

On the Legal Status and Labor Forms of the Reaya in the Landed-Estates of Çelikpaşazades in the Hamid District (1780-1845)

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The Çelikpaşazâde family, whose members held the title of mütesellim-paşa, owned numerous landed estates in the towns of Burdur and Isparta in the Hamid district. Some of these estates were established by introducing new settlers from outside, while in other cases, existing villages underwent a collective transformation, and became the family's çiftliks. Throughout the eighteenth century, the family utilized the muzaraa system as a means of investing not only in its çiftliks but also in the lands of the autonomous villagers. With the interference and provocation of rival local magnates seeking dominance over the region's lands, a conflict arose between the landowners and the villagers over the legal status of the latter. Each party contested their claims to land usufruct by capitalizing on different instruments. While landholders based their property claims on land tenure, the villagers' legal status became a focal point. Even after the family lost its former prestige in the early nineteenth century, not only did their çiftliks persist, but the conflict over the legal status of the villagers and their property claims against other landholders for land usufruct continued.

Existing studies on land tenure in the nineteenth century, especially those aimed at understanding the phenomenon of çiftlik, have neglected the analysis of various forms of labor, the organization of production, and the conflicts between landlords and villagers over their claims without examining the previous century. Since the way these units were established also determined the legal status of the villagers and thus their forms of labor, it sheds light on questioning the effectiveness and agenda of the state, which implemented a series of land reforms in the nineteenth century, by emphasizing the importance of continuities. Therefore, this study will focus on the çiftliks of the Çelikpaşazâde family in order to examine the different forms of labor, the legal status of the villagers, and the state's approach to the conflict between landlords and villagers over their claims to land usufruct.