

**FUELING THE EMPIRE: LABOR AND FOREIGN MIGRATION IN  
LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK COALFIELDS**

by  
FIRAT KÖKLÜ

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabancı University  
July 2024

**FUELING THE EMPIRE: LABOR AND FOREIGN MIGRATION IN  
LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK COALFIELDS**

Approved by:

Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Ozil .....  
(Thesis Supervisor)

Assoc. Prof. Selçuk Akşin Somel .....

Asst. Prof. Akın Sefer .....

Date of Approval: July 24, 2024

FIRAT KÖKLÜ 2024 ©

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### FUELING THE EMPIRE: LABOR AND FOREIGN MIGRATION IN LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK COALFIELDS

FIRAT KÖKLÜ

HISTORY M.A. THESIS, JULY 2024

Thesis Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Ozil

Keywords: Zonguldak Coalfields, labor migration, Industrial Revolution, coal production, late Ottoman Empire

This study portrays the late Ottoman Zonguldak coalfields, focusing on foreign workers' experiences in the surface and underground industries and the relations of these workers with other actors in the region, such as Ottoman workers and the state. In particular, it focuses on the role of migration in shaping the workforce and social relations in the coalfields, as well as the political and diplomatic consequences of migration in the region. It argues that foreign labor migration, which accelerated after the establishment of the Ottoman Ereğli Company, contributed to the stratification of the region's labor force and created complex intercommunal relations. At the same time, the mobility of foreign workers became a politicized issue. It provoked anxieties among state officials at different levels, who developed strategies to prevent the arrival of foreign workers in the basin. However, preventing the arrival of foreigners sparked diplomatic discussions between the Ottoman Empire and the workers' home countries, which required the government to reshape its policies over time. Finally, this study traces the experiences of foreign workers in their final destination and argues that government officials developed a securitarian discourse against the presence of foreign workers due to problems, such as intercommunal strife due to occupational competition and diplomatic intervention by foreign representatives in Ottoman affairs. Meanwhile, the presence of foreign workers increased radical militancy and labor activism in the region, creating new relations between different actors and challenges for government officials.

## ÖZET

### GEÇ DÖNEM OSMANLI ZONGULDAK'INDA KÖMÜR SAHALARINDA EMEK VE GÖÇ

FIRAT KÖKLÜ

TARİH YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, TEMMUZ 2024

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Ayşe Ozil

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zonguldak Kömür Havzası, emek göçü, Sanayi Devrimi, kömür üretimi, geç dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu

Bu çalışma, geç dönem Osmanlı Zonguldak'ında yeraltı ve yerüstü iş sahalarında çalışan yabancı işçilerin deneyimlerine ve onların Osmanlılı işçiler ve devlet gibi diğer aktörlerle ilişkilerine odaklanmaktadır. Özellikle bu çalışmanın odağında göçün kömür sahalarındaki işgücünü ve toplumsal ilişkileri şekillendirmedeki rolü ile bölgedeki siyasi ve diplomatik sonuçları yer almaktadır. Buna göre Osmanlı Ereğli Şirketi'nin kurulmasından sonra hızlanan yabancı işçi göçünün, bölgedeki işgücünün tabakalaşmasına katkıda bulunmuş ve karmaşık cemaatler arası ilişkiler yaratmıştır. Aynı zamanda, yabancı işçilerin dolaşımı ve bölgede sayıca artmasının politik ve diplomatik bir konu olarak ortaya çıkmış ve farklı düzeylerdeki devlet yetkilileri arasında endişelere yol açmıştır. Ancak yabancı işçilerin gelişinin engellenmesi sebebiyle Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve işçilerin kendi ülkeleri arasında ortaya çıkan diplomatik tartışmalar hükümetin daha sonra bölgeye girişleri yasaklayan sert politikasını yeniden gözden geçirmeye zorlamıştır. Son olarak, bu çalışma yabancı işçilerin nihai varış noktalarındaki deneyimlerinin izini sürmektedir. Buna göre hükümet yetkilileri, mesleki rekabetten kaynaklanan yerli-yabancı çekişmeleri ve yabancı temsilcilerin kendi vatandaşlarını sebep göstererek Osmanlı işçilerine diplomatik müdahalesi gibi sorunlar nedeniyle yabancı işçilerin varlığına karşı güvenlikçi bir söylem geliştirmiştir. Bununla birlikte, yabancı işçilerin varlığı kimi zaman yerli-yabancı işçi ikiliğinin ötesine geçerek bölgede anarşizm başta olmak üzere radikal fikirlerin yayılmasına ve işçi hareketlerinin artmasına katkı sağlamıştır.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Ayşe Ozil for her continuous help in shaping my thoughts and completing my thesis. The discussions we had with her always helped me to determine the direction of my thesis. Her detailed feedback on my drafts and rewrites was crucial in getting me to this point. Without her encouragement and guidance, I would not have been able to complete my thesis. I would also like to thank Selçuk Akşin Somel and Akın Sefer, who served on my thesis committee, for reviewing my thesis in detail and providing comprehensive feedback.

Writing a thesis also means making frequent sacrifices to yourself and your loved ones. During the process, you will sometimes feel tense, sometimes unhappy, sometimes exhausted. In such moments, having people who will always be with you unconditionally is the greatest source of strength in this life. I would like to express my infinite love and gratitude to my family - my mother, father and sisters - who have always supported me with understanding and love during my most difficult times. I am grateful for their presence and support.

I would also like to thank my friends who contributed to my academic studies with their ideas and made my two-year adventure at Sabancı University bearable, especially Bahadır with whom I shared my twenty square meter dorm room without conflict but with friendship. I would like to thank my cohort, Sarp, Fatih, Anıl and Deniz, who made a painful master's process bearable; İsa and Ardit, who guided us through everything at Sabancı and made the isolated environment of the campus worthwhile with their tea parties; and all my friends, whose laughter is engraved on the walls of the faculty building. Strange as it may sound, I would also like to sincerely thank the drink called tea that accompanied my early morning work in the office - and of course I would like to mention Savaş Abi for making tea drinking possible.

I would like to dedicate the last part of my Acknowledgments to Boğaziçi University, a centennial institution that I entered as a student in my youth and that has given me many of the values that have made me who I am. Its professors who are dedicated to understanding their students and making a positive difference in their lives, its embracing culture, and its extraordinary campus are all things I will cherish for the

rest of my life. I thank everyone who made this possible during my five years there, and those who continue to fight to preserve it. Thank you to my undergraduate professor, dear Tolga Cora, who helped me strengthen my interest in Ottoman social and economic history during these five years, and thank you to all the good friends I made during this time, Okan, Ata, Damla, Hazar, and others who I hope will be with me throughout my life.

*To my beloved family*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>OZET</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1. The Historical Context and the Coal Production: An Overview .....	2
1.2. The Literature on Zonguldak Coalfields .....	9
1.3. Research Questions and the Aims of the Thesis .....	14
1.4. Sources .....	15
1.5. Overview of the Chapters .....	16
<b>2. PORTRAYING LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK COALFIELDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FORMATION OF A STRATIFIED WORKFORCE</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.1. Labor-Motivated Migration to the Coalfields before the Establish- ment of the Ottoman Ereğli Company and the Formation of the Workforce .....	19
2.2. Understanding the Human Setting in the Coalfields: Occupations, Living Conditions, Geographical Origins, and Social Attitudes in a Stratified Workforce .....	24
<b>3. THE OTTOMAN EREGLI COMPANY, FOREIGN LABOR MI- GRATION, AND STATE CONTROL IN LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK</b> .....	<b>31</b>
3.1. The Making of a Late Ottoman Settlement: Ottoman Ereğli Com- pany and the Emergence of Zonguldak as the Center of the Coal District.....	32
3.2. Foreign Migration, Communal Networks, and Employment in Late Ottoman Zonguldak .....	34

3.3. The Flow of Foreign Labor to Zonguldak: Processes, Actors, and State Control .....	38
<b>4. FOREIGN WORKERS AND THE STATE IN LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK: INTERCOMMUNAL CONTESTATION, DIPLOMATIC INTERVENTION, AND RADICALISM .....</b>	<b>46</b>
4.1. Intercommunal Strife, Securitarian Discourse, and the Limits of State Capacity in Late Ottoman Zonguldak .....	47
4.2. Foreign Workers as an Instrument of Diplomatic Intervention: Central Government, Diplomatic Agents, and Provincial Authorities .....	52
4.3. Labor Militancy, Foreign Workers as Agents of Anarchism and Reactions of the Ottoman Government in Late Ottoman Zonguldak .....	59
<b>5. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>71</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the prime mover of the wheels changed from physical power to coal-fueled engines. Hence, during this period, the Ottoman Empire increasingly needed more fuel sources to keep its wheels turning in manufacturing and transportation. Discovered in the 1820s and operated from the 1840s onwards, Zonguldak coalfields were the largest single coal-producing region in the empire. Towards the end of the century, coal production processes underwent fundamental changes when the Ottoman Ereğli Company, a French capitalized operator, began operations in the coal basin. These changes included the expansion of the production infrastructure and the increased use of modern machinery to increase production. As a result, the company acquired about four-fifths of the total production, which increased from about 151,000 tons in 1895 to 590,000 tons in 1905.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the coalfield experienced significant labor migration as various expanding and new occupational sectors offered employment. As the company initiated large construction projects to improve the production infrastructure and offered jobs in its new facilities, migrant workers with different skill levels arrived in the coalfield. During this period, migrant workers were not only Ottoman subjects, but workers from outside the empire also came to the region to become part of the larger workforce in the region. People from the Balkans, the wider Mediterranean world and other parts of Europe came to Zonguldak in search of work. Although the numbers of these foreign workers were more limited compared to the Ottoman migrant workers, this new interaction meant the emergence of new relationships between these new foreign workers arriving in the region and other labor groups as well as the Ottoman government. This dissertation aims to portray late Ottoman Zonguldak by focusing on these relationships and the experiences of foreign migrant workers in their new habitus vis-à-vis other labor groups and the state. In particular, it focuses on how migration reshaped labor and social relations in the coal

---

<sup>1</sup>Donald Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 28-29.

basin, inflamed political and diplomatic discussions, and created security concerns in the eyes of state officials. The dialogues between different diplomatic and bureaucratic actors regarding the highly politicized mobilities of foreign workers arriving in Zonguldak are also central to this thesis. Furthermore, the thesis aims to provide a portrait of foreign workers that goes beyond the context of their production processes and includes them as actors in the social, political, and diplomatic spheres. In order to achieve this, the dissertation focuses on the period from the beginning of the Ottoman Ereğli Company's operations - as its operations were key to accelerating foreign labor migration - to the Young Turk Revolution, as the new governments' interactions with the coalfield fundamentally changed and the company underwent certain transformations during this period. In short, this dissertation aims to offer a narrative of late Ottoman Zonguldak that focuses on foreign workers not only as actors engaged in fueling the empire's industries, but also as a group that redefined social relations and fueled the state's security concerns in late Ottoman Zonguldak.

## 1.1 The Historical Context and the Coal Production: An Overview

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a significant expansion of state-sponsored manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire. In the 1840s, the government initiated the establishment of an "industrial park" outside Istanbul, primarily to meet the needs of the army and other state institutions.<sup>2</sup> However, these early efforts had little success in transforming Ottoman industry, and many of these facilities failed to continue production. Rather, private entrepreneurs of Ottoman and foreign origin were the real force behind the transformation of the Ottoman industrial base through the establishment of modern, machine-based production facilities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their efforts bore fruit especially after the 1880s, when the number of private factories in the empire rose to more than three-quarters of all Ottoman factories.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>For Ottoman Industrialization during this period, see, Edward Clark, "The Ottoman Industrial Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1974): 65–76, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800032797>; Zafer Toprak, "Tanzimat'ta Osmanlı Sanayii," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985). Görkem Akgöz mostly concentrates on the Republican period but still particularly Chapter I of her book contributes to the scholarship on the late Ottoman industrialization. See, Görkem Akgöz, *In the Shadow of War and Empire* (Brill, 2023).

<sup>3</sup>More than half of these factories, established until World War I, operated in the textile and food production sectors thanks to the adaptation of agricultural production for exports and industrial production in the nineteenth century. See, Şevket Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi* (İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2023), 127-135. For more information about the establishment of Ottoman manufactories by local and foreign capital, see, Donald Quataert, *Manufacturing and Technology Transfer in the Ottoman Empire, 1800-1914* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 1992); Gündüz Öçkün, *Ottoman Industry: Industrial Census of 1913-1915* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2003).

The trend toward steam-powered mechanization in the nineteenth century was not limited to industrial production. Perhaps even more significantly, mechanization transformed transportation. Throughout the nineteenth century, new technologies were the key enablers of the unprecedented movement of people, raw materials, and finished goods. The first example of this revolutionary technology was the steam-boat. Throughout the nineteenth century, foreign and Ottoman companies, both established through state and private investment, began to operate their steam-boats in Ottoman waters.<sup>4</sup> In most parts of the empire, the main means of medium- and long-distance maritime transportation slowly shifted to steamboats during the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the Ottoman Navy also adopted coal-powered ships throughout the nineteenth century, becoming one of the most important coal-consuming state institutions by the end of the century.<sup>6</sup> It was also during this period that the first Ottoman railway networks emerged as a result of Ottoman integration into the world economy. Most of these early networks were built to connect various manufacturing centers away from the coastal regions to a single, highly commercialized terminus port. The financiers of these railroads were often of foreign origin and benefited from the establishment of these networks through improved terms of trade.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Mübahat Kütükoğlu, “Osmanlı Buharlı Gemi İşletmeleri ve İzmir Körfezi Hamidiye Şirketi,” in *Çağın Yakalayan Osmanlı: Osmanlı Devleti’nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri*, ed. Mustafa Kaçar and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (İstanbul: IRCICA, 1995), 165-167. By just before the Great War, one of these companies, *Şirket-i Hayriye*, had reached 18 million total passengers transported since its establishment. See, Ali Akyıldız, “Şirket-i Hayriyye,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 2010, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sirket-i-hayriyye>.

<sup>5</sup>For instance, scheduled voyages started under the Imperial Shipyard (*Tersane-i Amire*) that carried passengers and cargoes to various parts of the empire in the Mediterranean, the Aegean, and the Marmara Seas. See, Ercüment Kuran, “XIX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti’nde Deniz Ulaşımı: ‘İdare-i Mahsusa’nın Kuruluş ve Faaliyetleri,” in *Çağın Yakalayan Osmanlı: Osmanlı Devleti’nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri*, ed. Mustafa Kaçar and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (İstanbul: IRCICA, 1995). For more information about Ottoman maritime transportation in the Aegean, see, Kütükoğlu, “Osmanlı Buharlı Gemi İşletmeleri ve İzmir Körfezi Hamidiye Şirketi,” Migrant laborers also used these means of transportation increasingly since over the century, such means of transportation became comparatively affordable and more common. For instance, migrants from inner and eastern Anatolia took steamers from the Black Sea coast to head towards Istanbul. See, Christopher Clay, “Labour Migration and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth Century Anatolia,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 1–32, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701241>

<sup>6</sup>For more information on the modernization of Ottoman Navy and its embracement of steam power, see, Ahmet Güleriyüz and Bernd Langensiepen, *The Ottoman Steam Navy, 1828-1923* (US Naval Institute Press, 1995).

<sup>7</sup>Nevin Coşar and Sevtap Demirci, “Incorporation into the World Economy: From Railways to Highways, 1850–1950,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2009): doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200802547636>, 21. Most of the money that entered the empire from the West was in the form of loans, followed by ventures in railroad construction and operation. Two third of all direct investment – equivalent to £75 million – flew into this specific sector until the start of World War I. See, Pamuk, *Türkiye’nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi*, 104. In addition to these early commercially motivated railways, the Ottoman Empire also financed certain railway projects in the context of the centralization and modernization of the state. While these projects certainly provided some economic and social benefits, the state deliberated on its political intentions – such as consolidating political authority, improving state apparatus to function more effectively, and transporting state officials and soldiers faster in case of need – for the construction of these lines. See, Coşar and Demirci, “Incorporation into the World Economy: From Railways to Highways, 1850–1950,” 22-23.

Thus, the demand for coal increased significantly from the early years of the nineteenth century, which was fundamental to the Ottoman government's efforts to start coal production in the mid-nineteenth century and later attempts to increase production in the Zonguldak coal basin. In fact, oral tradition attributes the role of the navy, along with a villager from Ereğli, Uzun Mehmed, in the discovery of coal in the region. According to this, the Navy was one of the institutions that sought alternative domestic sources to avoid the high cost of exporting coal, and it introduced coal to new recruits every year in the hope that they would find coal sources in their hometowns. One of these new recruits, Uzun Mehmed, while resting from agricultural work in his hometown, one day found coal fragments in an open field and informed the state about the coal resources in the region.<sup>8</sup> But the field remained unexploited for another two decades, probably because the government did not understand the full potential of the region and the quality of the coal, thinking that it was not hard coal but lignite, no better than other sources in the empire.<sup>9</sup> Coal production did not begin until 1848, when the Sultan appropriated the property as part of his Privy Purse (Hazine-i Hassa). During this period, production remained limited and the income from the region was donated to the maintenance of various religious endowments.<sup>10</sup> From that time until the Crimean War, while the ownership of the mines remained in the hands of the state, their operation was subcontracted to the moneylenders in Galata for an annual income of 30,000 Kuruş. However, the operators were obliged to sell the coal to the Navy at a fixed price. During this period, the mines were also worked by Montenegrin and Croatian miners, as there were no experienced miners in the region.<sup>11</sup> During the Crimean War, the operation of the mines was left to the British, as allied ships needed coal for their operations in the Black Sea. British engineers brought to the region during this period also made the first infrastructure investments, laying short-distance railroads to transport the coal cut from the mines. However, most of the production still had to be handled in primitive ways. At the end of the war, however, they left the region after selling the coal stocks they had accumulated to the Ottoman government.<sup>12</sup> From this period until 1865, the production processes were subcontracted to several operators. These included moneylenders from Galata, but also wealthy local notables and successful

---

<sup>8</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Cumhuriyet'in on Yılında Zonguldak ve Maden Kömürü Havzası* (İstanbul: Zonguldak Sanayii ve Ticaret Odası Neşri, 1933), 113.

<sup>9</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 22-24.

<sup>10</sup>Sina Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi, 1848-1940* (Ankara: Yeraltı Maden-İş Yayınları, 1977), 18.

<sup>11</sup>Ekrem Murat Zaman, *Zonguldak Kömür Havzasının İki Yüzyılı* (Ankara: TMMOB Maden Mühendisleri Odası Yayını, 2004), 28; Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 19.

<sup>12</sup>Zaman, *Zonguldak Kömür Havzasının İki Yüzyılı*, 29-30; Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 23-24.

ex-hewers who had accumulated enough capital to start their small-scale production were granted licenses to produce coal in the region. For a brief period of two years between 1859 and 1861, British operators were also granted concessions to operate mines. Thus, several operators managed the coal production, while they continued to sell the coal at a fixed price of 4 kuruş per kantar (about 56.5 kilograms) during this period.<sup>13</sup> However, the production remained primitive and insufficient during these early years and the Navy could not meet most of its needs from the region.<sup>14</sup>

In 1865, the administration of the coalfield was transferred from the Privy Purse to the Ministry of the Navy, which was the main buyer of Zonguldak's coal. This initiative was taken to increase production as the central government was disappointed with the previous production figures. The first major change made by the Navy in the region was the creation of an independent mining district. A new position was created with the title of 'Superintendent of the Imperial Mine' (*Maden-i Hümayun Nazırı*), who would also serve as the governor of the coal district.<sup>15</sup> During the navy's administration of the coal district, the practice of subcontracting mining operations continued, but the ministry also began to operate its own mines. As a more fundamental change, the first holder of the Superintendent's post, Dilaver Paşa, drafted a Mining Regulation in 1867, which redefined labor relations and reorganized production processes. The most critical consequence of this regulation was the introduction of forced labor in the basin. According to the regulation, men between the ages of thirteen and fifty who lived in the villages of the coal region had to work in the mines on a rotating basis for almost half of the month, and they were designated as the only group eligible to work underground, despite frequent cases to the contrary.<sup>16</sup> As discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, this was an important step in the transformation of the region's workforce. In terms of production processes, instead of modernizing and technologizing the means of mining, this regulation envisaged an increase in production as a result of the continuation of the labor-intensive model with the provision of more workers. In fact, after 1867, the production figures increased, reaching 142,000 tons in 1875, while in 1865 it was only around 40,000 tons.<sup>17</sup>

The late 1870s and early 1880s were another period of change in the region. During

---

<sup>13</sup>Zaman, *Zonguldak Kömür Havzasının İki Yüzyılı*, 30-31; Çıladı, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 25-28.

<sup>14</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 39.

<sup>15</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 40.

<sup>16</sup>Zaman, *Zonguldak Kömür Havzasının İki Yüzyılı*, 31-35; Çıladı, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 36-43; Donald Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 40.

<sup>17</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 28.

this time, the government experienced a severe economic crisis as a result of the war with Russia in 1877-1878. As a result, the Navy was unable to purchase all of the region's production, leading to a significant drop in production - which fell to about 56,000 tons in 1880. In fact, the Ministry was so strapped for cash that the mine operators were given the concession to collect the taxes of various places in the basin as compensation for the coal they purchased from the producers in lieu of cash.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the mine operators asked the government to allow them to sell a percentage of their production on the open market. After negotiations with the producers, the government finally agreed in 1882 to allow 40 percent of production to be sold on the open market.<sup>19</sup>

This new situation also encouraged relatively larger investors to enter the basin to start production. In the 1880s, Ottoman investors of various backgrounds, such as merchants, transport company operators, and high-ranking bureaucrats, established their own mining companies in the basin. For example, the owners of the Esenyan Company<sup>20</sup> and the Giurgiu Company were actually owners of private transportation companies operating in the Ottoman seas. Giurgiu Panos operated steamships between the Ottoman capital and Egypt and had the motivation to acquire cheap coal by starting production himself in 1885.<sup>21</sup> The owner of the Karamanyan Company was a local merchant involved in the timber trade. The Sarıcazade Company, on the other hand, was founded by Abdülhamit II's chief chamberlain Ragıp Paşa in the same period.<sup>22</sup> Thus, operators with different motivations brought large investments to the region as coal mining became a better paying sector after the relative liberalization of the market in 1882.

However, the biggest investment in the region was made by the Ottoman Ereğli Company (*Ereğli Şirket-i Osmanisi*) in the last years of the nineteenth century. In 1891, the government came up with a plan to build a large port in the region to facilitate the loading of mined coal onto wagons. However, the government did not carry out the plan itself, but contracted it to the Sultan's chief architect, Yanko Ioannidis, in 1893. According to the contract, the architect was responsible for the construction of a large loading port in a selected location, along with other construction, land transportation and tunneling projects. The contractor was also to

---

<sup>18</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 52, 56; Attila Aytekin, *Tarlalardan Ocaklara, Sefaletten Mücadeleye* (Yordam Kitap, 2017), 87.

<sup>19</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 56-58.

<sup>20</sup>Zaman, *Zonguldak Kömür Havzasının İki Yüzyılı*, 37.

<sup>21</sup>İsa Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenlerinde Faaliyet Gösteren Şirketler," *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 18 (2001), 253-254.

<sup>22</sup>Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenlerinde Faaliyet Gösteren Şirketler," 254.



acquire the right to exploit the coal deposits found during the execution of these infrastructure projects.<sup>23</sup> On the initiative of architect Yanko and other shareholders, the Ottoman Ereğli Company was established in 1896 to carry out the construction projects in the region. Almost all of the investments required for the establishment of the company, which reached around 10,000,000 francs, were provided by French investors. The largest shareholder was the Ottoman Bank, which was itself French capitalized, and others were *le Comptoir national d'escompte de Paris* and *Houilleres du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais*.<sup>24</sup>

With the start of mining operations, the Ottoman Ereğli Company quickly became the largest coal producer in the basin. The rapid increase in production was also due to the company's investments in production infrastructure, as it also established other facilities such as repair shops, coal washing facilities, and rail transportation, and hired engineers to better monitor and facilitate production processes.<sup>25</sup> As a result, increased production began to account for a larger percentage of the coal consumed in the empire. In the final years of the 1880s, following the relative liberalization of the market, production only slightly exceeded previous records, hovering around 150,000. However, the real leap in production was achieved by the Ottoman Ereğli Company, whose production reached around 500,000 tons per year after its establishment.<sup>26</sup> The total annual coal requirement of the capital, which was mainly used by the navy, arsenal and other military establishments and factories, was around 370,000 tons. Thanks to this leap in production, a large part of it began to be supplied by production in the basin.<sup>27</sup> In the two decades between 1890 and the early 1900s, as coal production increased thanks to the company, the share of local coal in total consumption also increased in other parts of the empire. For example, in 1902, Ereğli coal supplied one-fifth of the 90,000 tons of coal consumed annually in Izmir, and by 1910 the total share of Ereğli coal reached 60 percent of the city's coal consumption.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, according to Ottoman industrial data collected before World War I, most of the coal used in Ottoman factories came from the Zonguldak coalfields.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 80; Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 29.

<sup>24</sup>Donald Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi*, 1881 - 1908 (Yurt Yayınevi, 2017), 89-90.

<sup>25</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 80; Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 29-30, 44-45.

<sup>26</sup>Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi*, 84-90.

<sup>27</sup>Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi*, 91-92.

<sup>28</sup>Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi*, 92.

<sup>29</sup>Ökçün, *Ottoman Industry*, 20.

Thus, the beginning of the operations of the Ottoman Ereğli Company marked a period of modernization of production processes and the emergence of new occupational categories related to large surface construction projects and other emerging surface industries. Meanwhile, as the nineteenth century was a period characterized by the further integration of the Ottoman Empire into the world economy and the global interconnectedness and circulation of people thanks to better communication and transportation technologies,<sup>30</sup> the region experienced migration not only from the Ottoman provinces but also from abroad as people sought livelihoods in these newly created jobs by the company. For example, Montenegro, from where miners arrived in the 1840s, became one of the main sending regions of labor migration to the Zonguldak coalfields, as workers sought employment both underground and on the surface. In fact, the special status of Montenegro was even de facto recognized by the Ottoman officials, who allowed miners from this region to continue coming to Zonguldak, despite their negative attitude towards migrant miners from other regions, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3. However, the establishment of the company and its connections with France, as well as Italy's position as an immigration region in the larger Mediterranean world,<sup>31</sup> also facilitated other connections in which workers with different professional skills came to Zonguldak to seek employment.

In this context, this thesis aims to uncover the stories of this understudied group of foreign workers, their relationship with the state, and the government's perceptions and actions in the face of their actions. Specifically, this study aims to do this with a focus on Zonguldak, from the beginning of the company's operations, when it facilitated a large mobility of foreign workers in a newly emerging settlement, to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, when the Young Turk Revolution marked a period of change in the coalfield. First, the administration of the mines was taken away from the Navy and transferred first to the Ministry of Public Works (*Nafia Nezareti*) and then to the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture (*Ticaret ve Ziraat Nezareti*). Second, during this period, the company experienced a serious financial collapse after the Young Turk Revolution and the first serious labor strike in the region.<sup>32</sup> Thus, these new realities of how the new government related to the

---

<sup>30</sup>For more information about global interconnectedness after the 1870s and globalization trends, see, Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, Ma: Blackwell Pub, 2004). For the experiences of the Ottoman Empire in this period, see, Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>31</sup>For more information about the Italian workers in various labor hubs in the Middle East, see, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup>Çıldır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 97-98.

coalfield and how the company changed offer a different story that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

## 1.2 The Literature on Zonguldak Coalfields

Writing the history of the Zonguldak coalfields remained a local phenomenon for a long time, and scholarly attention to the history of the region has emerged only recently. The first writers who produced their works on the region and the mining industry were commissioned by the Zonguldak People's House (*Halkevi*) in the early Republican period. As an organ of the newly established regime in the city, they paid special attention to writing the local history of their city, which developed around mining activities. *Cumhuriyetin On Yılında Zonguldak ve Maden Kömürü Havzası* [*Zonguldak and the Coal Basin in the Ten Years of the Republic*]<sup>33</sup> was the first such work, written in 1933 by a commission of three researchers. One of the researchers expanded his research on the subject and published *Zonguldak Havzası: Uzun Mehmet'ten Bugüne* [*Zonguldak Basin: From Uzun Mehmet to Today*]<sup>34</sup> one year after the People's House published their joint work. Ahmet Naim, the author of this second book, was an employee of the Ereğli Hard Coal Company (formerly the Ottoman Ereğli Company), where he worked first as a translator and then as a statistician. Born in Istanbul, he received his primary education there and studied French at a nuns' seminary in Haliç. He completed his education in Konya, where he began his writing career at a local newspaper. When the first book was commissioned, he was also working as a publications officer at the Zonguldak People's House, where he was part of the trio that produced the final work.<sup>35</sup>

Ahmet Naim's sources include statistical information, books, newspapers and magazines in French and Turkish, personal notes and records, and oral testimony from those who lived through the city's recent past. Thus, having access to the people who lived through the last years of Ottoman Zonguldak and acquiring documents from the recent past, his creations were a product of first-hand information. However, in accordance with the early republican discourse, he had a strong judgmental attitude towards the Ottoman past. According to him, the sultans and their appointed offi-

---

<sup>33</sup> Ahmet Naim, et al., *Cumhuriyet'in on Yılında Zonguldak ve Maden Kömürü Havzası* (İstanbul: Zonguldak Sanayii ve Ticaret Odası Neşri, 1933).

<sup>34</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Zonguldak Havzası: Uzun Mehmet'ten Bugüne Kadar* (İstanbul: Hünütabiāt Matbaası, 1934).

<sup>35</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırk Beş Sene*, 11.

cials lacked the necessary information to properly manage the basin, or collaborated with the imperialist powers and bribed the Westerners to perpetuate the nation's wealth. This discourse persists throughout the book whenever the author gives his interpretation of events and processes.

Nevertheless, Naim's works are pioneering local histories based on meticulous research. By preserving first-hand accounts, he laid the groundwork for many later works. Ahmet Naim spent the rest of his life in Zonguldak and wrote several novels about the life of the miners. In addition to his fictional works, however, he made a final contribution to the history of the coal basin by publishing the memoirs of a retired mine foreman. In 1936, Naim published *Yeraltında Kırk Beş Sene: Bir Maden İşçisinin Anıları* [*Forty-Five Years Underground: The Memoirs of a Mine Worker*]<sup>36</sup> in the newspaper *Bartın*. The work focuses on the experiences of Ethem Çavuş, who started working in the mines around 1886 - the exact date is uncertain, but the editor predicted it based on the events in the narrative - and undertook all sorts of tasks in the mines, eventually becoming a foreman. As a worker's memoir of the late nineteenth century, Ethem Çavuş's story is a unique primary source for better understanding the social dimension of late Ottoman Zonguldak and the living conditions of the workers.

Naim's contributions were followed by his son, Sina Çıladı, who worked as a journalist for most of his life. In addition to his intellectual side, he was a political activist and participated in leftist parties. His ideologies were reflected in his works. In *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi: 1848/1940* [*History of Workers' Movements in the Zonguldak Basin: 1848/1940*],<sup>37</sup> published in 1977, Çıladı follows in his father's footsteps and rewrites the history of the basin by focusing on the institutional development of the coal basin, the state administration and its relationship with the capital owners, the conditions of the mine workers and their wages, production processes and efficiency. Finally, he offers a chronology and periodization based on administrative changes and addresses and comments on fundamental transformations in the basin. The time span of his research has been extended from his father's work to 1940, and a large part of the book is devoted to this later period. However, in order to provide information on the history of the basin in the Ottoman period, he relies mainly on Naim's book and benefits only from some more recent sources, again produced at the local level. In terms of his discourse, he agrees with his father's critical attitude towards the Ottoman past, but this time from a more socialist perspective.

---

<sup>36</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırk Beş Sene: Bir Maden İşçisinin Anıları*, 1886-1931 (Evrensel, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Sina Çıladı, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi, 1848-1940* (Ankara: Yeraltı Maden-İş Yayınları, 1977).

Local authors continued to write about Zonguldak and its mining industry.<sup>38</sup> However, academic circles remained uninterested in writing an academic history of the coal basin until the 1990s. Erol Kahveci, who had just finished his Ph.D. in sociology at the time, was one of the first scholars to publish on the basin and its working classes. Overlapping with his dissertation topics, he contributed to *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey* with his chapter "The Miners of Zonguldak"<sup>39</sup> in 1997. In the chapter, Kahveci focuses on the long-term sociological changes and continuities among the miners of the basin and brings his narrative up to the present, towards the 1990s. The article provides important information about the initial developments in the basin and the Ottoman period. One merit of the chapter was its success in drawing attention to migration in the region as a crucial precondition for the emergence of Zonguldak's labor force. Kahveci identifies and categorizes different groups of workers - rotational-compulsory vs. permanent, local vs. migrant, underground vs. aboveground, unskilled vs. skilled, and so on. He also discusses their different living conditions in Ottoman Zonguldak. In a more recent article published in 2015, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labor in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey,"<sup>40</sup> Kahveci further develops his claims and provides more examples of how the background of Zonguldak's labor groups - which began to take shape in the late Ottoman era - has influenced workers' social and occupational status, their earnings, and their participation and responsibility in union activities to the present day. It is important to note that Kahveci's contributions were crucial as he produced early examples of scholarship that shed light on Ottoman Zonguldak and the importance of migration to the region.

Scholarly attention to the Zonguldak coalfields increased relatively in the 2000s with the publication of three successive monographs. Donald Quataert, a distinguished professor of late Ottoman socio-economic history, published his comprehensive book *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920*<sup>41</sup> in 2006. The work still stands out as the most complete history of the basin. Quataert also managed to integrate several new sources, such as oral testimonies

---

<sup>38</sup>One of them deserves a special mention. Erol Çatma was a mine worker himself from 1970s to 1990s. He was involved in leftist political activism and was interested in the history of the coalfield and learned Ottoman Turkish, diving into the archives to rewrite the history of the basin. Accordingly, his *Asker İşçiler* was published in 1998 and *Zonguldak Taşkömürü Havzası Tarihi: Birinci Kitap, 1840-1865* was published in 2006 as a part of his larger project. See, Erol Çatma, *Asker İşçiler* (Ceylan Yayınclk, 1998); Erol Çatma, *Zonguldak Taşkömürü Havzası Tarihi: Birinci Kitap, 1840-1865* (Ankara: Sistem Ofset Yayıncılık, 2006).

<sup>39</sup>Erol Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," in *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, ed. Erol Kahveci, Theo Nichols, and Nadir Suğur (Routledge, 1997).

<sup>40</sup>Erol Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," *International Review of Social History* 60, no. S1 (October 21, 2015): 207–226, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020859015000425>.

<sup>41</sup>Donald Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

of Greek miners, local sources from Zonguldak, and archival documents from the Turkish Coal Corporation (*Türkiye Taşkömürü Kurumu*), consisting of wage books and reports on accidents that occurred during the production process. The work shows the physical/geographical environment of the region and its population, the interactions between the state and the miners during the period of the empire's transformation into a modern and centralized polity, the daily lives of the workers, and the mining accidents. In addition, Quataert extended the claims of earlier works. His work shows that social structures in the villages under the coal administration region were fundamental in determining who was recruited as a miner and for what tasks, or how the central government used reserve soldiers in the mines to increase productivity in times of need. However, his history focuses mainly on the transformation of villagers into miners, and although he mentions migration in defining the human environment and occupational categories, he does not elaborate much on the subject or on foreign workers.

In 2007, Atilla Aytekin published *Tarlalardan Ocaklara, Sefaletten Mücadeleye: Zonguldak-Ereğli Kömür Havzası İşçileri, 1848-1922* [*From Fields to Coal Mines, From Misery to Struggle: Zonguldak-Ereğli Coal Basin Workers, 1848-1922*],<sup>42</sup> based on his earlier master's thesis written in 2001. In his introduction, Aytekin begins with a conceptual and theoretical debate, addressing the current state of labor studies in Ottoman historiography and emphasizing the need to highlight the historical agency of non-elite groups. Drawing largely on local archives in Zonguldak, Aytekin then narrates the history of the region, addressing the conditions of workers, the transformation of the basin through empire-wide changes, and its integration into the global economy. To accomplish this task, Aytekin pays particular attention to changes in wages and industrial accidents, and considers the agency of workers in making their own history.

Nurşen Gürboğa's *The Zonguldak Coal Basin as a Site of Contest, 1920-1947: Mine Workers, the Single Party Rule, and War*,<sup>43</sup> published in 2009, aims to discover the history of the region under one-party rule from the effective end of Ottoman rule to World War II. To this end, the book examines the restructuring of the region's administration in the 1920s, the situation of labor and labor relations, the regime's attempts to halt productivity, and the reintroduction of the compulsory labor regime in the region during World War II. The book also considers the status of workers as agents, how they received the reintroduction of forced labor, and their

---

<sup>42</sup>Atilla Aytekin, *Tarlalardan Ocaklara, Sefaletten Mücadeleye: Zonguldak-Ereğli Kömür Havzası İşçileri, 1848-1922* (Yordam Kitap, 2017).

<sup>43</sup>Nurşen Gürboğa, *The Zonguldak Coal Basin as a Site of Contest, 1920-1947: Mine Workers, the Single Party Rule, and War* (İstanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Reserch Centre, 2009).

reactions to dealing with this new situation. While her main research is on early Republican Zonguldak, Gürboğa also touches on the Ottoman past to provide a background for her study and to provide the institutional and administrative history and transformation of the region before the collapse of the empire.

To date, several other monographs and dissertations have been written in an attempt to rewrite the history of the coal basin. However, they too limited their studies by examining the history of late Ottoman Zonguldak either in terms of the administrative and operational history of the coal basin or in terms of the transformation of the local population from peasants to mine workers.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the history of the Zonguldak coal basin in the late Ottoman period has so far been studied in order to understand the production processes in the basin and how it was managed by the government. A notable contribution has been made by later scholars who have conducted studies on the living and working conditions of the workers in the region. Little research has been done to understand the role of migration and its impact on the region. Meanwhile, recent studies by social historians focusing on labor and migration have expanded our understanding of transnational labor migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These studies have shown that in an age of globalization and accelerated human circulation, the Ottoman Empire remained not only a sending country, but also a receiving country of labor migration.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup>As an example, İsa Tak's doctoral dissertation rewrites the history of the basin with a focus on the production processes shaped around the administrative changes in the region. While he heavily relies on archival documents and detailly narrates the history of the coal basin, his study does hardly offer a new perspective to the history writing. See, İsa Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri" 2001. Tamer Güven's book on mine operations and the work life in Kozlu is an example of recently published monographs on late Ottoman Zonguldak. He too concentrates on the administrative and operational history as well as the experiences of mine workers in workplaces. See, Tamer Güven, *Zonguldak Kozlu'da Kömür Madenciligi: İşletmecilik ve Çalışma Hayatı, 1848-1921* (Zonguldak: Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015).

<sup>45</sup>For recent histories on the experiences of these foreign migrant workers in Ottoman lands, see, Anthony Gorman, "Foreign Workers in Egypt 1882-1914: Subaltern or Labour Elite?," in *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from below in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Stephaine Cronin (London: SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2008); Malte Fuhrmann, "I Would Rather Be in the Orient' European Lower Class Immigrants into the Ottoman Lands," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag et al. (SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2011); Malte Fuhrmann, "North to South Migration in the Imperial Era: Workers and Vagabonds between Vienna and Constantinople," in *Urban Governance under the Ottomans*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2014). Akın Sefer, "British Workers and Ottoman Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 99 (2021): 147-66, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0147547921000028>. Particularly, Khuri-Makdisi's Chapter 5 in her book relates to foreign labor migration and its consequences in the spread of radicalism in the Arab Lands, see, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2013).

### 1.3 Research Questions and the Aims of the Thesis

In light of these recent studies, and in the hope of contributing to our broader understanding of trans-imperial labor mobility in this period, can we expand our knowledge of late Ottoman Zonguldak by focusing on foreign workers in the coalfield, who have remained a neglected group in historiography? Based on this question, this paper aims to focus on the experiences of foreign workers in Zonguldak, a group that has been overlooked in comparison to other labor groups in the region. Although their numbers were smaller than the others, foreign workers had a remarkable impact on the region's past, which this thesis aims to demonstrate. In order to do so, this thesis attempts to explore the impact of the understudied group of foreign workers in Zonguldak on the larger workforce of the region and their position in relation to other worker groups. At the same time, as a consequence of the international status of the workers, this thesis questions the state's concerns about the arrival of workers in the region and the policies developed within the framework of these concerns, and is also interested in the processes of reshaping these policies as a result of negotiations between diplomatic channels. In doing so, this thesis goes beyond the parameters of the existing literature, which has heavily emphasized the production processes and working conditions of workers, and makes a novel contribution to understanding the agency of workers in other aspects of the region's past, including the social, political, and diplomatic spheres.

Then, what and how were the processes of migration into the region? Once these workers arrived in the region and became part of the larger labor force, what was their relationship to other groups of workers around them and to the state? Did differences between workers lead to conflict on certain occasions? What did the presence of foreign workers in the region mean to the state? Did their foreignness play a role in the production of these meanings? What policies were developed by state officials at different levels to address these problems? And was it possible to overcome conflicts in labor relations and take collective action for common goals? Accordingly, this dissertation aims to answer these questions by looking at different occupational categories and geographical origins of workers, as well as the intersections of these categories, to understand the position of foreign workers within the larger workforce in the region and their role in intercommunal relations. In addition, this thesis uncovers the processes of workers' arrival and the responses of state officials to the arrival and concentration of foreign workers in Zonguldak. The responses that these officials developed in response to new concerns and diplomatic reactions that led to the reshaping of these policies is also a subject of investigation in this



thesis. Finally, this thesis questions the political and diplomatic repercussions of the arrival of these workers and how foreign workers and their home countries used this reality to their advantage at the international and regional levels, as well as the emergence of a securitarian discourse against foreign workers used by state officials. In an attempt to answer these questions, this thesis also looks at what kind of relationships and partnerships emerged beyond the conflicts between foreign and local workers, all of which are central issues explored in the thesis.

Thus, this dissertation aims to go beyond the already explored dimensions of the workers in the region, which are the history of production processes, the administration of the coalfield, and the workers' conditions, and to delve into the social, political, and diplomatic aspects of the foreign workers in relation to other actors in the region. In order to do so, this dissertation examines a group that has been mostly overlooked in the literature, the foreign workers in Zonguldak, who were numerous but less than other groups; yet had a great impact on the history of the basin.

#### 1.4 Sources

In order to meet these objections, this thesis uses a number of primary sources. First and foremost, it relies on the extensive use of Ottoman state archives. Documents from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Dahiliye Nezareti*) and the Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası*) are the most frequently used categories, as many issues related to foreign workers were reflected in communications between different ranks of both provincial and central state bureaucrats. Since the workers needed international status, documents produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Hariciye Nezareti*) were also frequently used throughout the thesis. There were many extreme cases in Zonguldak that raised security concerns and required the involvement of the police. For these cases, documents under the classification of the Ministry of Police (*Zaptiye Nezareti*) were used. While it is important to recognize that the documents in the Ottoman State Archives were produced by state officials - and thus reflect the perspectives of the state rather than any other actor - they are nonetheless an important source for understanding the social aspects of foreign workers' lives, offering dynamic narratives that also allow researchers to find workers' agency between the lines. For this reason, this dissertation has benefited greatly from these documents in constructing a social history of the late Ottoman Empire.

In addition to these documents, this dissertation used a surviving foreman's mem-

oir, Ethem Çavuş's firsthand account, *Yer Altında Kırkbeş Sene* [*Forty-Five Years Underground*], edited by Ahmet Naim. While it is very rare to find a worker's first-hand account in the study of late Ottoman labor history, this book provides an invaluable first-hand account of workers' living conditions, workplace dynamics, and social attitudes in late Ottoman Zonguldak based on the testimony of a miner who started as a basket carrier in his teenage years and retired from the mines as a professional hewer almost half a century later.

Finally, this dissertation uses provincial yearbooks (*Salname*) on a few occasions, especially to understand the population change in the region, which is an important aspect for a migrant-receiving city.

## 1.5 Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2 explores the background of the formation of foreign labor migration to the region and examines the period prior to the establishment of the Ottoman Ereğli Company, from 1848 to the early 1890s, in an attempt to reconsider the formation of the region's labor force by focusing on migration and taking into account other important events in the history of the coalfield. It then goes on to define the various occupational categories in the region and the geographic origins of the workers in an attempt to understand the relationships between the two.

Chapter 3 continues with the importance of the establishment of the Ottoman Ereğli Company and its significance for the creation of Zonguldak as a late Ottoman settlement. Coal production and the influx of people for subsistence thus emerge as an important element in the creation of the coalfield. The chapter then focuses on foreign labor migration to late Ottoman Zonguldak, a city in the making. This part of the chapter attempts to explore the origins of foreign workers and their networks in which they collaborated and found employment. The last part of the chapter focuses on the dynamic history of the arrival of foreign workers in Zonguldak and the state's attempts to stop their arrival in the region. The chapter also shows how the international status of the workers required the central government to take into account diplomatic appeals from abroad as the state attempted to ban them from coming to Zonguldak and redesigned its policies, this time not as harshly as the provincial administrators had previously foreseen.

While the main concern of Chapter 3 is the processes of migration, the final chapter, Chapter 4, continues to show different faces of the interactions between Ottoman

workers and the state and tries to understand why a securitarian discourse emerged in relation to the presence of foreign workers in Zonguldak. It argues that conflicts between groups of foreign and Ottoman workers were one of the reasons for this discourse, as well as the state's inability to address such issues on the ground. Meanwhile, the Ottoman government also feared the involvement of foreign states in its affairs because of the affairs of its citizens in Zonguldak, most of whom were labor groups. Although not on a large scale, the workers' appeals through diplomatic channels led to frequent interventions or recommendations by foreign diplomatic representatives, which put pressure on Ottoman administrative and legal procedures in everyday cases. Finally, this chapter attempts to understand the repercussions of global radicalism and labor militancy in Zonguldak by focusing on foreign anarchist workers and their activities, as well as the state's response to them within its larger securitarian concerns in late Ottoman Zonguldak. This part of the chapter is also crucial in offering another possible interaction between foreign and Ottoman workers that goes beyond cases of mutual distrust and confrontation.

## **2. PORTRAYING LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK COALFIELDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FORMATION OF A STRATIFIED WORKFORCE**

This chapter provides an account of the formation of the workforce in the Zonguldak coalfields by highlighting significant historical events and processes from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. At the same time, the chapter aims to show the different occupational categories in the region and the geographical origins of workers, arguing that the geographical origins of workers were an important factor in the articulation of occupational categories as well as workplace and social relations. In doing so, the chapter considers migration as one of the main determinants of labor formation in the region, which is also relevant to the following chapters, which focus on the arrival of foreign migrant workers in the basin and their relations with their new environment as well as with the state.

The first part of the chapter deals with the history of the coal basin in relation to the creation of its workforce. According to it, from the first years of production the coal basin received migration from abroad. However, the transfer of the management of the mines to the Ministry of the Navy and the regulation of the organization of the production processes reshaped the workforce by introducing local rotating villager miners as forced laborers. The further capitalization of production in the 1880s also initiated changes in the composition of the coalfields' workforce, as many Ottoman migrants arrived in the region in large numbers from this period. The second section of the chapter describes the occupational categories of the underground and surface sectors and attempts to illustrate the living and working conditions of the workers. At the same time, this chapter takes a closer look at the geographical origins of the workers in order to understand the relationship between the workers' origins and their occupations, which, as will be relevant in the following chapters, is also crucial for understanding the intercommunal perceptions of the workers.

## 2.1 Labor-Motivated Migration to the Coalfields before the Establishment of the Ottoman Ereğli Company and the Formation of the Workforce

The arrival of foreign workers in the region dates back to the beginning of the first mining activities in the basin, which was under the control of the Privy Purse (*Hazine-i Hassa*). During this period, mining was carried out by primitive methods without the use of machinery, so the workforce was not as diverse as in later periods in terms of occupational differences and consisted mainly of hewers and transporters. Technicians specializing in the use of machinery for mining, such as engineers, railroad workers, and pumpers, were not present in the region. Similarly, surface industries related to mining had not yet developed, except for those involved in the transportation of coal.<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman government officials, when they first realized their initiative to mine coal in 1848, proposed to bring experienced miners from the provinces of the empire and abroad because of the lack of skilled workers in the region. These miners were a small group of workers of Montenegrin and Bosnian Croat origin, who had gained their experience in quarries in their home regions.<sup>2</sup> In order to extract coal in the basin, they continued to use the primitive methods they had learned in the quarries of their home regions. Since the government did not invest much in advanced technology, the skills of these miners suited the government's goals, as they were expected to extract coal with primitive means. Once extracted, the coal was hauled out of the pits by porters using baskets or wooden carts on wooden rails that were pulled to the dock by pack animals.<sup>3</sup> Thus, migrant workers were present in the region from the very beginning of mining activities in the Ereğli Basin. Although their number is not exactly known, the total number of professional miners before the Crimean War (1853-1856) was about five hundred, most of whom were Croatian and Montenegrin workers.<sup>4</sup> Along with these professional miners, some young locals helped to transport the coal from the mines on their baskets.<sup>5</sup>

During these early years of production, the government allowed some former miners to acquire mining know-how and accumulate enough wealth to subcontract the op-

---

<sup>1</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 52.

<sup>2</sup>Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi*, 98-99.

<sup>3</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Zonguldak Havzası: Uzun Mehmet'ten Bugüne Kadar*, 21-22.

<sup>4</sup>Quataert *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı*, 99.

<sup>5</sup>Quataert *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı*, 99.

eration of the mines and become mine operators, although ownership remained in the hands of the state. Meanwhile, wealthy locals, bureaucrats and moneylenders from Galata in Istanbul also joined this model of subcontracting the mines. These operators operated their coal pits independently to carry out mining and had to sell their production to the government at a fixed price.<sup>6</sup> While the mining activities were carried out with primitive methods due to lack of investment and attention, the arrival of British entrepreneurs in the region marked the first infrastructural investments. In those years, in addition to foreign miners, members of the local garrison also participated in mining activities at the request of the government.<sup>7</sup> During the Crimean War the first groups of highly qualified mining workers - engineers and technicians - arrived from Europe. According to the agreement between the Ottomans and their Western allies, the operation of the mines was entrusted to the British in order to ensure the supply of coal for the allied ships. In order to ensure better production in the region, the British brought these experts from Britain, although these experts returned to their countries soon after the end of the war.<sup>8</sup> Their numbers, however, were negligible. In the years following this initial arrival of miners and high-level personnel - which, especially in the case of British technicians and engineers, remained a short-term mobility - there was no serious change in the composition of the workforce for the next decade, and Montenegrins and Croats continued to constitute the majority of the workforce in the region.

Zonguldak was not the only place where the government or entrepreneurs brought in skilled workers from abroad to start production in the basin. Rather, it was a strategy to overcome the problems associated with the lack of skilled labor in the empire in the 1840s and 1850s, when the government made its first attempts at industrialization. As a result, many of the manufacturing plants that were established brought in workers from abroad to facilitate the manufacturing processes. For example, the "industrial park" established outside the capital in the 1840s brought many skilled workers and foremen, as well as machinery, from the West.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, when the glass factory in Paşabahçe started production in the mid-1880s, about a hundred glassmakers from southern Germany were brought in for their experience in the sector.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 25-28.

<sup>7</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 54.

<sup>8</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Zonguldak Havzası*, 24-25.

<sup>9</sup>Edward Clark, "The Ottoman Industrial Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1974): 65-76, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800032797>, 69-70.

<sup>10</sup>Donald Quataert, *Manufacturing and Technology Transfer in the Ottoman Empire, 1800-1914* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 1992), 35.

The first time this policy was abandoned in the coal district was in 1865, when the operation of the mines was transferred from the Privy Purse to the Ministry of the Navy (*Bahriye Nezareti*). At the same time, Ereğli was reorganized as an administrative district with the status of a coal district, where the governor of the district also held the title of Superintendent of the Imperial Mine (*Maden-i Hümayun Nazırı*).<sup>11</sup> Two years after this administrative change, the first governor and Superintendent of Mines appointed to this newly created position, Dilaver Paşa, drafted a mining regulation that aimed to redefine labor in the region. The regulation affected labor relations in the coal basin primarily through the conscription of local villagers as unskilled laborers. According to Article 21 of the regulation, all males over the age of thirteen and under the age of fifty living in the fourteen villages of Ereğli district had to be conscripted to work in the mines as a compulsory service, and all three categories of underground workers-hewers, porters, and transporters (*kazmacıyan, küfeciyan, ve kiracıyan*) - who provided the much-needed labor for the mines-could only be recruited from these villages. The villagers had to work on a rotating basis; the men of each village were to be divided into two groups, and only one group would go at a time for twelve days, while the others would replace those returning at the end of their working period. The mine operators (*madenciyan*) had to employ them in their mines and pay them for their work; if they were not needed, they had to inform the mine administration to transfer the villagers to work elsewhere. While all porters and transporters had to work in the mines assigned to them by the administration, the regulation recognized the privileged status of the hewers as a distinct group with the most experience and granted them the right to choose the mine in which they worked in Article 22. The regulation also organized the working conditions and working hours of these villagers.<sup>12</sup> In return for their services, the government exempted the villagers from military service.<sup>13</sup>

The regulation fundamentally changed the history of the coal basin. First of all, since Dilaver Paşa was both the superintendent of the mines and the local governor of the district, his power went beyond the management of the mines. As the local governor, he had the authority to introduce the obligation of rotation and compulsory work in the mines for the ordinary villages, thus making the duty a responsibility towards the state. In addition, the region was no longer under civil or bureaucratic authority, but under the Navy, which gave the basin a military character.

More importantly for this thesis, the regulation reshaped the labor pool in the basin

---

<sup>11</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 28.

<sup>12</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 39, 41-44.

<sup>13</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 55.

by designating residents of the coal district as the only group eligible to work in the mines, with Article 21 prohibiting others from working underground. This is important because many documents produced by state officials in later periods criticizing the employment of foreign workers cited this legal restriction and criticized operators for continuing to employ foreign workers in the basin despite the article prohibiting groups other than locals from working underground. However, there was another article in the regulation that can be interpreted as the government's acceptance of the reality that most of the skilled miners working in the region were foreign miners, Montenegrins and Croats, and that their dismissal from mining work would harm production. According to Article 53, if there were foreign miners working in the mines, they should be treated as Ottoman citizens since they were serving the "sublime state". They were to be subject to Ottoman laws and regulations, and if they violated the articles of the regulation, they were to be expelled from the basin (*def ve tard*).<sup>14</sup> Another exception was made for foremen and highly qualified personnel such as engineers of foreign origin, who were allowed to be employed in the mines.<sup>15</sup> In this way, the regulation recognized the need for foreigners in the region, both as skilled workers and as specialists, and did not completely exclude them from the workforce. However, the workforce was no longer solely dependent on them, and foreigners and other Ottoman immigrants were less frequently employed in the mines. With this regulation, full-time professional foreign miners became a minority group in terms of numbers compared to the local village miners who worked in the mines on a rotational basis and were inexperienced in mining work.

Another major change came in 1882, when the government accepted the mine operators' request to sell a portion of their production on the open market without restrictions. Prior to this change, the operators had to sell their entire production to the government at a fixed price. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, when the government was unable to purchase all of its production due to economic instability, the mine operators offered to sell forty percent of their production on the open market without any price restrictions.<sup>16</sup> The government accepted this offer, and as a result, coal mining became a more profitable investment for mine operators. These new circumstances attracted wealthier investors, who created larger companies with greater liquidity, which did not refrain from using their financial resources

---

<sup>14</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 45-46.

<sup>15</sup>İsa Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri" 2001, 186-187. Still, state officials frequently disregarded Article 53 and emphasized Article 21 which proclaimed the employment of only locals in underground work in bureaucratic correspondences and warnings send to operators asking them to terminate foreign migrant workers' employment. They, however, did not embrace the same negative approach towards foremen and specialists and technicians (*amele-i fenniye*) and did not oppose to their employment in the region. See, Chapter 2.

<sup>16</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 56-58.



to attract more skilled miners, especially hewers. On the other hand, although the number of skilled miners increased over time as locals gained experience, the workforce remained insufficient to meet the demand of the operators. Thus, some of the influential mine operators, including Sarıcazade Ragıp Paşa, who was the chief chamberlain of Yıldız Palace, lobbied for the liberalization of the labor market in order to increase the number of miners and other workers available to them. Although it was a slow process, the operators finally received a positive response and the government accepted the employment of miners from outside the region, but only miners of Ottoman origin, in 1906.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, many job-seekers from all over the empire arrived in the basin - especially the unemployed from Istanbul and workers from the Trabzon Provence<sup>18</sup> - adding a new layer to the already stratified workforce, this time with the influx of domestic immigrants.

While the relative liberalization of the labor market came in 1906, there was an influx of Ottoman and foreign migrants to become miners in the basin, especially after 1882, when mining became a relatively profitable business for investors. Those seeking employment were welcomed by the mine operators, despite the disapproval of the state. In particular, Kurds from the eastern provinces and Laz from the eastern Black Sea coast came to the region to sell their labor as miners. They stayed in the region for varying periods of time-from a few months to several years-and some stayed permanently. These permanent workers, who became professionalized over time, were highly valued by the operators and received better living conditions. In many of the mine repair shops opened by the company in the early 1900s, the workforce included a significant number of foreigners.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the dominant assumption in early accounts of the history of the Zonguldak coalfields that the migration of miners was a phenomenon that began after 1906,<sup>20</sup> with the exception of the early Montenegrins, is not accurate. While it is true that there was a legal obstacle based on the regulation prepared by Dilaver Paşa, migrant miners of both Ottoman and foreign origin continued to come to the region

---

<sup>17</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 56-61;Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 43.

<sup>18</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 61.

<sup>19</sup>Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," 181.

<sup>20</sup>Most of the earlier works on Zonguldak coalfields repeat this assumption referring to the legal constraints by the Dilaver Paşa Regulation. see, Ahmet Naim, *Zonguldak Havzası: Uzun Mehmet'ten Bugüne Kadar* (İstanbul: Hünütabat Matbaası, 1934); Sina Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi, 1848-1940* (Ankara: Yeraltı Maden-İş Yayınları, 1977); Bahri Savaşkan, *Zonguldak Maden Kömürü Havzası Tarihçesi, 1829-1989* (Zonguldak: Türkiye Taşkömürü Kurumu, 1993). However, recent studies point out that there were many exceptions in the application of the regulation and foreign and Ottoman migrant workers too were employed in the mines. See, Erol Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," *International Review of Social History* 60, no. S1 (October 21, 2015): 207-26, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020859015000425>, Donald Quataert, *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

to work in the mines even after the regulation came into force.<sup>21</sup> In addition, most of the articles of the regulation, such as those concerning the improvement of the conditions of the miners, were not enforced on the ground.

In exceptional cases, the government did not even refrain from propagating the migration of workers to the region. For example, in 1900, the Ministry of the Internal Affairs sent a message to the Navy stating that since the supply of coal from Great Britain had been insufficient this year and prices had risen significantly due to the shortage of fuel, more workers were needed to increase production in the coal fields. The Ministry then asked the Navy to send notices to the two vilayets of Kastamonu and Trabzon for the recruitment of miners from these regions.<sup>22</sup> The ensuing correspondence that followed showed that a few hundred people were interested in the profession. However, after two months, the Ministry informed the Navy that enough workers had been recruited in the whole of Kastamonu Vilayet and that there was no need for further recruitment from Trabzon.<sup>23</sup>

In short, the workforce in the Zonguldak coalfields was made and remade over time from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The labor mobility of international workers in the coalfields, which began in the 1840s, marked the first steps in the creation of this complex workforce. After an important change in the administration of the basin, the Dilaver Paşa added another layer to the workforce by turning villagers into unskilled mine workers on a rotational basis. With the introduction of capitalist relations and pressure from mine operators, the government once again initiated a fundamental change in the region by accepting Ottoman migrants as miners in 1906, although both foreign and Ottoman migrants had been employed in the mines since the 1880s.

## **2.2 Understanding the Human Setting in the Coalfields: Occupations, Living Conditions, Geographical Origins, and Social Attitudes in a Stratified Workforce**

Three traditional groups of workers in the mines, hewers, porters and transporters, continued to form the backbone of the underground workforce in the Zonguldak

---

<sup>21</sup>Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri," 187; Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," 213-216.

<sup>22</sup>DH.MKT. 2308/116, (21 February 1900).

<sup>23</sup>DH.MKT. 2310/79, (26 February 1900); DH.MKT. 2338/21, (29 April 1900).

coalfields from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The most skilled group among them were the hewers (*kazmacıyan*). They were responsible for cutting the coal in the mines and they could work as hewers only after gaining some experience in mining.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the least skilled jobs were those of porters and transporters (*küfecıyan ve kiracıyan*). The porters were responsible for carrying the baskets of coal prepared by the miners out of the mines and the carriers were responsible for carrying the coal with their pack animals either to a port or to a railway station.<sup>25</sup> Apart from that, there were miners who worked for building mine pillars to prevent the mines from collapsing.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to these traditional categories of underground employment, mining work became increasingly difficult and professionalized, requiring the employment not only of the traditional groups of miners who relied on their physical strength, but also of specialists and technicians who would use machines instead. In particular, the entry of the Ottoman Ereğli Company into mining activities marked an important turning point in the use of these skilled workers in the mines. For example, they relied heavily on the railways to transport coal from the mines, which required the employment of machinists and railway workers. Similarly, as the mines went deeper, they increasingly needed to employ pumpers to pump water out of the mines to ensure the safety of the mines and the continuity of their production.<sup>27</sup> In addition to these skilled workers, there were a small number of highly skilled professionals, such as engineers and doctors, as well as mine officers of various ranks.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, surface industries related to coal production developed in the region, providing employment for people no less than underground work. These industries required surface workers, and their employment accounted for a significant percentage of the region's total workforce. Employees in these surface industries included construction workers, carpenters, stonemasons, blacksmiths, boatmen, and foresters who were needed to support the coal mining sector with their contributions to mine development and to the region's overall infrastructure and transportation.<sup>29</sup> In some cases, the same employers provided jobs for both underground and surface workers, as in the case of the Ottoman Ereğli Company, which became the largest investor

---

<sup>24</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 55-57.

<sup>25</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 54-55.

<sup>26</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 57-58.

<sup>27</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 52.

<sup>28</sup>Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri," 178-182.

<sup>29</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 52.

in the region, especially after the 1900s.

The hewers were the group of miners who earned the most in the basin, while the surface workers could also earn close to their numbers and even more if they worked in skilled trades. The daily wages of porters and transporters were fixed from 1875 to 1911. Porters were paid only 6 *kuruşes* per day. Transporters were paid from 15 to 90 *paras* per 128 kilograms of coal (100 *atikkiyes*) transported, depending on the distance. Hewers, on the other hand, were paid up to 20 *kuruşes* per day for the same period, which was more than three times more than an unskilled porter.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, especially after the 1900s, when the company became the dominant operator in the region, the miners increasingly began to work as pieceworkers, receiving their salaries per basket of coal, which Ethem Çavuş identifies as one of the developments the company brought to the region that worsened their working conditions.<sup>31</sup> In other categories, both underground and above ground, where skilled workers were employed, the wages were again higher than those of the porters and close to or even higher than those of the hewers. For example, a head blacksmith would receive a monthly salary of 650 *kuruşes*, and a foreman working on the railways would receive a salary of 500 *kuruşes* per month. The monthly earnings of a machinist and a carpenter would be around 450 and 400 *kuruşes* respectively.<sup>32</sup> Although we have little information about the earnings of unskilled workers above ground, salaries must have been considerably lower. In a petition by the unskilled dockworkers in 1908, the workers complained that their daily wages were insufficient.<sup>33</sup>

In terms of regional origin, the largest single group in the entire region were the local villager-miners who worked in the mines on a rotating basis. As explained above, according to the Dilaver Paşa regulation, until 1906 they were the only group that could be employed in the three traditional categories of underground work, with the exception of migrant hewers in the region. In fact, a small percentage of this group could become full-time professional hewers after many years of underground work, such as Ethem Çavuş, a hewer of local origin known for his memoirs of the late Ottoman Zonguldak coalfields. In this way, they clearly distinguished themselves from other local rotational workers. However, the vast majority of this group remained porters and transporters, working under poor conditions, paid in kind rather than cash, and barely able to cover their taxes and debts to the wealthy landlords in their

---

<sup>30</sup>Tak, “Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri,” 190.

<sup>31</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 52-54.

<sup>32</sup>Tak, “Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri,” 185, 190.

<sup>33</sup>ZB. 74/65 (7 September 1908).

villages.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes they were paid in cash, which in most cases was less than they earned, and tax officials and moneylenders would show up at the time of payroll and demand a significant portion of the salary immediately.<sup>35</sup> Villager-miners also had to provide their own transportation and housing near the mines, as many unprofessional and small mines - even relatively large ones - did not provide housing for workers. In his memoirs, Ethem Çavuş recounts his first arrival in the mines when he was a teenager of about thirteen. On the night of their arrival, they built a mud mound around the fire in the most primitive way in order to stay indoors. Nevertheless, a mound near their location collapsed with sixteen miners inside. They were able to save thirteen, leaving three bodies unearthed under the mound.<sup>36</sup> The novel *The Curly*, written by Behçet Kalaycı, a novelist from Zonguldak who was born in 1922 and wrote books about the working conditions in the basin, is another example of the unfavorable living conditions of the villager-miners compared to other groups. On one occasion, the main character of the novel, Dursun, and his companion from the village spend the first nights of their stay in a cave near the mines, where they collect chestnuts from the surrounding forests and make a fire to cook a slurry-like cornmeal soup.<sup>37</sup> Since most of the workers returned to their villages after two weeks, they endured these harsh conditions - and had nothing else to do. On another occasion, Dursun was told by another miner from his village that the Laz workers called them "curly" because their living conditions were similar to those of curly sheep, living in chaff beds and mud mounds. The Laz workers, on the other hand, call them jackals because of their cunning and trickery.<sup>38</sup>

The second group were Ottoman migrants, most of whom came from the eastern Anatolian provinces and the Black Sea. Those from eastern Anatolia consisted mainly of Kurdish workers, while the latter were often referred to in the documents as Laz, although most of them were apparently Muslim Turks and Pontic Greeks.<sup>39</sup> In the underground, these workers made up a smaller percentage of the total workforce than the locals, although their numbers increased after 1906, when the regulation limiting the employment of outsiders in the mines was lifted. In the underground, most of these migrant workers worked long hours as hewers in the mines and were respected by mine owners as a skilled and reliable workforce, receiving better wages

---

<sup>34</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 21-24.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 30-32.

<sup>36</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Behçet Kalaycı, *Kıvrık: Genç Bir Madencinin Öyküsü* (Ankara: R Prodüksiyon, 1992), 25-27.

<sup>38</sup> Kalaycı, *Kıvrık*, 10-11, 52-53.

<sup>39</sup> Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," 213-215.

and housing than local villager-miners.<sup>40</sup> In particular, mine operators hired workers from the Black Sea region who had experience working in metal mines in their home regions.<sup>41</sup> Considering that they were full-time professionals, they contributed a lot to the underground activities, even though their number was smaller than that of the local village miners. As a result, they enjoyed better living conditions than the locals, creating a discrepancy between the two groups that persisted during the Republican period.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from the miners, a considerable number of Ottoman migrant workers were employed in the surface works. Especially after the 1890s, when the Ottoman Ereğli Company started its operations in the region, the number of surface workers increased drastically as its operations included the transportation of coal and the construction of a port, tunnels, railways and buildings. Many records indicate that Ottoman migrant workers were employed in these projects either as unskilled laborers, such as basket carriers,<sup>43</sup> or as more skilled construction workers.<sup>44</sup> However, the sources do not reveal much about the living conditions of this group of workers. Nevertheless, the largest employer in the region, the Ottoman Ereğli Company, preferred foreign surface workers for some of its operations, despite the government's advice to employ Ottoman citizens. Under these conditions, these Ottoman migrant workers occasionally accepted lower-paid, unskilled positions in order to secure at least some form of employment.<sup>45</sup>

Foreigners were the last group of workers in terms of regional and national origin. This group was the smallest compared to the first two. Europeans accounted for almost all of the highly skilled workers in the region, including engineers, machinists, and technicians. In addition to this highly privileged group, skilled and unskilled foreign workers sought employment in the region. People of various origins worked in the region, but the earliest arrivals of foreign miners were from Montenegro and Bosnia. This group had little difficulty in working as miners because the state admired their status in the region, and even later arrivals of miners from these regions were tolerated by the government.<sup>46</sup> Later, although the government was against

---

<sup>40</sup>Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," 213-215.

<sup>41</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 60.

<sup>42</sup>Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," 213-215.

<sup>43</sup>ZB. 74/65 (7 September 1908).

<sup>44</sup>MTV. 165/178 (25 August 1897).

<sup>45</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 63.

<sup>46</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 59.

the employment of other foreign miners and tried to limit their arrival in the region, a number of Italian, French, Austrian and Greek citizens came to the region to work underground.<sup>47</sup> Some of these foreign workers, thanks to their experience, became foremen in the course of time. For example, Ethem Çavuş worked under the supervision of a foreign foreman for a long time.<sup>48</sup> Many foreigners also came to Zonguldak to work in the mining industry. In many of the repair shops that were opened in the early 1900s, both the foremen and the workers were foreigners.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, stonemasons from Montenegro were used extensively by the company in the construction of its port in Zonguldak and other buildings in the region.<sup>50</sup> The company also made extensive use of workers of other nationalities in these operations, including Italians, Croats, Greeks, and French, both as skilled and unskilled construction workers.<sup>51</sup>

Foreign workers generally enjoyed better living conditions thanks to higher wages and cheap, quality housing provided by the companies, although unskilled workers did not enjoy these privileges.<sup>52</sup> In some cases, the company would also sign contracts with foreign workers guaranteeing them housing, wages, and other benefits if they were hired as foremen or even workers.<sup>53</sup> Thus, most foreign workers found their place in this already stratified labor pool in a distinctly advantageous position. They also competed with Ottoman migrant workers - Kurds and Lazs - for employment above ground, where over the years they would become skilled workers and possibly foremen. Although there was no clear legal restriction on the employment of foreign surface workers, the government, fearful of losing control of the coal mines and overwhelmed by the diplomatic and bureaucratic complications of conflicts between Ottoman and foreign workers, tried to ban the arrival of foreign workers for these construction projects, although these workers were favored by the operators and their employment continued in the region.<sup>54</sup>

Accordingly, labor relations and job descriptions in Zonguldak were regularly articulated around the origins of the workers. Unskilled local villager-miners were at the

---

<sup>47</sup>Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Division of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfields, Turkey," 225; Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 52.

<sup>48</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 52.

<sup>49</sup>Kahveci, "The Miners of Zonguldak," 181; Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 63.

<sup>50</sup>MTV. 165/178 (25 August 1897); Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 48-50.

<sup>51</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).

<sup>52</sup>Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Division of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfields, Turkey," 224-226.

<sup>53</sup>Tak, "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri," 192.

<sup>54</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).

bottom of this stratified labor force, while some of these locals could also become hewers over time as they gained experience. Ottoman migrant workers, on the other hand, were employed as both miners and surface workers. Workers employed in the mines from this category mostly served as hewers and enjoyed better treatment than local villager miners. Workers employed in surface industries, on the other hand, mostly competed with foreigners for skilled positions and did not necessarily enjoy superiority over foreigners. Foreigners in the region were also employed in different sectors. A small group enjoyed the most privileged status as the most skilled group, forming the backbone of the region's know-how. Another group of foreigners worked as miners in the mines and were sought after by the operators because of their skills. They also received better treatment from these operators. Finally, a group of foreigners worked in the mining industry. Again, there were skilled workers in this category. Along with them were relatively unskilled workers from Europe seeking employment in the region, mostly in construction. In surface employment, foreigners competed mainly with Ottoman migrants from eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea regions, and although the government was in favor of limiting their numbers, employers - especially the Ottoman Ereğli Company, especially after the 1890s - continued to employ them, arguing that they were more skilled than local options. Thus, these categorizations radically affected the way different groups in the region interacted and perceived each other. Therefore, in understanding the aforementioned local-migrant dichotomy and how these groups perceived and interacted with each other, it is important to consider that the living conditions of these groups could be radically -though not necessarily decisively- altered by labor relations in the region.



### **3. THE OTTOMAN EREĞLI COMPANY, FOREIGN LABOR MIGRATION, AND STATE CONTROL IN LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK**

This chapter attempts to illustrate the dynamic relationship between foreign workers and Ottoman state officials by focusing on the processes of mobility and arrival of foreign workers. It thus offers a historical narrative of the politics of foreign labor circulation, which was subject to constant negotiations between the state, the Ottoman Ereğli Company, and foreign countries. Accordingly, the chapter argues that Ottoman officials at various levels developed policies against the arrival of foreign workers due to security concerns. However, their policies sparked international discussions that led to the reconsideration and reformulation of these policies. As a result, the implementation of these policies was subject to individual considerations, which at times led to certain disagreements between the central and provincial administrations, as well as between foreign workers and state authorities.

The first section of the chapter focuses on the Ottoman Ereğli Company and the beginning of its operations in the region, to show how its activities contributed to the creation of a late Ottoman settlement that became the center of the entire region within a few decades. As the company's activities included the completion of various projects, many foreign workers came to the region in search of employment. The second subchapter provides information on the number of foreigners who came to the region in search of work, as well as their geographical origins. It also attempts to show what connections might have played a role in the employment processes and the arrival of foreigners in the region. Finally, the last section of the chapter examines the arrival of foreigners in the region as a dynamic process. In particular, it looks at the politics of foreign labor mobility and arrival in Zonguldak by considering the constant negotiations between the government and foreign diplomatic channels. In doing so, the chapter considers different actors such as the workers, the company, government officials at different levels, and foreign diplomatic embassies and their different positions.

### 3.1 The Making of a Late Ottoman Settlement: Ottoman Ereğli Company and the Emergence of Zonguldak as the Center of the Coal District

In the oral culture of Zonguldak, there are two common stories about how the name of the city was invented. According to the first story, the name comes from the local word *zonguldamak*, which means trembling due to malaria, as Zonguldak was a reedy area with no significant settlement and was notorious for the prevalence of malaria until the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The other story claims that the employees of the French-capitalized Ottoman Ereğli Company added the French word *zone* as a prefix to the name of the region - which was previously called *Güldağ* (Rose Mountain) or *Göldağ* (Lake Mountain).<sup>2</sup> These claims are unlikely to be authentic, but they do reflect how Zonguldak's inhabitants remembered the city's past before its founding in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Although it is unlikely that the name came from the company's efforts to name the region, the city was in fact founded by the company, which developed a port nearby to better transport the coal mined from the sea and built some buildings for its employees in what is still called the French District.<sup>3</sup> Before that, the place where the settlement is located remained a rush bed with only a few households<sup>4</sup> and Zonguldak did not emerge as a noteworthy settlement until the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Although it was not the most suitable place for the port due to its stormy coastline and narrow hinterland, powerful private investors such as the Esenyen and Karamanyan companies supported the establishment of the port in Zonguldak, believing that it would increase their profitability due to the proximity of this new port area to their mines. In addition, this new area was in the middle of the entire coal district, making it the center of many mines scattered throughout the region.<sup>5</sup> As the government was convinced of the location, despite the geographical and climatic challenges, the construction of the port was entrusted to the initiative of Abdulhamid II's chief architect, Yanko Ioannidis, under a contract signed in 1893. According to the contract, the construction was to be carried out under the management of a new

---

<sup>1</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Cumhuriyet'in on Yılında Zonguldak ve Maden Kömürü Havzası*, 37.

<sup>3</sup>Deniz Dölek Sever, "Bir Maden Kentinin Doğuşunun Çevresel Analizi: Zonguldak," in *Zonguldak: Antik Çağ'dan Cumhuriyet'e Bir Kentin Tarihi*, ed. Ahmet Efiloğlu et al. (Zonguldak: Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2022), 585.

<sup>4</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 33.

<sup>5</sup>Sever, "Bir Maden Kentinin Doğuşunun Çevresel Analizi: Zonguldak," 586-7.

company to be established for the project. This new company was also to construct some of the buildings needed in the region and to connect the railways in Kozlu and Catalağzı with those already existing in Zonguldak. They would supply the construction materials for all these constructions from the region and would also have the right to exploit the coal deposits found during the quarrying and tunneling.<sup>6</sup> The company mentioned in the contract between the government and Yanko Ioannidis was soon established with the investment of the Ottoman Bank and was named the Ottoman Ereğli Company (*Ereğli Şirket-i Osmanisi*). The Ottoman Ereğli Company quickly became the leading company in the region, producing three quarters of the coal in the basin, as it had to perform the tasks mentioned in the treaty and also had the rights to exploit any coal source found during its projects. They also built coal washing plants, coke and briquette factories, and repair shops.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the company did not remain as an initiative to manage the construction of the port of Zonguldak, but became the leading coal producer and the main employer of workers both on the surface and underground.

Within three decades of its establishment, Zonguldak became one of the largest settlements and the center of the coal basin. It was granted the status of a subdistrict (*kaza*) in 1896 and continued to grow rapidly until 1920, when it was established as a separate district (*mutasarrıflık*) consisting of the subdistricts (*kaza*) of Ereğli, Bartın and Devrek (formerly Hamidiye).<sup>8</sup> Before this administrative change, the Zonguldak subdistrict (*kaza*) under the Bolu district had reached a total rural and urban population of 30,000 in 1914.<sup>9</sup> More significant than the change in the total population of the subdistrict was the emergence of Zonguldak as the most important urban settlement in the basin at the end of the empire. A virtually non-existent settlement before the 1890s, Zonguldak's urban residents were all of immigrant origin, and the rapid expansion of the city center's population was closely linked to the influx of people from around the coal district and beyond seeking new livelihoods in

---

<sup>6</sup>Bahri Savaşkan, *Zonguldak Maden Kömürü Havzası Tarihçesi*, 1829-1989 (Zonguldak: Türkiye Taşkömürü Kurumu, 1993), 23-25.

<sup>7</sup>Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 80.

<sup>8</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Cumhuriyet'in on Yılında Zonguldak ve Maden Kömürü Havzası*, 38. The establishment of the district coincides with the end of the negotiations between Turkey, Italy, and France on the coalfield's status after the war. According to that, after the end of the WWI, Italy demanded the region from the Allies since it did not have control over any remarkable coal producing regions. However, after the negotiations with Turkey, Italy dropped its claims over the region and accepted that the coalfields would remain under Turkish control. In return, Italy was promised to be given certain privileges in operation and employment of its citizens. Similarly, the French forces occupied the city slowly started their retreat after the agreement. Under such conditions, Zonguldak's status as an independent district was recognized in the Assembly. For more information, see, Rahmi Doğanay, *Milli Mücadele'de Karadeniz, 1919-1922* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2001); Ali Sarıkoyuncu, "Milli Mücadele Döneminde Zonguldak Kömür Havzasında Fransız-İtalyan Rekabeti ve İtalya'nın Faaliyetleri," *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 2, no. 7 (1991).

<sup>9</sup>Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 184.

the sectors that emerged around coal mining. As one former miner who was later resettled in Greece after the population exchange said, "...in the past, Zonguldak was insignificant. . . Everybody, Turks as well as Greeks came from somewhere else. There was no native population" in Zonguldak.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the population of the Ereğli and Devrek subdistricts, which were divided when the new Zonguldak subdistrict was created and a part of their territory was given to Zonguldak, maintained approximately the same number of inhabitants after fifteen years until 1914, although they were now smaller. In addition to the natural increase of the population, this population growth had to be related to the influx of workers to the coal fields. In particular, the male population of Hamidiye subdistrict was significantly higher than the female population due to the influx of single male workers into the region.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2 Foreign Migration, Communal Networks, and Employment in Late Ottoman Zonguldak

The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed a significant trend of foreign migration to Zonguldak, a period that coincided with the emergence of the city as a notable settlement in the region. After the Ottoman Ereğli Company first came to the region to build the largest port near Zonguldak, the settlement slowly became the center of the entire coal district.<sup>12</sup> As the company grew rapidly, it became the leading employer of all kinds of workers, including those for its construction, tunneling and mining projects.<sup>13</sup> During this growth, many foreign workers seeking employment came to the region to work on these projects.

---

<sup>10</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 34.

<sup>11</sup>It is hard to calculate what percentage of this population increase was due to labor migration from outside the region because there is no source keeping record of all incomers to the region. However, one significant indicator comes from 1899 Kastamonu Provincial Yearbook (*Salname*), demonstrating that male population of Ereğli district was roughly four percent more than the female (around 21,000 vs. 19,000) and the male population of Devrek (Hamidiye), where Zonguldak was a part of until it became a separate subdistrict, was roughly 14 percent more than the female population (around 29,000 vs. 22,000). This remarkably higher male percentage in Devrek may be a consequence of more frequent arrival of single male laborers from outside the basin to the region. However, there is no data after this date which provides any information about different gender percentages in the region, that would allow a comparison of changes over the years. For population data of 1899, see, *Kastamonu Vilayeti Salnamesi*, (Kastamonu: Kastamonu Vilayet Matbaası, 1317/1899). For population data from 1914, see, Karpas, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914*, 184.

<sup>12</sup>For the development of Zonguldak as the center of the coal district, see, Sever, "Bir Maden Kentinin Doğuşunun Çevresel Analizi: Zonguldak."

<sup>13</sup>For the sectors that the company involved in, see, Çıladır, *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi*, 80. Over time, the company became the largest single employer of all categories of occupation in the region. See, Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 29.

Foreign immigration to Zonguldak started when the company began its first operations in the region for the construction of the port in 1894, though the project was finalized only in 1902.<sup>14</sup> Most of the early comers from abroad arrived in Zonguldak to work in the construction of the harbor. Although it is almost impossible to determine the precise number of all foreign workers in Zonguldak during this period due to the scarcity of available statistical sources, the number of foreign workers employed by the company in Zonguldak also found its place in bureaucratic correspondence. The number of foreign workers first appeared in the documents in 1895 due to a dispute between them. According to the document, about 500 foreign workers were employed in the region, some of them were stonemasons from Montenegro. It was stated that there were serious enmities between the workers and guns were drawn during the incidents, and for this reason, it was recommended to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to employ local workers rather than foreigners in the region.<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that the Montenegrin connection continued to provide foreign laborers to Zonguldak coalfields. As more employment opportunities were created in the region with Ottoman Ereğli Company, these sectors too – and some of them were apparently for aboveground work – were filled by new arrivals from Montenegro. In addition, workers from France, a leading country in industries during this period, became a source of foreign arrivals. In 1896, on the initiative of the director of the French capital company, some workers from Marseille came to the region.<sup>16</sup>

According to another letter sent by the Sublime Porte to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1897, the total number of foreign workers employed by the company at that time reached 807, and this number was increasing day by day with the arrival of foreign workers by steamships visiting Zonguldak.<sup>17</sup> However, the fact that the Ereğli Company employed too many foreign workers, although the mining regulations prohibited the employment of foreigners except for technicians, engineers and foremen (*amele-i fenniye* and *işbaşı*), was noted as a problem.<sup>18</sup> Another document from the same period confirms the number of foreign workers working in the region and adds that the total number of workers employed by the company was around

---

<sup>14</sup>Sever, “Bir Maden Kentinin Doğuşunun Çevresel Analizi: Zonguldak,” 587.

<sup>15</sup>BEO. 657/49206 (19 July 1895).

<sup>16</sup>BEO. 880/65972 (13 December 1896).

<sup>17</sup>It is hard to define in which category these workers could fall into since such diplomatic communications do not specify the sectors or qualifications of these workers often times. Rather, they were referred with an umbrella term ‘worker’ (*amele*). Regardless of their skills or occupational category, state officials problematized their foreign status.

<sup>18</sup>Y.MTV. 165/178 (25 August 1897). As explained in Chapter 1, Ottoman state officials frequently referred to the regulation to support their position against the employment of foreigners in the region. Their opposition to the employment of the foreigners, on the other hand, was due to various concerns during this period which resulted in a securitarian discourse against foreign workers in Zonguldak. For more information, see, Chapter 3.

1600.<sup>19</sup> Considering that the number of workers in the whole region on the eve of World War I was barely 10,000, the total number of foreign workers was remarkably high. Moreover, these numbers were only from Zonguldak, where they were heavily concentrated because it was a newly emerging small town, while the town was still smaller than the largest urban settlement in the coal district, Ereğli, which had a population of only 5,000.<sup>20</sup>

The clearest data on the geographical origin of foreign workers could be found in a telegram sent by the Governor of Bolu to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1903. According to this, the vast majority of the high-ranking officers and highly-skilled personnel employed by the Company in Zonguldak were foreigners. Among the 1150 full-time regular laborers, there were a total of 347 foreigners – 102 from Italy, 97 from Montenegro, 66 from Greece, 35 from France, and the rest were from Austria, Germany, Spain, Romania, Russia and Bulgaria. Kurds constituted the largest group among the Ottoman regular workers with 512 workers, followed by 149 Laz. There were also workers from the Greek and Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire, as well as some Turks. In addition to this number of regular workers, there was a group of rotational workers employed by the company among the locals.<sup>21</sup> Again, the document does not specify the occupational categories of these workers. On the other hand, it is most likely that a good percentage of these workers were employed in the aboveground construction projects led by the company since there are certain references to the conflicts between Montenegrin and Kurdish workers in the region in the document.<sup>22</sup>

What were the mechanisms and networks that enabled the recruitment of workers in this environment? One of the most frequently quoted sources on the Zonguldak coalfields, Ethem Çavuş, a hewer of local origin, states in his memoirs that workers often had to give bribes and gifts to foremen or local recruitment officials in order to get a desirable position in the mines. For most villagers, this could be a basket of seasonal fruit or a poultry. When Ethem was recruited by the Giurgiu Company in the 1880s - one of the first companies in the region to pay workers in cash - his father gave the foreman a full basket of Safranbolu grapes to convince him to complete the

---

<sup>19</sup>BEO. 996/74628 (21 August 1897).

<sup>20</sup>Quataert, *Miners and the State*, 32.

<sup>21</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903). Meanwhile, another document from 1898 states that total number of Italian workers only in the District of Zonguldak was 192, who served their labor in the region as construction workers (bricklayers, stonemasons, etc.) carpenters, and hewers. See, Y.MTV. 182/118 (8 October 1898).

<sup>22</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kirkbeş Sene*, 52-54. For the clashes between the Ottoman and Montenegrin workers, see, Chapter 3.

recruitment.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in Kalaycı's *The Curly*, Dursun brings a goat to the mine foreman as a gift. When the supervisor notices the gift, he asks, "Are you looking for a job?" suggesting that it is most natural to give a persuasive gift before asking for a job.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps more significantly, communal networks and compatriotism can explain the phenomenon that most migrant workers, both foreign and Ottoman, came from similar places and established their communities in the region. The high concentration of miners from these regions could therefore be understood as a chain migration trend, with early arrivals creating a more hospitable environment for later arrivals. This was also a trend seen in many late Ottoman labor migration patterns. For example, in the nineteenth-century Kasap İlyas neighborhood of Istanbul, certain occupations, such as basket carrying near the docks, were largely taken over by immigrants from Arapkir and its surrounding area, as the early arrivals created a community of compatriots. İspanakçızade Hafız Mustafa Paşa, who once served in Arapkir during his lifetime in the eighteenth century, established the first connection by allowing early arrivals to be employed in his household. Later, some of these Arapkirlis acquired key positions in professional guilds, supporting their compatriots and paving the way for others from Arapkir to arrive in the neighborhood in search of employment.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people left Eğin for İstanbul to become porters, shopkeepers, and construction workers, creating their communities in the receiving neighborhoods. Since migration is never a one-way direction, some of them returned when their financial situation improved and spent the rest of their lives in a more prosperous way.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the networks of compatriots in migrant-receiving regions, the prosperous financial situation of the returnees had to encourage those left behind too for beginning their own journeys as migrant workers.

This framework can provide us with a perspective to understand the reason for the high concentration of people from certain geographical backgrounds in Zonguldak. In a similar vein, compatriotism in Zonguldak must have played a crucial role in the arrival of Ottoman migrants from the Black Sea coast and eastern Anatolia, as well as foreigners from the Montenegro-Croatia region, Italy, and France. Particularly, considering that Montenegrins had long established ties with the region, dating

---

<sup>23</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Kalaycı, *Kıvrık*, 16-17.

<sup>25</sup> Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 100-108, 113-120.

<sup>26</sup> Zeki Arıkan, "Eğin Kasabasının Tarihsel Gelişimi," *OTAM* 2001, 23-24.

back to the early production activities, and workers from the Black Sea and eastern Anatolia were already present in the region, those who arrived later had to benefit from these connections now to better integrate into social networks. Since some of the mines were run by former hewers who managed to gain enough experience and wealth to start their own businesses, most of whom were either of Montenegrin and Croatian origin or from the eastern Black Sea region,<sup>27</sup> their personal connections may also explain why workers from these regions continued to arrive in the Zonguldak coalfields and made up a remarkable proportion of all migrant workers, most likely having an advantage to find a livelihood in the region. With the entry of the company into coal production and port construction projects in the region, foreign workers from France also began to immigrate to the region. Finally, Kurdish immigration to the coal basin can be explained in the same way as well as within the framework of the poor living and material conditions that prevail in Eastern Anatolia, which became a considerable push factor for Kurdish laborers.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.3 The Flow of Foreign Labor to Zonguldak: Processes, Actors, and State Control

The aforementioned documents from 1895, 1897, and 1903 show a decreasing trend in the number of the company's foreign employees in the region. This may be due to the strong pressure the government put on the company to reduce the number of foreign employees in Zonguldak. The reason for this pressure was that the government authorities became increasingly suspicious of foreign workers and developed a securitarian discourse against their employment in Zonguldak, viewing them as troublemakers where the diversity of their national backgrounds appeared as a threat to regional security. Indeed, in 1897, there were some major conflicts between Ottoman workers, both migrant and local, and foreign workers. During these conflicts, Montenegrin workers clashed with Kurdish migrant workers and other Ottoman subjects for several days, which was only resolved with the intervention of the military.<sup>29</sup> In addition to these instances of clashes and security concerns, Ottoman officials often used the discourse that the mining regulation prepared by Dilaver

---

<sup>27</sup>Kahveci, "Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey," 208.

<sup>28</sup>Christopher Clay, "Labour Migration and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth Century Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 1-32, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701241>, 1-5.

<sup>29</sup>Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kirkbeş Sene*, 48-50. Along with such conflicts, the international status of foreign workers which led to occasional foreign intervention as well as the governments fears about the spread of radical movements in the region became other factors that the Ottoman government developed a securitarian discourse against the employment of foreign workers. For more information, see, Chapter 3.



Paşa did not allow foreigners to be employed underground, citing Article 21 while ignoring Article 53 and the fact that there were already some foreign miners working in the region. This discourse on legal restrictions also failed to take into account the fact that most of these foreigners sought employment in the surface sectors rather than underground, although there were certain exceptions. Nevertheless, the central and provincial authorities exchanged correspondence with each other and with the company throughout 1897, asking the company to stop employing foreign workers.<sup>30</sup>

However, this does not mean that the circulation of foreigners seeking employment in the region has come to an end. While the number of foreign workers dropped significantly, the company continued to employ foreigners despite warnings from the government. According to the company, local workers lacked the necessary skills to perform the complex tasks assigned to them. They argued that their responsibilities were not limited to the construction of the port, but also included connecting railways in the region, constructing buildings using stone from the region, and operating coal mines discovered during their tunneling activities; and that to carry out these projects, they needed a skilled workforce that only the foreigners could provide. The company added that if the government could ensure the employment of similarly qualified Ottoman workers in their projects, they would agree to replace the foreign workers with local ones.<sup>31</sup> The government was never able to meet these demands, and the company continued to use foreign workers in the following years, although their numbers declined.

However, the Ottoman government repeatedly insisted that the company had to limit the employment of foreigners to highly skilled engineers and technicians (*memurin-i fenn*) and foremen (*işbaşı*), and that the rest of the workers had to be recruited from Ottoman subjects if no special skills were required.<sup>32</sup> Arguing that the discontent between the Montenegrin and Croatian workers, on the one hand, and the Kurds, on the other, would lead to further problems, the government maintained its position that the projects could be completed by relying on unskilled laborers for the bulk of the work and that only a few experienced workers would be needed to supervise the inexperienced who could be drawn from among the foreigners.<sup>33</sup> Here, the Ottoman government agreed on the need for engineers and other highly experienced supervisors who could potentially bring know-how to the region, increase productivity, and help the organization of work activities. While

---

<sup>30</sup>BEO. 974/73001 (7 July 1897); BEO. 1021/76542 (12 October 1897).

<sup>31</sup>BEO. 977/73265 (13 July 1897).

<sup>32</sup>BEO. 1087/81507 (7 March 1898); BEO. 1021/76542 (12 October 1897); İ.HUS. 55/61 (16 August 1897).

<sup>33</sup>BEO. 996/74628 (21 August 1897).

unskilled, ordinary foreigners were considered superfluous in the region, as they did not provide any benefit different from what most local workers could do, this group of foreign workers in Zonguldak constituted a highly suspect group in the eyes of the state authorities.

The government's inability to fully persuade the company to comply with its demands led to a new state policy. In the following years, state officials tried to use their capacity directly to stop the arrival of foreign workers by not issuing the travel permits, *mürur tezkiresi*, required to move within the empire's territories. In fact, this practice was not limited to the case of Zonguldak.

The use of travel documents became widespread throughout the empire in the nineteenth century, as state control over mobility increased significantly during this period. Many prominent urban centers, most notably Istanbul, received large numbers of job-seeking individuals who left their homes in the countryside during the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> For the most part, these individuals were viewed with suspicion and treated with caution by the government, as they were notoriously associated with urban unrest. As in the case of large urban centers, rural towns receiving permanent or seasonal migrant workers experienced similar problems, with migrant workers being the first to be accused of crimes for which there was insufficient evidence.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, in order to prevent the arrival of large groups of immigrants and to keep track of their mobility, the Ottoman government adopted various policies, such as the guaranty (*kefalet*) system, to limit the number of incomers and to register those arriving in urban centers from Selim III onwards.<sup>36</sup> The guaranty system was a practice that dated back to previous centuries. During this period, however, it was revived as a response to the increasing influx of labor-seeking single males into the capital and other urban centers. Although the issuance of travel permits was an old practice, these documents also regained prominence during the Tanzimat period to address similar concerns. In 1841, a new regulation (*Men-i*

---

<sup>34</sup>A number of studies on the late Ottoman social and economic history may be a reference point to understand the aspirations of labor-seeking immigrants to travel within the empire and their experiences. See, Christopher Clay, "Labour Migration and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth Century Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 1–32, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701241>; Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Zeki Arıkan, "Eğin Kasabasının Tarihsel Gelişimi," *OTAM*, 2001; Akın Sefer, Aysel Yıldız, and Mustafa Erdem Kabadayı, "Labor Migration from Kruševo: Mobility, Ottoman Transformation, and the Balkan Highlands in the 19th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 2021): 73–87, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743820000847>; Florian Riedler, "Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag et al. (SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2011).

<sup>35</sup>Omri Paz, "The Usual Suspect: Worker Migration and Law Enforcement in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Anatolia," *Continuity and Change* 30, no. 2 (August 2015): 223–49, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0268416015000235>, 223–224.

<sup>36</sup>Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Between Crisis and Order* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 106.

*Mürur Nizamnamesi*) was introduced that significantly complicated the issuance of travel permits and, in most cases, prohibited their issuance. Per the new regulation, individuals had to have a valid reason to be able to travel from one settlement to another and their reasons of travel had to be indicated in the document. In addition, the document had to contain information about the traveler's identity, and the traveler had to provide two guarantors from residents of both the place of arrival and departure. Thus, throughout the nineteenth century, the state revived ancient mechanisms of mobility control to deal with the growing trend of migration from the countryside to the urban centers.

In response to the unwillingness of company officials to fully accept their demands, the government decided to adopt new legal strategies to limit the arrival of workers from abroad by not issuing the necessary travel permits if a foreigner wanted to sail to Zonguldak. The decision was applied by the state officials who prepared the necessary travel documents and were checked on the spot by the police and gendarmerie. However, the decision to ban foreigners was limited to Zonguldak as a settlement. Occasionally, foreign workers on their way to the settlement used other ports in the region to evade state control. In a telegram sent to the Internal Affairs Ministry, officers from the Ottoman Police Ministry complained that a number of Italian workers had recently arrived in Bartın, and although it was against the Sultan's orders for these individuals to go to Zonguldak, they were using other ports close to the region to arrive in Anatolia and later travel by land to Zonguldak. The police officers also informed the provincial administration about the situation. However, the Ministry replied that there was no order to detain foreigners going to the ports of Ereğli and Bartın and that foreigners could not be stopped in such cases.<sup>37</sup>

Since the implementation of the policy of not allowing foreigners into the settlement was left to the state officers on the ground, its implementation was sometimes deliberately or accidentally disregarded. In 1900, five Austrians arrived in Zonguldak because the officers mistakenly approved their travel documents, which was stated to be a violation of the Sultan's order in the document. The Ministry of the Police (*Zabtiye Nezareti*), therefore advised the officers concerned to pay serious attention in order to avoid such mistakes.<sup>38</sup> In another case, in 1906, a local police captain helped nine people from the region without travel permits and passports escape to Europe by letting them board a steamship.<sup>39</sup> Although the route in this case was to

---

<sup>37</sup>DH.MKT. 2085/37 (3 November 1897).

<sup>38</sup>DH.MKT. 2379/62 (25 July 1900).

<sup>39</sup>ZB. 438/43 (5 March 1906).

Europe, it still demonstrates how fragile the state control over human mobility was in Zonguldak. Workers exploited such gaps and weaknesses in the system to evade state surveillance and infiltrate the region. Such violations of state control over mobility were already common throughout the empire. Often, the means used by migrants included making arrangements with ship captains, using forged travel permits, or simply traveling illegally.<sup>40</sup> Considering the frequency of steamships visiting Zonguldak for bunkering coal and the lack of state capacity to monitor all circulation in the region, it is likely that there were unregistered arrivals in Zonguldak.

Such disagreements were common between the central government and its local representatives in the provinces and these disagreements most often resulted from the central government's consideration of diplomatic relations. In many cases, the provincial authorities strongly opposed the entry of foreigners into Zonguldak and demanded the strengthening of state authority in the region with the harshest measures, while the central government had to reposition itself in various cases as a result of diplomatic reactions derived from their harsh policies towards foreign nationals. With these considerations, the central government often took each case into consideration separately. In 1896, the first French laborers from Marseille arrived in the region, but since they had all the necessary documents, the state did not give them any negative evaluation and did not make any difficulties for them to come to the region.<sup>41</sup> However, following the problems between foreign and Ottoman workers and the Ottoman state's decision to restrict foreign entry into the region, a group of workers who had left Zonguldak for Istanbul were not allowed to return. The company and the workers then contacted the French embassy. In three successive memorandums sent by the French Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1897 and 1898, France stated that the expulsion of its workers from the region was a violation of the right of French citizens to move freely in the Ottoman lands on the basis of the principle of reciprocity. Furthermore, on the basis of the right of the French to reside in the Ottoman Empire, which had been agreed between the two states in 1740, and the thirty-first article of the agreement signed between Russia and the Ottomans in 1783, which stated that travel documents would be issued without delay (and the claim that this would also apply to the French), France stated that the workers should be taken to the region immediately.<sup>42</sup> Another document sent by France in 1898 stated that an engineer was denied entry to Zonguldak by

---

<sup>40</sup>For more information about illegal means to surpass legal regulations on travel, see, Nalan Turna, *19. Yüzyıl'dan 20. Yüzyıl'a Osmanlı Topraklarında Seyahat, Göç ve Asayiş Belgeleri: Mürûr Tezkereleri* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2013).

<sup>41</sup>BEO. 880/65972 (13 December 1314).

<sup>42</sup>HR.İD. 98/7 (29 November 1897); BEO. 1021/76542 (12 October 1897).

the Ottoman police. As the engineer was not offered a travel permit, he and his wife had to return to Istanbul in stormy weather. During the journey, the engineer's wife fell ill and died soon after. As a result, the company had to pay compensation to the family. The Embassy stressed that this had happened because Ottoman officers had disregarded international agreements between France and the Empire and reiterated its position that no restrictions should be imposed on French citizens wishing to sail to Zonguldak. After these recommendations from the French Embassy, the workers were allowed to return to Zonguldak. The government also argued that, to avoid similar problems, it might be better to pressure the company not to hire foreign workers than to directly exclude all foreigners from the region.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, in the case of the Montenegrin workers, the central government took a cautious approach so as not to upset the Montenegrin government, in contrast to the harsh attitude of the provincial authorities. After the conflicts between the Montenegrins and the Kurds, the governor of Kastamonu asked the center to take precautions to prevent further conflicts and if he could expel all the Montenegrins from the region.<sup>44</sup> The government initially accepted the idea and ordered the Foreign Ministry to notify the Montenegrin ambassador of the expulsion of some two hundred workers.<sup>45</sup> But soon after, the government changed its mind and warned the local authorities that such an act would also punish those who were not involved in the skirmish with the Kurdish workers. In addition, the government stated that the ambassador asked what the reason was for removing the Montenegrins from the region while the Kurds remained unpunished. The ambassador also said that their prince was upset when he heard the news and threatened the government that he would leave the Ottoman lands if such actions were taken collectively against the Montenegrin workers.<sup>46</sup> Thus, diplomatic relations sometimes shaped the government's stance in its decision-making, resulting in the implementation of different policies for different groups of foreign workers in Zonguldak, while the provincial administration was more fundamentally opposed to the presence of any foreign groups, viewing them as potential threats.

Whereas the interpretation of the Dilaver Paşa regulation by state officials was quite harsh against the employment of foreign workers as miners, the government considered Montenegrins as an exceptional group that could be employed by the company as hewers. After correspondence between the Sublime Porte and the ministries,

---

<sup>43</sup>BEO. 1087/81507 (7 March 1898)., HR.İD. 98/7 (29 November 1897).

<sup>44</sup>BEO. 994/74527 (17 August 1897).

<sup>45</sup>İ.HUS. 55/45 (15 August 1897).

<sup>46</sup>BEO. 994/74527 (17 August 1897); İ.HUS. 55/60 (16 August 1897).

the Sublime Porte came to the conclusion that newcomers to Zonguldak from Montenegro could be allowed to work in the mines in 1900, admiring their traditional position in the miners as hewers from the beginning of the production in the region and placing them in a privileged status among other foreign migrant worker groups in Zonguldak.<sup>47</sup> In another case in 1903, the Governor of Kastamonu informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that some miners who had recently arrived in Zonguldak from Montenegro had been expelled from the region because they were seeking employment in the mines as a violation of the regulations. However, the ministry explained that a sultanate decree had been issued in 1900 stating that anyone from Montenegro could work in the region in both surface and underground occupations. Therefore, any worker who applied for a travel permit from Montenegro should be granted one, while citizens of other countries could not be granted a travel permit if they declared their intention to work as workers. If they declared other purposes, their travel should be evaluated on the basis of official certificates (*ilmühaber*) from the embassies of their home countries.<sup>48</sup> As shown, the diplomatic relations between the government and Montenegro too were considered in this decision. Thus, the central government treated some foreign groups in Zonguldak more favorably, taking into account both diplomatic issues and established customs regarding labor relations in the region, in contrast to the strict application of policies against foreigners by the provincial authorities.

However, as much as being Ottoman or foreign was critical to how the state perceived workers in the region, different claims to localness and foreignness were reevaluated on different occasions based on interpretations of legal status and realities on the ground. In 1905, a number of Montenegrins in the region petitioned their embassy, claiming that local tax officials were charging them taxes for military service (*bedel-i askeriyye*) even though they carried Montenegrin passports. When the embassy informed the Ottoman government of the situation, the government informed the local authorities that such demands violated international law (*hukuk-i milel*) and the mutual agreements between the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro regarding the movement and residence of their citizens in the empire. Therefore, the practice of receiving military service payments should be stopped.<sup>49</sup> In response, the Governor of Kastamonu, citing information from local officials, stated that the aforementioned Montenegrins came to the region several generations ago, when the Principality had not yet gained its independence from Ottoman rule. Similarly, their names appear in

---

<sup>47</sup>HR.TH. 242/84 (7 June 1900).

<sup>48</sup>DH.MKT. 722/32 (3 June 1903).

<sup>49</sup>DH.MKT. 1015/37 (12 October 1905).

old registers (*sicil-i atik*), and they participated in the 1298 census and received Ottoman documents indicating their Ottoman status. Thus, their claims of foreignness were unfounded and instrumentalized to avoid taxes.<sup>50</sup> As the aforementioned Montenegrins continued their complaints to the embassy, the case continued throughout the summer of 1906, with the government requesting that the situation be investigated to find concrete evidence to convince the embassy that these workers were indeed Ottoman in their nationality.<sup>51</sup> Although they were consistently referred to as Montenegrins in documents, indicating that the state considered them to be part of the larger Montenegrin community in the region in terms of social relations, the Ottoman government defended their Ottoman nationality in legal terms and repeatedly asked local officials to verify their Ottoman nationality.

Thus, as Zonguldak developed as a settlement thanks to the operations of the Ottoman Ereğli Company, many foreign workers also came to the region in search of employment opportunities. While the government tried to limit their arrival in the region due to security concerns, it was not as successful as it wanted to be due to disagreements with the company and its continued employment of foreigners in its operations. Meanwhile, the government pursued a policy of restricting the arrival of foreign individuals by denying them travel documents. However, such cases led to diplomatic complications that forced the government to reconsider and change its policy. Witnessing the problems on the ground, provincial authorities advocated for a tougher policy, while the central government reevaluated and redirected its policy toward the arrival of foreigners as workers because diplomatic agents were involved in the situation. As shown in this chapter, diplomatic communication between the government and the representatives of France and Montenegro resulted in the government accepting the arrival of foreign individuals in search of employment in the region. Meanwhile, in an environment where claims to foreignness became significant, various claims to foreignness were reinterpreted and reconsidered by the state in response to the conflicting claims of both workers and foreign agents on the ground.

---

<sup>50</sup>HR.HMŞ.İŞO. 192/16 (14 December 1905).

<sup>51</sup>DH.MKT. 1029/58 (8 December 1905).

#### 4. FOREIGN WORKERS AND THE STATE IN LATE OTTOMAN ZONGULDAK: INTERCOMMUNAL CONTESTATION, DIPLOMATIC INTERVENTION, AND RADICALISM

Focusing on the tense relationship between foreign workers and the state in Zonguldak, which became a place of residence and work for many foreign workers in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, this chapter will attempt to understand what perceptions the state authorities developed toward foreign migrant workers and what policies they pursued to address their concerns. In other words, by examining the sites of contestation between foreign workers and the Ottoman government in Zonguldak, the final destination of migrant workers, this chapter aims to reveal what the Ottoman authorities' attitudes toward foreign workers were and what responses they produced based on these attitudes. In doing so, this chapter argues that Ottoman government officials at various levels developed increasingly negative attitudes and adopted a securitarian discourse toward the presence of foreign workers in Zonguldak because they were concerned about (1) intercommunal conflicts, (2) foreign diplomatic intervention, and (3) the spread of radical ideas in their domains. As a result, the government adopted a harsh policy against foreign labor migration to Zonguldak.

The first section of the chapter discusses the securitarian concerns of the state officials – particularly in provincial levels – in relation to state capacity in late Ottoman Zonguldak. According to that, there were occasional intercommunal conflicts occurred between different groups of workers in Zonguldak, in which regional and national solidarity and occupational competition played a crucial role. Hence, a securitarian discourse emerged that emphasized the diversity of workers' origins as the underlying reason behind the emergence of such conflicts. At the same time, the government's inability to effectively provide security in the region due to the lack of state capacity was also discussed within this discourse.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the processes in which problems associated with foreign workers turned into diplomatic issues in a period that the Ottoman



government increasingly felt insecure due to European interventionist ambitions on its lands. Thus, frequent circulation and residence of Europeans in Zonguldak – whose most of them were workers – became problematized by state officials with the fears that foreign powers would use their citizens for expanding their influence in the region. While these fears did not evolve into a major crisis, foreign diplomatic missions frequently involved into administrative affairs of provincial authorities and legal cases on the pretext of protecting the rights of the foreign workers – also because foreign workers often asked for their help in using the diplomatic power of their home countries as leverage. However, this situation irritated provincial authorities as foreign diplomatic agents in the region commonly interfered in their affairs and overwhelmed bureaucratic capacity by complicating their affairs.

Finally, the third section of this chapter highlights the government's anxieties about the spread of radical political aspirations – particularly anarchism – and labor militancy among Ottoman workers and local population in Zonguldak at a time when global anarchist movements and worker activism were on the rise. According to that, as anarchist actions terrorized various parts of the world, the Ottoman Empire became a part of an international struggle against anarchism fearing that such actions would target its domains too. Meanwhile, as many anarchist workers circulated internationally, some arrived in Zonguldak too to achieve their political objectives. The government, however, immediately took action to prevent the spread of their ideas and expelled them out of their lands in most situations, as an internationally agreed-upon method. However, this could not stop foreign workers from taking part in labor activism and leading strikes in the region.

#### **4.1 Intercommunal Strife, Securitarian Discourse, and the Limits of State Capacity in Late Ottoman Zonguldak**

In late Ottoman Zonguldak, intercommunal conflicts between foreign workers, Ottoman labor communities and the local population occasionally broke out, and state officials often cited these conflicts to justify their opposition to the arrival of foreign workers. These conflicts took place between two groups of workers where the groups were articulated around the geographical and national solidarities between the workers. As a result, government officials, especially the provincial authorities, developed a securitarian discourse about the arrival of foreigners in the region and pointed to their presence in Zonguldak as a security issue.

One of the biggest confrontations between Ottoman workers and foreigners in

Zonguldak took place in 1897. There are different accounts of how this confrontation took place. In his memoirs, Ethem Çavuş links this conflict to the beginning of the activities of the Ereğli Ottoman Company in the region. Since the company employed a large number of Montenegrins as stonemasons and construction workers in the construction of the port, to the exclusion of other groups in the region, these jobs almost became a concession to the Montenegrins. These Montenegrin workers also had uneasy relations with other groups in the region and adopted a harsh attitude towards them. For example, they did not allow anyone from outside their community to use the only water source near their construction site without their permission. They also carried guns in their waistbands and did not hesitate to use them when necessary. One day they attacked a Turkish child for not asking to use the water source. Then there was a serious confrontation between the Turkish workers and the Montenegrins, which turned into a full-scale clash within an hour, as other workers from the region appeared with their axes, pickaxes and whatever weapons they could get their hands on. In return, the Montenegrins took up positions behind the rocks and fired their pistols at the Turkish workers. The two sides clashed for five days, attacking each other's dwellings and killing some of them. On the fifth day of the clashes, a navy gunboat appeared on the shores of the Black Sea and the marines put an end to the clashes.<sup>1</sup> Ethem Çavuş further states that although they were not the aggressors in this story, the government decided to punish some Turkish foremen to avoid further complaints from the diplomatic representatives of Montenegro, while the Montenegrins were left unpunished.<sup>2</sup>

Ottoman archival documents tell a similar story of intercommunal strife, with minor differences. According to them, a Montenegrin youth pointed his gun at an Ottoman soldier after the soldier tried to drink water in front of him. Then Kurdish workers from the region got involved in the situation on the side of the soldier and clashes broke out between the Kurds and the Montenegrins. During the clashes, two Kurdish workers were injured and one villager, two Ottoman Greeks and one French citizen died. In order to put an end to the clashes, both the Governor of Ereğli and the Navy sent military forces to the region along with an investigator to better understand the problem. As a precautionary measure to maintain stability in the region, the governor also ordered the relocation of Montenegrin workers from the coal basin.<sup>3</sup> While the government largely resolved the confrontation, there were still security concerns in the region for the next few months, and the government asked the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmet Naim, *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene*, 50.

<sup>3</sup> BEO. 994/74527 (17 August 1897).

provincial governor to keep military reserves in the town to ensure stability.<sup>4</sup> Thus, in this second account reproduced in bureaucratic communications, the workers confronting the Montenegrins are identified as Kurds, and the victim of the attack happened to be an Ottoman soldier rather than a Turkish child, contrary to Ethem Çavuş's account. Regardless of minor differences, both accounts demonstrate an intercommunal conflict between foreign and Ottoman workers that the Ottoman bureaucrats considered a serious problem.

It is obvious that two groups of workers, the Montenegrins and the Kurds, faced each other in this case where the geographical origin and the national lines determined the sides of the conflict. This may be associated with the competition between these two groups of workers for similar occupations in the region where they shared the same setting and resources. The literature on labor migration in the Ottoman Empire has also shown that in cases where different groups of workers competed for the same positions, this tension sometimes became a factor fueling intercommunal conflicts. Although there were multiple reasons behind the occurrence of 1895-1896 events in Istanbul, the persecution of Armenian laborers in the city by Kurdish laborers was an example of how such occupational competition played a role in the emergence of serious intercommunal conflict. During these clashes, many Muslim laborers - mainly Kurds but also Lazes and Iranians - sided with the security forces against the Armenian workers.<sup>5</sup> Various studies point out that both Armenians and Kurds worked as day laborers in the region and competed for the same sectors, which may have played a crucial role in motivating Muslim workers in Istanbul to target the Armenian worker community along with state apathy, if not encouragement. While their communities had been involved in conflicts against each other in their home regions, the professional competition between the Kurdish and Armenian communities in Istanbul made hostilities easier to turn into clashes away from home. As the number of Armenian workers dwindled in the aftermath of the events, the Kurdish community also moved quickly to fill the positions previously occupied by Armenians, using compatriot ties and community networks, further reinforcing the claim that occupational competition was a strong factor in this intercommunal strife.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>BEO 995/74589 (21 August 1897).

<sup>5</sup>Sinan Dinçer, "The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul (1896)," *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale En Economische Geschiedenis/ the Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 10, no. 4 (December 15, 2013): 20, doi:<https://doi.org/10.18352/tseg.237>, 25.

<sup>6</sup>For further information on the persecution of Armenians from 1895 to 1896 in Istanbul and the role of occupational competition in the involvement of Kurdish workers, see, Sinan Dinçer, "The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul (1896)," *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale En Economische Geschiedenis/ the Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 10, no. 4 (December 15, 2013): 20, doi:<https://doi.org/10.18352/tseg.237>; Yaşar Tolga Cora, "1910 Kömür Hamalları Grevi: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Emeğin Tarihi ve Sol Siyasetin Dili," *Kebikeç İnsan Bilimleri İçin Kaynak Araştırmaları Dergisi* 52, no. 52 (2021); Florian Riedler, "Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag et al. (SOAS/Routledge Studies

As is evident in the case of Zonguldak, both the Montenegrins and the Kurdish workers had to share the same habitus, despite the Montenegrins' desire to outcompete other groups and control the region's resources. Moreover, while the company largely preferred the Montenegrins to other groups in the region for certain tasks, the Kurdish workers too often sought employment in the aboveground sectors, making these two groups potential competitors for employment. Thus, in an environment where compatriot and community solidarity was widespread and strong, such confrontations can be explained in terms of this occupational competition. Moreover, the Ottoman workers in the region already had a negative attitude towards the foreign capitalized Ottoman Ereğli Company in the region and ran against it, blaming the company for the deterioration of their working conditions.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the negative attitude of the Ottoman workers towards the company may have been directed against the foreign workers in the region in a situation where the Ottoman workers associated the foreign workers with the foreign capitalized company due to their strong preference for the Montenegrins, which is also reflected in the discourse and attitude of Ethem Çavuş in his memoirs.

Regardless of the reasons behind such incidents, foreign workers in Zonguldak could not escape the securitarian discourse of state officials in the region after the clashes. Especially in the bureaucratic messages sent by the provincial authorities, the high concentration of foreigners in the region appeared as the cause of such unrest. For example, the subdistrict governor of Bolu described the diversity of national and ethnic (*kavmiyyet, cinsiyyet ve tabiiyyet*) backgrounds of the workers in such a small settlement as one of the reasons for the occurrence of such confrontations and advocated gradually reducing their number and replacing them with local options, similar to many other Ottoman state officials.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, after the events between the Montenegrin and Kurdish workers in Zonguldak, the government repeatedly warned the company to stop employing foreign workers and replace them with Ottomans, except for highly qualified specialists and foremen, on the grounds that foreign workers were causing unrest in the region.<sup>9</sup> Even then, the governor of Kastamonu tried to remove all Montenegrins from the region, although this practice was criticized by the central government and the Montenegrins were allowed to return to the basin.<sup>10</sup>

---

on the Middle East, 2011).

<sup>7</sup>Aytekin, *Tarlalardan Ocaklara, Sefaletten Mücadeleye*, 34-35; Alaaddin Tok, "The Ottoman Mining Sector in the Age of Capitalism: An Analysis of State-Capital Relations, 1850-1908" 2010, 54-55.

<sup>8</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).

<sup>9</sup>Y.MTV. 165/178 (25 August 1897); BEO. 1004/75297 (9 September 1897); BEO. 1021/76542 (12 October 1897).

<sup>10</sup>İ.HUS. 55/60 (16 August 1897); BEO. 994/74527 (17 August 1897).

However, along with this securitarian discourse against the presence of foreigners in the region, government officials often pointed to the lack of relevant means to prevent such incidents due to the lack of state capacity. In fact, the state apparatuses could not intervene in the first days of the conflict between foreign and Ottoman workers in Zonguldak. While no local official of the state, such as the police, a local governor or a judge, was present until the end of the events, hundreds, if not thousands of workers were left to their own means of interaction in a state of nature. Thus, such crises between Ottoman and foreign workers became moments in which state officials reconsidered the limits of state control in late Ottoman Zonguldak. In the same document in which the subdistrict governor of Bolu emphasized the diversity of the workers' backgrounds as a problem, he also pointed out the lack of state apparatuses in the region that could directly intervene in the situation before it turned into a large-scale struggle. He stated that the government does not know the identity of these foreigners and if they have committed criminal activities in the past.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, he pointed out that there were no relevant mechanisms to keep a register of these foreigners in order to have information about their backgrounds. The governor went on to say that there was no stationary police or gendarmerie in the region. For this reason, the foreigners living in the mountains and mines of Zonguldak could easily cause such crises where their control is really limited, the district governor said.<sup>12</sup> In another document, Enis Paşa, the governor of Kastamonu, similarly reiterated that the arrival of foreign workers without official registration posed a threat to the stability of the basin, as people of unknown backgrounds continued to arrive and have problems with the local population. He then conveyed his demand for the deployment of a police force in the region to ensure local security and the establishment of a *Nizamiye* court in Zonguldak, as many local cases go unpunished due to lack of access to justice. The governor emphasizes that this is not the first time he has called on the central government to take action on this issue, and cites the complaints made by other local authorities on his instructions to strengthen his position.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the state officials admitted their inability to manage the confrontations between foreign workers and Ottomans and to maintain security in the region and asked the central government to increase their capacity to be able to do so, which became part of their securitarian discourse towards the foreign workers in the region.

The central government's response to the demands of the provincial authorities

---

<sup>11</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).

<sup>12</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).

<sup>13</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

varied, depending on both its consideration of the limits of its capacity to implement such demands and its view of Zonguldak and its importance. Most of the initial demands of the provincial authorities remained unfulfilled. However, over time, as the center acknowledged the growing importance of Zonguldak as a settlement in the basin in terms of coal production, they became more willing to invest in their means to increase state capacity there. In its reply to the governor of Kastamonu, the Ministry of Internal Affairs recalled that the governor had previously requested the establishment of a court in the settlement, which was rejected on the grounds that there was neither the possibility nor the need for it. However, considering the increasing importance of Zonguldak with the current development of the settlement, the Ministry stated that the request for the establishment of a second or third level *Nizamiye* court would be reevaluated. Regarding the appointment of the police force, the Ministry of Internal Affairs could not give a clear answer and stated that the issue would be decided later.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the establishment of the court was soon approved, and by the end of 1904, the court was already functioning as its jurists were appointed by the center.<sup>15</sup> Thus, while the central government rejected the initial requests of the local authorities to pay more attention to the region in order to increase state capacity, it reconsidered its approach over time due to the increasing population of Zonguldak and the city's position as the center of the coal basin, and began to invest in increasing state capacity in the region.

#### **4.2 Foreign Workers as an Instrument of Diplomatic Intervention: Central Government, Diplomatic Agents, and Provincial Authorities**

The nineteenth century was a period in which the Ottoman Empire received foreign labor migration as it was part of a larger global economy. However, this period was also known for the increasing involvement of the Great Powers in the affairs of the empire in relation to the Eastern Question. In such a context, the identity of these foreign workers and their relationship to their new environment in relation to their home countries became a puzzling problem for Ottoman state officials. The government became suspicious of foreign workers because it could not predict where their loyalties lay.<sup>16</sup> These fears were also partly the result of the actions of the European

---

<sup>14</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

<sup>15</sup>DH.TMIK.S. 55/63 (17 November 1904).

<sup>16</sup>Malte Fuhrmann, "I Would Rather Be in the Orient' European Lower Class Immigrants into the Ottoman Lands," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, ed. Ulrike Freitag et al. (Routledge, 2011), 228.

powers, who occasionally tried to use their citizens within the empire to expand their influence in Ottoman lands. Such situations mostly occurred when individuals of the higher classes were involved, but periodically lower and working class foreigners were also used by the Great Powers to further their ambitions.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the workers themselves occasionally sought refuge in the representations of their home countries in the empire in order to gain their support and improve their position, thus increasing their bargaining power vis-à-vis the Ottoman government and its citizens.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the question of the location of foreign migrant workers in this complex relationship became an increasingly important issue for Ottoman officials, as the government suspected the possibility of European powers intervening in its affairs through diplomatic channels in cases where its citizens sought its assistance.

These fears of the government became more pronounced after the 1890s due to its experience with the Armenian uprisings in the provinces. During these uprisings, the empire was confronted with the European powers and their interventionist aspirations due to the internationalization of a local crisis that first started in its provinces. For example, the Great Powers, including Great Britain, France and Russia, sent collective memorandums that the Ottoman government had to carry out reforms in its provincial administration. The interventionist aspirations of the foreign powers reached the point that the British Navy was ready to carry out a naval demonstration to support the implementation of their demands in the provincial administration.<sup>19</sup> As a result of these concerns, the state reconsidered the organization of its provincial administration and made reforms that were not limited to the six eastern provinces, but carried out an empire-wide reform.<sup>20</sup> During this period, the Ottoman government became increasingly concerned about international relations and the possibility of foreign intervention in its affairs. These concerns also affected the way they dealt with their provinces in relation to the expansion of foreign influence in their administrative affairs.

Although it was not frequent, such fears were felt in Zonguldak regarding the expansion of foreign influence. The government's disapproval of the strengthening of the Ereğli Company due to its fears of losing control over production in the basin

---

<sup>17</sup>Fuhrmann, "I Would Rather Be in the Orient," 229-230.

<sup>18</sup>Fuhrmann, "I Would Rather Be in the Orient," 239.

<sup>19</sup>Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 61-63; Abdülhamit Kırmızı, "Taming the Governors: The Swinging Pendulum of Power over the Ottoman Provinces in the Nineteenth Century," *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 2010): 4-23, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1179/jrl.2010.6.1.4>, 15-17.

<sup>20</sup>Kırmızı, "Taming the Governors," 15-17.

was frequently mentioned in the documents.<sup>21</sup> In extreme cases, however, the government's fears went beyond the simple loss of its share in production. In these cases, in addition to the company, the foreign workers became the object of these fears. The government saw the high concentration of foreign workers in the area as a threat to the stability of the region, fearing that they would become an object for foreign powers to interfere in their affairs. In a document sent from the Yıldız Palace to the Navy - the ministry that controlled the basin - in 1899, the ministry was warned that foreigners were slowly turning the coalfields into a "colony". The document emphasized that the French capitalized company was acquiring concessions in construction, mining and transportation projects, and British citizens were accumulating large plots of land in the region. In addition, more than two hundred new residential buildings were erected in Ereğli for foreign employees. Furthermore, as many other workers of different qualifications too were present in the coalfields, their high concentration attracted clergymen and missionaries from Europe who established churches, further strengthening the position of foreigners who were fundamentally transforming the region.<sup>22</sup> The document mentions a few separate groups – namely foreign workers, highly skilled foreign specialists, missionaries, and foreign investors – but regardless, it is important that the palace did not differentiate foreign workers from other foreign elements and recognized foreign laborers as a part of the larger foreign presence in the region. In this case, the government reflected its concerns over the creation of a foreign colony in its lands, and the presence of foreign laborers in the region were discussed from a securitarian perspective since the government counted these laborers as a part of the larger foreign presence in the coalfield.

Although no such large-scale intervention took place in Zonguldak until the end of World War I, diplomatic channels were often used by foreigners in the region for everyday concerns as well as criminal and legal cases. For this reason, Ottoman government officials constantly complained that the international status of foreign workers often led to the internationalization and complication of the cases they were involved in, which resulted in the intervention of foreign missions in their local administrative processes and kept them busy. Indeed, with large numbers of workers left to their own fates without deterrent state control, crime was not uncommon in Zonguldak. Regardless of their occupational categories or national backgrounds, workers often experienced problems among themselves or with the state. On the other hand, unlike disputes between Ottoman citizens, issues involving foreign workers required more attention and administrative capacity, as these disputes often

---

<sup>21</sup>Aytekin, *Tarlalardan Ocaklara, Sefaletten Mücadeleye*, 34.

<sup>22</sup>Y.EE. 150/126 (4 November 1899).



required the government to provide explanations to the workers' home countries - adding another layer of diplomacy to complicate the process.

Thus, most of the problems that foreign workers turned to diplomatic channels for help were related to cases of confrontation or crime. However, diplomatic support would not guarantee a positive outcome. In 1904, an Italian worker, Vitalis, appealed to government authorities that some workers were harassing his wife and mother and attempting to kidnap them, and asked for protection. The worker also requested help from the Italian embassy, stating that their lives were in danger, and the embassy sent a diplomatic note that the government should ensure the safety of the worker and his family. In response to these appeals, the government asked the governor of Kastamonu to provide information about the worker's situation. The governor replied that Vitalis had been fired two years ago for similar inappropriate behavior and evicted from company housing. With the help of his connections, he found an apartment near the town hall, but was asked to leave because his landlord could not tolerate his family's immoral behavior. The governor went on to say that other Italian workers and engineers did not experience such problems, but Vitalis did because of his own misdeeds and refused to help the Italian worker despite the involvement of the embassy.<sup>23</sup>

In most cases, however, diplomatic intervention helped the foreign workers achieve the desired result. However, in extreme instances, such criminal cases did not simply remain as harassment, beating, or abduction but turned into cases of murder. In such situations, close relatives of the workers utilized these diplomatic channels to learn about their relative's destiny or to increase their chances about finalizing their cases and receiving a compensation. In 1897, a group of Kurdish mobs harassed Jean Copello, an Italian worker employed in Zonguldak. Carrying a large sum of money on himself which belonged to his employer, Copello sought shelter in the surrounding mountains as he was pursued by the mobs. Not being able to escape from the mobs, he was first robbed and then stabbed to death. After a while, Copello's wife complained to the Italian embassy that her husband was murdered in Zonguldak, who was the only breadwinner in the family, and she had no means of survival. Also having a child to take care of, she requested for compensation for her lost husband. Along with that, she stated that her husband's murderers remained unpunished. She, thus, demanded the embassy to involve into the case to increase her chances to receive good news for retribution of her husband's killers. After the complaint by her, the embassy pressured the government that the offenders should be penalized. Soon after, the government put a foreman, Veysel, and six other

---

<sup>23</sup>DH.MKT. 865/3. (26 June 1904).

workers on trial with the accusation of killing Jaen Copello, who were found guilty and sentenced.<sup>24</sup>

Occasionally, foreign embassies themselves became involved and followed these cases. In 1898, an Italian worker murdered his national, Petrini, in Zonguldak. The Italian embassy soon heard about the murder and contacted the Ottoman government, asking them to find the murderer. The government then received information from the local authorities that the murderer had fled the city after the event, fearing that the police would find him. Thus, no conclusion was reached in this case as the Ottoman officers were unable to find the murderer.<sup>25</sup> In another incident, two Ottoman migrant workers from Trabzon attacked and threatened Louis Guillermo, an Italian worker, with a knife and robbed him of his twenty-six kuruş and his valuable nickel watch at Üzülmüş, just outside Zonguldak. The robbers were caught, put on trial, and found guilty of forcible confiscation. As the worker had Italian nationality, the Italian embassy had been following the latest developments of Guillermo's trial and emphasized that the Ottoman officials should give the necessary punishment to the criminals.<sup>26</sup> In 1903, the Italian embassy was involved in another robbery case, this time inadvertently on the side of the guilty. During the incident, the Ottoman police raided an Italian-flagged ship and arrested one of the passengers. The Italian embassy, irritated by the situation, asked the government for clarification. The government, relying on the information of the local authorities, stated that the arrested person was a Montenegrin who was accused of stealing the property of the Ottoman Ereğli Company. The police then searched the worker and found the stolen items on him, proving that he was indeed responsible for the burglary. In addition, his travel permit happened to be fake and had been issued in someone else's name. The worker was therefore removed from the ship and taken to the French Embassy and later expelled from the country.<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, along with foreign laborers of various skill levels, other highly skilled specialists employed in Zonguldak too used these diplomatic channels to address their problems. In a case from the year 1903, Milo, An Austrian worker with Croat origin, attacked a Belgian engineer employed by the company because he and some of his friends previously had asked the payment of their unpaid salary of a hundred liras but the engineer had rejected their proposal. For this reason, Milo battered the engineer, who then asked protection from the government and acquired a safe

---

<sup>24</sup>BEO. 1001/75031(3 September 1897); BEO. 1004/75300 (9 September 1897).

<sup>25</sup>DH.MKT. 2101/120 (6 September 1898).

<sup>26</sup>HR.TH. 286/74 (4 July 1903).

<sup>27</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

accommodation soon after. Later, Milo came to the presence of the mine superintendent visiting Zonguldak one day and asked for his money. The mine superintendent accepted to pay his salary, but it turned out that the total amount the company owed to him was thirty-five liras. Despite this payment, Milo continued to harass the engineer but since he belonged to the community of Croatians who knew their occupation well and could not be easily replaced by inexperienced workers, the government decided not to expel him from the region. Yet, Milo's actions extremely overwhelmed the Belgian engineer, who, as a result, informed the French embassy about his situation and asked their help. Consequently, the government gave a decision to change the location of the engineer considering that his stay in the region would be against his safety.<sup>28</sup> In another document from the year 1909, the French embassy asked for the protection of an Austrian mine director and a French mine intendent because a Hungarian worker, Espikof, attacked these mining officers and threatened them to kill. Although the government were previously notified about the situation, they did not to take the necessary precautions (*hükümetin usulen ittihaz-ı tedabir eylemediği*), according to the French embassy. Thus, the embassy stated that the government should pay serious attention to this case.<sup>29</sup>

These cases represent only a small fraction of the many individual-level problems experienced in the region. Nevertheless, they show that such cases often involved foreign embassies of the workers' home countries or a third country, both at the request of the workers or their relatives and at the initiative of the embassies themselves. In order to facilitate such interactions for their citizens, some countries such as Italy and France sent permanent diplomatic representatives to Zonguldak. France was the first country to appoint a diplomatic representative in the region. They appointed Jean Pierre, who was previously employed at the French Embassy in Istanbul, as a deputy consul. Although the Ottoman government was initially against the appointment, Pierre arrived in Zonguldak in 1898 as the consulate insisted on its request on the grounds that many French nationals including workers, engineers, experts and company officials were present in the region and their affairs required close attention.<sup>30</sup> Italy followed France in 1907 by appointing Cohen Matania as its deputy consul in Zonguldak to look after the affairs of its citizens.<sup>31</sup> As soon as he arrived in the region, Matania prepared an extensive report claiming that the affairs of Italian citizens in Zonguldak were often deliberately delayed. Based on this report, the

---

<sup>28</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

<sup>29</sup>DH.MUİ. 7/9 (15 September 1909).

<sup>30</sup>DH.MKT. 2147/67 (12 December 1898).

<sup>31</sup>BEO. 3004/225247 (2 March 1907).

Italian embassy asked the Ottoman government not to allow such problems in the region.<sup>32</sup> These diplomatic representatives were not only concerned with the affairs of their own citizens, but also occasionally mediated between the government and other foreign nationals. For example, the French ambassador intervened in cases involving Montenegrin workers.

The local provincial authorities, on the other hand, considered the involvement of foreign diplomatic channels in their administrative and legal processes and the foreign representatives in Zonguldak as a factor that slowed down the administrative processes in the region. In 1903, the governor of Kastamonu stated that the district governor of Bolu often sent messages complaining about the involvement of the French deputy in administrative affairs under the pretext that he had to inform his embassy about the issues in which foreigners were involved. In this way, even the simplest issues turned into complicated problems as the deputy consul made the French embassy involved in these cases in Zonguldak, a location that already became a place of frequent circulation of foreigners (*ecanibe cevelangah olmuş*).<sup>33</sup> He also stated that the deputy consul, Jean Pierre, was a corrupt person who allowed his assistants in the region to exploit his influence. One day, a Montenegrin worker who helps him in his business in the region stormed into a church belonging to the Ottoman Greek community in the region and fought with a member of the community who owed him a debt. While the local authorities asked Jean Pierre to explain himself and ensure that such harassment of locals would never happen again, he never responded and protected his assistant. Thus, the governor argued that the French deputy should be expelled from Zonguldak.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the central government rejected the governor's proposal, stating that without concrete evidence to directly accuse the deputy of any unlawful activities, they cannot convince the French side for his disposal.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, relations between provincial officials in other parts of the empire were tense. Provincial administrators, such as provincial governors, viewed these foreign representatives as a factor that limited their power, as they monitored the governor's actions and informed the central government and their home countries of the governor's policies. They also occasionally interfered with their administrative practices.<sup>36</sup> In addition, governors sometimes wanted to make local problems seem less

---

<sup>32</sup>Y.A.HUS. 516/120 (16 November 1907).

<sup>33</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

<sup>34</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

<sup>35</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).

<sup>36</sup>Abdülhamit Kırmızı, *Abdülhamid'in Valileri* (Klasik, 2007), 198-201.

important than they were, since high-ranking state officials in the region would be held accountable for their unsuccessful administrative practices,<sup>37</sup> while foreign representatives would, on the contrary, make these problems seem even more problematic than they were. As Enis Paşa, the Governor of Kastamonu, expressed in his communications, his frustration was also due to the actions of these foreign representatives, who turned simple issues into internationalized complex problems with diplomatic repercussions.

#### **4.3 Labor Militancy, Foreign Workers as Agents of Anarchism and Reactions of the Ottoman Government in Late Ottoman Zonguldak**

The issues that preoccupied the Ottoman government with regard to foreign labor migration to Zonguldak during this period were not limited to the government's fear of foreign involvement in its affairs, but also included the spread of radical ideas and labor militancy among its subjects in the region. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the political activism of anarchist groups worldwide, and especially from the 1890s onward, many international anarchist groups carried out conspicuous actions in which the efforts of the security forces felt inadequate. Regicides were the most prominent of these actions. Between 1894 and 1901, anarchists assassinated the president of France, the prime minister of Spain, the empress of Austria, the king of Italy, and the president of the United States. Other actions taken by anarchists during this period included the bombing of public places. For this reason, anarchism was increasingly treated as a serious security threat in the international arena.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the majority of these radical attacks were initiated by foreigners away from their home countries. For example, the assassinations of French President Sadi Carnot and Spanish Prime Minister Canovas were carried out by two Italian anarchists.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the assassin of the Austrian Empress Elisabeth Amalie Eugenie was an Italian who slaughtered the Empress in Switzerland during her trip to the region.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the international status of these anarchists, who carried out their actions in foreign countries, sparked international discussions among the European

---

<sup>37</sup>Kırmızı, *Abdülhamid'in Valileri*, 171.

<sup>38</sup>Richard Back Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism: An International History, 1878-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31-33.

<sup>39</sup>Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, 33.

<sup>40</sup>Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, 131.

powers to take collective action against anarchist activities and their circulation between different geographies. As a result, in 1898, immediately after the assassination of the Austrian Empress, an international conference was held in Rome to address the issue through collective efforts, with the participation of some fourteen countries, including the United States, Austria, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>41</sup> During this conference, police organizations from the participating countries participated in sessions where they agreed on international police cooperation against anarchism. Accordingly, the participants agreed to cooperate and take a number of joint measures. Among the policies to be pursued were the deportation of undesirable aliens and the registration of suspects and known anarchists through a method called *portrait parlé*. This method basically involved recording the biometric characteristics of individuals - through anthropometric examinations of their eye and hair color, height, and other distinguishing physical characteristics - as well as their identity information, photographs, and travel purposes. The countries also agreed to share information about these suspects, as the anarchists traveled throughout Europe and elsewhere to spread their ideas.<sup>42</sup> This conference was followed in 1904 by a protocol between Switzerland, Germany, Russia, Serbia, Denmark, and the Ottoman Empire in St. Petersburg to expand cooperation in the common struggle against anarchism.<sup>43</sup>

The Ottoman Empire participated in these international efforts from the beginning, fearing that such political radicalism would spread to its domains. As mentioned above, anarchists were in constant circulation around the globe. The Ottoman Empire was no exception. Even a Belgian anarchist attempted to assassinate Abdülhamit II in Istanbul in 1905 by placing a bomb on his car, although it failed.<sup>44</sup> Although this attempt took place at a relatively late date, the Ottoman government had been wary of anarchism since the early years due to the turmoil anarchists were causing in Europe. Thus, the mobility of individuals became a highly politicized issue during this period, as the government feared the spread of anarchist ideas in its territories.

More importantly, the mobility of workers became an issue that the Ottomans paid special attention to due to the aforementioned fears, because workers were in fact one of the leading groups attracted to the social and economic justice demands of anar-

---

<sup>41</sup>Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, 131-133, 165-168.

<sup>42</sup>Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, 164-168; İlkay Yılmaz, "Anti-Anarchism and Security Perceptions during the Hamidian Era," *Zapruder World* 1 (2015), 5-7.

<sup>43</sup>Jensen, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, 279-280.

<sup>44</sup>İlkay Yılmaz, "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi İdare ve Söylem Arasında: Fesad, Serseri, Anarşist," *Toplumsal Tarih* 241 (2014), 41-42.

chism, and they were instrumental in spreading such ideals by word of mouth. Thus, their mobility was closely linked to the spread of radical ideas that the Ottoman government was aware of.<sup>45</sup> As an integral part of the larger global and transimperial labor mobility, parts of the Ottoman Empire received an influx of foreign workers during this period, such as cosmopolitan port cities like Beirut and Alexandria in the Arab lands, İzmir in Anatolia, and Selanik in the Balkans. In these regions, labor militancy became more common than in the rest of the empire.<sup>46</sup> In particular, workers from Italy and Spain, which were important labor-sending countries throughout the Mediterranean, and especially Italian workers, were notoriously associated with anarchism by the Ottoman government.<sup>47</sup> As a result, the government was particularly cautious in monitoring their mobility and sent messages to Italian steamship companies operating in the empire, asking them not to allow anarchists on their steamers.<sup>48</sup>

Zonguldak was another site of contention between the Ottoman government and workers with radical aspirations, as it received the migration of foreign workers. In fact, as early as 1898, the central government sent messages to the provincial administration to pay attention to the situation. According to this, the Italian anarchists were looking for new places of refuge, as foreign countries were expelling them from their countries. Since the province of Kastamonu had a considerable population of Italian workers, especially in the coal basin, the government warned the provincial authorities that Italian anarchists would most likely come to the region and asked the governor to take the necessary measures to prevent these groups from entering the region.<sup>49</sup>

Italians were not the only group whose presence in Zonguldak worried the government, which feared the spread of radical ideas. The Bulgarians were also closely monitored in the region, especially after 1903. This was due to radical attacks by Bulgarian revolutionaries in Selanik, including the bombing of the Ottoman Bank branch in the town in 1903, and the uprising in Ilinden that same year by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, a group with anarchist ties.<sup>50</sup> As Bulgar-

---

<sup>45</sup>Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2013), 15, 34.

<sup>46</sup>Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 135; Yılmaz, "Anti-Anarchism and Security Perceptions during the Hamidian Era," 9-10.

<sup>47</sup>Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, 149-152.

<sup>48</sup>Yılmaz, "Anti-Anarchism and Security Perceptions during the Hamidian Era," 10.

<sup>49</sup>MV. 96/59 (7 December 1898).

<sup>50</sup>Yılmaz, "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi İdare ve Söylem Arasında: Fesad, Serseri, Anarşist," 41-42.

ians became part of these larger radical networks and initiated such activities, the provincial authorities in Zonguldak informed the central government in 1903 that there were some Bulgarian workers in the region, some of them of Ottoman origin, while the others were from Bulgaria - which was a vassal principality under Ottoman rule until the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. The authorities also stated that the presence of Bulgarian subjects in the region was inappropriate because of the unrest they had recently caused in the empire, and asked what should be done about their situation and whether they should be removed from the region.<sup>51</sup> In response, the central government stated that the expulsion of all Bulgarians from the region was unthinkable. Rather, provincial authorities were instructed to closely monitor their actions and deal with any wrongdoing within the legal framework.<sup>52</sup>

Spanish workers also became a source of concern for the Ottoman government, as their country was notorious for the anarchist activism of its workers in the Mediterranean world. In cases where the Ottoman government became aware of their presence in Zonguldak, it followed the internationally agreed procedures of recording the personal information of anarchists, photographing them and then deporting them. In 1907, police officers arrested two Spanish workers, Juan Diaz and Bernardo Diaz, when they arrived in Zonguldak from Istanbul. After being detained for six days, they were deported to Piraeus in Greece on a steamship with the accusation that they were anarchists who wanted to spread political ideas in the region.<sup>53</sup> In the same year, three Spanish bricklayers, Antonio, Jose and Manuel, who were employed by the company, were accused of supporting the ideas of anarchist groups in Zonguldak. The provincial authorities then detained them for sixteen days, taking their photographs and other biometric information. They were then deported to Alexandria.<sup>54</sup>

While foreign workers or their relatives often used foreign diplomatic channels to negotiate better with the Ottoman government, as shown earlier in this chapter, the case of anarchism was an exception in the sense that the workers could not use these channels in their favor. On the contrary, the Ottoman government used these same diplomatic channels to ensure that the accused were indeed supporters of anarchist aspirations, since there was an international agreement to fight anarchism. In the case of the three Spanish bricklayers, the wife of one of the workers went to the Spanish embassy and complained that she had lived with her husband in Zonguldak

---

<sup>51</sup>DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903); DH.MKT. 715/19 (5 October 1903).

<sup>52</sup>DH.MKT. 715/19 (5 October 1903).

<sup>53</sup>BEO. 3198/239843 (2 December 1907).

<sup>54</sup>ZB. 610/21 (5 October 1907); BEO. 3198/239843 (2 December 1907).



when he was exiled, which had left her in despair as he was the only breadwinner in the family. She therefore asked the embassy to facilitate her husband's return and to compensate her for the damages she had suffered. The government, however, argued that the expulsion of the workers from their borders was initiated because they were anarchists and the decision was taken after informing the embassy and consulting their information about the individuals. Under these conditions, they declared that no compensation would be paid to the wife of the worker.<sup>55</sup>

What was the impact of these workers' efforts in Zonguldak? Did they achieve any of their anarchist ambitions in the region despite state surveillance? Did they succeed in encouraging other workers to participate in labor activism? There is not enough information to provide complete answers to these questions, as only a few sources about their experiences in Zonguldak remain, and these are from the moments when the state noticed their presence in the region and anticipated their expulsion. However, some of the remaining sources can be interpreted in an attempt to answer these questions. Since anarchist workers were involved in labor militancy and strike organization in their places of residence after migration, a close look at the strikes in Zonguldak can offer a perspective for understanding the extent to which workers with radical political aspirations were able to achieve their goals in the region.<sup>56</sup>

During the strike movement of 1908, which took place after the Young Turk Revolution, about 10,000 surface and underground workers in Zonguldak went on strike together.<sup>57</sup> The strike first started in the basin when a number of foreign machinists, who were employed underground to transport coal from the mines, refused to continue their services after hearing that the surface machinists were receiving an improvement in their wages.<sup>58</sup> Then some Kurdish workers joined them and blocked the surface trains, which led to a fight between these workers and the operators of the blocked trains. The police then intervened and put the Kurdish workers on trial for blocking the railway, which further angered the workers and the events turned into mass demonstrations with a large participation of all categories of workers demanding improvements in their working conditions. The demands of the workers

---

<sup>55</sup>BEO. 3198/239843 (2 December 1907); ZB. 352-118 (18 August 1908); BEO. 3384-253728 (27 August 1908).

<sup>56</sup>In fact, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi dedicates an entire chapter in her book, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*, to examine the strikes "as one complex expression of radical ideas." She also admires the role of international labor migration to Egypt and Lebanon in the spread of strikes as a form of labor protest. See, Khuri-Makdisi, "Workers, Labor Unrest, and the Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Leftist Ideas," in *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism*.

<sup>57</sup>Şehmus Güzel, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e İşçi Hareketi ve Grevler," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1985), 814.

<sup>58</sup>Zafer Toprak, "1908 İşçi Hareketleri ve Jön Türkler," *Yurt ve Dünya* 2 (1977), 283.

included an increase of their wages by 40 percent, one month's vacation per year and the payment of their working equipment and health expenses by the company, which were previously paid by the workers themselves. In addition, the workers demanded the reinstatement of the workers who were fired due to the conflicts that arose at the beginning of the strike.<sup>59</sup>

The collective labor militancy demonstrated by the workers in Zonguldak during the strikes of 1908 is significant because, while in many previous examples the workers were engaged in occupational competition and intercommunal conflicts, on this occasion they were able to cooperate for their common interests regardless of their occupational categories and regional backgrounds, proving that segregation and confrontation among the workers was not a dead end. On the contrary, the workers in Zonguldak were able to act collectively in times of crisis. What was behind this cooperation? How were the workers in Zonguldak able to act collectively despite the established social segregation and occupational competition?

The same questions preoccupied the Ereğli Company when it faced such a challenge in Zonguldak for the first time in its history. The company first accused some twenty-one workers of being "foreign agitators" who were spreading labor unrest in the region and asked the Ottoman government to try them and expel them from the basin. According to them, these foreign workers were systematically damaging the machinery used to extract and transport coal, as well as the mines, and putting pressure on workers who wanted to continue working in the region.<sup>60</sup> The company also blamed the subdistrict Governor of Ereğli, Hayri Bey, claiming that he had close relations with the workers in the region and encouraged the workers to participate in the strike and ignored the necessary precautions during the events and let the strike spread. Outraged by the company's accusations, Hayri Bey sent a detailed defense to the government in which he blamed the foreign workers for the events. He admitted that the influence of the 1908 revolution had played a role in the Zonguldak strike, as the strikes in that short period were an empire-wide movement. However, he also argued that foreign agitators were particularly involved in organizing the strikes in the case of Zonguldak. He stated that certain groups had shaken parts of Europe with their labor protests and that this militancy would inevitably spread to Zonguldak. Since the "ignorant" Ottoman workers would not even understand what a strike is and since there were no cases of strikes in the Ottoman territories but they were introduced from abroad, the foreigners employed by the company must be behind the promotion of labor unrest as they know how to use such demonstrations

---

<sup>59</sup>DH.MKT. 2616/37 (26 September 1908).

<sup>60</sup>Quataert, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi*, 113.

to their advantage.<sup>61</sup>

It is important to note that the Zonguldak strike was by no means a region-specific case, but rather part of an empire-wide strike movement in 1908 after the Young Turk Revolution.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, region-specific explanations may not be sufficient to explain the occurrence of the 1908 Zonguldak strike. Nevertheless, the accusations made by both the company and the local district governor against foreign workers for organizing the strike are significant for the involvement of foreign workers in spreading labor militancy and leading labor protests in Zonguldak, even if we know little about their identities and whether they were committed anarchists. While it is difficult to label these agitators as anarchists, both the Ereğli Company and the Ottoman provincial authorities viewed foreign workers as importers of labor militancy and organizers of strikes in Zonguldak, further consolidating and legitimizing the Ottoman state's fears of the spread of radical ideas among Ottoman workers and the local population. In fact, while this was the first strike organized in the region, despite the fact that the basin was one of the largest labor centers in the empire with a population of around 10,000 workers, five more strikes took place in Zonguldak only before World War I, independently of the rest of the empire, making the basin one of the most active sites of labor militancy in the empire.<sup>63</sup>

In short, another security concern that preoccupied the Ottoman government in the last years of the 1890s and the first decade of the 1900s with regard to foreign workers in Zonguldak was its fear of the spread of radical ideas and labor militancy in the coal basin. As the Ottoman government was an integral part of global labor mobility during this period, many workers with radical anarchist aspirations came to the region. On the one hand, the Ottoman government, in collaboration with other foreign states, took precautions against these workers and adopted strategies such as deporting them and keeping records of their personal information to ensure the security of its domains. On the other hand, these workers took part in organizing strikes in the region regardless of the state's control, which further consolidated and justified the Ottoman government's concerns about the role of foreign workers in spreading labour militancy in Zonguldak. Their success in uniting workers in the region, regardless of their occupational categories and geographical backgrounds, is also crucial as an important example of workers overcoming the classifications that divide them and fuel animosities between them for a common cause.

---

<sup>61</sup>DH.MKT. 2615/65 (22 November 1908).

<sup>62</sup>Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 1908 Grevleri," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 78 (1998), 187.

<sup>63</sup>Güzel, "Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e İşçi Hareketi ve Grevler," 819.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century, the Zonguldak coalfield was critical for the Ottoman state, as it provided a significant portion of the growing need for coal. At the same time, the region increasingly became a labor hub for foreign workers, especially in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. One reason for this was the arrival of the Ottoman Ereğli Company in the region. As the company transformed production processes and created new employment opportunities both in underground and aboveground sectors, many foreigners began to be employed in the region through newly formed and long-standing networks.

This thesis examines with the consequences of this new reality. Accordingly, foreign workers arriving in the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became a part of an already multilayered labor pool. A group of miners from the Balkans had long been present in the region for a long time, with foreign labor migration starting in the 1840s. In addition to this, the practice of compulsory employment of peasants in the mines from the 1860s onwards and the Ottoman workers coming from eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea region from the 1880s onwards created a labor force that was quite diverse in terms of its geographical origins. In addition, since there were various employment areas in the region and these employment areas included not only the underground sectors but also many aboveground jobs related to coal production processes, there was a significant diversity in terms of sectors and occupations too.

It seems that, while there were exceptions to this - i.e., means workers from all geographical backgrounds have worked both underground and aboveground, and at different levels of specialization - the geographical origin of the workers - whether they were local, Ottoman migrant workers, or foreign migrant workers - created a general pattern in terms of the sectors in which these workers could be employed. For example, local workers tended to be employed in mines and in less skill-requiring jobs, including basket carrying. But some of them also managed to become hewers. Despite the fact that Dilaver Paşa Regulation of 1867 prohibited groups other

than local villagers from working in the mines, Ottoman migrant workers too were involved in underground activities – as were the foreigners. These Ottoman migrant workers, especially in the underground work, usually became diggers and had better conditions than the local workers because they had better income. But in the aboveground work, they were employed in many different jobs, sometimes as skilled workers and sometimes as unskilled workers. Some of the foreign workers were specialized technicians, but there were also underground diggers - mainly Montenegrins and Croats. In the surface industries, there were also areas where they competed with Ottoman migrant workers, but they were generally preferred by the company. As a result of this competition, occasionally, Ottoman workers had to accept less-skill-requiring jobs. This competition will be particularly valuable in understanding later instances of intercommunal strife.

Chapter 3 begins to shape the narrative around the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, which is the focus of the thesis. Accordingly, this period is significant for foreign labor migration for two reasons . First, the Ottoman Ereğli Company began to make its presence felt in the region during this period and the company enabled the emergence of many new projects, especially in the surface sectors. The company was established as a French-capitalized company during this period and quickly became the largest operator and employer in the region. Second, the company's construction projects near Zonguldak, most importantly the port, were fundamental in the emergence of the settlement as the center of the coal basin. The fact that the settlement emerged for the first time in this period is valuable because it was built from scratch thanks to the coal industry and the operations of the company; thus, migration was fundamental to the creation of the settlement.

At the same time, this chapter specifies the places of origin of foreign migrant workers and their numbers with a special focus on Zonguldak. Montenegrins and Italians were the two largest groups of foreign workers in the region. However, there were foreign workers from other backgrounds, especially from the Balkans and the rest of Europe. It is difficult to determine the occupational categories of all these workers and their skill levels. However, the Montenegrins, as was the practice in the region, were clearly employed in the mines as hewers and new arrivals from the region. They were also employed in surface projects as construction workers and stonemasons. Italians were also employed in the mines as hewers, although probably in smaller numbers. At the same time, there were Italians employed in other surface sectors, such as bricklayers, carpenters, etc. It is important to note that compatriotism and communal networks may have played an important role in the arrival and employment of workers and the higher concentration of some groups compared

to others. For example, the frequent arrival of Montenegrins in this period may be related to their earlier arrivals and the ties of compatriotism that were important for later arrivals in a chain migration trend. Since some former Montenegrin hewers became small-scale operators, it is also likely that ties of compatriotism enabled Montenegrins to continue to find work as hewers. In addition, new connections were made during this period, for example, when French-capitalized companies brought workers from France to the region.

Finally, this chapter looks at the processes by which foreign workers arrived in the region from a dynamic perspective. For the Ottoman government, the arrival of these workers posed a security problem, as explained in the last chapter. However, this did not prevent the company from employing foreign workers, although their numbers decreased over time. Thus, the Ottoman government decided to prevent the arrival of foreigners in the region by not issuing travel permits, *mürur tezkiresi*. However, this policy of preventing the arrival of foreign workers often led to complaints from the workers' countries of origin. France, for example, argued that the Ottoman efforts to prevent its citizens from entering the region were a violation of international law and mutual agreements. Similarly, Montenegro expressed concern that workers from its country were being denied entry into the region. Thus, while the provincial authorities wanted to pursue a strict policy against the entry of workers into the region, the central government reconsidered its policy over time due to diplomatic concerns and pursued a less strict policy. For example, newcomers from Montenegro were allowed to work in the mines due to long-standing practice and diplomatic relations with Montenegro, even though the mining regulations stated otherwise. Similarly, the Ottoman government did not restrict the arrival of French workers after diplomatic communications with France. Finally, in an environment where the foreignness of the workers became an issue, the different claims to Ottomaness and foreignness also became a matter of discussion between the workers and the Ottoman government. When a group of Montenegrins claimed that they had foreign status to avoid paying taxes and receive diplomatic support from their home countries, their claims were disregarded by the government because their arrival predated the independence of the Principality, thus creating two different interpretations of the foreignness of Montenegrins based on the date of arrival of foreign workers.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on the experiences of foreign workers in Zonguldak, in their place of residency and work, and how the state perceived their presence in the region. In doing so, the chapter aims to acknowledge the historical agency of foreign workers despite its focus on state perceptions. According to this, there were instances of intercommunal conflicts emerged between foreign and Ottoman workers, fueled by occupational competition, and the Ottoman provincial

authorities began to increasingly employ a securitarian discourse regarding foreign workers in the region. The largest of such conflicts took place between the Montenegrin and Kurdish workers in 1897 and lasted for several days. During the events, the local authorities were unable to intervene immediately due to the lack of state capacity, and the events only ended when the navy intervened in the situation. Thus, in a place where the means of security and state capacity were insufficient, the high concentration of foreigners and the diversity of origins of the workers emerged as the fundamental reason for the security problems in the region in correspondences between state officials of different ranks, as they also called for strengthening state capacity in the region by increasing the police force and bringing other state institutions to the region including the *Nizamiye* courts.

As the nineteenth century marked a period in which the Ottoman government increasingly felt foreign pressure in certain areas, its fears of foreign intervention also appeared in the case of Zonguldak too, where the foreign workers became a part of the larger foreign presence in the region. The Ottoman government regarded the workers as an integral part of a new foreign colony and feared foreign intervention based on the affairs of these workers. While this did not occur in the form of a large-scale intervention during this period, workers often used diplomatic channels to obtain support from their home countries to strengthen their position in individual cases against other workers or the Ottoman state. These cases were usually related to individual confrontations with locals, Ottoman workers, or other foreigners. Regardless, foreign workers or their relatives asked their country's embassies to use their diplomatic power as leverage. Meanwhile, foreign countries also had diplomatic representatives in the region from the late 1890s onwards. There were two deputy consuls in Zonguldak, one French and one Italian, to take care of their citizen's affairs. However, the fact that they used their diplomatic status to interfere in everyday affairs, legal cases, and administrative practices angered the provincial authorities.

Another issue that fueled the Ottoman government's fears was the presence of foreign workers with radical ideas and labor militancy in Zonguldak. There were repercussions of the global anarchist movement in Zonguldak and the central government asked the local authorities to take into consideration the danger of Italian anarchists from 1898. The Bulgarians, who were causing local unrest in the empire with radical aspirations, were also under close surveillance in the region. While in other cases the foreign status of workers became a problem for the government because they received support from their home countries, the Ottoman government, on the contrary, collaborated with foreign governments against anarchism and applied internationally agreed policies to combat its aspirations. For example, in one

case, the wife of a Spanish anarchist, who was dismissed from his job in Zonguldak and expelled from the country, asked for the support of Spain in order to receive compensation. However, this was rejected on the grounds that these workers were anarchists and represented a danger; therefore, they were expelled from the region. The methods used to fight anarchists included recording their personal and biometric information, photographing them and expelling them from the country, as the Ottoman government did in Zonguldak. Despite state control, however, foreign workers continued to be involved in radicalism and labor militancy in Zonguldak. Although it was not specific to Zonguldak and there was a big wave of strikes in 1908 after the Young Turk Revolution, the company pointed out the involvement of some twenty-one foreigners as they agitated other workers and organized the strikes in Zonguldak. Similarly, the provincial authorities accused the foreign workers of being involved in spreading radical ideas among the Ottoman workers and in leading strikes as they brought foreign forms of labor militancy that were alien to the Ottoman lands.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### A. Archival Sources

##### **BOA, Ottoman State Archives, Istanbul**

- BEO. 3198/239843 (2 December 1907).  
BEO. 3384-253728 (27 August 1908).  
BEO. 996/74628 (21 August 1897).  
DH.MKT. 2085/37 (3 November 1897).  
DH.MKT. 2308/116, (21 February 1900).  
DH.MKT. 2338/21, (29 April 1900).  
DH.MKT. 2615/65 (22 November 1908).  
DH.MKT. 2616/37 (26 September 1908).  
DH.MKT. 715/19 (5 October 1903).  
DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).  
BEO. 1001/75031(3 September 1897).  
BEO. 1004/75297 (9 September 1897).  
BEO. 1004/75300 (9 September 1897).  
BEO. 1021/76542 (12 October 1897).  
BEO. 1087/81507 (7 March 1898).  
BEO. 3004/225247 (2 March 1907).  
BEO. 657/49206 (19 July 1895).  
BEO. 880/65972 (13 December 1314).  
BEO. 880/65972 (13 December 1896).  
BEO. 974/73001 (7 July 1897).  
BEO. 977/73265 (13 July 1897).  
BEO. 994/74527 (17 August 1897).  
BEO 995/74589 (21 August 1897).  
DH.MKT. 1015/37 (12 October 1905).  
DH.MKT. 1029/58 (8 December 1905).  
DH.MKT. 2101/120 (6 September 1898).

DH.MKT. 2147/67 (12 December 1898).  
DH.MKT. 2310/79, (26 February 1900).  
DH.MKT. 2379/62 (25 July 1900).  
DH.MKT. 715/19 (28 May 1903).  
DH.MKT. 722/32 (3 June 1903).  
DH.MKT. 764/62 (13 September 1903).  
DH.MKT. 865/3 (26 June 1904).  
DH.MUI. 7/9 (15 September 1909).  
DH.TMIK.S. 55/63 (17 November 1904).  
HR.HMŞ.İŞO. 192/16 (14 December 1905).  
HR.İD. 98/7 (29 November 1897).  
HR.TH. 242/84 (7 June 1900).  
HR.TH. 286/74 (4 July 1903).  
İ.HUS. 55/45 (15 August 1897).  
İ.HUS. 55/60 (16 August 1897).  
İ.HUS. 55/61 (16 August 1897).  
Y.A.HUS. 516/120 (16 November 1907).  
Y.MTV. 165/178 (25 August 1897).  
ZB. 438/43 (5 March 1906).  
MTV. 165/178 (25 August 1897).  
MV. 96/59 (7 December 1898).  
Y.EE. 150/126 (4 November 1899).  
Y.MTV. 182/118 (8 October 1898).  
ZB. 352-118 (18 August 1908).  
ZB. 610/21 (5 October 1907).  
ZB. 74/65 (7 September 1908).

## **B.Printed Sources**

*Kastamonu Vilayeti Salnâmesi*, (Kastamonu: Kastamonu Vilayet Matbaası, 1317/1899).

Ahmet Naim. *Yeraltında Kırkbeş Sene: Bir Mâden İşçisinin Anıları*, 1886-1931. Evrensel, 2014.

## Secondary Sources

- Ahmet Naim. *Cumhuriyet'in on Yılında Zonguldak ve Maden Kömürü Havzası*. İstanbul: Zonguldak Sanayii ve Ticaret Odası Neşri, 1933.
- . *Zonguldak Havzası: Uzun Mehmet'ten Bugüne Kadar*. İstanbul: Hünütabat Matbaası, 1934.
- Arıkan, Zeki. “Eğin Kasabasının Tarihsel Gelişimi.” *OTAM*, 2001.
- Aytekin, Attila. *Tarlalardan Ocaklara, Sefaletten Mücadeleye*. Yordam Kitap, 2017.
- Bayly, Christopher. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*. Malden, Ma: Blackwell Pub, 2004.
- Behar, Cem. *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Başaran, Betül. *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Between Crisis and Order*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014.
- Çıladı, Sina. *Zonguldak Havzasında İşçi Hareketlerinin Tarihi, 1848-1940*. Ankara: Yeraltı Maden-İş Yayınları, 1977.
- Clark, Edward. “The Ottoman Industrial Revolution.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1974): 65–76. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800032797>.
- Clay, Christopher. “Labour Migration and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth Century Anatolia.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 1–32. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209808701241>.
- Cora, Yaşar Tolga. “1910 Kömür Hamalları Grevi: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Emegın Tarihi ve Sol Siyasetin Dili.” *Kebikeç İnsan Bilimleri İçin Kaynak Araştırmaları Dergisi* 52, no. 52 (2021).
- Coşar, Nevin; Demirci, Sevtap. “Incorporation into the World Economy: From Railways to Highways, 1850–1950.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2009): 19–31. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200802547636>.
- Dinçer, Sinan. “The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul (1896).” *Tijdschrift Voor Sociale En Economische Geschiedenis/ the Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 10, no. 4 (December 15, 2013): 20. doi:<https://doi.org/10.18352/tseg.237>.
- Doğanay, Rahmi. *Milli Mücadele'de Karadeniz, 1919-1922*. Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2001.
- Fuhrmann, Malte. “I Would Rather Be in the Orient' European Lower Class Immigrants into the Ottoman Lands.” In *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, edited by Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi, and Florian Riedler. SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2011.

- Güteryüz, Ahmet; Langensiepen, Bernd. *The Ottoman Steam Navy, 1828-1923*. US Naval Institute Press, 1995.
- Güzel, Şehmus. “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e İşçi Hareketi ve Grevler.” In *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*. İstanbul: İletişim, 1985.
- Hanioglu, Şükrü. *The Young Turks in Opposition*. New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Jensen, Richard Back. *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism: An International History, 1878-1934*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Kahveci, Erol. “Migration, Ethnicity, and Divisions of Labour in the Zonguldak Coalfield, Turkey.” *International Review of Social History* 60, no. S1 (October 21, 2015): 207–26. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020859015000425>.
- . “The Miners of Zonguldak.” In *Work and Occupation in Modern Turkey*, edited by Erol Kahveci, Theo Nichols, and Nadir Suğur. Routledge, 1997.
- Kalaycı, Behçet. *Kıvrık: Genç Bir Madencinin Öyküsü*. Ankara: R Prodüksiyon, 1992.
- Karakışla, Yavuz Selim. “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda 1908 Grevleri.” *Toplum ve Bilim* 78 (1998).
- Karpat, Kemal. *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Khuri-Makdisi, Ilham. *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kırmızı, Abdülhamit. *Abdülhamid’in Valileri*. Klasik, 2007.
- . “Taming the Governors: The Swinging Pendulum of Power over the Ottoman Provinces in the Nineteenth Century.” *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 2010): 4–23. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1179/jrl.2010.6.1.4>.
- Kuran, Ercüment. “XIX. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devleti’nde Deniz Ulaşımı: İdare-i Mahsusa’nın Kuruluş ve Faaliyetleri.” In *Çağın Yakalayan Osmanlı: Osmanlı Devleti’nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri*, edited by Mustafa Kaçar and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu. İstanbul: IRCICA, 1995.
- Kütükoğlu, Mübahat. “Osmanlı Buharlı Gemi İşletmeleri ve İzmir Körfezi Hamidiye Şirketi.” In *Çağın Yakalayan Osmanlı: Osmanlı Devleti’nde Modern Haberleşme ve Ulaştırma Teknikleri*, edited by Mustafa Kaçar and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu. İstanbul: IRCICA, 1995.
- Öçkün, Gündüz. *Ottoman Industry: Industrial Census of 1913-1915*. Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2003.
- Owen, Roger, and Pamuk, Şevket. *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998.

- Pamuk, Şevket. *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi*. İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2023.
- Paz, Omri. "The Usual Suspect: Worker Migration and Law Enforcement in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Anatolia." *Continuity and Change* 30, no. 2 (August 2015): 223–49. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0268416015000235>.
- Quataert, Donald. *Manufacturing and Technology Transfer in the Ottoman Empire, 1800-1914*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 1992.
- . *Miners and the State in the Ottoman Empire: The Zonguldak Coalfield, 1822-1920*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2006.
- . *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Avrupa İktisadi Yayılımı ve Direnişi, 1881-1908*. Yurt Yayınevi, 2017.
- Riedler, Florian. "Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s." In *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, edited by Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi, and Florian Riedler. SOAS/Routledge Studies on the Middle East, 2011.
- Sarıkoynucu, Ali. "Milli Mücadele Döneminde Zonguldak Kömür Havzasında Fransız-İtalyan Rekabeti ve İtalya'nın Faaliyetleri." *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 2, no. 7 (1991).
- Savaşkan, Bahri. *Zonguldak Maden Kömürü Havzası Tarihçesi, 1829-1989*. Zonguldak: Türkiye Taşkömürü Kurumu, 1993.
- Sefer, Akın. "British Workers and Ottoman Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Istanbul." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 99 (2021): 147–66. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0147547921000028>.
- Sefer, Akın; Yıldız, Aysel; Kabadayı, Mustafa Erdem. "Labor Migration from Kruševo: Mobility, Ottoman Transformation, and the Balkan Highlands in the 19th Century." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 2021): 73–87. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743820000847>.
- Sever, Deniz Dölek. "Bir Maden Kentinin Doğuşunun Çevresel Analizi: Zonguldak." In *Zonguldak: Antik Çağ'dan Cumhuriyet'e Bir Kentin Tarihi*, edited by Ahmet Efiloğlu, Gürbüz Arslan, Yücel Namal, and Çağlar Tan. Zonguldak: Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2022.
- Tak, İsa. "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenleri," 2001.
- . "Osmanlı Döneminde Ereğli Kömür Madenlerinde Faaliyet Gösteren Şirketler." *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 18 (2001).
- Tok, Alaaddin. "The Ottoman Mining Sector in the Age of Capitalism: An Analysis of State-Capital Relations, 1850-1908," 2010.
- Toprak, Zafer. "1908 İşçi Hareketleri ve Jön Türkler." *Yurt ve Dünya* 2 (1977).

———. “Tanzimat’ta Osmanlı Sanayii.” In *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*. İstanbul: İletişim, 1985.

Turna, Nalan. *19. Yüzyıl’dan 20. Yüzyıl’a Osmanlı Topraklarında Seyahat, Göç ve Asayiş Belgeleri: Mürûr Tezkereleri*. İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2013.

Yılmaz, İlkey. “Anti-Anarchism and Security Perceptions during the Hamidian Era.” *Zapruder World* 1 (2015).

———. “II. Abdülhamid Dönemi İdare ve Söylem Arasında: Fesad, Serseri, Anarşist.” *Toplumsal Tarih* 241 (2014).

Zaman, Ekrem Murat. *Zonguldak Kömür Havzasının İki Yüzyılı*. Ankara: TMMOB Maden Mühendisleri Odası Yayını, 2004.

### **Digital Sources**

Akyıldız, Ali. “Şirket-i Hayriyye.” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 2010.  
<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sirket-i-hayriyye>.