The impact of the Ottoman Commercial Tribunals on the Tanzimat remains an enigma for historians. This branch of the Ottoman legal system uniquely accepted European merchants as judges, and existed throughout the Ottoman Empire for several decades as an institution of the Tanzimat reforms.

This dissertation contains a thorough account of the form and function of these tribunals during the Tanzimat reforms (c. 1839-1880). The imperial interactions in these tribunals provide novel analytical opportunities to clarify the nature of Ottoman resistance against European incursions. Similarly, the research investigates the sources of the discordant interactions in these tribunals that justified counterproductive imperial policies at every level of diplomacy and governance. Along these lines, this research augments the current understanding of Tanzimat in Ottoman history by presenting a previously unavailable perspective of provincial imperial interactions. Simultaneously, the intermutual analysis of local and global imperial interactions in the Ottoman Empire advances efforts in world history to explain the role of local imperial interactions in shaping the dynamics of global change in the nineteenth century.

Beside textual modes, the analysis subjected Ottoman and British archival evidence to quantitative methods, such as correspondence analysis, to identify variances in the outcomes of cases for different nationalities and locales, and to identify brokerage opportunities available to historical actors. These progressive analytical approaches demanded a methodological
commitment to the treatment of interactions among individuals and groups as network interactions.

The analysis yielded several results. At the local level, commercial tribunals created previously unavailable brokerage opportunities for European and Ottoman actors by diluting the legal authority of the Ottoman center. At the imperial level, the frictions and clashes of authority in the commercial tribunals dealt a significant blow to the Tanzimat reforms by sowing discord between the Ottoman reformers and their European allies, by magnifying the uncertainties perceived by the public, and by causing bottlenecks in the Ottoman bureaucratic system. The analysis also uncovers aggressive British and Ottoman strategies that distinguished Anglo-Ottoman interactions from Franco-Ottoman interactions, especially during the second half of the Tanzimat.