as early as the 1860s. Relying on the British consul reports, he makes the point that there was almost no family in Kavala and its environs who provided its livelihood from anything other than tobacco.¹⁸⁸ This means that Kavala was both an important port city and an export-led agricultural center with its hinterland from the middle of the nineteenth century. Although shadowed by Thessaloniki port, Kavala became an important commercial center in a very short period of time.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the early 1890s was an important turning point in the commercialization of tobacco. Within a couple of decades, tobacco exports increased dramatically. According to the 1909 external trade statistics, the annual tobacco export of Thessaloniki province reached about 17 million kilos. Kavala alone exported more than 13 million kilos of this total amount.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Donald Quataert, "The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire: 1800-1914," in *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East*, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder Colo: Westview Press, 1996), p. 26.

¹⁸⁸ İsmail Arslan, p. 161.

¹⁸⁹ Dıġıroġlu, p. 139.

Table 6. Tobacco Exports from Kavala Port¹⁹⁰

Year	Tobacco Exports	
	Quantity/kg.	Value/Fr-drh
1903	9,000,000	36,000,000 fr
1909-10	13,000,000	65,336,795 drh
1910-11	9,179,119	45,895,595 drh
1911-12	12,180,181	60,900,905 drh
1912-13	13,303,980	66,519,900 drh

Tobacco leaves came from Serres and Drama in early October and were processed according to their size and type in the workshops of Kavala to be exported to London, Alexandria, Dresden, Trieste, Odessa, New York and other places. The finest quality tobacco of the region attracted even the Japanese government. Director of the Japanese tobacco monopoly together with the leading Japanese tobacco merchants visited Kavala and Drama to acquire expertise about tobacco production and processing in 1900.¹⁹¹ Germans, Austrians and Americans also visited to learn from the tobacco experts of Kavala.

As is understood from the above facts and figures, tobacco commerce can be regarded to have been the major driving force behind the modernization and urbanization processes of Kavala. The key to the economic development of Kavala was not the industry but commerce. The industrial inventory consisted of an ice factory and

¹⁹⁰ Emilia Stephanidou, *I Poli-Limani tis Kavalas kata tin Periodo tis Tourkokratias* (Urban study of Kavala city-port in the period of Turkish administration) (Thessaloniki: Photoanthigraphiki Publications, 1991), p. 209.

¹⁹¹ BOA. DH MKT. 2307/7, 1317.L.17.

three soap factories¹⁹² as far as we know. The ice factory was established as late as 1908.¹⁹³ Those factories were just to satisfy the local demand in terms of basic consumption. The figures below about the tobacco enterprises give an idea about the size of the tobacco sector within the economy of the district.

The first country that imported tobacco from Kavala from 1870s to the end of Ottoman administration was Austria which did so in large quantities. The second country that was involved in the tobacco trade since the beginning of twentieth century was the USA. Transatlantic countries strongly influenced the Kavala market and called for the excessive production crisis of 1903. The sudden temporary demand of large quantities of tobacco by the American Tobacco Company, which had been established in Kavala in 1901, two years later, called for 50 percent increase in tobacco production, which brought inevitable results: difficulty in absorption from the market, decrease in prices, mass unemployment and the organization of the first big strike of the unemployed as well as the overloaded tobacco workers in charge in 1904. However, after a short while, in 1912, came another over-production crisis, which had started a year before, resulting from the greater demand by the same company canceled in the same way.¹⁹⁴ Besides the big foreign tobacco companies numerous local merchants operated in the Kavala tobacco market. The commercial company of the Allatinies, the

¹⁹²The soap factories of; Panayoti Puglia, Traghaki & Tsamourgheli and Tzoannou Freres & Voula Freres. See, *Annuaire Oriental* (Yearbooks of the Orient) 1909.

¹⁹³BOA.İ RSM. 31/132, 1326. Ra. 21

¹⁹⁴ Stephanidou, pp. 181-182.

leading local entrepreneur of industry and commerce in the central Thessaloniki, was also active in the Kavala tobacco market from 1900.¹⁹⁵

Table 7. Tobacco Enterprises in Kavala¹⁹⁶

Enterprise	Individual + company
Tobacco Exporter	64+13
Tobacco Exchange Market	10
Tobacco Company	5+10
Tobacco Middlemen/Broker	5

The above listed figures on the tobacco business indicate the scope of the sector in Kavala. The urbanization and modernization of Kavala made leaps forward parallel to the amazing development of the tobacco trade. As in the case of central Thessaloniki described above, the development of trade requires the development of transportation and communication facilities. The development of commerce and modern, urban facilities fed each other. Transportation had started to develop for the inhabitants of Kavala as early as the 1840s. In 1844, the Thessaloniki-Istanbul ferry line of the Ottoman Steam Company included Kavala and Dardanelles in its route.¹⁹⁷

The improvement of the port facilities was of course key to the development of the tobacco trade. Port and customs facilities developed along with the development of the tobacco exports. The wooden dock of Kavala was reconstructed in 1888.¹⁹⁸ The

¹⁹⁵ For a list of the tobacco exporters in Kavala at the turn of the twentieth century, see Appendix B.

¹⁹⁶ Stephanidou, p. 206.

¹⁹⁷ Gounaris, “Selanik,” p. 108.

¹⁹⁸ BOA. DH MKT. 1403/109, 14.C.1304.

construction of a customs building on the shore started in 1890.¹⁹⁹ Besides that, road construction activities accelerated from the early 1890s in order to connect the tobacco producing hinterland to Kavala. In addition, the small island just opposite the Kavala gulf, Thasos (Taşoz) also was connected to Kavala by ship. Ferries shuttled between Kavala and Thasos day and night. Any disruption in the functioning of the transportation resulted in an immediate reaction by the traders.²⁰⁰

This transportation lines were designed to carry goods rather than people. But the same lines served the mobility of seasonal and migrant laborers as well. Especially the ferry lines provided the mobility of laborers between the Thessaloniki- İzmir and Crete-Thasos-Kavala routes.²⁰¹ As will be explained in detail in the next chapter, seasonal tobacco workshops from several places flooded to the tobacco workshops in Kavala from March to September. Although the laborers could probably not afford it, automobile and bus lines between Kavala and Drama were also available from 1908.²⁰² These two vehicles indicate both the general economic affluence of the district and the developing middle-classes there.

¹⁹⁹ BOA. İ ŞD. 102/6112, 1308.Ra.12.

²⁰⁰ BOA.TFR I ŞKT.36/3529, 20.M.1322. BOA.TFR I SL. 37/3645, 10.S.1322.

²⁰¹ BOA.Y PRK BŞK.69/70, 30.Ra.1324. BOA.BEO.2844/213284, 14.R.1324. BOA.BEO.2855/214062, 28.R.1324. BOA.DH MKT. 1083/60, 30.Ra.1324.

²⁰² BOA.TFR I MKM. 29/2864, 1326.Ca.16.



Figure 12. Postcard illustrating Drama-Kavala Bus

Besides transportation, communication is an indispensable part of commercial relations. Apart from the Ottoman post services, the private post-offices of Austria and France were also found in Kavala. Because of the high amounts of tobacco purchased from here, the foreign missions were quite interested in Kavala. In early the 1890s, the consular of Germany, Britain, Austria-Hungary, Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Russia were present in Kavala. As the French Commercial Consular Reports indicate, even the consuls themselves were engaged in tobacco export and insurance companies as the managers or agents.²⁰³

As the tobacco commerce becomes a profitable economic activity, numerous credit and insurance firms were established in the city. The city was equipped with creditor institutions. Ottoman Bank was built on the coastal side of Kavala at the end of

²⁰³ *Annuaire Oriental* (Yearbook of the Orient), 1896.

the nineteenth century and the Agricultural Bank (Ziraat Bankası) was built shortly after. Three creditor institutions were established in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Bank of Athens that was located on the ground floor of the Big Club; the Bank of Thessaloniki on the coast; and the Rumanian Bank de Commerce was founded later in 1911.²⁰⁴

Tobacco trade was the main economic activity in Kavala and everyone was engaged in it in one way or another. Boatmen, the gendarmerie, local administrators and even shoe-makers were engaged in the tobacco sector legally or illegally. A petition from Mehmet Şerif Efendi complaining about one of the members of the municipal consul, Hacı Ahmed Efendi, on the ground that he neglected his municipal duty because he was over- indulged in tobacco trade, is an explicit example of this situation.²⁰⁵ Or in another case, it is seen that the mayor of Kavala, Ahmed Muhtar Efendi, owned a tobacco workshop in Kavala which he maintained until the WWI.²⁰⁶

Actually, the international companies located in Kavala invested in the development of infrastructure in the city. International direct investment helped the economic growth and urbanization in Kavala. It seems that the city benefited much from the agricultural exporter position of the Ottoman economy within the world system. For example, Mr. Spaydel, the franchise owner of the mines on Thasos Island located just opposite the Kavala shore, assumed some of the expenses of the

²⁰⁴ Stephanidou, p. 305.

²⁰⁵ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 101/10013, 1324.10.11.

²⁰⁶ BOA.HR SYS. 2385/36, 1915.06.12.

construction of the telegraph line between Kavala and Thasos.²⁰⁷ International investments in Kavala provided also know-how for the development of infrastructure. Austria was the oldest and largest foreign entrepreneur in the tobacco sector of Kavala. The famous Herzog Company was an Austrian initiative. Since Austria had invested a significant sum of capital in Kavala, the Austrian state was closely interested in the infrastructural development of the city for its own use. The son of the prime minister of Austria together with the industrial secretary of his country visited Kavala in 1901 to conduct field research for city water mains, tramway construction, and the modernization of the port and also investigated the mines.²⁰⁸

The tobacco trade was the main engine of the other sectors in the city. The wealthy tobacco traders of the Kavala were eager to invest in the other sectors as well, mainly in the insurance and transportation sectors. Besides there were others investing in other sectors and helping the growth of the economy. For example, the tobacco merchant Zahoracquired the franchise for the thermal springs in Pravi, a nearby town, for 23 years.²⁰⁹ Thus, the tobacco sector in Kavala helped the growth of the rural economy in the nearby towns as well. For example, more than 100,000 sacks to be used exclusively in the transportation of tobacco were produced yearly in the Kesriye village of Pravi. Mats, cotton and woolen fabric and ropes were also produced in the several nearby villages for the exclusive use of the tobacco business.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ BOA. DH MKT. 1104/69, 1324.C.8.

²⁰⁸ BOA. DH MKT. 2556/115, 1319.Ş.5.

²⁰⁹ BOA. DH MKT. 103/10, 1323.Za.5.

²¹⁰ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 452.

Besides supporting the infrastructure and promoting the economic growth with production, the company holders or the management staff of the big tobacco businesses of the city participated in charitable activities. Selanikli Ahmed Nuri Efendi was shown appreciation by the government with a medal for a generous grant he had made for the construction of a hospital in the city.²¹¹ Consequently, all these efforts, triggered by the growing tobacco trade, helped the district take the form of a city- an urban center- in terms of modernization. The below list reflects the level of urbanization, modernization and economic development in Kavala.

By the year 1909, there were 600 shops, 490 stores, 600 coffeehouses, 39 bakers', six hotels, 16 Islamic schools in Kavala. The foundation of Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha donated a high school, a primary school, a madrasah (*medrese*), a library, a soup kitchen (*imaret*) for the students and the poor, and seven mosques to the city. Apart from the foundation, there were seven mosques, two masjids (*mescid*), five madrasahs, three churches and one synagogue. Besides that, the district had a hospital with a 40 bed capacity and a theatre hall.²¹² Eight Muslim and four non-Muslim elementary schools and a secondary school were founded in Kavala at the end of the nineteenth century. The student population of the city exceeded 400. It can be estimated that the literacy of the district reached almost 10 percent. The well-known modern Feyziye Schools of central Thessaloniki had a branch in Kavala as well. These schools contained primary and secondary level schools for boys and girls as well in Kavala.²¹³ Besides that, the

²¹¹ BOA.DH MKT. 746/48, 1321.Ca.8.

²¹² *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 424.

²¹³ BOA. MF MKT. 647/18, 1320.R.22.

Alliance Israélite Schools also had a branch in Kavala.²¹⁴ This profile indicates that the district under examination was a microcosm of central Thessaloniki in terms of urbanization and modernization.

Nevertheless, this period of admirable change in Kavala was not exempt from conflicts among the social and economic groups. Growing tobacco commerce brought more discord than harmony to Kavala. There were several conflicts between the local administration and the Régie Company, the Régie Company and the tobacco merchants, and the tobacco merchants and workshops laborers.

First, it should be noted that the control of tobacco trade generated conflicts between the Régie Company and the local administration. The district governor of Kavala attempted to change the legislation on the export procedures and seized power over the control of tobaccos which was actually under the power domain of the Régie Company in legal terms.²¹⁵ This attempt of the district governor was meaningful in the sense that he tried to seize control of tobacco exports at a time which was a crucial turning point in terms of the rising international demand for the tobaccos of Kavala. The Régie Company had been acting in the Kavala tobacco market since 1887.²¹⁶ The introduction of the American Tobacco Company and the others in the market at the very beginning of the twentieth Century, however, changed the balances in the market and generated a short-term market fluctuation, the bill of which would be delegated to the tobacco laborers.

²¹⁴ BOA. MF MKT. 1142/51, 1327.L.17.

²¹⁵ BOA. DH MKT. 653/9, 1320.Za.16.

²¹⁶ BOA. MKT MHM. 494/68, 1305.M.22.

The governor of Kavala tried to take control of the tobacco trade in 1903 and to rearrange the sector. A year later, the tobacco trade would directly open to the manipulations of the international market, which would eventually result in the emergence of tobacco labor activism in 1904 and 1905. In that sense, it is suggested that there was a close relation between the international manipulations on the Kavala tobacco market and the initial stage of labor activism in the city. The social conflicts generated by the domestic tobacco market- the conflicts between the Régie Company, tobacco farmers and the merchants- were examined in the previous chapter. The rest of the study will focus on the social conflicts created by the external tobacco sector. In the external market, major conflict occurred between the tobacco exporters and the workshop laborers. Tobacco labor organizations and the labor activism will be examined in detail in the following chapter

CHAPTER IV

THE TOBACCO LABORERS OF THESSALONIKI PROVINCE: LIVING STANDARDS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

This chapter describes the tobacco workshop laborers and the attributes of their job.

Living standards and wage levels of the tobacco laborers compared to the other wage laborers are taken into close consideration, mainly because these conditions are regarded as the sole reason of the tobacco labor activism by some authors, especially by the labor intellectuals of the period.

In order to understand the tobacco sector and the social reality it generated, it is necessary to describe the job itself at first. Tobacco job is an integrated occupation starting from the field and ending in the factory. In other words, it had different stages of production. In fact, the production of tobacco differs according to intended use. Tobacco was consumed in various forms such as, in water pipe (*nargile*), snuff (*enfiye*), chewing, hand wrapped cigars and lastly industrial cigarettes. The most widespread use of tobacco was the cigar form. Minced tobacco leaves were rolled either into tobacco leaves or into papers. Cigarettes were the latest industrialized form of tobacco production and consumption. This study focuses on the commercial tobacco processing job.

Description of the Tobacco Job from Field to Factory

From field to the factory, tobacco production is a complicated job following interrelated procedures. Therefore, the story of tobacco production starts in the field, because the agricultural processing can be considered as the first stage of the later processing job in the commercial workshop. Besides that, the agricultural production stage is crucial to understanding the time cycle of the production stage and the seasonal mobility of the labor force from the fields to the workshops.

Tobacco seeds were sowed on March and grew between twenty and thirty days, when they were replanted in a prepared field. The seeds were planted in straight lines with a space for one person to move between the two lines of the plants. The plants grew between two and three months and each plant had approximately four or five ranges of leaves from the top to the bottom. The first range of leaves at the bottom constituted the lowest quality and the top leaves generated the highest quality. Although the names can change locally, these ranges of leaves were called bottom (*dip altı*), low (*dip*), main (*ana*) and peak (*doruk*). In fact, the range of tobacco leaves constituted the basis of labor hierarchy, as will be seen.²¹⁷

Mature tobacco leaves were weeded by the weeding laborers. Those weeding laborers could be hired according to the size of the farm, production and property relations. Following the weeding job, the picking of the leaves started. This operation took place in July-August. Harvesting time was a critical decision for the agricultural producers. An early harvest is better for the quality of the leaves and facilitated better

²¹⁷ Salih Zeki, *Türkiye’de Tütün* (Istanbul: n.p., 1928), p. 39.

drying of the leaves. Nevertheless, it diminished the quantity of the total product. On the other hand, if the producer decided on a late harvest, the leaves could get sun burnt and become useless.²¹⁸

The tobacco plant was harvested using a special technique in order for it to be processed properly in the workshop and also in the factory. Although the harvesting methods showed some variations in different localities, the rule was that the best quality leaves were collected by the most qualified laborers. The laborers were grouped into 4-5 categories in accordance with the range of leaves. In a sense, the work hierarchy was embedded in the leaves of the plant. Thus, we can say that tobacco processing started in the field and this operation constituted the basis of the work hierarchy among the workshop laborers.

The leaves of the plant were harvested in consecutive periods. The bottom leaves are harvested first. Less skilled laborers, generally children collected these leaves. They would pick the bottom leaves, make them into a bunch of ten to fifteen pieces and leave next to the plant. These bunches were left under the sun and dried for an hour and then collected and carried for drying. Five or six days after this operation, the top ranges of leaves are collected in the same way. And finally, the top levels were collected seven or eight days later. All the collected leaves were left to dry for one day. The leaves had to be dried in a way to prevent tearing and cracking. Dried leaves were strung by the common effort of all the available force at hand, men, and women, children, young and elderly.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Salih Zeki, p. 40.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

Tobacco leaves were either strung or bunched according to their type and quality. High quality tobaccos such as those of Thessaloniki province generally were strung. Those low quality tobaccos which are not for stringing were processed by a different method. Those leaves were sorted into four or five categories according to their quality and bunched into the bundles of 10-15 leaves. This method was called *Basma* (press) and was widely used in İzmir.²²⁰ Both the agricultural and commercial processing of tobacco changed according to the type and quality of tobacco and locality of production.²²¹

In case there was time pressure or the humidity of the leaves required so, the stringing operation started after three or four hours of drying and the leaves were left to a second drying after this operation.²²² After another process of drying, the strung leaves were sorted once more according to their quality and bailed into packing cases to be sold to the merchant.²²³

Given the above-mentioned details and the complications of agricultural tobacco production, one can understand the required level of profession.²²⁴ This profession either comes from one's trial and error wisdom or scientific knowledge provided by the

²²⁰ Note that the local tobacco of İzmir was not of as high a quality as of Thessaloniki. The high quality tobacco producers of İzmir cultivate the seeds brought from Yenice (Janitza) district of Thessaloniki province which was famous for its aroma. Yenice type tobacco processing in İzmir constituted 70 percent of all tobacco processing jobs towards the turn of the twentieth century. See Erkan Serçe, *İzmir 1920* (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1998), pp. 9-10.

²²¹ Tobacco processing methods vary according to the type, size, form and structure of the tobacco plant and they are known by the following names: 1. *Basma* (Press) 2. *Başıbağlı* (Head fixed) 3. *Samsunkari* (Samsun bunch) 4. *Samsun sıra* (row) 5. *Alexandria pastal* (laying) 6. *İzmir kalıp* (mould) 7. *Tonga*. For further information about tobacco processing work, see the Turkish Monopoly Administration, *Tobacco Affairs* (İstanbul): [The Monopolies' Press], 1939).

²²² Salih Zeki, p. 42.

²²³ Note that bailing (*denk*) and packing case (*sandık*) methods also show variations in different localities.

²²⁴ For further details and complications of the agricultural tobacco production, see Osman Tur, "Tütünçünün Mevsimlik İşleri," *Ziraat Dünyası* 7, no. 82 (1956), pp. 13-25.

Agricultural Schools (*Ziraat Mektepleri*) described in the previous chapter. In fact, all the above manipulation of the tobacco leaves- lowering the level of humidity from 80 to 20 percent for example- and the generation of alternative methods to bring them under the pressure of various conditions indicates a kind of local knowledge and profession that was passed down through generations. The variation of the methods at several stages of the production from one locality to the other signifies the practical achievements of the agricultural producers.

The proper sorting of the leaves according to quality was an important asset increasing the price of the commercial product. As will be explained in the following section, the sorting of the leaves always generated hot discussions between the merchants and agricultural producers and between the merchants and the workshop laborers as well. In principle, the sorting method of the bales was open to the abuses of both the agricultural producer and the merchant. But the practical cases will show us that this issue would work to the advantage of the merchant in general.

The commercial processing of tobacco leaves started after the sale to the merchant. The purchased tobacco bales were transported to the workshops of the merchants or the big commercial businesses. These workshops were warehouses called *mağaza* and used to store tobacco leaves. They functioned not only as storage places but also as an atelier or workshop where the tobacco leaves underwent a commercial processing operation by numerous workers.

Simple warehouses were turned into commercial tobacco workshops as early as the 1870s. Nollas states that the first tobacco workshops appeared in Kavala in 1870s. The size, form, style and place of the tobacco workshops in the urban fabric varied over time. Generally they were small, plain two storied buildings. Their form

precisely followed their function: light was required for processing and dark for storage, so the architecture ensured ample light high up and shade down below. On the ground floor, windows on all four sides ensured good ventilation and prevented rotting, but were kept small to limit the light to which the raw tobacco piled in wooden crates or cots was exposed. The processing took place upstairs, where the windows were larger and received more sun light.²²⁵

Tobacco experts decided on and supervised the methods of processing. Wage laborers carried out a commercial processing job in the workshops, which were generally located near the ports. This processed tobacco was mainly an export good sold to Europe and USA to produce cigarettes. The commercialization of tobacco brought further specialization in the tobacco processing job. It became so complicated that tobacco expertise occurred as an independent job category.

Apart from the quality of the seed, the meticulously recurring manipulation of the leaves in the field and the workshop made Turkish tobacco, as it was called even in the Ottoman period, the most favored brand in the international tobacco market. Tobacco manipulation in the Ottoman territories was an expensive and difficult task requiring a great deal of skilled labor. The foreign buyers at first sight found these recurring manipulations unnecessary, because in many parts of the world, the tobacco leaves were pressed into an ordinary canvas or a tea case like bags and then were given to cutting machines without undergoing any manipulation. Later in the 1930s, the Turkish Tobacco Monopoly would criticize the foreign buyers by stating that “foreign

²²⁵ Kamilo Nollas, *Tobacco Factories* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2007), p. 21. Although such conditions as light, damp, ventilation may require the location of workers and the storage of tobacco bales in certain places, it is observed that it could vary on different occasions.

buyer is satisfied to see an average sample of tobacco as if he was buying corn or wheat.”²²⁶

Only those who were trying to generate their special brand mark appreciated the quality of the blend produced from these manipulations. This meticulous method of tobacco processing survived into the 1940s in Turkey under the administration of the state monopoly. As was noted in the previous chapter, the international importers of Turkish tobacco would find this method unnecessary and sought to cut it short and reduce the labor and production costs.

In the tobacco workshops of Ottoman Thessaloniki and elsewhere, the skilled laborers re-processed the baled tobaccos and got it ready to be used mainly for cigarette production abroad. The agriculturally processed bales were controlled and resorted into the packing cases (*sandık*) by skilled laborers.

The main body of the workshop laborers worked on these packing cases. In other words, packing cases constitutes the main production units of the workshops. The manipulation of the packing cases for cigarette production differed from that of the others. These packing cases contained several kinds of tobaccos. A packing case was composed of a series of cases, one placed on top of another. These series of cases followed from the bottom to the top as *taban* (base), *uzun sıra* (long row), *mezar* (coffin), *kapak* (cover), *kapak altı* (under cover), *yukarı kapak altı* (high under cover), *yukarı kapak* (higher cover), *yukarı mezar* (higher coffin) and *büzülme* (shrinkage). The cover case could be regarded as the border line between the two levels of quality. Each packing case was processed in general by a single worker, who sorted the cases without dissolving the bales. The tobaccos resorted in the packs are compressed to be shipped

²²⁶Turkish Monopoly Administration, *Tobacco Affairs* ([Istanbul]: [The Monopolies' Press], 1939), p.50.

easily. It took one day for a single laborer to resort just one case of an entire pack. But it should be noted that this packing case processing method also showed differences depending on localities. İzmir, Alexandria, Samsun and the other localities developed their own methods.²²⁷

Agriculturally processed tobacco was transferred either to the commercial workshops as described above or to the cigarette factories of the Régie Company. Due to the monopoly status of the Régie Company, no cigarette factory could be established in the Ottoman territories after 1881. Shipped bales were dissolved and resorted in the factory. This resorting operation gave the cigarettes their taste. The humidity of the leaves was adjusted after this operation by a pulverizator or manually. Then the pile of leaves was cut and minced by a muller. A worker could mince between thirty and forty kilos of tobaccos in a day, working between eight and ten hours. A mincing foreman was assisted by another less skilled worker. This mincing worker (*havancı*) was assisted by an unskilled worker (*pastalçı*). This operation could be achieved by machine or manually. Minced tobacco was rolled into paper and took the form of cigarettes.

This job was usually carried out by women laborers. A man worker could roll between two and three thousands cigarettes in a day by working ten hours. The same job could be achieved by a machine, which produced 22,000-24,000 cigarettes in an hour. This machine could be run by two women. The packing of the cigarettes and the unrolled tobacco constituted the final stage of production in the factories. The cigarettes

²²⁷ Salih Zeki, pp. 6-7.

were packaged into envelopes and paper boxes. Packing into envelopes could be achieved by machine or manually. But paper box packaging was a manual job and a paper box atelier was founded in each of the big factories. The production of the paper boxes and packaging were usually carried out by the women and children. The unrolled minced tobacco was weight and filled into small boxes. A worker could fill two or three thousands boxes a day.²²⁸

Much of the operations described above could be achieved either by machine or manually. Our knowledge about the level of mechanization in the cigarette factories mainly comes from Ottoman industrial statistics produced in 1913-1915. Nevertheless, these statistics give us an inventory of the machines and equipment in Istanbul and İzmir cigarette factories, not those in Thessaloniki. According to these statistics, the factories in İzmir and Istanbul had 36 tobacco mincing, five cigarette filter, 34 cigarette rolling, one tobacco packaging (in İzmir) and two nicotine distilling machines (in Istanbul).²²⁹ Therefore, it can be assumed that, contrary to the manual manipulations of the tobacco workshops, cigarette factories involved a considerable level of mechanization at the beginning of the twentieth century. Relying on Quataert, it should be underlined here that the cigarette factory of the Régie Company in Thessaloniki produced 100,000 machine-made cigarettes per day as early as 1883.²³⁰

The complete mechanization of cigarette production developed at the time of the First World War. While the level of production in the İzmir and Istanbul factories

²²⁸ Salih Zeki, pp. 127-132.

²²⁹ Ökçün, *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 69.

²³⁰ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 66.

increased at the time of war, the price value decreased, because much of the tobaccos and cigarettes were purchased by the Ottoman army.²³¹ Armies elsewhere at that time were prevailing customers and a consumer mass for the sector.

The First World War is a significant period of time not only for the level of mechanization but also for the transformation of production methods. A new method of commercial tobacco processing, which was called *tonga* was introduced at that time. Tonga can be defined as a method of processing low quality tobacco leaves baled without a pre-sorting stage of bunch making. The labor density of the packing case processing that was explained above also was reduced due to this method.²³² The heavy expenses of processing and the risk involved in buying a stock which could only be disposed of during the following year were serious obstacles for the tobacco business firms. In this case, the export of unprocessed or less-processed tobacco was put forward as a solution by some firms.

However, the definition of what was unprocessed tobacco itself was a subject of constant dispute between the workers and merchants from 1904. The merchants could impose this method only after the WWI, because some merchants and commercial firms were suspicious about this method and stood with the workers in this debate. But inabilities and exigencies of the war conditions and the rising demand for tobacco at the time of war promoted the export of unprocessed tobacco. Thus, the tonga method started to prevail.

The tong method changed the overall dynamics of the sector and brought about different social impacts. For this reason, this study will cover the period until the Balkan

²³¹ Ökçün, *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 70.

²³² Salih Zeki, p.98.

Wars. The period after the Balkan Wars is a turning point in many respects. This sectoral change was accompanied by a political and demographic change at that time. The annexation of Thessaloniki by Greece and the following migrations changed the whole social reality together with the sector. The following description of the tobacco laborers presents the social reality of the tobacco laborers.

Description of the Tobacco Laborers

The above section examined the tobacco job in three main stages of production, agricultural, commercial and industrial. The description of the tobacco laborers will follow the same path. To start with, it should be noted that these three categories of labor are interrelated in various respects and one can be better understood in reference to the other category. The phenomenon of labor hiring in return for wages in money constituted the main criterion cross-cutting all three categories. Thus, the conception of “worker” denotes the hired labor category here in this study. After such a specification of the definition, the concepts of worker and laborer are used interchangeably. These laborers will be pictured in terms of a working hierarchy, gender composition and the other defining criteria. It should also be noted, besides the formal legal sector described here, a relevant share of the labor stock was captured by the illegal smuggling sector, which will be examined separately in the following chapters. The laborer category examined here is composed of those employed in the formal, legal sector.

To start with the agricultural laborers, it should be noted that this category refers to hired laborers. So this is a different category from share-cropping. Although tobacco cultivation was primarily a family job, paid laborers could be employed at harvest

times. Especially, the large farms or those farms on which family labor was not sufficient to deal with the meticulous work of prior processing on the field had to employ seasonal agricultural laborers.

These laborers were employed in the weeding, harvesting and stringing jobs in the field as described above. The weeding laborers constituted the less skilled category among the agricultural laborers, because this job did not require any experience or profession peculiar to tobacco manipulation. Any kind of unskilled agricultural laborer with little or no experience could be employed at this job. On the other hand, the other agricultural work categories occupied with the sorting and compilation of the tobacco leaves required some prior experience with the plant. Since the tobacco job in general involved an expertise in sorting and compilation, the employers were more selective in hiring in this category.

Agricultural laborers were hired seasonally, in the summer time. Their number changed according to the level of production or the availability of the free-floating labor force in particular localities. Although there are no clear statistics on the number of agricultural hired laborers, we can assume that their numbers must not have been negligible especially in the Ottoman Balkans where the farms were larger than in other parts of the empire. For central Thessaloniki, Moskof states that there was about 3000 agricultural laborers most of whom were employed in the tobacco fields at the turn of the twentieth century.²³³

Workshop laborers were more numerous in comparison to the agricultural wage laborers working in the field. While the number of agricultural laborers was about 3000

²³³ Moskof, p. 271.

in central Thessaloniki, the number of workshop laborers reached 6000 according to Moskof²³⁴ and 4000-5000²³⁵ according to Quataert, which means that the number of commercial workshop laborers was one-half or two times larger than those of the agricultural ones. Within the province, the number of commercial workshop laborers reached its peak in Kavala, where nearly 15,000 workers were employed.²³⁶

A division of labor and working hierarchy is observed at all levels of the tobacco production and it was structured on the basis of the quality of the tobacco leaves. In other words, the tobacco laborers were ranked hierarchically along the ranges of the tobacco plant. The most skillful worked with the best quality leaves. This division of labor and hierarchy was observed in such a strict manner that we find some folk beliefs about it. For example, if one was the first person in a line of laborers picking leaves in the field, one should not change one's position in the row throughout the collecting activity. It was believed that one's back would be injured, if one changed one's position.²³⁷

It should be noted that the hierarchical division of labor occurred earlier on the field and persisted and reinforced through the further stages. This hierarchical relation took the form of *denkçi* vs. *pastalcı* distinction in the commercial workshops. Those who worked on the first quality leaves in the workshops and made the blend were called *denkçi* and those who worked on the lowest quality leaves were called as *pastalcı*. A

²³⁴ Moskof, p. 68.

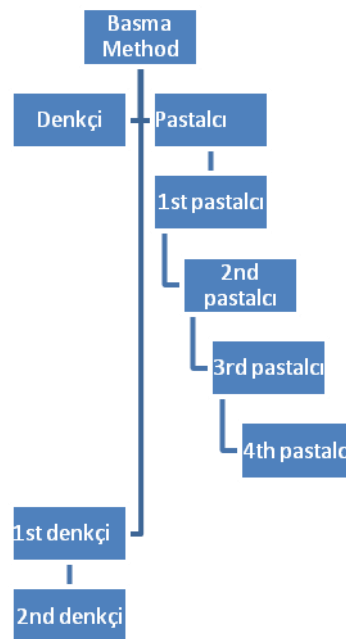
²³⁵ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 71.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

²³⁷ Süleyman Şenel, "Ayıngacı Türküleri," in *Tütün Kitabı*, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2003), p. 364.

denkçi was generally a man, while pastalacı was generally a woman. Thus, the hierarchical division of labor was not only constructed on skill, but also followed a gender division. The same hierarchical situation was reflected in the wages, as we will see in detail in the following section.

In terms of the working hierarchy in the tobacco workshops, we see the worker supervisors, who assigned duties to the workers, at the top of the hierarchy. The supervisor decided who would work on which part of a packing case. He was responsible for the compilation of the packing cases as a whole. The same gender division was also observed here. The supervisor, called *sandıkçı* (packing case expert) or *ustabaşı* (foreman) was a man and those to whom he assigned work were generally women. Although, the production methods varied according to the locality or to the type of the tobacco, the hierarchical scheme did not change. The diagram below shows this hierarchical scheme.



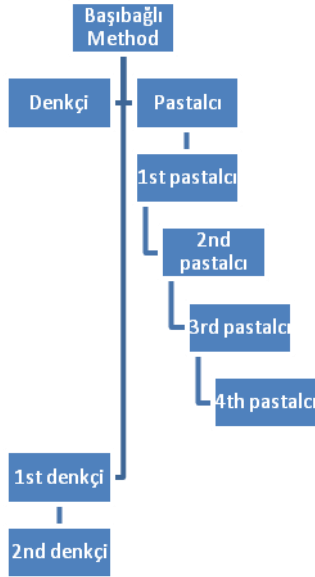


Figure.13. Illustration of working hierarchy in the tobacco workshops

When it came to the industrial factory workers, they were less numerous than the agricultural and workshop laborers. After receiving the monopoly status to produce cigarettes for domestic consumption, the Régie Company established factories in Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Izmir, Samsun, Adana, Damascus and Aleppo. According to the first industrial statistics of the Ottoman Empire, the average number of workers employed in each of the Régie factories in Istanbul and İzmir was about one thousand in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Although, it might have changed in time and according to the production level, the number of workers employed in the cigarette factory of the Régie Company in Thessaloniki was about 400 in average. While Quataert states that 335 workers were employed in the cigarette factory of the Régie Company in 1891,²³⁸ Berke calculates that

²³⁸ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 71.

the number of workers in the same factory was between 400 and 500 in 1892.²³⁹ On the other hand, Ilıcak notes that the cigarette factory of the Régie Company employed 15 foremen, clerks and employees; 335 manipulators and five guardians.²⁴⁰ The number of cigarette factory workers did not exceed 500 and they constituted only a small part of the tobacco labor force employed in the central Thessaloniki city. Compared with the numbers of the agricultural laborers and the factory laborers, the workshop laborers constituted the greatest part of the tobacco labor force in central Thessaloniki. Since the number and significance of the workshop laborers far exceeded those of the factory laborers, research priority is given to the workshop laborers.

All three categories of laborers defined here had some commonalities and differences among themselves. In terms of commonalities, it should be underlined at first that it was a women labor intensive in all categories of production. Nevertheless, women labor in the sector was not as exclusive as those of the textile sector.

Secondly, the tobacco laborers in question were seasonal workers of all levels of the production from the field to factory. However, the length of the season changed according to the level of production or the size of the business. The working season was shorter for the agricultural laborers, mainly between July and August. Although, it depended on the size of the business, the commercial workshop season lasted longer, from March to September. A laborer could be employed both in the field and in the workshop for the different periods of the working season. This is to say that the sector enabled the free-floating of laborers between the fields and workshops. But since the

²³⁹ Berke, p. 19.

²⁴⁰ Şükrü Ilıcak, "Jewish Socialism in Ottoman Salonica," *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 2, no.3 (September 2002), p.121.

July-August period constituted the high season both in the fields and in the workshops, the labor force had to be allocated between the two in this period. This is most labor-demanding period of the year. Contrary to what one might expect, the seasonal work schedule was peculiar not only to the agricultural and commercial tobacco production. The cigarette factories also did not work for the whole year either. According to a calculation, they did not work more than 240 days in a year.²⁴¹ Keeping in mind that the weekly holidays were not recognized by most of the employers at that time, this means that the factories also were closed in the winter months.

Thirdly, the working hierarchy did not change much in all categories. The most qualified laborers were occupied with the highest quality tobacco leaves. Last but not the least, all the mentioned categories of tobacco laborers including those working in the field were wage laborers, some of whom could support themselves with other sources of income. Consequently, these factors brought the field, workshop and factory laborers closer to one another.

When it comes to the differences, factory production was different from the other two levels or modes of production with its level of mechanization, of course. As was noted before, the level of mechanization in the cigarette production indicated the early industrialization of the sector in Thessaloniki especially.

Secondly, while the factory laborers were mainly composed of urban inhabitants, the workshop labor force had a significant share of rural and migrant population along with the urban indigenous population. This is to say that the commercial laborers constituted the most heterogeneous part of the tobacco labor force.

²⁴¹Ökçün, *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 70.

As will be explained in the next chapter in detail, the meeting of the urban and rural, local and migrant, in the tobacco workshops would lead to some conflicts among the laborers. The large concentration of tobacco laborers in the commercial sector made it the largest of all three tobacco laborer categories described above. Here at this point, the large numbers of tobacco workshop laborers in comparison to the others brings an important question. Where did they come from? The following section examines the source of this special labor force.

The Genesis of Tobacco Workshop Laborers in the Ottoman Balkans

As the tobacco workers category is examined, it can be said that the origin of the urban factory workers is more or less apparent. The source of labor employed in the Régie factories in Istanbul, central Thessaloniki and the other urban places does not pose a relevant question since those kinds of urban places could recruit such a labor force by their nature. Agricultural wage laborers also are not an incomprehensible category, especially when the high season exigencies of the tobacco production are considered.²⁴² But the significant number of tobacco laborers employed in the commercial workshops of the more peripheral regions is a perplexing question which requires closer examination.

The concentration of tobacco labor force in the developing and modernizing periphery of the Thessaloniki province is one of the main premises of this study.

²⁴² It was a common practice to hire agricultural wage laborers at times of the high season in the late nineteenth century and this practice survived until the Republican Turkey. For further information, see Reşat Nalbantoğlu, "Türkiye'de Ziraat İşçilerinin Durumu," in *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1948), pp. 16-29; İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, *Türkiye Köy İktisadiyatı* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), pp. 135-138.

Drawing attention to the large concentration of this commercial labor force, this section tries to answer the question of how they came into being. What was the origin of this tobacco labor force employed in the commercial workshops of Thessaloniki province and its periphery?

The modernization of the periphery of the province and also the state of affairs in the rural areas at the turn of the twentieth century reveals that the labor force employed there, was an amalgam of urbanizing townsmen and women and the population of the rural areas who were becoming increasingly poor and were thrown to those areas. As explained in the previous chapter, the peripheral districts of the Thessaloniki also were becoming commercialized as the trade capacity of those places grew in parallel to the improvement of transportation facilities and increasing international demand for commercial crops. Especially, the coastal towns such as Kavala developed faster than the nearby areas. The tobacco workshops in Kavala became an important point of attraction for the free-floating laborers.

First of all, it should be emphasized that the tobacco workshop laborers category under question was not a homogenous category. In other words, the laborers stood “in-between” in many regards. This means that they came into being at the cross-roads of the clashing norms, rising and falling social institutions and forms. In short, the tobacco workshop laborers were the products of a period of change.

The shattering status-quo between the urban and rural social institutions in the nineteenth century and the changing relations of production in parallel are keys to understanding this generation of tobacco workshop laborers. Just as the Ottomans considered the craft guild system as the fundamental institution of the city, so they regarded the family labor farm system as the foundation of agricultural production and

rural society. The maintenance of these two institutions formed the constitutional underpinnings of the traditional imperial system until the nineteenth century, when the Tanzimat reformers discarded them in favor of Western-inspired liberal policies.

The household cultivating a plot of land constituted the key element of the rural society. The farm unit was basically a combination of three elements: fields forming a certain unit workable by a team of oxen and used to grow grain, the family household which provided labor and a team of oxen as traction power. The first of these elements, the land, had to be both large enough to feed a family and to yield enough surpluses to cover the tax as well as the reproduction costs. Consequently, these elements were considered as forming an indissoluble agrarian and fiscal unit. The persistence of “free” and “dependent” peasant households as the main productive unit was regarded as the key to the maintenance of the system, at least until the nineteenth century. The peasants were both dependent and free: “dependent” in the sense that their mobility and use of land were regulated strictly by the state to ensure that they surrendered to the government whatever amount of revenue had been decided in the state registers, and “free” in the sense that they could independently organize the production of the family farm and no one could use their labor arbitrarily.²⁴³

Nineteenth century developments debilitated these productive units and disrupted the statusquo. As a result of a combination of forceful appropriation, usury and abandonment of land by peasants, together with the advancing commercialization, the size of the land units controlled by the tax-farmers grew, most notably in the Ottoman Balkans. This situation gave way to the generation of large farms (çiftlik),

²⁴³Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, ed. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 143-152.

which constituted a wide-spread mode of agricultural production in the Ottoman Balkans.

A number of developments took place in the nineteenth century that dramatically changed the system. First, before the nineteenth century the peasant farm was naturally limited by the relationship between family consumer demands and its work. Given the level of increasing trade volume parallel to the integration with the European economy, this relationship was no longer feasible. Trade required surplus and the generation of surplus changed the very nature of production relations.

Second, when we speak of the nineteenth century, the peasant production units cultivating grains for family consumption had turned to the more labor intensive commercial crops such as cotton and tobacco. As the peasants turned to these crops, they became much more receptive to the external market relations, the benefits and devastations as well.

Third, the central state control over land possession and family labor was disrupted in many ways in this period. In the classical period, the law had stipulated that the farm units were not to be divided or extended. The limit to land possession was limited by the *çift-hane* (farm-unit) system. Especially the state strictly forbade its agents- usually the *sipahis* (cavalrymen) who held grants of land from the sultan in return for military service- from occupying and cultivating lands reserved for peasant households. In the *iltizam* (tax-farming) system that replaced the *timar* system (fiefdom) in the seventeenth century, the state would not be able to control the usurpers so easily. This is to say that, the state's control over the *çift-hane* system was a safeguarding mechanism for the peasants at the same time. Deprived of the protection of this mechanism, peasants became more vulnerable on face of the usurpers of every kind.

Fourth, not only the possession and production but the mobility of the peasants also had been controlled by the state in the classical period. Peasants were not allowed to abandon their lands and migrate somewhere else. But situation was different especially in the late nineteenth century. As will be explained below in detail, the emigration of the peasants from the north-east areas of Thessaloniki province because of banditry and armed conflicts between the communities was a wide-spread phenomenon at the turn of the century. The state was not capable of providing safety there. It could not prevent the emigration and the abandonment of the villages. The people were drawn to the more secure urban areas, as had been the case of the Celali riots in the classical period.²⁴⁴

Then, what was the picture of the rural society and the production relations in the late nineteenth century? One can say that the agricultural labor force of Thessaloniki province displayed an amalgam of share-croppers, wage laborers and the forced farm laborers in this period. The present literature emphasizes the share-croppers as the prevailing form. Concerning the employment patterns of the share-croppers, one can see that the large-scale farms of between 200-800 hectares were cultivated almost unexceptionally by the share-croppers. The share-croppers worked with their families on the farm in kind, in return for a particular share of the harvested product. Farm animals and seeds were supplied by the farm owners. The farms equal to 500-2000 dönüm²⁴⁵ in size were cultivated partly by share-croppers.

²⁴⁴ Note that a massive population shift occurred as a result of an upheaval which the Celali bands caused in Anatolia in the period 1596-1610. The government took drastic measures to ensure the return of these peasants to their abandoned villages to maintain agricultural production. For further details see, Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, ed. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 25-34.

²⁴⁵ 1 dönüm= 1000 meter square approximately.

It should also be noted that it becomes more difficult to decide on the production relations when it comes out that the labor returns varied in different cases. For example, the British Consul in Thessaloniki wrote in 1871 that farm laborers made an annual contract and received a particular amount of corn and cash as well changed according to the region. The cash that the laborers received as wages at the end of their contracts changed between 60 and 100 piasters.²⁴⁶

Here it emerges that there was a close connection between the size of the land possession and the relations of production to be performed. The farms displayed some differences in terms of its, size and employment capacity. The farms of Rumeli were larger in size and more commercialized in comparison to those in other parts of the Empire.²⁴⁷ In Thessaloniki and Monastir provinces, large-scale commercial farms prevailed all along the nineteenth century.²⁴⁸ According to a calculation, 40 percent of all the commercial farms in Thessaloniki province were larger than 200 hectares²⁴⁹ in size as early as 1863.²⁵⁰ In comparison, the largest share of the lands in Izmir was in the hands of the small farmers and the size of the most lands was 1.2-8

²⁴⁶ Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme*, p. 182.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 182.

²⁴⁸ Large estates were the dominant form of land property in the lowlands of the following districts of the Thessaloniki province: Yenice-i Vardar, Karaferiye, Avret Hisar, Siroz, Zihne and Gevgili. See Socrates Petmezas, "Rural Macedonia from Ottoman to Greek Rule," in *Economy and Society on Both Shores of the Aegean*, ed. L. Baruh, V. Kechriotis (Athens: Alpha Bank, 2010), p. 366.

²⁴⁹ 1 hectare = 10.000 square meters

²⁵⁰ Charles Issawi, ed. *The Economic History of Turkey 1800-1914* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), p.203.

hectares.²⁵¹ Similarly, in Edirne province 2/3 of the total lands were below 20 hectares in size.²⁵² On the other hand, some of the farms in Thessaloniki province were equal to the size and population of an average village and they were given the administrative statues of village in 1907.²⁵³

As opposed to the large and middle scale farms, in the farms of 10-50 dönüm size, agricultural wage laborers supplied the work especially in the harvest season where the family labor of the owner was insufficient. So, it reveals that the agricultural wage laborers were employed on the small-scale farms. Since it is indicated that 60 percent of the total lands in Thessaloniki was still composed of middle and small scale farms, the relevance of the agricultural wage laborers becomes apparent. Another contemporary observer of the tobacco sector, Salih Zeki, also noted that share-cropping was an economically favorable system for the large-scale farms.²⁵⁴ Therefore, agricultural wage labor also fitted well to the Ottoman production pattern.

According to the classification of Tökin, there were three types of agricultural wage laborers in the commercial crop producing areas of Thessaloniki, Izmir and Adana.²⁵⁵ The first category was composed of those who had lost their lands and sought work on the lands of others. These peasants lost their lands generally by a mechanism of

²⁵¹ Mustafa Koç argues that the tobacco agriculture in the Aegean region was implemented by the small independent peasantry until WW II. See Mustafa Koç, "The Transformation of Oriental Tobacco Production in the Aegean Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 4 (Fall 1990), pp. 30-55.

²⁵² Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisinde Bağımlılık ve Büyüme*, pp. 112-113.

²⁵³ BOA. TFR I SL. 68/6731, 1323.2.

²⁵⁴ Salih Zeki, p. 11.

²⁵⁵ Tökin, p. 136.

indebtedness. This was mostly the case in the tobacco sector and it was one of the main reasons for the impoverishment of the tobacco producers.

Peasants could be indebted either to the Régie Company or to individual merchants. First of all, we should look at the property relations, legal and practical conditions in which the parties in the sector operate. According to the contract of the Régie Company, the minimum size of land allowed for cultivating tobacco would be half of a dönüm. Therefore, the small farmers also could produce tobacco on their land. But the commercialization of the tobacco plant had introduced the merchant factor which altered the nature of property relations. According to the Régie Company contract, the company had to supply advance payment to the tobacco farmers, when they start cultivating. But the company did not comply with this article of the contract. As was noted before, the company either abstained from lending or forced repayment before the sale of the products. Moreover, the company did not supply credit or advance payment to farmers producing high quality tobacco for the commercial market. In the event of debts or illegal activities on the part of the farmers, such as smuggling, uncertified cultivation, storage and transportation, the Régie Company could expropriate the products of the farmers or even their lands. The farmers frequently complained about this situation. It is observed that those complaints turned to mass protests by the peasants. The tobacco farmers of Drama, Kavala and Serres held a big protest march to solve this credit problem in 1909.²⁵⁶

The farmers lost their products and properties not only to the Régie Company but also to the creditor merchants. Many producers had turned to the first quality

²⁵⁶ BOA. DH MKT. 2885/92, 1327.B.09.

tobacco production because of the high prices paid for them by the merchants. The market price between the lowest quality tobacco and the highest quality ranged from 20 to 300 piasters.²⁵⁷ The merchants promoted the cultivation of first quality tobacco and supplied credit to the farmers who turned to commercial type tobacco production. The merchants extended loans to the peasants at high interest rates. Unable to pay the excessive obligations, the producers were continuously over-burdened with debts. In this manner, peasants eventually lost their lands.²⁵⁸

In some cases, the merchants issued advance payment to the agricultural producers. The producers had to submit their harvest to the creditor merchant in return. The peasants appreciating this interest-free credit and owing gratitude to the merchant had almost no say on the price of their products. Moreover, such costs as the transportation certificate, broker's commission, transportation and storage were charged to the peasant's account.

In addition, the practices of product rejection and discount also reduced the returns of the peasants. After a detailed examination of the tobacco bales to be purchased, merchants rejected 20-25 percent of the total product under the pretext of it being worthless. At first, the products rejected as scrap were left to the peasant, who could sell it at a lower price. But later, the merchants began to collect the scrap product and sell it themselves.²⁵⁹ Therefore, even some part of the tobacco farmers, who were regarded as producing in favorable conditions, were at a disadvantage at the end of the

²⁵⁷ Dıġıroġlu, p. 25.

²⁵⁸ I. Wallerstein, H. Decdeli, R. Kasaba, "The Incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the World-Economy," in *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, ed. Huri İslamoġlu İnan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 90.

²⁵⁹ Tökin, pp. 148-149.

day. These impoverished unpropertied peasants finally joined the agricultural wage laborers and the free floating tobacco workshop laborers.

It is understood from the documents in the Ottoman State Archives that the indebted farmers applied to the Rumeli Inspectorcy and wrote petitions to solve their problems with the merchants and the Régie Company as well. For example; Şaban, the son of Süleyman, from the Korkut village of Avrethisar, a sub-district of the province, complained that Hasan Akif Effendi from the tobacco merchants of Thessaloniki had invited him to Thessaloniki offering 30 piasters for his tobaccos. But when he arrived in Thessaloniki the merchant had reduced the value of the tobaccos to 7 piasters. In another case, Hüseyin Hüsnü, the owner of Hızırılı farm in Thessaloniki, complained that his farm had been seized in return for his debts and asked for help. Moreover, the Ottoman year books on Thessaloniki province also clearly point out that after the harvest almost nothing was left in the hands of the share-croppers. They were always indebted to the land owner. Furthermore, the share-croppers were hired by the land owners together with their debts.²⁶⁰

Other farmers complained about the credit policy of the Régie Company. Among the Rumeli Inspectorcy documents there are complaints by many farmers regarding the loss of their land to the merchants.²⁶¹ Although small peasant property was not completely destroyed, such kind of practices helped the accumulation of land and capital in the hands of the new powerful landlords. Thus, it is observed that land ownership changed hands in the period under examination.

²⁶⁰*Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 599.

²⁶¹BOA.TFR I ŞKT.84/8360, 1324.2.1. BOA.TFR I ŞKT.87/8655, 1324.3.25.BOA.TFR I ŞKT.94/9362, 1324.6.23.BOA.TFR I ŞKT.95/9409, 1324.6.29.

The second category of agricultural wage laborers was made up of those who had left their own lands to work on the lands of others for a particular period of time and returned to their own lands after earning some money. Those laborers were not yet deprived of their lands but tried to keep them in hand by engaging in the labor market to subsidize the needs of their own property.

The last category of agricultural wage laborer was composed of seasonal laborers who worked until the end of the season and returned to their villages. This was the poorest category within the agricultural wage laborers. They were unpropertied from the beginning. They benefited from the differences in the harvest times of different localities. This situation is observed mostly in tobacco agriculture. The harvest time of the tobacco differs substantially according to the kind, locality and processing style of tobacco.

The share-croppers also were subjected to the abuses of the land holders. The abandonment of farms was observable in the province at the turn of the century. In one of these cases, abused share-croppers of the Polti farm in central Thessaloniki district sent a petition to the Kaimakam, the governor of the district, declaring that the land owner had seized their products. Although it was contrary to the contractual relation between the land owner and the share-croppers, the governor found the share-croppers in the right and allowed them to leave the farm and move wherever they wanted.²⁶² Moreover, there were other cases where the share-croppers left the farms en masse. For example, at the İzvor farm, which was one of the largest in the province, the share-

²⁶² BOA. TFR I SL. 70/6981, 1323.2.27.

croppers left the farm overnight.²⁶³ In this regard, feudal relations also were observable to some extent on the large-scale farm lands of Rumeli. For example, despite the abolition of forced labor in the European provinces of the Empire, this practice persisted in the nineteenth century.²⁶⁴ Consequently, it seems that more agricultural producers were becoming free laborers, wandering from one farm to the next and from the farms to the workshops as well.

So far, the factors giving way to the impoverishment of the tobacco producers have been examined. It seems that the impoverishment of the tobacco farmers brought them to the position of free floating laborers shuttling between the farms and the tobacco workshops. But this situation only partially answers to the question of how the tobacco workshop laborer category came into being, because the availability of arable lands elsewhere could have kept them in agricultural production. Then the questions are; what brought the tobacco farmers to the urban workshops and factories in a situation where marginal lands were available for the free peasantry and wage levels were relatively high given the scarcity of labor supply? What were the other factors giving way to the extension of this free laborer category?

People moved to the large commercial centers of tobacco such as Kavala and Drama from the nearby areas. Besides the seasonal laborers coming from the close localities, there was a migrant labor force taking refuge from the insecure areas. Towards the end of the century, it seems that this body of largely unpropertied and impoverished free laborers came from particularly the northeast part of the province.

²⁶³ BOA. TFR I SL. 65/6476, 1323.1.6.

²⁶⁴ Charles Issawi, ed. *The Economic History of Turkey 1800-1914* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), p. 202.

From the mid-1890s the northeast part of the province, the districts of Menlik, Razlık, Petriç, Cuma-i Bala were in a state of social and political instability and deprived of security because of banditry.

The rising nationalisms in the Balkan and the violence of the national banditry brought economic instability and insecurity to the region. People fled the torched villages and areas of massacres to the more stable commercial towns. Banditry not only forced people to move to more safe areas, but also severely impoverished them. They became free laborers deprived of their lands, properties and even their families. In this way, many of them were in search of a new source of livelihood. Passage certificates (*mürur tezkeresi*) received for Kavala and Thasos, which will be explained in detail in the following chapter, prove the fact that most of the people migrating to those places originated from a village that had suffered being put to fire or a slaughter. A relevant part of these free laborers thus was composed of those who had been subjected to the banditry activities in their homes.

As the result of this process, many farmers had becoming the hired laborers on their former properties or became free laborers seeking jobs in the nearby flourishing tobacco workshops. The picture seems to be that the free tobacco laborers were shuttling between the tobacco farms and the workshops as wage laborers. In fact, they could shuttle between the properties of the same employer. This is to say that, moving from the farm to the workshop could sometimes be the recruitment strategy of the same employer. Some of the big tobacco merchants also had tobacco farms, such as the Allatinies, whose workshop and farm were put to flame at the same time.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵BOA. TFR I SL. 27/2612, 1321.9.25.

Consequently, it can be said that one part of the tobacco workshop laborers were composed of the local population that came from the old ethno-religious neighborhoods of the modernizing and urbanizing towns, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, and the other part either came from insecure places in the province or originated from impoverished, unpropertied peasants. In any case, commercial workshop laborers did not constitute a monolithic category.

The category of laborers examined in this study is different from what many labor historians take as the main subject matter. It is suggested that the peculiarity of the tobacco workshop laborers and their conditions can be understood better by a comparison with the other labor categories within and outside the tobacco sector. Therefore, the following section will examine the living and working conditions of the laborers of Thessaloniki province at the turn of the twentieth century.

Living and Working Conditions of the Laborers in the Province

The wage laborers of central Thessaloniki increased in number and significance towards the end of the nineteenth century. According to estimation, the number of wage laborers was almost two times larger than that of those with their own business or producing at home.²⁶⁶ This growing population of wage laborers, which became an important part of the society and exerted much more influence on the economic and political life of the province, requires thorough examination. In addition to presenting the basic facts and

²⁶⁶ Moskof, p. 271.

figures on this wage laborers' group, this section will focus on the living and working conditions of the tobacco laborers and the other groups of laborers.

In the early twentieth century, according to one estimate, there were some 20,000 wage laborers employed in the industrial and manufacturing production in Thessaloniki. Altogether, this accounted for perhaps 17 percent of the total population of the central city - women, men and children— at the time.²⁶⁷ This fact clearly indicates that the population of wage laborers in Thessaloniki was probably larger than elsewhere in the empire. The number of wage laborers was quite high above the average rates. According to the estimations of Makal, the proportion of the wage laborers was only one percent of the total Ottoman population.²⁶⁸

The laborers of the central Thessaloniki city were employed in the three main sectors, tobacco, transportation and textiles. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the tobacco laborers constituted the largest share of the labor force with 6000 employees. In the narrow sense of the term, the number of industrial laborers in the city was about 12,000, according to the estimations of Moskof.²⁶⁹ This industrial labor force was employed in a few large industrial plants of the city, which were discussed in the previous section. The cigarette factory of the Régie Company, the textile factories and the largest industrial plant of the city, the flour factory of the Allatinies, absorbed much of the industrial labor force.

The developing economy of Thessaloniki province in the nineteenth century generated a class of wage laborers. A close examination of the living and working

²⁶⁷ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 71.

²⁶⁸ Ahmet Makal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Çalışma İlişkileri: 1850-1920* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1997), p.163.

²⁶⁹ Moskof, p. 264.

conditions of these laborers will provide a better comprehension of the major social and political issues of the province at the turn of the century. From another point of view, such an investigation will generate a larger and closer context to the upcoming social and political events concerning the labor activism, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The living and working conditions of the wage laborers of Thessaloniki province were determined by several factors. The mobility of the labor force, the fluctuations of the labor market, epidemics, housing and security affairs determined their living conditions. Income level, largely determined by the wage, was of course the main determinant of their living standards. Therefore, a special emphasis will be placed upon the wages.

To start with the living conditions and the living contexts of the laborers, it should be noted that the unavailability of sources on the life contexts of laborers is one of the main handicaps of Ottoman labor history, as was noted at the very beginning of the study. However, one can still apply to some direct and indirect sources to explore the workers' life context. A few memoirs help to improve our knowledge about the life contexts and the life conditions of the laborers of Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century.

Workers involved in the transportation sector, including the porters, boatmen, stevedores and cart drivers, constituted one of the most important sections of the workforce in the city after the tobacco laborers. Their number was around 5000.²⁷⁰ Thanks to interviews conducted in the 1960s with an ageing population of

²⁷⁰ Ilıcak, p. 122

emigrants to Israel, we have an unusually detailed picture of the Jewish porters in Thessaloniki. In these memoirs, it is understood that the work day started with worship. The laborers met daily for sunset prayer. They changed clothes after work and gathered for a drink at pub.²⁷¹ It is interesting to note that the Jewish porters' syndicate paid for a bottle of *raki* per week for its members from the organization's chest.²⁷² On payday, the employer paid the money owed to a member who set aside a small sum in a communal chest and distributed the balance among the members. Although it is not very clear, the person distributing the money between the chest and the laborers might have been a recruiting agent supplying labor for the employer. It is interesting that the sick members received their normal share. But lower wages were paid to a temporary replacement.

Sons automatically could replace their deceased fathers. A widow without male children could hire a permanent substitute and keep the difference between his salary and the average wages of her deceased husband. She could also sell the right to her husband's position and pocket the entire amount.²⁷³ This was the case for porters. But similar points were valid for the other laborers as well. For example, there was another occasion on which the women could receive their husbands' salary. In the Ottoman state archive documents it is evident that women could receive the salary of their husbands in exile who had been employed in the Régie factory or in the Oriental Railway Company. The state assumed the maintenance of the family in the absence of the family head. The women, however, were required to apply to the state in order to receive the salary of the

²⁷¹ Donald Quataert, "The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire 1800-1914," in *The Social History of Labor in the Middle East*, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg, (Boulder Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), p. 28.

²⁷² Ilıcak, p. 133.

²⁷³ Quataert, "The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire," p. 29.

exiled husband. Some women could be deprived of this salary for the reason that they did not make such an application.²⁷⁴

When it comes to the textile sector, in 1893, 640 laborers were employed in the cotton mills, 160 men and boys, and 480 girls.²⁷⁵ The number of textile workers was quite unstable. The main reason for this instability was the short-lived textile factories established between 1900 and 1909. While the number of laborers in these factories was about 1200 in 1902, it was reduced to 500 in the year 1907. The thread factories of Saiaş and Torres&Misrahi had gone bankrupt in the meantime.²⁷⁶ Most of the workforce in this sector was constituted of Jewish girls between twelve and eighteen years of age. They worked from the sunrise to the sunset and had 35 minutes break for lunch in a work day. These girls worked usually until they collected money for marriage. The textile factories were located also in the periphery of the province such as Karaferye (Veria)²⁷⁷, Ağustos²⁷⁸ and Vodina (Edessa) districts.²⁷⁹ These factories recruited young girls from the nearby areas. But it is noted in the Thessaloniki yearbook that this labor force was not a regular one, so irregular that it could lead to the bankruptcy of the enterprises.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁴ BOA. DH EUM MH. 85/21, 9.B.1332. BOA. DH EUM MH. 111/31, 16.Z.1333. BOA. DH EUM MH. 115/65, 27.S.1334.

²⁷⁵ Ilıcak, pp. 121-22.

²⁷⁶ Berke, p. 18.

²⁷⁷ BOA. İ. RSM. 18/1321/B-2, 6.B.1321. BOA. I.RSM. 18/1321/Ş-5, 13.Ş.1321. BOA. BEO. 2990/224236, 23.Z.1324.

²⁷⁸ BOA.TFR I ŞKT.70/6999, 19.C.1323. BOA.BEO.3191/239314, 18.L.1325.

²⁷⁹ BOA.BEO.1139/85408, 21.M.1316. BOA.I RSM.17/1321/S-4, 18.S.1321. BOA.DH MKT. 1125/90, 29.N.1324.

²⁸⁰ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p.270.

Relying on the yearbook, it can be suggested that the available labor force of the province did not help the sustainability of work and the stability of production very much. The adaption of the laborers to the mentality of the secular, industrial working time notion was not so easy.²⁸¹ What is interesting here is the interaction between the religious and the industrial time. It is observed that the period between sunrise and the sunset determined the working hours in the province, irrespective of the differences of work or one's religion. The periodization of the working hours between sunrise and sunset indicates a religious time notion both for the Jewish and Muslim members of the labor force. From the point of the workers, the religious timing of work was more oppressive than the industrial time, because industrial capitalism had captured the entire daily routine defined by religious terms and turned it into a work routine. As a result, work hours could be extended to 14 hours in the summer time. From tobacco workshops to the several of the factories the work day lasted 14 hours in the summer time. The laborers of the flour factory of the Allatinies wrote a petition to the Rumeli Inspectorate complaining about working 14 hours a day.²⁸² Consequently, no clear boundaries were recognized between one's daily routine and work routine. Therefore, solving this problem of long working hours would take place on the agenda of the workers' syndicates.

²⁸¹ The standardization of time and adaptation to punctuality created some problems for the regularity and efficiency of the factories in the age of modernization and industrialization. For further discussion on this issue, see E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38, no.1 (1967), pp. 56-97; Jacques Le Goff, "Labor in the 'Crisis' of the Fourteenth Century: From Medieval Time to Modern Time," in *Time, Work, Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982). For the Ottoman applications of time and hour and their reflections on the daily routine and working culture, see Bekir Cantemir, "The Changing of Conception of Conception of Time: Calendar and Clock from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004), pp. 85-95.

²⁸² BOA.TFR I ŞKT.89/8862, 21.R.1324.

Besides the daily work routine, it seems that the weekly holiday notion was not settled either. Working on Saturdays generated hot discussions within the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, who made up the majority of the labor force. One of the leading tobacco firms in Thessaloniki, the Herzog Company, the owners of which were Jewish, employed 350 Jewish workers and 30 Turks, Bulgarians and Greeks, decided to continue production on the Sabbath. In response, the Jewish female workers went on strike, declaring that they refused to work in a factory that did not respect the holiness of Sabbath.²⁸³ In this case, once more religious timing determined once more the work routine. But this time, the intervention of religious time into the industrial time was on the agenda. In other words, the traditional, religious time tried to demonstrate its patrimony or precedence over the industrial time. In any case, the laborers endured the pains of a transition from a religiously defined traditional society to modern, industrial, capitalist society. The clashes between the two notions of time remained unsettled throughout the period under examination.

The hardships of a laborer's life were not limited to the long working hours. In reference to the newspaper *El Avenir*, Hadar notes that in the tobacco workshops of Thessaloniki the workday lasted between fourteen and sixteen hours and the workers worked in dark and dry halls in order to preserve the quality of the tobacco leaves.²⁸⁴ This is to say that the long working hours were spent in an unhealthy working environment. Female workers sat on the floor either in circles or in lines and at their feet lay piles of tobacco leaves to be sorted into baskets. Dimov vividly depicted the

²⁸³ Gila Hadar, "Jewish Tobacco Workers in Salonika: Gender and Family in the Context of Social and Ethnic Strife," in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans*, ed. Amila Buturovic and Irvin Cemil Schick (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007), p. 131.

²⁸⁴ Hadar, p. 130.

working conditions of the tobacco workshops. He said the tobacco smelled good at the first entrance, but it soon became condensed and so disgusting that one wanted to vomit. In the hot summer days the smell of tobacco became mixed with the smell of the unhealthy bodies of the laborers. Pregnant women sacrificed their unborn children to the tobacco dust here. The men were always anxious and nervous at work. The fate of winter time unemployment never made them happy while working. Those who were employed in the sections where tobacco bales were stored may seem luckier in terms of daily work load but they were not. Because each worker was responsible for three to four hundreds bales of tobacco and they worked in a life threatening environment if these large amounts of tobacco leaves did not dry properly.²⁸⁵

Work accident was another problem of the working environment. Accidents that ended in the injury or death of the workers of the province appear frequently in the Ottoman State Archive documents. Since the commercial tobacco production was not a mechanized activity, the tobacco workshop laborers were luckier in this regard. Most work accidents occurred because of the machinery. Cigarette and textile factory workers were more vulnerable in this regard. For example, in one case, a girl working in the thread factory in the Ağustos district caught her hair in the bands of the machine and was injured seriously.²⁸⁶ Another girl working in the thread factory in Vodina (Edessa) had a similar accident.²⁸⁷ Although the machinery could give way to work accidents more frequently, very simple equipment such as the knives of the tobacco laborers or the stones of the mills could injure people. An interesting incidence shows that even

²⁸⁵ Dimitir Dimov, *Tütün*, trans. Mine Asova (Istanbul: Ararat, 1973), p. 46.

²⁸⁶ BOA. TFR I SL. 44/4382, 22.R.1322.

²⁸⁷ BOA. TFR I SL. 176/17503, 6.S.1326.

stones could cause someone's death at work. A worker employed in a thread factory in Karaferye (Veria) died when a stone fell on him.²⁸⁸

Besides the work accidents, the laborers of Thessaloniki could be the victims of the frequent fires in the work places. Increasing arson cases in the work places parallel to the rise of insurance companies in commercially developed regions had been generated a significant threat for the workers.²⁸⁹ For example a woman worker died during a fire at the tobacco workshop of Mr. Mayer in Kavala.²⁹⁰

Occupational diseases were another threat for the laborers of the province. Tobacco laborers were one of the primary victims of these due to the closed concentrated workplaces with poor hygiene conditions. The tobacco dust particles carried in the air penetrated the lungs and eyes and caused respiratory problems, lung infections, tuberculosis and eye infections. In addition, sitting on the floor during the long working hours paved the way for back and skeleton problems.

Apart from these health problems concerning the workers in general, women had peculiar problems such as the high risk of miscarriage and premature births. According to an estimation, 45 percent of the women workers suffered miscarriages.²⁹¹

Apart from the occupational diseases, the work places and working conditions of the laborers were conducive to the spread of epidemics. Thessaloniki province had serious epidemic attacks throughout the nineteenth century. In 1837, the first quarantine

²⁸⁸ BOA. TFR I SL. 22/2133, 23.B.1321.

²⁸⁹ BOA. TFR I SL. 213/21231, 23.C.1327. BOA. TFR I SL. 216/21506, 24.B.1327.

²⁹⁰ BOA. TFR I SL. 131/13026, 22.Za.1324.

²⁹¹ Gülhan Balsoy, "Gendering Ottoman Labor History: the Cibali Régie Factory in the Early Twentieth Century," *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 17 (December 2009), p. 66.

of the empire was established in Thessaloniki against the plague. A coffeehouse outside the city was turned into a quarantine station. In 1840s epidemics of plague and malaria had captured Thessaloniki. The establishment of the municipality was influential in the development of the infrastructure services and the hygiene in the city. Thessaloniki was among the first provinces having a municipal administration after Istanbul. The municipal administration was established in the city in 1869. The same year, the governor of the province, Sabri Pasha, started to tear down the city walls. Before the destruction of the walls, the city on the south was confined to small neighborhoods unable to receive fresh air from the sea. The mayor of the city, Hamdi Bey, also played an important role in the introduction of a water system to the city. He attempted to drain the swamps along the Vardar River, which were the main source of malaria, and tried to improve the general hygiene of the city in the 1890s. But despite those measures, the inhabitants of the city still suffered from serious epidemics. In 1897, an epidemic of fever swept through the city.

Epidemic was one of the major threats to the laborers concentrated in closed work places. The concentration and the mobility of the workers stimulated the spread of diseases. It is no coincidence that diseases spread wherever the tobacco labor force circulated. For example, in 1902, the pox spread immediately in Pravište, Sarışaban, Drama and Kavala, the shuttling route of the free-floating tobacco laborers.²⁹²

Another case was the epidemic of cholera in 1912. This epidemic is a meaningful case in many regards. The Socialist Youth Organization, working parallel to the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, helped the local authorities fight the

²⁹² BOA.DH MKT. 503/34, 1320.S.5.

epidemic earned the appreciation of the public, even of the Union and Progress Party, with whom it was at odds. The organization was successful at taking measures among the workers and preventing the further spread of the disease. Because of the easy access of the Socialist Youth Organization to the workers of the city and their experience in organizing the laborers, the local administration of the city did not hesitate to assign the disease control job at work places to this organization.

Beside the health conditions of the workers, this event indicated another development. It signified the fact that the socialist organizations had become a strong and visible part of the urban life in Thessaloniki. In a sense, it was a sign of the recognition of the Socialist Youth and its other collaborator organizations by the local administration voluntarily or involuntarily. Moreover, the same event proved the credibility of the Socialist Youth and the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki among the workers.²⁹³

So far, the working conditions of the tobacco laborers and the others have been discussed. An investigation deep into the life contexts of the laborers requires the examination of other aspects of their work life and living conditions in general. As was noted in the above section, tobacco was a seasonal job and it also attracted migrant labor from nearby areas. The relation between the migrants and local laborers will be examined thoroughly in the coming chapters, but here at this point it should be said that the mobility constituted one of the main determinants of the life conditions of the tobacco laborers. Besides the migrants coming from distant places, a kind of mobility

²⁹³ Paul Dumont, George Haupt, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalist Hareketler*, trans. Tuğrul Artunkal (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977), pp. 309-310.

that can be called shuttle migration from the nearby areas was a way of life for a considerable share of the labor force.

The memoirs of a tobacco worker, who lived in Kavala during the period in question, can be enlightening in this regard. He noted that they were living in a village four hours from Kavala. He himself, his father and brother worked in the commercial workshops of the Americans in the central Kavala district. He stated that they returned to their village for one month in the winter when the workshop was closed.²⁹⁴ This pattern indicates a household-sharing strategy in terms of earning the family's livelihood. While the female members of the household cultivated a plot of land, the male members worked for the tobacco workshops in the nearby city. This case also brings the question of subsidiary incomes. As will be examined in detail in the following section, the wages constituted the main determinant of a laborer's living standards. But it is understood here that the subsidiaries also could support those wages in some cases.

Subsidies to the wages of the laborers could take different forms. Besides these coming from the agricultural production, the subsidiary services of the employers such as the workers' soup kitchens in the cotton-spinning mills of both southeastern Anatolia and the Ottoman Balkans promoted the basic consumption level of the workers. Those benefits provided by some employers to recruit and retain workers usually in labor-scarce regions helped to support one's purchasing power and consumption level as well.²⁹⁵ The supply of bread by the employer was also a wide spread practice.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ See the oral history interviews conducted by İskender Özsoy. İskender Özsoy, *İki Vatan Yorgunları* (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2003), p. 193.

²⁹⁵ Donald Quataert, "The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire 1800-1914," p. 29.

Not only the employers or the charity organizations but also the syndicates supplied such subsidies for the workers as well. As will be explained in detail in the next chapter, the tobacco workers' syndicate in Kavala provided such benefits for the workers. Although food could be supplied partially by some employers, the same can not be said for accommodation. Especially for the tobacco sector, although a relevant number of workers came from the nearby regions to work seasonally in the workshops, they had to provide their own accommodation. The above-mentioned memoirs of the tobacco worker Mustafa and the archival documents indicate that the tobacco laborers, who came from the distant places and were employed in the workshops of Kavala, either had to hire rooms or stay in the khans.²⁹⁷

In terms of the living and working conditions of the tobacco laborers, it is necessary to make a distinction here between the rural and urban tobacco laborers. The living standards and purchasing power of the urban laborers depended solely on wages. Contrary to the position of tobacco laborers shuttling between the agricultural fields and commercial workshops, the urban tobacco laborers faced difficulties in some periods of the year since no workshop or factory worked for the whole year. In this case, the urban tobacco laborer might have several alternatives to make a livelihood during the unemployed period. The first alternative was the mutual aid chests of the laborers. Such kind of organizations existed from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In fact, until the emergence of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, which will be discussed in detail in the following section, such kind of organizations functioned as

²⁹⁶ BOA.TFR I SL. 72/7184, 16.Ra.1323.

²⁹⁷ BOA. TFR I SL. 178/17744, 1326.S.27. See also, İskender Özsoy, *İki Vatan Yorgunları* (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2003), p. 193.

charities run by the wealthy members of the communities. Those organizations helped the poor and unemployed in economically hard times.

A second alternative is to maintain relations with the agricultural production as in the case of the above-mentioned tobacco laborer from Kavala. If one was not totally deprived of land or agricultural production in a totally urban environment, one could supply basic consumption by cultivating a plot of land.

A third alternative was to search for other jobs available for the whole year. This strategy usually was applied by the women laborers. Jewish girls of the tobacco workshops trying to put together their dowries for marriage searched for jobs as servants in the houses of wealthy families when the tobacco workshops were closed seasonally or when they became unemployed.

The last alternative was to make a primitive accumulation to manage the economically hard times. This primitive savings strategy was advised by Andrikos Veta for the tobacco laborers of Kavala. Veta was a labor leader, who took part in the foundation of several tobacco labor organizations in Kavala. He was also a poet. His poem describing a strike of the tobacco workers in Kavala is a valuable source. All through his poem, the over-spending of the tobacco laborers is criticized. They were accused of spending money on fashionable clothes, hair-cuts and alcohol.²⁹⁸ The Protestant ethic of the Orthodox poet is an interesting point which deserves another study.²⁹⁹ What is relevant for the present study here is the suggestion of primitive

²⁹⁸ Andrikos Veta, *Esena ta Lego Pethera yia na ta Akoui i Nifi* (Mother in law tells you to make the daughter-in-law heard) (Istanbul: n.p., 1899), pp. 12-13. For a whole translation of this poem, see Appendix C.

²⁹⁹ Relying on the title of his book, *Mother in Law Tells You to Make the Daughter-in-Law Heard*, one can assume that his advice for primitive accumulation was articulated rhetorically to criticize the tobacco merchants. Even the implicit meanings of the workers' poems and folk songs are open to discussion as

accumulation put forward by him. The wage levels of the tobacco laborers and their purchasing power in parallel will give us some idea about the possibility of saving money. The following section examining the wage levels and the purchasing power of the tobacco laborers gives an idea of whether they were able to save money.

Wage Levels of Tobacco Laborers in the Province

Income levels are the first and foremost determinant of the living standards of wage laborers. Moreover, increase in the wages constitutes one of the major demands of the laborers in the context of labor activism. For this reason, the income levels of the laborers require a thorough examination here. The determinants of the wages and income levels from the comparative perspective will help us to see the sources of the tobacco labor activism in the later analysis.

To start with the income levels of the laborers, we should state at first that the wage levels changed according to the region, sector, season, gender and qualification of the laborers in general. The wages in the most commercialized parts of the empire were always higher than in the other places. Together with Istanbul, Izmir, Aydın, Beirut, Adana and Samsun, the wages in Thessaloniki were registered in the highest category. Wages for the workers of Thessaloniki began rising after 1896. In part they improved because of a general increase in Ottoman prices and the consequent more sluggish rise in wages following the end of the world-wide price depression of 1873-1896.

artistic and rhetorical articulations. They can be regarded as good sources to support the first-hand accounts of the workers. For a comparison, see for example the lullabies of the migrant Jewish women workers in the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century, which were indicative of a working class experience. Alice Kessler Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and Their Union," in *The Labor History Reader*, ed. Daniel J. Leab (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), pp. 273-274.

As Quataert indicates, the wages in Thessaloniki rose more than elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire because of the particular local conditions of the region.³⁰⁰ Mainly the decrease in the labor supply because of out-migrations and other factors, which will be explained in detail in the next chapter, influenced the rise of wages. It is argued that the erosion in the male labor supply because of the out-migrations from the province together with the banditry and smuggling activities absorbing the male population at that time generated a scant labor supply. But the bosses would soon fill this gap with the much cheaper female labor force.

In addition to the labor scarcity, the rising international demand for the best quality tobacco of Ottoman Macedonia can be said to have been influential in the wage increase at the turn of the century. The amazing rise of the tobacco exports from Thessaloniki province were explained previously. The growth of the sectors was more or less reflected in the wages.

As was noted before, the tobacco sector in the Thessaloniki province thrived at the expense of the textile sector. Thessaloniki had achieved its first industrial upturn with the textile sector in the 1860s, when the American Civil War had increased the textile demand from the Ottoman Empire. Wool, cotton and silk produced in the region had been woven on the region's looms. Following this trend, several thread and fabric factories had been established in the city. These factories, however, failed to compete with the cheap European products. As was explained in the previous part, the textile industrialists of Thessaloniki experienced very hard times at the time of European

³⁰⁰Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 71. Note that the prices in Istanbul can be taken as a reference for a long term analysis of the prices in the Thessaloniki province as well. For further details, see Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 235-240.

penetration into the market. Although they demanded protectionist measures to be taken by the state to counter the pervasive effects of European industry, they were not successful. Most of the textile factories had a difficult time at the very beginning of the twentieth century and some of them went bankrupt. For example, the thread factory of Saias was closed in 1902. In addition, the two factories of Tores&Misrahi went bankrupt in 1905 and 1907 respectively.³⁰¹

Tobacco thrived dramatically, while the textile industry was experiencing such hard times. The thread factory, founded in the late 1880s in Gevgili, went bankrupt because of the nearby tobacco workshops. The wages of the women spinners in Karaferye (Veria) and Vodina (Edessa)³⁰² were three times lower than those of the women tobacco workers.³⁰³ The wages in textiles were also lower than the tobacco wages even in Bursa, the heart of textile production. Between 1909 and 1912, the average wage level in textile was three piasters and the wages varied from 100*para*³⁰⁴ to six piasters.³⁰⁵ That was almost 50 percent lower than the female tobacco workshop laborers' wages around the same period. So, it seems reasonable to assume that the labor was shifting from the textile sector to the more favorable tobacco sector at the turn of the twentieth century. Especially the women's labor shifted from the textile to the tobacco sector.

³⁰¹ Berke, pp. 18-19.

³⁰² Karaferye (Veria) and Vodina (Edessa) are the two kazas of the central Thessaloniki sandjak.

³⁰³ Quataert, "Fabrika Bacalarından Tütün İlk Dumanlar," p. 192.

³⁰⁴ *Para* is a unit of Ottoman currency. 1 piastre = 40 *para*.

³⁰⁵ Nicole A. N. M. Van Os, "Bursa'da Kadın İşçilerin 1910 Grevi," *Toplumsal Tarih* 7, no.39 (1997), p. 14.

The tobacco sector also expanded at the expense of some agricultural products as well, especially grain and even opium. In 1902, tobacco lands in Macedonia doubled. The price of tobacco leaves on the market was thirteen times more expensive than that of wheat for example. When several international tobacco companies, such as the Austrian Herzog Company and the American Tobacco Company, entered the market at the turn of the century, prices rose as a result of the fierce competition.³⁰⁶ In fact, this was an international market condition newly emerged in the region. The international demand for oriental tobacco created a similar shift from the currant agriculture, which was almost a monoculture type of production, to tobacco production in Peloponnesus in Greece. The same over-production crises and market failures occurred in the small-free holding areas of Greece in the same period.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, one should keep in mind here that the tobacco leaves of Thessaloniki province and its environs constituted the best quality and sold at the highest prices on the international market. Consequently, the conditions were favorable in the tobacco sector at the turn of the century in comparison to the other sectors and it was a preferred alternative for the wage laborers of Thessaloniki.

Although the conditions in the tobacco sector were favorable for the wage laborers, the sector was still fragile in some respects. The seasonal changes, the efficiency of the agricultural production and the level of international demand resulted in fluctuations in the wages. Wages increased to their highest level during the season from May to August. The agricultural production level also was influential in the

³⁰⁶ Fikret Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2001), p. 43.

³⁰⁷ Lois P. Labrianidis, "Industrial Location in Capitalist Societies: The Tobacco Industry in Greece 1880-1980" (Ph.D., diss. London School of Economics and Political Sciences, 1982), p. 94.

fluctuation of wages. Given the scarcity of the labor force, it is observed that the wages were higher in good harvest years. The increasing number of farmers turning to tobacco production also had increased the demand for tobacco laborers, especially qualified laborers. For example, in 1911 in Aydın province, the wages of tobacco laborers increased due to the 70-80 percent increase in the production level.³⁰⁸ Bad harvest years had the reverse effect on the wages. For example, the bad harvest of 1904 resulted in a fall in wages, unemployment and wide spread strikes of the tobacco laborers in Thessaloniki.

Not only the fluctuations of the agricultural production level, but also the fluctuations of the international market, especially sudden changes in demand, also unbalanced the wage levels. The sector was fragile in this kind of fluctuation. The main reason for the fluctuations was the lack of market regulation. The Régie Company, having the monopoly of tobacco production within the country applied to several methods in order to regulate the production and supply of tobacco but these measures were concerned mostly with the domestic market, and thus did not have much to do with the commercial export workshops. While the production level in Thessaloniki in 1904 was not sufficient to meet the international demand, a sudden fall in international demand as a manipulation of the big commercial companies decreased wages in 1905. The same market failure in those two consecutive years was also observed in İzmir³⁰⁹ and Peloponnesus, where the same international tobacco companies had branches. However, after a short while in 1912, another over production crisis emerged. It had

³⁰⁸ Ökçün, *İktisat Tarihi Yazıları*, p. 208.

³⁰⁹ Erkan Serçe, *İzmir 1920* (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1998), p. 11.

started a year before, resulting from the greater demand by the same American Tobacco Company and canceled in the same way.³¹⁰ This fact underpins the assumption that this was a manipulation of the international tobacco businesses rather than a simple market failure. The tobacco laborers in Thessaloniki reacted to this situation by staging massive strikes. This is to say that, the market failure or manipulation gave way to the first labor activism of the tobacco laborers in the province.³¹¹

Except for the crisis years of 1904-5, the wages in the tobacco sector were more favorable than those in the other sectors. The wages of the tobacco laborers showed a steady increase in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the Thessaloniki year book of 1908, it is stated that the daily wages of the tobacco workers of Kavala varied between 5-24 piasters and almost doubled in a decade.³¹²

When it comes to a factual analysis of the wage levels of the tobacco laborers, a distinction should be made between the commercial workshop laborers and the agricultural wage laborers. But one should keep in mind here that because of the seasonal character of the tobacco job one could be employed both on the farms and the workshops for the different periods of the year. At least, this was possible for some mobile proportion of the labor force.

Besides the Ottoman year book, there are other sources indicating the wage levels of the tobacco laborers employed in Thessaloniki province. The wage levels

³¹⁰ Stephanidou, p.182.

³¹¹ Note that although the commercial tobacco sector was subjected to the same market manipulations of the international companies, the first tobacco labor organization can be traced back to 1910, as far as we know. This situation indicates that the organized tobacco labor activism started earlier in the Thessaloniki province. For the earliest organizations of the tobacco laborers in Izmir, see Bülent Varlık, "İzmir'de Tütün İşçilerinin Örgütleri (1910-1953)," *Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi* 18, no. 170 (1994), pp. 35-42.

³¹² *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), p. 425.

noted by Stephanidou and Ökçün provide a more or less coherent and consistent wage level of the tobacco laborers. Stephanidou gives below table about the wage levels of the tobacco laborers from 1900 to 1912, presented here in the table below. Those laborers are the ones employed in the commercial workshops. In addition, Ökçün gives the wage levels of the agricultural tobacco laborers in the Serres district of Thessaloniki province in 1911.

Table 8. Daily Wages of Tobacco Workshop Laborers (piasters)³¹³

	1900	1910	1911	1912
Principal expert	12-24	24-30	28-32	24-30
2nd expert	12-24	24-30	28-32	20-22
3rd expert	12-24	24-30	28-32	18
Women	4-7			7-9
Children	4-7			6-12

Table 9. Daily Wages of Agricultural Tobacco Laborers 1911³¹⁴

Qualification of the laborers	Daily Wages (piasters)
<i>Harmancı</i> (Thresher)	15-20
<i>Tütüncü</i> (Tobacco laborer)	15-30
<i>Adi Amele</i> (Unskilled laborer)	8-12
<i>Çapacı</i> (Hoer)	12-15

³¹³ Stephanidou, p. 209.

³¹⁴ Ökçün, p. 209.

These two data sets provide us the opportunity to make a rough comparison between the wages of the commercial and agricultural laborers. First, it is seen that the wages of commercial workshop laborers increased two folds from 1900 to 1910. This increase in the overall level can be related to the growth of the sector, an increase in the level of profits and the labor scarcity, as mentioned above. The same increase in the wages can be observed in the agricultural sector as well. It seems that the wages of the agricultural laborers were higher in the tobacco sector in comparison to those in the other sectors. Issawi notes that farm workers made 7 piasters a day at the turn of the century.³¹⁵ Besides that, the successful strikes of the tobacco laborers at that time which will be explained in detail in the next chapter can be considered an influential factor in the rise of wages in the commercial tobacco sector, because in most of the strikes the tobacco laborers managed to get between three and five piasters increase in their wages.

Although the proper data is not available, it seems that the increased wage levels were maintained at least at the start of the Balkan Wars. While the margins of the wage levels of the qualified male laborers grew narrow towards the end of the period, an increase in the wages of the female and child laborers are noticeable. As one can expect, this increase is reasonable for a period of war for demographic reasons.

A second observation about these datasets is the fact that although the wage levels follow the hierarchy of qualification, the laborers of the highest qualification received almost the same level of wages irrespective of whether they were employed in the agricultural fields or commercial workshops. The top margins of the most qualified laborers were the same both in agricultural and commercial production. The laborers

³¹⁵ Charles Issawi, "Wages in Turkey, 1850-1914," in *Social and Economic History of Turkey*, ed. Osman Okyar and Halil İnalcık (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1980), pp. 268-270.

working with the tobacco blend in a way either on the field or in the workshop constituted the highest level, because, besides the quality of the tobacco seed in this region, what made the oriental type tobacco special and desirable for the cigarette producers in Europe and the USA was the quality of blend. Apart from the seasonal character of the job, this blend expertise issue is another factor which blurred the distinction between the agricultural, commercial and industrial modes of tobacco production. The wage levels also indicate that the expertise in blend was highly valued in every mode of stage of production.

When it comes to the cigarette factory of the Régie Company in Thessaloniki, even if proper data on the wages of the workers are not available, it is possible to retrieve information about the wage levels of the qualified workers relying on the income tax registers. In this respect, it can be estimated that the most qualified workers could receive around 30 piasters per day in the same period.³¹⁶ So it can be concluded that the top margins of the wage levels were close one another in the agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors. The bottom level of wages can be said to have been close to one another as well. While the gap between men and women laborers could go up to three fold in the commercial tobacco workshops as the above data show, it is stated that the women laborers received 50 percent less than the men in the cigarette factory.³¹⁷

Here at this point, the data on the wage levels reveal another important fact. The disadvantaged position of the women laborers comes to the fore front in each case. It

³¹⁶ BOA. TFR I UM. 12/1136, 1.S.1324.

³¹⁷ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 71.

can be suggested that the real differentiation between the wages stemmed from the gender factor, not from the level of industrialization or the hierarchy of qualification as often expected. The wages of the women laborers were at least three times lower than those of men laborers. As seen in the above table, the gap between the wages of the expert cadres decreased in time. But when it came to the women laborers, the qualification hierarchy turned into a gender hierarchy and they received much less than the men irrespective of their talent or quality. This wage policy against women was reinforced by the promotion policy as well. Women laborers were not allowed to move into expert positions. Even the labor organizations did not allow the promotion of women at work.

So it emerges that gender was an important factor determining wage levels. Hadar also notes that even at the time of WWI, a time supposedly promoting women wages because of the labor shortage, women's wages still remained as the one third of the men laborers. She notes that the men received 20-23 piasters a day for cutting and sorting tobacco, whereas Turkish girls received 8-10 piasters a day for the same task.³¹⁸

If we rely on the statistics at hand, we should say that the difference between the wages of the male and female laborers was larger in the commercial workshops. In any case, it comes out that the wages were paid according to gender rather than the task or qualification. In fact, the tobacco sector was a female labor intensive sector. Cheap female labor was much more favorable for the bosses. In addition, child labor was

³¹⁸Hadar, p. 130.

heavily exploited. As Güzel notes, children between seven and seventeen years old were employed by 40-60 para(one-one and a half piasters) a day.³¹⁹

The above presentation of the wage levels of the tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki may not give a proper idea about their living standards unless compared to the wages of the other laborers. Therefore, the below section examines the position of the incomes of the tobacco laborers vis-a-vis the other wage laborers.

Wages in Comparison

The wages in the province increased throughout the nineteenth century. According to the calculations of Moskof, the average daily wage of an unqualified laborer in Thessaloniki was about 40-50 para³²⁰ and those of qualified ones were 60-70 para in 1820. The wages of the agricultural workers were lower, about 16-20 para in the same period. The average wage of 50 parain the 1820s rose to 5 piasters in 1908.³²¹ Referring to Abraham Benaroya, the leader of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, Moskof states that before 1908, the average daily wages of men was 15 piasters and women 5 piasters in return for 12-13 hour work day. But he claims that the formation of the Federation helped daily wages increase to 35 piasters for men and 10 piasters for women in return for an eight hour work day.³²² Dumont also notes that the wages increased 25 percent at highest in some enterprises after the successful strikes of the

³¹⁹ Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi*, p. 63.

³²¹ Moskof, pp. 271- 272.

³²² Ibid., p. 350.

workers in the second constitutional period.³²³ If we take the tobacco workers' case, it is possible to say that this calculation is more or less similar and corresponds to the statistics cited above. Therefore, we can say that there was betterment in the wage levels of the laborers of the city in general and tobacco laborers in particular in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Taking one step further, this section will try to figure out the economic position of the tobacco laborers vis-a-vis that the wage laborers of the province. According to the estimations of Moskof, the wages of the laborers of central Thessaloniki city in general varied between 15 and 53 piasters at the turn of the century.³²⁴ This is of course a wide range including all the wage laborers of the city. Various factors mentioned above had generated the differences in the wages levels across several sectors. Then the question is where should the wages of the tobacco laborers be positioned among the other wage earning laborers of the Empire?

The largest wage earning group in the Ottoman labor force was the civil servants employed in the bureaucracy and military. Although the delays in the payments is observed frequently, the salaries of the civil servants composed the most stable wage category, with the right to a retirement salary as well. The wages of the agricultural and commercial laborers were not as stable as those of the civil servants because of the lack of job guarantee, the non-existence of laws and regulations on this ground and mostly the seasonal character of the job as was mentioned before. Therefore, the state was the most favorable employer. The case of the Montenegrin refugees is meaningful in this

³²³ Paul Dumont, "Osmanlı Sosyalizminin Doğuşu," in *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, ed. Gilles Veinstein, trans. Cüneyt Akalın (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), p. 206.

³²⁴ Moskof, p. 351.

regard. When the Montenegrin farmers took refuge in Thessaloniki and its environs because of a drought and following famine, they demanded to be employed as police and gendarme and resisted being employed on the farms of western Anatolia.³²⁵

Given some benefits of the state sector, it could be more sensible to compare the wages of the tobacco workshop laborers with another sector than the state. In this regard, another rising sector employing large numbers of wage laborers at the turn of the century, namely the railways can be a useful point of reference for comparison. If the workers category is taken into account, the wages of the most qualified tobacco workers were twice as high as the wages of the Baghdad railway workers, for example. While the daily wages of the qualified commercial tobacco laborers of Kavala were in between 24-30 piasters 1910, the daily wages of the Baghdad railway workers were reduced from 12 piasters to 5 piasters in the same year.³²⁶

The skill hierarchy was not the same in the tobacco and railway sectors, of course. The technicians, drivers and the engineers made up the most skilled category among the railway jobs. For example, the average monthly wage of a first class driver in the Hedjaz Railway was 1096 piasters, a machine operator received 950 piasters, a second class driver received 770 piasters and a third class engineer received 450 piasters.³²⁷ So that, the monthly wages of the professionals were between one and a half and three times more than the monthly wages of the unskilled laborers. Since the technical professionals were not employed in the tobacco sector, only the administrative

³²⁵ BOA. DH MKT. 1822/73, 18.Ş.1308.

³²⁶ BOA. DH H. 9/6, 1.Z.1328.

³²⁷ Peter Mentzel, "The Ethnic Division of Labor on Ottoman Railroads: A Reevaluation," *Turcica* 37, (2005), pp. 221-241.

staff could receive such high salaries. Consequently, the available data indicate that the most skilled workers of the commercial tobacco sector in the province earned more than an average railway worker.

As compared with the state sector, the wages of the qualified tobacco workers were more or less the same as the wages of the low and middle-ranking civil servants and professionals. To give some example, while the monthly salary of a qualified tobacco laborer was around 300 piasters in Thessaloniki province, the government cashier in Üsküp asked for his salary to be raised to this amount in the year 1908.³²⁸ The monthly salary of the prayer leader (*imam*) employed in the Thessaloniki government office (*hükümet konağı*) in 1908 was 190 piasters and he asked for a raise.³²⁹ On the other hand, the lower ranking teachers (*muallim-i sani*) of the province were paid 250 piasters monthly.³³⁰

It is understood that this was the case in the non-Muslim schools as well.³³¹ Since there were some attempts of the state for the standardization of the wages, the civil servants were still assigned wages varying according to their personal and professional status and the budgetary applications of the state. For this reasons, one can encounter varying sums for teacher's wages among the Ottoman state documents. For example, while efforts were made to standardize the wages of the lower ranking teachers in the province at the level of 250 piasters, Ali Efendi was appointed to the secondary school (*rüşdiye mektebi*) in the town of Florina with a monthly salary of 200

³²⁸ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 85/8474, 1324.3.6.

³²⁹ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 88/8746, 1324.4.6.

³³⁰ BOA. TFR I SL. 164/16363, 12.L.1325.

³³¹ BOA. BEO. 2130/159743, 9.Ca.1321.

piasters.³³² In another case, the monthly salary of teacher Bilal working in a village of Kumanova was raised to 200 piasters.³³³ The monthly wages of the teachers could go up to 300 piasters.³³⁴ But if a teacher of a middle rank asked for an increase to the level of 600 piaster, he would be threatened to be sent to Yemen, which was a kind of exile in fact.³³⁵ Above all, the same gender hierarchy of wages also was observed in the state sector. It is understood that women teachers received half the wages of an average male teacher.³³⁶

Relying on the above figures, one can think that the minimum wage for the Ottoman laborers at the turn of the twentieth century was around 10 piasters a day and no more than 300 piasters a month. Keep in mind that the state granted between 5-10 piasters daily wages for the poor, refugees and exiles in the same period for a subsistence level of living.³³⁷

Another indication used here to determine the minimum wage level of the period is the profit tax (*temettü vergisi*). Those who were employed in companies located in the suburbs and whose monthly salary exceeded 300 piasters were subjected to an individual profit tax. Because the salaries of some skilled workers employed in the commercial tobacco companies of Thessaloniki province exceeded 300 piasters monthly, they also were subjected to this tax. It is understood that not only those who

³³² BOA. TFR I MKM. 7/662, 27.R.1322.

³³³ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 94/9396 28.C.1324.

³³⁴ BOA.TFR I SL. 94/9309, 24.Za.1323.

³³⁵ BOA.MF.MKT. 960/36, 1.N.1324.

³³⁶ BOA.DH MKT. 802/28, 7.L.1321.

³³⁷ BOA. DH MKT. 1055/85, 12.M.1324. BOA. ŞD. 2699/12, 6.Za.1317. BOA. DH MKT. 2379/13, 27.Ra.1318. BOA. DH MKT. 1078/20, 16.Ra.1324.

were employed in the status of worker in the commercial companies but also the wages of some porters also exceeded this amount and they had also paid this tax. Nevertheless, a new arrangement in 1908 rendered workers and porters exempt from this tax.³³⁸

Railroad workers and the construction workers also were exempt from this tax.³³⁹

In terms of taxes, urban wage laborers were in a relatively better position than the agricultural producers and those making a living in animal. Agricultural producer were subjected to a 10 percent tithe and another 6 percent from the remaining product after 1903. Those making a living on husbandry paid two and a half piasters for each sheep, for example.³⁴⁰ Although urban wage laborers were exempt from these taxes, they were subjected to other cuts. For example, the Régie Company cut medication and food expenses from the wages of the workers. This practice was initiated by the company, but later the state seized control of these cuts by rendering them subject to the permission of the local government.³⁴¹ A similar practice created discontent among the Régie workers in Samsun.³⁴² War taxes came as another cut from the wages of the factory workers employed by the state at the time of WWI, but this was not implemented.³⁴³

One can ask whether the wages of the tobacco laborers or other labor categories were all paid in cash or not. Before answering to this question, it should be noted that

³³⁸ BOA. TFR I UM. 12/1136, 1.S.1324.

³³⁹ BOA. BEO.438/32805, 16.M.1312. BOA.TFR I SL. 181/18027, 23.Ra.1326.

³⁴⁰ Adanır, pp. 38-39.

³⁴¹ BOA. DH MKT. 2220/39, 29.S.1317.

³⁴² BOA. DH MKT. 1002/56, 28.C.1323.

³⁴³ BOA. DH UMVM. 1/34, 1.L.1334. BOA. DH UMVM. 1/55, 7.Ş.1335.

receiving wage money in cash was rather problematic for the laborers in some cases. Illiteracy was a major handicap in this regard. The illiterate state of most of laborers rendered them open to the abuses of the bosses when receiving their wages. Tahsin Uzer, who worked as a local administrator in various parts of Thessaloniki province, noted this inability of the workers in his memoirs.³⁴⁴ In order to prevent these abuses, seals, payrolls and the witness of the payment commissions entered into the work lives of the laborers.³⁴⁵

Wage laborers were paid in cash in general, but in some cases it is possible to find that some wages paid with coupons. For example, the agricultural laborers of olive fields of Aydın received the below coupon (or *marka*) instead of proper money in currency.



Figure 14. Coupons of agricultural laborers paid as wages

³⁴⁴ Tahsin Uzer. *Makedonya'da Eşkiyalık Tarihi ve Son Osmanlı Yönetimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1987) p. 268.

³⁴⁵ BOA. DH UMVM. 1/32, 12.Ş.1334.

Although there is no clear evidence of the wages paid to the agricultural tobacco laborers with coupons in the Thessaloniki province, it is observed that coupons circulated in the Thessaloniki market. The salaries of some civil servants and retirement salaries were paid with coupons appeared in the sources.³⁴⁶ Actually coupons worked for the state as a means of delaying salary payments. There were many complaints about unpaid salary coupons. Coupons were used for paying taxes as well.³⁴⁷ Coupon brokers emerged also in the province. Especially, the coupons of the gendarme, the lowest income group among the civil servants, fell into the hands of these brokers among the money lenders and tax farmers.³⁴⁸ Moreover, it is observed that those coupons also were abused by the cash clerks paying salary to the coupon holders.³⁴⁹

In addition, bread purchasing was sometimes realized by coupons.³⁵⁰ Bread coupons were issued by the state treasury for the use of the poor, refugees and other needy people. This arrangement can be seen as a subsidiary measure to control bread supply and to make it available for all, because the unavailability of bread or increase in prices was always a focus of mass protests. The kind of coupons used by the workers might have been these bread coupons, but not the salary coupons, unless the wage earner was employed in the state factories. Consequently, one can say that the tobacco

³⁴⁶ BOA. TFR I SL. 31/3040, 27.B.1326.

³⁴⁷ BOA. MV. 6/20, 10.S.1303. BOA.TFR I ŞKT.166/16527, 18.S.1327. BOA.TFR I ŞKT.77/7621, 12.Za.1323.

³⁴⁸ BOA.DH MKT. 1902/67, 15.Ca.1309.

³⁴⁹ BOA.TFR I MKM.19/1816, 24.Za.1324.

³⁵⁰ BOA.DH MKT. 2100/66, 16.R.1316.

laborers of Thessaloniki province, working either on the farm or in the factory, mainly were paid in cash as wage money.

When it comes to the purchasing power of wages received by the laborers, it is necessary to apply to a comparison again. First, it should be noted that both the prices and the wages were higher in the commercially developed areas of Thessaloniki province. A careful observer of the province, Tahsin Uzer, who worked as an administrator in the several districts and sub-districts of the province, noted that the cost of living in the rural areas of the province such Razlık and its environs, was cheaper. One okka³⁵¹ of bread was 20 para, one *okka* of meat was two piastres and one okka of beans was 10 para between 1901 and 1904. Parallel to these prices, the daily wage of a construction worker was four piastres and that of a carpenter was two piastres. He noted that as the district governor, he could spend only 200 piasters of his salary of 1200 piastres.³⁵² Note that there was a shortage of flour in many provinces of the Empire between 1904 and 1909. Due this shortage, bread prices rose elsewhere including the capital of the empire. While, an okkaof bread cost 20-30 para in the Thessaloniki province, it was more expensive in several other provinces. For example, the price of an okkaof bread was 50 parain Trabzon, 60 para in Erzurum and 100 para in Gümüşhane around 1908.³⁵³ Bread prices were also higher in Istanbul in the same period. The prices

³⁵¹ *Okka* is a unit of measurement equal to 1282 grams.

³⁵² Uzer, p. 125, pp. 131-134. For a comparison of these prices and cost of living with the consumer basket in 1914 elsewhere in the Empire, see Zafer Toprak, *İttihat-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi* (Istanbul: Homer, 2003), p. 164.

³⁵³ BOA.DH MKT. 2708/81, 23.Z.1326.

varied between 35-40 para at that time.³⁵⁴ The prices of the basic consumption goods, mainly the price level of bread, can be taken as key to determine the living standards of the lower classes in the Ottoman Empire. Given the available data, it seems that the other provinces of the empire were more expensive than Thessaloniki in terms of basic consumption goods.

After all, above comparison of the wages strengthens the idea that the wage earning tobacco laborers of the province received an average level of minimum wage. It should also be emphasized that the other wage earners working in the lower echelons of the state sector did not receive more than this level. As was noted above, one can even encounter cases in which some civil servants received less than a qualified tobacco worker employed in a tobacco workshop. This is to say that the wages of the tobacco laborers allowed a subsistence level of living at least. Here it can be suggested that the seasonal character of the job and the market manipulations constituted the major reasons for the discontent among the tobacco laborers of the province which would take the form of a labor activism at the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, the tobacco laborers either could live in the off-season with agricultural production or holding other jobs or they might have saved money, which was not a feasible alternative in such conditions.

As a result, it seems that the instability of income because of the seasonal character of the job and the frequently encountered fluctuations because of the market manipulations constituted the major predicaments of the tobacco laborers in the province. These factors were more influential in the emergence of labor protests, rather

³⁵⁴BOA. BEO.3066/229950, 17.R.1325.BOA.İ HUS.154/1325/R-053, 17.R.1325.BOA.BEO 3066/229925, 19.R.1325.BOA.İ HUS.154/1325/R-060, 20.R.1325.BOA. MV. 116/28, 23.R.1325. BOA.BEO.3083/231199, 10.Ca.1325.

than the wage levels. The below section examines the mentality behind these labor protests. As an alternative to arguments that most of the labor activism in Thessaloniki province emerged in the form of sudden walk-outs stimulated by the euphoria of the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908, it will be emphasized that it did not happen all of a sudden.³⁵⁵ The labor activism of the tobacco laborers had a background that can be traced back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is proposed that this labor activism was accompanied by a mental transformation in which the laborers of the province went through.

Transformation of Right-Seeking Methods and Mentality

The petitions found among the Ottoman State Archive documents are a valuable source of information compensating the lack of first-hand accounts of laborers. Although one should put some reservations on evaluating these petitions such as the question of intermediaries between the petitioner and the petitioned, the literacy level of the workers and the artificial language, the petitions reveal a particular framework of mind peculiar to a particular segment of society. This section examines the mentality of an average laborer when speaking to the state on his/her own behalf. Rumeli Inspectorate documents are a valuable source in this regard. The Rumeli Inspectorate was established

³⁵⁵ Gene Sharp defines walk-out as lightning strike referring to a spontaneous protest strike undertaken without deliberation or protests over relatively minor issues. For further details about this type of political action, see Gene Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action* (New York: Sargent Publisher, 1980). On the other hand, Craig Phelan uses the term differently. Walk-out is the action stage of a planned strike. See Craig Phelan, *Divided Loyalties: The Public and Private Life of Labor Leader John Mitchell* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 247-290. For a discussion in the Ottoman context, see Esin Kumral, "Ne Kadar Sınıf O Kadar Sosyalizm!" *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 172 (2008), pp. 13-14.

in 1902 and operated until 1909. It was authorized to intervene in almost each sphere of public life in the six Balkan provinces, including Thessaloniki.

It is difficult to determine the status of this institution in the minds of the people. It seems that the institution represented the state, but more than that, because, the institution had the mission to establish good governance in the Ottoman Balkans where the central state had failed in some respects. On the other hand, the same institution was regarded sometimes with suspicion because of its intermediary role between the state and the foreign missions. Therefore, petitioning this institution should be evaluated in its own peculiarity.

In the Rumeli Inspectorate registers, it is possible to find the petitions from workers complaining about their unpaid wages. For example, Ali from the district of Doyran stated that he had worked for two workshops since June, but had been unable to receive payment still in January.³⁵⁶ Selim from the same district working in bridge construction complained that he and his seventy friends could not get wages for seventeen days.³⁵⁷

In these registers there are many petitions of the people demanding wage increase, but there is a clear difference between the petitions of the civil servants and the workers. While the petitions of the civil servants were individual in character, workers' petitions, often written on behalf of all unjustly treated parties, thus had a collective character. To give some examples, Ali Efendi, a census officer in the district of Kırçova; Hasan Tahsin, another census officer in the district of Karaferye or the

³⁵⁶BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 106/10589, 1325.1.10.

³⁵⁷BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 88/8789, 1324.4.12.

guardian of the women's jail, Nefise, had all demanded an individual increase in their wages.³⁵⁸

Moreover these individual demands were justified upon their personal hardships and asked the mercy of state.³⁵⁹ For example; Mehmet Şakir from Serres demanded a proper salary for himself justifying his claim on the fact that he had a large family and many children.³⁶⁰ Or in another case, tax clerk Ömer Avni stated that he had married last year. Because he was unable to make a living on his salary, he was obliged to live in the house of the father of his wife, which was a derogatory experience for him and for the state as well since he represented the state as an official.³⁶¹ The state was expected to intervene in such kind of situations as the protective father. It was expected to save the position of the patriarchal family and the honor of the empire embodied in the personality of the civil servant.

The state responded to the demands of the civil servants in several ways. It was implemented in a way to grant them mercy. One of these strategies was the granting of a bonus in the holy month of Ramadan.³⁶² Such a granting indicates that the notion of wage in the Ottoman Empire was far from being perceived as a return for one's work.

³⁵⁸ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 90/8934, 1324.5.2. BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 102/10146, 1324.11.7. BOA. TFR I SL. 89/8900, 1324.4.25.

³⁵⁹ Note that these petitions of the civil servants is similar to what Chalcraft put as "loyal petitioning" in terms of asking the mercy of the state. Loyal petitioning referred to the strategy of the claimant to address to the mercy of the state to restore the justice against a local exploiter. However, the use of rank and file to reach the state against the local exploiter operates differently in our case. For further discussion on this point, see John Chalcraft "Market Tyrannies, Popular History and the end of the Guilds in Egypt." Paper presented at the "Conference: Return of the Guilds," 5th- 7th October 2006, Utrecht University, Utrecht.

³⁶⁰ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 86/8582, 1324.3.16.

³⁶¹ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 86/8561, 1324.3.14.

³⁶² BOA.BEO.1748/131079, 10.Ş.1319.

Moreover, the civil servants would see this grant as their right and the state would try to make these payments even in economically unfavorable conditions in order to prevent the discontent of the civil servants.³⁶³ In this way, the entire notion of a wage in return for one's labor was somehow reversed in this context. This also means that the relation between work and wage was not established in Ottoman society, at least in the state sector, as it was institutionalized in the industrial capitalist economies.

This is to say that the wage policy was rather determined according to one's cost of living calculated according to personal status. The notions of work and wage were perceived in personal terms and they were far from being collective notions. In this regard, such notions as "equal pay for equal work" and "collective right-seeking or bargaining" would not develop in the Ottoman state sector.

On the other hand, it is observed that the workers used the language of a kind of collective rights rather than the expression of an individual's personal hardships in trying to acquire the mercy of the state, the protective father. For example, Andonis, Athanasios, Kosta and their friends from Serres stated in a petition that the employer Cevdet Bey fired them without showing any reason.³⁶⁴ In another case, road construction workers Avram and his friends, whose work had been suspended, demanded compensation of their losses and to be employed at another job.³⁶⁵

Since the labor organizations and the labor protests were available at that time for the most sections of the workers, one can only see few petitions generally submitted

³⁶³BOA.BEO. 2443/183165, 25.Ş.132

³⁶⁴BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 84/8326, 1324.2.10.

³⁶⁵BOA. TFR I ŞKT.85/8419, 1324.2.27.

collectively by the unorganized sections of the labor force such as the construction workers employed by several individual entrepreneurs on the basis of contract. What is stressed here is the fact that the petitioner laborers rely on a different notion of “justice” from that of the civil servants. For example, they do not express the injustices upon their own individual position. Different from the civil servants and the other “loyal petitioners,” it is observed that their way of expression called on the state to fulfill its duty and restore justice rather than seeking mercy. Of course, one should take the point into consideration that the same state was the employer of civil servants and some state factory workers,³⁶⁶ while the workers employed in the non-state sector had the opportunity to apply to the state as a higher authority to restore the justice between themselves and their employers. In any case, the right-seeking practices of the state employees could not display a transformation either because of the cultural reasons mentioned above or because of some practical limitations.

Consequently it can be said that the workers, whose numbers were increasing towards the end of the nineteenth century, brought a new conception of “right seeking” to the relations between the employers and the employed, the state and its subject. As was mentioned above, for the civil servants, an increase in wages was an individual demand justified on one’s own personal hardships. This is to say that, the wages were bestowed by the state. The workers, on the other hand, did not appeal to the mercy of the state when demanding a wage increase or betterment of their working conditions. In

³⁶⁶ Note that the workers’ petitions employed in the state factories at the earlier decades of 1860s, 1870s contain a variety of articulations ranging from asking the mercy of the state to the strong collective negotiations with the state. For further details, see M. Erdem Kabadayı, “Working for the State in a Factory in Istanbul: The Role of Factory Workers’ Ethno-Religious and Gender Characteristics in State-Subject Interaction in the late Ottoman Empire” (Ph.D. diss., Munich University, 2008), pp. 65-99.

this way, the mercy of the state was replaced by the notion of one's rights in terms of work relations. Such concepts as "collective bargaining" as a method of collective right seeking was introduced to the work life of the empire for the first time by the workers at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁶⁷

It also should be noted here that the restoration of the constitution was also an important factor in this change. The labor press in Thessaloniki displays that the workers relied on the rights and liberties promises of the constitution in their activism and organizational attempts. But it would soon come out that the workers expected too much from the restoration of the Ottoman constitution. Besides the slogan "Long live the Sultan!" the slogan; "Long live the constitution!" also was voiced by the workers at mass demonstrations.³⁶⁸ Disappointed with the constitution and the strict measures of the government in response to workers' demands, the labor press wrote, "The promises of the constitution had not been realized. Workers had been strikingly asking how such unfairness and pressure could be possible at the time of constitution (*meşrutiyet*)."³⁶⁹

The following chapter examines the right-seeking activities of the tobacco laborers in the larger context of the labor movement taking pace in the Thessaloniki province from the late nineteenth century.

³⁶⁷ Note that the petitioning as a way of protest can pave the way for the collective protests of the workers and even provide the foundation of labor organizations and syndicates. See John Chalcraft "Market Tyrannies, Popular History and the End of the Guilds in Egypt." Paper presented at the Conference: Return of the Guilds, 5-7 October 2006, Utrecht University, Utrecht

³⁶⁸ Moskof, p. 342.

³⁶⁹ *Amele*, 28 August 1325 published in Paul Dumont and George Haupt, ed. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalist Hareketler*, trans. Tuğrul Artunkal (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977), pp. 220-21.

CHAPTER V

THE TOBACCO LABOR MOVEMENT FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTER

This section examines the labor movements and socialism in Thessaloniki province.

The sources of the tobacco labor radicalism are thought in the larger context of the labor movement prevailing in the province in the first decade of the twentieth century. The proceeding of the movement in the center and the periphery is handled as the two component parts of the issue. The genesis of the movement in the periphery, namely Kavala, is investigated thoroughly in the latter part of the chapter.

Taking the periphery under close examination provide not only a new perspective on the nature of center-periphery relations in the context of the labor movement, but also open up some new debates about the community and gender relations within the movement.

The living standards, working conditions and wage levels of the tobacco laborers were examined comparatively in the previous chapter. These factors constituted the main sources giving way to the labor activism and labor movement in general. The previous chapter pointed out that, except for the relatively long duration of seasonal unemployment and market fluctuations, the living and working conditions of the tobacco laborers were more or less similar to the other sections of the wage laborers. However, it was observed that they were in a process of mental transformation in terms of right-seeking practices. Besides the other factors, access to the ideology is taken into account in this chapter as one of the leading sources of this mental change.

As was explained in the very beginning, this study tries to reveal all the factors making up the unity of the life-worlds of the laborers. Therefore, both the material conditions and the mental makeup, often occurred as its reflection, are taken into consideration.

It is indicated that at turn of the twentieth century central Thessaloniki hosted various political groupings propagating different ideas and ideals. It is suggested that the presence of the various socialist circles in the central Thessaloniki city helped the transformation of the labor activism into labor politics. However, the reception of this ideology showed differences among the tobacco laborers of central Thessaloniki and the district of Kavala. Parallel to this framework, the following section examines the ideological sources of the labor movement and socialism in the province.

The Historical and Ideological Sources of the Labor Movements in Thessaloniki

The conditions enabling the transformation of the labor movement in Thessaloniki in general and the tobacco labor movement in particular reside mainly in the accessibility of ideology in this place. In other words, the presence of socialist intellectuals and socialist circles enabled the politization of labor activism in the province.

In fact, the roots of the labor movement and socialism observed in Thessaloniki in the first decade of the twentieth century resided in the larger Macedonia region, where mainly Bulgarians had been carrying out socialist propaganda. The movement in Thessaloniki took source mainly from Bulgarian socialism and entered into dialogue with several socialist organizations such as the Serbian Socialist Party, the left wing of

the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), the Greek Socialist Center in Istanbul, the Jewish Socialist Party Poale Sion in Palestine and the Taşnaksutyun and Hınçak Parties. On the ideological level, Bulgarian social democracy, Austrian and German Marxism and Jewish socialism prevailed. These sources of influence produced an amalgamation which was peculiar to the social context of Thessaloniki at the turn of the twentieth century. Each of these influences requires close consideration at this point.

To start with, it can be said that Bulgarian socialism structured the first stages of the labor movement and socialism in Thessaloniki. Both the proximity of the region and the presence of Slavic populations in the city rendered Thessaloniki a favorable place for the Bulgarian labor movement and socialism to extend its domain of influence. The first organizational attempts of the laboring classes appeared in several of the town centers in Macedonia starting from the 1880s and extended to central Thessaloniki after two decades. Dagkas dates the first syndical experience of the Balkans to the year 1879, when the print workers of Plovdiv (Filibe) established a syndicate in 1879. They demanded a wage increase and more humane life conditions from the bosses. Then the strikes of the textile workers in Sliven followed in the 1880s.³⁷⁰

This first nucleus of labor activism was followed by socialist propaganda. Damianova notes that socialist propaganda first appeared in Bulgaria in 1885 when the journal *Savremennij Pokazatel* (Contemporary Index) was published in Sophia by

³⁷⁰ Dagkas, Alexander. 26 November 2006. "To Koinoniko Kinima stis Perioches tou Plovdiv kai tis Thessalonikis" (Social movements in the regions of Plovdiv and Thessaloniki). Available [online]: <http://users.auth.gr/~adagkas/> [26 November 2006].

Blagoev, the leading character of this formation. He had been expelled from Russia for being one of the founders of a Marxist group in St. Petersburg.

Another leading socialist intellectual of the same region was Gabrovski. He had studied in Geneva and later had worked as a teacher and lawyer in various parts of the modern day Bulgaria and its environs. He created a network of educational societies under the generic name “New Life”. In the second congress of the Bulgarian socialists in 1891, it was decided to establish the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party. Some believed that the foundation of a party was a premature attempt yet. Nevertheless, the “partists” with the support of Blagoev and his followers, established the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP) and the “unionists” who dissented in turn formed the Bulgarian Social Democratic Union (BSDU).³⁷¹ It was generally the Bulgarian Social Democratic Union which was more active in Thessaloniki in extending its domain.

Besides the Bulgarians, the Macedonians of the region also were affiliated with the socialist ideology in their own way. Although the Bulgarian socialists extended their domain over some Macedonian groups, those groups mainly were attached to another organization, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO).³⁷² The Macedonian socialists initiated several organizational attempts at the same time.

As Dimitar Vlahof states in his memoirs, a socialist group led by Martulkof and another

³⁷¹ Zhivka Damianova, “Bulgaria,” in *Transnational Labor History: Explorations*, ed. Marcel van der Linden (Aldershot, Hants.; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 403-404. For more information on socialism among the Bulgarian community, see Ibrahim Yalimov, “The Bulgarian Community and the Development of the Socialist Movement in the Ottoman Empire during the Period 1876-1923,” in *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1923*, ed. Mete Tunçay, Erik Jan Zürcher (London; New York: British Academic Press in association with the International Institute of Social History, 1994), pp. 89-99.

³⁷² For more information about the foundation, activities and propaganda of IMRO, see Evangelos Kophos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964).

education club established in Veles (Köprülü) in 1894 constituted the main core of Macedonian socialism. Following these two organizations, more friendship clubs and worker's organizations came into being in Skopje (Üsküp), Bitol (Manastır), Kumanova, Strumnitza (Ustrumca), Kruşevo (Kırçova), Gevgili and Totovo.

Dimitar Vlahof, coming from the left wing of the IMRO, was an important figure in the extension of these socialist formations of the region to Thessaloniki in general and the tobacco labor organizations in particular. The workers of the province elected Vlahof to the Parliament as their representative and the tobacco laborers brought him to the presidency of their congress in 1911. He had worked before for the IMRO and when the organization was split into the factions in 1904, he joined the left wing. In the year 1909, he founded the National Federative Party out of this wing. When the Party was closed by the Ottoman administration, Vlahof and his followers joined the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, which was the most influential socialist organization in the city.

On the ideological level, the early spirit of the socialism in Thessaloniki resided in French socialism and the latter tradition was influenced mostly by Austrian and German socialism. Especially, Alliance Israélite schools in Thessaloniki had been rising generation of Francophone among the Jewish community who easily adopted French humanitarian socialism. Socialist ideas found resonance not only among the workers and intellectuals of Thessaloniki, but also among the lycee students as well. On the other hand, Liakos states that the Federation had close relations with the Austrian Socialist Party and its mentors were Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer.

The guide of the statute of the Federation was that of the Austrian Socialist Party.³⁷³ The purpose of the organization as registered in the statute was organization of the proletariat to help them to emancipate and to enable them to realize the principles of socialism which had been accepted in the last congresses of the Socialist International in 1904, 1907 and 1910. These were nationalization of state property, production and exchange relations according to the communist principle; subjugation of the power (government) by the workers' class; international proletariat and last, distinction with the maximum program which involved the social change and the minimum program of the workers' class demands and social reform.³⁷⁴ It is understood that the influence of the Austrian socialism was not limited to the statute of the Federation. It is stated in the Ottoman State Archive documents that a syndicate in Austria tried to settle some emigrants in Thessaloniki.³⁷⁵

The labor movement and socialism in Thessaloniki generally is articulated through the story of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki; the Federation, in short, led by Abraham Benaroya. In fact, the Federation came into being as an extension of the Bulgarian social democratic circle mentioned above. In other words, one of the factions of the Bulgarian socialism stimulated the socialist movement and

³⁷³ Note that the statute and the party program of the Ottoman Socialist Party included some liberal points as well. For further details on the Ottoman Socialist Party and its program, see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler 1915- 1991* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), pp. 303-309. See also, Foti Benlisoy and Y.Doğan Çetinkaya, *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Sol*, vol.8 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007) pp.165-183; Yusuf Tekin, "Türkiye'de İlk Sosyalist Hareket 'İştirak Çevresi'nin Sosyalizm Anlayışı Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 57, no. 4 (2008), pp. 172-184.

³⁷⁴ Andonis Liakos, *I Sosialistiki Omospondia Thessalonikis (Federasion) kai I Sosialistiki Neolaia* (Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki "the Federation" and the Socialist Youth) (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1985), p. 20.

³⁷⁵ BOA. DH MKT. 2857/92 8.C.1327.

organizations in Thessaloniki. The major cleavage within the Bulgarian social democratic movement in terms of ideology, method and organizational principles occurred on the line of the “narrow” and “extended” groups. Among the socialists in Bulgaria, N. Rusev and his comrades constituted the orthodox Marxist “narrow” wing. Such prominent members of the groups as Nikola Harlakov, Pavel Delidarev and Angel Tomov made up the Anarcho-liberal “extended” wing. The founder and the leader of the Socialist Workers’ Federation of Thessaloniki Abraham Benaroya took part in this latter group.

Benaroya was educated in Bulgaria and socialized among the Bulgarian socialist circles until 1908. In the Ottoman State Archive documents, he was often referred as “Avram from Bulgaria.” When he moved to Thessaloniki after the restoration of the constitution, he initiated an anarcho-syndicalist struggle.³⁷⁶ Benaroya himself stated that he was converted to socialism in Bulgaria first by joining the narrow wing. He said:

When this group split into the “liberals” (or democrats) and the “conservatives” (or centrists), I became one of the liberal militants. I must, nevertheless, admit that I retained great respect for the “conservative” socialist leaders of Bulgaria, my original mentors. At the same time, the independent spirit of my work in Saloniki, particularly among the Jewish workers, aroused bitter animosity among the conservative socialists of Bulgaria, as well as among their local compatriots and the Greek socialists in Istanbul.³⁷⁷

Benaroya founded the Socialist Workers’ Federation in Thessaloniki, where the Jewish community had an overwhelming majority in the city both in general and among the working classes in particular. The Federation soon became the most influential

³⁷⁶ Note that there are several arguments concerning the date Benaroya moved to Thessaloniki and his status of citizenship. For further details on this issue, see Emre Polat, Emre Polat, *Osmanlı’nın İlk Yahudi Sosyalisti: Abraham Benaroya ve Faaliyetleri* (Istanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2004), pp. 43-44, 77-99.

³⁷⁷ Abraham Benaroya, “A Note on the Socialist Federation of Saloniki,” *Jewish Social Studies*, no.11 (1949), pp. 69-72, p. 71.

organization in the city in terms of number and influence, and attracted a considerable mass especially among the Jewish workers.

Since the majority of labor force in Thessaloniki city was composed of Jewish workers, Jewish socialism appealed to the masses. The influence of Jewish socialism had existed since the formation stages of the Federation. Moskof argues that a few free masons gathered around Joseph Nehama had organized the first socialist Jewish group in the city which would later become the core of the Federation.³⁷⁸

In fact, the cleavage between the Federation and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Union and their struggle to get the laborers of the Thessaloniki on their own sides overshadows the existence of different tendencies within the Federation. A closer examination of the intellectual cadre of the Federation will enable us to see these tendencies.

Besides Benaroya, Joseph Hazan and David Recanati were found among the intellectual cadre of the Federation. Hazan replaced Benaroya as the general secretary of the Federation at times when the latter was in exile. Saul Naum, settled in Paris, enabled the connection of the Federation with the European socialists and represented the organization at the Socialist International.

Among the intellectual cadre of the Federation, Alberto Arditti deserves special attention. Beginning in 1910 Arditti was one of the opinion leaders of the Federation. He was a graduate of the lycee Alliance Israélite Universelle and his mentor was Joseph Nehama. Starting as an employee in a business firm, he became an independent merchant. Benaroya considered that his entry into the Federation was one of his best

³⁷⁸ Moskof, p. 137.

achievements. On the other hand, he stressed that Arditti never gave up his liberal view point.

Another figure, Abraham Haason, a tailor and a native of Strumnitsa, drew a profile contrary to that of Arditti. According to Benaroya, he brought Bulgarian sectarianism into the Federation and paved the way for the lengthy discussions. Besides that, although Benaroya was personally opposed to joint meetings with the Freemasons, Haason did so. He was the organizer and the leading figure of the protest in Thessaloniki against the murder of Ferrer, a Jewish teacher killed by the police in Spain, which had sparked a protest against anti-Semitism throughout Europe. As the general secretary of the Federation, Benaroya kept a distance with the Zionist groups in general. Nevertheless, later on in his memoirs, he noted that he had organized the visit of two influential Socialist Zionists, Izak Ben Zvi and Ben Gurion, to Thessaloniki in 1911 to deliver a speech to the members of the Federation.³⁷⁹ Molho notes that the visit of Ben Zvi and Ben Gurion and their delineation of the concept of a possible co-existence between socialist and Zionist ideals had a powerful impact on the Jewish workers of the city.³⁸⁰

In fact, the relation of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki with the Zionist movement and/or socialist Zionist movement and the clash of opinions within the community in this regard, requires research that is beyond the scope of this study. What is important here for the current debate is the fact that the labor movement and

³⁷⁹ Abram Benaroya, "To Ksekinima tou SosialistikouKinimatos,"(First stages of the socialist movement) in *Elpides kai Planes* (Hopes and Plans), ed. Theodoros Benakis (Athens: Stokhastis, 1989), p.42.

³⁸⁰ Rena Molho, "The Jewish Community of Salonika and Its Incorporation into the Greek State 1912-1919,"*Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (1988), pp. 391-403, p. 394.

socialism in Thessaloniki embraced a wide range of ideas and ideals and made its own amalgamation of them. It is suggested that the success of the Federation lay in its ability to generate such an amalgamation.

The Federation competently translated all these sources and influences into the language of a kind of Ottomanism which would flexibly be articulated into the project of the Balkan Federation when the Empire apparently was dissolving into several nation states. At first, Benaroya supported the Union and Progress Party and joined the army moving from Thessaloniki to Istanbul to restore the constitution. Then he joined the opposition front in the elections of 1911.³⁸¹ At that time, the project of Ottomanism had already been proved unable to bring the different communities of the empire together. Here at this point, the Balkan Federation project provided the survival of the multi-communal labor project of the Federation. In fact, the Balkan Federation project was first introduced to the laborers of Thessaloniki shortly after the establishment of the Federation.³⁸² Christian Rakovski was invited to deliver a speech on May Day 1910. As the representative of the Socialist International, he made a speech titled “European Imperialism and the Balkan Federation.” He spoke in French in *Hürriyet Meydanı* (Liberty Square).³⁸³ Later the manuscripts of his speech in several languages circulated among the members of the Federation.³⁸⁴ Besides this regionalist program, the

³⁸¹ Dumont and Haupt, pp. 288, 308.

³⁸² Moroni notes that the Balkan Federation Project was first put forward by a Greek socialist, P. Argyriades. Ileana Moroni, “Sosyalizm ve Ulusal Sorun,” *Tarih ve Toplum* 40, no. 239 (November, 2003), p. 29.

³⁸³ Yannis Kordatou. *Istoria tou Ellinikou Ergatikou Kinimatos* (History of the Greek workers’ movement (Athens: Boukoumani, 1972), pp. 247-248.

³⁸⁴ Liakos, p. 91.

Federation recognized also the national liberation struggles of the different communities in the Ottoman Empire.³⁸⁵

The all-inclusive character of the labor movement and socialism in Thessaloniki in terms of influences, organization and ideology does not mean that it was in compliance with all its interlocutors. As was noted above, although addressing different groups, the Federation was in conflict with the narrow Bulgarian socialists as well as the Greek socialists in Istanbul.

One of the differences between the Federation and most of the Balkan socialists had come to the surface on the issue of federation. While the Federation had adopted federative principle as an organizational model, the “narrow” socialists of the Balkans- mainly Bulgarians- criticized it for dividing the workers’ front on the basis of ethnicities and undermining class as the basis of a socialist organization.

The Federation was at loggerheads with the Serbian Socialist Party as well for the same reason. The Federation was not invited to the Balkan Social Democratic Conference held in Belgrade in 1910. Although the Federation was not the only socialist organization carrying out activities in Thessaloniki, it was the most influential one. Therefore, the Socialist Workers’ Federation of Thessaloniki deserves special attention. The following section will explain the steps towards the foundation of the Socialist

³⁸⁵ Note that the national liberation struggles of the different peoples in the Ottoman Empire were mainly supported by some socialist intellectuals such as Rosa Luxemburg who regarded the national liberation movements of the Christian peoples as a pre-requisite for the development of social democracy in the Ottoman territories. For further discussion on this point, see Anahide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik ve Sosyalizm (1887-1912)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), pp. 28-30. Bernstein also raised the Eastern Question in a manner supporting the national struggles of several Balkan peoples. For further analysis on the Eastern Question by the international socialist circles, see William George Vettes, “The German Social Democrats and the Eastern Question 1848- 1900,” *American Slavic and East European Review* 17, no. 1 (February 1958), pp. 86-100. See also Evangelos Kophos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964).

Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, which consisted of several labor organizations. It should be kept in mind that the Syndicate of the Tobacco Workers had a constitutive role in the foundation of the Federation.

Labor Organizations and the Socialist Workers Federation of Thessaloniki

The guild tradition in Ottoman society preceded the development of labor organizations and provided a solid ground and organizational experience for the later workers' organizations. The guilds remained a visible part of the workers' lives through the mid-point of the nineteenth century. In some Ottoman cities, craft guilds remained active and important until the end of the Empire. According to Quataert, this might have been the case in Thessaloniki as well. But given the kinds of industries that were expanding after 1850, and the female labor that they often employed, it is more likely that the importance of craft guilds in Thessaloniki declined sharply during the latter part of the nineteenth century.³⁸⁶

On the other hand, Liakos suggests that most of the guilds in Thessaloniki were replaced by the labor organizations, namely the syndicates both in legal and practical terms. Utilizing the court registers of Thessaloniki from 1914-1915, Liakos follows the traces of some syndicates of the late Ottoman period into the guilds or solidarity organizations. After the extended strikes of the tobacco workers of Kavala, Drama, Serres, Pravi, Xanthi under the Greek administration in 1914, the Greek administration attempted to change the legal arrangements concerning the syndicates and labor activism. This initiative gave way to the opening of old registers about the syndicates,

³⁸⁶ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p.69.

most of which were able to be traced back to related guilds or solidarity organizations in the Ottoman period.

According to these registers, the guild of the shoe-makers was founded in 1815. The guild of bakery's was founded in 1869 and those of the grocers' in 1876. The solidarity organization of the hotel and restaurant workers was founded in 1900. The solidarity organization of shoe-workers was re-established in 1904, but this time it was exclusively the organization of the laborers. Similarly, the laborers of tailor shops and the employees of the commercial stores established their own organizations in 1904 and 1905, respectively.

According to Liakos, this list of the organizations shows the differentiation and transformation of the guild organizations that constituted a stage towards the workers' syndicalism. As he notes, the shoe-employers separated from the shoe-makers for example. This transition from guilds to syndicalism also was observed in the statute of these organizations. The statute of the tailor shop workers declared in 1904 declared "The purpose of the organization is solidarity with all the workers of Greece and the world by defending workers' rights and stopping the exploitation by the capital and as a final purpose, to create a fair income for the producers upon their own production and to stop the exploitation of humanity from the other things similar in kind."³⁸⁷

Based on the notifications of Liakos, it can be suggested that the organizations in question followed a course from guilds to workers' organizations and syndicalism. But it does not mean that these two different organizations replaced each other consecutively. Although it might be the case for some organizations such as those noted

³⁸⁷Liakos, pp.11-12.

above, the linearity of this organizational transformation can be debated. Different forms can be observed in a single organization especially in the transition periods. Sometimes it can be hard to make a distinction between a national organization and a syndicate in this period. Or sometimes a syndicate could hardly be distinguished from a charity organization.

The Solidarity Fund of the Tobacco Workers of Thessaloniki is an enlightening case in this regard. This organization was affiliated with the Friendship Club of the Jewish bourgeoisie of the city and also was a sympathizer of the Workers' Club at the same time. The chairman of this solidarity organization was a member of the Friendship Club. But later on, the organization had to make a choice between the Friendship Club of the bourgeoisie and the Workers' Club. Finally, the propaganda of the Workers' Club yielded results for the advantage of the labor movement and the tobacco workers elected a worker among themselves as the head of the organization.³⁸⁸ Thereafter, the organization turned to syndicalism and became one of the most active and radical syndicates of the city.

On the other hand, some of the syndicates of the city had multiple political identifications at the same time. For example; the porters' syndicate of Kerim Ağa was affiliated with the Young Turks and five other syndicates in the city were affiliated with the Greek national organization, the *Organosi*(Organization).

In addition, one also should take the point into consideration that most syndicates did not call themselves syndicate officially especially after 1909, when heavy restrictions were levied on the syndicates by the Law on Organizations.

³⁸⁸ Dumont and Haupt, p. 291.

Nevertheless, the state was aware of this strategy of the labor organizations. The official applications of some labor organizations, calling themselves club or society was rejected by the state on the grounds that the organization in question was in fact a syndicate.³⁸⁹ The Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter, is a good example in this regard. Although it was apparently a syndical organization, it did not officially call itself so.

Despite their affiliations with various national organizations of the Balkans, these organizations acted together under the leadership of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki. In the context of this study, this is an important point deserving special attention.

Most of the labor organizations of the city became united under the roof of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, in 1909. Although the Federation contributed to the organization of workers in several sectors, most of them were already organized before the establishment of the Federation. In July 1909 just before the establishment of the Federation, 19 syndicates were founded in Thessaloniki with 7000 members; eight of these syndicates were affiliated with the Workers' Union, four with the Social Democratic Center of the Bulgarian Social Democrats, one with the Young Turks and six with the Greek Organosi. Twelve of these syndicates became attached to the Federation in 1910.³⁹⁰

The constitutive core of the Federation was the Jewish Workers' Club. During the latter part of 1908 some thirty men gathered to form a Jewish Workers' Club in

³⁸⁹BOA. DH MUI. 76/4, 10.C.1328.

³⁹⁰ Moskof, p. 348.

Thessaloniki. Included in this group besides Abraham Benaroya, who would be the general secretary of the Federation later on, were Samuel Saadi, Abraham Hazan and Alberto Dassa, who represented the printer, tobacco and clothing workers and commercial employees, respectively. After meeting in a cafe, the club members rented a room to be used as the office. The emblem of the organization was a figure of a worker's hand grasping a hammer. In addition to offering socialist lectures, the club devoted itself to the job of gaining the adherence of the heads of the Jewish solidarity funds and mutual aid societies which had fallen under the control of bourgeoisie clubs.³⁹¹ As mentioned above, the solidarity organization of the tobacco workers was among the first which the Workers' Club was able to gain on its own front.

The transformation of the first core, the Workers' Club, into the Federation took several stages. The interim stages from Workers' Club to the foundation of the Federation are a complicated issue because the information given by several authors does not correspond to one another. Dumont and Haupt note that the Jewish Workers' Club announced for the first time on the first anniversary of the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1909 that it had transformed itself into a section of the Socialist Federation to be founded.³⁹² Starr notes that this group made a public appearance as the "Socialist Club" on 1 May 1909.³⁹³ On the other hand, Harris notes that on October 1908, the Jewish intellectual study group led by Abraham Benaroya merged with the small body of Bulgarian socialists in Thessaloniki to form the Socialist Club. He states

³⁹¹ Joshua Starr, "The Socialist Federation of Saloniki," *Jewish Social Studies*, no.7 (1945), p. 324.

³⁹² Dumont and Haupt, p. 292.

³⁹³ Starr, p. 325.

that this united organization issued an appeal in four languages calling the working class of the Ottoman Empire to join in one common socialist party.³⁹⁴

Associating the writings of Harris and the others one can assume that when the Jewish Workers' Club was first established, it was in close contact with the Bulgarian socialists and these relations evolved into unification in the body of the Socialist Club. The Socialist Club might have displayed its first public appearance either on May Day 1909 or at the time of the celebration of the restoration of the Ottoman constitution on 24 July 1909. On the other hand, Moskof notes that the May Day celebration in 1909 was organized by the Federation.³⁹⁵ Although the dates are debatable, it seems that the Workers' Club turned into the Socialist Club first and then into the well-known Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, indicating the translation of the workers' activism in the city into the socialist ideology.

Celebration of the first anniversary of the restoration of the Ottoman constitution was a turning point for the Federation. As Haupt and Dumont state, the Workers' Club (or the Socialist Club) declared that they would not join the celebration unless the workers were permitted to organize their own section of parade. With the support of various workers' solidarity organizations, the Club headed a labor column almost half as large as the entire parade. Among the non-Jewish participants, were Greek tobacco workers and bakers as well as a small group of Bulgarian print workers. In this parade, 3000-4000 copies of a socialist manifesto were delivered to the workers and it was

³⁹⁴ George Harris, *The Origins of Communism in Turkey* (Stanford; California: Hoover Institution Publications, 1967), p. 17.

³⁹⁵ Moskof, p. 342.

announced that the Club would become a Socialist Federation.³⁹⁶ Soon after, the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki was established legally in August 1909.³⁹⁷

The Federation made an open call to the Jewish, Bulgarian, Turkish and Greek workers of the city. The Federation appealed to the formerly established syndicates and also the solidarity organizations of the city in a very short period of time. In 1910, the Federation had 5000 members and 14 syndicates attached to it. Abraham Benaroya elected as the general secretary of the Federation. Benaroya had been influential for years, the concept of "socialism in Thessaloniki" had become attached to his personality for a long time, even after his exile and death. So, this figure deserves special attention.

Although several authors note that he was born in Vidin, Benaroya himself stated that he was an inhabitant of Thessaloniki by birth but educated in Bulgaria. He stated that, in 1907-1908 he taught in a Jewish school and following the revolution of 1908 he became a printer with a view to preparing himself for service as a labor organizer. He also noted that it was the same motive which impelled him to abandon the study of law.³⁹⁸ After the restoration of the Ottoman constitution he moved to Thessaloniki and found a fertile ground to spread socialism. In an article he wrote in a later period of his life in Israel, he wrote that he had worked as a printer until the evening and in the evenings had sought for help and support to spread his ideas. He wrote that he found what he was looking for in the cafes of Thessaloniki, the Cafe

³⁹⁶ Dumont and Haupt, p. 292.

³⁹⁷ For the establishment process of the Federation, see also Yüksel Akkaya, "Selanik Sosyalist İşçi Federasyonu," *Mülkiyeliler Birliği Dergisi*, no.136 (1991), pp. 50-54.

³⁹⁸ Benaroya, "A Note on the Socialist Federation of Saloniki," pp. 69-72.

Vardar, the Cafe del Amanesser and the big cafe just opposite the government house.

“These cafes not only addressed to the working people but also the clever young population” he stated.³⁹⁹ He finally published four articles in the *La Nacion*, the periodical of the Nouveau Club. The titles of these first articles were; “The Union Is Gaining Strength” indicating to the positive results of his attempts in Thessaloniki and another one addressed to the workers in regard to the labor organizations and activism “Who Will Do It for Me, If I Do Not?”⁴⁰⁰

Although the Federation was the largest organization in Thessaloniki, there were other socialist organizations as well. The Social Democratic Center and the Hınçak Party can be named among them. The Social Democratic Center was founded in October 1908. At the beginning, the number of its members did not exceed 10, but soon it organized among the workers. On January 1909, it was organized among the workers’ syndicates in Üsküp (Skopje), Volos (Veles), Manastır (Monastir or Bitola), Thessaloniki, Kavala and İskeçe (Xanthi) where Turks, Albanians, Greeks, Slavo-Macedonians and Vlachs participated together. In 1910, the Social Democratic Center had 33 administrative staff in Thessaloniki, 15 in Skopje, 11 in Istanbul and lesser cadre in small cities. While the sphere of activity of the Federation was limited to Thessaloniki city and extended later to the periphery of the province, the Social Democratic Center addressed a larger area. It attracted four syndicates in Thessaloniki

³⁹⁹ Benaroya, “A Note on the Socialist Federation of Saloniki,” p. 70.

⁴⁰⁰ Benaroya, “To Ksekinima tou SosialistikouKinimatos,” pp.41-42.

and one in Skopje. In contrast to the Federation, the membership was not massive in character.⁴⁰¹

The Hınçak Party was another organization carrying out socialist activities in Thessaloniki.⁴⁰² It is registered in the Ottoman State Archives documents that the Hınçak Party organized meetings with the workers in provincial town of Yenice town of the province.⁴⁰³ Another socialist organization in Thessaloniki at that time was the Ottoman Social Democrat Workers' Party of Thessaloniki (*Selanik Osmanlı Sosyal Demokrat Amele Fırkası*). Although we do not know much about this party, we can say that it was a faction of the Bulgarian socialists. This initiative was attempted by the Bulgarian workers employed in the commercial shops.⁴⁰⁴

The cleavages between the Federation and the other socialist groups appeared soon. The constitutive assembly of the Federation convened on August 1909 in Thessaloniki. The Social Democratic Center and the Hınçak Party did not attend, although they formerly consented to the foundation of a Pan-Ottoman Socialist Party.⁴⁰⁵ However, when the Socialist International Bureau asked the opinion of the Hınçak Party about the application of the Federation for membership, the Party replied that it would recommend it, however, not whole-heartedly. Despite the overwhelmingly Jewish

⁴⁰¹ Moskof, p. 337.

⁴⁰² Note that the Hınçak Party was also organized in the Ottoman Balkans. See Anahide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik ve Sosyalizm* (1887-1912) (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), p. 37.

⁴⁰³ BOA. DH MUİ. 128/38, 22.N.1328.

⁴⁰⁴ BOA. DH İD.126/7, 28.Za.1328.

⁴⁰⁵ Moskof, p. 345. Note that, relying on S. Velikov, Mete Tunçay states that a Social Democrat Party was established in Istanbul in 1908 on the initiative of eleven founders, four of whom were Rums, two Turks, two Armenians and one Jewish. Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar* (1908-1925) (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 2000), p. 64.

character of the Federation, the Hınçak Party introduced it to the Socialist International as a Slav initiative, noting that “Thessaloniki is an important center of the socialist movement and the basic component is our Slav comrades.” On 7 November 1909, the Federation became a member of the Socialist International as the Thessaloniki branch of Pan-Ottoman Socialist Party although such a party did not exist yet, as far as we know.⁴⁰⁶

In the publications of the Federation at that time, Benoraya made explicit his intention to transform the Federation into a political party. In one of his articles published in the Greek newspaper of the Federation, *Efimeris tou Ergatou* (Workers Newspaper), he described the labor movements in Europe and emphasized that the syndical activities of the Federation also should be transformed into a party structure. He wrote, “A syndicate without a workers’ party is like a rifle without a shot shell. It will never be able to guarantee a front. On the other hand, the struggle of a political party without syndicates is like a shot shell without a rifle. These two organisms are the two apparatus of the same machine, the two sides of the same coin.”⁴⁰⁷

Establishing a pan-Ottoman socialist party proved a difficult task. The political project offered by the Federation created a cleavage. While the Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian and other socialists of the Balkans had been discussing the project of a Balkan Federation, Benaroya’s pan-Ottoman socialist federation project seemed a bit out-dated. The Ottomanism project of the Federation soon became outdated in the face of the changing balances of international politics. The socialists of the Balkans had just turned to the strategy of Balkanism as an alternative to Ottomanism, while Benaroya was

⁴⁰⁶ Moskof, p. 346.

⁴⁰⁷ *Efimeris tou Ergatou*, 15 August 1909.

insisting on remaining Ottoman. However, the Federation did manage to unite workers from different communities until the Balkan Wars and even after that.

The activities of the Federation show how and why the different groups came together and formed a political mass of workers. Most of the labor activism in Thessaloniki in the second constitutional period was organized by the Federation. The following section examines this activism in detail.

Labor Mobilization and Labor Activism in Thessaloniki

The restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 resulted in public euphoria; the masses flooded into the streets and squares in Thessaloniki for the first time. Following the restoration of the constitution, workers of the city began to participate in the political sphere with their own expectations and demands from the new regime. As such, the same streets and squares hosted striking workers. Strike waves of various sectors occurred in August and September 1908.

Labor activism in the city had started before the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908. The attempt of the tobacco workers of the Régie factory in 1904 in coordination with the Régie factory in Istanbul marked the first initiative in the city.⁴⁰⁸ Another early strike came in 1907 from the railway workers of Thessaloniki stations who demanded an increase in their wages.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ BOA. DH MKT. 912/53, 23.N.1322.

⁴⁰⁹ BOA. DH MKT. 1215/45, 2.Za.1325.

The declaration of the constitution gave a new impetus to the labor activism in Thessaloniki. As can be observed from the socialist press of the period and the slogans of mass demonstrations, the workers relied on the rights and liberties promised in the constitution in their activism and organizational attempts.⁴¹⁰ The first two months of the second constitutional period witnessed strike waves of laborer in the city. *Journal de Salonique* was published with the title “Strikes on All Fronts” on 13 September 1908. The tramway and railway workers, the tobacco workers and the workers of Allatini’s flour factory, big commercial shops, gas factory, cafes, restaurants, hairdressers, almost all the city inhabitants were on strike.⁴¹¹ The city became paralyzed. Especially the strike of the railway workers stopped the post services in the city and badly affected the commercial and administrative communication.⁴¹²

These strikes appear in the registers of the Ottoman Ministry of Internal Affairs, where it is stated that the strike of the Oriental Railway employees had been stopped and the efforts were being made to stop the others.⁴¹³

It is understood that when this issue of *Journal de Salonique* was published, the strikes had been going on nearly a week. Only the strike of the Orient Railway workers had been brought to an end and the government was trying to take the others under its control.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹⁰The promises of the constitution were not realized. Workers asked how such unfairness and pressure could be possible at the time of the constitution (*meşrutiyet*). *Amele*, 28 August 1325 published in Paul Dumont and Haupt, pp. 220-221.

⁴¹¹ Anastassiadou, p. 365.

⁴¹² BOA. TFR I M. 22/2137, 9.Ş.1326.

⁴¹³ BOA. DH MKT. 1291/69, 11.Ş.1326.

⁴¹⁴ BOA. DH MKT. 1291/69, 11.Ş.1326.

A remarkable aspect of these initial strikes of the second constitutional period was the fact that the strike declarations triggered one another and they reached a massive character in the end. The strikers tried to impose their will upon uninterested workers or the potential strike-breakers for the first time. For example, the strikers of the Olympos Beer Factory forced the other workers, who were unwilling to take part in the strike.⁴¹⁵

The introduction of the Strike Law made a quelling effect on this wave of strikes. It was also the end point, where the belief of the workers in the constitution faded away. The Armenian MP Boyacıyan expressed the disappointment of the workers explicitly in an interview in *Amele* (Worker) newspaper published in Thessaloniki: “How can the people believe in our constitution, if the government does not recognize the syndicate and strike rights”⁴¹⁶ The ban on the strikes did not put an end to the labor activism, but made it very difficult to survive.

Besides the strikes, there were other mass demonstrations by workers in the city giving the movement its character. After the celebration of the May Day in 1909, a second big workers demonstration was organized to celebrate the first anniversary of the restoration of the constitution. As noted above, despite the calls of the Unionists for a united organization, the workers celebrated on their own.

Another occasion of mass demonstration occurred during the discussion of the Strike Law in the Ottoman Parliament in June 1909.⁴¹⁷ A group of 5000 workers from

⁴¹⁵ BOA. TFR I SL. 22/2117, 24.B.1326.

⁴¹⁶ *Amele*, 21 August 1325, published in Dumont and Haupt, pp. 216-217.

⁴¹⁷ BOA. DH MKT. 2855/6, 5.C.1327.

different sectors and ethnic backgrounds organized a protest meeting in Thessaloniki. Speeches were given in Ottoman, Bulgarian, Greek and Ladino and the published leaflets were in five languages.⁴¹⁸ Another mass demonstration took place to protest the Italian occupation of Tripoli in 1911.⁴¹⁹

Besides these demonstrations, the workers came together to watch the law suit against the Tobacco Workers' Syndicate and celebrated together when the syndicate was acquitted. In another case, workers responded to the Ferrer case⁴²⁰ in Spain and protested Spanish conservatism parallel to several demonstrations in Europe. A worker's library was established in the name of Ferrer after this event. Besides the strikes and wage bargaining, these incidents helped the political acculturation of the laborers.

May Day was another venue of mass participation for the workers of the city. The celebration of May Day was realized in Thessaloniki for the first time in the Ottoman Empire. On May Day 1909, numerous workers marched in the streets of the city. This celebration had been organized by the Workers' Club and was attended by many Jewish workers of the city, Bulgarian socialists and Turkish sympathizers.⁴²¹ According to information derived from the local newspaper *Progrés*, the slogans at this meeting were "Live long International Workers Party!", "Long Live Proletariat!",

⁴¹⁸ Oya Sencer, *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı* (Istanbul: Habora Kitabevi, 1969), p. 26.

⁴¹⁹ Mete Tunçay, "Osmanlı Yönetiminin Son Yıllarında (1909-1912) Selanik'te Yahudi Sosyalizmi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 3 (Fall 1977), p. 137.

⁴²⁰ Francisco Ferrer was a radical teacher who founded the Modern School (*Escuela Moderna*) in Spain. He was known for his radical and anarchist opinions. He was arrested and executed without trial in 1909. Several public meetings were organized in Europe and in the USA to protest his execution. For further information on the life of Ferrer and his opinions, see Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910).

⁴²¹ Dumont and Haupt, p. 290.

“Long Live the Constitution!” and followed the cheering for the Sultan, “Long Live the Sultan!” He also notes that the slogans were in the five or six languages spoken in the city.⁴²²

The May Day celebration in 1910 was less enthusiastic. While the workers’ movement was growing in the city, competing factions and organizations had become more apparent. Christian Rakovski was invited to the May Day celebration in 1910. Actually, Rakovski was sent from the Socialist International to bring together the two clashing socialist organizations of the city, namely the Socialist Workers Federation of Thessaloniki, known as the “Federation,” and the Bulgarian Socialist Democratic Center. Rakovski delivered a speech on Socialism and Internationalism. He also gave a public lecture on the issue of Balkan Federation.

On May Day in 1911, Socialist MP of the Ottoman parliament Vlahof; Papathomas, the leader of the Greek socialist in the city; İhsan, the representative of Muslim workers of the city, and Arditti and Benaroya from the Federation delivered public speeches. The participant workers carried red banners displaying the emblems of their organizations and that of the Socialist International. The violence policy of the Sultan in Macedonia and Albania and the pressures upon the socialists were the main issues criticized in these speeches.⁴²³

The leaders of this protest, Samuel Yiona, Samuel Levi, Benaroya and İhsan were arrested on the pretext that the life of the Sultan was under threat.⁴²⁴ These arrests were protested not only in Thessaloniki but also in Europe. In Thessaloniki, a big

⁴²² Moskof,p.342.

⁴²³ Ibid.,p. 370.

⁴²⁴ BOA. DH İD. 112-1/13, 27.Ra.1331.

demonstration was organized to defend the arrested leaders. The socialist MPs of the Ottoman Parliament, Papazyan, Vlahof, Zaharian and Arditti from the Federation gave speeches at this protest. After eight months in prison, Benaroya returned to Thessaloniki and then expressed his gratitude to his comrades in Istanbul.⁴²⁵ Within a few days he was sent to Istanbul within a few days on the condition of not engaging in the labor movements in the city.⁴²⁶

Although it was illegal, 1200 workers convened to celebrate May Day in 1912. About 7000 workers were on the strike on the same day. The evening saw another demonstration in Beş Çınar Square (Kipos Prinkipon in Greek) where thousands were participated. Moskof relates this relatively low level of participation to the pressures of the Union and Progress Party.⁴²⁷ Consequently, May Day celebrations were an important venue for labor meetings and as it is understood from above that the Federation attributed a special significance to this event. As Liakos notes, May Day celebrations were included in the statute of the Federation. Article 38 of the statute accepts the 1 May, the international Workers' Day as the birth date of the organization.⁴²⁸

The number of participants at the May Day celebration in 1911 was lower in comparison to that of one year before. This may have been a result of the pressures of the Union and Progress in the election atmosphere, as Moskof suggests. In addition, the number of participants on May Day celebration in 1910 had not been comparable to that

⁴²⁵ Kordatou, p. 251.

⁴²⁶ Dumont and Haupt, p. 308.

⁴²⁷ Moskof, p. 371.

⁴²⁸ Liakos, p. 62.

of one year before. In the May Day of 1910, there was a harsh competition between the “extended” front of the Federation and the “narrow” front of the Bulgarian Social Democrats, who had decided to celebrate separately on their own. As a result, the participant mass of labor activism was not stable in number during the period under question.

The number of the participants in the May Day celebration and other demonstrations and strikes is debated by the authors in the related literature. Dumont and Haupt compare the reports of the Federation and the Bulgarian Socialist Democratic Center sent separately to the Socialist International Bureau about the same demonstrations and pointed out that the number given by the Federation was exaggerated.⁴²⁹ Another author comparing the reports of Federation with the Ottoman state archive register notes that although the number of participants protesting the deportation of Benaroya was declared to have been as 3000 by the Federation, the Ottoman police registers indicate that the number was about 600.⁴³⁰

On the other hand, there are several reasons to believe in the exaggerated number of the Federation. One reason for such a misinformation may have been to gain the favor of the Socialist International as Dumont and Haupt suggests. Or the Bulgarian social democrats might have counted only the participants who were attached to their organization. As noted before, Bulgarian social democrats attracted a smaller membership in Thessaloniki among the workers, mainly because they did not appreciate the participation of the “unconscious” masses.

⁴²⁹ Dumont and Haupt, pp. 312-315.

⁴³⁰ Emre Polat, *Osmanlı'nın İlk Yahudi Sosyalisti: Abraham Benaroya ve Faaliyetleri* (İstanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2004), p.141.

Although one can be suspicious about the reported numbers, a sudden change in the participation level was not a case peculiar to the Ottoman labor movement. As Hobsbawm points out, great leaps and explosions in the movement in very short periods of time was a characteristic aspect of the new unionism in Europe. For example, the British syndicate movement increased its membership capacity 90 percent between the 1880s-1890.⁴³¹

The numbers are always debatable, but the facts that the masses met with the idea of socialism and their own political project for the first time, participated in elections as workers and voted for their own candidate, Dimitar Vlahof and had their own press for the first time can not be denied.

When the labor movement in Ottoman Thessaloniki is concerned, it is usually contextualized around the activity of a few intellectuals or opinion leaders such as Abraham Benaroya, the leader of the Federation, and its urban enlightened followers giving and receiving lectures on syndicalism in the cafeteria of a reputable hotel in central Thessaloniki, such as the lecture given in the Splendid Palace Hotel.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Hobsbawm, p. 155.

⁴³² BOA. TFR I SL. 215/21458, 20.B.1327.

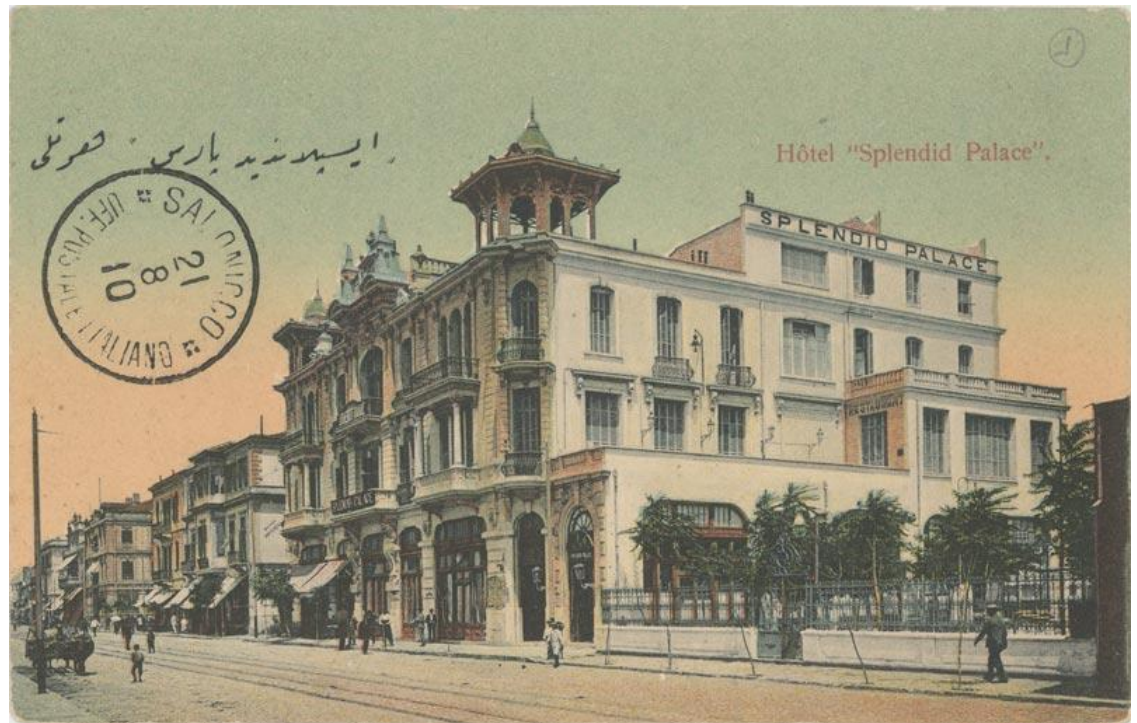


Figure 15.Splendid Palace Hotel (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T023/008)

The above mentioned labor activism displays that the labor movement in the city attracted a particular level of mass participation from various sectors and various communities. Nevertheless, it also should be noted that this mass mobilization of the workers would have been feasible in the absence of labor organizations, which played a crucial role in the workers' mobilization. Moreover, they had an important role in introducing socialist ideas and ideals to the present labor activism.

The Labor Press

Although short-lived and limited in audience, the role of the labor press also should be mentioned in this regard. Both the Bulgarian socialists and the Federation tried the means of press for the acculturation and mobilization of the laborers. Among the variety of publications, generally communal in character, there was a labor press cross-cutting all the communities. Although short lived and reached a limited audience, it is possible to speak of a labor press in the Thessaloniki province. Apart from the newspapers, brochures and leaflets were also a practical and convenient way of reaching the workers. Those leaflets were distributed mostly at the time of mass demonstrations and circulated in the hands of the workers. For example, the constitution of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki was announced to the workers at the time of the first anniversary meeting of the constitution. This declaration was a socialist manifesto and it was published in four languages to reach all the workers of the city parallel to the main target of the newly founded organization. Another leaflet published and distributed by the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki was the copied speech of Christian Rakovski, who was invited to Thessaloniki for the May Day celebrations in 1910 as the representative of the Socialist International Bureau.

In addition to the brochures and leaflets of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, some newspapers were issued as well. The Federation published a workers' newspaper in four languages, Ladino (*Jornal del Laborador*), Bulgarian (*Rabotničeski Vestnik*), Turkish (*Amele Gazetesi*) and Greek (*Efimeris tou Ergatou*) in 1909. Joshua Starr explains the birth of the first workers' periodical of Thessaloniki as such:

In as much as the workers attracted to the Federation were limited to their native Ladino, the problem of providing them with socialist reading matter was bound to be difficult. In the course of time translations of the chief Marxist tracts were printed in Thessaloniki, but the immediate task was to issue a workers' journal. At a picnic held in a public park, the Federation managed to raise the sum of 100 pounds and the Workers' Journal, the first socialist periodical of Thessaloniki was born.⁴³³

The Ladino and Bulgarian versions of this publication lasted longer than the Turkish and Greek versions. The Turkish version of the newspaper, *Amele Gazetesi*, was published for only four issues and the Ladino version was published for nine issues as understood from the archives of the Socialist International.⁴³⁴ As Starr notes, the translation expenses were costly and the funds of the Federation were exhausted by the fifth issue of this multi-lingual journal. Given the limited number of Turkish and Greek workers in comparison to Jewish workers and the level of interest shown by these communities, the journal in these languages was not a self-financing enterprise. The other versions of the newspaper could live no longer than the ninth issue. In addition to these publications, Benaroya states in his memoirs that the Federation published another periodical titled, *Socialist Solidarity*. This was as a publication of the Socialist Youth Organization that worked in parallel to the Federation.⁴³⁵

For the "narrow" wing socialists, the consciousness level of the workers was more important than their number. Therefore, they gave priority to the publication activities more than the workers' mobilization in mass demonstrations. The propagandists of the Bulgarian Social Democrat Workers' Party started a series of

⁴³³ Starr, p. 326.

⁴³⁴ Dumont and Haupt, p. 198.

⁴³⁵ Benaroya, "To Ksekinima tou SosialistikouKinimatos,"pp. 41-42.

public conferences. Socialist literature was introduced to the workers in this way. The book, *Red Calendar of the People*, was published in Sophia and became a best-seller within a few months throughout the Macedonia.⁴³⁶

Like the socialist groupings, the socialist press also started earlier in the neighboring regions. From June 1886 to the end of the same year there appeared in Gabrovo, one of the centers of the developing textile industry in Bulgaria, the first socialist weekly newspaper, *Rosiza* (Dew), where Marx's *Hired Labor and Capital* was published in Bulgarian for the first time in a translation by the editor.

The early emergence of the labor press in the neighboring regions does not mean that the Federation was uninterested in conscious-raising activities among the workers. The Ferrer library of the Federation was an important initiative in this regard. As noted before, the Federation organized a meeting to protest the murder of Ferrer, an atheist teacher in Spain murdered by torture in the jail, an act reminiscent of the Middle Age Inquisition. It was protested all over Europe. After the protest in Thessaloniki, a worker's library was founded by the Federation and given the name of Ferrer. Kordatou notes that the Ferrer library involved books on French socialism, the publications of the Sephardic Jews, the workers movement in Belgium and all Europe and the literature on class struggle and socialism.⁴³⁷

Besides the above-mentioned workers' newspapers published in four languages, the Federation published a newspaper in Turkish named *Mücadele* (Struggle) to present

⁴³⁶ Dumont and Haupt, p.207.

⁴³⁷ Kordatou, p.246.

its socialist program and open it to the public discussion on the eve of the general elections in 1911.⁴³⁸

In addition to the publications of the Federation, the other socialist periodicals circulated in the city. Moskof states that, *İştirak*(Participation) newspaper, published in Istanbul; *Journal de Travailler*(Journal of Work) published in İzmir in French, Turkish and Greek; and *Beşeriyet* (Humanity) published in Istanbul were circulated in Thessaloniki as well.⁴³⁹ In addition, Noutsos states that the Greek socialist publication, *O Sosialistis* (The Socialist) had an agency in Thessaloniki as well as in Istanbul, İzmir and Crete.⁴⁴⁰

Considering the language of the labor press of the period Dumont and Haupt suggest that while the language of the *İştirak* and especially the language of some intellectuals like Hüseyin Hilmi,⁴⁴¹ were exaggerated and distant from the real life contexts of the workers, *Amele* newspaper published in Thessaloniki touched the real problems of the proletariat.

In *Amele*, it is possible to see the detailed news of the tobacco workers' strike from the perspective of the workers with their own articulations. Besides that, the strategies of the planned or ongoing strikes were discussed in this newspaper.

⁴³⁸ Dumont and Haupt, p. 308.

⁴³⁹ Moskof, p. 351.

⁴⁴⁰ Panagiotis Noutsos, "The Role of the Greek Community in the Genesis and Development of the Socialist Movement in the Ottoman Empire: 1876-1925," in *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1923*, ed. Mete Tunçay and Erik Jan Zürcher (London; New York: British Academic Press in association with the International Institute of Social History, 1994), p. 80.

⁴⁴¹ Besides Hüseyin Hilmi, the publisher of the socialist newspaper *İştirak* and the founder of the Ottoman Socialist Party, Haydar Rıfat can be named as another intellectual writing and especially translating on socialism in Istanbul. See for example, George Turner, *Sosyalizm*, trans. Haydar Rıfat (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye, 1326).

Furthermore, the workers could engage in the discussions on going in the Ottoman Parliament about the strike law, for example. They could debate it with an MP of the Ottoman Parliament in an interview.⁴⁴²

As a result, although the labor press of Thessaloniki was short-lived, it achieved great progress in a short period of time. As seen in an interview with the MP Boyacıyan, labor issues at the local level could be carried successfully to the parliament. This means that these periodicals and newspapers were functional not only in organizing and uniting the laborers of Thessaloniki and giving them a political consciousness; they also carried the labor debates and demands to the level of parliamentary politics.

The above-mentioned demonstrations and the publications generated a kind of labor radicalism in Thessaloniki. The next question is how the state responded to this radicalism. The following section examines this issue.

The Response of the Ottoman Administration to the Labor Activism in Thessaloniki

The Ottoman administration was highly alarmed, as the labor radicalism in Thessaloniki underwent a transformation from a mere labor movement to socialism. As Güzel indicates, while the job of dealing with the labor organizations was left to the domain of the local administration, socialist organizations were discussed at the top levels of the state.⁴⁴³ The socialist overtones of a few intellectuals were enough for the state

⁴⁴² Dumont and Haupt, p. 224.

⁴⁴³ Güzel, *Türkiye’de İşçi Hareketi*, p. 80.

authorities to take pre-emptive measures. The reports of the governor of Thessaloniki Hüseyin Kazım Kadri to the administrative center are enlightening in that sense.

The reports of Hüseyin Kazım Kadri inform us about how the socialist initiatives in general and the activities of the organized labor in the tobacco sector were considered by a bureaucrat. The governor's report to the ministry of internal affairs first came about as an individual response to the lingering legal status of the tobacco workers and the organizations of the porters. On the part of the state, confusion existed about the legal status of the tobacco workers' organizations and other organizations that were not engaged in public service. The Strike Law and the Law of Organizations in 1909 prohibited the establishment of syndicates and the right to go to strike in the public sector so that the labor activism of especially the transportation sector and the other sectors concerning modern day municipal services led by foreign monopoly companies were prevented. The foreign monopolies and the state came to an agreement on the prevention of labor activism, but the labor activism in some sectors continued.

The definition of "public" gave way to discussion among the public administrators and policy makers. The applications of most labor organizations were rejected on the grounds that establishing a syndicate in the public service sector was prohibited according to the related law.⁴⁴⁴ But the position of the tobacco laborers as well as the porters according to this law remained ambiguous and this situation created long discussions. Various state departments from the province administration to several ministries, from the general secretary of trade to the Council of State (*Şura-yı Devlet*) took part in these discussions.

⁴⁴⁴BOA.DH HMS.22/12, 9.Ş.1329.

The Council of State put an end to the debate by declaring the lawfulness of the syndicates established outside of the public sector. In this way, the previous objections to the organizations, which were accused of having been established under the name of societies or clubs but functioned as syndicates, became null and void. Despite all the dislike and anxiety about the labor organizations, the state departments presented an effort to act on the grounds of law, but also put an effort in denigrating these organizations as well. The Ottoman state archive documents make this point explicitly.

The document declaring the lawfulness of the syndicates in the transportation and tobacco sector degrades the public image of the newly established syndicates. It is emphasized that the constitution is the safeguard of those forced or cheated by the syndicates. Instead of describing the functions and domain of the syndicates, the Council of State explains its probable vices and how the citizens are to be safeguarded against the detriments of those organizations. Although the lawfulness of these syndicates was declared in a way, they were deprived of the right to strike because of the reasons of public order and security.⁴⁴⁵

Although the new legislation left little space for the syndicates to act, the governor of Thessaloniki province, Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, was still anxious about the activities of these organizations. He was not satisfied with the decision of the Council of State and sent a report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to warn the state authorities about the evils of these organizations and their leaders. For Hüseyin Kazım Kadri pages of correspondence among the various state departments on the legal status of the porters and tobacco workers organizations were useless. He noted that while the state

⁴⁴⁵BOA.DH İD. 112-1/13, 27.Ra.1331

authorities were discussing the ambiguous legal position of the organizations in question, socialist activities in the province had achieved progress. Sensing that the state authorities were not well informed about the scale of the socialist activities in the province, the governor tried to attract attention to the seriousness of the issue. He stated that the socialist activities had been taking place for three years' time in the province.

The governor attracted attention to the activities of the tobacco workers organizations in Thessaloniki and Kavala and the porters' organization in Thessaloniki. He put forward that, led by Abraham Benaroya, those organization were likely to cause more trouble. He believed that Benaroya had been sent to Thessaloniki as a spy of the Bulgarian government and his real mission was to prepare ground for foreign intervention into the Ottoman territories by disturbing public order under the guise of the socialism ideal.⁴⁴⁶

Another interesting point here is the fact that the socialism threat in Thessaloniki was discussed mostly in reference to the personality of Abraham Benaroya, not the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki. Although, the establishment and the activities of several organizations were debated in the several state departments, Governor Hüseyin Kazım Kadri always especially referred to Benaroya. The deportation of Benaroya on the eve of the elections in 1912 also indicates that the matter was problematized in the personality of Benaroya. It seems that the administration was convinced that taking Benaroya out of the game would bring the end of the socialist adventure in Thessaloniki.

Hüseyin Kazım believed that socialism would not be able to find ground in Thessaloniki or anywhere in the Empire, because the conditions for socialism did not

⁴⁴⁶ BOA. DH İD.112-1/13, 27.Ra.1331.

exist there. Relying on this articulation, one can expect that he was comfortable with the socialist activities in Thessaloniki and did not see it as a big deal, but paradoxically, he was the person who was the most anxious about the advance of socialism in Thessaloniki. In his correspondence with several state departments, it is seen that he was never convinced that his addressees fully realized the level of socialist threat in Thessaloniki.

Hüseyin Kazım was well aware of the progress of the tobacco workers' radicalism in the city. The anxiety of the governor can be understood in a way. In the principle, he believed that socialism would not establish a solid ground in the Empire- or he found relief in this idea- whereas his observations especially on the tobacco labor radicalism in the province alerted him about the socialist "threat." Here at this point, tobacco labor activism in the Thessaloniki province requires closer attention.

The Sources of Tobacco Labor Radicalism in the Province

The tobacco laborers were among the most important target population of the competing socialist organizations in Thessaloniki. After moving to Thessaloniki, Benaroya first became a printer and then participated among the tobacco laborers as one of them. His engagement with the printers was rather functional, both to organize the printers and to be able to publish his first articles to attract some audience for socialist propaganda. After publishing his first articles, he went to Gevgili, one of the major tobacco producing sub-districts of central Thessaloniki district, in order to observe the most proletarianized part of the labor. He was arrested for a short period of time when he was making propaganda among the tobacco workers there. Gevgili was a place

where the Bulgarian Social Democratic Center was also organized. It seems that the two major socialist organizations of the Thessaloniki competed for the tobacco laborers to bring them to their own front, mainly because the tobacco laborers were the most numerous section of labor engaged in a proletarian struggle to survive. As understood from their own writings, this is the way the socialist leaders of the period saw them.⁴⁴⁷

Several factors helped in the radicalization of the tobacco laborers. Firstly, it is possible to say that the tobacco laborers drew strength from their number. Moskof notes that half of the laboring men and women of Thessaloniki city were employed in the tobacco sector.⁴⁴⁸ When the periphery of the province is also added, the number of tobacco laborers grew larger. The number of tobacco workers represented at the General Congress of the Tobacco Workers of Macedonia in 1911, including the workers of the Thessaloniki province and Xanthi also, was 30,000.⁴⁴⁹

Moreover, although the commercial tobacco processing job was related closely to the agricultural processing job and these two subsidized each other in some cases, it is still possible to make a distinction between the rural and urban tobacco labor force. The number of urban commercial tobacco laborers outnumbered the agricultural laborers the central Thessaloniki. The calculations of Moskof are striking in this regard. He states that 50 percent of the 12,000 industrial laborers of the city were employed in the commercial tobacco processing sector. The total number of agricultural wage

⁴⁴⁷ Benaroya "A Note on the Socialist Federation of Saloniki," p. 70.

⁴⁴⁸ Moskof, p. 271.

⁴⁴⁹ Vyzikas, p. 17.

laborers from every sector including tobacco production, cotton, cereals and others was about 3000.⁴⁵⁰

These numbers indicate two important points; one is that the number of agricultural laborers constituted at most half of the urban tobacco laborers, so that the tobacco labor force in the central Thessaloniki displayed mostly an urban character at the beginning of the century. The second is that the tobacco laborers with their number and propensity constituted the best venue for socialist propaganda. The high population of the tobacco workers in the city meant that the socialist organization gaining the tobacco workers on its own side would get the support of the 50 percent of the worker population of the city. Therefore, the socialist organizations carrying out activities in Thessaloniki must have given their best effort to get the support of the tobacco laborers. From another point, this is to say that much of the time and energy of the socialist propaganda were devoted to the tobacco laborers.

The third, the propensity of the tobacco laborers for labor radicalism and socialism lay in their life and work conditions. A number of scholars emphasize this factor as the main reason of the tobacco labor radicalism in Thessaloniki province. For example, Starr argues that the radicalism of the tobacco workers was no doubt that, unlike other categories in which workers supplemented their wages by cultivating a plot of ground or the like, these wage earners were engaged in a fully proletarian struggle for existence. In fact, the seasonal character of the commercial tobacco processing sector enabled the agricultural producers to shuttle between the agricultural fields and the commercial workshops in the late nineteenth century. But it seems that it was becoming

⁴⁵⁰ Moskof, p. 271.

a less attainable strategy for the tobacco laborers at the very beginning of the twentieth century.

As Adanır also points out, depropertization of the agricultural tobacco producers, the new employment opportunities in the commercial workshop sector and the insecurity of some rural areas directed them to the urbanized areas of the province, mainly to Thessaloniki, Drama and Kavala. There was a migration wave of share-croppers towards these regions.⁴⁵¹ Since more peasants were losing their lands to debtors by way of the afore-mentioned mechanisms, more laborers had to choose between the agricultural lands or commercial workshops to be employed as wage laborers. Because the high season in agricultural and commercial tobacco job corresponded to the same period of the year, they had to choose between the farm and the workshop. Nearby tobacco workshops might be more attractive for a peasant family deprived of a land to cultivate. Therefore, it can be assumed that more laborers concentrated on commercially significant urban areas.

The material life conditions of the tobacco laborers changed in the way that the livelihood subsidization opportunities were less available for them at the beginning of the new century. Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate the lack of subsidizing strategies in this period. An average worker could earn no more than 50 piasters a year, which was the total sum of at most six months payment.⁴⁵² Similarly, the poems of Andrikos Veta, a precious source about the life contexts of the tobacco

⁴⁵¹ Adanır, p. 45.

⁴⁵² Evangelos Hekimoglou, "The Jewish Bourgeoisie in Thessaloniki 1906-1911," in *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe from 15th Century to the End of World War II*, ed. I.K. Hassiotis (Thessaloniki: IMXA, 1997), p. 177.

laborers, indicate that the tobacco workers were employed five or six months a year and endured miserable conditions for the rest of the year.⁴⁵³

The fourth, besides the changing material life conditions and subsidiary strategies, it is argued that the work places of the tobacco laborers helped the development of consciousness among the laborers. Starr argues that the system of concentrating large numbers of poorly paid workers on a single floor was likewise naturally conducive to the emergence of a class-conscious attitude.⁴⁵⁴ Similarly, Moskof makes the argument that the radicalism of the tobacco laborers resulted from the large concentration of the workers in the establishments reaching 500 workers in a single place.⁴⁵⁵ As is noted before, the employment capacity of no factory in Thessaloniki exceeded 500 workers. For this reason, the capacities of tobacco workshops were comparable to those of factories in terms employment capacity and concentration of workers. This situation rendered propaganda spreading among the workers much easier.

On the other hand, Jecchinis notes that the way the workers sat in the workshops facilitated the communication among them. They could talk and chat with each other while processing the tobacco leaves for long hours. He states that “quiet warehouses, men and women as they sat in rows facing one another, hour after hour selecting and packing tobacco leaves, could chat with each other easily, or listen daily to political talk, and discuss trade union questions on the spot, without having to attend meetings.”⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Veta, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁵⁴ Starr, p. 325.

⁴⁵⁵ Moskof, p. 348.

⁴⁵⁶ Christos Jecchinis, *Trade Unionism in Greece* (Richmond: Roosevelt University Press, 1962), p. 92.

Hadar mentions another related point. She states that in contrast to the noise of the looms in the textile industry, for example, the task of sorting tobacco leaves was quiet in and of itself and this presented the laborers a golden opportunity to converse about any possible subject.⁴⁵⁷ Beyond the workplaces, the close residences of the tobacco laborers in the same neighborhood enabled them to continue their dialogue and solidarity outside the workplace. The proximity of the residences of the laborers both in Thessaloniki and Kavala, which will be examined in detail in the next chapter, provided the continuation of communication after work.

The last but not the least factor in the radicalization of the tobacco laborers stemmed from the Ottoman legislation. As is noted before, Ottoman legislation tried to restrict the labor movement just after the strike waves in Thessaloniki in 1908. Although the laws on the organizations and strike have been discussed by several scholars as a control mechanism of the state over the labor organizations and their activities, a point of loophole on the law has always been neglected or underestimated. It is suggested here that the tobacco labor radicalism and the maintenance of labor activism in the tobacco sector throughout the second constitutional period owed much to this loophole in the law. For this reason, the laws on the organizations and strike require a special attention at this point.

As one of the most organized and radicalized part of the labor, tobacco sector had a different status within the legal arrangements organizing labor unions and labor strikes. The Law on Organizations and the Strike Law prohibited the establishment of syndicates and denied the right to strike in the public sector. Since the tobacco export

⁴⁵⁷ Hadar, p. 130.

business was not included in the public sectors category, it was more difficult for the government to control the activism of the tobacco workers in comparison to that of transportation sector, for example. This means that although tobacco sector was one of the most radicalized sectors in terms of labor activism, its radicalization could not be prevented by legal order. As was noted earlier, the ambiguity of the status of tobacco laborers according to the laws on the organizations and strikes provided the tobacco labor activism a kind of legal immunity.⁴⁵⁸

The above mentioned factors came together to generate a tobacco labor activism in Thessaloniki province at the beginning of the twentieth century. When the tobacco labor activism in the province is considered, two main characteristics prevail. One is that the tobacco workers' strikes generally occurred as a response to the fluctuation of wages. This is to say that the strikes broke out in response to the diminishing of wages after a relative increase. In the tobacco sectors, the periods of 1904-5 and 1907-8 were such kinds of fluctuation periods accompanied by powerful strikes of the laborers. As was noted before, the manipulations of the international tobacco companies of demand triggered the first massive strike of the tobacco labor activism in the province. On the other hand, the bad harvest and the rise in the food prices decreased the purchasing power of the people in 1908.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ For a discussion on the Strike Law, see Mesut Gülmez, "Bir Belge Bir Yorum: 1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Yasası ve Grev" *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 12 (1980), pp. 50-64; Mesut Gülmez, "Zorunlu ve Son Bir Açıklama [Mesut Gülmez'in "Bir Belge, Bir Yorum: 1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Yasası ve Grev" İsimli Yazısına Dr. M. Şehmus Güzel'in Verdiği Yanıt Üzerine Mesut Gülmez'in Görüşleri]" *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 15 (1981), pp. 144-157; M. Şehmus Güzel, "[Mesut Gülmez'in "Bir Belge, Bir Yorum: 1909 Tatil-i Eşgal Yasası ve Grev" İsimli Yazısına Dr. M. Şehmus Güzel'in Verdiği Yanıt Üzerine M. Gülmez'in Yaptığı Eleştiriye Cevabı]," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 16 (1981), pp. 158-163.

⁴⁵⁹ For a discussion on the relation between the economic crisis and raising political reactions on the eve of the 1908 revolution, see Carter Vaughn Findley, "Economic Bases of Revolution and Repression in the

It should be noted that the tobacco labor activism in Thessaloniki responded to the empire-wide economic conditions as well as the sectoral changes at the local level. Market fluctuations were more devastating for some localities like Kavala. Since tobacco exports were almost the single economic activity in Kavala, the city was more sensitive to changes in the international market.

The other characteristic of the tobacco labor activism in the province was the fact that the activism in the periphery preceded the activism at the center of the province. This is to say that the tobacco labor activism in the Thessaloniki province was extended from the periphery to the center, contrary to what one might expect. This characteristic of the tobacco labor activism requires further delineation.

Dagkas notes that three or four unorganized strikes appeared in Kavala in 1903 with the participation of several thousands of workers.⁴⁶⁰ The important point here is that these initial strikes did not occur in central Thessaloniki city, but in the periphery of the province. According to this notification, tobacco labor activism arrived Thessaloniki city one year after in 1904 when the tobacco workers of both Thessaloniki and Kavala went on strike.

These initial stages of tobacco labor activism were rather spontaneous and violent, the workshops were damaged by the workers.⁴⁶¹ After the restoration of the Ottoman constitution, the labor activism of the tobacco workers took on an organized

Late Ottoman Empire,” *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 28, no. 1 (January 1986), pp. 81-106; Donald Quataert, “The Economic Climate of the ‘Young Turk Revolution’ in 1908,” *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 3 (September 1979), pp. 1147-1161.

⁴⁶⁰Dagkas, Alexander. 26 November 2006. “*ToKoinoniko Kinima stis Perioches tou Plovdiv kai tis Thessalonikis*” (Social movements in the regions of Plovdiv and Thessaloniki). Available [online]: <http://users.auth.gr/~adagkas/> [26 November 2006].

⁴⁶¹ BOA. Y.PRK. ASK. 227/86, 17.M.1323.

character. The restoration of the constitution and the rights and liberties , which were believed to be secured by the constitution, provided a new impetus for labor activism among the tobacco laborers of the province like the laborers of the other sectors. Tobacco workers' strikes took place in Thessaloniki city in 1908, 1910 and 1911 with the participation of several thousand workers. The greatest strike of the tobacco workers in Thessaloniki, not only in the city but also all over the province including Drama, Kavala, and Serres as well, was realized in 1914 under the Greek administration. This overarching strike of the workers also started from Kavala and extended to the other parts of the province. As a result, Kavala was the main actor both in the initial stages of the tobacco labor activism and the final great strike of the tobacco laborers in 1914. This fact brings the question of the role of the periphery in the tobacco labor movement. The rest of this chapter examines the periphery in this regard.

Politics over Tobacco in the Periphery: The Tobacco Congress in Drama

Commercial and agricultural wage laborers were much more numerous in the periphery of the province. As was explained in the second chapter, most of the commercial workshops were concentrated near the port of Kavala and the other transportation facilities in the interiors of the Drama district. It is by no coincidence that the tobacco congress took place in the periphery of the province and not in the Thessaloniki city. It means that the state administration and the new born party politics turned their gaze to the periphery of the province as the real heart of the sector. The amazing growth of the tobacco sector, both in terms of the agricultural production and the trade, increased the number of people who earned their livelihoods from tobacco. The growing interest of

the new born party politics in the tobacco sector and the population engaged in is understandable in this context.

The politicians and policy-makers addressed this population for the first time at the Tobacco Congress convened in Drama in 1909. Note that the tobacco congress in Drama was not the single congress held on the tobacco issue. Parallel to the rising number and relevance of the masses whose lives were dependent on tobacco in one way or another, the new policy-makers of the constitutional regime called for several tobacco congresses.⁴⁶² The previous section examined the struggle of the tobacco laborers under the new regime in the context of the labor movement and it was noted that the both the interests and the organizations of the tobacco laborers and the merchants were differentiated. Here, it is pointed out that the state and the government displayed an effort to bring these two together again within the same organizational framework. In this regard, the Drama Congress is a valuable case to see the relations between the parties of the tobacco sector, the merchants, farmers, laborers and the state administration.

The Unionist leaders convened the congresses in Drama in 1909. The congress was initiated by the official invitation of Tahsin Bey, the district governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Drama and attended by the farmer and merchant representatives of Edirne, Selanik and Kosova provinces. The event was held in the great hall of the Union and Progress Club on 1 August 1909. The congress was directed by Drama MP Rıza Bey. Although he was the organizer of the congress calling upon the people, Tahsin Bey wanted to leave the congress after the opening session, by emphasizing the civil character of this

⁴⁶² Note that, Tobacco Congress of Anatolia was also organized by the Unionists in 1910 in Samsun. *Anadolu Tütün Kongresi Beyannamesi*, 8 August 1327 (1911), transliterated by Baki Sarısakal.

meeting. But he stayed and followed the congress as an impartial citizen upon the requests of the attendants, as it is written so in the report of the congress. It is stated in the congress report that the director of Drama Régie Administration, Angelidi Efendi also attended the congress, even if we do not find any word of him in the congress documents.

The problems between the tobacco farmers and the merchants constituted the main agenda of the congress. The difficulties of getting storage and transportation licenses from the Régie administration were the problems shared by the farmers and the merchants. Rıza Bey and Tahsin Bey initiated a dialogue between the Régie Company and its interlocutors, namely the farmers and the merchants. In fact, they tried to promote a civil enterprise against the Régie administration by emphasizing the importance of the organized behavior of the farmers and the merchants. They also stressed the point that the congress should be the main platform to discuss the conflicts between the tobacco farmers, merchants and the Régie Company. On the other hand, the workers were excluded from this civil initiation against the Régie Company. As seen in the previous section, the tobacco workers pursued their own struggle on a different ground, which was not appreciated by the state administration.

Tahsin Bey displayed a cautious attitude towards the Régie Company. He stated the impartiality of the state about an issue under the jurisdiction of the Régie administration in his opening speech, but he added that the government could not be indifferent to the problems of the farmers and merchants since they constituted the nation for which the government was responsible. The interesting point is that the nation was composed of the farmers and the merchants for Tahsin Bey.

He stated his gratitude to the merchants who had introduced and promoted Ottoman tobacco in Europe, “We have to conform to the merchants, because they are the ones who introduced Ottoman tobacco to Europe. For this reason, we are grateful to our merchants. Nevertheless, one thing is asked for, the balance between demand and supply is essential for the price of tobacco.”⁴⁶³

The above citation indicates the implicit complaints of the state administration about the market manipulations of the big tobacco companies. In addition, Tahsin Bey made the point that the peasants should be organized and learnt a little bit about trade in order to find relief from their economic dependency. Similarly, Rıza Bey encouraged the farmers to establish their own credit institutions or chests.

The only figure in the congress that mentioned the situation of tobacco laborers was Mehmet Tevfik. He noted that the workers were either forced to work or paid very little in the existing conditions. He also warned that it would not be possible to find any workers in the near future unless their conditions were improved. By making reference to the purpose of the congress, he stated that the needs and demands of the workers needed to be taken into consideration;

Based on the essential aim of this congress, the reform and betterment of the tobacco agriculture and development of the family economies and taking the measures to attract capital in parallel to the points, needs and demands of the workers and elimination of the deficiencies on this regard is one of the most important issues. I wish the workers’ issue to be considered first and measures to be taken against many desperate things and I request the resolution of this important matter while revising the subjects put forward by the congress.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ “Biz tüccarlara uymak mecburiyetindeyiz.Çünkü; Osmanlı tütünlerini ilan ettiren ve Avrupa’ya tanıttıranlar da bu tüccarlardır. Bu önemli noktadan ötürü tüccarlarımıza müteşekkirimiz. Fakat bir şey çok aranıyor; talep ile arz arasındaki denge tütünün takdir fiyatı için esastır.” *Drama Tütünçü Kongresi* (Drama Tobacco Congress), 1August 1326 (1910), p. 8.

⁴⁶⁴ “Kongre müzakeresinin asıl gayesi tütün ziraatının ıslah ve iyileştirilmesi ile ailelerin ekonomilerinin düzelmesi ve bu hususa göre sermayeyi çekecek tedbirlerin alınmasınabinaen işçilerin ihtiyaç ve isteklerinin noksanlıklarının giderilmesi en mühim bir konudur. İşte bu işçiler konusu özellikle ilk önce

Although described as one of the members of the congress, the job or status of Mehmet Tevfik is not clear. Since the laborers were not represented in the congress, one can only speculate about his identity. The interventions of the Mehmet Tevfik indicates that at least some of the merchants might have considered the fragile position of the tobacco workers, which was a threatening situation for their own business at the same time. Nevertheless, it seems that the above speech of Mehmet Tevfik did not have any resonance among the participants of the congress. Thus, the position of the state towards the tobacco workers can be defined as non-recognition. The sector was remained composed of farmers and merchants for the state, despite the growing numbers and organizations of the wage laborers in the sector.

It seems that since the right-seeking mechanism of the laborers changed and evolved into the labor movement, they were extracted from the agenda of the state as the ones to be taken care of. Therefore, the state was concerned only with the problems of the tobacco farmers and the merchants against the Régie Company.

Another purpose of the state, especially for the government of the Union and Progress at that time, to convene such a congress could have been related to warning or fine-tuning the Régie Company about its jurisdiction, because the monopoly status of the Régie Company was opened to discussion once more at that time. The status and the terms of the contract of the Company and alternative ways to replace this monopoly administration were put on the table implicitly at this congress. Although this agenda was implicit in the Drama Congress, it created an explicit public discussion very soon.

göz önüne alınarak birsürü çaresiz şeylere karşı tedbir alınmasını temenni eder ve kongrenin vücuda getireceği mevzuları gözden geçirerek bu önemli konunun memnuniyetle halledilmesini istirham ederim.”*Drama Tütüncü Kongresi*, (Drama Tobacco Congress), 1 August 1326 (1910), p. 56.

A year after, in the call of the Anatolian Congress convened at Samsun, the legitimacy of the position of the Régie Company and alternative ways to replace it were taken onto the main agenda of the congress call and discussed openly.⁴⁶⁵

When it comes to the laborers, it is known that the Union and Progress Party tried to influence some of the labor organizations or acted as reconciler between the striking workers and the employers especially before 1908. As will be seen in the following section, some administrators assumed this reconciler position in the early strikes of the tobacco workers in Kavala before 1908. As an alternative to the syndical organizations of the laborers, they suggested credit unions and solidarity funds, but the tobacco laborers followed a different path. The following section examines the tobacco labor activism in the periphery and the organizations developing in parallel.

Tobacco Labor Activism in the Periphery: The Case of Kavala

Hobsbawm notes that, historians have long been drawn to the study of labor protests, especially strikes, which suggest the possibility of grasping the autonomous self-expression of the working people. This prospect holds special appeal for labor historians (social historians as well) whose quest for working class subjectivity is so often constrained by the silence that surrounds their subaltern subjects. He makes the point that when a strike unfolds the voices of ordinary men and women ring with a startling, sharp clarity. The protesting workers of course are aware of themselves as

⁴⁶⁵ *Anadolu Tütün Kongresi Beyannamesi*, 8 August 1327 (1911), transliterated by Baki Sarısakal.

workers and of the rights for which they are agitating or striking.⁴⁶⁶ Although the subject matter of labor history can not be limited to mere labor activism, it is argued here that the striking workers are worthy of scholarly attention, an attention that transcends strike journalism.

In this study, the scholarly attention is directed to the labor activism of the often neglected periphery of the province. First, it should be noted that the radicalism of the labor movement in Thessaloniki was not peculiar or limited to the central Thessaloniki city. Investigation of the tobacco labor activism in Kavala helps to unravel some phenomena which have been undermined, untouched or formulated differently so far. Therefore, a case study on the tobacco laborers of Kavala enable us not only to make a simple comparison between the center and the periphery but also brings about new questions, such as the position of female laborers within the movement, the attitudes of the labor leaders about the gender question and the nature of cross-communal relations within the movement, all of which will be examined in the next chapter.

Vyzikas gives valuable information about what was going on in the periphery of the province while the labor activism in central Thessaloniki city took significant steps forward. His study relies largely on the reports of Greek consulate in Kavala under the Ottoman administration. This source informs us about the workers' strikes, their demands, working conditions, wages and organizations. According to these reports, the first known strike of the tobacco workers in Kavala broke out in 1879, which was one of the first strikes in the Empire as well. It is stated in the reports that:

⁴⁶⁶ Laura Lee Downs, "Women's Strikes and the Politics of Popular Egalitarianism in France, 1916-18," in *Rethinking Labor History*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 115.

The peace of our city has been broken for fifteen days because of the strike of nearly 3000 men and women tobacco workers demanding a wage increase. As a result, the tobacco workshops are completely closed. The situation which stemmed from the attempts to prevent the processing of tobacco for the disadvantage of the merchant was very serious yet the initiatives of the local administration and the consulate authorities have been influential and the workers are expected to return to their work today.⁴⁶⁷

It is interesting that women were involved in this first strike. This fact indicates the presence of the female labor force in the tobacco sector of Kavala since the earliest periods. The duration of the strike also is worthy of attention. When it is considered that most of the strikes, even in the previously mentioned strike wave in Thessaloniki, lasted a few days, two weeks duration indicates a powerful strike organization. The sustainability of a strike requires an organization behind it and a particular level of economic strength to support the strikers. It should be noted that the economic sustainability of the strike was one of the major handicaps of the labor activism in Thessaloniki, as discussed in the workers' newspaper *Amele* in 1909.⁴⁶⁸ The number of participants is also striking. 3000 strikers in a district with a population of 8000-10,000⁴⁶⁹ is a significant number.

According to the same source, the next strike broke out in 1896. It is reported that the tobacco workers demanding a wage increase revolted against the bosses. They left their work places, broke the windows of the building and then Christian, Muslim and Jewish workers held a big protest march. The Albanian kavas, responsible from the

⁴⁶⁷ Vyzikas, p. 12.

⁴⁶⁸ *Amele*, 21 August 1909, published in Paul Dumont and George Haupt, ed. *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalist Hareketler*, trans. Tuğrul Artunkal (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977).

⁴⁶⁹ According to the Ottoman census figures, population of the Kavala district was 8168 until 1893. Note that the Ottoman censuses counted only the male tax payers. For further details, see Kemal Karpat. *Ottoman Population 1830-1914* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

security of the Régie building, fired upon the protesters and one of the Muslim protesters replied with a gun and killed one of the high rank officials of the Régie administration. Then the local administrator of Kavala (*kaymakam*) intervened and stopped the protest. He assumed the role of arbitrator between the merchants and the workers. He described the strike as a struggle for one's livelihood, struggle for bread, and helped the increase of wages a few piasters. This strike was reported also by a Greek minstrel, Andrikos Veta.⁴⁷⁰

It is not clear whether these initial strikers were organized or supported by a labor organization. The earliest organization in this regard is the one that was established in a town next to Kavala. There was a solidarity association of tobacco workers operated between 1890 and 1899 in Pravi (Pravişte), was a small town located next to Kavala. The solidarity organization of the tobacco workers here was called *Allilovoithiko Somatio Deksidon* (Solidarity Organization of the Denkçis). As was noted in the third chapter, the term *denkçi* referred to the qualified workers employed generally in the commercial workshops.⁴⁷¹

Besides this organization of the denkçis, there was another organization of tobacco workers in Kavala, which was named as *Enkratia* (Self-rule). Among the founders of this organization, there was a poet and/or minstrel, Andrikos Veta, and a journalist, D. Dimitriadis.⁴⁷² This organization was established in 1901 and it was the predecessor of another tobacco labor organization in Kavala, *Eudaimonia*, meaning welfare and happiness. This was the Greek name of the *Tütün Amelesi Saadet Cemiyeti*

⁴⁷⁰ Vyzikas, p. 12.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁷² Note that the publication of newspaper was not allowed in the districts.

(Welfare Society of Tobacco Workers) found in the Ottoman State Archive documents. This organization was established in 1908 and sustained its activities until 1916. In the same consular documents, it is reported that there was a strike of the tobacco workers and the bakers of Kavala in 1904. Although it is not certain whether this strike was organized by this organization, one can see that the tobacco workers' strikes in Kavala from 1905 to 1916 were organized by the Welfare Society of Tobacco Workers (WSTW).

The strike in 1905 is registered both in the Ottoman State Archive documents and the Greek consular reports. It was reported by Ottoman military officers. Therefore, it is articulated as a matter of public security from the point of the Ottoman sources. This document gives information about how forceful the strike was and how it was stopped finally.⁴⁷³

On the other hand, it is possible to get access to the other details of the same strike by the means of Greek consular reports. These documents tell about why the strike broke out, who was involved in it, what they demanded and finally how the parties came to an agreement. According to the Greek consular reports, the strike primarily broke out as a result of the bad tobacco harvest of 1905. Since the production level did not meet the commercial demand, the merchants turned to the less profitable, low-quality tobacco. The loss of the merchants was reflected upon the wages, which already had been reduced due to the less labor consuming, low-quality tobacco processing. As a result, the workers struck against the unemployment and decreasing wage levels.

⁴⁷³ BOA. Y PRK ASK. 227/86, 17.M.1323.

The strike broke out on 7 March 1905. Nearly 2500 workers composed of Greek, Muslim and Jewish subjects held a protest march. They broke the windows of the workshops and administrative offices. They also assaulted the house of the director of the Herzog Tobacco Company, Mr. Vix, and that of the director of Allatini's Company. Serious clashes took place around the Allatini's workshop. Upon these events, one of the consulate police (*kavass*) fired his gun in the open air to stop the crowd. Then the workers replied by setting tobacco packages on fire with gasoline. Finally, the representative of the Metropolitan Bishop Sp. Vlachos arrived to pacify the crowd. The military commander and the local administrator followed him and the workers were dissolved.

Then the day after, on 8 March 1905, a greater crowd composed of nearly 3000-4000 workers gathered and protested. The military commander asked for support from Drama district. The local administrator of Drama arrived and called the merchants to negotiate the workers' wages. The merchants made a compromise upon the workers' demands. Finally, the local authorities reported the priest Vlachos as a provocateur. In this way, the events turned into a conflict between the communities on the higher administrative level.⁴⁷⁴

The Ottoman sources reporting the same strike indicate that it was suppressed by the gendarme with difficulty. Military forces from Drama district and also from Thasos Island were called to support the gendarme in Kavala. In the military reports, it is stated that in the tobacco workshops of Kavala, a terrible conflict broke out between the tobacco workers, whose number was estimated to be about 10,000, and the owners of

⁴⁷⁴ Vyzikas, p. 14.

commercial capital, because of the wages.⁴⁷⁵ These events in Kavala had not been reported to the higher authorities for some time because the local authorities had estimated that the existing military measures were enough to handle the issue. But it seems that the scope of the events had been underestimated by the administrative and military authorities and they soon lost control because of the participation of more and more strikers and the escalating violence. The report notes that the doors and windows of more than two hundreds workshops were broken by the workers.⁴⁷⁶

The number of laborers did not decrease in parallel to the stagnation in the market and the reduction of production to the previous level. For this reason, the merchants reduced the wages and the workers responded with a strike. The local government took some measures in order to prevent such events. According to these measure, the excess laborers coming from outside and making up a crowd of vagabonds from different communities would be sent to their hometowns and the wages of the native workers would be reorganized according to their skills and the merchants also would be taken care of. It is stated from then on, the government would keep an eye on the issue.⁴⁷⁷

Here at this point, it becomes apparent that apart from the fluctuations of the tobacco market, the issue of the migrant laborers was an important factor in the tobacco labor activism in Kavala. Kavala received a stock of tobacco laborers larger than those in central Thessaloniki. The impact of the migrant laborers on the tobacco labor

⁴⁷⁵ BOA. Y PRK ASK. 227/86, 17.M.1323

⁴⁷⁶ For a commentary of this strike from the Luddist perspective, see Yaşar Bülbül and Deniz Özbay, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Teknolojiye Karşı Direncin İktisat Tarihi,” *İş, Güç Endüstri İlişkileri ve İnsan Kaynakları Dergisi* 9, no.4 (2007), pp.30-31.

⁴⁷⁷ BOA. Y PRK ASK. 227/86, 17.M.1323.

activism requires further examination and will be investigated thoroughly in the following chapter.

The strike of the tobacco laborers in 1905 was one of the earliest and also the most powerful strikes in Kavala gave the movement its character. This strike showed for the first time what the tobacco laborers were for and against. It seems that they were opposed to the foreign merchants having big businesses in Kavala that were capable of manipulating the market, rather than the small-scale local tobacco merchants. As will be discussed later in detail, some of the tobacco merchants were involved in the members list of the tobacco laborers' organization in Kavala (WSTW).

Besides the big commercial companies, they were also against the migrant laborers who came seasonally from several places and reduced the wage levels. Consequently, the demands of the tobacco workers during the strike in 1905 were formulated as first, an increase in the daily wages of head-workers by March, from 14-16 piasters to 18 piasters (22-24 piasters after the Easter) and the determination of the wages of the rest of the workers in the same ratio; second, the employment of only local inhabitants. Beginning from March, workers from all over the tobacco producing areas such as Thessaloniki, İzmir and elsewhere had been flooding to the tobacco workshops in Kavala and the local workers tried to prevent this labor supply.⁴⁷⁸

From the point of view of the state, these strikes were considered just as an act of ignorant workers. The above mentioned gendarme report notes that the events were instigated by the ignorant workers trying to get their target.⁴⁷⁹ On the other hand, it is

⁴⁷⁸ Vyzikas, p. 14.

⁴⁷⁹ BOA. Y PRK ASK. 227/86, 17.M.1323.

interesting that the Rumeli Inspectorate declared after this strike that the gendarme, applying the use of extreme force and violence in the suppression of the strike, would be dismissed from the job.⁴⁸⁰

The tobacco workers of Kavala initiated another strike in 1908 as did many other laborers of the Thessaloniki province. The registers of the Greek consulate do not only articulate this strike in Kavala, but also present the way they perceive the political atmosphere of 1908 and the response of the non-Muslim communities to the suppression of the labor movement by the Unionist government. In the consular reports it is stated that the workers declared a strike for a decrease in work hours and increase of daily wages. At that time, the association had 4100 registered members composed of Christian, Muslim and Jewish workers. As a result of this strike, the organization of the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers was recognized practically by the Turkish administration and the merchants who had to accept the tobacco workers' demands. Moreover, working hours were reduced from twelve to nine and a half hours and the daily wages were increased between two and three piasters.⁴⁸¹

Concerning the political atmosphere of 1908, the same source notes that at the beginning, Turkish people and the minorities were given some political and syndical rights. For the Young Turk Revolution, it says that it represented the promise of the salvation of the Ottoman Empire by means of reforms in the eyes of the urban people.

⁴⁸⁰ BOA.TFR I SL. 68/6732, 2.3.1323.

⁴⁸¹ Vyzikas, p. 15.

In fact, it represented a futile promise that did not come true in the end, that is, the promise of a democratic (or populist) solution for the peoples of the Empire.⁴⁸²

Despite the strong measures upon the labor organizations and anti-labor legislation of the government, the labor movement of the tobacco workers gained more impetus especially in the periphery of the province. The labor activism of the tobacco workers of Kavala followed on with another strike in 1909. In 1909, the tobacco laborers were in a state of unrest because of the manipulations of some tobacco merchants operating in the market. The representatives of the American Tobacco Company settled in the city attempted to export unprocessed tobacco. A conflict ensued between the American firm, which wanted to export unprocessed tobacco and the rest of the merchants, the Régie and the bulk of the workers. The dispute ended with the introduction of a law which prohibited the export of unprocessed tobacco from Macedonia. A similar problem arose in Volos in the same year where the same agents had businesses.⁴⁸³ The merchants considered the tobacco which underwent agricultural processing and packing operation but still needed some commercial manipulations, as unprocessed. Workers, on the other hand, regarded any method other than the established standard of processing for high quality tobacco as unprocessed.⁴⁸⁴

As will be examined in the last chapter, after the period of WWI and throughout the inter-war period tobacco laborers lost their bargaining power over the processing methods. The state monopolies and the large corporations started to set the rules of the game on their own. Therefore, retrospectively speaking, the above-mentioned strike of

⁴⁸² Vyzikas, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁸³ Achillea I. Mantzaris. *Ta Kapna Mas* (Our tobaccos) (Athens: Pyrsou, 1929), p. 5.

⁴⁸⁴ Labrianidis, "Industrial Location in Capitalist Societies," p. 120.

the tobacco workers in 1909 indicates that the laborers still had bargaining power which had been gained by a labor struggle. The laborers maintained this power until the Balkan Wars and the totally changing conditions of the inter-war period left them helpless in the face of the newly introduced methods and the legal arrangements safeguarding these methods.

1909 signifies another development in terms of the tobacco labor movement in the province. It can be suggested that the tobacco labor activism in Kavala reached another stage in 1909. The representatives of the Tobacco Workers' Syndicate in Kavala met the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in August 1909. The newly established Federation was eager to have the already active members of the tobacco labor organization in Kavala on their own side. The Federation tried to unite the tobacco labor organizations of the province and found a positive response from the organizations in Kavala and Drama. The representatives of the Federation went to Kavala in August 1909 and the representatives of the tobacco labor organizations of Kavala and Drama visited the Federation in Thessaloniki in September 1909.⁴⁸⁵

Besides the expansionist attempts of the Federation over the periphery of the province, the anti-labor legislation that was mentioned before promoted the labor movement in the periphery as an unexpected consequence. Developing relations between the Federation and the peripheral organizations together with the strong measures of the government and anti-labor legislation resulted in the movement of the Central Action Committee of the Federation to Kavala. When the Socialist Workers

⁴⁸⁵ Vyzikas, p. 16.

Federation of Thessaloniki was abolished by the government, the Committee was carried to Kavala in November 1909.⁴⁸⁶ This is to say, the center of gravity in terms of the labor movement of the province shifted from the center to the periphery.

The high level of labor activism in Kavala brings the question of the intellectual and ideological sources of this mobilization. The intellectual and ideological sources of the movement in Thessaloniki were discussed in the third chapter. It was a coalition of several western European and the Balkan social democrat approaches. However, the situation was different in Kavala.

First, it should be noted that there were several handicaps in Kavala for the emergence of such an intellectual environment. Above of all, the issuing of newspaper was forbidden in the sub-districts. Despite that, a lawyer named Dimitri Aknonidi attempted to publish a newspaper in Kavala called *Ergatis*(Worker). Another person from the Greek community of Kavala, Mihail Tokosi (or Takasi) published a pamphlet titled “Tobacco”. As was noted earlier, even forbidden newspapers could reach readers in Kavala by means of the foreign post offices.

The tobacco labor movement in Kavala met with the intellectual leadership after the contact with the Federation in Thessaloniki. Before that, it seems that the local leadership in Kavala had not been very knowledgeable about the ideological sources of the labor movement. The poems of a local minstrel Andrikos Veta provide valuable insights in this regard. Veta had also been in the administration of the Welfare Organization of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala in its former stages. It is unclear whether it was used ironically, but a vision of the Protestant ethic dominated the spirit

⁴⁸⁶ Stephanidou, p.21.

of his poems on the tobacco workers of Kavala. According to his point of view, the workers themselves were responsible for their miserable life conditions.⁴⁸⁷

The above mentioned labor activism and organization of the tobacco workers in Kavala prove that the movement here preceded the one in the central Thessaloniki city. It is generally taken for granted that the labor activism in general and tobacco workers' activism in particular started in central Thessaloniki, mostly because of the urban character of the city, and relatively the easy access of the city to the flow of European ideas. The above activities and the organizations of the tobacco workers of Kavala, beginning as early as the late 1870s, lead us to re-evaluate this issue. As was noted earlier, when the labor movement and socialism in the Ottoman Thessaloniki are considered, it is always central Thessaloniki city under examination. In this study, it is suggested that the extension of the borders of the study in a way to include the periphery of the provincial borders at least helps to revise these taken for granted arguments repeated so far.

For this reason, the inclusion of the periphery of the province in general and Kavala district in particular is not a simple expansion of the study. In other words, the Kavala district is a supplement changing the established knowledge on the history of the labor movement in Ottoman Thessaloniki. Above all, examination of the periphery of the province displays that when Thessaloniki city was an active center of the labor movement in the first decade of the twentieth century, the nearby periphery was not silent in this regard.

In addition, the examination of the periphery shows that the characteristics of the labor movement in Thessaloniki can not be generalized. While the movement in

⁴⁸⁷ For the translation of his poem, see Appendix C.

Thessaloniki had an urban and Jewish character both in general and in particular for the tobacco labor movement, it was not the case in Kavala. While the movement had an overwhelmingly Jewish character in Thessaloniki, it displayed a multi-communal character in Kavala. The above-mentioned tobacco workers' syndicate in Kavala, the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers, is an example of this fact. The following section examines this organization in detail to shed light on the question of the communities, or the national question, which was often regarded as impeding the labor movement.

A Multi-Communal Tobacco Labor Organization in Kavala

As Hobsbawm points out, the history of labor movement in general is full of monographs of the sort of organizations which are comprised of small sects, groups or journals that lived and died within a very short period of time. He notes that the British Socialist League of the 1880s was a small and impermanent organization among other small but more permanent ones and hardly deserves the heavy weight of scholarship which has been placed upon it. It acted as a pioneer of socialism in a few provincial towns and broke up soon. But because it was associated with Engels, William Morris and other notable figures, it has been given historical attention quite out of proportion to its importance.⁴⁸⁸

Actually, what is indicated for the British labor history by Hobsbawm is valid for Ottoman labor history to some extent. Much of the already scarce scholarship on Ottoman labor history touches upon the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki

⁴⁸⁸ Hobsbawm, p. 3.

which was mentioned previously. In fact, the organization can be viewed as the pioneer of labor movements and socialism especially in the Ottoman Balkans. But the relative weight of the organization should not mislead one to the conclusion that it was the only example of its kind. It always has been assumed that an organization like the Federation can be brought into being only in an urban center like Thessaloniki. This presumption has been so internalized that one can not even think of searching for such an organization in the peripheral areas.

This section tries to attract attention to another workers organization established in Kavala and as prominent as the Socialist Workers Federation of Thessaloniki in its strength, durability and political influence. Actually, this investigation into the tobacco workers organizations in Kavala can be considered as an attempt to broaden the present scholarship on the labor movement and socialism in the Ottoman province of Thessaloniki. Therefore, this is not a challenge to the present scholarship on the Federation but a contribution to it.

A brief comparison with the other labor sections of Kavala proves the pioneer role of the tobacco workers in terms of the organization of labor. Although several labor categories such as the bakers and mine workers of the nearby small island of Thasos displayed some kinds of labor activism on several occasions, they did not have a labor organization of their own as far as we know. But it is observed that they supported the strikes of the tobacco workers sometimes. For example, the bakers joined the strikes of the tobacco workers in 1904.⁴⁸⁹ The earliest labor organization established after the labor organization of the tobacco workers was that of the labor union of the commercial

⁴⁸⁹ Vyzikas, p. 14.

servants. According to the registers of the Greek Consulate of Kavala, it was formed on January 1912.⁴⁹⁰

As was noted above, there had been several organizations behind the labor activism of the tobacco workers in Kavala since the 1890s. Although detailed information on these former organizations is unavailable, the leader cadres of these organizations indicate that the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala, that is the organization under question here, can be assumed as the successor of these former tobacco labor organizations. It can be said that the tobacco workers of Kavala displayed their first attempt at organization when the countries importing from Kavala provoked the first big economic crisis. For the resolution of this problem, the tobacco workers in 1904 went to strike collectively but in a disorderly fashion from which they could not get advantage in the end. According to Moskof, 8000 tobacco workers participated in this strike.⁴⁹¹ Since 1901, they were organized under a Tobacco Workers' Society, the *Enkratia*(Self-rule). After 1908, the organization was re-established with the name *Eudaimonia*, the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala. As is understood from the Ottoman State Archive documents, and this organization had a branch in Drama also.⁴⁹² There was another organization of the tobacco laborers in Xanthi.⁴⁹³

The Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala deserves special attention for various reasons. First, it should be noted that the Society was a multi-communal organization made up of Christian, Muslim and Jewish members. As the

⁴⁹⁰ Stephanidou, p.14.

⁴⁹¹ Moskof, p. 335.

⁴⁹² BOA. DH İD. 132/4, 3.Za.1329.

⁴⁹³ BOA. DH İD.132/7, 7.N.1330.

labor leader poet Andrikos Veta said in one of his poems, “Christians, Muslims, Jews and Armenians acted together as if they were born from the same mother.”⁴⁹⁴ Because of the partition of the Ottoman Balkans into several nation states, it is hard to compile the scattered materials of this multi-ethnic organization. Therefore, one needs to search different nation states to restore the remnants of this multi-national organization. While the Ottoman archives informs us about the relations of the organization with the state administration and the legal documents concerning its establishment,⁴⁹⁵ the Greek Consular reports of the time shed light on other aspects, such as the labor activism of the organization, financial and practical matters to maintain and improve the organization in several respects. For this reason, both sources are brought together in this study to examine this labor organization in its integrity.

Ottoman archive documents about the organization mainly inform us how the organization was affected from by the promulgation of the Strike Law in 1909. It is understood that the government had some difficulties denying the rights of the organization under the existing law. Since tobacco production was not in the category of public service, it was hard to deny the existence and the activities of this organization and the organization utilized from this status which enabled it to bypass the legal restrictions. The statute of the organization, which was found among a bundle of the official correspondence between several state departments, is a good source of information about the organization.

In the statute, the main purpose of the organization was articulated as the improvement of the tobacco trade and the related work practices. Putting the knowledge

⁴⁹⁴ Veta, p. 15.

⁴⁹⁵ BOA. DH İD. 132/4, 03.Za.1329.

of the members into the practice was underlined in this formulation. Dissuading the tobacco workers from their ambition to migrate to the USA is the most interesting point among the expressed purposes of the organization. It seems that the demographic changes of the period affected also the lives of the tobacco laborers in Kavala.

Demographic matters will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

The statute gives a clear cut answer to the question of who could be a member of the organization, which leads to another discussion about the membership profile and class composition of the Ottoman labor organizations in general. According to the second article of the statute, anyone from any class or community who had legal authorization could become a member of the organization. Tobacco merchant Hüseyin, the son of İbrahim Pasha, and another tobacco merchant, Nikola Serdaroğlu, are noted as the honorary presidents of the organization. Serdaroğlu and Ragıp Efendi, the chief clerk of the trade chamber of Kavala, were the executive heads of the organization responsible for carrying out the administrative affairs and the relations with the state. The Greek consular reports reveal that the minstrel Andrikos Veta and a journalist D. Dimitriadis were found among the initiators of the organization.

Here at this point, the question of leadership in the labor organizations attracts attention once more. The overthrow of the bourgeois leaders from the administration of the labor organizations was one of the major objectives of the Federation in its early stages of development. Then the new leaders, chosen from among the laborers themselves, were convinced by the Federation to join on their own side. In this way, the solidarity organizations of the laborers were transformed into syndical organizations.

In fact, the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers in Kavala was a solidarity organization when it was established. As a typical solidarity organization, the Society

assumed and disseminated several social services for the well-being of its members. A soup kitchen, a pharmacy, a nursing home and a reading club were established by the organization. Besides that, the organization provided financial support for the education of the workers' children. It granted scholarships to three or four children from the tobacco workers' families and enabled them to study in the Kavala secondary school and trade high schools in Thessaloniki.⁴⁹⁶ The financial support of the bourgeoisie was crucial for such kind of organizations to be able to deliver such services to the poor members. Therefore, the patrimony of the merchants generally was welcomed by most of the solidarity organizations of the laborers. Nevertheless, this situation was one of the major handicaps disabling the separation of the labor organizations from the bourgeois organizations. Developing a strategy against this situation was the number one agenda of the Federation in Thessaloniki. But the situation in Kavala in this regard was much more complicated than it seemed.

While the clubs of the bourgeoisie preceded the establishment of labor organization in Thessaloniki, it was the opposite in Kavala. As Stephanidou puts forward, in order to counteract the influence of the organization of the tobacco workers in Kavala, the tobacco merchants established the Big Club(*Megali Leskhi*) in 1910. According to its statute, the Big Club was established with the aim of the development of good relations and exchange of ideas, circulation of commercial information for the mutual benefit of the members. The twenty five founding members of the organization were composed of the biggest tobacco merchants of Kavala either working on their own behalf or as the agents or directors of foreign tobacco trade houses. Except for the tobacco merchants, among the members of this club there were two administrative

⁴⁹⁶ Vyzikas, p. 15.

personnel (one of whom was a director of a bank), French consul, a doctor and a soap manufacturer. Principally, the organization was open to all businessmen in general and it was not religiously homogenous, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Muslims and Jews gathered under the same roof.

Although some local tobacco merchants took part in the administration of the tobacco labor organization in question, the presence of these merchants can not be seen as an organized attempt of the bourgeoisie to capture and control the laborers. And when the tobacco merchants got organized under the roof of the Big Club, it was late for them to exert any influence on the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala because it already had joined the fronts of the Socialist Workers Federation of Thessaloniki, moreover hosted the Central Action Committee of the Federation at that time. Then the question is, what the presence of a tobacco merchant in the administration of the labor organization of the tobacco workers probably meant?

The question of leadership is a lengthy issue that has many aspects. Although most of the organizations of the laborers and the bourgeoisie were separated in the second constitutional period, it is observed that the tobacco laborers of Kavala maintained their relations with some of the members of the local petit bourgeoisie sometimes because of the persistence of the old paternalistic relations with the employers and sometimes for pragmatic and practical reasons. In fact, the legal arrangements on the societies and clubs in the second constitution period brought about some unexpected changes in the leadership and membership profile of the labor organizations.

After the promulgation of the Law on the Organizations in 1909, both labor and bourgeois organizations became subjected to several new arrangements. Above of all,

this law took the spontaneously formed societies under the control of the state.⁴⁹⁷ The societies would submit the statute of their organization and the other official documents such as the list of members and financial documents to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Istanbul or the highest state officer in the provinces. This is to say that a standard and centralized bureaucratic job was added to the internal operations of the societies and clubs. A literate person experienced in the correspondence with the state offices would be necessary to carry out this job on behalf of the societies and clubs. The other members overwhelmingly made up of the tobacco workers would not be able to manage this job. The presence of Ragıp Efendi, the chief clerk of the chamber of trade in Kavala, as one of the two executive heads of the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala is understandable in this sense.

One can also speculate that the presence of Ragıp Efendi indicates the consent of the trade chamber of Kavala for the establishment of a tobacco labor organization. In fact, it seems that the tobacco laborers of Kavala were not in conflict with all of the tobacco merchants of the district. As seen in the case of the crisis in the tobacco market in 1904 and 1905, some tobacco merchants and companies supported the position of the tobacco laborers. Some tobacco merchants did not agree with the proposition of some large companies attempting to export unprocessed tobacco. Therefore, the tobacco merchants of Kavala can not be considered to have been a monolithic category.

Moreover, it can be proposed that the cleavage between the tobacco merchants was reinforced by the policies of the Union and Progress cadres. The tobacco congresses organized by these cadres in the Balkans and Anatolia promoted the position

⁴⁹⁷ See Zehra Arslan, "Ağustos 1909 Tarihli Cemiyetler Kanunu Üzerinde Meclis-i Mebusan'da Yapılan Müzakereler ve Cemiyetlerin Yapılanmasında İttihat ve Terakki Örneği," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3 (2010), pp. 57-72.

of the local merchants against the foreign companies, especially the Régie monopoly. In this regard, one can not expect to see the representatives of the American Tobacco Company, for example, in the administration of the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala, but some other small-scale local merchants might have supported the labor organization of the tobacco workers against the big companies. Eventually, it was the tobacco workers who damaged the large tobacco corporations, their competitors in the market, by their forceful strikes. Although this explanation can be a simplistically pragmatist speculation, this might have been the case. The presence of the tobacco merchant Nikola Serdaroğlu in the executive committee can be understandable in this regard.

The Law on Organizations helps us to interpret the existence of Serdaroğlu in the administration of the organization from another perspective. Before the promulgation of this law, the presence of the merchants in the labor organizations might have been favored by the workers because of their financial supports. But the eight article of the law brought a limitation to donations by members. According to this article, the donations of the members would not be more than 24 liras, a modest amount. When two wealthy members of the organization Dermancidis and Dimitriadis, had quit the previously founded organization, the organization had had to bear the loss of 4100 liras.⁴⁹⁸ Now, the laborers would not be able to favor the presence of wealthy merchants in their organizations. From another point of view, the generous donators would no longer be influential over the labor organizations.

⁴⁹⁸ Vyzikas, p. 13.

This article created long discussions in the Ottoman Parliament. Some MPs argued that the limitation on donations was a violation of liberties. Although the grand vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha agreed on this argument, he tried to attract attention to the point that if they did not bring any limitation to the donations, the societies and clubs would accept members from everywhere in return for money and the organizations would get out of the control of the state as a result.⁴⁹⁹ The intentions of the law makers were different, of course, but in the end this article helped to limit the influence of the bourgeoisie over the labor organizations. Neither Serdaroğlu nor any other tobacco merchant would be able to dominate the labor organizations because of their financial supports.

Serdaroğlu was replaced later by the journalist Dimitriadis. Dimitriadis was one of the early initiators of the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala. In contrast to the position of Serdaroğlu, he was more like a sponsor of the organization. This is not to make a distinction between the merchants who favored the labor organizations and those who do not. Here it is suggested that the presence of other actors in this labor organization can be evaluated in practical and pragmatic terms.

Given the fact that the position of the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers was clear enough as the organization hosting the Central Action Committee of the Federation, one can say that even if the members of the bourgeoisie were accepted into the organization, they would not be able to exert any influence. The socialist organizations already had taken further steps for the acculturation of the laborers of the city. Even the young people of the city became familiar with the socialist acculturation

⁴⁹⁹ Zehra Arslan, pp. 62-63.

by means of the Socialist Youth Organization of the Federation. Kavala was the first city in which the Socialist Youth was established outside the borders of central Thessaloniki.⁵⁰⁰

According to the statute of the organization, the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala was administered by a committee composed of thirty-two persons. Fifteen members of this administrative committee came from the Christian community the other fifteen members came from the Muslim community and two of them from the Jewish community. First, it can be said that this committee was giving voice to more members in the administration. According to the seventh article of the Law on Organizations, just two persons were enough to compose an administrative committee.⁵⁰¹ Moreover, in line with the aims of the organization, the administrative committee could invite at most twenty-five professionals or related persons either from the members or from outside for consultation.

Second, it can be said that this multi-communal organization adopted a principle of proportional representation based on the population of the different religious communities in Kavala. The almost equal populations of the Christian and Muslim communities and the marginal number of the Jewish community in the district strengthen this idea of proportional representation.⁵⁰² It should be noticed that the

⁵⁰⁰ Stephanidou, p. 211. For further information on the Socialist Youth Organization, see also Andonis Liakos, *I Sosialistiki Omospondia Thessalonikis (Federasion) kai I Sosialistiki Neolaia* (Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki (Federation) and Socialist Youth) (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1985).

⁵⁰¹ Zehra Arslan, p. 62.

⁵⁰² According to the French year books, *Annuaire Oriental*, population of the Muslim community in Kavala was 9000 and the population of the Christian Community was 8000 in 1896. According to the Ottoman censuses the population of the Muslim community was slightly larger than that of the Christian community. In the year 1909 while the population of the Muslim community was about 14,000, the

principle of representation was based on the population figures of the district rather than the membership figures of the organization. This point is important in the sense that it can be read as an indication of the fact that the organization regarded itself as a representative of the locality as a whole besides representing the tobacco workers. Therefore, the organization can be regarded as one of the actors in the local politics of Kavala.

Greek consular reports note that the number of members in the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala was 4100 in 1908 and 10,000 in 1912. 6000 of these members were Christian, 3600 were Muslim and 400 were Jewish. The organization was composed of Christian, Muslim and Jewish sections and each section contributed to the treasury of the organization in accordance with its member population. Thus, Christian section had 6000 liras, Muslim section had 3500 liras and Jewish section had 500 liras as their capital or share in the treasury.⁵⁰³ According to statute of the organization, each member of the organization would pay monthly 6 piasters in cash to the organization. In case of the dissolution of the organization, the collected money of the organization would be distributed among its members. When a member of the organization died, his share would be paid to his heirs immediately. As was examined in the third chapter in detail, six piasters as a subscription fee was equal to the daily wage of a qualified worker who was generally a woman or child. Unqualified workers, however, did not have to pay to the organization because they were not allowed to be

population of the Christian community remained as 10,000. In any case, the number of the Jewish community in Kavala was about 600.

⁵⁰³ Vyzikas, p. 15.

members. By own decision of the organization, only qualified tobacco workers (*denkçi*) were allowed to be members.

Contrary to what is often suggested, the above examinations indicate that it was not the ethnic or communal cleavages that threatened the maintenance of the labor organization in this context. The Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala found a way to bridge the communal differences in a period of fierce national rivalry. The cleavages occurred mainly on the line of gender cross-cutting all the communities. The qualification or working hierarchy was a totally gendered phenomenon in the context of this organization and the tobacco laborers were isolated from the labor organization on the basis of gender. Emigrant labor was another isolated category. The next chapter investigates the communal and gender relations among the tobacco laborers of the province.

CHAPTER VI

CROSS-COMMUNAL AND CROSS-GENDER RELATIONS AMONG THE TOBACCO LABORERS

An Overview of the Communal Relations in the Ottoman Balkans

Ottoman labor history followed a different path from that of Europe in the sense that while the European labor movement extended its domain over the national territories towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated into several nation-states. Contrary to the European experience, the process of nationalization was not an integrating force for the Ottoman labor movement. For example, in the 1870s many employers could reasonably ignore trade union organizations in Britain, but by 1914 this became unthinkable because of the national collective bargaining agreements. By the very beginning of the twentieth century labor was recognized as an important part of society with an organized presence in the national politics.⁵⁰⁴ In this way, the nationalization of politics provided leverage to the labor politics in the case of Britain and in many other European states.

The Ottoman case was structurally different from the European examples in terms of the development of labor politics. It was also different from the case of the newly independent Balkan states. In such countries, the process of nationalization helped the extension of the labor movement towards many occupational groups besides industrial workers. Contrary to the Ottoman case, national sentiment functioned as leverage for the extension and consolidation of labor politics in these countries too. For

⁵⁰⁴ Richard Pierce, "Britain," in *Transnational Labor History: Explorations*, ed. Marcel van der Linden (Aldershot Hants; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2003), pp.3-24.

example, in Bulgaria, teachers, civil servants and even priests were engaged in the labor movement in a way. Labor politics could present a nation-wide political project alternative in such countries.⁵⁰⁵ But how could the integration of the laboring classes would be possible in a disintegrating Empire? How could the integration of labor be possible without nationalization?

The national question was a key to the fractionalization of the Ottoman labor movement in many cases. However, this study tries to reveal an alternative or show a unique case integrating the laborers without the force of nationalism. It is suggested that at least some sections of the Ottoman laboring classes, such as the tobacco workers examined above, were integrated not by the force of nationalism but by the construction of a common identity against the “others.” In the case of the tobacco workers examined here, “the others” were women and migrants rather than a national “other.” The tobacco workers were in a direct and concrete conflict with women and migrants in their own life contexts. In other words, the identity of the laborers in question was constructed on the real competitors in the labor market, rather than an imagined “other”.⁵⁰⁶

The question of national rivalry in the context of the organization of labor is central here. In fact, the question of national rivalry in the late Ottoman period is such a complicated issue that needs to be dealt with separately, but only its reflections on the labor market and labor politics will be examined in this study.

First, one needs to be cautious when speaking about the communal identities of late Ottoman society. The major mistake is to take it for granted in today’s ossified

⁵⁰⁵ For the Bulgarian labor politics just after the independence from the Ottoman Empire, see Zhivka Damianova, “Bulgaria,” pp. 393-420.

⁵⁰⁶ For the construction of national identity over “imagined” categories, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

national definitions. Therefore, the changing nature of the traditional communities and cross-communal relations in the Ottoman Balkans need to be revised here.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the peoples of the Ottoman Balkans developed identities other than the traditional system of the Ottoman administration based on confessional units. The establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate generated the first crack in the system. Bulgarian national consciousness, incited by the Exarchate was followed by the other nationalities. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, various national organizations in Thessaloniki strove for adherents in the city.⁵⁰⁷ It is suggested that what was more important than the national organizational attempts was the reception of national sentiment by the people. Thus, the venues of encounter, cooperation and confrontation among the communities need to be examined thoroughly to estimate the weight of nationalism vis-a-vis the other political affiliations. Thessaloniki province is the best venue to observe these issues.

The notion of ethnic, religious or confessional communities were such a defining character of the city all through history that it is difficult to investigate any issue concerning Thessaloniki without touching on the communities. Following the course of literature on Thessaloniki is a good way to understand the existing approaches to the communal question and develop our own way of approaching to the issue.

The approach to the question of communities in Ottoman Thessaloniki has followed different courses in the literature since WWI. The course of the literature can be summed up in three consecutive genres. The first course, or genre, starts with the

⁵⁰⁷ For further information on the national organizations founded after the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908, see Yusuf Hamza, "1908-1912 Yılları Arasında Makedonya'da Kurulan Ayrılıkçı Örgütler ve Osmanlı, Balkan ve Doğu Federasyonu Kurma İddiası," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 75 (1991), pp. 47-65.

writings of Joseph Nehama (P. Risal)⁵⁰⁸ in 1914 and follows with the writings of Mavrokordatos⁵⁰⁹ and Ladas⁵¹⁰ in the 1930s and those of Kophos in the 1960s. This genre underlines the fluid and transient character of the communities in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

The 1960s denoted the starting of another genre, selectively speaking, about the particular communities of the city and their “glorious times.” Unlike the previous one, this genre mostly speaks of Greek Thessaloniki, skipping or underestimating the Ottoman past.⁵¹¹ The 1990s witnessed a flourishing of community studies with a multi-cultural approach. Especially Jewish Thessaloniki reappeared in the literature in this period.⁵¹² Various communities of the city were compartmentalized in the edited volumes in line with a multi-culturalist discourse.⁵¹³ The labor and socialist movements of Thessaloniki also were subjected to this communal compartmentalization.⁵¹⁴ The legitimacy of community studies can not be questioned, of course; what is problematic

⁵⁰⁸ P. Risal, *La Ville Convoitée Salonique* (Paris: n.p., 1914).

⁵⁰⁹ Yannis Mavrokordatos, *Modern Greece* (London: MacMillan, 1931).

⁵¹⁰ Stephen P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York: MacMillan, 1932).

⁵¹¹ See, for example, Apostolos. E. Vacalopoulos. *A History of Thessaloniki*, trans. T.F. Carney (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963); Chyrisanthi Mavropoulou-Tsioumi, *Byzantine Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki: Rekos, 1993).

⁵¹² See for example, Kostis Kopsidas, *The Jews of Thessaloniki: Through the Post-cards 1886-1917* (Thessaloniki: K. Kopsidas, 1992); Albertos Nar, *Israelitiki koinotita Thessalonikis* (Jewish community of Thessaloniki) (Thessaloniki: *Israelitiki koinotita Thessalonikis*, 1992).

⁵¹³ See, for example, Gilles Veinstein, ed. *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, trans. Cüneyt Akalın (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999).

⁵¹⁴ See, for example, Mete Tunçay and Erik Jan Zürcher, ed. *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1923* (London; New York: British Academic Press in association with the International Institute of Social History, 1994).

in this regard is a kind of multi-culturalist discourse assertively drawing the communal boundaries and leaving no space for any transitivity or cross-communality.

In reference to the self-identifications and affiliations of the lay men and women in the Ottoman Balkans, the early genre displays best the complicated nature of one's communal belonging. For example, Kophos presents a balanced approach to the question of communities in the Ottoman Balkans at the turn of the twentieth century. On the one hand, he admits that in the late 1880s and early 1890s the situation in the Ottoman Balkans developed to such an extent that various population belts could be distinguished. These signifiers dominated the spirit of cross-communal encounters for lay men and women.⁵¹⁵ According to this formulation, in the north, the Slav element predominated though its degree of inclination towards Bulgaria could not be fully ascertained. In the extreme west, most populous was the Albanian nationality. In the south, the Greeks constituted the overwhelming majority.

On the other hand, he indicates that between and within the Greek and Slavic belts there was a mixture of nationalities, mostly multi-lingual, which could not be definitely classified with either group, since there was no patriotism developed other than local patriotism.⁵¹⁶ Macartney probably best describes this situation when he writes, "Although certain areas were predominantly occupied by one group, there was a large zone of the population of uncertain nationality. A man would probably go quite

⁵¹⁵ Note that the clothing could also render the people of different communities alike. Scarce notes that "Ottoman Turkish styles were worn not only by the Muslim Turkish population, but also adapted in varying degrees by the native urban elite of different communities. A contemporary observer, Baron Broughton, gave an account of Greek women's city clothes which closely paralleled in every detail those of a Turkish woman. Jennifer M. Scarce, *Women's Costume of the Near and Middle East* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 100-101.

⁵¹⁶ Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964), p. 23.

easily and quite sincerely where his sympathies led him. Those sympathies would not be rooted in the past, but would be swayed by considerations often material, of the present and the future.”⁵¹⁷

Similarly, Ladas notes that neither the operations of the Exarchists nor the atrocities committed by the armed comitadjis, the national bandits, were sufficient to instill a definite Bulgarian national consciousness in all the Slavophones of Macedonia. This is evidenced by the fact that the members of the same family divided their allegiance between the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Greek Patriarchate.⁵¹⁸ The following quotation gives a vivid, though probably somewhat exaggerated, picture of the prevailing situation in the Ottoman Balkans:

Children became a valuable commodity for which the rival agitators paid in hard cash and enterprising fathers have been known to distribute their favors equally among the rival propaganda, with the result that it is by no means uncommon to find three brothers in a single family professing three different nationalities. Numerous instances could be given of men who have changed their names from Vlach to Greek, from Greek to Bulgarian and from Bulgarian to Serb.⁵¹⁹

Although this genre might have underestimated to some extent the attraction of nationalism among the people, it puts some reservations on the retrospective compartmentalization of the peoples of the Balkans into clear-cut nations. Speaking about the communal belongings and self-identification of the peoples of Ottoman Thessaloniki in the face of the above-mentioned ambiguities and transitivity is a hard staff. As the confessional communities were being transformed into modern nations, it seems that one's identity lost its ground of consistency in today's definitions. The

⁵¹⁷ C.A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 136-137.

⁵¹⁸ Ladas, p. 7.

⁵¹⁹ Kophos, p. 23.

adaptation of individuals and groups into the newly established national definitions was often a conflictual process.

From another point of view, this complex process of identification extended the boundaries of the communities towards new kinds of affiliations. In the context of this study, it is suggested that although it was not a strong alternative in the overall level, labor organizations presented a new source of affiliation for the peoples of Thessaloniki province. Without undermining the influence of national sentiment and its factional effect within the labor organizations, this study tries to shed light on the other sources of identification bringing the laborers together irrespective of their old communal identity or newly adopted nationality.

Given the complex nature of the identity matters in this context, how is it possible to conceptualize the nature of cross-communal relations? In other words, how can one conceptualize the cross-communal relations while the communal relations in themselves are problematic? In order to overcome this handicap, it is suggested here that one way to conceptualize the cross-communal relations in Ottoman Thessaloniki is to picture the moments of encounters between the members of different communities. It is put forward that the ambiguous identities crystallize at most at the moments of encounters. Communal affairs, religious days, social gatherings and economic transactions constitute these venues of encounters between the communities. Going through each of these encounters can give some ideas about the cross-communal relations in the Ottoman Balkans at the turn of the twentieth century.

Although not escalated to serious levels, it is observed that some conflicts occurred between the Greeks and Bulgarians (or the members of the Patriarchate and Exarchate) or between Muslims and non-Muslims on religious days. The Ottoman State

Archives provide some opportunities to make some observations on the conflictual encounters of the communities. For example, in one of those cases, the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of Kavala complained about the offensive acts of the gendarme on their religious day.⁵²⁰

In another case, the Patriarchist and Exarchist tobacco laborers of the Evladiyefarm in the Doyran district got into conflict with each other on a Christian religious day.⁵²¹ After a while, the local administrations had to take measures to prevent conflicts between the communities on religious days. Here at this point, it should be underlined that the state documents register only the conflictual matters between the communities by its nature. However, the preemptive measure of the local administrators on the religious days indicates the scope of such communal conflicts. Consequently, such cases suggest that the communal identities of the peoples of Thessaloniki crystallized most over religious matters, which signifies that the religion still had a determining role in their identification.

Economic relations constituted a secular venue where the national and/or religious identities were crystallized. In Ottoman society, several jobs were dominated by particular communities. Such factors as the intergenerational transfer of some occupations, demographic concentration of a particular community in a particular place or sometimes the employment of the ethnic or religious fellows by the bosses had consolidated the ethnic division of labor in the Ottoman Empire throughout the centuries. The emergence of large industrial or commercial plants changed the ethnic character of the jobs to some extent. The large concentration spaces of the factories and

⁵²⁰ BOA. DH MKT. 628/47, 7.L.1320.

⁵²¹ BOA. TFR I SL. 81/8088, 1323.6.22.

workshops contained members of various communities in varying proportions. However, the relative domination of some communities over some jobs remained almost the same in some localities. As will be examined in detail in the next section, the demographic factor in a given locality determined largely the ethnic composition of a labor force in a work place. From another perspective, this is to say that the ethnic division of labor was maintained where the communal character of the traditional neighborhoods remained intact.

The following section delineates on the ethnic division of labor in the Ottoman Empire and its further repercussions on the communal aspect of the working relations.

Communal Relations in the Market

Several communal conflicts were observed in the province in the sphere of economic transactions, employment and wage policies. Although the members of different communities could work together such as the porters of Kavala⁵²² and engage in business partnership,⁵²³ the communal conflicts within the working relations can not be neglected.

The escalation of the activities of the national organizations in the Thessaloniki province pervaded the economic activities as well. For example, it is recorded in the Rumeli Inspectorate documents that the nationalist Greeks threatened their fellow tavern

⁵²² BOA. TFR I ŞKT.129/12863, 3.N.1325.

⁵²³ The business partners of the thread factory in Karaferye belonged to the different communities, see BOA. İ TNF. 21/1328/R-06, 13.R.1328. For further details on multi communal business partnerships and the relations among the various economic entrepreneurs in the province, see İsmail Hakkı Kobakizade, *Bir Mübadil'in Hatıraları* (İstanbul: YKY, 2008); Reşat Teşal, *Selanik'ten İstanbul'a Bir Ömrün Hikayesi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997).

owners not to purchase beer from the beer factory of Allatinies.⁵²⁴ As was mentioned before in the section introducing the industrial plants of Thessaloniki, there were two beer factories, the Olympos factory of the Allatinies, the richest entrepreneur of the Jewish community, and the Naousa beer factory, owned by the Greek entrepreneurs of the city, Georgiadis and his partners. The same source registered another case where the Greek nationalists, with the support of the consuls and Metropolitan bishops warned the tobacco merchants in İskeçenot to employ Bulgarian workers in their workshops and factories.⁵²⁵

Besides the employment policy, communal conflicts were reflected in the wage policies as well. While the differentiation of wages on the communal line was not observed in the state factories in the early stages of industrialization,⁵²⁶ there were some instances of communal differentiation of wages in private businesses. From the petitions sent to the Rumeli Inspectorate it is understood that the Muslim and non-Muslim laborers employed in the flour factory of Allatinies, which was mentioned before as the largest industrial plant in the Ottoman Balkans, did not receive equal wages.⁵²⁷

The differentiation of wages occurred not only on the communal basis, another discrepancy in terms of wages was observed between Ottoman subjects and foreigners. Examining the case of railway workers, Mentzel argues that while there were some

⁵²⁴ BOA. TFR I SL. 185/18430, 2.Ca.1326.

⁵²⁵ BOA.BEO.3037/227709, 7.Ra.1325. BOA. DH MKT. 1173/32, 22.Ra.1325. BOA. BEO. 3051/228761, 25.Ra.1325.

⁵²⁶ Mustafa Erdem Kabadayl, "Working for the State in a Factory in Istanbul: The Role of Factory Workers' Ethno-Religious and Gender Characteristics in State-Subject Interaction in the late Ottoman Empire" (Ph.D. diss., Munich University, 2008).

⁵²⁷ BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 89/8862, 21.R.1324.

divisions among the Ottoman workers, the more important dividing line was in fact that of nationality. While the Ottoman employees, either Muslim or non-Muslim, worked almost with the same status, the foreigners dominated the best paid and most favorable positions.⁵²⁸ As Quataert also notes although 90 percent of all the workers employed in the railroads were Ottoman subjects, Europeans (especially Germans) occupied the highest and most lucrative posts. They held the middle level positions in about equal numbers with Ottoman Christians. Mostly Muslims held the lowest levels of work.⁵²⁹ Given the lack of qualified personnel in the Ottoman Empire, this means that the ethnic or national division of wages overlapped with the qualification levels and working positions.

In addition to the high salaries, tax exemptions enabled the foreigners to maintain their earnings in contrast to the Ottoman subjects. A petition of the Thessaloniki-Monastir railway workers indicates this fact. In the petition, it was noted that the wages of the Ottoman subjects were lower than those of the foreigners and their rights to promotion at their jobs were limited. For this reason, the local workers demanded exemption from the income tax. They justified it on the grounds that it was their rightful demand in return for having fought for the Ottoman state during the Ottoman-Greek War of 1896-97 as the patriots.⁵³⁰

It also should be noted that the Ottoman government levied income taxes on the incomes of foreigners as well in 1908, but it was not easy to collect this tax. For example, the foreign administrative staff of the American and Austrian tobacco

⁵²⁸ Mentzel, pp. 221-241.

⁵²⁹ Quataert, "The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire," p. 77.

⁵³⁰ BOA.BEO. 1006/75402, 14.R.1315

companies in Kavala rejected this new tax arrangement. The government could not even get them registered in the tax records.⁵³¹ From the point of the native workers, this time the unjust party was not the state but the foreigners who refused to pay the tax. As a result, this situation deteriorated the relations between the locals and foreigners after 1908. This anti-foreign sentiment was demonstrated also in several boycotts.⁵³²

The tobacco sector was similar in some respects to the railway sector in terms of the communal composition of the employees. The same conflict lines, the Ottomans vs. foreigners and qualified workers vs. unqualified workers, also were observed in the tobacco labor market. The administrative and professional staff of the cigarette factory of the Régie Company in Thessaloniki and also the workshops of the Company in Kavala and Drama was composed almost totally of non-Muslims employees, some of whom might have been foreign citizens. Except for Drama, in the center and the districts where the Régie Company had branches, the administration was hold by a Muslim director and the rest of the administrative staff was composed almost totally of non-Muslims, some of whom might have had foreign citizenship.⁵³³

Besides the Régie Company, the administrative staff of the foreign tobacco companies also had foreign employees. More interestingly, most of the consuls or consular officers in Kavala were engaged directly in the tobacco trade as the agents of the insurance companies, bankers or tobacco commissioners. For example, Pierre Bulgarides, who represented the French and Russian consuls in Kavala, directed at the

⁵³¹ BOA TFR I SL 173/17270 1326.M.9

⁵³² For further discussion on this issue, see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya. *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

⁵³³ For the lists of administrative staff, see Appendix B.

same time La Foncière, one of the many insurance companies in Kavala. He also was the president of a charity organization in Kavala, the Society of Miserables. Another consular representative, Anastassiades, was the agent of another insurance company in the city, La Continentale. A. Wix, the consul of the Austrian Empire, was the agent of another insurance company in Kavala called Northern. Several others were engaged in the commission and transportation of tobacco.⁵³⁴ This means that the diplomatic missionaries held not only hold the political power, but also dominated the export-led economy of Kavala and its environs.

Consequently, the foreigners had a strong influence on the Kavala market both as employers and as administrative staff. For this reason, what Mentzel observed for the employees of the Thessaloniki-Monastir railways was valid for the tobacco workshops of Kavala. In other words, employers and the employees were divided on the basis of communal and national lines as well.

The foreigners were capable of manipulating the tobacco market of the province for their own good. As was explained before, the speculations of some foreign tobacco companies gave way to the first massive strike of the tobacco workers in Kavala in 1904. The workers directed their anger at the Austria-Hungarian Consul A.Wix, who was the director of the Austrian Herzog Company at the same time. During the strike, workers from different communities came together to protest his actions in front his house. The Austrian consul was not the only person whose actions the workers protested in this strike. Voulioglu, the agency of the Commercial Company of the

⁵³⁴ *Annuaire Oriental* 1909.

Salonica, whose owner was the Allatini family of Thessaloniki, also received the brunt of their anger.⁵³⁵

Consequently, the picture at hand reveals that there was a multiplicity of conflict lines including communal, confessional, ethnic and national identifications. The same conflict lines operated in the tobacco market of Thessaloniki province. When it comes to the tobacco workers, a local vs. migrant discrepancy was added to the existing conflict lines. As will be seen in detail in the following section, this conflict line prevailed over all others, especially in Kavala.

The Communal Composition of the Tobacco Laborers

Among the tobacco workers of the province, there were the members of several communities, religions, confessions, ethnicities, localities and genders. The Régie Company in Thessaloniki employed 330 processors 270 of whom were Jewish and 60 of whom were composed of Greeks and Bulgarians. It employed 5 Muslims as the guards.⁵³⁶ As the figures present, Jews had the overwhelming majority in the industrial tobacco production. They also dominated the labor force in the commercial tobacco workshops. Since there was no cigarette factory in Kavala, the industrial tobacco labor force was not present here. The work force in Kavala was composed of commercial tobacco laborers and their communal composition was quite different from that of central Thessaloniki. While most of the tobacco labor force was composed of members

⁵³⁵ Vyzikas, p. 15.

⁵³⁶ Ilıcak, p. 121.

of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki, their number was only marginal in Kavala. Contrary to the case in Thessaloniki, the tobacco labor force was dominated by Christian (mostly Greek Orthodox) and Muslim laborers. In fact, one can see that the communal composition of the tobacco labor force in both localities reflected more or less the communal composition of the total population. This means that the tobacco labor force in both localities can be regarded as a sample of the total population.

When it comes to the figures of the organized labor, it can be said that the number of syndicate members steadily increased. As mentioned above, while the number of tobacco laborers organized in the single tobacco workers syndicate of Kavala (The Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala) was 4100 in 1908, it reached to 10,000 in 1912. 6000 of the members were Christians (mostly Greek Orthodox), 3600 of Muslims and 400 of Jews.⁵³⁷

On the other hand, the syndicate of the commercial tobacco laborers in Thessaloniki contained 3200 members. 2000 of them Jews, 500 Greeks, 400 Muslims, 200 Bulgarians and the remaining 100 were composed of the people from other communities. In addition, the syndicate of the Régie factory workers had 500 members. The communal profile of the membership was composed of 400 Jews, 50 Greeks, 40 Bulgarians and 10 Muslims.⁵³⁸ Then the question is how these communal differences at a time of fierce national rivalry in the Ottoman Balkans influenced the organization of labor. A proper answer to this question requires a meticulous examination of the life contexts of the laborers.

⁵³⁷ Vyzikas, p. 15.

⁵³⁸ Moskof, p. 349.

As was explained in the previous section, the traditional communal identity was not the only driving force among the tobacco workers, because they developed several other identities towards the end of the nineteenth century under the new circumstances. The multiplicity of one's identities enabled him/her to establish several coalitions other than the one s/he would establish with his/her own community members. In this way, the laborers under question could have been part of the Ottomans against the foreigners in one case, the locals against the migrant workers in other case or men workers against the women workers on another occasion. This means that, although the national rivalry was escalating in the province in this period, the national or communal identity did not sweep all the identification options of the subjects. Here it is suggested that the availability of other identities enabled the tobacco workers to transcend the communal boundaries and to come together on the other grounds.⁵³⁹ Specifically, the large numbers of seasonal laborers flooding into Kavala in every summer and the present migrant labor stock generated a kind of local patriotism among the native tobacco workers of Kavala which enabled them to transcend the communal boundaries among themselves. Besides the migrant laborers, another competitor of the native tobacco workshop laborers was the cheap female labor power. It is suggested that the presence of the migrant and women laborers in the sector were keys to the development and maintenance of a common identity among the male tobacco workers of Kavala.

Not all the labor sections of the province were able to transcend the communal or national boundaries. There were some sections of the laborers that never came

⁵³⁹ Here, it should also be noted that while the tobacco laborers of the province came together in one way or another, there were some sections of the laborers that never came together, such as the Greek and Bulgarian waiters of Thessaloniki, who were openly hostile to each other.

together, such as the Greek and Bulgarian waiters of Thessaloniki, who were openly hostile to each other.⁵⁴⁰ This means that the peculiar conditions of the tobacco sector also played a role in the common identification of the tobacco laborers. In order to explain the unity of the tobacco laborers, the contemporary observers and ideologues such as Benaroya and Starr applied to the classical proletarianization thesis. More recent scholars have taken the working conditions of the tobacco workshop laborers under closer consideration. Hadar and Jecchinis propose that the face to face sitting of the tobacco laborers in the quiet workshop facilitated conversation during the work hours and helped the generation of a common identity.

Although none of these arguments can be denied, none of them is capable of explaining the fact alone. It is suggested that a proper answer to the common identification of the workers contains a variety of factors. Here, it is indicated that the common identity of the tobacco laborers was a defensive one constructed in response to the migrant and women workers. Spatial and demographic factors come to the fore in this regard.

It is proposed that while the industrial location pattern reinforced the long-standing phenomenon of the ethnic division of labor in central Thessaloniki, the situation was different in Kavala. A close examination of the spatial and demographic transformations helps to enlighten this matter.

⁵⁴⁰ For a further analysis on this issue, see Marina Angelopoulou, *Zitimata Skhetika me tin Apergia ton Servitoron sti Thessaloniki to 1908* (Issues concerning the strike of the waiters in Thessaloniki in 1908) (Rethymno: University of Crete, 2002).

The Spatial Transformations and the Communal Organization of Labor

It is suggested that the urbanization process was an important factor in the transformation of cross-communal relations both in the central Thessaloniki and Kavala. At first, urbanization forces brought about spatial change to both cities, which was visible at the turn of the twentieth century. An observer of Thessaloniki and Kavala cities can see that the working centers took their exclusive places in the spatiality of both cities. New neighborhoods signifying the economic status of the inhabitants rose nearby the traditional mahalle (neighborhood) institution, which was formed upon communal lines. The public space started to host intellectuals in the cafes and laborers in the squares.

In order to understand the industrial location pattern of Thessaloniki, it is necessary to picture the landscape of the city and the urban change that the city underwent towards the end of the nineteenth century. The central Thessaloniki district or Thessaloniki city consisted of two parts, the old and the new. The old city extended along the sea to the hills on the north. It followed the newly established quarters such as the Hamidiye and Vardar neighborhoods and extended towards the eastern cape of the gulf. The new city came into being in the second half of the nineteenth century. The steady urban development of the city accelerated in the 1890s. Throughout this period, the city center enlarged towards the periphery.

The spatial organization of Thessaloniki city became extended and differentiated in itself towards the end of the century. The two governors of the province, Sabri Pasha and Mithat Pasha, were the two most influential figures in the development of the modern face of the city. Governor Sabri Pasha took the first step in the spatial

reorganization by tearing down the walls of the city. Although Thessaloniki had a shore and a beautiful gulf, the connection between the settlements and the sea was blocked by the city walls. As Risal puts it, before the destruction of the city walls, the crowded neighborhoods inside the city walls resembled bee hives with their narrow and dirty streets.⁵⁴¹ After the destruction of the walls, the breeze of the gulf refreshed the air of the narrow streets. Moreover, the municipal services such as the water and sewage systems cleaned the dirty streets.



Figure 15. Narrow streets of Thessaloniki (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T022/012)

⁵⁴¹ Anastassiadou, pp. 129-130.

Sabri Pasha started to destroy the city walls from the south-east part, the first commercialized part of the city. There had been three entrance gates of the city located on the south-east side ranked from the up hills to the shore, Yenikapı, Vardarkapı and Topkapı. In the 1860s, this side of the city wall was destroyed and all three gates turned into the squares called by the same names. The newly opened squares soon became the work centers of the city.⁵⁴² Various workplaces, warehouses and workshops were established on these squares. Topkapı, the closest one of the three gates to the port, constituted the most commercialized part of the city known as Tophane. Çınar Square, located in the Tophane area, became the site of the mass demonstrations just after the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution.

After eliminating the south-east walls, Sabri Pasha opened up two avenues cutting across the sea, one of them was called by the name of the Pasha and the other was called as the municipal boulevard. These avenues connected the government office (*hükümet konağı*) with the sea. In addition, another avenue, parallel to the sea, was opened up that would be the famous cordon of the city extending in front of the White Tower.

⁵⁴²Anastassiadou, p. 42.



Figure 16. The White Tower (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. 015/027)

Modernization of the eastern part of the city was initiated by the governor of the city Mithat Pasha, who began with demolishing the walls on the east side. The newly established quarter on the east was first called by the name of Mithat Pasha and then came to be known as the Hamidiye neighborhood, referring to the Sultan Abdulhamid II. Hamidiye Boulevard extending from the White Tower to the Yedikule on the hill connected the upper neighborhoods to the sea side.⁵⁴³

The new city welcomed the new inhabitants, the bourgeoisie and immigrants. The bourgeoisie constituted the old “new” dwellers of the city in the sense that they changed their place of residence in the city. As the wealth of this group increased they invested in country houses in the newly established part of the city. Yalılar Yolu (Road of the Villas), the street where the country houses of the developing bourgeoisie were

⁵⁴³ Anastassiadou, pp. 109-110.

located, became the most prosperous and splendid part of the city.⁵⁴⁴ Various merchants, bankers and some wealthy professionals inhabiting this neighborhood competed with each other in architectural style and fashionable design. The Villa Allatini also was located in this area.⁵⁴⁵ The villas added a new silhouette to the developing city, and enriched its architectural inventory as well. As in the case of the merchants of the Italian Renaissance, the mansions in this part of the city reinforced and solidified the existence of the bourgeoisie in the city. This stylish showing off of the bourgeoisie can be considered as a claim over the spatial reorganization of the city in a way.

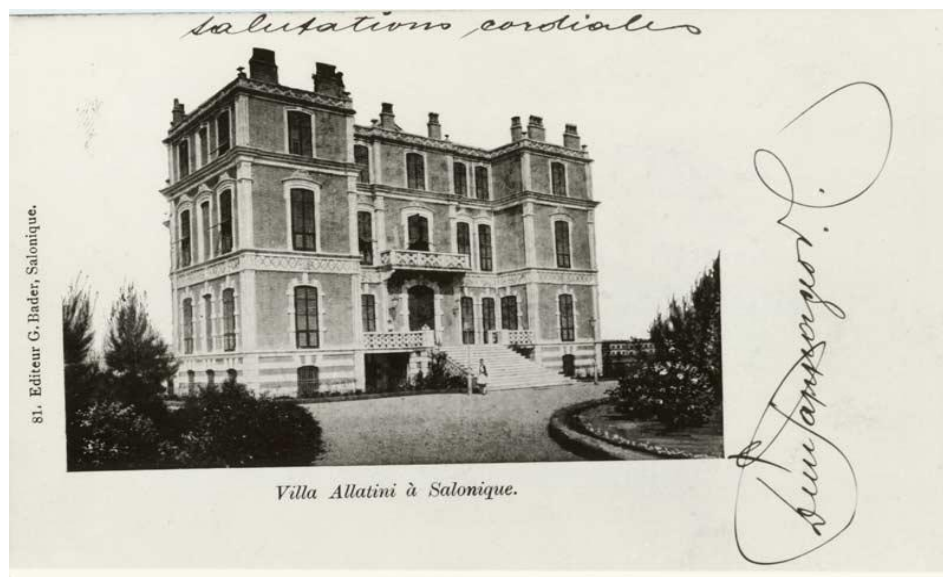


Figure 17. The Villa Allatini (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T052/009)

⁵⁴⁴Türkmen Parlak, *Yeni Asır'ın Selanik Yılları 1895/1924*(İzmir: Yeni Asır Yayınları, 1986; pp. 32-33.

⁵⁴⁵ Note that, the famous Villa Allatini hosted Sultan Abdulhamid II when he was exiled to Thessaloniki in 1909. See François Georgeon, “Allatini Villasının Münzevisi,” in *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp. 253-260.

The development of the Yalılar Street indicated also the widening gap between the various income groups of the city. Consequently, one's wealth and property started to determine one's place of residence in the city towards the end of the nineteenth century.



Figure 18. A splendid villa in Yalılar (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T024/022)

Along with the neighborhood settlements, leisure activities also determined one's social and economic status. As Colonas notes, spending time on the Les Campagnes Street started to define one's prestige after the establishment of the tramway line there.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶ Vassilis Colonas, "Mimari Dönüşümler," in *Selanik 1850-1918: Yahudilerin Kenti ve Balkanların Uyanışı*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), p. 184. As Thompson points out leisure became the luxury of the upper classes since the industrial capitalism occupied almost all the day time of the working classes. For further analysis, see E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38, no.1 (1967), pp. 56-97.

Down to Yalılar neighborhood, the old market place of the city on the coast turned into the public space of the bourgeoisie. Hürriyet Meydanı(Square of Liberty), which was named after the declaration of constitution in 1908, was transformed into a gathering place where the various political groups met and discussed matters in cafes and restaurants, convened conferences in the nearby hotels and delivered speeches to the public outside. The square was one of the most crowded parts of the city and it had a quite cosmopolitan atmosphere. Particular political or intellectual groups became the regular customers of particular cafes, restaurants or clubs. Although located side by side, those places represented different factions even those hostile to each other.

Literally speaking, an epidemic of clubs was observable in Thessaloniki. Besides the ethnic, social and political clubs of different communities, there were international and cosmopolite ones such as the Club de Salonique, Nouveau Club and Club Alliance. For Benaroya, these cafes provided a suitable venue for socialist propaganda. For this reason, these cafes played an important role in the intellectual and political life of the city.⁵⁴⁷ It should be noted that Benaroya published his first articles in the periodical of the Nouveau Club, *La Nation*.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ Starr, p. 325.

⁵⁴⁸ For a detailed information about the clubs and cafes of Thessaloniki and their attendants, see Erol Üyepazarcı, “Selanik ve Kısa Süren Saltanat,” *Tarih ve Toplum* 30, no. 177 (1998), pp. 23-32.

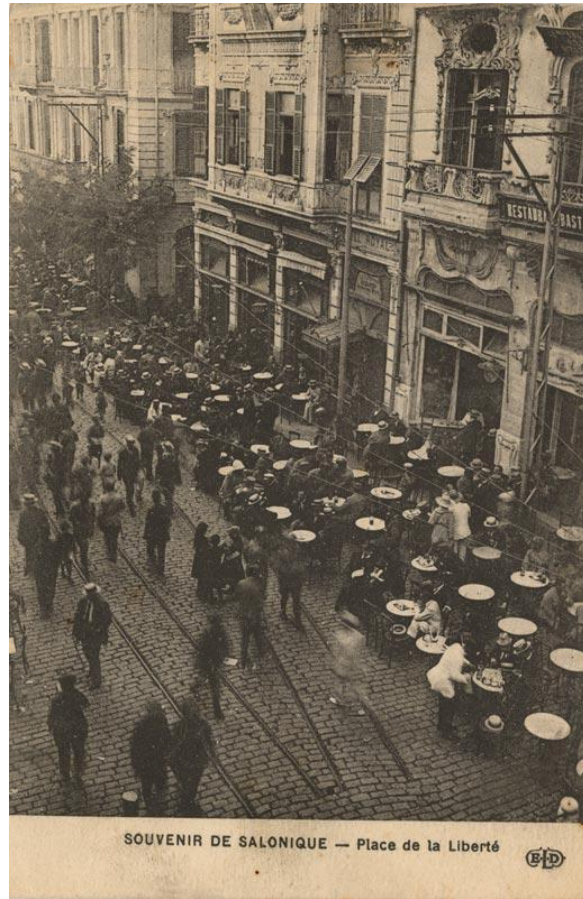


Figure 19. The Square of Liberty (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T039/002)

Besides the prosperous Yalılar district, Hamidiye and Vardar districts also were located in the “new city.” The inhabitants of these districts generally were composed of the urban poor, immigrants and the victims of fires. Immigrants generally consisted of those who took refuge from the former Ottoman territories lost to the Russian Empire in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The influx of the refugees to the city required the establishment of new districts in the periphery. Hamidiye, Selimiye and Mecidiyene neighborhoods in the eastern part of the city were established mainly to house

these people.⁵⁴⁹ Other urban poor moved into these neighborhoods from the parts of the city that had been ravaged by fire. Thessaloniki had been victim to wide-spread fires destroying a relevant part of the city and other natural disasters. Impoverished population of the fired parts moved to the new districts of the city. For example, the Jewish victims of the destructive fire of 1890 moved to the newly established Hirsch-Vardar neighborhood constructed by the generous financial support of the wealthy Hirsch family. This newly established neighborhood had a standard architecture designed for the lower strata of the city.⁵⁵⁰ The same size houses with the same yards and all other things for about three thousand people formed a contrast with the Yalılar neighborhood. Consequently, the economic factor was much more observable in the spatial segregation of the city towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Those newly established neighborhoods were inhabited by ethnically and religiously mixed populations. Especially in the Hamidiye district, which developed faster than the other refugee settlements due to the opening of Hamidiye Boulevard, it was possible to see the worship places and schools of various communities from Bulgarians to Jews, Serbs to Montenegrin refugees.⁵⁵¹ Therefore, the newly developed part of the city resembled a microcosm of the total population of the province with all its components.

The spatial character of the “new city” did not fit into the classical profile of the traditional mahalle institution. The reorganization process in question challenged not

⁵⁴⁹ BOA. İ DH. 889/70731, 21.Ş.1300.

⁵⁵⁰ Anastassiadou, p. 115.

⁵⁵¹ BOA. İ DH. 1088/85379, 27.L.1305. BOA. MF MKT. 217/28, 29.M.1312. BOA. MF MKT. 261/12, 7.Za.1312. BOA. İ AZN. 24/ 1314/L-04, 12.L.1314. BOA. BEO. 79577/1062, 6.Ş.1315.

only the traditional habitat pattern, but also determined the spatial character of the economic activities. The industrial location pattern deserves special attention here.

The location of the factories and workshops manifests the process of the separation and isolation of the emerging working center from the rest of the city, especially from the residential areas. The first factories of the city, the thread factory of Saias, for example, were established on the middle coast towards the eastern part of the city. In the first decade of the twentieth century it was not possible for an entrepreneur to establish a factory in the city in a place other than the Tophane region, which was located at the west end of the city. For example, despite his decisive efforts, Yosef Modiano was not able to construct a silk factory in the Yalılar neighborhood, the residence place of the emerging bourgeoisie, because the residents protested the construction of such a factory in their region on the account that it would be harmful for their health. As a result, although Modiano had the property rights of the land in question, he was unable to establish his factory there.⁵⁵² But the situation was different in a nearby neighborhood, Hamidiye. The brick factory in this neighborhood was not protested by anyone who lived there.

The thread factory of Saias and the flour factory of Allatini's in the south-east part of the city remained as an exception. In contrast to this former pattern, most of the factories and the workshops were established in the south-west part of the city. Here at this point, the Tophane district requires a closer examination. Located on the west coast of Thessaloniki between the port on the south and the Vardar River on the north, Tophane emerged as the working center of the city. Both the cigarette factory of the

⁵⁵² BOA.BEO.1028/77028, 26.Ca.1315. BOA.BEO.1073/80404, 1.N.1315. BOA.BEO.1095/82063, 27.L.1315. BOA. ŞD. 1210/8, 28.Z.1316.

Régie Company and the tobacco workshops of the merchants were located there. Tanneries, butcheries, wire and shoe manufacturers and most of the khans were also located in this region. Therefore, it was not a residential place at all.

As far as the settlements of the different communities in the city are concerned, the west side of the wharf was the location of the workplaces of the Jewish and the Levantine entrepreneurs. The port facilities were also located in Tophane due to the concentration of trade activities here. The middle part of the city was mostly populated by the Greek Orthodox community and the Jews and Levantines as well. The only Muslim neighborhood in this part was the Hamza Bey neighborhood. The east side of the wharf was more or less evenly divided by the Greek Orthodox and the Muslim populations. The Rum community constituted the majority in the Hagia Sophia neighborhood. The Muslim community made up the majority in the neighborhoods of Sinan Pasha, Timurtaş and Akçe Mescit. The Yedikule district on the upper side of the city was an overwhelmingly Muslim populated area. Rums lived only in Çavuş Manastır and Yanık Manastır neighborhoods in this region.⁵⁵³ As was noted above, the newly established neighborhoods of the city on the east displayed a relevant mixture of different communities. The locals and the newly settled migrants from different communities met here.

The nearest residences to the Tophane, the working center, were the Jewish neighborhoods on the middle part of the coast, Baru and Levi. Therefore, the recruitment of the Jewish population was easier. The logic of industrial location requires the proximity of tobacco workshops to the transportation facilities. In this case, most of the tobacco workshops were located near the Thessaloniki port facilities on the

⁵⁵³ Parlak, pp. 36-38.

Tophane region, just next to the traditional Jewish settlement. What would have happened if it had not been the Jewish neighborhood or the traditional Ottoman mahalle institution had not been communal in character? The answer is not the business of history but one can think of it as a proposition to delineate the relation between the recruitment and spatial patterns.

Moreover, the location of industrial plants explains the gender division of labor to some extent. Previously, it was noted that Jewish women constituted the majority both in the cigarette factory of the Régie Company and the tobacco workshops in the central Thessaloniki. The area of the tobacco workshops was next to the district of İştira, the workplace of the porters. Given the fact that the Jewish men dominated the porters' sector, it emerges that the jobs in the tobacco workshops and the adjacent port were allocated between the women and men of the nearby Jewish neighborhoods. In other words, the presence of an exclusively male sector in a nearby place, the porters' sector might have opened up a space for the Jewish women in the tobacco workshops. Since the men of the nearby Jewish neighborhoods were employed mostly as porters, the tobacco workshops had to recruit the women of the same neighborhoods as the only available labor force.

Quataert notes that the Jewish girls worked until collecting money for marriage.⁵⁵⁴ In the Jewish tradition, a girl to be married was expected to bring dowry which was called drahoma. In addition to the traditional explanations relating the overwhelming majority of Jewish women in the tobacco sector with the drahoma factor, the above spatial explanation suggests a different point of view.

⁵⁵⁴ Donald Quataert, *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), p.89.

Beş Çınar mentioned before as a site of the mass demonstrations and workers' gatherings, also was located in the Tophane district. As was noted before in the section about labor activism, this place hosted some workers' demonstrations, especially the May Day celebrations. This means that a workers' public space also was located in the working center of the city.

The location of the Federation was also meaningful. It was located on Vardar (Egnatia) Street, cross-cutting the city in the middle, bringing the dominantly Jewish quarters of the city on the south with the dominantly Muslim and partly Greek quarters of the north together. The Federation was not located within the working center of the city as one might expect. In accordance with its own point of view, the organization chose the balance point of the city, reaching all of the communities. In this regard, the spatial pattern of the industrial plants in Thessaloniki, which reinforced the communal division of labor, produced undesirable results for the aims of the Federation. The working center of Thessaloniki remained overwhelmingly Jewish. Therefore, it was exempt from such a problem as communal conflict among the laborers. From another point of view, it can be suggested that the multi-communal sentiment of the tobacco laborers in this locality was based on the ideology rather than an experience of co-existence. On the contrary, a previous experience of co-existence between the different communities provided the basis of a multi-cultural labor movement in Kavala.

For the tobacco workshop laborers in central Thessaloniki, the gender factor brought more problems than the communal differences. No registered communal conflict among the tobacco laborers of this region was found in the Ottoman State Archive documents. A serious communal conflict resulting in the killing of one worker occurred in the beverage factory located on the north side of Tophane, where the district

met the Vardar River. It was a risky point in terms of communal conflicts. On the banks of the Vardar River, there were immigrant settlements close to this factory.

A case of communal conflict registered in the Rumeli Inspectorate documents is worthy of attention in this sense. The document reports that an immigrant Bulgarian worker from İstip, employed in this beverage factory, killed a Jewish worker. In the police reports, it is registered that the Bulgarian worker Hristo shouted “I will kill all the Jews with my gun!” and shot a Jewish worker named Aron.⁵⁵⁵

Another violent communal conflict among the laborers was observed in the flour factory of Alatinies, which was located in the newly established immigrant settlements on the east. The factory was capable of recruiting the labor force of the nearby immigrant settlements, Hamidiye, Mecidiye and Selimiye. The Rumeli Inspectorate documents reveal another violent case among workers. It is registered that a Bulgarian worker from Sibeşte village of Debre-i Bala working in the flour factory of Alatinies was killed.⁵⁵⁶ Unlike the former case, a communal conflict was not clearly expressed in this case. However, it should be emphasized that any kind of conflict easily between the laborers could turn into a communal conflict if the parties belonged to different communities.

While some violent conflict cases among the laborers in some industrial plants of Thessaloniki were observable, the tobacco workshops remained quiet and peaceful. It seems that the Jewish presence in the labor market of Tophane was challenged by the immigrant labor as the event in the beverage factory demonstrates, but the tobacco workshops of the region were still exempt from such communal conflicts because of

⁵⁵⁵ BOA. TFR I SL. 206/20577, 14.Ra.1327.

⁵⁵⁶ BOA. TFR I SL. 174/17388, 23.M.1326.

their distance from the immigrant settlements. This is to say that the intercommunal relations could be conflictual where the native and immigrant workers of different communities meet in demographically heterogeneous regions.

This study suggests that the registered conflict cases among the laborers indicate a local vs. immigrant conflict rather than a national conflict between the members of different communities. Nevertheless, the local vs. immigrant conflict did not give way to the generation of a kind of local patriotism among the tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki. First they were distant from the conflict line in spatial terms. Second, there was almost no communal boundary to transcend among the tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki, because they overwhelmingly came from the same community. It comes out that the multi-communal aspect of the tobacco labor organizations in Thessaloniki was rather ideological in essence. As was examined in the previous chapter, central Thessaloniki city was the intellectual heart of the labor movement in question. The multi-communal project of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki must have been helpful in this regard.

On the other hand, different factors were in operation in Kavala. The spatial reorganization of the city, the communal composition of labor and access to the ideology were all different. First, the residence places and working center displayed a different character in Kavala. Within the fortified city, each ethnically homogenous neighborhood had its own socio-political center composed of religious buildings usually combined with educational and other communal facilities. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a new working center came into being due to the economic development of the district.

The main difference between Thessaloniki and Kavala in terms of the industrial location pattern is the fact that while the working center of Thessaloniki was located near the traditional residence place of a homogenous community, this was not the case in Kavala. As Stephanidou points out, the new working center of Kavala was settled in a neutral place to function far from the closed ethno- religious neighborhoods. The large tobacco workshops of the big companies were concentrated on the shore, close to the port. In response to that, people also started to move near the new working centers and populated the new city. Next to the new working center, a big multi-ethnic center came into being, starting from the aqueduct and including the coastal zone almost until the promontory of Falirou.⁵⁵⁷

The land close to the shore became more valuable because of the presence of the new working center. The cemeteries and butcheries were moved from these areas despite the resistance of the people.⁵⁵⁸ The people in the shops and firms often conflicted with each other and with the local administration as well to have enough space for their businesses in the already limited space of the highly commercialized Kavala coast. Individuals and firms sued their close competitors for this reason.⁵⁵⁹ Because of the growing population, illegal construction was permitted in the residential areas.⁵⁶⁰ Consequently, dissolving traditional mahalle organization in the new city and the experience of co-existence between the members of the different communities helped the generation of a multi-cultural labor movement in Kavala.

⁵⁵⁷ Stephanidou, p. 305.

⁵⁵⁸ BOA. DH MKT. 1102/30, 1324.Ca.29. BOA. TFR I ŞKT. 31/3077, 1321.Z.12.

⁵⁵⁹ BOA.TFR I SL. 192/19192, 1326.C.24.

⁵⁶⁰ BOA. İ. DFE. 17, 1324.R.4.

Second, the seasonal tobacco workers played a significant role in the reorganization of the city space in Kavala. Their neighborhood was another alternative to the traditional communal neighborhoods. The migrant workers either stayed in the khans or rented rooms.⁵⁶¹ The high population of the seasonal tobacco workers in the city required the improvement of the sanitary system and the other municipal facilities in the city.⁵⁶²

The ever increasing visibility of the seasonal tobacco workers coming from other places instigated the local-versus-outsider distinction among the resident tobacco workers. They reacted to the employment of cheap migrant laborers, irrespective of their religion or ethnicity. This tendency consolidated the relations between the locals of different communities and compelled them to act as a united body against the migrant workers.

Contrary to Thessaloniki, the tobacco laborers in Kavala did not generate a communally homogenous body. No particular ethnic or religious community dominated the tobacco labor market. The communal composition of the tobacco laborers in Kavala was also different from that of Thessaloniki. As was noted before, while the Jewish tobacco workers dominated the labor force in Thessaloniki, they were marginal in number in Kavala. As the aforementioned syndicate membership pattern also manifests, Christian (mostly Greek Orthodox) and Muslim tobacco workers made up the balance in Kavala.

Besides the seasonal migrant laborers, women were also another factor giving way to the generation of a common identity among the male native tobacco laborers of

⁵⁶¹BOA.TFR I SL. 178/17744, 27.S.1326.

⁵⁶²BOA. TFR I SL. 192/19169, 1326.C.22. BOA. TFR I SL. 183/18282, 1326.R.17.

Kavala irrespective of their communal identities. In other words, the availability of the “other” categories helped the generation of a common identity. The common identity of the local male tobacco workers was a defensive one. The most explicit example of this situation was observed in the syndicate membership and wage bargaining of the tobacco workers that was mentioned in the previous chapter. Women and migrant tobacco laborers were barred from syndicate membership, wage bargaining and promotion opportunities. From this perspective, women and migrant laborers were regarded in the same category as threats to the employment and wage opportunities of the local male laborers. The local male laborers could come together upon their common interests in the labor market in this way.

From another point of view, this identification profile of the native male tobacco workers suggests that they developed identification upon the conditions of the labor market. Their interests as laborers were much more influential than an imagined nationhood. In the presence of the given “other” categories, women and the migrant tobacco laborers, this identification represented itself in the form of a local patriotism rather than nationalism.

The following section examines the influence of the “other” factors in the generation of a cross-communal identity among the tobacco laborers of Kavala. Demographic transformation of the province in this period is a key to understanding the weight of the migrants in the labor market. Therefore, the demographic conditions will be examined first.

The Demographic Transformations and the Communal Organization of Labor

This part of the study examines the influential factors determining the communal composition of the labor market. Besides the spatial change examined above, the demographic transformations in the late nineteenth century were another influential factor generating the communal composition of the province in general and the labor market in particular.

What is observed throughout the nineteenth century in demographic terms is a steady population growth both on the level of the central district and that of province in general. There were two major factors behind this demographic change, one is the improvement of urban infrastructure and the migration flows that the city received especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While the development of the urban infrastructure was giving way to the natural growth of the population by means of the improvement of public health, the migration waves added new masses to the existing population. The betterment of public health due to the development of the urban infrastructure and municipal services and sanitation together with the establishment of hospitals helped to reduce mortality and increased reproduction and the average lifespan.

The migration flows are difficult to follow for several reasons. Unregistered refugees, seasonal labor migrations and temporary movements from the unsafe rural areas to the cities are some of the main obstacles rendering the assessment of the migrant population in the late nineteenth century problematic and disputable. Besides that, one can expect that the production of population data at a time of competing nationalisms can be misleading and unreliable. As shown by McCarthy, even the same

data source could be articulated differently by the authors of different nationalities.⁵⁶³ Although population figures are always problematic by their nature and open to endless discussions because of the distortions of nationalist discourses, it is still possible to get some ideas about the population of the city.

The ethnic and religious composition of the population is always open to discussion. Each community tries to prove the majority and the long established roots of their own fellows in the city in order to have a “rightful” national claim over the city according to the established practices of the international politics of the period. On the other hand, such measures as the size and the growth rate of the population are not subjected to such serious debates like the composition figures. What concerns us in this study is the migrant population rather than the ethnic composition of the locals. Since the focus is on the “outsiders,” the changes in the total population and the proportion of the migrant population constitute the main questions.

Part of the overall population growth came as a result of the incoming migrants. There are several sources to consult in the investigation of the population of the province and especially the population of the central sandjak. Most of the produced data was concentrated on the central district due to the political claims of various communities on the city. To start with the earliest of these population figures, the first Ottoman census conducted between the years 1826-1831 can be mentioned. The main goal of the Ottoman censuses was to be able to determine the number of tax-payers and conscripts. Therefore, these figures do not reflect the total number of the population. The female population was counted for the first time in the 1881-82 Ottoman census.

⁵⁶³ Justin McCarthy, *Population History of the Middle East and the Balkans* (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2002), p. 116.

The population of Thessaloniki city according to the 1831 census was 40,215.⁵⁶⁴ The population of the province is problematic in this period, because the borders of the main administrative units were reorganized in 1864.

After the first general Ottoman census in 1831, the following general census was started in 1882 and results declared in 1893. For this reason, if one takes the Ottoman censuses into account, it is not possible to follow the population figures regularly throughout the century. Here at this point, alternative sources can fill this time gap. In this case, Ottoman year books (*salname*) can be a substitute source. According to the 1877-78 Ottoman year book, the total population of the province was 393,029. Another estimate for the total population of the province in 1911 was 1,347,915.⁵⁶⁵

Besides the general censuses and yearbooks of the Ottoman state, there are some other data produced by the local administration of the city. The first of these local data were revealed by Anastasiadou. She notes that the total population of the city consisted of 53,926 persons in 1878. The second local population data collected in 1890 stated that the total population of the city was 98,938 men and women including both the Ottoman subjects and the foreigners residing in the city. Different from these local population data, the population of the city was registered in the Ottoman year book as 80,299 in 1905. The difference between the two registers probably stems from the absence of the foreigners in the official census registers.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İlk Nüfus Sayımı 1831* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997), p. 197.

⁵⁶⁵ McCarthy, p. 121.

⁵⁶⁶ Anastasiadou, p. 89.

According to another alternative source, French commercial year books, *Annuaire Orientale*, the population of the city increased to 121,593 in 1896 and 173,733 in 1909.⁵⁶⁷ Lastly, the first census of the city accomplished by the Greek administration in 1913 noted the population of the city as 157,889, with 39,956 Greeks, 61,439 Jews, 45,867 Muslims, 6263 Bulgarians and 4363 miscellaneous.⁵⁶⁸ In order to sum up these complicated numbers, the population figures of Thessaloniki are given in the city (central kaza) and the province (vilayet) levels in the following tables.

Table 10. The Population of Thessaloniki Province

1877-78	1893 ⁵⁶⁹	1894	1895	1896	1897	1906	1911 ⁵⁷⁰
393,029	989,844	990,397	990,400	1,009,992	1,038,973	921,359	1,347,915

Table 11. The Population of Thessaloniki City

1831	1878	1890 ⁵⁷¹	1896	1909	1913
40,215	53,926	98,938	121,593	173,733	157,889

As a result, around 1,000,000 people were added to the total population of the Thessaloniki province throughout the nineteenth century. This increase in the population came as a result of two main factors, the improvement of health conditions

⁵⁶⁷ *Annuaire Orientale* 1896; *Annuaire Orientale* 1909.

⁵⁶⁸ Anastassiadou, p. 90.

⁵⁶⁹ Data between 1893-1906 relies on the corrected Ottoman censuses. See Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 190.

⁵⁷⁰ McCarthy, p. 121.

⁵⁷¹ Data after 1890 includes men and women both in the city level and the province level.

supporting the decrease in mortality and increase in reproduction and the influx of migrants. The role of the improving health conditions was mentioned above. When it comes to the role of migrations in this demographic growth, it can be said that this phenomenon was more influential in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Apart from small groups such as the Jews coming from Russia in 1892, the bulk of the incoming refugees were composed of mainly Muslims fleeing the Russian and Austrian Empires. According to estimation, the number of Circassians coming from the Russian occupied lands in 1864 was 2134.⁵⁷² After the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian war, 60,000 Muslims from Bulgaria and 10,000 Muslims from Bosnia were added to the population of the province. Another source indicates that the net population gain in the province level between 1893 and 1906 equaled 67,620.⁵⁷³ Based on the data at hand, one can assume that at least 10 percent of the total population of the province was composed of the migrants. Nevertheless, the distribution of this migrant population within the province is more crucial than their numbers. When the spatial arrangements are taken into account, it can be said that most of this migrant labor stock was settled in the urban centers of the province. For this reason, besides the population growth, the changing population density within the province requires attention.

According to the average calculation, each square kilometer was populated by 3658 persons. This is to say that the province of Thessaloniki was one of the most densely populated places in the Ottoman Empire. The population was not evenly distributed throughout the province. The population density was concentrated on the

⁵⁷² McCarthy, p. 105.

⁵⁷³ Karpat, p.190.

central Thessaloniki district and the central district of Langaza and Tikveş as well as the central district of Drama and Serres county. The least populated areas were the districts of Razlık, Cuma-i Bala, Ksendire and Katerin. Especially the districts of Razlık and Cuma-i Bala had the lowest population density.⁵⁷⁴ It should be noted that there was a high level of human mobility. Banditry, border changes and seasonal husbandry and agricultural labor rendered the population of those areas unstable.

Some of the other peripheral towns such as Kavala recorded a dramatic population growth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. People fleeing the lands on the Bulgarian border found a safe haven in Kavala. The data at hand indicate that between the 1880s and 1909 the population of Kavala increased almost four fold.

Table 12. Population of Kavala in the Nineteenth Century

	1831 ⁵⁷⁵	1882-1893 ⁵⁷⁶	1896 ⁵⁷⁷	1909 ⁵⁷⁸
Muslim	2481	6936	9000	14,000
Non-Muslim	272	1200 ⁵⁷⁹	8000	10,000
Total ⁵⁸⁰	2753	8198	17,600 ⁵⁸¹	32,000

⁵⁷⁴ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik* (Ottoman Year Book on the Thessaloniki Province), 1325 (1907), pp. 357-372.

⁵⁷⁵ Note that the district of Bereketli is also included in the data in 1831 Ottoman Census.

⁵⁷⁶ For further details of this census, see Karpas, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁷⁷ *Annuaire Oriental*, 1896.

⁵⁷⁸ *Annuaire Oriental*, 1909.

⁵⁷⁹ 1100 Greek Orthodox, 100 Bulgarian.

⁵⁸⁰ Note that the “other” category is included in the total number

⁵⁸¹ Thasos Island is included in the total population. Jewish population is 600.

The migrant population of Kavala can be examined in two different categories, permanent migrants coming to settle in Kavala and seasonal labor migrants. Although they cover only a short period of time, transit permit records (*mürur tezkeresi*) can provide some valuable insights into the human mobility within the province. Residence permits were issued by the local administrative units to control movement. Ottoman subjects had to obtain residence permit in order to move from one province to another. In fact, this was a kind of visa arrangement implemented between the provinces of the Empire. A transit permit was acquired from the province of origin. It had to be confirmed by the receiving province, so that it would turn into a residence permit. For a migrant to be able to move from one province to the other, a guarantor person was required. In those documents, it is possible to see who received transit and residence permits in which direction and under whose guarantorship. Besides controlling the increasing level of human mobility, transit or residence permits allowed the state to follow the traces of its tax-payers. In case the migrant or traveler did not pay his taxes in his new place of residence, the state would collect it from the guarantor.⁵⁸²

Having a guarantor in the receiving province and paying for the transit and residence permits can be regarded as obstacles for the rural poor to move to relatively more prosperous urban commercial areas either to work or live. Especially the local administrators of the neighborhoods (*muhtar*) assumed the guarantorship of the emigrants in Kavala. The local administrator of the Hamidiye neighborhood assumed the guarantorship of most immigrants. Hamidiye neighborhood (the old Kırarkası neighborhood) in Kavala was a newly established migrant settlement given the

⁵⁸² BOA. DH MKT. 2873/43, 23.C.1327.

name of Sultan Abdulhamid II, the same as the one in Thessaloniki.⁵⁸³ Although it was not the case on several occasions, the potential emigrant did not need to manage his migratory process by means of his personal engagements since the local administrator of the receiving destination assumed the guarantorship.

The sixth article of the Transit Permit Decree provided another facilitating factor for the movement of the poor, free transit permits.⁵⁸⁴ When the transit residence permit arrangement was abolished after the restoration of the constitution in 1908, movement within the country was liberated. Thus, one can assume that the migration flows to particular migrant-receiving areas such as Kavala accelerated in this period.

The residence permit records of Kavala between 1906 and 1908 allow close consideration of the migrant profile in the city. These residence permits include information on the place of origin, occupation and the guarantor of the migrants. In terms of the place of origin, it is observed that the migrants came from as far away as Manastır, Yanya, Edirne, Aydın and Konya provinces and from the islands of Crete, Malta and Limni, as well as the capital of the Empire. These provinces were the places of departure where they got the transit permits. The exact place of origin of the migrants made up a long list of small districts and villages. In other words, the migrant profile in general was an overwhelmingly rural population.

The districts and villages where the migrants mostly came from were concentrated especially in the northeastern part of Thessaloniki, the most insecure and unstable area of the province. As was discussed in the third chapter, national banditry

⁵⁸³ BOA. İ DH. 1335/1314/M-29, 23.M.1314.

⁵⁸⁴ BOA. DH MKT. 562/50, 14.Ca.1320.

disturbed the security of these areas and gave way to a migration wave from the rural to the urban areas. The banditry activities of several national groups and the frequently changing borders, especially the border with the Bulgarian state, badly affected the living conditions of the people in this region and resulted in a high level of emigration.⁵⁸⁵ Because of the national banditry coming from the Bulgarian side, it was not so easy for the inhabitants of the region to move across the borders. At the same time, those who moved across the Bulgarian border were under the close surveillance.⁵⁸⁶

However, people still were able to move across the borders. For example, in 1909 the tobacco workers of İskeçe, who were unable to receive the expected increase in their wages, fled to the towns of Bulgaria to work.⁵⁸⁷ Especially after the establishment of the Bulgarian state in 1908, Kavala became a more favorable place to work for many tobacco laborers in the region. At least Kavala was a legal choice to move. The following table summarizes the places of origin of the migrants whose permits were confirmed in Kavala.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ BOA.TFR I SL. 27/2651, 30.N.1321.

⁵⁸⁶ BOA.TFR I MKM.18/172, 4.N.1324. BOA.Y PRK SGE.9/118, 30.Z.1320. BOA.DH MKT. 885/38, 19.C.1322.

⁵⁸⁷ BOA.DH İD.107/24, 22.Ca.1329.

⁵⁸⁸ BOA.TFR I SL. 1/126, 1324.10.9.

Table 13. Place of Origin of the People Moving to Kavala

Places of Origin	Proportion of the Migrants in %
Debre-i Bala	17
Kolonya	13
Karahisar-ı Şarki	12
Görice	5
Rakolar	5
Doyran	3
Premidi	3
Naslıç	3
Kesriye	3
İskarapar	2
Greece	2
Italy	0.7
Germany	0.3

Here at this point one can ask how this migration flow to Kavala influenced the communal composition of the population. Relying on the names of the residence permit holders registered in the lists, it can be said that the incoming populations did not make a considerable change in the communal composition of the population in Kavala. There was a balance between the number of Muslim and Christian migrants in those lists. Residence permit statistics in 1908 indicate that the Muslims made up 40 percent of the total migrant population in Kavala while the Christians made up 60 percent.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁹ BOA.TFR I SL. 1/126, 1324.10.9.

What is striking in these lists is the fact that those moving from a particular place came either as a totally Muslim group or a totally Christian group. It is almost impossible to find a place of origin left by a group that was composed of Muslims and Christians at the same time. This situation supports the argument that at least some of the migrant groups moving to Kavala fled the violent attacks of different national banditry groups. Such places as Debre-i Bala,⁵⁹⁰ Karahisar-ı Şarki,⁵⁹¹ Görice,⁵⁹² Kolonya,⁵⁹³ Premidi,⁵⁹⁴ Rakolar⁵⁹⁵ were the targets of national banditry several times in this period. Sometimes Muslim or sometimes Christian villagers were thrown out of their homes by these bands and forced to search for a living somewhere else. The massacre of workers in areas close to the Bulgarian border was reported in the European newspapers of the day. Different groups of national bandits accused each other of killing innocent workers trying to pass this or that side of the border to work in search of a living.⁵⁹⁶ As a result, it can be said that the members of Muslim and non-Muslim

⁵⁹⁰ BOA.TFR I A. 5/424, 15.M.1321. BOA.TFR A. 17/1696, 7.Ra.1322.

⁵⁹¹ BOA. DH MKT. 900/4, 8.Ş.1322.

⁵⁹² BOA. DH MKT. 478/47, 5.M.1320. BOA. DH MKT. 511/31, 8.Ra.1320. BOA. BOA. TFR I MN. 81/8056, 27.L.1323. BOA. BEO. 2909/218147, 23.B.1324. It is also interesting to see that, sixteen people from the Muslim community of a small town in Görice had previously migrated to Istanbul and employed in the *Fez* factory. M.Erdem Kabadayı, "Working in a Fez Factory in Istanbul in the Late Nineteenth Century: Division of Labour and Networks of Migration Formed along Ethno-Religious Lines" *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 17 (December 2009), p. 81.

⁵⁹³ BOA. TFR I MN. 81/8007, 19.L.1323. BOA. TFR I A. 29/2840, 7.M.1324. BOA. TFR I MN. 129/12829, 11.Ca.1325.

⁵⁹⁴ BOA. DH MKT. 520/2, 17.S.1320.

⁵⁹⁵ BOA.TFR I ŞKT.48/4754, 26.Ca.1322. BOA.TFR I A. 36/3545, 8.L.1325. BOA.TFR I MN.176/17546, 22.B.1326.

⁵⁹⁶ BOA. Y PRK ASK. 188/57, 23.N.1320.

communities fleeing the insecure and unstable lands on the Bulgarian borders found their way in Kavala.

Kavala received migrants from other places as well. In the documents, the place of origin of the migrants can be traced to places as far away as Aydın and Konya provinces. Although marginal in numbers, foreigners also were included in the residence permit lists. But it should be noted that the analysis to be made upon those lists can not give a proper number of migrant labor stock in Kavala, because the residence permit was required only to travel across the provinces; movement within the province was free. Therefore, the movement of the laborers within the province also should be taken into account. Kavala attracted a significant number of tobacco laborers from the nearby towns of Sarışaban, Pravişte and from the several places in Drama sandjak which were included in the borders of the same province. Even child tobacco laborers could move between Sarışaban and Kavala, for example.⁵⁹⁷ Thus, the migrant labor stock in Kavala was larger than it is seen in the residence permit lists.

Another handicap of the residence permit statistics is the fact that they register only the legal movement of the people, thus illegal movements are not considered. The residence permit list is an important source in the sense that it enables one to draw the migration routes to Kavala.

What the route of the residence permits reveals is the fact that most of the migrants moved to Kavala from insecure places in the northeastern part of the province. The Serres district of the Thessaloniki province and some parts of Monastir province, such as the districts of İskeçe and Gümülcine, constituted the most insecure regions. For

⁵⁹⁷ BOA.TFR I SL. 58/5704, 15.N.1322.

example, İskeçe, another center of tobacco production, was no longer safe for tobacco producers and laborers. All the Bulgarian laborers were fired from the tobacco workshops there by the incitement of the Metropolitan Bishop and the Greek Consul.⁵⁹⁸ This mutual hatred between the Greek and Bulgarian communities resulted in murders and increased the incidents of banditry. Besides that, because the bandits wandered around under the guise of tobacco laborers, real tobacco laborers were imputed as criminals.⁵⁹⁹ As a result, tobacco was a risky sector for the commercial laborers, agricultural producers and the merchants in İskeçe and its environs. The director of the American Tobacco Company in İskeçestated after the murder of a tobacco merchant that he did not feel safe there.⁶⁰⁰ In comparison to such places in the northeast, Kavala was a safe haven. Therefore, it received a significant number of migrant laborers from these insecure regions.

Another category of migrant laborers in Kavala was composed of seasonal workers flooding to Kavala in the summer months. Except for a few workshops of the big commercial companies, most of the tobacco workshops operated from March to September at most. The high season of the sector lasted for three months, from June to August.

The seasonal tobacco laborers reduced the wages in the sector. The Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala, which was introduced in the previous chapter, tried to stop this seasonal migration wave. One of the two demands of the tobacco workers' syndicate during the strike in 1905 was the employment of only local

⁵⁹⁸ BOA.BEO.3048/228543, 19.Ra.1325.

⁵⁹⁹ BOA.DH MKT. 1249/64, 22.Ra.1326. BOA.DH MKT. 2830/52, 14.Ca.1327.

⁶⁰⁰ BOA.DH MKT. 2842/74, 24.Ca.1327.

laborers.⁶⁰¹ This means that the local tobacco laborers of Kavala tried to isolate the outsiders from the tobacco labor market since the early periods of their struggle. Here, it is suggested that this defensive position of the local tobacco laborers against the outsiders produced a cross-communal identity among the members of different communities and a multi-communal labor organization.

It also should be noted that while the outsiders were flooding to Kavala to work in the tobacco workshops, the local tobacco laborers sought ways to migrate to the USA. As was noted before, the tobacco industries in the USA and Europe invited tobacco experts from Kavala and other leading places of tobacco production. For this reason, the qualified labor power was under the risk of eroding in Kavala. The first article of the statute of the syndicate in Kavala declared that one of the main targets of the organization was to prevent the emigration of workers to the USA.⁶⁰²

The agricultural producers of the Ottoman Balkans also migrated towards the end of the nineteenth century. Akarlı emphasizes the falling international prices of wheat from the 1880s as an important factor in the transatlantic emigration from the region.⁶⁰³ Gounaris states that a series of bad harvests between 1897 and 1910 reduced the incomes of the peasants of Monastir province near Thessaloniki. Besides reducing incomes, the impact of the Bulgarian uprising against the Ottoman Empire and heavy tax burdens forced the rural populations of the region to migrate. They became

⁶⁰¹ Vyzikas, p. 14.

⁶⁰² BOA. DH İD. 132/4, 3.Za.1329. See also Appendix 5.

⁶⁰³ Ahmed Akarlı, "Growth and Retardation in Ottoman Macedonia, 1880-1910." In *The Mediterranean Response to Globalisation Before 1950*, ed. Ş. Pamuk and J. Williamson (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 109-133.

urbanites shortly after.⁶⁰⁴ Adanır stresses that many farmers in Ottoman Macedonia turned to tobacco production towards the end of the nineteenth century because of its rising commercial value.⁶⁰⁵ So, one can assume that the rural populations of Ottoman Macedonia had two alternatives, either adapting to the agricultural and/or commercial tobacco production or searching a new life in nearby areas or as far away as the USA.

Besides those asking for permission to work in Bulgaria,⁶⁰⁶ there were also those leaving for the USA.⁶⁰⁷ In terms of the out migrations from the Ottoman Balkans, relying on the Rumeli Inspectorate documents, it can be said that the most mobile group was the Bulgarians. According to the statistics of the Thessaloniki governorship, the number of people migrated from the Ottoman Balkans to Bulgaria reached 20,000-30,000 in 1911.⁶⁰⁸ Relying on the German consular reports, however Adanır states that the emigration of young farmers to the USA was more considerable than the migration to Bulgaria. He notes that the number of those emigrating from the Macedonia to the USA was about 25,000 between 1902 and 1906, which was equal to 10 percent of the male labor force.⁶⁰⁹ According to the findings of this study the number of those migrating to Bulgaria was comparable to those migrating to the USA. Besides the

⁶⁰⁴ Basil C. Gounaris, "From Peasants into Urbanites, from Village into Nation: Ottoman Monastir in the Early Twentieth Century," *European History Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2001), pp. 43-63. See also Basil C. Gounaris, "Emigration from Macedonia in the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, no. 7 (1989), pp. 133-153.

⁶⁰⁵ Adanır, p. 43.

⁶⁰⁶ BOA.TFR I SL. 100/10047, 1324.2.10. BOA.TFR I SL. 97/9671, 1.M.1324.

⁶⁰⁷ BOA.TFR I SL.107/10612, 1324.3.28. For the Ottoman legislation on emigration to the USA, see Fahri Çoker, "ABD'ye Göç Etmenin Çilesi," *Tarih ve Toplum* 12, no.62 (1989), pp. 41-43.

⁶⁰⁸ BOA. TFR I SL. 207/20677, 1327.3.25.

⁶⁰⁹ Adanır, p. 44.

economic conditions, safety reasons and the establishment of the Bulgarian state, the forced labor that the people were subjected to on the farms also.⁶¹⁰ In any case, the scope of emigration seems larger than we can detect.⁶¹¹

Consequently, the mobility was high among the people of the province. While some found their way abroad, others sought sanctuary in the nearby areas. It seems that the large number of migrant and seasonal tobacco laborers moving to Kavala was not welcomed by the local tobacco workers. It is argued that the tobacco laborers of Kavala developed a kind of local patriotism⁶¹² in response to the presence of migrant laborers.

The conceptualization of the notion of “local patriotism” differs significantly in several scholarly works. In the study of Burckhardt, it is a preceding form of national patriotism in the context of Renaissance Italy. The same concept is regarded by Lane as an orientation to celebrate universally shared revolutionary, patriotic and labor traditions. Mansfield’s definition is similar to that of Lane in the sense that the notion is contextualized within the labor tradition. Local patriotism in both works is regarded as a step towards national patriotism. Nevertheless, the concept of “local patriotism” in this study differs from the others in the sense that it operates in a multi-communal society as an alternative to nationalism. Moreover, it is formulated as a reactionary identity.

Besides the migrants, female laborers were another category of “other” in response to

⁶¹⁰BOA TFR I SL 48/4780 1322.5.27

⁶¹¹ Note that the same region, especially the tobacco producing rural areas of Serres under Greek administration became subjected to another wave of outmigration in the interwar period and shortly after. For the influences of outmigration for agricultural tobacco production in the region, see Cornelis J.J. Vermeulen, “Repressive Aspects in the Process of Outmigration: The Case of a Greek Macedonian Tobacco Village,” *Mediterranean Studies* 1, (1979), pp. 32-45.

⁶¹² For further discussion on the notion of “local patriotism”, see Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance Italy* (London: Penguin, 1990); Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Nicholas Mansfield, *English Farmworkers and Local Patriotism, 1900-1930* (London: Ashgate, 2001).

which the male local tobacco laborers developed a common identity irrespective of their communal differences. The following section examines the women labor factor within the tobacco labor movement.

Women in the Ottoman Labor Market

This part of study scrutinizes the integration of women into the tobacco labor force and the labor struggle. The organization of labor in a women's labor-intensive sector deserves special attention. The question now is the position of the women laborers in the organized labor.

Speaking on the women tobacco laborers requires a comparative context. Otherwise, it is not possible to detect what was peculiar to the group in question. The textile sector seems to be the most reasonable reference point to start analyzing the process of the integration of women into the labor force. Textiles were the most widespread and long-standing traditional women's job. Therefore, this section presents the process of women's integration into the work force and money economy in general, necessarily by making reference to the developments in the textile sector in the nineteenth century.

World systemic developments integrated the lower-class women of the Empire into the workforce earlier than the upper-class intellectual and professional women. While the economic development model of the Empire was drawing large numbers of lower class women into the textile, tobacco and other agricultural food processing sectors, most of the middle class women in the cities were still isolated from the work force.

Although marginal in number, Ottoman women were employed also in some professional jobs, which were open to them. They were mainly employed as mid-wives, nurses and teachers. At a time when textile and carpet production was promoted by the state, women were employed as teachers, especially as weaving teachers in girls' schools.⁶¹³ Female philanthropists in the Empire donated weaving, spinning, embroidery and tailor schools and ateliers for girls, especially for orphans, needy women and widows who were deprived of their fathers and husbands to look after them. This was perceived as a gift to a woman, especially for a needy woman, to gain her own livelihood.⁶¹⁴ Although limited in number, women had engaged in the textile trade also.⁶¹⁵

Concerning the lower classes of women, textile workers are the most studied category in Ottoman labor history, because textiles was the oldest and probably the most extensive sector employing women's labor throughout the period of the transformation of commercial capital to industrial capital. Quataert discusses how the women's labor factor could change our established knowledge when supplemented⁶¹⁶ to the story of Ottoman manufacturing in the nineteenth century. He says that, women's work is a key to understanding the history of Ottoman manufacturing in that time period. As the output of the male-dominated guild type labor organizations was falling

⁶¹³ BOA.MF.MKT. 381/55, 11.S.1315. BOA. MF MKT. 681/61, 29.L.1320.

⁶¹⁴ BOA. MF MKT. 770/2, 01.M.1322. BOA. DH MKT. 1237/18, 28.M.1326.

⁶¹⁵ Haim Gerber, "Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City Bursa," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 12 (1980).

⁶¹⁶ For the critique of women's history as an "innocuous supplement, see Joan W. Scott, "Women's History: The Emergence of a New Field," in *New Perspectives in Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1989).

throughout the century, women played an integral role in the textile manufacturing sector operating both at home and in the workshops. Since the textile manufacture was the main engine of the Ottoman economy in the age of industrialization, this is to say that women mediated the process of integration to the world economy in the nineteenth century.⁶¹⁷

The putting-out system helped the women engage in the labor market and money economy from the beginning of nineteenth century. Women worked in their homes in Rumeli, the Aegean provinces, Ankara, Adana, Bursa and in many other places. They spun, wove and embroidered. It is stated that at the beginning of nineteenth century there were approximately 10,000 women laborers in Ankara employed at a thousand looms operated either at home or in work places. There were 3000 women and 5000 girls working at 600 carpet looms in Uşak in the 1880s. In İzmir, 3500 women and 750 girls wove carpets at the 2000 weaving looms in 1906.⁶¹⁸ By 1912, the province of Konya had some 4000 looms with 15,000-20,000 working girls, more than three times the number of 1906.⁶¹⁹ The leading coarse wool centers in Thessaloniki province, Nevrekop, Niaousta and Mayadağ towns, had 2125 looms in 1890.⁶²⁰ As a result, textile weaving enabled the integration of women into the work force and the money economy.

⁶¹⁷ See Donald Quataert, "Women Households and Textile Manufacturing 1800-1914," in *The Modern Middle East*, ed. A. Hourani, P.S. Khoury, M.C. Wilson (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 255-270; Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Uşak'ta Kadın Halı İşçilerinin İsyanı 1908," *Toplumsal Tarih* 17, no. 99 (2002), pp. 54-57; Şehmus Güzel, "1908 Kadınları," *Tarih ve Toplum* 7, (1984), pp. 6-12.

⁶¹⁸ *Taraf*, 27 Nisan 2008.

⁶¹⁹ Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Manufacture in the Nineteenth Century," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 111.

⁶²⁰ *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik*, 1307(1889), p. 227.

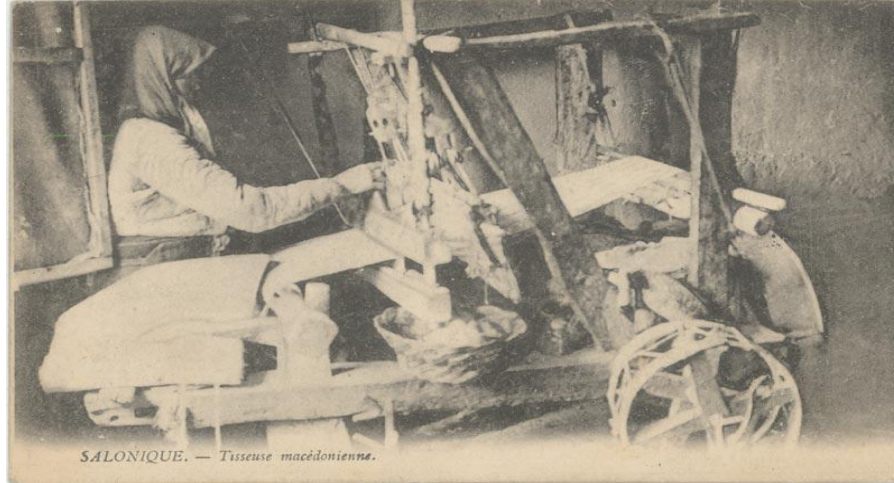


Figure 20. A Spinning Loom (Municipality Library of Thessaloniki, No. T051/015)

The female work force was employed not only in the textile weaving sector, but although perhaps limited in number, they also were employed in factory production. Besides the several cigarette factories of the Régie Company, they were employed in textile factories and several other industrial plants. For example, 121 out of 201 workers employed in a match factory in Istanbul in 1897 were women. 50 percent of the workers employed in Bakırköy cloth factory were women.⁶²¹ These data can be enlarged but it can be sufficient to give an idea about the magnitude of the women labor force in the Ottoman labor market in the late nineteenth century.

Women's integration into the labor market outside the home was a difficult process. Their employment in work places was much more problematic than employment at home. Female labor was unsteady in general. In the Thessaloniki year book of 1909, it is noted that the Public Dept Administration(PDA)established a silk

⁶²¹*Taraf*, 27 Nisan 2008.

factory in Gevgili, a nearby town in central Thessaloniki with easy access to the transportation. This factory was built in 1898 and its labor force was made up of 400 girls who came from the small towns. The factory failed to be profitable because of the irregular attendance of the girls and the lack of work discipline. They usually left the job before the end of their contracts.⁶²² The irregularity and instability of the female labor force also were observed in the tobacco sector. Especially the Jewish girls of Thessaloniki started working while they were very young and left their jobs when they had earned enough money for their dowries, *drahoma*, which was a traditional requisite for a girl in the Jewish community to be able to marry.

Either operated at home within the framework of the putting-out system or outside in the concentrated work places, the textile sector was a strong determinant defining and structuring the relation of Ottoman women with the labor market. The tobacco sector provided another opportunity for Muslim women of lower classes especially towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the textile sector was no longer favorable in terms of wage levels. Van Os states that the increasing volume of thread production resulted in an increase in labor demand between 1845 and 1855. At first, Rums were employed at relatively high wages to satisfy the labor demand. Then Muslim, Jewish and Armenian girls from the nearby villages were employed at lower wages. Between 1909 and 1912, the average wage level in the sector was three piastres and the wages varied from 100 para to six piastres.⁶²³ These wages were almost 50 percent lower than those of the women tobacco workshop laborers around the same period. As was examined in the third chapter, the tobacco sector developed at the

⁶²² *Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Selanik*, 1325 (1907), p. 270.

⁶²³ Van Os, p. 14.

disadvantage of the textile sector in the Thessaloniki province and it attracted the cheap female labor force of the textile sector in return for relatively higher wages.

While most of the women tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki were Jewish girls, Muslim women were employed in the tobacco workshops of Kavala together with Christian women.

So far, the work life of Ottoman women has been studied as a question of woman's liberation voiced by the middle and upper class women in the columns of women's journals in the late Ottoman period. This study examines how a developing sector changed the lives of the lower classes of women in the Ottoman Balkans. It is suggested that the integration of women into the tobacco processing sector brought some radical changes or a rupture in the working experience of Ottoman women.

The First World War was a turning point, integrating women into the labor force on a massive scale. The Society for the Employment of Muslim Women (*Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi*) was established by the Minister of War Enver Pasha under the auspices of his wife, Naciye Sultan, in 1916. It was an institution mobilizing the women labor for the war time necessities. This society promoted especially the integration of Muslim women into the workforce. Within two and a half months 14,000 Muslim women applied to this organization for jobs.⁶²⁴

The factors driving women to work were of course different in the textile sector and in the war time labor market, but it can be suggested that these two occasions did not bring a rupture in the traditional role of the Ottoman women in terms of the gender

⁶²⁴ For further details about the war time employment of women, see Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Women War and Work in the Ottoman Empire: Society for the Employment of Muslim Women 1916-1923* (İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2007).

division of labor. This is to say that, on one occasion they were making cloths and in the other they were nursing and both of these positions were extensions of women's household labor. In other words, these positions were defined in parallel to the household duties of women. They were "appropriate" jobs for women, which were acceptable according to the existing system of the gender division of labor.

The putting out system retarded the development of the concept of work place.⁶²⁵ Here it is suggested that, even carried to the concentrated work places outside the home, the textile sector and the war time employment did not bring the necessary rupture from the traditional women roles in terms of mentality. Close links between house work and textile manufacturing or nursing did not allow the development of a work notion irrespective of the woman's traditional family roles. This is say to say that the line between the house work and working for the market was not clear in the textile and nursing jobs. The question is; how could a woman doing the same job both at home and outside in the market understand her own working status? This meant little more than to carry the housework physically outside. Thus, it is argued that the textile and nursing jobs enabled the integration of women into the money economy, but did not relieve them from the traditional gender division of labor.

In this study, it is suggested that the job opportunities offered by the tobacco sector provided a radical opening for Ottoman women, distancing them from the traditional gender division of labor both in physical and mental terms. In the tobacco sector, woman took part even as smuggler, which was considered an exclusively male domain. As a result, the tobacco sector, with its legal and illegal market interactions,

⁶²⁵For the effects of putting out system, see Oya Sencer, *Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı* (Istanbul: Habora Yayınevi, 1969); Quataert, "Women Households and Textile Manufacturing," pp.255-270.

workers' organizations and strikes, was a radical venue for the Ottoman women laborers, breaking all the ties with the household jobs and its connotations.

The Integration of Women into the Tobacco Market

The magnitude of the agricultural export sector and its employment capacity were examined in the first chapter. The rapidly growing tobacco workshops employed a considerable number of women elsewhere and especially in Thessaloniki province. This section tries to shed light on the women's labor force of the tobacco workshops. The integration of women into the tobacco labor force is examined here in reference to the market-related conditions, physical requisites of the job and the male labor scarcity.

The period of WWI is often designated as the turning point in the feminization of the tobacco labor. The demographic effect of the world wars always has been considered as a breaking point for the integration of women into the labor force in general. For the same reason, WWI considered to have been a watershed in the process of what we may call the feminization of tobacco labor. Besides that, it is indicated that the introduction of the tonga method in the same period reinforced the feminization of labor, because this method required less skilled labor, which was provided by women.⁶²⁶ Given the mass employment of women in the commercial tobacco sector in the late nineteenth century, this study proposes another periodization for the integration

⁶²⁶ See Efi Avdela, "Class, Ethnicity and Gender in post-Ottoman Thessaloniki; the Great Tobacco Strike of 1914," in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998); Lois P. Labrianidis, "Industrial Location in Capitalist Societies: The Tobacco Industry in Greece 1880-1980" (Ph.D. diss., London School of Economics and Political Sciences, 1982).

of women into the tobacco labor force. The late 1890s is suggested as the first turning point for the feminization of the tobacco labor force.

The Ottoman tobacco sector made significant progress in the mid-1890s, as was explained in the first chapter. In the same period, the European economies were recovering from the Great Depression of 1873-1896 and turning to the heavy industry, which did not employ the women's labor force at all.⁶²⁷ That is to say, in the late nineteenth century Ottoman women had better employment opportunities in comparison to their fellows in Europe. While classical liberalism was losing ground in favor of heavy industrialization in Europe and recruiting only the male labor force, the agricultural food processing sector in the Ottoman Empire employed a considerable number of women. Çizakça notes that the position of the Ottoman women workers in the nineteenth century, especially in the textile sector, was comparable to those of Japanese and British women. The long working hours, work discipline and the workers' dorms resembled those in the Europe and in Japan.⁶²⁸

On the other hand, the fall of the textile sector in this period reinforced the feminine character of the developing tobacco sector. Quataert notes that the women laborers of the textile workshops were transferred to the flourishing tobacco workshops nearby by the late 1890s and early 1900s.

After the last decade of the nineteenth century, the next period of the feminization of the tobacco labor force occurred as a result of the manipulations of the

⁶²⁷ For an assesment indicating 1890s as a turning point for the European women labor, see Jean Quataert, "Women in the Era of Interventionist State: An Overview 1890 to Present," in *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World from 1500 to Present*, ed. Marilyn J. Boxer, Jean H. Quataert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁶²⁸ Murat Çizakça, "A Short History of the Bursa Silk Industry," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 23 (1980), p. 151.

big tobacco companies. Companies like the American Tobacco Company and the Herzog Company applied various methods to reduce production costs. The simple way of reducing production costs was to replace the male labor force with the cheaper female laborers. In this way, more women started to enter the tobacco labor force, but in return for reduced wages in comparison to those of men. Consequently, although the female labor continued to enter into the tobacco labor force in the first decade of the 1900s, the conditions were not as favorable as a decade before. But overall, the number of women laborers in the sector increased during these two decades. For example, the number of women tobacco workers in Kavala reached 7000-8000 according to Quataert.⁶²⁹ It was not less than the number of carpet weavers in İzmir or silk weavers in Bursa at the turn of the twentieth century.

After such a periodization of the feminization of tobacco labor, the next question is which factors promoted the women's integration into the tobacco labor market. The effects of the market related conditions driving women into the tobacco workshops have explained already. 83 percent of the workforce in the single cigarette factory of Thessaloniki owned by the Régie Company was composed of women. Since the tobacco export sector was much more extensive than the tobacco industry, the number of female workshop laborers far exceeded the number of those who worked in the cigarette factories. According to the estimations of Quataert, the tobacco workers in Kavala were almost evenly divided by gender. However, in the workshops of central Thessaloniki, women were the overwhelming majority.⁶³⁰ Besides that, 70 percent of the

⁶²⁹ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 71.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

tobacco workshop laborers in İzmir and 80 percent of those in Istanbul were women.⁶³¹ In this case, one can relate the employment of women in the tobacco sector with a physical factor peculiar to women. According to this point of view, it can be assumed that the small hands of women were more suitable for the tobacco processing job in comparison to those of men.

As was described in the third chapter, the tobacco processing job was based on the sorting of leaves according to type, size and quality. What was crucial for the commercial processing job was to be familiar with the type and quality of the leaves to be able make the best blend. This did not require small hands. Small were functional for the rolling job, which was part of cigarette production. Therefore, while women's hands were an advantage for the rolling and packaging activities of the cigarette factories, they were not for the commercial processing workshops. But it should be underlined that most cigarette factories of the Régie Company contained cigarette rolling machines operated by women workers. Salih Zeki noted that the functioning mechanism of the rolling machines was so easy, they could easily be operated by two women.⁶³² The Régie Company in Thessaloniki had rolling machines as early as in 1883.⁶³³ So it comes out that the employment of women in the tobacco workshops had to do with socio-economic factors rather than physical requisites.

The below postcards showing fig and currant workers in İzmir is a visual evidence of the social character of the gender division of labor rather than the physical

⁶³¹ Fatma Doğruel, A. Suut Doğruel, ed. *Osmanlıdan Günümüze: Tekel* (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2000), p.278.

⁶³² Salih Zeki, p. 132.

⁶³³ Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," p. 66.

requisites. According to this physical argument, the figures in the two photographs should be changed. Men should have been occupied with the fig processing and women should have been sorting and processing the much smaller currants with their smaller hands.



Figure 21. Fig processing women in a workshop in İzmir (Sacit Kutlu, p. 135)

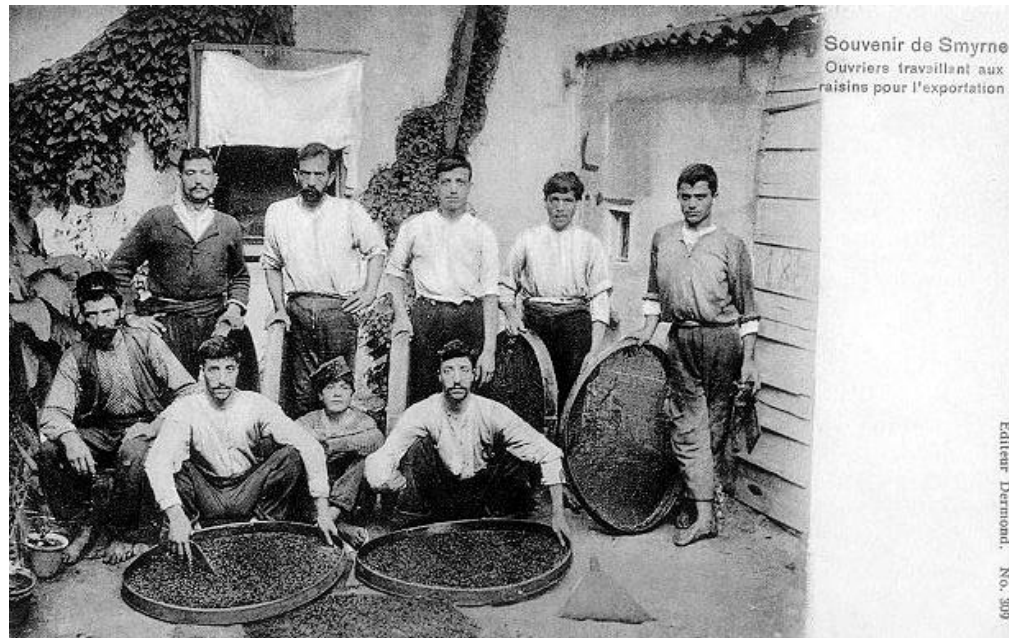


Figure 22. Currant workers in a workshop in İzmir (Sacit Kutlu, p. 136).

Besides the other factors, demographic figures also can give some ideas about the integration of women into the tobacco labor force. If men and women are regarded as the two component parts of the labor supply, it can be argued that the scarcity of one of them promotes the employment of the other. In other words, a scarcity of male labor might have been one of the factors drawing the female labor into the tobacco labor force. Then, the question is whether there was a problem with the male labor supply in Thessaloniki province at the turn of the twentieth century.

When the state of affairs and the activities in which the men were engaged in the late nineteenth century are considered, one can get some ideas about the state of the male labor supply. In this respect, smuggling, and migration can be listed among the factors changing the gender composition of labor. Smuggling was a very large sector within the tobacco sector. Smuggling and illegal manufacturing were so widespread that

in some places it was hard to find legal cigarette produced by the Régie Company.⁶³⁴ As was noted before, the illegal tobacco sector employed 7000 males as a police force and caused the loss of 20,000 people from the smuggler bands only in the year 1901.⁶³⁵ These numbers indicate that a considerable amount of men might have drawn into the smuggling sector, either as smugglers or as police. As a result, it can be suggested that the large scope of the illegal tobacco sector was an important factor reducing the male labor supply in the legal sector. Moreover, the illegal tobacco sector not only employed men but also led to their death in violent armed conflicts. When the high level of smuggling is considered, one can think that the women might have replaced the men as the available work force. Consequently, when the labor supply is taken into consideration, it comes out that the legal and illegal parts of the tobacco sector were distributed respectively between the female and male laborers.

Besides smuggling, migrations can be counted among the main demographic factors reducing the male labor supply. First, it should be noted that the migrant profile that was mobile within and outside the province had an overwhelmingly male character. Afore mentioned transit and residence permit registers reveal that the migrant profile was composed almost solely of men. One exception in this regard was the border crossings in the northeast part of the province. People generally move on the Bulgarian border with their families or men migrate first and the women followed them to reunite the families. Male migration to the New World must have also reduced the male labor force to some extent. As noted earlier, the emigration of young peasants to the USA

⁶³⁴ Basil Williams, ed. *Life of Abdulhamid, Makers of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Henry Hult and Comp. 1917), p. 179.

⁶³⁵ Gökdemir, p. 103.

took 10 percent of the male labor force between 1902 and 1906.⁶³⁶ The Ottoman government took some measures to prevent this emigration wave, which was accelerated after the promulgation of the new legislation that required the conscription of the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire.⁶³⁷

In addition to the above-mentioned general conditions driving women into the tobacco labor force, it should be noted that they showed differences in particular localities. While the Jewish girls of Thessaloniki preferred temporary jobs in the tobacco workshops, the older women, especially the widows who carried the financial burden of feeding their children, preferred domestic service jobs in the houses of the wealthy families. Hadar notes that although the wages in domestic service jobs were low, they provided more economic security and sustainability.⁶³⁸ Besides that, domestic service under the protection of a family could be a preferable job in terms of social protection. This is to say that the job could be more favorable for women deprived of the protection of their families, fathers or husbands, who felt insecure and vulnerable to the abuses of the world outside in a patriarchal society. The paradox of dealing with the patriarchal authority, seeking a patriarchal shelter as the antidote to patriarchal abuse, becomes visible here.

As was mentioned before, the women tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki were mostly made up of Jewish girls, who worked until they had accrued enough money for marriage. Nevertheless, the situation might have been different for the Muslim and Christian women working in the tobacco workshops of Kavala. Free of the

⁶³⁶ Adanır, p. 44.

⁶³⁷ BOA. DH MKT. 1500/114, 3.Ş.1305. BOA. DH İD. 107/24, 22.Ca.1329.

⁶³⁸ Hadar, p. 130.

drahomafactor, married and unmarried Muslim and Christian women could work with their families. There were some cases where married working women had their grown up children beside them, employed in the least skilled stages of the tobacco production.⁶³⁹

The insufficiency of the wages can be regarded as another factor drawing the wives and children of a family to work.⁶⁴⁰ In this regard, it may have been a household strategy for some women and their families. On the other hand, in some cases men and women laborers might have been required to work in pairs because of the type of operations implemented in the workshop. As Nollas indicates, they sat in pairs on rush mats on the floor. Each pair of qualified workers had an unskilled women worker sitting cross-legged next to them to stack the chosen leaves into small piles.⁶⁴¹ This was mostly the case in Kavala. The job descriptions and the visual material presented by Hadar suggest that it was not the case in the tobacco workshops of Thessaloniki, where the overwhelming majority of the labor force was made up of women and there had been at least no organizational restriction for the employment of women in qualified positions.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁹ Aykan Candemir. *İzmir 1921*. İzmir: İzmir Büyük Şehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2000, p. 21.

⁶⁴⁰ In a pamphlet of the Turkish Socialist Party in 1920, it is stated that the employment of the father alone is not enough to gain the livelihood of a family. For further details, see Zafer Toprak, "Türkiye Sosyalist Fırkasının Bir Risalesi: Sosyalistlik Nedir?" *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 2 (1977), pp. 134-35.

⁶⁴¹ Nollas, p. 24.

⁶⁴² Hadar, pp. 129-152.



Figure 23. The Herzog Company in Kavala (Tobacco Museum of Kavala Municipality)

The presence of the Muslim women in the labor force has often been regarded as marginal.⁶⁴³ This might have been the case for middle-class Muslim women, but not for lower class Muslim women. For example, while the Régie Company in Istanbul did not still employ any female Muslim officer in 1914,⁶⁴⁴ Tobacco workshops, as well as some

⁶⁴³ In the above photograph, Muslim women are recognizable by their white headscarfs. In the Ottoman Empire, clothing indicated the ethnic and religious identity of a person. Scarce notes that “Turkish women of Thessaloniki took to the streets in the fashion of *ferace* and *yaşmak* as worn in contemporary Istanbul.” Jennifer M. Scarce, *Women’s Costume of the Near and Middles East* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 100. While *ferace* was a kind of black out wear covering the whole body of a woman from the head to the feet, *yaşmak* was just a white headscarf. Here in this picture Muslim women appear with their *yaşmak*. For further information about women cloths of the various communities, see Melek Sevüktekin Apak, et. al., *Osmanlı Dönemi Kadın Giyimleri* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1997).

⁶⁴⁴ Tiğınçe Oktar, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Kadının Çalışma Yaşamı: Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi* (Istanbul: Bilim Teknik Yayınevi, 1998), p. 93. For the employment struggle of the middle-class Muslim women, see also Yavuz Selim Karakışla, “Osmanlı Kadın Telefon Memureleri,”

other agricultural processing workshops such as the fig and currant workshops, had already been employing a considerable number of Muslim woman labor force as early as 1887. Moreover, these women were regarded by the state as persons trying to earn their livelihoods. The number of such women was so considerable that the state felt the need to regulate their working conditions by legal means and researched how the European states did it.⁶⁴⁵

The working environment of the Muslim women in the tobacco workshops is also open to debate. Muslim women working with their husbands and fathers keeping an eye on them might not have required the segregation of the work place as seen in the above photograph, but this might not be the case in other places. For example, the Ottoman State Archive documents reveal that the Muslim women workshop laborers worked in segregated places in İzmir, possibly with the women from the other communities.⁶⁴⁶

Tarih ve Toplum 36, no. 214 (2001), pp. 41-55; Nimet Günaydın, "İlk Kadın Memurlar," *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası*, 4 (1967), pp. 66-67.

⁶⁴⁵ BOA. HR TO. 207/58, 10.11.1887.

⁶⁴⁶ BOA. DH İD. 107/29, 13.B.1329.



Figure 24. Muslim women workers of the Herzog Tobacco Company (Tobacco Museum of Kavala Municipality)

At this point it is interesting to see the same problem concerning the organization of women's work place within the Jewish community of Thessaloniki. In her study on the Jewish women tobacco laborers in Thessaloniki, Hadar notes that "for safeguarding the honor of women workers," the Jewish owner of the Herzog Company called upon Rabbi Meir, the Chief Rabbi of Thessaloniki, to inspect the tobacco workshops in order to investigate the claim that the Jewish girls worked alongside Jewish, Greek and Muslim men in the same workshops. The rabbi found, to his relief, that in the girls' workshop there were only female workers and the only males who infrequently entered there were

elderly men.⁶⁴⁷ Similar problem concerning the women's work places occurred in Lebanon, Bursa, Istanbul and elsewhere in the Empire. The families did not allow their girls to work in a newly established factory in Lebanon for the reason that they were required to work together with men.⁶⁴⁸ Factory owners in Bursa applied to the Muslim and Christian religious authorities and got their consent in order to be able to employ female labor force. They applied even to the Pope and received a written permission allowing the employment of Armenian girls in the textile workshops and ateliers in Bursa.⁶⁴⁹ Gender segregation of work place was also observed in the cigarette factory of the Régie Company in Istanbul, where most of the women labor force was made up of the non-Muslims. As Balsoy suggests, mobility in the work space was a privilege of power. Only male supervisors had access to the female departments.⁶⁵⁰ Contrary to the widespread way of reasoning, the question of the organization of women's work places is not a peculiar problem of an Islamic society nor does it concern only Muslim women laborers. This rather orientalist approach undermines the patriarchal practices, the problem of gender inequality cross-cutting all the communities.

Upon the various complaints and claims about the "honor of working women," the government issued a decree in 1911 concerning the matter. The decree says that the Islamic rules were not violated because the Muslim women working in the raisin, fig, acorn and tobacco workshops performed their jobs in separate places with the

⁶⁴⁷ Hadar, p. 132.

⁶⁴⁸ Roger Owen, "The Silk Industry of Mount Lebanon, 1840-1914," in *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, ed. H. İslamoğlu İnönü (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 274.

⁶⁴⁹ Donald Quataert, *Workers Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire 1730-1914* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), p. 84.

⁶⁵⁰ Balsoy, p. 63.

permission of their fathers and husbands and their wages were given to them by women.⁶⁵¹

As the women entered the labor force in greater numbers, societal preoccupation with women's traditional role and status increased and parties other than the traditional family authority intervened into the affairs. In other words, the traditional family authority was accompanied by the surveillance of other authorities outside the home. It can be suggested that the state authority substituted the traditional family authority and control in the case of the work place organization of Muslim women and the rabbi intervened into a similar problem concerning the Jewish women as the head of the community. Here at this point, it should be noted that the employers guaranteed the "honor" of the women workers in their work places and did what was necessary to convince the patriarchal authorities about this. The sustainability of the cheap woman labor force was crucial for the advantage of the employers in the end. This is to say that the women's relation to work was determined by a tripartite coalition of traditional family authority, bourgeoisie and the state or the communal authority. This means that a woman was required to get the consent of all these authorities to be able to work outside the home.

When the women started to get out of their homes to work, the issue of the "threat outside" created public discussions. It is evident that women also could work as agricultural wage laborers outside their own villages. As was noted before, the majority of tobacco labor force moved from one place to another to make a living. It seems that the women laborers were included in this mobility and this situation posed some

⁶⁵¹ BOA. DH İD.107/29, 13.B.1329.

security problems. They were kidnapped while working outside of their villages⁶⁵² or in another case threatened by armed men.⁶⁵³ This “threat outside” consolidated the power and influence of the patriarchal authorities over the working women. The conservatism of these authorities was expressed clearly in the great strike of the tobacco workers in 1914, which will be explained in detail in the next section.

Consequently, the women tobacco laborers of Thessaloniki province were torn between labor radicalism on the one hand and the traditional patriarchal authority on the other hand. This study draws attention to the point that these apparently different parties came together on a kind of conservatism concerning the women question. The following section investigates the position of women within the labor organizations and tries to examine the similarities between the standing of some labor leaders and the traditional patriarchal authorities.

The Role of Women in the Organization of Labor

In Thessaloniki province, female tobacco laborers found themselves in the midst of labor politics when they entered into the sector. The position of female tobacco laborers within the organization of labor displayed relevant differences in Thessaloniki and Kavala. Although they constituted the majority of labor force in the tobacco workshops, they were not allowed to have an influence in labor politics proportionate to their number. However, they found some niches to make their voices.

⁶⁵²BOA. TFR I SL. 37/3661, 1322.2.11.

⁶⁵³BOA. DH MKT. 2783/5, 10.Ra.1327.

In the context of the Ottoman labor history, one can find several instances concerning women's reactions to wages, working conditions or the introduction of new machinery and resulting unemployment problems. The struggle of female laborers took different forms such as writing letters to newspapers, petitioning, luddite reactions, participation in strikes and providing support to strikers. The ways in which the Ottoman women laborers displayed their reaction requires closer examination.

Among the labor reactions of women, writing letters to newspapers played an important role. They made their voices heard in this way. The letter of a girl from a thread factory in Bursa, which was published in the *İştirak*, is informative in this sense. The girl noted that the number of female laborers in the silk factories and workshops was about 5000 and that she spoke on behalf of them. She stressed that she applied to the "free" press to make their voices heard. She described their working conditions as a kind of serfdom. She mentioned not only their physical deprivation but also attracted attention to their social and psychological deprivation compared to the affluent girls of their age. Besides that, she expressed disappointment in the intellectuals striving for the well-being of humanity and the universal laws protecting the laborers.⁶⁵⁴

Other women spoke on behalf of the women laborers in the columns of the newspapers. For example, a woman reader, Faika, wrote a letter to *Terakki* newspaper describing the living conditions of female textile workers. She wrote, "When my father was an official in Balıkesir, I saw those poor Anatolian women working and working,

⁶⁵⁴Evrensel, 25 March 2007.

by God, to earn more than men. What will come of our setting ourselves up as ladies? After there is no money left in our pockets, of what use will it be to be ladylike?”⁶⁵⁵

As Karakışla points out, most of the women’s press addressed upper-class women. A class distinctive attitude of the upper class ladies vis-a-vis their domestic servants was remarkable.⁶⁵⁶ The first women’s journal published in Thessaloniki, *Kadın*(Woman), was not an exception in this regard.⁶⁵⁷

The letters of women could be represented by men in the press as well. Ferruh Niyazi Bey, the mayor of the town of Elmalı, quoted a letter by a woman named Margeritin *İştirak*. The author was glad that the idea of socialism was spreading among the women of the Empire. He added that there were socialists among the Ottoman women. Despite various handicaps, the progress achieved by Ottoman women was appreciated by the author. According to him, Ottoman women were more successful at adopting socialism than their European fellows.⁶⁵⁸

Petitioning was another way of protest applied by the working women. As early as the 1870s, several groups of women who were unable to get their wages protested the government with petitions. Complaining about their unpaid wages, some fifty female Rum and Armenian workers of the fez factory in Istanbul walked to the Sublime

⁶⁵⁵ Elizabeth Brown Frierson, “Unimagined Communities: State, Press and Gender in the Hamidian Era” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1996), p.244.

⁶⁵⁶ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, “Kadın Dergilerinde (1869- 1927) Osmanlı Hanımları ve Hizmetçi Kadınlar,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 11, no. 64 (Mart 1999), pp. 15-24.

⁶⁵⁷ For further analysis on this journal, see Fatma Kılıç Denman, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Bir Jön Türk Dergisi: Kadın* (İstanbul: Libra, 2009). See also, Hakan Aydın, “Kadın (1908-1909): Selanik’te Yayınlanan İlk Kadın Dergisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme,” *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 22 (2009), pp. 147-156.

⁶⁵⁸ Mete Tunçay, “Osmanlı Kadınları Arasında Sosyalizm Fikirleri ve Margerit Hanımın Mektubu” *Katkı*, no.21, (1975), pp. 23-26.

Porteand submitted their petitions.⁶⁵⁹ In another case, silk factory workers in Bursa sent petitions to the several state departments for the improvement of their working conditions and wages.⁶⁶⁰

Luddite reactions were another kind of labor protest applied by Ottoman women. Bülbul and Özbay suggest that Ottoman women laborers displayed some luddite reactions against the mechanization. In 1908, 1500 Muslim and non-Muslim carpet weaver women in Uşak broke the machines of the Oriental Carpet Manufacturers Limited Company, pillaged the threads and robes and set the factory on fire. In another case, newly established fez factory in Thessaloniki was set to fire by women.⁶⁶¹

In reference to the above cases, it can be suggested that the reactions of female laborers took mostly the form of unorganized reactions to wages, working conditions and the mechanization of production. The protests of the women spinners in Uşak resulted in the closure of the carpet factory and guaranteed an official ban on thread imports. Furthermore, the dismissed women were allowed to return to their jobs as a result of their strong protests.⁶⁶² Even if they had not been apparently backed by a labor organization, such cases suggest that Ottoman women laborers not only protested but also had the ability to change what they protested. These reactions sometimes produced the expected results. For example, a protest of women textile workers in Adana found resonance in the Parliament. They managed to get the issue discussed in the Ottoman

⁶⁵⁹ *Evrensel*, 4 Mart 2007.

⁶⁶⁰ *İkdam*, 9 September 1909.

⁶⁶¹ Quataert, "Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire," p. 296.

⁶⁶² Bülbul and Özbay, p. 31. See also, Şehmus Güzel, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Makine Kırıcılığı" in *Cahit Talas'a Armağan* (Ankara: Mülkiyeliler Birliği Vakfı Yayınları, 1990).

Parliament by several MPs. For example, Varteks Efendi and Halil Bey spoke on behalf of the poor girls and asked for the legislative protection of women and child laborers.⁶⁶³

Besides these labor protests, women also participated in strikes. They were involved in strikes in two different forms, either as the workers themselves or as supporting wives, sisters or daughters. For example, women supported the striking men in the famous strike of Kasımpaşa shipyard workers that lasted for four years from 1873 to 1877. They also were involved in clashes with the strike breakers. The press labeled them as the “women’s forces.” Women supported the tramway workers as well, lying down on the tramway lines to support their striking husbands or fathers.⁶⁶⁴ Women workers joined the strikes on their own behalf as well. For example, in 1904, 50 of 250 striking tobacco workers of the cigarette factory of the Régie in Istanbul consisted of female workers.⁶⁶⁵

Since textiles was the largest sector, employing a massive women’s labor force, most of the women labor protests occurred in this sector, as the above cases indicate. The above-mentioned reactions of the female textile workers were different from the radicalism of the female tobacco laborers in some respects. First, female textile protesters operated in an environment which was free of the presence of men. Since the employment of men in the textile sector was marginal and mostly limited to the administrative positions. This meant they were free of the gender conflicts within the labor movement. On the other hand, female tobacco laborers had to negotiate with their male fellows in every sphere of labor politics, from the action to organization, public

⁶⁶³ Şehmus Güzel, “1908 Kadınları,” *Tarih ve Toplum*, no.7 (1984), pp.6-12.

⁶⁶⁴ *Evrensel*, 4 Mart 2007.

⁶⁶⁵ Balsoy, p. 64.

presence to work promotion. Second, there was no labor organization apparent behind the activism of the textile workers. The female tobacco laborers of the Thessaloniki province, however, acted within organized labor politics.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the female tobacco laborers of Kavala took part in labor activism together with their male fellows from 1879. However, they were gradually isolated from the movement, as the movement became increasingly institutionalized. The female tobacco laborers in Kavala were pushed out of the organized labor politics at a time when the labor movement was increasing its pace. Women's membership in the tobacco workers' syndicate in Kavala was banned by the male laborers in 1908, which was a time that saw a great leap forward for the labor movement in the province in fact. In the study of O. Hakkı⁶⁶⁶ it is stated that the tobacco workers of Kavala and Drama achieved a forceful strike in 1908 with the participation of 14,000 laborers. It is indicated that the female laborers also took part on the strike committee during the strike.⁶⁶⁷ As understood from the registers of the tobacco workers syndicate in Kavala, women's access to the syndicate membership was denied after this strike. The syndicate took a more professional character. Hereafter, only qualified workers (*denkçi*) were accepted as members. This meant that the female laborers, most of whom were unqualified laborers, would not be able to acquire syndicate membership. Moreover, the syndicate prohibited the promotion of female

⁶⁶⁶ Pen name of Zafer Toprak

⁶⁶⁷ Hakkı Onur, "1908 İşçi Hareketleri ve Jön Türkler" *Yurt ve Dünya*, no. 2 (1977), p. 281. It is stated in this article that the strike was organized by a person named Veta. He must either be Andrikos Veta, the minstrel labor leader whose poems are analysed in this study, or Kostis Veta. See Vyzikas, p. 15.

laborers to the position of qualified worker. It is added that if there had been such women, they would not have been allowed to work in this position.⁶⁶⁸

The denial of female tobacco laborers was once more expressed in the protocol signed between the syndicate and the tobacco merchants after the great strike of the tobacco workers in 1914.⁶⁶⁹ As Avdela indicates, striking was a “manly” job. The male comrades in Thessaloniki applauded the “manly stance” of the tobacco workers in Kavala still maintaining the struggle.⁶⁷⁰ The important point here is that while the same syndicate was open to all the tobacco laborers from different communities in a period of the fierce competition of Balkan nationalisms, it was closed to the women.

Concerning the position of the female tobacco laborers within organized labor politics, the situation was different in central Thessaloniki. Tobacco workshop laborers and cigarette factory workers were organized in different bodies. The syndicate of the tobacco workshop laborers contained 3200 active members. 2150 of the total members were women. On the other hand, the syndicate of the cigarette factory workers of the Régie Company had 500 members, 410 of whom were women.⁶⁷¹ Given their overwhelming majority, the presence of women could have not been deniable in the central Thessaloniki city. If the syndicate in Thessaloniki had denied women access to the syndicate, the number of remaining men would not be sufficient to generate a body

⁶⁶⁸ Vyzikas, p. 15.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁶⁷⁰ Avdela, p. 426. Note that the “manly” attitudes of the male Ottoman tobacco workers here was not a peculiar case. Cooper also indicates that the labor organization of the tobacco workers in the USA at the very beginning of the twentieth century was a male dominated union. She argues that male union culture stressed male autonomy, collective identity, respect for manliness and loyalty to each other. For further analysis, see Patricia Ann Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

⁶⁷¹ Moskof, p. 349.

of organized labor. That is to say that, neither the organized labor politics nor the labor activism would have been possible in the absence of the female laborers. Therefore, the tobacco workers syndicates in Thessaloniki had to address the female laborers as well.

In addition, the ideology of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki might have prevented the denial of female laborers. The socialist newspapers of the period stated that a highly applauded lecture titled "Women and Socialism" was given by the Federation at a workers' social gathering. After this speech, the night ended with the dancing of couples and the singing of "socialist songs" in the streets. The recognition of women in ideological terms consolidated their status of agency within the labor politics. As a result, the female tobacco workers of Thessaloniki were able to take their own initiative within the movement. In 1911, female workers of the Régie factory disagreed with the male workers during the strike over the issue of wage increase. The male workers had agreed on a 5 percent reduction in their demands without getting the consent of the female laborers. Upon this decision, the women went on strike on their own, while the men went back to work. The director of the Régie factory sent the men their home, stating that he had no work for them if the women would not come. Finally, the Federation played a conciliatory role between the men and women workers to resolve the dispute.⁶⁷²

Consequently, female tobacco laborers in the central Thessaloniki had a bargaining power of which the women in Kavala were deprived. As was noted before, the presence of the female laborers had a strategic value both for the labor organizations and the employers in Thessaloniki. On the other hand, male laborers in Kavala applied

⁶⁷² Ilıcak, p. 132.

many tactics to keep the cheap female labor force distant from the labor market. In fact, the cheap female labor problem turned into a struggle between the men workers and the employers. Since the male tobacco laborers regarded the women as the mere tools of the employers for reducing wages, they developed an “otherization” strategy regarding women. The men in Thessaloniki probably were discontented with the presence of the cheap female labor, but the mass of women laborers in this locality was not deniable.

In Thessaloniki, the replacement of male laborers with the cheap female laborers took the form of a religious matter. The men were fired by the employers on the pretext that they “saved the honor” of women workers in this way. In response to this trick of the workshop owners, the Tobacco Worker’s Syndicate in Thessaloniki declared that, “The demand to separate the sexes does not arise from the desire of the employers to safeguard the honor of their female employees. It is poverty which shames the male workers as it does the female workers. It is the Tobacco Worker’s Union that protects the honor of the workers, male, female alike.”⁶⁷³

While the tobacco workers’ syndicate in Thessaloniki supported the women members in one way or another, the syndicate in Kavala closed its doors to the women. It also should be kept in mind that these two workers organizations in Thessaloniki and Kavala collaborated in the great strike of 1914 under the same organization, the Socialist Workers’ Federation of Thessaloniki. Unfortunately, the syndicate in Thessaloniki that supported the female comrades did not take the leadership on the question of female workers, but adopted the position of the organization in Kavala.

⁶⁷³ Hadar, p. 131.

Women participated in and supported the tobacco labor activism in the province from 1879. The gradual isolation of women from organized tobacco labor politics was the most unfortunate mistake of the tobacco labor movement in Thessaloniki province. Although the organization and politization of labor was initiated mostly by the male worker leaders and intellectuals, the fate of the movement was dependent on the response of the female laborers since they constituted a large mass to be mobilized. The tobacco labor activism in the province owed its strength to the female laborers.

It seems that the tobacco labor movement in Thessaloniki province displayed its radicalism on the activism front but it did not extend it to other spheres of life. The same movement had some conservative aspects especially concerning the woman question.

The Rise and Fall of the Tobacco Labor Movement: Local Patriotism and Labor Conservatism

While the local patriotism strategy of the tobacco laborers in Kavala consolidated the power of a multi-communal labor politics in a period of escalating national conflict, the conservatism of the same movement gradually was bringing its end.

Despite the isolation of the migrant and female laborers, the tobacco workers' syndicate in Kavala was able to strengthen and extend its domain of power on the eve of the Balkan Wars. The center of the gravity of the labor activism shifted to Kavala in this period. As was mentioned before, the movement had started in Kavala in an earlier period. Although, the intellectual leadership was held by the Socialist Workers'

Federation in Thessaloniki, the organization transferred its most important organ, the Central Action Committee, to Kavala in 1910.

In fact, the intellectual leadership and labor mobilization was distributed respectively between Thessaloniki and Kavala. While Thessaloniki maintained its role as the intellectual center of the movement under the management of the Federation, Kavala was recruiting workers into the movement and providing the labor mobilization. In other words, Thessaloniki was the brain of the movement while Kavala constituted the muscles.

On the eve of the Balkan Wars, Kavala became not only the center of labor activism but also the center of labor politics. The big congress of the tobacco laborers convened in this city requires special attention in this regard. The Congress of the Tobacco Workers of Macedonia and Thrace was convened in Kavala in the summer of 1911. Representatives of Turkish, Greek, Jewish workers from Thessaloniki, Serres, Drama, Kavala and Xanthi attended to the congress. 30,000 tobacco workers were represented in this congress. Dimitar Vlahof, known for his activities as a socialist MP in the Ottoman parliament, was elected as the head of this congress. This means that the tobacco laborers of the region were able to carry their labor politics to the parliamentary level. Nevertheless, Vlahof would be arrested a year after.

It should be underlined here that the tobacco laborers represented the workers of Macedonia and Thrace at this congress. This situation generated a Pan-Thrace sentiment among the workers. As was noted before, this sentiment was transformed into a regionalist program among the workers, who were already acquainted with the Balkan Federation project. In this regard, it can be suggested that the local patriotism strategy of the workers was carried to another level. Since the very beginning, the Socialist

Workers Federation in Thessaloniki regarded the partition of the region into several hostile states a devastating project. It was discontented with the escalating militarism in the region and warned the international socialist circles on this point as well.⁶⁷⁴ As a result, the tobacco laborers of the region were the most populous and determined group on which the Federation relied to get support for its alternative Balkan Federation project.

After the congress in 1911, the tobacco laborers of the region showed their strength and determination in a united strike in 1912.⁶⁷⁵ On 22 March 1912, a strike broke out in Kavala and the strike declarations in Serres, Drama, Pravi and Thessaloniki followed one another. The demands of the strike committee were first, an increase in the daily wages; second, recognition of the workers' organizations; third, seasonal re-arrangement of the working hours; fourth, compulsory syndicate membership; and last giving authorization to the syndicates for the inspection of work places.

This labor activism indicates that the war did not generate a rupture or disintegration in this multi-communal labor movement. Moreover, the scope of the movement extended in this period. Kavala was not the single center of labor activism; the line was extended towards Drama, Serres and Xanthi. Those regions were not totally silent in terms of labor activism during the second constitutional period, but this time the whole region acted together. When the strike was declared in Kavala, the others

⁶⁷⁴ Mete Tunçay, "Osmanlı Yönetiminin Son Yıllarında (1909-1912) Selanik'te Yahudi Sosyalizmi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 3 (1977), p. 137.

⁶⁷⁵ Before the joint strike of the tobacco workers of the province in 1912, Şehmus Güzel notes another strike of the Régie cigarette factory workers on March 1911. He states that the strike was realized in order to force the employer to re-employ twenty-three fired workers. He also notes that the number of strikers was 2300-3000, which clearly indicates that the tobacco workshop laborers in the city also participated in the strike. See Güzel, *Türkiye'de İşçi Hareketi*, pp. 62-63.

followed in a chain reaction and Thessaloniki was the last chain in this line. The great strike of the tobacco workers in 1914 provides a complete picture of this situation.

The newly established Greek administration attempted to change the stages of tobacco processing. New legislation relegating the former commercial processing stage to the agricultural producers was being discussed in the Greek parliament. For a response to this new arrangement, the great strike of the tobacco workers broke out in 1914. As was explained before, tobacco processing had several stages starting in the field and ending in the workshop. Agricultural producers carried out the first processing of the tobacco leaves before they were sold to the merchant. Then the same leaves underwent a commercial processing stage in the workshops. The commercial processing was a complex and complicated job requiring the repeated manipulation of the tobacco leaves with several methods. With this bill, the Greek government attempted to relegate the former part of the commercial processing to the agricultural producers. The labor costs of the tobacco workshops would be reduced in this way.⁶⁷⁶ This meant the unemployment of a part of the existing tobacco labor force. As a result, the tobacco workers protested this bill with a forceful strike.⁶⁷⁷

On 3 March 1914, the representatives of the tobacco workers organizations had a meeting to plan the coordination of their activities. As a final declaration, the tobacco workers' organizations in Kavala, Drama and Thessaloniki agreed to maintain their

⁶⁷⁶ For this new legislation on tobacco processing, see Lito Apostolaku, "'Greek' Workers of Communist 'Others': The Contending Identities of Organized Labor in Greece, 1914-36," *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 3 (July 1997), pp. 409-424. See also, Lois Labrianidis, "Restructuring the Greek Tobacco Industry," *Antipode*, 91, no. 2 (1987), pp. 134-153.

⁶⁷⁷ For a narrative analysis of the strike of tobacco workers in 1914, see Efi Avdela, "Class, Ethnicity and Gender in post-Ottoman Thessaloniki; the Great Tobacco Strike of 1914," in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998).

solidarity against the tobacco merchants. The strike started in Kavala. On 22 March 1914, the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala sent a letter to each of the tobacco merchants operating in Kavala.⁶⁷⁸ Upon the rejection of the workers' demands by the merchants, a strike by 20,000 tobacco workers of Kavala took start on 24 March 1914. The strike committee sent a telegraph to Thessaloniki saying that, "Today, on Thursday morning a strike broke out in Kavala. The strike declaration was announced immediately. Drama gave a hand to the strike."⁶⁷⁹

The tobacco workers' syndicates in Thessaloniki also decided to cooperate with the workers of Kavala and conformed to the strike decision. In this way, the strike disseminated to a larger region and the number of strikers reached 32,000. In Thessaloniki, all the workers came together in front of the office of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki. The leading figures of the Federation addressed the workers. The first speech was delivered by Zeropoulos. He said,

Dear comrades, the workers of Kavala are calling on us to strike. We are just watching, we have to support them... In contrast to the suppositions of the merchants, our life conditions are not humane. Improvement of the situation depends on us. On the other hand, the merchants here agreed some of our demands, but this is not enough. All of our comrades must be satisfied and we have to support them. This situation requires that the committee in Kavala can trust in our support and I am sure that everyone agrees on this. If we display our unity, the merchants will respect us. They will meet our demands. They will not dare to underestimate our humane demands. Live long our strike!"⁶⁸⁰

Then Abraham Benaroya made a speech, saying,

Comrades, our rights are being violated. The tobacco merchants undermine us. The workers of Kavala initiated the strike. Life does not mean only to survive. The question concerns after tomorrow... It seems to me that there is nobody

⁶⁷⁸ For the translation of the entire letter, see Appendix F.

⁶⁷⁹ Vyzikas, p. 21.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

who disagrees with the idea of the committee which means that we should support the workers of Kavala. The workers of Drama also have declared strike. We should do so as well. In this way, we will show our existence, our strength and the merchants will not be able to dominate us. Today, the worker is more valuable than capital for the merchant. Money is dead without the worker. However, they undermine us. We are right about our demands and we will win. Everyone will support us. Live long our solidarity! Live long our strike!⁶⁸¹

On 28 March 1914, the representatives of Drama and Thessaloniki went to Kavala to attend the committee meeting. They decided to continue with the strike. Two days later, a great tension occurred in the streets of Thessaloniki. Workers clashed with the police forces around the Federation building. Violent and bloody events took place.

In the aftermath of the strike, the newspaper *Nea Alitheia* published some articles against the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki and Abraham Benaroya. In the articles, the Federation was accused of being a branch of the Bulgarian *komitadji* and not being patriotic. Vyzikas evaluates the attempts of this newspaper as an attempt to defame the socialist workers movement by the accusation of betrayal as they had several times before. The syndicates made a press release about those newspaper articles. The syndicate in Kavala sent a telegraph to Thessaloniki saying,

We reject the insults of the Thessaloniki edition of *Nea Alitheia*, arguing that the so called provocation of Benaroya took source from the revolutionary komitadji organization. It is obvious that not only the independent and pious fellow Benaroya, but all the tobacco workers of Anatolian Macedonia are patriot Greek citizens respecting the laws and regulations. This struggle is a blessed and rightful one and we expect the fate of the larger, more healthy and more patriotic part of the nation⁶⁸² will get better.⁶⁸³

⁶⁸¹ Vyzikas, p. 24.

⁶⁸² "The larger, healthier and more patriotic part of the nation..." here refers to the workers.

⁶⁸³ Vyzikas, p. 23.

On 4 March 1914, negotiations took place. The tobacco workers of Kavala were represented by Emin, Drama by George and Thessaloniki by Zeropoulos, Yiona and Benaroya. Finally, the negotiations were concluded and the strikes came to an end. Everybody was talking about the victory of the tobacco workers. On 9 March 1914, the “First Kavala Protocol” was signed. It was decided that the official conclusion of the strike would take place in Kavala where the strike had been initiated first. Nevertheless, some of the workers did not comply with the results of the negotiations and the final agreement. They continued to strike. At last, on 15 March 1914, the “Second Kavala Protocol” was signed and the strike was terminated. After this victorious strike of the tobacco workers, the leader cadre of the Federation, especially the Jewish leaders Yiona and Benaroya, were exiled to the Naxos Island for two and a half years.

The strike of 1914 became a turning point in the history of the tobacco labor movement. In the aftermath of this strike, the labor movement in question took a Hellenic character. The Federation and especially its Jewish leadership were accused of being traitors rather than being socialist. The Jewish women of Thessaloniki, who also had participated to this strike actively, were excluded from the rest of the Greek nation together with the Jewish men. As Avdela states, the Jewish women in this strike were accused of being deprived of “womanly honor” and unfitting to the attributions of the nation. The multi-communal political culture of the tobacco laborers did not fade away all of a sudden, but hereafter it became more difficult to be maintained. Muslim worker leaders also maintained their ties with this multi-communal labor movement and later with the Greek Communist Party until their final repulsion in 1923 due to the Lausanne

Population Exchange Protocol.⁶⁸⁴ The Muslims were recruited also as the candidates by the Greek Communist Party in the general elections of 1920.⁶⁸⁵

On the other hand, the great strike of the tobacco workers in 1914 indicates a turning point considering the question of women within the movement. The discrepancy between the Jewish and Muslim female tobacco workers in this strike requires a closer examination. As was noted before, Jewish women laborers attended this strike in great numbers. Muslim laborers were noted as strike-breakers. Greek women, who were referred to as refugees in the Greek newspapers, were also found among the strike-breaking group.⁶⁸⁶ Very little information is available to comment on the position of these women. One can speculate that if those women were not natives of Thessaloniki, it might have been a kind of local vs. migrant labor conflict, like the one observed in Kavala. Or if those women were natives of the city, who were previously non-existent in the tobacco labor market, it can be said that they were alien to the labor acculturation within the movement which had been going on in the city for several decades. In any case, it seems that the conflict manifested itself in the form of a communal conflict between female laborers.

Here at this point, it comes out that the syndicate would not have been able to move forward without resolving the women question. Furthermore, the communal

⁶⁸⁴Note that the communal composition of the region changed dramatically after the Lausanne Population Exchange Protocol signed between Turkey and Greece in 1923. The Muslim population of the former Thessaloniki province were sent to Turkey, in return for the migration of Rums in Anatolia to Greece, except those settled in Istanbul. For further information, see Kemal Arı, *Büyük Mübadele: Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995); Renee Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: the Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Pireaus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁶⁸⁵*Rizospastis*, 15-16 October 1920.

⁶⁸⁶Avdela, p. 426.

conflicts were added to the question of women within the movement. The newly established Greek administration was pressing hard to isolate the Jewish female tobacco workers, the most active and massive part of the labor force, from the movement. In this case, the syndicate in Thessaloniki had two options, either it would defend the women or comply with the state. It seems that the syndicate chose the latter option. Although the tobacco workers syndicates in Thessaloniki and the Federation were more sensitive about the women question, it seems that they failed to find a reconciliation point between the state and the other patriarchal authorities on the question of working women and their status within the labor politics.

Consequently, the position of the labor organizations in Thessaloniki came close to that of Kavala, which had denied the presence of women since the earlier periods of the movement. One can list several reasons for such a transformation of the labor organizations in Thessaloniki. First, it should be noted that the leader cadre of the Federation, the intellectual head of the labor movement in Thessaloniki, was in a crisis because of the arrest and exile of the leading members and legislative threats regarding the organization itself.

The position of the syndicate of the tobacco workshop laborers was explained in the previous section. Although the syndicate in Thessaloniki declared that they protected the interests of both male and female laborers in a conflict between the two, the long standing problem of inequality between the wages of men and women laborers never came onto the agenda of the syndicate. Thus, it can be said that the syndicate played a reconciliatory role between the men and women laborers in urgent cases, but did not target more. Even if the organization had such an agenda, it would not have been easy to convince a conservative public on this issue.

When the origins of the Jewish labor movement in Thessaloniki are taken under closer examination, the conservative sources of the movement become visible. The lower classes of the Jewish community resented the secularization attempts of the Jewish bourgeoisie and identified the class distinction with the religious sentiment. The Jewish bourgeoisie was criticized for not attending religious prayers any more. The Federation permitted Sabbath prayers to be performed in its own building. Most of the laborers were pious persons respecting the religious authority and its decisions on the social affairs of the community. The moral recovery of the Jewish working class was one of the major issues discussed among the Jewish intellectuals meeting in the cafes of the city.⁶⁸⁷

According to this point of view, while the labor movement and socialism would provide the material recovery, the promotion of the religious sentiment against the secular bourgeoisie would bring the moral recovery. For this reason, one can assume that it was quiet normal for an average Jewish male laborer to see the control of religious and patriarchal authorities over the female laborers as normal and desirable. As a result, the question of female laborers came onto the public agenda as an internal matter of the Jewish community in religious terms, not as a matter of labor politics. This is to say that the Jewish working class of Thessaloniki had a traditionally conservative attitude. Neither the tobacco workers syndicates nor the Federation could change it.

As the number of the women in the labor force in the sector increased due to the demographic effects of the Balkan Wars, the women's question became more prominent. Given the ever increasing feminization of the tobacco labor force, the failure of the labor organizations to solve the women question and integrate them properly into

⁶⁸⁷ Starr, p. 336.

the labor politics weakened the position of the syndicates overall. In other words, a movement excluding the masses to be mobilized would naturally bring its own end.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The tobacco sector generated overarching phenomena in the history of the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth century. The issues of tobacco concerned most of the population and they were discussed on every level of society, from the parliament to the newspaper columns and village cafes. These were mostly issues of life or death for the subjects of the Empire. While the increasing tobacco exports provided new life opportunities for millions of people, the ever increasing smuggling activities in the sector led to many people's deaths. In other words, the amazing development of the tobacco sector brought new life opportunities as well as serious risks from unemployment to death. The risks and conflicts increased in parallel to the profits of the sector. The matter of smuggling soon took the form of armed conflict. The socio-political repercussions of the smuggling issue have been studied so far by several scholars. This study examined another matter of social conflict within the sector, the conflict between the tobacco merchants and the commercial workshop laborers.

The conflict between the tobacco merchants and the tobacco laborers has remained underestimated so far. It was pointed out that this conflict gave way to a kind of labor movement which was peculiar to the late nineteenth century Ottoman context. So far, the tobacco labor activism has been mentioned briefly within a few compiles of Ottoman labor history. It is generally touched upon in the context of the short-lived strike wave in Thessaloniki following the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908. Thus, the tobacco labor movement in Thessaloniki remained as a small part

within the big picture of the above mentioned strike wave. This study examined how the tobacco labor activism in question had a background and a foreground. This means that the historicity of the tobacco labor movement in the Thessaloniki province stands beyond the euphoria of the labor activism that lasted for a few months in 1908.

Concerning the tobacco labor movement in Thessaloniki province, where the movement demonstrated itself in its strongest form, this study challenged a number of assumptions. First, the tobacco labor movement in question was carried out mainly by commercial workshop laborers. So far, the mainstream labor history has focused on industrial factory workers. In this case, it would be difficult for one to understand the source of thousands of laborers striking in the workplaces, protesting in the streets and resisting the gendarme forces. If the employment capacity of the tobacco workshops is not realized, it would not be possible to understand the sources of the thousands of striking workers registered in the Ottoman State Archive documents. Thus, not the factories but the workshops lie at the heart of the tobacco labor movement. It is revealed that most warehouses, where the tobacco plants were stored before being sold, functioned as a commercial processing workshop in fact.

The number and capacity of these workshops increased due to the rising international demand for high quality, oriental-type Ottoman tobacco. Mostly located in the commercially developed areas of the province, mainly in Kavala, those workshops employed a large number of wage laborers. Big international companies such as the American Tobacco Company and the Austrian Herzog Company established multi-planted large workshops in Kavala. The total employment capacity of these workshops in Kavala, which was comparable to the employment capacity of the single cigarette

factory of the Régie Company in central Thessaloniki city, provided the source of the tobacco labor movement in question.

Second, this study examined not only the urban center to understand the labor question, but also investigated the periphery. Relying on the presumptions of the mainstream labor history, the present literature concentrated on the urban industrial centers rather than the commercialized periphery. This study revealed that the tobacco labor activism in the commercial periphery preceded the one in the industrialized urban center. Relying on the existing literature, one might think that the tobacco labor movement was born and died in the central square of Thessaloniki city, but the commercially developed peripheral areas of the province were as active as central Thessaloniki in terms of tobacco labor activism. Moreover, the available documents revealed that the labor activism and the labor organizations developed earlier in the peripheral district of Kavala and the number of organized tobacco laborers was larger there. Contrary to what one would expect, tobacco labor activism disseminated from the periphery, not from the center. Following from this point, a comparison between Kavala and Thessaloniki became an indispensable task. A comparison between the two prevented the over-generalizations made upon the central Thessaloniki city. Moreover, such a comparison provided some opportunities to challenge several arguments and to display the complexity and peculiarity of cases. The main difference between Thessaloniki and Kavala was the fact that Thessaloniki was the ideological center of the movement in question, whereas Kavala was the center of activism. In other words, there was a brain and muscles relationship between the two.

Third, the study at hand unraveled the multi-communal character of the tobacco labor movement. Given the relative strength of nationalisms in the province strongly

attached by the members of the different communities in Thessaloniki, it is often difficult to see the other political orientations. This study dealt with the question of how the communal factor operated within the tobacco labor movement and found out that the movement in question displayed a multi-communal character throughout the province. Multi-communal character of the Socialist Workers' Federation of Thessaloniki (Federation) is already known. The Syndicate of the Régie Factory Workers and the Syndicate of the Tobacco Workshop Laborers constituted the hard core of the Federation as the first labor organizations joining this federative body. Although the majority of the members of these organizations belonged to the Jewish community of the central Thessaloniki city, they adopted multi-communal principle and did not hesitate to include the members of other communities. Muslim, Greek and Bulgarian members were represented and given voice within the Federation.

Besides the story of the Federation, which is well-documented in the related literature, this study revealed another multi-communal organization of the tobacco laborers. The Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala (Ευδαιμονία in original name), founded in Kavala in 1908 as a successor of a previous organization dating back to late 1870s, was a multi-communal organization made up of the Greek, Muslim and Jewish members. This organization displayed a strong labor activism which rapidly raised its adherents at a time of fierce national rivalry. The same organization had branches in Drama, Pravi and İskeçe (Xanthi) as well. It is indicated that all these organizations acted together even at the time of the Balkan Wars. Thus, it is argued that the nationalism factor did not operate as a dividing mechanism within the tobacco labor movement of the province. This is to say that another peculiarity of the tobacco labor movement in the Thessaloniki province lies in its multi-communal character. Most labor

organizations of the province at that time were organized on the communal basis and strongly attached to the national discourse such as the labor organizations of the waiters, shoe-makers and bakers. These labor sections did not only separate their organizations on the communal and/or national basis, but also displayed some hostile attitudes towards each other.

The multi-communal character of the tobacco labor organizations showed differences in their compositions throughout the province. In this regard, the investigation of the periphery brought new information and new issues onto the table. In other words, the knowledge of the periphery posed a challenge to some overgeneralizations. In the present literature, the Jewish character of the tobacco labor movement is underlined frequently. This was true for the central Thessaloniki city, but not for the rest of the province. It came out that the communal composition of the tobacco laborers in Kavala was quite different. While the Jewish tobacco workers constituted an overwhelming majority in Thessaloniki, their number was marginal in Kavala, where Christian and Muslim tobacco laborers dominated the tobacco labor market. Moreover, they shared the same labor organization.

The communal composition of the tobacco labor movement in question was explained in terms of a spatial analysis. The Jewish women dominated character of the tobacco labor force in the central Thessaloniki city is figured out as a consequence of the urban development of the city that changed its spatiality. So far, the Jewish female dominated character of the tobacco labor force in the Thessaloniki city was explained in terms of the traditional features of the community. Drahoma, the dowry of a girl to get married, was indicated as the sole factor drawing young Jewish girls to the tobacco factory of the Regié and the workshops. This study put forward an alternative

explanation related with the spatiality of the city. It has been suggested that in the Tophane district, the working center of the city emerged in the mid nineteenth century, the jobs were distributed among the male and female members of the nearby Jewish neighborhoods. In other words, the proximity of the long-established Jewish neighborhoods with the working center of the city brought about such a composition regarding the tobacco labor force of the Thessaloniki city. On the other hand, both the demographic structure and the spatial character of Kavala enabled a balance between the communities involved in the tobacco labor force. While the Jewish community constituted majority in Thessaloniki, the number of the same community was marginal in Kavala. As in Thessaloniki, communal composition of the tobacco labor force in Kavala resembled the general demographic figures of the locality. Thus, Muslims and Greeks made up the balance in the tobacco labor market of Kavala. Besides the demographic structure, the urbanization processes changing the spatial character of the district also consolidated this composition. Newly emerged working center of Kavala that included the port and its hinterland, was in a position of equidistant in regard to the communal neighborhoods.

Fourth, women and migrant laborers constituted another important aspect of the tobacco labor force in the province. Muslim women, who were often regarded as non-existent or marginal within the labor force in general, showed a significant presence in the tobacco workshops of Kavala. While the women constituted majority of the tobacco labor force in Thessaloniki, the gender composition was almost evenly divided in Kavala. The presence of women laborers in the tobacco workshops of Thessaloniki generated some public debates in which the religious authorities, syndicates and the employers were involved. The issue of female tobacco laborers turned to religious

debate within Jewish community of Thessaloniki. The same pattern was also observable in many places of the Empire. Promotion at work and participation to the labor organizations were the other issues concerning the women tobacco laborers. The tobacco workers syndicate in Kavala tried to prevent the promotion of women laborers at work and denied their right to become a syndicate member. Male tobacco laborers of Kavala formed a common front against the women laborers irrespective of their communal identities. Nevertheless, the presence of women tobacco laborers in the Thessaloniki was undeniable for the organized labor since they constituted overwhelming majority of the labor force.

Both migrants and women were regarded as threats by the local male tobacco laborers. They had to face with the organized resistance of the male tobacco laborers in Kavala. The local male tobacco laborers of Kavala resisted to the employment of the seasonal and migrant laborers. Kavala attracted large numbers of seasonal and migrant laborers from the nearby areas and insecure parts of the province of the north east, where communal hostilities turned to armed conflicts. People of these insecure districts found a safe haven in Kavala. Compared to the north east part of the province, Kavala was a secure place. Nevertheless, the seasonal and migrant laborers were not welcomed in Kavala by the native tobacco laborers.

It is suggested in this study that the presence of women and migrant laborers gave way to the emergence of a kind of local patriotism among the local male laborers of Kavala. Different from the other cases of local patriotism exist in the related literature, the notion here does not refer to a preceding form of nationalism. This is reactionary identification of the native male tobacco laborers against the women and migrants.

So far, it has been suggested that the national rivalry turning into armed conflicts between the different communities brought an end to the multi-communal labor movement in Thessaloniki. It is true that the national organizations found adherents in Thessaloniki. On the other hand, the Socialist Workers' Federation in Thessaloniki led by Abraham Benaroya developed a strategy based on Ottomanism to unite the laborers of different communities. When the Ottomanist project was tried and proved dysfunctional for the unification of different communities, it was flexibly articulated into a regionalist project.

The Balkan Federation project, recognizing the national liberation projects of the different communities, was supported by the workers and the various intellectual circles in the local and international level. Shortly after the establishment of the Federation, Balkan Federation project was introduced to the laborers of Thessaloniki by Christian Rakovski in a speech as the representative of the Socialist International. In this way, the Federation saved the multi-communal labor project. This means at the same time that the laborers of Thessaloniki had a political project as an alternative to nationalism. The affiliation of the tobacco laborers with the Balkan Federation Project was apparent since the big tobacco congress held in 1911 in which they represented the units of a possible Balkan Federation as the workers of Pan-Thrace. As a result, the labor activism of the province developed into labor politics with a clear-cut political project. But the different forces were in operation in Kavala other than this political project.

As an alternative to nationalism, the identification processes of the tobacco laborers of Kavala followed a path from local patriotism to regionalism. Both migrant and female laborers posed threats to the male local laborers as cheap sources of labor. A

kind of local patriotism, developed among the native tobacco workers of Kavala as a defensive identity against the migrant and female laborers. This identification enabled these people to transcend their communal boundaries.

The local patriotism of the tobacco laborers survived even after the end of the Ottoman administration in the region. One can think that for the people who had experienced the Balkan Wars, it was no longer possible to come together in a multi-communal labor movement, but surprisingly, the tobacco laborers of the region achieved their greatest strike in 1914, which proved that the national factions did not divide their united front.

Compared to the other districts of the region, national propaganda did not find much ground in Kavala. In terms of identification, the economic interests of the laborers were much more influential than the appeal of “imagined communities.” Besides that, Kavala was a highly international city in comparison to the other peripheral areas of the province. The commercial significance of Kavala and the economic investments of the big international companies did not allow the penetration of national rivalry here. International companies holding the diplomatic missions in their hands dominated the economic and social life as well. While the rural areas and especially the northeast of the province were under the serious threat of national banditry, Kavala and its environs were a safe haven. For this reason, Kavala received several migration waves from the insecure areas where the national propaganda had turned into armed conflict. While the national clubs of several communities were present in Thessaloniki and trying to attract audience by means of charity or by the other means, this was not the case in Kavala. Consequently, the migration flow was the first and the foremost factor that deteriorated

the relations in Kavala, because the changing demographic status-quo influenced the life and work opportunities of the local people.

The strategy of local patriotism was crucial to the development of the tobacco labor movement in Kavala despite the surrounding national conflicts. Nevertheless, the defensive character of this strategy would bring its end. As was noted before, this local patriotic identity was developed as a response to the presence of migrant and female laborers. Since the labor organizations in question were unable to integrate migrant and female laborers, the movement began to lose ground. Especially the isolation of female laborers that constituted the half of the tobacco labor force was not a reasonable strategy.

Given the ever increasing feminization of the tobacco labor force, it would have been a wiser strategy for the labor organizations in question to invest in the women laborers. The demographic effects of the Balkan Wars together with the introduction of the *tonga* method, which favored the less skilled female labor, changed the gender composition of the tobacco labor. However, the labor organizations in question still resisted the bourgeoisie with the male half of the laborers. In other words, it was still a male dominated labor politics, made by men for men. As a result of this strategy, the labor politics in question lost its adherent masses.

Consequently, while the strategy of local patriotism promoted the position of the tobacco labor movement in a period of fierce national rivalry, the gender conservatism of the same movement put its survival under serious risk. The case of the tobacco laborers reveals that the people from different communities had established joint labor organizations before the second constitutional period and maintained their cooperation afterwards. They resisted even the political atmosphere leading to the Balkan Wars. It is

proposed that if the triumph of Balkan nationalisms over the imperial Ottoman regime was a dividing force for the laborers, then a kind of local patriotism extending towards Balkan regionalism and embodied later in the Balkan Federation project was an important unifying force on the political ground. It is my hope that this study will present an alternative to the existing studies indicating nationalism as the sole source of the end of the Ottoman labor movement.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Administrative Units of the Thessaloniki Province and their Populations

Central Thessaloniki Sandjak

Cazas (<i>Kaza</i>)	Population
Thessaloniki Center	173,733
Aionoros (Aynaroz)	6,991
Avret-Hissar(Avret Hisar)	43,988
Caraferia (Karaferye)	37,040
Cassandra(Kassandra)	43,098
Ustrundja(Ustrumca)	37,380
Doiran(Doyran)	30,275
Caterin(Katerin)	25,447
Guevgueli(Gevgili)	48,933
Langaza	46,295
Yenidje-Vardar(Yenice-i Vardar)	45,251
Tikvech(Tikveş)	44,279
Vodina	41,103
Total	893,743

Serres Sandjak

Cazas (<i>Kaza</i>)	Population
Serres (Serez or Siroz)	96,425
Petriç (Petriç)	31,515
Demir-Hissar (Demir Hisar or TimurHisar)	39,691
Djoumai-Bala (Cuma-i Bala)	29,529
Zihna (Zihne)	34,647
Raslok (Razlık)	29,806
Menlik (Menlik)	27,283
Nevrocop (Nevrekop)	83,275
Total	372,441

Drama Sandjak

Cases (<i>Kazak</i>)	Population
Drama	68,387
Pravichta (Pravişte or Pravuşta)	19,520
Sari-Chaban (Sarışaban)	20,903
Cavalla (Kavala)	32,408
Robtchose (Ropçoz)	23,814
Total	165,032

Source: *Annuaire Oriental*, 1909.

APPENDIX B

Lists of Tobacco Merchants

List of Tobacco Merchants in 1896

Tobacco Merchants of Thessaloniki	Tobacco Merchants of Kavala
Cohen & Aelion	Allatini Freres
Hussein Moustapha Rachid	M. Foscolo
	Pappadopoulo (T.) & Pappa Elia (E.)
	Protopappas (G.)
	Triandaphyllidis (Const.)
	Zacos (C.)

List of Tobacco Merchants in 1909

Tobacco Merchants of Thessaloniki	Tobacco Merchants of Kavala
Hassan Akif	American Tobacco Company
Herzog (M.L.) and his partners	Argyropoulos (D.) & Atheneos (Michel B)
Husni Osman	Balabanoglou (C.)
Sciaky (Joseph)	Cavadjikli Mehmed Rıza
The Commercial Company of Salonica	Commercial Company of Salonica
Cohen & Aelion	Colokitha (M.A) & Constantinides (Const)
Hussein Moustapha Rachid	Constantinidis (Jean) & Cousis (A. G)
Manassian (Hatchik)	Day Mirat Comp.
Régie Ottomane des Tabacs	Dimetracopoulo
	Dulgarides (Constantin)

	Fessas Freres
	Gianaclis (N.) & Giordano (Eugenio)
	Giordanou (Georges)
	Hadji Emin Efendi Zadeleri
	Harissiadis (Sterghios)
	Herzog Company
	Ioannou (A.C)
	Kiriazzy (Jean) & Kyriasis Freres
	Loucoumis (B.E) & Mattossian (Ohannes)
	Mayer (N.) & Muratti
	Nahmias & Benveniste
	Papadopoulo Freres & Pappa Elia
	Protopappa (G.D) & Schinassi Bros.
	Skandjoris (Th.J)
	Societe Anonyme “Le Khedive”
	Sossidi & Danon
	Stavridis (Haralambo) & Tavaniotii (A.D)
	Tocos (N.D) & Triandafyllou (Const.)
	Tzimourta (G.)
	Vardas & Alexopoulos
	Zachos (Z.)

Source: *Annuaire Oriental*, 1896, 1909.

APPENDIX C
Poem by Andrikos Veta

Tobacco Workers of Kavala

Have you heard what happened in Kavala?

...

Kavala, how did you get into such a situation with your tobaccos!

...

They eat, get drunk and entertain
Nobody cares about the winter coming!

5-6 months in the tobacco job during summer
Unemployed in the other 6 months

Earnings are great, but progress is little
Because they are void of reason and this is their fault

They earn from tobacco and waste money on tobacco
What is left at hand is only the smoke

In summer, alcohol, *raki*, wine and cognac
Whereas in winter, suffering from hunger and desperation

You should see them in summer when the work day finished
Like gentlemen with fashionable hair cuts

Collar, neck tie and everything is pretty good
Whereas, they get in poverty in winter like the gypsies of the country

They ask for credit, nobody trusts them
Because they are not used to paying it back

They put pledge for bream fish and rum
Next year everything is the same

This our situation and our reason is to blame
Nevertheless, there are also some rational persons among us.

Andrikos Veta

Source: Andrikos Veta, *Esenā ta Lego Pethera yia na ta Akoui i Nifi* (Mother-in law tells you to make the daughter-in-law heard) (Istanbul: n.p., 1899), pp. 12-13.

APPENDIX D

Lists of the Administrative Staff of the Régie Monopoly

Administrative Staff of the Régie Factory in Thessaloniki (1909)

Position	Name
Director	İsmail Rıza Bey
Vice Director	Abdullah Efendi
Chief Accountant	Babi (E)
Cashier	Eugénidés (D)
Vice Cashier	Consta (G)
Chief of the Legal Bureau	Şükrü Efendi
Lawyer	Faraggi (L)
Turkish Correspondence Chief	Mustafa Asım Bey
French Correspondence Chief	Sakelarides (A)
Archivist	Noucha
Revisers	Syndicas (P), Eugénidis (P)
Chief of Store	Bianchi (A)
Chief of Culture	Aumann (J)
Chief of Sales Bureau	Ghirbas (P)
Accountant of Store	Abbot (A)

Administrative Staff of the Régie Workshop in Kavala (1909)

Position	Name
Director	Veli Efendi
Controller	Börekçiyan
Accountant	Modiano
Cashier	Hayati

Administrative Staff of the Régie Workshop in Drama (1909)

Position	Name
Director	Anghelides
Chief Accountant	Christides (Ch.)
Expert	Djimou (G)

Source: *Annuaire Oriental*, 1909.

APPENDIX E

Statute of the Organization, *Tütün Amelesi Saadet Cemiyeti* (Welfare Society of Tobacco Workers)

1. Article- The central administration of the organization is settled in Kavala city. The aims of the organization are integrating the knowledge of the members of the organization to the work practices, the extension of the tobacco trade, the improvement of the kind and the production of tobacco and to dissuade the tobacco workers from the their inclination to migrate to the USA.
2. Anyone from any class or community who has legal authorization can be a member of the organization.
3. The organization will be administered by a committee composed of 32 persons. 15 members of this administrative committee will be from the Christian community, the other 15 members will be from the Muslim community and 2 of them will be from the Jewish community and they will be renewed.
4. The clerk of the Kavala Trade Chamber, Ali Galip, the son of Ragıp, who is settled in the Halil Bey neighborhood in Kavala, and tobacco merchant Nikola Serdaroğlu, who is settled in the HagiasIoannis neighborhood in Kavala, will be executive heads of the organization according to the 9th article of the Law on Organizations.
5. Each member of the organization will pay in cash monthly 6 piaster to the organization.
6. In case of the dissolution of the organization, the collected money of the organization will be distributed among its members. If a member of the organization dies, the share of this member will be paid to his heirs immediately.

7. In line with the aims of the organization, the administrative committee can invite at most 25 professionals or related persons either from the members or from the outside for consultation.

It is certified that this is the exact copy of the original statute.

16 March 1908

Members of the Administrative Committee

Member	Occupation
Ali Galib, the son of Ragıp	General secretary of the chamber of merchants
Abraham İsak Kohen	Denkçi
Şakir Efendi, the son of Ahmed	Demarch of Hüseyn Bey neighborhood
Dimitri Konstantin, the son of Dimitriyadi	Denkçi
Saddler Mehmed Agha, the son of Abdülrahim Efendi	Saddler
Dimitri, the son of Yani Yanopulo	Denkçi
Nebi Agha, the son of Celil Mehmed	Denkçi
Yannis, the son of İsteryo Vasiliko	Denkçi
Halil Agha, the son of Agoş	Denkçi
Konstantin, the son of Dimitri Fota (or Fotis)	Denkçi
Halil Agha, the son of Mümin Agha	Denkçi
İsa Efendi, the son of Hasan Efendi	Denkçi
Yako, the son of Mosses Salom	Denkçi
Sotiri, the son of Dimitri	Denkçi
Reşad Agha, the son of Mustafa	Denkçi
Yorgi, the son of Vasil (or Yanolas)	Denkçi
Ali Agha, of Karagozis	Denkçi
Panayot, the son of İsterati	Denkçi

(Nemlizada?) Mustafa Agha	Denkçi
Argiri, the son of İsteryo	Denkçi
İsmail Efendi, the son of Hasan	Denkçi
Angelos, the son of Yorgi	Denkçi
Atanaş, the son of Konstantin	Denkçi
Atanaş, the son of Konstantin	Denkçi
Hüseyin Efendi, the son of Mehmed	Denkçi
Dimitri, the son of Apostol Hadji Pasha	Tobacco merchant
Hüseyin, the son of İbrahim Pasha	-
Nikola Panayot Serdaroglou	Tobacco merchant
Ahmed Efendi	-
Abdülrahim Efendi	-
Ahmed Agha	-
Hadji Pasha	-

Source: BOA. DH İD. 132/4, 3.Za.1329.

APPENDIX F

The Letter of the Welfare Society of the Tobacco Workers of Kavala Sent to the Merchants during the Strike in 1914

Dear gentlemen,

It is known that the daily wages of the tobacco workers is 24 piastres in summer and 18 piastres in winter. It also has been known for many years that the life costs are on the increase, but the daily wages of the tobacco workers remain the same. Unfortunately, this situation badly affects all the commercial centers of the city, so that the tobacco workers have drifted into an impasse and they are not capable of feeding their families. Upon this situation, the administrative assemblies of the tobacco workers' associations in Kavala, Drama and Thessaloniki came together and discussed the miserable position of the tobacco workers, the factors disturbing their regular work and it is decided that representative of each workshop collect the workers' demands and it is unanimously agreed that no concession will be made upon those demands. The associations firmly support solidarity and they will not give up their demands in each of the three cities.

Our demands are 1) the daily wages of the first *denkçi* (qualified worker) will be 7 drahmi in summer 5 drahmi in winter for the *basmacı* workers; 6 drahmi in summer 4.5 drahmi in winter for the *başıbağlı* workers. The daily wages of the lower categories of *basma* and *başıbağlı* workers (*denkçi*) will be increased in the same ratio; 2) the summer and winter daily wages of the first *pastalcı* (unqualified worker) will be equal to the daily wage of the first *denkçi* of *basmacı*. The daily wages of the lower categories of *pastalcı* will be increased in the same ratio as those of the *denkçi* of *basmacı* in the same category; 3) the workers who are not members of the any of the three association

will not be permitted to work; 4) a worker resigning from their work will not be permitted to work in another workshop unless he has a reasonable excuse approved by the Kavala association; 5) In each of the shop floors, 35 percent of the workers will be composed of first *denkçi*; 6) The employing authority (*ustabaşı*) of each shop floor will be recognized by his workshop upon his authorization by the association; 7) Girls and women will not work as *denkçi*. If there are women workers holding this position, they will be forced to work as *pastalcı*; 8) In Pravişte (Pravi), the daily wages of the first *denkçi* will be 6.5 *drahmi* in summer 4.5 *drahmi* for the *basmacı*s; 5,5 *drahmi* in summer 4 *drahmi* in winter for the *başıbağlı* workers. The daily wages of the lower categories of *pastalcı* will be increased in the same ratio; 9) the daily wages of the first *pastalcı* of Pravi will be equal to those of first *basmacı* in summer and winter. The daily wages of the lower categories of *pastalcı* will be increased in the same ratio with those of the *basmacı* in the same category. 10) The consent between the tobacco workers and the tobacco labor organization in Kavala will be determined in the related assemblies.

We are waiting for reply in three days,

Sincerely,

Chairman D. Dimitriadis

Source: Yannis Vyzikas, *Chronico ton Ergatikon Agonon* (Annals of workers' struggle) (Kavala: Tobacco Museum, 1994), p. 21.

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BOA. DH MKT: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Chief Secretary

BOA. DH MUİ: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Administration of Correspondence

BOA. DH UMVM: Province Directorate of Local Affairs

BOA.HR SYS: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Office

BOA. HRT: Catalogue of Maps

BOA. İ AZN: Ministry of Justice, Imperial Edicts Office

BOA. İ DH: Rescripts of Internal Affairs Office

BOA. İ HUS: Edicts Special

BOA.İ RSM: Rescripts of Tax Office

BOA. İ TNF: Ministry of Trade and Agriculture, Imperial Edicts Office

BOA. MF MKT: Ministry of Education, Chief Secretary

BOA. MKT MHM: Chief Secretary of Important Affairs

BOA. ŞD: Council of State

BOA. TFR I A: Correspondence between Rumeli Inspectorate and Grand Vizier

BOA. TFR I KV: Rumeli Inspectorate, Documents of Kosovo Province.

BOA. TFR I MKM: Directorate of Rumeli Inspectorate

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BOA. TFR I ŞKT: Petitions to Rumeli Inspectorcy

BOA. TFR I SL: Rumeli Inspectorcy, Documents of Thessaloniki Province

BOA. TFR I UM: Rumeli Inspectorcy, General Documents

BOA. Y MTV: Yıldız Palace, Combined Petition Documents

BOA. Y PRK ASK: Yıldız Palace, Military Documents

BOA. Y PRK BŞK: Yıldız Palace, Correspondence with the Grand Vizier

BOA. Y PRK SGE: Staff Documents of Yıldız Palace

BOA. ZB: Documents of Police

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