

## **Defining the Çiftliks in the Early Nineteenth Century**

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Between the years 1820 and 1822, Ali Paşa of Tepedelen lost his power and property. His demise started with the confiscation of his wealth in 1820 and ended for him in 1822 when he was executed by the Ottoman authorities. However, for the Ottoman Empire, it was the beginning of a decades-long legal discussion and land redistribution problem about how to define a “çiftlik”. Following its confiscation, Ali Paşa’s landed property was to be redistributed to new actors by the Imperial Domains (Emlâk-ı Hümayun). In the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, “çiftlik” had gradually been used as a broad term for different types of property-like estates with varying legal status and labour relations. Nevertheless, during the redistribution process, Ottoman central authorities desperately needed a solid definition of çiftlik for several reasons. First, they needed to identify which estates “belonged” to Ali Paşa, and which others were farmed out or rented, or occupied by him. Second, aspiring to have centralized legal and administrative institutions, the Ottoman rule needed to coin a standard legal definition of çiftlik.

This presentation focuses on the discussions about Ali Paşa’s çiftliks that took place in Meclis-i Meşveret (The Advisory Council) between 1820 and 1824. Meclis-i Meşveret was a highly significant institution of the Ottoman central bureaucracy and it was the predecessor of the Meclis-i Vükela (Council of Ministers). For the issue of redistribution of Ali Paşa’s çiftliks, this institution had to answer some difficult questions originating from the Ottoman land system’s early modern premises which were far from being compatible with the norms of modern private property institutions. I will argue that the çiftlik debates at Meclis-i Meşveret go beyond the Ali Paşa issue and expands to a pursuit of a standard definition of çiftliks.