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## **Salt Production Activities in Izmir Çamaltı Saltern and in Turkey (1923-1950)**

### **Izmir Çamaltı Tuzlası ve Türkiyede Tuz Üretimi Çalışmaları (1923-1950)\***

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#### **Abstract**

This study deals with salt production activities in Izmir Çamaltı Saltern and in Turkey in the Republic period and their contributions to economy. Data has been obtained by scanning the literature. The subject is limited to and discussed under the title of salt production activities in Izmir Çamaltı Saltern and in Turkey in the period of Republican People's Party (CHP) (1923-1950). Evaluations have been made based on numeric data in discussing the salt production activities in Izmir Çamaltı Saltern and in Turkey. The gap in the literature about the research subject has been filled through use of primary sources such as Republic archive documents, official publications, journals of laws, journals of official reports, proceedings of memorandum, official gazettes, statistical data, *Ayın Tarihi* journal (government's dating publication), and articles from the magazines of the period. The relevant evaluations have been made considering the production processes in Turkey and those in the leading countries in the world about salt production. It has been found out that salt production, sales, and export were monopolized by the state with the General Directorate of Salt Monopoly set up on 1 June 1927 with its center in Ankara. With the modernization of Çamaltı Saltern and other facilities established from that date on, the amount of salt production in Turkey and salt export to other countries increased, thereby making substantial contributions to the national economy.

**Keywords:** Izmir Çamaltı Saltern, Rock salt, Monopoly, Sea salt, Lake Salt.

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## Öz

Bu araştırmada Cumhuriyet döneminde İzmir Çamaltı Tuzlası ve Türkiye’de tuz üretimi faaliyetleri ile bunun ekonomiye olan katkıları ele alınmıştır. Veriler literatür taraması yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Konu, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) döneminde Çamaltı Tuzlasında ve Türkiye’de tuz üretimi faaliyetleri (1923-1950) ile sınırlandırılmış ve bu başlık etrafında incelenmiştir. Çamaltı tuzlası ve Türkiye’de tuz üretimi çalışmaları ele alınırken sayısal veriler üzerinde değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın konusu hakkında literatürde yer alan boşluklar Cumhuriyet arşivi belgeleri, resmi yayınlardan kanunlar ve tutanak dergileri, zabıt ceridesi, resmi gazete, istatistik verileri, ayın tarihi ve dönemin süreli yayınlarından olan dergilerinin makaleleri gibi birincil kaynakların kullanılması yoluyla tamamlanmıştır. Çalışmanın konusu incelenirken dönemin Türkiye’si ile dünyanın tuz üretimi konusunda önde gelen ülkelerin üretim süreçleri göz önüne getirilerek değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır. Çalışmada elde edilen sonuç şudur: 1 Haziran 1927 tarihinde merkezi Ankara olarak kurulan Tuz İhissarı Umumi Müdüriyeti ile tuz üretimi, satışı ve ihracatı devlet tekeline alınmıştır. Bu tarihten itibaren Çamaltı Tuzlasının modernleştirilmesi ve kurulan tesisleri sayesinde Türkiye’de tuz üretimi ve dış ülkelere yapılan tuz ihracatı miktarı artırılmış bu suretle ülke ekonomisine önemli katkılar sağlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İzmir Çamaltı Tuzlası, Kaya tuzu, İhissar, Deniz tuzu, Göl tuzu.

## INTRODUCTION

Salt is a substance known and used by humans since ancient times. Salt, which is necessary for the body to work regularly, has a big importance for human health. The Chinese government saw the salt as a source of income for the state for centuries. Various texts mentioning salt tax in China in the twelfth century BC were found. Human being deprived of the information provided by modern geology and not knowing where the salt could be found continued his efforts to find ways of obtaining salt until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The roads built in the Roman Empire carried the salt not only to Rome, but also to the inner parts of the peninsula. Due to the precious nature of salt, salaries of soldiers and workers were paid in salt in some countries throughout history (MTA, 1977: 376).

In the Ottoman Empire, until the declaration of the *Tanzimat*, the salt production was made by individuals. The tax to be imposed on salt was either put on tender or administered by *mukataa*. After the *Tanzimat*, this tax was collected directly by the state. As the capitulations were in effect, the importation of salt from foreign countries could not be prevented, and there was no possibility of the monopolized administration of this material. Since the debts of the Ottoman Empire from 1854 to 1877 could not be paid, an agreement was made between the state and Galata Bankers for the 10-year allocation of fiscal incomes such as salary tax in return for the interests and redemption of the debts. Pursuant to this agreement, Administration of Six Indirect Revenues (ASIR) was established on 22 November 1879, and it took over salt revenue. Later, all rights related to this were transferred to Ottoman Public Debt Administration in accordance with the *Muharrem* By-Law. This administration obtained approximately one and a half million gold liras from salt annually (Altuğ, 1952: 304); (Karal, 1988: 427); (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 31).

### 1. Salt Production Activities in Çamaltı Saltern and in Turkey in the Period of Republican People’s Party (CHP) (1923-1950)

As salt was among the primary sources of income of the state, laws concerning the increase of taxes on it were put into effect to raise the financial support for the country following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the National Government. With the *Law on Salt Tax* dated 23 September 1920 and numbered 26, the tax to be collected per kilo at the salterns of the Ottoman Empire was determined as three kuruş (TBMMKD [TBMM Journal of Laws], 1920: 28); (Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], 28 February 1921). With the *Law on Salt Tax* dated 8 April 1924 and numbered 468, the Law numbered 26 was abolished, and tax on salt was raised to four kuruş per kilo (TBMMKD [TBMM Journal of Laws], 1924: 321). In accordance with the second article of the Law dated 3 March 1925 and numbered 575, salt tax was increased to six kuruş from four kuruş (TBMMKD [TBMM Journal of Laws], 1925: 88); (Resmi Gazete [Official

Gazette], 4 March 1925). With the *Law Concerning Salt Sale on Account* dated 24 May 1928 and numbered 1270, it was allowed to buy salt on account from salterns provided that one of the banks to be indicated by the government would stand security; the limit would be 1,500 tons per individual; and the money for such amount of salt would be paid within maximum three months (TBMMKD [TBMM Journal of Laws], 1928: 214).

Laws on salt continued to be introduced in the Republic period as well. With the *Law on Salt Sales and Salt Prices* numbered 1518, salt export and transportation, which would be conducted by Salt Monopoly Administration through bargain, and all the repair and construction activities would be carried out in consignment on condition that there was no willing individual. It was decided that those which were not open to negotiation due to their nature and urgency would be carried out in consignment with the approval of the Ministry of Finance, and tools and materials concerning it would be purchased through bargain (TBMMKD [TBMM Journal of Laws], 1929: 955); (Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], 8 June 1929).

Salt monopoly was administered by Ottoman Public Debt Administration until the National Government was established in Ankara. The income obtained from salt was allocated by this administration, too. After the National Government was established, connections with Ottoman Public Debt Administration in Istanbul were broken. Until 1927, salt works were conducted by General Directorate of Public Debt Administration set up in Ankara. An administration titled Salt Monopoly Administration was established in 1927. After this administration conducted salt works for a while, the administration was affiliated to the Ministry of Customs and Monopolies in 1931. Then, it was annexed to the General Directorate of Monopolies established through combination of the general directorates of tobacco, distillery, salt, gunpowder and explosives<sup>2</sup> (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 31). With the *Salt Law* dated 11 December 1936 and numbered 3078, salt export and production in Turkey was taken under the monopoly of the state, and the production and exportation of salt by others was called smuggling (TBMMKD [TBMM Journal of Laws], 1936: 104); (Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], 23 December 1936).

In the first Government Program announced by Celal Bayar on 8 November 1937, he stated that they attached importance to salt monopoly as well as other monopolies, and thus they were determined to take all the measures to increase salt sales to foreign countries (TBMMZC [Proceeding of Memorandum], 1937: 32); (Arar, 1968: 109).

Salt, which contains many chemicals including but not limited to soda and caustic soda, is a food product for many living beings, especially human beings. Therefore, it is highly important for industry as well. The Administration of Monopolies undertook the task of operating this rich offered by nature and made additions to its program every year to raise production (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 52).

Until the World War II broke out, the salt produced in Turkey had consumers in Japan besides European countries (Acun, 1942: 67). However, the negative atmosphere caused by war conditions almost stopped salt sale to foreign countries (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 53). After the war ended, an effort was made to make and put into effect a new agreement with Japan, as stated by Nuri Özsarı, the Minister of Customs and Commerce during the budget negotiations at TBMM (Grand National Assembly of Turkey). 56 thousand tons of salt in 1946, 33 thousand tons of salt in 1947, and about 39 thousand tons of salt in 1948 and 1949 were exported to foreign countries from Turkey (Cimilli, 1951: 12, 23).

Salt production in Turkey was performed in four ways: sea salt, lake salt, rock salt, and spring salt (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 31, 53).

1. Lake salt is produced by use of sun in lakes with salty water. Lake salt is produced from Yavşan and Kaldırım salterns in Koçhisar lake of Konya province. Annual production is about 40 tons.

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<sup>2</sup> For the document about the draft budget law of Salt Monopoly Administration dated 11 May 1932, see BCA, 30.18 1 2-28-36-12. For the Decree of the Council of Ministers dated 6 June 1931 and numbered 11186 concerning the approval of the temporary budget of the General Directorate of Salt Monopoly for June and July 1931, see BCA 30 18 1 2-20-37-9. For the draft law dated 28 May 1931 and numbered 11147 concerning the temporary budget of the General Directorate of Salt Monopoly for June and July 1931-1932, see BCA, 30 18 1 2-20-35-12.

2. Spring salt is produced by collecting salty river and well waters in pools and evaporating them. Spring salt is produced from various 41 salterns located in various regions of Turkey, and the production is about 35 tons on average per year.

3. Rock salt can be found above the surface of the ground in the form of rocks. However, it is also possible for rock salt to form under the ground. Underground salt reserves are mined via tunnels just like it is done in pits. This kind of salt is obtained from the salterns in Hacibektaş and Tepesidelik near Kayseri province, Sağırkaya and Oltu in Erzurum province, Kağızman and Kulp in Kars province, as well as from Çankırı and Sekili salterns. Average annual production is about 20 thousand tons (Cillov, 1965: 349); (Cillov, 1967: 242).

4. Sea salt is obtained by evaporating the sea waters that are withdrawn to land. It is only produced at Izmir Çamaltı Saltern. This saltern was developed by modern facilities. People like this saltern due to its cleanliness and excellence. 150 thousand tons of table salt is produced annually from this saltern.

In Turkey in 1942, there were 475 locations to obtain salt that were controlled by the General Directorate of Monopolies. These locations were mainly situated in eastern regions. Some of these salterns contained certain substances that prevented producing quality salt and providing salt with nutritious quality, while others had insufficient potential, which prevented obtaining salt from such locations (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 31).

In Turkey in 1947, over 200 thousand tons of salt with a value amounting to 5 million liras were produced while in 1948, 350 thousand tons of salt with a value amounting to 9 million liras was produced (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1949: 10).

To conduct salt transportation in all the seasons without any problems, Yavşan and Kaldırım salterns in Koçhisar Lake Tuz were affiliated to the General Directorate of Highways, and the way connecting Izmir Çamaltı Saltern to Çiğil Station was bettered. An agreement was made with Organization for Economic Co-operation for a fund of 403 thousand and 500 hundred liras, which was necessary for these works, to be granted from Marshall Aid programme mutual funds (Ayın Tarihi, 1951: 36).

### 1.1. Salt Production Works in Izmir Çamaltı Saltern

The history of Çamaltı Saltern, located on the barren land filled by Gediz River, dates back to ancient times. While it is impossible to grow neither pine nor any kind of trees on such a barren land, why this region is called Çamaltı (meaning “under the pine trees” in Turkish language) is worth investigating. It was found that the real name of the saltern is not *Çamaltı* but *Çanala*. Though there are various rumors regarding the issue, the most important one tells that there was a church located on three hills in the north-west direction once upon a time. The saltern was called *Çanaltı* (meaning “under the bell” in Turkish language) due to the bell of the church. Though the church remains near the saltern are indicative of Greeks mainly in control of salt production, it is acknowledged that there were also certain Turkish names involved in salt production (Cimilli, 1951: 12).

Çamaltı is a saltern located on a flat area of 14 km<sup>2</sup> to the left of the entrance to the gulf, which is 25 km away from Karşıyaka sub-district of Izmir province. This region is rather convenient in terms of roads. On one side, it is coastal and it offers an easy and cheap way of transportation. On the other side, it has a network of land and rail ways at the rear end, which has led to constant extension of saltern hinterland (Cimilli, 1951: 12).

Çamaltı Saltern became one of the leading source of income for the Ottoman Public Debt Administration for a certain period. Then, Izmir Çamaltı Saltern started to be controlled by the General Directorate of Monopolies. It became one of the notable centers of industry and production with all the steps and developments attained each day. Saltpans owned by various people during the Ottoman Public Debt Administration period were received and organized geometrically. Following the start of these saltpans being used according to technical methods, it became necessary to form a staff. To get the highest efficiency from the staff, certain measures, with housing needs of the workmen being in the first place, were taken to meet the needs of the staff (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 32).

After the General Directorate of Monopolies took the command of and started to operate Çamaltı Saltern, relevant measures were needed to be taken to take the salt from the saltpans and to accumulate and

protect it. Therefore, the administration attached importance to assistant service, elevators, transportation vehicles, light railway, and electrification as well as power plant workers so as to ensure the fulfilment of the abovementioned works. The Directorate tried to reach the level of its European equals while also trying to obtain the highest efficiency from the saltern. In addition, it tried to increase state income, ensure high production with low cost, and offer clean and delicious salt to the citizens of the country (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 32).

In the past, salt collected from the sea at Çamaltı Saltern was given to tradesmen in accumulated forms. The tradesmen grinded salt in various mills either by themselves or through other mediators to sell it to people. Since salt production needed to be controlled rigidly, the General Directorate of Monopolies undertook the duty of salt grinding and packaging as well. Çamaltı Saltern mill, founded in 1912 and extended in 1935, became one of the most important facilities at the saltern. Thanks to the activities of this mill, it became possible to manufacture low-cost, damp-free, fine table salt. At the saltern, the founded mill washes the salt to make it magnesium-free and grinds it. The facilities have the maximum capacity of manufacturing 40 to 50 tons of table salt per day.<sup>3</sup> In September 1942, there were 11 people working at Çamaltı Saltern. One of them was the master; some others were dissipators, dry kiln, and hot-air workers; two were centrifuge and sack machine workers; and three were packaging workers. Thanks to the works of these people, 50 kg sacks of damp-free salt reached high-purity level (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942: 52).

Cost factors such as raw salt, labor, transportation, and common materials were added to the cost of table salt obtained from the saltern. 1 kilogram of table salt cost 3.93 kuruş in 1946, 4.06 kuruş in 1947, and 4.10 kuruş in 1948. 40 to 50% of the cost was due to sack value while the rest was about other elements. 9 to 15% of table salt cost corresponded to raw salt, labor, transportation, and general expenses, while the rest 85 to 91% corresponded to cost of material. 1 kilogram of table salt cost 14.54 kuruş in 1946, 13.34 kuruş in 1947, and 14.24 kuruş in 1948 (Cimilli, 1951: 16, 23).

The amount of salt sold to foreign countries from İzmir Çamaltı Saltern in a decade was 20 thousand tons annually. This amount increased more in 1935 and reached 50 thousand tons. As foreign ships that came to buy salt were loaded with lots of salt in a short while, foreign buyers started to trust in this saltern. Therefore, countries such as Sweden and Belgium bought salt from Turkey, and salt export of a large scale was initiated between Turkey and Japan (İktisadi Yürüyüş [Economic Walk], 1942:32-52).

Çamaltı Saltern was the only saltern making exports. With an income of 400 thousand liras from the Marshall Aid plan, it started to be expanded based on a schedule. The expected rate of export upon the completion of the works was determined to be 200 thousand tons (Cimilli, 1951: 12); (Tataç, 1951: 216); (Ayın Tarihi, 1951: 36). As it is the case in other monopoly businesses, the saltern formed its own capital as it was financed by the General Directorate. Fixed assets of the saltern, which can be considered founding capital of the facility, were made up of two parts: one from the budget and the other from the capital in use. The budget part consisted of the capital used from property, machines, inventory stock, and transportation vehicles. Fixed assets involved instruments, tools, and installations of the saltern. According to the monopoly balance dated 1949, the first amounted to 1,807,202 liras while the latter amounted to 450,664 liras. The fund granted to the saltern from the budget was allocated for civil servants, waged workers, and construction and repair works. All kinds of costs related to labor and production of materials were covered from the capital used. The sum of annual budget and the capital used varied from 1 million 300 thousand to 1 million 600 thousand liras. At Çamaltı Saltern, there were 300-360 permanent workers and 1,200-1,400 temporary workers working in the production season lasting nearly two months (Cimilli, 1951: 12).

At Çamaltı Saltern, the acquisition of raw salt from sea water usually starts in May every year. At this date, sea water, which has a turbidity of 1-2.5 degrees Baume, is filled into raw water pools. The production of raw salt completely depends on the convenience of weather conditions. Dry and humid weather conditions

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<sup>3</sup> For the Decree of the Council of Ministers dated 11.04.1931 and numbered 11910 concerning the permit granted to German M. Funken, an officer from Bifs company, for him to enter the area to renew and repair the accumulator batteries of Çamaltı Saltern affiliated to the Office of the General Director of İzmir Salt Monopoly, see BCA, 30 18 1 2-24-73-12.

affect salt production. They increase or decrease production. For that reason, the years involving higher production should be associated with the convenience of weather conditions rather than the efforts of supervisors (Cimilli, 1951: 16).

The production capacity of Çamaltı Saltern is averagely 150-160 thousand tons a year (Acun, 1942: 67). The area where the produced salt can be kept has a capacity to hold 280 thousand tons of salt. As sea transportation is easy and cheap, salt need of some cities around Black Sea, Marmara, and Mediterranean Sea is completely met from Çamaltı Saltern.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1 below shows salt production and salt sales in Turkey from 1924 to 1950 in ton (Cimilli, 1951: 123).

**TABLE: 1.** Salt Production and Sales in Turkey (1923-1950)

Years	Salt Obtained	Sea Salt	Lake Salt	Rock Salt	Spring Salt	Table Salt	Total
1924	154,452	-	-	-	-	-	-
1925	94,261	-	-	-	-	-	-
1926	170,324	-	-	-	-	-	-
1927	172,631	115,935	22,937	12,432	27,409	-	178,713
1928	241,160	95,137	16,203	10,449	27,702	-	149,491
1929	143,088	127,037	23,088	12,913	23,145	-	186,183
1930	146,220	85,539	21,858	12,076	25,977	-	145,450
1931	170,428	79,202	22,188	12,838	23,353	17	137,598
1932	218,438	81,512	19,882	13,152	21,524	10	136,080
1933	153,832	76,917	21,508	14,145	25,388	4	137,962
1934	191,503	66,406	19,926	13,191	26,814	6	126,643
1935	214,835	138,139	25,723	15,544	31,506	18	210,930
1936	199,799	179,592	23,245	18,675	22,069	57	243,638
1937	252,459	222,497	23,658	18,095	29,787	2,162	296,199
1938	261,510	168,458	24,951	19,294	33,193	1,075	246,971
1939	240,043	131,310	26,604	19,621	32,570	2,729	212,834
1940	234,461	106,000	30,719	22,350	32,893	4,288	196,250
1941	250,613	117,077	28,323	22,105	37,176	3,180	207,861
1942	240,998	134,460	19,678	20,873	33,676	4,186	212,873

<sup>4</sup>For the information about figures related to salt export to foreign countries following the expansion of Çamaltı Saltern given by Ömer Refik Yaltkaya, who was general director of monopolies in the Democrat Party period, see Ayn Tarihi, 1956: 20.

1943	266,330	113,498	21,840	20,755	35,530	1,554	193,177
1944	256,962	117,275	23,202	19,994	35,215	2,322	198,008
1945	245,192	81,487	16,249	17,706	33,710	2,730	151,882
1946	206,304	123,428	23,831	22,156	33,670	3,858	206,493
1947	276,109	142,641	31,807	24,054	40,197	2,502	241,201
1948	266,160	141,583	32,158	22,666	36,273	2,320	235,001
1949	319,114	144,968	42,869	22,888	41,718	2,247	254,690
1950	310,173	118,555	66,090	24,317	40,748	2,317	252,027

Source: General Directorate of Statistics (İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, İGM), 1932: 362; İGM, 1933: 417; İGM, 1937: 371; İGM, 1939: 406; İGM, 1940: 447; İGM, 1943: 297; İGM, 1945: 421; İGM, 1948: 478; İGM, 1949: 201; İGM, 1950: 197; İGM, 1951:265; İGM, 1952:297; İGM, 1953: 291.

Table 1 shows salt production and salt sales in Turkey from 1924 to 1950 in ton. In 1924, there was a production of 154,452 tons of salt. It rose to 310,173 tons in 1950 with an increase of 155,721 tons. That is, an increase of 100.82% took place in the amount of salt production from 1924 to 1950.

Salt sale was 178,713 tons in 1927. It rose to 252,027 tons in 1950 with an increase of 73,314 tons. In this way, an increase of 41.02% took place in salt sales from 1927 to 1950.

## CONCLUSION

Until the National Government was established in Ankara, salt monopoly was administered by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, which was established in the late Ottoman period. The income obtained from salt was also collected by this administration. The fact that salt was among the primary sources of income of the state led the National Government founded in Anatolia to introduce laws for increasing salt tax in order to raise the financial support for the country. TBMM (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey) trying to establish an administrative structure for conducting salt activities after the Ottoman Public Debt Administration and attach importance to salt monopoly in particular set up the General Directorate of Monopolies, assigned the task of operating sea, lake, rock, and spring salt to it, and made some efforts to take measures that would raise salt sales to foreign countries.

Though salt was obtained from many sources in Turkey, most salt production was made at Çamaltı Saltern. Salt production works involving obtaining raw salt from sea water generated around 150-160 thousand tons of salt a year. Some of this salt met the salt need of some cities around the Black Sea, Marmara, and the Mediterranean Sea, while the rest was exported to foreign countries.

Gradual increase in salt production from year to year facilitated its use in many areas. Thanks to the production and trade of salt used in various forms and fields such as table salt, agriculture, soda ash, ceramics, soap, glass, paper, chlorination, artificial silk, leather, chemistry, and food industry, significant contributions were made to the economy of the country by creating employment and exporting to foreign countries.

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