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**From Mulberry Orchards to Silk: Silk Production in Antakya (1737-1773)<sup>1</sup>**

**Dut Bahçesinden İpeğe: Antakya'da İpekçilik (1737-1773)**

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### Abstract

Silk has made its mark on the rich history of Anatolia, economically and culturally influencing many periods, and evolving into a significant industry. The Ottoman state, with its strategic location and prosperous silk-producing centres, was at times a prominent player in the silk trade. There were also times when the Ottoman silk industry adopted production methods from other countries, which led to periods of intense output. However, due to political movements and other events that caused fluctuations in the industry during certain periods, from the 18th century onwards, local resources were utilized to reduce dependency on Iranian silk, leading to a significant shift in the silk trade. This transition towards favouring domestic production over Iranian silk was a significant milestone for the industry. This study will examine silk-related activities in the district of Antakya (Antioch), which had an important place among the domestic silk producers of the Ottoman state, and in relation to this, how mulberry orchards, which provide the food source of silkworms that are considered to be the first stage of the silk production chain, were registered as private property in the court records (*şeriye sicilleri*) of Antakya. This will also provide insights, within the context of Islamic law, into the perspectives of Islamic jurists through various cases brought before the courts. Antakya's silk industry will be explored through the court records of Antakya from the 18th century, as well as observations of travellers, and various research publications and reviews. In conclusion, the findings reveal that Antakya had a special place in Ottoman and European silk industries. The district carried on the silk tradition by playing vital roles in silk production, trade, and industry. Although the increase in the number of mulberry orchards in Antakya, due to the actions of ordinary citizens, brought about ownership disputes, it still serves as an indicator of the development of the local silk production.

**Keywords:** Ottoman, Antakya, Mulberry, Silk, Silk Production.

### Öz

İpekçilik, Anadolu'nun zengin tarihinde benzersiz bir iz bırakmış, ekonomik ve kültürel anlamda birçok dönemi etkileyerek önemli bir sektör haline gelmiştir. Osmanlı Devleti, stratejik konumu ve zengin ipek üretim bölgeleriyle ipekçilikte zaman zaman öne çıkan bir güç haline gelmiştir. Osmanlı ipek sektörünün, diğer ülkelerin üretim şekillerine uyum sağlayarak yoğun üretime geçtiği olmuştur. Ancak bazı dönemlerde, siyasi hareketler ve çeşitli olaylar, sektörde dalgalarnameala neden olduğundan, 18. yüzyıldan itibaren yerel kaynaklar kullanılarak, İran ipeğine olan bağımlılık azaltılmış ve ipek ticaretinde önemli bir değişime gidilmiştir. İran ipeği yerine yerel üretimin tercih edilmesi önemli bir dönemeçtir. Bu çalışmada, Osmanlı yerel ipek üreticileri arasında önemli bir yere sahip olan Antakya'nın (Antioch) ipekçilik faaliyetleri; bununla ilişkili olarak, ipek üretim zincirinin ilk aşaması sayılan ipek böceklerinin beslenme sahisi olan dutlukların, Antakya mahkeme kayıtlarında nasıl özel mülk olarak tescil edildiği incelenecektir. Böylece, İslam hukuku çerçevesi dâhilinde fikihçilərin bakış açıları, mahkemeye intikal eden davalar üzerinden izlenebilecektir. Antakya'daki ipekçilik; 18. yüzyıla ait Antakya kadi sicilleri, seyyahların gözlemleri ve araştırma eserleri üzerinden irdelenecektir. Sonuç olarak, Osmanlı ve Avrupa ipekçiliğinde, Antakya'nın özel bir yere sahip olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Şehir, ipek üretiminde, ticaretinde ve sanayisinde oynadığı önemli rollerle ipekçilik geleneğini sürdürmüştür. Antakya'da dut bahçeleri sayısının insan eliyle artırılmış olması, mülkiyet problemlerini getirmiştir olsa da bu durum, yerli ipek üretiminin gelişliğinin bir göstergesidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı, Antakya, Dut, İpek, İpekçilik.

### Extended Abstract

Silkworm silk, with its lustrous appearance and soft texture, has been regarded as a symbol of elegance and nobility since ancient times, and its allure has encouraged societies to utilize silk textiles extensively, which in turn fostered advancements in silk weaving. The production of silk involves the processes of extracting silk fibres from cocoons and weaving silk yarn into textiles. Silkworm farming is the initial stage of this production chain. Therefore, mulberry leaves are of vital importance since they serve as silkworms' primary food source. Although mulberry trees are cultivated for a number of reasons, the most obvious one is to support the rearing of silkworms and to produce raw silk.

Silk production is carried out only at a certain time of the year and with minimal labour, allowing producers to engage in other occupations simultaneously. In this respect, the freedom it gave to people in their daily lives rendered it a high value-added occupation, and thus it has attracted much interest throughout history. In this study, silk production activities in Antakya and, in connection with this, the process how the food sources of silkworms—mulberry orchards—were registered as private property in Antakya's 18th-century court records (*şeriye sicilleri*) will be examined through examples. This approach allows for observing how issues debated on a theoretical level in "*fiqh*" literature and "*fatwa*" collections played out in real-life cases. Through the information derived from specific court cases, it is also possible to partially understand how disputes concerning mulberry trees and orchards—debated by Ottoman jurists on the basis of Islamic law as to whether they fell within private ownership—were resolved in the qadi courts.

Of the qualitative research techniques, this study employs the document analysis method, and the time frame is limited to the 18th century. This chronological scope was determined by the material available on the subject. Despite the existence of previous studies on silk production and sericulture, the limited information available on the function and ownership of mulberry gardens, which in fact form the backbone of the silk industry, has motivated this research. Both lawsuit documents submitted to the courts and the "*waqf*" charters issued in the name of officials from the administrative class Ehl-i Örf, reveal that such officials also owned mulberry orchards and silk reeling and throwing devices among their properties in Antakya and its subdistricts. According to Ottoman law, mulberry orchards were owned by the state. However, during the sale or inheritance division of a vineyard or an orchard, those who cultivated such lands in Antakya managed to have them recognised and registered as their private properties. Since the conditions for owning orchards were well-defined in Ottoman law, transactions involving sales of mulberry orchards in Antakya were deemed valid.

The Ottoman state leased its revenue sources to private individuals for a definite sum of money and a specific period through a contractual arrangement known as mukataa. Through this system, the Ottoman state, in addition to operating sources of revenues other than agricultural lands, also collected taxes from such sources. It is clear that silk throwing devices and silk looms, which fall under commercial and industrial revenue sources, were also leased as mukataas for operation on behalf of the state. Such information on mukataas provides valuable insights into the economic conditions of the Ottoman state in general and the district of Antakya in particular. Following Antakya's incorporation into Ottoman rule, all its tax sources were included in the mukataa system. Thus, they became a part of the revenues of the Sultan and the

governor-general (beylerbeyi) of the province and remained so for a long time. By the 18th century, the mukataas regarding silk production in Antakya, the administrative centre of the district, were leased as malikane (a form of life-term tax-farming), and their management was directly overseen by the muhassil (tax collector) of Aleppo. In conclusion, as revealed by the documents examined in this study, these state-owned revenue sources in Antakya were placed under the control of certain individuals living in Antakya and thus generated income for the treasury. Furthermore, the lump sum payments made by entrepreneurs in exchange for these mukataas indicate that the state had turned to domestic borrowing, and that non-Muslim entrepreneurs, though few in number, also participated in silk trade in partnership with Muslims in Antakya. Judging from the sales documents and “*waqf*” charters pertaining to the mulberry orchards mentioned in Antakya’s 18th-century court records, it is possible to say that a significant portion of these mulberry orchards was monopolised by members of the ruling (askerî) class.

## Introduction

The precise century in which silk-related activities began in the Ottoman Empire remains a subject of debate. Despite Bursa's prominence in silk production, no records pertaining to local silk production are found in the 14th-century Bursa court records (*şeriye sicilleri*). Likewise, Anatolian cities such as Amasya and Tokat provide no clear evidence of silk production during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The earliest documented evidence of Edirne's silk industry appears in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the Ottoman archives, the earliest documents concerning silk production pertain to the regions of the Morea and Rumelia. A document from 1547, for instance, mentions sericulture in the town of Menlik in Serres (Yücekaya, 2021a, p.157-162; Yücekaya, 2021b, p.756). According to İnalcık, silk was produced in the Ottoman Balkans in Prizren and Albania. However, he also notes that silk production in the Morea and Rumelia predicated that of Anatolia (2012, pp. 284-312). In the Arab provinces, research suggests that following the establishment of Ottoman rule in Lebanon and Damascus during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, silk production and trade increased significantly (Çelik, 2016, p. 278).

The introduction of silk to Anatolia is closely tied to the long-established trade routes that pass through these lands. Activities related to silk production, weaving and trade were carried out in cities situated along these trade routes. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, silk production had developed into an important economic activity in the Ottoman state, thanks to the silk trade with its eastern neighbour—Iran, one of the prominent silk-producing centres in the world—and advancements in weaving techniques. With the expansion of the borders of the state during the 16th century, the rise in social welfare and increased demand for silk textiles led to an influx of people engaged in silk-related businesses across the state (Kıvrımlı and Elmacı, 2011, pp. 717-718). As a result, many people from the local populace turned to silk production. Indeed, our preliminary investigation of the research publications we have referred to in the relevant sections of this study, as well as Antakya's 18th-century court records, has revealed that silk production was of notable importance in Antakya, which came under Ottoman rule in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Further insights into the silk industry in Antakya are found in the accounts of travellers who visited the district during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, an English traveller, Abraham Parsons, who visited Antakya in December 1772, remarked on the silk production in Antakya as follows:

*“More silk is produced within a thirty-mile radius of Antioch than is produced in other parts of Syria. A significant portion of this silk is sent to Aleppo, where some of it is processed. Of the remaining quantity, a portion is sent to France, while the majority is shipped to England under the name “Antioch silk.” These multiple relations enlivened Antakya's trade and contributed to the wealth of both the district and its inhabitants (Kasaba, 2006, p. 205).*

Parsons also noted that a great quantity of silk was manufactured in Antakya. Besides Parsons, a traveller named Kinneir, who also visited Antakya during his journey through Anatolia, observed that silk farming was the primary occupation of the local population in Antakya and that the exportation of raw or manufactured silk generated considerable income. Similarly, another traveller, Ali Bey, stated that silk was the main product in the region (Demir, 1996, pp. 140-142).

The development of the textile industry in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, resulting in the production of cheaper and more ornate silk fabrics, diminished the demand for high-quality Turkish silk textiles.

As a result, while silk textile industry declined in the Ottoman state, sericulture was somewhat encouraged. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, however, difficulties in obtaining raw material for silk textiles increased the appeal of rearing silkworms (Kıvrımlı and Elmacı, 2011, pp. 719-720).

For instance, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman archival documents reveal that locals of Edirne began to engage in silk cocoon production (Yücekaya 2021a, p.165). As Yücekaya notes:

*“An archival document from 1807 states that, along with Amasya, the cities of Canik, Sivas, and Tokat were included in the tax base pertaining to silk production (mizan-ı harir mülhakatı). Another record refers to silk produced in the towns and districts around Amasya. The silk producing hinterland of Amasya is thus revealed through the silk and cocoons brought here from the cities of Sivas, Harput, Diyarbakır, and Mosul”* (2013, p. 274).

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ra’sü'l-Ayn Farm, located in Urfa in southeastern Anatolia, sought official permission and financial support from the authorities to conduct silkworm-rearing activities (Şanda, 2024a, p.180). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, buildings and silk throwing devices dedicated to silk production were established on this farm (Şanda, 2024b, p.868). Another record states that, as the silkworm rearing season had passed and no tax farmers (*miltezim*) had bid for tax farming (*iltizam*) for the year 1880, the Ra’sü'l-Ayn Farm would be administered directly by the state (*emanet*) after the silk season ended (Şanda 2024c, p.129). It appears sericulture was a significant economic focus in the aforementioned Ottoman cities. Also in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British took an interest in silkworm cultivation in Antakya and its surrounding areas and thus encouraged the local population to engage in sericulture. For instance, John Barker, who served as the representative of the Levant (Eastern Mediterranean) Company in Aleppo for 25 years before becoming the British consul in Alexandria, came to Suedia (Samandağ) in 1833 and built a villa there near the mouth of the Orontes River. He acquired a summer house in Batiyaz and orchards in Hıdırbey. He sent away for the highest-quality silkworm eggs from Italy and distributed them to local population, encouraging them to produce better and more abundant yields (Morray, 1997, p. 39; Tekin, 2000, p. 99). Also, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (*Düyün-i Umumiye*) included Antakya in its programme to establish sericulture institutes (*Harir Darii t-ta 'limi*) and mulberry nurseries, allocating the necessary funds for this project from the surplus revenue generated by the silk tithe (Kıvrımlı and Elmacı, 2011, p. 724).

Halil İnalcık is known to have carried out extensive research on Ottoman silk production (2012, pp. 273–312; and 2021, pp. 184–245). In the present study, we have drawn upon the works of selected authors—cited both above and throughout the text—whose analyses on silk production are known in the literature. These works have been fundamental for understanding both the stages of silk production and its historical development. However, the lack of information on the function and ownership of mulberry orchards, which can be regarded as the heart of this sector, has led to this research. Unlike previous studies, this study will focus on how mulberry orchards were registered as private property in the 18th-century court records of Antakya, and how Islamic jurists approached this issue within the context of Islamic law. In doing so, it is hoped that this study will contribute to future research in this field. The scope of this study is limited to register books 2, 7, and 8 of the Antakya court records (*seriye sicilleri*). The documents in these register books contain the most comprehensive and chronologically coherent information on mulberry orchards in Antakya, whereas the remaining Antakya registers offer insufficient data on the subject. A qualitative research technique was employed in this study. Within this framework, the historical research method was adopted in order to shed light

on the social and economic structure of the period. Additionally, document analysis method was utilized to identify thematic patterns within the court records.

### 1. Mukataa Revenues from the District of Antakya

In the Ottoman financial system, revenues of the central treasury were collected by three means: “*emanet*” (direct state administration), “*iltizam*” (tax-farming), and “*malikane*” (life-term tax-farming). Among these, “*iltizam*” and “*malikane*” were employed in the collection of revenues from the district of Antakya. Until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, as one of the “*haslı*” provinces (provinces under the “*timar*” system), Aleppo was governed financially and administratively by the governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) and treasurer (*defterdar*). However, around the middle of this century, Aleppo's treasury revenues were removed from the jurisdiction of the treasurer and entrusted to the management of a “*muhassil*” (tax collector). The “*muhassil*” of Aleppo accounted for approximately two percent of the revenues of the central treasury (Özvar, 2003, p. 102). It is known that during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, all of Antakya's revenue sources were converted into “*mukataas*”. Thus, from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, revenues in the district of Antakya were collected by two means. The first comprised the tax items that were managed as “*malikane*” under the “*mukataa*” system and directly overseen by the “*muhassil*” of Aleppo. Silk was one of these revenue items. The second development during the same century was the abolition of the treasury along with the position of “*muhassil*” in Aleppo, and the transfer of the “*mîrî*” (state-owned) revenues that had been collected as “*mukataa*”, which had previously been managed by the treasury of Aleppo, to a single individual under the system of “*iltizam*”. As a result, nearly all revenues in 18th-century Antakya came under direct state administration (Gül, 2014, pp. 176-177).

In the Ottoman Empire, revenue and expense registers (*miüfredat defteri*) of the districts under the jurisdiction of a sanjak were compiled and submitted to the “*mevkufat kalemi*” (a department under the central treasury) for auditing. According to a record in a “*miüfredat defteri*” dated 7 *dhul-Qa'da* 1149 AH (9 March 1737 AD), mulberry orchards in Mışräkiye village in the province of Antakya, which were listed among the properties of the former Shaykh al-Islam Damadzade Effendi, yielded 41 “*ritl-i Antaki*” (the unit of weight used in Antakya) worth of silk. Here, the unit of weight, “*ritl*”<sup>2</sup>, was valued at 13 kuruş. Based on this, the value of the silk in question should be, 41 “*ritl*” times 13, a total of 533 kuruş. Another record from the same year indicates that silk worth 30 “*ritl-i Antaki*”, valued at 15 kuruş per “*ritl*”, generated 450 kuruş in revenue. According to the expenses section (*minha'l-mesarifi'l-muharrer*) of this register (*miüfredat defteri*), 39 kuruş was spent on granary and the repair of silk houses (*tamir-i buyut-i harir*), while 17 kuruş were paid for hemp and tools needed for silk throwing devices (*ipek dolabi*). The register also mentions that, after the calculation of revenues and expenses for the years 1145 and 1146 AH, and after the deduction of other creditors' expenses, the remaining net revenue (*ba'del-masarif sahhii'l-baki irad* as stated in the document) amounted to 263 kuruş. Of this sum, 200 kuruş was disbursed (*fevt*) to the orchard workers as a loan or deduction (*ber vech-i karz*). The remaining net balance (*sahhii'l-baki*), which amounts to 63 kuruş after the deduction of 200 kuruş from the total of 263 kuruş, was delivered to Sarızmazde Ahmet Effendi, who was responsible for the revenues and expenses of the mulberry orchards in the aforementioned village (Antakya Sr. Sc. No:2, p. 201 b.271).

<sup>2</sup> One “*ritl*” was equal to 1560 *dirhams* in 18th-century Antakya (Kallek, 2008, pp. 52-55). One “*dirham*” weighed 3 kilos 207 grams.

## 2. Yarn, Silk, and Silk Reeling Device (*Mancınık*)

While it is said that no definitive criterion existed for defining a settlement as a city in the Ottoman state, an Ottoman city was mostly defined according to its functional characteristics. Ottoman cities were “*administrative units within the Ottoman administrative structure, each governed by a qadi and a commander of the security forces (subaşı), with a local population engaged in trade and industry*” (Aliağaoglu and Uğur, 2016, p. 209). According to Faroqhi, for a settlement to be classified as a city or town, it needed to fulfil certain administrative functions and have evidence of market activity through tax records. Documents related to business premises should prove that a significant portion of the population earned their living through non-agricultural activities (Faroqhi, 2000, pp. 12-13). From these perspectives, Antakya during the Ottoman era fits this description with its people of governance, trade, and industry, as well as its bazaars and markets, and the taxes collected from these premises.

In the Ottoman system, units subject to taxation by the state were referred to as “*mukataas*”. “*Mukataas*” were determined by the state, and the right to collect taxes from them was granted for periods ranging from three to twelve years to the person or persons who sought this right. Those who acquired these rights—known as tax farmers (*miltezim*)—were required to pay an annual sum, which was usually determined through auction, with a portion of the payment made in advance. In return, the tax farmers would bear sole responsibility for the profits and losses associated with the “*mukataas*” during their tenures (Cihan, 2021, p.294).

After Antakya became part of the Ottoman lands, all of its revenue sources were converted into “*mukataas*”, and this practice continued into the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The revenue sources in the city were recorded as “*mukataas*” and included under the income of the sultan (as *hass-i hümayun*) and the governor-general (as *hass-i mir-i miran*). In the context of the silk textile industry, each process that silk underwent to become a textile product fell within the scope of a separate craft (*hırfet*). In other words, in silk textile production, there were many crafts and many artisan guilds worked together. Silk artisans were divided into two main groups: silk reelers and silk weavers. Between these two groups were dyers (*sabbâğlar*), who coloured the silk (Ergenç, 2006, p.205).

Silkworm cocoons were unravelled to extract silk filaments and reeled onto a silk reeling device (*mancınık*). This device consisted of a cauldron for softening cocoons, spools for separating and drawing out silk filaments, and a rotating wheel for winding them. After the silk filaments were reeled on this device, they were then made into yarn by an equipment called silk throwing device (*dolap*). It was the work of the artisans called throwers (*dolapçı*) to untangle and combine the silk filaments obtained from the reeling devices. In this way, the combined and twisted silk filaments were transformed into yarn (Ergenç, 2006, pp. 206-207).

In this regard, it would be useful to mention the documents indicating the presence of silk throwing devices (*dolap*) in Antakya as evidence. These documents reveal that in some of Antakya's subdistricts there were small-scale, family-operated silk throwing devices and that silk was processed by using them. With the data obtained via these throwing devices, the economic scale of these small businesses can be analysed through the taxes collected from these devices. However, no detailed data were found or accessed regarding the taxes collected from these artisans. The court records we examined provided only a limited amount of data pertaining to tithe collected from mulberry orchards.

According to Erişen's findings, there were 26 silk artisans/merchants (*kazzaz*) engaged in silk production in Antakya during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Erişen, 2002, p.93), which shows that silk throwing equipment and mulberry orchards was valued in Antakya and its vicinity. Due to the relatively short production cycle of silkworm farming, employment in this sector had always been popular among producers. For instance, according to the charter of a “*waqf*” established on 16 Rabi'u'l-awal 1141 AH (20 October 1728) by Osman Pasha who was engaged in silkworm rearing, he owned a mulberry orchard, and a garden in the area of Maşukiyye that was prepared for silk production, among his properties in and around Antakya. Likewise, the “*waqf*” established on 9 dhu'l-Hijra 1149 AH (10 April 1737) by Abdulkaki Ağaoglu Osman Ağa, the steward (*kethüda*) of Grand Vizier Mehmed Pasha, included various properties in multiple locations, among which were two well-functioning devices (*ipek dolabı*) for throwing silk (Bayraktar, 2021, p.365, 366).

### 3. Private Property Rights and Rights of Use Involving Mulberry Orchards

“*Fiqh*” scholars, seeking to align Ottoman land law with Islamic jurisprudence through interpretation, introduced new definitions by distinguishing between lands used as vineyards and orchards, and lands with or without a water source. Due to the long time required for trees to grow and bear fruit, “*fiqh*” scholars often classified such lands as “*private property*”. In legal documents, vineyards and orchards, along with immovable assets such as houses and barns, were regarded as property (Ergenç and Taş, 2013, pp. 236-237). This can also be observed in the Antakya court records that we examined, especially those mentioning mulberry orchards.

For instance, on a judicial document of sale (*miibaya'a hücceti*) dated 1 Safar 1163 AH (10 January 1750), it is written as follows: Migirdic veled-i Yasef, an Armenian resident of Hacı Habibler village in the Suedia (Samandağ) subdistrict of Antakya, declared in court, in the presence of the representative of Müderris Ahmed Effendi from the Sarı Mahmud neighbourhood, that he owned a share in two silk houses (*harir damı*), a silk throwing device (*harir dolabı*), a cauldron (*harir kazgani*) for silk reeling, a pair of oxen, and a mulberry orchard with fruit-bearing and barren trees, for all of which he provided descriptions and defined boundaries, and that he sold his share to Ahmed Effendi for 225 kuruş, and said, “*I have no remaining claim to the mentioned mulberry orchard. It is now the purchased property of Ahmed Effendi, who may use it as he pleases, he can sell, bequeath, or donate it*”. As is evident, the mulberry orchard, like the other movable and immovable properties, was regarded as a form of property with an explicitly stated right (*hakk-i sarih*) (Ergenç and Taş, 2013, p. 237; Antakya Sr. Sc. No: 4, p. 34, doc: 65).

Another judicial document of sale (*miibaya'a hücceti*) dated to around the middle of Rabi'u'l-akhir 1163 AH (late March 1750) (Antakya Sr. Sc. No: 4, p. 46, b. 95) indicates that Meşhud bin Salih from the village of Cedide in Antakya purchased a mulberry orchard.

A more detailed example is found on a judicial document (*hüccet*) dated to around the middle of Jumada'l-aula 1163 AH (mid-April 1750) (Antakya Sr. Sc. No: 4, p.48, b.99). Halil Effendi, a resident of the Ammare neighbourhood in Antakya, passed away, leaving behind two wives, three daughters, and one son. One of his daughters, Emine, filed a lawsuit against her maternal half-brother, Abdullah Effendi, alleging the following:

“*We inherited, as my father's property, a total of three mulberry orchards—one in the village of Barbarun and two in the area of Sedd-i Hudus in Antakya. Since I was not in Antakya at*

*the time of my father's passing, my maternal half-brother Abdullah Effendi had seized my shares and had been using them for over 20 years. I request this situation to be rectified"* (Antakya Şr. Sc. No: 4, p.48, b.99).

Abdullah Effendi countered his sister's claim as follows:

*"The orchards in question were co-owned by Emine's father and his two brothers. They had divided these mulberry orchards into three equal shares before Emine's father, Halil Effendi, passed away. Until his death Halil Effendi retained control over his share. He put his one-third share up for sale to settle his debts after his passing, which I purchased. Later, I bought the remaining two-thirds from Halil Effendi's brothers. Thus, all of the mulberry orchards became my purchased property. I do not hold them on Emine's behalf, they are my own property"* (Antakya Şr. Sc. No: 4, p.48, b.99).

Abdullah Effendi also substantiated his statement with witness testimony. Thereupon, the qadi ruled in favour of Abdullah Effendi. The document clearly demonstrates that property rights over orchards fell within the realm of private law.

Since ownership of such orchards was in accordance with "*fiqh*", such ownership was common. Many people owned such properties in villages or smaller rural areas. When disputes arose over property rights or when properties were illegally appropriated, individuals exercised their right to file lawsuits. The abovementioned document explains that Halil Effendi and his brothers initially managed the orchards they owned together, then divided them into shares, and maintained their respective portions for a time after the division. After the death of Halil Effendi, one of his heirs, Emine, claimed that the defendant Abdullah Effendi had appropriated her share for more than 20 years. Based on this information, it appears that the family's ownership of the orchards actually spanned a considerable length of time. This means that these orchards, which were located within the borders of a village or a rural area and should have been regarded as "*mîrî lands*", were actually treated as "*private property*". Indeed, the judicial document (*hüccet*) of similar orchards include seller statements declaring that "*the property in question is the purchaser's rightful property, which they may use as they wish, sell to others, donate it, or bequeath it as an inheritance*" (Antakya Şr. Sc. No: 2, p. 40 b. 54; Antakya Şr. Sc. No: 4, p. 33 b. 60, 63).

It is clear from the following example that when a mulberry orchard was burnt down or a problem arose about silk-related properties, legal action was sought in court for compensation of loss and damages. On 3 Muharram 1169 AH (9 October 1755), during a stubble burning, the orchard and silk house of Es-Seyyid Abdu'l-Fettah Aga, a resident of Antakya, burnt down. In response, Aga filed a lawsuit against Sheikh İbrahim and his brothers from the village of Suedia (Erişen, 2002, p.87).

In Ottoman cities, trees were generally absent on the streets, other than in mosque courtyards and fountain squares. The city's greenery was mainly found in the gardens of houses. Undoubtedly, green spaces were not limited to these areas alone. "*Living in mountain pastures in summer and in lower altitude settlements in winter, an essential part of Turkish lifestyle, continued in cities in the form of seasonal relocation to vineyards and orchards*" (Aliağaoğlu and Uğur, 2016, p. 219). As the geographical region discussed in this study is characterised by a hot and humid climate, it provided a suitable environment for the growth of mulberry trees, the sole food source of silkworms. The mention of mulberry orchards in court records of property sales indicates

the development of sericulture in and around Antakya and highlights the importance local people attached to these orchards. It also provides evidence of seasonal living in vineyards and orchards, as well as the city's greenery being concentrated mainly in house gardens. For instance, on 9 Rabi'u'l-akhir 1177 AH (17 October 1763), following the death of Mustafa, a resident of the Cami-i Kebir neighbourhood in Antakya, his heirs offered his assets for sale. Of particular note in this example is that a neglected mulberry orchard and a device for processing silk, among the assets offered for sale, were jointly purchased for 295 kuruş by es-Seyyid Hüseyin of the Meydan neighbourhood and Patros, a non-Muslim, from the Kantara neighbourhood (Antakya Sr. Sc. No:7, p.166 b.298). The joint purchase of the orchard by a Muslim and a non-Muslim hint at their intention to engage in silk production and provides valuable insights into the socio-economic relations of the period. As is well known, mulberries are edible, and their remains can serve as animal feed. However, this use, being non-market-oriented, is generally of secondary importance. The primary reason for cultivating mulberry trees is to raise silkworms<sup>3</sup> and produce raw silk.

In this context, the presence of 38 mulberry orchards and 8 half-shared orchards of mulberry trees mentioned in the copy of Ahmet Pasha's "waqf" charter dated AH 1176 / AD 1762-63 further reinforces our argument (Antakya Sr. Sc. No: 7, p.17 b.38). Bayraktar's study on the "waqfs" of Hatay also mentioned this individual, noting that he knowingly purchased these mulberry orchards. This "waqf" document also attests that the mulberry orchards were recognized as real property (2021, p. 425).

The "waqf" of Mustafaoglu former Shaykh al-Islam Damadzade Ebü'l-Hayr Ahmet Effendi had the second largest number of mulberry orchards—13 in total—after the "waqf" of Ahmet Pasha. Together, these two "waqfs" owned a total of 51 mulberry orchards. According to Bayraktar's research, 70% of the 76 mulberry orchards documented in the charters of the "waqfs" in Hatay belonged to these two "waqfs". The remaining 17 mulberry orchards were distributed across 11 other "waqfs". The "waqfs" of Ahmet Pasha and Mustafaoglu former Shaykh al-Islam Damadzade Ebü'l-Hayr Ahmet Effendi appear to have established a near monopoly on the mulberry orchards and silk production in Antakya. The mulberry orchards mentioned in the "waqf" charters also included a number of outbuildings, such as silk houses that contained tools like silk reeling and throwing devices and "disves"<sup>4</sup> (Bayraktar, 2021, pp. 425, 426, 655). Most of the estates documented in the court records of Antakya that we examined included mulberry orchards. There was even a neighbourhood named "Dut Mahallesi" (the Mulberry Neighbourhood) in the 18th-century Antakya (Gün, 2012, p.75).

The tithes collected from mulberry orchards are particularly noteworthy. For instance, as recorded on 12 Rabi'u'l-awal 1178 AH (9 October 1764), Hünkar's sons, Yusuf Çavuş and Mehmet Çavuş, both "malikane" holders (life-term tax farmers)<sup>5</sup> residing in the Feya "mukataa" in the Antakya district, managed mulberry orchards and paid annually a tithe of 44 kuruş. However, as the annual tithe they paid did not match

<sup>3</sup> A silkworm egg weighs only about 0–4 mg before hatching into a larva. In four days, it reaches the caterpillar stage, during which it feeds on mulberry leaves for approximately 15 days. For instance, 20 thousand caterpillars can consume nearly 20 tonnes of mulberry leaves in 15 days. The caterpillar spins its cocoon in a single day before entering the pupal stage. At this stage, the cocoons are collected and placed in boiling pots for reeling. The silk filaments are then reeled and processed into silk threads through different mechanisms, preparing them for weaving. Each cocoon can yield a continuous silk filament, measuring between 1 and 1.5 km in length. Today, these silk filaments are used in a wide range of industries, from electronics to textiles (Karasu, 1997, pp. 89, 90).

<sup>4</sup> "Disve": A copper pot used in silk houses, where raw cocoons are immersed in boiling water to extract silk filaments (Bayraktar, 2021, p.425).

<sup>5</sup> Among those who held "malikanes" within the territory of the "muhassil" of Aleppo, 31 "malikane" holders were identified to be residing in Antakya (Özvar, 2003, p.110).

the fixed (*maktu*) tithe, the qadi of Antakya was asked to collect 31 years' worth of land tax and tithe (*rüsum-i haraç öşür*) due from the mulberry orchards (Antakya Sr. Sc. No: 8, p. 44 b. 67).

The “*waqf*” charter of Safiye Kadın, dated 20 Ramadan 1187 AH (5 December 1773), provides further data on silk production in and around Antakya. For example, there were enough mulberry orchards within the area called Antakya’s city wall (*Antakya Suru*) to support silkworm farming for 10 “*okka*” (one “*okka*” equals 1,282 grams) of silkworm eggs. In 1773, in the village of Dersuniye in Antakya, there were enough mulberry trees to rear 7 “*ritls*” of silkworm eggs, as well as eight silk processing devices and their related tools on two plots of land. The document also mentions mulberry trees, which were purchased from the heirs of Mustafa Aga, planted in Dersuniye village to supply silkworms with leaves. Mulberry trees were also mentioned in the subsequent pages of the “*waqf*” charter. For instance, it was noted that in the garden known as Muaskere, located in Nuayre village (modern-day Nahırlı) in the Suedia (Samandağ) subdistrict of Antakya, there were enough mulberry trees to rear 4 *ritls* of silkworm eggs, as well as a four-room structure built on four arches for silkworm farming, five copper pots, and seven silk processing devices. Similarly, in the Baytara village of Antakya’s Altınözü subdistrict, there was a plot of land with enough mulberry trees to rear 10 “*okka*” (approximately 12,820 grams) of silkworm eggs, with borders clearly defined by a valley to the south, a plain to the east, a road to the north, and a threshing floor to the west. Another piece of information regarding a share in Baytara village includes a two-room structure built on five arches, a device for silk processing, and a copper pot. The “*waqf*” charter also mentions an orchard in the Yuvalıkbırç village of the Altınözü subdistrict of Antakya, with borders defined by a valley to the south, a mountain to the east, the lands of Baslıka village to the north, and another valley to the west, that also contained mulberry trees (Bayraktar, 2021, pp.280, 281, 283, 285).

### Conclusion

Convenient local conditions, including climate and vegetation, played a determining role in the production of the raw material for silk weaving in Antakya. The region’s warm and humid climate contributed to the growth of the sole food source for silkworms, namely mulberry trees. The presence of mulberry orchards and silk processing devices within “*waqf*” properties and inherited estate records demonstrates that silk production was an important economic activity in the region. Moreover, occasional legal disputes over mulberry trees among the local population shed light on the competition in silk production during that period. The significant number of mulberry orchards in and around Antakya at the time further indicates the expansion of local silk production.

The information regarding silk production as provided by travellers who visited Antakya as well as the documents mentioned in this study confirm that silk production was the primary source of income for the local population. The presence of silk throwing devices across the broad area between Antakya and the sea, which includes the city and its surrounding villages and subdistricts, can be considered evidence of the extensive production of silk. The state often generated revenue for the treasury by leasing silk production areas as “*mukataa*” to members of the ruling class.

In villages and rural areas, mulberry orchards were acquired through purchase and recorded as private property. Although the mulberry orchards located within the boundaries of villages and rural areas should technically have been considered state-owned land, they were treated as private property. Since ownership

rights over mulberry orchards fell within the domain of private law, in cases of disputes over property rights or when properties were illegally appropriated, property owners exercised their right to file lawsuits.

It is apparent that Muslims and non-Muslims in Antakya had close social and economic relations and mutual trust. The joint purchases of mulberry orchards suggest the likelihood of their engagement in silk production.

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