

Migration, Settlement, and the Environment: Initiatives to Create New Settlements in the Province of Hudavendigar in the Late Ottoman Period



Göç, İskân ve Çevre: Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Hüdavendigar Vilayetindeki Yeni Yerleşim Yerleri Oluşturma Girişimleri

Emine Şahin¹  

¹ Düzce Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü, Düzce, Türkiye

Abstract

Starting from the mid-19th century, the pressure exerted by the Russian state on the Muslim population in the region, together with the Ottoman-Russian War (1877-1878) led to a massive wave of migration to Istanbul and Anatolia. As a result of these migrations from the Balkans and the Caucasus, new lands were needed to settle the migrants who had taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire and arrived in Anatolia, and it was decided to clear the swamps, rivers, and lakes for settlement purposes. One of the regions that received a large influx of migrants was the Hudavendigar Province, known for its proximity to Istanbul. The gradual decrease in the water level of Lake Manyas within the province and the subsequent recession of its waters led to the emergence of new settlement areas for the resettlement of migrants. Accordingly, the Sublime Porte dispatched a commission to the region to conduct an investigation and carry out studies for the establishment of new settlement areas. As a result, it was decided that Lake Manyas and its surroundings would be suitable for the settlement of migrants. This study aims to examine the settlement policies implemented around Lake Manyas as an example of how the rapid population growth accompanying large-scale migration in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire led to the establishment of new residential areas. In addition, the study will also address the impact of newly formed lands-emerging as a result of climatic and certain environmental factors in the Ottoman Empire-on settlement and urban planning.

Öz

19. yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren, Rusya devletinin bölgedeki Müslüman nüfusa uyguladığı baskı ve Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı (1877-1878) (93 Harbi) İstanbul ve Anadolu'ya yoğun bir göç dalgası yaşanmasına yol açmıştır. Balkanlardan ve Kafkasya'dan gelen bu göçlerin sonucunda, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na sığınan ve Anadolu'ya gelen göçmenleri yerleştirmek için yeni topraklara ihtiyaç duyulmuş ve iskân için bataklıkların, nehirlerin ve göllerin temizlenmesine karar verilmiştir. Yoğun göç alan bölgelerden biri de İstanbul'a yakınlığıyla bilinen Hüdavendigar vilayeti olmuştur. Vilayet dahilindeki Manyas gölünün su seviyesinde zaman içerisinde yaşanan azalma ve suyun çekilmesi muhacirlerin iskânı için yeni yerleşim alanlarının ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Buna bağlı olarak Babiâli bölgeye tahkikat yapmaları amacıyla bir heyet göndererek yeni iskân bölgelerinin oluşturulması için çalışmalar gerçekleştirmiş ve neticede Manyas Gölü ve çevresinin muhacirler için uygun bir yerleşim yeri olmasına karar vermiştir. Bu çalışma 19. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda yoğun göçle paralel olarak ortaya çıkan yoğun nüfus artışının yeni yerleşim yerleri oluşturmasına bir örnek teşkil edecek şekilde Manyas Gölü'ndeki iskân politikalarını ele almayı hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca Osmanlı'da iklim ve bazı çevresel faktörlerin etkisiyle meydana gelen yeni arazilerin yerleşim ve şehir planlaması üzerindeki etkileri de bu çalışmanın konusunu teşkil edecektir.



Citation | Atıf: Şahin, Emine. "Migration, Settlement, and the Environment: Initiatives to Create New Settlements in the Province of Hudavendigar in the Late Ottoman Period". *Türkiyat Mecmuası-Journal of Turkology*, 35, Special Issue (2025): 284-298. <https://doi.org/10.26650/iuturkiyat.1766216>

 This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. 

 2025. Şahin, E.

 Corresponding author | Sorumlu Yazar: Emine Şahin eminesahin@duzce.edu.tr



Keywords Migrant · Circassian · Migration · Resettlement · Manyas

Anahtar Kelimeler Muhacir · Çerkes · Göç · İskan · Manyas

Introduction

Due to the wars and forced migrations of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire experienced a significant population increase. These migrations, which took place during the century, were managed and directed through newly established administrative organizations and policies. In particular, mass migrations to large cities led to attempts to open up new settlement areas. Indeed, in order to prevent a sharp increase in population in Istanbul, the capital of the empire, migrations were redirected to Anatolia and Thrace, and the demographic, economic, and cultural characteristics of these regions influenced settlement policies. The Ottoman central administration aimed to revitalize these regions by settling migrants in vacant areas to increase the benefits derived from the surrounding areas. With these new areas, cities expanded outward, leading to spatial expansion and growth. First, small villages were established, and then, with the mass migrations that followed, these villages were expanded, facilitating the growth of cities.¹

It is understood that the majority of migrations in the 19th century were from west to east, from the Caucasus and Rumelia to Anatolia. The main reasons for these migrations were political and religious, and most migrants were Muslims. These politically and religiously motivated movements began with the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 1783 and continued to increase in the following years.² The Crimean War and the subsequent 93 War were the principal causes of the largest migration waves experienced by the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. As a result of Russia's oppressive policies towards Muslim communities, large-scale migrations to Ottoman territories took place in 1858–1862, 1863–1864, and 1865. In particular, in 1864 the Tsarist government forced Turkish, Circassian, and other Muslim peoples to leave the Caucasus within a short period of time, resulting in a second major wave of migration in which approximately 400,000 to 600,000 people were compelled to move from the region to Ottoman territories.³ These migrations were carried out under severe conditions by land, sea, or railroad, and some migrants died along the way from illness or exposure to the cold. It is known that the majority of those who migrated during these years were Circassians and that some Circassian tribes migrated in their entirety to Ottoman territories, while others migrated in large numbers. For this reason, the “Great Migration” of 1864 is often referred to as the Great Circassian Migration.⁴

¹Selim Deringil, “19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Göç Olgusu Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler”, *Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan* içinde, (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Araştırma Merkezi, 1991), 435-436.

²Kemal H. Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu (1830-1914) Demografik ve Sosyal Özellikleri*, çev. Bahar Tırnakçı, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003), 14; Nedim İpek, *İmparatorluktan Ulus Devlete Göçler*, (Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2006), 28-29.

³Various sources estimate that the total number of Circassians who migrated to the Ottoman Empire between 1856 and 1878 was between 500.000 and over one million. For detailed information see. A. Üner Turgay, “Circassian Immigration into the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1878”, *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams* içinde, ed. Wael B. Hallaq ve Donald P. Little, (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1991), 201; In the period after 1850, as pressure on minorities increased in Tsarist Russia, the Muslim population was also affected by this policy socially and politically. See. Furkan Külünk, “İngiliz ve Harici Kutsal Kitap Cemiyeti'nin Çarlık Rusyası ve Türkistan'daki Misyonerlik Çalışmaları”, *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12/1 (2025): 217. After 1867, Russia changed its migration policy and worked to prevent Muslims from leaving the region. At the same time, the government aimed to better control migration along the Russian-Ottoman border by prohibiting North Caucasians from returning from the Ottoman Empire. See. Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky, *Empire of Refugees, North Caucasian Muslims and the Late Ottoman State*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024), 72.

⁴Erdal Taşbaş, “Osmanlı Topraklarına Yapılan Göçler ve Muhacirin-i İslamiye Komisyonu”, (Doktora tezi, Akdeniz Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2011), 49-52, Ulusal Tez Merkezi (296554); Musa Şaşmaz, “Immigration and Settlement of Circassians in the Ottoman Empire on British Documents 1857-1864”, *OTAM: Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 9 (1998): 331-366. After 1859, most of the Nogai and Circassian migrants who migrated in large numbers were sent to Anatolia. However, since they lived in tribes in the Caucasus, it was deemed inadvisable to settle them collectively, and it was decided to take a different approach. Indeed, if they were settled collectively, it could have posed security risks for the country. Therefore, efforts were made to separate the tribes and settle them in Anatolia. Mehmet Yılmaz,



After the 93 War, Circassians whom the Russians had decided to exile again migrated in large numbers to Ottoman territories. Migrants who reached Ottoman territory were initially settled temporarily in Istanbul. However, as migrants remained in the capital, concerns regarding the fiscal burden on the state prompted decisions to relocate them to the provinces at the earliest opportunity, and they were sent to provinces where they would reside permanently.⁵ Nevertheless, a number of problems arose during the transportation and settlement processes, as many migrants insisted on settling in Biga and Balıkesir, where their relatives lived, rather than going to the areas assigned to them, creating difficulties for the Ottoman administration.⁶ In the mid-19th century, the Emigrant Commission (Muhacirin Komisyonu) was established to regulate the intense waves of migration and to organize the transportation and settlement of migrants. Through this commission, migrants were transported and land for their settlement was identified. The commission worked to identify land suitable for agriculture and settlement, calculate the acreage of vacant land, and determine the amount of land to be allocated per family on the basis of its productivity. From the last quarter of the 19th century onwards, migrants arriving in Ottoman territory from the Caucasus were sent to the province of Hudavendigar.⁷ Lake Manyas and its surroundings, one of the important water sources in the province of Hudavendigar, were among the first areas considered for the settlement of migrants. Beginning in the 1860s, when the Great Circassian Migration took place, the Manyas district was chosen for the settlement of migrants, and the swamps in these lands were drained and opened up for settlement. This study examines the opening of new settlements in the Manyas district from the late 19th century onwards, in parallel with population growth in the province of Hudavendigar, and the process of settling Circassians in the region.

1. Swamp Drainage Works and Circassian Immigrant Settlement in Manyas

In the late Ottoman Empire, mass migrations were used as a tool for restructuring Ottoman society. The migration movements of this period were intended to yield several positive outcomes. First, it was planned to ensure political and military security by settling migrants in border regions. Additionally, migrants were continuously used in an effort to settle tribal populations into a sedentary way of life, with the aim of fulfilling the Ottoman civilization mission.⁸ For these reasons, from the late 19th century onwards, Muslim immigrants were exempted from certain taxes so that they could remain in their new settlements and continue their lives. Especially during the reign of Abdulhamid II, the Muslim population gained significant influence in the empire, and the state developed policies toward Islamic elements, granting them specific rights and privileges.⁹ Immigrants were initially allocated vacant land for cultivation and were exempt from

⁵XIX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Muhaciri İskan Politikası", *Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi* içinde, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, Ankara), 1999, 4: 595. The migration and resettlement of North Caucasian Muslims between 1870 and 1914 has been referred to as the first wave of globalization. The development of maritime transport during this period led to an increase in migration. See Hamed-Troyansky, *Empire of Refugees*, 38.

⁶Ella Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers: Historical Analysis as a Method in Evaluating Migration Categories", *Middle East Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2/1 (2017): 102.

⁷Nedim İpek, "Kafkaslardan Anadolu'ya Göçler (1877-1900)", *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6/1 (1991): 113-114; Faruk Kocacı, "Balkanlardan Anadolu'ya Yönelik Göçler (1878-1890)", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 1 (1980): 162.

⁸David Cameron Cuthell Jr., "The Muhacirin Komisyonu: An Agent in the Transformation of Ottoman Anatolia 1860-1866", (Doktora tezi, Columbia University, 2005), 20-25. In 1885, two of the destinations to which the displaced population was sent were the provinces of Hudavendigar and Karesi. (Between 1881 and 1888, Karesi was administered as a separate province, but was subsequently dissolved.) Approximately 10.000 migrants were sent to these two provinces. Mehmet Demirtaş, "Kırım Savaşı ve 93 Harbi Sürecinde Osmanlı Memleketine Gelen Göçmenlerin Sevki ve İskanları", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 16/41 (2009): 230. As a result of migration, the population of the Hudavendigar province was 841.305 in 1876, while in the 1906 census, this number rose to 1.691.277 indicating that the population doubled as a result of migration. Karpat, *Osmanlı Nüfusu*, 18-19.

⁹Ella Fratantuono, "Producing Ottomans: Internal Colonization and Social Engineering in Ottoman Immigrant Settlement", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 21 (2019): 5.

¹⁰Various studies on Abdulhamid II's policy of Islamic unity are included. For detailed information see. Cezmi Erarslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği Osmanlı Devleti'nin İslam Siyaseti*, (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2019); Engin Akarlı, "Abdulhamid II's Attempts to Integrate Arabs into the



income tax (temettü) for 10 years, from teind/land tax (aşar) for 3 years, and from military service (kur'a) for 25 years. Additionally, immigrants were not required to pay certain taxes—such as the road construction tax, the sheep tax (ağnam vergisi), and land rent—for a specified period. Furthermore, those who were forced to abandon their property and migrate during the war were exempt from military service for a period of 10 years.¹⁰ Thus, the allocation of farmland to migrants ensured that previously undeveloped vacant land and swamps were opened up for agriculture. One of these areas emerged in the 19th century as a result of the partial draining of Lake Manyas, which created swampy tracts in and around the lake.

Environmental disruptions that occurred in a particular region or around a natural resource often generated ripple effects across other parts of the empire. Droughts, famines, and livestock epidemics increased mortality rates and triggered migrations, while wars depleted vital resources and diverted both human and animal labor from productive activities. During such periods of imbalance, the central administration struggled to respond effectively, and the slow pace of decision-making often deepened the crisis, further intensifying existing environmental pressures. Among these forms of environmental degradation, wetlands and marshlands were regarded by the Ottoman central authorities as problematic areas that posed a threat to public health by facilitating the spread of infectious diseases. Consequently, these areas were classified as environmental and administrative issues to be resolved in the provinces through drainage or reclamation efforts.¹¹ Although the drainage of swamps was intended to give Ottoman cities a more Western appearance and was one of the steps toward modernization, it is clear that the primary purpose was socio-economic. By the end of the 19th century, there was a growing need to reclaim land and convert it into agricultural areas, as well as to obtain new farmland. To achieve this, the Ottoman administration experimented with different approaches, initially attempting to finance these projects through the state treasury. Additionally, swamp reclamation efforts were carried out through the granting of concessions, obtaining loans, establishing companies and organizations, and through the initiatives of local leaders and the public.¹²

At the end of the 19th century, certain studies were carried out in the province of Hudavendigâr within the framework of public works activities, including swamp drainage, and the Ottoman Ministry of Public Works (Nafia Nezareti) prepared a report on the region and submitted it to the palace chamberlain (Mabeyn). The report emphasized that the lakes and swamps in the province were the greatest obstacles to agriculture and needed to be reclaimed, as they were negatively affecting the health of the region.¹³ It also stated that efforts should be made to open up new settlements and increase agricultural productivity in the lands around Lake Manyas, which was one of the major marshland areas of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, in May 1887 the Ottoman central government decided to clear the vacant lands in Manyas and use them for the settlement of migrants. While it was possible to generate revenue for the treasury by selling these lands, which covered an area of approximately 30,000 to 40,000 acres, through auction in small parcels, it was considered more appropriate to allocate them for the settlement of migrants within the province.¹⁴

Ottoman System", *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation* içinde, ed. David Kushner, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986), 74-89; Engin Akarlı, "Abdülhamid's Islamic Policy in the Arab Provinces", *Türk Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugün ve Gelecekte, I. Uluslararası Konferans Bildirileri*, (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1979), 44-60; Kemal Karpat, "Pan-İslamizm ve İkinci Abdülhamid: Yanlış Bir Görüşün Düzeltilmesi", *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1986), 4, 1331-1359.

¹⁰İpek, "Kafkaslardan Anadolu'ya Göçler", 123; Deringil, "Göç Olgusu Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler", 442.

¹¹Mehmet Mert Sunar, "Hayvanlar", *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Çevre ve Şehir* içinde, (İstanbul: İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi, 2015), 194.

¹²Cihan, Özgün, "Osmanlılarda Çevre Temizliği Kapsamında Bataklıkları Kurutma Çalışmaları", *Temizlik Kitabı* içinde, ed. Emine Gürsoy Naskali, Salih Mehmet Arçın, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009), 134-136.

¹³Burcu Kurt, "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Nafia Çalışmalarına Bir Örnek: Nilüfer Nehri'nin Islahı ve Bursa Ovası Bataklıklarının Kurutulması Projesi", *Odryses'ten Nilüfer'e Uluslararası Nilüfer Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* içinde, ed. Mustafa Şahin, Sezai Sevim, (Bursa: Nilüfer Belediyesi, 2016), 524. In addition, during this period, a bird fair was organized in the Manyas district to clean up lakes and swamps, and the 1.298 lira collected was left to the Bandırma district. Cumhuriyet Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Şura-yı Devlet (ŞD.) 504/13, 12 March 1882-9 July 1882.

¹⁴BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti, Mektubi Kalemî (DH.MKT.) 1420/9, 15 May 1887.



The Ottoman administration encountered several difficulties during the settlement of migrants in the province of Hudavendigar. While the area around Lake Manyas was being opened for settlement, tensions arose between migrants from the Caucasus and the local population over the distribution of land. At times, conflicts occurred because migrants were dissatisfied with the locations assigned to them and seized other land; at other times, disputes emerged because the allocated areas were insufficient for their population. Furthermore, as in other regions receiving migrants, some local communities viewed the influx of refugees as yet another intervention by the central government that disrupted the moral economy of their regions. In such cases, the Ottoman central administration was compelled to intervene in order to protect the refugees from nomadic groups attempting to forcibly expel them from the area.¹⁵ However, members of the local population also submitted complaints to Istanbul regarding the occupation of their lands. One example is the complaint telegrams sent to Istanbul in October 1884 by Derviş and Şemsedin, residents of the Manyas district and owners of the Geyikler and Koyun Kafir farms, stating that their lands had been seized by Circassian İsmail Bey and his tribe of about 30 households. They informed the Ottoman central administration that they had been deprived of their property and unable to cultivate it for several years due to the Circassians' occupation. In their telegrams, Derviş and Şemsedin Bey further stated that although officials had designated a settlement area for them in the Balıklı Dere neighborhood, İsmail Bey and his men refused to move there and continued to cause disturbances for both the complainants and the local population.¹⁶

The Ministry of the Interior (Dahiliye Nezareti) took action to investigate the situation of the Circassians in Manyas and informed the province of Karesi that İsmail Bey and his tribe should be relocated to their designated area.¹⁷ However, the Circassian migrants had no intention of moving from their current location to Balıklı Dere, creating difficulties for the local authorities. The governorate of Hudavendigar reported to the central government that the migrants would not leave the region without severe sanctions. In response, the Sublime Porte took action and, in November 1888, informed the Zabtieh (Zabtiye) that it was necessary to remove the migrants from the area, if necessary by force (kuvve-i cebriyye isti'mâli), due to fears that their continued presence there would lead to certain "mischief." The Zabtieh, however, advised that the matter should be resolved peacefully and that a compromise should be reached through consultation with both the farm owners and İsmail Bey. The Ministry of the Interior proposed that İsmail Bey's household, along with 20 other households, be allowed to remain on the Geyikler and Koyun Kafir farms, which were the subject of the complaint, while the remaining families would be resettled to other areas.¹⁸ This proposal, presented as a compromise, was submitted to the Emigrant Commission of Dersaadet. In January 1889, however, the Commission informed the Ministry of the Interior that the landowners would firmly reject this plan and did not wish even a single migrant to settle there.¹⁹

Due to the ongoing complaints from the Manyas district and the failure of migrants and the local population to reach an agreement, the issue was brought before the Ottoman Council of Ministers (Meclis-i

¹⁵Reşat Kasaba also stated that this caused anger among local groups who were dissatisfied with the support refugees received from the central government and viewed them as no different from agents of the Ottoman Empire. See. Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire, Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 282, 302.

¹⁶BOA, Yıldız, Baş Kitabet Dairesi Maruzatı (Y.PRK.BŞK.) 9/3, 29 October 1884. During the same period, similar disputes were occurring in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. One example of this is the conflict between the Ottoman administration and local landowners over newly acquired lands around Lake Lapsista between 1889 and 1894. The landowners claimed that these drained areas had always been part of their farms. As a result, the region experienced years of legal and political deadlock. For detailed information, see. Özkan Akpınar, "Making Property of a Marsh: Environment, Property, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Ioannina" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 58 (2022): 487-503.

¹⁷During this period, Manyas was part of the Karesi province, but after 1888, it was once again incorporated into the Hudavendigar province. BOA, DH.MKT. 1357/117, 31 July 1886; ŞD. 2921/5, 2 December 1887.

¹⁸BOA, Yıldız, Resmi Maruzat (Y.A.RES.) 46/25, Enclosure (Encl.) 11, 18 November 1888; DH.MKT. 1565/68, 18 December 1888.

¹⁹BOA, DH.MKT. 1389/87, 3 January 1889.



Vükela). In February 1889, the Council decided that İsmail Bey and his tribe should be forcibly removed from their current location, because their refusal to move to their officially designated settlement area risked causing serious incidents and it was necessary to protect the rights of all parties involved. Additionally, it was deemed appropriate to deploy two companies of soldiers to Manyas in case the Circassians caused any disturbances during their relocation.²⁰

However, despite the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers, in March 1889 the Yıldız Court ruled that it was inappropriate to remove the migrants from the Koyun Kafiri and Geyikler farms with two battalions of soldiers. The Court argued that, due to the negligence of former settlement officials and the governorate, the migrants had spent considerable sums of money and built houses on the land they currently occupied, and that removing them would effectively cause their homes to collapse upon them. It further warned that a forced evacuation could lead to unrest and that the issue might attract negative attention from the foreign press, provoking public outrage. Consequently, it was decided that, since the land occupied by the migrants was already state-owned, it would be appropriate to cede it to the Circassians on the condition that the local people retained their rights over it. The matter was ultimately resolved by a decree issued in March 1889, which allowed the land to be allocated to the migrants with the consent of the local population.²¹ Thus, despite ongoing complaints sent from Manyas to the capital, fears of unrest in the region and concerns about negative publicity in the foreign press led to the decision to let the Circassians remain where they were and to pursue reconciliation with the local population.²²

In December 1890, the Council of Ministers revisited the issue and decided that İsmail Bey and his relatives would each be compensated with 50 lira by the state if they agreed to leave their homes and relocate to a new settlement, in view of the fact that their houses would be demolished.²³ As time passed, however, it became evident that the migrants had no intention of leaving, prompting a decision to summon at least their leaders in an effort to remove them from the area.²⁴ Yet this plan, too, was eventually abandoned when it became clear that its implementation would be impossible. The Ministry of the Interior then informed the province of Hudavendigar that, in order to ensure stability in the region, the migrants should be allowed to remain where they were, that the state could purchase the land owned by the local population, and that relocating the migrants elsewhere would only plunge them back into poverty, thereby creating additional difficulties for the state.²⁵

Despite these measures, complaints from the region continued to increase. Telegrams signed by Şemsedin and Abdulkadir, representatives of the local population in Manyas, demanded that İsmail Bey's encroachments on their land be stopped immediately. In response, the Council of Ministers decided in December 1891 that the Circassian families should be removed from the lands they had occupied and that

²⁰The ruling stated that it would be inadvisable to allow the Circassians to remain on the lands they had seized. BOA, Meclis-i Vükela (MV.) 39/77, 3 February 1889.

²¹BOA, İrade, Meclis-i Mahsus (İ.MMS.) 103/4386, 29 March 1889.

²²Since the Circassians constituted an armed force, it was feared that any potential unrest in the region could escalate into major incidents; thus, military interventions were often avoided. Moreover, their transition to a settled lifestyle was also considered significant in terms of agricultural productivity. Similar complaints were reported from nearby areas as well. The ability of Circassians to circulate armed in the Anatolian countryside was a source of unease among the local population. By the late nineteenth century, petitions from Ayvalık to the imperial center emphasized that this community had become a general source of disturbance and posed ongoing security concerns. For detailed information, see. Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethno-Politics: North-western Anatolia, 1877-1912", *Ethno-Nationality, Property Rights in Land and Territorial Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* içinde, ed. S. Engerman and J. Metzger, (London: Routledge, 2004), 164-165.

²³İsmail Bey and his family had informed the governor's office that they would not leave their current location and would not accept any compensation or cash payment. BOA, MV. 59/60, 3 December 1890.

²⁴BOA, MV. 65/94, 8 July 1891.

²⁵BOA, DH.MKT. 1888/62, 10 November 1891.



they would be notified in the spring to prepare for migration.²⁶ Nevertheless, this decision, like earlier ones, was never implemented. By a decree issued in April 1892, Ali Fuad Bey, an official in the Ministry of the Interior's correspondence office, was assigned to Manyas to protect the people's lands and to prevent further unrest caused by the Circassians. Reports that the number of Circassian migrants had increased from 15 households to 70 households and that they had seized approximately 12,000 dönüms of land from the local population, coupled with the ineffectiveness of previous measures, placed the state in a very difficult position. For this reason, Ali Fuad Bey was dispatched to Manyas to address the situation.²⁷ However, he was removed from this position shortly thereafter for reasons unknown, and it was decided that another official would be appointed in his place.²⁸ Subsequent records do not indicate that any investigation was conducted against the individuals named in the complaints from Manyas. It appears that, despite the persistent complaints of the local population, İsmail Bey and his family were never removed from the region and continued to live there.²⁹

Another incident in Manyas occurred between the inhabitants of the villages of Dura and Kızıl Kilise, where Rumelian and Circassian migrants lived. These two groups clashed over the division of fertile land around Lake Manyas, resulting in a violent altercation. The district governor of Karesi (Karesi mutasarrıfı) reported that four or five people were injured and two soldiers were killed in the fighting, attributing the conflict solely to greed and avarice.³⁰ Complaints from the region also pointed to the Circassian origins of the district governor of Bandırma and the director of Manyas (Manyas müdürü), who had served in the region for two years, as a contributing factor to the unrest in the Manyas district. In line with the principle of administrative impartiality, officials reported to the Ottoman central administration that appointing other individuals to replace them might help restore stability in the region.³¹ Indeed, complaints from Manyas persisted for many years, and the land disputes remained unresolved.

2. Commissions Established for the Reclamation of Land and their Activities in Manyas

In response to the complaints and problems mentioned in the previous section, the Ottoman central administration decided to appoint a delegation consisting of two officials from the Emigrant Commission

²⁶BOA, MV. 27/6, 18 December 1891.

²⁷BOA, İ.MMS. 129/5544, Encl. 1, 20 April 1892. For the removal of the will, see the same document, Encl. 3, 21 April 1892.

²⁸BOA, Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası (BEO.) 36/2689, 20 July 1892.

²⁹The disputes over the lands surrounding Lake Manyas were caused by the unjust attitudes of the administrators. Telegrams sent from Manyas to the Istanbul mentioned that some officials in the provincial administration favored certain migrants while mistreating others. In a telegram sent to Istanbul in May 1890, signed by Omer, one of the migrants, it was stated that the migrants were being treated like slaves due to the negligence of the district governor of Karesi, that despite the presence of 300 households that had not been settled, no information to that effect had been reported to the province, and that even the homes of those who had been settled had been destroyed. Additionally, the telegram mentioned that a fight had broken out among the migrants due to the district administrator of Manyas causing unrest, resulting in some injuries, and that the administrator had further provoked the crowd by walking toward them with a whip. BOA, İrade, Dahiliye (İ.DH.) 1177/92061, 15 Mayıs 1890. Following a complaint by the migrant Omer, an investigation was conducted in the district, and in March 1890, İbrahim Bey, the governor of Karesi, sent several reports to the province. These reports stated that there was a land dispute between the residents of the villages of Salur and Hamamlı, which were part of the Manyas district, that the matter had been referred to the court, and that the situation had been brought under control. It was also reported that the district governor of Bandırma had been there for several days and had warned the residents of the two villages to refer the matter to the Bandırma court. İ.DH. 1177/92061, Encl. 5, 17 Mart 1890.

³⁰BOA, İ.DH. 1177/92061, Encl. 6, 20 March 1890.

³¹BOA, İ.DH. 1177/92061, Encl. 8, 26 March 1890. By the end of the century, similar land disputes were unfolding in Ayazmend, a region situated relatively close to Manyas. The newcomers to the area were nomadic groups, and tensions arose over their encroachment on lands belonging to the local population. Hasan Şinasi Efendi, a landowner residing in Ayazmend, lodged a formal complaint, noting that his property had been occupied despite his holding the official title deed. Evidently, across both nearby and more distant regions of the empire, debates persisted over who qualified as local or non-local and what rights to property each group was entitled to. For detail information, see. Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "A Very Important Requirement of Social Life: Privatisation of Land, Criminalisation of Custom, and Land Disputes in Nineteenth-Century Anatolia", *Les Acteurs Des Transformations Foncières Autour De La Méditerranée Au Xixe Siècle* içinde, ed. Vanessa Guéno et Didier Guignard, (Karthala and the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (MMSH), 2013), 31.



of the Sublime Porte (Babiali Muhacirin Komisyonu) and the Ministry of Property Records (Defter-i Hakani Nezareti), as well as a military officer, to the region. The delegation was tasked with opening up Lake Manyas and its surroundings for settlement, distributing land among the migrants, and resolving disputes with the local population.³² Sami Bey from the military, Emin Efendi, chief clerk of the provincial registry (taşra senedat baş katibi), and Ali Bey, settlement officer for the Dersaadet and Rumeli provinces and inspector of all migrants (umum-ı muhacirin müfettişi), were subsequently appointed to the commission.³³ After approximately three months of work, the commission prepared a comprehensive report for submission to the Ministry of the Interior, offering recommendations on how to open up the land reclaimed from Lake Manyas for settlement.³⁴

The commission reported that approximately 20–25 years earlier the outlet of the lake on the Manyas plain had become blocked, causing the lake waters to overflow and flood the plain together with the Karadere River. However, 6–7 years prior to their report, the old lake outlet had been dug out and cleared with laborers from the surrounding villages, saving approximately 50,000 acres of land from the lake. Due to heavy rainfall, however, the outlet was again becoming blocked, and if it was not cleaned, the lake would inevitably overflow in the winter as a result of rain and snowmelt, flooding the surrounding land. The commission therefore emphasized that the lake outlet needed to be cleared as soon as possible. The report also stressed the importance of mapping the lands that could be reclaimed by draining the swamps on the plain, in order to prevent future land and boundary disputes. The commission estimated that, with systematic effort, approximately 100,000 acres of land could be recovered and made suitable for the settlement of migrants. In its report, sent in August 1890, the commission urged that all information obtained through the investigation be forwarded immediately to the Ministry of the Interior so that the necessary measures could be taken without delay.³⁵ As a result of the report, a decree was issued ordering the preparation of a detailed map of the region.³⁶

Four officers, including Major Sami Bey from the Ottoman Military Command (Erkan-ı Harb), were assigned to map Lake Manyas and its surroundings.³⁷ Progress on the project was slow, however, and additional personnel were therefore assigned to the region.³⁸ After working for some time, the commission suspended its activities due to the onset of winter, which made further work on the lake impossible, and returned to Istanbul.³⁹ In the spring, the commission resumed its work in Manyas and prepared another report in August 1892. According to this report, comprehensive cleanup and reclamation works were necessary to make the region suitable for the settlement of migrants and for agricultural use. However, approximately 600,000 lira was required to carry out these works—an amount that could not be covered by the state at the time. It was therefore proposed that rehabilitation projects in the lake and its surroundings be undertaken

³²BOA, İ.DH. 1177/92061, Encl. 8, 26 March 1890, Encl. 9, 27 April 1890; DH.MKT. 1724/114, 18 May 1890; DH.MKT. 1726/17, 25 May 1890.

³³BOA, DH.MKT. 1731/46, 11 June 1890. It appears that some cleanup work was carried out around Lake Manyas prior to 1890, but these were small-scale operations rather than part of a larger project. DH.MKT. 1417/96, 5 May 1887.

³⁴BOA, İ.DH. 1198/93746, 10 August 1890.

³⁵BOA, İ.DH. 1198/93746, Encl. 1, 10 August 1890. The report prepared under the leadership of Sami Bey stated that a map should be drawn up as soon as possible. The the Ministry of the Interior forwarded the commission's report to the Sadaret in September 1890. Encl. 3, 13 September 1890. In addition, the Minister of the Interior emphasized that the map would be prepared by the Ottoman military. DH.MKT. 1756/104, 1 September 1890.

³⁶BOA, İ.DH. 1198/93746, Encl. 4, 16 October 1890. While efforts were being made to identify land for settlement around Lake Manyas, new migrant villages were being established. A village and neighborhood were established in the Cobancesme district of Manyas, and in October 1890, the village was named Iclaliye. İrade, Şura-yı Devlet (İ.ŞD.) 102/6102, Encl. 2, 19 October 1890. In addition, the villages of İnadiye in Aziziye, Umraniye in Osmaniye, Yenikoy, Hamidiye, Yenice, and Bosnak in Bandırma were established in the province of Hudavendigâr. İpek, "Anadolu'ya Yönelik Göçler", 209.

³⁷BOA, DH.MKT. 1767/123, 5 October 1890.

³⁸BOA, DH.MKT. 1776/43, 29 October 1890; DH.MKT. 1782/2, 17 November 1890.

³⁹BOA, DH.MKT. 1791/83, 13 December 1890.



with the assistance of the population from the surrounding villages. The report suggested that, following these cleanup efforts, the newly reclaimed land could be distributed among the migrants and opened for settlement.⁴⁰

While the Ottoman central administration was sending commissions to the Manyas district, it also continued to settle migrants on vacant land. Migrants even petitioned the Ministry of the Interior, requesting that the vacant land be granted to them.⁴¹ The Ministry informed the province of Hudavendigar that the lands around Lake Manyas could be distributed not only to migrants but also to local inhabitants in need of land.⁴² However, this process led to disputes between migrants and the local population over housing and land distribution, which in some cases resulted in deadly clashes. In June 1892, for instance, Zekeriya Çavuş from the village of Ziraatli Cedit claimed that his brother had been killed during a land dispute, which he attributed to the district governor's "indulgent" attitude, and he appealed to the Ministry of the Interior for justice. As a result, the central administration decided to investigate the murder of Hacı İbrahim, a corporal who was believed to have been killed during the division of land.⁴³

Conflicts over land ownership and the settlement of migrants in Manyas continued in the following years, as the Ottoman central administration sought to maximize the region's agricultural potential. In 1894, a new delegation, including an engineer named Gulan, was sent to the region. The commission submitted both the map it had prepared and a detailed report to the Ministry of the Interior, emphasizing the importance of draining the swamps around Lake Manyas. It also noted that the Karadere River, which feeds the lake, had flooded several villages and damaged fertile agricultural land, and stressed the need to bring the river under control. The commission concluded that if the necessary reclamation work were carried out, a large portion of the Manyas plain could be opened up for cultivation, which would generate substantial revenue for the state treasury.⁴⁴

However, insufficient funding remained the main obstacle to rehabilitation efforts in Manyas. A substantial budget was required for a comprehensive reclamation project, but it was determined that the Ottoman treasury lacked the necessary resources. Another major impediment was the intervention of the Public Debt Administration (Düyun-ı Umumiye İdaresi), established after the Muharrem Decree (Muharrem Kararnamesi) of 1881, which exercised direct control over parts of the empire's economy. The Public Debt Administration directly supervised certain production activities in the province of Hudavendigar and collected taxes from them—including the supervision and collection of the fishing tax (sayd-ı mâhi rüsûmu) on Lake Manyas. In order to prevent a decrease in fishing tax revenues, the Public Debt Administration insisted that the water level in the lake must not be allowed to drop. Accordingly, under the Ministry of Public Works, the Public Debt Administration closely inspected all construction projects around the lake and repeatedly warned the Sublime Porte to take precautions against dams or other works that might reduce the water level in Manyas.⁴⁵ As a result, the large-scale reclamation and drainage projects proposed by the commissions could not be implemented in the Manyas plain. Only limited land clearing was carried out through the

⁴⁰BOA, DH.MKT. 1993/29, 27 August 1892.

⁴¹BOA, DH.MKT. 1911/83, 14 January 1892.

⁴²BOA, DH.MKT. 1814/33, 1 March 1891.

⁴³BOA, DH.MKT. 1964/57, 21 June 1892; DH.MKT. 1967/56, 28 June 1892; BEO. 36/2689, 20 July 1892. No document has been found regarding the outcome of this investigation.

⁴⁴BOA, ŞD. 1200/47, Encl. 3. In subsequent years, further discussions were held to prevent the flooding of the Manyas plain by controlling the Karadere River, but no conclusion was reached. Maliye Nezareti, Evrak-ı Emiriyye Müdiriyyeti (ML.EEM.) 214/107, 19 August 1895.

⁴⁵Emine Şahin, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Düyun-ı Umumiye İdaresi'nin Manyas Gölündeki Nüfuz Mücadelesi (1890-1914)", *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 11/2 (2024): 534-553.



individual efforts of the local population and migrants. During this period, the Ottoman administration did not undertake any large-scale public works to drain the marshes and clear the land in the Manyas region.⁴⁶

3. Migrants' Land Title Claims on New Lands Created in Manyas

Although the Ottoman administration was unable to implement major reclamation projects around Lake Manyas and its surrounding marshes, both the migrants who had settled in the region and the local population took the initiative to clear the land themselves. They removed reeds, rushes, and other materials brought by the lake's waters, gradually transforming the area into arable land. Agricultural activities soon began on these newly reclaimed plots.⁴⁷ As a result of their labor, the migrants later petitioned the Ottoman administration to grant them free title deeds to the lands they had cleared and cultivated, arguing that they had invested significant time and effort in making the land productive. In October 1899, the Ministry of the Interior informed migrants who had cultivated 500 acres of land around the village of Manyas that, according to a decision by the administrative council, only half of the land could be granted to them, while the other half would be allocated to the local population who had been residing there for a long time. Dissatisfied with this decision, the migrants objected and demanded ownership of the entire area.⁴⁸

In October 1902, three migrant representatives—Ibrahimzade Ömer Hilmi from the village of Ziraatlı Cedit, Bekir Efendi from the village of Akcapınar, and Osman Efendi from the village of Eski Sığırcı, all of whom cultivated lands around Lake Manyas—sent a petition to the Ministry of the Interior to reiterate their land claims. They stated that they were acting on behalf of both Circassian and Rumelian migrants living in the villages of Ziraatlı Cedit, Akcapınar, and Debleke (in the district of Erdek) and Eski Sığırcı (in the district of Bandırma), comprising about 300 households and approximately 1,000 people. In their petition, the representatives emphasized that for the past fifteen years they had worked to reclaim the marshy land exposed by the receding waters of Lake Manyas, transforming it into fertile agricultural fields. Their efforts, they argued, not only eliminated unhealthy marshes that were harmful to public health, but also increased agricultural productivity in the region. They therefore requested that the titles to the lands they had cultivated be distributed free of charge to poor migrants who had not yet received title deeds.⁴⁹

Upon receiving these petitions from the districts of Erdek and Bandırma, the Ministry of the Interior ordered an investigation into the matter. The inquiry was carried out by the district governor of Erdek, the deputy governor, the assistant governor, the mufti, the finance director, and an investigation officer. Their findings confirmed that these individuals belonged to the "needy class" (muhtacin takımından) and had not been given any land when they first migrated. It was also verified that they had independently cleared and cultivated reed-covered land that had previously belonged to the lake and had settled there.⁵⁰

⁴⁶No documents have been found in the Ottoman archives indicating that a large-scale, systematic cleaning "tathirat" project was carried out in and around Lake Manyas during this period. The labor force of the peasantry had already been employed in previous years for the cleaning of canals and water resources. In 1835, for instance, Muhammad Ali Pasha dispatched 24,000 laborers to Upper Egypt to carry out the cleaning and dredging of canals and the reinforcement of dams. Yet, this large-scale mobilization also gave rise to several problems in Egypt, including the severity of working conditions and the peasants' subsequent claims to certain rights. During this period, soldiers were even instructed to forcibly bring peasants who refused to work to the canal construction sites. For detail information, see. Alan Mikhail, *Osman'ın Ağacı Altında, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Mısır ve Çevre Tarihi*, çev. Seda Özdiç (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017), 173-174.

⁴⁷In April 1899, a document signed by Vartanyan, one of the attorneys representing Bandırma, claimed that more than 800,000 acres of land had been seized by some villagers without the knowledge of the local administration due to the diversion of the Manyas Lake into the Mihalıc River. BOA, BEO. 1292/96835, 5 April 1899.

⁴⁸BOA, DH.MKT. 2262/126, 28 October 1899.

⁴⁹BOA, ŞD. 1589/17, Encl. 1, 16 October 1902. During corresponding periods in the Ottoman Empire, similar requests were submitted from various regions. For example, Yorgi Vasiliyadi was among those who sought the title deed for the lands resulting from works at Lake Lapsista in 1902. He reported to the central authorities that, for approximately twelve years, the deeds had not been issued to him. See. Akpınar, "Making Property of a Marsh", 494.

⁵⁰BOA, ŞD. 1589/17, Encl. 2, 22 May 1903.



The governorate of the province of Hudavendigâr subsequently submitted its own report to the Ministry of the Interior, confirming that the lands had been peacefully divided among the migrants through mutual exchange, without any recorded conflicts.⁵¹

As a result of these investigations, in March 1904 the Ministry of Property Records (Defter-i Hakani Nezareti) reported to the Council of State (Şura-yı Devlet) on all the correspondence and inquiries carried out, stating that the 300 households had applied for a total of 2,175.5 acres of land in 565 plots. The report confirmed that these lands had been cleared and cultivated over many years by the migrants, who had not been given any land upon their arrival in Anatolia and had initially been forced to live on reclaimed marshland. However, the Ministry of the Interior warned the Sublime Porte that granting title deeds for the requested lands might set a precedent, encouraging other migrant groups to make similar claims. Therefore, it emphasized the need for caution and stressed that if title deeds were to be issued, they must be clearly demarcated on maps.⁵²

The land title requests submitted by migrants from the province of Hudavendigâr were eventually reviewed by the Council of State. During the deliberations, it was concluded that the migrants had suffered from a shortage of land due to the high population density in the areas where they had first been resettled, and that the lands in question had been reclaimed and made cultivable through considerable labor and effort, as evidenced by reports sent from the province. It was therefore deemed appropriate to grant the requested land titles, since these individuals had not previously been allocated land.⁵³ This decision was then submitted to the palace by the Council of Ministers, and in August 1904, a decree was issued officially confirming the transfer of title deeds for the reed beds around Lake Manyas to the migrants.⁵⁴

After the Sultan approved the settlement of migrants on the marshy lands around Lake Manyas in the province of Hudavendigâr, lists were drawn up to record the allocated plots and their respective owners. A total of 565 people were granted 2,179 acres of land in the village of Debleke, in the district of Erdek, and it was ordered that official title deeds be issued to them. The prepared lists included the name of the village, the location of the land, the type of land, its boundaries, acreage, and the names of both the owners and the local administrator overseeing the distribution. It is understood that all the allocated plots were located in Debleke village, with each migrant receiving approximately 3–4 acres of land.⁵⁵ Among the landowners there were migrants from Rumelia as well as a large number of Circassians. These people resided in the neighboring villages of Ziraatlı Cedid and Atik, Akcapınar, and Sığırıcı. When determining the borders of each property to be granted, the names of the neighboring landowners were also recorded. For example, in plot number 288 in Debleke village, in the vicinity of the stream, a 6-acre (dönüm) field was bordered on the east by Çerkes Süleyman, on the west by Sadık Ali, on the north by Sarı İbrahim, and on the south by Deli Muhammed. The person designated to cultivate the land was identified as Hafize, the daughter of Circassian Barzuk from the village of Akcapınar.⁵⁶

The demands of migrants for land and title deeds continued in the following years, and by the onset of the Second Constitutional Era, the Ottoman administration had decided to grant land to those whose

⁵¹BOA, ŞD. 1589/17, Encl. 3, 6 February 1904; Encl. 4, 2 March 1904.

⁵²BOA, ŞD. 1589/17, Encl. 5, 14 March 1904.

⁵³BOA, ŞD. 1589/17, Encl. 5, 11 June 1904

⁵⁴BOA, ŞD. 1589/17, Encl. 6, 5 August 1904; Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Mühimme Evrakı (A.MKT.MHM.) 525/23, 13 August 1904.

⁵⁵It is highly probable that Circassians had other land title claims in Manyas during the same period. However, no documents regarding this have been found in the Ottoman archives.

⁵⁶See the lists prepared for the allocation of land to migrants. BOA, İrade, Defter-i Hakani (İ.DFE.) 15/30, Encl. 3. Although men are mostly listed as administrators (mutasarrıf), there are also women on the list. Fatima, the daughter of İsmail Efendi from Ziraatlı Cedid, is listed in second place, and Fatima, the daughter of Muhacir Ali from the village of Bandırma Sığırıcı, is listed in eleventh place. İ.DFE. 15/30.



need had been clearly established. The Migrant Administration (Muhacirin İdaresi) informed the Ministry of the Interior that land should not be granted to migrants who were already self-sufficient. Instead, land newly exposed by the receding waters of Lake Manyas could be distributed to the poor and needy or sold for revenue.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the issue of how to clean, reclaim, and distribute the land around Lake Manyas for settlement remained a subject of debate for many years, and no definitive resolution was ever reached.⁵⁸

Conclusion

In the 19th century, there were large-scale migrations from the Caucasus to Ottoman territories, and the state attempted to settle the large numbers of migrants who arrived in the empire's lands. However, both financial constraints and the undisciplined behavior of some migrants prevented the implementation of a consistent policy. In the province of Hudavendigâr, which was one of the regions most affected by intense waves of migration, the Ottoman administration undertook efforts to open new settlement areas and resettle the migrants. The resettlement of migrants was intended to prevent the chaos that could be caused by vagrants, as well as to increase the state's tax revenue in parallel with agricultural productivity and thereby strengthen the treasury.

However, the resettlement policies implemented at the end of the 19th century did not achieve the expected success in the region of Lake Manyas and its surroundings; instead, they generated a series of new problems. First, members of the local population who had participated in the work around Lake Manyas in 1883–1884, cultivated the land, and resided in the region for many years objected to the allocation of land to migrants. This led to tensions between the local population and both the migrants and the provincial administration. Subsequently, many migrants refused to move to the lands assigned to them, seized the lands and farms of others, and came into serious conflict with landowners, with the result that the region's agricultural productivity failed to reach the desired level for a long time.

Although vacant land emerged as the waters of Lake Manyas and its surroundings receded, the newly exposed land was cleared by the migrants themselves, on their own initiative, because of ongoing disputes and the inability to carry out regular reclamation work. The migrants who cultivated these lands and engaged in agricultural activities later demanded that they be granted to them "free of charge" (meccanen). The local population, however, opposed the transfer of the lands to the migrants with title deeds, claiming that the lands were their rightful property and demanding that the state bring an end to this injustice. Despite these objections, the Ottoman central administration agreed to grant title deeds to some of the migrants for the lands they had cultivated, disregarding local balances of power and recognizing a right that the local population did not possess. This decision did not reduce complaints in the region, and tensions continued to arise between the local population, the migrants, and state officials in the following years. These tensions reveal the difficulties the Ottoman state faced in balancing the interests of long-established local populations with those of newly arrived migrants. Moreover, the failure to integrate migrants effectively contributed to social unrest and highlighted the limits of centralized administrative authority in peripheral regions. In the long term, such resettlement challenges influenced subsequent Ottoman policies on land allocation, migration, and provincial governance.



⁵⁷BOA, DH.MKT. 1289/ 21, 22 August 1908.

⁵⁸In October 1909, telegrams signed by Arif on behalf of the migrants of Sigirci village in Bandırma were sent to the Ministry of the Interior, reporting that the district governor of Bandırma had seized their lands and given them to others, and had imprisoned 20 people who had protested. BOA. Dahiliye Nezareti, Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdaresi (DH.MUİ.) 32/47, Encl. 2, 29 October 1909; Encl. 3, 27 October 1909.



Peer Review Externally peer-reviewed.
Conflict of Interest The author has no conflict of interest to declare.
Grant Support The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

Author Details **Emine Şahin**

¹ Düzce Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü, Düzce, Türkiye

0000-0002-8201-0776 ✉ eminesahin@duzce.edu.tr

References

Archives

Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA)

Sadaret, Mühimme Kalemî (A.MKT.MHM.) 525/23.

Bab-ı Alî Evrak Odası (BEO.) 36/2689; 1292/96835.

Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemî Evrakı (DH.MKT.) 1420/9; 1357/117; 1565/68; 1389/87; 1888/62; 1724/114; 1726/17; 1731/46; 1417/96; 1756/104; 1767/123; 1776/43; 1782/2; 1791/83; 1993/29; 1911/83; 1814/33; 1964/57; 1967/56; 2262/126; 1289/ 21.

Dahiliye Nezareti, Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdaresi (DH.MUİ.) 32/47.

İrade, Defter-i Hakani (İ.DFE.) 15/30.

İrade, Dahiliye (İ.DH.) 1177/92061; 1198/93746.

İrade, Meclis-i Mahsus (İ.MMS.) 103/4386; 129/5544.

İrade, Şura-yı Devlet (İ.ŞD.) 102/6102.

Maliye Nezareti, Evrak-ı Emiriyye Müdüriyeti (ML.EEM.) 214/107.

Meclis-i Vükela (MV.) 39/77; 65/94; 59/60; 27/6.

Şura-yı Devlet (ŞD.) 504/13; 2921/5; 1200/47; 1589/17.

Yıldız, Resmi Maruzat (Y.A.RES.) 46/25.

Yıldız, Baş Kitabet Dairesi Maruzatı (Y.PRK.BŞK.) 9/3.

Literature

Akarlı, Engin. "Abdulhamid II's Attempts to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System". *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation* içinde, editör David Kushner, 74-89. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986.

Akarlı, Engin. "Abdulhamid's Islamic Policy in the Arab Provinces". *Türk Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugün ve Gelecekte, I. Uluslararası Konferans Bildirileri* içinde, 44-60. Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1979.

Akpınar, Özkan. "Making Property of a Marsh: Environment, Property, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Ioannina" *Middle Eastern Studies*, 58 (2022): 487-503.

Cuthell Jr., David Cameron. "The Muhacirin Komisyonu: An Agent in the Transformation of Ottoman Anatolia 1860-1866". Doktora Tezi, Columbia University, 2005.

Demirtaş, Mehmet. "Kırım Savaşı ve 93 Harbi Sürecinde Osmanlı Memleketine Gelen Göçmenlerin Sevk ve İskanları", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 16/41 (2009): 215-238.

Deringil, Selim. "19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Göç Olgusu Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler". *Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan* içinde, 435-442. İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Araştırma Merkezi, 1991.

Erarslan, Cezmi. *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği; Osmanlı Devleti'nin İslam Siyaseti*. İstanbul: Ötügen Yayınları, 2019.

Fratantuono, Ella. "Producing Ottomans: Internal Colonization and Social Engineering in Ottoman Immigrant Settlement", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 21 (2019): 1-24.

Fratantuono, Ella. "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers: Historical Analysis as a Method in Evaluating Migration Categories", *Middle East Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2/1 (2017): 97-115.

Hamed-Troyansky, Vladimir. *Empire of Refugees, North Caucasian Muslims and the Late Ottoman State*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024.



- İpek, Nedim. "Balkanlar, Girit ve Kafkaslar'dan Anadolu'ya Yönelik Göçler ve Göçmen İskân Birimlerinin Kuruluşu (1879-1912)", *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 1 (1995): 197-221.
- İpek, Nedim. *İmparatorluktan Ulus Devlete Göçler*. Trabzon: Serander Yayınları, 2006.
- İpek, Nedim. "Kafkaslardan Anadolu'ya Göçler (1877-1900)", *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6/1 (1991): 97-134.
- Karpat, Kemal H. *Osmanlı Nüfusu (1830-1914) Demografik ve Sosyal Özellikleri*. çeviren Bahar Tırnakçı. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003.
- Karpat, Kemal H. "Pan-İslamizm ve İkinci Abdülhamid: Yanlış Bir Görüşün Düzeltilmesi", *X. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler* içinde, 4, 1331-1359. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1986.
- Kasaba, Reşat. *A Moveable Empire, Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009.
- Kurt, Burcu. "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Nafia Çalışmalarına Bir Örnek: Nilüfer Nehri'nin Islahı ve Bursa Ovası Bataklıklarının Kurutulması Projesi", *Odryses'ten Nilüfer'e Uluslararası Nilüfer Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* içinde, editörler Mustafa Şahin, Sezai Sevim, 519-532. Bursa: Nilüfer Belediyesi, 2016.
- Külünk, Furkan. "İngiliz ve Harici Kutsal Kitap Cemiyeti'nin Çarlık Rusyası ve Türkistan'daki Misyonerlik Çalışmaları", *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12/1 (2025): 207-232.
- Kocacık, Faruk. "Balkanlardan Anadolu'ya Yönelik Göçler (1878-1890)", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 1 (1980): 137-190.
- Mikhail, Alan. *Osman'ın Ağacı Altında, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Mısır ve Çevre Tarihi*, çev. Seda Özdil, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017.
- Özgün, Cihan. "Osmanlılarda Çevre Temizliği Kapsamında Bataklıkları Kurutma Çalışmaları", *Temizlik Kitabı* içinde, editörler Emine Gürsoy Naskali, Salih Mehmet Arçın, 131-158. İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009.
- Paşaoğlu, Derin. "Muhacir Komisyonu Maruzatı'na Göre (1877-78) 93 Harbi Sonrası Muhacir İskânı", *History Studies International Journal of History*, 5/2 (2013): 347-386.
- Sunar, Mehmet Mert. "Hayvanlar", *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Çevre ve Şehir* içinde, 113-154. İstanbul: İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi, 2015.
- Şahin, Emine, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Düyûn-ı Umûmiye İdaresi'nin Manyas Gölündeki Nüfuz Mücadelesi (1890-1914)", *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 11/2 (2024): 534-553.
- Şaşmaz, Musa. "Immigration and Settlement of Circassians in the Ottoman Empire on British Documents 1857-1864", *OTAM: Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 9 (1998): 331-366.
- Taşbaşı, Erdal. "Osmanlı Topraklarına Yapılan Göçler ve Muhacirin-i İslamiye Komisyonu". Doktora Tezi, Akdeniz Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2011.
- Terzibaşoğlu, "Yücel. "A Very Important Requirement of Social Life: Privatisation of Land, Criminalisation of Custom, And Land Disputes in Nineteenth-Century Anatolia", *Les Acteurs Des Transformations Foncières Autour De La Méditerranée Au Xixe Siècle* içinde, ed. Vanessa Guéno et Didier Guignard, 25-47. (Karthala and the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (MMSH), 2013).
- Terzibaşoğlu, Yücel. "Land Disputes and Ethno-Politics: North-Western Anatolia, 1877-1912", *Ethno-Nationality, Property Rights in Land and Territorial Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* içinde, 153-180. ed. S. Engerman and J. Metzger, (London: Routledge, 2004).
- Turgay, A. Üner. "Circassian Immigration into the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1878", *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams* içinde, editörler Wael B. Hallaq ve Donald P. Little, 193-217. Leiden: Brill, 1991.
- Yılmaz, Mehmet. "XIX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti'nin Muhaciri İskan Politikası". *Osmanlı Ansiklopedisi* içinde, 4: 587-602. Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999.



Appendix

Figure 1

Map showing Manyas and surrounding lands and villages. [BOA, ŞD. 1200/47, Encl. 3]

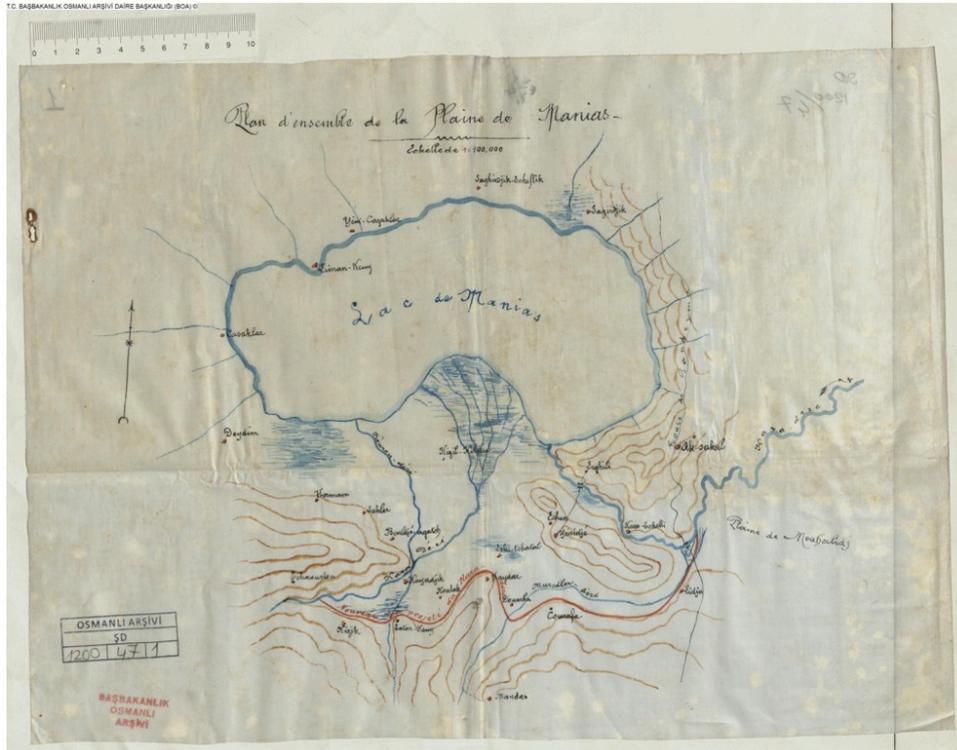


Figure 2

Lists prepared for the allocation of land to migrants. [BOA, İ.DFE. 15/30, Encl. 3]

