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## Olive Oil Production in the Eyâlet of Crete (1650-1670)

Upon the distribution of Byzantine lands among the Crusaders as a result of the IVth Crusade, Crete came to belong to Boniface, the Marquis of Montferra, who gave the island to the Republic of Venice through a treaty signed on August 12th 1204<sup>1</sup>. Because of its closeness to Anatolia and the Peloponnese, as a result of which it controlled trade between countries in the Mediterranean and Istanbul, Crete has played a significant role in the history of eastern Mediterranean. Wars that broke out with the intention of capturing Crete in the Middle Ages are to be interpreted as part of the continuous power struggle in the eastern Mediterranean. Thus by conquering Crete, Venice acquired great power in eastern Mediterranean and in the Aegean<sup>2</sup>. In the course of time, Crete became the outpost of Venice in the Aegean and the centre of the Empire in the Levant and embarked on organizing its commercial relations by means of the Duchy of Crete<sup>3</sup>. Through commercial

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1. Şerafettin Turan, *Türkiye-İtalya İlişkileri I Selçuklular 'dan Bizans 'in Sona Erişine*, İstanbul 1990, pp. 32-33.

2. Ekkehard Eickhoff, "Denizcilik Tarihinde Kandiye Muharebesi", transl. by Mihin Eren, *Atatürk Konferansları 1964-1968*, II, (Ankara 1970), p. 149.

3. On the relationships of Venice with the State of Anatolian Seldjuk and Anatolian





agreements Venice imported cereals, rice, maize, animals, oak gallnuts, wax, lumber and hemp from Anatolia, and exported cloth, soap, wine, ambergris and tin<sup>4</sup>.

After the Ottomans had established unity in Anatolia by abolishing the Anatolian Principalities, Venetians received permission from the Ottoman government to trade in Anatolia<sup>5</sup>. Trade in the eastern Mediterranean constituted an important factor in Ottoman-Venice relations. Venice did not want to lose, at any cost at all, the right to free trade in Ottoman lands that it had obtained through its agreements. At the end of Venice's struggles against the Ottomans, its government embarked on an effort to improve commercial relations and refresh trading agreements. The most important factor to improve commerce in the Levant was the traffic in goods from the Far East and India to Europe. The most important goods that brought enormous profit to merchants were sugar, dates, ivory, senna, jewellery, citrus fruits, valuable minerals, several types of dye, long fibres, wool and spice. These goods were transported from the Malacca Strait from the coast of Malabar to India, then to the Persian Gulf and via the Tigris and the Euphrates, they finally reached Syrian ports by caravan. Another route involved transporting them by means of Suez and from there to Alexandria. The Mediterranean ports between Alexandria and Iskenderun were the most important departure points in this trade. The goods were distributed from these ports by means of ships to Venice and the ports of the rest of continental Europe<sup>6</sup>. After the goods had

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Emirates and on the treaties signed during this period see Osman Turan, *Anadolu Selçuklular Hakkında Resmî Vesikalar Metin Tercüme Araştırmalar*, Ankara 1988; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and The Emirates Menteshe and Aydin 1300-1445*, Venice 1983; Melek Delilbaşı, "Ortaçağda Türk Hükümdarları Tarafından Batılılara Ahidnâmelerle Verilen İmtiyazlara Genel Bir Bakış", *Belleten*, XLVIII/185, (Ankara 1984), pp. 95-103.

4. W. Heyd, *Yakındoğu Ticaret Tarihi*, I, transl. by E. Ziya Karal, Ankara 1975, p. 608.

5. For the first Ottoman-Venician relationships and the treaties signed, see Ş. Turan, *Türkiye-İtalya*, pp. 191-324; Momcilo Spremic, "XV. Yüzyılda Venedik Cumhuriyeti'nin Sarkta Odediği Haraçlar", transl. by Mahmut H. Şakiroğlu, *Belleten*, XLVIII/185, (Ankara 1984), pp. 363-390; M. Delilbaşı, *Selanik (Thessaloniki)'in Fethi Hakkında Bir Tarih*, Ankara 1989; Halil İnalcık, "İmtiyâzât", *Diyanet İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, XXII, pp. 245-252; Meryem Kaçan, XVI-XVII, *Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı-Venedik Ahidnâmeleri*, (Marmara University Unpublished Master Thesis), Istanbul 1995.

6. Cengiz Orhonlu. "XVI. Asrın İlk Yarisında Kizildeniz Sahillerinde Osmanlılar". *İstanbul Üniversitesi Tarih Dergisi (İÜTD.)*. XII/16 (İstanbul 1962), p. 2.





reached the coasts of the Mediterranean, they were transported to continental Europe by the powerful commercial fleet of Venice. During this period Crete sometimes functioned as a dock for the transportation of goods from Anatolia, the Far East and India to Europe. The convoys of ships belonging to Venice put in at Candia on their way to Syria and back. This trade from the Levant began to move to Lisbon from the beginning of the 16th century onwards, as a result of the Portuguese sailing round the Cape of Good Hope and reaching the Far East<sup>7</sup>. In spite of this, from the 16th century onwards Crete played a much more important role than that of a station on the trading route between the East and Venice. Towards the end of domestic rebellions, Crete began to export its own products, while at the same time expanding the land it used for farming. The most important products for export included oil, wine, cheese and honey. In the course of time, due to improvements in the production of wine in the area of Malevizi near Candia, Crete began to occupy a very prominent place in the wine market, its products now being sought throughout Europe. At the beginning of the 16th century England appointed a representative whose task it was to oversee the safety of the wine trade in Candia<sup>8</sup>. During this period the Cretans were more inclined towards viticulture, farming becoming correspondingly less important for them. In the middle of the 16th century Crete could cater for its own subsistence needs in grain for six to eight months at most. As a result, the administrators of Crete met the demand for grain from Ottoman lands. Since the price of grain was higher in Crete than in the Ottoman domestic market and naval transportation was available, Ottoman producers used to sell their surplus product to the island of Crete. The people of Crete, who met their needs in grain in this way, thus used their lands for other types of cultivation which were more profitable for them, such as viticulture, olive production, citrus fruits and apiculture. However, the Senate of Venice decided that vineyards were to be pulled up and demanded that farming be carried in Crete. Although Cretan wine was sold to Europe, most of the

7. Salih Özbaran, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Hindistan Yolu". *İÜTD.*, XXXI. (İstanbul 1978). pp. 73-80; Fernand Braudel, *Akdeniz ve Akdeniz Dünyası*, I, trans. by M. Alj Kiliçay, İstanbul 1989, pp. 367-368.

8. Molly Greene, "Commerce and the Ottoman Conquest of Kandiye", *New Perspectives On Turkey*, X, (İstanbul, Spring 1994), p. 98.





other products of Crete were sent to Istanbul. Its physical closeness, the possibility that all their products could be sold and the price they would obtain for them were the main factors that rendered the Istanbul market attractive to Cretans<sup>9</sup>.

Crete was extremely important for Mediterranean trade and, thanks to its position in relation to the sea routes to Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, could obstruct merchandise reaching Istanbul. After conquering Cyprus, the Ottomans began to seek an opportunity to conquer Crete. Finally, due to the event of Sümbül Ağa, a military campaign was arranged towards this aim. The military campaigns against Crete starting in 1645 and ending with the conquest of Candia in 1669, constituted one of the long wars that the Ottoman State carried out during the 17th century. At the beginning of the war, Chania was conquered in 1645 and Rethymnon in 1646. Then the war focused on Candia, the administrative centre and most powerful castle of the island. The period until Fazil Ahmed Paşa conquered Candia in 1669 was famous for its naval warfare and use of mines to obstruct provisions and ammunition reaching the island<sup>10</sup>.

The Ottomans used to maintain records in order to determine the uses of the land they had conquered recently. The results of these records were included in two inventories or *defters* called *mufasssal* and *icmal*. *Mufasssal defters* contained the results of censuses while *icmal defters* recorded the distribution within the *mîrî arazi* regime<sup>11</sup>. These inventories allow us to determine the male taxpayer population living in a village or town at a given point in time, the amount of land they possessed or the tax they had to pay to the government. These inventories recorded clearly whose *hâs*, *timâr*, *mülk*

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9. Bruno Simon, "Onaltıncı Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit İlişkileri Hakkında Birkaç Not", X, *Türk Tarih Kongresi Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, IV (Ankara 1993), pp. 1815-1817.

10. Ersin Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi ve Adada Osmanlı İdaresinin Tesisi 1645-1670*, (Marmara University unpublished PhD dissertation), İstanbul 1997, pp. 21-154.

11. On Tahrîr and the inventories see Ömer Lütfi Barkan-Enver Meriçli, *Hüdavendigâr Livasi Tahrîr Defterleri*, I, Ankara 1988, pp. 1-144; H. İnalcık, *Hicrî 835 Tarihli Sûret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, Ankara 1987, pp. XI-XXXI; Feridun M. Emecen, XVI, *Asirda Manisa Kazâsi*, Ankara 1989, pp. 2-3; Erhan Afyoncu, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtında Defterhâne-i Âmire (XVI-XVIII, Yüzyıllar)*, (Marmara University unpublished PhD dissertation), İstanbul 1997, pp. 15-40.





or *wakf* each village was and the kinds of grains and animals that existed there<sup>12</sup>. *Kanunnâmes* or decrees were inserted at the beginning of these inventories to prevent contradictions arising between *reâyâ* and *sipahi* (feudal fief) within eyâlets, where the *mîrî arazi* system and *timâr* were valid. *Beylerbeyi divans* (councils of Governors) and *Kadi courts* were obliged to produce verdicts according to these laws. Sandjak *kanunnâmes* followed excellent principles with regard to the formulation of *reâyâ* tax and of land laws. For each Sandjak, the practice of putting *kanunnâme* at the beginning of *mufassal defters* started during the reign of Bayezid II. It is possible to divide these *kanunnâmes* into chronological and geographical groups. On the basis of tax rate, the Sandjaks of Anatolian Beylerbeyliği constitute one group. The eastern Anatolian Sandjaks such as Malatya, Diyarbakir, Erzurum, Musul, Harput and the domain of Syria, on the other hand, form two distinct groups. The central Anatolian Sandjaks constituted a different category similar to that of the Anatolian Beylerbeyliği Sandjaks. The *kanunnâmes* of the Rumelian Sandjak formed a special and different group. Here the articles representing typical *kanun-i Osmanî* were compatible with Byzantine and Slavic customs and law. Many laws depended on pre-Ottoman practice<sup>13</sup>.

With the conquest of Crete *tahrirs* or Ottoman registries were instituted. At present the first *mufassal defter* available is registered under number 820 within the *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) Tapu-Tahrîr Defterleri Classification (TD)*, and it is arranged in one inventory. This *kanunnâme* includes information on the legal situation and on tax in Crete. The *kanunnâme* was divided into four sections. The first section contains information about *timâr* and *zeamet* which were valid in Crete, whilst the second section contains information on the taxation system applied to merchants from abroad or from other cities of the island who traded principally in Chania. The third explains the legal situation of the *reâyâ* of the *eyâlet* and their taxes. Under Ottoman authority the land of Crete was regulated according to the Ottoman land system and was designated as land *öşrî*. The largest part of the land belonged to the state and was called *mîrî*. There were also some villages

12. Ö. L. Barkan, "Türkiye'de İmparatorluk Dervinin Büyük Nüfus ve Arazi Tahrirleri ve Hakana Mahsus İstatistik Defterleri 1", *İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, II/1, (İstanbul 1940), p. 20.

13. H. İnalçik, "Kanunnâme", *DİA*, XXIV, pp. 334-335.





belonging to *wakfs* or bequeathed to religious establishments<sup>14</sup>. This system involved villagers in Crete paying *öşür* on products such as grains, olive oil, pulses, etc. The *kanunnâme* dictated that the rate of *öşür* applying to products in Crete amount to 1/10 in 1650. Furthermore, *salariye* were collected at a rate of 1/30. Altogether *öşür* and *salariye* were collected from the whole of Crete at a rate of 2/15. The following table gives the quantity of olive oil produced in Crete in 1650. *Öşür* on olive oil was paid according to the *medre* scale. *Medre* was a liquid measure, consisting of four *kilinder* each of which measured two *okkas* and equalled 10256 litres<sup>15</sup>. According to this measure in 1650, 24256 *medres* (253 877 litres) *öşür* tax was collected from the Eyâlet of Crete.

**Table I.**  
**The Quantity of Tithe and the Real Production (in terms of medre) of Olive Oil in the Eyâlet of Crete in 1650.**

Sandjak Name	Tithe Quantity	Real Production
Candia	8712	65340
Chania	6683	50122
Rethymnon	5027	37702
Sitia	4332	32430
Total	24754	185654

14. The farmers who lived on this land were called *timâr raiyyeti*, *hâs raiyyeti*, *wakf raiyyeti* etc. according to the way in which land was used in their villages. The designation of land as *hâs*, *zeamet*, *timâr*, *wakf* or *mülk* did not change *reâyâ's* responsibility to pay taxes (F. M. Emecen, *Manisa Kazâsi*, p. 228, n. 27). After the division of state land into *hâs*, *zeamet* and *timâr*, this land was distributed to villagers by assigning them deeds dividing the land into farms. According to these deeds the lands used were *raiyyet* farms that could not be sold, dedicated or donated, but could be transferred from father to son as corporation. Villagers had to cultivate them and provide their own means of production. In return for the land given them, villagers paid the taxes imposed by the state and *sipahi* as laid down by the law (H. İnalçık, "Köy Köylü İmparatorluk", *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Toplum ve Ekonomi*, (İstanbul 1993), p. 4).

15. Walter Hinz, "İslamda Ölçü Sistemleri", transl. by Acar Sevim, *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, V. (İstanbul 1999), p. 55.





The tithe tax amounted to 2/15 of the production and if this percentage is multiplied by a factor of 7.5, one can deduce that 185654 *medres* of olive oil, equal to 19,004,067 litres, were produced on Crete in 1650. The greatest oil production on the island was achieved in the Candia Sandjak and the least in the Sitia Sandjak. Furthermore in this section the tax that the *reâyâ* would have to pay is determined. At the end of the *kanunnâme* the sales tax for the markets of the island is estimated.

The registry (*tahrîr*) of the island after the occupation of Candia is quite different from the typical Ottoman registry. Fazil Ahmed Pasha transferred the capital of the island to Candia, after he conquered the city on September 6, 1669 and ordered that a census be taken throughout the island. He assigned Defterdarzâde Mehmed Efendi, one of the clerks of the Jannissary, as the *tahrîr emini*<sup>16</sup> (registrar) to be responsible for the task. The *mufassal defters* of this *tahrîr*, TD 822 and 825, are held in the BOA. The first *defter* deals with the Chania and Rethymnon Sandjaks and consists of 658 pages, while the second (TD 825) deals with the Candia and Sitia Sandjaks and consists of 962 pages. In these *tahrîrs*, however, there is no information as to when the census was completed. Thus the date by which the census was completed can only be determined from the *tahrîrs* of *cizye* or taxes and *icmâl* of the same census. These *tahrîrs*, in which the *defters* of the *cizye* and *icmâl* of this census are included, mention that the census was concluded in *Hicrî* 1801, but no exact date is given<sup>17</sup>. This date corresponds to *Miladî* (of the Gregorian calendar) for the years 1670-1671. Study of these inventories suggests that the survey was concluded in 1670.

In the pages 2-5 of the *tahrîr*, which belongs to the Candia and the Sitia Sandjaks, a newly designed *kanunnâme* for the island of Crete appears. In this *tahrîr* it is obvious that both the legal status of the *reâyâ* of the island and the structure of the *tahrîr* was improved. The *kanunnâme* indicates that all land on the island was declared as *haracî* land. This meant that each piece of land was property of the individual landlord, who could thus sell it, give it away or purchase more land from other landlords. When the initial owner passed away, the land would have been shared among his heirs. If the new owners

16. Erzurumlu Osman Dede. *Târih-i Fazil Ahmed Pasha*, Süleymaniye Library, Hamidiye Department, Number 909, leaf 79a.

17. BOA, TD 801, p. 48; BOA, TD 980, p.6.





did not have the means, or simply did not wish to cultivate the land themselves, they could rent it out to other farmers, who would pay them a certain tax in return. This law applied to the Muslim citizens as well, which meant that if they owned land they had to pay the *haraç*. In other words, anyone who accepted Ottoman law and lived on the island could own land and in return were obligated to pay the *cizye* and the *haraç* (dues and taxes). Two types of *haraç* were collected from the landowners, on the basis of the type of crops that they produced: the *haraç-mukasem* from those who owned grain farms and olive groves and the *haraç-mukataa* from those who had orchards, vegetable farms and flower gardens. The land used to cultivate pulses and grains was separated primarily into two categories, the highly fertile and the moderately fertile land, the decision as to what land fell into what category being decided on the basis of its total yield. Then yield of each farm was evaluated on the basis of whether or not it approximated the *cerib* (minimum yield); for a highly fertile piece of land the *cerib* was estimated to 5 kilos of yield and for a moderately fertile one to 2.5 kilos. 1/5 of the entire yield was collected as *haraç-mukasem*. As for the olive groves it was estimated that 5 kilos of olive oil were to be obtained from each tree. Again, 1/5 of the olive oil was collected as *haraç-mukasem*. If a farmer left his land fallow for a year he was not obliged to pay the *haraç-mukasem* for that year. Likewise, if a piece of land produced crops twice within the same year, the farmer would have to pay the *haraç-mukasem* twice. In the *kanunnâme* the taxation system for vineyards and truck farms, where the *haraç-mukataa* was charged, is displayed after the *haraç-mukasem*.

The greatest advantage of these *tahrîrs* is that they made it possible to determine exactly how much land was available for cultivation in each settlement on the island, in other words, how many acres of grain and pulse farms, vineyards, produce farms, etc. a village, *nâhiye* or *sandjak* included. The situation is even better when it comes to the olive groves of the island. Thanks to this system of taxation, there exist complete records of the number of olive trees and the quantity of olive oil produced by them. These data show that in 1670 there were 121,123 olive trees in Candia Sandjak, 139,307 in Sitia Sandjak, 248,130 in Chania Sandjak and 157,455 in Rethymnon Sandjak, making up for a total of 666,015 olive trees on the island of Crete.





**Table II.**  
**The Number of Olive Trees in Crete in 1670**

Sandjak Name	Number of olive trees
Candia	121123
Sitia	139307
Chania	248130
Rethymnno	157455
<b>Total</b>	<b>666015</b>

The annual tax per olive tree was estimated at 5 kilos as *haraç-mukasem* in every Sandjak except that of Rethymnon<sup>18</sup>. In the Rethymnon Sandjak matters were slightly different, since the most productive olive groves were located there. Thus the olive trees at Milopotamo, Amari and Ayvasil were taxed on the basis of an estimated minimum production of 10 kilos of olive oil per year. Only the trees in Rethymnon Nâhiye were taxed on the basis of the minimum of 5 kilos of olive oil estimated to be the annual production scale. As a result, from a total of 157455 olive trees in Sandjak, 85803 were taxed on the basis of the minimum 10 kilos of olive oil estimated to be the annual production scale and the remaining 71652 on the 5 kilo of olive oil minimum estimated annual production scale.

**Table III.**  
**The Production of Olive Oil in Crete in 1670 (measured in Kilos)**

Sandjak Name	Number of olive trees
Candia	605615
Sitia	696535
Chania	1240650
Rethymnno	1216290
<b>Total</b>	<b>3759090</b>

18. *Okka vukiyye* or *kiyye*, the unit of the Ottoman weight system equaled to 400 drachms and 1,2828 kilograms (H. İnalcık, "Osmanlı Metrolojisine Giriş" transl. by Eşref Bengi Ozbilen, *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, L XXIII, (İstanbul 1991), pp. 27-28.





The production of olive oil in Crete increased greatly in 1670 in comparison with the yield from the year 1650. As can be seen from the table above, in 1670 Chania Sandjak had the highest production of olive oil among the Sandjaks, but by 1650 highest production came from Candia. This is due to two important reasons. The first was that administrative changes were made throughout the island. The capital of the island was transferred from Chania to Candia, and Lasit Nâhiye, which was previously dependent administratively on Candia Sandjak, became dependent on Sitia Sandjak. The second reason was the outbreak of a lengthy war in Candia and its surroundings.

During the time of the Venetian rule, the most important of all exportable goods from the island of Crete was wine. The wine produced around Candia and consumed in every European country brought great profits to the exporters. When the island came under Ottoman rule, olive oil replaced wine at the top of the list of exportable goods. This change was due to the fact that the Ottoman government promoted the production of olive oil more than that of wine. Furthermore, the cultivation of olive trees involved much simpler techniques than that of the vines. Eleven years after the island of Crete had come under Ottoman rule, British traveller Bernard Randolph wrote that the production of olive oil was far more advanced than the production of wine and described it as follows: "They preserve the oil in big four-sided vessels made of wood. Merchants check the oil meticulously in order not to lose customers. They pay attention lest the oil includes sediment. The oil containing sediment is cheaply sold and made soap. In parts of Anatolia Chania oil is much more liked and preferred. The delicious taste of oil of the island is sometimes attributed to young olive trees and sometimes to manual collection of the olives"<sup>19</sup>.

The production of olive oil on the island of Crete increased during Ottoman rule and this increase affected several branches of local industry as well. Since, for example, that olive oil was the basic material used in the manufacture of soap, Crete became the producer of soap in the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the soap produced in Crete, and in Candia in particular, was considered to be of superior quality and was in considerable demand. Candia soaps were famous for their effectiveness in cleaning. At the beginning of the

19. Bernard Randolph, *Ege Takimadaları Arşipelago*, transl. by Umit Koçer, İstanbul 1998, p. 85.

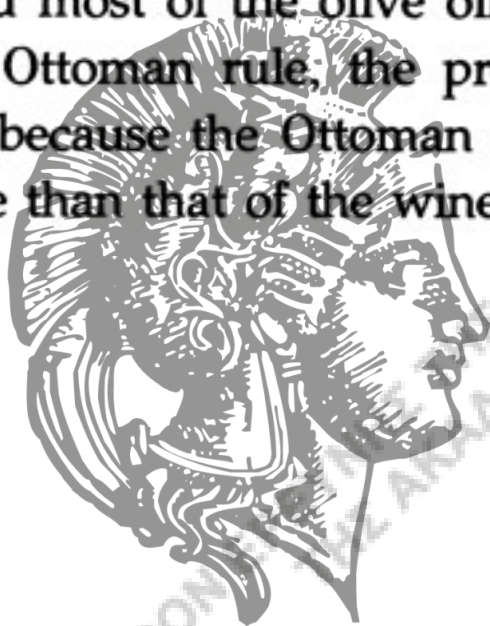




18th century the small number of soap manufacturers in Crete was still small, but by the middle of the century their number had increased more than tenfold<sup>20</sup>.

To sum up: the island of Crete, which has played a very important role throughout the history of eastern Mediterranean, became a significant stronghold and a major trade center in Levant during the time of the Venetian rule. The island was conquered by the Ottoman Turks after wars between 1645 and 1649. During Venetian and Ottoman rule, the most important exportable goods of the island were wine and olive oil. Under Venice, wine occupied first place in exports from the island. Malvasio and Moscato wines were famous throughout Europe and brought great profits to the exporters. In this period, olive oil came only second among the island's exportable goods. After Crete came under Ottoman rule, however, olive oil replaced wine. During that time the best quality olive oil and the one preferred by most consumers was that produced in Crete and most of the olive oil produced in Crete was consumed in Istanbul. Under Ottoman rule, the production of olive oil in Crete increased yearly, mainly because the Ottoman government encouraged the production of olive oil more than that of the wine\*.

ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑ



ΑΘΗΝΩΝ

20. Said Oztürk, "Osmanli Devleti'nde Sabun Sanayii", *Türkler*, X (Ankara 2002), pp. 783-785.

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