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Special Collections and Private Archives for Business History Research in Turkey: A Review

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Introduction

The field of business history typically relies on company archives to examine corporate internal dynamics, strategic choices and organisational cultures. When access to these archives is limited or impossible, historians must seek alternative sources. Turkey provides an interesting example of this situation. Although large holding companies and family businesses play a significant role in the country's economic and political growth, their internal records are rarely open to researchers. This lack of access highlights both institutional and cultural challenges. There is no legal obligation to preserve historical records, and the tradition of corporate accountability is weak. Additionally, business ownership is often concentrated within powerful families who see company records as private possessions rather than public resources.[2]

The limited accessibility of corporate archives in Turkey has created a significant gap in developing business history as an academic field. While economic history and political economy have thrived through state archives and statistical data[3], the internal workings of firms, especially after 1950, remain mostly undocumented in academic literature. In this context, special collections, private archives and the holdings of professional organisations provide important but often overlooked resources for business history research. These materials can help reconstruct aspects of managerial beliefs, elite networks, labour relations, consultancy practices and broader patterns of industrial and commercial development, even without firm-level documentation.[4]

This article reviews a variety of alternative archival sources in Turkey. Its goal is to document and evaluate their importance for business historians. It highlights the availability and limitations of collections held by university libraries, research centres, professional chambers, foundations and the estates of business leaders and consultants. It also includes collections from major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

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[2] A. Bugra, *State and Business in Modern Turkey: A Comparative Study* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[3] Ş. Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012).

[4] Kenneth Lipartito, 'Culture and the Practice of Business History' (1995) 24(2), *Business and Economic History*, pp.1–41; Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard and Stephanie Decker, 'Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue Between Historical Theory and Organization Theory' (2014) 39(3) *Academy of Management Review,* pp.250–74.

Important institutions such as the SALT Research archive, the Vehbi Koç Foundation Archive (VKV) and various university special collections are key access points for exploring Turkey's business history.

The article goes beyond identifying existing sources to examine methods and information issues related to the use of personal and non-institutional archives. These sources are often curated, influenced by ideas or incomplete. This raises important questions about how narratives are constructed, what is left out, and how history is interpreted. However, academics in similar situations with limited archives argue that these materials can also help reshape the understanding of labour history. They shift the focus from companies to the networks, institutions and people that make up the larger system of capitalism.[5]

The organisation of the article is outlined here. Following this section, the next part addresses the motivations and impacts of Turkey's access to business records. A subsequent section then explores the potential of special collections and private archives that could serve as alternatives to business archives. Finally, the article wraps up with a conclusion section.

Access to Business Archives and Archival Accumulation in Turkey

When examining archival practices in Turkish businesses, it can be said that despite the existence of century-old brands and economic organizations, and even large-scale business groups, archival accumulation is quite limited. For instance, Seven Ağır[6] points out that the scarcity of archival resources for business history, especially in the Middle East, including Turkey, and the lack of specialised archives capable of enhancing the study of business history – unlike in various developed nations – represent one of the main challenges to documenting business history. Seven Ağır further highlights that the lack of legal frameworks and regulations in Turkey has resulted in situations where such archival resources are shared without government aid or oversight and are only accessible by chance. In addition, no legally established archival institution in Turkey is responsible for the regular collection and processing of private archives. Considering all these factors, the value of the few existing private archives becomes apparent. In his

[5] F. Amatori and G. Jones (eds), *Business History around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Stephanie Decker, 'The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-colonialism and Archival Ethnography' (2013) 8 (2), *Management & Organizational History,* pp.155–73.

[6] Seven Ağır, 'Nineteenth-century Female Entrepreneurship in Turkey' in J. Aston and C. Bishop, *Female Entrepreneurs in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

report on business archives, Faruk Bilici[7] cited the Ottoman Bank Archive as a rare and important example and noted that although some large private groups such as Koç and Sabancı have made efforts to organise their archives under a centralised system, they are still far from being accessible to researchers. One important point to consider is whether these archives are accessible to all researchers. This issue has a significant and direct impact on the potential for accumulating business history knowledge. For example, in a study[8] on the rationalisation of economic organisations in the early republican period, the Türkiye İş Bank Archive was consulted along with many other institutions. In response, it was stated that the general management would approve the request for permission to research the subject and that researchers would only be able to conduct searches using specific keywords. This example alone demonstrates that such institutional archives can be viewed not as archives but as material storage facilities where documents are kept away from researchers. Another dilemma created by this issue, and a dimension revealed by local experiences, is that some archives are only accessible to specific individuals, or only those with close ties to these institutions can benefit from them. For instance, specific research[9] that examines the archives of Koç Holding, a key institution in Turkey's economic history, indicates that these archives are only available to select individuals.

A relevant and complex issue that has sparked significant debate is the ownership of documents and information produced by private sector organisations such as businesses, and who has the authority to manage them. It is widely accepted that archives play a crucial role in shaping institutional and social memory. This memory depends on the efforts of private organisations and individuals who create, preserve, organise and define archives, ensuring their protection and the transmission of historical events to future generations. Furthermore, the information and documents created and accumulated by economic organisations constitute an important part of the national heritage. In this context, examining whether the information and documents from a long-established and significant business transition into the public domain after a certain length of time is essential. The issue extends beyond merely making these archives accessible and visible through texts and exhibitions created by the institutions. It also involves recognising that

[7] Faruk Bilici, 'İş dünyası arşivleri', *Arşivcilik Konferansları*, Hamza Kandur (haz.) (İstanbul: Librairie de Pera, 1995), pp.74–83.
[8] Akansel Yalçınkaya, 'Adapting Western Management Practices: The Rationalization and Taylorization of Turkish State Monopolies in Early Republican Turkey (1933–1950)' (2024) 30(4), *Journal of Management History*, pp.513–26.
[9] C. Dündar, *Özel Arşivinden Belgeler ve Anılarıyla Vehbi Koç* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2006); C. Dündar, *Özel Arşivinden Belgeler ve Anılarıyla Vehbi Koç II (1961–1976)* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008); Asli M. Çolpan, and Geoffrey Jones, 'Business Groups, Entrepreneurship and the Growth of the Koç Group in Turkey' (2016) 58 (1), *Business History,* pp.69–88.

society is the proper custodian of this information and documentation, allowing third-party institutions and individuals to write alternative histories, and ensuring equitable access for all without requiring registration for researchers. This forms a crucial component of the mission of private archives and distinguishes them fundamentally from state archives and collectors.[10]

In the Turkish context, the prominence of private business archives must also be understood in relation to the unusually direct role that banks and business conglomerates play in cultural production and institutional life[11]. Unlike the UK – and to a lesser extent the US – where corporate involvement in culture is predominantly realised through sponsorship of events (e.g. Istanbul Film Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival), exhibitions or prizes, several of Turkey's most reputable publishing houses (e.g. Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları), universities (e.g. Koç University, Sabancı University, Özyeğin University), and cultural institutions (e.g. Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV), Istanbul Modern Museum, Sakıp Sabancı Museum) are themselves founded, administered, or closely affiliated with major conglomerates.[12] These institutions occupy a complex position vis-à-vis the state, simultaneously intersecting with official cultural policy and, at times, providing alternative or oppositional intellectual spaces.[13] While this article does not aim to analyse corporate cultural patronage per se, acknowledging this structural feature helps to situate private business archives in Turkey within a broader institutional ecosystem and underscores their distinctive potential for historical research in business historiography.

Special Collections and Private Archives for Turkish Business History Research

In the past decade, especially in Turkey and worldwide, the emergence of small-scale, predominantly autonomous private archives has generated new prospects for research in business history and other disciplines. This repository encompasses corporate archives, foundation and familial collections, as well as archives curated by professional associations or individual collectors. Typically maintained by private enterprises, corporations, foundations or non-governmental organisations, such archives aim to preserve corporate legacy, bolster institutional identity, or enhance cultural heritage projects.

[10] Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'Türkiye'de özel arşivlerin oluşumu üzerine bazı düşünceler' in İ. Keskin, Ş. N. Somer and N. Oğuz (eds), *İsmet Binark Armağanı* (İstanbul: Türk Edebiyatı Vakfı Yayınları, 2015), p.380.

[11] N. Şeni, *İstanbul'da Özel Kültür Politikası ve Kentsel Alan* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011).

[12] G. Çelik, *Supporting Arts and Culture: A Case Study of Private Corporations and Foundations in Turkey* (Unpublished master's thesis, Kadir Has Üniversitesi, 2018).

[13] E. Massicard and A. Alemdaroğlu, 'Mechanisms of Privilege: Private Foundations' Tax-exemption in Turkey (1967–2022)' (2026) *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, pp.1–20.

The gathered materials – comprising company correspondence, accounting records, contracts, advertising materials, catalogues, personnel files and visual documentation – are directly relevant to business history, providing insights into organisational structure, management practices, and market relations often absent in state archives. The emergence of virtual libraries and online archival platforms has profoundly transformed the research landscape. These platforms offer a blend of digitised archival materials, born-digital records and curated publishing collections, making them accessible to scholars regardless of geographical location. Prominent examples include SALT Research and VEKAM in Turkey. Historians who neglect these materials compromise the thorough understanding of primary sources, thus limiting the depth and originality of their analyses.

Furthermore, such digitally operated archival initiatives bring new perspectives to archival practices due to their open access and often free nature. This is because archival initiatives are often based on the state's recording of its public memory. The state archive is merely one example of an archive; it is not a special form of archive but merely one form of archive. In Turkey, private archives have evolved within a structural and institutional framework that differs markedly from the country's long-established state archival tradition. The state archives, rooted in Ottoman bureaucratic practices and later formalised under the Republican administration, represent a centralised and legally regulated system designed to preserve the official memory of the state. By contrast, private archives – maintained by individuals, families, foundations or non-governmental institutions – have historically developed outside this centuries-old administrative continuity and lack the same level of legal standardisation and institutional integration. Although private archives provide valuable complementary sources for social, cultural and intellectual history, their processes of preservation, access and classification have generally remained fragmented and dependent on individual or organisational initiatives rather than a unified national archival policy. This divergence reflects the distinct historical trajectories and degrees of institutionalisation characterising public and private archival practices in Turkey.[14]

Creating an archive does not necessarily mean replicating the organisational and operational logic of state archives. Many private and corporate archives are run according to professional standards that are like those of official archival institutions. However, more digital archival projects are using different, more flexible models. These digital archives are often created by researchers, independent groups or people in the

[14] H. Öztürk, 'Private Archive in Turkey: Recommendations in the Context of Private Archives Practices in Scotland' (2022), *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*, 9 (1) pp.1–7.

community. They do more than just store materials; they also actively curate, organise, and put them in context for research. Their collections may consist of digitised documents, born-digital records, visual materials or oral histories, often curated to emphasise perspectives and practices that are underrepresented in state or corporate archives. Adam Nix and Stephanie Decker say that these digital archives and sources give business historians unique points of view and new ways to make historical knowledge.[15]

Within this framework, the study answers its main research question: *Is it possible to conduct business history research without access to official or institutional archival materials in a context like Turkey, where most economically significant entities are family-owned and unavailable to researchers?* Additionally, it addresses a related question: *What alternative sources, besides official or institutional archives, can provide archival data, and how can these sources be accessed?* The findings highlight the important role of special collections and digital archives in tackling these challenges and broadening the opportunities for business history research in limited archival settings. İlhan Tekeli[16] points out that when an institution will not open its archives, writing its history, especially its economic history, becomes nearly impossible. In Turkey, this means that researchers studying business history often must write history without relying on archives. To manage this, business historians may use the increasing number of private and family archives that have appeared in recent years. Many of these have been digitised and serve as alternative sources for constructing historical narratives when access to official or institutional archives is unavailable.

Researchers in Turkey can find important information in several archives that are connected to holding companies, banks and economic institutions. These include the SALT Research Archive, the Yapı Kredi Bank Historical Archive, the Türkiye İş Bank Museum Archive and the Eczacıbaşı Holding Archive and Documentation Centre. These holdings, along with university-based collections like VEKAM and the Suna Kıraç Library Digital Collection, as well as independent archives like the Ara Güler Archive, the Istanbul Research Institute Archive and the History Foundation Archive, create a different kind of archival landscape because they let historians put together a picture of the past from many different sources instead of just one institutional record[17]. As shown by recent events, the Turkish bourgeoisie's efforts to open their economic and artistic

[15] Adam Nix and Stephanie Decker, 'Using Digital Sources: the Future of Business History?' (2023) 65(6), *Business History,* pp.1048–71.

[16] İ. Tekeli, *Tarihyazımı Üzerine Düşünmek* (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 1998); İ. Tekeli, *Birlikte Yazılan ve Öğrenilen Bir Tarihe Doğru* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2011).

[17] Baruh, ibid.; T. Karatepe, E. Yılmaz Şentürk and V. Saydam (eds), *Bilgi ve Belge Çalışmaları: Özel Arşivlerde Teori ve Uygulama* (İstanbul: Hiperlink Yayınları, 2017).

collections to the public, mainly through the foundations and universities they have created, have played an important role in raising awareness about archives. This trend has picked up speed in recent years due to digital technologies, which have opened new opportunities for archival practices. For over twenty years in Turkey, materials outside official state archives, such as diaries, memoirs, family collections and photographs, have attracted the attention of cultural, artistic, and educational institutions and established companies. In response, many of these groups have started initiatives in this area. Their reasons and goals vary. They aim to promote new research directions, create artistic or aesthetic platforms, rebuild institutional memory and seek financial or social standing.[18]

The digitisation of archives, which act as stores of collective memory, began in Turkey in 1998. This was an important step toward providing faster and location-independent access to archival materials. It also helped make these materials available to a larger audience. Besides digitisation, adding high-quality metadata improves searchability, supports better cross-referencing, and allows greater compatibility with other archival collections[19]. It is important to look closely at these archives' nature, content and significance, especially regarding their potential contributions to business history research.

In 2011 Garanti Bank combined the services of three different cultural institutions: the Ottoman Bank Archive and Research Centre, Garanti Platform, and Garanti Gallery.[20] This new organization is called SALT. SALT Galata has an information centre known as SALT Research. It was created by merging the collections of these institutions and has a library that focuses on history, architecture and contemporary art. The library holds over 45,000 books and more than 60,000 periodicals. These include printed and rare works in several languages, mainly Turkish, Ottoman Turkish, French and English. A notable item in the collection is the *Annuaire Oriental* (Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları), which provides historians with valuable chances for detailed research. SALT Research's archival resources contain over 1.5 million digitised images and more than 100,000 catalogue records available through open access. One unique aspect of this archive is its preservation of the records of the Ottoman Bank, known as Bank-ı Osmanî-i Şahane, which was founded in 1863 and served historically as the official bank and treasury of the Ottoman Empire. Researchers can find various materials related to the Ottoman Bank,

[18] Nurçin İleri, 'Tarihin suskunluklarının peşinden gitmek: Bir arşiv deneyimi' (2021) *Sekme #1: Arşiv-Temas*.

[19] Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'Arşivden çıktı: Arşivi kamuya açmak' <https://www.academia.edu/34952771/Ar%C5%9Fivden_%C3%87%C4%Bıkt%C4%B1_Ar%C5%9Fivi_Kamuya_A%C3%A7mak> accessed 31 July 2025.

[20] Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'SALT Araştırma: Özel arşivleri paylaşıma açmak' (17 December 2020) <https://ankos.org.tr/tr/salt-arastirma-ozel-arsivleri-paylasima-acmak-webinari/> accessed 31 July 2025.

including personnel photographs, stock certificates, banknotes, promotional documents and real estate files.[21] The archival collection, the basis for the Ottoman Bank Historical Research Centre, constitutes one of the richest sources on late Ottoman and early Republican financial, economic, political and cultural history. The Ottoman Bank, with all the diversity of its functions as a bank of issue, as a state bank dealing with the state's financial operations and as a commercial bank with a highly developed market base, witnessed the significant events of its time. All the colours and variety of the period are reflected in these documents which, even though not very voluminous when compared with other banking archives, constitutes one of the best sources to assess, complete and re-evaluate the documentation available on the subject.[22] As a direct result of the archival work related to this collection, the history of the Ottoman Bank[23] has been thoroughly documented. In addition to studies highlighting the wealth and variety of the bank's archival materials[24], research has also looked at the bank's employees, especially its operational history. For example, one study provides detailed insights relevant to business history, discussing topics like the turnover rates of female employees from a gender perspective, their national identities, reasons for leaving their jobs, and the controlling practices used by their supervisors.[25] Furthermore, Edhem Eldem used the same archive to explain how the ethnic identities of the bank's staff changed as the institution moved from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic.[26]

The Yapı Kredi Bank Historical Archive was created to identify, document, preserve, and organise the bank's contributions to Turkey's banking sector and culture from its start to today. It follows modern archival standards.[27] Its mission also includes ensuring relevant information reaches the right users quickly and effectively. While the archive's collection of documents may not be extensive, it stands out for containing the photographic works of Selahattin Giz, who was one of the most notable photojournalists of the Republican era, along with those of Ara Güler.[28] The Eczacıbaşı Group Archive is currently being

[21] Elif Yılmaz, 'SALT Galata ve SALT Araştırma' (2014) 15(2), *Bilgi Dünyası*, pp.463–4.

[22] Lorans Tanatar, 'Offerings of the Ottoman Bank Historical Research Center', *Colloquium of the European Association for Banking History e. V. East Meets West: Banking, Commerce and Investment* Istanbul 15–16 October 1999.

[23] E. Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank* (İstanbul: Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, 1999); Edhem Eldem, 'The (Imperial) Ottoman Bank, Istanbul' (1999) 6(1), *Financial History Review*, pp.85–95.

[24] E. Eldem, *A 135-Year-Old Treasure: Glimpses from the Past in the Ottoman Bank Archives* (İstanbul: Ottoman Bank, 1998).

[25] Laurence-Aida Ammour and Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'Çalışan kadından bir kesit (1911–1934): Osmanlı Bankası kadın personeli' (1999) 183, *Tarih ve Toplum*, pp.152–1.

[26] Edhem Eldem, 'Reshuffling nationality and ethnicity. The Ottoman Bank staff from empire to republic' in T. de Graaf, J. Jonker and J. J. Mobron (eds), *European Banking Overseas, 19th-20th Century* (Amsterdam: ABN AMRO Historical Archives, 2002), pp.179–211.

[27] A. Kılıçarslan, *Pazarlama İlkelerine Göre Görsel-İşitsel Arşiv Malzemelerinin Pazarlanması: Yapı Kredi Tarihi Arşiv Müzesi Örneği* (Unpublished master thesis: Marmara University, 2007), pp.71–2.

[28] C. King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), p.21.

digitised and is not available for researchers to access. You can request access information. The archive holds collections of documents and materials related to the Eczacıbaşı Group and its founders.[29] In contrast, Koç University's VEKAM and the Suna Kıraç Library Digital Collection provide open access to free resources. These resources are handy for business historians studying the Koç Group and its founder, Vehbi Koç, as well as for scholars focusing on Ankara-specific research conducted by VEKAM[30]. The Vehbi Koç Newspaper Clippings Collection in the Suna Kıraç Library Digital Collection includes important press articles gathered from various periodicals concerning Vehbi Koç. While the Sakıp Sabancı Museum Collections and Archives at Sabancı University do not contain materials directly related to economics or business history, they still offer valuable resources for researchers exploring the cultural and artistic aspects of the business world. These collections and archives have been digitised and are available through the 'digitalSSM' initiative. This digital archive project follows international standards in the digitisation process, creates detailed metadata for the materials, and allows open access for the global research community.[31]

The Türkiye İş Bank Museum Archive holds a diverse collection of objects, documents, and audiovisual materials that have been gathered since the bank's founding. This collection reflects the development of banking during the Republican era and is an essential part of the bank's daily operations[32]. The archive includes banking-related documents like bills of exchange, receipts, collection slips, cash register records, share certificates, checks and bank wallets. It also contains contracts, internal correspondence, official communications with various institutions and organisations, letters to the bank and records about the bank's early employees. Together, these materials provide insights into that time's social and economic life. In addition, the collection features advertising materials such as newspaper advertisements, posters and postcards. It includes photographs, paintings, historical architectural plans, blueprints and various films on various topics. This extensive archive serves as a valuable resource for research in social and economic history.[33] The State Planning Organization Library serves as the library for

[29] Evrim Çataloğlu, archive and documentation specialist at Eczacıbaşı Group archive, email correspondence with Evrim Çataloğlu, 26 April 2019.

[30] Alev Ayaokur, 'Vehbi Koç ve Ankara Araştırmaları Merkezi (VEKAM) Kütüphanesi ve Arşivi' (2011) 12 (1), *Bilgi Dünyası*, pp.160-3.

[31] Osman Serhat Karaman, 'digitalSSM: Sabancı Üniversitesi Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi'nin koleksiyon ve arşivlerinin dijitalleştirilmesi' (Paper presented at Archives and Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age conference), 20 October 2017, İstanbul, Türkiye).

[32] Ayşegül Okan Sağlam, 'What does a bank do in the museum world?' (Paper presented at ICMAH Annual Conference on Corporate Museums, 10-12 October 2018, İstanbul, Türkiye).

[33] Türkiye İş Bankası Müzesi, <http://www.issanat.com.tr/turkiye-is-bankasi-muzesi/koleksiyon-bagis> accessed 31 July 2025.

the Presidency of Strategy and Budget of the Republic of Turkey. It provides users free access to digital copies of many documents, reports and records produced by the State Planning Organization. The State Planning Organization Library also keeps an extensive archive of materials related to the coordination and monitoring phases of development plans carried out between 1960 and 1980. This primary source material offers valuable support for various innovative and original research projects.[34]

In recent years, the transformation of industrial heritage sites within municipal jurisdictions into information and documentation centres by local governments – aimed at fostering urban memory – has highlighted the growing importance of these sites as archival resources for writing the operational histories of local government information and documentation services. For instance, the SEKA Paper Factory in İzmit, a significant industrial heritage site from the Republican era, was transferred to the Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality, where the SEKA Documentation Centre, housing the SEKA Archive, was repurposed as the SEKA Paper Museum, serving the research community.[35] Given that the SEKA Paper Factory was founded in 1934 and became operational in 1936, the archive's role as a crucial repository of Turkey's economic and social history is established.[36]

Despite the various digital archiving projects mentioned above, efforts to digitise historical sources in Turkey have been moving slowly. Turkey has not fully adopted the idea of open and unrestricted access unlike many other countries. Current initiatives mainly focus on preserving and cataloguing historical documents for internal use, while sharing these materials through open access is a lesser concern. This approach contrasts broader archival beliefs, such as those of Henri Langlois, the founder of the Cinémathèque Française. He argued that the best way to preserve a film is to share it, suggesting that archives thrive on sharing rather than hoarding.[37] In this context, open access is not just an ideal; it is essential for preserving and passing on archival materials over time.

[34] M. Yavuz, *Kamu Yatırımlarının Yönetimi: Müstakil Projelerden Toplulaştırılmış Projelere Geçiş* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ankara University, 2017).

[35] Yeşim Kartaler, 'The SEKA Paper Museum: Transformation of Life into Memory, Memory into Museum and Museum into Life Again' (Paper presented at ICMAH Annual Conference on Corporate Museums, 10-12 October 2018, İstanbul, Türkiye), p.61.

[36] Meral Akbaş and Özge Kelekçi, 'From Factory to Museum: the Obliteration of the History of Resistance' in A. Chynoweth (ed.), *Museums and the Working Class* (London: Routledge, 2021), p.161.

[37] M. Ferro, *Cinema and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

Finally, the *Creating Emerging Markets* (CEM) oral history archive developed by Harvard Business School is a significant and promising resource. This archive features interviews with prominent business leaders from various developing countries, including Turkey. It provides valuable insights into the paths of individual entrepreneurs and firms, along with broader trends in economic and institutional development. The archive contains in-depth video interviews, often lasting over one hour, with more than 160 business leaders from over 20 countries across Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. This resource is handy for researchers focused on the connections between business, history and development, as it highlights long-term thinking, corporate governance, social responsibility and the role of business in nation-building. Notably, the CEM archive features several interviews with prominent figures from Turkey, providing rare firsthand insights into how family-owned companies, conglomerates, and business leaders have adapted to the country's changing political and economic landscape. One of the project's unique features is its focus on accessibility and academic quality. Transcripts, thematic excerpts and full-length interview videos are free on the HBS Baker Library website. The archive is also used in teaching and case-based research at HBS. It serves as a model for using oral history to enhance business history studies in situations where traditional sources might be limited, incomplete or hard to find.[38] This oral history archive provides access to visual and transcribed recordings of oral history interviews with prominent Turkish business leaders such as Hamdi Akın, Gülsüm Azeri, Cem Boyner, Hüsnü Özyeğin, Rahmi Koç, Güler Sabancı, Selçuk Yaşar and Murat Vargı. Despite its considerable potential, the archive has not been significantly included in academic research concerning Turkish business history.

Conclusion

Private archives play a crucial role in business historiography when official or institutional sources are limited or insufficient. In these cases, materials from private archives often form the primary basis for research. This study adds to the field by identifying and examining the scope and content of local private archival sources. It also explores the new research opportunities these sources may offer for business history. It also highlights several important issues related to the broader themes discussed in the study.

Archives with business-related materials do more than just show how institutions think; they can also be used to investigate social relationships and everyday activities inside and outside of companies. Even though these collections are often made from a corporate or

[38] Creating Emerging Markets, <https://www.hbs.edu/creating-emerging-markets/Pages/default.aspx> accessed 31 July 2025.

institutional point of view, researchers can read them against the grain to find stories that aren't told in official narratives, like those of workers, middlemen or local communities. In this way, business archives can help historical approaches that are more grassroots-oriented without having to rely only on sources that are clearly bottom-up. The materials kept in these exceptional archives show that this kind of history can shift from focusing only on business founders to including the experiences and roles of employees within these organisations. Secondly, it is important to emphasise that, along with the timeline presented below, the economic and business history of the country can also be told from a more 'private' perspective. This view differs from the state-centred viewpoint and involves using the exceptional archives mentioned earlier. This is especially relevant in Turkey, where the government has always had a big say in the economy. When business archives include materials created or maintained by employees, they can enhance state archives by facilitating analyses that focus on quotidian labour practices and non-elite experiences, perspectives frequently overlooked in official historical accounts. A third key point is that the terms of access and how open private archives are to researchers matter greatly.

Finally, closely related to the previous point, addressing questions of access and transparency is important. Developing a clear institutional and legal framework for the management of private archival collections is particularly crucial in environments where current regulations are inadequate. For instance, there is no regulation in the UK that says private companies must give their records to state repositories. Because of this, most historical business and trade records are kept in local archives or in collections that can be found through guides like Company and Business History Records Held by Other Archives published by The National Archives.[39] Initiatives like the Business Archives Council have been very important in promoting preservation and access even though there are no comprehensive legal mandates. Some scholars argue these collections should be considered part of the public domain. This issue is crucial for both writing business history and for the field of archival studies.

[39] Company and business history records held by other archives, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/business-history-records-held-by-other-archives/> accessed January 31, 2026.

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