BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
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ÇIFTLIK DEBATE REVISITED: NEW CASES, NEW FINDINGS, AND NEW QUESTIONS I

Panel leader: Mehmet Ali Çelik

Participants: Göksel Baş, Maria Shusharova, Mehmet Ali Çelik, Tahsin Şahin

Panel abstract: Çiftliks have long been an issue for Ottoman social and economic history. Since the 1960s, scholars have approached the çiftlik phenomenon in relation to larger historiographical problems such as the transformation of Ottoman agriculture, transition from feudalism to capitalism, the integration of the Ottoman lands into the new European-dominated capitalist world market, the transformation of the imperial institutions, widespread implementation of tax-farming contracts (iltizam/malikane), and the emergence of provincial notables (ayan). There has also been a recent revival of interest in çiftlik studies. Although the çiftlik literature might be considered quite extensive, it is very difficult to talk about a scholarly consensus regarding the nature of çiftliks. The nature of landownership, the extent of commercial agriculture, and the character of

the labor employed in these estates, and whether çiftlikization transformed the empire's "classical" agrarian order, based on the miri land regime, the timar system, and independent peasantry, are the main questions discussed in this field.

This double-panel aims to contribute to the çiftlik literature by focusing on the concrete cases of agrarian change in different localities from the early sixteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, and to raise critical questions about the çiftlik formation processes. Our panelists will discuss different types and functions of the çiftliks and their impact on local economies, the relationship between çiftlikization and peasant dispossession, different forms of labor employed in these estates, various legal and social conflicts over land, production and taxation, different agents of the agrarian change such as peasants, ayans, mütegallibes, and the state, and the impact of the global world market on the Ottoman agriculture.

More specifically, Göksel Baş shows how the early sixteenth-century mukataalı çiftliks were used for the expansion of the timar system in the Western frontier of the empire. Maria Shusharova evaluates the "urban askeri çiftliks" in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth-century Rusçuk and demonstrates how these çiftliks shaped the urban space. Mehmet Ali Çelik looks at the early eighteenth-century rebellions in Elbasan and discusses the impact of çiftlikization, peasant dispossession, and displacement on these local uprisings. Tahsin Şahin investigates the conflicts between the mütegallibe groups, çiftlik-owners, state officials, and the reaya during the eighteenth century.

Paper abstracts:

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d. Land, Power, and Petition: Çiftlik-Related Complaints from the Province of Anatolia to the Imperial Council (1768–1780)*

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The 18th century in the Ottoman historiography is often described as the "age of the ayans." Following the outbreak of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1768, ayans increasingly assumed key roles in provincial administration. Earlier interpretations viewed this development as a process of decentralization; however recent scholarship emphasises a form of partnership between the central state and local elites. Nevertheless, petitions sent from the provinces to the Imperial Council (Divân-ı Hümâyûn) reveal a rise in the number of complaints, a continued protection of the reaya's right to petition, and more detailed recordkeeping by the state, which suggests both a reinforcement of legitimacy and continued surveillance over the provinces. A significant phenomenon of this period was the growing number of çiftliks. Many provincial notables owned çiftliks, while others were accused of unlawful encroachments on neighboring estates. In addition, disputes between çiftlik owners and state officials, particularly over taxation, land boundaries, and inheritance, frequently reached the Divan.

This paper examines petitions from the Province of Anatolia, submitted to the Imperial Council between 1768 and 1780, focusing on complaints related to çiftliks. The majority of concerns in these petitions were unauthorized interference and conflicts over tax collection or agricultural production. The central government's decisions, as well as the appointment of imperial commissioners (mübaşirs) to investigate such disputes, reveal how the state maintained its administrative authority despite local power dynamics. Most complainants and accused persons included in the military-administrative class, while the

emergence of an intermediary mütegallibe group between the askerî and the reâyâ is also noteworthy. By analysing çiftlik-related complaints reflected in the Anadolu Ahkâm Registers from the second half of the eighteenth century, this paper aims to contribute to the broader literature on çiftlik studies and the dynamics of provincial society in Ottoman history.

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