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Negotiating nature : ecology, politics, and nomadism in the forests of Mediterranean Anatolia, 1870-1920

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NEGOTIATING NATURE:
ECOLOGY, POLITICS, AND NOMADISM IN THE FORESTS OF
MEDITERRANEAN ANATOLIA, 1870-1920

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Abstract

Negotiating Nature: Ecology, Politics, and Nomadism
in the Forests of Mediterranean Anatolia, 1870-1920

Başak Akgül Kovankaya, Doctoral Candidate
at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University
and the Institute for History at Leiden University, 2019

Professors Nadir Özbek and Leo Lucassen, Dissertation Advisors

This dissertation examines the politics of forestry in the context of late Ottoman Mediterranean Anatolia. Exploring the power struggles among forest officials, timber traders, and Tahtacı communities, this study discusses how modern forestry practices were negotiated at the local level. In the nineteenth century, in order to gain more effective control over forests, the Ottoman government introduced a series of reforms in the name of “scientific forestry.” In the implementation of these reforms not only did opposing interests clash at the central level but local interest groups involved in regional trade networks also appeared as influential actors. On the one hand, negotiations between officials and traders undermined “scientific forestry” as a high modernist ideal. On the other hand, this complex network constituted an integral part of Ottoman modern forestry practices and prevailing power struggles. Despite fragmented interests within the administration as well as various obstacles officials encountered in monitoring forests, the new forestry practices brought about a dramatic transformation of the countryside. Most importantly, increasing pressure on forests and forest-dependent communities due to intensified commercialization caused an overexploitation of nature and labor. Focusing on the changing subsistence strategies of Tahtacı communities in the Taurus Mountains, this study investigates the impact of these changes on the hill societies of Mediterranean Anatolia.

To my daughter Ayşe

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