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## LABOR ACTIVISM AND THE STATE IN THE OTTOMAN TOBACCO INDUSTRY

### **Abstract**

In the late 19th and early 20th century, tobacco exports from the Ottoman Empire rapidly increased. Thousands of workers began to earn their livelihoods in warehouses, sorting and baling tobacco leaves according to their qualities. Ottoman towns where tobacco warehouses were concentrated soon became the sites of frequent labor protests. This article analyzes strikes that broke out in two such towns, İskeçe (Xanthi) and Kavala, in 1904 and 1905. It underlines the active role of the Ottoman government in the settlement of these strikes. It also shows that mobilized tobacco workers devised effective protest tactics and often secured a say in key decisions, such as when and under what conditions the warehouses operated. However, in both towns, labor activism was characterized by fragmentation as well as unity. The workers who took to the streets did not equally share the burdens and benefits of their collective actions. That inequality, the article argues, was rooted in gendered power relations, intercommunal rivalries, and other social tensions among the workers.

Before the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, tobacco workers were one of the most active labor groups in the Ottoman Empire in organizing strikes and other forms of protests. Sultan Abdülhamit II (r. 1876–1909) expressed his concern about the activities of tobacco workers in the early 1890s. When informed of a strike in an Istanbul tobacco factory in April 1893, he warned his bureaucrats that if necessary measures were not taken, such incidents would give rise to labor troubles similar to those in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Later developments in the tobacco industry showed that the sultan was right to be concerned. In the fourteen-year period between 1893 and 1906, all of the major tobacco production and processing centers in the empire—Istanbul, Salonica, Samsun, İskeçe (Xanthi), and Kavala—were hit by labor unrest at least once. The unrest took the form of strikes and demonstrations of short duration, usually a few days, and focused primarily on wage issues. In July 1905, for instance, tobacco workers in Samsun staged a demonstration to protest wage deductions for medical care.<sup>2</sup> Less than a year later, in March 1906, an estimated 200 to 270 workers in Istanbul went on strike when their employer, the Régie Company, announced that it was going to forego its annual Easter payments that year.<sup>3</sup>

During the reign of Abdülhamit II, labor unrest in the tobacco industry often remained localized. In at least one case, however, labor protests that began in one town spread to

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another in the following year: İskeçe and Kavala, two medium-sized towns in Thrace and Macedonia, witnessed large-scale strikes in 1904 and 1905, respectively. By the time order was restored in both towns, hundreds of tobacco warehouses had been damaged, numerous tobacco merchants had been forced to stop their operations temporarily, and some of the strikers had been either arrested or deported back to their hometowns. This study sets out to explore the causes, major events, and consequences of these two strikes. It focuses especially on the protest tactics employed by workers, the sources of tension among them, and the role played by government officials in the settlement of the disputes.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF OTTOMAN LABOR HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Strikes were an important form of labor activism in the late Ottoman Empire. Drawing on a rich variety of sources, Ottoman labor historians have shown that more than 200 strikes took place from the 1870s to 1914.<sup>4</sup> These studies characterize the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 as a crucial watershed for the labor movement in the empire. Between late July and December 1908, some 119 strikes involving thousands of workers swept across the empire, often bringing industry and transportation to a standstill. The 1908 strike wave was unprecedented but not wholly unexpected. As Aykut Kansu and Donald Quataert have argued, the revolution took place against a background of mounting social unrest, especially taxpayer revolts and strikes.<sup>5</sup> In his study of the carpet industry of western Anatolia, for example, Quataert demonstrates how economic distress in an important production center, Uşak, led to a riot involving about 1,500 carpet makers just a few months before the revolution.<sup>6</sup>

The existence of social unrest, however, does not mean that workers across the country always viewed the government of Sultan Abdülhamit II as an adversary. Jens Hanssen shows that in the early 1890s, striking port workers in Beirut received support from both the sultan and the provincial governor in their struggle against the French port company. The support for the strikers, Hanssen concludes, briefly made Abdülhamit II a popular figure in the city.<sup>7</sup> How representative the Beirut case was of strikes and other labor protests between 1876 and 1908 is open to question. Yet, this article argues that it was by no means unique: in the early 20th century, the government of Abdülhamit II used strikes in the tobacco industry to secure the loyalty of workers.

As Ilham Khuri-Makdisi writes, “in Egypt, throughout the Ottoman Empire, around the Mediterranean, and beyond, the cigarette industry seems to have produced a culture of contestation and an inclination toward radical politics.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, relatively little is known about tobacco workers’ protest tactics in the Ottoman Empire, especially before the 1908 revolution. Scholarship addressing strikes in the Ottoman tobacco industry has summarized the workers’ actions but does not explain why they resorted to them.<sup>9</sup> This article seeks to fill this void. It argues that when tobacco workers in İskeçe and Kavala went on strike, they devised tactics that were both effective and appropriate in the political conditions of their time. Tobacco merchants did not have unquestioned authority in their workplaces; workers often participated in decisions about wages and working conditions. In making this argument, the article does not portray the workers as a homogenous mass

united against their employers. Rather, it seeks to address how the benefits and burdens of the İskeçe and Kavala strikes were distributed differently among mobilized workers.

The study draws on a variety of primary sources, including documents in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive in Istanbul, newspaper reports, travelers' accounts, and books written by tobacco experts in the 1910s. Much of the information on the 1904 and 1905 strikes comes from the first two types, archival documents and newspaper reports. It is important to note that these sources have their shortcomings. First, government officials and journalists raised issues that seemed important to them; quite possibly, some events that were important to workers went unnoticed and unrecorded. Second, both archival documents and newspaper reports portray a universe where individual workers are invisible. They present workers as anonymous and collective actors.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, in what follows, the individual voices of tobacco workers in İskeçe and Kavala are absent.

#### THE OTTOMAN TOBACCO INDUSTRY, 1880–1914: THE RÉGIE MONOPOLY AND THE GROWING EXPORT SECTOR

The Ottoman Empire had a flourishing tobacco industry in the late 19th century. In 1881, tobacco workers operated forty-one factories in Istanbul, thirteen in Izmir, at least nine in Salonica, seven in Edirne, six in Erzurum, and five each in Aleppo and Janina.<sup>11</sup> The sources I consulted discuss neither the output of these establishments nor the number of workers they employed. They likely included both small unmechanized workshops and mechanized enterprises employing tens of workers. In any case, after 1883 all of the existing tobacco factories in the empire were officially closed. In that year, the Régie Company (a consortium of the Ottoman Bank, Crédit Anstalt, and Bleichröder bank groups) was founded and the Ottoman government granted it a monopoly over the domestic tobacco market. The Régie, which was the largest foreign investment corporation in the empire, began its operations in April 1884, establishing new factories in major production and transportation centers such as Istanbul, Samsun, Izmir, Salonica, and Adana. By the end of the century, approximately 3,000 workers, primarily women and children, earned their living in these factories, producing cut tobacco, cigarettes, and snuff.<sup>12</sup> Through such investments, the company gradually expanded its presence in domestic markets, where it increased its tobacco sales from 6 million kilograms in 1888–89 to 7.4 million kilograms in 1904–05 and 8.4 million kilograms in 1910–11.<sup>13</sup>

Despite being granted monopoly rights, the Régie Company had strong competitors in the rapidly expanding tobacco industry. In domestic markets, smugglers operated on a large scale and their tobacco sales often surpassed that of the Régie, particularly during the early years of the monopoly. An Ottoman official estimated that smugglers sold 12 million kilograms of tobacco in 1888, twice the amount of the Régie's official sales. According to another source, contraband tobacco sales decreased to 10 million kilograms in 1896, but the Régie was still far from approaching that figure.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the company had no monopoly rights over tobacco leaf exports. In those regions that produced high-quality tobacco, growers sold the bulk of their crops to export merchants unaffiliated with the Régie.<sup>15</sup> In 1905, 88 percent of the tobacco sold in the İskeçe, Kavala, Salonica, Izmir, and Samsun districts ultimately went to the depots of these export merchants.<sup>16</sup>

The dominance of export merchants in certain districts derived from a worldwide phenomenon: the popularization of cigarette consumption in the last two decades of the 19th century. The advent of mass advertising and of technologically advanced cigarette-rolling machines made cigarettes a mass-consumption commodity.<sup>17</sup> This phenomenon left its imprint on the Ottoman economy and society, as major cigarette producers in Egypt, Europe, and the United States began to depend on high-quality tobacco leaf imports from the Balkan and Anatolian provinces of the empire for use in their cigarette blends. Therefore, despite some seasonal ups and downs, Ottoman exports of tobacco leaf steadily increased at the turn of the century. According to official statistics, tobacco shipments reached 8.9 million kilograms in 1880, 15.9 million kilograms in 1897, 20.6 million kilograms in 1903, and 38.4 million kilograms in 1911.<sup>18</sup> Even after the empire's loss of major tobacco production centers in Macedonia and Thrace in 1912, tobacco exports still remained well above the levels of the 1890s. By the beginning of World War I, tobacco was the leading export crop of Anatolia.<sup>19</sup>

Kavala, İskeçe, Salonica, Samsun, and Izmir were the major export centers for tobacco leaf. Kavala ranked first among these towns, with annual shipments ranging from 8.2 to 13.5 million kilograms in the first decade of the 20th century. In the same period, annual exports from İskeçe and Salonica fluctuated between 1.2 and 3 million kilograms each. By 1911, exports from these two towns leapt to slightly over 4 million kilograms of tobacco.<sup>20</sup> In Anatolia, the export trade gained momentum with the growing investments of the American Tobacco Company in the early 20th century. In 1910 and 1911, Samsun was the second largest tobacco exporter in the empire, with exports in those years totaling 5.5 and 7.5 million kilograms, respectively. Exports from Izmir ranked third, growing from 2.4 to 7.5 million kilograms between 1910 and 1913.<sup>21</sup> As the volume of exports increased, Ottoman and foreign entrepreneurs opened numerous new warehouses where tobacco leaves were processed (sorted and baled according to their qualities) before being shipped to customers in overseas markets. Male and female, local and migrant, Muslim and non-Muslim workers labored and socialized side by side in these warehouses. The following section outlines the growth of the tobacco-processing industry in the empire, and then turns to the social profile of the warehouse workers in İskeçe and Kavala.

#### THE TOBACCO-PROCESSING INDUSTRY AND WAREHOUSE WORKERS

Kavala had the largest number of tobacco warehouses and workers in the empire. In the mid-19th century, the town's warehouses employed approximately 2,000 workers. By the beginning of the 20th century, its number of tobacco workers had increased more than fivefold, fluctuating between 10,000 and 15,000. These workers, employed in more than 200 warehouses, constituted between 40 and 60 percent of the town's population.<sup>22</sup> Tobacco merchants also made large investments in Samsun, İskeçe, and Salonica. When an Ottoman journalist visited Samsun in 1911, he wrote that there were fifty-sixty tobacco warehouses, employing 7,000 to 8,000 workers who constituted approximately 30 percent of the town's population.<sup>23</sup> In İskeçe, the number of tobacco workers increased from a couple thousand in 1890 to 5,000 in the early 1910s. On the eve of the Balkan Wars (1912–13), about one-third of the town's population earned their living in tobacco warehouses.<sup>24</sup> In the port city of Salonica, tobacco-processing

warehouses were the largest source of employment in the early 20th century, involving between 4,000 and 5,000 workers.<sup>25</sup>

As was the case in the Egyptian cigarette industry, migrant workers constituted a large portion of the tobacco labor force in Kavala and İskeçe.<sup>26</sup> During the work season in the warehouses, which usually began in April or May and lasted four to nine months, legions of migrant workers descended on Kavala and İskeçe.<sup>27</sup> A tobacco merchant noted that during the work season the population of Kavala increased “by 5,000 at the lowest computation, through the influx of workmen from the neighboring country.”<sup>28</sup> The sources I consulted do not provide such figures for İskeçe, but Ottoman state documents occasionally mention migrant tobacco workers in the town. For example, in April 1908, the governor of Edirne province reported that a group of migrant workers, apparently all Greek, who were employed in tobacco warehouses attacked two Bulgarians from İskeçe, resulting in one death and one injury.<sup>29</sup> Some of the migrant workers came from the nearby tobacco-growing villages. A British professor, after a visit to Kavala in 1896, wrote that the tobacco industry created “a constant intercourse between the country and town, the sorters and packers at the stores being in many cases the farmers who have grown the leaf.”<sup>30</sup> A tobacco merchant, writing on tobacco-growing villages in the İskeçe district, mentioned Gabrova, a mountainous village inhabited by Bulgarian Christians, as a source of tobacco balers in İskeçe.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the workers who split their lives between tobacco fields and warehouses were plagued with financial troubles. Tobacco growers in Macedonia and Thrace typically sold their crop in advance to export merchants unaffiliated with the Régie. The advance sale contracts contained a hidden rate of interest from which money-lending merchants profited. Some of the delegates who participated in the tobacco congresses convened in Drama in 1910 and Kavala in 1911 argued that export merchants managed to acquire the crop at a reduced price at the time of harvest through advance payments. To make matters worse, cash-hungry tobacco growers often turned to usurers and took loans with interest rates at 20 percent or more.<sup>32</sup> Seasonal employment in warehouses provided some financial relief to growers who were exploited by merchants and usurers.

Tobacco warehouses in Kavala and İskeçe employed permanent and seasonal workers from among the residents of these towns in addition to migrants. A small number of local workers remained on the payrolls of the warehouses after the end of the work season, guarding warehouse buildings and taking care of tobacco bales stored in special depots. Other workers shifted to other occupations during the off-season. According to the yearbooks of Salonica, Kavala had approximately 600 carpenters who worked only in the winter months, and their ranks probably included some tobacco workers.<sup>33</sup> Non-tobacco industries, however, did not generate adequate employment opportunities in the winter months, at least in Kavala. In a poem written in the late 19th century, Andrikos Veta, a local minstrel and labor organizer, noted that Kavala’s tobacco workers spent six months of the year unemployed, living in hunger and destitution.<sup>34</sup>

Among the workers streaming into tobacco warehouses were hundreds of women and girls. In most parts of the Ottoman Empire, female tobacco laborers worked primarily in sex-segregated rooms. When cases of sexual abuse were reported in the province of Aydın, the local government stipulated that women tobacco workers were to be hired only with the permission of their guardians, employed in separate rooms, and paid their wages by female accountants.<sup>35</sup> In Istanbul, the Régie factory had separate rooms



FIGURE 1. (Color online) Workers employed in a tobacco warehouse in İskeçe. Source: Yani Hristaki, *Tütün: Tütün Ziraatinin İslahına Dair Malumat-ı Mücmel* (Dersaadet: Agop Matosyan Matbaası, 1327/1911), 48.

for male and female cigarette makers and packers.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, after the chief rabbi of Salonica inspected tobacco workshops in the city in 1911, he noted that “in the girl’s workshops there were only female workers.”<sup>37</sup> Contemporary sources, however, suggest that the situation was different in İskeçe and Kavala. Photographs in Yani Hristaki’s early 20th-century book on tobacco growing depict young female and male workers processing tobacco leaves together in İskeçe warehouses (see Figures 1 and 2). According to an article published in the London-based *Cornhill Magazine* in 1888, in Kavala warehouses “as many as three hundred men and women may be seen huddled together in a stifling atmosphere engaged in sorting the leaves.”<sup>38</sup>

Women and girls in Kavala warehouses often worked side by side with their fathers and husbands. Some migrant workers took their wives and children to assist them during the export season.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, a former resident of Kavala wrote that, in the early 20th century, some of the girls in her neighborhood worked in tobacco warehouses with their fathers.<sup>40</sup> It seems that fathers and husbands were able to transfer their patriarchal authority from the family to the workplace. Like the late 19th-century silk and early 20th-century tobacco factories in Lebanon, Kavala tobacco warehouses were sites of gendered hierarchies.<sup>41</sup> Male workers monopolized the higher paid and more skilled jobs, such as tobacco baling and sorting high-quality leaves; women and girls sorted low-quality leaves or helped the male balers by preparing small tobacco piles.<sup>42</sup> In 1911, hundreds of female workers were faced with the threat of losing their jobs. When a group of workers in the town went on a strike in April, their demands included the exclusive employment of men as tobacco sorters. By the time strikers returned to work, after more than two weeks, they had won some concessions,<sup>43</sup> but could not displace women sorters because of the latter’s lower rates of pay.

The labor forces in Kavala and İskeçe formed multiethnic and multireligious communities. In both towns, Greek Christian workers constituted the majority, followed closely by Muslims. At the beginning of the 20th century, between 600 and 1,000 Bulgarian



FIGURE 2. (Color online) Workers processing tobacco leaves in a tobacco warehouse in İskeçe. Source: Yani Hristaki, *Tütün: Tütün Ziraatinin Islahına Dair Malumat-ı Mücmel* (Dersaadet: Agop Matosyan Matbaası, 1327/1911), 45.

workers had gained a footing in İskeçe warehouses and formed the third largest group in the labor force. Besides Muslims and Christians, warehouses in both towns also employed a few Jewish workers.<sup>44</sup>

The wage levels and employment prospects of these workers were closely related to agricultural production. A decline in the yield or quality of tobacco could lead to high rates of unemployment and hence a fall in wages. This scenario occurred in İskeçe in 1904 and in Kavala in 1905.

#### DEPRESSION IN PRICES, WAGE CUTS, AND LABOR UNREST IN İSKEÇE

As mentioned above, many tobacco growers in Macedonia and Thrace sold their crop in advance. In 1903, approximately three-fourths of the tobacco growers in the İskeçe district made agreements with export merchants unaffiliated with the Régie for the advance sale of their crop. However, the merchants subsequently offered them lower prices than the previous year on the grounds that the quality of the 1903 harvest was not good. In response, most of the growers declined to sell their products. The stalemate between the merchants and growers led to a recession in the İskeçe tobacco market. By

the end of May 1904, export merchants had purchased less than 10 percent of the harvest in the district.<sup>45</sup>

The tobacco growers knew they were running out of time. Although the previous year's harvest was normally delivered to the export merchants in the first five months of the current year, by June 1904 depots in the tobacco-growing villages were still filled with the 1903 harvest.<sup>46</sup> Within a couple of months, the work season in tobacco warehouses would come to an end and the growers would probably have to sell their crop at even lower prices. To make matters worse, the export merchants refused to make advance payments for the 1904 harvest.<sup>47</sup> These pressures on tobacco growers, however, did not go unchallenged. Growers from a number of villages, failing to reach an agreement with the export merchants, turned their attention to the Régie. In May 1904, they began arriving in İskeçe to ask for government help in forcing the Régie to make advance payments on the 1904 crop and to buy the unsold crops from 1903, on the grounds that the company, according to its agreement with the Ottoman state, had to buy all tobacco grown in the empire that was not to be exported. On 22 May, a large crowd of growers gathered in front of the Régie building and stayed there into the late hours.<sup>48</sup>

The visible presence of disappointed tobacco growers raised serious concerns among local government officials. To disperse the protestors waiting in front of the Régie building, the district governor (*kaymakam*) of İskeçe held a meeting with several of them and stated that the government was in contact with the Régie administration about a solution to the problems in the İskeçe tobacco market. Then he asked the protestors to leave one or two representatives in the town and return to their villages. Although his proposal found full support in the meeting, the *kaymakam* did not feel comfortable at the end of the day. He thought that if the Régie did not soon satisfy the tobacco growers' demands, "it would be almost impossible to silence them."<sup>49</sup> The *kaymakam*'s concerns regarding the maintenance of public order were reinforced by high rates of unemployment among warehouse workers.

The contraction in the tobacco trade inevitably gave rise to unemployment. By the time the growers began to arrive in İskeçe, a large number of unemployed tobacco workers had already been wandering in the streets. The warehouses employed about 2,000 workers in late May 1904, less than half the number employed in the prosperous years of the early 20th century.<sup>50</sup> Tobacco merchants took advantage of these conditions and held down wages, especially of the typically well-paid skilled tobacco balers. At the turn of the century, tobacco merchants and workers in the town had signed a contract stating that tobacco balers' daily wages were to be forty-three piasters during the work season. However, the merchants disregarded this agreement in May 1904, lowering the balers' wages to twenty piasters. The high levels of unemployment and reduction in wages provoked a strong opposition, and on 16 May approximately 1,000 employed and unemployed tobacco workers organized a demonstration, marching through the streets and throwing stones at the windows of the tobacco warehouses.<sup>51</sup>

In response to the 16 May demonstration, some tobacco merchants temporarily closed their warehouses and the *kaymakam* held a meeting with leading figures among the protesters. After the workers at the meeting identified the recent wage cuts as the reason for their plight and protests, the *kaymakam* invited all tobacco merchants in the town to another meeting to discuss the issue. With his intervention, the merchants stepped back and promised to restore the wages to their previous levels. This decision



apparently satisfied those workers who already had jobs as sorters and balers in tobacco warehouses.<sup>52</sup> The increase in wages, however, did not benefit the unemployed workers. Meanwhile, the contraction in tobacco sales continued, leading warehouses to refrain from hiring new workers. The unsolved unemployment problem soon led to further unrest in the town.

Shortly after the 16 May demonstration, some unemployed workers held secret meetings and decided to organize a new protest. According to the reports of local government officials, their plan was to convince the sorters and balers in the warehouses to strike. If it worked, the unemployed organizers hoped, the merchants would take active steps to solve their problems. When warehouse managers got wind of these secret meetings, some closed their doors as a precaution against attacks by workers. Yet, their fears were soon allayed as the police forces in the town discovered and dispersed those involved in the strike plan.<sup>53</sup>

Although the strike never went beyond the planning stage, during the spring and early summer of 1904 local government officials saw unemployed workers as a major threat to law and order in the town. After the 16 May demonstration, the vice-governor of Edirne province ordered the deportation of unemployed protesters from İskeçe and the arrest and prosecution of those who had instigated the demonstration.<sup>54</sup> In response, the *kaymakam* of İskeçe initiated an investigation against “the instigators of the troubles.”<sup>55</sup> However, both the *kaymakam* and his superiors knew that the deportation and arrest of protestors would not resolve the social tensions in the town. In a report addressed to the governor of Edirne province on 24 May, the governor of Gümülcine subprovince (*sancak*) wrote that the Régie Company must buy tobacco bales from the growers and make advance payments to them for the 1904 harvest. If these measures were implemented, the report reasoned, export merchants would also make purchases, and this would solve the problems of tobacco growers as well as workers. On the same day, the provincial governor forwarded the report to the Ministry of Interior, which asked the Ministry of Finance to notify the Régie administration to initiate the necessary measures as soon as possible.<sup>56</sup>

Protests by tobacco growers and workers, combined with government pressure, forced the Régie Company to act. Monsieur Hafsir, a company official in charge of initiating the measures, arrived in İskeçe on 25 May 1904. When Hafsir met with the governor of Gümülcine *sancak* the next day, there were two main issues on the agenda: unsold tobacco bales and advance payments. Apparently following orders from company headquarters, Hafsir did not make any compromise on the unsold tobacco bales; the Régie insisted that tobacco growers deliver their 1903 crops to the export merchants who had made advance payments on them. Regarding the 1904 harvest, however, Hafsir adopted a more flexible policy and agreed that the Régie would begin making advance payments.<sup>57</sup> In June 1904, the company paid 15,000 liras to 1,200 tobacco growers from fifteen to twenty villages.<sup>58</sup>

The 26 May meeting between the governor and Hafsir elicited a great deal of excitement among tobacco growers. When they were informed of the outcome, about 1,000 growers waiting outside the government building prayed for the good health of the sultan before returning to their villages. Yet, despite this important step, there remained substantive issues to be addressed. Foremost among them were the unsold tobacco bales from 1903 and the high rates of unemployment among warehouse workers. Neither the

Régie's decision to make advance payments nor the merchants' move to restore the cut wages provided a solution to these problems. Unfortunately for unemployed workers and growers alike, the contraction in tobacco sales continued during the rest of 1904. Reflecting on tobacco exports from Kavala, the major port for shipping tobacco grown in the İskeçe district, the British vice-consul Pecchioli wrote, "the export of tobacco during 1904 does not represent the total crop; a large quantity was left on hand owing to the lack of buyers. The best qualities are left, while the inferior kinds have been sold."<sup>59</sup>

The unfavorable market conditions, however, did not lead to any further strike attempts or street demonstrations in 1904. The decline in collective action on the part of workers has several explanations. First, especially after the restoration of wages to their previous levels, another strike did not receive strong support from workers who had escaped the unemployment plaguing the town. Some of those workers were also tobacco growers, thus already hard hit by the falling prices in the market, and could not bear the loss of wages during an uncertain strike period. Second, the ecclesiastical rivalry between the Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate over the loyalty of the Orthodox Christian populations of Macedonia and Thrace affected the situation in İskeçe.<sup>60</sup> In 1897, an Exarchist priest who attempted to establish a Bulgarian Orthodox church in the town had encountered strong opposition from the Greek clergy and was forced to leave. The same priest wrote that when he made a stop in İskeçe on his way to Istanbul in 1904, some Greek residents of the town attacked him and threatened to shave his beard.<sup>61</sup> This incident both reflected and heightened tensions between the local Patriarchist and Exarchist communities in the year of the strike. These tensions probably made further collective action on the part of workers difficult.

Unable to change market conditions, most of the unemployed workers either returned to their hometowns or went to other districts to find alternative sources of income. Tobacco growers also had to deal with difficult economic conditions. By late July 1904, according to estimates of local government officials, 400 of them had still not received advance payments from the Régie Company.<sup>62</sup> Even the growers who had received them were not doing well financially. Most of them probably sold their 1903 crops at low prices or kept them in their depots in the hope of getting better prices in the following year. In an effort to forestall a new crisis, they planted less tobacco in 1904. In the spring of 1905, it appeared that the tobacco yield had declined markedly from the previous year, not only in İskeçe but also in major production centers of nearby Salonica province, such as Drama, Kavala, and Sarışaban. That decline sparked further unrest, this time among tobacco workers in Kavala.

#### THE SECOND ROUND OF THE CRISIS: ANGRY WORKERS AND BROKEN WINDOWS IN KAVALA

While tobacco growers in İskeçe suffered from falling prices and mounting crop surpluses, their counterparts in Kavala were only slightly better off. According to the reports of the Régie Company, the 1903 tobacco harvest in the Kavala district was more than 10 million kilograms, approximately 60 percent of which remained in the hands of growers at the beginning of June 1904.<sup>63</sup> As the growers in the district responded to the unfavorable market conditions by planting less tobacco, the demand for labor in Kavala warehouses in 1905 was reduced. Recognizing that this reduction created a labor surplus

in the town, tobacco merchants decreased workers' wages at the very beginning of the work season. To protest the wage cuts, virtually all tobacco workers, whose total number was estimated at between 5,000 and 6,000, declared a strike on the morning of 20 March 1905.<sup>64</sup>

Following the strike decision, the workers organized a march in the streets and smashed the windows of more than 200 tobacco warehouses in the town. After they attacked the office and insulted a scribe of a well-known tobacco company run by the Allatini family, one of the company guards opened fire on the strikers. They responded by attempting to set fire to the company building with gasoline. They also demanded the punishment of the guard, whom local Ottoman officials took into custody.<sup>65</sup> A gendarme officer accompanied by a delegation of religious figures addressed the strikers, telling them "to disperse and their grievances would be attended to," but the response was not favorable.<sup>66</sup> Finally, around noon, military units arrived, the strikers were dispersed, and order was restored.<sup>67</sup> The *kaymakam* of Kavala, in a report dated 20 March 1905, described the attacks on warehouses as an old habit of tobacco workers.<sup>68</sup> The town had witnessed similar labor troubles in the recent past; in 1896, striking Greek, Muslim, and Jewish workers managed to secure wage increases after holding demonstrations in the streets and smashing the windows of the tobacco warehouses.<sup>69</sup>

From the perspective of Ottoman military officials, strikes and violent demonstrations were symptoms of the tobacco workers' ignorance and vagrancy.<sup>70</sup> For "the unemployed and famished"<sup>71</sup> workers, these forms of protest were an expression of the anger they felt toward tobacco merchants. However, their activities also demonstrated an underlying selectivity and restraint. When they came together on the morning of 20 March, most of the strikers apparently knew that military and police forces would soon arrive and disperse them by threat or the actual use of force. Based on their earlier experiences, they targeted the windows of the warehouses in order to quickly eliminate strike-breakers: as tobacco leaves exposed to fresh air could not be properly processed, the small number of strike-breakers had no choice but to leave their workplaces until the windows were fixed. By breaking windows, the strikers also showed that they could easily paralyze tobacco processing, if the merchants insisted on the wage cuts. Even the attack on the office of the Allatini Company was no arbitrary act. When Colonel Fairholme, one of the European staff officers in charge of gendarmerie reform in Macedonia, arrived in Kavala on 23 March, he learned that before the strike, tobacco workers in the town did not know the amount of their weekly wages until pay day. Quite possibly, there was sometimes considerable disparity between the workers' expectations and the actual payments they received. To protest their employers' wage policy, the strikers targeted one of the most prominent tobacco companies and attacked the office where wages were calculated.<sup>72</sup>

The strikers' "ignorant" tactics proved effective in light of the events that unfolded over the next few days. On 21 March, the governor of Drama *sancak* rushed to Kavala, where he organized a meeting between the representatives of the strikers and those of the tobacco merchants. At the meeting, the latter party stepped back and agreed to restore wages to their previous levels, while the workers promised to pay the costs of the broken windows. For this purpose, the merchants would withhold one day's wages from them, which amounted in the aggregate to about 1,000 liras. When this agreement was made public, a large number of workers gathered in front of the government building and expressed their gratitude to the government. According to the local press, they chanted

“Long live the sultan!”<sup>73</sup> Although the strike was over, the warehouses were not yet able to resume operations. Colonel Fairholme, in a report addressed to the commander of the International Gendarmerie Commission in Salonica, noted that it would take one to two weeks to fix the broken windows.<sup>74</sup> Until then, unemployed sorters and balers had to find alternative sources of income or manage with their limited financial resources. In this interim period, the more fortunate in the job market were those who made their living as carpenters in the winter months. Tobacco merchants hired at least some of them to fix the broken windows and do other repair work in the warehouses.

When hundreds of warehouses reopened their doors in late March or early April, the tobacco workers of Kavala, organized across ethnic and religious lines, had won a noteworthy victory.<sup>75</sup> Similar to, but more effectively than, their counterparts in İskeçe, they had shown that tobacco merchants did not have sole decision-making authority regarding when and under what conditions the warehouses could operate. Tobacco workers’ struggle to gain a voice in determining their working conditions continued in the following years, and their lists of demands became longer and more precisely articulated. When, for example, thousands of workers went on strike in September 1908, they raised demands regarding not only wages and work hours but also recruitment procedures. The representatives of strikers asked their employers to sign a document stating that a newly recruited worker would be paid the same wage he had received in his former job.<sup>76</sup>

In the success story of March 1905, however, burdens and benefits were not evenly distributed. For a variety of reasons, the locals of Kavala played a more central role in the settlement of the strike than did migrant workers. First, the strike took place at the very beginning of the work season, and thus seasonal migrants had not yet arrived in great numbers. While Kavala warehouses typically employed no less than 10,000 hands during the peak work season, local officials estimated the number of tobacco workers in the town in late March 1905 at between 5,000 and 6,000.<sup>77</sup> Second, migrant workers who participated in the strike encountered exclusionary and oppressive government policies. Both civil and military officials accused them of being the instigators of all the mischief. In one of his early reports on the strike, for instance, the *kaymakam* of Kavala wrote that the trouble was provoked by nonlocal workers who were inclined to sedition.<sup>78</sup> While reporting on the causes of the strike, Field Marshal İbrahim, the commander of the Ottoman Ninth Infantry Division, advanced a similar argument. In order to prevent the recurrence of such events, he noted, the government had to send vagrant people who flocked to Kavala looking for work back to their home communities. A few lines later, he portrayed local workers as miserable people needing to be rescued from the tyranny of tobacco merchants.<sup>79</sup>

In line with this discourse, government officials quickly initiated policies targeting the migrant workers in Kavala. While the strikers and their employers were negotiating a settlement, local police forces deported some vagrants and unemployed workers back to their hometowns. Moreover, upon the order of the governor of Salonica province, a gendarme major from Drama, working with local police, began an investigation to identify and punish strike leaders. Local officials would send the identified workers to Salonica, even if no evidence was found to bring charges against them. The gendarme major and police forces, vested with such authority, ultimately arrested eight persons for instigating the strike. Yet, the major himself soon became the subject of an investigation

conducted by the Gendarme Reform Office. The office learned that he had beaten the arrested strikers in the government building. The Ottoman state documents do not provide information on the identity of these strikers. However, when government officials' above-mentioned statements on the causes of the strike are taken into account, it is quite possible that at least some, if not all, of them came from the ranks of migrant workers.<sup>80</sup> The sources consulted do not mention any labor protest by local workers against these government policies. The locals' post-strike silence probably stemmed from the insecurity they felt in the face of the decreased workload and limited job opportunities in the tobacco warehouses.

The local-migrant divide, however, was not the only salient division among strikers. The local and migrant workers together had established a gendered power hierarchy. Male workers, as mentioned above, monopolized prestigious and well-paying jobs in the warehouses, such as tobacco baling. It can be said with certainty that local male balers who managed to maintain their high wages were the chief beneficiaries of the strike. In the ensuing years, they continued to play a major role in the labor movement in Kavala. For example, during the negotiations between the representatives of workers and merchants in the September 1908 strike, one of the first issues that arose was the wage levels of balers and foremen.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, when the Kavala Tobacco Workers' Welfare Association was founded in 1909 as one of the first labor organizations in Ottoman Macedonia, all twenty-one workers on its administrative board were tobacco balers. These balers constituted an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous group including Greeks, Muslims, and Jews.<sup>82</sup> Because of their active involvement in labor organizations and protests, male balers maintained their monopoly over the craft until tobacco companies simplified and mechanized tobacco processing methods in the early 1930s.<sup>83</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

An analysis of the strikes in *İskeçe* and Kavala provides important insights into the relations between workers and the state in the last years of Abdülhamit II's reign. In both cases, the Ottoman government acted as a mediator between the parties in dispute. The strikes were settled at meetings organized by local government officials. This successful mediatory role won the government of Abdülhamit II popular support. Similar to the sultan's gift-giving ceremonies in the imperial capital, public celebrations after the 1905 strike became occasions for large crowds to express their loyalty to Abdülhamit II.<sup>84</sup> It is important to stress that the *İskeçe* and Kavala cases were by no means exceptional. In the early 20th century, the government's involvement in labor disputes sometimes went beyond the role of mediator. In the above-mentioned 1906 strike in Istanbul, for example, Abdülhamit II ordered that if the Régie did not respond to the workers' demands, the government itself should pay the customary Easter money.<sup>85</sup> These three examples demonstrate how, in the context of mounting social unrest before the 1908 revolution, the government of Abdülhamit II used labor protests in the tobacco industry to win the approval and loyalty of workers in both the center and the provinces.

In addition to underlining the active role of the Ottoman government in the settlement of strikes, this article has emphasized the agency of tobacco workers as historical actors. In both *İskeçe* and Kavala, tobacco sorters and balers struggled to have a greater voice in workplace decisions. To gain the upper hand against their employers and against

strike breakers, mobilized workers devised effective protest tactics, such as smashing the windows of tobacco warehouses. Without these tactics, neither the government nor tobacco merchants would have taken steps to address their grievances. The workers were also able to adapt themselves to changes in the local and imperial political context. Shortly after the 1908 revolution, for example, tobacco balers in Kavala established close relations with members of the local Committee of Union and Progress, such as the gendarme commander and telegraph officer. Apparently drawing on this relationship, they employed new protest tactics in a strike in September 1908. Instead of attacking warehouse buildings, sorters and balers in the town freely entered the buildings and conducted searches for strike breakers.<sup>86</sup>

In analyzing labor unrest in İskeçe and Kavala, this study has drawn attention to moments not only of cohesiveness but also of fragmentation. In the spring of 1904 and of 1905, tobacco workers with different levels of skill and from different ethnic groups and regions formed broad-based alliances against their employers. However, as the street demonstrations and attacks on the warehouses forced tobacco merchants to restore wage cuts, internal cohesion among the mobilized workers declined. In İskeçe, the strike plan initiated by unemployed workers did not materialize, in part because of harsh economic conditions and tensions between the Patriarchist and Exarchist communities. Moreover, intercommunal tensions in the town intensified in the years after the strike. When a crop failure led to a decrease in the labor demand of tobacco warehouses in 1907, some Greek residents of the town pressured tobacco merchants not to employ Bulgarians. Their efforts proved successful and some 800 Bulgarian workers remained unemployed during the tobacco-processing season.<sup>87</sup> In Kavala, meanwhile, when some migrant workers were labeled “vagrants” by the Ottoman civilian and military bureaucracy and expelled from the town, local workers did not raise their voices. In both towns, the “solution” of the unemployment problem was thus left to free market forces and Ottoman state officials.

As Khuri-Makdisi argues, tobacco workers in the Ottoman Empire, like their counterparts in Egypt, developed a culture of contestation. However, in Kavala, frequent labor protests did not pose a threat to gendered hierarchies in tobacco warehouses. In İskeçe, labor activism and militancy went hand-in-hand with the escalation of tensions between Bulgarian and Greek communities. In these two places, the culture of contestation described by Khuri-Makdisi was characterized not only by labor unity but also by labor fragmentation, rooted in male supremacy and intercommunal tensions.

#### NOTES

*Author's note:* I thank David Gutman, Mark Baker, and the anonymous reviewers and editors of *IJMES* for their insightful comments.

<sup>1</sup>Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, hereafter BOA), İrade Hususi (hereafter İ.HUS) 1310.L.37 (9 Şevval 1310/26 April 1893).

<sup>2</sup>BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi (hereafter DH.MKT) 993/67, Governor of Trabzon province to the Ministry of Interior (16 Temmuz 1321/29 July 1905).

<sup>3</sup>As compensation for unpaid wages, the company gave its workers a certain sum of money annually on Easter. BOA, DH.MKT 912/53, report from the Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of Interior (17 Mart 1322/30 March 1906); report from the Ministry of Police to the Ministry of Interior (17 Mart 1322/30 March 1906); report from the Prefect of Istanbul to the Ministry of Interior (17 Mart 1322/30 March 1906).

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Mesut Gülmez, “Tanzimat’tan Sonra İşçi Örgütlenmesi ve Çalışma Koşulları (1839–1919),” in *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, 3. Cilt (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları,

1985), 792–802; Şehmus Güzel, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e İşçi Hareketi ve Grevler,” in *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, 3. Cilt, 803–30; Yavuz Selim Karakışla, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda 1908 Grevleri,” *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 78 (1998): 187–208; and Cevdet Kırpık, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde İşçiler ve İşçi Hareketleri (1876–1914)” (PhD diss., Süleyman Demirel University, 2004), 233–74.

<sup>5</sup>Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Donald Quataert, “Machine Breaking and the Changing Carpet Industry of Western Anatolia, 1860–1908,” *Journal of Social History* 19 (1986): 473–89.

<sup>6</sup>Quataert, “Machine Breaking.”

<sup>7</sup>Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105–12. In his study on the coal heavers of Port Sa’id, John Chalcraft similarly demonstrates that the Egyptian state was not always an adversary of worker protest. See John Chalcraft, “The Coal Heavers of Port Sa’id: State-Making and Worker Protest, 1869–1914,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (2001): 110–24.

<sup>8</sup>Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2010), 155. On the militancy of tobacco workers in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, see also Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882–1954* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 50–57; Relli Shechter, *Smoking, Culture and Economy in the Middle East: The Egyptian Tobacco Market 1850–2000* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 43–44; E. Tutku Vardağlı, “Tobacco Labor Politics in the Province of Thessaloniki: Cross-Communal and Cross-Gender Relations” (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2011); and George Haupt and Paul Dumont, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyalist Hareketler* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1977).

<sup>9</sup>Peter Carl Mentzel, “Nationalism and Labor Movement in the Ottoman Empire, 1872–1914” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1994), 87–89; Kırpık, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde İşçiler,” 236.

<sup>10</sup>In his study on the Zonguldak coalfield, Quataert discusses a similar problem. “One body of mining documents, the accountants’ records,” he writes, “offers a vision of the workers’ world as anonymous and collective.” Donald Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822–1920* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 109.

<sup>11</sup>BOA, Şura-yı Devlet (hereafter ŞD) 568/19, list of tobacco factories prepared by the accountant of the Department of Excise Taxes (25 Şubat 1296/9 March 1881), report from the Department of Excise Taxes to the Ministry of Finance (22 Teşrinisani 1296/4 December 1880), and petition written by a tobacco company owner in Izmir (28 Teşrinievvel 1296/9 November 1880).

<sup>12</sup>Donald Quataert, “The Régie, Smugglers, and the Government,” in *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 13–40; Murat Birdal, *The Political Economy of the Ottoman Public Debt: Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 15; “The Ottoman Tobacco Industry,” *Journal of the Society of Arts* 42 (1894): 733–34; Şükrü Ilicak, “Jewish Socialism in Ottoman Salonica,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 2 (2002): 115–46, 121; BOA, DH.MKT 847/67, report from the Vice-Director of the Régie Company to the Ministry of Interior (21 Nisan 1320/4 May 1904).

<sup>13</sup>Birdal, *The Political Economy of the Ottoman Public Debt*, 158.

<sup>14</sup>BOA, Yıldız Esas Evrakı (hereafter Y.EE) 11/17, report from the Régie Superintendent to the Imperial Palace (13 Cemaziyelevvel 1307/5 January 1890); Quataert, “The Régie, Smugglers, and the Government,” 21.

<sup>15</sup>Export merchants were not a homogenous group. Some, having considerable capital at their disposal, engaged in buying and selling tobacco leaves on a large scale. They established companies and employed other merchants as their agents. The Allatini family was among such prominent export merchants. The family’s company, mentioned later in this article, ranked second in Macedonia, after the Hungarian Herzog Company, in exporting tobacco leaves. See Donald Quataert, “The Workers of Salonica, 1850–1912,” in *Workers and the Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839–1950*, ed. Donald Quataert and Erick Jan Zürcher (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 59–74, 68.

<sup>16</sup>Adam Block, *Special Report on the Ottoman Public Debt* (London: 1906), 85.

<sup>17</sup>Jarrett Rudy, “Cigarettes,” in *Tobacco in History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, ed. Jordan Goodman (Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2005), 144–50.

<sup>18</sup>1296 *Senesi Martı İbtidasından Şubatı Nihayetine Değın Bir Sene Zarfında Memâlik-i Mahrûsa-i Şahane Mahsulât-ı Arziyye ve Smaıyyesinden Diyar-ı Ecnebiyeye Giden ve Bılcümle Diyar-ı Ecnebiyeden Memâlik-i Mahrûsa-i Şahaneye Gelen Eşyanın Cins ve Mikdarını Mübeyyin Tanzım Olunan İstatistik Defterlerinin Hâlâsatü'l-Hâlâsa Cedvelidir* (Dersaadet: n.p., 1301/1885), 25; "Tabakerzeugung, Bearbeitung und Handel in Der Europaishen Türkei," *Berichte über Handel und Industrie* 18 (5 December 1912): 338.

<sup>19</sup>Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2, 1600–1914, ed. Halil İnalçık with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 852.

<sup>20</sup>"Tabakerzeugung, Bearbeitung und Handel in Der Europaishen Türkei," 339.

<sup>21</sup>*Rüsumat Müdiriyyet-i Umumiyesi Ticaret-i Hariciye İstatistiğı 1326* (Dersaadet: n.p., 1328/1912), 8; *Rüsumat Müdiriyyet-i Umumiyesi, Ticaret-i Hariciye İstatistiğı 1327* (Dersaadet: n.p., 1329/1913), 8; *Rüsumat Müdiriyyet-i Umumiyesi Ticaret-i Hariciye İstatistiğı 1329* (Dersaadet: n.p., 1331/1915), 8.

<sup>22</sup>Konstandinos A. Vakalopoulos, *Modern History of Macedonia, 1830–1912* (Thessaloniki, Greece: Barbounakis, 1988), 144; BOA, Rumeli Müfettişliğı Selanik Evrakı (hereafter TFR-I-SL) 68/6732, Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (21 March 1321/3 April 1905); BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, report from Colonel Fairholme to Degiorgis Pasha (25 March 1905); 1322 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 441; 1325 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 426. According to Gounaris, the population of Kavala was 22,000 in 1898 and 24,000 in 1908. See Basil C. Gounaris, *Steam over Macedonia 1870–1912: Socio-Economic Change and the Railway Factor* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1993), 235.

<sup>23</sup>Ahmet Şerif, *Anadolu'da Tanin*, ed. Mehmed Çetin Börekçi (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), 256. The population of Samsun was estimated at 25,000 in 1912. See Quataert, "The Age of Reforms," 781.

<sup>24</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 1686/47, the Ministry of Interior to the Commander-in-Chief (20 Kanunuevvel 1305/1 January 1890); BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti İdare Kısmı (hereafter DH.İD) 132/7, telegram from the administrative board of tobacco workers' union in İskeçe (12 Teşrinievvel 1327/25 October 1911). In 1912, the population of İskeçe was reported to be 18,000. See Consul General G. Bie Ravndal, "Census and Divisions of Turkish Empire," 23 October 1912, *Daily Consular and Trade Reports* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Commerce and Labor Bureau of Manufactures), 426–27.

<sup>25</sup>Quataert, "The Workers of Salonica," 71.

<sup>26</sup>The Egyptian cigarette industry grew rapidly at the turn of the century; migrant workers (Greeks, Armenians, Europeans, and Syrians) held the better-paid and more skilled positions. See Bein and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 50; and Shechter, *Smoking, Culture and Economy*, 42–43.

<sup>27</sup>C. L. Constantinides, *Turkish Tobacco: A Manual for Planters, Dealers, and Manufacturers* (London: W. & J. Rounce Ltd., 1912), 25; 1315 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 571; 1318 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 509; 1325 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 426.

<sup>28</sup>Constantinides, *Turkish Tobacco*, 25. Constantinides referred to migrant workers as men, but as discussed below they also included women and girls.

<sup>29</sup>This event took place in the context of the fierce struggle between Bulgarian and Greek armed groups for territorial gains in the Ottoman Balkans. The governor wrote that the attack was in revenge for the murder of a Greek consulate official in Salonica by Bulgarians. The leader of the migrant group carrying out the attack was an Ottoman Greek subject from Kozana, Salonica. The sources consulted do not give information on the other workers. See BOA, DH.MKT 1249/64, the Ministry of Interior to the Grand Vizierate (22 Rebiülevvel 1326/23 April 1908). For the struggle between Bulgarian and Greek armed groups, see Ahsene Gül Tokay, "The Macedonian Question and the Origins of the Young Turk Revolution, 1903–1908" (PhD diss., University of London, 1994).

<sup>30</sup>W. C. F. Anderson, "A Journey from Mount Athos to Hebrus," in *Papers Printed to Commemorate the Incorporation of the University College of Sheffield* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1897), 211–52, 241.

<sup>31</sup>Constantinides, *Turkish Tobacco*, 48.

<sup>32</sup>*Drama Tütüncü Kongresi Mukarreratı* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1326/1910), 70; *Kavala Tütün Kongresi* (Selanik: Yeni Asır Matbaası, 1327/1911), 17, 29.

<sup>33</sup>1315 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 571; 1318 *Sene-i Hicriyesine Mahsus Selanik Vilayet Salnamesi*, 509.

<sup>34</sup>Vardağlı, "Tobacco Labor Politics," 169, 380.



<sup>35</sup>BOA, DH. İD 107/29, the Ministry of Interior to the Governor of Aydın province (26 Haziran 1328/9 July 1912) and telegram from the Governor of Aydın province to the Ministry of Interior (27 Haziran 1328/10 July 1912).

<sup>36</sup>“The Ottoman Tobacco Industry,” 733–34; “Osmanlı Tütünleri ve Reji Şirketi,” *Servet-i Fünun* 6 (1894): 296.

<sup>37</sup>Gila Hadar, “Jewish Tobacco Workers in Salonika: Gender and Family in the Context of Social Life and Ethnic Strife,” in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History*, ed. Amila Buturovic and Irvin Cemil Schick (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 132.

<sup>38</sup>“The Home of Turkish Tobacco,” in *The Cornhill Magazine, New Series*, vol. 11 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1888), 191.

<sup>39</sup>Anderson, “A Journey from Mount Athos to Hebrus,” 241.

<sup>40</sup>Zehra Kosova, *Ben İççiyim* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), 13.

<sup>41</sup>In the late 19th century, more than 10,000 women and girls worked in the silk factories of Mount Lebanon, while only 1,000 men were employed, exclusively as overseers. See Akram Fouad Khater, “‘House’ to ‘Goddess of the House’: Gender, Class and Silk in the 19th-Century Mount Lebanon,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996): 330. A tobacco monopoly was established in Lebanon in 1935. Women dominated the least-skilled and lowest-paid jobs in the monopoly company’s factories. See Malek Abisaab, *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press: 2010), 3, 29–30.

<sup>42</sup>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), 424.

<sup>43</sup>*Tanin*, 29 Mart 1327 (11 April 1911) and 13 Nisan 1327 (26 April 1911); Mentzel, “Nationalism and Labor Movement in the Ottoman Empire,” 208.

<sup>44</sup>Avdela, “Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in Post-Ottoman Thessaloniki,” 425; BOA, ŞD 2027/12, Governor of Salonica province to the Ministry of Interior (14 Receb 1314/19 December 1896); BOA, Başbakanlık Evrak Odası (hereafter BEO) 3051/228761, report from the *Kaymakam* of İskeçe to the Governor of Edirne province (7 Mart 1323/20 March 1907); Mr. G. Barclay to Sir Edward Grey, 18 September 1906, *Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers*, vol. 100 (Cd. 3454), 123.

<sup>45</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, report addressed to the Régie Superintendent (17 Rebiülevvel 1322/1 June 1904).

<sup>46</sup>BOA, ŞD 1918/6, petition from peasants to the inspection committee in İskeçe (20 Teşrinievvel 1309/1 November 1893).

<sup>47</sup>BOA, Rumeli Müfettişliği Edirne Evrakı (hereafter TFR-I-ED) 8/718, telegram from Finance Inspector Rami to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Temmuz 1320/20 July 1904).

<sup>48</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the *Kaymakam* of İskeçe (10 Mayıs 1320/23 May 1904) and telegram from the Vice-Governor of Edirne province to the Ministry of Interior (5 Mayıs 1320/18 May 1904).

<sup>49</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the *Kaymakam* of İskeçe (10 Mayıs 1320/23 May 1904).

<sup>50</sup>See BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the Governor of Gümülcine sub-province to the Governor of Edirne province (16 Mayıs 1320/29 May 1904).

<sup>51</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the Governor of Gümülcine sub-province (3 Mayıs 1320/16 May 1904).

<sup>52</sup>BOA, TFR-I-ED 7/611, two telegrams from the Governor of Gümülcine sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (3–4 Mayıs 1320/16–17 May 1904); BOA, DH. MKT 854/21, telegram from the Vice-Governor of Edirne province to the Ministry of Interior (5 Mayıs 1320/18 May 1904). These documents suggest that the problems of unemployed workers were not discussed at the meeting. The unemployed sorters and balers quite possibly did not have a representative there.

<sup>53</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the *Kaymakam* of İskeçe (10 Mayıs 1320/23 May 1904) and telegram from the Vice-Governor of Edirne province to the Ministry of Interior (11 Mayıs 1320/24 May 1904).

<sup>54</sup>BOA, DH. MKT 854/21, telegram from the Vice-Governor of Edirne province to the Ministry of Interior (3 Mayıs 1320/16 May 1904).

<sup>55</sup>BOA, TFR-I-ED 7/611, telegram from the Governor of Gümülcine sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (3 Mayıs 1320/16 May 1904).

<sup>56</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the Vice-Governor of Edirne province to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Finance (11 Mayıs 1320/24 May 1904).

<sup>57</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, telegram from the Governor of Gümülcine sub-province to the Governor of Edirne province (16 Mayıs 1320/29 May 1904).

<sup>58</sup>BOA, TFR-I-ED 8/718, telegram from Finance Inspector Rami to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Temmuz 1320/20 July 1904).

<sup>59</sup>Report from Mr. Vice Council Pecchioli, *Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers*, vol. 93, no. 3430 (Cd. 2236–174), 16.

<sup>60</sup>The Exarchate, a semiautonomous Bulgarian church, was founded by an imperial decree in 1870. Article 10 of the decree stipulated that if two-thirds of the Orthodox population of a given district expressed their will to change their ecclesiastical authority through a local referendum, the Ottoman administration would recognize the change. See Paraskevas Konortas, “Nationalist Infiltrations in Ottoman Thrace (ca. 1870–1912),” in *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830–1945*, ed. Benjamin Fortna, Stefanos Katsikas, Dimitris Kamouzis, and Paraskevas Konortas (New York: Routledge, 2013), 77–78.

<sup>61</sup>Vermund Aarbakke, “Urban Space and the Bulgarian-Greek Antagonism in Thrace, 1870–1912,” paper presented at the workshop *The Balkans: From Academic Field to International Politics*, Athens, 2012. I thank Dr. Aarbakke for letting me use his paper.

<sup>62</sup>BOA, TFR-I-ED 8/718, telegram from Finance Inspector Rami to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Temmuz 1320/20 July 1904).

<sup>63</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 854/21, report addressed to the Régie Superintendent (17 Rebiülevvel 1322/1 June 1904).

<sup>64</sup>BOA, Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Askeri Maruzat (hereafter Y.PRK.ASK) 227/86, telegram from Field Marshal İbrahim to the Imperial Palace (17 Muharrem 1323/24 March 1905); BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, two telegrams from the Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Mart 1321/20 March 1905).

<sup>65</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, telegram from the Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia and telegram from the *Kaymakam* of Kavala to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Mart 1321/20 March 1905); BOA, Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat (hereafter Y.MTV) 272/107, telegram from the Ottoman Ninth Infantry Division (11 Mart 1321/24 March 1905).

<sup>66</sup>British consul’s report, quoted in Mentzel, “Nationalism and Labor Movement in the Ottoman Empire,” 88.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 88–89; BOA, Y.MTV 272/107, telegram from the Ottoman Ninth Infantry Division (11 Mart 1321/24 March 1905).

<sup>68</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, telegram from the *Kaymakam* of Kavala to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Mart 1321/20 March 1905).

<sup>69</sup>Yannis Vyzikas, *Chronico ton Ergatikon Agonon* (Kavala, Greece: Tobacco Museum, 1994), 12–13. I thank Anna Maria Aslanoğlu and Tutku Vardağlı for the translation of related chapters in this manuscript from Greek to Turkish.

<sup>70</sup>BOA, Y.MTV 272/107, telegram from the Ottoman Ninth Infantry Division (11 Mart 1321/24 March 1905).

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, report from Colonel Fairholme to Degiorgis Pasha (25 March 1905). For more information on gendarmerie reform in Macedonia, see Tokay, “The Macedonian Question.”

<sup>73</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 68/6732, report from the Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (21 March 1321/3 April 1905); *Yeni Asır*, 14 Mart 1321 (27 March 1905) and 7 Nisan 1321 (20 April 1905).

<sup>74</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, report from Colonel Fairholme to Degiorgis Pasha (25 March 1905).

<sup>75</sup>In virtually all labor protests discussed in this article, Kavala tobacco workers were organized across ethnic and religious lines. However, this does not mean that the tobacco industry in the town was free of communal tensions. When, for instance, Greek Christian foremen closed two tobacco warehouses during a short visit by the Greek Archbishop of Drama in June 1909, a serious dispute broke out between Greek and Muslim workers. See *Tanin*, 16 Haziran 1325 (29 June 1909).

<sup>76</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 196/19560, telegram from the Governor of Drama sub-province (31 Ağustos 1324/13 September 1908).

<sup>77</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, telegram from the Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia and telegram from the *Kaymakam* of Kavala to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Mart 1321/20 March 1905).

<sup>78</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 67/6659, telegram from the *Kaymakam* of Kavala to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (7 Mart 1321/20 March 1905).

<sup>79</sup>BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 227/86, telegram from Field Marshal İbrahim to the Imperial Palace (17 Muharrem 1323/24 March 1905).

<sup>80</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 68/6732, report from the Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (21 March 1321/3 April 1905) and report addressed to the Governor of Drama sub-province (27 Mart 1321/9 April 1905)

<sup>81</sup>BOA, TFR-I-SL 196/19560, telegram from the Governor of Drama sub-province to the Inspectorate of Rumelia (2 Eylül 1324/15 September 1908).

<sup>82</sup>BOA, DH.İD, 132/4, report from the Kavala Tobacco Workers' Welfare Association (6 Teşrinievvel 1325/19 October 1909).

<sup>83</sup>Maria Rentetzi, "Tobacco Factories: The History of a Lost Culture," in *Tobacco Factories*, ed. Kamilo Nollas (Athens: Kastaniotis Editions, 2007), 31–37; Lois Labrianidis, "Restructuring the Greek Tobacco Industry," *Antipode* 19 (1987): 141.

<sup>84</sup>On the sultan's gift-giving ceremonies in the imperial capital, see Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet, 1876–1914* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002).

<sup>85</sup>BOA, İ.HUS 1324.S.1 (4 Safer 1324/29 March 1906).

<sup>86</sup>On the relationship between tobacco balers and members of the local Committee of Union and Progress, see BOA, TFR-I-SL 196/19560, telegram from the Governor of Drama sub-province (6 Eylül 1324/19 September 1908).

<sup>87</sup>BOA, DH.MKT 1173/32, report from the Ministry of Interior to the Grand Vizierate (22 Rebiülevvel 1325/5 May 1907); BOA, DH.MKT 1171/89 (26 Rebiülahir 1325/8 June 1907); BOA, BEO 3051/228761, telegram from the *Kaymakam* of İskeçe to the Governor of Edirne province (9 Nisan 1323/22 April 1907); G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, vol. 5, *The Near East* (London: n.p., 1928), 23.