



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

Description of the funded research project
2nd Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects
to Support Post-Doctoral Researchers

Title of the research project: Value Chain Analysis of Tobacco in Greece (1949-1981)



Principal Investigator: Juan Carmona-Zabala

Reader-friendly title: VCAT-Gr

Scientific Area: History

Institution and Country: Foundation for Research & Technology – Hellas, Greece

Host Institution: Foundation for Research & Technology – Hellas, Greece

Collaborating Institution(s): None

Project webpage:
<https://www.ims.forth.gr/el/project/view?id=207>

Budget: 134,995.00 €

Duration: 24 months



The purpose of this research project is to produce a historical account of the evolution of Greece's tobacco sector in the period that spans between the end of the Greek Civil War (1949) and the country's accession into the EEC in 1981. More specifically, the project addresses three bundles of questions related to a) the relations of power among stakeholders within the tobacco sector (transnational organizations, state institutions, organized labor, agrarian associations, firms); b) the distribution of economic activities related to tobacco production and commercialization across the Greek geography; and c) changes in technology and value-adding processes. The project addresses these questions in an integrated fashion and paying attention to different nodes along the value-adding chain: agricultural production, leaf processing and export, and cigarette manufacturing. The project will therefore contribute to a more detailed, concrete understanding of what Greece's economic transformation in the postwar period looked like from the point of view of production and the groups that were involved in it. The research team will collect the necessary data from a series of historical archives. It will then make use of the theoretical framework proposed by the literature on value chains for the interpretation of the source material, and in order to weave the evidence into an explanatory narrative. The dissemination of the results will take the form of a multi-author edited volume, two peer-reviewed articles, two articles for non-specialists, and a website. In addition, the research team will organize a conference in Athens that will focus on the history of commodities.

The research project will not just make a contribution to Greek historiography by producing new historical knowledge. It will also make a methodological contribution to the historical study of commodities by further demonstrating the potential of the value-chains approach for this subfield of the historical discipline. This study of Greek tobacco is therefore relevant to an international audience for two reasons. First, because it places the topic in the broader context of Greece's integration into the GATT and EEC trading regimes. Second, because the theoretical approach will attract the interest of scholars of value chains who might not have any particular reason a priori to read about Greece.

Recent works on Greece's integration into the EEC exemplify how Greek history can be framed so as to make it internationally relevant. These works have revealed how business and the EEC's adoption of democracy as its unifying value determined the path that Greece and the EEC followed during the latter's Second Enlargement. These works have brought Greece into the discussion on the political transformations that EEC/EU conditionality has prompted in prospective. VCAT-Gr will add to our knowledge of how a specific branch of the Greek economy evolved in the context of Greece's relation with the EEC, from the signature of the Association Agreement in 1961 until accession in 1981. Economic historians have already pointed out that Greece's foreign trade became increasingly oriented towards Europe in that period, but they have not explored in detail how specific sectors of the economy evolved.

To sum up, this project will contribute to three growing bodies of historical scholarship: 1) the historiography on Greek tobacco, 2) the literature on the history of commodities, and 3) Greek economic histories of the postwar period.

In addition to having a scholarly impact within the historical discipline, the project will contribute to public debates about the history of Greece's economy. One of the consequences of roughly a decade of far-reaching economic disruption in Greece and elsewhere has been a renewed interest in economic history. A significant part of the Greek public is interested in the question of what went wrong and who is to blame for the economic downturn. In many ways, tobacco epitomizes the transformations that the Greek economy underwent during the years leading up to the crisis of 2008. It once was Greece's most important export, and the object of ambitious policies at the national level. Later, however, tobacco became the perfect example of an agricultural sector in decline despite the subsidies coming from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

A number of cultural organizations working on the conservation and dissemination of historical knowledge about Greek tobacco are likely to find value in the results of this research project. Such is the case of the Tobacco Museum of Kavala, the Digital Agrinio Tobacco Museum, and the Tobacco Museum of Pentapolis in the department of Serres. The material produced in this project can provide the basis for future collaboration between academic and cultural institutions. As part of the dissemination effort, the research team will make sure that these organizations are aware of the materials produced in this project.

The funding provided by HFRI makes it possible for me to further the PI's research agenda and develop the careers of all the research team members involved. It also provides the income needed to satisfy the material needs of the members during the period that they are employed.



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