

“PERIPHERY” IN THE HEARTLANDS: YENİŞEHİR AND İZNİK, 1863-1909

by

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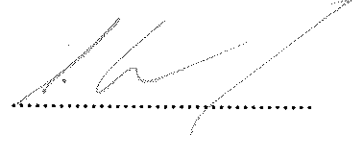
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A HISTORY OF A WESTERN ANATOLIAN REGION: YENİŞEHİR AND İZNİK
DURING THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1855-1909

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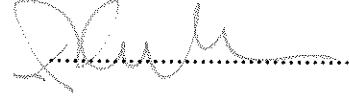
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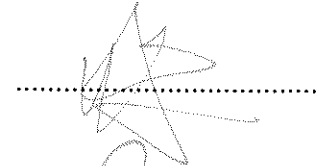
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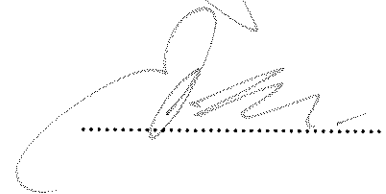
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ABSTRACT

“PERIPHERY” IN THE HEARTLANDS: YENİŞEHİR AND İZNİK, 1863-1909

FATMA MELEK ARIKAN

Ph.D. Dissertation, January 2018

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selçuk Akşin Somel

Keywords: Western Anatolia, local history, modernization, Ottoman provinces, rural history

This study examines how different social actors and groups experienced and participated in the processes of modernization in Yenişehir and İznik in Western Anatolia throughout the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Unlike many other studies in the field of late Ottoman provincial studies, this thesis focuses on the local political arena of a relatively small, predominantly rural setting that was historically within the close orbit of the Ottoman state. By excavating a provincial context from the core regions of the Ottoman Empire, this thesis contributes to the scholarly efforts of interrogating late Ottoman modernization from different local perspectives. The medium term historical trajectory of this dissertation is used for following up continuities and changes in the manifestations of local administration, political economy and societal structures in Yenişehir-İznik region. This historical account utilizes a narrative technique of analyzing certain local events for addressing larger structures pertaining to the late Ottoman history. Thus, one of the methodological objectives of this study is demystification of meta-concepts like “state-building” and “modernization” by examining practical experiences of the human element in a specific context. As local history, this dissertation finds out the resilience and durability of the local structures, and argues for the significance of individuals’ and social groups’ agencies, strategies, and conceptions of their world in the unfolding of Ottoman modernization.

ÖZET

MERKEZDEKİ “ÇEVRE”: YENİŞEHİR VE İZNİK, 1863-1909

FATMA MELEK ARIKAN

Doktora Tezi, Ocak 2018

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Selçuk Akşin Somel

Anahtar Kelimeler: Batı Anadolu, yerel tarih, modernizasyon, Osmanlı taşrası, kırsal tarih

Bu çalışma, Batı Anadolu'nun Yenişehir-İznik yöresinde farklı sosyal grup ve aktörlerin 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısı ile 20. yüzyılın başında modernizasyon süreçlerini nasıl deneyimlediklerini ve bu süreçlere nasıl katıldıklarını incelemektedir. Osmanlı taşrası üzerine yapılmış pek çok çalışmadan farklı olarak, bu tez görece küçük, ağırlıklı olarak kırsal ve Osmanlı devletinin yakın takibinde olan bir bölgenin yerel politik düzlemine odaklanmaktadır. Böylece, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun çekirdek bölgelerinden seçilmiş bir taşra ortamı irdelenerek, Osmanlı modernizasyonunu farklı yerel perspektiflerden bakarak açıklayan akademik çalışmalara katkı sağlanmaktadır. Bu tezin orta vadeli zamansal ölçeği, Yenişehir-İznik yöresinde yerel idarenin, politik ekonominin ve sosyal yapıların dışı vurumundaki tarihsel devamlılık ve değişiklikleri takip etmek için kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada son dönem Osmanlı tarihiyle ilintili süreç ve yapıları bazı yerel olayları aktararak analiz eden bir anlatım tekniği kullanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, tezin metodolojik amaçlarından biri “devletin oluşumu” ve “modernizasyon” gibi büyük kavramları belli bir yöredeki insan unsurunun pratik deneyimlerinden yola çıkarak somutlaştırmaktır. Bir yerel tarih çalışması olarak bu tez, yerel yapıların dayanıklılığını ve uzun ömrünü ortaya koymakta ve Osmanlı modernizasyonunda bireylerin ve sosyal grupların etkinliklerinin, stratejilerinin ve anlam dünyalarının önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Geçmişlerimizin ruhuna ve Agâh'a



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA)

A. DVN. MHM:	Sadaret Divan Mühimme Evrakı
A. MKT. DV:	Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî Deavi Evrakı
A. MKT. MHM:	Sadaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemî Evrakı
A. MKT. MVL:	Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî Meclis-i Vala Evrakı
A. MKT. UM:	Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî Umum Vilayet Evrakı
BEO:	Babıali Evrak Odası Evrakı
BEO. AYN. d:	Babıali Evrak Odası Ayniyat Defterleri
C. EV:	Cevdet Evkaf
C. TZ:	Cevdet Tımar
DH. MKT:	Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemî
DH. SAID:	Dahiliye Nezareti Sicill-i Ahval İdare-i Umumiyesi
DH. ŞFR:	Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Evrakı
DH. TMIK:	Dahiliye Nezareti Tesri-i Muamelat ve Islahat Komisyonu
EV. d:	Evkaf Defterleri
EV. MKT:	Evkaf Mektubi Kalemî
HR. MKT:	Hariciye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemî Evrakı
HRT. h:	Haritalar
İ. DH:	İrade Dahiliye
İ.MMS:	İrade Meclis-i Mahsus

İ. MVL:	İrade Meclis-i Vala
İ. ŞD:	İrade Şura-yı Devlet
İ. TAL:	İrade Taltifat
MF. MKT:	Maarif Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi
ML. VRD. TMT d:	Maliye Varidat Muhasebesi Temettuat Defterleri
MV:	Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları
MVL:	Meclis-i Vala Evrakı
ŞD:	Şura-yı Devlet Evrakı
Y. A. HUS:	Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı
Y. A. RES:	Yıldız Sadaret Resmi Maruzat Evrakı
Y. EE:	Yıldız Esas Evrakı
Y. MTV:	Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı
Y. PRK. A:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Sadaret Maruzatı
Y. PRK. ASK:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Askeri Maruzat
Y PRK AZJ:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Arzuhal Jurnal
Y. PRK. BŞK:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Başkitabet Dairesi Maruzatı
Y. PRK. DH:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Dahiliye Nezareti Maruzatı
Y. PRK. KOM:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Komisyonlar Maruzatı
Y. PRK. ML:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Maliye Nezareti Maruzatı
Y. PRK. SGE:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Mabeyn Erkanı ve Saray Görevlileri Maruzatı
Y. PRK. SRN:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Serkurenalık Maruzatı
Y. PRK. ZB:	Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Zaptiye Nezareti Maruzatı
ZB:	Zaptiye Nezareti Evrakı

Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi: VGM

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions: ABCFM

İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı Arşivi: İ. HAKKI



Table 1: Terms used for administrative units and chief administrative officials

Administrative Unit	Chief Administrative Official
Eyalet (Before the Vilayet system)-Vilayet: Province	Vali: Governor
Liva and/or Sancak: District	Mutasarrıf
Kaza: Sub-district	Müdür: Director (Before the Vilayet system); Kaymakam (After the Vilayet system)
Nahiye: Commune	Müdür (After the Vilayet system)



Photo 1: Panorama of İznik taken from Mekece, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Yıldız Sarayı Albümleri, 90490-24.

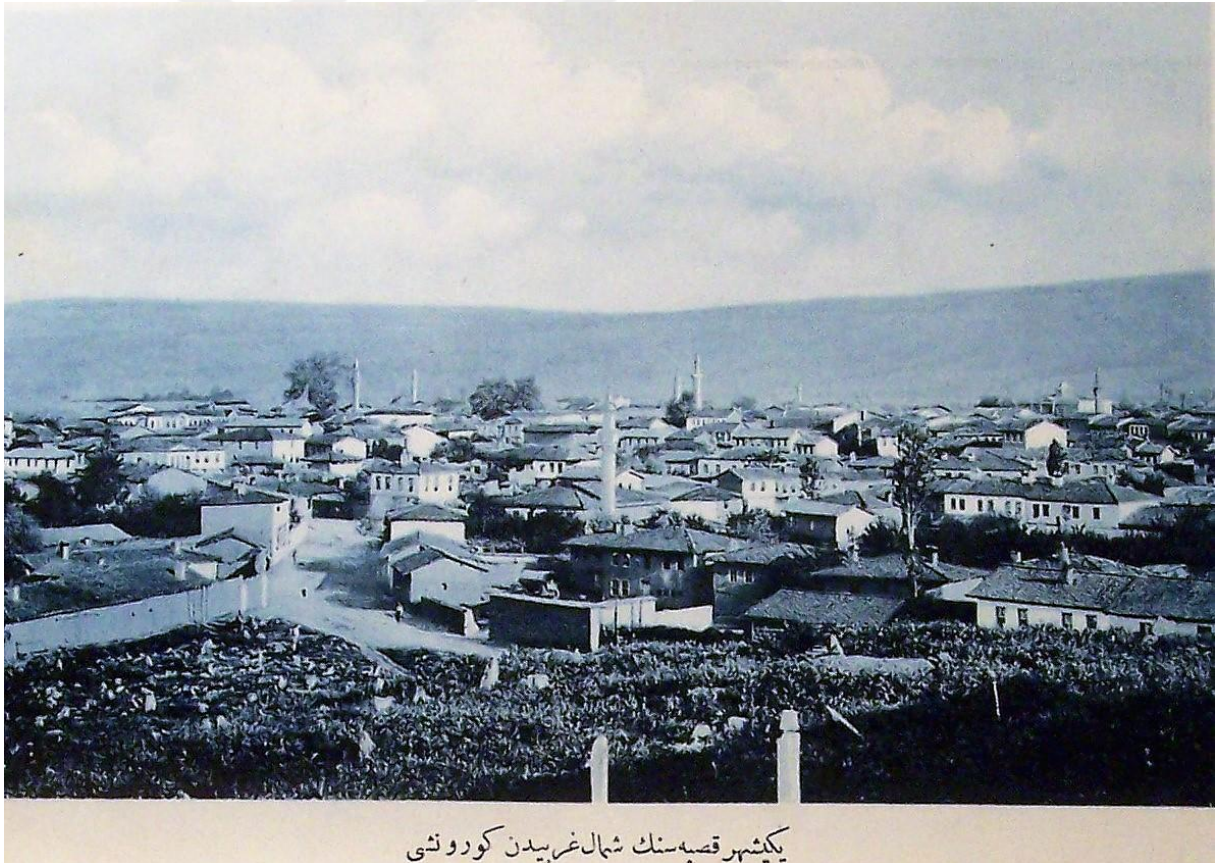
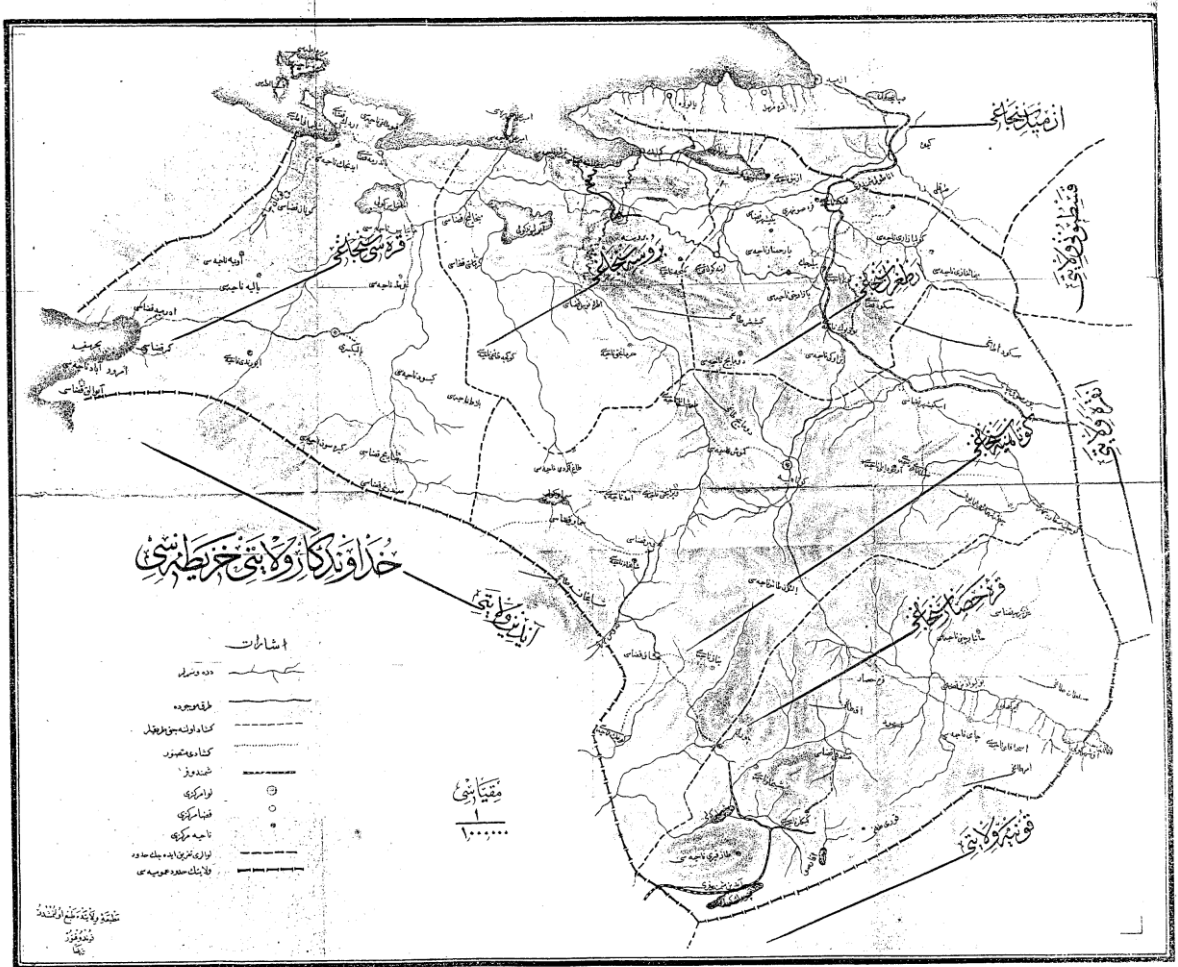
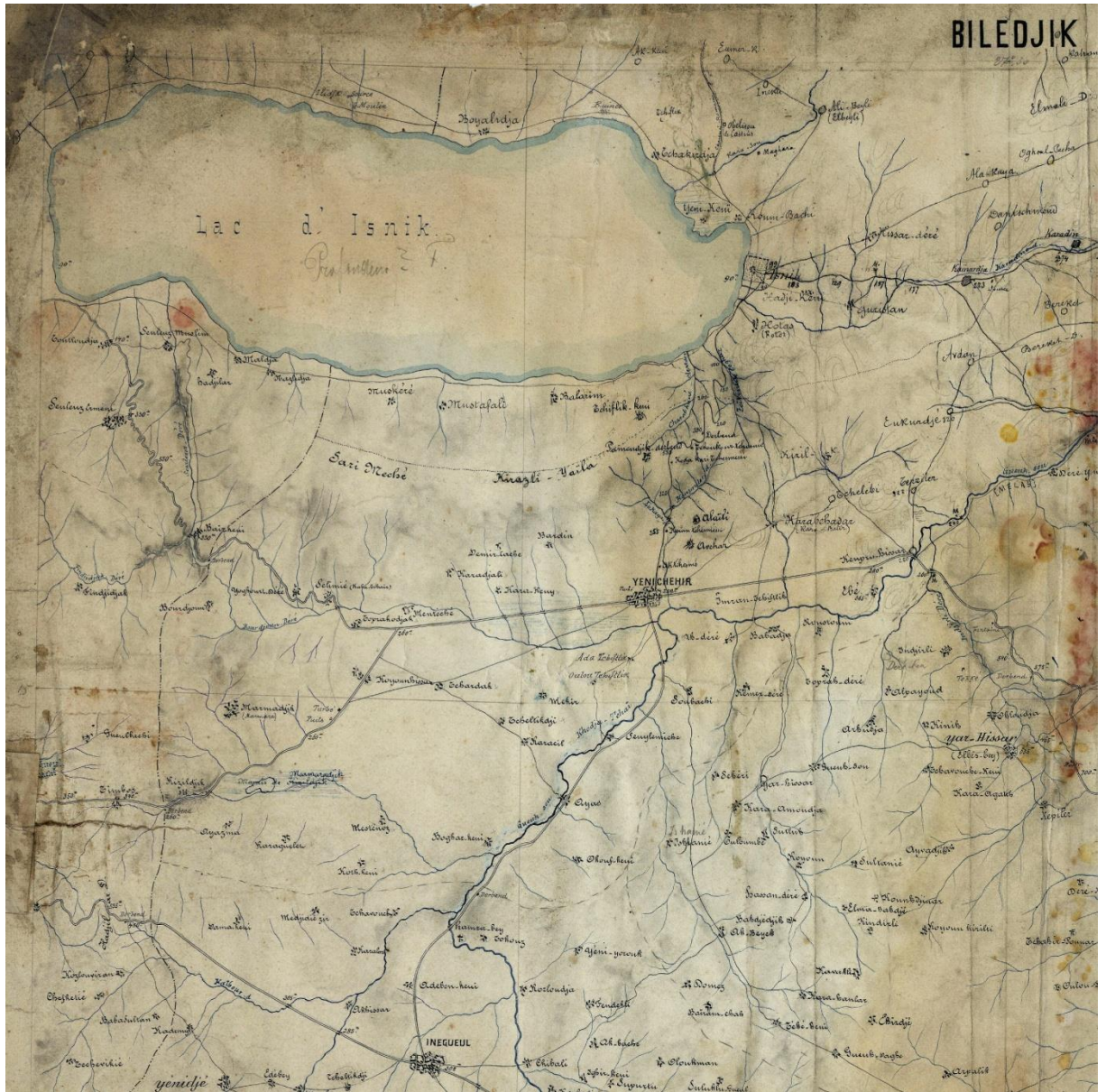


Photo 2: View of Yenişehir's town center taken from north-west, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 240.

Map 1: The physical map of the Hüdavendigâr Province, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1310* (unpaginated, attached to the end of the yearbook).





Map 2: The map of Yenişehir-İznik region, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA), HRT. h. 01083.

INTRODUCTION

i. Yenişehir-İznik Region as a Subject of Historical Inquiry

In general terms, this study on the late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik belongs to the revisionist literature on the late Ottoman provinces. This literature is built on a critique of orientalist and state-centric approaches construing the early modern and modern epochs of the Ottoman history within the decline paradigm.¹ Rather than taking Ottoman modernization as externally imposed, state-initiated, top-down reforms, revisionist studies take provincial societies, groups and individuals as active participants in the processes of change.² This dissertation, above all, adheres to this scholarly tradition that defines a more constructive role for provincial actors during “the age of reforms”.³ I thus examine how different social actors and groups experienced and participated in the processes of modernization in Yenişehir and İznik throughout the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

¹ For the decline debate see, Roger Owen, "The Middle East in the Eighteenth Century --An 'Islamic' Society in Decline ? A Critique of Gibb and Bowen's Islamic Society and the West," *Review of Middle East Studies* 1, 1975, 101-112; Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 1-2, 1997-8, 30-75; Rifa'at Abou-el-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

² For a succinct summary of the evolution of Ottoman studies in this direction see, Meltem Toksöz, "Reform ve Yönetim: Devletten Topluma, Merkezden Bölgeye Osmanlı Modernizasyonu," in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu and Halil İnalçık (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2012), 209-225.

³ Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 759-934. For some examples of the revisionist literature see, Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1995); Eugene L Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Sibel Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman İzmir: The Rise of a Cosmopolitan Port, 1840-1880* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Bülent Özdemir, *Ottoman Reforms and Social Life: Reflections from Salonica, 1830-1850* (Istanbul: Isis, 2003); Hamdi Özdiş, "Taşrada İktidar Mücadelesi: II. Abdülhamid döneminde Trabzon Vilayet'inde Eşraf, Siyaset ve Devlet (1876-1909)," (PhD diss., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2008).

Although this dissertation builds upon and borrows from the recent literature on the late Ottoman provinces, it nonetheless differs from the general scholarly trends in the field with the scope and location of its geographical focus. Many studies on the late Ottoman provinces concentrate on the borderlands, frontiers and margins of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ In a similar vein, rather exceptionally cosmopolitan urban centers and religiously and ethnically much mixed provinces and districts attract the attention of Ottomanists as “fascinating” cites of historical inquiry.⁵ These far-flung territories and cosmopolitan regions of the Ottoman Empire equip the scholars with abundant historical materials that reveal fluidity of state-society relations, porousness of social categories and the leverage of local groups and individuals in the modernization processes. Revisionist historians use their empirical findings as such, for arguing against top-down, outside-in meta-narratives of decline prioritizing the state and external factors as the engines of Ottoman modernization. Likewise, this literature criticizes post-Ottoman nationalist historiographies of the successor states by laying bare the complex, interrelated and open-ended processes at play in the context of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious imperial framework.

Yet, Yenişehir-İznik region was not an excellent cite for tracing diversity, bustling cosmopolitanism, newly invigorated commercial growth, or for that matter, opportunities and flexibilities of the borderlands. On the contrary, the region was, so to say, a quite “ordinary” context, located at the backyard of the imperial capital. It belonged to a geography, which was perhaps among “the least provincial” and oldest of all the Ottoman provinces. If registration, taxation and conscription were the leitmotifs of modernizing polities in the 19th century, in geographical terms, all İstanbul had to do was crossing the Marmara Sea to reach the economic and human resources of this predominantly Muslim, Turkish speaking population.⁶ As a matter of fact, the Ottoman

⁴ For example, Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*; Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011), Ebubekir Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq: Political Reform, Modernization and Development in the Nineteenth Century Middle East* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011), Meltem Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region 1850-1908* (Leiden [u.a.]: Brill, 2010).

⁵ For example, Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman Izmir*, Milen V. Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Paşa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864-1868," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006)., Jens Hanssen, *Fin De Siècle Beirut: the Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006); Yasemin Avcı, *Değişim Sürecinde bir Osmanlı Kenti: Kudüs (1890 - 1914)* (İstanbul: Phoenix, 2004).

⁶ See the population figures cited below. In fact, a substantial majority of the non-Muslim inhabitants of the Hüdavendigar Province could speak Turkish. Some Greek communities exclusively spoke Turkish, since they did not know the Greek language, *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 249.

Sultanate extended to İstanbul and Rumelia by basing itself on the ex-Roman and Byzantine province of Bithynia, containing Yenişehir and İznik as well. The founder of the Ottoman dynasty, Osman Bey, conquered Yenişehir in 1299, while İznik fell to the Ottomans in 1331, after a long siege of more than 25 years.⁷ As a part of the oldest domains of the Ottoman Empire, Yenişehir-İznik region was within the relatively easy reach of the central state.⁸ In this sense, unlike many other studies in the field of late Ottoman provinces, this thesis focuses on the local political arena of a small provincial setting that was historically within the close orbit of the Ottoman state.

Yenişehir and İznik are two neighboring towns in North-western Anatolia. In administrative terms, İznik lost its sub-district (*kaza*) status in late 1860s, and became a smaller administrative unit (*nahiye*) attached to the *kaza* of Yenişehir.⁹ İznik is located on the eastern coast of its namesake lake, Lake İznik. The lake stands in the middle of a topographical arch formed by the south-eastern shores of the Sea of Marmara. As such, the Gulf of İzmit is on the north; and the Gemlik port is on the west of İznik. Yenişehir is detached from İznik by a range of mountains (*Katırlı*, *Gemiç* and *Sarı Meşe*) running parallel to the southern shores of Lake İznik in the west-east direction. The town center of Yenişehir is located about 50 kilometers east of the city of Bursa.¹⁰ Overall, the 1885-1886 Yearbook of the Hüdavendigar Province reports a population of slightly more than 25.000 (25.914) people¹¹ inhabiting about a-1300 kilometer square region, making up Yenişehir and İznik.¹² In 1907-1908, the population of this region reached about 45.000 (45.306) souls.¹³ In the early 1870s, about 21% of Yenişehir and İznik's

⁷ Halil İnalçık, "İznik için Osman Gazi ve Bizans Mücadelesi," in *Tarih Boyunca İznik*, Işıl Akbaygil, Halil İnalçık, Oktay Aslanapa, and Rita Urgan, eds., (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2004), 60.

⁸ İznik is located about 90 kilometers south-east of İstanbul. Şemseddin Sami, s.v. "İznik," in *Ḳâmus ul-A'lâm: Tarih ve Coğrafya Lugati*, v2 (İstanbul: Mihran Matba'ası, 1889).

⁹ İznik was at first tied to Karamürsel as a *nahiye*, see, ŞD 1540-29. Shortly after, it was detached from Karamürsel, and tied to Yenişehir, *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1287*, 64.

¹⁰ See the map of the Hüdavendigar province, Map 1, p. xiii.

¹¹ Salih Erol, *Hüdavendigar Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir Kazası 1870-1927: İznik ve Yarhisar Nahiyeleri ile Birlikte* (Yenişehir: Yenişehir İlçesi Merkez ve Köylerini Güzelleştirme Derneği, 2011), 109. More detailed statistical tables divided according to the ages of the inhabitants of Yenişehir is available at *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1303*, 269-275.

¹² *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 68.

¹³ *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 68; In *Ḳâmus ul-Âlam*, Şemseddin Sami reports a population of 58.202 for Yenişehir towards the end of the 19th century, Şemseddin Sami, s.v. "Yenişehir," in *Ḳâmus ul-A'lâm: Tarih ve Coğrafya Lugati*, v.6 (İstanbul: Mihran Matba'ası, 1889). I chose to use the figures in the yearbooks of Hüdavendigar, because they seem more consistent over the years.

inhabitants were non-Muslims.¹⁴ However, received waves of Muslim migration from Rumelia following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, decreased the proportion of non-Muslim population to 11% by the early 1900s.¹⁵ So, this study is on a relatively small, predominantly Muslim and rural region in the hinterland of the city of Bursa.

Notwithstanding their proximity to each other as two neighboring towns, a closer glance at the historical and geographical outlooks of Yenişehir and İznik reveals some marked differences. Due to its closeness to the Marmara Sea and Lake İznik, İznik's climate is characteristically more Mediterranean, i.e. it is more humid than Yenişehir throughout the year and milder in winters. As a result, İznik had a lively olive economy, which Yenişehir lacked.¹⁶ Yet, İznik's town center had extremely unhealthy weather and sanitary conditions because of its proximity to the vast belt of swamps around the lake.¹⁷ The mountainous regions encircling the lake and the town center had better air.¹⁸ Several villages located on the cliffs and tops of mountains encircling the lake and the town center were the motors of İznik's rural economy during the late Ottoman era. Besides its olive economy, İznik possessed substantial vineyards, and it could produce many kinds of vegetables and fruits thanks to its favorable climate.¹⁹ Towards the end of the 19th century, İznik could also benefit from the revival of silk industry in the Bursa region through the multiplication of its mulberry groves.²⁰

Lake İznik dominated the overall human geography of İznik, and its influence on the climate profoundly affected the agricultural activities of the town, whereas, the vast Yenişehir plain physically defined its namesake town, Yenişehir. The mountain range

¹⁴ I computed this ratio from the numbers of Muslim and non-Muslim men given in the Yearbook of 1870. Accordingly, Yenişehir and İznik together had a population of 12.818 males, and 2.719 of these males were reported as non-Muslim. *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1287*, 150.

¹⁵ For 1903-1904, the yearbook states the total population of Yenişehir, including İznik, as 37.573. Of this population 2.315 people were reported to be Greek, and 1.730 people were identified as Armenian. *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1321*, 370-371.

¹⁶ In 1906, İznik's olive oil exports amounted to 80.000 *kıyyes*, *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1324*, 370-371.

¹⁷ Heath W. Lowry, "Gezginlerin Gözünden ve İdari Kayıtlardaki Bilgilerin Işığında Osmanlı Döneminde İznik, 1331-1923," in *Tarih Boyunca İznik*, Akbaygil et al., eds. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2004), 157-158.

¹⁸ Y. PRK. SGE 11-22.

¹⁹ Erol, *Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir*, 136.

²⁰ In 1896-97, İznik contained 4480 dönüms of mulberry groves. *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1314*, 308. For more information see, chapter 5.

between İznik and Yenişehir cut many features of the latter's Mediterranean character; in Yenişehir, the serenity of a vast and fertile plain of about 255 kilometer squares²¹, stretching in the west-east direction replaces the olive groves of İznik.²² In addition to many kinds of fruits and vegetables, Yenişehir produced substantial wheat, barley, corn and silk cocoons to be exported to Bursa, or to elsewhere through the Gemlik port.²³ Extensive cultivation of grains in the plain, a substantial amount of which was destined for the urban population of the city of Bursa²⁴ distinguished Yenişehir's overall economic direction from İznik, which tended towards İstanbul, thanks to its easier access to the Gemlik port.²⁵ Yenişehir first and foremost turned towards Bursa: the silk industry of this provincial city supported the livelihoods of many inhabitants of Yenişehir, who engaged in cocoon raising for supplying the demands of many silk factories in Bursa during the second half of the 19th century.²⁶

Although Yenişehir became the administrative capital of the *nahiye* of İznik, the mountain range separating them rendered transportation between them quite burdensome.²⁷ Therefore, İznik turned towards the advantage of transportation through the lake for reaching the Gemlik port rather than directing its surplus to further inland via Yenişehir. During the early 1900s, sailboats and cargo boats, which could carry up to six tons of cargo, sailed once or twice a week between İznik and Pazarköy, carrying grains, fruits, barrels and wood for construction to be transferred to the Gemlik port.²⁸ Moreover, while, the Byzantine İznik (Nikaia) was a city known as "the vegetable

²¹ Nadide Sagun, "Yenişehir Ovasının Beşeri ve Ekonomik Coğrafyası," (master's thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Coğrafya Enstitüsü, 1945), 1.

²² HRT. h. 01083.0001.

²³ In 1906-1907, for instance, Yenişehir alone (excluding İznik) exported 150.000 kiles of wheat, 70.000 kiles of barley and 70.000 kiles of corn. Together with its cocoon exports, it derived 6.130.000 kuruş income from its exported agricultural produce, *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1324*, 369.

²⁴ Halim Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul Sancağı: (1900-1918)* (Bilecik: Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 9.

²⁵ The 58 kilometer-long road built between Yenişehir and Gemlik port during the last decades of the 19th century passed by the southern shores of Lake İznik, see, Map 4, p. 35. See also Table 2 for travel times pertaining to Yenişehir and İznik, p. 35.

²⁶ *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 346.

²⁷ See the map of the curvy road binding İznik to Yenişehir through a steep hill, Map 3, p. 34.

²⁸ *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1324*, 370-371.

garden” of the Byzantine capital, Konstantinopolis²⁹, late Ottoman İznik sold its premium olive products to the Ottoman palace in İstanbul.³⁰ After the construction of the Anatolian railway line in the 1890s, however, Mekece station nearby İznik was used for exporting Yenişehir and İznik’s produce to Konya, Eskişehir and Adapazarı as well.³¹ Hence, 48 camels reported for Yenişehir (including İznik) in the Yearbook of 1907-1908 should have been used for transportation through overland routes to Bursa and Mekece.³²

Yenişehir plain was encircled by gradually rising hills and mountains³³, which contained substantial high pastures enabling extensive animal husbandry. In 1907-1908, the number of sheep and cattle bred in Yenişehir far exceeded the number of people living in the *kaza*. There were about 61.000 livestock animals raised in especially the Yenişehir plain, while the total population of the town was around 45.000.³⁴ Swiftly rising mountains around İznik, on the other hand, did not let development of animal husbandry comparable to the scale of this economic activity in Yenişehir. In fact, the *temettuat* records of 1844 demonstrate that a substantial majority of peasant households in Yenişehir owned some land, animals, gardens (especially mulberry groves) and vineyards. In Yenişehir, peasant households without any animals were rare.³⁵ The villagers of İznik on the other hand, mostly owned olive trees, mulberry groves and vineyards; animal husbandry and grain cultivation was less pronounced in İznik than they were in Yenişehir.³⁶ In addition to animal husbandry, forestation increased timber obtained from Yenişehir and İznik during the Hamidian era. Thus, both towns

²⁹ Michael Angold, "Nikaia Kenti MS 1000-1400," in *Tarih Boyunca İznik*, Akbaygil et al., eds. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2004), 27.

³⁰ MVL 539-101, MVL 739-20, DH. MKT 1407-53.

³¹ *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1324*, 370-371.

³² *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 312.

³³ Sagun, "Yenişehir Ovasının," 1.

³⁴ *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 312-313.

³⁵ See for example the *temettuats* of Marmaracık village, ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9563; Karabahadır village, d. 9548; Akdere village, d. 9547; Umran village, d. 9539, Makri village, d. 9527b.

³⁶ See for example, Sölöz Müslim village, ML. VRD. TMT. d. 8289A.

benefitted from the products of extensive forests covering substantial parts of the mountains within their borders.³⁷

When we zoom into the town centers of İznik and Yenişehir respectively, the difference between the physical outlooks of these two towns becomes more striking. İznik was a town burdened by its gracious pre-Ottoman past. It was founded in 311 BC by one of Alexander the Great's generals and successors, Antigonos Monophtalmos. Until 264 BC, İznik remained the capital of Bithynia, one of the many minor kingdoms that emerged from the breakup of Alexander's empire.³⁸ Compared to the other two prominent cities of Bithynia, namely İzmit (Nikomedia) and Bursa (Prusa), İznik was the oldest city and the first metropolis of Roman Bithynia.³⁹ In spite of being overshadowed by Konstantinopolis, it continued to be one of the most important provincial cities of the Byzantine Empire. İznik was also famous for housing two ecumenical councils in 325 and 787.⁴⁰ The city was among the last ditches of defense against Umayyad attacks to Konstantinopolis during the first half of the 8th century AD.⁴¹

Unlike its sister cities of Bursa and İzmit, İznik did not grow to become a large city by modern standards during and after the Ottoman era. For this reason perhaps, it could preserve some basic features of its original plan, such as the ancient city walls and rectilinear streets cutting across each other at right angles at the city center.⁴² In addition to survival of the remains of some of its pre-Ottoman artifacts, Sultan Orhan, the conqueror of the city, and a famous Ottoman vizierial family, the Çandarlı family endowed İznik with several public buildings and facilities. The town was also the center of some sufi orders, such as the order of Eşrefzade Rumi, which attracted visiting dervishes from outside during the early Ottoman rule in the city. In fact, many imarets

³⁷ Erol, *Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir*, 99; 199; 343. Sami, "İznik." 852.

³⁸ Tønnes Bekker-Nielsen, *Urban Life and Local Politics in Roman Bithynia: The Small World of Dion Chrysostomos* (Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2014), 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁰ Sami, "İznik." 852.

⁴¹ Angold, "Nikaia Kenti," 27-28.

⁴² Bekker-Nielsen, *Roman Bithynia*, 49-51.

were founded for serving this itinerant population.⁴³ Overall, during the late Ottoman era, many visitors viewed İznik as a ghost town, which contained many dilapidated, magnificent pre-Ottoman and Ottoman historical artifacts, yet severely lacking population that such a glorious physical structure entailed. As such, a mourning tone for the pre-Ottoman Nikaia accompanied the accounts of especially Western travelers.⁴⁴

In fact, during the late Ottoman period, the town center's malaria stricken air made it very difficult to settle in the vicinity of the town.⁴⁵ Possibly, the inhabitants of İznik still enjoyed the beautiful view of the lake and some of the public facilities within the town center. For example, the Greek community of the wider Southern Marmara region upheld annual fairs at the town center during the late 19th century.⁴⁶ However, the real economic engine of İznik was prosperous villages located at some healthy distance from the swamps of the lake. Hence, travelers and outsiders, who merely dropped by the town center could not apparently attain a fair view of İznik as a real, contemporary, living entity. The missionaries (from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions), who were much more accustomed to this geography on the other hand, stressed the prosperity and populousness of especially the non-Muslim villages of İznik around the middle of the 19th century.⁴⁷

Unlike İznik, Yenişehir's town center carried a pronounced Ottoman character due to the absence of significant pre-Ottoman buildings and remains. As the literal name of the town suggests (which means "the new city" in Turkish), it seems that Osman Bey founded this town anew as a garrison for moving to west and north from the south-east of the Bithynia region. After capturing Yenişehir in 1299, he immediately turned to the town's hinterland, namely, Bilecik, Lefke, Mekece, Akhisar and Geyve, thereby he not only ensured the safety of his strategic encampment ground, but also completed İznik's siege from all sides. With the fall of Bursa in 1326 and İznik in 1331, Yenişehir apparently ceased to be the hub of the military operations of the early

⁴³ Lowry, "Gezginlerin Gözünden," 142-146.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 151-163.

⁴⁵ Erol, *Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir*, 230. See also the imperial gardener Henry's observations on İznik reported to the Yıldız Palace based on his visit to the town, Y. PRK. SGE 11-22. For more information see, chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Y. PRK. DH. 6-93.

⁴⁷ *The Missionary Herald*, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, v.63, 1867, 391-392.

Ottoman Sultanate.⁴⁸ Thereafter, Yenişehir apparently evolved into a mid-size, predominantly rural Ottoman town, benefitting from the prosperity brought forth by its mild climate and abundant fertile lands. Although it was more land-locked than İznik, which could use sail transportation across the lake for reaching the Gemlik port⁴⁹, Yenişehir took advantage of its proximity to the city of Bursa, which had long been a center of commerce, manufacturing and industry.

Compared to meager information available on Yenişehir in secondary sources, İznik attracted the attention of many scholars from different fields of social sciences. However, many of these studies on İznik are art history⁵⁰ and/or focus on İznik ceramics and tiles⁵¹. In a similar vein, there is a literature touching upon pre-Ottoman İznik thanks to the city's prominence in the Roman and Byzantine Empires⁵², and its significance due to the two ecumenical councils held in this city.⁵³ Early Ottoman İznik also commanded some interest, since it was located at a region where the Ottoman Sultanate originated.⁵⁴ Late Ottoman İznik, however, is not a popular topic⁵⁵; there is just one master's thesis built on a sharia court register dated early 1920s.⁵⁶ Besides this thesis, we have at hand a compilation of travelers' accounts, accompanied by some Ottoman state documents on İznik's general outlook in the long term, covering the late Ottoman era as well.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ İnalçık, "İznik için," 60; 77.

⁴⁹ Y. PRK. SGE 11-22.

⁵⁰ For example, Semavi Eyice, *İznik: Tarihçesi ve Eski Eserleri* (İstanbul: Sanat Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi Yayını, 1988).

⁵¹ For example, Nurhan Atasoy and Julian Raby, *İznik: Seramikleri* (London: Alexandria Press, 1989); Walter B. Denny, *İznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics* (London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004),

⁵² Angold, "Nikaia Kenti," 27-55; Bekker-Nielsen, *Roman Bithynia*.

⁵³ For example, Francis Dvornik and Mehmet Aydın, *Konsiller Tarihi: İznik'ten II. Vatikan'a* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1990).

⁵⁴ For example, İnalçık, "İznik için," 59-85.

⁵⁵ The table of contents of the International İznik Symposium book is instructive in this regard. There was not a single presentation on late Ottoman İznik. Ali Erbaş et al., eds., *Uluslararası İznik Sempozyumu, 5-7 Eylül 2005* (İznik: İznik Belediyesi, 2005).

⁵⁶ Bahattin Kurtulmuş, "İznik 36 nolu Şer'iyye Sicil Defteri'ne göre İznik'te Sosyal Hayat," (Master's thesis, Sakarya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1998).

⁵⁷ Lowry, "Gezginlerin Gözünden," 135-174.

Just like İznik, Yenişehir appears in historical accounts on the foundational years of the Ottoman Sultanate, based on some chronicles, especially the history of Aşıkpaşazade.⁵⁸ For the 16th century of the town, there is an undergraduate thesis, which used “*tahrir defterleri*” (land survey registers) as its primary archival source.⁵⁹ Later on, 16th century land survey registers of Hüdavendigâr, which included Yenişehir, were published by Ömer Lütü Barkan and Enver Meriçli.⁶⁰ Yenişehir-İznik region reappears in secondary sources with some historical developments at the turn of the 19th century. It seems that during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, “the age of *ayans*” in this region came to an end as well.⁶¹ The struggles between competing provincial power-holders of this region, and subsequent assertion of power and control by the centralizing state during the early 19th century profoundly affected the evolution of the land regime and socio-political outlook of this region throughout the rest of the 19th century.⁶²

As a subject of historical inquiry, late Ottoman Yenişehir-İznik region appears to be an uncharted territory. Nonetheless, this study is built on the insights and methodological premises developed in the field of late Ottoman studies since the last fifty years. What follows is a brief discussion of the evolution of studies on late-Ottoman provinces as it pertains to the methodology and approaches used in this thesis.

ii. Methodology and Sources

In the early 1970s, İlber Ortaylı and Musa Çadırcı wrote their dissertations on local administration in the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat era. Their published works based on these studies became sources of reference for future studies in the

⁵⁸ Kemal Yavuz and M. A. Yekta Saraç, eds., *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi: Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman* (İstanbul: Gökkuşbe, 2007; İnalçık, “İznik için,” 59-85).

⁵⁹ Yaşar Yılmaz, “16. Asırda Bursa Yenişehir Kazası,” (Undergraduate thesis, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü, 1971).

⁶⁰ Ömer Lütü Barkan and Enver Meriçli, eds., *Hüdavendigâr Livası Tahrir Defterleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988).

⁶¹ Cafer Çiftçi, “Dervişpaşazâde Numan Bey'in Âyanlık ve Tersanecilik Faaliyetleri,” *Belleten* 75, no. 273 (August 2011): 387-405; Özer Küpeli, “Sarıcaoğlu Osman Ağa: the Ayan of Yenişehir (Bursa) and His Inheritance,” *History Studies International Journal of History* Volume 3 Issue 3, no. 3 (2010): 246-63.

⁶² For more information on this issue see chapter 1.

field.⁶³ These studies however, were not monographs on specific provincial contexts: Ortaylı's work was a general survey tracing different aspects of Ottoman provincial administration during the Tanzimat era, while Musa Çadircı published some thematically focused articles, and some articles using different Anatolian contexts as case studies illuminating different aspects of provincial administration in the late Ottoman Empire. These pioneering studies however, did not explicitly challenge the state-centric aspects of "the decline paradigm" in the Ottoman historiography. Yet, a couple of years earlier than these studies, Albert Hourani's "Ottoman Reform and Politics of Notables" had made a hole in the orientalist/essentialist outlook of the late Ottoman historiography by introducing notables of the Arab provinces as important historical agents.⁶⁴ Thereafter, "politics of notables" remained a popular niche in many studies focusing on different late Ottoman provincial contexts.⁶⁵

Hourani's contribution was not only introducing an alternative methodological paradigm for studying late Ottoman modernization, but he also cleared the way for multiplication of actors in historical accounts beyond the notables. Hence, historical agents like foreign consuls, merchants, nomads, peasants, missionaries and different Ottoman communities took their due places in the historiography.⁶⁶ In this way, provincial studies acted as a counterbalance to the dominant late Ottoman historiography of the 1960s and 1970s⁶⁷, which took the agencies of the central state and European powers as all-powerful engines of historical change. In the mean time,

⁶³ İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri, 1840-1880* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011); Musa Çadircı, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Eyalet ve Sancaklarda Meclislerin Oluşturulması (1840-1864)," in *Yusuf hikmet Bayur'a Armağan* (Ankara: T.C. Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1985), 257-277; Musa Çadircı, "Tanzimat'ın Uygulanması ve Karşılaşılan Güçlükler (1840-1856)," in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu and Halil İnalçık (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2012), 197-207; Musa Çadircı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye: Anadolu Kentleri*, ed. Tülay Ercoşkun (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2011).

⁶⁴ Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and Politics of Notables," in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk Conference on the Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 41-68.

⁶⁵ For example, Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle*; Özdiş, "Taşrada İktidar". For an example from Bursa see, Emre Satıcı, "Meclis Üyeliğinden Paşalığa Tahir Ağa (Tanzimat Sonrası Yerel Yönetimde Eşrafın Rolüne İlişkin Bursa'dan Bir Örnek)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 25, no. 40 (2006): 225-244.

⁶⁶ For example, Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*.

⁶⁷ By "dominant historiography", I refer to such works as, Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2012); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, V. II: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963).

monographs on different provincial settings complicated the unilinear model of historical temporality by introducing complex and somewhat contingent interrelatedness of various contemporary historical contexts. In other words, there was no more just “the time of the state” to measure historical developments in provincial settings; rather the global economic context, regional contexts and specific urban and rural contexts were integrated with the imperial context in historical accounts on provincial societies.⁶⁸ Thus, over the years, both historical agents and levels of analysis were multiplied in the historiography as monographs on different provincial contexts accumulated in the field.

Post-structuralist readings of modernity also had an impact in the field of late Ottoman studies. Rather than taking Ottoman modernization as processes of reform initiated by the conscious will of the state, studies inspired by post-structuralism took modernity as a field of power in which multiple historical agents interacted.⁶⁹ Hence, a significant shift from top-down to bottom-up readings of Ottoman modernization became possible. In this literature, “participation” and “compliance” of the ordinary provincial subjects, and their interactions with an ever evolving and adapting imperial framework throughout the processes of reform were highlighted as integral components of Ottoman modernization.⁷⁰ Such an approach also rendered the late Ottoman context comparable with other contemporary states of the 19th century.

Notwithstanding Yenişehir and İznik’s geographical and historical proximity to the imperial capital, this study follows the general contours of the revisionist literature on late Ottoman provinces. On the one hand, zooming into a relatively small setting enables identifying and tracing many historical actors over decades. Acting consuls, non-Muslim industrialists, money lenders, land owners, women, peasants, bandits, provincial administrators, local government employees, trustees of waqfs, immigrants, nomads and notables all have a voice in this historical account. However, due to the nature of available archival materials, we will hear more from the notables than the ordinary people. Still, this thesis shares the insights of the studies that attend to the view

⁶⁸ For example, Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton*; Sarah D Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

⁶⁹ Khaled Fahmy, "The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," *Die Welt des Islams* 39, no. 3 (1999): 340-377.

⁷⁰ For example, Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman İzmir*; Milen V. Petrov, "Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864–1868," *Comp. Stud. Soc. Hist.* 46, no. 04 (2004): 730-759.

points and experiences of the lower social strata as an integral part of Ottoman modernization. On the other hand, this study contextualizes late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik within multiple historical contexts entailing intertwined temporalities with somewhat different rhythms. Put differently, I attend to the interactions of the global, imperial, regional and local contexts for explicating the outlook of Yenişehir and İznik at a particular time in between 1855 and 1909. Hence, even though the imperial center casted a darker shadow over this Western Anatolian setting than it did over many other far flung territories, I abstain from using the perspective of the central state as the dominant analytical paradigm. Instead, just like many other studies on different provincial societies, I opt for deciphering local/provincial perspectives while contextualizing them within the larger universe they belonged to.

An historical account cannot be exhaustive; therefore, the historian has to make some methodological choices and focus on specific issues and problems. In this respect, this study has some affinities with different types of historical accounts on late Ottoman provinces. As a micro study, it approximates studies that examine late Ottoman cities as more or less bounded spatial contexts. Some of these studies revolve around “politics of space”. They investigate how people from a wide spectrum of society engaged in the reorganization of the city’s physical space in the context of a modernizing imperial polity.⁷¹ Yet, late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik were not lively urban centers, on the contrary they were relatively small, rural contexts compared to bustling cosmopolitan cities, which generally attracted scholarly attention. Nonetheless, town centers of Yenişehir and İznik were play grounds of political contestations, which were occasionally accentuated by “politics of space” pertaining to a quasi-urban environment. Thus, this study is only tangentially related to this sub-theme in the historiography.

This thesis resembles studies that trace manifestations of provincial administration in specific cities, regions or provinces more than it does politics of urban space. Some of these studies examine how the evolution of the late Ottoman provincial administration was perceived, experienced and received in specific local contexts on the one hand, and how the local contexts affected the policies of the imperial center on the

⁷¹ Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman İzmir*; Hanssen, *Fin De Siècle*. More specifically on the architectural and urban history of Bursa, see Beatrice St. Laurent, "Ottomanization and Modernization: The Architectural and Urban Development of Bursa and the Genesis of Tradition, 1839-1914," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1989); Sevilay Kaygalak, "Kapitalistleşme Sürecinde bir Osmanlı Anadolu Kenti: Bursa, 1840-1914," (PhD diss., Ankara Üniversitesi, 2006).

other.⁷² In a similar vein, some other studies analyze the impacts of the evolution of late Ottoman provincial administration on socio-political and economic transformations in specific provincial contexts.⁷³ This study follows a highly eclectic approach in relation to the manifestations of provincial administration in late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik. In analyzing the processes of administrative reform, I prioritize experiences of the local people and different societal groups. However, in doing so, I also address the responsiveness and lack of responsiveness; the assertiveness and flexibility; formulated strategic policies and chaos pertaining to the central state throughout the changing historical conjunctures of the half century span of this study. In other words, this study's medium term historical trajectory encompassing both the later Tanzimat and Hamidian eras enables following up continuities and changes in the manifestations of local administration on the part of both local societal forces and the state.

Another branch of research highlights the rural contexts of the provinces, districts and regions studied.⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, rural producers dominated overall economic activities and the population outlook of the Ottoman Empire throughout its existence. Yet, urban centers and politics of the capital city command an unmatched hegemonic presence in the late Ottoman historiography.⁷⁵ Provincial studies that attend to the rural hinterlands as motors of Ottoman economy and the lifeworlds of an overwhelming majority of Ottoman subjects contribute to balancing the heavily skewed interest towards more easily tractable urban contexts and the institutional set up of the central state in the dominant historiography. Although this historical account on late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik cannot be identified as an example of "peasant studies" *per se*, it is nonetheless more rural in orientation than many other studies focusing on cities and/or larger provincial contexts. In this study, "politics of space," so to say, entails ownership, distribution, utilization and use of agricultural lands more often than it does urban space. Likewise, "provincial and local administration", most of the time,

⁷² Özdiş, "Taşrada İktidar,"; Özdemir, *Reflections from Salonica*; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*.

⁷³ Avcı, *Bir Osmanlı Kenti*.

⁷⁴ Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq*; Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside"; Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*; Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants*.

⁷⁵ Halil Berktaş, "The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/historiography," in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, ed. Halil Berktaş and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: F. Cass, 1992),109-184. For a renewed interest in Ottoman rural history, see the symposium book of Halcyon Days VIII, Elias Kolovos, "Introduction: Bringing the Peasants Back In?," in *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies: Halcyon Days in Crete VIII : a Symposium Held in Rethymno 13-15 January 2012*, ed. Elias Kolovos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2015).

entails fierce struggles over the control of rural surplus. In this respect, this historical account contributes to the late Ottoman rural history by excavating the political economy of a small Western Anatolian context.

Finally, the literature on late Ottoman provinces, both rural and urban, interacts with the critical features of the larger historiography on Ottoman modernization. In order to challenge the essentialist and orientalist premises of the modernization theory and historical determinism of the world-systems theory, many scholars highlight the complexity, unevenness and open-endedness of the 19th century Ottoman imperial paradigm.⁷⁶ In other words, unilinear and outcome oriented historical accounts implying inevitable causal relationships are replaced by emphasis on detours, unintended consequences, contingencies, contradictions, negotiations, paths taken and abandoned by both the state and society.⁷⁷ This process oriented approach resonates in the studies on late Ottoman provinces as a research agenda that explicitly seeks to overcome binary demarcations between the state and society. On the one hand, many studies highlight negotiations between the state and provincial social forces as open-ended processes transforming all historical actors by constantly blurring the divides between them.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the state's deeper penetration and increased infiltration into the local contexts throughout the 19th century is taken as a dynamic and complex process, which significantly took its cultural, economic and political dynamism from the society.⁷⁹ In these ways, local societal variations analyzed in studies on provincial societies seek to become building blocks of the narrative of Ottoman modernization at large. In this regard, this thesis aspires to be a small brick put from the core regions of the empire to the scholarly efforts of interrogating late Ottoman modernization from different local perspectives.

In fact, the evolution of the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire followed up international trends and discussions on historical writing. In the 1970s, many

⁷⁶ Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants*, 6-7.

⁷⁷ Zandi-Sayek, *Ottoman İzmir*, 187.

⁷⁸ Yonca Köksal, "Local Demands and State Policies: General Councils (Meclis-i Umumi) in the Edirne and Ankara Provinces (1867–1872)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 53, no. 3 (2016): 470-485; Resat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

⁷⁹ Cengiz Kırılı, "Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı'da Sosyal Kontrol," in *Tanzimat: değişim sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu and Halil İnalçık (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2012), 601-624; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 17-20; Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside," 133-159.

historians increasingly perceived theory oriented, quantitative methods and structuralism of “the Annales school” as inadequate in expressing the complexity of historical reality.⁸⁰ As a result, a search for moving towards more realistic and less mechanistic representations of history arose among the historians. This search led many scholars to take up descriptive approaches favoring narrative at the expense of structuralist and theory-oriented perspectives.⁸¹ In historical writing, “thick description” techniques of anthropology⁸² were utilized for constructing historical narratives, which were more flexible and fluid. “Thick description” in history however, referred to a renewed stress on “events”, which in turn entailed singularity and relativity. As such, the revival of narrative in historical writings was subject to criticisms, pinpointing escapism and methodological myopia due to sacrificing structure and analysis to the singularity and relativity of the events highlighted in historical narratives. So, the challenge for “the new social historian” was integrating narrative and analysis and/or relating local events more closely to structural changes.⁸³ The revisionist literature on the late Ottoman provinces indeed tackled with this challenge in trying to overcome the rigidities of the decline paradigm.

In order to counter the new challenges of historical writing, historians experimented with different historiographical practices and techniques. Among these, microhistory gained some popularity in the field.⁸⁴ Microhistory does not have specific theoretical references; rather it is essentially an interpretive historiographical practice referring to reduction of the scale of observation and an intensive study of the documentary materials.⁸⁵ Yet, microhistory cannot be defined solely in relation to the micro dimensions of its subject matter. Although it takes off from a set of signifying

⁸⁰ For a review of the transformations in the twentieth historiography see, Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2012).

⁸¹ Peter Burke, "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 283-287.

⁸² Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

⁸³ Burke, “History of Events,” 287-288.

⁸⁴ Georg Iggers, “From Macro- to Microhistory: The History of Everyday Life,” in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 74-84.

⁸⁵ Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 99.

events and facts derived from a micro setting, it tries to fit them into an intelligible structure by inserting them in wider historical contexts. Hence, its objective is revealing true functioning of certain aspects of society, which would be distorted by generalization and quantitative formalization. In other words, microhistory accentuates individual lives and events with a view of revealing more general phenomena.⁸⁶ So, the idea behind many microhistorical works is seeing the subjects of traditional history in one of their localized variations.⁸⁷ Put differently, practitioners of microhistory turn to narrative as a means of illuminating structures.⁸⁸

The field of Ottoman studies also produced some works inspired by the techniques of microhistory. Leslie Peirce's *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*⁸⁹ Nelly Hanna's *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Isma'il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant*⁹⁰, Milen Petrov's "Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864–1868,"⁹¹ and Yücel Terzibaşoğlu's "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?"⁹² can be cited as studies reflecting some features of microhistorical writings. What binds together these rather different sorts of scholarly works is that they try to "make a narrative thick enough to deal not only with the sequence of events and conscious intentions of the actors in these events, but also with structures- institutions, modes of thought and so on- whether these structures act as a brake on events or as an accelerator."⁹³ This historical account on late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik also utilizes a narrative technique of highlighting certain local events for addressing larger structures pertaining to late Ottoman history.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 102-112.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 114.

⁸⁸ Burke, "History of Events," 293.

⁸⁹ Leslie P. Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley (Calif.): University of California Press, 2003).

⁹⁰ Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Isma'il Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1998).

⁹¹ Petrov, "Subaltern Commentaries," 730-759.

⁹² Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 4 (2006): 121-147.

⁹³ Burke, "History of Events," 291.

However, this study is not a microhistory as it is practiced by the pioneering historians of this genre. To begin with, compared to Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*⁹⁴ and Natalie Z. Davis' *The Return of Martin Guerre*⁹⁵, for example, this study is neither "micro", nor "thick" enough to qualify purely as a microhistorical account. More importantly perhaps, this study does not claim to have sufficiently fulfilled one of the major objectives of microhistory, which is writing ordinary people into the grand historical narratives by turning them into historical actors.⁹⁶ Although "ordinary people" do occasionally appear as major historical protagonists in this study, it was not possible to continuously uphold an emic perspective revealing the epistemological worlds of the ordinary people throughout the text. In fact, it is notoriously difficult to infiltrate into the lifeworlds of common people from this predominantly rural geography, because of the nature of available documents. For this reason, in spite of constantly keeping an open eye for the voices of the subaltern groups and common people, I could address how these people perceived major historical transformations only intermittently. Moreover, this historical account on late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik is not narrated as a single story derived from a specifically limited, relatively short span of time. On the contrary, it covers the medium term (though its analytical movements in time are longer than this time span) by introducing many stories and events according to the internal compositions and analytical objectives of each chapter. Due to these marked differences from microhistorical accounts, I would call this thesis as a micro-study or local history, not a microhistorical account *per se*.

The overall focus of this study gravitates towards politics of power that involve interactions of various provincial and governmental actors. Rather than engaging in a thematic survey of certain aspects of life in Yenişehir and İznik⁹⁷, I adhere to a more dynamic approach of excavating "who got what, and on what grounds" in this geography amid changing historical conjunctures. Just like microhistorical accounts, I

⁹⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John A. Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980),

⁹⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁹⁶ Iggers, *Historiography*, 71-73.

⁹⁷ There are actually some thematically organized dissertations on Bursa, which basically use an institutional-legal perspective, see Emre Satici, "19. Yüzyılda Hüdavendigâr Eyaleti," (PhD diss., Ankara Üniversitesi, 2008); Nursal Kumaş, "II. Abdülhamid döneminde Bursa'da Sosyal Hayat (1876-1909)," (PhD diss., Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2011). This study on the late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik does not adhere to this scholarly tradition.

thus concentrate on the contradictions of the normative system, and the plurality of viewpoints rendering the governmental system fluid and open.⁹⁸ Needless to say, such an approach requires using varied theoretical references derived from late Ottoman historiography in particular, social sciences in general.

Another historiographical practice that I borrowed from microhistory is “heteroglossia”. Throughout the thesis, I constantly attempt to present the opposing viewpoints of historical actors.⁹⁹ However, as I mentioned above, the nature of available archival documents in Ottoman studies favor the voices of more powerful, articulate and assertive social and political agents over the voices of relatively disadvantaged individuals and groups. Hence, I resort to the microhistorical practice of focusing on clues, signs and symptoms through an in-depth reading of archival materials with a view of reclaiming as many voices as possible from the society.¹⁰⁰ I thus kept my base of documentary sources varied, and attended to side notes, readable erased parts, the tone and language used and quotations from different people, especially in state documents. On top of these, I included my own voice as an integral part of the plurality of viewpoints stressed in the historical account. Hence, the historian’s point of view is an intrinsic part of this historical narrative.¹⁰¹ In short, this study is one history among the many possible histories of late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik.

Geographically limited scope of the thesis and methodological approaches that I use throughout the text have both some advantages and drawbacks. The most significant advantage of a micro-study is that it adheres to a down-to-earth historical perspective, because it focuses on specific people, their problems and struggles over time. In other words, rather than dealing with ideals, norms, rules and regulations *per se*, it deals with concrete manifestations of socio-political and economic developments. In this sense, it is easier to trace outcomes, divergences, failures and achievements postulated for the late Ottoman establishment in the historiography. Thus, one of the methodological objectives of this study is demystification of meta-concepts like “state-building” and

⁹⁸ Levi, “On Microhistory,” 110-111.

⁹⁹ Burke, “History of Events,” 289.

¹⁰⁰ Levi, “On Microhistory,” 110.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

“modernization” by highlighting practical experiences of the human element in a specific context.

The method of shifting between different levels of analysis, i.e. between the “local”, “regional”, “imperial” and “global” entails a constant exercise of balancing and linking the specificities of a micro setting with larger historical trends affecting that local context. This exercise opens up possibilities of engaging with many discussions in the field of Ottoman studies in particular and some social scientific approaches in general. Hence, another methodological premise of this study is testing some of the hypothesis circulating in the late Ottoman studies on specific issues, such as the land regime and the public sphere. Some empirical findings from Yenişehir and İznik are in turn presented as potential new directions for further theorization and comparison with other late Ottoman contexts.

The most obvious disadvantage of undertaking a micro-study on Yenişehir and İznik is perhaps the rarity of historical accounts on rural history, especially in the same micro-scale, in Ottoman studies. As I noted, scholarly literature on the late Ottoman provinces is heavily skewed towards urban centers and much bigger administrative units. In this respect, the number of studies on the city and province of Bursa during the late Ottoman Empire are much more than the studies that take issue with smaller units within the countryside of the Hüdavendigâr Province.¹⁰² So, some local events that seem to point out divergences from wider historical structures might indeed be quite common practices in other rural contexts. Conversely, certain local events that seem to converge with structural transformations might indeed be quite atypical examples generated in the particular setting of Yenişehir-İznik region. In fact, attending to the wider regional context of North-western Anatolia could to some extent be an antidote to this potential myopia. Still, extensive comparisons with other monographs on specific rural late Ottoman contexts would have made this dissertation analytically much sounder. In the absence of such a sound comparative edge, this study is vulnerable to criticisms of reading too much into limited historical evidence.

¹⁰² For the former kind of scholarship focusing on the city and/or the province see, Satıcı, “Hüdavendigâr Eyaleti”; Kumaş, “Bursa’da Sosyal Hayat”; Kaygalak, “Kapitalistleşme Sürecinde,”; St. Laurent, “Ottomanization and Modernization,”; Leila Thayer Erder, “The Making of Industrial Bursa: Economic Activity and Population in a Turkish City, 1835-1975,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1978).

As a micro-study, this thesis inevitably follows the general contours of the late Ottoman historiography. In other words, since something pertaining to such a limited geography cannot be easily stretched to the much larger paradigm of late Ottoman studies, this study cannot speak of “revolutionary”, “very novel” and “extremely critical” conclusions for the larger historiography. Neither do I claim to have unearthed and used hitherto unknown, paradigm-changing sources and documents. This study is just a modest attempt to offer fresh analytical usage of the available archival documents, which now seems to permit undertaking a historical study in this micro scale. All I hope is making a contribution to envisioning “provincial” life in the late Ottoman Empire in more concrete and humane terms.

The bulk of the archival material used in this dissertation is derived from the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry State Archives (*Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Osmanlı Arşivi*) in İstanbul. Another major archive in which I carried out research is Waqfs’ Records Archive of the General Directorate of the Waqfs (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Vakıf Kayıtlar Arşivi*) in Ankara. SALT Research’s digital archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) are used for scanning some missionary documents on the Bursa region. Many documents on Çandarlı waqfs in İznik were taken from *İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı* Archive and Library at Selimiye Mosque Complex in Üsküdar. I resorted to the digital Ottoman Salnames database of İSAM library (*Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi Kütüphanesi*) for the Yearbooks of the Hüdavendigâr Province (*Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnameleri*).¹⁰³ İSAM library was also useful for resorting to another ABCFM’s publication, *the Missionary Herald*. Some photographs were taken from *İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi*. Some newspapers and magazines published in Bursa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which are mostly available in *Hakkı Tarık Us* digital collection of Beyazıt State Library, were also scanned for getting information on Yenişehir and İznik. Finally, a couple of memoirs written by the locals of the late Ottoman and early Republican Yenişehir were used for enriching the historical narrative.

¹⁰³ I also used Salih Erol’s book, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayet Salnamelerinde Yenişehir Kazası 1870-1927*, which I found to be a reliable compilation and transliteration of the parts on Yenişehir within the yearbooks. The book, which is divided according to specific yearbooks, however does not give reference to specific pages within the *salnames*. For this reason, I preferred using the original yearbooks whenever I used hard data, such as population figures. Other quotations from Erol’s book were cross-checked with the yearbooks.

Although I tried to keep my base of primary sources as varied as possible, there are a couple of archival sources that I could not sufficiently consume. Sharia court records, which might have turned out some very valuable insights about late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik, are not available for the time slot that I study. Other than a couple of İznik *sicils*, dated late 1910s and early 1920s, and a Yenişehir *sicil* dated 1919-1920, we do not have at hand any sharia court register belonging to these two towns at the moment. In a similar vein, general census records from the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II were not open to researchers during the time of my research. Archives of the Ottoman Bank and consular reports might have revealed different socio-economic aspects of the Bursa region. Given the scarcity of time and costs of research, I found the anticipated returns from these two sources relatively marginal for the micro rural context of my research. Instead, I resorted to secondary sources, such as Reşat Kasaba's and Yücel Terzibaşoğlu's articles on Western Anatolia, which extensively used these archival sources.

iii. Main Theses and Arguments

An inherent axis of this study is some structural and institutional continuities between the early-modern era (more specifically, the late 17th century and the 18th century) and the late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik. In fact, the continuities between the Tanzimat period and the Hamidian era have been highlighted in the historiography for some time now.¹⁰⁴ This dissertation adheres to a wider analytical framework and traces some historical continuities well into the early modern era. I contend that the land regime, the waqfs, religious/secular judges (*naibs*) and specific notable families remained on the forefront of the politics and economy of Yenişehir-İznik region in between 1850s and early 1900s. Although these structures, institutions and historical actors became profoundly transformed in the long run, their early modern genealogies continued to have a significant impact on the historical changes and developments associated with the modern era. For example, structurally low land-labor ratio and the

¹⁰⁴ Stanfod J. Shaw, "Sultan Abdülhamid II: Last Man of the Tanzimat," in *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu: (Bildiriler), 25-27 Aralık 1989, Milli Kütüphane, Ankara*, ed. Işın Duruöz and Gönül Büyüklimanlı (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı. Milli Kütüphane Başkanlığı, 1991), 179-197.

pre-eminence of independent, small peasant households inherited from the early modern era conditioned intense land disputes following the received waves of migration after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. Likewise, in spite of the evolution and centralization of the waqf administration during the late Ottoman Empire, economic resources accumulated in the waqfs throughout several centuries remained focal points of contention in Yenişehir-İzmit region during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In addition to stressing the resilience of these structures and institutions, this study demonstrates the persistence of the historical actors attached to ancient institutions like the waqfs and sharia courts. It is striking that in this roughly chronologically ordered study, descendants of the same İstanbul and Yenişehir based families continue to appear as historical protagonists in the first and last chapters. A family of bureaucrats based in İstanbul, namely, the Mahrukizade family and the descendants of a provincial power-holder based in Yenişehir, namely, the family of Edhem Paşa, possessed and contended for the waqf properties, some of which could be traced as far back as the 17th century. In the case of İzmit, the descendants of the vizieral family of *Çandarlıs* continued to control several waqf properties in and around the town well into the 20th century. Furthermore, *naibs* in their dual roles of judgeship in the secular and religious courts, as well as due to their *ex-officio* membership in the local administrative councils, appear as significant nodes of power during both the mid 19th and early 20th centuries. So, as a micro-study covering the medium term, this study reveals the waqfs, the *naibs*, the land regime and the notables (both local and İstanbul-based) as significant undercurrents of continuity underneath “the surface of the ocean”.

Around the middle of the 19th century, reforms in the provincial administration entailed integration of the local notables into various tiers of provincial administration. In Yenişehir and İzmit, the local administrative councils were thus political platforms through which the notables controlled the rural resources and corresponded with the state. The acknowledged authority of the notables, however, worked against the peasantry by stripping it off administrative and judicial protections against the encroachments of the monetarized and commercialized economy of the Bursa region. Put differently, in addition to their prerogatives invested in the local administration, the local notables got enmeshed in the lucrative business of money lending emanating from İstanbul to Bursa and from Bursa to its countryside. The Tanzimat state’s failed

monetary policies, such as the unsuccessful attempts of introducing paper money and its policies of taxation, which increasingly turned towards higher rates of in-cash taxes, further strained the peasantry in the absence of cheap sources of credit. Thus, the rural producers were entrapped in cycles of debt, which threatened them with dispossession. Hence, just like many other provinces, the Bursa region was in a political and economic crisis in the aftermath of the Crimean War.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, the turmoil in the provinces led the Tanzimat state to initiate a series of inspection tours targeting different provincial contexts with the aim of surveying and addressing their problems on the ground. Among the inspectors appointed with this mission, Ahmed Vefik Efendi was assigned North-western Anatolia.¹⁰⁵ In 1863-64, he inspected the Southern Marmara region, dropping by at Yenişehir and İznik as well. In addition to attending to the debt crisis of the peasantry by freezing all cases of debt until the interest rates of these debts were reassessed through retrials under the close scrutiny of the central state, he overhauled the local administrative councils by dismissing and harshly punishing the local notables, who were well-integrated with the reformed administrative posts. He redistributed and reassessed taxes accruing from North-western Anatolia so as to increase the shares of the local notables, moneylenders and property owners. In other words, he virtually erased the tax debts of the villages by billing them to the wealthier actors involved in the political economy of the Bursa region. He did this reshuffling of the tax burden by producing heavy retrospective tax debts on accounts of the local notables and landowners, with a clear motivation of breaking their economic power. Settlement of some nomadic tribes and immigrants from Russia, investments in the transportation infrastructure and in public facilities were also on the agenda of the inspector of Anatolia. Hence, the overall objective of the inspection from the viewpoint of the Tanzimat state appears to be monitoring the local contexts more closely by enhancing its capacity to infiltrate into these provincial settings.

Given this historical background, this study makes two main arguments within the historiography of the Tanzimat era. One of these arguments takes issue with the penultimate moment of the inspection by asking how the local people perceived the central state's increasingly more pronounced presence in their lives during the mid-19th

¹⁰⁵ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 142.

century. The second argument builds upon the reactions of the local people to Vefik Efendi's inspection tour by assessing the sustainability and feasibility of the projects he initiated in the region over the medium term.

Accordingly, I argue that around the middle of the 19th century, the Tanzimat reforms generated veins of both compliance and dissent in the local society. On the one hand, when Vefik Efendi arrived at Yenişehir and İznik, he found a population which was accustomed to speak the language of the Tanzimat. Namely, ordinary people's entanglements with the Tanzimat state during the mid-century reveal how provincial actors embedded the reform institutions, and in doing so, how they carved out a space for their own agencies within modern governmental practices. On the other hand, Vefik Efendi faced with widespread banditry, violent night raids targeting the properties and lives of some well off non-Muslim inhabitants of the region and substantial itinerant populations in Yenişehir and İznik. These societal forces challenged the reformist vision of the Tanzimat state, which entailed containing populations through registration, taxation and conscription. Thus, amid prevailing veins of reception and rejection in the society, Vefik Efendi was to implement the Tanzimat state's agenda, albeit by stamping it with his own overbearing personality.

The second proposition of this study regarding the Tanzimat historiography assesses the new round of centralization initiated through inspection tours in the aftermath of the Crimean War. Although the support that the Tanzimat state extended to the peasantry with the inspection of Anatolia was a long due response to the cry of help from the Bursa region, Vefik Efendi's excesses and oppressive *faits accomplis* towards the local notables throughout the inspection overshadowed the appeal of modernization projects within the local society. Moreover, he billed the expenses of the settlement projects and infrastructural investments to the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik. His whimsy town-planning and over-hasty schemes not only claimed the money of the wealthy, but also aggrieved the disadvantaged groups, like the refugees and poor villagers deployed as *corvée*. I thus argue that the Tanzimat state's unilaterally imposed projects and socio-political schemes were unsustainable due to lacking the cooperation of the local society. In other words, modernization *a la* Tanzimat was crippled when it entailed forceful implementation of socio-politically hollow schemes of the state, because commitment and mobilization of the local people and the resources at their disposal were needed for these rather expensive modernization projects to bear fruit.

This dissertation also contributes to the literature on the settlement of the immigrants and accompanying upheavals in Anatolia following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. While scholarly works on this theme focus mainly on inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-communal tensions generated by massive immigration, this study sheds light to mainly intra-Muslim conflicts with a view of revealing the contradictions of the late Ottoman governmental framework under the pressure of quite extra-ordinary socio-political and economic circumstances. I argue that in the 1880s, the late Ottoman notions of “legitimacy” entailing the survival of independent, landed peasant households as the basic unit of economic production clashed with “the rule of law”, which entailed exclusive ownership rights on land as private property. I contend that strict adherence to “the rule of law” (with respect to the legal guarantees on the private ownership of land) would have rendered Western Anatolia ungovernable during the massive influx of the Muslim refugees, because “the rule of law” was one of the most powerful weapons of the big landowners against the encroachments of many immigrant communities, which were in dire need of land. As such, presumed and codified “rights” of different Ottoman Muslims were negotiated within an imperial rights regime that attributed differing values and costs to the positions of the claimants in land disputes. In Yenişehir and İznik, “the legitimate” claims of the immigrant communities prevailed over “the lawful” positions of the big land owners. The local political arena was decisive in this outcome, because it channeled the settlement towards extensive waqf lands under the possession of absentee land owners, with a motivation of protecting the local interests from the immigrants’ encroachments. Moreover, the native peasantry chose the immigrant communities as their neighbors over the more aggressive big land owners, who were enclosing rural resources ever more jealously due to the processes of privatization of land. The settlement as such proved to be critical for the sociopolitical composition of Yenişehir-İznik region in the upcoming decades.

This study engages with the historiography of the Hamidian era by enframing the consolidation of the Hamidian regime within Gramscian notions of hegemony stressing consensus building on the one hand, a revised definition of Habermasian public sphere highlighting the Hamidian public sphere as a sphere of acclamation and legitimation, on the other. I take the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı*, to which Yenişehir and İznik were attached in 1885, as a distinctively Hamidian project subsuming “myth of origin” and “invention of tradition” within quasi-dynastic legitimation. I argue that

unlike Vefik Efendi's unilateral actions, which depended on use of force, the creation of the new district as an exuberant showcase of Ottoman modernization depended on a thrift economy of violence, perpetuated by the Hamidian government's efforts of consensus building and political enticement. Based on examples from Yenişehir and İznik, I propose that many of the modernizing transformations associated with the Hamidian era, from construction of roads to building of mosques, schools and monumental government buildings could take place with the resources and manpower provided by the local societies under the coordination of the Hamidian administration.

I also examine the Hamidian "public sphere" as a political template, in which the authority of the sultan was formed and the masses participated in politics presumably within the limits that the political imagery of the regime aspired to set. In other words, although the Hamidian government envisaged the public sphere as a sphere of acclamation and legitimation, many people who were empowered as participants and/or observers during the formation of "the public" could potentially subvert and challenge the state sponsored premises of the public sphere. By concentrating on the agencies of the people, who partook in and engaged with the ideologically motivated public rituals, ceremonies, educational policies and Islamic Ottomanism of the regime, I argue that both the provincial administrators, who represented the official ideology and the local societies, who were drawn into the orbit of this ideology through public rituals, ceremonies and educational policies understood the autocratic political culture as a tool of governance. As such, "the public sphere" triggered criticisms, challenges and strategic subversions within and beyond the regime's ideological claims. I thus contend that in spite of its tangible success stories, like the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı*, Hamidian hegemony was not all-encompassing; it had limits and pitfalls, which were well-apprehended by the provincial actors.

In addition to addressing the relatively novel ideological aspects of the Hamidian era, this dissertation adds to the scholarly perspective, which stresses institutional and structural continuities between the Tanzimat and Hamidian eras. Zooming into the political economy of the Bursa region during the Hamidian era exposes it as a fusion of older societal structures inherited from the Tanzimat era and newer institutions and actors, such as the Public Debt Administration (the PDA), the Tobacco Régie and the Agricultural Bank, which got involved in the economy of the Ottoman Empire during the last quarter of the 19th century. Within the Bursa region, I use the micro context of

Yenişehir for assessing how laws, regulations, institutions and historical transformations pertaining to the political economy worked in practice. I demonstrate that in an economic context shaped by fierce competition for the rural surplus, various economic actors bended and broke the rules, regulations and conventions. More specifically for the Hamidian Yenişehir, I argue that just like in the mid-19th century, alliances and frictions over the utilization and distribution of the rural resources through the prerogatives of the local administration were the order of the day. So, focusing on how Yenişehir's political economy functioned over the medium term reveals persistent socio-economic structures amid political and institutional transformations.

Another theme in the historiography of the Hamidian era is the struggle for power between the *Mabeyn* and the Porte throughout the long reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.¹⁰⁶ This study ends with addressing the last phase of this struggle, in which the *Mabeyn* triumphed for good. After 1901-1902, factional politics of the Yıldız Palace overrode not only the hierarchical administrative framework centered in the Porte, but also the authority of the sultan, which used to function as a moderator of different political interests and viewpoints. Consequently, palace factions formed around a couple of powerful courtiers became the competing hubs of the late Hamidian regime, thereby completely paralyzing administrative and judicial checks and balances of the political system. In this context, direct lines of communication and political links between the Yıldız Palace and some provincial notables became tools of oppression for many provincial subjects. In other words, the state's seemingly unconditional alliance with specific provincial foci of power undermined its role of being a fairly impartial arbitrator of local disputes and problems. Based on the example of Yenişehirli Edhem Paşa, I thus argue that the politically and economically motivated links between the Yıldız Palace and specific provincial notables not only produced an irresponsive and lackadaisical government in the eyes of the provincial societies, but it also robbed the state's treasury by exploiting and oppressing many people to the point of sacrificing the complete fairness and legitimacy of the late Hamidian regime. Looking at it from Yenişehir-İznik region, the autocratic regime, which Sultan Abdülhamid instituted

¹⁰⁶ Engin Deniz Akarlı, "Friction and Discord within the Ottoman Government under Abdülhamid II (1876-1909)," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* 7 (1979): 3- 26; Gökhan Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası: Bir Dönemlendirme Denemesi," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/ The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, no. 47 (2016): 353- 409.

laboriously over the previous decades, was consuming itself at the turn of the 20th century.

Overall, this dissertation demonstrates fascinating durability of the local structures and networks over the long term. During the long 19th century, the local societies and their structures of power were able to adapt and survive interventions of the central state by transforming themselves. As such, the local social forces' willingness to cooperate or to resist specific policies of the imperial center profoundly affected the directions, pace and intensity of the reforms.

The local social structures' durability and resilience depended to a large extent on the individuals' success in finding out legal and institutional loopholes within the political system as it unfolded in their localities. It seems that the local actors were much more flexible than the central state in skewing new circumstances towards their own interests and benefit. Whenever the political authority of the imperial center seemed to be exertive and decisive, the local social forces made concessions and retreated to the background in order not to provoke further scrutiny and intervention. But, when the political system appeared to be ripe enough for their exploitation, powerful local actors stretched their spheres of influence and interest as far as they could.

At a more general plane, modernization in Western Anatolia does not appear to be an irreversible force subduing the people; on the contrary, it seems to have advanced mostly through the cooperation and participation of the people. Yet, processes of modernization always came with a price- some of which was paid in advance and some of it simply passed over to the next generations. For instance, the peasantry of the Bursa region called for more protection of the centralizing Tanzimat state; the immediate price for it was enduring the overbearance of Vefik Efendi. In a similar vein, the inhabitants of Ertuğrul mostly welcomed the new round of modernization in the mid-1880s; the immediate price for it was the consolidation of the autocratic aspects of the Hamidian regime. Still, many people, including those who were definitely on the losing side over the long term, such as some voluntarily settled nomadic communities, listed for the benefits and goods that modernization promised. As mortal beings, the people of the past, in general, opted for what modernization offered for making life easier, longer and less burdensome. Meanwhile, they deferred some serious back payments to the

upcoming generations by initiating unforeseeable chain reactions causing many atrocities, environmental decay, public health issues etc. in the subsequent centuries. In this account, as “modern” human beings, they were on a par with contemporary people.

iv. Organization of the Chapters

This thesis follows a roughly chronological order. Accordingly, the first two chapters (chapters 1 and 2) are on the later Tanzimat era of Yenişehir and İznik, covering the years in between 1855 and 1878. Chapter 3 is an intermediate chapter binding the Tanzimat era with the nascent Hamidian Empire by addressing the settlement of immigrants in Yenişehir and İznik in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. The last three chapters (chapters 4, 5 and 6) are on different aspects of the Hamidian episode of Yenişehir and İznik’s history.

Chapter 1 introduces the general social, political and economic outlooks of Yenişehir and İznik around the middle of the 19th century by delineating some structural and institutional continuities with the early modern era. This introductory chapter also analyzes cross-fertilization of the Ottoman Empire’s accelerated integration into the world markets with practical embodiments of provincial administration developed by the reformist state. By zooming into the local political arenas of Yenişehir and İznik, I demonstrate that at the particular economic conjuncture of the mid-19th century, the local notables’ power over the reformed local administration met with the pernicious arms of the capitalist world markets in the Bursa region. Thus, their use and abuse of the opportunities of the unregulated commercialized market economy of the Bursa region threatened many peasant households with dispossession by entrapping them in cycles of debt.

Chapter 2 concentrates on the nature of the relationship between the central state and the provincial societies of Yenişehir and İznik throughout the 1860s and 1870s. It traces the dilemmas of power between the state and local societies by addressing Ahmed Vefik Efendi’s inspection tour of North-western Anatolia as it was experienced in Yenişehir and İznik. Rather than focusing on what Vefik Efendi intended to do and actually did in Yenişehir and İznik *per se*, chapter 2 analyzes how his intervention was

experienced and received by the locals of the two *kazas*. All in all, Vefik Efendi's ambitious and overbearing inspection tour is examined as a case study of "how certain schemes to improve the human condition have (mostly) failed"¹⁰⁷ over the long run, because of lacking a societal base of support.

Following Vefik Efendi's inspection tour, Yenişehir and İznik were thus ready for the *vilayet* system, which tied the provinces more closely to the central state through a hierarchy of councils and centrally appointed officials at various tiers of the provincial administration. Within this new arrangement, Yenişehir proved that the social forces of the countryside would not easily submit to the bureaucratic hegemony of the provincial capital, Bursa. On the other hand, İznik, which was administratively demoted to a *nahiye* under Yenişehir, lost its momentum as an independent town. Thus, chapter 2 also addresses what the *vilayet* system and increased bureaucratization of the late Ottoman administrative framework entailed for the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik.

Chapter 3 deals with the settlement of immigrants and subsequent land disputes in Yenişehir and İznik following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. It opens up by describing the mobilization for war and actual combat months from the viewpoint of the Bursa region. It moves on to analyze the settlement process through the experiences and perspectives of various actors involved in the process. In this chapter, I address the immigrants', the central state's, local political actors' and land owners' changing priorities, agendas and actions throughout elongated processes of settlement in Yenişehir and İznik. Finally, I present different kinds of land disputes encapsulating various combinations of the above-mentioned actors as clashing parties. Overall, this chapter explains how the Hamidian Empire flourished in Yenişehir and İznik by basing itself on a social landscape, which was transformed by the arrival of many thousands of refugees.

Chapter 4 addresses consolidation of the Hamidian regime by engaging with the ideological components of its modernization efforts as they were played out and received in Yenişehir (including the *nahiye* of İznik hereafter). The chapter could be grouped roughly under two parts. The first part deals with the formation of Hamidian "hegemony" through efforts of consensus building between the state and society for a

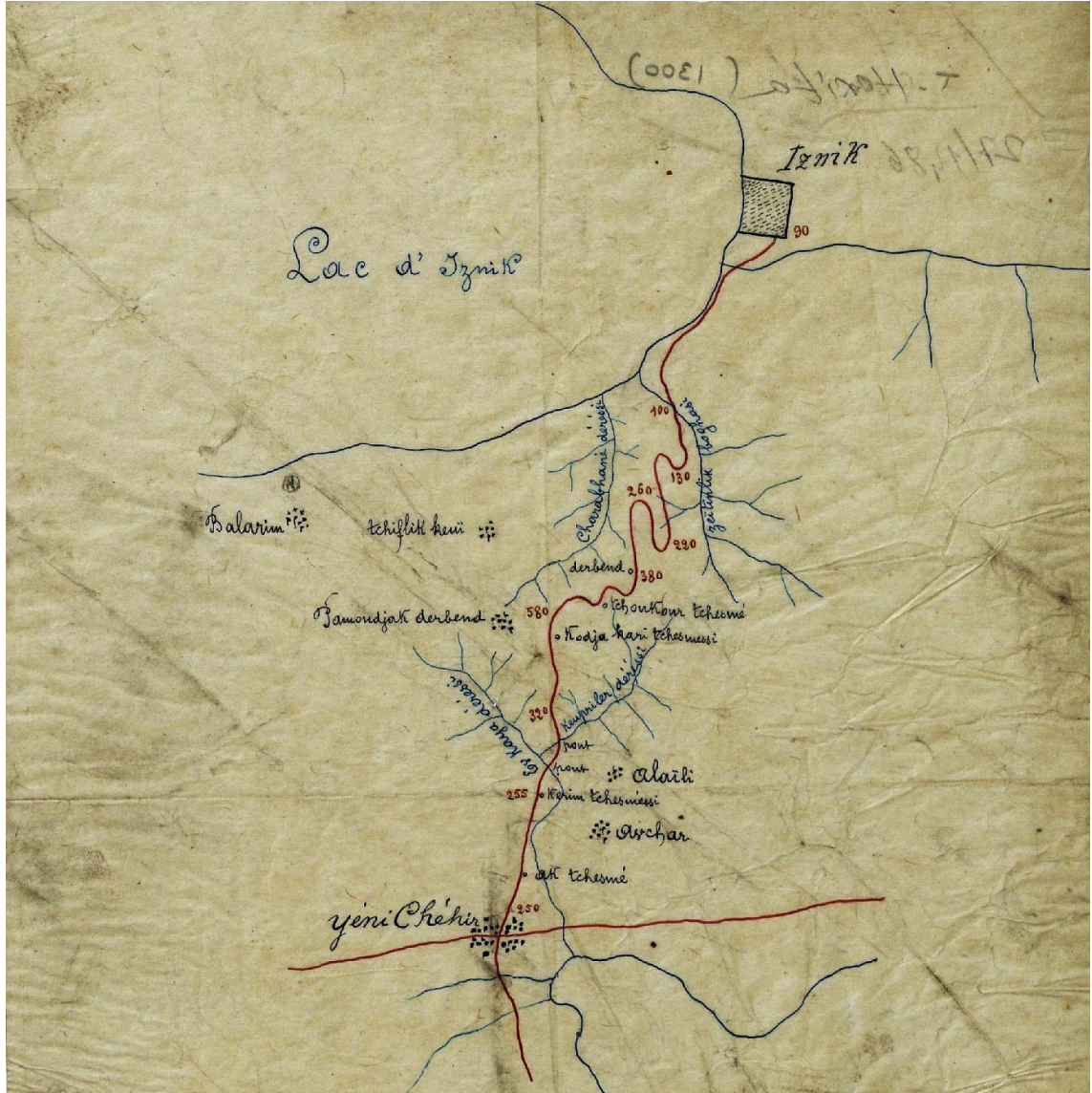
¹⁰⁷ James C Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

renewed attempt of modernization in North-western Anatolia. I trace the merging of the material and ideological components of the Hamidian Empire in the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* as a new district in 1885. Due to this administrative reorganization, Yenişehir was detached from the district of Bursa, and attached to the new district, whose capital was denoted as the city of Bilecik. I also address “the public sphere” as another platform, in which the Hamidian regime invested meticulously for ideological legitimation. I examine some public rituals specifically targeting the inhabitants of Yenişehir for demonstrating how the Hamidian regime interwove autocracy and Islamic rhetoric for forming hegemony over the public sphere with a view of rallying the support of wide segments of the populace behind the regime. The second part of this chapter zooms into the limits of Hamidian hegemony by highlighting how different local actors experienced and responded to the ideological claims of the regime. Put differently, I attend to the slippery grounds of the hegemonic Hamidian public sphere by focusing on the agencies of the various actors, who got involved in different aspects of the Hamidian rhetoric of power.

While chapter 4 revolves around the relatively novel ideological aspects of the Hamidian regime, chapter 5 highlights structural continuities in the political economy of Yenişehir from the Tanzimat era into the Hamidian era. Chapter 5 also consists of two sections: The first section is a survey of some of the main economic institutions and actors of the late Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian era. This section contextualizes the economic outlook of the Bursa region within contemporary trends of the world economy on the one hand, the Ottoman Empire’s specific policies of coping with the challenges of these trends on the other. It demonstrates the diversification and multiplication of foreign and Ottoman economic actors, which contended for the control of the rural surplus of North-western Anatolia. The second section zooms into the intimate and more quotidian context of Yenişehir for tracing how surplus extraction occurred amid relations of power that conditioned local administration. I analyze politics of “appropriation” in Yenişehir through a case study based on the detailed investigations that the *kaymakam* of the *kaza*, Mehmed Ramazan Efendi, underwent because of his dubious undertakings during the summer and early autumn of 1885. The overall objective of this chapter is to show how some of the economic transformations analyzed in the first section coalesced with local relations of power examined in the second section.

Chapter 6 focuses on how and why the late Hamidian Empire was experienced as an unjust and oppressive political system by many inhabitants of Yenişehir. After 1901-1902, the Hamidian regime failed to sustain “internal fine-tuning”¹⁰⁸, which had enabled a precarious balance between different social groups and political interests during the earlier decades of the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. In this debilitating process, Yenişehirli Edhem Paşa acted as a conduit transferring the vices of frictional politics of the Yıldız Palace into Yenişehir, and vice versa. This last chapter of the thesis uses Edhem Paşa’s activities and career as a window for examining the sociopolitical outlook of the late Hamidian Yenişehir. In other words, I situate Edhem Paşa’s compelling agency within the power structures of the late Hamidian era for examining the last episode of the long reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Hence, this local history of a Western Anatolian region opens up by addressing the dismal situation of the peasantry around the middle of the 19th century and ends with revealing the oppressive stranglehold created in this region through the political equation between Edhem Paşa and the late Hamidian regime during the early 20th century. In between lay desperate struggles and hope; change for the better and the worse.

¹⁰⁸ Selim Deringil uses the notion of “fine-tuning” for describing the Ottoman state’s efforts to overcome bewildering internal and external problems. Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 8-11.



Map 3: The map of Yenişehir-İznik road, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA), HRT. h. 01486.



Map 4: The map of Yenisehir-Gemlik road, Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA), HRT. h. 02002. 0002.

Destination	Year 1870 (hours)	Year 1898 (hours)
Yenisehir-İznik	6	4
Yenisehir-Bursa	12	10
İznik-Bursa	16	14
Yenisehir-Bilecik	---	8
İznik-Bilecik	---	12

Table 2: Travel times pertaining to Yenisehir and İznik according to years, *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1287*, 145; *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1316*, 317; 320.

CHAPTER 1

YENİŞEHİR AND İZNIK AROUND THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY (1855-1863)

1.1. Introduction

In *An Economic and Social History*, Donald Quataert begins his analysis of “The Age of Reforms” by positing that “despite strong threads of continuities with previous eras, 19th century was one of exceptional changes in Ottoman social, economic and political life.”¹⁰⁹ Many historians, writing on different aspects of the late Ottoman Empire would agree with Quataert, in that during the course of the 19th century, the Empire went through a process of rapid integration into the capitalist world economy, while inception of unprecedented institutions and promulgation of uniform laws and regulations undergirding the formation of a modern central state accompanied this process.¹¹⁰ I follow this general theoretical framework on the modern era of the Ottoman Empire, thereby address the political economy of Yenişehir and İznik within

¹⁰⁹ Donald Quataert, “Overview of the 19th Century,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 761.

¹¹⁰ İlber Ortaylı highlights that local administration and local councils did not have a precedent in the pre-Tanzimat era, İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî İdareleri, 1840-1880* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 13; Yavuz Cezar marks rapid and radical changes of the 19th century as distinctly different from the previous period, Yavuz Cezar, “From Financial Crisis to the Structural Change: The Case of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century,” *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 79 (1999): 50; Huri İslamoğlu distinguishes the 19th century by underlining the generality and uniformity of the rules and regulations of the Ottoman state, which replaced particularisms of the previous eras, Huri İslamoğlu-Inan, “Politics of Administering Property: Law and Statistics in the Nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire,” in *Constituting Modernity Private Property in the East and West*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu-Inan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 286.

the contexts of the commercialized Western Anatolian countryside on the one hand, and the local administrative framework of the Tanzimat state on the other hand. I argue that despite structural similarities between the wider, monetarized and commercialized economic context and the formal administrative framework that these two neighboring *kazas* belonged to, different social and political compositions of İznik and Yenişehir produced different outcomes for the rural populations inhabiting them. In other words, notwithstanding the formal uniformity of the local administrative structures put forth by the Tanzimat state, the actual manifestations of the reforms depended on how specific societal dynamics ingrained the reform institutions and the ensuing capitalist economy.

Local councils instituted at various levels of administrative hierarchy form the focal point of provincial administration in the late Ottoman Empire. The councils' comprehensive authority over local administration had started with 1840s, when they were created for collection of taxes directly by centrally appointed officials. Although the appointment of tax-collectors was abolished in 1842, the councils remained and with modifications continued to exist until the end of the empire. The councils were practically in charge of the whole local administration, including collection of taxes, maintenance of public order, conscription, land survey, waqf administration, and public works.¹¹¹ Increasing preeminence of the local councils was a reflection of the rising power of the local notables and land-owners, who pursued their interests through the expanding prerogatives of these councils.¹¹²

The Tanzimat state envisioned the local councils as an instrument for listing the support of the local notables in transferring the surplus of the provinces to the state's treasury in a relatively peaceful manner. The local notables however, were not a corporate entity; on the contrary they often represented competing interests and formed rival factions, which in turn used the institutional framework of the local council as a battleground for playing out social tensions and power struggles.¹¹³ Factionalism was

¹¹¹ Jun Akiba, "The Local Councils as the Origin of the Parliamentary System in the Ottoman Empire," in *Development of Parliamentarism in the Modern Islamic World*, ed. Tsugitaka Satō (Tokyo, Japan: Toyo Bunko, 2009), 179.

¹¹² Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 4 (2006): 137.

¹¹³ Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri*, 41-42; Hamdi Özdiş, "Taşrada İktidar Mücadelesi: II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Trabzon Vilayet'inde Eşraf, Siyaset ve Devlet (1876-1909)," (PhD diss., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2008), 42.

obviously an inefficient and time-consuming phenomenon, yet it was not altogether evil, in the sense that it potentially transcended the local political arena and involved higher administrative authorities as arbitrators. In fact, conciliating eternal disputes of rival local factions was a substantial work-load for the Tanzimat state, which became a virtuoso of handling slander, false accusations, fictitious pretensions and cycles of petitions and counter-petitions. Around the middle of the 19th century, the local political arena of İznik was ridden with such factionalism, stemming from the social composition of the *kaza* predating the Tanzimat. The local council, which was formed on top of the already existing societal tensions, became a part of the factional struggles through offering a new vocabulary for political action.

In spite of its “radical” breaks and somewhat accelerated pace of “change”, as Quataert concedes 19th century of the Ottoman Empire did not come out of the blue. A historiography merely dwelling on the uniqueness of the 19th century would inevitably create an irreconcilable gap between the early modern and the modern epochs of the Ottoman history. In fact, in their endeavors to fight the ghost of “the decline paradigm”, ever coming back to haunt the historiographies of the post-classical ages of the empire, historians of the early-modern era have developed a revisionist line, stressing porous socio-political boundaries, eclectic identities and transformations triggered by social conglomerations and the adaptability and the durability of the Empire over the centuries.¹¹⁴ The directions of research in the historiography of the early modern era as such, render it difficult to relate to the modern era, which after all ended with the catastrophic bloodsheds of rigid, nationalist confrontations.¹¹⁵ In other words, the historiographical gap between the early modern and the modern epochs enhances the isolated image of the late Ottoman Empire, as a polity conditioned first and foremost by the forces of modernization unfolding throughout the 19th century. In order to address this gap, I take “strong threads of continuities with previous eras” seriously; thereby analyze the presumed decline of traditional Ottoman institutions, such as the waqfs and

¹¹⁴ For example, Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Boston: Brill, 2004); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁵ The gap between the early modern and the modern historiographies of the Ottoman Empire is expressed in Alan Mikhail and Christine M. Philliou, "The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn," *Comp. Stud. Soc. Hist.* 54, no. 04 (2012): 737.

sharia courts. As opposed to the image of fateful attrition and dilution attributed to these institutions, I argue that the modern era offered a new lease of life to these institutions. The Ottoman state reorganized *naibship* and the administration of the waqfs in tandem with the administrative and fiscal transformations of the Empire. In doing so, it formalized and enhanced the basis of power of these institutions through redistributing administrative and economic prerogatives over these institutions between the central state and multiple stakeholders attached to these institutions. Yet, around the middle of the 19th century, in Yenişehir and İznik, the control of these institutions remained mostly at the hands of the local actors, who utilized them in their own terms. Hence, alongside with the local councils created by the Tanzimat state, the waqfs and the local sharia court formed the focal point of political contestations between the local notables.

The dominant historiography explains the 19th century history of Ottoman waqfs as an elongated process of decline, starting with the establishment of the Ministry of Evkaf in 1826 and tailoring a bare survival for them in the Republican era.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, throughout the 19th century, the Ottoman state gradually curtailed the autonomy of waqfs through transferring the surplus and administration of them from the social classes controlling this institution to the Ministry of Evkaf. The Ministry of Finance, which collected the income generated by the waqfs, withheld a substantial proportion of this income, which actually belonged to the budget of the Evkaf Ministry.¹¹⁷ On top of these, when the waqfs were founded, no income was earmarked for the financing of a huge bureaucracy, which involved in the central administration of the waqfs during the late Ottoman Empire. As such, the waqfs continuously lost blood, because their resources, which were to be used for the maintenance and financing of pious institutions, public works and the employees of the waqfs, were diverted to the financing of an inefficient bureaucratic administrative system and the fiscal needs of the

¹¹⁶ By “the dominant historiography” on the late Ottoman waqfs I refer to such studies as Murat Çizakça’s, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World from the Seventh Century to the Present* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000) and Nazif Öztürk’s, *Türk Yenileşme Tarihi Çerçevesinde Vakıf Müessesesi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1995).

¹¹⁷ Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations*, 71-109; Nazif Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 247-285.

central state.¹¹⁸ Neglect, mismanagement and corruption further accelerated the dismemberment of waqfs, which were economically weakened.¹¹⁹

But, the persistence and the eventual survival of this institution suggest that what is posited as “decline” was actually a re-shuffling of the revenues of and the administrative prerogatives over waqfs, under the changing circumstances of the late Ottoman Empire.¹²⁰ Contrary to the image of fateful decline, some historians argued for a differentiated notion of public waqf administration, which takes into account the protection of the interests of foundations and preservation of waqf properties during the later Ottoman Empire.¹²¹ In other words, the centralization of the waqfs was not a stepping stone for their eventual demise; rather it was a part of fiscal reforms initiated for the formation of a modern centralized state. In fact, pooling of the resources of religious endowments for building up centralized, modern state apparatuses was not unique to the Ottoman context. Similar fiscal reforms took place in Egypt, Russia and several European states.¹²²

Just like the narrative of “decline” on the waqfs, some historians designate the sharia courts of the late Ottoman Empire as an institution gradually losing its jurisdiction to the newly founded reform institutions, such as the local councils and the Nizamiye courts (secular courts).¹²³ It is true that especially these two creations of the Tanzimat state circumscribed the previous comprehensive authority of the sharia courts. Yet, within the challenges of the modern era, the sharia courts did not remain untouched; on the contrary, just like the centralization of the waqf administration, the

¹¹⁸ Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 299.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 282-283.

¹²⁰ Öztürk estimates that throughout the 19th century, the waqfs attached to the Evkaf Ministry (except “mülhak” and “müstesna” evkaf, which had more autonomous status) produced an income corresponding to 15.77% of the whole incomes of the state. He notes that this percentage is close to Ömer Lütfi Barkan’s estimate of the waqf incomes for the 16th century. Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 40.

¹²¹ Miriam Hoexter, "Adaptation to Changing Circumstances: Perpetual Leases and Exchange Transactions in Waqf Property in Ottoman Algiers," *Islamic Law and Society* 4, no. 3 (1997): 233.

¹²² Selim Argun, "Elite Configurations and Clusters of Power: the Ulema, Waqf, and the Ottoman State (1789-1839)," (Ph.D diss., Institute of Islamic Studies Mc Gill University, 2013): 307.

¹²³ For example, Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri*, 12. Yücel Terzibaşoğlu stresses that it remains an often cited but rarely analyzed fact that the sharia courts lost most of their jurisdiction in the course of the 19th century at the expense of the new nizami courts, Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "A very important requirement of social life": Privatization of Land, Criminalisation of Custom, and Land Disputes in Nineteenth-century Anatolia," in *Les acteurs des transformations foncières autour de la Méditerranée au XIXe siècle*, ed. Vanessa Guéno and Didier Guignard (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 26.

Tanzimat state reformed the local judiciary in tandem with the reforms on the provincial administration. On the one hand, *naibship*, which used to be a post dependent on the *kadis*, was fortified through detaching it from the *kadis*. Professional criterion for nomination and central appointment for the *naibs* were principally instituted, as opposed to previous practices based on purchase of office from the *kadis* and appointments according to rank rather than a grade system acknowledging merit.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the judicial system was integrated into the provincial administration through giving *ex-officio* membership to the *naibs* in the local councils. When Nizamiye courts were instituted with the *Vilayet Law* of 1864, the *naibs* became the chief judges of the new courts as well.¹²⁵ Hence, in spite of the decline in the prerogatives of the sharia courts, the main human element embodying this ancient Ottoman institution was smoothly integrated into the new judicial and provincial system.¹²⁶

Around the middle of the 19th century, the centralization of the judiciary was limited, in the sense that many small *kazas* could not generate income sufficient for covering the travel and living expenses of centrally appointed candidates. For this reason, the *naibs* were often nominated from among the local *ulama*, despite the customary rule of avoiding the appointment of locals.¹²⁷ As such, the local *ulama* could enhance their basis of power by becoming an integral part of the local government.¹²⁸ Moreover, as Jun Akiba notes, the *naib's* presidency in the new courts in the following decades was not merely a temporary arrangement due to a lack of trained "secular" judges; rather their critical role in the functioning of the Nizamiye courts can be seen as a natural extension of their long administrative experience in the local councils.¹²⁹ Hence, despite the radical changes introduced in the procedural and substantive fields of the law through Nizamiye courts, the double role of the *naibs* in the sharia and the

¹²⁴ Jun Akiba, "From Kadi to Naib: Reorganization of the Ottoman Sharia Judiciary in the Tanzimat Period," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies State, Province, and the West. Volume 1 Volume 1*, ed. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 47-50.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 52-54.

¹²⁶ David Kushner, "The Place of the Ulema in the Ottoman Empire during the Age of Reform (1839-1918)," *Turcica* 19, no. 0 (1987): 70.

¹²⁷ Akiba, "From Kadi to Naib," 51-52.

¹²⁸ Mahmoud Yazbak, "Nabulsi Ulama in the Late Ottoman Period, 1864–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 01 (1997): 72-73.

¹²⁹ Akiba, "From Kadi to Naib," 54.

Nizamiye courts testifies the synergic nature of the reformed judicial system.¹³⁰ In other words, the Nizamiye courts were in practice an amalgamation of the old and new concepts of justice, thanks to their hybridization with the sharia courts through the agency of the *naibs*.¹³¹

Another factor underlying the *sui generis* outlook of the 19th century is obviously our meager knowledge on the 18th century. Under the dazzle of “the reforms”, structural continuities in patterns of land-holding, demography and even system of taxation and the credit market slip into obscurity. In Yenişehir and İznik, a high land-labor ratio, the presence of big *çiftlik*s and the availability of extensive waqf lands were legacies of the 17th and 18th centuries, which conditioned the socio-economic framework of intensified contestations over land, especially after the arrival of waves of migration during the last quarter of the 19th century. Likewise, the Land Law of 1858 was implemented on top of the prevalent land regime without immediately disturbing existing patterns, only to unravel a set of developments with the entry of the migrant communities to the social dramas of Yenişehir and İznik later in the century.

To sum up, in between “continuities” and “breaks”, this chapter analyzes Yenişehir and İznik of the mid-19th century as an amalgam of the modern and the early modern on the one hand, the imperial and the local on the other.

1.2. The Commercialized Economy of the Bursa Region

Many historians writing on the economic outlook of the 16th, 17th and 18th century Bursa region note the striking commercialization of its agriculture, accompanied by a remarkable diversification of its labor and monetary markets. For example, during the 17th century, mulberries in the Bursa region were not raised for food, but as a market crop supplying the silk industry¹³², the extend of which is

¹³⁰ Avi Rubin, "Civil Disputes between the State and Individuals in the Ottoman Nizamiye Courts," *Islamic Law and Society* 19, no. 3 (2012): 262.

¹³¹ Avi Rubin, "The Trial of the Prosecutor Hamdi Bey: Inside and Out of the Ottoman Nizamiye Court," *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 3 (2011): 775.

¹³² Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1988), 82.

professed by the existence of 1000 silk looms in Bursa at the beginning of the 16th century¹³³. For the 16th and 17th centuries, Halil İnalçık identifies the principal fields of investment for the formation of capital in Bursa as interregional trade and the lending of money at interest.¹³⁴ Haim Gerber stresses that credit relations between Bursa people and inhabitants of the nearby villages and townships were very widespread. For Gerber, the expansion of credit relations from Bursa to the inhabitants different places, transcending the personal intimacy of a single, local community indicates that by the early-modern era, legal and administrative basis for the smooth functioning of the market for money had already been well-developed.¹³⁵ In addition to its comprehensive credit market, which encompassed even the poorest social elements, Bursa was an important hub of interregional and international trade in the 15th and 16th centuries¹³⁶, adding to the prosperity of those who could partake in its lucrative markets.

Thus, during the 19th century, neither “commercialization”, nor “monetarization” were novelties for the economic zone of Bursa. The region was not unaccustomed to trade with the rising mercantilist European economies, either. Yet, the region’s resilient and lively economy underwent significant transformations with the onslaught of the modern era. To begin with, the free trade agreements of the Ottoman Empire with European states at the end of 1830s curtailed the Ottoman state’s ability to monitor and control its foreign trade.¹³⁷ Waiving legal and economic barriers to integration with the capitalist world economy triggered an unprecedented boom in the exports from Western Anatolia.¹³⁸ In 1859, the value of exports from Bursa province was 2.6 times its imports.¹³⁹ Cultivation, processing and marketing of silk, grapes, tobacco, olives, cotton and dyestuffs generated a huge surplus, so much so that, by the middle of the 19th century, the future revenues of the Hüdavendigâr province were utilized as collateral for

¹³³ Halil İnalçık, "Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire," *The Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 1 (March 1969):108.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹³⁵ Gerber, “Economy and Society,” 146.

¹³⁶ İnalçık, “Capital Formation,” 108.

¹³⁷ Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisi ve Dünya Kapitalizmi (1820-1913)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınevi, 1984), 20.

¹³⁸ Reşat Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Dünya Ekonomisi: On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1993), 75.

¹³⁹ Leila Thayer Erder, "The Making of Industrial Bursa: Economic Activity and Population in a Turkish City, 1835-1975," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1978), 129.

domestic and international borrowing needs of the Tanzimat state.¹⁴⁰ Hence, the 19th century brought about a significant intensification in the volume of Bursa's economic activities on the one hand, and the overall direction (skewing towards the European economies) and the regulatory framework redistributing the economic surplus of the regional economy, on the other hand.

The critical question, then, is how exactly was the regional surplus appropriated? The lion's share from the commercialized agriculture of the region went to money-lenders (*sarrafs*), tax-farmers, local notables and foreign merchants, due to their successful orchestration of the collection of the taxes and the credit market. In other words, chains of credit emanating from İstanbul coalesced with chains of tax-farming contracts, which together snowballed the tax-burden of the peasantry by billing the cultivators an additional, incredible price of borrowing. On the one hand, urgent financial needs of the central state brought about auctioning of tax-revenues far below their actual values. The original contractors of tax-farms either immediately sold them to potential buyers for exorbitant profits, or divided them into smaller units and awarded these to subcontractors in the provinces. Likewise, non-Muslim money-lenders operating from İstanbul either directly bought these tax-farms from the Ottoman state, or financed the ventures of other tax-farmers. Within this scheme of events, Armenian money-lenders in Bursa became the sub-contractors of İstanbul-based money-lenders, who virtually had a monopoly over the original tax-farming contracts.¹⁴¹

How did this vicious circle continuously drawing on the over-exploitation of the cultivators come about? Even though the accelerated integration of the Ottoman Empire to the world markets was a phenomenon of the 19th century, the system of taxation and the credit market in Western Anatolia had its roots in the 18th century, and even far beyond. As noted above, the greatest fortunes of Bursa during the 15th and 16th centuries belonged to the money-changers (*sarrafs*), who dealt in money and made loans at interest. During the same period, interest rates in the provinces, especially in the rural areas, often exceeded 50 per cent. Thus, usury was indeed one of the major avenues of

¹⁴⁰ For foreign borrowing see, Şevket K. Akar and Hüseyin Al, *Osmanlı Dış Borçları ve Gözetim Komisyonları, 1854-1856* (Karaköy, İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2003), 7-11; more specifically on Hüdevendigar's revenues as collateral for foreign debt see, Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 301-302; towards the end of 1850s, sarraf Tıngıroğlu Ohannes and Baltacı Bezirgan lent to Hüdevendigar province by taking the future tax revenues of silk as collateral, see A. M.K.T. MHM 164-8.

¹⁴¹ Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 70-71.

capital accumulation in the Bursa region.¹⁴² In a similar vein, for the 18th century Bursa and its vicinity, Suraiya Faroqhi stresses that the complaints received by the Ottoman state from this city and its surrounding villages were often about excessive interest. She observes that "...in the 18th century countryside of Western Anatolia, with its gardens, orchards and olive groves, there seems to have existed an acute need for capital, which usurers could exploit in order to acquire landed property."¹⁴³ Thus, commercialization of agriculture, monetarization of the regional economy and institutionalization of market relations were not actually the offspring of the 19th century; on the contrary the developments of the 19th century could materialize within the framework of the long-term trends in the regional economy. To put it differently, when the Ottoman Empire contracted free trade agreements with European states in 1830s, the regional economy of Western Anatolia had already been ripe for responding to the contemporary demands of the international markets.

In the integration of the Western Anatolian countryside to the capitalist world economy, the credit nexus was of paramount importance. Money-lenders could claim a substantial proportion of the rural surplus through spiraling debts of the cultivators, who remained structurally dependent on them in order to pay their taxes and to make their ends meet. During the course of the 18th century, irregular taxes known as "*iane*" and "*tekaliif*" were transformed into regular taxes for matching the ever-increasing fiscal needs of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁴ As Mehmed Genç succinctly puts it:

At the end of the 18th century, accumulated capital in the Ottoman Empire concentrated in the hands of the state and the waqfs. Small-scale enterprises dominated agriculture, artisanship and even commerce. In an environment in which factor prices were checked, only money-lenders and tax-farmers could accumulate relatively more capital due to the nature of their undertakings.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² İnalçık, "Capital Formation," 109; 139. Likewise, Murat Çizakça analyzes the prolific credit market revolving around cash waqfs of Bursa in between the second half of the 16th century and the early 19th century, see Murat Çizakça, "Cash Waqfs of Bursa, 1555-1823," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, no. 3 (1995): 313-354.

¹⁴³ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women: Establishing Status, Establishing Control* (İstanbul: Eren, 2002), 19.

¹⁴⁴ Yavuz Cezar, "From Financial Crisis to the Structural Change," *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 79 (1999): 52.

¹⁴⁵ All translations in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted. Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Ötüken, 2000), 90.

Hence, the peasants turned to *sarrafs* and tax-farmers for their needs of credit. The high demand for liquidity and the limitedness of credit brought about peasant indebtedness as a persistent problem of the Ottoman economy.

What distinguished the political economy of Western Anatolia of the 19th century from the economic undercurrents of the previous century was intensification of the structural problems of the Ottoman economy. On the one hand, “free trade” politics enhanced the involvements of European interests in the regional economy. On the other hand, the Ottoman state’s enthusiastic attempts to increase its hold on the rural surplus further strained the Western Anatolian countryside. In fact, these problems were not endemic to Western Anatolia; many other parts of the Ottoman Empire with relatively developed economic infrastructure experienced similar problems. For example, Beshara Doumani argues that what was critical in the economy of Palestine throughout the late Ottoman era was not the emergence of commercial agricultural production as a result of the encounter with Europe, since this development was not new; rather the critical feature of the 19th century was the orientation and acceleration of the regional economy as the Ottoman Empire as a whole became slowly enmeshed in the European economic orbit.¹⁴⁶

In a similar vein, Bursa was already an important center of international and regional trade towards the end of the 15th century.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, throughout the 16th century, the silk industry of the city assumed remarkably commercialized features, fuelled by the ever-increasing demand of the external markets. Consequently, the overall outlook of the industry, from organization of the labor to the processes of marketing resembled “capitalist production”.¹⁴⁸ Hence, neither the commercialized economy of Western Anatolia, nor the money-lenders shouldering and profiteering from this prolific economy were novelties during the late Ottoman Empire. Yet, money-lenders could benefit more from lack of standardized currency and institutional banks throughout the first half of the 19th century, due to increased pressures of the Ottoman

¹⁴⁶ Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1995), 128.

¹⁴⁷ Halil Inalcik, "Bursa and the Commerce of the Levant," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3, no. 2 (1960): 131-147.

¹⁴⁸ Inalcik, “Capital Formation,” 113-118.

state for extracting more cash from the countryside.¹⁴⁹ At the beginning of the 19th century, in addition to the extra cash taxes imposed on crops destined for international markets, the Ottoman state levied an income tax in the commercialized regions of the Empire, such as Western Anatolia. The collection of these taxes was also auctioned to tax-farmers, who were further empowered *vis a vis* the peasantry in the absence of cheap sources of credit.¹⁵⁰ In this context, various coins and paper money in circulation in the provinces offered a free hand to money-lenders, who were the sole agents available for changing money.

The Tanzimat state's "innovative" methods designed for breaking the financial strait-jacket of the Empire proved to be detrimental for the peasantry inhabiting the hinterland of the Bursa region. In 1850s, this region was among the worst hit provinces from the failed attempts of introducing paper currency, due to its geographical proximity to and economic ties with the capital city. In 1854 and 1858, the Ottoman government's attempts to withdraw paper-money from circulation perpetuated a bottleneck of liquidity in Bursa, which in turn caused an over-valuation of coins *vis a vis* İstanbul, offering new "business" opportunities for the *sarrafs*, who profited from these failed attempts to introduce paper-money at the expense of the peasantry.¹⁵¹ The severity of the problem for this region stemmed from the fact that the Ottoman government withdrew paper money first from the provinces, while it was still in circulation in İstanbul. In the sub-district of Pazarköy, neighboring İznik in the southern Marmara region, the withdrawal of paper money from circulation united Muslims and non-Muslims of the *kaza*, which under normal circumstances was communally quite frictional. In the spring of 1858, the inhabitants of Pazarköy petitioned the Ottoman government for getting permission to continue to pay their taxes in paper money. Virtually all their economic ties were with the capital city, which was merely 6-7 hours far away from Pazarköy; consequently all their business partners and clients in İstanbul made their payments in paper money. Therefore, the inhabitants of the *kaza* did not have any other currency at hand, except for paper money, which was lately rejected by

¹⁴⁹ Yavuz Cezar, "The Role of the Sarrafs in Ottoman Finance and Economy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies State, Province, and the West. Volume II Volume II*, ed. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 68.

¹⁵⁰ Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 61.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 71.

the local treasury (*mal sandığı*). The Ottoman government however did not grant an exceptional permission for the seemingly exceptional difficulties of Pazarköy, thereby pushing the villagers towards the not-so-lenient webs of the money-lenders.¹⁵²

Why did not the Tanzimat state intervene in “the invisible hand” of the market, which quite “visibly” was robbing not only the peasantry, but also the state’s treasury? At the heart of the problem laid the state’s inability to exert fiscal control over the tax revenues on the one hand, the lack of control over the formal and informal credit markets on the other hand. The Tanzimat state depended on *sarrafs* for not only running the system of taxation, which practically took the shape of domestic borrowing, but also for generating short-term advances through internationalizing domestic borrowing. In between 1840 and 1867, a financial oligarchy composed of Greek money-lenders marketed and exported paper of the internal Ottoman public debt to the West through the international Greek diaspora mercantile network and their long experience of discounting commercial bills.¹⁵³ Thus, even before contracting its first foreign debt during the Crimean War, the Tanzimat state was contracting very expensive short term loans, from which an oligarchy of Greek bankers profited. Being acutely in need of financial liquidity, the state could not transfer substantial amounts of money to the provinces. Still, in 1840’s, an amount of 20.000.000 *kuruş* was earmarked as non-interest bearing credit for fuelling agricultural production. But, it could not achieve its purported aim.¹⁵⁴ The persistent insecurity of the Western Anatolian countryside forbade transfer of substantial amounts of cash between the capital and the provinces anyway.

1.3. Local Administration: Yenişehir vs. İznik

¹⁵² MVL 571-23 and MVL 572-77. Even in the early 1860s, the Ottoman government was still receiving paper money to the treasury from the district of İzmit, neighboring İstanbul. See, A. MKT. MHM 269-2.

¹⁵³ Ioanna P. Minoglou, "Ethnic Minority Groups in International Banking: Greek Diaspora Bankers of Constantinople and Ottoman State Finances, c. 1840-81," *Financial History Review* 9, no. 2 (2002):126

¹⁵⁴ A. Ubcini, *Osmanlı'da Modernleşme Sancısı*, trans. Cemal Aydın (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 1998), 267.

How small-peasant households of Western-Anatolia experienced the commercialized economy of the Bursa region was closely related to the local administration and local relations of power, which distilled the demands of the market before they reached the peasantry. Many historians working on the late Ottoman Empire take the *Vilayet* Law of 1864 as a crucial turning point for analyzing the reforms in the provincial administration.¹⁵⁵ The *Vilayet* Law was actually a major link in a chain of provincial reforms that the Tanzimat state undertook.¹⁵⁶ Just after the promulgation of the Tanzimat Edict, in the early 1840s local councils called *muhassıllık meclisleri* or *memleket meclisleri* were formed for the first time in some provinces, with a view of collecting taxes more efficiently.¹⁵⁷ In 1849, an administrative ordering on the provincial councils (*eyelet meclisleri*) was prepared in the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances and put into effect in the provinces. This ordering was a detailed manual reorganizing the whole provincial administration.¹⁵⁸ Around the middle of the 19th century, Yenişehir and İznik were *kazas* (sub-districts), in which such provincial reforms of the Tanzimat were in force. Both towns had directors (*müdürs*) and local councils functioning under higher administrative authorities in İzmit and Bursa.¹⁵⁹ Many cases from Yenişehir and İznik were carried to Bursa and İzmit, which functioned as layers of dispute and problem resolution in between the local political contexts and the imperial institutions operating from the capital city.

Under the disguise of this formal uniformity however, laid distinct local political dynamics, differentiating the manifestations of provincial administration in these two towns. The central state wanted to exert a tighter administrative control over Yenişehir,

¹⁵⁵ For example, Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12; Yasemin Avcı, *Değişim Sürecinde bir Osmanlı Kenti: Kudüs (1890-1914)* (Ankara: Phoenix, 2004), 260; Özdiş, *Taşrada İktidar Mücadelesi*, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Reforms in the provincial administration were not limited to promulgation of laws and regulations that were effective all over the Empire. For example, a significant administrative re-organization within the district of Bursa took place in 1858, see A. MKT. MVL 98-25. Whereas, the implementation of Tanzimat reforms in Trabzon was delayed until the end of 1840s, due to the resistance of the local notables. Musa Çadırcı, "Tanzimat'ın Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde Uygulanması," in *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye: Anadolu Kentleri*, ed. Tülay Ercoşkun (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2011), 74. Hence, in addition to promulgating empire-wide laws and regulations, the Tanzimat state upheld a flexible attitude in the actual implementation of the reforms.

¹⁵⁷ Ortaylı, *Mahalli İdareler*, 32-35.

¹⁵⁸ Musa Çadırcı, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Eyalet ve Sancaklarda Meclislerin Oluşturulması (1840-1864)," in *Yusuf Hikmet Bayur'a armağan* (Ankara: T.C. Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1985), 269-270.

¹⁵⁹ İznik was a sub-district attached to İzmit; subsequently it was attached to Hüdavendigar province. Yenişehir was attached to the district of Bursa within Hüdavendigar Province until the creation of Ertuğrul Sancağı during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

because it was a bigger administrative unit, strategically important for supplying timber for the shipbuilding activities of the Ottoman navy in the nearby Gemlik dock. Therefore, Yenişehir was administered by a 1500 *kuruş* salaried director, whereas İznik was a sub-district with a 500 *kuruş* salaried director. Ideally, the appointments of the directors of both towns had to be ratified by the central administration. But, the low salary of the *müdür* of İznik could not sustain a candidate appointed from outside by the central state.¹⁶⁰ For this reason, either unqualified outsiders volunteered for the post, or local notables *de facto* manned this post in between formal appointments.

Compared to Yenişehir, İznik was a town much more difficult to contain for the central state, because it encompassed mountainous regions harboring many armed gangs engaging in banditry. Furthermore, İznik's borders in the mid-century extended to Pazarköy (Orhangazi), in which a substantial number of Armenians lived; therefore it was more prone to eruption of inter-communal tensions. İznik's "troublesome" nature for the central state as such, brought about frequent changes in its administrative status and borders on the one hand; very rapid turnover of appointed directors on the other hand. In this context, local notables utilized the administrative prerogatives of the local council for playing out their factional rivalries. Hence, in the mid-century, as opposed to the relative administrative calm of Yenişehir, İznik frequently emerged on the agenda of the central administration with factionalism and inter-communal strife.

Yenişehir's relatively harmonious administrative outlook *vis a vis* the Ottoman state could however mean two things; either the reforms of the Tanzimat state smoothly functioned so as to achieve social peace, or a reign of terror blocked the channels for voicing dissent. Unfortunately, the latter was the case for Yenişehir, in which the local notables acted in unison to the detriment of the peasantry. The mountainous, harsh geography of İznik pushed some villagers into arms production and banditry, which in turn perpetuated peasant flight. The factionalism between the Muslim and non-Muslim notables in İznik rendered the disputes within the sub-district open to the arbitration of the Tanzimat state, thereby preventing the monopolization of economic and political power by a group of local potentates. Unlike İznik, the geographical serenity of Yenişehir plain and the concerted actions of the local notables within the context of liberal, capitalist regional economy became a curse for Yenişehir, bringing the

¹⁶⁰ For Yenişehir see, MVL 622-82; for İznik see, MVL 569-88.

peasantry at the brink of collapse. Thus, what the Tanzimat state intended for Yenişehir was one thing; what actually happened on the ground was another story.

1.3.1. Yenişehir: The Worst Combination of Politics and Economy

At the end of July 1863, when the inspector of Anatolia, Ahmed Vefik Efendi reached Yenişehir, he immediately sent criers all over the *kaza* for summoning people and collecting their petitions. Not a single soul came forward, which quite fittingly indicated for Vefik Efendi that the people were terrorized under the iron fist of the local foci of power. He thus imprisoned four members of the local council and a particularly powerful “notable” called Çakıroğlu İsmail. Before the arrival of Vefik Efendi, Çakıroğlu had travelled all the villages one by one and threatened the people by telling them that he had already “bought” the coming inspector, who would support him no matter what the people would claim. As an experienced statesman, Vefik Efendi described what he witnessed in Yenişehir as “mind-boggling” (*zihinlere durgunluk getirüp*).¹⁶¹

After Çakıroğlu’s imprisonment, a village headsman (*muhtar*) came forward with a petition, which Vefik Efendi put in effect in “the commercial commission” he formed as a part of the inspection mission. The trials at this commission unraveled how the credit nexus destroyed the peasantry with the mediation of the local notables. The *muhtar* recounted that due to the village’s 6.5 gold liras debt to the local treasury (*mal sandığı*); he had to obtain a promissory note (*senet*) from Çakıroğlu İsmail, for 19 gold liras with a 91 day option. Çakıroğlu however, did not pay 6.5 liras to the treasury from his own pocket; instead, he borrowed 16.5 gold liras from an Armenian called Karabet, who came to Yenişehir for buying cocoons, in return for paying back 19 liras in three months. He deposited 6.5 liras to the treasury to clear the village’s standing debt, and shared the remaining 10 liras with the local treasurer, who played his part through forcefully demanding the payment of the village’s debt at the most disadvantageous

¹⁶¹ All the information below, on Yenişehir’s economic and political situation is taken from Vefik Efendi’s report: İ. MVL 492-22265-1. Tevfik Güran used the same document in describing “Uninstitutionalized (Private) Agricultural Credit Market”, Tevfik Güran, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı Üzerine Araştırmalar* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Eren, 1998), 136.

season for the peasantry. Thus, from this debt deal, Karabet, who actually was an agent of a foreign silk merchant called “Şevab” (Schwab), on whom we will see more below, earned 2.5 liras and the two local intermediaries each made 5 liras.

Under the commercialized economy of the Bursa region, money begot money, but it did more so when it allied with the forceful arms of the local notables. Although Yenişehir was not unique in this respect, since there were many similar cases in İnegöl and Bursa, it was probably an extreme example demonstrating the limits of over-exploitation exacerbated by the unified front of the local notables. According to Vefik Efendi’s report, in Yenişehir, the *beys* (local notables) staffing the local council had usurped 10.000 *dönüms* of state-owned lands, thereby withheld 19.000 *kuruş* tax revenues. Furthermore, rural notables (*ağavat*) ruined about 3000 households in 20 years through extending advance payments for the crops of villagers well under the market prices. This practice, known as *seleme* or *salam*, swallowed almost all the rural surplus by rendering villagers dependent on *ağas* via payments of eternal interests.¹⁶² As a result, many villagers were practically dispossessed and reduced to share-croppers on their own lands or became servants of the rural notables. As Beshara Doumani notes for Nablus, money-lending had been a well-established practice of urban-rural relations since ancient times; yet 19th century witnessed a qualitative change in the pervasiveness, uses and social bases of *salam* contracts, which hand in hand with taxation accelerated the expansion of a market economy into the farthest reaches of the countryside.¹⁶³ In spite of their different social and political compositions, the international and imperial economic contexts of the mid-19th century produced the same problem of rural indebtedness in both Palestine and Western Anatolia.

In the mid-19th century Yenişehir, two possible strategies that could have improved the position of the peasantry come to mind. First, the people could have sought the active involvement of the Tanzimat state, since İstanbul was not literally too far away from Yenişehir. Second, in order to get rid of at least the burden of the local notables, the villagers could directly borrow from the sources of credit available in

¹⁶² *Seleme* was not an arrangement specific to Yenişehir or Western Anatolia. Abdul-Karim Rafeq describes very similar practices for mid 19th century Syria. Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems and Their Social Impact in Syria around the Middle of the 19th Century," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East: (proceedings of an internat. conference)*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: Amer. Univ, 1984), 389.

¹⁶³ Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 180.

Bursa. The peasantry could not feasibly take these tracts, simply because the functioning of “the free market” boiled down to the crude force at the disposal of the local potentates. Vefik Efendi remarks that unlike any other places he had seen, in Yenişehir, there was a parallel local government, composed of four persons called *şehir muhtarı* (city headsmen), aside from the official local council and the neighborhoods’ headsmen. He adds that Çakıroğlu was a member of this committee, which “administered” the markets of the town through forceful extortions. Accordingly, these men closed down all the bakeries in town and sold bread at the only bakery belonging to themselves, at the prices they determined. They established a monopoly over wheat by usurping the whole produce, which they distributed to the peasantry at exorbitant prices. They could sustain their oppression as such, because they had many armed men under their command, hence the term “brigand” (*şaki*) Vefik Efendi uses for them. It is clear that the Tanzimat state did not (or could not) reach out to Yenişehir with sufficient armed men to wrestle the monopoly of violence from these “brigands” in the first place.

As to the second point, regarding the possibility of forging a direct credit link with Bursa; this was a rather risky business on the part of Bursa-based money-lenders. In fact, Sarraf Gülmezoğlu Agop, extended credit to many villages of Yenişehir and Bursa. In 1860, he was after 27.350 *kuruş* of debt to be collected from the villages of Yenişehir.¹⁶⁴ Until that time, he had won all the court cases against his debtors, yet the people continued to resist paying their debts.¹⁶⁵ The debts of the peasants were indeed legally sanctioned, even though exorbitant interest rates theoretically remained illegal. In such a context, the armed presence of “the parallel government” ensured that the villagers actually paid their debts.

The political context of Yenişehir during the mid-19th century resembles the era of provincial power-holders during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The crucial difference between “the brigands” like Çakıroğlu İsmail and provincial power-holders was their economic basis of power. Çakıroğlu profited from unimpeded market conditions, whereas provincial power-holders were a part of a grand coalition of İstanbul-based elites and large-scale money-lenders, formed for managing the revenues of the state through *malikane* (tax-farms for life) contracts. Many provincial actors

¹⁶⁴ A. MKT. DV 212-49.

¹⁶⁵ A. MKT. DV 219-100.

partook in this coalition by pooling *malikane* shares on villages and successfully passing them from one generation to the next.¹⁶⁶ With the abolition of *malikanes*, the lands within the *malikane* system were gradually included in the system of short-term tax-farming through auctions.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the first couple of decades of the 19th century witnessed the transfer of the resources controlled by provincial power-holders to the central state through instituting short-term tax-farming instead of *malikanes*.¹⁶⁸ This shift meant weakening of the economic basis of the provincial power-holders, whereas tax-farmers and *sarrafs* (money-lenders) rose to preeminence and/or enhanced their places within the taxation system. In the case of Yenişehir, local notables filled in the vacuum of power generated by the elimination of the provincial power-holders through dwelling on the opportunities presented by rapid integration into capitalist world economy within a context of unregulated relations of production and credit nexus.

Did the Tanzimat, then, completely by-pass a town so close to the capital city, after more than two decades had passed over its initiation? This was not exactly the case; the people knew the purported objectives and the legitimacy framework of the Tanzimat. Yet, the notables who often did not share the developmentalist, liberal agenda of the Tanzimat state utilized the reform institutions as a façade for their exploitative and abusive administration of the *kaza*. Such course of action on behalf of the notables brought about the end of Yenişehir's first steps towards industrialization.

1.3.2. Destruction of Nascent Silk Industry in Yenişehir¹⁶⁹

Towards the end of 1850s, Karmazoğlu Kigork, an Armenian resident of Yenişehir, established a silk factory in the town through investing about 400.000 *kuruş*

¹⁶⁶ Şevket Pamuk, "The Evolution of Financial Institutions in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1914," *Financial History Review* 11, no. 01 (2004), 17.

¹⁶⁷ Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 113.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁶⁹ Cafer Çiftçi introduces some of the documents used in this section in, Cafer Çiftçi, "Yenişehir'de Tacir Kigork'un Harir Fabrikası, Borçları ve Alacaklılar Meselesi," in *Tarihten Günümüze Yenişehir Sempozyumu (Bildiri kitabı)*, ed. Mefail Hızlı and Sezai Sevim (Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2014), 233-239. But, he cites his sources as "HR. MKT 49-569", which I could not locate in the Ottoman archives. I found some of the same documents enclosed in HR. MKT 228-24.

in his new business. In order to raise the required capital, he borrowed 40.000 francs from a French banker in İstanbul. He also signed a contract with the acting consul of the United States of America in Bursa, Mösyö Şevab. Accordingly, Mösyö Şevab made a down payment of about 309.000 *kuruş* (or 60.000 francs) to Kigork for the purchase of silk cocoons. In return, Kigork would deliver him one *balya* (78 *kıyyes*) of silk every two weeks, until completing 6 *balyas* in total. He delivered 5 *balyas*, some of which were less than 78 *kıyyes*. When Mösyö Şevab inquired about the undelivered *kıyyes* and the remaining *balya*, Kigork parried Şevab's questions by claiming that some parts of the factory were out of use and in need of reparations, also he could not find enough girls to labor in the factory. In fact, due to the slump in European trade in the aftermath of the Crimean War, the prices of silk had fallen quite steeply and Kigork was financially very much strained.¹⁷⁰

Through his nephew, Pol Karmazyan, who was a Bursa-based trader, Kigork asked for an extension for the payment of and a reduction in his debt from the French banker in İstanbul. In the mean time, Mösyö Şevab was questioning the credibility of Kigork in Bursa. He talked to Pol Karmazyan, who in turn tried to settle down Şevab through testifying Kigork's credibility. Yet, Şevab smelled something fishy in the air, since he had already heard that Kigork had secretly sent 3 *balyas* of silk to Pol Karmazyan, to be sold above the price contracted with Şevab. On top of this, the acting consul of the French state in Bursa bumped into Mösyö Şevab, who recounted him his problems with Kigork's debt. The French acting consul naively responded Şevab by giving away that another French banker in İstanbul had extended Kigork 40.000 francs credit, taking the factory itself as collateral. That was it for Şevab; he immediately summoned 5 or 6 of his men and went to the factory in Yenişehir.¹⁷¹

Kigork was not present in Yenişehir at the moment of Şevab's arrival. His brother and his sister were managing the factory in his absence. Şevab took by his side the director of silk *mizan* (the local tax-collection official of silk) of Yenişehir, Karabet¹⁷², and another servant in the local *mizan*, Gülmezoğlu Murad and a member of

¹⁷⁰ Kigork's petition to the governor of Bursa, HR. MKT 228-24; Şevab's petition to the governor of Bursa, HR. MKT 228-24.

¹⁷¹ The French acting consul's protest presented to Şevab and the governor of Bursa, HR. MKT 228-24; Şevab's petition to the governor of Bursa, HR. MKT 228-24.

¹⁷² This "Karabet" could be the agent of Şevab, who lent money to Çakıroğlu in 1863.

the local council of Yenişehir, Karabacak Emin Ağa and busted into the factory. He took all the silk and silk worms and cocoons available at the time and stored them in Karabet's house to be transferred to his own place in Bursa. He also carried away substantial quantities of timber and many other items present at the factory for processing silk. At night, he put two locals of Yenişehir, armed with axes, to the door of the factory, virtually imprisoning Kigork's brother Andon and their sister, so that they could not initiate a formal complaint in the local council of Yenişehir. The following day, Şevab sent many workers to the site of the factory in order to uninstall all the equipments, machines, appliances, even the furniture of the factory and sealed them with the consular seal in a place of storage. The factory, which was established in 11 months with many expenditures and labor, was thus destroyed within a day, remaining behind only its walls and roof. Soon after, Şevab sold the spoils of his raid, some of which he stored in the house of a Muslim (most probably Karabacak Emin Ağa) well under their market prices.¹⁷³ Later on, the silk *mizan* official, Karabet, came to the factory with his servants and took Andon to Şevab, who forced Andon to sign documents indicating his free will in surrendering the factory in return of Kigork's debt. Contemplating on the open collaboration of some prominent *Yenişehirli*s with Şevab, Andon had no other option than signing the documents.¹⁷⁴

When Şevab returned to Bursa, he found Andon there and told him that the factory could only pay 80.000 *kuruş* of Kigork's debt, for the remaining 96.000 *kuruş* he invited him to the commercial court in Bursa. Six days after his arrival to Bursa, Andon could write a complaint to the governor, recounting what had happened in Yenişehir. Soon after, Kigork returned to Bursa, he too wrote to the governor, stressing that Şevab could dare to engage in such a despicable act, just because Kigork was a subject of the Ottoman state. He asserted that Şevab undermined the sovereignty of the Ottoman state through seizing a factory belonging to an Ottoman subject, whose life, honor and property the Ottoman state pledged to protect. By bypassing the local council of Yenişehir on purpose, Şevab intervened in the administrative and executive prerogatives of the Ottoman state through abusing his official title at the consulate of

¹⁷³ For instance, the timber worth 17.000 *kuruş* was sold to Berber Halil Ağa for only 5.500 *kuruş*, to be paid in 40 days.

¹⁷⁴ Andon's petition to the governor of Bursa, HR. MKT 228-24.

the United States of America.¹⁷⁵ The governor of Bursa was outraged by Şevab's hard-bitten dare.¹⁷⁶ The acting French council in Bursa, who represented the French banker in İstanbul, was equally furious. Hence, the governor sent the translator of the province with an official from the French consulate to Yenişehir and collected evidence against Şevab on the ground, as well as obtaining an official document signed by the local council of Yenişehir.¹⁷⁷

The governor, of course, realized the collaboration of the local council due to its passivity in an event that turned into public spectacle. The council, whose one member was an open collaborator, defended itself by underlining the absence of an official complaint, claiming that the council learnt about the issue only after everything against Kigork had already happened.¹⁷⁸ The governor rejected Şevab's protests outwardly and sent all the documents collected against him to the office of the Grand Vizier, in order for the whole case to be tried at the capital. Şevab and the new acting consul of the United States in Bursa very well knew that they stand no chance for winning the case in İstanbul. Yet, as we have seen, this blow to Şevab was not sufficient to end his activities in the Bursa region, since he was still functioning in Yenişehir through his agent, Karabet, in the early 1860s.¹⁷⁹

The destruction of Kigork's factory reveals that not all well-off non-Muslims were money-lenders *per se*, some, like Kigork, were industrialists contributing to the industrialization of the Ottoman economy. In this respect, the Tanzimat state's liberal, developmentalist agenda overlapped with Kigork's adherence to the legitimacy framework of the Tanzimat state. Kigork openly appealed to the Tanzimat state's pledge of protecting the life, honor and property of its subjects by framing himself as a loyal and industrious subject of the Ottoman Empire. His statement manifests a mastery of

¹⁷⁵ Kigork's petition, HR. MKT 228-24.

¹⁷⁶ The governor's protest addressing Şevab, HR. MKT 228-24.

¹⁷⁷ The governor's report summarizing the whole case, A. MKT. UM 311-7. The initial investigation in Yenişehir encompassed representatives of Şevab and the French trader. Throughout this investigation Şevab tried to conceal his use of force through his connections in Yenişehir. The provincial council in Bursa did not buy the report prepared after this investigation, since the event involved hundreds of men (*Yenişehirli*) in the destruction of the factory.

¹⁷⁸ The local council of Yenişehir's report, HR. MKT 228-24.

¹⁷⁹ As a matter of fact, by the early 1860s, Şevab's business in silk trade was quite entrenched in Bursa region. Even before the devastating earthquake in Bursa in 1855, he was doing business in between Bursa and Bilecik. Mehmed Namık Paşa, then the governor of Bursa, totally hated Şevab and tried to curtail his activities in the region. HR. MKT 118-47.

the legitimacy frameworks of the Tanzimat state. As opposed to Kigork's allegiance to the Tanzimat state, the local council of Yenişehir, which was a creation of the same reformist state, did not fulfill the functions tailored for itself. The notables sitting in the local council did not want Kigork's factory in the town. Therefore, they sided with a foreign capitalist in the literal destruction of the nascent local industry. It is significant that the notables' overall attitude within the whole event was not shaped by communal or religious sensibilities, since alongside with Muslim notables; local Armenian officials of silk *mizan* were collaborators of Şevab. One reason for the notables' univocal collaboration with Şevab could be economic opportunities of obtaining Kigork's goods far below their market prices. Aside from the immediate gains as such, Kigork's factory might have decreased the notables' own profit margins in silk trade. In order not to leave his factory idle, Kigork was probably absorbing the cocoons of the region in return for higher advance payments to the producers. As we have seen in the case of the debt trial in Yenişehir, Şevab's business with Kigork potentially nullified the share of the local foci of power in the credit arrangements between the foreign merchant and the sub-district.

Whatever the exact motivations of the notables were, it is obvious that they did not share the developmentalist, liberal agenda of the Tanzimat state. Consequently, they deliberately paralyzed the local administration, which was supposed to function as the arm of the central state in the *kaza*. The *salnames* (yearbooks) of Hüdavendigâr province in the upcoming years conspicuously described Yenişehir as a sub-district devoid of significant industry. This was indeed a well-deserved etiquette.

1.3.3. İznik: Rampant Factionalism

Around the middle of the 19th century, İznik and Pazarköy (Orhangazi) were two neighboring sub-districts that were geographically and economically quite integrated, despite being administratively separated.¹⁸⁰ In the region surrounding Lake İznik (encompassing both İznik and Pazarköy), vibrant Armenian villages flourished, thanks

¹⁸⁰ In the early 1860s, Pazarköy was attached to İznik for a short period of time. A. MKT. MHM 281-56.

to their involvement in the silk and olive economy of the Southern Marmara region.¹⁸¹ Non-Muslim notables from these populous Armenian villages enhanced their economic prospects by partaking in tax-farming and credit arrangements through their connections with Armenian money-lenders operating from Bursa and İstanbul. For example, in the years 1858 and 1859, Sarraf Mübayaacıoğlu Agop from Bursa bought the tax-farm of the olive-oil tithe and outsourced İznik's share to Fincanoğlu Hacı Mircan and Haçanoğlu Kolyos and Nişan from *Sölöz Gayri Müslim*, an Armenian village of İznik. When these *Sölözlüs* defaulted, Agop carried the case to the Supreme Council in the summer of 1861. During the trials in the Council, he rejected the sub-contractors' offer to pay their debts in installments.¹⁸² Subsequently, the case was transferred to "*Deavi Nezareti*", for a last trial arranging the payment of the debt through the sale of the properties of the debtors. At this point, the tax-farmers from *Sölöz* ran away to their hometowns together with their guarantors.¹⁸³

Likewise, for the year 1860, the olive tithe of Hüdavendigâr was contracted to Çıracıoğlu Markar (most probably a banker operating from İstanbul).¹⁸⁴ Bursalı Sarrafoğlu Ohannes, in turn, bought İznik's olive tithe from Osman Habib, "the acting tax-farmer" (*mültezim vekili*).¹⁸⁵ Haçanoğlu Kolyos and Fincanoğlu Hacı Mircan were again the last chain of tax-collection, indebted to Sarrafoğlu Ohannes from Bursa. Both Ohannes and the local tax-farmers defaulted in their debts. While Ohannes chased Mircan and Kolyos through various levels of the court system, ending up in the capital city, Osman Habib tried to pressure Ohannes through parallel steps.¹⁸⁶ Being cornered

¹⁸¹ In 1867 a few missionaries visited 9 of the 10 Armenian villages in the vicinity of İznik. According to their report, the most populous of these villages contained 1000 houses; the average number of houses per village was 350. The missionaries delightfully noted the prosperity of these Armenian villages due to their promising prospects for the development of self-supporting churches and schools. The wealth of these villages depended on the yield of silk and olives. *The Missionary Herald*, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, v.63, 1867, 391-392.

¹⁸² İ. MVL 451-20137.

¹⁸³ A. MKT. DV 218-94. In a similar vein, İstanbul-based Armenian money lenders could own land in Yenişehir and İznik, most probably through the failed debts of their clients. Some local Armenian notables were their representatives in the region. For example, Polıçeci Keşkekoğlu Karabet, operating from Valide Hanı in İstanbul owned land in İznik. MVL 499-152. Haçanoğlu Hacı Mardiros from *Sölöz Gayri Müslim* was his representative, who collected his debts in the region. A. MKT. DV 162-12.

¹⁸⁴ MVL 464-114.

¹⁸⁵ There was no official contract between Çıracıoğlu and Ohannes. We do not know how many sub-contractors stood in between Markar and Ohannes. Osman Habib could be representing Markar or another sub-contractor linked to Markar.

¹⁸⁶ A. MKT. DV 215-84; MVL 399-59.

by Osman Habib in the summer of 1862, Ohannes became a subject of the Russian state, further complicating the case through the involvement of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to enforce the decision to seize his property.¹⁸⁷ By 1865, Mircan and Kolyos had paid approximately the half of their debt to Ohannes, who was still after the remaining 36.000 kuruş.¹⁸⁸

Tax-farming and money-lending in İznik were not exclusively in the hands of the non-Muslims. Muslim notables sub-contracted some cash taxes and got involved in the money market, too. Yet, overall the credit market was dominated by non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, who could utilize the loopholes provided by the pronounced presence of foreign states in the Ottoman economy and politics.¹⁸⁹ Had he been a Muslim, Sarrafoğlu Ohannes would not have become a subject of the Russian state, to the bewilderment of Osman Habib. Yet, the stretch of *Sölözliis* trials to mid-1860s suggests that it was not easy for money-lenders to seize the debtors' property. According to the Ottoman law, one cannot touch the house (together with its appliances and utilities) in which the debtor dwells with his family. For other kinds of immovable properties, local tax-farmers made use of the age-old trick of fictitious sales or transfers of their property to their relatives and family members.¹⁹⁰

Factionalism between Muslim and non-Muslim notables should have afforded a breathing space for the peasantry in İznik, since wide-spread peasant indebtedness, as was the case in Yenişehir, do not figure in the documents for the villages of İznik. In the cases of the defaulted local Armenian tax-farmers, it is significant that they bore the burden of debt rather than the villagers. Lacking the executive arms of the local council and the threat of violence perpetuated by the armed mediation of local potentates, it must have been much more difficult for these Armenian notables to collect the villages' standing debts. On the one hand, the local councils were the spheres of the Muslim notables; on the other hand, the Armenian communities of İznik and Yenişehir were not armed; rather they were selected targets of banditry and raids. Thus, notwithstanding

¹⁸⁷ MVL 399-59.

¹⁸⁸ MVL 464-114.

¹⁸⁹ In his report on Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi states that defaulted debts to Armenian money-lenders in Bursa were pooled by the agents of Austrian and Russian consulates in Bursa, with a view of making the Ottoman state collect these debts through the pressures of these two states. İ. MVL 492-22265. See also chapter 2.

¹⁹⁰ A case demonstrating such fraud is from Cyprus, A. MKT. UM 317-56.

their economic preponderance and the legal improvements in their status introduced by the Reform Edict of 1856, the Armenians of the region were unarmed communities falling behind the Muslims with respect to political emancipation.

The Muslim notables of İznik and Pazarköy did not hesitate to ride on the opportunities that the provincial administration created by the Tanzimat state offered them. They used their weight in the local councils for counter-balancing the economic eminence of the Armenian communities. In 1847, for instance, İznik was divided into two factions between Ömer Efendi and Haçanoğlu Ohannes. The Muslims of İznik filed a complaint against Ohannes, claiming that he insulted the *naib*, the members of the local council and someone from the local *meşayih*. When the governor of Bursa investigated the dispute, he found out that these were actually false accusations of the Muslim faction, motivated by getting Ohannes banished from İznik through provoking the Muslim sensibilities of the imperial administrators. The provincial council in Bursa contended that the factionalism in İznik stemmed from the fact that the director of İznik was a Muslim from the town (*yerlisinden*); consequently it decided to remove him from office and appointed Esad Ağa from Bursa in his stead.¹⁹¹ Esad Ağa's appointment to the directorship was a real blow for the Muslim notables of the town, because Esad Ağa did not confer administrative prerogatives, privileges and due respect to the Muslim notables, who took these as their entitlements. Thus, they worked out petitions, speaking on behalf of the poor (*fukara*) of İznik, complaining about how immoral and unapt Esad Ağa was and how he spent his days idle in the marketplace, while staying in the houses of the non-Muslims (*reaya*) at nights.¹⁹² Apparently, the real shortcoming of Esad Ağa was his closeness to or impartiality towards the non-Muslims of İznik, which hindered the Muslims' ability to utilize the local administrative framework for their own ends.

The neighboring Pazarköy resembled İznik with respect to inter-communal factionalism. During the mobilization for the Crimean War, the Ottoman state excessively recruited villagers from Pazarköy, which decimated Muslim villages, thereby resulted in transfers of property from the Muslims to the non-Muslims of the

¹⁹¹ MVL 12-29.

¹⁹² MVL 100-69.

kaza.¹⁹³ In 1856, 12 Muslim villages had a total population of 940 inhabitants, whereas 6 non-Muslim villages had a total population of 2.654 souls. The sudden demographic decline in the Muslim population brought about over-taxation for the Muslim community, since apportionment of the taxes favored the village as a unit, rather than the number of individual tax-payers. Furthermore, the tithe of grape had been calculated as 8 *para* per *kıyye* for a long time, which the people took as customary practice (*teamül-ü kadim*). But lately, the tax-farmer of the grape tithe wanted to collect the tithe according to the market price of grapes with the permission of the government.¹⁹⁴

Within the era of the Reform Edict, which enhanced the rights and status of non-Muslim Ottomans, increases in the tax-burden of the whole population further estranged relations between the Muslims and non-Muslims of Pazarköy, which altogether fuelled inter-communal confrontations. The strained relations between the communities rendered offences between members of different communities rallying causes for dragging the Ottoman state to local disputes at the expense of the opposing community. In this respect, it is significant that the tax dispute in Pazarköy was presented to the Ottoman state with the pretext of a Muslim adolescent girl's beating of her family's Armenian laborer, who was a child from Çengiler village. Apparently, the day after the girl's assault, the Armenian boy died on his way to his village. While the Muslims claimed that the death of the boy was due to malaria, since he was sent to his village by his Muslim employer because of his illness; the Armenians maintained that the boy died because of the severity of his wounds inflicted by the Muslim girl.¹⁹⁵ Hence, the Armenians used this event for substantiating "the oppressive attitudes" of the Muslim community of the *kaza*.

Within this tense political context, Muslims utilized their predominance in the local council to redress their worsened economic prospects. In the absence of the only non-Muslim member of the council, they deducted 30.000 *kuruş* from the Muslim villages' taxes and added it to the non-Muslim villages' account. The Christians of the town were outraged when they learnt about this *fait accompli*. The case was carried to

¹⁹³ According to the British consul in Bursa, in the mid 19th century, conscription economically paralyzed one in every four Muslim households in the region. Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 60.

¹⁹⁴ HR. MKT 163-68; A. MKT. UM 290-44.

¹⁹⁵ For the case between Cevriye and Arakil, see A. MKT. UM 290-44.

the provincial council of Bursa, which conciliated the two sides of the quarrel by matching the amounts of tax to be paid according to the populations of the communities. Hence, rather than 30.000 *kuruş*, 25.000 *kuruş* was transferred from the Muslims' account to the non-Muslims'. Moreover, given the majority status of the Christian population of the town, one member in the local council was not deemed sufficient for the representation of the Christian subjects. Therefore, another member designated by the Christian community was appointed to the local council.¹⁹⁶

The local councils were crucial political arenas for not only playing out inter-communal contestations, but also for settling the accounts of diverse local interests upheld by different Muslim notables. These Muslim notables however, did not owe their power merely to the prerogatives of formal local administration; rather they depended on accumulated wealth and familial legacies distinguishing them from the majority of the people. Around the middle of the 19th century, the waqfs and the sharia courts of the region were nodes of power that the Muslim notables contended for. In now turn to the activities and power basis of some Muslim notables, when they were relatively unabated in their flirtation with and utilization of Tanzimat institutions before Vefik Efendi's tour of inspection. But, before analyzing the activities of the local notables, it is necessary to address the waqfs, on which the Muslim notables of Yenişehir and İznik depended for carrying their preeminence to the modern era.¹⁹⁷

1.3.4. The Waqfs in Yenişehir and İznik

During the 19th century, the waqfs in the Ottoman Empire represented a closely knit web of social and economic relations encompassing many people, societies and

¹⁹⁶ HR. MKT 163-68. The appointment of non-Muslim members to provincial and district councils (*eyalat ve elviye meclisleri*) was among the clauses of the Reform Edict. "Islahat Fermanı," in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2012), 23. In this case, there already existed a non-Muslim member in the sub-district council; after this event, which took place immediately after the promulgation of the Reform Edict, another member was appointed to the local council.

¹⁹⁷ Although non-Muslims possessed some waqf lands, their utilization of the waqf as an institution was limited compared to Muslims. In the 19th century, non-Muslim communities had other communal institutions, serving exclusively to the members of their respective confessions. For a well researched account of the internal dynamics of late Ottoman non-Muslim communities in the southern Marmara region see Ayşe Özil, *Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Empire*. London: Routledge, 2013.

communities inhabiting different parts of the Empire. Throughout “the centralization” of this web, the Tanzimat state introduced many rules and regulations, often addressing similar problems over and over again, due to its persistent inability to prevent “abuses” and “corruption” within the system. Yet, patching the loopholes within the waqf administration produced new windows of opportunity for “corruption”¹⁹⁸, because, at the end of the day it was the local agents who ran the centralized administration of an ancient institution, scattered all over the Empire. The social agents, who got involved with the waqfs throughout the modern era, could not undo or reverse the centralization of the waqfs, since this process was a part of the formation of a modern centralized state, transcending the Ottoman context. But, their seemingly tacit stance *vis a vis* this process does not mean that they took the state’s claim over the waqf pie as justified. Consequently, notwithstanding the hawkish laws and regulations of the Tanzimat state on the waqfs, the people did everything at their disposal to skew the new system towards their own interests. By 1853, a substantial proportion of the waqf surplus remained in the hands of local directors of Evkaf and trustees, in spite of the formation of an independent Ministry for the appropriation of waqf incomes almost three decades ago.¹⁹⁹

Local court records for mid-19th century Yenişehir and İznik are not available; therefore we cannot exactly decipher the activities of the waqfs as they were recorded in the sharia courts of these towns. Nonetheless, the documents compiled and preserved by the Tanzimat state on Yenişehir and İznik, clearly indicate that the waqfs produced a significant surplus, consequently their assets and their administration were nodes of contention between different local actors, especially notables. The region, encapsulating Yenişehir and İznik, were among the oldest domains of the Ottoman Empire, hence it encompassed various types of waqfs established over several centuries. Throughout the 19th century, the Tanzimat state forged different types of relationships with different types of waqfs. There were on the one hand, waqfs directly tied to the Ministry of Evkaf, called *evkaf-ı mazbuta*, which included the waqfs founded by the royal family and the waqfs, which in time lost their trustees. This group also included some waqfs, which had trustees, who did not exercise any control over their waqfs in exchange for

¹⁹⁸ Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 282-285.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 283.

remuneration paid by the Ministry of Evkaf. On the other hand, there were waqfs ran by their own trustees, with the Ministry of Evkaf acting as an overseer auditing their accounts in return for a commission. These waqfs were known as *evkaf-ı mülhaka*, which were in general composed of “genuine waqfs” (*vakf-ı sahih*), meaning that the endowed property was not a movable property or a right to revenues and possession of an immovable property owned theoretically by the state. A last category of waqfs included fully autonomous waqfs, known as *müstesna evkaf* (exceptional waqfs), over which the Ministry of Evkaf did not have any control and oversight.²⁰⁰

Yenişehir and İznik contained a plethora of waqfs administratively belonging to all the above mentioned groups. *Evkaf-ı mazbuta* for instance, included many waqfs, mostly founded before the early modern era, which owned lands, gardens, houses, stables and shops in the villages and at the town-center of Yenişehir and nearby Yarhisarı. The properties belonging to these waqfs were possessed by peasant households through perpetual lease agreements. In the early 1870s, these waqfs were administered by the Evkaf Ministry, which collected transfer (*ferağ*) and inheritance (*intikal*) fees through the local representative of the Evkaf in Yenişehir.²⁰¹ In practice, the small plots of waqf lands distributed to the peasantry resembled state-owned lands cultivated and possessed by peasant households.²⁰² Likewise, waqfs endowed to the Holy cities of Mecca and Medina (*Haremeyn Vakıfları*) in the region, were theoretically under the direct control of the Evkaf Ministry.

The waqfs administered by their trustees under the oversight of the Ministry of Evkaf (*evkaf-ı mülhaka*) encompassed some urban properties, such as khans, coffeehouses and shops, as well as mulberry gardens and olive groves endowed by prominent families of Yenişehir and İznik.²⁰³ These waqfs mostly remained under the purview of the sharia courts well after the inception of Nizamiye courts, since they

²⁰⁰ Ahmet Akgündüz, *İslâm Hukukunda ve Osmanlı Tatbikatında Vakıf Müessesesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), 288.

²⁰¹ The names of these waqfs are Hamza Bey, Bali Bey, İlyas Bey, Sungur Paşa, Reyhan Paşa, Akbıyık, Davud Paşa, Üftade Efendi, Sinan Paşa, Ali Paşa, Sarıca Paşa, Lala Hüseyin Paşa and Hatice Hatun. EV d. 219-34.

²⁰² Şevket Pamuk, states that in 1869, 30% of cultivable lands in Anatolia belonged to waqfs (25%) and the state (5%). Half of these lands were managed by small enterprises. 7, 5% of all the cultivable lands (grouped as waqf and miri) were such life-term leases (*de facto* matching ownership) to small peasant households. One half of the total waqf and miri lands (about 15% of all cultivable lands) were big enterprises. Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisi*, 89-90.

²⁰³ See the endowment deeds in, VGM defter 605-5-5; 616-1-1; 2232-77-48.

legally came close to free-hold property.²⁰⁴ In fact, the Land Law of 1858 clearly distinguished *vakf-ı sahih* from *vakf-ı gayri sahih*, and indicated that the clauses of the Law bind only the latter category. *Vakf-ı sahih* (which was the legal status of most *evkaf-ı mülhaka*) was grouped together with free-hold property and relegated to the jurisdiction of the shar'î law.²⁰⁵ In Yenişehir, there were also very large waqf *çiftlik*s, belonging to *evkaf-ı mülhaka*, which were controlled by İstanbul-based families, whose forefathers' were either early Tanzimat bureaucrats or palace officials of the Mahmudian regime at the turn of the 19th century.²⁰⁶

In the mid 19th century, İznik was a town marked by the architectural heritage of various waqfs founded by Çandarlı Kara Halil Hayreddin Paşa and his descendants. Hayreddin Paşa was a powerful Ottoman vizier, coming from an ulama career in the second half of the 14th century. His sons and grandsons continued to occupy critical posts in the administration of the Ottoman sultanate, some of them assuming the highest post of Grand Vizierate.²⁰⁷ By the 19th century, some of the waqfs belonging to various branches and generations of Çandarlı family formed a huge conglomeration, which contained various revenue bringing assets in different parts of the Empire under the trusteeship of different descendents of the family. The waqf of Hayreddin Paşa was among the few exceptional waqfs (*müstesna evkaf*), which preserved their autonomous status *vis a vis* the Ministry of Evkaf, with a view of rendering them economically more powerful for the sustenance of the public services they provided.²⁰⁸ For example, the waqf collected the tithe on silk cocoons produced on its lands, even after the establishment of *Duyun-u Umumiye* (Public Debt Administration), which normally had a monopoly over all the taxes on silk.²⁰⁹ Moreover, in between Karamürsel and İznik laid an extensive forest belonging to the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa. After the

²⁰⁴ In 1879, land disputes regarding these waqfs were put under the jurisdiction of the Nizamiye courts, otherwise all matters related to these waqfs remained under the jurisdiction of the sharia courts until 1887, when some other law suits were transferred to the Nizamiye courts. Akgündüz, *İslam Hukukunda*, 327.

²⁰⁵ Abdurrahman Yazıcı, "Arazi Kanunnamesi (1274/1858) ve İntikal Kanunlarıyla İslam Miras Hukukunun Mukayesesi," *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, no. 60 (Summer 2014): 459.

²⁰⁶ See, Vani Mehmed Efendi Vakfı and Silahtar Ali Ağa Vakfı below.

²⁰⁷ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı's monographic study on Çandarlı family includes compact information about the members of the family and the respective waqfs founded by them. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1974).

²⁰⁸ For a short description of this kind of waqfs, see "müstesna evkaf" in Akgündüz, *İslâm Hukukunda*, 288.

²⁰⁹ The people however privately owned the mulberry trees on waqf lands. İ. HAKKI 1862.

Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, about twenty new immigrant villages were formed on the forest of the waqf. (See chapter 3 for more information).

Although the legal, official status of the waqfs in Yenişehir and İznik around the middle of the 19th century appears quite neat on paper, the actual utilization of the waqfs diverged from the proposed norms. The local “acting directors of Evkaf” were submerged in the local relations of power, while the *naibs* became entrenched parties in the political contestations revolving around the waqf surplus. Local notables, who had already accumulated waqf properties in their hands *via* previous generations of their families, were the most salient actors in the functioning of the new waqf administration.

1.3.5. Muslim Notables of İznik

Ömer Hilmi Efendi belonged to a prominent family of İznik, which had connections with Çandarlı family. In 1844, he assumed the trusteeship of *Muharrem Hoca Mescidi*, which was built and supported by the family waqfs of the descendents of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa during the last quarter of the 18th century.²¹⁰ Towards the end of 1850s, Ömer Hilmi, as “the ex-acting director of Evkaf” in İznik got in trouble with another prominent rural notable, Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa.²¹¹ After his inconclusive attempts to list the *mutasarrıf* of İzmit on his side, he ended up in the local prison in 1860.²¹² The most vocal partner of Ömer Hilmi Efendi within local contestations of power was his wife, Kafiye Hatun, who was a propertied woman controlling a few waqfs inherited from her own family. When her husband was imprisoned, Kafiye Hatun petitioned the capital, recounting the battle between the local competing factions in detail.²¹³ Accordingly, Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa and the director of the local post office somehow enticed the *naib* of the *kaza* for Ömer Hilmi Efendi’s removal from his office

²¹⁰ VGM defter: 2232-77-48; VGM defter 628-679-386 and VGM defter 626/2-358-465.

²¹¹ According to the temettuat records, Mehmed Ağa owned 12 dönüms of mulberry groves; 2 dönüms of vineyards; 150 olive trees, 3 pear trees, 1 bathhouse, 1 shop and a horse. ML. VRD. TMT. d. 8289a, p. 3.

²¹² MVL 579-55; A. MKT. DV 166-31.

²¹³ All the information on the factional struggle between Ömer Hilmi and Sölözlü Mehmed is taken from Kafiye Hatun’s petition, A. MKT. DV 166-31.

at the local waqf administration and got Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa appointed in his stead. During the handover of the office, when the accounts were investigated, this faction “denigrated” Ömer Efendi with accusations of embezzlement and illegal collection of fees from various people and the illegal sale of a graveyard in the vicinity of Sölöz Gayri Müslim village. Having prepared the necessary paperwork, the rival faction resorted to the higher administrative council of İzmit, which in turn sent an official for Ömer Hilmi’s imprisonment in his hometown. In the mean time, his house was raided, while false witnesses and litigants were arranged through “coercion” in town.

Kafiye Hatun advocated her husband by refuting the allegations one by one. First, “the so called” graveyard was actually a vacant land (belonging to a waqf attached to the Ministry of Evkaf), ceded to (*ferağ*) Hacı Kolyos for 2550 kuruş, which was immediately delivered to the treasury. No one challenged this transaction. Second, as the trustee of *Muharrem Mescidi*, Kafiye Hatun rewarded the *imamet* of the masjid to Ömer Hilmi.²¹⁴ The masjid served properly through an acting imam up until then. But, lately it decayed much and required reparations. In order to raise the money for its repair, the husband and wife, obtained required permits to enlarge the adjacent mulberry garden belonging to the waqf by demolishing the stable cum khan (*ahır kalıklı han*) of the waqf. They justified such a change, which was contrary to the deed of the waqf, by arguing that the mulberry garden would bring in much more revenue for the waqf than the rent of the khan. Thirdly, Ömer Hilmi was also innocent with respect to accusations of embezzlement, because he actually deposited that money in the post office, where it was withheld by the director of the post office, who happened to be a relative of Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa. Furthermore, the bills of exchange (*poliçe*) of Ömer Hilmi were rejected on purpose due to the machinations of Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, who harmed many people in this way. Thus, Kafiye Hatun asked for the release of Ömer Hilmi from prison. He could go to the local council for explicating the accounts during the day and sleep at home at nights throughout the investigation. For this, he actually obtained surety signed by 48 respectable inhabitants of İznik (allegedly all of them were members of the *ulama*

²¹⁴ In 1844, Ömer Hilmi appears as the trustee of the waqf of the masjid in waqf records. It is difficult to discern who the actual trustee was. Because, using his position as the acting director of the evkaf, Ömer Hilmi could have engineered an arrangement, which would keep both the resources devoted to the imamet and the trusteeship within his own household.

and *meşayih*) stating his good conduct during his term of office at the local waqf administration.²¹⁵

Kafiye Hatun's petition and the collective petition indicating Ömer Hilmi's good conduct did not go unnoticed by the rival faction. Using their pre-eminence at the local council of İznik, Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa and his allies worked out an official petition signed by the local council and a counter-collective petition discrediting Ömer Hilmi Efendi. They claimed that despite presenting signatures of some people regarding his good conduct, Ömer Hilmi's oppression and corruption became unbearable. Apparently, the supporters of Ömer Hilmi could get him out of jail, which alarmed the rival faction led by Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa. Eventually, in 1861, the issue spilled over to the provincial level, since İstanbul asked for initiation of a detailed investigation by the provincial council of Bursa from the governor, Nureddin Paşa.²¹⁶

We do not know how Nureddin Paşa handled the issue. The overall event up to that point however, reveals the critical points of contention and nodes of power within the politics of İznik. "The acting directorship of Evkaf" was a post created for centralizing the administration of the waqfs through infiltrating into the management of the waqfs at the local level. Yet, in the mid-19th century, this post was monopolized by the local notables, who could utilize the prerogatives of this post as they wished, given that they ensured the support of the *naib* of the *kaza*. As the disputes over the waqf land in the vicinity of Sölöz Gayri Müslim and the destruction of the khan complex demonstrate, "the acting director of Evkaf" had a great leeway in the distribution and utilization of waqf properties. Waqf lands and properties such as the mulberry garden established on the lot of the khan, produced significant surplus within the commercialized economy of the Southern Marmara region. Hence, Ömer Hilmi Efendi and Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, both of whom possessed waqf properties, got involved in the credit market as well. In fact, after his fall out with Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, Ömer Hilmi Efendi could gain the ground he lost, since he was already functioning as a sub-contractor of the tax farmer of İznik's fees (*bedel- i rüsumat*) in 1861.²¹⁷ The following

²¹⁵ A. MKT. DV 166-31.

²¹⁶ Y. PRK. BŞK 1-3.

²¹⁷ He made a contract with the tax-farmer Hasan for paying him 9750 kuruş in four installments. But, he did not pay 6320 kuruş of his debt, which incurred an additional 1330 kuruş interest. Hasan was trying to get 7660 kuruş from Ömer Hilmi to clear his own accounts. A. MKT. DV 198-19.

year, he became the *müdür* of İznik, yet, his last hold on power proved to be an evanescent autumn, turning into a harsh winter brought by the inspector of Anatolia, Ahmed Vefik Efendi. Vefik Efendi was no Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa and he was decisive to demonstrate this point most immoderately. (See chapter 2).

As the dispute between Ömer Hilmi Efendi and Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa demonstrates, before climbing up to the district and provincial levels of dispute resolution, the quarrels within İznik highlighted the *naib* as a critical actor. Taking into account the weight of this office, Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa carefully listed the *naib* on his side in local contestations of power. Yet, his opponents were also resourceful natives, abusing the loopholes of the system within the context of politicized, local judicial power. A case in point in this respect was Katip Mustafa's dispute with Mehmed Ağa, over a public bathhouse in Sölöz, in 1860. Mustafa was a co-villager of Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, employed as a clerk in Gemlik customs. Mehmed Ağa was the trustee of the bathhouse endowed to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina (*Harameyn-i Şerifeyn Vakfi*). The bathhouse however was out of use due to decay. Thus, Mehmed Ağa demolished some sections of the bath and built a shop on its lot. Mustafa, who owned the adjacent lot, re-built the demolished sections on his land, using his own resources. He signed a contract with Mehmed Ağa for renting the un-demolished section of the old bathhouse and began to operate the new bath complex on his own account. Two years later, Mehmed Ağa became the *müdür* of İznik and tried to evacuate Mustafa from the repaired section of the bathhouse, belonging to the waqf.²¹⁸

Mustafa was actually the rightful party in the dispute, but it was impossible for him to obtain a decision supporting his claims from the local court, because of Mehmed Ağa's influence over the *naib*. Thus, drawing on the opportunity of the recent death of the *naib*, he seized the stamp of the deceased *naib* from the local council and fabricated a debt document incurring 3000 *kuruş* to Mehmed Ağa, and another court decision requiring Mehmed Ağa to disburse the expenses Mustafa made for the repair of the ruined sections of the bathhouse. Subsequently, he applied to Bursa court, where the alleged decisions of İznik court were ratified.²¹⁹ But, the decisions of the two courts could not be implemented on the ground, since Mustafa could not oppose a man as

²¹⁸ A. MKT. DV 167-78.

²¹⁹ A. MKT. DV 162-65; MVL 583-103.

prominent as Mehmed Ağa in his locality. Therefore, he asked for a trial in the capital city, because Mehmed Ağa's network could not extend that far. For Mehmed Ağa, on the other hand, it was imperative to contain the case within his own sphere of power. Therefore, he tried to corner Mustafa with accusations of fraud in the district council of İzmit, due to his seizure of the stamp of the deceased *naib*. Hence, the power of the local sharia court potentially produced conflict over the utilization of waqf properties, which generated valuable income within the cash stricken economy of the Bursa region. While the waqfs endowed to the Holy cities were theoretically under the direct control of the Ministry of Evkaf, the bathhouse endowed for the Holy cities in İzmit was quasi-private property of a local notable, thanks to his influence over the *naib*. In this respect, if you were a man or a woman of property in İzmit around the middle of the 19th century, you would better have the *naib* on your side.

1.4. The Afterlife of Provincial Power-holders in Yenişehir

From the second half of the 18th century to the early 19th century, provincial power-holders (*ayan*) in various Ottoman provinces rose to preeminence in the sociopolitical lives of the provinces through monopolizing regional wealth and status over several generations. They controlled organized violence in their regions and provided soldiers for the elongated Ottoman wars. These local magnets of power were tied to the Ottoman state through entitlements and administrative functions. Hence, while preserving an autonomous space for their own actions, these notables became indispensable stakeholders in the imperial governance.²²⁰ The scholarship on the early 19th century posits that these provincial forces were one by one eliminated by Sultan

²²⁰ On the provincial power-holders, see, Dina Rizk Khoury, "The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power-Holders: An Analysis of the Historiography," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133–56; Fikret Adanir, "Semi-Autonomous Provincial Forces in the Balkans and Anatolia," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 157–85; Ali Yaycıoğlu, "Provincial Power-holders and the Empire in the late Ottoman World: Conflict or Partnership?," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 436-52.

Mahmud II in 1810s, and thereafter the Ottoman Empire took the irreversible path of “centralization” *vis a vis* the provinces on the eve of the Tanzimat.²²¹

War-lordism and semi-autonomous forces do not emerge in the archival documents on Tanzimat Yenişehir and İznik. But, a combination of some sort of “blue blood” and wealth can be discerned for some families and individuals. Apparently, the provincial power-holders were broken militarily and their economic resources were cut off in this region as well. But, their descendents managed to cling on some property and familial legacies, which enabled them to exert influence in their respective regions.²²² The Tanzimat state appointed some of these *hanedan-zades* as low-level administrators in various provinces (other than their hometowns), thereby tried to curb their local basis of power.²²³ Yet, some others struggled to preserve what they inherited from their ancestors under the changing international and imperial circumstances.

At the turn of the 19th century, Yenişehir, İznik, Bilecik and İnegöl had a couple of competing *ayans*, who attended military expeditions of the Ottoman Empire with their retinues and recruited men. These notables were also responsible for the supply of timber to the dockyard in Gemlik. In the early 1800s, the *ayans* of the region clashed with each other violently, eventually rendering each other powerless against Sultan Mahmud’s programmatic elimination of this kind of foci of power.²²⁴ İnegöllü Derviş Paşazade Numan Bey was one of these local *ayans*, who belonged to a household descending from an ex-governor (*sancakbeyi*) of Hüdavendigâr, Derviş Mehmed Paşa,

²²¹ For specific examples of Mahmud II’s elimination of provincial power-holders, see Necdet Sakaoğlu, *Anadolu Derebeyi Ocaklarından Kösepaşa Hanedanı* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 40; Yüzö Nagata, *Tarihte Ayânlar: Karaosmanoğulları Üzerinde bir İnceleme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 191. Ariel Salzmann, asks whether a federalist alternative was possible for the formation of modern state in the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the Tanzimat. She thinks that such a possibility was ruled out during the reign of Mahmud II. “A Federalist Alternative?” in *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 187-91.

²²² Kemal Karpat notes that Mahmud II’s elimination of the top *ayans* did not liquidate their supporting sub-groups. He thinks that the economic and social basis of the *ayans* were transformed to generate a new Muslim “middle class”, Kemal H. Karpat, “The Transformation of the Ottoman State 1789-1908,” in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 43; Hamdi Özdiş also posits that the suppression of the *ayan* did not bring about complete destruction of their social and economic pillars in the provinces. Özdiş, “Taşrada İktidar”, 35. İlber Ortaylı is of the same opinion, Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri*, 35; 42.

²²³ In late 1860s, the *müdürs* of İznik, Geyve and Adapazarı were such *hanedan-zades*. A. MKT. MHM 762-75.

²²⁴ Özer Küpeli, “Sarıcaoğlu Osman Ağa: the Ayan of Yenişehir (Bursa) and His Inheritance,” *History Studies International Journal of History* Volume 3 Issue 3, no. 3 (2010): 246-63.

who rose to preeminence in the Bursa region in the early years of the 18th century.²²⁵ Numan Bey died in İstanbul in 1817, leaving behind sons, the exact number of whom is not known.²²⁶ A couple of decades after Numan Bey's death, a young man called Ahmed Bey, known as the grandson of "Numan Paşa" stirred Yenişehir with a violent crime.²²⁷ The detailed minutes of subsequent trials in Bursa and at the Supreme Council in İstanbul provide rich information about the afterlife of a provincial household in Yenişehir.²²⁸

1.4.1. A Homicide in the Countryside

On a Thursday night in May 1859, five men met at the *tekke* of Akdere village at the outskirts of the town center of Yenişehir. For the last time, they reviewed their plans to attack the tent of four foreigners, who were in the business of extracting roots of walnut trees (used as dye stuff) from the vicinity of Yenişehir for the European market. The gang waited for some time to make sure that "the Christians" went to sleep. Towards dawn, they busted into the tent, stabbing the foreigners several times in the darkness. The French man, Mösyö Lamame, who was the owner of the business, died just after the assault due to his wounds. The carpenter *cum* translator, a subject of the Greek state, attempted to use the rifle hanging inside the tent. Yet, he was prevented by the assaulting men and lost one of his fingers while resisting them. Still, he was lucky, because he knew some Turkish, which could be of use to the attackers, who could not otherwise interrogate their victims. Thus, he was spared from death and kept inside the tent being tied down. Other two Austrians, one of whom was seriously wounded and the dying French man were tied down and dragged out of the tent. The translator showed

²²⁵ Cafer Çiftçi, "Dervişpaşazâde Numan Bey'in Âyânlık ve Tersanecilik Faaliyetleri," *Bellekten* 75, no. 273 (August 2011): 387-388.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 404.

²²⁷ İ. MMS 19-821-28-2.

²²⁸ Most of the information about this event is taken from "İ. MMS. 19-821". This is a 54-page file encompassing many types of documents (court records, interrogation protocols, inventories, bureaucratic correspondances between different ministries, petitions, etc.). Additional numbers to "İ. MMS 19-821", indicate specific documents and pages within the file.

the attackers, what they were looking for: The bag of Mösyö Lamame. Just before dawn, the five men took the bag and left the crime scene in a hurry.²²⁹

One of the attackers was Kısa Hüseyin, to whom the idea of usurping the money of “the Christians” first occurred. He was a veteran of the Crimean War, occasionally working for the foreigners as a daily laborer. Lately, he learnt that Mösyö Lamame had just received 80 gold coins from Mudanya. He shared the news with Sakallı Ahmed from Akdere village. Sakallı Ahmed was the *kethüda* (steward) of Ahmed Bey. Ahmed Bey heard the news from his *kethüda* and accepted the idea of usurping the foreigners’ money and recruited another ex-servant of his, Zeybek Ali, to the group. They discussed the plan in the mansion of Ahmed Bey at the town center. Contemplating on the need of a strong man for a probable fight with the foreigners, Sakallı Ahmed added his co-villager Mustafa Pehlivan, a tall and well-built 21 year old, to the gang.²³⁰ Hence, the conspiring five men were basically an intimate network of acquaintances formed around the magnet of Ahmed Bey.

At the morning following the attack, the wounded translator walked to the town center and recounted the violent crime to the *müdür* of Yenişehir.²³¹ A few days after the event, Ahmed Bey and the other accomplices of the crime were sent to Bursa for trial in the provincial council (*Meclis-i Kebir*), at the presence of the consuls of the victims. The consuls of the victims ensured a huge indemnity of 48.000 *kuruş* from the delinquents. The court, however, could not discern who the murderer of Mösyö Lamame was. Apparently, all five men stabbed the foreigners inside the tent at the darkness of the night indiscriminately, thus whose knife stabs killed the French man could not be ascertained. The question was important in the sense that the killer would be hanged, while the remaining others would pay the indemnity collectively, in addition to being sentenced to life-time hard labor at the galley. The case was transferred to the Supreme Council (*Meclis-i Vala*) in İstanbul.

²²⁹ The interrogation of Kısa Hüseyin, who provided a relatively accurate narrative of the event, İ. MMS 19-821-27-2; 3;4;5.

²³⁰ The summary of the Bursa trial sent to the Office of the Grand Vizier by the provincial council, İ. MMS 19-821-10-1.

²³¹ The fact that the attackers left the translator alive hints that they were primarily interested in robbing the foreigners.

After scrutinizing the whole case and re-interrogating the suspects, *Meclis-i Vala* decided that Ahmed Bey's brother, Emin Bey, was to be imprisoned in the locality of the crime for one year due to his logistical help to the conspirators.²³² As for the other perpetrators, Sakallı Ahmed died, while under arrest at the police station in İstanbul. Shortly after, Ahmed Bey, Zeybek Ali and Emin Bey were hospitalized at Valide Sultan's hospital, where Ahmed Bey and Zeybek Ali died, while they were still being tried at *Meclis-i Vala*. Emin Bey, on the other hand, died soon after returning to Yenişehir. Ahmed Bey's "wife"/slave, Saniye, died within roughly the same span of time.²³³ The remaining two men, Akdereli Mustafa Pehlivan and Kısa Hüseyin were sentenced to life-long hard labor at the galley.²³⁴

Meclis-i Vala found the indemnity, 48.000 *kuruş*, too high, but it did not reverse the provincial court's decision, since such an act would invite quite a lot of headache from the victims' respective countries.²³⁵ The indemnity would be taken from the estates of the five conspirators. Yet, Kısa Hüseyin and Zeybek Ali were penniless. The total value of Ahmed Bey's, Akdereli Mustafa's and Sakallı Ahmed's assets and properties was only 20.135 *kuruş*. Even that amount was not their personal wealth, rather held in common with their families.²³⁶ Furthermore, Sakallı Ahmed's and Ahmed Bey's estates were mortgaged to Sarraf Gülmezoğlu Agop, who successfully objected the sale of Ahmed Bey's mansion for the payment of indemnity by presenting proof that the mortgage agreement took place a couple of months before the attack.²³⁷ In the aftermath of the trials, the consuls of the victims continued to pressure the Ottoman government for the acceleration of the payment of indemnity. Seeing no prospects for squeezing money from the estates of the delinquents, the Ottoman government accepted

²³² The draft of the Supreme Council summarizing the trial process and the decisions of the Council, MVL 592-28.

²³³ A. MKT. MVL 117-90; İ. MMS 19-821-16-1.

²³⁴ İ. MMS 19-821-39-1.

²³⁵ İ. MMS 19-821-2-5.

²³⁶ İ. MMS 19-821-15-1

²³⁷ For the mortgage on Sakallı Ahmed's properties, see İ. MMS 19-821-13-1; For Ahmed Bey's debt, see A. MKT. UM 518-98. Gülmezoğlu Agop was the Bursa-based money-lender, who experienced problems in the collection of the debts he extended directly to the villages of Yenişehir in late 1850s.

to pay 10.000 francs from the treasury to the wife of the murdered Mösyö Lamame as “gift”.²³⁸

During the attack to the foreign merchants, Ahmed Bey was 25 years old. He was the trustee of the waqfs of 12 estate (*malikane*) villages inherited from his grandfather. He lived in his mansion (*konak*) at the town center with his slave-wife, Saniye, his two sons, Edhem and Osman, and his bachelor brother Emin Bey.²³⁹ The mansion apparently was a spacious and bustling place hosting frequent visitors in its *selamlık*. Relatives and acquaintances of the two brothers paid evening visits, in which coffee, tea and tobacco were served as treats. Some dependents and workers from outside of the town center stayed over-night, especially during their visits in short winter days. Quite a lot of cooking utensils, extra beds, quilts, mattresses, pillows as well as utensils for consuming coffee, tea and tobacco enlisted in Ahmed Bey’s *tereke* (estate) should have been used for this social network. Aside from the comfortable house they occupied, Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey owned elaborate accessories for various types of weaponry, indicating their high social standing. They were not however, intellectually oriented types, since the mansion did not include any books.²⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, throughout their interrogations they used a rather simple Turkish, indistinguishable from their socially inferior accomplices. By all accounts, Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey were petty notables of a rural context trying to keep intact modest luxuries and social standing they had inherited from their ancestors.

Why on earth would these well-to do owners of the mansion commit a horrifying crime, thereby risk their whole reputation and economic prospects? The answer partly lies in the evolution of the fortunes of the family, simultaneously with the transformations of the Tanzimat state. Ahmed Bey’s father, Osman Bey died around 1844, when Ahmed Bey was in his early teens.²⁴¹ Together with his younger brother, Ahmed Bey inherited from his father trusteeship (*tevliyet*) of a few waqfs, among which Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı was the most important. With great wealth however, came

²³⁸ A. MKT. MVL 117-90; İ. MMS 19-821-39-1.

²³⁹ Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey co-owned the property inherited from their father. MVL 363-57.

²⁴⁰ Ahmed Bey’s inventory, İ. MMS 19-821-17-1.

²⁴¹ At the time of the income survey in Yenişehir, the mother of the brothers was away in İstanbul, attending to the inheritance business of her late husband. ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9544-21, p. 39.

great debt. When Osman Bey died, he owed to a money-lender in İstanbul, 33.000 *kuruş*, for which his two sons and his wife, Şerife Aişe Hatun were responsible as his heirs.²⁴² The heirs accepted their debt to Sarraf Yani and re-structured it through discounting it to 20.000 *kuruş* in return for leaving the yearly 1600 *kuruş* remuneration payment (*hasılat bedeli*) of one of their waqf villages. They promised to pay back a sum from the remaining 20.000 *kuruş* every year. Apparently, Aişe Hatun was an audacious debtor. After two years of proper transfer of the village revenues, she started to drag her feet on the payment, by collecting the tithe of the village before Yani. When Yani came to claim his money, the heirs either expelled him or tried to send him away with a minimal payment. Failing to collect his debt in Yenişehir, Yani eventually succeeded in forcing Aişe Hatun and his sons to come to İstanbul for debt trials in the capital. But, the heirs fled to Yenişehir, before Yani could take his money.²⁴³

The earliest thing we know about Ahmed Bey through Ottoman state documents is that he grew up in a credit hungry familial economy. Snowballing of the debt of prominent families, like Osman Bey's, was not due merely to conspicuous consumption. Structural and institutional transformations in the administration of waqfs pushed the descendents of *ayans* such as Osman Bey, to borrow ever more money to maintain their control over waqf lands from which the Ottoman state began to divert increasingly more revenues to the state treasury. Before the reforms, trustees could directly collect the tithes of waqf lands²⁴⁴ (or sell them to a tax-farmer in advance). After the establishment of Evkaf Nezareti, waqf lands started to be treated more like *miri* lands (state-owned lands); hence they were tax-farmed to the highest bidders. From the revenues of tax-farming, a fixed amount was paid to the trustees as remuneration.²⁴⁵ In the late 1850s, Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey received such fixed payments from Hatice Hatun and İlalı Hatun waqfs.²⁴⁶

²⁴² A. MKT 203-42.

²⁴³ A. MKT. DV 71-43.

²⁴⁴ These waqfs fall under the category of *vakf-ı gayri sahih*, meaning that the ownership of land remained with the state, while the revenues were endowed.

²⁴⁵ Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 109-110.

²⁴⁶ The accounts of Ahmed Bey's waqfs for two years (1273-1274 Rumi) prepared by the Ministry of Evkaf: İ. MMS 19-821-18-1. Note that in 1840s, Aişe Hatun could alienate "the remuneration payment" as well as the actual collection of the tithe of the waqf village to Yani. Hence, the trustees were likely candidates for buying the tax-farms

Yet, for the year 1859, Ahmed Bey himself auctioned the tithes of the lands (known as *Numan Paşa Çiftliği*) belonging to Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı in Eskişehir. Before being sent to İstanbul for trial, he took 17.000 kuruş from the tax-farmer of Gündüzler village belonging to the waqf. Unlike Hatice Hatun and İlaldı Hatun waqfs, Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı was exempt from paying tithes to the state, because it was a *vakf-ı mülhak*, administered by its trustee.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, a few years before the violent incident, Ahmed Bey demanded rent from the villagers of Gündüzler for their houses built on waqf lands. The villagers however resisted his claims by arguing that they would not give a penny unless he presents an order obtained from Bursa. Ahmed Bey could collect rents only after getting the order from the provincial capital.²⁴⁸ These rents however do not appear in the accounts prepared by Ministry of Evkaf. Most probably, Ahmed Bey illegally squeezed this money from the villagers through his contacts in the province.²⁴⁹ Ahmed Bey also received rents from immovable properties of Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı in İstanbul. Hence, notwithstanding the presence of Evkaf Ministry as an overseer, Ahmed Bey practically controlled the assets and revenues of Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı.

Throughout the 19th century, waqfs continued to provide some public services, supported the employees of religious establishments and paid for the expenses and the upkeep of waqf buildings according to the deeds of endowment. The trustees were actually awarded with what remains after the deduction of these costs. However, Ahmed Bey's imprisonment revealed that the mosque and the tomb attached to Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı and the bridge in Hamza Bey village attached to Hatice Hatun Vakfı were in need of repair. On top of the usual expenses of the waqfs as such, various fees and dues paid to the treasury through Evkaf Ministry meant further deductions from the surplus of the waqfs. Hence, after deducting all these expenses and fees,

belonging to their waqfs. In order to purchase these tax-farms, the trustees like Osman Bey should have contracted debts with money-lenders.

²⁴⁷ İ. MMS 19-821-18-1; Rafeq also notes that waqfs in Syria did not pay tithes to the state in 1840s. Rafeq, "Land Tenure Problems", 384. But, in the early 1870s, the taxes of all waqfs, except for *müstesna evkaf*, started to be collected by the Treasury, which paid a fixed sum to the trustees as compensation. Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 112.

²⁴⁸ İ. MMS 19-821-33-2.

²⁴⁹ Likewise, in one of his interrogations, Ahmed Bey asserted that he controlled 12 malikane villages inherited from his grandfather, İ. MMS 19-821-28-2. A couple of these were waqf villages, for which he received remuneration payments. The rest should be "malikanes", the tithes of which he appropriated. But, the Ottoman state did not consider these as Ahmed Bey's income; either these were already off-the-record, illegal sources of income or the state discontinued them with Ahmed Bey's arrest.

Ahmed Bey's yearly revenue from the waqfs under his trusteeship was merely 6.767 *kuruş*. Evkaf Ministry asserted that by selling the tithe of Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı for 17.000 *kuruş*, Ahmed Bey lost his rights over the revenues of all his waqfs for about 3 years.²⁵⁰ Had he not committed the crime, his waqfs would not probably have come under the spotlight of the Evkaf Ministry and he would continue to make the best out of these waqfs for his financial needs.

Four months before the violent assault, Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey had to mortgage their mansion to Sarraf Gülmezoğlu Agop, in return for 50.000 *kuruş* credit. With Emin Bey's wedding one week ahead, they were financially very much strained, since a wedding suitable for their social standing would be quite expensive.²⁵¹ In this context, they might have considered targeting foreigners for easing their financial burdens as a low risk enterprise that can be "contained" through political connections. In fact, after the free trade agreement with Britain in 1838, dyestuffs, tobacco, acorn and cotton became valuable commodities exported from Anatolia.²⁵² Thus, these foreign merchants were probably in a business in which a lot of cash passed through their hands. The fact that Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey not only compiled their own debts, but also inherited debts from their father, points out the structural problems of a monetarized tax system imposed on an insufficiently monetarized agricultural economy lacking sources of cheap credit.²⁵³ As we have seen, towards the end of 1850s, not only Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey, but also quite a lot of villagers and local tax-farmers in İznik and Yenişehir defaulted in their debts to money-lenders in Bursa and İstanbul. Everyone needed money urgently, only foreigners seemed to have it abundantly, or at least that was what Ahmed and Emin thought.

²⁵⁰ İ. MMS 19-821-18-1.

²⁵¹ MVL 615-54; A. MKT. UM 500-83; Emin Bey's interrogation İ. MMS 19-821- 32-2;3.

²⁵² Nagata, *Tarihte Ayanlar*, 181.

²⁵³ Yavuz Cezar, "The Role of the Sarrafs in Ottoman Finance and Economy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies State, Province, and the West. Volume II Volume II*, ed. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 68.

1.5. Patterns of Land-Holding

Writing in 1851, Ubcini observed that what Turkey lacked was not wealth, but money.²⁵⁴ This observation was true for Yenişehir and İznik, which produced a variety of agricultural produce and dairy products thanks to their fertile lands and mild climate. Aside from the occasional failure of crops due to weather conditions and pests, this geography was fertile enough to feed the populations inhabiting it.²⁵⁵ Even though the residents of the region were not financially doing well in the middle of the 19th century, the *temettuats* records of 1844 demonstrate that, despite the presence of some landless tenants, especially in the vicinities of big *çiftlik*s²⁵⁶, a substantial majority of peasant households in Yenişehir owned some land, animals, gardens (especially mulberry gardens) and vineyards. Animal husbandry was apparently a significant economic activity in Yenişehir.²⁵⁷ The villagers of İznik on the other hand, mostly owned olive trees, mulberry gardens and vineyards; animal husbandry and grain cultivation was less pronounced in İznik than they were in Yenişehir.²⁵⁸ Despite, the grim situation of the peasantry in Yenişehir during Vefik Efendi's inspection tour, dispossession of the peasantry does not emerge as a salient problem after 1863. Moreover, during the mid-19th century, daily work was readily available for peasants possessing insufficient lands for their subsistence or landless peasants, who were willing to labor on account of others.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ A. Ubcini, *Modernleşme Sancısı*, 265-267.

²⁵⁵ Failures of crops generated temporal, but severe difficulties for the livelihoods of peasant households. For example, after a bad harvest in Bursa region in 1852, it was reported that the villagers chopped off barks of the trees and mixed them with flour to make bread. Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 58.

²⁵⁶ For example, Çardak village, ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9555b; Karasıl village, d. 9541; Mesenöz village, d. 9568 B (pp. 14-16) and Toprakocak village, d. 9538.

²⁵⁷ In Yenişehir, peasant households without any animals were rare; some married and unmarried village women also personally owned animals; likewise even the poorest households often owned a few *dönüms* of gardens or vineyards; see for example the *temettuats* of Marmaracık village, ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9563; Karabahadır village, d. 9548; Akdere village, d. 9547; Umran village, d. 9539, Makri village, d. 9527b.

²⁵⁸ See for example, Sölöz Müslim village, ML. VRD. TMT. d. 8289A.

²⁵⁹ Tobacco fields in İznik for instance, employed daily workers at the high season. see Zeybek Ali's interrogation, İ. MMS 19-821-33-2. Around the middle of the 19th century demand for wage labor in Western Anatolia remained high. Reşat Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 57-58. Alp Yücel Kaya also lists wage labour among a variety of economic activities that an average household engaged in mid 19th century Bayındır (a town in the hinterland of İzmir). Alp Yücel Kaya, "In the Hinterland of İzmir: Mid-Nineteenth Century Traders Facing A New Type of Fiscal Practice," in *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Peeters, 2008), 267.

The inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik owed their relatively well-off situation as such to the bountiful natural environment and a high land-labor ratio. Sparsely populated, extensive, fertile lands were a persistent legacy of Celali rebellions of the 17th century in Anatolia.²⁶⁰ Indeed, many travelers passing across Anatolia during the 19th century noted many abandoned villages, graveyards in the middle of nowhere and ruined ancient irrigation pipes. Some of these travelers deduced that Anatolia should have had a much larger population, before it came under Ottoman rule.²⁶¹ However, names of places indicated for describing the borders of lands in Yenişehir include such landmarks as “ruined *tekke*” (*harabe tekke*), pointing out a loss of population during the early-modern period under Ottoman rule. In a similar vein, many abandoned villages with no inhabitants frequently occur among the landmarks.²⁶² In the upcoming decades, some nomadic tribes were actually settled in these abandoned villages through digging out old water supplies and demarcating the place where the old masjid stood.²⁶³

The early modern legacy of abundant, abandoned lands in Yenişehir was critical for the formation of big *çiftlik*s in the region. Just like the lands of Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakfı in Eskişehir, the biggest *çiftlik* of Yenişehir belonged to a waqf founded in the 17th century. Vani Mehmed Efendi endowed among other lands and villages, Koyunhisarı in Yenişehir to the mosque complex he built in Kestel, at the eastern outskirts of the city of Bursa. The ownership of Koyunhisarı was granted to him by Sultan Mehmed IV in 1670.²⁶⁴ Vani Efendi further extended Koyunhisarı lands through purchasing some other lands and pastures located on the border of Koyunhisarı.²⁶⁵ In fact, during the 19th century big *çiftlik*s of Yenişehir were located side by side on an arch extending from the north-west of the town to the south, bounded by the highway

²⁶⁰ In 1850s Ubicini describes Bursa as a city spread out to a very large area compared to its population. A. Ubicini, *1855'te Türkiye = La Turquie Actuelle*, trans. Ayda Düz (İstanbul: Tercüman, 1977), 54; Oktay Özel, takes persistent banditry in the Anatolian countryside throughout the 18th and 19th centuries as a legacy of the *celalis*, "The Reign of Violence: The *Celalis* c. 1550-1700," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 192.

²⁶¹ Henry C. Barkley, *Anadolu ve Ermenistan'a Yolculuk*, trans. Nil Demir (İstanbul: Kesit Yayınları, 2007), 65.

²⁶² This phenomenon was not specific to Yenişehir. Abdul-Karim Rafeq, notes similar villages with no buildings and peasants in Syria and describes them as “artificial villages”, "Land Tenure Problems", 372.

²⁶³ See chapter 2, p. 68.

²⁶⁴ Haim Gerber, takes “*temlik*s” (sultanic grants of land) as a major avenue to the creation of full private property in land. *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo: L. Rienner, 1987), 58.

²⁶⁵ Excerpts from Vani Mehmed Efendi's endowment deed, Hüsni Ortaç, *Bursa Köyleri* (Bursa: Ant Basımevi, 1946), 7.

tying Yenişehir to İnegöl. This arch included some abandoned villages (such as Koyunhisarı) and villages that include only a few households other than the *çiftlik* (or a few *çiftliks*) within their boundaries (such as Toprakocak and Mesenöz). Thus, big *çiftliks* were mostly founded on virtually uninhabited lands, which included marshes, making settlement difficult due to risks of disease.²⁶⁶

Vast lands belonging to waqfs and state-owned lands in their vicinity were converted to *çiftliks* most probably during the 18th century. By the early 1800s, İnegöllü Numan Bey and Sarıcazade Osman violently clashed for the control of *çiftliks* in Toprakocak and Çardak. Sarıcazade Osman burnt down the buildings and pillaged all the produce and animals of the *çiftliks* then belonging to Numan Bey.²⁶⁷ At about the same time, the inhabitants of the region petitioned the capital and complained about Numan Bey's lenient attitude towards bandits. They claimed that Numan Bey feared that the bandits would burn down his large estates, had he hunt them down seriously.²⁶⁸ When Sarıcazade Osman was killed in 1813, he had three *çiftliks* under his control: Avşar in İznik, Mesenöz and Çardak in Yenişehir. Animal husbandry was the main economic activity in these *çiftliks*.²⁶⁹ Apparently, labor shortage and the insecurity of the countryside continued to curtail agricultural production in the early 19th century. Concentration on livestock raising in large estates with minimum labor input must have left landed small-peasant households of the region intact throughout the period.²⁷⁰

Around the middle of the 19th century, vast lands, including forests and meadows in Yenişehir belonged to waqfs. The Ministry of Evkaf, however, preferred distribution of waqf lands among small peasant households, rather than dealing with powerful trustees actively getting involved in the cultivation and lease of huge chunks of waqf lands. In general, waqfs founded before the early modern era came under the direct control of Evkaf Ministry earlier than the waqfs established thereafter, due to the disappearance of

²⁶⁶ Gerber, *Social Origins*, 86.

²⁶⁷ Çiftçi, "Derviş Paşazade," 403.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 393.

²⁶⁹ In Sarıcazade's estate (*tereke*) 265 cattle, 2003 sheep and goat and 51 pack animals were listed for these *çiftliks*. Küpeli, "Sarıcaoğlu Osman," 258.

²⁷⁰ In this respect, Yenişehir follows the general Anatolian pattern noted by Gerber. "Major estates were formed on wasteland, often situated in swampy plains, while the statistically predominant form of ownership in the old and established settlement areas continued to be smallholding." Gerber, *The Social Origins*, 86.

the trustees and descendents of the former waqfs in time.²⁷¹ Waqfs founded in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries through endowments of immovable, free-hold properties, however, could have strong trustees and descendents claiming their rights over family waqfs based on the endowment deeds.²⁷² Mahrukizade family was such an assertive family defending its rights of possession over the waqf lands under its control against all odds.

1.5.1. Mahrukizade Ali Bey

After the power of the provincial notables were broken, most sizeable *çifiliks* in Yenişehir ended up in the hands of İstanbul-based actors, who were either close to the regime of Mahmud II or a part of the early Tanzimat administration. Among the new possessors, Mahrukizade Mehmed Ali Bey was born in Kasımpaşa, İstanbul, in 1821. Soon after his birth, Mehmed Ali's father, Kaptan-ı Derya Nasuhzade Ali Paşa was killed during the Greek rebellion of 1821-22, while commanding the Ottoman fleet in the vicinity of the Chios Island. When he turned 15, Mehmed Ali was endowed with an honorary title and a monthly stipend of 1000 *kuruş*, thanks to the services of his deceased father.²⁷³ His career in the scribal services began simultaneously with the nascent Tanzimat era in 1839. After spending almost 10 years in the Secretariat of the Supreme Council (*Meclis-i Vala Tahrirat Odası*), in 1849, he petitioned the Sultan, asking for a new salaried job at another department (*Amedi Odası*). He claimed that he had no income and no salary, despite being employed in the Ottoman bureaucracy for 9 years. He was suffocating under a heavy debt burden and had nothing left for sale in order to make a living and to pay his debts.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ See "Mütevellisi kalmayan vakıflar" in Akgündüz, "*Vakıf Müessesesi*", 287.

²⁷² Compared to 17th century, family members' proportion in the overall incomes of the waqfs actually decreased in the 19th century. Nazif Öztürk explains this phenomenon by the widespread practice of converting property into waqfs due to the risks of confiscation during the 17th century. Öztürk, *Vakıf Müessesesi*, 47.

²⁷³ DH. SAİD 2-104.

²⁷⁴ İ. DH. 187-10473-1.

Despite the life-long stipend allocated to him, Mehmed Ali Bey might indeed be telling the truth when he asserted that he was receiving nothing from the Ottoman state. The Tanzimat state, which was in dire need of cash, might have simply introduced cut-offs in the salaries of the bureaucrats. Yet, the income survey of 1844 reveals that, Ali Paşazade Ali Bey owned a *çiftlik* in Çardak village of Yenişehir. In addition to many animals (in total about 600 cattle, sheep, goat and horses), he possessed 3.000 *dönüms* of cultivated, 24.000 *dönüms* of uncultivated, 2000 *dönüms* of leased out lands, in addition to 22 *dönüms* of gardens.²⁷⁵ Ali Bey might have nothing left to sell in İstanbul in 1849, but he certainly had quite a lot of property in Yenişehir. In the early 1850s, an accountant from Bursa's Department of Pious Foundations claimed that Mahrukizade Ali Bey, who eventually climbed as high as the directorship of the state treasury (*Beyt'ül Mal Müdürlüğü*) in the Tanzimat bureaucracy, was controlling the incredible amount of 112.000 *dönüms* of land in Yenişehir.²⁷⁶ The actual extend of Mahrukizade lands was precisely the core of disputes, yet legally Mahrukizade family was almost always the rightful party, since "their lands", including the waqf lands under their trusteeship, were so vast that they encompassed a wholly dried lake and a mountain within their boundaries.²⁷⁷

Ali Bey did not inherit the *çiftliks* known as "Çardak Köy and Koyunhisarı *çiftliği*" from his pasha father; rather most of these lands belonged to the waqf of ex-Şeyhul Islam Mehmed Vani Efendi. Ali Bey's mother, Fatma Hanım, happened to be the trustee of this waqf. Before inheriting the trusteeship from his mother, Ali Bey "bought" the right of possession of these lands (*teferrüğ etmek*) from her.²⁷⁸ The waqf apparently came under the control of the family in late 1830s or early 1840s.²⁷⁹ The income survey of 1844 clearly indicates the involvement of the family in agricultural production and animal husbandry in Çardak. Thus, by mid-century, Mahrukizade

²⁷⁵ ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9555 B 2, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ EV. MKT 636-80 ("EV. MKT" documents used in this section were retrieved from Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü in Ankara. At the time of my research, these documents were not analytically catalogued at the Prime Ministry Archive in İstanbul.)

²⁷⁷ EV. MKT 708-94.

²⁷⁸ EV.MKT 636-80.

²⁷⁹ In the years 1835 and 1839, the waqf lands were awarded to tax-farmers, with no indication of the involvement of Mahrukizade family. C. TZ 4-159; C. EV 293-14917.

family, though being an absentee landlord, was present in the political economy of the region.

1.5.2. The *Çiftlik*s of Silahdar Ali Ağa

In Yenişehir, there was another absentee landlord resembling the Mahrukizade family with respect to their control of *çiftlik*s belonging to a family waqf. This family was the wife and the descendents of Silahdar Ali Ağa, who was a high level palace official during the reign of Mahmud II.²⁸⁰ According to the income survey of 1844, Silahdar Ali Ağa's son, Tevfik Bey, who was residing in İstanbul, owned a *çiftlik* in Toprakocak village. The *çiftlik* had 1500 *dönüms* of cultivated and 100 *dönüms* of uncultivated lands. The substantial chunk of land, 10.000 *dönüms*, however was recorded as high pasture forest (*yaylak orman*). The *çiftlik* also contained a mulberry garden (14 *dönüms*) and a tobacco cultivated field (15 *dönüms*) (*duhan tarlası*).²⁸¹ Just like Mahrukizade's *çiftlik*, Silahdar Ali Ağa's *çiftlik* in Toprakocak possessed about 630 cattle, sheep and transportation animals. Tevfik Bey had another smaller *çiftlik* in Mesenöz, for which 400 *dönüms* of uncultivated and 500 *dönüms* of cultivated land were recorded. The main economic activity of this *çiftlik* was animal husbandry, as well.

If we closely analyze the *temettuat* records on the Mahrukizade *çiftlik* in Çardak and Silahdar Ali Ağa's *çiftlik* in Toprakocak, we would observe that the greatest chunks of land within the *çiftlik*s (24.000 and 10.000 *dönüms* respectively) were not under cultivation, rather utilized in animal husbandry. Lands designated as "cultivated" were the second largest category (3000 and 1500 *dönüms* of land respectively). These "cultivated" lands however, differed from leased out lands, which were recorded as 2000 *dönüms* for the *çiftlik* in Çardak. Thus, these "cultivated" lands were most probably appropriated through share-cropping arrangements, as opposed to lease agreements that were designated separately. Aside from share-cropping, in 1850s,

²⁸⁰ Ramazan Balcı, *Saray Günlüğüm: Enderunlu Hafız İlyas Ağa'nın Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Yitik Hazine Yayınları, 2012), 26-30.

²⁸¹ ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9538-2.

harvesters came from the highlands in the vicinities of Bursa and Kütahya during the two week-long harvest season, when the demand for labor peaked.²⁸² Gardens (including the tobacco field in Toprakocak) amount to the smallest category of land (encompassing less than 30 *dönüms*), indicating that labor intensive agricultural work with high return of cash could not be done extensively due to a shortage of cheap labor.

In 1856 and 1857, Silahdar Ali Ağa's family seemed to lose grip on their *çiftlik*s. First, Cezb-i Cihan Hanım, the deceased Ağa's wife, petitioned the government about an attempt of usurpation of their lands through fraud. Apparently, due to an ongoing land dispute, Cezb-i Cihan Hanım chose a major of the reserve army, Hacı Salih Ağa, as her representative. She thus handed him the documents of the *çiftlik* in Mesenöz. Later on, she learnt that instead of using the documents for solving the land dispute, Salih Ağa was using them for getting the *çiftlik* recorded in his own name in the local council of Yenişehir.²⁸³ Next year, Silahdar Ali Ağa's son Mehmed Emin Bey, requested an order from the Grand Vizier's office addressed to the governor of Bursa for preventing encroachments on the waqf lands. Most probably, rather than a large land-owner, villagers were encroaching on the waqf lands through making use of the extended absence of the landlord. By stressing that there had been no encroachments for 30 or 40 years, Emin Bey aimed precluding the villagers' prescriptive rights stemming from cultivating a land for 10 years without any contestation from other parties.²⁸⁴

In 1857, Mehmed Emin Bey wrote another petition, claiming that he could not settle the accounts of his *çiftlik* with the manager (*nazır*) of the *çiftlik*, Emin Çavuş, for about 10 years. All the revenues of the last decade remained with the *nazır*. On top of this, he recently learnt that Emin Çavuş and *Kethüda* Recep appropriated the equipments and movables of the *çiftlik* as well as the last year's produce from the granary by removing the seal of the local council of Yenişehir, which counted and recorded the produce.²⁸⁵ The situation of the waqf of Silahdar Ali Ağa in late 1850s, delineates the critical agency of the local actors, such as *nazırs* and *kethüdas*, in the actual appropriation of the waqf surplus. The local council of Yenişehir also assumed a

²⁸² Kasaba, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, 73.

²⁸³ A. MKT. UM 232-67.

²⁸⁴ A. MKT. UM 293-34.

²⁸⁵ A. MKT. UM 293-34.

significant role in the adjudication of the land disputes involving waqfs, as well as in overseeing the administration of the waqfs on the ground. Furthermore, the respective capacities and involvements of the absentee landlords made a difference in the political and economic utilization of waqf lands. In this respect, Mahrukizades managed to form a relatively efficient enterprise on waqf lands, as opposed to the looser control of the family of Silahdar Ali Ağa on the waqf lands it possessed.²⁸⁶

1.5.3. Contestations over Land and the Land Law of 1858

As in other provincial settings of the Ottoman Empire, the outcomes of the Land Law of 1858 in Yenişehir and İznik depended mostly on the pre-existing local structures and practices of land-holding.²⁸⁷ Even though, the local administrations in the region were notified about the Law soon after its promulgation, surveys of land and distribution of deeds did not finalize until the end of 1861.²⁸⁸ During the land survey, local testimonies (*ilm-u haber*) assumed a critical role, thereby afforded leeway to local actors *vis a vis* the central state.²⁸⁹ Soon after the survey, many local clerks taking part in the registration process were summoned to the provincial capital for correcting fraudulent local initiatives.²⁹⁰ The immediate outcomes of the law were mixed. While some clauses were used for favoring village communities against landowners, some others were successfully utilized by large landowners in solidifying their rights of ownership.

²⁸⁶ In contrast to the *nazır*'s usurpation of Silahdar Ağa's *çiftlik*'s properties and assets, Mahrukizade Ali Bey was actually indebted to the *nazır* of his *çiftlik* in 1862. MVL 412-15.

²⁸⁷ Comparing the processes of registration for the application of the Land Law in the two districts of Transjordan (Ajlun and Salt), Eugene Rogan extrapolates that the Ottomans operated within the land practices which prevailed in different regions, and so met little resistance to the application of the land regime. Yenişehir and İznik confirms this pattern. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 92.

²⁸⁸ A. MKT. MHM 146-46; A. MKT. UM 486-67-1.

²⁸⁹ The process as such supports İslamoğlu's statement that the Ottoman government needed the cooperation of the local people for eliminating its information deficit through surveys. Huri İslamoğlu-Inan, "Politics of Administering Property: Law and Statistics in the Nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire," in *Constituting Modernity Private Property in the East and West*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu-Inan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 305.

²⁹⁰ A. MKT. UM 486-67. 10.000 dönüms of miri lands, which Vefik Efendi claimed to be usurped by the beys, who were members of the local council in Yenişehir, could have slipped away from the correction of "fraudulent local initiatives".

Almost a decade before the implementation of the law, there were instances in which “privatization of land” (in the sense of exclusive individual ownership of land at the expense of communal claims over it) crystallized in land disputes between different parties.²⁹¹ Yet, as İslamoğlu suggests, law and administrative practice did not simply rubber-stamp what occurred in autonomous and separate domains of the economy or society.²⁹² Once registration of land in the government land register and receiving a title deed became obligatory, multiple stake-holders over the same pieces of land flooded government offices for protecting and ratifying their rights. To put it in Terzibaşoğlu’s words, rather than regularizing and modernizing land-holding, the law opened Pandora’s box.²⁹³ In Yenişehir and İznik, intensification of land disputes within the framework of the Land Law as such, occurred later in the century, especially with the received waves of migration from the Balkans and Russia.

In the early 1850s, Mahrukizade Ali Bey engaged in a land dispute with a particularly strong land-owner operating from the capital city. Sarraf Tıngıroğlu Ohannes was a wealthy banker *cum* money exchanger, who managed to obtain a decoration from the Sultan (*mecidiye nişanı*) in 1848.²⁹⁴ He extended credit to many tax-farmers, as well as lending directly to Hüdavendigâr Province in late 1850s.²⁹⁵ Tıngıroğlu Ohannes owned a çiftlik, Mesenöz, to the south of Ali Bey’s lands, probably through a failed debt of one of his clients. Ohannes allied with the Armenian villagers of Marmaracık village, located on the western border of Ali Bey’s çiftlik. In fact, the villagers had already had a fall out with Mahrukizade Ali Bey before. This was their second encroachment on Mahrukizade lands, this time trying to sail before the wind through Ohannes’ connections in the capital city. Based on a court decision obtained by the previous owner of Mesenöz, Ohannes argued that Ali Bey was illegally occupying the common pastures of several villages, located around the lands of Vani Mehmed

²⁹¹ Haim Gerber argues that the 1858 law was a rather accurate reflection of the actual agrarian relationships prevailing in substantial parts of the Ottoman Empire. Even though, I would agree with him in this respect, I would not go so far as to claim that there was historical and legal continuity between the classical Ottoman land laws and the 1858 law. The latter argument would be an over-legalistic approach to social history. Gerber, *The Social Origins*, 69; 71.

²⁹² İslamoğlu-İnan, "Administering Property," 10-11.

²⁹³ Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun’un Zeytin Bahçeleri," 131.

²⁹⁴ A. DVN. MHM 25-54.

²⁹⁵ A. MKT. MHM 164-8.

Efendi Vakfi. Ali Bey, on the other hand, claimed that the pastures belonged to Koyunhisarı, which was a part of the lands of Vani Mehmed Efendi Vakfi under his possession. Both Ohannes and Ali Bey obtained several orders from different governmental departments supporting their own claims. The governor of Bursa was in turn perplexed by the conflicting orders he received from the office of the Grand Vizier.²⁹⁶ Eventually, the dispute turned into a muddle and ended up in Meclis-i Ahkam-ı Adliye (The Council of Judicial Ordinances). The council decided to annul all the orders obtained by the opposing parties, since land disputes involving borders were not matters of administrative redress, but issues that had to be solved in courts through proper investigations.²⁹⁷

The showdown between Mahrukizade Ali Bey on the one hand, Sarraf Ohannes and the Armenian villagers on the other hand, demonstrates that “privatization of land”, in the sense of elimination of multiple claims over land, had already started in Yenişehir before the introduction of the Land Law of 1858. Ali Bey tried to establish his exclusive control over waqf lands through enclosing them to the common usage of neighboring villages as pastures. Furthermore, the transfer (*teferrüğ*) of the right of possession of these lands from the trustee, Fatma Hanım to his son Ali Bey in the early 1850s was notarized as transfer of “ownership” (*yedine temlik vermek*), indicating private property.²⁹⁸ The conflicting orders that Ali Bey and Ohannes obtained from different authorities not only point out corruption *per se*, but also the side by side presence of a traditional understanding of land tenure and a liberal notion of exclusive ownership of property. In Yenişehir, implementation of the Land Law can thus be evaluated as a reflection of existing contestations and struggles over land, rather than an alien imposition of the reformist state.²⁹⁹ More generally, as Doumani suggests “...the Ottoman government’s political centralization and its administrative reforms, such as

²⁹⁶ MVL 145-15.

²⁹⁷ İ. MVL 298-12142.

²⁹⁸ EV. MKT 636-80.

²⁹⁹ Huri Islamoğlu notes that the very text of the Land Code has an intensely negotiated character, testifying to the diverse interests present which the drafting commission was compelled to mediate. Islamoğlu, “Administering Property,” 292.

the promulgation of the 1858 Land Code, were both precipitated by and shaped by many of the very changes they were later credited with introducing.”³⁰⁰

We do not know how this particular dispute between Ohannes and Ali Bey was resolved. However, Mahrukizade’s troubles with the villagers of Marmaracık and some other neighboring *çiftlik*s continued. In 1858, Marmaracık villagers initiated another wave of attack over Mahrukizade lands. When they were asked to show proof of their ownership over the contested lands, the villagers presented a document (*senet*) produced by the acting director of Evkaf of Yenişehir and an official dispatched from the directorate of Evkaf in Bursa. According to the document, the contested lands belonged to Hasodabaşı Hasan Ağa Vakfı, which awarded them to Marmaracık villagers. With local testimony, Marmaracık villagers ensured the fabrication of the document out of the blue. When further investigated, it became clear that the lands belonging to Hasodabaşı Vakfı were located on the other side of Vani Efendi lands. Therefore, the villagers’ waqf document was annulled. In cooperation with local waqf officials, the villagers tried their chances through abusing the complex patterns of land-holding encoded in the centralized waqf administration. Within the new waqf administration, the status of Mahrukizade’s waqf lands approximated free-hold property; whereas the status of the waqf of Hasodabaşı approximated state-owned lands. Marmaracık villagers dwelled on this disparity for challenging Mahrukizade’s exclusivist practices of land-holding.

Facing the setback of the denial of their waqf document, the villagers subsequently claimed that they had drained 2000 *dönüms* of marshy lands from the lake and opened it up to agriculture. Hence, they had a prescriptive right over these imperial lands (*Hass-ı Hümayun*). Because, they could not present documents supporting their claims and the lake was indeed within the boundaries of Vani Mehmed Efendi Vakfı, the villagers again lost their case. The animosity between Marmaracık villagers and Mahrukizades did not end at that point. Some of the villagers, who had managed to obtain deeds over some of the contested lands through getting them recorded as state-owned lands lost their cases against Ali Bey at the sharia court of Yenişehir. In mid 1860s, despite the court’s decision to annul their deeds and previous court rulings supporting their claims, these lands were auctioned after the death of one of the

³⁰⁰ Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*, 179.

villagers. When the news about the auction of his lands reached Ali Bey, he immediately took action to protect his lands.³⁰¹

Within the context of land disputes between Mahrukizade Ali Bey and Marmaracık villagers, the Ministry of Evkaf sided with the villagers. An official of the Evkaf in Bursa claimed that Mahrukizade Ali Bey encroached on huge chunks of waqf lands, as if these were his “private property”. The official was of the opinion that these lands should be distributed to the villages surrounding them. Ali Bey replied this complaint by telling that these waqf lands were under his possession thanks to transferring the right of possession from his mother, who was the trustee of the waqf. The Evkaf official, then, stated that Ali Bey’s waqf document indicated 7005 *dönüms* of land under his possession, while he actually possessed a much larger amount of land (112.000 *dönüms*). Ali Bey in turn made use of the clause of the Land Law of 1858, which asserted that when the *dönüms* designated in the documents conflict with the designated borders of the land, the borders should be taken as the proper extend of land. Thus, he corrected the number of *dönüms* recorded in the waqf document at his hand according to the description of the borders of the land (*hududname*).³⁰² In a similar vein, the Land Law specified that in a *çiftlik* pasturing ground the possessor of the *çiftlik* to whom it belongs can alone pasture his animals.³⁰³ Based on this clause, Ali Bey should have gained the upper hand against the claims of Marmaracık villagers and Ohannes, given that he proved his “ownership” through his corrected waqf document. Thus, against the utilization of local testimonies and arguments of prescriptive rights put forth by the villagers, Ali Bey had some of the clauses of the Land Law on his side.

Notwithstanding Ali Bey’s case, clauses of the Law favoring the small peasantry and the village community were also applied at the expense of other claimants. For example, in 1861, Ali Ağa persistently petitioned İstanbul, claiming that the villagers of Papatya (in Yenişehir) illegally occupied his land in the village. He wanted to get these villagers summoned to İstanbul for a trial. The villagers in turn presented waqf documents demonstrating their right of possession of the contested land. The governor of Bursa, Nureddin Paşa, backed up the villagers by arguing that according to the new

³⁰¹ ŞD 64-10.

³⁰² EV. MKT 636-80.

³⁰³ Gerber, *The Social Origins*, 71.

land law, if the inhabitants of a village were in need of land; available lands within the village could not be given to someone from outside. Ali Ağa was such an outsider, who legally cannot have any claim on the village lands, despite “buying” (*teferrüğ etmiş olsa da*) land. Furthermore, it was the high season of agricultural work, therefore sending the villagers to İstanbul would harm their livelihood. Nureddin Paşa thus asked the Grand Vizier’s office to disregard Ali Ağa’s flooding petitions.³⁰⁴

As Yücel Terzibaşoğlu posits, within the context of land disputes between landlords and peasant communities, “prescriptive rights” and “local testimonies” were the tools of the local forces against the documentary proof of big land-owners, designed and ratified according to the laws and regulations of the reformist state.³⁰⁵ The Land Law however did not *apriorily* supported the claims of the landlords. As in the case of the villagers of Papatya, it could as well protect the interests of the village community. However, the obligation to register land in the government land registers clearly favored exclusive-individual ownership at the expense of multiple claims over the same piece of land and communal ownership of land³⁰⁶, even though the Law did not openly invalidate the latter practices. But, extraordinary social and economic pressures materializing in Yenişehir and İznik precluded the full-scale application of prescribed norms on land. Despite the clauses of the law favoring large land-owners, fully fledged privatization of land could not proceed unobstructed due to social, economic and population pressures. In the long run, *real-politik*, which was on the side of the local forces, weighed heavier than the law, which favored Mahrukizades.³⁰⁷

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed cross-fertilization of the Ottoman Empire’s integration into the world markets with the practical embodiments of provincial administration

³⁰⁴ A. MKT. UM 503-50.

³⁰⁵ Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “A very important requirement of social life,” 43-44.

³⁰⁶ The law favored individual ownership and expanded the boundaries of legal and practical possession on state-owned lands. See, Mehmet Akif Aydın, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 3*, s.v. “Arazi Kanunnamesi,” (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1991), 146-147.

³⁰⁷ See chapter 3.

developed by the reformist state through the lenses of two neighboring Western Anatolian towns, namely Yenişehir and İznik. The alliance of Yenişehir's notables with the forces and agents of "the free market" produced a beguiling image of "reformed" local administration. On the one hand, crude force at the disposal of some local potentates brought about over-exploitation of the peasantry within the context of unimpeded market conditions. On the other hand, the destruction of the nascent silk industry in the town demonstrated that the local council did not fulfill its purported function of representing the Tanzimat state in Yenişehir. Yet, unlike the more or less unified front of the notables of Yenişehir, factionalism in İznik caused instrumentalization of the local administrative council as a playground for settling the accounts of different communal and private interests. Thus, in spite of the generality and uniformity of the rules and regulations of the modernizing Ottoman state, two sub-districts so close to each other, and to the capital city generated different outcomes from the reforms.

By zooming into the local relations of power, I argued that the waqfs and the sharia courts in İznik and Yenişehir remained focal points of contention between the Muslim notables in the mid 19th century. These two ancient institutions adapted to the modern era through the reforms of the Tanzimat state. But, embeddedness of these institutions to specific local contexts and social agents meant that in spite of the centralizing laws and regulations of the Ottoman state, by mid-century various stake-holders attached to these institutions withheld substantial control in the actual utilization of the resources and prerogatives of these institutions. They often did so, through treachery and corruption, matching the insatiable drives of the modernizing state to squeeze ever more from the subject populations.

Just like the waqfs and the sharia courts, the land regime in Yenişehir and İznik was an off-spring of the early modern era. Sparsity of the population and abundance of under-utilized lands conditioned the power-struggles in the second half of the 19th century. The Land Law of 1858 did not seriously upset prevailing patterns of land-holding, which was dominated by independent, small peasant households; on the contrary, some land disputes preceding the Law were actually whistle blowers of the upcoming legalization and enhancement of private property on land. Yet, liberal clauses of the Law favoring large land-owners failed the test of socio-economic and political

pressures initiated by received waves of migration later in the century; whereas, the clauses favoring the village community remained intact until the end of the Empire.

If there exists one characteristic that wraps up the Tanzimat era; it would be the ever present gap in between the aspired norms and the practices on the ground. This gap, testifies the leeway of the powerful local actors for diverting the reforms towards their own benefit. Yet, when this leeway met the pernicious arms of the capitalist world markets, the outcome could be deadly for the social fabric, which undertook economic production. In the middle of the 19th century, this was indeed the case for Yenişehir. But, in 1863, the Tanzimat state finally caught its breath in the aftermath of the Crimean War and initiated a new round of reforms by clearing the obstacles on the way of a more efficient and professionalized provincial administration. In order to achieve its objectives, the state needed the support of some social elements, because waves of centralization and modernization initiated since the beginning of the Tanzimat era, could not easily come to terms with each and every interest and a plethora of ways of inhabiting the world that characterized a cosmopolitan Empire. Thus, the next chapter addresses veins of compliance and dissent to the Tanzimat project in Yenişehir and İznik within the political landscape conditioning Ahmed Vefik Efendi's critical inspection tour.

CHAPTER 2

DILEMMAS OF POWER BETWEEN THE CENTER AND PROVINCIAL SOCIETIES: THE 1863 INSPECTION TOUR IN YENİŞEHİR AND İZNİK

2.1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the Crimean War, the Ottoman Empire went through difficult times both economically and socio-politically. On the one hand, the war depleted the already strained treasury, leading up to a financial crisis due to public indebtedness. In this context, the introduction of paper money as a venue of internal borrowing shattered rather catastrophically in late 1861.³⁰⁸ With popular protests and general discontent, the government retired paper money with the help of loans obtained from the Imperial Ottoman Bank in 1862.³⁰⁹ On the other hand, the promulgation of the Reform Edict, which empowered the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects in relation to the Muslim subjects of the Empire, triggered a chain of reactions in various provinces from Jiddah to Bosnia.³¹⁰ In order to contain the disturbances in the provinces, the Porte commissioned various high-ranking officials for investigating and addressing the problems of specific

³⁰⁸ Ali Akyıldız, *Para Pul Oldu: Osmanlı'da Kâğıt Para, Maliye ve Toplum* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 116.

³⁰⁹ Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 211.

³¹⁰ Ufuk Gülsoy, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 19*, s.v. "İslahat Fermanı," (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1999), 188; Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 104.

regions.³¹¹ The 1863 inspection of North-western Anatolia was one of these tours of inspection, through which the Tanzimat state assessed the situation in the provinces on the ground.

For the inspection of North-western Anatolia, the Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa's four and a half month-long inspection of Rumelia in 1860³¹² was a critical predecessor. Based on the insights gained from Mehmed Emin Paşa's inspection tour, "four inspectors had gone out in 1863, with instructions to check on local officials, effect economies, inspect police and prisons, and waqf administrations, advice on measures to improve communications and agriculture and reform the conduct of the local councils and village notables."³¹³ Ahmed Vefik Efendi was assigned to the Bursa region among the four inspectors commissioned as such. Both Bulgaria (which was the main area inspected by Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa) and the Bursa region were located on the heartlands of the Ottoman Empire, resembling each other with respect to the predominance of their rural populations, relative commercialization of their economies and their closer administrative ties with the capital city³¹⁴ compared to other far-flung territories of the Empire. As such, some of the problems and issues that came up in the inspections of Rumelia and Anatolia were virtually the same; therefore, Vefik Efendi followed the blueprints of the Tanzimat state in dealing with similar problems in North-western Anatolia. Yet, his radical methods, stamped by his overbearing and erudite personality contrasted the gradualism and conservatism of the central bureaucracy. In this respect, the inspection of North-western Anatolia can be read as a concentrated and accelerated version of Tanzimat modernization.

³¹¹ For example, in 1859, Süleyman Paşa, the ex-governor of Bursa was charged with surveying the general conditions of the Danubian plain, Milen V. Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Paşa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864-1868," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 164; in 1860, Fuad Paşa was sent to Damascus and Mount Lebanon in order to pre-empt foreign intervention to the ensuing civil strife, Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 132-193; in 1863 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa went to inspect Bosnia, Cavid Baysun, ed., *Cevdet Paşa, Tezâkir 21-39* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 19-107; in 1865 he was in charge of all the non-military aspects of the work of the Reform Division (Fırka-i Islahiyye), which was a major armed force dispatched for establishing a bureaucratic administration under central control in Cilicia, see Andrew G. Gould, "Lords or Bandits? The Derebeys of Cilicia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 04 (1976): 490; 498.

³¹² Yonca Köksal and Davut Erkan, *Sadrızam Kıbrıslı Mehmet Emin Paşa'nın Rumeli Teftişi* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2007), 19-21.

³¹³ Davison, *Reform*, 142.

³¹⁴ Yonca Köksal, "Tanzimat Döneminde Bulgaristan: Osmanlı'da Merkezi Devletin Oluşumu, 1839-1878," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 83 (Winter 2000): 241-266; Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside," 52-110.

In between July and October 1863, Ahmed Vefik Efendi stayed in Yenişehir and İznik. He took the most important purpose of his mission as breaking the authority and power of local notables by curbing their influence and hold over various administrative institutions and posts. As I explained in chapter 1, the early Tanzimat era witnessed an attempt on the part of the Ottoman state for incorporating local magnates of power into the institutional framework of reforms, such as local councils and middle and lower levels of various governmental posts in the provinces. Towards the end of 1850s however, it became clear that the acknowledged power and authority of the local elites had become a liability for the central state.³¹⁵ As such, wherever Vefik Efendi set foot in North-western Anatolia, he dismissed, dispossessed, fined, imprisoned and even tortured the local notables, especially those who were well-integrated with the provincial administrative apparatus of the Tanzimat state. He inspected the local budgets to the miniscule level of the tax records of individual villages and undertook a massive re-allocation of the tax burden over different segments of the population. Based on income and population surveys he undertook, he significantly decreased the taxes due to the poorer segments of the population, including the peasantry, while categorically increasing the tax-burden of the local notables, as well as İstanbul-based property owners in the region. Furthermore, he took urgent measures for weakening the yoke of the money-lenders over the peasantry without however instituting alternative sources of credit. The Tanzimat state thus attempted to forge a less mediated relationship with the rural producers by eliminating the intermediaries between the rural surplus and the central treasury as far as possible.

With the resources he expropriated from the inhabitants of North-western Anatolia, Vefik Efendi renovated and rebuilt various public buildings such as mosques, bathhouses, soup kitchens and marketplaces, in addition to erecting new governmental buildings such as modern secondary schools, *müdür* mansions and prisons in the regions he inspected. He improved roads and attended the repair of bridges in order to facilitate communication within the region. On top of these, he initiated extensive social projects

³¹⁵ Milen Petrov notes that during the inspection tour of the Balkan provinces in 1860, the Grand Vizier Kırışlı Mehmed Paşa realized that cliques of local notables (Muslim and Christian alike) had secured a virtual stranglehold on meclis membership in many localities and had managed to make themselves the primary causes of popular dissatisfaction, see Petrov, *Tanzimat for the Countryside*, 98. Yonca Köksal too marks the early 1860s as the beginning of the later Tanzimat era, when the central state started to curb the power of the local notables, see Yonca Köksal, "Imperial Center and Local Groups: Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Edirne and Ankara," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (2002): 129-132.

of settlement targeting both the immigrants flooding from Russia and the nomadic communities of the region. As such, the inspection in Yenişehir and İznik was seemingly an epitome of top-down modernization and centralization imposed on provincial societies by force. Vefik Efendi's impetuous and high-handed way of doing business further enhances the imagery of a momentous, unilateral intervention of the central state to the local political scenery of north western Anatolia in 1863.

Yet, the list of things summarized above as Vefik Efendi's actions in Yenişehir and İznik were though historical facts, they were not "history" *per se*. This chapter deconstructs Vefik Efendi's inspection tour in Yenişehir and İznik by contextualizing it as a landmark reshaping the balance of power between different social elements in Yenişehir and İznik on the one hand, the central state and the locally based foci of power on the other hand. Focusing on the socio-political context of the inspection within the micro settings of Yenişehir and İznik, I argue that Vefik Efendi was actually acting upon a receptive social base, which opted for a more intrusive state due to locally generated injustices, perceived deadlocks within provincial settings, and the structural problems of the regional economy. By 1860s, the institutions and the reforms of the Tanzimat state had reached a level of maturation in Yenişehir and İznik, enabling some "ordinary people" to engage the central state through claiming a space for their own agencies within the governmentality encapsulating both the state and the society. In this context, I analyze the petitions of women from Yenişehir and İznik just before the inspection, as manifesting the presence of a vibrant local society, which did not abstain from bringing the matters to the attention of the central state through skillfully navigating the modern institutions put forth by the Tanzimat state. Thus, in Yenişehir and İznik, Vefik Efendi faced an audience, which was already "speaking Tanzimat"³¹⁶.

However, there were also social forces occupying the margins of the political spectrum, falling quite apart from the Tanzimat state with respect to their socio-political visions and ways of life. Nomadic communities and bandits were such groups that caused troubles for the Ottoman state due to their impenetrability *via* modern governmental techniques, used above all for efficient taxation and conscription. These groups were not stable communities in permanent antagonism to the Tanzimat state; on

³¹⁶ Milen V. Petrov, "Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864–1868," *Comp. Stud. Soc. Hist.* 46, no. 04 (2004): 733.

the contrary, there was always room for conciliation, cooptation and negotiation. Notwithstanding the unilateral outlook of Vefik Efendi's inspection, the institutionalization of the Ottoman state unfolded in continuous relationship with these unruly elements in the society.³¹⁷ The Tanzimat state developed different discursive and practical strategies in its interactions with different forms of banditry and different nomadic communities. In this respect, from the viewpoint of the Tanzimat state, while "ordinary" or "mundane" banditry motivated by pragmatic gains was an unavoidable evil; night raids targeting the houses of the Armenian inhabitants of the region in the aftermath of the Reform Edict were more alarming. Hence, alongside with the adaptation of the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik to the frameworks of the modernizing state, there were socio-political pitfalls pressuring the Tanzimat state with their unforeseeable energies, jeopardizing the vision for more centralization.

Ahmed Vefik Efendi's inspection in Yenişehir and İznik can thus be seen as a response of the Tanzimat state to a long due invitation from the countryside. In fact, sheer number of petitions received not only throughout the inspection of Anatolia, but also in the inspection of Rumelia³¹⁸ manifests the popular interest and confidence in the arbitration of the central state in the main lands of the Empire. Being aware of the deteriorating situation of the peasantry, the Tanzimat state intervened in the local contexts for backing up the rural producers, who formed the backbone of the Ottoman economy. Vefik Efendi's fight against usury and his reallocation of the taxes point out a renewed alliance between the central state and the peasantry at the expense of the local elites. In redressing the balance of power in favor of the peasantry in the provincial settings, the Tanzimat state chose to act upon a specific imperial ruling tradition, which took independent peasant household as the main productive unit of the imperial economy. In other words, protecting the peasantry for fiscal concerns, as well as for enhancing the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its subjects was a political strategy readily available in the governmental repertoire of the Ottoman state. However, the timing and the political context of the reformist state's support to the rural producers pinpoint modern governmental practices of state centralization. In this respect, renewed

³¹⁷ I follow here Reşat Kasaba's conceptualization of the itinerant populations in the Ottoman Empire, Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 8.

³¹⁸ Davison notes that Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa received 4.000 petitions in Nish alone, Davison, *Reform*, 106. For the number of petitions presented in Yenişehir, İnegöl and Bursa see below.

alliances between the peasantry and the central states were components of contemporary state-building practices transcending the Ottoman context. As such, the emancipation of the peasantry and the accompanying structural reforms of 1860s in Imperial Russia manifest significant similarities with the centralization drive of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1860s.

Likewise, the Tanzimat state followed the jargon of modern state-craft through initiating deliberate social, architectural and infrastructural schemes in local contexts. As James Scott puts it: “Where the pre-modern state was content with a level of intelligence sufficient to allow it to keep order, extract taxes and raise armies; the modern state increasingly aspired to “take charge” the physical and human resources of the nation and make them more productive.”³¹⁹ Thus, responding the cry of help of the peasantry was not the sole purpose of the inspection in the Bursa region; rather mobilization for direct intervention to the local contexts entailed opportunities of socio-political engineering and top-down planning in the image of the modern state power. Ahmed Vefik Efendi was indeed very enthusiastic for such developmentalist and modernist schemes. No wonder then the inspection put the expenses incurred in this regard on the shoulders of the local populations, who listed for the support of the Tanzimat state, but not for increases in their overall burdens *via* the intervention of the central state. In as much as Vefik Efendi’s activities provided relief to the lower segments of the population through redistribution, his prey upon the local resources for modernization and centralization strained the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik. At the end of the day, some of his projects proved to be unsustainable and extremely inefficient in the absence of the cooperation of the local societies.

Vefik Efendi’s zeal for instituting a more professional local administration, cleared from the machinations of the local notables, signaled the upcoming *vilayet* system, which opted for controlling the local elites through centrally appointed officials at the lower levels of provincial administration as well. Though the local notables could not carry official titles (such as “the acting directorship” in the case of İznik) thereafter, they were far from being erased from the political sceneries of Yenişehir and İznik. On the contrary, they partook in the *vilayet* system as socially and locally entrenched actors

³¹⁹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 51.

exercising significant leeway on the appointed officials. Hence, it is not surprising that we come across local notables of Yenişehir leading the town to resist unjust orders of Bursa just a couple of years after the inspection. In this respect, the inspection merely made the local notables assume a lower profile *vis a vis* the central state until the imperial system became more open to their influences in the ensuing decades of the Hamidian era.

Finally, this chapter addresses what “centralization” culminating in the new *vilayet* system meant for the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik. How did critical issues like “privatization of land” and utilization of waqf resources proceed under the reformed provincial administration? I contend that while the relatively free reigns of the local magnates of power were over, the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik increasingly faced abuses and extortions originating from the provincial capital of Bursa, due in large part to the expanding bureaucratic centralization of the overall provincial administration. Critical matters like taxation, utilization of waqf lands, and the administrative status of towns became serious points of contention between Bursa on the one hand, Yenişehir and İznik on the other.

2.2. Social Support for the Tanzimat: Petitioning Women from Yenişehir and İznik

Around the middle of the 19th century, the Ottoman state had significantly expanded its grasp on local societies through population and income surveys, institutions like prisons and the police, and centralized governmental bodies such as the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances. Rather than taking the state’s increasing involvement in the local settings as imposition of the will of the state over the society, I follow historians who suggest that “its growing presence presented political opportunities to many people with local grievances, who through their engagements with the government entrenched, legitimated and extended the bureaucratic construction of the 19th century (Ottoman) state.”³²⁰ In order to permeate more into the provincial

³²⁰ I follow the hypothesis of John Chalcraft, who evaluates peasants’ petitions in Egypt during 1860s and 1870s as demonstrating their aspirations for more state intervention, not less, John Chalcraft, “Engaging the State: Peasants

settings, the Tanzimat state needed information and feedback from the local societies, which it often derived through consensual relationships, whereby the state acted as an arbitrator of local disputes. The people selectively and occasionally manipulatively provided the central state with local knowledge, which in turn endowed them with agency in their relations with the central state. Thus, the diffuse and the subtle forms of modern state power, embodied in the people's participation in the institutions and the practices of the modern state carved out a stable basis of support for the Tanzimat state.³²¹ In this respect, petitioning provincial societies testify that Ottoman centralization could be driven from below as much as from above.³²²

When Vefik Efendi arrived at Yenişehir and İznik, he faced local societies and individuals, who were quite proficient in turning to the central state when paralyzed, or too much pressed in their immediate local contexts. In the previous chapter, I described how the members of the elite in Yenişehir and İznik interacted with the Ottoman state. Both Kafiye Hatun and Katip Mustafa, for instance, tried to get the central state involved in their local struggles. In this chapter, I argue that people from the lower echelons of society also engaged the Tanzimat state for overcoming deadlocks in their local settings. Seeking justice at the gates of the imperial capital was indeed an ancient Ottoman tradition, preceding the modern era several centuries.³²³ In fact, dwelling on this tradition, Suraiya Faroqhi conceptualizes petitioning as a political activity closely related to sultanic legitimation during the disturbed decades of the *celali* rebellions in Anatolia.³²⁴ Thus, for historians, who study political activity and political culture in the modern era, what distinguished the new practices from the older notions of “justice”,

and Petitions in Egypt on the Eve of Colonial Rule," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (2005): 306; 319.

³²¹ See, Khaled Fahmy's conceptualization of modern state power in 19th century Egypt, inspired by Foucauldian notions of “governmentality”, Khaled Fahmy, "The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," *Die Welt des Islams* 39, no. 3 (1999): 377.

³²² For the late Ottoman Palestine, Beshara Doumani notes that the peasants often succeeded in effectively dragging the state into arbitrating their disputes with the notables and sub-district chiefs. See, Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1995), 243.

³²³ For women's utilization of petitioning during the early modern era, see Suraiya Faroqhi, "Crime, Women, and Wealth in the 18th century Anatolian Countryside," in *Stories of Ottoman Men and Women: Establishing Status, Establishing Control* (Istanbul: Eren, 2002), 216; and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Women, Law and Imperial Justice in Ottoman İstanbul in the Late 17th Century," in *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, ed. Amira El Azhary Sonbol (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 94.

³²⁴ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Political Activity among Ottoman Taxpayers and the Problem of Sultanic Legitimation (1570-1650)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, no. 1 (1992): 1-39.

“legitimacy” and political action emerged as a significant analytical problem. Scholars responded to this problem by highlighting the people’s willingness and ability to use the new legal procedures and modern judicial institutions, such as the Nizamiye courts.³²⁵ However, “the new” and “the modern” were formed through a constant conversation with “the old”. Therefore, in analyzing the peasants’ appropriation of the new discourses on “elections”, “the rule of law” and “popular choice” in their petitions addressing the khediwal state in 1860s and 1870s, John Chalcraft stresses the persistent role of older notions of justice and rights. Accordingly, “an older moral economy drew on newly authorized concepts to bolster its largely preexisting claims, which were than subtly transformed by this process of appropriation.”³²⁶ Likewise, petitions from Yenişehir and İznik around the middle of the 19th century were not “revolutionary” in the sense of being unprecedented; on the contrary, deeply entrenched older notions of justice and legitimacy most probably motivated the petitioners as well.

However, what is significant in cases, whereby the locals of Yenişehir and İznik sought the involvement of the central state, is that at least some of the problems that the people carried over to the imperial capital were by their nature caused by the state’s more pervasive involvement in the lives of the people through modern institutions, like the police and prisons, new criminal codes and a more centralized judicial procedure embodied in the utmost Tanzimat institution: The Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Meclis-i Vala-yı Ahkam-ı Adliyye*). The Supreme Council was among the first “consultative” councils initiated during the last years of the reign of Sultan Mahmud II. It assumed its actual power with the promulgation of the Gülhane Edict.³²⁷ Throughout its existence, it experienced organizational branchings and merges, yet its judicial and legislative functions remained of paramount importance, well after its final split into “Şura-yı Devlet” and “Divan-ı Ahkam-ı Adliye” in 1868.³²⁸ The Supreme Council’s importance in relation to the provinces lies in its functioning as a high court of appeal. Serious crimes such as homicide, physical assault and theft that were tried in provincial and district local councils were transferred to the Supreme Council, where

³²⁵ Petrov, “Subaltern Commentaries,” 759.

³²⁶ Chalcraft, “Engaging the State,” 319.

³²⁷ Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *Tanzimat Devrinde Meclis-i Vâlâ, 1838-1868* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 39.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47-55.

they were processed before being presented to the Sultan for final ratification.³²⁹ Furthermore, the Supreme Council was not bounded merely by the Penal Code of 1840 or other new laws promulgated thereafter; it was also a court of appeal for *şer'i* (religious) lawsuits. It had members from the *ulama*, and even employed a *müftü* (a religious jurisconsult), called *Meclis-i Vala Müftüsü*, who passed judgment on *şer'i* lawsuits.³³⁰ Many people from Yenişehir and İznik, from Katil Ahmed Bey to ordinary village women, voluntarily or by compulsion had to have recourse to the Supreme Council, where they directly faced the central bureaucracy of the reformist state.

Yenişehir and İznik were not geographically too far away from İstanbul; therefore many locals could be physically present in the trials at the Supreme Council. For example, the aunt of “Katil” Ahmed Bey and Emin Bey, Şerife Fatma Hatun, personally followed her nephews’ case in İstanbul and answered questions in the courtroom. Furthermore, she petitioned the Supreme Council for the release of Emin Bey by presenting herself as his mother, thereby tried to render her request more plausible.³³¹ It was not only the elite women, like Şerife Fatma Hatun, who engaged the Supreme Council, apparently people of more modest means could try their chances in this Tanzimat institution as well. For example, in 1862, two local policemen in Yenişehir shot İbrahim from the village Makri to death, apparently without a cause. In June of the same year, the policemen were taken to the police station and interrogated. Yet, although five months had passed over their interrogation, they were not yet tried in November. İbrahim’s mother, Hatice, petitioned the Supreme Council for accelerating the process of justice, which was either withheld by the foot-dragging of the local authorities, who were supposed to send the documents about the case to the Supreme Council or the Supreme Council itself was delaying the case due most probably to its workload. Hatice Hanım’s petition imply that she was in İstanbul for the pending trial, since she stated that she was exhausted due to staying over other people’s houses (*el kapılarında sürünmekte olduğuma mebni*).³³² Hence, in seeking justice, Hatice Hanım, as the mother of a peasant, who was killed by two members of the police force

³²⁹ Ibid., 119.

³³⁰ Ibid., 120.

³³¹ See her petition in İ. MMS 19-821-38-1.

³³² MVL 406-86.

established by the Tanzimat state, turned to the highest court of appeal, founded by the same modernizing state.

Based on the Penal Code of 1851, the Tanzimat state re-tried cases of homicide, even if the *şer'i* trials ended up with negotiation through payments of blood money. In other words, even if the relatives of the victim did not opt for retaliation, in which case a death sentence would have required the involvement of the Ottoman state, rather settled for a specific amount of indemnity, the Tanzimat state would still re-try cases of homicide at the Supreme Council and decide upon imprisonment with hard labor up to 5 years.³³³ Thus, while keeping the prerogatives of the sharia courts intact in cases of homicide, the state added an extra penalty to cases closed by negotiation. In 1855 such a case was forwarded from İznik to the Supreme Council. The *imam*, at the same time the teacher of the primary school (the traditional Koranic school) at Sölöz Müslim village in İznik had allegedly severely beaten a child during a lesson. The child, whose injuries were rather graphically described in the *şer'i* trial commenced 35 days after the event at the provincial council of Bursa, died two hours after the hitting due to his wounds. The imam rejected the parents' accusation that the child died due to the severity of injuries inflicted on him by himself; he defended himself by claiming that he had mildly hit the kid one time for disciplining him per custom, but had not injured him by exceeding the customary limits. Eventually, the family and the imam negotiated for 2500 *kuruş* blood money. Subsequently, the case was transferred to the Supreme Council, which not only dismissed the imam from office, but also sentenced him to 5 years of hard labor at the galley.³³⁴

After 3 years had passed over his imprisonment, the *imam's* wife petitioned the Supreme Council and claimed that the Bursa court did not settle the case by proving the guilt of the imam, rather the case was closed through a settlement between the family and the imam. Moreover, she claimed that the child died 7-8 days after the alleged assault, when there was a cholera epidemic in the region. She reasoned that, since it was not logical for the child to have died due to a mild hit, as the *imam* accepted in the court,

³³³ Said Nuri Akgündüz, "Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Ceza Hukuku Uygulaması," (PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2010), 94.

³³⁴ İ. MVL 349-15189.

he should have died due to cholera.³³⁵ Taken into account his 3 years of imprisonment, she asked for the release of the imam. The Supreme Council, in turn, bought the wife's story and granted the release of the *imam*³³⁶, without deliberating the contradictions in the time laps between the event and the child's death in the accounts of the plaintiffs and the defendants.

The police, prisons and the Supreme Council were concrete realities in the lives of people like a peasant woman, Hatice and a village *imam*'s wife. Ordinary people faced the Ottoman state through these institutions, which opened up venues for the local people to have an agency, albeit limited, on the governmentality embodied in and exercised through these institutions. The *imam*'s wife dwelled precisely on the opportunities afforded by the interactive organizational character of the Supreme Council for manipulating the outcome of a case by slightly misrepresenting the actual local context. In doing so, she not only lent legitimacy to the Supreme Council as a central imperial institution, but also carved out a space for her own agency within the overall system of governmentality.³³⁷

One of the principal differences noted for the modern epoch of the Ottoman Empire is the increasing administrative interventions to the sphere of the local sharia courts. I noted in the previous chapter that the administrative councils, for instance, assumed judicial functions, which used to be the prerogatives of the local sharia courts. Likewise, in the land dispute between Mahrukizade Ali Bey and Sarraf Ohannes in Yenişehir, both sides managed to obtain several orders from different government offices, which perplexed the governor of Bursa, who received contradictory directives from the capital city. Eventually, all orders were cancelled and the issue was transferred to the relevant courts.³³⁸ Hence, as the grip of the modernizing state became gradually tighter on the provincial settings, administrative encroachments to the sphere of law

³³⁵ Apparently, epidemics were frequently used for warding off accusations of homicide in İznik. See the case involving Arakil and Cevriye in chapter 1.

³³⁶ A. MKT. MVL 101-40.

³³⁷ The Ottoman Empire resembled some other contemporary states in this regard. For Egypt Khaled Fahmy writes: "...the modern state lends itself to manipulation and control at the same time as it seeks to monitor and control its population, and its numerous sites of power where the population were supposed to be counted, registered, monitored and controlled, proved to be sites where the very diffuse power of the state was contested and challenged.", Fahmy, "The Police," 377.

³³⁸ See chapter 1.

became more likely. Yet, from the view point of the local actors, the administrative presence of the central state as such was not always undesirable. On the contrary, if a person was likely to lose a case in the sharia court, administrative interventions opened an alternative venue for seeking more advantageous solutions. Not only the imperial elites like Mahrukizade Ali Bey and Sarraf Ohannes, but also some local people with modest backgrounds found themselves dragging the executive arms of the central state to the local contexts in order to shortcut the sharia court. Even though pitting administrative and executive powers against the purviews of the judiciary was a practice predating the 19th century³³⁹, throughout the late Ottoman era the stricter control of İstanbul over the governors rendered the central state an indispensable interlocutor for the people from provincial settings.

Rukiye Hatun from Yenişehir's Nasuhbey neighborhood opted for such administrative intervention in order to abort a sharia court ruling. Towards the end of 1856, Rukiye Hatun, who was the wife of the deceased Rufai Shaikh Mehmed Genci Efendi, wrote a petition to the Grand Vizier's office. In her petition, she recounted that when the Shaikh died, she was pregnant with their daughter. The little girl however died when she was only two years old. After her daughter's death, some of the followers of the Shaikh, "thinking that the world is a wilderness" (*cihani hali sanıp*) attempted to dispossess Rukiye Hatun from the property she inherited from her late husband and daughter. Rukiye Hatun requested from the Grand Vizier's office an order addressing the governor of Bursa for the return of her usurped property.³⁴⁰

So far the case as presented by Rukiye Hatun appears to be a grave injustice perpetrated to a young woman by the dervishes of Genci Baba *tekkesi* in Yenişehir. In spite of the self-assured rightfulness emanating from the discursive strategies of Rukiye Hatun, the event has an enigmatic turn that Rukiye Hatun prefers to be silent about: Why would the dervishes wait until the death of the daughter of the Shaikh before dispossessing Rukiye Hatun? The answer lies in the legal status of the Shaikh's

³³⁹ For example, Abraham Marcus notes for the 18th century Aleppo that some individuals, who lost in the sharia court took their cases to the governor, who tried these cases as an administrative judge, although they fell into the jurisdiction of the sharia courts. Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 107-108.

³⁴⁰ A. MKT. DV 105-24.

inheritance, which was a waqf endowed to the *tekke*.³⁴¹ When the expenditures of the waqf were deducted from its income, the waqf founded by Mehmed Genci Efendi generated a surplus of 1280 *kuruş* in 1866.³⁴² Rukiye Hatun was thus struggling for keeping the control of this surplus, which she did after the death of her husband, thanks to the presence of her daughter. The little girl was critical for Rukiye Hatun's control of the waqf, because the Shaikh specified in the endowment deed that the trustees of the waqf would be his descendents after his death.³⁴³ If his descendents become extinct, then his followers (the dervishes) would assume the trusteeship. Apparently, the little girl was the only surviving child of the Shaikh. After her death, the trusteeship entailing control of the assets and the property tied to the waqf would belong to the dervishes, not to the wife of the Shaikh.³⁴⁴

Rukiye Hatun very well knew that she would not be able to obtain a favorable decision from a *şer'i* trial, therefore she tried to mobilize the executive prerogatives of the governor by getting the central state involved in the issue based on her own version of events. Yet, the Tanzimat state was quite keen about sensing such manipulative maneuvers engineered in provincial settings. Hence, rather than ordering the governor to intervene on behalf of Rukiye Hatun, the Grand Vizier's office asked the governor to convene a session of *şer'i* trial at the provincial council (*şer'i şerif ve meclis marifetiyle rüyet olunarak*), where Rukiye Hatun or her representative would be present, and enforce the decisions of the trial.³⁴⁵ Notwithstanding her efforts to keep the control of the waqf, Rukiye Hatun apparently lost her case, because the followers of the Shaikh appear as the trustees of the waqf in the upcoming years.³⁴⁶

What do the stories of the imam's wife, Hatice Hanım and Rukiye Hatun tell about the impending inspection tour of Vefik Efendi? By the early 1860s, there was a local population in Yenişehir-İznik region, which was accustomed to appealing to the

³⁴¹ The assets of the waqf were two houses in Yenişehir to be rented annually (*icare-i vahideli*), an olive grove, again to be rented annually, a monetary transfer due to the waqf from the treasury of Hüdavendigâr for the eating expenses of the dervishes (*taamiye*) and 500 *kuruş* endowed cash bringing 75 *kuruş* income annually. C. EV 251-12658.

³⁴² C. EV 251-12658.

³⁴³ VGM defter 188-43.

³⁴⁴ VGM defter 188-43.

³⁴⁵ A. MKT. DV 105-24.

³⁴⁶ VGM defter 188-43.

institutions of the modernizing state. People did not shy away from making the best out of the more pervasive presence of the Tanzimat state in the local contexts. Rather than outright antagonism between the local populations and the central state, multi-layered channels of communication and a plethora of strategies were utilized for constantly negotiating the governmental practices encapsulating both the initiatives of the Tanzimat state and the agency of the local people. Vefik Efendi, as a high bureaucrat, who served in the Supreme Council,³⁴⁷ was very much aware of this dialogical relationship, which rendered the people of the region receptive to the excursions of the Tanzimat state, given that these improve their lots in the local settings.

2.3. Social Contention: Bandits, Night Raids and the Nomads

One of the most pressing issues that the Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa dealt with throughout his inspection of Rumelia was the problem of public security and wide-spread banditry in the regions he inspected.³⁴⁸ Just like Rumelia, the Southern Marmara region containing İznik and Yenişehir generated a steady manpower for brigandage, robbery and raids. Some Muslim villages of İznik were in the business of arms production and in the early 1860s, talented masters living in the villages of the region could indeed develop and produce ammunitions of remarkable quality, even by the European standards of the day.³⁴⁹ Yenişehir and İznik were thus a part of an armed countryside, in which persistent banditry was the order of the day.

Although late Ottoman Anatolia inherited banditry from the early modern era, banditry as a social phenomenon did not exist in a void; rather it was conditioned by specific historical circumstances. Still, Eric Hobsbawm's conception of "social bandits"

³⁴⁷ Ömer Faruk Akün, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 2*, s.v. "Ahmed Vefik Paşa.", (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1989), 145.

³⁴⁸ Köksal and Erkan, *Rumeli Tefişi*, 21-23.

³⁴⁹ During the inspection, Vefik Efendi dropped by Çakırlı Karyesi (a village in Pazarköy neighboring İznik), where he observed the production of ammunitions, which could measure up to a new technology he witnessed during his stay in France. He thus sent the master, Musa Usta, to İstanbul for utilizing his skills in the Ottoman army. Yet, Musa Usta got lost with the allowance Vefik Efendi gave him. A. MKT. MHM 288-90.

³⁵⁰ guides theoretical debates about the nature of banditry. He defines “social bandits” as “peasant outlaws whom the lord and the state regard as criminals, but who remain in peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported.” As Karen Barkey puts it “the question whether the majority of rural bandits are redistributors or simply opportunistic highway robbers with little ideology or social and political commitment remains operative.”³⁵¹ Many Ottomanists working on banditry in different socio-political contexts of the Ottoman Empire do not give much credit to “social banditry”, despite submitting that this notion could be traced, to some extent, in oral history and folk literature.³⁵²

However, it is obvious that if “social banditry” did exist at one point in history, it would be very difficult to locate it in state documents in its pure form. For example, in the Bursa region, there was a gang active in 1867, which the government could not subdue for a long time, despite dispatching quite a lot of soldiers over it.³⁵³ *Eşkiya* Manol’s gang generated such an aura that in 1869, the official newspaper of Hüdavendigâr engaged in polemical debates with an İstanbul-based newspaper, *Terakki*, which followed the fascinating re-emergence of Manol in Bursa.³⁵⁴ In fact, twenty years later, about 10.000 liras, which Manol buried in the vicinity of İnegöl was unearthed.³⁵⁵ Whether Manol’s gang was engaging in “social banditry” remains an open question, yet the gang definitely commanded quite a lot of resources and had the backing of at least some segments of the population.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969), 13.

³⁵¹ Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 179.

³⁵² Barkey, *Bandits*, 179-182; Gould, “Lords or Bandits?,” 501-502.

³⁵³ This was the gang of *Eşkiya* Manol, which should have had some support from the local populations of the region. İstanbul froze promotions of the local administrators serving in the regions where Manol’s gang was active, because of their inability to deliver him to the government. İznik was among these towns, whose *müdür* İbrahim Edhem Efendi, lost a promotion due to Manol. A. MKT. MHM 762-75.

³⁵⁴ *Terakki: Menafi-i Şarkıyye ve Umur-u Dıvelıyye’ye Dair Türk Gazetesidir*, 19 Safer 1286, 5.

³⁵⁵ BEO 1008-75586.

³⁵⁶ *Terakki*, notes that even the official newspaper of Hüdavendigâr wrote that Manol was being protected by a *kaymakam* and that his activities were not detrimental to commerce and agriculture in the region. *Terakki: Menafi-i Şarkıyye ve Umur-u Dıvelıyye’ye Dair Türk Gazetesidir*, 19 Safer 1286, 5.

Notwithstanding the ambiguous example of Manol, it is clear that a great deal of banditry in Yenişehir and İznik was of “mundane” quality, motivated by pragmatic gains, rather than possessing ideological or revolutionary features. The Tanzimat state took such events as undesirable, yet inescapable realities of the countryside.³⁵⁷ In August of 1864, one year after the inspection of Yenişehir and İznik, a notorious gang led by Lefter robbed 25 passengers on the road binding Bilecik to Yenişehir, in addition to killing a couple of non-Muslims. Armed forces were dispatched from Bursa for chasing and eliminating this gang. Eventually, the gang was encircled at Kızıllıhisar hill in Yenişehir. Many policemen and private security forces (*zaptiye ve cebelu*) from Yenişehir and İznik supported the troops sent from Bursa. Lefter and his men dug trenches on top of the hill, which was further secluded with a thick forest. The gang resisted the authorities for 10 hours, only to flee at the darkness of the night, leaving behind one dead. They managed to pass by the soldiers, who were patrolling road crossings. Thus, Lefter’s gang, which was active in between İzmit and Kütahya for more than 5 years, managed to break the last cordon, deployed specifically for tracking it down.³⁵⁸

These rather unsuccessful skirmishes with the bandits led the government to seek the opinion of Vefik Efendi, who was then inspecting Karesi. Vefik Efendi wrote that one year ago, he had eliminated some bandits and brigands in the vicinity of Kocaeli and Bilecik, thereby ensured public security. According to him, in the region from Lefke to Kütahya (which includes İznik and Yenişehir), not even petty theft was occurring, let alone banditry. He stressed that from the resurrection of banditry in this region, the laxity of local administrators was responsible. In this context, all he could do with respect to this problem was to propose the reorganization of local police forces through borrowing, for he was not authorized to do anything beyond this.³⁵⁹ In fact, among the many problems of the regions he inspected, Vefik Efendi gave up only in fighting banditry. The gangs watched him come and go from their strongholds in the regions inspected. The helplessness of the government in containing banditry, even after

³⁵⁷ The Bursa region resembles contemporary Bulgaria in this respect. For the Danubian Province, Milen Petrov evaluates brigandage as thoroughly opportunistic and ideology-free. He notes that the Tanzimat state chose to trivialize organized crime as a habitual phenomenon. Petrov, “Tanzimat for the Countryside,” 384; 390.

³⁵⁸ MVL 683-64.

³⁵⁹ MVL 684-60.

a show-down of force through the inspection, signaled that the Tanzimat era was to bequeath this problem to the subsequent Hamidian era.

What needs to be stressed in the case of Lefter's gang is that the Ottoman government was not particularly disturbed with the ethnicity or the religion of the outlaws, because it did not perceive ideological discontent in the outlook of this gang. Yet, even though the activities and the strategies of different gangs resembled each other, the overall significance of acts of banditry depended on the socio-political atmosphere. For example, in 1854, Hüseyin from İznik's Müşkire village attacked the house of Bacaksızoğlu İsmail in Yenişehir's Toprakocak village with his five accomplices at night. They wounded İsmail's brother-in-law, who escaped outside to seek help. While Hüseyin's accomplices were chasing him, Hüseyin attacked İsmail's wife, Şerife Zeyneb and tried to rape her. Zeyneb, who was entrapped in a room, took the rifle hanging on the wall and shot Hüseyin to death. After the event, Hüseyin's mother, Hafize, boldly accused Zeyneb of stealing the arms and the money of his son. In the trial in Bursa, Zeyneb easily acquitted from Hafize's allegations, because Hüseyin was known to be a pernicious bandit in the region, as testified by the locals present at the trial in Bursa.³⁶⁰ Everyone knew who Hüseyin was, where his family lived and what sort of extra-legal activities he engaged in. More striking is perhaps his mother's appearance in the courtroom demanding Hüseyin's weapons and money, as if her son was pursuing a perfectly normal career. Şerife Zeyneb was most probably a victim of an ordinary night raid, without specific ideological motivation.

As opposed to Şerife Zeyneb's case, in the aftermath of the Reform Edict, a specific form of banditry, manifested as night raids to the houses of the Armenian inhabitants of İznik and Yenişehir emerged. These night raids appear as premeditated crimes specifically targeting the well-off Armenians, by large gangs composed most probably of local Muslims. In 1859, the bandits attacked the house of Çakıroğlu Kevork in the Armenian Marmaracık village in Yenişehir. They killed Kevork and wounded his wife and children, who shouted for help in horror. Other villagers, who heard their cries, came by the house of Kevork, only to see that the house was encircled by the bandits. When they tried to help Kevork's family, they too were assaulted and wounded by the bandits. The bandits left the village having stolen all the belongings and property of

³⁶⁰ A. MKT. MVL 70-79; MVL 214-71.

Kevork, as well as the property of some other villagers. Some of the bandits were indeed caught after the event, while the remaining others were being chased. Apparently, the gang attacking Kevork's house was a quite crowded group, since the Ottoman government warned the governor of Bursa about the dangers of keeping the imprisoned bandits together, while they were kept in Bursa, waiting to be interrogated after the capture of the fleeing members of the gang. The governor of Bursa got a scolding from the capital for this scandalous event.³⁶¹

We do not know who exactly the bandits, who raided Kevork's house were. Yet, other similar events in the region point out the local people, who possessed intimate knowledge about the wealthy non-Muslims as potential culprits.³⁶² For example, in 1858, "thieves" raided the house of an İznik Armenian, Haçador, at night. They killed him and his pregnant wife and stole his goods and belongings. The following day, when Haçador and his wife were being buried, some suspects were taken to the sub-district council to be interrogated.³⁶³ The "suspects" in this case were most probably natives of İznik, since they could be tracked down in a short period of time. Aside from banditry and theft targeting the Armenians of İznik and Yenişehir, it is possible to trace tense inter-communal relations through Muslims' assaults to individual Armenian victims. For example, in 1858, Kasap Mustafaoğlu Arif, Berber Hacı Halil and Kırkkalemoğlu Halil, together with others captured Tercanlıoğlu Ağyazar from Sölöz village of İznik and beat him to death.³⁶⁴ Of course, it is very difficult to decipher motivations behind extra-legal activities retrospectively; yet the fact that the Armenian communities of a rather restricted region filed similar complaints within a short span of time hints that something extra-ordinary was going on in inter-communal relations.³⁶⁵

There seems to be a peak in the attacks to Armenians of Yenişehir and İznik in 1858-1859, paralleling various provincial disturbances all over the Empire, triggered by

³⁶¹ A. MKT. UM 378-27; HR. MKT 308-6.

³⁶² Ahmed Bey and his men's deadly night raid targeting the tent of the foreign merchants in Yenişehir in 1859 could be evaluated as another similar event. The event took place at the instigation of one of his men, who claimed to have knowledge about the money of the foreigners, thanks to being hired by them as a daily worker. See, chapter 1, pp. 73-74.

³⁶³ HR. MKT 236-55.

³⁶⁴ HR. MKT 252-46.

³⁶⁵ See also the document on Arnavud İsmail's gang's attack to the commercial convoy of 50 Armenians travelling to İznik for business in 1858, HR. MKT 227-90.

the Reform Edict.³⁶⁶ In seeking justice, the Armenian community of the region turned to the Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian National Assembly, which was a creation of the Reform Edict of 1856. Thus, they found a vocal interlocutor in this new communal institution transferring their grievances to the reformist state. On the other hand, there was a reactionary strain within the Muslim community translating its discontent with the proposed Muslim and non-Muslim equality of the reformist state to selective banditry, theft and homicide preying on their Armenian neighbors. Hence, in spite of the tacit consent of the majority of people to modern institutions and methods of the Tanzimat state, the populations of the region were far from being docile entities. On the contrary, discontent with the Tanzimat state could spill over to inter-communal unrest, the potential dangers of which continuously haunted the late Ottoman Empire. Although banditry in the region was not revolutionary, some manifestations of it were not completely ideology-free. As such, in 1863, Vefik Efendi set foot to a fragile social landscape, in which the Ottoman state had to form alliances, as it watched out inter-communal balances.

In the early 1860s, the bandits in the region attacked the postal coaches, which were transferring quite a lot of cash between the capital and the provinces.³⁶⁷ This time the Ottoman state was the very target of banditry. In 1862, four nomadic tribes (*yörükler*) living in the mountains of Geyve, Karamürsel and İznik, attacked the postal coach and destroyed *imarets* in the vicinity of İznik. The men responsible for the raid trusted their shares from the spoils to their wives and mothers, who in turn hid them. When the attackers were captured and imprisoned in İstanbul, the Ottoman state dispatched officials to the region in order to redeem the stolen money from the tribes' women. The women returned a sum, claiming that they had spent the remaining money for their livelihood while their husbands and sons were imprisoned in İstanbul. The Ottoman state in turn produced bonds specifying the amount of debt per each woman. Since these people were nomads, they did not own real estate; therefore their animals and weapons were taken as collateral for their debts.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Davison, *Reform*, 104.

³⁶⁷ At one robbery, the bandits were mostly the subjects of the Greek state under the leadership of Vasil, although the gang included two Albanians as well. A. MKT. MHM 264-13.

³⁶⁸ A. MKT. MHM 271-30.

The Ottoman state read the raid of the nomadic tribes as a revolt, since not only did they steal from the postal coach, but also destroyed *imarets* in the region. Thus, the state's attempts to take back what was stolen took the form of collective punishment. About a year after the robbery, a woman was found unconscious due to hunger in the mountains of Karamürsel. When the authorities further investigated, they found out that there were about twelve similar women trying to survive under miserable circumstances with their small children. These were the wives of some of the nomads imprisoned with the allegation of robbing the mail coach. The women were given debt bonds by the state officials, despite being not involved in the robbery. Their husbands were captured, just because they were present within the vicinity of the destroyed *imarets*. The women had no money to pay the debt; hence their animals and weapons were sold. Since they made a living through their animals, they were left with nothing to feed their children and themselves. Their desperate situation evoked the compassion of Ahmed Vefik Efendi, the inspector of Anatolia. He wrote to the Porte and asked for the release of the husbands of these women. The answer, however, was negative; the event was a major robbery including the crime of killing officials, therefore no one could be released without going through an elaborate trial.³⁶⁹

The raids of postal coaches had serious outcomes for the inhabitants of İznik and more specifically for Ömer Hilmi Efendi, who became the *müdür* of İznik immediately after these raids. Before delving into the reverberation of these raids in the sedentary populations of the region, it is imperative to note that the nomadic tribes of the region were strained by the long-term trends curtailing their mobility, flexible usage of land and overall access to rural resources. In Yücel Terzibaşoğlu's words: "...the nomads were playing a losing game, and indeed in the course of the century what they would find and accept in the end was that they were either forced to relinquish their customary rights on pastures and agricultural land and leave, or had to settle and go into sedentarized life in order to protect their rights on-what they saw as- their lands."³⁷⁰ In this respect, the nomads' challenge was part of a strategy of survival under the impending threats of "privatization of land" and state centralization. Although the

³⁶⁹ A. MKT. MHM 271-30.

³⁷⁰ Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "'A very important requirement of social life': Privatization of Land, Criminalisation of Custom, and Land Disputes in Nineteenth-century Anatolia," in *Les acteurs des transformations foncières autour de la Méditerranée au XIXe siècle*, ed. Vanessa Guéno and Didier Guignard (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 44.

eventual economic and political visions of the Tanzimat state and the nomadic communities of the region were irreconcilable, Vefik Efendi's rather unexpected mild attitude towards the tribeswomen highlights the possibility of relatively peaceful co-optation of these populations. Notwithstanding his draconian style, as I shall explain below, Vefik Efendi actually managed to settle some nomadic households in Yenişehir through persuasion, rather than coercion.

2.4. Contextualizing the Inspection of North-western Anatolia within the Ottoman Political System

In evaluating the inspection of 1863 within the Ottoman context, a salient analytical problem emerges: This is the difficulty in deciphering the policies of the central state on the one hand, and the significant agency of Vefik Efendi on the other hand. One way to overcome this difficulty is to compare the inspection in the Bursa region with contemporary policies of the Tanzimat state implemented in different, yet similar local contexts. The inspection of Rumelia in 1860 and Midhat Paşa's governorship in the Danube province in between 1864 and 1868 offer some useful insights in this regard. Throughout the inspection in Rumelia, Grand Vizier Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa adopted a significantly pro-peasantry stance in the *çiftlik* disputes between the peasantry and the local notables. Among the sixteen *çiftlik* disputes that the inspection commission investigated, the peasantry was given land in eleven cases.³⁷¹ Based on this radical outcome, Yonca Köksal evaluates the inspection of Rumelia in this regard as "concealed land reform."³⁷² Likewise, throughout the inspection of Rumelia, the Grand Vizier abolished some local councils and appointed or reinstated new members to these councils. Especially in Niş and Varna the Muslim members of the local councils disobeyed the governor by rendering the local council subservient to their own desires. By intervening in the compositions of the local councils, the inspection in Rumelia aimed breaking the power of the local notables.³⁷³ Thus, Vefik

³⁷¹ Yonca Köksal, "19. Yüzyılda Kuzeybatı Bulgaristan: Sessiz Toprak Reformu," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 170 (February 2008): 27.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁷³ Köksal and Erkan, *Rumeli Tefişi*, 16-17.

Efendi's policies of supporting the peasantry and curbing the power of the local notables significantly followed the directions of the Tanzimat state.

Furthermore, Midhat Paşa's efforts to "self-finance" and implement reforms "on the cheap" in the Danube province especially after 1866, strikingly resemble Vefik Efendi's infrastructural undertakings and settlement projects with respect to placing the financial burden of the reform policies squarely on the shoulders of the local people.³⁷⁴ Hence, where Vefik Efendi differed from the Tanzimat state should be sought in his excesses (especially towards the local notables); and not in the general directions of the inspection. Unlike Midhat Paşa, who actively sought the input of the local elites for getting feedback about the centralist vision of what needs to be done in the Danube province³⁷⁵, Vefik Efendi unequivocally and brutally suppressed the local notables. His destruction of Ömer Hilmi Efendi and Kafiye Hatun in İznik demonstrates how the potentially positive input of community leaders was *apriorily* wasted amid Vefik Efendi's haughty preconceptions about the venality of the local notables. Not only the local notables, but also İstanbul-based interest groups, such as large-property owners with strong bureaucratic connections at the Porte and money-lenders operating from the capital city got their due reprimand from the inspector of Anatolia. On top of these, unlike Midhat Paşa's extensive utilization of the services of the technocrats,³⁷⁶ Vefik Efendi had neither time nor patience for seeking out technical knowledge; rather the inspection mostly proceeded as a one man show of the inspector. Unsurprisingly, complaints about the arbitrary actions of Vefik Efendi flooding from every direction led to his recall.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴ Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside," 206-207.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 162.

³⁷⁶ Ibid, 101.

³⁷⁷ Davison, *Reform*, 107.

2.5. Inspection in Yenişehir: A Short-cut, Temporary Solution to Usury

When Vefik Efendi arrived at Yenişehir, he already had some knowledge about the problem of usurious interest rates, which was continuously deteriorating the economic situation of the peasantry. Not only was this issue among the salient problems of the countryside of Bulgaria, which was inspected by Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa in 1860³⁷⁸, but also Vefik Efendi himself witnessed similar problems in İzmit, which he visited as part of the inspection just before coming to Yenişehir.³⁷⁹ However, the true extent of the problem in especially the district of Bursa (which Yenişehir was attached to as a sub-district then), was manifested during the inspection of Yenişehir. About 830 petitions, which contained lawsuits of homicide, assault and usurpation, mostly related to usury were presented to Vefik Efendi in Yenişehir. While these cases were being tried in the special commission Vefik Efendi formed as a part of the inspection mission, he went to İnegöl in order not to lose time awaiting these lawsuits. In his short visit to İnegöl, he contended that the situation there closely resembled Yenişehir; there were about 300 petitions containing complaints about oppressive interest rates. When Vefik Efendi inquired more about the problem of usury, he discovered that there were about 3000 such lawsuits pending him in the city of Bursa. He thus, realized that if he did not take a decisive precaution for containing this problem, he would not be able to attend anything else throughout the inspection.³⁸⁰

As a short-cut solution, he proposed announcing all the debt bills at the hands of the money-lenders void, unless these were scrutinized and re-tried in commercial courts. Until then, not a penny would be collected from the people anywhere in the province. In order to get this radical decision executed on the ground, he asked the Porte to send very strict orders to the province in this regard, “lest”, he wrote, “our Armenians could not be contained otherwise” (*bizim Ermenilerin önü alınamayacağından*). More dangerous than “our Armenians” were some merchants, affiliated with the Russians and Austrians

³⁷⁸ For Bulgaria, Milen Petrov notes that “the *murabahacı*’s venality and lack of scruples were notorious and the exorbitant interest rates they demanded from their peasant clients (up to 60% per annum) were widely seen as a cause of rural impoverishment in the region,” Petrov, “Tanzimat for the Countryside,” 124-125.

³⁷⁹ In his report on Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi refers to debt relations in İzmit, where the acting-consul of Britain was involved by gathering many debt bills. İ. MVL 492-22265.

³⁸⁰ İ. MVL 492-22265.

in Bursa, who were collecting the bills that were obtained from the poor through coercion. Allegedly, they wanted to make the government collect these debts in the future. Hence the inspector warned the government that “if these foreigners are not preempted now, the district of Bursa will be ruined and it will not be able to recover again”. According to Vefik Efendi, a special commission for hearing cases of interest in Bursa should be formed. The commission should be presided by an official appointed from the Ministry of Commerce, or instructions on the functioning of this commission should be sent to Bursa.³⁸¹ Hence, Vefik Efendi’s strategy was to freeze all cases of interest by subjecting them to elongated processes of re-trials, in which the rates of interest would be decreased to the legal limits. A centrally controlled commission overseeing the trials would ensure that the money-lenders of Bursa as a powerful interest group would not be able to skew the process for their own advantage.

How are we to evaluate Vefik Efendi’s proposed solution for peasant indebtedness within the overall policy of the late Ottoman state to peasant indebtedness? In other words, was the Ottoman state indifferent to the devolution of resources from the countryside through various intermediaries active in an over-exploitative credit nexus? Or, was the Tanzimat state aware of the problem of usury as an impending threat not only to the productive economic basis of the Empire, but also to the legitimacy mechanisms binding rural populations to the imperial establishment? Historians differ in their answers to these questions. Writing on rural indebtedness in the early and mid-19th century Ottoman Empire based on data derived from Mihaliç and Kirmastı (both of them sub-districts of the district of Bursa), Atilla Aytekin argues that the Ottoman state did not do much to existing debt relations in the countryside and protect the cultivators from the consequences of what amounted to operating a permanent economic deficit. He thinks that this was due to an emergent ruling class, which engaged in money-lending to peasant cultivators.³⁸² As opposed to Aytekin, a strain of thought within the scholarship stresses the role of the central state in the survival of simple commodity production by peasant households.³⁸³ In Çağlar Keyder’s

³⁸¹ İ. MVL 492-22265.

³⁸² E. A. Aytekin, "Cultivators, Creditors and the State: Rural Indebtedness in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 308.

³⁸³ Şevket Pamuk, "Commodity Production for World Markets and Relations of Production in Ottoman Agriculture, 1840-1913," in *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu-İnan (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 185.

words: “In the Ottoman case, the central bureaucracy maintained its self-avowed mission to uphold the status of an independent peasantry- both for reasons of fiscal expediency and because the alternative would be recognizing rival modes of authority. Hence, the ideological context stipulating the exchange of order and justice emanating from the state against revenue from direct producers was upheld.”³⁸⁴

In fact, when these opposing views are calibrated for different historical conjunctions of the long 19th century on the one hand, and the conceived involvement of the Ottoman state in the rural economy on the other hand, the scholars of the different camps meet at a mid point. Atilla Aytekin’s arguments cover the first half of the 19th century, which indeed coincided with the high-time of the money-lenders in Western Anatolia. Furthermore, Aytekin actually concedes that “the Ottoman state typically became involved when rural indebtedness reached levels that led- or threatened to lead- to peasant dispossession.”³⁸⁵ Whereas, Şevket Pamuk, who stresses the central state’s backing of the peasantry, acknowledges that the Ottoman state heavily taxed the small peasantry and pushed the rural producers towards indebtedness and usurious credit relationships due to the persistence of tax-farming throughout the 19th century.³⁸⁶ Hence, the Ottoman state’s interventions to usury throughout the late Ottoman era depended on specific historical, political and economic circumstances of both the empire and the local settings from which such cases were forwarded to the capital. Yet, disruption of agricultural production and the risks of wide-scale dispossession and rural unrest potentially mobilized the Tanzimat state for intervening on behalf of the peasantry.

The inspection in the Bursa region coincided with one of the critical conjunctions when the central state perceived the very survival of independent peasant households at risk. In this respect, when evaluating the proposal of Vefik Efendi, the high bureaucrats at the Porte highlighted that the responsibility of the government was to regulate interest contracts accompanying people’s borrowing and to ensure that the conditions of payment were within legal boundaries, thereby protect the people from

³⁸⁴ Çağlar Keyder, "Introduction," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 10.

³⁸⁵ Aytekin, “Cultivators, Creditors,” 303.

³⁸⁶ Pamuk, “Commodity Production,” 185-186.

being dependent on ruthless money-lenders. Thus, the Tanzimat state was not principally against lending for interest, or legal mechanisms ensuring the collection of interest payments; rather it opposed excessive interest rates utilized for coercing rural populations to the point of creating economic slumps and social unrest. Hence, when discussing Vefik Efendi's report on Yenişehir, the statesmen in İstanbul pointed out that there already was an interest statute (*murabaha nizamı*), which had lost its effectiveness gradually, therefore complaints in this regard had been renewed and multiplied. As a response to this new peak of cry from the countryside, the Tanzimat state prepared a new legal draft (*layiha*) for solving the problem of excessive interest rates. In addition to this new draft, the Grand Vizier's office welcomed Vefik Efendi's short-cut solution as an emergency plan for the Bursa region.³⁸⁷ Vefik Efendi's plan was radical, yet temporary; because until the creation of an alternative source of cheap credit accessible from the countryside, the problem of usury would thrive in the favorable economic climate of this region.³⁸⁸

Vefik Efendi's measures against usury, which aimed backing up independent peasantry against the encroachments of the free market and its agents, also reflect a deeply rooted imperial tradition, available in the politico-cultural baggage of the Tanzimat statesmen. Halil İnalçık describes this tradition as follows: "The Ottomans regarded the family labor farm system as the foundation of agricultural production and rural society, and they scrupulously endeavored to maintain it through a complex bureaucratic system. It was, so to speak, the constitutional underpinning of the whole imperial system until the 19th century."³⁸⁹ Throughout the 19th century, rapid integration with the world markets, accelerated monetarization of the economy and gradual privatization of land jeopardized the independence of the peasantry in Western Anatolia. Yet, during the inspection in 1863, the Ottoman state once again endowed the peasantry of the Bursa region with a breathing space. Besides fighting usury, the Tanzimat state utilized its other crucial prerogatives for fortifying the economic

³⁸⁷ İ. MVL 492-22265.

³⁸⁸ In 1869, the official newspaper of Hüdavendigâr cited unavailability of cheap credit due to scarcity of cash among the biggest problems of the agricultural producers in the province. *Hüdavendigâr*, 5 Muharrem 1286, issue 15, 1-2. Agricultural credit cooperative known as *Memleket Sandığı* was established in Bursa in 1869 as a component of the *vilayet* system. *Hüdavendigâr*, 26 Zilkade 1285, issue 6, 23.

³⁸⁹ Halil İnalçık, "Village, Peasant and Empire," in *The Middle East and the Balkans Under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1993), 154.

independence of the rural producers. Redistribution of the taxes in favor of the peasantry was among the most effective tools of the Ottoman state in achieving its objective of enhancing centralization through breaking the power of the local notables. I now turn to Vefik Efendi's activities in Yenişehir in this regard.

2.5.1. The Redistribution of Taxes in Yenişehir

After the Crimean War, not only the Ottoman state, but also Russia undertook major steps in reforming its imperial establishment through enhancing the power of the central state. In 1861, the Russian bureaucrats spearheaded the emancipation of the serfs with land, in order to counterbalance the predominance of the noble landowners, because they wanted to strengthen the position of the autocracy and enhance its role as an arbiter of conflicts among the various segments of the society.³⁹⁰ The Russian state used taxation as a critical tool for ameliorating the steep gap between the peasantry and the upper classes of the society. Boris Mironov states the Russian state's policies of taxation after the reforms of 1860s as follows:

First, direct taxation was imposed on numerous groups- nobles and bureaucrats, Cossacks and national minorities-that had previously been exempt... Second, in the 1860s, the Russian tax system began to transition from poll tax to income tax, which transferred the tax load from the poor to the well-to-do.³⁹¹.... Third, indirect levies became more significant, which further shifted the tax burden from the peasantry to the relatively well-to-do urban strata. Indirect taxation fell mainly on the residents of the towns and cities, because more matches, fuel oil, tobacco, sugar and even vodka were consumed in urban settings.³⁹²...after the reforms, the peasants began paying a smaller share of their income in taxes.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ A. İU Polunov, Thomas C. Owen, and L. G. Zakharova, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814-1914* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 99.

³⁹¹ This should not be understood in absolute terms. Even after the reforms the peasantry was apparently more taxed than the upper strata of the society. Boris Mironov states that in 1859 overall tax exposure (excluding monopolies) of the higher classes was 18 percent and of the lower, 82 percent; in 1887, those numbers were 41 percent and 59 percent respectively. Hence, the improvement of the conditions of the peasantry with respect to exposure to taxation was in relative terms. Miranov stresses that the tax load on the higher classes rose by almost 130 per cent in between 1859 and 1887. Boris N. Mironov, "The Myth of a Systemic Crisis in Russia After the Great Reforms of the 1860s-1870s," *Russian Studies in History* 47, no. 4 (2009): 42.

³⁹² Mironov, "The Myth of a Systemic Crisis," 42.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

In the Ottoman context, where a history of serfdom did not exist as in Russia, the distinctions between the peasantry and the notables were obviously much more fluid, rendering comparison with Russia in long term trends of taxation *vis a vis* different social groups difficult. Yet, we know that throughout the 19th century, İstanbul achieved taking a greater share of the economic surpluses from the rural and urban economies.³⁹⁴ In doing so, it continued to depend on local notables, who doubled their roles as tax-farmers. Thus, provincial elites maintained control of important economic resources. Their capacity of channeling revenues to İstanbul gave them considerable clout in their dealings with the central state.³⁹⁵ However, throughout the inspection of Anatolia, Vefik Efendi used the taxation prerogatives of the central state for redressing the balance of power in the provincial settings. Hence, just like contemporary Imperial Russia, the Tanzimat state opted for utilizing taxation as a tool of socio-political leveling during the inspection of North-western Anatolia.

In fact, in acting against usury, the Tanzimat state demonstrated that it took the rural masses an indispensable component of governance within the modernizing imperial establishment. The terminology used by Vefik Efendi and the Porte in referring to the rural populace as a collective entity *-halk-*³⁹⁶, suggests that the Tanzimat state conceived the peasantry as a social force to be counted on in its struggle for power against the local notables. Yet, this should not be understood as pinning down democratic credentials of the Tanzimat statesmen. On the contrary, an elitist, imperial tint was ever present in the discourses of Vefik Efendi against both the notables and the ordinary people of the region. The alignment between the central state and the peasantry was rather a political strategy for expanding the penetration of the modern state into the local societies. Thus, the emancipation of the peasantry in imperial Russia in 1861 and the ensuing reforms fortifying the peasantry economically and legally in

³⁹⁴ Donald Quataert, "Overview of the 19th century," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 768.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 769.

³⁹⁶ For example, when recounting his undertakings in Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi wrote: "...bir takım zulm ve erbab-ı ihtikar ve murabahacı ızrarından halkın tahlisine...", A. MKT. MHM 281-92. For the Porte's usage of "halk", see İ. MVL 492-22265.

relation to the nobility³⁹⁷ could be evaluated as paralel steps of state-building *via* breaking the power of the notables in the countryside.

In spite of sharing the Tanzimat state's slant towards favoring the peasantry of the Bursa region in the early 1860s, Vefik Efendi was once again ahead of his time in terms of increasing the tax-burden of the upper strata quite arbitrarily at one stroke. He thus started inspecting the accounts of villages³⁹⁸ in Yenişehir one by one, simultaneously with his spectacle against usury, displayed through the trial of Çakıroğlu.³⁹⁹ He single-handedly erased all the tax debts of the villages by billing their debts to the local notables as two or three years of tax-arrears based on the inspector's assessment of new exorbitant rates of taxation to be imposed backwards in time.⁴⁰⁰ He collected about 46.000 *kuruş* from the local notables of and property-owners in Yenişehir, while squeezing 140.000 *kuruş* from the notables of the nearby Yarhisar, Bilecik and İnegöl.⁴⁰¹ In fact, one of the most salient problems that Kıbrıslı Mehmed Emin Paşa faced throughout the inspection of Rumelia was the embezzlement, corruption and oppression of the local administrators, tax-farmers and the local notables (*çorbacı*).⁴⁰² Thus, Vefik Efendi quite rightly assessed that the local notables were actually transferring the tax-burden due themselves to the peasantry in the Bursa region, too. But, the inspection was a short-term, palliative intervention to the local contexts. As such, rather than undertaking systematical "income and property surveys", which would be the basis of an equitable increase in the tax load of the wealthier segments of the population, the inspector summarily punished the local notables through ad-hoc "surveys", motivated by curbing their economic power.

One of the victims of Vefik Efendi's policy of selectively over-taxing the wealthy was Tıngıroğlu Ohannes, whom we have seen as the powerful opponent of

³⁹⁷ For a discussion of emancipation of the peasantry in Russia, see A. İU Polunov, Thomas C. Owen, and L. G. Zakharova, "The End of Serfdom," in *Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814-1914* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 87-109.

³⁹⁸ Vefik Efendi writes about "tax account books of villages" (...*karyelerin vergi defterlerinin ıslahatına bakılıp bakayalarının cümlesi vergi vermemiş olan beylerin ikişer üçer yıllık vergilerinin tahsiliyle kapatılmış...*) See, İ. MVL 492-022265. At the moment we do not have information about or access to such registers.

³⁹⁹ See chapter 1, p. 51.

⁴⁰⁰ İ. MVL 492-022265.

⁴⁰¹ For Yenişehir see, İ. DH 514-34958; for the other towns see, A. MKT. MHM 274-78.

⁴⁰² Köksal and Erkan, *Rumeli Teftişi*, 23-24.

Mahrukizade Ali Bey in the previous chapter. As in the other places included in the tour of inspection, Vefik Efendi reassessed the taxes in Yenişehir. In total, he added 32.199 *kuruş* of new annual taxes to estate owners.⁴⁰³ Tingiroğlu's estate, known as Mesenöz çiftliği, had been under his control for about 15 years. The annual tax of this çiftlik was 500 *kuruş*, on which Vefik Efendi added 750 *kuruş* of new tax to be imposed from 3 years before the inspection onwards. Thus, the local administration of Yenişehir required Ohannes to pay 2.250 *kuruş* of tax-arrears for his çiftlik. Ohannes claimed that he had spent money for the upkeep of his estate, which could not produce enough income for even recouping the old tax. It was impossible for the çiftlik to afford the new tax rate; hence Ohannes was looking for a suitable buyer for it, obviously to no avail.⁴⁰⁴

Tingiroğlu Ohannes is one example among the many notables and property-owners that happen to function within the regions included in the inspection of Anatolia. Vefik Efendi taxed, fined and dispossessed the upper classes of the provincial societies as well as İstanbul-based propertied actors quite arbitrarily throughout the inspection. He did not bother to reason with these upper classes, since he deliberately took empowerment of the peasantry *vis a vis* the local notables as a top priority of his mission. For Vefik Efendi, the local foci of power proved to be stubborn opponents of the Tanzimat state, continuously building up obstacles against the drive for centralization and the modernizing state's penetration into the provincial settings. In order to break their power, he opted for forming closer links with the peasant masses and the nomadic communities, given that the latter accept becoming sedentary rural producers like the former.

Although Vefik Efendi was a dreadful figure for the local notables, he managed to carve out a more accessible and sympathetic image in the eyes of the lower classes. For example, when listing his achievements in Yenişehir, he included that he abolished the difficulties put forth before marriage by organizing some wedding ceremonies and engaging in acts of benefaction in this regard.⁴⁰⁵ In fact, such minor gestures left a mark in the collective consciousness of Yenişehir, since an account of such a wedding survived through oral history. Accordingly, when Vefik Efendi was in Yenişehir for

⁴⁰³ MVL 715-77.

⁴⁰⁴ MVL 711-87.

⁴⁰⁵ A. MKT. MHM 281-92.

inspection, a man called Hacı Lütfullah visited him. Hacı Lütfullah wanted to get married for some time, but could not afford 300 kuruş bride price that his fiancé's father demanded. He recounted his problem to Vefik Efendi, who in turn got furious with the prospective father-in-law. He immediately summoned the girl's father and ordered him to give the bride away and told Hacı Lütfullah to buy a pair of shoes and a nightgown. The same night, Hacı Lütfullah married Hacı Gülsüm, who continued to mock her husband by telling him that "you have taken me without drums and horns (meaning that without a proper wedding ceremony)" even at her relatively advanced age.⁴⁰⁶

2.5.2. Settlement of a Nomadic Community in Yenişehir

During his short visit to İnegöl in between the inspection of Yenişehir, 25 households from a 60 household branch of Karayağlı tribe requested from Ahmed Vefik Efendi the official granting of the lands they opened up to agriculture. These households were among the nomadic tribes engaging in transhumance in the Southern Marmara region stretching from Kütahya on the east and Karesi on the west. Vefik Efendi evaluated the nomadic households' demands for owning land with proper title deeds as an opportunity for negotiating permanent settlement with them. Thus, he made them promise that they will not migrate to highlands for grazing their animals in summers; rather they will be settled all year long in their village, being content with sending their animals to pastures with shepherds. By stressing permanent settlement, Vefik Efendi was in fact following the sedentarization policies of the Tanzimat state. The earlier practices of settlement in the Ottoman Empire did not touch semi-nomadism, entailing seasonal migration to pastures, whereas the Tanzimat policies aimed at eliminating migration routes in order to strictly register the property and population of the tribes for purposes of taxation and conscription.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Mollaoğlu Ali Rıza Üzüm quoting from Hacı Gülsüm's grandson, Marangoz Rıza. Orhan Özkan (ed.), *Yenişehirli Mollaoğlu Ali Üzüm'in Hatıratı*, (Unpublished manuscript), 28. I thank Salih Erol for making this source available to me.

⁴⁰⁷ Yonca Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Sedentarization of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 477-478. See also Terzibaşoğlu for persistence of semi-nomadic pastoralism in Anatolia, Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethnopolitics: North Western Anatolia, 1877-1912," in *Land Rights, Ethno-Nationality, and Sovereignty in History*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Jacob Metzger (London: Routledge, 2004), 155.

When Vefik Efendi returned Yenişehir, the nomadic community guided him to an abandoned village, Behramşah⁴⁰⁸, in the vicinity of Akbıyık village. In fact, these nomadic households had been encamping on these lands for quite some time, thus they chose this area as the place of their permanent settlement. Vefik Efendi summoned land-survey officials, some other officials from the courts and the local council, as well as the people from the neighboring villages to the prospective place of the new settlement. The settlement was thus announced to everyone present and according to Vefik Efendi, everyone unanimously agreed on the establishment of a new village there. Subsequently, the lands of Behramşah were detached from the neighboring Akbıyık village through designation of the borders between them. Then, the old village settlement was found and the places of the old masjid and water wells were dug out. The construction of 18 houses along the newly created orderly streets started immediately. Vefik Efendi ordered the officials to prepare the deeds of the lands that the nomads had opened up to agriculture. There were actually other tribes, who applied Vefik Efendi with demands of official land allocation. Vefik Efendi however sought the approval of the Porte in continuing to settle these households.⁴⁰⁹

A few years after the inspection of Yenişehir, Hacı Halil from Akbıyık village petitioned İstanbul, claiming that during the inspection tour of Ahmed Vefik Efendi, the lands under his possession in the vicinity of Akbıyık were given to the nomads in return for 25.000 *kuruş* payment without seeking his consent. When the issue was further investigated, it turned out that the lands in question actually belonged to the waqf of a dervish lodge, Şeyh Akbıyık zaviyesi. The waqf did not have proper records in the Ministry of Evkaf; therefore İstanbul could not ascertain the right of possession of Hacı Halil. Consequently, it turned to the local council of Yenişehir for investigating whether Hacı Halil had at hand valid documents demonstrating his right of possession over these waqf lands. If he possessed proper documents, then his case had to be tried according to the rules and regulations that were pertinent to such cases.⁴¹⁰

Notwithstanding the smooth representation of settlement by Vefik Efendi, it is obvious that the settlement of these nomadic households was fuelled by the recent Land

⁴⁰⁸ Today's "Bayramşah village" attached to İnegöl.

⁴⁰⁹ MVL 654-47.

⁴¹⁰ MVL 716-85.

Law of 1858, which perpetuated scramble for land between different interest groups in the countryside. These nomadic households had been *de facto* using the waqf lands and some other state-owned lands long before their application for settlement. The abandoned village site on the other hand, suggests that the waqf, as the formal owner of the land, was actually lacking a permanent, settled population for tiling its land. The introduction of the Land Law in Yenişehir, on the one hand, mobilized the nomadic households for formalizing their usage of the land, including the lands belonging to the waqf of the dervish lodge. In order to protect their rights over these lands, the nomadic households accepted permanent settlement. On the other hand, the stake-holders of the waqf reacted Vefik Efendi's unilateral granting of these lands to the nomadic households by reclaiming their rights over these lands.

Though the Tanzimat state was successful in achieving the settlement of this nomadic community, its lack of information on the waqf lands and therefore its dependence on locally derived knowledge demonstrates the dialogical aspects of the settlement of the tribes. Various individuals and local groups, who had stakes in the utilization of the rural resources, engaged the modernizing state throughout the processes of "centralization", as is exemplified in the settlement of this nomadic community in Behramşah. Both the nomads and Hacı Halil turned to the Tanzimat state for formalizing and ratifying their cross-cutting rights over the same piece of land. However, at the end of the day, the dispute between Hacı Halil and the newly settled nomadic households fits into, what Yücel Terzibaşoğlu describes as "a process of erosion of the communal rights over pastures, forests and village commons and the proprietorship rights over waqf lands to the benefit of individual title and use."⁴¹¹ This was a transformation from communal rights to individual rights enhanced through the Land Law of 1858. In spite of being "dialogical" and open to the agencies of different societal groups, historical change assumed some legible directions throughout the late Ottoman era.

In his report on the re-creation of Behramşah village, Vefik Efendi expressed his views about the nomadic communities of the region. He wrote that "gradually, other nomadic communities in Kütahya, Karesi and Eskişehir should be detached from tribal confederations through policies of settlement resembling Behramşah case. The new

⁴¹¹Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethnopolitics," 157-158.

villages formed as such, should not pay the tribal tax to the state; rather appropriate taxes should be levied on them on *a par* with old villages. This way, the nomadic people could get rid of various extra-legal taxes and dues that their tribal leaders impose on them. As such, settlement would be mutually beneficial to nomadic communities and the Ottoman treasury.”⁴¹² Hence, Vefik Efendi’s crusade against the local notables encompassed not only sedentary local leaders of the villages and the towns; it included elimination of the tribal leaders as intermediaries benefitting from their functions of linking the nomadic populations to the central state. In this respect, Vefik Efendi was following the general blueprints of the Tanzimat in relation to the nomadic tribes, since the Ottoman state attempted to curtail the power of tribal chiefs, while at the same time using them for sedentarization in the Ankara province, as well.⁴¹³

There was however, a very delicate balance between the price and the benefits of discarding the local notables. The tribal leaders were at the same time partners of the late Ottoman state, providing indispensable services. As Reşat Kasaba puts it: “Conceptually and in real terms, the internal boundaries that separated the Ottoman state from the tribal social structures were never clear.”⁴¹⁴ Vefik Efendi was indeed aware of the ambiguous situation of the tribal leaders *vis a vis* the Ottoman state. He was however, a rather resourceful man, skillful in developing radical solutions, which often contradicted the gradualism of the conservative Tanzimat statesmen in İstanbul. With respect to the tribes of the Southern Marmara region, he stated that these communities were tied to *Kıldonlu* tribal confederation, whose tribal leaders were contractors of the Ottoman state in the production of wool and silk mixed fabrics. Yet, according to Vefik Efendi, if machines worth 50.000 *kuruş* could be bought to the state-owned factory in Karesi, the needs of the state for these fabrics could be easily met. With this precaution, 2000 households could be settled in 40-50 villages, from which development and great increases in agricultural production could be expected.⁴¹⁵

The Tanzimat state was neither as enthusiastic as Vefik Efendi in its visions of social change, nor financially strong enough to undertake such big projects. More than

⁴¹² MVL 654-47.

⁴¹³ Köksal, “Coercion and Mediation,” 478.

⁴¹⁴ Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 8.

⁴¹⁵ MVL 654-47.

demonstrating how exactly the Tanzimat state acted, Vefik Efendi revealed to what extremes the centralization drive could have been stretched without the restraints of an imperial ruling tradition adverse to social unrest on the one hand, and ideologically devoted to fiscalism on the other hand. This in turn should have spared some tribal communities from potentially disastrous projects of forced settlement in the Southern Marmara region.

2.5.3. Town-planning à la Vefik Efendi

Vefik Efendi had a tight schedule in Yenişehir; during the day he followed the ongoing trials and engaged in administrative tasks, such as reviewing the accounts of the villages. In the afternoons, he took small trips to the town-center for attending the repair and the re-building of the historical buildings and public facilities of Yenişehir. The neglected, decaying historical artifacts in Yenişehir truly upset Ahmed Vefik Efendi, who devised an ambitious project for rebuilding the town-center. His project was basically the rejuvenation of the mosque complex of the Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Paşa by merging the economic and physical assets of Sinan Paşa's waqf with a centrally imposed imagery and plan, embodied above all in the building of an impressive, new *müdür*'s mansion (government building). Sinan Paşa's mosque complex was built in between 1572 and 1582.⁴¹⁶ Beside the mosque, the complex included a madrasa, a soup kitchen, a market place (known as *sipahi çarşısı*), a caravanserai and a bakery.⁴¹⁷ According to Vefik Efendi, the mosque complex thrived until the last quarter of the 18th century. By 1863 however, the mosque's exterior had detached from its interior; the madrasa and the bakery were dilapidated. Although the soup kitchen, including its dining hall was present, its ceilings and walls had been demolished. Vefik Efendi stated that until recently, there was a Muslim cemetery and a caravanserai, which were announced as "wreck" by an ex-governor of Bursa, Nureddin Paşa. They were thus

⁴¹⁶ Tuğba Erzincan, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 37*, s.v. "Sinan Paşa Külliyesi.", (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2009), 237-239.

⁴¹⁷ Tuğba Erzincan states that the complex included a mosque, an imaret and a tekke, Erzincan, s.v. "Sinan Paşa Külliyesi," 237. Based on Vefik Efendi's description of other architectural units, I preferred using his account as a more reliable contemporary source.

destroyed; the wreckage, the valuable wall stones and the remaining 40-50 thousands of tiles were distributed among the local notables. Overall, 3000 *kuruş* gained from the sale of “the wreckage” was spent for the building of a “pitiable” well instead of the mosque’s fountain, the stones of which were despoiled. Vefik Efendi lamented that even the newly built well was dysfunctional, with only four walls standing. Overall, he contended that without the beautiful works of art and unique public facilities inherited from the *ex-viziers* of the Ottoman Empire, Yenişehir was demoted to the level of a despicable village.⁴¹⁸

In the re-building of the mosque complex, the repair of the mosque and the soup kitchen and the rebuilding of the madrasa as a modern secondary school had priority. The Ottoman state actually earmarked 34.000 *kuruş* from the treasury of the Ministry of Evkaf for the repair of the mosque. Having extorted money from the people (in his terminology “encouraging them”), for the repair of the buildings with priority, Vefik Efendi spent only 10.000 *kuruş* from 34.000 *kuruş* earmarked in the Evkaf treasury. Having emphasized his impressive economizing in getting the job done, he asked for the increase of the budget from 34.000 *kuruş* to 35.000 *kuruş*, the remaining 25.000 *kuruş* of which was to be used for the re-building of the waqf’s income bearing properties namely, the marketplace and the bakery. According to him, these ruined artifacts could be re-built cheaply, because some of the high entrances and walls were already present. The demolished sections could be re-built in tandem with their originals; thereby the complex of Sinan Paşa could be revived as a town-center and market place. If the enlarged project would be approved by the state, the shops included in the cavalry market and the bakery would bring 9000 *kuruş* of annual income for the waqf of Sinan Paşa from rents.⁴¹⁹

Vefik Efendi integrated his plan to build a new *müdür* mansion in Yenişehir with the rebuilding of Sinan Paşa complex. The existing mansion of the *müdür* had decayed a lot; one corner of it had been demolished during the winter. Furthermore, the *mansion* did not have a prison, which was an absolute necessity. Actually, 4000 *kuruş* was recently earmarked for the building of a prison in Yenişehir. In Vefik Efendi’s words “the construction of a thing like a stable made of mud had started”, but he cancelled it,

⁴¹⁸ İ. DH 514-34958.

⁴¹⁹ İ. DH 514-34958.

since it would not be of any use. Instead, Vefik Efendi proposed to build a *müdür* mansion in the place of the caravanserai in Sinan Paşa complex, with all the amenities including the prison. Not only using the walls and the plot of the caravanserai would save a lot of money, but also 4000 *kuruş* earmarked for the building of a prison and an estimated 5000 *kuruş* to be earned from the sale of the existing *müdür* mansion would contribute to the new project. Furthermore, the well-built, stone government building would pay 40-50 *kuruş* monthly rent to the waqf of Sinan Paşa, further empowering it financially. Vefik Efendi, quite ostentatiously wrote that while the revival of the cavalry market would make a perfect commercial center, the construction of the stone government building in the vicinity of the market-place would wrestle the monopoly of power from the local notables.⁴²⁰ Hence, Vefik Efendi conceived town-planning as an intrinsic part of his mission of weakening the power of the local notables.

Yet, massive projects require massive amounts of money; the building of the *müdür* mansion would cost another 35.000 *kuruş* to the Ottoman treasury, which the Ministry of Finance could not easily release. Who was to pay for Vefik Efendi's project, then? We already know that he obtained 4000 *kuruş* from the approved budget of the prison, and another 5000 *kuruş* from the sale of the existing *müdür* mansion. He proposed that the remaining expenditures could be met with the tax-arrears of the new tax he imposed on Yenişehir, which amounted to 46.000 *kuruş* to be sent to the treasury. The half of these collected arrears was to be withheld in Yenişehir for the government building project, to be compensated from the income of the shops attached to Sinan Paşa's waqf in the future.⁴²¹ Thus, people like Tıngıroğlu Ohanness were supposed to pay for these costly projects. Vefik Efendi had at hand 46.000 *kuruş* that he collected from the wealthy of Yenişehir. He took pains to explain the entire math to İstanbul for withholding the half of the collected money for the re-building of the town center.⁴²²

The problem with Vefik Efendi's lofty plans was that most of the money put forth for covering expenses was actually hypothetical. For example, 5000 *kuruş* to be earned from the sale of the existing *müdür* mansion was not around yet. Likewise, the

⁴²⁰ İ. DH 514-34958.

⁴²¹ İ. DH 514-34958.

⁴²² Vefik Efendi's strategy resembles Midhat Paşa's "self-financing reform projects" in the Danubian Province in 1864-1868. Accordingly, resulting "savings" from self-financing projects were spent locally, rather than remitted back to the Imperial Treasury. Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside," 204.

recouping of 23.000 *kuruş* from the income of the waqf of Sinan Paşa in the future depended on the very success of the project to revive the market-place, which was yet to exist. If Vefik Efendi were to remain in Yenişehir forever and personally saw the realization of these projects, then they stood a chance of success. Yet, immediately after he left, most of what he planned started to shatter, since they were put together by force. At the end of the day, the socio-political dynamics of Yenişehir prevailed over Vefik Efendi's plans: There remained no trace of the cavalry market and the caravanserai and the government building stayed nearby the already existing marketplace. But, the mosque, the soup kitchen and the madrasa, the repairs of which had priority in Vefik Efendi's project survived.⁴²³

Improving roads and communications between the towns was among the top priorities of Vefik Efendi. As he passed from Yenişehir to İznik, he had the road binding these two towns graded.⁴²⁴ However, the main road from Yenişehir to the port of Gemlik, which was the main port of the town, had to wait the Hamidian era for being constructed as a highway. Likewise, the telegraph, which would bind Yenişehir more closely to the outside world, would be introduced in 1869.⁴²⁵ Without taking such major steps, Vefik Efendi attended public works that would improve communications. Yet, again his undertakings were crippled by financial expediencies. For instance, four years after the inspection, Yenişehir's budget had a deficit from the repair of Subaşı Bridge, initiated by Vefik Efendi. The members of the local council blamed the inspector for getting money from the local treasury without designating proper sources of income for the repair of the bridge. When İstanbul inquired Vefik Efendi about this deficit, he replied that for the repair of the bridge he earmarked 15.000 *kuruş* of tithe income of a waqf founded for the improvement of the town; only the remaining 5000 *kuruş* to be paid to the contractor was taken from the income of the present year. Hence, it is clear that 15.000 *kuruş* theoretically transferred from the income of the waqf did not actually realize for whatever reason. 5000 *kuruş* was most probably paid to the contractor as a down-payment by Vefik Efendi; the remaining 15.000 *kuruş* was taken from the local treasury after Vefik Efendi left. In fact, Vefik Efendi followed the repair of the bridge

⁴²³ "Sinan Paşa Medresesi-Bursa." *Türkiye Kültür Portalı*. Accessed June 13, 2016. <http://www.kulturportali.gov.tr/turkiye/genel/kulturenvanteri/sinan-pasa-medresesi>.

⁴²⁴ A. MKT. MHM 279-63.

⁴²⁵ *Hüdavendigar*, issue 6, 26 Zilkade 1285, 24.

for a couple of years, ensuring that it was not neglected. He even deposed a *müdür* of Yenişehir due to corruption, on his way to Kütahya from Karesi, which he inspected after Yenişehir.⁴²⁶ But, without his iron fist forcefully mobilizing local resources for the public good, the *müdürs* were helpless in completing the ongoing projects.

What needs to be underlined in Vefik Efendi's town-planning in Yenişehir is that he used the waqf as an institution for reviving the contemporary infrastructure and redesigning the town-center in the new governmental image of the centralizing Ottoman state. On the one hand, he possessed genuine intentions for rebuilding and saving the old artifacts; on the other hand, the rejuvenated complex of Sinan Paşa would serve the contemporary needs of the Tanzimat state. The madrasa, for instance, would be repaired and put in use, yet it would become a modern secondary school.⁴²⁷ Likewise, the plot and the walls of the caravanserai would be reclaimed, but it would become an impressive *müdür* mansion. His attendance to the commercial center of the mosque complex manifests not only his concerns to enhance the aurora of the new government building with a bustling commercial center, spared from the local despots like Çakıroğlu, but also his concerns to render the ancient waqf a self-sustaining and powerful institution. In short, the old and the new would meet in Yenişehir for embodying a new balance of power between the center and the provincial societies. The question was whether this could happen as Vefik Efendi envisaged it; or the local dynamics could tailor a greater role for their own visions in the long run.

2.6. Inspection in İznik: Vefik Efendi vs. the Central Bureaucracy

In the inspection of İznik, Vefik Efendi pursued strategies and engaged in activities that were similar to his undertakings in Yenişehir. However, by his arrival to İznik, the institutions of the central state, especially the Supreme Council, had already received quite a lot of petitions, complaining about Vefik Efendi's radical methods of dispossessing, imprisoning, chastising and fining various interest groups, especially the

⁴²⁶ For the Subaşı bridge dispute, see MVL 735-73.

⁴²⁷ We do not know whether Vefik Efendi could open a secondary school in the place of the madrasa. But, he did open a secondary school in Yenişehir and ensured the appointment of a teacher, MVL 706-94.

local notables. İstanbul had to deal with all these flooding complaints; therefore the Porte, tried to slow down the inspector in İznik. For example, Vefik Efendi asked for the immediate dispatch of Kayserili Keşkekoğlu Karabet, who was an İstanbul based money-lender active in İznik, in order to complete his lawsuits against many debtors. This meant that Vefik Efendi was decided in destroying Karabet, who according to the inspector, fled to İstanbul after learning about the impending inspection of İznik. The Supreme Council replied Vefik Efendi by reminding that if there were any plaintiffs of Karabet, they should provide proper guarantors for reimbursing the expenses of the trials and travel costs of Karabet in case they lose their cases against him; otherwise, sending Karabet to İznik would be an oppressive act against him. Vefik Efendi insisted on the dispatch of Karabet after he left İznik and headed to Bursa, but to no avail.⁴²⁸

Not everybody was however, as lucky as Keşkekoğlu Karabet. During the income surveys in İznik, Ahmed Vefik Efendi summoned Hacı Ali Efendi, who was a secretary in the Land Registry Office (*Defter-i Hakani ketebesinden*) in İstanbul. Ali Efendi was originally from İznik's Orta village, where he had some properties. Just like he did in Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi billed Ali Efendi and his son 9.000 *kuruş* as tax-arrears of 3 or 4 years, the increased new tax of the current year and a cash fine. In İznik, he imprisoned Ali Efendi, and then sold his properties and belongings for liquidating his "debts". Apparently, after obtaining 9.000 *kuruş*, he released him. Ali Efendi immediately returned to İstanbul and filed a complaint in the Supreme Council about Vefik Efendi's acts towards him. The Supreme Council contacted Vefik Efendi, only to get the usual explanation that Ali Efendi was giving 183 *kuruş* annual tax, when in fact he had to give 1500 *kuruş*. All the inspector had done was to increase his tax to its proper levels, and then collect his debts for the Ottoman treasury. The Supreme Council in turn, appointed an official from the Supreme Council for investigating the issue in İznik at the presence of Ali Efendi.⁴²⁹ We do not know whether Ali Efendi could reclaim his 9.000 *kuruş*, yet the event itself manifests that Vefik Efendi did not hesitate disturbing even bureaucrats that had close contacts in the capital city. The Porte

⁴²⁸ MVL 658-17; MVL 658-47.

⁴²⁹ A. MKT. MHM 328-41.

chose an incorruptible man for the inspection of Anatolia, yet he was also uncontrollable in his ways of doing business.⁴³⁰

Notwithstanding the moderation of the central bureaucracy compared to Vefik Efendi, he was in fact more sympathetic to the demands of the provincial societies that would bring regional economic benefits in the long run, albeit at the expense of the short-term gains of the central treasury. A case in point in this respect was Vefik Efendi's attempts to cancel taxes on beehives for inducing people to engage more in beekeeping. In İzmit and Hüdavendigar, Vefik Efendi observed that the taxes collected from the beehives had continuously fallen in the last couple of years. When he talked to people, he realized that people actually stopped beekeeping due to the arbitrary over-taxation of the tax-farmers. According to Vefik Efendi, Hüdavendigar's annual bee tax was only about 30.000 *kuruş*. He thus proposed the cancellation of the tax on beehives in Hüdavendigar and İzmit in order to foster increase in the production of honey, from which regional economic development could be expected to occur. Apparently, without waiting for a definite reply from the central bureaucracy, in some places he visited, he announced his intention to cancel this tax in exchange for making people promise to keep more bees. The Supreme Council, forwarded Vefik Efendi's proposal to the Ministry of Finance, which surprisingly did not have any estimation of the amount of taxes received from the beehives. Thus, the Ministry made an educated guess by claiming that since beekeeping was practiced in most regions of the Empire, the income received from the taxes of beehives should be substantial. Excepting Hüdavendigar and İzmit from this tax was unacceptable, since this exception could spread to the other provinces, which in turn would incur great losses to the treasury.⁴³¹

Vefik Efendi was not sitting in İstanbul, rather he was on the ground dealing with the problems of particular provincial settings; therefore he constantly negotiated with the Porte for retaining some of the local funds within the localities for financing infrastructural projects and public works. As he did in Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi had to go to great lengths for keeping the money of İznik within the town, which actually needed

⁴³⁰ In a similar vein, for Vefik Paşa's governorship in Bursa in the early 1880s, Leila Thayer observes that "he refused to accept directives. Within the İstanbul bureaucracy this proved counterproductive, but in Bursa, where he was his own man, this made him especially effective." Leila Thayer Erder, "The Making of Industrial Bursa: Economic Activity and Population in a Turkish City, 1835-1975," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1978), 245.

⁴³¹ MVL 669-7.

financial support from outside for fulfilling the modernization aspirations of the Tanzimat state. The inspector's task was to achieve a lot without any recourse to the central treasury, and if possible to direct funds to the coffers of the central state from the provincial societies. In doing so, he was not supposed to act arbitrarily and he was supposed to refrain from oppressing the subjects of the Empire. The task at the outset was thus impossible. Vefik Efendi's personality was preponderant to sacrifice the latter objective, which reflected the averseness of the Tanzimat state towards social upheavals. He thus crushed any wealthy person, but especially those notables, who partook in the administration of the towns through the institutions and the posts of the modernizing state. An alliance forged with the upper classes of the provinces at the beginning of the Tanzimat era was thus forcefully ended by the Ottoman state. Vefik Efendi was perhaps the perfect candidate for achieving such a task; because throughout the inspection his brutality masked "the rule of law" and gradualism of the Tanzimat state. In search of justice against Vefik Efendi, the local notables had no chance other than turning to the Janus-faced central state, which as a policy opted for breaking their power in the provinces.

2.6.1. Destruction of the Local Notables in İznik: Ömer Hilmi Efendi and Kafiye Hatun

As I mentioned above, about a year before the inspection, the postal coach was robbed in İznik and the existing director was summarily dismissed. Subsequently, Ömer Hilmi Efendi became the acting-director of İznik for a short period of time, until the arrival of a new centrally appointed *müdür*. Though his term in office was short, he accomplished quite a lot. To begin with, the season for bidding the tax-farms of olive and olive oil had already passed. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the crops in the preceding couple of years were bad in İznik, bankrupting the tax-farmers from Sölöz Gayri Müslim. Hence, it is not surprising that no volunteers showed up in the biddings of the olive oil tax-farms of six villages and olive tax-farms of five villages of İznik.

With the permission of the government, Ömer Hilmi organized the direct collection of the taxes of these villages through the local council of İznik.⁴³²

The olive oil tithes were collected in kind from six villages, from each of which six or seven villagers were collectively awarded the collection of the olive oil. Five villages, which produced olives on the other hand, received officers appointed by Ömer Hilmi Efendi, in collaboration with Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, for the collection of the tithes. Each and every person who served in the transfer, processing and storing of olives received receipts designating the amounts paid them from the local treasury. When Ömer Hilmi Efendi was leaving office to his successor, the imams and muhtars of the six villages whose olive oil tithes were collected by the local administration came to the local council and ratified the amounts of tax they paid both orally and by signing documents composed in the local council. Likewise, for the expenditures involved in the collection of the olive tax of the other five villages, each receiver of payment came to the local council, presented his receipts and ratified the amounts paid from the local treasury. When all accounts were cleared, the local treasury owed Ömer Hilmi 2000 *kuruş*. Two copies of the documents demonstrating the clearing of Ömer Hilmi's accounts were prepared in the local council of İznik; one copy was sent to the district center in İzmit, the other was given to Ömer Hilmi.⁴³³

When Vefik Efendi was still in Yenişehir, he sent his *kethüda* (steward) Hüsnü Bey to İznik, probably for forestalling the cautionary measures of the local notables, as Çakıroğlu did in Yenişehir. Hüsnü Bey sealed the local treasury and asked for the account books of the sub-district. One of the first account books he obtained was the book containing the expenditures incurred in the collection of the olive tax of five villages during the administration of Ömer Hilmi Efendi. The first name in the book was Dölek Hacı, whom Hüsnü Bey immediately summoned. He asked him: "Did you get this 1000 *kuruş*? If you did not, this is Vefik Efendi on his way to İznik; he will ruin you. Tell me the truth now!" Hacı Dölek told Hüsnü Bey that he had taken only 260 *kuruş*. Hüsnü Bey declared that 700 *kuruş* was swindled by Ömer Hilmi and got him imprisoned. Two days later, Vefik Efendi arrived. The inspector's officials took all the receipts issued during the collection of the olive tithes of the five villages from the local

⁴³² ŞD 1534-18.

⁴³³ See interrogations in ŞD 1534-18.

treasurer. Overall, Vefik Efendi somehow found out that 11.000 *kuruş* of 18.500 *kuruş* expenditure shown for the collection of the olive tax was billed to the treasury by inflating the prices of the services rendered.⁴³⁴

For ascertaining the amount of olive tax collected by Ömer Hilmi Efendi, Vefik Efendi sent Bedros and Tahtacı Yani from İznik to Sölöz Gayri Müslim. Bedros and Yani summoned the villagers of Sölöz Gayri Müslim and asked the people one by one, what amount of tithe they paid last year. They recorded everyone's answers and the tithe of Sölöz Gayri Müslim amounted to 12.000 or 13.000 *okkas*. For the five villages, whose olive taxes were directly collected by the administration of Ömer Hilmi, about 21.000 *kıyyes* were recorded. Without investigating the amounts of tithes of the remaining four villages, Vefik Efendi claimed that Ömer Hilmi stole 7009 *kıyyes* from the tithe and stored it in Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa's depot in Sölöz Müslim village.⁴³⁵

For the olive oil tithes of six villages on the other hand, the inspector claimed that Ömer Hilmi had awarded the collection of this tax to his relatives and business partners, when in fact there were people who offered 2100 *kıyyes* more than the actual olive oil tax-farm of these villages. Overall, Vefik Efendi calculated that Ömer Hilmi incurred 44.000 *kuruş* worth loss to the local treasury from the collection of the olive and olive oil taxes of these 11 villages. He doubled this amount by imposing an equal 44.000 *kuruş* as cash fine. Hence, Ömer Hilmi was supposed to pay 88.000 *kuruş* to the Ottoman state due to his corruption and mismanagement in the collection of these taxes.⁴³⁶

Vefik Efendi's accusations against Ömer Hilmi Efendi with respect to the collection of the tithes of these villages were not probably completely groundless. However, it is obvious that he greatly exaggerated Ömer Hilmi's corruption through short-cut investigations that were at the outset motivated by destroying Ömer Hilmi Efendi, merely due to his remarkable influence in the local political arena of İznik on the one hand and his accumulated wealth on the other hand. Although inflating the expenditures incurred in the collection of the olive tithe seems to be a likely crime,

⁴³⁴ See interrogations in ŞD 1534-18; the document paginated 8/3 describes Hüsnü Bey's arrival to İznik.

⁴³⁵ ŞD 1534-18.

⁴³⁶ ŞD 1534-18.

involving a small number of people that were close to Ömer Hilmi Efendi and Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, stealing from the tithe was quite unlikely. Because, as many local people from İznik stated at the investigation in Bursa long after the inspection, transferring and storing the allegedly stolen amounts of olives would be very difficult in a small, rural setting, where everyone watched over the other and hearsay was an ever present phenomenon. Furthermore, Vefik Efendi's inquiry about the allegedly stolen tithe encompassed only Sölöz Gayri Müslim, which was one among the five villages that was particularly on bad terms with Sölöz Müslim in general and Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa in particular. The accusation that Ömer Hilmi awarded the olive oil tithes to his partners and relatives appears very unlikely, because for this to happen, 40-50 villagers from 6 different villages, as well as the *imams* and *muhtars* of these villages had to be collaborators of Ömer Hilmi. In the investigation in Bursa, everyone from İznik unanimously stated that they had not heard of an offer 2100 *kıyyes* higher for the olive oil tithes until Vefik Efendi claimed to have heard so.⁴³⁷

The dilemma in Vefik Efendi's position was that he was actually helpless in protecting the interests of the central state against most of the locally engineered swindling and abuses. For example, he could detect the inflation of the expenditures for the collection of the taxes, only because he could be present in İznik to pressure the local people to tell the truth. Otherwise, the members of the local council, the director Ömer Hilmi, and some other local notables like Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa could act in unison to the detriment of the local treasury without being caught. Likewise, even if there was not actually anybody, who had offered more for the collection of the olive oil tithes of the six villages, villagers themselves and the local administrators could have agreed on an artificially low amount of tithe, since there was no mechanism for checking the produce other than the local council itself. Hence, in squaring the punishment of Ömer Hilmi Efendi, Vefik Efendi acted more on his insights than on the actual calculation of the loss of the treasury. In other words, in the eyes of Vefik Efendi, Ömer Hilmi Efendi was a usual suspect to be discarded due to being a native, who had assumed the post of directorship.

For the local notables, who partook in the administrative institutions of the Tanzimat state, there were many ingenious ways of flexibly bending the rules,

⁴³⁷ ŞD 1534-18.

regulations and laws for their own advantage. Ömer Hilmi Efendi was one of the most successful figures who improved his lot through dubious, quasi-legal transactions. As the trustee of the waqf of Muharrem Hoca Mescidi, he exchanged the stable of the waqf (which Kafiye Hatun claimed to have been converted into an olive grove) with a plot of land belonging to his wife. He bought the right of possession of the adjacent plots from the waqf of Zeyneb Hatun. Spending 80.000 *kuruş*, he built ten shops and a new stable over these plots. Through the local sharia court he managed to obtain court rulings demonstrating his freehold ownership of these buildings, most of which stood on waqf lands. One of the shops was an olive oil processing workshop (*yağhane*), which according to Ömer Hilmi brought an annual income of 25.000 *kuruş*. From the other shops, he collected rents. After completing his investment, Ömer Hilmi Efendi repaired Muharrem Hoca Mescidi, in which food was also served for the visitors and the poor. He endowed the income of the olive oil processing workshop to five public fountains he built in İznik.⁴³⁸ Hence, at least a fraction of what he earned from his mastery in channeling waqf resources to private entrepreneurship returned to İznik as public investments.

What Ömer Hilmi did was indeed remarkably similar to what Vefik Efendi wanted to do with the ruined caravanserai belonging to the waqf of Sinan Paşa in Yenişehir; both men tried to enhance alternately private and imperial interests through tapping the resources of the waqfs. Hence, Vefik Efendi did not bother to investigate all the legal procedures that Ömer Hilmi Efendi undertook for justifying his entrepreneurial activities, which were intertwined with the waqf resources. The inspector claimed that Ömer Hilmi had usurped all the shops “originally” belonging to Zeyneb Hatun’s waqf through fake documents. He calculated all the rents Ömer Hilmi took from these shops, and then deducted 6.000 *kuruş* from this rental income per Ömer Hilmi’s repair of Muharrem Hoca Mescidi, billing the rest to him.⁴³⁹ Once again, no matter how rightful Ömer Hilmi legally was, Vefik Efendi represented the central state, then a formidable competitor for the huge waqf pie in the provinces. Moreover, if the power of the local notables was to be broken, waqf properties, which formed the backbone of their economic power, could not be left unaddressed.

⁴³⁸ MVL 469-3; MVL 488-113.

⁴³⁹ MVL 488-113.

Notwithstanding their involvements in factional quarrels and their activities on the edge of legality, the local notables were in a unique position for organizing collective action for the public good. They possessed an intimate knowledge of the practical problems of the local contexts and an ability to assess the appropriate levels of potential collective input for solving the problems. In this regard, Ömer Hilmi Efendi was a successful leader, effectively defending the interests of the inhabitants of İznik. He became the acting director of İznik, immediately after the catastrophic robbery of the postal coach by the nomadic tribes. After the robbery, many officials and gendarmeries were sent to the vicinity of the crime scene, where two unfortunate villages of İznik happened to be located. During the elongated investigations, these two villages, namely Hotoz and Körüstan, incurred 3 or 4 thousand *kuruş* worth expenditures in providing shelter, billeting, fodder and other needs of the incoming officers. Their loss was so huge relative to their economic power that other inhabitants of İznik mobilized for reimbursing them. It was also obvious that the local police forces were not sufficient for fighting widespread banditry in general and protecting the postal coach in particular. Therefore, the people agreed on hiring seven more armed, private security forces (*kar serdarları*). Furthermore, some of the directors appointed from outside had left the town having depleted the local treasury; hence it was necessary for the town to have a treasurer, who would keep the accounts in good order; thus the town hired a treasurer as well. Consequently, for the reimbursement of Hotoz and Körüstan and the payment of the salaries of these newly employed officials, Ömer Hilmi Efendi proposed to add 12.000 *kuruş* to the existing taxes of İznik. Everyone unanimously agreed on the proposal, since the robbery of the postal coach, the insecurity of the roads and the ensuing deficit of the local treasury were serious problems for which the whole sub-district paid a price. Thus, necessary documents were prepared at the local council for the tax increase, and a copy was sent to the district center in İzmit.⁴⁴⁰

When Vefik Efendi was going over the account books of the villages, this extra tax popped up. Vefik Efendi scolded Ömer Hilmi by asking him: “Why did you levy this tax without an order from your superior?” He thus added this 12.000 *kuruş* to Ömer Hilmi’s debts to the Ottoman treasury.⁴⁴¹ All in all, Ömer Hilmi owed 88.000 *kuruş*

⁴⁴⁰ ŞD 1534-33; ŞD 1534-18.

⁴⁴¹ ŞD 1534-18, paginated 8/4.

from the collection of taxes, 12.000 *kuruş* from the extra-tax he levied and about 9.000 *kuruş* from his “usurpation” of waqf properties. Ahmed Vefik Efendi used rather primitive methods for collecting Ömer Hilmi’s more than 100.000 *kuruş* debt. He chained him from his feet and crucified him (*çarmuğa gerüp*) in the prison, while interrogating the whereabouts of his presumably hidden golden coins. He had his house and gardens searched; even the cupboards in Ömer Hilmi’s house were sacked (...*dolaplarının derunlarını karıştırıp...*). He took all the important deeds and documents he could find among Ömer Hilmi’s belongings and did not return them.⁴⁴²

Vefik Efendi arranged that about 50.000 *kuruş* of Ömer Hilmi’s debt was to be recouped through the sale of his animals and grains. The remaining 50.000 *kuruş* would be collected through the sale of lands belonging to his wife, Kafiye Hatun. The inspector, apparently, smelled Kafiye Hatun’s partnership with her husband, and wanted to dispossess her in order to completely destroy the family. Kafiye Hatun died in deep grief two months after Vefik Efendi left İznik. Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa, who was chained like Ömer Hilmi Efendi, got seriously ill while he was imprisoned; hence he was released. Shortly after, he too died. Ömer Hilmi spent some time imprisoned in İznik, and then he was banished to Sinob, being condemned to 15 years of imprisonment (*kalebend*).⁴⁴³ In the following years, Ömer Hilmi’s second wife, Nefise Hatun and his two small children from Nefise stayed in İstanbul for some time, trying to face Vefik Efendi in a re-trial⁴⁴⁴, while Ömer Hilmi’s grown up daughters and he himself tried to bring Vefik Efendi’s decisions and actions to a court of appeal through several petitions.⁴⁴⁵

Eventually, Ömer Hilmi’s sheep worth 50.000 *kuruş*, which brought 10.000 *kuruş* income annually, were sold for just 9000 *kuruş* in İznik. His cattle worth 60.000 *kuruş* was sold for 19.000 *kuruş* and his grain was sold for well under its market price.⁴⁴⁶ His oil processing workshop, which brought 25.000 *kuruş* income annually, was hired to someone from İznik, whom Vefik Efendi appointed as a new member of

⁴⁴² MVL 469-3.

⁴⁴³ MVL 488-113; ŞD 2860-12.

⁴⁴⁴ MVL 470-11.

⁴⁴⁵ MVL 469-3.

⁴⁴⁶ ŞD 2860-12.

the local council, for just 300 *kuruş* annual rent.⁴⁴⁷ Likewise, 458 *dönüms* of waqf lands under the possession of Kafiye Hatun was sold to the ex-secretary of the local council of İznik for only 18.000 *kuruş*. Some other lands belonging to her were sold to the ex-treasurer, İstavri for 3.000 *kuruş*.⁴⁴⁸ When Ömer Hilmi Efendi and his family petitioned the Supreme Council for re-investigation and re-trial, İstanbul turned to Hüdavendigâr, and asked the province to provide information derived from the locality. Yet, the people, who would prepare reports of the incident, were precisely the ones who were given Ömer Hilmi's and Kafiye Hatun's properties in return for minimal payments.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, several appeals of the family hung in the air for some time.

Towards the end of 1860s, Ömer Hilmi was pardoned; he thus returned to İznik. After years of petitioning he managed to initiate an investigation in Bursa, where many villagers, the local notables and ex-members of the local council of İznik were present for testifying in favor of Ömer Hilmi Efendi. Whatever Vefik Efendi had done to Ömer Hilmi could somehow be concealed in a legal or administrative garb, but including Kafiye Hatun in the punishment was a grave injustice that could not be justified in the local political scenery. For this reason, in Bursa, even those people who "bought" Kafiye Hatun's properties during the inspection testified in favor of Ömer Hilmi⁴⁵⁰, who thus acquitted from the allegations, yet did not live to see the return of his losses.⁴⁵¹ His son-in-law as the legal representative of his grown-up daughters and his second wife, Nefise Hatun representing her two children went to İstanbul for reclaiming the deceased's rights. In 1871, Nefise Hatun, too could not cope with the exhausting marathon of investigations, trials and bureaucratic correspondences; she got seriously ill in the capital city and had to return to İznik before attending the last sessions that would ratify what was left from Ömer Hilmi's estate.⁴⁵²

The destruction of Ömer Hilmi Efendi demonstrates the costs of discarding entrenched local notables. Although machinations of the local elites incurred financial

⁴⁴⁷ MVL 469-3.

⁴⁴⁸ ŞD 2860-12.

⁴⁴⁹ MVL 469-3; MVL 470-11.

⁴⁵⁰ ŞD 1534-18.

⁴⁵¹ ŞD 1534-33.

⁴⁵² ŞD 1534-33.

losses to the Tanzimat state, overall some of these men were community leaders, who were in the best position to organize collective action for the public good. In this respect, Ömer Hilmi Efendi's rather smooth increase of the taxes of the sub-district for the common interest of the inhabitants of İznik sharply contrasts with Vefik Efendi's ill-conceived social projects. Among these projects, the settlement of *Kazan* immigrants particularly burdened İznik. I now turn to Vefik Efendi's activities in this regard.

2.6.2. Settlement of the Immigrants in İznik

Ahmed Vefik Efendi arrived at İznik at the beginning of September 1863. In İznik, his chamberlain, Hüsnü Bey was already attending the accounts of the sub-district, singling out scapegoats like Ömer Hilmi Efendi to be dispossessed for financing local infrastructural projects and imperial policies of modernization and centralization in İznik. Some other potential sources of money came by themselves to Vefik Efendi, when some Christian villagers visited him. These villagers claimed that the populations of some other Christian villages immensely increased lately; therefore, they suggested that some of the tax burden of their own villages should be transferred to these growing villages. Furthermore, *çorbacı*⁴⁵³ were not distributing the taxes equitably among the village households; hence the poor peasants were over-taxed. Vefik Efendi immediately sent his men to the Christian villages of İznik for population and income surveys. As he did in Yenişehir, he decreased the poor's taxes from about 300 *kuruş* to 50 *kuruş*, while increasing the taxes of the rich from 500 *kuruş* to 700-800 *kuruş*.⁴⁵⁴ He thus continued to reallocate the taxes, so as to empower the peasantry *vis a vis* the Christian notables of İznik.

In the mean time, Vefik Efendi worked out yet another giant project that would, if successful, resurrect the old glorious days of İznik in the modern era. His project was to drain the vast swampy and sandy lands around Lake İznik through opening channels by digging out the sand on the watercourse. Having discharged water from these lands,

⁴⁵³ *Çorbacı* are Christian notables from the villages responsible for the apportionment of the taxes within the village and assisting the state in the collection of the taxes.

⁴⁵⁴ MVL 476-19.

he would not only improve the sanitary conditions of the whole town (since these swamps were a continuous source of epidemics in the town), but also he would settle 400 households of immigrants, who fled from *Kazan* in Russia in the aftermath of the Crimean War.⁴⁵⁵ These households would rejuvenate İznik, which would need new public facilities, such as a new modern secondary school for serving this influx of people.⁴⁵⁶

Vefik Efendi commenced the settlement project when there was not any Kazan immigrant in İznik. One of his favorite targets for obtaining construction materials and labor for this project was Çengiler village, which was a Christian village pointed out as prosperous by the Christian villagers who visited Vefik Efendi. Based on the surveys he undertook, Vefik Efendi added 1235 *kuruş* to the annual tax of Çengiler, in addition to another 5925 *kuruş* annual increase in its poll-tax (*asker ianesi*). According to the villagers, the inspector assigned five or six times more value to the properties of the wealthy of Çengiler, billing seven village notables 6.500 *kuruş* tax-arrears for three years, including a cash-fine. For the housing project of the immigrants and the draining of the swamps on which the houses were to be built, Çengiler provided 1200 trees to be used in paving (*döşeme ağacı*) and 50 *yük* fence. Moreover, 600 laborers and 4 carts from the village worked in the project for 15 days without any payment. On top of these, Vefik Efendi demanded 200 golden liras (*200 adet yüzlük altın lira*) from the rich of the village in the name of “Circassian charity” (*Çerkes ianesi*) for financing the construction materials and tools of the housing project.⁴⁵⁷

While the construction of the houses was still going on, Vefik Efendi wrote to İstanbul and reported that İznik was ready to receive 200 immigrant households. With the completion of the draining project, the town would be able to house 400 households.

⁴⁵⁵ Kemal Karpat writes that by 1862, the Cossack troops were moving towards the sources of the Kuban and in 1863 they advanced into the Circassian mountaineers' strongholds. Consequently, migration from these lands into the Ottoman Empire became a mass exodus. In between late 1850s and 1864, around 500.000 Circassians fled from Russia into the Ottoman Empire, while in between 1861 and 1864 about 230.000 Crimeans migrated to the Ottoman Empire. However, the figures concerning migration from Crimea do not usually include the migrants from the north of the Perekop (Orkapı) isthmus, which includes places like Kazan, Orenburg, Ufa and northern Kuban. Karpat notes that throughout the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire received large groups of Muslims from these lands as well. Kemal H. Karpat, "Population movements in the Ottoman State in the Nineteenth Century: An Outline," in *Contributions À L'histoire Économique Et Sociale De L'Empire Ottoman*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Leuven (Belgique): Peeters, 1983), 401; 405-406. The first wave of immigrants in İznik were from *Kazan*; subsequent waves of migration encompassed Circassian tribes.

⁴⁵⁶ A. MKT. MHM 278-90; A. MKT. MHM 279-63.

⁴⁵⁷ MVL 469-71.

With his usual bustling about getting things done, Vefik Efendi asked for the dispatch of 400 households immediately. Apparently, the arriving immigrants would themselves work in the on-going project either without a shelter or while crowding half-built houses.⁴⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, draining İznik swamps was a giant project, which required digging a very long canal from Lake İznik to Gemlik Gulf, where the water would flow. Vefik Efendi's *ad-hoc* arrangements based on deploying corvée here and there for digging stood no chance of success.⁴⁵⁹ In fact, the Ottoman state continued to work on proposals to drain İznik swamps until the end of the 19th century, when it gave up, being unable to finance the draining in the first place. Furthermore, the central state was deterred by the social and economic upheavals that many property owners and contractors would be involved during and after the draining.⁴⁶⁰ Vefik Efendi, however, was no man to be deterred by "the impossible" when he had a vision to achieve; hence he asked the Porte to send an engineer for the draining job, when many villagers of İznik had already been deployed in the project.⁴⁶¹

Eventually, the first wave of immigrants reached İznik. Vefik Efendi settled them in half-built houses and distributed them lands, which he took from the local notables of İznik. He made the immigrants sign documents promising that they would not abandon their houses and lands.⁴⁶² To be fair, though the greatest burden of the settlement fell on the shoulders of *İzniklis*, Vefik Efendi requested from the Grand Vizier's office the release of some funds from the treasury for the payments of the equipments and laborers used in the housing project.⁴⁶³ Before he left İznik, he thus earmarked 138.000 *kuruş* in the local treasury for the ongoing settlement project and for

⁴⁵⁸ A. MKT. MHM 278-90.

⁴⁵⁹ Vefik Efendi was actually aware of the difficulties involved in the draining of the swamps, since he proposed that every spring 2000 *kuruş* should be regularly spent on the clearing of the sand, which would be undertaken by the immigrant villages in exchange for exemption from the monetary taxes, see A. MKT. MHM 282-71; A. MKT. MHM 278-90.

⁴⁶⁰ ŞD 1194-30; BEO 4-270-2; BEO 2228-167063.

⁴⁶¹ A MKT MHM 279-63. Though Vefik Efendi was famous for such eccentric acts, he was not the sole Tanzimat bureaucrat with such dispositions. Roderic Davison notes that Midhat Pasha's actions were sometimes overhasty, his projects sometimes poorly thought out. He quotes from Midhat Pasha's physician that during his governorship in Baghdad, Midhat thought he could run a rail-less railway across the desert; the desert triumphed and the locomotive rusted, stuck in sand, Davison, *Reform*, 162.

⁴⁶² A. MKT. MHM 434-16.

⁴⁶³ A. MKT. MHM 279-63.

some repairs and infrastructural projects at the town center.⁴⁶⁴ This 138.000 *kuruş* was again a hypothetical sum; it included for example, what can be liquidated from Ömer Hilmi's wealth, what can be collected in the future as "Circassian charity" imposed on the local notables and the funds to be received from the central treasury in the future.

What Vefik Efendi intended was to mobilize the resources of İznik for achieving a very costly settlement project with minimum recourse to the stringent Ottoman treasury. What he ensured was a disastrous fate for the immigrant communities amid hostile native inhabitants, who were forcefully made to pay for the fantastic developmentalist plans of the inspector. Five years after the arrival of the first wave of migrants, an official from *Muhacirin Komisyonu* (The Refugee Commission) visited İznik for investigating the housing project. He talked to the immigrants and travelled to the site of the immigrant settlement to see the actual conditions of the houses. He reported that because they were built on sand, the houses did not have sound foundations. They had no ceilings; tiles were put directly on reeds and bushes used for covering the buildings. Hence, the houses, which had no flooring either, were not even shielded from rain. The windows and the doors of the houses were built by the immigrants themselves. Due to the pitiable quality of the materials used in construction, many houses actually fell apart a few months after their building, even before the arrival of the immigrants. To make things worse, the crops in the region failed due to draught immediately after the arrival of the immigrants.⁴⁶⁵ Many people died because of cold, rains and hunger. Some of the immigrants ran away to Adapazarı to save their lives, despite the promises they made the inspector. For those who remained, there was not any soil to till in a quarter hour walking distance, since the settlement was established on sand. The neighboring villages, on the other hand, prevented the immigrants' passage to the lands distributed to them by Vefik Efendi, threatening to shoot them. Many local notables reclaimed the lands of the immigrants by presenting deeds and waqf documents in the courts, since these lands were usurped from them during the

⁴⁶⁴ A. MKT. MHM 434-16.

⁴⁶⁵ The documents on İznik only note that the immigrants died due to hunger. Yet, another document from Yenişehir recounts that the crops, which the natives of Yenişehir had cultivated for supporting the newly arriving Circassian immigrants in 1865 failed due to draught. The inhabitants of Yenişehir asked from the government an extension for the daily allowances of food (*yevmiye*) given to the immigrants by the government until the next harvest season. MVL 716-82.

inspection. Finally, many construction materials and tools collected and stored by Vefik Efendi were left to molder.⁴⁶⁶

In the spring of 1865, a few notables of Çengiler, who refused to pay “the Circassian charity”, were imprisoned in İznik.⁴⁶⁷ When the season for harvesting the silk crop approached, the bishop of İzmit mediated their release on bail. The tax-farmer of Çengiler, Haçadoroğlu Hacı Kirkor from Sölöz Gayri Müslim guaranteed their surrender in case they were summoned by the government within 21 days. The notables of Çengiler were thus free to do their business, being not called back by the government for months. Some of them even hosted the *müdür* of the sub-district in their houses. Yet, after a few months, the authorities began searching them to make them pay their debts. They pressured Hacı Kirkor to hand them over to the government, since he was their guarantor. The notables of Çengiler however, took refuge in their village, where their co-villagers hid them in close solidarity.⁴⁶⁸ Hence, 200 gold liras due to the housing project could not be collected; rather it brought more trouble to Hacı Kirkor, who could not farm the taxes of Çengiler, due to the problems arising from his guarantorship.

In a similar vein, the central treasury did not send the money earmarked for the expenses incurred in İznik as part of Vefik Efendi’s activities. Whereas, two more waves of migration from Russia were transferred to İznik, necessitating the rebuilding and the repair of the houses abandoned by the immigrants settled in the housing site before. Thus, the hypothetical 138.000 *kuruş* in the local treasury of İznik had to be stretched to 200.000 *kuruş* due to the inefficiency of the housing project and the failure to receive and collect the funds making up the initial 138.000 *kuruş*. Edhem Efendi, then the *müdür* of İznik, had to grapple with lawsuits until 1870, when he acquitted from allegations of swindling the funds of the local treasury. To clear the accounts of İznik officially, he had to incur private debts for the repair of the immigrant houses.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ A. MKT. MHM 434-16.

⁴⁶⁷ Christians from other villagers also complained that they were being pressured by the local council of İznik for the payment of “Circassian charity” that Vefik Efendi imposed on them during the inspection. MVL 720-14; MVL 730-46.

⁴⁶⁸ MVL 467-8.

⁴⁶⁹ İ. ŞD 19-807.

Did anything happen to Vefik Efendi regarding the disastrous housing project? Not really. The Porte asked him to reply the complaints flooding from the native inhabitants of İznik. His answers were quite straightforward. Accordingly, the sub-district council of İznik decided that for the settlement of the Circassians⁴⁷⁰, the poor of the villages were to contribute labor, the middle-income peasants were to provide transportation services and the rich were to give money for the equipments, tools and materials of construction. Only the rich notables, who got used to tax evasion complained about such a “fair” arrangement.⁴⁷¹ In fact, as he did in Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi dismissed most of the existing members of the local council of İznik, appointing in their stead local notables from different cliques. He prepared all the official documents and then had them stamped by the newly appointed members, who were awed by Vefik Efendi’s radical proceedings.⁴⁷²

The real victims of the settlement project were the first wave of immigrants, who either died or struggled to survive under very miserable conditions. Five years had to pass for them to make their voices heard through the mechanisms of the Refugee Commission, because due to the hostile attitudes of the local notables, they could not get the local council mobilized for their problems. But, then Vefik Efendi was not the culprit; the local notables and the local administrators, including the ones manning the provincial council of Bursa were to be blamed for the failure of the settlement project.⁴⁷³ By the late 1860s, Vefik Efendi had long been gone; therefore the local notables and administrators had to contain and account for the chain of reactions that the catastrophic settlement project triggered in İznik.

What did the central state make out of the overall settlement of Circassian immigrants in İznik? A document dated 2 February 1868 among the documents kept in the Supreme Council states that the people of İznik built 360 houses worth 90.000 *kuruş* for the Circassian immigrants sent for the third time to their town. They donated 5.000 animals worth 50.000 *kuruş* to the immigrants. Since, they dropped their demands of

⁴⁷⁰ Ottoman documents sometimes use the term “Circassian” as an all-encompassing category referring to the immigrants from Russia. Hence, not all “Circassians” were Circassians *per se*; Crimean Tatars, for instance, were occasionally categorized as “Circassians” too.

⁴⁷¹ MVL 476-19.

⁴⁷² See interrogations enclosed in Ömer Hilmi’s case, ŞD 1534-18.

⁴⁷³ DH. MKT 1309-10; A. MKT. MHM 434-16.

140.000 *kuruş* reimbursement from the state's treasury; their benefaction in this regard could be deemed as an exemplary act of patriotism, deserving to be published in the official newspaper. (*Takvim-i Vekayi*).⁴⁷⁴ The Ottoman state's view in this regard closely resembles the "donations", Midhat Paşa used in settling immigrants from Russia in the Danube Province around the same period of time. These "donations" included houses built gratis, grains, firewood, domestic animals provided to the immigrants at no cost, and "unclaimed" reimbursement for transportation expenses.⁴⁷⁵ In this respect, one cannot help but wonder how much of this 90.000 *kuruş* belonged to Ömer Hilmi Efendi, Kafiye Hatun and other notables of İznik. Likewise, did 5.000 animals belong to Ömer Hilmi, which were sold well-under their market prices, only to be "forcefully" donated to the immigrants by their new owners? Furthermore, 140.000 *kuruş* suspiciously approximates 138.000 *kuruş* earmarked in the local treasury of İznik, which melted into the air in the face of the grim realities on the ground. Did the Ottoman state fabricate "the benefaction of *İzniklis*" for covering up the evaporation of these funds, some of which were collected through coercion from the local notables and İstanbul-based property owners?

Vefik Efendi's catastrophic settlement project points out that cooptation of and cooperation with the local interest groups were indispensable components of major social policies that the Ottoman state opted for implementing in specific local contexts. Even though the overall agendas' of the Tanzimat statesmen, such as Midhat Paşa and Ahmed Cevdet Paşa resembled each other with respect to upholding the Tanzimat policy of curbing the power of the local notables, their somewhat differing strategies and ways of doing business in specific provincial settings had an impact on the outcomes they achieved. For example, Midhat Paşa in the Danube Province⁴⁷⁶ and Ahmed Cevdet Paşa during his mission in Cilicia⁴⁷⁷ handled the local notables and power-holders of these regions very delicately. Whereas Vefik Efendi's high-handed attitude towards the local notables risked the achievements of the inspection; because the input of the local notables was critical in the sustenance and the effectiveness of the

⁴⁷⁴ MVL 1054-41.

⁴⁷⁵ Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside," 204-205.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁷⁷ Gould, "Lords or Bandits?," 498-500.

state initiated projects. In this respect, Vefik Efendi's authoritarianism led his projects to resemble instances of massive, state imposed social engineering undertaken in different parts of the world during the following century. As James Scott contends, almost all these well-intended schemes for improving the human condition, from Soviet collectivization to compulsory villagization in Tanzania, failed; simply because, "formal order is always... parasitic on informal processes, which the formal scheme does not recognize, without which it could not exist, and which alone cannot create and maintain."⁴⁷⁸ Thus, without the mobilization of "the informal processes" through tapping the socio-political capital of the local notables, Vefik Efendi's scheme of settling the immigrants merely by "formal" arrangements was doomed to fail.

On the other hand, building up institutions providing veins of communication between the central state and the disadvantaged groups like the immigrants were crucial for enabling ordinary people to transcend potential webs of local oppression and administrative indifference. In the case of the immigrant communities of İznik, *İdare-iUmumiye-i Muhacirin Komisyonu* (The General Migration Administrative Commission), as a centrally controlled institution founded in 1860⁴⁷⁹, began to fulfill its function of voicing the demands of the immigrants around 1867, when the third wave of migration reached İznik. Many personal demands and complaints of the immigrants, such as perceived injustices in the distribution of reliefs⁴⁸⁰, insufficient inns and stables for the animals of the immigrants⁴⁸¹ and even the need to hire a wet-nurse for the baby of a sick immigrant mother⁴⁸² could be directed to and coordinated by the central bureaucracy, thanks to the Refugee Commission. Especially in the fall of 1867, widespread epidemics among the immigrants in İznik mobilized the Ottoman government, which immediately appointed a doctor, who would visit the sick immigrants in their villages, in the place of the resigned doctor sent from İzmit for this job.⁴⁸³ Likewise, the Supreme Council authorized the distribution of 5 *kıyyes* of rice per each sick immigrant

⁴⁷⁸ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 310.

⁴⁷⁹ This commission was the predecessor of "The Refugee Commission"; Karpat, "Population Movements," 405.

⁴⁸⁰ MVL 713-103.

⁴⁸¹ MVL 728-28.

⁴⁸² MVL 1054-45.

⁴⁸³ MVL 1054-34.

in İznik, to be used for cooking soup for their recovery.⁴⁸⁴ In the mean time, the Refugee Commission communicated with *seraskerlik* (the General Staff) for the urgent dispatch of engineers to İznik in order to survey and map the places of the prospective immigrant villages.⁴⁸⁵

In sharp contrast to the vulnerability of the first wave of migrants, the central bureaucracy was indeed fed up with the assertiveness of the incoming refugees towards the end of 1860s. Some of the immigrants that were sent to İznik for settlement were branches of Circassian tribes with complex, hierarchical links to tribal confederations. Furthermore, these Circassian communities, which possessed arms, had local customs that were at odds with the cultural practices of the native inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁸⁶ The fact that they did not speak Turkish made it much more difficult for them to integrate with the local inhabitants of the receiving societies. Under the leadership of their chiefs, these tribes wanted to settle in the same region as tribal confederations. The Tanzimat state perceived these communities as oppressed refugees, who should be treated with compassion and munificence. Yet, these tribal structures had to be deteriorated in order for these communities to smoothly integrate with the local populations and with the administrative frameworks of the modernizing state. Therefore, rather than settling related tribes in the same region by forming new immigrant villages, the Ottoman state as a policy opted for dividing tribes into smaller communities, which would be distributed to native villages. In doing so, the Tanzimat state actually followed its aspirations for breaking the power of the tribal chiefs of the nomadic communities in the Empire.⁴⁸⁷

The conflicting motivations of the Tanzimat state and the Circassian immigrant communities inevitably clashed throughout the settlement process. For example, in 1867, a branch of a Circassian tribe was transferred to Saruhan in the province of Aydın, instead of being sent to İznik, where their co-tribesmen were previously settled. For 10 months, 150 immigrants were hosted at an old hospital, since they refused to be

⁴⁸⁴ MVL 1047-106.

⁴⁸⁵ MVL 1047-111.

⁴⁸⁶ For example, the Circassians' treatment of their slaves alarmed Ottoman administrators. Abdullah Saydam, "Tanzimatçıların Ağalık ve Beylik Kurumunu Kaldırmaya Yönelik Çabaları," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 10 (October/November 1994): 12.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

settled in Saruhan. Throughout their stay in limbo, the tribal chief of the immigrant households, Hacı Beslan travelled to İstanbul for getting permission to move to İznik, where their relatives were settled. The Porte refused Hacı Beslan's request and wrote to the governor of Aydın, not to send him again to the capital city for re-location, since giving permission to him in this regard would spread to other immigrant communities which had similar intentions. The governor of Aydın, notified the community through the district of Saruhan. This time, Hacı Beslan came to the provincial center and told the governor that he would transfer his tribe to İznik no matter what the government does for preventing him. He presented a petition to the district of Saruhan, virtually threatening the local government with resisting forced settlement in the district at the cost of their lives. The *mutasarrıf* and the governor both got the message that these stubborn people were quite determined to go to İznik and that an open confrontation with them would entail using force against them. Their resistance, on the other hand, risked mobilizing other immigrant communities in Saruhan against the government; therefore the governor asked the Porte to let them go to İznik. The Porte's answer was negative; İstanbul reminded the governor the state's policy of settling immigrants in separate groups, accordingly the governor should collect the weapons of the tribal community of Hacı Beslan and make these households settle by force, since time and again attempts to persuade them had failed.⁴⁸⁸

We do not know whether Hacı Beslan could transfer his community to İznik. But, most probably he could, because reports prepared on Hüdavendigâr during the Hamidian era note that the Circassian tribes, which could not be settled separately were a continuous source of social unrest in the region. (See chapter 3). Furthermore, in 1868, the Ottoman government decided to transfer another Circassian tribe from İznik to Düzce. The tribe resisted relocation and encamped between two villages three hours away from İzmit, and it disturbed the native inhabitants there. The local refugee official responsible for their relocation was helpless in containing the situation, thus the Ottoman government sought a more able officer, who could break the resistance of the Circassians.⁴⁸⁹ Around the same period of time, 150 Nogai immigrants were pending in Canik for being transferred to İznik before the winter broke in 1868. The Ottoman

⁴⁸⁸ MVL 558-85; ŞD 1375-18.

⁴⁸⁹ ŞD 2389-39.

government was struggling to arrange ships for their immediate transportation to İznik.⁴⁹⁰ Hence, the Tanzimat state actively sought to monitor the population compositions of the provinces, which received immigrants. It tried to create communities that fit into the governmental structures of modernity entailing social control through registering populations. The immigrants with diverse backgrounds however, had different concerns about their communities and their new lives in Ottoman lands. As the governmentality of the Tanzimat state expanded, these communities carved out pockets of locally ingrained practices in the political landscape of the Empire through negotiation, reconciliation and resistance. As such, the immigrant communities transformed from being victims of Vefik Efendi's catastrophic, though well-intended schemes of settlement, into vocal actors speaking out for themselves.

2.6.3. Public Works in İznik

Just like Yenişehir, Vefik Efendi tried to use the resources of the waqfs in rebuilding and repairing some public buildings in İznik. He first wrote to the Porte and asked for permission to spend 100.000 *kuruş* for the repair of a bathhouse, a madrasa and a tomb, which he claimed to belong to the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa. According to him, İznik urgently needed the repair of the bathhouse, since there was only one functional public bath in the town. The ruined madrasa, which was used as stable by the Christian inhabitants of the town on the other hand, would be turned into a modern secondary school after its rebuilding. However, it turned out that Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa and his descendents did not have any madrasas or bathhouses in İznik; rather they had tombs, soup kitchens and mosques, most of which were either recently repaired by their trustee or were currently under repair, to be finished in a short period of time.⁴⁹¹ Apparently, due to his hyperactivity, Vefik Efendi took the buildings belonging to the waqf of Sultan Orhan as belonging to the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa. At any rate, the name or the legal status of the waqfs of these buildings did not matter for Vefik Efendi. He asked the Porte to send lead to be used in the repair of the

⁴⁹⁰ ŞD 2390-19.

⁴⁹¹ A. MKT. MHM 282-71.

domes of these buildings. He could not wait for the sluggishness of the central bureaucracy in İstanbul; therefore he himself found lead masters ready to work with the expected supplies in İznik. He continuously harassed İstanbul for the acceleration of the processes of ordering and transfer of these expensive and hefty materials. The Ministry of Evkaf, which first had to track down the actual waqfs of these buildings on the other hand, dragged its feet since the possessors and the types of possessions of these buildings were not known. Were they possessed as perpetual leases, or were they leased out annually? Who had the right to possess these buildings? Why were the resources of the waqfs that these buildings belonged to not used in the repair of them? More importantly perhaps, what quantities of lead were needed for what kinds of buildings?⁴⁹²

As in the case of the settlement project, the problem was that these repairs required not only a lot of financial resources, but also sophisticated technical knowledge, which only engineers sent from the capital city could provide. Vefik Efendi knew this all too well, since regarding the repair of the soup kitchen of Nilüfer Hatun (which was the biggest of all the public works he intended to undertake in İznik), he openly wrote to the Porte that “if time consuming and expensive procedures like sending engineers are avoided and the job is altogether contracted to me, I will immediately put men to work in Nilüfer Hatun’s *imaret* to finish its restoration in one month by saving a lot of money.”⁴⁹³ As an amateur engineer he thus initiated the repair of the building of the sharia court of İznik, two soup kitchens, a madrasa and two bathhouses, in addition to the soup kitchen of Nilüfer Hatun. Five years after Vefik Efendi’s inspection, the costs of the repair of each building were re-estimated by a committee appointed from the province for investigating the huge budget deficit of İznik. Overall, actual expenses shown by the local council of İznik exceeded the estimated expenditures by 34.252 *kurus*⁴⁹⁴. This difference can as well be attributed to the corruption of the local council, yet it is clear that at least some part of it stemmed from the hasty, amateurish and inefficient undertakings of Vefik Efendi.

⁴⁹² A. MKT. MHM 282-71.

⁴⁹³ A. MKT. MHM 282-71: “... mühendis irsaliyle keşfi icra olunmak gibi mürur-u zamanı ve zaid masrafı mucib muamelattan sarf-ı nazarla bütün bütün su-i kemteriyeye ihale olunur ise derhal amele üşüşdürülerek tasarrufat-ı mukteziyyeye bi’l riaye.....bir mah zarfında tamirine müsaraaat olunacağı...”

⁴⁹⁴ A. MKT. MHM 434-16. This figure includes the differences in the estimated and actual costs of the immigrant houses as well.

2.7. In the Aftermath of the Inspection: The *Vilayet* System for Yenişehir and İznik

In 1867, Hüdavendigâr Province was re-organized according to the *Vilayet* Law of 1864.⁴⁹⁵ The new system introduced a more integrated hierarchy among different levels of provincial administration, thereby enhanced the executive power of the central state by enabling its more efficient access to specific administrative sub-divisions.⁴⁹⁶ The governors' power over the officials manning different levels of provincial administration was increased in tandem with the expanding scopes of the provincial councils at the *vilayet* centers. In other words, a hierarchy of councils in each of the top three tiers of provincial administration, namely, *vilayet*, *sancak* and *kaza* tied the sub-divisions at the lower levels more tightly to the provincial capitals. Furthermore, an "indirect elective system" was instituted for giving a preponderant voice to the İstanbul-appointed officials in relation to the elected members of the administrative councils.⁴⁹⁷ The *Vilayet* system, which was slightly amended with another law in 1871 (*İdare-i Umumiye-yi Vilayet Nizamnamesi*)⁴⁹⁸, thus reflected the Tanzimat state's concerns for increasing its control over the provinces for governmental purposes. Liberal notions of increasing "representation" and/or empowering the administrative councils for checking the authority of the state were not at all on the agenda of the Tanzimat statesmen.⁴⁹⁹ As Milen Petrov puts it, "as far as the local councils were concerned, the overall goal of the 1864 provincial reform was to make them more amenable to state control under the guidance of appointed officials."⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ Feridun Emecen, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 18*, s.v. "Hüdavendigâr.", (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1998), 286.

⁴⁹⁶ İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri, 1840-1880* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 55; Davison, *Reform*, 146-147.

⁴⁹⁷ Davison, *Reform*, 147; 149. For a discussion of election and membership in local councils, see Jun Akiba, "The Local Councils as the Origin of the Parliamentary System in the Ottoman Empire," in *Development of Parliamentarism in the Modern Islamic World*, ed. Tsugitaka Satō (Tokyo, Japan: Toyo Bunko, 2009), 189-196.

⁴⁹⁸ Ortaylı, *Mahalli İdareler*, 63.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78-80.

⁵⁰⁰ Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside," 99.

After the implementation of the *vilayet* law in Hüdavendigâr, Yenişehir administratively entered into the orbit of Bursa more closely than hitherto was the case. In fact, for some other provincial settings of the late Ottoman Empire, historians observe that the new provincial system instituted during the second half of the 19th century curtailed the power of the rural forces over the city and enabled urban centers to control their rural hinterlands more effectively than heretofore.⁵⁰¹ For Yenişehir however, Ahmed Vefik Efendi's crash of the local notables did not settle the accounts of the town with Bursa once and for all. Despite formalization of the increased central control in Yenişehir with the new *vilayet* system, the local magnates did not disappear; rather they adapted to the new system through developing new strategies of resistance, negotiation and cooperation with the Ottoman state. Eventually, during the apex of the Hamidian era, the son of Ahmed Bey, Edhem Paşa from Yenişehir, would assume so much power as to become one of the worst nightmares of the governor, Tevfik Bey, during his term of office in Bursa. Notwithstanding Vefik Efendi's heavy hand targeting the local notables, the Hamidian era inherited not only the *vilayet* system, but also the persistent power of the local notables in the western Anatolian countryside from the Tanzimat era.

The most immediate outcome of the *vilayet* system for Yenişehir was that the local foci of power resented the provincial center's expanded prerogatives over the town, and at least in one occasion the local notables led the inhabitants of Yenişehir to resist the encroachments of Bursa. For the year 1867, Hasan Tahsin Efendi from Varna bought the right to tax-farm the tithe of the district of Bursa from *Şirket-i Umumiye-i Osmaniye*⁵⁰². He outsourced the tax-farms of many of the sub-districts of Bursa to local tax farmers, yet the collection of Yenişehir's tithe remained under his direct control. He lobbied the provincial council of Bursa, and managed to get a decision that required the transfer of the tithe from Yenişehir to the nearest port in Gemlik by the inhabitants of Yenişehir in exchange for a transportation price determined in the provincial council.

⁵⁰¹ Yasemin Avcı, *Değişim Sürecinde bir Osmanlı Kenti: Kudüs (1890-1914)* (Ankara: Phoenix, 2004), 261; Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period: The New Ottoman Administration and the Notables," *Die Welt des Islams* 30, no. 1/4 (1990): 43.

⁵⁰² This was the İstanbul-based bank known as *The Société Général de l'Empire Ottoman*, founded in 1864 by the Galata bankers in partnership with foreign financial groups. In addition to providing short-term loans of their own, this kind of banks founded until the middle of 1870s, played the role of intermediaries between the purchasers of the Ottoman bonds and the Ottoman state, earning commission and interest from each transaction. Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 213.

Thus, the tax-farmer was going to reimburse the tax-payers based on this pre-set cost of transportation.⁵⁰³

Hasan Tahsin Efendi sold 40.000 *kile* of wheat stored in Yenişehir as the collected tithe of the town through a contract that his business partner signed. According to the contract, he was supposed to deliver the wheat to the buyer in Gemlik within a specific period of time. Yet, the people of Yenişehir refused to transfer the wheat to the Gemlik Port, due to the extremely low transportation price set at the provincial council of Bursa. Hence, Hasan Tahsin, who owed 5000 *kuruş* to *Şirket-i Umumiye-i Osmaniye* as the credit that the bank had extended him for the tax-farm of the Bursa district, was financially very much strained due to his inability to deliver the tithe of Yenişehir to suitable buyers at the Gemlik Port. He also owed 2000 *kuruş* to the treasury of Bursa from “guarantorship” (*kefaletten*). Furthermore, the price of wheat at the Gemlik Port decreased from 37,5 *kuruş* per *kile* to 22 *kuruş* per *kile*, because the high season of selling had passed during the town’s resistance to the orders of the governor, incurring further financial losses to the tax-farmer.⁵⁰⁴

Hasan Tahsin thus resorted to the governor of Bursa in the spring of 1868 for getting the people of Yenişehir deliver the wheat to Gemlik. The governor and the provincial council of Bursa appointed an official, *tahsildar* Mehmed Efendi and dispatched him to Yenişehir in order to enforce the transportation of the tithe. When Mehmed Efendi arrived at Yenişehir, the local council of Yenişehir wanted to summon a few local leaders for getting the people transfer the wheat, yet the news quickly spread over the town and various uninvited people gathered in the government building, cursing and repeating that they would no way transfer the wheat to Gemlik. When the members of the local council tried to calm them down, the crowd got even more furious and step by step enclosed the convening place of the local council. The members of the local council had no other choice than withdrawing from enforcing the orders of the governor. Hence, *tahsildar* Mehmed Efendi returned to Bursa, being unable to fulfill his mission of getting *Yenişehirli*s transfer the wheat to Gemlik.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ ŞD 2857-39.

⁵⁰⁴ ŞD 2857-39.

⁵⁰⁵ ŞD 2857-39, paginated 4/1.

A few days after Mehmed Efendi's return, having heard the news, Hasan Tahsin came to Bursa and took Mehmed Efendi with him to the shari'a court of Yenişehir. Apparently, the reaction of the people to the exploitative orders of Bursa was not spontaneous; the local notables openly encouraged people to rebel against such undue demands. The leaders of the sub-district had been communicated the orders of the governor time and again, and they openly and definitely rejected to comply. Five local notables⁵⁰⁶, three of whom were members of the local council of Yenişehir, encouraged the people to disobey the orders of the governor. The tax-farmer, Hasan Tahsin and *tahsildar* Mehmed Efendi had the names of these local notables recorded in the shari'a court of the town, since Hasan Tahsin, who had to transfer the wheat himself by bringing carts from outside, had to bill his losses to specific individuals. In the summer of 1870, *Şirket-i Umumiye-yi Osmaniye* sued Hasan Efendi for his debt to the bank from the tax-farm of 1867. Hasan Tahsin presented the testimonial from the shari'a court of Yenişehir, in order for the bank to collect the money from the local notables of Yenişehir. He stressed that if his losses could not be recouped from these individuals, then all the responsibility of the debt would fall on the shoulders of the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr (*Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Merkezi Hükümeti*), which could not contain the local notables of Yenişehir in this issue.⁵⁰⁷ Thus, just a couple of years after Vefik Efendi's overhaul of the local council of Yenişehir, the local notables, some of whom were the members of the local council, proved their resilience in warding off unilateral and exploitative interventions stemming from bureaucratic centralization.

Perhaps, Vefik Efendi's activities in İznik left a deeper mark in the overall local political scenery of this town than they did in Yenişehir; because, towards the end of 1860s, İznik lost its sub-district status and was tied to Karamürsel as a *nahiye*.⁵⁰⁸ Shortly after, it was detached from Karamürsel and tied to Yenişehir⁵⁰⁹ and consistently

⁵⁰⁶ These were Molla Tahir Ağa, Seyyid Ahmed Ağa and Hacıoğlu Mustafa Ağa, who were members of the local council of Yenişehir, and Hacı Mahmud Ağa from Barçın village, and Hacı İbrahimoğlu Molla Ömer from Çeltikçi village. ŞD 2857-39.

⁵⁰⁷ ŞD 2857-39.

⁵⁰⁸ This arrangement happened most probably during the expansion of the *vilayet* system to various provinces of the Empire in 1867. I could not locate any document specifically pointing out the exact date of İznik's attachment to Karamürsel as a *nahiye*. See below for its attachment to Karamürsel.

⁵⁰⁹ By 1870, İznik was a *nahiye* of Yenişehir; in the first *Salname* (Yearbook) of Hüdavendigâr compiled for 1870 (1287 H), İznik was recorded as a *nahiye* of Yenişehir. *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1287*, 64.

remained a sub-division under Yenişehir until the end of the Hamidian era, when it finally achieved carrying itself back to Karamürsel administratively.⁵¹⁰ The reign of “acting directors” and/or “acting evkaf officials” ended in İznik with Vefik Efendi’s intervention, during which even native *naibs* in the region were dismissed.⁵¹¹ When local notables of İznik lost the administrative posts attached to the sub-district, their power in relation to the upper levels of administration, namely Yenişehir and Bursa significantly decreased.

More than a decade after its detachment from Karamürsel, the inhabitants of İznik mobilized for re-aligning with Karamürsel by detaching themselves from Yenişehir. They produced a collective petition justifying their demands of administrative relocation in 1881. Accordingly, they claimed that Karamürsel, which (presumably) was the main port that *İzniklis* used for transporting the produce of the town to İstanbul, was closer than Yenişehir. When they were attached to Karamürsel, the inhabitants of İznik could easily pay their taxes in Karamürsel, after selling their produce in the port. Each time they travelled to Yenişehir for paying their taxes, they faced difficulties due to the distance of the sub-district to İznik. Furthermore, though financially and administratively attached to Yenişehir, İznik was still tied to Karamürsel in the military organization. In other words, the town was contributing reserve forces and conscripts for the army division stationed in Karamürsel. Hence, in order to get İznik transferred from the jurisdiction of Yenişehir to Karamürsel, the petitioners worked out arguments that were particularly appealing to the central state.

As a strategy of rendering their cause more plausible *vis a vis* the central state, the petitioners listed the support of the commander of the reserve army stationed in İzmit. The commander, Sami Paşa was very much willing to keep İznik as a source of conscripts within his pool of population, since Karamürsel was a small town barely supporting two battalions. For the Paşa, more men under arms meant more human resources that could be deployed for preserving public security, which was under constant threat in this mountainous region harboring many bandits. Furthermore,

⁵¹⁰ Intermittently its status may have changed for short periods of time. For example, a document dated 1892 refers İznik as a *nahiye* of Gemlik, see, DH. MKT 2034-9. In 1909, İznik was re-attached to Karamürsel, İ. DH 1477- 76.

⁵¹¹ During Vefik Efendi’s inspection tour, the sub-district of Pazarköy (Orhangazi) was dissolved and attached to İznik as a sub-division. Vefik Efendi thus abolished *naibship* post of Pazarköy and dismissed the *naib* of Pazarköy, because he was an “incompetent native”. A. MKT. MHM 281-56.

recruitment from İznik, which was a town attached to Hüdavendigâr province was posing serious difficulties for Sami Paşa, since in case of resistance to conscription, armed forces from Bursa had to be deployed in İznik rather than the İzmit-based forces under the command of the Paşa himself.⁵¹²

The Ottoman government forwarded the request of the inhabitants of İznik to Hüdavendigâr, where Ahmed Vefik Paşa happened to be the governor at the time. Vefik Paşa was no man to be duped with the machinations of the inhabitants of İznik, who were most probably mobilized by the local notables of the town for whatever benefit they were to derive from being transferred to Karamürsel. Vefik Paşa notified the government that İznik was 4 hours away from Yenişehir; whereas Karamürsel was at a 9-hour distance from the town. Furthermore, most of the business of the inhabitants of İznik took place in Yenişehir, rather than Karamürsel. As for the issue of conscription, sixteen villages attached to the army division of Bursa were transferred to Karamürsel in order to support the division at İzmit. If further arrangements were needed for the military needs of Karamürsel, the results of the pending population survey should be waited.⁵¹³

İznik's ineffectual attempt to detach from Yenişehir reveals that administrative status mattered for the rural societies. Not only vertically possessing specific administrative status, such as being a *kaza* or a *nahiye*, but also horizontally being attached to specific upper units made a difference for the local foci of power.⁵¹⁴ Notwithstanding Bursa's powerless outlook in relation to the resistance of Yenişehir in the dispute of the transportation of the tithe, the provincial center effectively blocked İznik's demand, in spite of the support of Sami Paşa. Thus, in engaging locally entrenched social forces, the *vilayet* system afforded some valuable cards to the central state as well.

⁵¹² ŞD 1540-29.

⁵¹³ ŞD 1540-29.

⁵¹⁴ The example from İznik in this regard was not unique; the local notables in other provinces engaged the late Ottoman state through administrative organization of their localities, too. For a well written account of such engagements between the local notables and the Ottoman state in the province of Trabzon see F. Hamdi Özdiş, "Taşrada İktidar Mücadelesi: II. Abdülhamid döneminde Trabzon Vilayet'inde Eşraf, Siyaset ve Devlet (1876-1909)," (PhD diss., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2008).

2.8. “Privatization of Land” amid Bureaucratic Centralization: The Dispute of Land between the Two *Sölözes*

Beyond the legal and procedural underpinnings of the *vilayet* system, bureaucratic centralization in the late Tanzimat era proceeded in constant relationship with the local dynamics. In the previous chapter, I touched upon how inter-communal fissures between *Sölöz Müslim* and *Sölöz Gayri Müslim* molded into the institutional framework of the local council of *İznik* towards the middle of the 19th century. About two decades after this confrontation, the feud between the two villages got entangled with the bureaucratic tentacles of the modernizing state, embodied in the *Evkaf* administration in *Bursa*. In 1870, villagers of *Sölöz Gayri Müslim* notified the *Evkaf* administration of *Bursa* about 400 *dönüms* of unoccupied (*boz-hali*) waqf land in between their village and the neighboring *Sölöz Müslim*. The deputy accountant of the *Bursa Evkaf* administration, *Abid Efendi*, came to the region in order to survey the allegedly unoccupied waqf land. However, in *Sölöz Müslim*, it turned out that the waqf land in question was the pasture of this village. The villagers of *Sölöz Müslim* had at hand an ancient waqf document, dated as far back as the reign of *Sultan Orhan*, demonstrating their collective right of possession over this land as the village pasture. *Abid Efendi* however, told the villagers that there was a new Sultanic order requiring the sale of such pastures.⁵¹⁵ He thus managed to persuade the villagers to “buy” their own pasture, most probably by threatening them with selling it to *Sölöz Gayri Müslim*, which had an eye on the pasture. He then took the ancient waqf document of *Sölöz Müslim* and arranged “the sale” of pasture as “unoccupied waqf land” to seven villagers from *Sölöz Müslim* for 78.000 *kuruş* (or 605 *liras*). He took 18.000 *kuruş* (205 *liras*) from the villagers in advance and prepared a debt bond for the remaining 60.000 *kuruş*. Immediately after *Abid Efendi* left, the villagers realized that he had not touched the pastures of other villages and learnt that there was no Sultanic order requiring the sale of pastures to individual buyers. They thus rushed to *Bursa* for reclaiming their money and annulling their debt bond.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁵ *Abid Efendi*’s most immediate personal interest in telling this lie was the various legal and extra-legal fees incurring in such sales. He would take a proportion from these fees as the waqf officer initiating the sale.

⁵¹⁶ ŞD 1537-16, paginated 8/2.

In the mean time, the accountant of Evkaf in Bursa had changed. The new accountant, Şevki Efendi, told the villagers that Abid Efendi's sale designated the land in question as "unoccupied waqf land", not as "pasture", hence it could not be annulled, and therefore they had to pay their debt, let alone taking back their money. Sölöz Gayri Müslim, which triggered the whole dispute over the pasture, on the other hand, petitioned the government, claiming that the disputed land was a pasture belonging to the waqf of Hatice Hatun. Since they needed the pasture more than Sölöz Müslim, they were ready to pay 150.000 *kuruş* to the Evkaf treasury for the right of possession of this pasture. After a couple of visits to İstanbul, the villagers of both *Sölözes* were able to arrange the authorization of a committee, composed of the *kaymakams* and *naibs* of Yenişehir and Gemlik and *müdürs* of İznik and Pazarköy⁵¹⁷ and Şevki Efendi, the accountant of Evkaf in Bursa, for ascertaining the boundaries of the disputed land on the ground. If it was within the boundaries of Sölöz Gayri Müslim, then the previous "sale" to Sölöz Müslim would be cancelled. However, it turned out that the land was actually within the boundaries of Sölöz Müslim, thus it had priority of right of possession over the land. The villagers of Sölöz Müslim did not settle just for the designation of the boundaries of the disputed land; having already mobilized the religious and administrative authorities for the issue, they managed to get the land certified as "pasture" belonging to their village both by a religious court ruling signed by the *naibs* of Yenişehir and Gemlik and an administrative report (*nizami mazbata*) prepared by secular authorities. Şevki Efendi did not participate in the committee's certification of the pasture status of the land, claiming that this was not within the purview of the committee, which was composed solely for the purpose of solving the issue of the borders of the land.⁵¹⁸

Subsequently, in Bursa, the shari'a court ruling indicating "the pasture" status of the disputed land was abrogated, most probably due to the machinations of Şevki Efendi. The villagers, then resorted to the shari'a court of Yenişehir, in order to obtain a second copy of the court ruling supporting their case. They took this second copy to

⁵¹⁷ Sölöz Müslim was then a village of İznik, which was a *nahiye* attached to Yenişehir; whereas Sölöz Gayri Müslim was a village attached to Pazarköy, which was a *nahiye* of Gemlik, hence the logic behind the selection of these local administrators. ŞD 1537-16, paginated 9/3.

⁵¹⁸ ŞD 1537-16, paginated 9/1; 9/3.

*Fetvahane*⁵¹⁹ in İstanbul and had it ratified there. However, when they presented this copy to the province, the administration in Bursa re-cancelled it by declaring that this second copy was fake, for it did not match the first copy kept at the provincial capital.⁵²⁰ Having consumed virtually all the possible ways of appeal, the villagers returned from Bursa without achieving anything.

Six months later, Şevki Efendi summoned the seven villagers, in whose names the debt bond of 60.000 *kuruş* was prepared, to Bursa, where he pressured them for paying their debt. When they definitely refused to pay, he had them imprisoned in Bursa. After a week, during the governor's (İzzet Paşa) inspection of prisons, these villagers submitted a petition to the Paşa. The Paşa summoned them and listened to their problems. He, then, ordered Şevki Efendi to return their 18.000 *kuruş* (205 *liras*) and to cancel their debt bond. Şevki Efendi thus gave the villagers 180 *liras* worth public securities (*esham-ı umumiye ve şimedifer kuponu*) and told the villagers to demand their remaining 25 *liras* from Abid Efendi, the ex-deputy accountant of Evkaf in Bursa. The villagers got the securities discounted by a Bursa merchant in return for getting 24 *liras* less than 180 *liras*. They thus incurred a net 49 *lira* loss, except the whole other expenses they made for getting back their pasture.⁵²¹

Şevki Efendi however, was not quite finished yet. In order to clear the remaining 60.000 *kuruş* debt of the villagers, he himself bought the disputed land by using someone called Latif Bey as a bogus buyer. Whereas the villagers of Sölöz Gayri Müslim were continuously petitioning the government for buying the land for 150.000 *kuruş*, Latif Bey bought it for just 78.000 *kuruş* for Şevki Efendi. Şevki Efendi thus cleared the villagers' debt by personally taking over their land.⁵²² He subtracted about 12.000 *kuruş* from the overall 78.000 *kuruş* as various fees and expenses (*dellaliye, ihbariye, cabi, müteveli* and *münadi*) most of which actually did not apply to sales of

⁵¹⁹ In 1861, an office called “*Meclis-i Tedkikat-ı Şer’iyye*” was founded as a unit under the Office of *Şeyhülislam* for reviewing şer’i court rulings submitted to it. This council assumed a permanent character in 1862, thereby *Fetvahane* assumed some judicial jobs; from then on, *İlamat Odası* tied to *Fetvahane* started to function as a court of appeal for religious courts, Akgündüz, “*Ceza Hukuku*,” 69.

⁵²⁰ The first copy had the stamps of the *naibs* of both Gemlik and Yenişehir, whereas the second copy was prepared with only the stamp of the *naib* of Yenişehir. Furthermore, Şevki Efendi claimed that the second copy was prepared long after the dismissal of the *naib* of Yenişehir from office. ŞD 1537-16, paginated 9/3.

⁵²¹ ŞD 1537-16, paginated 9/1.

⁵²² ŞD 1537-16, paginated 8/2.

lands pertaining to the waqfs like Hatice Hatun's (which for instance did not have a *mütevelli*).⁵²³ After registering the land in Latif Bey's name, Şevki Efendi wanted to cultivate it. Yet, the villagers prevented him from using the land. When he protested through the province, the villagers again resorted to İstanbul and got orders addressing the provincial administration of Bursa to act in favor of them.⁵²⁴

Facing the resistance of the villagers, Şevki Efendi then arranged the sale of land by Latif Bey to Gavrilaki Efendi, who was the translator of the Russian consulate in Bursa, for 103.000 *kuruş*.⁵²⁵ Gavril Efendi was in fact a native of Bursa, who had changed his nationality first to Greek and then to Russian nationality. According to Ottoman laws, individuals who exit Ottoman nationality could not possess land in the Empire. At any rate, when Gavril Efendi attempted to use the land, he too faced the resistance of the villagers of Sölöz Müslim. The villagers again contacted İstanbul and obtained orders supporting themselves against Gavril *vis a vis* the provincial administration in Bursa.⁵²⁶ The tireless efforts of the villagers finally resulted in the authorization of a special commission composed of some of the highest elected and appointed members of the provincial administration of Bursa for investigating the elongated land dispute.⁵²⁷ In the summer of 1876, when Şevki Efendi had already lost his post in Bursa, the whole case was laid out by this commission for the on-going trial at the Council of State. Though the abuses and exactions of officials like Abid Efendi and Şevki Efendi were manifested in the report of the commission, the villagers of Sölöz Müslim had still a long way ahead, since their disputes with various related individuals from Abid Efendi to Gavril Efendi were transferred to various related religious and secular courts.⁵²⁸

⁵²³ ŞD 1542-9.

⁵²⁴ ŞD 1537-16, paginated 9/1.

⁵²⁵ Overall, Şevki Efendi sold the pasture for 103.000 *kuruş*, which costed him only about 66.000 *kuruş*, when the various fees he billed the treasury are subtracted from 78.000 *kuruş*. He thus made 37.000 *kuruş* from this transaction. Apparently, this was not his only corrupt act in office, since a similar case involving another pasture in Mihaliç became a headache for him as well. ŞD 1537-16, paginated 3/2.

⁵²⁶ ŞD 1537-16, paginated 7/2; 9/1.

⁵²⁷ ŞD 1537-16.

⁵²⁸ ŞD 1537-16, paginated 7/2.

Increased bureaucratization and centralization produced their own pitfalls for the local populations, when there were not effective mechanisms checking the centrally appointed provincial administrators. Hence, the land dispute between Sölöz Müslim and Sölöz Gayri Müslim demonstrates privatization of land amid bureaucratic corruption in the Evkaf administration of Bursa. The land dispute, sparked by Sölöz Gayri Müslim's instigation of Evkaf officials from Bursa turned into a muddle by a corrupt Evkaf official's credible lie, riding on the trends towards privatization of land in the late Ottoman Empire. Throughout their struggles to legally take back their pastures, the villagers of Sölöz Müslim found allies in İstanbul, in addition to the spontaneous support of the governor of Bursa, while Sölöz Gayri Müslim did not cease its claim over the same land. Yet, once the collective ownership of the pasture was compromised, the villagers of Sölöz Müslim could not easily overcome the *zeitgeist* favoring individual ownership and privatization of land. Still, the village presented itself as a strong community, which did not let its pasture utilized by outsiders. Thanks to the positive disposition of İstanbul towards the villagers, Sölöz Müslim could resist bureaucratic corruption engineered in Bursa.

2.9. Conclusion

In chapter 1, I highlighted the resilience of traditional institutions and the persistence of the structural legacies of the early modern era in Yenişehir and İznik. In this chapter, I analyzed how “modernization” made inroads to the political landscapes of these two towns. Following historians, who take modernization as a dialogical process transforming both the state and the society, I argued that increasing local participation in the reform institutions was a counterpart of the Ottoman state's more pervasive presence in the local settings.⁵²⁹ Ordinary people's entanglements with the Tanzimat state, as exemplified by the women petitioners from Yenişehir and İznik, demonstrate how provincial actors embedded the reform institutions, and in doing so how they carved out a space for their own agencies within modern governmental

⁵²⁹ Cengiz Kırılı, "Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı'da Sosyal Kontrol," in *Tanzimat: Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2012), 622; 624.

practices. As such, the tour of inspection in 1863, took place in a region, where the people were quite attuned to the Tanzimat project. On the other hand, widespread banditry and itinerant populations challenged the Tanzimat state as social phenomena contrasting the reformist vision of containing populations through registration, taxation and conscription. In Yenişehir and İznik, the nomadic communities' raid of the postal coach and their destruction of the *imarets* were outright attacks to the authority of the reformist state. Likewise, the bandits' assaults to the non-Muslims of the region as a way to settle their accounts with the Tanzimat project of equality between the subjects signify that some local societal dynamics were beyond the command of the Tanzimat state. Thus, in order to substantiate the hold of the reformist state in this region, Vefik Efendi had to form alliances and try to co-opt the itinerant groups through negotiation.

Throughout the inspection in Yenişehir and İznik, Vefik Efendi overhauled the local councils by dismissing the local notables, who hijacked the reformed local posts for their own purposes. He took measures for supporting the peasantry against the local elites. He redistributed and reassessed the taxes so as to weaken the property owners and the local notables of the region. Yet, his excesses towards the local notables, like Ömer Hilmi Efendi and Kafiye Hatun in İznik, overshadowed his sympathetic appeal to the rural producers. Furthermore, as in the case of Midhat Paşa's governorship in the Danube province in between 1864 and 1867, Ahmed Vefik Efendi billed the expenses of the settlement of the immigrants from Russia, the infrastructural projects and the repair of public facilities to the native inhabitants of İznik and Yenişehir. His whimsy town-planning and over-hasty projects, not only claimed the money of the wealthy, but also aggrieved the disadvantaged groups, like the refugees and the poor villagers deployed as *corvée*. In the aftermath of the inspection, it became clear that Vefik Efendi's unilaterally imposed social projects were unsustainable without the cooperation of the local societies, especially the local notables.

Yet, the inspection also had more lasting outcomes: Vefik Efendi left behind a stronger peasantry; he communicated the money-lenders that the usurious rates of interest were not to be tolerated forever; and he showed the local notables that the Ottoman state was not going to leave the local administration to their ploys. Yenişehir and İznik were thus ready for the *vilayet* system, which tied the provinces more closely to the central state through a hierarchy of councils and centrally appointed officials at various tiers of the provincial administration. Within this new arrangement, Yenişehir

proved that the societal forces of the countryside would not easily submit to the bureaucratic hegemony of Bursa. On the other hand, İznik, which was administratively demoted to a *nahiye* under Yenişehir, lost its momentum as an independent town. Its struggle for detaching from Yenişehir to be tied to Karamürsel demonstrates the importance of administrative status for the inhabitants of İznik. Even though İznik as a town was burdened with an additional administrative layer (that is the sub-district of Yenişehir) for reaching İstanbul, Sölöz Müslim's confrontations with the bureaucratic cadres in Bursa denote the presence of channels of communication between the villagers and the capital city. The villagers of Sölöz Müslim resorted many times to the imperial institutions in İstanbul for overcoming the abuses stemming from Bursa. The fact that they found a sympathetic ear in the capital city testifies the resilience of the alliance between the central state and the rural populations.

One of the most significant legacies of the late Tanzimat epoch in the Hamidian era was the *vilayet* system, which entailed for the inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik a new source of bureaucratic corruption and abuses that they had to grapple with. In this respect, the land dispute between Sölöz Müslim and Sölöz Gayri Müslim hinted that due to bureaucratic centralization, privatization of land and utilization of waqf resources would be increasingly accentuated by the operations of a multi-layered bureaucratic apparatus. But, the governmental system also developed some institutional checks against the problems initiated by the expanding bureaucratic corpse. Institutions like the Council of State and the Refugee Commission formed during the Tanzimat era, emerged as critical institutional platforms binding the provincial societies to the central state throughout the Hamidian era.

Vefik Efendi's immature infrastructural investments and his attend to public buildings and town-planning were though crippled attempts at the outset, Yenişehir and İznik were to witness rejuvenated and more sustainable efforts of public investment during the Hamidian era. There was however a marked difference between Vefik Efendi's undertakings and the investments of the upcoming decades. Throughout the inspection, Vefik Efendi did not seek the cooperation of various social elements in the projects he initiated; on the contrary he was his own man, barely consulting İstanbul, let alone the local inhabitants. As opposed to the social hollowness of his undertakings as such, the Hamidian Empire rose up on a tacit social contract that tactfully saluted the social forces in the provinces. However, for this new equilibrium to emerge, the dust of

the 93 *Harbi* had to settle down. In the next chapter, I thus turn to this disastrous war and the decisive entry of the immigrant communities into the socio-political arenas of Yenişehir and İznik.



CHAPTER 3

THE SETTLEMENT OF IMMIGRANTS AND LAND DISPUTES IN YENİŞEHİR AND İZNİK (1878-1900): LEGITIMACY VS. THE LAW

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyze the settlement of the immigrant communities in Yenişehir and İznik in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. The settlement of the immigrants in different parts of Anatolia after the 1877-1878 War attracted the scholarly attention of some historians of the late Ottoman era as a crucial process unleashing inter-communal and ethnic confrontations between the immigrants and different communities within the receiving societies. As such, within the historiography of the settlement, the influx of the refugees figures as a fateful turning point crystallizing issues of sovereignty, citizenship and nationalism in the late Ottoman Empire, which in turn paved the ground for the formation of the ideological and socio-political pillars of the Turkish nation state.⁵³⁰ Throughout the processes of the

⁵³⁰ Oktay Özel, "Migration and Power Politics: The Settlement of Georgian Immigrants in Turkey (1878–1908)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 4 (2010): 477-496; "Muhacirler, Yerliler ve Gayrimüslimler: Osmanlı'nın Son Devrinde Orta Karadeniz'de Toplumsal Uyumun Sınırları Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 5 (Spring 2007): 93-112; Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Land Disputes and Ethno-Politics: North-western Anatolia 1877-1912," in *Land Rights, Ethno-Nationality, and Sovereignty in History*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Jacob Metzer (London: Routledge, 2004), 153-180; "Landlords, Refugees, and Nomads: Struggles for Land around Late-Nineteenth Century Ayvalık," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no 24 (Spring 2001): 51-82. Another study, which deals with the Muslim immigration from Crete in 1898-1899 can be included within the same paradigm of ethnic tensions caused by immigration, Pınar Şenişik, "Cretan Muslim Immigrants, Imperial Governance and the 'Production of Locality' in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (2013): 92-106; Kemal

absorption of many thousands of refugees into the political economy of the regions they migrated, land disputes emerged as the main bone of contention. This chapter adds to the literature on the generation of a renewed relationship between the rural societies and the late Ottoman polity due to the changing nature of land conflicts in the Anatolian countryside in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War.

Many studies focusing on the settlement of the Muslim immigrants during and after the contraction of the borders of the late Ottoman Empire highlight the ethnicization and nationalization of the land disputes, entailing many inter-communal and religiously charged clashes in Anatolia at the turn of the 20th century.⁵³¹ However, my main focus in this chapter will be on the disputes of land involving Muslim parties. A substantial majority of the immigrant communities that arrived at Yenişehir and İznik, were in fact Turkish speaking Muslims from Rumelia. Since Yenişehir was also a predominantly Muslim *kaza*, the contestations of power within Yenişehir revealed more about relationships between different societal clusters of the Ottoman Muslims than the horizontal relationships between different ethnic and religious communities. I contend that the less “problematic” context of Yenişehir in this regard nonetheless pinpointed decisive intersections of liberal notions of law pertaining to privatization of land on the one hand, and the economic underpinnings of the legitimacy frameworks of the late Ottoman polity on the other.

In the chapter 1 of this thesis, I examined how the forces of an unregulated market economy could undermine the Tanzimat state’s efforts of state-building through centralization of the provincial administration. Drawing on the unimpeded credit relations of the commercialized market economy of the Bursa region around the middle of the 19th century, the local magnates of power in Yenişehir virtually high-jacked the local council to seal their exploitation of the peasantry through debt cycles and enforced monopolies over the crops. In chapter 2, I focused on the Ottoman state’s efforts to redress the status quo in Yenişehir and İznik through the tour of inspection of Ahmed Vefik Efendi, who crashed the local notables and money lenders in Yenişehir and İznik,

Karpat evaluates the immigration from Rumelia after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878 within the paradigm of “Islamization” of the late Ottoman Empire, Kemal H. Karpat, “Population Movements in the Ottoman state in the Nineteenth Century: An Outline,” in *Contributions À L'histoire Économique Et Sociale De L'Empire Ottoman*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Leuven (Belgique): Peeters, 1983), 385-428.

⁵³¹ Özel, “Muhacirler, Yerliler,”; Terzibaşoğlu, “Land Disputes and Ethno-politics,”; Şenışık, “Cretan Muslim Immigrants,”.

thereby afforded a breathing space to the rural producers. I conceptualize the settlement of the immigrants in Yenişehir, yet another historical conjuncture, which pitted the forces of building a viable, modern state structure by rallying the resources and support of greater segments of the subject population, against the legal appendages of a liberal market economy positing privatization of land, security of property and “the rule of law”.⁵³² The economic underpinnings of the legitimacy frameworks of the late Ottoman state promised the rural producers just taxation, which in the context of the flight of many rural subjects from their homelands translated into a right to possess land as independent producers. In order to fulfill their obligation to pay taxes and to provide soldiers to the Ottoman army, the Muslim immigrant communities had to have land for producing surplus and reproducing themselves in the first place. I argue that the immigrant communities “right to land” as such, clashed with the long term trends of privatization of land in Yenişehir and İznik.

It should be clear by now that by “legitimacy”, I do not refer to ideology, representation of power, public rituals and ceremony and “invention of tradition” that some scholars use for explaining the rhetoric of state-power in the late Ottoman Empire.⁵³³ Rather, I adopt a more economically oriented approach that focuses on the factual aspects of legitimacy pertaining to the land regime in Western Anatolia. Hence, I am interested in exploring what the “legitimacy” of the late imperial polity entailed for the peasant households forming the bulk of the Ottoman population. In other words, why would the rural populations of Western Anatolia accept being conscripted and taxed by a bankrupt state, which faced a humiliating defeat in Rumelia, costing the lives, properties and above all the homelands of many thousands of Ottoman subjects? Beyond the specific context of the catastrophic Russo-Ottoman War, what would the rural producers demand from the centralizing state as their “right” within the context of the state’s tightening grip over the provincial societies since the initiation of the

⁵³² In this conceptualization, I follow a “quasi-Marxist” theoretical framework that highlights contradictions in the principles of legitimacy and the rules of the market within the late Ottoman Empire. Huri İslamoğlu-Inan, “Hukuk, Mülkiyet, Meşruiyet: Mukayeseli Tarih Yazımı için bir Öneri,” in *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Problemler, Araştırmalar, Tartışmalar*, ed. Hamdi Can Tuncer (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 1-13; Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “The Ottoman Agrarian Question and the Making of Property and Crime in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies: Halcyon Days in Crete VIII : a symposium held in Rethymno 13-15 January 2012*, ed. Élias Kolovos Halcyon Days in Crete (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2015), 317-318.

⁵³³ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998); Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet (1876-1914)* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, 2002).

Tanzimat reforms? These questions, of course, do not render the “ideological” pillars of legitimacy (which I will examine more closely in the next chapter), utterly irrelevant; yet the focus in this chapter will be on the economic aspects of the relationship between the rural societies and the late Ottoman state as these intermeshed with the state building efforts of the modernizing Ottoman establishment.

The settlement of the immigrants in the relatively minuscule context of the sub-district of Yenişehir was not independent from the international and imperial contexts conditioning the political landscape of the Bursa region during the last quarter of the 19th century. The 19th century witnessed the formation of territorial nation states within the context of intensified international struggles for controlling economic resources of different parts of the world. Aside from the colonial expansions of some European countries, bureaucratic empires like the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg Empires aspired for mobilizing more of their internal resources in order to form viable central state structures putting them on a par with the rising global powers.⁵³⁴ These Empires’ urge to survive in the competitive international state system required them to include broader strata of their subject populations in their efforts to enhance the administrative capabilities of their centralizing state structures.⁵³⁵ Hence, stricter taxation and conscription emerged as the most concrete means of these expansive imperial structures’ extraction of human and economic resources from the societies they ruled. The modernizing states’ enduring and increasing demands from the bodies and pockets of their populations brought about a legitimacy crisis demonstrated through resistance to taxation and conscription. Towards the last quarter of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire closely resembled the contemporary modernizing polities, which were trying hard to work out sustainable governmental frameworks for extracting more efficiently from the people by overcoming the legitimacy crisis.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ For a historical sociological perspective of state-building in Europe see, Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-191; for a general review of the 19th century context of “building nations” see, Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 116-155.

⁵³⁵ İslamoğlu-İnan, “Hukuk, Mülkiyet,” 11; Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 01 (1993):3.

⁵³⁶ Donald Quataert, "Rural Unrest," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 876; Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the “Armenian Question” during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 04 (2012): 775-776.

In fact, the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II began with an expedited legitimacy crisis for the late Ottoman Empire. In 1873 and 1874, the Anatolian countryside was devastated by draught and famine.⁵³⁷ Furthermore, the snowballing of the public debt since the Crimean War put the state in a financial strait leading up to bankruptcy in 1875.⁵³⁸ With the coffers of the state empty, the mobilization for the Russo-Ottoman War depended largely on the resources of a societal base that could not fully recover from the extremely difficult years of the famine. The defeat in the war and the subsequent inflow of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Anatolia consumed the last drops of hope in the future of the Ottoman Empire. This chapter opens up by describing the dark dawn of the Hamidian era as it was experienced by the inhabitants of the Bursa region. The catastrophic defeat and the subsequent inflow of the refugees rendered settlement a very urgent issue both for the central state and the vulnerable immigrant communities. In this respect, from early on, the interests of the Ottoman bureaucracy, which traditionally opted for “order” and “tranquility”⁵³⁹, coincided with the interests of the immigrants seeking settlement as soon as possible in order to survive as dignified Ottoman subjects.

Throughout the chaotic years of the late 1870s and early 1880s, the Hamidian regime was not yet fully consolidated, and therefore it largely depended on the structures and mechanisms inherited from the Tanzimat era. In this respect, the initial settlement of the refugees in Yenişehir and İznik highlighted the dilemmas of Ottoman modernization as they were bequeathed to the Hamidian era. On the one hand, the expansion of the market economy and the Ottoman Empire’s rapid integration into the world markets were accompanied by liberal notions of the “rule of law”, “equality before law” and “individualization” and “privatization” of land-ownership. In other words, generalized rules and regulations, ideally applicable to all individuals and contexts, would protect the legal rights of the subjects, particularly pertaining to the

⁵³⁷ Özge Ertem, "Eating the Last Seed: Famine, Empire, Survival and Order in Ottoman Anatolia in the Late 19th Century," (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2012).; Mehmet Yavuz Erler, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kuraklık, 1800-1880* (Osmanbey, İstanbul: Libra Kitap, 2010).; Yener Bayar, "1873-1875 Orta Anadolu Kıtılgı," (master's thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2013).

⁵³⁸ Edhem Eldem, "Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt," *European Review* 13, no. 3 (2005): 438-440.

⁵³⁹ Maurus Reinkowski, "The State's Security and the Subjects' Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic Correspondence (19th Century)," in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 195-213.

security of property in the case of land-holding. The Tanzimat state supported “privatization of land” with a view of achieving legibility, efficient taxation and productivity.⁵⁴⁰ On the other hand, the immigrant masses coming from the Balkans and Russia after the Russo-Ottoman War were in dire need of protection and affirmative interventions of the central state, because they urgently needed land in order to survive. Land was however, in short supply due to the legal claims of various parties over the seemingly vacant lands in Western Anatolia. For the rural immigrant communities, “justice” entailed the state’s protection of the peasant producers, which in their case meant ensuring their access to land without any intermediaries demanding rents and/or compensation. As such, the legitimacy structures of the late Ottoman polity collided with the political appendages of the liberal market economy, which gradually made inroads to the Ottoman political system since the beginning of the Tanzimat era. Thus, settlement could not occur smoothly even in a context where most of the immigrants and the local inhabitants culturally, linguistically and economically resembled each other.

In order to unravel the structurally conflict ridden disputes of land, I address how the settlement in Yenişehir and İznik occurred from different perspectives of the political actors involved in this process. For the immigrant communities, making Western Anatolia their new homeland entailed above all a protracted process wrought with struggles to have sufficient land to subsist. Whereas the Ottoman state had to figure out why the much needed supply of labor in the Anatolian countryside could not smoothly match the vast stretches of land lying uncultivated. Subsequently, the central state faced the pendulum of legitimacy and the rule of law, and I suggest that it demonstrated a visible preference for the former. The local notables of Yenişehir and the sub-district administration on the other hand, allied with the immigrant communities against big land-owners, who resided elsewhere. Large tracts of waqf lands under the possession of absentee landlords were thus allocated to the immigrant villages without seeking the permission of these waqfs’ stakeholders. On the flip side of the coin, large land-owners found themselves threatened with dispossession. Armed with their numerous official and legal documents of ownership, they initiated several law suits

⁵⁴⁰ Yücel Terzibaşoğlu evaluates such trends in the late Ottoman Empire within Hobsbawm’s conceptualization of “a politico- legal revolution directed against both the landlords and the peasantries aimed at installing markets in land and labour for ‘a rational utilisation of land’.” Terzibaşoğlu, “The Ottoman Agrarian Question,” 310.

against the invading communities. In the early 1880s, the deliberate laxity of the local authorities, and their sympathy towards the interests of the immigrant communities coupled with the ill-faith of the governor of Bursa (yet again Ahmed Vefik Paşa) towards the big land-owners to produce an irreversible fait accompli: Sizeable immigrant villages were formed on the waqf lands of the absentee land-owners by the sanctioning of the local and provincial administrations.

Throughout the 1890s, the disputes of land in Yenişehir and İznik intensified owing to the arrival of the late-comers, and the mobility of the previously settled populations. In the mean time, several trials of land disputes pointed out the land-owners as the rightful parties. Yet, by 1890s, many immigrant communities were de facto residing on and cultivating lands over which other parties had legal claims. Not only did the immigrant communities “naturalized” by getting themselves officially recognized as tax-paying units, but they also built houses, mosques, schools and shops over the lands they occupied. As such, court rulings regarding their evacuation could not be implemented on the ground. The mid-way of assigning rents to the immigrant communities for compensating the possessors and the owners of the lands they occupied on the other hand, met the strong resistance of the immigrant communities. Throughout 1890s, the Ottoman state, overall gave in a discourse stressing the legal rights of the land-owners more often than it did throughout the early phases of the settlement, but it still avoided administrative actions that would distress the immigrant communities. After all, the socio-political and financial costs of re-settlement against the backdrop of the immigrants’ strong resistance were beyond the instrumental means of the Hamidian state. Hence, notwithstanding its rhetoric of protecting the legal rights of the land-owners; in practice, the Hamidian state followed the path of favoring small peasant households. For doing that, it did not shy away from disregarding or reversing the rulings of the highest court of appeal, the Council of State, in its highest executive institution, the Council of Ministers.

The history of the settlement of the refugees in Yenişehir and İznik not only testifies the positive appeal of the Ottoman administration towards the immigrant communities, but also highlights the local political arena as the most influential factor determining the directions of the settlement. Unlike the Georgian immigrants in North-central Anatolia, the immigrants in Yenişehir were not armed militias that fought in the Russo-Ottoman War; on the contrary, they were unarmed peasant households coming

from a relatively developed part of the Ottoman Empire that closely resembled the Bursa region with respect to its economy and administrative structure. Notwithstanding their affinity with the local population of Yenişehir in this regard, the native inhabitants did not hesitate defending their rights against the immigrants when the latter encroached on their property. Yet, the availability of expansive waqf lands belonging to the absentee landowners presented the unique opportunity of an ad hoc alliance between the locals and the immigrants for the settlement to take place on these lands. Various layers of the provincial administration supported such a solution as the most convenient way of dealing with the massive refugee problem at the quotidian level.

In spite of the favorable political climate supporting their settlement, many immigrant communities and individuals still had to struggle hard for making Yenişehir their new home. They opened up vast stretches of land to agriculture, putting quite a lot of labor on uncultivated marshes, meadows and forests. They formed villages anew with their own resources, and invested in schools, mosques and shops, thereby contributed to the enlivening of Yenişehir at the turn of the 20th century. Some of them were eventually left without sufficient land, and therefore had to work as laborers here and there. The expansion of the network of roads and the building of railway lines throughout the Hamidian era presented them opportunities of work to support themselves. Some of them eventually joined in the supply of brigands and smugglers exploiting the pitfalls of the political economy of the Bursa region. Yet, a substantial majority of the immigrant communities could preserve their status as independent and landed peasant households. Overall, it was a successful transplantation from Rumelia for which the receiving society and the Ottoman administration deserve some credit.

3.2. Mise-en-scène of the Hamidian Era in the Bursa Region

The Southern Marmara region was not a congenial surrounding for its inhabitants for the most part of the difficult years in between 1873 and 1881. In 1873 and 1874, draught and famine devastated Anatolia.⁵⁴¹ In spite of being not affected as

⁵⁴¹ Erler, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kuraklık*; Özge Ertem, "Eating the Last Seed"; Yener Bayar, "1873-1875 Orta Anadolu Kitlığı".

severely as central Anatolia, the Bursa region, more specifically Yenişehir, experienced draught. During the fall of 1873, Yenişehir applied to the Ottoman government for getting permission to distribute the stored tithe of the previous year as relief. Yet, the Ministry of Finance postponed the distribution of the tithe until the beginning of the next harvest season, when the need for staple food and seeds would peak- reasoning that the consumption of the stored tithe long before the harvest would bring about greater difficulties then.⁵⁴² Likewise, the governor of Bursa was ordered to act against profiteering due to famine.⁵⁴³ On top of the draught, the pebrine disease effectively crashed the silk-raising business in the hinterland of Bursa. The factories in the city depended on imported cocoons for continuing production. The Ottoman government sought to abolish taxes on imports of cocoons to Bursa with a view of salvaging the factories.⁵⁴⁴ It also tried to import mulberry saplings from uninfected regions, such as Belgrade, to be distributed to the cultivators in Bosnia- a province which was suitable for cultivation of mulberry trees.⁵⁴⁵ None of these attempts brought about immediate relief to the inhabitants of the Bursa region.

In the early 1877, due to the critical situation in the Balkans just before the eruption of the Russo-Ottoman War, the reserve soldiers were put under arms in the sub-districts of Bursa, causing serious social and economic disruption in the province. Some reserve soldiers left behind dependents without any means of subsistence, hence the Ottoman state had to provide assistance to these vulnerable people.⁵⁴⁶ Furthermore, mobilization drained locally stationed armed forces, which used to be deployed for containing banditry and brigandage. Consequently, gangs began to attack particularly the houses of the recruited soldiers. Not only the properties of the soldiers' were their targets, but also they abducted fiancées of the young men under arms. Military authorities warned the governor of Bursa about the critical importance of preventing the

⁵⁴² BEO. AYN. d. 880-172.

⁵⁴³ BEO. AYN. d 882-10.

⁵⁴⁴ İ. MMS 58-2728. For the general trends of the silk industry in Bursa see, Donald Quataert, "The Silk Industry of Bursa 1880-1914," in *Contributions À L'histoire Économique Et Sociale De L'Empire Ottoman*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Leuven (Belgique): Peeters, 1983), 483-85; Leila Thayer Erder, "The Making of Industrial Bursa: Economic Activity and Population in a Turkish City, 1835-1975," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1978); Zeynep Dörtok Abacı, "İngiliz Konsolosluk Belgeleri Işığında Bursa Ekonomisi (1848-1896)," *Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7, no. 11 (February 2006): 159-171.

⁵⁴⁵ BEO. AYN. d 880-179.

⁵⁴⁶ BEO. AYN. d 880-242.

marrying off of the fiancées of the soldiers through issuing strict orders to that effect to the local authorities in the sub-districts and villages.⁵⁴⁷ Apparently, the turmoil of mobilization at home greatly enhanced desertions from the army, which further threatened the public order in the province.

As usual, the Ottoman state heavily conscripted men from the Southern Marmara region. In this context, women had to take up agricultural production within a harshly taxed rural economy due to the war. During the fall of 1878, a European traveler passing by the Bursa region –Henry Barkley- conversed with the head of the police in İnegöl (a town neighboring Yenişehir in the south), who described the situation in the countryside as follows:

All the youngest and strongest of our men have been called away to fight. Ten go and out of the ten, one returns- the rest are rotting in Bulgaria. Then those who are left starve. The women have done wonders. They have ploughed, sown, rasped and thrashed, and many have produced more this year without their husbands than the husbands would have done, but they have had to work hard and taxes have been heavy.⁵⁴⁸

Hence, Russo-Ottoman War had serious repercussions for the native inhabitants of the Bursa region beyond the impact of the injected populations from the Balkans in the aftermath of the war.

Yet, compared to the upcoming months of the war and its aftermath, the disorders of mobilization were indeed “the good old days” of the Bursa region. The winter binding 1877 to 1878 was truly catastrophic for the fleeing populations of Rumelia. Frosting cold, hunger, diseases, overcrowding in trains and at the train stations, horrific accidents in the open seas and massacres committed by the Russian and Bulgarian armed forces claimed many thousands of lives.⁵⁴⁹ The first arriving

⁵⁴⁷BEO. AYN. d 880-220.

⁵⁴⁸ Henry C Barkley, *A Ride through Asia Minor and Armenia: Giving a Sketch of the Characters, Manners, and Customs of Both the Mussulman and Christian Inhabitants* (London: Murray, 1891), 53.

⁵⁴⁹ Nedim İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya Türk Göçleri, 1877-1890* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994); Bilâl N Şimşir, *Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri: Belgeler = Documents* (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1989); Faruk Kocacık, "Balkanlar'dan Anadolu'ya Yönelik Göçler (1878-1890)," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, no. 1 (1980): 137-190; Tarık Özçelik, "Basiret Gazetesi'ne göre Doksanüç Harbi'nde İstanbul'da Rumeli Göçmenleri (1877-1878)," (master's thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 1993); Derya Derin Paşaoğlu, "Muhacir Komisyonu Maruzatına Göre (1877-1878) 93 Harbi Sonrası Muhacir İskanı," *History Studies International Journal Of History* 5, no. 2 (2013): 347-387; Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995); Emine Gümüşsoy, "Doksanüç Muhaceretinde Gümölcine," *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, no. 25 (2011).

groups of immigrants were indeed relatively well-off inhabitants of Rumelia, who could afford faster transportation to the capital city. Their arrival was shockingly tragic for the native inhabitants of İstanbul.⁵⁵⁰ In the early 1878, about 10.000 refugees per day began to arrive at İstanbul.⁵⁵¹ The capital city could not host such great numbers of people for too long. Hence, simultaneously with the pour of people into the city, groups of refugees were sent to Anatolia.⁵⁵² Asia Minor, in which the city of Bursa commanded a formidable position, was among the most convenient centers, where the excess of population from İstanbul gathered.

In fact, as 1878 approached, the city of Bursa was already packed up with refugees. For example, in the early 1878, 800 refugees from Varna hired a ship for being transported from İstanbul to Bursa. Since they paid the cost of transportation themselves, İstanbul permitted them to go to Bursa, which already was quite crammed with immigrants. All the central state could offer to the authorities in Bursa was the advice of sending these people immediately to inner Anatolia (more specifically to Karahisar-ı Sahib)⁵⁵³, which proved an extremely difficult task. Hence, by August 1878, according to the testimony of a missionary in Bursa, the refugees were filling up every place in the city; some of them were even sleeping in the streets. There were motherless children around, many of whom were very ill and pitifully poor.⁵⁵⁴ In this regard, the immigrants' situation in Bursa replicated İstanbul, where epidemics claimed a huge death toll among the refugees who could make it to the capital city.⁵⁵⁵

As early as the beginning of the summer of 1878, the Ottoman government decided that no more refugees would be sent to Bursa due to the overcrowding in the city. Yet, the situation in İstanbul was so pressing that the authorities in Bursa were asked to accept those immigrants who reached Bursa for uniting with their families. Furthermore, those refugees who did not use big ports that were patrolled by security

⁵⁵⁰ Basiretçi Ali Efendi , *İstanbul Mektupları*, ed. Nuri Sağlam (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), 595.

⁵⁵¹ Şimşir, *Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri*, v.I, 273.

⁵⁵² Paşaoğlu, "Muhacir Komisyonu," 352-353.

⁵⁵³ BEO. AYN. d 880-255.

⁵⁵⁴ American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), *Letter to Theodore A. Baldwin, from Julia A. Rappleye*, 28 August 1878.

⁵⁵⁵ Şimşir, *Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri*, v. I, 406-408.

officials, rather reached Bursa in small boats boarded on the sea from relatively secluded coastal areas should not be returned back, since their numbers would not be substantial.⁵⁵⁶ With these seeming “exceptions”, the Ottoman government was actually saving its face against a situation that far transcended its capacity to govern. In this context, the help of the local inhabitants and the initiatives of the refugees themselves played a greater role in the initial settlement process than the Ottoman government’s efforts to alleviate chaos and supplement the needs of the refugees. However, despite being unable to fully contain waves of migration, the Ottoman state should still be credited with expanding its institutional capabilities for monitoring settlement. In the fall of 1878, the Ottoman government authorized employment of “settlement officials” in the districts of Hüdavendigâr for controlling the movements of the immigrant communities.⁵⁵⁷

Bursa was no match of İstanbul with respect to its size and facilities. Thankfully, the number of immigrants received immediately after the war was not also as high as İstanbul. Yet, Bursa province was further strained by the demands of the capital city, which had no other choice than leaning on Anatolia in order not to get completely paralyzed. Because chains of supply from Rumelia were devastated due to the war, İstanbul turned to Anatolia for the basic needs of its sky-rocketed population. Transfer of livestock, timber and coal was demanded from Bursa in the spring of 1878.⁵⁵⁸ The already stricken Anatolian people tried to block transfer of animals to the capital city.⁵⁵⁹ Furthermore, İstanbul demanded the police officers of Bursa, which was supposed to hire new officers in their stead amid the chaos in the city. Out of the 80 summoned cavalry policemen, Bursa sent 28, dragging its feet on sending the rest, which it desperately needed.⁵⁶⁰ In the virtual absence of the local security forces, disbanded and fugitive soldiers added to the prevailing chaos in the Bursa region.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁶ BEO. AYN. d 884-61.

⁵⁵⁷ BEO. AYN. d 884-92.

⁵⁵⁸ BEO. AYN. d 884-60; BEO. AYN. d 884-27.

⁵⁵⁹ BEO. AYN. d 884-27.

⁵⁶⁰ BEO. AYN. d 884-60; BEO. AYN. d 880-253.

⁵⁶¹ BEO. AYN. d 884-114.

Moreover, even before the received waves of migration in 1877 and 1878, the Bursa region already had a “Circassian problem”, inherited from the aftermath of the Crimean War.⁵⁶² With the recent war, Circassian tribes, previously settled in Rumelia re-emigrated to Anatolia, adding to the corpse of the unruly elements in the Southern Marmara region. In the fall of 1878, the Circassians were openly attacking the non-Muslim villages in the Bursa and Bilecik regions.⁵⁶³ Muslims were not spared from the attacks of the Circassians as well. The local Muslim population of Western Anatolia sent repeated petitions to İstanbul in order to mobilize the central government for this pressing problem.⁵⁶⁴ The Ottoman government, on the other hand, decided that the state could provide assistance to the Circassian immigrants, only if they were at the brink of death; otherwise they should be supported by the people.⁵⁶⁵ The Circassians continued to obtain this “support” by force.

When the first waves of immigration during and immediately after the war arrived in İstanbul and different parts of Anatolia, the Ottoman government earmarked some funds in the treasury as “extra-ordinary expenditures” to be spent on the refugees.⁵⁶⁶ However, soon it became clear that the magnitude of the received migration far exceeded the meager financial resources of the Empire. Therefore, towards the end of 1878, İstanbul communicated the provincial administration in Bursa that the government would not pay the rents of the houses and khans in which the immigrants were staying in Bursa.⁵⁶⁷ Due to the untimely eruption of an animal disease in Western Anatolia, carts could not be found for transferring the immigrants gathered in Bursa to inner Anatolia during the spring of 1878.⁵⁶⁸ As such, over the summer and the fall of 1878, epidemics among the immigrants in the overcrowded city further incurred medical costs. The Ottoman state ordered the payment of these costs to be made from

⁵⁶² BEO. AYN. d 882-209. This document, dated early 1876, mentions the complaints of the native inhabitants residing in the vicinity of Yenişehir (*nahiye* of Yarhisar) about the Circassians’ habitual stealing of their animals.

⁵⁶³ BEO. AYN. d 884-112; 884-45.

⁵⁶⁴ Terzibaşoğlu, “Land Disputes and Ethno-politics,” 164-165.

⁵⁶⁵ BEO. AYN. d 884-45. “...iane-i ahali ile işçeleri mümkün olmadığı halde canib-i miriden tayinat itasıyla muhafaza-i hayatları esbabının istihsaline...”

⁵⁶⁶ BEO. AYN. d 884-28.

⁵⁶⁷ BEO. AYN. d 884-116.

⁵⁶⁸ BEO. AYN. d 884-1.

the provincial treasury of Bursa.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, in spite of the transfer of slightly over a million *kuruş* funds from the central treasury to Bursa for the expenses of the refugees in the year 1878-1879⁵⁷⁰, Bursa was mostly left to its own resources towards the end of 1878.

In 1879 and 1880, though the war was over, the prospects of the Bursa region did not seem very bright. A missionary described the overall outlook of the region in these years by stressing “insecurity of life and property, (even) robbers on all the highways, financial embarrassment resulting in the utter prostration of all the common industries of the people, pecuniary losses from governmental mismanagement and oppression, like the destruction of the currency and the most wicked taxation of the poor and starving, drought and the ravages of locusts...”⁵⁷¹ These observations should be quite to the point, since complete demobilization of the army occurred as late as the early fall of 1881. The men recruited from Yenişehir could return to their stations in late August and early September 1881.⁵⁷² The nine-month long active battling stole almost four and a half years of the recruited men, who were lucky to survive the war.

In spite of the dim atmosphere throughout and in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War, struggle for power continued unabated in the provinces. As early as 1878, the central government warned the governor of Bursa to keep an open eye on the local notables, who were hunting for promotions and honors through abusing the mobilization for war. In other words, those who truly contributed to the war effort financially or through other means should be distinguished from those who sought to improve their lots through lobbying various administrators and bureaucrats.⁵⁷³ On the other hand, by the early 1879, fierce scramble for land between the native inhabitants, land owners and the immigrant communities had already began. Soon enough, immigrants became a salient social force to be reckoned in the political landscape of the Southern Marmara region. The settlement of the immigrants brought about intensified and elongated disputes of land towards the end of the 19th century. Before analyzing the

⁵⁶⁹ BEO. AYN. d 884-116.

⁵⁷⁰ Kocacık, “Balkanlardan Anadolu’ya,” 173.

⁵⁷¹ *ABC FM*, “Report of Broussa Station 1879-1880” by John O. Barrows.

⁵⁷² Y. PRK. ASK 1-70-2; Y. PRK. ASK 8-28; Y. PRK. ASK 8-49; Y. PRK. ASK 8-64.

⁵⁷³ BEO. AYN. d 880-252.

ensuing struggles revolving around the possession and ownership of land, I will address how exactly the settlement of the immigrant communities occurred in Yenişehir and İznik.

3.2.1. Settlement as Experienced by the Immigrants

There is a rich literature on how the flight from Rumelia during and after the Russo-Ottoman War took place.⁵⁷⁴ I will limit my account of the flight and subsequent settlement to one village of Tırnova, Tantur, whose inhabitants formed the village “Osmaniye” or “Ulupınar” in Yenişehir. Thanks to the written account of Hüseyin Kaplan, whose father fled the Russian invasion when he was sixteen years old, we have at hand the oral testimony of an immigrant as it is recorded by his son.⁵⁷⁵ Accordingly, during late July or early August of 1877, when the Russian army approached the villages of Tırnova, sixteen year old Osman, his father, his mother and his elder brother left the village Tantur, taking with themselves two quilts, a copper saucepan and another pan for cooking bread. They left the village on foot towards noon. In the afternoon, they heard that the Russian army had reached the village. For about a week they walked towards Anatolia during the day, spending the nights by the villages on their way or in the stack yards of these villages. Finally, they reached Türbedere village (contemporary Çerkezköy) in Çorlu. As usual, they had nothing to eat, thus Osman’s mother knocked on the door of a seemingly well-off house in the village. This search for help determined the fate of the family for the next decade.⁵⁷⁶

The man living in the house was an old *çiftlik*-owner, who immediately came by the family to inquire the situation more closely. Upon seeing the helplessness of the family, he decided to employ Osman’s elder brother as an agricultural laborer, his

⁵⁷⁴ See the works cited in footnote 545.

⁵⁷⁵ Hüseyin Kaplan actually wrote two books; *Hayatım ve Hatıralarım* and *Bursa-Yenişehir Osmaniye Köyünün Tarihçesi*. Both books were edited by a local journalist, Ali Bilgiç. The books were published in limited numbers, and distributed to a circle of friends and acquaintances of Hüseyin Kaplan in Yenişehir. They include the original notes of Hüseyin Kaplan in Ottoman Turkish, transcribed by Ali Bilgiç. Hüseyin Kaplan, *Hayatım ve Hatıralarım*, ed. Ali Bilgiç (2004); *Bursa-Yenişehir Osmaniye Köyünün Tarihçesi*, ed. Ali Bilgiç (2011). I thank Salih Erol for providing me access to these books.

⁵⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Hayatım*, 2-4.

mother as a housemaid, Osman himself as a shepherd and the father of the family as the steward of the *çiftlik*. They all moved to the mansion of the *çiftlik* owner, Hacı Halil Ağa. A few years later, Hacı Halil Ağa, who had no sons, had to dismantle the *çiftlik*, due to his advanced age. But, apparently he did not find it in his heart to leave the family in destitution; therefore he built them a house, gave them some land and bought them oxen. Hence, the family lived in Türbedere until 1887, when both the father of the family and Hacı Halil Ağa died. Soon, Osman was conscripted in the army, leaving behind his mother and elder brother all by themselves in Çorlu. However, before Osman left for his military service, the family discussed moving to Yenişehir, Bursa, where their relatives and co-villagers settled.⁵⁷⁷

Towards the end of 1888, when Osman was still doing his military service, his mother and elder brother emigrated to Osmaniye village in Yenişehir. Their co-villagers from Tantar had founded this village in 1880. Having arrived almost a decade after the formation of the new village, the new-comers could not get any land distributed to the immigrants in Osmaniye in 1880. They bought five or ten *dönüms* of land from the neighboring villages. However, this amount of land was not sufficient for them to subsist, thus Osman worked as a daily laborer here and there for a couple of years in order to make his ends meet. Then, he worked in the construction of Ankara-İzmit railway line until 1892. Subsequently, he was employed in the construction of Ankara-Kayseri railway line until the middle of 1895. He could finally marry the daughter of one of his co-villagers in 1896, but could not settle down for too long, since he was re-conscripted in 1897 during the Greek-Ottoman War erupting that year.⁵⁷⁸

As the story of Osman's family's settlement suggests, many immigrants from the same villages spread to different parts of Anatolia and Thrace immediately after the war. Those who managed to stay together and achieved obtaining land formed a new village, which immediately became a magnet for the other scattered households. About thirty families from Tantar stayed together and succeeded in obtaining land in Yenişehir, while another branch from the same village settled in Edirne's Döllük

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, 6.

village.⁵⁷⁹ Many households of Tantur continued to move to Osmaniye from different parts of Anatolia during the following decades. The Ottoman government reserved 2.900 dönüms of land for 62 households in the Ulupınar region for Osmaniye village.⁵⁸⁰ There were actually 30 households in the early 1880s, when the village was first founded. Anticipating the arrival of more households from Tantur, the new village was given more land than the existing households. However, the number of the late-comers, whose arrival stretched over a couple of decades far exceeded the initial anticipation. At the turn of the 20th century, the village had over 100 households.⁵⁸¹ Meanwhile, pressured by the unsettled immigrant communities, the Ottoman government settled 30 more households from Osmanpazarı in Rumelia to form a new village, Orhaniye, by subtracting from the lands initially given to the villagers of Tantur from Tırnova. When the villagers from Tantur protested the new settlement due to the scarcity of land, the government replied that they were given land for sixty households, when in fact the households in their village numbered only thirty. Thus, land for thirty more households should be available for the new Orhaniye village, which was located about three kilometers east of Osmaniye.⁵⁸² Apparently, the Ottoman state chose not to have a dynamic and flexible understanding of the processes of settlement when it was motivated by convenience.

From the viewpoint of the immigrants in Yenişehir, the scarcity of land was the most crucial problem determining their livelihood in these new lands. Some documents state that by the early 1879, there was no vacant land for settlement in Yenişehir and İnegöl other than a few state-owned high lands (*miri yayla*). The high number of immigrants in this region led the Ottoman state to withdraw the bidding of these highlands for about 11.700 *kuruş* annual rent, so that the immigrants could be settled in these lands.⁵⁸³ Not surprisingly then, the settlement of the immigrants brought about

⁵⁷⁹ About sixty years after the Russo-Ottoman War, half of this village in Edirne was originally from Tantur. Hüseyin Kaplan, *Osmaniye Köyünün Tarihçesi*, 14-15. Hüseyin Kaplan's account of the history of his village is consistent with the Ottoman state's documents. See the next footnote, referring to a Sultan's *irade*.

⁵⁸⁰ İ. DH 900-71584.

⁵⁸¹ According to Hüseyin Kaplan's account, with the late-comers, the households in Osmaniye exceeded 100, Kaplan, *Osmaniye Köyünün Tarihçesi*, 13. However, the yearbook of Hüdavendigâr gives the number of households in Osmaniye for the year 1898 as 70, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1316*, 319.

⁵⁸² Kaplan, *Osmaniye Köyünün Tarihçesi*, 15-16.

⁵⁸³ İ. DH 781- 63492.

hostilities between different immigrant communities competing for land on the one hand, between the immigrants and the native inhabitants on the other.⁵⁸⁴

In spite of all the misfortune befallen on the immigrants from Rumelia, they were more fortunate than some other immigrants coming from different parts of the Balkans and Russia. For one thing, most of the villagers of Rumelia were Turkish speaking peasants that were culturally not so different from the existing rural populations of the Bursa region. Unlike the troublesome relationships between the Circassians and the native inhabitants, the local people felt more affinity with them from early on. Furthermore, the places of origin of the Rumelian Muslims were climatically more in tune with the Bursa region, rendering them tougher against the epidemics prevalent in the Southern Marmara region. Whereas refugees from Bosnia, who were apparently more vulnerable to the diseases of this geography, suffered immensely from epidemics. Since most of these immigrants did not speak Turkish either, the Ottoman government developed some affirmative policies for Bosnian immigrants in the upcoming years.⁵⁸⁵

In 1887 and 1888, another cycle of draught hit the Bursa region.⁵⁸⁶ Bosnian immigrants in İznik, who were not yet given land petitioned İstanbul and asked for alms from the Sultan to survive the draught. However, the practice of giving immigrants grain for free (*tavizen zahire verilmesi*) had been discontinued. Hence, the Ministry of Interior reasoned that, like any other community experiencing draught, these immigrants should be given grain from the collected tithe of the previous year, to be paid back whenever the agricultural production returns to normal. Yet, due to the draught, there was not actually any “stored tithe” available. In this context, the Ottoman government could merely advise the governor of Bursa to settle these people as soon as possible.⁵⁸⁷ A couple of years later, the Bosnian immigrants numbering fifty households in İznik were not yet settled. Many of these immigrants were flooding the Poor’s

⁵⁸⁴ For example, above-mentioned Orhaniye village asked for deeds from the government, because the native villages were intervening in the lands given them for settlement. DH. MKT 1939-117; see also DH. MKT 1956-20 and DH. MKT 82-13 for another example of mutual complaints on land between the immigrant and native villages.

⁵⁸⁵ Such as introducing quotas for Bosnian youth (Bosna etfali) in Bursa İdadisi (high-school) as boarding students. MF. MKT 777-11.

⁵⁸⁶ Y. PRK. BŞK 12-75; Y. PRK. ML 7-23.

⁵⁸⁷ DH. MKT 1369-92.

Hospital (*Gureba Hastanesi*) in İstanbul due to malaria (*derununda su birikmesi*). In İznik, with the permission of the trustee of a public bathhouse, they had built huts on a plot belonging to the waqf of the bathhouse. Due to the unavailability of land, gravestones of the old graveyard just outside the town were plucked out; a small stretch of land was thus retrieved for the usage of the Bosnian immigrants.⁵⁸⁸

Immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds were struggling hard, sometimes under miserable conditions, for obtaining land in the Southern Marmara region. As years passed over the catastrophic war of 1877-1878, the need for land snow-balled with continuing migration received from different parts of the Ottoman Empire in the form of reunions. There was on the one hand, an unprecedented concentration of population in Yenişehir made up of peasant masses striving for land, to the point of invading the lands reserved for the dead. On the other hand, there laid vast, fertile lands of the Yenişehir plain, visibly uncultivated and under-utilized. The serenity of this beautiful geography sharply contrasted with the destitution of the injected rural populations, ever ready and eager to till these lands. The Ottoman state had to figure out a solution for this puzzling situation, since the immigrant masses promised what it needed most, namely taxes and soldiers. I now briefly touch upon how the Ottoman state perceived the settlement process, as it is reflected in the documents compiled on the Bursa region.

3.2.2. Settlement from the Viewpoint of the Central State

When the first waves of migration arrived, the Ottoman government was quite confident that there were many unused, vacant lands in Anatolia that could be distributed to the immigrant communities. In this respect, accelerating the settlement process would not only turn the received communities from being consumers to producers, thereby contribute to the Ottoman treasury, but it would also spare these people from poverty, diseases and all the other drawbacks of their liminal position within the society. As such, the overall settlement agendas of the immigrant

⁵⁸⁸ Y. PRK. KOM 7-45.

communities and the Ottoman state coincided. However, shortly after the arrival of the immigrants in Anatolia, many places began to report that there were no “vacant” lands for the immigrants within their boundaries. The Ottoman state took such responses as the wicked unwillingness of the local populations to receive immigrants among themselves. Accordingly, greedy provincial subjects deceived or collaborated with the local officials through claiming ownership or right of possession over lands, which were clearly uncultivated and/or unoccupied. Thus, in the early 1879, the Ottoman government ordered the Immigration Commission to disregard the opposition of the native inhabitants and to settle immigrants through the investigations of the state officials, specifically dispatched to Anatolia for marking the places and lands to be reserved for settlement without consulting the locals.⁵⁸⁹

Meanwhile, desperate immigrant communities were exerting pressure on İstanbul for redressing what they perceived as a grave injustice: They were literally dying for land, which was clearly abundantly available. For instance, the leaders of a Circassian community that came to Bursa from Rumelia, travelled the unoccupied lands suitable for their settlement with some local officials. They claimed that despite the availability of land, as their excursion with the officials testified, they were pushed to destitution because of the delays in the process of settlement. The Ottoman state responded to their cry for help by authorizing the dispatch of a member of the Immigration Commission to the prospective site of settlement in order to get this community settled in ten days.⁵⁹⁰ Yet, many settlement disputes could not be solved in ten years, which at a retrospective glance renders the extremely optimistic “ten days” estimation of the Ottoman state farcical. Likewise, being still unaware of the nature and the magnitude of “the land problem”, in the spring of 1879 the provincial administration in Bursa complained about the inaptitude of the settlement officials sent from İstanbul as a major cause of delay in the settlement processes within the province.⁵⁹¹ The problem however, was not about the inaptitude of specific officials, but it was a legal and structural problem challenging the existing patterns of land-holding and potential utilization of the rural resources in Western Anatolia.

⁵⁸⁹ BEO. AYN. d 1151-87.

⁵⁹⁰ BEO. AYN. d 1151-256.

⁵⁹¹ BEO. AYN. d 1151-268.

In addition to the helplessness of many immigrant communities, eruption of social unrest between the immigrants and the native inhabitants alarmed the government. At one instance in İnegöl, some Circassian immigrants were pressured by the local administration for being transferred to inner Anatolia due to the unavailability of land in this sub-district. The immigrants in question raided the government building of the *kaza* and threatened to kill the *kaymakam* of the district unless they were left alone.⁵⁹² On the other hand, the immigrants in the city of Bursa, who resisted being transferred to elsewhere, were allegedly forcefully evacuated through the arson of their houses by the local administration. The Sultan heard such rumors and asked these to be investigated by the Immigration Commission.⁵⁹³ Hence, from the viewpoint of İstanbul, settlement was an urgent matter potentially threatening the public order in the provinces where the refugees concentrated.

In such a tense political atmosphere in the provinces, the Ottoman state did not obviously evaluate the obstacles put forth before the settlement of the immigrants by the native inhabitants positively. However, the local people were not simply intriguing because of their ill will towards the immigrants; they were actually trying to protect their legal rights over the seemingly “vacant” lands. As surveys of officials compiled on the sites of prospective settlements began to accumulate in İstanbul, the Ottoman state realized that these lands were not indeed “empty”. As Terzibaşoğlu puts it: “...the supposedly empty stretches of land might have been uncultivated but these lands were either registered to an absentee landlord, or had legally established claims on them by the nomads or the peasantry.”⁵⁹⁴ In Yenişehir and İznik, where there were abundant waqf lands, this pattern held as well. Moreover, the Southern Marmara region was at the same time one of the most “bleeding” geographies of the late Ottoman Empire due to excessive conscription among its Muslim population. In the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War, many lands belonging to the recruited men probably laid fallow, enhancing the overall imagery of vacancy.

So, what were the options of the Ottoman state in handling such a problem? At the outset, the most convenient option of İstanbul seemed to be dispersing the

⁵⁹² BEO. AYN. d 1151-248.

⁵⁹³ BEO. AYN. d 1151-273.

⁵⁹⁴ Terzibaşoğlu, “Land Disputes and Ethno-politics,” 165.

concentrated immigrants in places like Bursa, İzmir and İzmit to the other provinces of the Empire. Most of the time, this proved an impossible task due to the strong resistance of the immigrant communities and the Ottoman state's unwillingness to use force against these aggrieved populations. Still, the tense situation in Western Anatolia led the Ottoman state to consider some very radical solutions. In 1887, the Council of Ministers discussed settling the immigrants in such places as Erzurum, Van, Bayburt, Dersim, Hakkari and Diyarbakır, given that these places should have available lands sufficient to support hundreds of thousands of immigrants. The settlements in these places would not only relieve the densely populated Western Anatolia, but also would bring about prosperity to both the immigrants and these relatively underdeveloped parts of the Empire. The Council decided to go ahead with this plan after communicating with the governors' of these provinces about the actual availability of land.⁵⁹⁵ We do not know how this plan turned out, but any significant transfer of population from Western Anatolia to these places did not occur. As a matter of fact, it is quite puzzling that the ministers even considered such an unrealistic plan as a worthwhile shot, when the Ottoman state could not even transfer the immigrants in İnegöl to the not so far away Karahisar-ı Sahib, let alone to the easternmost provinces of the Empire.

If substantial transfer of immigrant communities from Western Anatolia was out of question, the central state had to figure out how to mediate the conflicting interests of different communities and individuals involved in disputes of land. Throughout the struggle for land and the processes of settlement stretching over decades, the Ottoman state not only acted as an arbitrator, but also as an actor, which had vested interests in the processes of settlement. The settlement of the immigrants was a phenomenon intertwined with state-building, because the land regime was not only crucial for the control and appropriation of the rural surplus, but also it laid at the heart of the legitimacy frameworks of the late Ottoman polity. Before delving more into the nature and the outcomes of specific land disputes in Yenişehir and İznik, I will address how exactly the processes of settlement in Yenişehir and İznik unraveled within the local political arena on the one hand, from the view point of the big land-owners on the other hand.

⁵⁹⁵ MV 28-12.

3.2.3. Settlement as a Process Mediated in the Local Political Arena

In August 1883, the immigration commission of Yenişehir compiled a report on the settlement of immigrants within the *kaza*, addressing the local council of Yenişehir. Accordingly, the *kaymakam* of the *kaza*, Bahaeddin Efendi, who had been in office for the last two years formed the local immigration commission from among the local notables for officially recording the new immigrant settlements, and the individually settled immigrant households in the existing villages. In doing so, Bahaeddin Efendi, who was at the same time a descendent of an ex-Şeyh'ul İslam, led the acceleration of the formalization of the settlement process within the sub-district. The whole report on settlement was attached to a promotion request for Bahaeddin Efendi through the governor of Hüdavendigâr. In this respect, what Bahaeddin Efendi did in Yenişehir was conceived to be an extra-ordinary achievement both by the provincial administration and the central state.⁵⁹⁶ Given the ongoing scramble for land in Western Anatolia, such a conception is not at all surprising.

According to this report, up until 1883, 9 new immigrant villages, made up of 1343 people in 391 households, were established in Yenişehir (including the *nahiye* of İznik). Immigrants distributed to the existing villages numbered 920 people in 248 households. In total, Yenişehir received 2263 people in 639 households after the Russo-Ottoman War. A substantial number of these immigrants were from Rumelia, while some immigrants from Russia (Tatars and Nogais) were also settled in the sub-district. Many of the newly established villages had about 30 or 40 households, only the village “Hamidiye” formed by Hezargrad (present-day Razgrad) immigrants significantly diverted from this pattern with its 100 households. The immigrants, who were distributed among the native villages on the other hand, did not usually exceed 10

⁵⁹⁶ The documents used in this section is enclosed in İ. DH 900-71584. In addition to a couple of locally produced documents and administrative correspondences as will be cited below, this file includes a registry of the immigrant population in Yenişehir in 1883 composed by the local immigration commission of the *kaza* (entitled, *Rumeli cihetinden Yenişehir kazasına hicret eden muhacirinin hangi mevkiye iskan olunup teşkil eden karye ve iskan muhacirinin esamisini mübeyyen defterdir.*)

households per village; in most cases numbering only 4 or 5 households within a village.⁵⁹⁷

In fact, the numbers included in the report do not tell much about how the settlement of the immigrants took place in Yenişehir. On the contrary, these numbers should be taken with a grain of salt, since we know that practices like awarding land to non-existent immigrant households in anticipation of their arrival, as in the case of Osmaniye village, could in fact be quite common. Conversely, in some cases undercounts might have been practiced with a view of avoiding taxation and conscription by the immigrant communities. Furthermore, the report itself was an instrumental document, drawing a blissfully static picture of a very dynamic and complicated process entangled with various contestations and confrontations between different communities and interest groups in the countryside. For instance, the overall number of the immigrants were recorded as 2263 people, which could as well be a credible number, but it was far from reflecting the medium term trends. About a decade after 1883, the number of immigrants in Yenişehir was recorded in the Yearbook of Hüdavendigâr as 6521 people.⁵⁹⁸ In 1883, settlement of the immigrants was still an ongoing process in its infancy. Likewise, from later records we learn that many immigrant households who were actually settled within existing native villages gradually united with their co-villagers from their places of origin to form their own “immigrant” villages by occupying “available”, but “unvacant” lands in Yenişehir.

So, what does this document demonstrate beyond the numbers included in it? It apparently points out an accord between the local population, the immigrant communities and the provincial administration about the nature of the distribution of land to the immigrant communities. According to the local immigration commission’s summary written at the end of the settlement report: “The *kaza* has a sparse population with respect to the lands it encompasses; therefore settlement in the vacant stretches of land enabled opening up of many plots of land (to agriculture). As such, settlement of the immigrants brought about prosperity and the desired utilization of land.

⁵⁹⁷ İ. DH 900-71584.

⁵⁹⁸ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1307*, 236.

Consequently, it improved the honor and the reputation of the *kaza*.⁵⁹⁹ The local council's proceedings about the settlement report addressing the General Immigration Commission on the other hand, not only stressed the importance of "the poor" immigrants' settlement in a timely manner for obviating their misery, but also underlined the interests of the treasury (*menafi-i hazine*) in such a swift course of action in relation to settlement.⁶⁰⁰ Indeed, if the locals were happy, the immigrants were content and the central state would be able to collect more taxes, who were to lose? As in the case of many neatly arranged local documents, something dubious was going on about "the empty lands" in Yenişehir.

What happened was that the local inhabitants, especially the local notables, allied with the immigrants for the settlement to take place on the lands belonging to the absentee landlords and/or on the large tracts of waqf lands. For one thing, the largest of all the immigrant villages, Hamidiye, with its 100 households as recorded in the report, was settled in the middle of the vast lands belonging to the Mahrukizade family. In fact, such an arrangement was ideal for all the related parties, except for the big land-owners and/or the trustees of the waqfs with extensive lands in Yenişehir. First, settlement on the lands of the absentee landlords or on the waqf lands would spare the smaller plots belonging to the native inhabitants from the desperate encroachments of the immigrant communities. Second, settlement of the Rumelian immigrants would potentially improve public security, which was endangered by the Circassian problem and other forms of more "endemic" banditry. A substantial majority of those settled were peasant communities from Rumelia, who resembled the local peasantry with respect to their patterns of agricultural production. Third, big land-owners in Yenişehir had long been engaging in a process of "enclosure" of land through legal and extra-legal means, sailing before the long-term trends of privatization of land in the Empire. Therefore, they were increasingly limiting the access of various rural groups to common pastures and water sources. With Rumelian settlers on the lands of the big land-owners, a more collaborative use of rural resources was possible. Finally, the settlement "officially" occurred through the authorization of the local immigration commission, in which local

⁵⁹⁹ "Kaza-i mezkurun arazisine nispetle nüfusu az olduğundan ve muhacirinin böyle bir takım arazi-i haliyeye iskan ve bu yüzden pek çok arazi meydana çıkarılmasından dolayı mülken mamuriyet ve istifade-i matlube hasıl ve kazanın izdiyad-ı şeref ve itibarını müstecib olmuştur," İ. DH 900-71584.

⁶⁰⁰ İ. DH 900-71584.

initiatives reigned. Absentee landlords did not have a stronghold in this kind of locally created, yet formally recognized commissions.

However, big land-owners had at their disposal some other means to pursue their interests. Moreover, some of them, like the Mahrukizade family, closely followed their affairs in Yenişehir, where they kept agents managing their *çiftlik*s. So, how was their resistance diverted in the early 1880s?

3.2.4. Settlement from the Viewpoint of the Big Land-Owners

After the initial shocks of receiving many thousands of refugees, it became clear for the officials in İstanbul that the settlement of these people would not be as smooth as they envisaged. After all, Anatolia, especially Asia Minor, was not as “empty” as the central bureaucracy took it to be at first. Yet, many immigrant communities gathered in Western Anatolia had no intention whatsoever to leave these fertile and uncultivated lands for the harsher climate of relatively barren inner Anatolia. Consequently, clashes of interest was unavoidable in this geography. More specifically, Hüdavendigar province experienced a terrifying fall and winter in 1878 due to the overcrowding and epidemics in the city of Bursa and looked up to the Ottoman capital for relief. By the early 1879, the Ottoman government should have grasped that what Bursa needed was far more than “apt” immigration officials sent from İstanbul; it needed a more than “apt” governor. As a matter of fact, the central state had at its disposal an experienced, albeit notorious candidate- a man, who could turn the tide for Bursa for whatever it takes. Thus, on the 4th of February 1879, Ahmed Vefik Paşa was appointed to the governorship of Bursa. Until October 1882, he remained in office in the province⁶⁰¹, of which he already had an intimate knowledge from his inspectorship in 1863-64.

Ahmed Vefik Paşa was the interlocutor of the Mahrukizade family in the critical issue of the settlement of the immigrants on their lands. Based on the notice of some

⁶⁰¹ Ömer Faruk Akün, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 2*, s.v. "Ahmed Vefik Paşa," (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1989), 143-157.

locals of Yenişehir⁶⁰², Vefik Paşa claimed that there were vacant lands within the vast *çiftlik*s belonging to the family. Without asking them to present their documents of “ownership” and without initiating a legal process ascertaining the “vacant” status of these lands, the Paşa awarded 3000 *dönüms* of land located in the middle of the Mahrukizade *çiftlik*s to 100 immigrant households from Rumelia. In fact, the family had at hand a document obtained from the Ministry of Evkaf, dated 1873, notarizing the “un-vacant” status of their lands. Notwithstanding their legally fortified position, the death of Mahrukizade Ali Bey provided Vefik Paşa with an additional pretext to back up the immigrant settlement *vis a vis* Mahrukizades. Due to the death of Ali Bey, his family naturally inherited his property. But, because his *çiftlik*s were very extensive waqf lands, the members of his family had to pay an inheritance fee to the Evkaf treasury in order to formalize their ownership. The inheritance fee was calculated as a fraction of the estimated value of the inherited land, which in Mahrukizades’ case was quite a substantial sum. In order to make them pay this fee, Vefik Paşa sealed all the stored grain of the family and appointed a *zaptiye* for specifically guarding their storehouse in Yenişehir. When the intendant (*nazır*) of their *çiftlik* asked permission to take some grain from the storehouse to be used as seed for the upcoming season, he was adamantly rejected.⁶⁰³

After this setback, having conceived the seriousness of their problem, the family immediately sent Şefik Bey, one of the sons of Mahrukizade Ali Bey, to Bursa with all their ownership documents. Şefik Bey applied to the Provincial Council of Bursa, which as a response communicated with the Land Survey department about the records of the disputed land. The Land Survey department could locate some records indicating that 19.000 *dönüms* of land belonged to someone called İsmail Ağa, who died without an inheritor (*İsmail Ağa mahlulatından olduğu*). However, Şefik Bey objected the information derived from the Land Survey department with his own documents of ownership. Subsequently, the Provincial Council decided to forward Şefik Bey’s documents to the Land Survey department in order to get them cross-checked with the records, and if needed, to correct the records kept at the department. The council

⁶⁰² Information submitted to the governor of Hüdavendigâr by the *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul, dated 30 Eylül 1305, ŞD 1581-5.

⁶⁰³ See the petition signed by the wife, one of the sons (Cafer) and two daughters of the deceased Mahrukizade Ali Bey enclosed in ŞD 2906-51 (15 Zilhicce 1299).

prepared a report in this regard addressing the Land Survey department. Vefik Paşa learnt about Şefik Bey's undertakings in Bursa, when he was literally sitting at the theater, which was among the most ostensible imprints of his governorship in the city of Bursa. He immediately had the report of the Provincial Council delivered to himself. With a dramatic gesture so typical of his restive personality, he tore the report apart.⁶⁰⁴ If they had not yet grasped what sort of an opponent they had behind the immigrant village, after this gesture, the Mahrukizade family should have clearly understood that the existing governor was no man to reason with through legal and formal channels.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, they had to wait until the end of his term in office on the 16th of October 1882; writing a petition summarizing the whole event on the 28 of October 1882, less than two weeks after the dismissal of Vefik Paşa. In their petition, they asked for their withheld grain to be returned to them immediately, and the urgent transfer of the immigrants on their lands to elsewhere.⁶⁰⁶

Vefik Paşa's hostile attitude towards Mahrukizades was not probably merely motivated by choosing the shortest possible way of ensuring the interests of the Ottoman state. He should have possessed some knowledge about the properties of this family in Yenişehir, because during his inspection mission in 1863-1864, he wrote a report about a land dispute involving this family to the Porte, which forwarded it to the Ministry of Evkaf.⁶⁰⁷ Thus, neither his authorization of the settlement of the immigrants on Mahrukizade lands, nor his high-handed attitude towards the family manifested in the sealing of their grain were contingent. Yet, the Ottoman government's appointment of Vefik Paşa to the governorship of Bursa was not accidental either; the state wanted to get things done in Bursa at a pace unimpeded by the usual legal, institutional and executive delays, since the livelihoods and the productive capabilities of the rural masses pouring in Anatolia were at stake. In this respect, Mahrukizade family was not probably the sole large land-owner suppressed by the Paşa.

⁶⁰⁴ "...işbu mazbatayı tiyatroda oturduğu halde celb ederek şak etmiş olduğundan....," ŞD 2906-5.

⁶⁰⁵ "Correcting and/or editing the documents kept at the Land Survey department according to Mahrukizade documents" seems a dubious task, hinting the machinations of the family in the Provincial Council. Vefik Paşa could have realized such an undertaking in Şefik Bey's activities in Bursa.

⁶⁰⁶ ŞD 2906-51.

⁶⁰⁷ A. MKT. MHM 281-66.

After almost four years of service, Vefik Paşa was finally dismissed from the governorship of Bursa in the fall of 1882. Yet at the critical conjuncture of his office in between early 1879 and late 1882, the Paşa once again left his mark on the socio-political landscape of the Bursa region by buying time for various immigrant communities to get settled on lands that were “available”, but legally not vacant. As usual, when returned to more “normal” circumstances, the Ottoman state would act more moderately and undo some of the most radical undertakings of Vefik Paşa. But, once the immigrants got settled, it proved beyond the means of a family as formidable as the Mahrukizades to remove them from their lands. Hence, in between concerns of legitimacy in the eyes of the peasant masses and the legal requirements pertaining to the Mahrukizade family, the Ottoman state had to work out a solution.

3.3. Land Disputes in Yenişehir and İznik

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, land disputes peaked in Yenişehir and İznik. By that time, reunions and resettlements increased the concentration of immigrant population significantly.⁶⁰⁸ The late-comers, who changed their initial places of settlement were not assisted by the central state and the provincial administration. As such, squatting and illegal occupations of land increased. On the other hand, the native inhabitants, the trustees of waqfs and big land-owners tirelessly resorted to the courts for protecting their rights. Not surprisingly, these plaintiffs were almost always the legally rightful party. In this context, violent confrontations and the use of force by the government seemed inevitable at the face of the resistance of the immigrants. However, no matter how faulty the immigrants were from a legal point of view, the Ottoman state used every means at its disposal for avoiding use of force against them. The central state and the provincial authorities practiced mediation, and sometimes even compromised the rights of the land-owners in order to shield the immigrant masses from evacuation and accompanying pauperization. The Ottoman state and the provincial authorities did

⁶⁰⁸ In the yearbook of Hüdavendigâr for 1890-1891, the overall population of the sub-district of Yenişehir was reported as 26.552, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1306*, 93. In the next year's yearbook of 1891-1892, the number of immigrants thus far settled in Yenişehir was reported to be 6.521 people, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1307*, 236. Hence, almost one in every four inhabitants of Yenişehir was immigrant in the early 1890s.

not choose an immigrant friendly policy merely out of compassion; financial stringency and the anticipated socio-political costs of using coercive measures against a substantial segment of the population of Western Anatolia significantly limited the option to resort to force. Yet, beyond the inconvenience of using force, the interests of the immigrant communities coincided with the Ottoman state-building processes in the long term. After all, these people were to expand the tax base and enlarge the conscription pool of the modernizing state in the long run.

However, in the early 1890s, much more than future projections to win over a productive population was on the plate of the late Ottoman establishment. An intertwined understanding of “legitimacy” and “justice”, taking its roots from the Tanzimat era guided all sides of the land disputes. Accordingly, as “privatization of land” bound village communities and individuals more closely to the central state through registration of land and stricter taxation, “the right to land” of the cultivators emerged as a principle of justice lying at the core of the state’s legitimacy.⁶⁰⁹ In other words, if the rural people were to pay their taxes as an obligation to the state, they were to possess land to produce a surplus due to the state in the first place.⁶¹⁰ Likewise, if the rural masses were to form the backbone of the Ottoman army, they had to be able to subsist and to reproduce. The peasants provided financial support and manpower to the Ottoman state in exchange for their right to land as independent productive units. Within the tense conditions of the 1890s, the immigrants’ right to land contradicted liberal conceptions of “the rule of law”, exclusive ownership rights on land and the security of property. As such, it was one of the bizarre moments of modern statehood, when “equity” and “justice” detached from “the law”, as generalized rules and regulations pertaining to liberal market economy.

⁶⁰⁹ In analyzing the generalization of the state’s ownership on land in the late Ottoman Empire, Huri Islamoğlu notes a redefinition of the principle of “justice” underlying the state’s legitimacy discourse, whereby it became identified with the protection of the peasant producers, Islamoğlu, “Hukuk, Mülkiyet,” 5. Though I would approach “the generalization of the state’s ownership on land” with a grain of salt, I am using her conceptualization stressing the parallel evolution of privatization of land and the protection of independent peasant households as productive units within the late Ottoman legitimacy frameworks.

⁶¹⁰ In a similar vein, the uprisings in the Balkans in 1840s and 1850s demonstrate how the principle of individual property clashed with the peasantry’s expectations of “justice” based on just taxation and access to land. Halil İnalçık, “Tanzimatın Uygulanması ve Sosyal Tepkiler,” *Belleten*, no. 112 (1964); Terzibaşoğlu, “The Ottoman Agrarian Question,” 313-318; Yonca Köksal, “19. Yüzyılda Kuzeybatı Bulgaristan: Sessiz Toprak Reformu,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 170 (February 2008).

The immigrant communities strongly resisted court rulings against them, because they perceived that they had a right to land. They even objected paying extra-taxes or rents for compensating the losses of the land-owners or waqfs, whose lands they occupied. Land-owners, on the other hand, almost always conceded the immigrants' right to land. Significantly, what they demanded was not complete pauperization of these masses, so that their labor could be harshly exploited in their *çiftlik*s, which could be organized as truly capitalistic enterprises in theory. Rather, they asked the state to allocate available, vacant, state-owned lands to these immigrants, so that these people would not infringe on their own rights of possession. Some trustees were even ready to accept rents with a view of protecting the interests of their waqfs without touching the livelihoods of the immigrants illegally occupying their lands. The Ottoman state fluctuated in between legal expediency and the right to land of the rural populations. Whenever evacuation came to the front as a likely course of action, the state tried to persuade the immigrant communities through awarding them lands elsewhere and providing them incentives for re-settlement.

3.3.1. Native Inhabitants vs. the Immigrant Communities

Notwithstanding the compact between the native inhabitants and the immigrant communities of Yenişehir in the early 1880s on solving the land problem of the immigrants through settling them on extensive waqf lands belonging to the absentee land-owners, in the early 1890s increased number of immigrants precipitated encroachments on the lands of the native inhabitants of Yenişehir and İznik. For example, in the spring of 1891, immigrants from Rumelia illegally occupied the lands belonging to the Armenian and Greek inhabitants of İznik in the region known as Soğucak. Armenian Patriarchate communicated with the Ottoman government on behalf of these non-Muslim inhabitants, stressing that the court rulings were not being implemented on the ground.⁶¹¹ On the flip side of the coin, immigrant communities, who were given land by the Ottoman state complained about the interventions of the old villages to their lands. In 1889, Orhaniye village in Yenişehir asked the Ottoman

⁶¹¹ DH. MKT 1830-60.

government to issue deeds for the lands awarded them by the state in order to strengthen its position *vis a vis* the native villages.⁶¹²

A great deal of land disputes between the native villagers and the immigrants arose due to ambiguous borders of lands. Apparently, the borders of the new immigrant settlements were not clearly designated, sometimes because of insufficient land marks in the available records and sometimes for affording the immigrant communities access to better quality soil belonging to absentee landowners. For example, immigrants from Aydos (present-day Atjos, Bulgaria) were settled on an abandoned village, known as Akköy in İznik. The new village, which was named Orhaniye, stood in between two native villages, Ömerli and Çakırca. While the immigrants in Akköy complained about the interventions of these two villages to the lands given them by the state⁶¹³, the native inhabitants of Ömerli petitioned the government claiming that the immigrants were encroaching on the lands, over which they had rights of possession. The immigrants were allegedly cutting olive trees and other similar trees belonging to the villagers of Ömerli⁶¹⁴, most probably due to their pressing needs for cultivable lands. These kinds of disputes highlight the clumsy nature of the settlement process within the context of elusive borders of land.

Yet, there were instances when the immigrants squatted on the property belonging to the native inhabitants outright. Some of these instances mobilized the local notables against the immigrant communities. Immigrants stood little chance of success in such contestations, if we take into account the notables' influence on the local courts and the local council.⁶¹⁵ However, even in cases when the immigrants were clearly the faulty party, the provincial administration tried to contain violent confrontations through offering assistance to the immigrants. For example, in the spring of 1891, some immigrants illegally built houses on the plots located at the town center, belonging to the notables of Yenişehir. The area they settled was actually used for storing the timber of the town. The notables applied to the sharia court of the town and obtained a court

⁶¹² DH. MKT 1939-117

⁶¹³ DH. MKT 1956-20.

⁶¹⁴ DH. MKT 82-13.

⁶¹⁵ Once again, we should take into consideration that most of the immigrant communities in İznik and Yenişehir were unarmed peasant households. Unlike the Circassian tribes and/or the Georgian immigrants in North-central Anatolia, these people were not in a position to threaten the locals by immediate use of force.

ruling against the immigrants in the absence of the litigants. Without communicating the decision of the court (which was a legal necessity), the local administration sent officials to the site of the settlement for destroying the houses of the squatters. When the immigrants resisted the officials by using sticks and axes as weapons, the sharia court wrote to the provincial center, and notified the governor about the necessity of using force against these immigrants. Bursa however, did not immediately authorize use of force, instead it sent the public prosecutor of the province to Yenişehir. When the prosecutor reported that the immigrants were actually occupying the lands belonging to the native inhabitants, the leaders of the immigrant community were captured and taken to Bursa. In Bursa, the provincial administration negotiated with the imprisoned community leaders, by communicating the necessity of their evacuation. The immigrants were to be transferred to Kozdere⁶¹⁶ village in the vicinity of the town and 100 *dönüms* of land would be given to each household. Furthermore, the state would provide tiles for the houses of the immigrants and the local notables promised to support the community by providing food for free throughout their resettlement in Kozdere. Still, the community leaders of the immigrants would not be released from prison in Bursa, until the houses at the town center were demolished and the immigrants were transferred to Kozdere.⁶¹⁷

In fact, evacuation was used quite seldom by the Ottoman authorities, since it entailed destruction of property, hence strong resistance of the immigrants. In the evacuation of the squatting community at Yenişehir's town center, it is significant that the case was heard at the local sharia court. The disputed land in question was probably a waqf land, thus the logic behind the choice of the religious court. However, the Ministry of Interior handled this case delicately, since the case took the course of evacuation, potentially aggrieving the immigrants. As such, the Ministry sought the legal opinion of the Ministry of Justice, in order to forestall legal complications in the future. The Ministry of Justice in turn, warned the Ministry of Interior by reminding that all the courts' and administrative councils' verdicts should be executed through the

⁶¹⁶ In the document, "Kozdere" is not written properly; I corrected this typo. The name of the village originally appears as "قوردردر".

⁶¹⁷ DH. MKT 1839-45.

secular courts of first instance (*bidayet mahkemesi*).⁶¹⁸ In this respect, in order not to cause complaints about the conduct of evacuation, the case should be transferred to the appropriate legal sphere of the secular courts.⁶¹⁹ Hence, the central state took extra care for handling such a sensitive case in a procedurally correct way. This in itself hints that the immigrant communities were apparently strong stakeholders within the governmental apparatus of the late Ottoman Empire.

After more than a decade passed over the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, the immigrants in Yenişehir and İznik did not always receive a warm welcome from the native inhabitants of these towns. On the contrary, as they left their “guest” status, and became enmeshed in the political economy of the region, competition for rural resources intensified. Many immigrant communities, who got used to their new environment sought higher quality soil and quantitatively more lands for matching the needs of their increased numbers. In the case of the immigrant community, which was transferred to Kozdere, the immigrants were promised 100 *dönüms* per household, which was actually much higher than the average amount of 40 *dönüms* per household. Yet, Kozdere is a village, which to this day does not have sufficient water for irrigation. Many immigrant communities, who were awarded such useless lands, gradually occupied under-utilized lands, which nonetheless had legal claimants. In this context, the Ottoman state was caught in between upholding the rights of the locals on the one hand, assisting the immigrants on the other hand. There was no preset remedy that the Ottoman government followed in dealing with these disputes; rather it acted according to the socio-political sensitivity of each case, being limited as always with its meager financial resources for backing up possible solutions. When the socio-political costs of illegal settlement was negligible, as in the case of the occupation of extensive waqf lands, whose stakeholders were a limited number of people from outside of Yenişehir, the government was more likely to sacrifice the legal rights of the land-owners. At any rate, as the example of the immigrants transferred to Kozdere suggests, the Ottoman administration should be credited with a positive disposition towards the immigrants.

⁶¹⁸ “*bil cümle muhakemelerin ve hatta mecalis idarelerin ilamat-ı ahkâmının merci-i icra-ı kanuniyesi mehakim-i bidayet riyasetleri olduğundan ol babda yapılan muamele kanunen mucib-i şikayet olmamak üzere vukuundan şikayet olunan muamele-i icraiyeinin mecra-i kanuniyesine irca’ı....*” DH. MKT 1839-45.

⁶¹⁹ Yücel Terzibaşoğlu also observes clashes between the local administrative councils and the nizamiye courts in the disputes of land throughout the late 19th century. Terzibaşoğlu, “The Ottoman Agrarian Question,” 312. I will elaborate on this split from an administrative perspective in chapter 5.

3.3.2. Waqfs vs. the Immigrants

In the early 1880s, some immigrant communities were settled within or in the vicinity of extensive waqf lands by the local administration. By 1890s, many more immigrant households, who were separately settled among the local population, united to form their own villages by illegally occupying waqf lands.⁶²⁰ The settlements on waqf lands initiated by the local administration in the early 1880s were already causing quite a lot of problems between the trustees of the waqfs and the immigrant villages. The increase of the immigrant population in these villages and the new villages formed by the initiatives of the immigrants themselves intensified land disputes in Yenişehir throughout the 1890s. Within a decade, many immigrant communities built their houses, mosques, and schools and opened up substantial amounts of land to agriculture and became tax-paying rural producers. The local administration turned a blind eye on the development of illegal immigrant villages on waqf lands, thus the immigrants invested on lands, which legally belonged to the waqfs. The trustees of the waqfs, in the mean time, applied to various courts, obtained administrative orders from the provincial council, and even petitioned the palace for protecting their rights. However, time and again, the resistance of the immigrants and the foot-dragging of the district and sub-district administrations prevented the actual implementation of the administrative and legal decisions. Hence, by the early 1890s, a substantial number of immigrants were irrevocably settled on waqf lands; rendering “evacuation” a void option in practice.

As a matter of fact, Yenişehir and İznik were sparsely populated compared to the lands they included. So, the immigrants should be welcomed by the waqfs, whose lands laid fallow and under-utilized until then, due to the scarcity of labor. In fact, the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa in İznik welcomed settlers, who were not even immigrants fleeing Rumelia and Russia. For instance, a non-Muslim community from Sivas province left their homeland in Karahisar-1 Şarki, where they had properties and sources of income, to get settled in the forest belonging to the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa

⁶²⁰For example the immigrant villages in Kabaçınar (Selimiye village) and Kavaklar (Kavaklı village), DH. MKT 1825-7.

in İznik with the permission of the waqf's trustee. Some other inhabitants of İznik joined them, and to the bewilderment of the provincial authorities these people started to live on top of a mountain.⁶²¹ The positive disposition of the trustee of the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa stemmed from the exceptional status of this waqf. Due to its special status, this waqf collected all the taxes, including the tithe and the silk tax pertaining to its lands directly from the producers, without the intervention of the state. Therefore, the waqf was willing to accept immigrants on its lands. About 20 immigrant villages were thus formed on the extensive lands of this waqf.⁶²² The waqf experienced problems with the Ministry of Forestry, which had an eye on the revenues of the waqf, hence claimed some of the waqf's lands as state-owned forests.⁶²³ Otherwise, the waqf clashed with the immigrants, only when the immigrant communities thought that they would be doubly taxed by the state and the waqf due to the ambiguous status of the lands they occupy in between state-owned and waqf lands.⁶²⁴

Some other waqfs in Yenişehir, such as the waqfs of Silahtar Ali Ağa and Üftade Dergahı, used to rent out some parts of their lands before the immigrant settlements. After the *fait accompli* of the immigrants' settlement and subsequent illegal occupations, these waqfs could not even get the rents that they used to earn from these lands. When it became clear that the evacuation of these immigrants from these waqfs' lands was no longer possible, the provincial administration mediated the dispute between the immigrant communities and the trustees of these waqfs by proposing that the immigrants would pay the previous rents of these lands or a moderate rent to the waqfs as compensation for their abridgement of the rights of possession of the waqfs. However, the immigrants strongly resisted paying these rents. As far as some communities were concerned, they were given vacant, state-owned lands by the local administration; the fact that these lands turned out to be waqf lands was not their fault. They thus resisted paying rents. Some other communities, which occupied waqf lands illegally through their own initiatives equally resisted paying rents. They claimed that they had been living on those lands for more than a decade, and they opened up many

⁶²¹ "...bunlar istila görmüş muhacirin olmayıp memleketlerinde emlak ve akar sahibi oldukları halde öyle cibalde iskan etmek fikrinde olmalarının esbabı anlaşılmasından..." DH. MKT 1588-30.

⁶²² İ. HAKKI 3501; ŞD 3029-18, ŞD 1571-27.

⁶²³ ŞD 1780-4; ŞD 3025-47.

⁶²⁴ DH. MKT 1529-75.

plots of land to agriculture, and built their own houses, mosques and schools on these lands. Since they had a right to land, if the government would compensate the costs of their investments on these lands and give them appropriate lands elsewhere, they would accept leaving the waqf lands.⁶²⁵ Of course, the Ottoman state was in no position to compensate all the potential costs of resettlement. Hence, in order to overcome the strong resistance of the immigrants to pay rents to the waqfs, the government decided to add these rents to the taxes of these villages and treat their debts in this regard as tax arrears to be collected according to the related regulations.⁶²⁶

So, did the immigrants really pay these rents cum extra-taxes? It is difficult to know for sure, but in mid-1890s, the disputes between the trustees and the immigrant villages were not yet resolved⁶²⁷ and the trustees were complaining that the local administration was illegally issuing deeds to the immigrants occupying waqf lands.⁶²⁸ In fact, the trustees openly pointed out that the immigrants could occupy the waqf lands due to the negligence and leniency of the local administration of Yenişehir. For example, some parts of Mahrukizade's waqf lands were occupied by the immigrant villagers of Fethiye and Selimiye, thanks to the collaboration of the tax and land survey officials, who designated the disputed lands as belonging to these villages. When Mahrukizades applied to the local council of Yenişehir, they were told to carry their case to the courts. However, the family claimed that even though some state-owned lands were given to these immigrant villages, the borders between the lands of these villages and Mahrukizade lands were not designated by the local council. Before going to the court, the local council had to detach the lands of the immigrants from the waqf lands. If the encroachments of the immigrants continue after the designation of the borders, then the family would apply to the courts. When the governor asked

⁶²⁵ In 1891, the leaders of the immigrant communities in Selimiye, Toprakocak and Kavaklar were actually summoned to İstanbul, where they were one by one asked to either evacuate the lands of Silahtar Ali Ağa's waqf, or to accept paying rents to the waqf. Among them, only the community of 20 household immigrants from Rusçuk, which was residing in the *çiftlik* of the waqf at Toprakocak accepted paying rents. DH. MKT 1825-7. Apparently, the immigrants perceived their communities' independent status more compromised when they settled directly on the *çiftlik*s of the waqfs. As such, they carried the traces of the land disputes in Rumelia, where the status of a village, whether "free" or "çiftlik" emerged as a main bone of contention, to Yenişehir. For this kind of land disputes in the Balkans during the Tanzimat era see, Terzibaşoğlu, "The Ottoman Agrarian Question," 318.

⁶²⁶ For the waqf of Üftade Dergahı see, DH. MKT 1884-3; 1919-12; 1940-45 and ŞD 2579-14. For the waqf of Silahtar Ali Ağa see, DH. MKT 1825-7, BEO 487-3649, Y. MTV 111-9 and BEO 584-43790.

⁶²⁷ BEO 487-36496.

⁶²⁸ Y. MTV 111-9.

information from the district of Ertuğrul about this dispute, the district reported that the borders were not indeed designated on purpose, because even if the lands were detached from each other, the family would continue to complain about interventions to their lands. From other similar examples, the district administration comprehended that the designation of borders would not solve the problem; on the contrary it would bring forth tones of other administrative correspondences. In other words, since the immigrants were settled on the borders of the waqf lands, most probably on purpose, they were continuously extending over the waqf lands. The designation of borders would not end their encroachments; it would merely equip the Mahrukizades with another document to pursue their struggles within the various layers of the provincial administration. Thus, the district proposed that Mahrukizades should dispatch all their documents to Yenişehir through a representative, who would be present during the designation of the borders.⁶²⁹ As such, the district administration opted for wearing-out the Mahrukizades through procrastination.

From the viewpoint of the local administration, there were on the one hand, hundreds of immigrant households, who upheld that they have a right to land, be it given them by the state or be it reclaimed by their own labor and investments. These people did not care about the legal status of the lands exquisitely lying in front of them unutilized; rather they were deeply concerned about preserving their status as independent, landed peasant households in their new homelands. As such, they strongly resisted double taxation (or paying rents). The disputes between the Christian peasantry and the Muslim land-owners in the Balkans throughout the Tanzimat era should have taught these Muslim immigrants that double taxation amounted to a loss of status, a harsh demotion in their case. On the other hand, there were a couple of absentee land-owners claiming right of possession over tens of thousands of *dönüms* of waqf lands from their residences in İstanbul and Bursa. Armored with many official land documents, court rulings and administrative decisions, they were almost always the legally rightful party.

Yet, the local administration had to deal with the immigrant communities at the everyday level of governance; it was to oversee and contain what actually would follow if the immigrants were pushed out of the waqf lands by force. Anticipating the high

⁶²⁹ DH. MKT 31-49.

socio-political and economic costs of violent confrontations with the immigrants, different levels of provincial administration chose to overwhelm the trustees of the waqfs through rounds of bureaucratic correspondences and trials at the courts. Facing such setbacks, the trustees resorted to the highest possible authority in the Empire: the Sultan.⁶³⁰ But, the Sultan's decisions favoring them were to be implemented on the ground through the provincial administration. Thus, adding rents to the taxes was the most suitable mid-way that the provincial administration could work out when pressured by the orders of the Sultan. The continuing land disputes between the villagers and the trustees hint that this resolution did not work smoothly either.

3.3.3. The Mahrukizades vs. the Hamidiye Village

Amid “the scarcity” of land in North-western Anatolia, Mahrukizade lands laid like a big prize attracting many immigrant communities. But, what sort of land did they have? How “big” was it? What did it topographically look like? As should be clear by now, the documents of land that were in circulation throughout the late Ottoman era could run wild about the dönüms. The extent of Mahrukizade lands for instance, could vary from 7000 to 112.000 *dönüms*. The difficulty was not merely related to the shortcomings in the adaptation of standardized measures or poor record keeping. The land regime carried with it a whole history of successions, changes of status, usurpations, deceits and political grants extending to several centuries. Hence, plots of land with a plethora of rights of possession, ownership, usage and actual utilization laid side by side. Throughout the centuries not only the political regimes under which these lands were administered changed, but also geographical landmarks were transformed. Villages were formed and abandoned, the borders between forests and agricultural lands shifted and some swampy lands were drained etc. Thus, over the long term, the land regime unfolded in a dynamic process carrying the effects and trends of previous eras in the upcoming eras.

⁶³⁰ Y. MTV 111-9; ŞD 2579-14.

With all these reservations blurring the overall picture, we can still roughly locate Mahrukizade lands on the map. Their lands laid about 20 kilometers west of the town center, today divided by the highway binding Yenişehir to Bursa. In the north, their lands encapsulated a hill belonging to Katırlı Mountain range separating İznik from Yenişehir plain. This northern part of their lands is higher and more mountainous than the southern part located on the plain. Forests and some pastures were probably included in this part. In the south, where their lands reached roughly to the borders of the contemporary airport, agricultural production should be easier, yet swampy stretches of land should have made habitation more difficult due to harsher sanitary conditions. All in all Mahrukizade lands were probably 20-30 kilometer square (or about 25.000 *dönüms*) of lands with differing qualities. However, all their lands were not a single, continuous plot; rather lands belonging to other waqfs and state-owned lands spotted their plots, which concentrated on the above described location.

Mahrukizade family owed their right of possession over these lands to the overturn of power during the reign of Mahmud II. The provincial power-holder, who controlled these lands was İnegöllü Derviş Paşazade Numan Bey. His death in the early 19th century led to the division of his lands among his heirs. Some of these lands eventually reverted to the Ottoman state, most probably due to the death of some descendents without heirs. Mahmud II awarded some of these lands to palace officials, like Silahtar Ali Ağa. Mahrukizade Ali Bey's mother, Fatma Hanım, who was the wife of the ex-Kaptan-ı Derya Ali Paşa, was either a descendent of İnegöllü Numan Bey, or she too was awarded the lands belonging to Numan Bey by Mahmud II, as an act of gratitude to the family of the ex-Kaptan-ı Derya, who was martyred during the Greek revolt.⁶³¹ At any rate, during the early Tanzimat era, the family could keep together the lands that they somehow inherited and/or were awarded. Mahrukizade Ali Bey's career, which reached its apex at the directorship of the Ottoman treasury, should have helped the family in pursuing their interests *vis a vis* these lands. In fact, they achieved tying various different plots of land to the waqf of Vani Efendi under their trusteeship throughout these years.⁶³²

⁶³¹ The smaller plots of land belonging to Fatma Hanım outside the two Mahrukizade *çiftlik*s indicate that she probably inherited her lands in Yenişehir, rather than being awarded them by Sultan Mahmud II.

⁶³² ŞD 1551-21. For more information about the Mahrukizade lands in Yenişehir see chapter 1, pp. 83-84.

Towards the end of the 19th century, yet another crack down on the land regime was about to occur with the population pressure of the immigrant communities. In the middle of Mahrukizade lands settled the villagers from Hezargrad, forming a large village, continuously biting off from the forests and uncultivated lands of the Mahrukizades. From the north and north-east, the lands of the family were encircled by three more immigrant communities, namely, the new villages of Fethiye and Selimiye⁶³³ and the immigrants from Zağra settled in Toprakocak village.⁶³⁴ In the west, the Armenian villagers of Marmaracık had already been on bad terms with the family due to disputes of land⁶³⁵. In the south-east, another native Muslim village, Çeltikçi clashed with Mahrukizades towards 1890s, when the family extended over lands that did not belong to it with a view of preventing new immigrant settlements on the borders of its lands.⁶³⁶ Being invaded at its center and encircled on almost four sides, Mahrukizade lands still attracted many immigrant communities, who were separately settled among the native population of Yenişehir and/or residing in different parts of the Southern Marmara region. These groups tirelessly lobbied the Ottoman government for being settled on the fertile lands in the vicinity of Mahrukizade lands.⁶³⁷

In the legal and administrative fronts, Mahrukizades tackled with two major opponents for keeping the control of their lands. One of them was Hamidiye village and the other was a 50-household immigrant community from Şumnu, 30 or 40 households of which were settled among the local population of Yenişehir. This dispersed Rumelian village hired a vocal shopkeeper in Yenişehir, Abdülkadir, most probably a well-off and educated immigrant himself, for initiating and following up their hunt for land in the disputed stretches of land, known as Katırcı Çayırı, neighboring the *çiftlik*s of the Mahrukizade family.⁶³⁸ In the case of Hamidiye, the immigrants pressured the Ottoman government for formalizing their settlement on Mahrukizade lands, which took place

⁶³³ DH. MKT 31-49.

⁶³⁴ ŞD 1581-5.

⁶³⁵ See chapter 1, p. 88.

⁶³⁶ DH. MKT 66-3.

⁶³⁷ ŞD 1581-5.

⁶³⁸ In fact the district administration of Ertuğrul took Abdülkadir to be an opportunist, who collected money from this immigrant community by marketing these immigrants the hope of obtaining fertile lands. ŞD 1551-12. At any rate, his perseverance in this issue points out his genuine involvement on behalf of the immigrants.

through the initiatives of the provincial and local administration in the early 1880s. In the case of Şumnu immigrants, the immigrants tried to get permission to settle on the lands with dubious status, yet certainly threatening Mahrukizade lands. Beyond the more openly legal and formal confrontations between these two groups and Mahrukizades, various informal disputes and quarrels between the representatives, employees and tenants of the family and the surrounding villages were ever present.

The disputes of land involving Şumnu immigrants and Hamidiye village took different courses, with Hamidiye commanding more support and sympathy from the provincial administration and the central state. Since the villagers of Hamidiye had been settled on Mahrukizade lands by the local administration already, the passing of time worked in their favor. As they became more integrated with the local communities and began paying taxes to the state⁶³⁹, their evacuation from Mahrukizade lands became an unrealistic, theoretical option utilized by the land-owning family for minimizing its losses through getting more compensation from the central state.

After the death of Mahrukizade Ali Bey, his children inherited his lands in Yenişehir. In order to assert their ownership, the heirs paid 64.000 *kuruş* inheritance fee (*harc-ı intikal*) to the Evkaf treasury. After paying this substantial fee, they asked from the Office of Land Registration issuance of a single document ratifying their right of possession over waqf lands of 14.974 *dönüms* in 18 different plots. However, the Land Registration Office denied their request; because different sorts of lands, such as forests and agricultural lands could not be tied to a single document. In fact, the district of Ertuğrul, which Yenişehir was tied to, deliberately delayed issuing documents to Mahrukizades, because of the ambiguous situation of the Hamidiye village. In 1890, the district notified Bursa that in the year 1880-81, about 3000 *dönüms* of land within Mahrukizade çiftlik was given to the immigrants from Hezargrad. Within a decade, the number of immigrant households reached 120. Hence, let alone being content with 3000 *dönüms*, the immigrants opened up about 2000 more *dönüms* of Mahrukizade lands to agriculture. Overall, they were invading about 5000 *dönüms* of land. In this context, neither kicking the immigrants out of these lands, nor completely annulling the right of possession of the Mahrukizade family was permissible. Therefore, the Ottoman state

⁶³⁹ During the survey of the year 1301 (1884), the villagers of Hamidiye were given deeds through the detachment of “their” lands from the lands of Mahrukizades’ çiftlik, and their taxes were subtracted from the taxes of the çiftlik. ŞD 1581-5.

contemplated giving the family some state-owned lands in the vicinity of their invaded lands as compensation for the abridgement of their rights⁶⁴⁰.

However, it soon turned out that there remained no vacant state-owned lands within Ertuğrul. In the meantime, the local administration of Yenişehir billed tax arrears to Mahrukizades for the unpaid taxes of the invaded lands. When the family protested this undue demand⁶⁴¹, the local administration turned to the villagers of Hamidiye to make them pay the taxes due to the Mahrukizade's *çiftlik*. The villagers also rejected paying these taxes; as far as they were concerned they were awarded vacant, state-owned lands by the local administration.⁶⁴² The Ottoman government solved this problem by cancelling the amount of taxes of the *çiftlik* corresponding to the lands occupied by the immigrant village.⁶⁴³ This was in fact a drawback for Mahrukizades, because the village was recognized as an independent tax-paying unit, with no links to the *çiftlik* it originally belonged to. Yet, Mahrukizades did not recede from their legal claims on the lands occupied by Hamidiye. When the problem persisted, the Ministry of Evkaf proposed taking the old rent of the lands from the immigrants as an addition to their taxes. But, this offer was an undesirable solution for the related parties, because the immigrants obviously did not want to pay more taxes and the relatively small sum of money that Mahrukizades would receive as rent would not obviously return them back their lands. Thus, the only remaining option was the buying of Mahrukizade lands by the central state.⁶⁴⁴

The Ottoman government turned to the local administration for assessing the value of Mahrukizade lands. However, the payment to the family would be done according to the value of land before immigration, since increased demand for land and the buildup of land by the immigrants should have pushed the prices upward. The locals of Yenişehir estimated the value of occupied Mahrukizade lands as 148.000 *kuruş* and stressed that the price of land somehow remained the same after the immigration.⁶⁴⁵ For

⁶⁴⁰ ŞD 1549-60.

⁶⁴¹ DH. MKT 1863-48.

⁶⁴² DH. MKT 1866-35.

⁶⁴³ DH. MKT 1867-48.

⁶⁴⁴ DH. MKT 1986-121.

⁶⁴⁵ İ. DH 1301-56.

the Mahrukizade family, who had already paid 64.000 *kuruş* just to ratify their right of possession, this was a pitiable sum.⁶⁴⁶ When they objected, a re-evaluation was done in Yenişehir, which estimated the value of the occupied lands around 433.000 *kuruş*. The Council of State, which was following the dispute, decided that either the immigrants should be evacuated from Mahrukizade lands and the losses of the family compensated by the state or the lands belonging to the family should be bought by the state for a price reflecting the real worth of land. Against the backdrop of the legal resolution of the Council of State, the Council of Ministers decided that 433.000 *kuruş* was the present value of the disputed land, whereas 148.000 *kuruş* was its value before immigration. Also, there was no need to buy all Mahrukizade lands; they were to be paid 148.000 *kuruş* for the occupied parts of their *çiftlik*s.⁶⁴⁷

When the Council of Ministers insisted on its decision without getting the approval of the family, Mahrukizades strongly objected such a “solution” amounting to their dispossession. They argued that the immigrant village was located in the middle of their *çiftlik*s. With its ever expanding boundaries, the village rendered the remaining parts of the *çiftlik*s very difficult to use and to protect from further encroachments. Thus, the state should buy all Mahrukizade lands with their real value and not just the lands which were formally occupied. In fact, during the inspection of Vefik Efendi in 1863, Mahrukizades’ property was assessed almost two million *kuruş* value; since then, the family was paying its taxes based on this (most probably inflated) value. Only the tithe of the occupied lands was about 18.000 *kuruş*, indicating that these lands could produce about 180.000 *kuruş* worth crops annually. Thus, 148.000 *kuruş* would not even recoup the value of a single year’s yield.⁶⁴⁸ Therefore, the family rejected the payment offered by the Ottoman state. Instead, Mahrukizades simply asked the state to uphold their right of possession by evacuating the immigrants from their lands; otherwise “the right of possession” would be completely meaningless. (*Hukuk-u tasarrufun ne hükmü kalmış olur!*)⁶⁴⁹ Apparently, the Council of Ministers was not impressed by such a legally fortified stance, it merely recalled the payment sent to

⁶⁴⁶ ŞD 2613-40; BEO 209-15661; BEO 538-040319-3-1.

⁶⁴⁷ DH. MKT 31-49.

⁶⁴⁸ BEO 538-040319-3-1.

⁶⁴⁹ See Cafer Bey’s petition in DH. MKT 31-49.

Bursa and communicated the family that it was up to them to resort to the relevant courts for seeking justice.⁶⁵⁰

The Ottoman government's overall subordination of the law to political expediency in Yenişehir eventually produced violent clashes on the ground. "The unresolved nature of the agrarian question"⁶⁵¹ led the parties of the land disputes to resort to extra-legal means of protecting their interests. Thus, in the early 1890s, when it became clear that a definite resolution to the land disputes could not be worked out through legal and administrative channels, big land owners took up more aggressive measures for patrolling their lands. For example, in 1891, ten community leaders of the immigrants settled in Menteşe village were detained by the owner of a neighboring *çiftlik*, who accused the immigrant villagers of intervening his *çiftlik*'s lands.⁶⁵² Likewise, Mahrukizade family hired armed shepherds for protecting its lands from further encroachments by the native and immigrant villages located in the vicinity of and within their *çiftlik*s.⁶⁵³ In 1893, the shepherds and the villagers beat up each other quite seriously, and the parties ended up in prison after various skirmishes. While Mahrukizades petitioned the Ottoman government on behalf of their shepherds, who allegedly were not treated justly by the local administration⁶⁵⁴; the immigrant villagers of Hamidiye succeeded in getting the attention of the authorities in İstanbul by claiming that the shepherds killed two men from their village, when in fact they beat one of them and injured the other with a gun in a fight over usage of water. The shepherds were imprisoned immediately and released after completing their terms.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁰ DH. MKT 31-49; MV 76-112.

⁶⁵¹ Terzibaşoğlu, "Ottoman Agrarian Question," 323.

⁶⁵² DH. MKT 1889-27.

⁶⁵³ The relationship between these shepherds and Mahrukizades is somewhat blurred, since these men occasionally figure as the tenants of the land-owning family. As Yücel Terzibaşoğlu notes, "... the renting out of such empty lands or placing guards was motivated by the need to protect the individual rights of ownership with the pressure on land induced by sedentarisation and refugee settlement at the end of the 19th century." Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "'A very important requirement of social life': Privatization of Land, Criminalisation of Custom, and Land Disputes in Nineteenth-century Anatolia," in *Les acteurs des transformations foncières autour de la Méditerranée au XIXe siècle*, ed. Vanessa Guéno and Didier Guignard (Paris: Karthala, 2013), 42. In this regard, Mahrukizades' practice was widespread among the big absentee land-owners of Western Anatolia, who benefited from the favorable trends in animal husbandry for keeping the immigrants out of their lands.

⁶⁵⁴ DH. MKT 66-3.

⁶⁵⁵ DH. MKT 2065-3.

Beyond the clashes between the land owners and the immigrant communities in Yenişehir, the Mahrukizade family attempted to compensate its losses through its own initiatives. By hiring armed shepherds, the family expanded to the commons of several villages, included within the meadow known as Katırcı Çayırı, illegally renting out these lands to outsiders engaging in large-scale animal-husbandry. However, Katırcı Çayırı attracted many immigrant communities in search of land. The immigrant communities contested Mahrukizades' illegal occupation of these lands by actively and consistently lobbying the Ottoman government for getting some parts of this meadow for establishing their own villages. As I shall explain below, the contestations of land, revolving around the somewhat mysterious Katırcı Çayırı demonstrate not only the dynamics of power struggles for controlling the rural resources in Yenişehir, but also reveal the strategic turns of the processes of privatization of land due to the population pressure generated by the immigrant communities.

3.3.4. Katırcı Çayırı: A Land Lost in Translation amid Privatization

Katırcı Çayırı laid to the south of Mahrukizade *çiftliks*, and included uncultivated, vast lands. According to the records of the Ottoman state, no land in Yenişehir was registered with the name “Katırcı Çayırı”.⁶⁵⁶ It was thus a meadow, which officially did not exist. According to the locals' usage and testimony, Katırcı Çayırı was apparently about 20-25.000 *dönüms* of land, roughly corresponding to the area occupied by the contemporary airport in Yenişehir. This meadow was in fact a combination of various sorts of lands with multiple legal statuses, though a substantial amount of it remained unregistered until the last quarter of the 19th century, indicating its common status. The meadow contained some lands belonging to the waqfs, whose trustees had long disappeared. Likewise, it contained some pastures collectively held by a couple of villages, some of which had ceased to exist. It probably included some state-owned lands and some unclaimed inheritance property usurped by the local magnates of

⁶⁵⁶ ŞD 1551-12; ŞD 1581-5.

power. What we know for sure is that the Mahrukizade family owned 410 *dönüms* of land within these contested lands.⁶⁵⁷

In terms of actual usage, the meadow was clearly under-utilized. Some of the native villages neighboring it had other pastures.⁶⁵⁸ The newly formed immigrant villages, such as Hamidiye, which was in the vicinity of the meadow, probably aspired to use some parts of it as pasture.⁶⁵⁹ Before the arrival of the immigrants however, it is probable that the nomadic groups of the region were using parts of the meadow as seasonal grazing grounds, and the villages surrounding it used its resources as they needed. As such, a sizeable amount of land within Katırcı Çayırını was in practice common property, which escaped registration and quantification efforts of the Ottoman state throughout the 19th century. With the further concentration of the immigrant population in Yenişehir towards 1890s, such “uncategorized” and “open” lands began to pose serious threats to Mahrukizades’ *çiftlik*s, which had been already invaded from within in the early 1880s.

The Mahrukizade family sent one of the sons of the deceased Mahrukizade Ali Bey, Şefik Bey, to Yenişehir to protect the interests and rights of the family, which the heirs thought to have been disregarded by the local and central state authorities. In Yenişehir, Mahrukizade Şefik Bey hired armed men to enclose Katırcı Çayırını, and then he rented out the lands included within the meadow to outsiders engaging in animal husbandry for 200 golden *liras* annual rent.⁶⁶⁰ He thus usurped the whole meadow, when in fact he merely had 410 *dönüms* of land within it. Yet, he could not legally pursue his case beyond 410 *dönüms* belonging to the Mahrukizade family. In order to forestall the settlement of the immigrants in the lands of the meadow, he claimed that the meadow was the common pasture of the villages surrounding it. From the viewpoint of the Ottoman government, formation of immigrant villages on the pastures of native villages was not permissible due to the dangers of confrontations between different rural communities for land. Thus, under the disguise of protecting the rights of the

⁶⁵⁷ ŞD 1551-12. This file includes documents manifesting how the Ottoman government strove to locate Katırcı Çayırını by scanning through its records in a hairsplitting manner.

⁶⁵⁸ ŞD 1581-5.

⁶⁵⁹ The immigrant villagers of Hamidiye allied with the Şumnu immigrants against Mahrukizade Şefik Bey. Mahrukizades were their common enemies. ŞD 1581-5.

⁶⁶⁰ MV 71-51.

surrounding villages, Şefik Bey had the sub-district and district councils produce documents notifying Bursa to the effect that this meadow contained the common pasture of the native villages.⁶⁶¹ When the Ottoman state cross-checked its records on the disputed lands, it found no record on Katırcı Çayırı. In fact, during the land surveys in Yenişehir, common pastures of the villages were not registered. Thus, the Ottoman state concluded that the unregistered meadow, known as Katırcı Çayırı, should be a village pasture held in common.⁶⁶²

The immigrant community, which struggled hardest for getting lands from Katırcı Çayırı were the Şumnu immigrants, represented by a shopkeeper in Yenişehir, Abdülkadir. This community, some households of which were settled separately among the native inhabitants of Yenişehir initiated their formal application for the lands in Katırcı Çayırı towards the end of 1880s.⁶⁶³ In the name of these Şumnu immigrants, Abdülkadir not only struggled against Mahrukizade Şefik Bey, but also competed with many other immigrant communities, who had an eye on the same lands. When Şefik Bey managed to persuade the Ottoman government that Katırcı Çayırı was basically a pasture held in common by the surrounding villages, Abdülkadir continued to petition the central authorities, arguing that if the meadow was indeed the common pasture of the surrounding villages, then Şefik Bey had to be expelled from these lands. He was not only renting out the lands that did not belong to him, but also he did not let any other party, including the native villages, use the meadow.⁶⁶⁴

Abdülkadir, however, did not content himself merely with the strategic move of discrediting Şefik Bey's activities in the meadow; rather he listed the support of the existing villages, which Şefik Bey pointed out as the rightful possessors of the pasture included in the meadow. The *muhtars* of the villages, Çeltikçi, Marmaracık, Toprakocak and Koyunhisarı disowned their alleged pasture, postulating that these lands belonged to no one from early on. Thus, animals from outside of Yenişehir had been grazing on these lands, without any payment to the Ottoman treasury, and therefore they added, it

⁶⁶¹ ŞD 1581-5.

⁶⁶² ŞD 1551-12.

⁶⁶³ ŞD 1551-12; ŞD 1581-5.

⁶⁶⁴ ŞD 1551-12.

was suitable for the settlement of the immigrants.⁶⁶⁵ This maneuver of the Şumnu immigrants boldly revealed Mahrukizade Şefik Bey's enclosure of the meadow as an illegal usurpation of land. After 12 years of struggle, the Şumnu immigrants achieved obtaining a Sultanic order consenting their settlement on the lands located within Katırcı Çayırı in the early 1900s. Yet, as in the case of the Mahrukizade family against the Hamidiye village, being the legally rightful party did not always guarantee a redress of status quo. As such, being continuously over-burdened by hundreds of land disputes, the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr dragged its feet on the actual implementation of this Sultanic order, probably with a view of forestalling further clashes between the opposing parties, hence the settlement could not occur.⁶⁶⁶

The disputed lands of Katırcı Çayırı demonstrate that population pressure in Yenişehir enhanced "privatization of land" by erasing the last remnants of the commons in the countryside. We do not know for sure, who eventually "owned" the lands of the meadow.⁶⁶⁷ But, we know for sure that local knowledge on and traditional usages of land bowed to the *Zeitgeist* privileging official documentation and individual ownership of land. In this context, it is remarkable that the native villages did not opt for arguing the common status of these lands; rather chose to "disown" this land, so that it could be officially registered for an owner that they preferred over another aspirant, namely, Mahrukizade Şefik Bey. Native inhabitants preferred immigrant villages as their neighbors over a big land-owner, who had been jealously restricting their access to the rural resources. Thus, even though the common status of these legally dubious lands was not any more tenable, a more collaborative use of the meadow was possible through the creation of an immigrant village, "saving" these lands from the invasion of Şefik Bey's armed guards.

The case of Katırcı Çayırı also demonstrates that the immigrant communities were vocal actors that were not daunted by the powerful, İstanbul-based elites like the

⁶⁶⁵ ŞD 1551-12.

⁶⁶⁶ The documents authorizing the settlement were sent from the Council of State's Internal Affairs Department to the Immigration Commission, which forwarded them to the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr for further investigation. At this point, Hüdavendigâr halted the documents, and did not respond to the other governmental departments involved in the settlement process in 1901-1902. ŞD 1581-5.

⁶⁶⁷ If some of the lands corresponding to "Katırcı Çayırı" are now indeed included within the area occupied by the contemporary airport, then we can presume that these lands eventually ended up at the hands of the state. The plots making up the airport used to belong to the villagers from the surrounding villages, such as Makri (contemporary Yolören), Karasil and Çeltikçi. During the building of the airport these lands were expropriated by the state.

Mahrukizades. The Şumnu immigrants took the bull by the horns by listing the support of the native inhabitants of Yenişehir, as soon as they discovered the existing pitfalls between the big land-owners and the native villagers due to the processes of privatization of land in Yenişehir. They rode on these political cracks for pursuing their own interests. Yet, by the time they mobilized for establishing their own villages (that is towards the end of 1880s), the Ottoman government had discovered the structural underpinnings of the endless disputes of land flowing to the capital city from Western Anatolia. As opposed to the *fait accompli* of the early 1880s, through which the immigrant communities were favored in the urgency and magnitude of the settlement problem, the Ottoman state took a more cautious tract that took into account “the legal” rights of the land-owners more seriously in the 1890s. After all freezing the law for political expediency had its limits, beyond which circles of violence would reign in the countryside. In this context, in the early 1890s, Western Anatolia seemed to be already saturated with enough immigrant communities causing many land disputes to overburden the administrative and judicial institutions of the late Ottoman state located both in the provinces and at the capital city. Thus, Şumnu immigrants were basically late for the land rush in the Bursa region.

3.4. Conclusion

The land disputes accompanying the settlement processes of the immigrants in Yenişehir point out a “differentiated imperial rights regime”⁶⁶⁸ that could not be fully contained within liberal conceptions underlying the laws on land. Immigrant communities and land-owning elites were though “equal” before the law, they were surely not equal before the Ottoman administration, which needed to flex the law for the sake of governance. In other words, a strict adherence to “the rule of law” would render Western Anatolia ungovernable in the context of the massive influx of the refugees

⁶⁶⁸ I borrowed this term from Jane Burbank, who uses it to juxtapose the late imperial Russia’s practices of governance through social difference. She juxtaposes the multifaceted imperial legal system with the ideals of universal and natural rights. Unlike Rousseau’s ideal of social contract, rights were assigned and alienable, which facilitated management of diverse collectivities in Russia. Jane Burbank, "An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 3 (2006). I do not however use “an imperial rights regime” purely in terms of the legal system within the late Ottoman Empire; rather I use it to refer to the wider practical application of “the law” and “rights” in relation to land-holding.

from Rumelia. As such, the presumed and codified “rights” of different Ottoman Muslims were negotiated within an imperial rights regime that attributed differing values and costs to the positions of the claimants in the land disputes. The Muslim immigrants, who lost their homelands in Rumelia reached Anatolia with a strong sense of belonging to the Ottoman establishment. Thus, it never passed their minds that they could as well be left to destitution and pauperization in Anatolia. They had a right to have access to land, and they perceived it in the responsibility of the Ottoman government to ensure their settlement in Anatolia as independent peasant producers. Even though they were outsiders in Western Anatolia, within the wider context of the Ottoman polity, they were insiders akin to “citizens” with rights and responsibilities. The land-owners, on the other hand, spoke the language of the rule of law and security of property, which the late Ottoman state upheld since the beginning of the Tanzimat. When clashes over the control of land became inevitable in Yenişehir, the “legitimate” claims of the immigrant communities prevailed over the “lawful” positions of the land-owners,.

However, in addition to the Ottoman government’s overall positive attitude towards the immigrant communities, the local political arena of Yenişehir was decisive in channeling the settlement towards the extensive waqf lands under the possession of the absentee land-owners with a view of protecting the local interests. When the immigrants occupied the lands belonging to the local notables at the town center, the locals chased them away by effectively using the sharia court, the local council and the local police force, and got Bursa involved in the dispute on their terms. Yet, when the interests of the absentee land-owners were at stake, the same sub-district administration drew a dormant and lackadaisical profile, causing the land-owners to complain about “the unmatched support” (*mazhar-ı sahabet-i bi-misal*)⁶⁶⁹ that the immigrants commanded in the local administration of Yenişehir. Furthermore, not only did the locals delivered the word about “empty” lands within Mahrukizade’s çiftlik to the governor, Ahmed Vefik Paşa, but also the local administration issued deeds to the immigrant communities and “legalized” invaded lands by acknowledging the immigrant communities as tax-payers, whenever the circumstances permitted. Against the allied front of the local administration and the immigrant communities, the land-owners did

⁶⁶⁹ ŞD 1551-12.

whatever was possible through legal and administrative channels. They even took their issues to the attention of the Sultan, asking for the redress of the abridgement of their rights. However, at the quotidian level, the native peasantry of Yenişehir chose the immigrant communities as their neighbors over the more aggressive land-owners, who were enclosing rural resources to the native inhabitants ever more jealously due to the processes of privatization of land.

Studies that analyze the settlement of the immigrants in Anatolia during the last quarter of the 19th century underline that the settlement entailed “re-making Anatolia a more homogenous territory, a homeland, for the Muslim subjects of the Empire.”⁶⁷⁰ Thus, the first answer to the politically charged question of “who should own land in Anatolia?” was “the Muslims”. In the context of Yenişehir, the answer to this question was “obviously Muslims”; but “which Muslims were to own land in Yenişehir?” was the following question. The crisis –ridden context of the after-war period enabled the locals of Yenişehir to voice their choices in this regard. They demonstrated that the immigrant households should own land in Yenişehir rather than the big land-owners. As such, they turned the tide in the processes of privatization of land, which until then mostly favored the big land-owners. Privatization of land would continue, but it would now work for the benefit of the small immigrant households, who gradually had the lands they occupied, registered in their names.

At the beginning of the 19th century the Bursa region was sparsely populated and vast *çiftlik*s marked the overall landscape with their uncultivated lands. At the turn of the 20th century however, the *çiftlik*s significantly contracted as a result of the population pressure generated by massive migration. Thus, villages came to dominate the overall geographic outlook of Western Anatolia.⁶⁷¹ Even though the Hamidian era did not open up with a bright start, it managed to flourish in the Bursa region by basing itself on this social landscape transformed by the immigrant communities. The next chapter examines how “the Hamidian contract” was negotiated and experienced in the context of the sub-district of Yenişehir.

⁶⁷⁰ Terzibaşoğlu, “Land Disputes and Ethno-politics,” 163.

⁶⁷¹ Nedim İpek quotes a geographer, Necdet Tunçbilek, for describing the evolution of land-holding patterns and settlement in Anatolia throughout the 19th century. İpek, *Rumeli'den Anadolu'ya*, 228.

CHAPTER 4

CONSOLIDATION OF THE HAMIDIAN REGIME IN YENİŞEHİR: IDEOLOGY, MODERNIZATION AND THE LOCAL SOCIETY (1885-1897)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines how the Hamidian regime took root in Yenişehir by focusing primarily on the ideological and administrative claims of the central state and their reception in local contexts. How were the Hamidian ideology and accompanying operations and policies of the central state reflected in Yenişehir as the regime consolidated itself throughout the Empire? In what ways did the various social strata interact with the new regime? In order to address these questions, I will examine how the Hamidian state strove to form a societal base supporting its modernization efforts by expanding its ideological and tangible reach over Yenişehir. In this respect, creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* (the district of Ertuğrul), to which Yenişehir was attached in 1885, demonstrates how the Hamidian regime engineered a rapprochement between the state and provincial societies by forming consensus in ideological and material fronts. Subsequently, I will analyze public rituals, ceremonials and ushering authoritarianism as features of the “Hamidian” public sphere mediating between the personalized power of the sultan and local societies. Both the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* and the expansion of the public sphere highlight the ways in which the Hamidian regime formed a hegemonic presence, albeit marked with tensions, in and around Yenişehir. I will then address the limits of Hamidian hegemony by focusing on individual agencies, the multiplicity of local publics and the delicate coexistence of “Islamic Ottomanism” and

“civic Ottomanism” in the Bursa region. For assessing the limits of the Hamidian state, I will excavate how the Muslim communities in Yenişehir and İznik responded to the educational policies, which the government deemed crucial for ideological transmission. Finally, I will address the local non-Muslim communities’ relationships with the Hamidian state within the framework of the Islamic political rhetoric of the regime on the one hand, and the conjunctural developments pertaining to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, such as the Armenian crisis of mid-1890s, and more generally, nationalist movements during the last quarter of the 19th century, on the other.

The scholarly literature on the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II stresses that the Hamidian administration pursued a deliberate policy of prioritizing Anatolian and Arab provinces, where Muslim subjects formed substantial majorities, in terms of investments in public services and infrastructure. This policy was to a large extent an outcome of the demographic and territorial shifts, resulting in the loss of substantial Christian populations and the Rumelian lands inhabited by them after the Russo-Ottoman War.⁶⁷² The district of Ertuğrul was perhaps an epitome of the Empire’s gravitation towards the Muslim majorities through an explicitly ideological administrative re-organization. It was a distinctively Hamidian project subsuming “myth of origin” and “invention of tradition” within quasi-national dynastic legitimation. As such, it resembled many contemporary polities, such as Russia, Austria, Germany and Japan, which used myths of origin and the cult of the emperor for claiming monarchical legitimation within processes of modern state formation.⁶⁷³ From the viewpoints of the inhabitants of Yenişehir however, the creation of Ertuğrul was an inconvenient and inefficient top-down administrative re-organization of the Hamidian state. The project disregarded Yenişehir’s historical and economic ties with the city of Bursa. As such, the creation of Ertuğrul Sancağı as an ideologically motivated project imposed on the inhabitants of Yenişehir, strikingly resembles Ahmed Vefik Efendi’s top-down modernization schemes of 1863-64 inspection tour. However, unlike Vefik

⁶⁷² Engin D. Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization- an Overview," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26, no. 3 (2006): 360-361; Gökhan Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası: Bir Dönemlendirme Denemesi," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/ The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, no. 47 (2016): 380.

⁶⁷³ Selim Deringil, "The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 01 (1993); Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet (1876-1914)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 29-30; Julia P. Cohen, "Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism: Jewish Imperial Citizenship in the Hamidian Era," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 02 (2012): 238.

Efendi's short-lived projects, *Ertuğrul Sancağı* proved to be quite resilient, out-living not only the Hamidian era, but also the Ottoman Empire. So, how did this come about?

After taking over the financial chaos of the previous Tanzimat era, the statesmen of Sultan Abdülhamid's reign believed that "the essence of a state was its finances; the finances of a state depended on the wealth of its subjects, and the wealth of the subjects depended on the liveliness of commerce and agriculture, which could be improved by the construction of roads, bridges and ports."⁶⁷⁴ In this respect, *Ertuğrul* as a project not only reflected the Hamidian ideology initiating its creation, but also indicated accelerated modernization through infrastructural investments, catering simultaneously to the needs of the central state and the inhabitants of the new district. An upsurge in investments in public infrastructure, especially the construction of a network of roads all over the district, immense improvements in public services and a refreshing touch to the whole physical landscape through forestation, building of various promenades and construction of pavements at the town centers substantiated the *Ertuğrul* project. The new district was envisaged as a showcase of Ottoman modernization, taking up from and improving on where the Tanzimat state left. Notwithstanding the novelty of its ideological pillars, the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* was significantly a continuation of the previous Tanzimat modernization in material terms.⁶⁷⁵ Naturally, the scales of various projects underlying the creation of the new district as a compact administrative unit required massive human, financial and material resources. The dilemma for the Hamidian state was how to invest in costly state modernization without possessing resources at the outset.

I contend that during the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* in mid-1880s, a rapprochement between the Hamidian state and the provincial societies of the new district occurred, whereby the former coordinated the modernization projects based on the resources and input contributed by the latter. In other words, the Hamidian state opted for making peace with strained provincial societies so as to convince them to work with the central state for rebuilding the physical landscape and healing the traumatic effects of the Russo-Ottoman War. How it "persuaded" wide segments of the

⁶⁷⁴ Engin D. Akarlı, "Economic Policy and Budgets in Ottoman Turkey, 1876–1909," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 3 (1992): 450.

⁶⁷⁵ Stanford J. Shaw, "Sultan Abdülhamid II: Last Man of the Tanzimat," *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu (Bildiriler)*, 25-27 Aralık 1989 (Ankara: Milli Kütüphane, 1991): 179-197.

local societies reveals the elusive boundaries between the state and society at the practical level, since the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* depended on a thrift “economy of violence.” Unlike Vefik Efendi’s use of force in 1863 and 1864, modernization of the new district proceeded through consensus building of the Hamidian administration, which was not specific to Western Anatolia; rather encapsulated provincial societies all over the Empire with differing degrees and strategies.⁶⁷⁶

Some scholars used theories of state that challenge the state vs. society dichotomy for addressing the elusive boundaries of the state and society during the late Ottoman era. For example, Janet Klein makes use of Joel Migdal’s “state in society” approach for explaining how local dynamics that seemed to be contradicting the state building efforts of the Hamidian administration were nonetheless incorporated into the governmental framework.⁶⁷⁷ Likewise, Michael Meeker conceptualizes the local societies of the Black Sea region as “a state-society”.⁶⁷⁸ In order to analyze state-society relations in Yenisehir during the consolidation of the Hamidian regime, I would however, prefer a Gramscian approach, since this chapter predominantly takes issue with ideology and generation of consent. I contend that the Hamidian regime formed a governmental system that resembled Gramscian “integral state”, emerging and gathering its cultural force from the society.⁶⁷⁹ In other words, the material and moral strength of the Hamidian state depended precisely upon its ability to assimilate cultural, ideological, political, economic and even religious activity taking place within “civil society” in order to transform it into legitimating support.⁶⁸⁰

Throughout the consolidation of his rule, Sultan Abdülhamid II grappled with generating a modern body politic that was bound together not only by the coercive

⁶⁷⁶ See for example, Eugene L Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Michael E Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: the Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁶⁷⁷ See, Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011); Joel S Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶⁷⁸ Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*, 185-226.

⁶⁷⁹ Benedetto Fontana, "Hegemony and Power in Gramsci," in *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion*, ed. Richard Howson and Kylie Smith (New York: Routledge, 2008), 92-93. For a different take on “hegemony” in the late Ottoman- early republican studies, see, Benjamin Fortna, "Reading, Hegemony and Counterhegemony in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic," in *Counterhegemony in the Colony and Postcolony*, ed. John T. Chalcraft and Yaseen Noorani (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 141-154.

⁶⁸⁰ Fontana, “Hegemony,” 94.

powers of the central state, but also by a network of social alliances and a shared sense of identity.⁶⁸¹ In this respect, the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* demonstrates the formation of a grand coalition and efforts of sustaining this coalition for supporting the Hamidian regime, and thereby implementing modernization policies through synchronizing the resources of the state and provincial societies. Alliance formation based on consent required the creation of this grand coalition, which was to transcend narrow and particular interests to form more general ones.⁶⁸² Indeed, the Hamidian administration opted not only for the co-optation of the local notables, but also for appealing to even the lowest social strata within the provincial societies.⁶⁸³ On the one hand, the regime weaved intricate webs of relationship between the center and the provincial societies of Ertuğrul through a hierarchical rewarding system that publicly and officially acknowledged and encouraged the contributions of the local notables to the efforts of state-building and modernization within the district.⁶⁸⁴ On the other hand, rural populations benefitted from the improvement of public services and infrastructural investments. Moreover, specific policies targeting the lower social strata, such as tax-amnesties granted to the poor subjects and the improvement of the conditions of prisons with a view of providing better quality of life to the prisoners were on the agenda of the government. Hence, the creation of Ertuğrul exemplifies how the local notables and peasant masses supported the modernization program of the Hamidian state through cash and in-kind contributions in the formers' case; and by providing immense manpower for large-scale infrastructural projects in the latter's case.

The ways in which the Hamidian regime carved out a supportive socio-political base unravel a strong ideological component on the one hand, and the means of creating and sustaining a "public sphere" for the dissemination of this ideology, on the other. The autocratic and authoritarian aspects of the Hamidian regime did not preclude the existence of a thriving public sphere; on the contrary, the Hamidian government sought to establish a hegemonic hold on the public sphere as a key element of its legitimation

⁶⁸¹ Akarlı, "Tangled Ends," 358.

⁶⁸² Fontana, "Hegemony," 100.

⁶⁸³ Benjamin Fortna, "The Reign of Abdülhamid II," in *The Cambridge History of Turke Volume 4*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 52.

⁶⁸⁴ See, Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası," 378-379; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 35-37.

strategies. The central state's pact with the provincial societies expanded the public sphere as a political template where the authority of the sultan was formed and the masses participated in the politics within the limits that the political imagery of the regime aspired to set.⁶⁸⁵ I thus examine a celebration of the enthronement anniversary of Sultan Abdülhamid II in Yenişehir and the ostentatious transfer of a *hilye*⁶⁸⁶ as the Sultan's personal gift to the inhabitants of Yenişehir from İstanbul to Yenişehir as vivid examples of how the Hamidian regime interwove autocracy and populist Islamic rhetoric to form a hegemonic public, and thereby strove to list the support of wide segments of the populace.

However, how the general ideological features of the Hamidian state were played out in Yenişehir is one question; how the local inhabitants responded to the reflections of the regime as such is another question.⁶⁸⁷ The latter question is much more difficult to address given the nature of archival documents, which reveal more about the state's perspective than that of the local inhabitants'. Yet, what we have at hand from Yenişehir testifies the slippery character of the hegemonic grounds that the regime depended on. In fact, the expansion of the public sphere by means of including wider social strata through campaigns of "contribution", philanthropic activities and public ceremonies and rituals potentially undermined the authority of the sultan due to their pluralistic nature.⁶⁸⁸ In other words, while the Hamidian administration envisaged the public sphere as a sphere of acclamation and legitimation, many people, who were empowered as participants and/or observers could potentially subvert and challenge state-sponsored premises of the public sphere. For this reason, hegemony over the public sphere has to be won, secured and constantly defended.⁶⁸⁹ That was exactly what

⁶⁸⁵ I follow Nadir Özbek's conception of the late Ottoman public sphere here. Nadir Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876–1909," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 1 (2005): 59-81.

⁶⁸⁶ "Hilye" refers to the literary works and framed inscriptions written with an ornamental style in the genre of describing the physical features of the prophet Mohammed. See, Mustafa Uzun and Uğur Derman, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 18*, s.v. "Hilye," (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1998), 44-51. In the above mentioned case, "hilye" is an inscription.

⁶⁸⁷ Quoting Harold Mah, Nadir Özbek describes this situation for the Hamidian era as "the discrepancy between the phantasy of a unified political subject and a reality of particular social groups", see, Özbek "Philanthropic Activity," 76.

⁶⁸⁸ Özbek, *Sosyal Devlet*, 43.

⁶⁸⁹ Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 322.

the Hamidian regime did. On the one hand, the Hamidian administration had to engage in continuous “internal” fine-tuning⁶⁹⁰ in order to mediate potentially conflicting interests of the rural masses and the local notables within the grand coalition it formed through ideological persuasion. On the other hand, even the Islamic themes that it utilized for consensus building were not under its monopoly; on the contrary, these were deeply rooted traditions, which could potentially form subversive publics.⁶⁹¹

As a matter of fact, whether Islamic or secular; whether systematically formed or spontaneously generated at the quotidian level, the Hamidian regime was acutely aware of the “threats” of alternative publics. In order to counter these threats, it sought to continuously screen the provincial settings through a network of informers. Ironically, these authoritarian measures put forth for suppressing contention and criticism preserved the traces of alternative publics in the state documents for the scrutiny of the contemporary historians. Thus, a casual pastime of a *kaymakam* of Yenişehir, Tahir Efendi, who actually figures on the front in the regime’s rituals and ceremonials, reported by a local spy reveals the undercurrents of an Islamically inspired critical public. Alongside with its “success” of generating consent, the authoritarianism of the Hamidian regime pushed many people towards simulation and reluctant cooperation due to the regime’s hegemonic claims of generating, proliferating and disseminating a given conception of the world, such that it would presumably become “historically true”.⁶⁹² However, ideology did not translate unadulteratedly into reality, for it was vulnerable at the face of human agencies that were supposed to carry it out. Thus, I argue that both the provincial administrators, who represented the official ideology, and the local societies, who were drawn into the orbit of this ideology through public rituals and ceremonials understood the autocratic political culture as a tool of governance, which did not always correspond to actual exercise of power. Hamidian hegemony was not all-encompassing; it had limits, and contained pitfalls, which were well apprehended by the provincial actors.

⁶⁹⁰ Selim Deringil uses the notion of “fine-tuning” for describing the Ottoman state’s efforts to overcome bewildering internal and external problems. Deringil, *Well-protected Domains*, 8-11.

⁶⁹¹ For the political and ideological potentials of “the Islamic tradition” see, İsmail Kara, *Türkiye’de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi: Metinler, Kişiler* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Risale, 1986); İsmail Kara, “Turban and Fez: Ulema as Opposition,” in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 162-200; Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: a Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (N.Y: Syracuse, 2000).

⁶⁹² Fontana, “Hegemony,” 96.

Education was perhaps the most important field, in which the Hamidian state invested for gaining the loyalty of its subjects through ideological and moral cultivation.⁶⁹³ Rather than taking issue with “individual reception” of Hamidian education in Yenişehir, I will address the receptiveness of the local society to “modern” state schools at the level of primary and secondary education. It seems that the inhabitants of Yenişehir developed a pragmatic relationship with the state schools in the *kaza*. On the one hand, there were very few modern primary schools, demonstrating that the local people preferred traditional primary education over the new-method (*usul-i cedid*) schools.⁶⁹⁴ On the other hand, the local society funded the modern secondary schools and willingly sent their kids to these schools, because a *rüşdiye* education potentially offered additional income by rendering the students eligible for employment in various official posts in Yenişehir or in the vicinity of the town. Finally, when their visions of education somehow clashed with that of the Ministry of Education’s, the local society strove to redeem the resources they put forth for funding the secondary schools. In 1908, Sölöz Müslim boldly reclaimed its initial investment in the secondary school building by transmitting false information to the central state, with a view of placating the actual utilization of the building for non-educational purposes. The village did so through stressing the local community’s alleged adherence to the state’s “illuminating” ideals of education.

How non-Muslim communities of Yenişehir received the Islamically tinted, authoritarian ideology of the Hamidian state is an important litmus test for assessing the overall reach of the regime. This study could only offer limited insights into this important inquiry. In Yenişehir proper (that is excluding İznik), the Armenian and Muslim notables of the town developed mostly amicable relations; a couple of elites from both communities virtually ran the local administration together for decades.⁶⁹⁵ Furthermore, incidental evidence reveals that co-habitation generated what a scholar termed “provincial cosmopolitanism”, pointing out quotidian vicissitudes of

⁶⁹³ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Benjamin C Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶⁹⁴ “Usul-i cedid” was a pedagogical approach associated with Selim Sabit Efendi, who combined modern trends with traditional educational policy and emerged as the architect of Ottoman educational modernization after 1869, see Somel, *The Modernization*, 169-173.

⁶⁹⁵ See chapter 5, p. 330.

commingling within an Ottoman ecosystem of interaction.⁶⁹⁶ Following the blueprints of the studies on late Ottoman non-Muslim communities, I contend that “Islamic Ottomanism” *a la* Hamidian regime did not automatically rule out the non-Muslim communities’ potential identification with the Ottoman polity. Furthermore, “civic Ottomanism” *a la* Tanzimat continued to exist along side with the Islamic rhetoric of the Hamidian state.⁶⁹⁷ As such, both the Hamidian state and the non-Muslim communities in and around Yenişehir appealed to civic Ottomanism for countering subversive publics and demanding redress of administrative abuses, respectively. Last but not least, rather than revolutionary nationalist movements, alternative non-Muslim publics of the Bursa region tested the limits of the Hamidian state. In other words, radical nationalist movements could not form a significant social base among the non-Muslim communities of the Bursa region, yet the Hamidian hegemony fell short of addressing the widening psychological gulf between the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects and the predominantly Muslim elements of the late Ottoman polity.

4.2. *Ertuğrul Sancağı* as an Embodiment of the Hamidian Ideology

The scholarship on the Hamidian era stresses that Sultan Abdülhamid II “intended to take advantage of the power of image and symbol through such means as ceremony, architecture, the act of bestowing medals and honors, visibly close relations with sufi orders, dedicatory inscriptions, the sultan’s monogram and the language of official pronouncements to his subjects, as broad a manner as possible.”⁶⁹⁸ The Sultan’s such strategies can be observed throughout the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* in North-western Anatolia. On the 30th of August 1885, a sultanic order ratifying the establishment of this new district within Hüdavendigâr province was promulgated. The new district was named after the alleged father of the founder of the house of Osman, Ertuğrul Gazi. It was created through the detachment of Yenişehir and İnegöl from the

⁶⁹⁶ Nora Lessersohn, ““Provincial Cosmopolitanism” in Late Ottoman Anatolia: An Armenian Shoemaker’s Memoir,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 02 (2015): 528-556.

⁶⁹⁷ Cohen, “Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism,” 237-255.

⁶⁹⁸ Fortna, “The Reign,” 53.

district of Bursa to merge with Bilecik and Söğüt. Bilecik became the district center, while Yenişehir, İnegöl and Söğüt were identified as *kazas* attached to it.⁶⁹⁹ *Ertuğrul Sancağı* was an artificial creation of the Hamidian state; it glossed over the historical, economic and socio-political ties between Yenişehir and İnegöl on the one hand, the city of Bursa on the other. Moreover, Yenişehir and İnegöl used to benefit from the fact that their ex-district center was located in the city of Bursa, which was at the same time the provincial capital of Hüdavendigâr. Thus, Bilecik as a district capital was extremely inconvenient for the inhabitants of these two *kazas*, who had to travel to the new district center in order to conduct their administrative and judicial affairs before resorting to Bursa. Likewise, official correspondences from Yenişehir and İnegöl had to travel all the way to Bilecik to the east of these towns, before reaching the provincial capital in the west, generating three or four days of delay on the average.⁷⁰⁰ Hence, from the viewpoint of these two *kazas*, the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* was an inefficient and burdensome administrative reorganization of the Hamidian state.⁷⁰¹

It seems that the motivation behind the establishment of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* was almost exclusively ideological; the Sultan personally opted for the embodiment of the symbolic gesture of returning to the roots of the Ottoman Sultanate in a new administrative unit honoring the places where the Ottoman dynasty allegedly originated. In order to carve out the material underpinnings of such an act of dynastic legitimation, the Hamidian administration “discovered” and “re-invigorated” the places where the founding figures of the Ottoman establishment were presumably buried, and built and/or renovated tombs in these places. The tomb of the father of Osman Bey, Ertuğrul Gazi located in Söğüt⁷⁰², the tomb of the mother of Osman Bey, allegedly “Hayme Ana”, located in İnegöl⁷⁰³ and the tomb of the nephew of Osman Bey, Aydoğdu Bey⁷⁰⁴,

⁶⁹⁹ Halim Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul Sancağı: (1900-1918)* (Bilecik: Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 7.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 10.

⁷⁰¹ Söğüt, on the other hand, had its own reasons to object the place of the district center; it considered itself being the district center as its due right, because not only was it located at a more convenient place for the attached *kazas*, but also it included the genuine places where the Ottoman Empire took its roots. See, ŞD 1544-24. The creation of *Ertuğrul sancağı* was thus an unpopular undertaking of the central state for the *kazas* included in it, except for the district capital of Bilecik.

⁷⁰² Deringil, *Well-protected*, 31

⁷⁰³ Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 170.

located in Yenişehir were such places lending “quasi-national” sacrality to the district. In a similar vein, while Söğüt housed officially organized commemorative ceremonies at the tomb of Ertuğrul Gazi⁷⁰⁵, Yenişehir was repeatedly stressed as the capital of the Ottoman sultanate before the conquest of Bursa in the yearbooks of Hüdavendigâr.⁷⁰⁶ On top of these, the Sultan founded a special regiment⁷⁰⁷ recruited from the members of Karakeçili tribe located in Bilecik and Söğüt, and used it as his personal body-guard in the palace. He even introduced this regiment to the visiting German Emperor, Wilhelm II as his “relatives”.⁷⁰⁸

As a matter of fact, “invention of tradition”, ceremonials and rituals related to myths of origin and the cult of emperor were means of monarchical legitimation that were extensively utilized in Russia, Japan, Austria and Germany at the turn of the 20th century.⁷⁰⁹ In this respect, *Ertuğrul Sancağı* was envisaged as an impressive project enhancing the ideological pillars of the late Ottoman state. Yet, the officially acclaimed myth of origins as a strategy of monarchical legitimation was apparently hardly impressive for the inhabitants of the new district, who had to shoulder the inconvenience of this project. Consequently, about 19 years after the foundation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı*, the provincial council of Hüdavendigâr proposed detachment of Yenişehir and İnegöl from Ertuğrul to be re-united with Bursa, and the transfer of the district center from Bilecik to Eskişehir, which would be the new district center of Bilecik and Söğüt. However, the central state rejected this proposal in 1905, claiming the historical importance of Bilecik and Söğüt for the foundational years of the Ottoman Sultanate, in addition to reminding that the district was founded through the special initiative of the Sultan.⁷¹⁰ In fact, about eight months after the establishment of the district of Ertuğrul, Sultan Abdülhamid dispatched a special committee made up of

⁷⁰⁴ Salih Erol, *Hüdavendigâr Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir Kazası 1870-1927: İznik ve Yarhisar Nahiyeleri ile Birlikte* (Ankara: Yenişehir İlçesi Merkez ve Köylerini Güzelleştirme Derneği Yayınları, 2011), 223.

⁷⁰⁵ Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 8.

⁷⁰⁶ Erol, *Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir*, 133; 222-223.

⁷⁰⁷ In his memoirs Tahsin Paşa calls this regiment “*Söğütlü Alayı*”. Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit: Yıldız Hatıraları*, ed. Kudret Emiroğlu (İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2008), 66.

⁷⁰⁸ Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 8.

⁷⁰⁹ Deringil, *Well-protected*, 16-18; Özbek, *Sosyal Devlet*, 29-30.

⁷¹⁰ Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 9.

about ten people headed by an official from the Palace to the district. This committee travelled the new district, taking photos and compiling information about different *kazas* specifically for the Sultan.⁷¹¹ Hence, *Ertuğrul Sancağı* was under the protection of Sultan Abdülhamid II, which practically nullified any attempt to dismantle and/or weaken this administrative unit. But, Ertuğrul as an administrative unit not only outlived the Hamidian era, but also the Ottoman Empire.⁷¹² Thus, the new district as an artificial construct imposed from above proved to be quite resilient.

What made the Ertuğrul project a story of success despite all odds was a new era ushered by the Hamidian regime. Although the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* took off from the ideological motivations of the Hamidian state, as a project of modernization it entailed far more than pomp; it meant massive investments in infrastructure, public facilities and the regional economy, which rapidly transformed the whole outlook of the places included within the district. The new ideological tint of the Hamidian regime did not prevent the late Ottoman state from taking over where Tanzimat modernization halted; on the contrary, a renewed tacit contract between the provincial societies and the central state significantly expanded the sphere of political action, whereby the Hamidian regime collaborated with the provincial actors in pursuing modernization. Unlike Ahmed Vefik Efendi's rather unpopular modernization projects in North-western Anatolia during 1863 and 1864, by 1885, the Hamidian regime instituted an elaborate system of honors, distinctions and decorations for acknowledging and rewarding the provincial elites' contributions to the efforts of modernization.⁷¹³ Mobilization of the resources commanded by the local notables for the improvement of the infrastructure and public facilities, including the governmental buildings within Ertuğrul not only enabled the Hamidian state to significantly decrease the costs of state-building and modernization, but also equipped it with a rhetoric of sparing the poorer segments of the population from oppressive extractions. Indeed, the government tried to co-opt even the lowest social strata through graceful gestures like the residential tax-amnesty granted to

⁷¹¹ When the palace official fell short of money on his return from this trip, he requested money from the sultan through another palace official. Y. PRK. SRN 2-15.

⁷¹² The name "Ertuğrul" used for the administrative unit centered in the city of Bilecik was abrogated in 1926. See, Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 14.

⁷¹³ Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası," 378-379; Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected*, 35-37.

the poor of Yenişehir and İnegöl in 1887.⁷¹⁴ The government needed the support of not only the notables, but also the bulk of the population, because an immense amount of manpower was needed for the materialization of large-scale infrastructural projects. In this respect, the injection of the immigrant communities, which increased the total number of population in Ertuğrul from about 150.000 to 200.000⁷¹⁵, made it a suitable setting for advancing Ottoman modernization.

4.2.1. *Ertuğrul Sancağı* as a Showcase of Modernization

Some scholars argue that the Hamidian state could undertake costly modernization thanks to its economic compromises to the Public Debt Administration, whose foundation in 1881 ensured cheap international borrowing by enhancing the credibility of the state.⁷¹⁶ This proposition is to the point, given the overall financial standing of the late Ottoman Empire. However, it does not explain the whole picture, which indicates that significant amounts of internal resources were also diverted towards modernization efforts, especially during the earlier years of the Hamidian regime. Sultan Abdülhamid was actually generous with military expenditures; yet he took special care to see the financial self-sufficiency of the various public welfare and social service organizations and departments. The most important aim of his fiscal policy was paying back the Empire's debt so as to attain financial freedom, and building an economic infrastructure that would help the production capacity grow and thus increase the revenues of the government.⁷¹⁷ Thus, the Sultan could put more ideological zeal than actual material backing to the Ertuğrul project.

⁷¹⁴ İ. ŞD 85-5046.

⁷¹⁵ Y. PRK. AZJ 27-61.

⁷¹⁶ This theme runs through both the classical and more recent accounts on Ottoman external debt. See, Donald C Blaisdell, *European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire; A Study of the Establishment, Activities, and Significance of the Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt* (New York: AMS Press, 1966); Murat Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt: Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010); Giampaolo Conte and Gaetano Sabatini, "The Ottoman External Debt and Its Features Under European Financial Control (1881-1914)," *The Journal of European Economic History*, no. 3 (2014): 69-96.

⁷¹⁷ Akarlı, "Economic Policy," 462.

In thinking about the cooperation of the state with various segments of the provincial societies of Ertuğrul, Gramsci's conception of "integral state" might be helpful. According to this conception, the state, rather than imposing itself on society, emerges and issues from "civil society" (more specifically from the economic, technical, cultural and scientific apparatuses embedded within civil society) and at the same time "civil society" maintains its coherence and stability through the authority of the state.⁷¹⁸ The physical and ideological built-up of Ertuğrul seems to indicate the formation of a grand-coalition, merging the Hamidian state and the potentials of the provincial societies through consensual cooperation. As such, Hamidian modernization in North-western Anatolia built itself on the resources of the rural societies, which the government managed to list for its state-building efforts through persuasion and political enticement. What distinguished the Hamidian government from the Tanzimat era was that it used carrots more often than sticks for constructing a working relationship with the provincial societies.

About two and a half years after the establishment of *Ertuğrul Sancağı*, the founding *mutasarrıf* of the district prepared a report thoroughly explaining the public works and other developmentalist schemes undertaken in the new district. The report was submitted to Yıldız Palace, where Sultan Abdülhamit II concentrated political power throughout his reign. In this respect, the organization of the report reflects the expectations and priorities of the Hamidian administration in relation to the district of Ertuğrul. Accordingly, construction of a network of roads binding administrative centers to each other was a top priority for the Ottoman state. The report opens up by describing how many meters of road was constructed at which part of the district in a rather detailed manner. About 300 kilometers of road (amounting to a 60-hour travel time then), including passageways and bridges were completed. More specifically pertaining to Yenişehir, a 90 kilometer-road was built from the town's western border with Bursa to the new district capital, Bilecik. This road, which passed through the town center, merged with the Anatolian highway (*Anadolu Caddesi*) passing through the district of Kütahya to the south of Bilecik. Furthermore, the district of Ertuğrul completed 30 kilometers of road, allotted as its portion within the 60 kilometer-long

⁷¹⁸ Fontana, "Hegemony," 92-93. I however use "integral state" in a limited fashion for describing the specific political conjuncture of the consolidation of the Hamidian regime throughout 1880s and 1890s. Different dynamics were at work during the early 20th century, which I address in chapter 6.

road binding Yenişehir to the port of Gemlik to the north-west of the town. 30 kilometers of road in between Yenişehir and İnegöl was on the other hand, anticipated to be completed by the spring of 1889.⁷¹⁹ Thus, the basic infrastructure of Yenişehir's contemporary network of roads was laid down during the Hamidian era. Overall, the *mutasarrıf* stressed that the network of roads tying the *kazas* to each other improved trade and enhanced prosperity within the district.⁷²⁰

Construction of about 300 kilometers of road in less than three years was in fact a quite impressive achievement, if we take into account the meager financial and technological resources at the disposal of the Ottoman Empire in mid-1880s. Additionally, the season of construction largely depended on the vagaries of weather, and early arriving winters just after the harvest season halted the whole work. So, how exactly were these roads built? They were built through the concerted efforts of the Ottoman state and the rural populations of the district. Rather than acting as opposing poles, the state and society mostly worked together to achieve construction of a network of roads, which as a long desired public good appealed to both the inhabitants of the district and the Ottoman state. During mid-1880s, the single most important task that the Hamidian administration expected from the *kaymakams* within Ertuğrul was coordination of the construction of roads. They were to schedule which village would send out what amount of workers to which site of construction within their *kazas*. They regularly dispatched policemen (*zaptiyes*) to check on whether the villages provided the manpower required from them. On top of these regular organizational tasks, they were to inspect the improvement of construction on the ground, which meant arduous travels to distances a couple of days away from the *kaza* centers. The Ottoman government constantly monitored the process through issuing orders and demanding feedback from Hüdavendigâr province, which in turn communicated with the district administration of Ertuğrul.⁷²¹

Unlike the dissent demonstrated towards Vefik Efendi's developmentalist schemes, which largely depended on forced labor in 1863 and 1864, the construction of

⁷¹⁹ Y. PRK. UM 11-38.

⁷²⁰ Y. PRK. UM 11-38.

⁷²¹ ŞD 2502-21. Also see chapter 5, for how a kaymakam of Yenişehir avoided the close scrutiny of the government in this regard, p. 326.

roads in 1880s did not provoke such vocal protests from the peasantry. On the contrary, the documents including references to the people going to or returning from construction sites have a rather mundane tone devoid of grievances. For example, an interrogation protocol, dated 5th of January 1886, directly quotes from a peasant, Ahmed Ağa from Koçu village of Yenişehir. Ahmed Ağa described the construction process as follows: “Three or four months ago, *zaptiye* (policeman) Mehmed came to our village and told us to dispatch men to the road (the construction site). We told him that before he came, twenty workers from our village were sent to the Gemlik road. ‘All right!’ he said.” After learning that workers had indeed been sent to the construction site, *zaptiye* Mehmed asked Ahmed Ağa to bring green barley (*yeşil arpa*) for his horse. Since green barley had not yet matured, Ahmed Ağa brought an alternative fodder, which the *zaptiye* did not like. When Mehmed insisted on getting green barley, Ahmed Ağa told him that he would not cut someone else’s barley, since the owner would complain about him. Hence, Mehmed left without taking anything. The following day, another *zaptiye* came and took Ahmet Ağa to the government building in Yenişehir, where he was taken to the *kaymakam*, Ramazan Efendi, who was with the members of the local council. Without asking anything, the *kaymakam* insulted⁷²² Ahmed Ağa and had him imprisoned. Later on, the members of the local council had him released, hence he returned to his home.⁷²³

This event shows that the villagers actually did their part in the construction work before being pressured by a policeman. They duly accepted working for the construction of roads; but they rejected the undue demands of the local administration involved in the organization of construction. In fact, the unavailability of decent roads and the poor conditions of the existing ones were major obstructions for the rural populations, who undertook transportation of their crops to town centers, ports and cities.⁷²⁴ As such, it is not surprising that they were willing to contribute labor to the construction of roads. The initial impetus for the building of roads largely depended on the local population’s “contributions”, which the Hamidian administration obtained

⁷²² Ahmed Ağa was rather explicit about these insults: These were “*edepsiz, kerata, peze(v)enk*,” “*Koçu karyeli Ahmed Ağa'nın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir*,” ŞD 2502-21.

⁷²³ “*Koçu karyeli Ahmed Ağa'nın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir*,” ŞD 2502-21.

⁷²⁴ See chapter 2 for an example of how the inhabitants of Yenişehir quarreled with the tax collector, Varnalı Hasan Tahsin for the transportation of the collected tithe of the *kaza* to the Gemlik port, pp. 158-160.

without the fury characterizing the tour of inspection of Vefik Efendi. Later on, the government developed a slightly different path, whereby the construction job was outsourced to contractors, who were paid from the funds of the Agricultural Bank.⁷²⁵

The building of the district center in Bilecik was the most significant occasion for the notables of the district to demonstrate their loyalty and support for the Hamidian regime. According to the report of the *mutasarrıf*, a new government building, containing twenty-four rooms was built through the contributions of the notables and the people, without any “encouragement” from the district administration. The new government building was not constructed merely due to the practical needs of the administration; rather it was envisaged as an elegant showcase of ingrained Ottoman taste in the physical governmental structure. The artists decorated the rooms and walls of the building; especially the walls and the ceilings of the rooms of the administrative council and of the *mutasarrıf* were embellished with some antique works of art and floral designs, and were beautifully illuminated. Armchairs, sofas and other furnishings of the rooms, which were produced from exquisite Bilecik velvets, were likewise the courtesy of the local notables. Panels painted with the symbolic crescent and star, and golden stars were installed on the ceiling above the staircase. The stairs at the entrance floor were made of marble. The building was surrounded by fences, decorated with crescent and star motifs, and lamps. The three sides of the building were further embellished with precious pine and linden trees. A monumental stone entrance was erected in front of the building, which included the Ottoman coat of arms engraved on marble beside other decorations.⁷²⁶

Across the government building, a huge prison complex with all the necessary facilities was built through in-kind and cash contributions of the local notables. The *mutasarrıf* stressed that the building of the prison complex was proposed by the rich local notables (*eşraf ve müteneffizan-ı ahali*), and the construction proceeded without incurring any harm to the poor and vulnerable members of the society (*fukara ve zuafaya tecavüz olunmamak*). In addition to two big prison buildings, the complex

⁷²⁵ This new system was called “*bedelat-ı nakdiyye usulü*”. The awarding of these contracts and the distribution of money through the local branch of the Agricultural Bank located in the district center generated back-door operations and political clashes within the district administration. See, ŞD 1578-5.

⁷²⁶ Y. PRK. UM 11-38. See also the photo of the entrance of the government building attached to the end of this chapter, Photo 3, p. 274.

included rooms of the guardians and other clerks, a vast courtyard, a double-floored hospital ward, a pharmacy, a water depository, a laundry room and bathrooms. Even the window and door cases and the stairs of the prison were made from engraved marble. The *mutasarrıf* reported that the convicts were grateful to the Sultan for the building of this new complex, since the old prison was threatening their health and well-being due to over-crowding. The police station was built next to the prison complex. Its building was estimated to cost about 150.000 *kuruş*; but it could be completed with using merely 24.000 *kuruş* from the state's treasury, the rest of the expenses being disbursed by the in-kind and cash contributions of the local notables.⁷²⁷

The establishment of the district of Ertuğrul was not only expressed through ostentatious governmental buildings, rather it emphasized a comprehensive overhaul of the whole physical landscape. Beautiful promenades with fountains were built, and extensive forestation transformed the overall outlook of the district. Existing streets within towns were widened; sewages and water conduits were repaired; new bridges and pavements in town centers were constructed. Even the walls of the old houses that disturbed the renewed outlook of the main streets were demolished and rebuilt. The public works within the town centers were to a large extent undertaken by the municipalities.⁷²⁸ Market places and/or shops were built to finance the municipal budgets. Yenişehir as a *kaza* attached to Ertuğrul benefited from all these developments. Seven or eight shops were built in appropriate places for generating income to the municipality of Yenişehir. Likewise, the streets of the town were paved; the sewage at the courtyard of the Great Mosque was repaired; delicious water flowing from about two-hour distance from the town center was made available to the mosques and madrasas through the rebuilding of the water dikes.⁷²⁹

Throughout the *mutasarrıf*'s report, the stress on the voluntary nature of contributions suggests that the Hamidian administration opted for generating a synergy between the state and the local notables for the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* as a

⁷²⁷ Y. PRK. UM 11-38.

⁷²⁸ For general information about municipalities in the provinces see, İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı Vilayetlerinde Modern Belediyeler," in *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri (1840-1880)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011), 171-192. For a case study, see Malek Sharif, *Imperial Norms and Local Realities: the Ottoman Municipal Laws and the Municipality of Beirut (1860-1908)* (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2014).

⁷²⁹ Y. PRK. UM 11-38.

symbolically significant, modern Ottoman district. However, *Ertuğrul Sancağı* as an administrative project was not a magic wand turning the fortunes of the regions it encompassed; rather the project based itself squarely on the economic and societal potentials of the southern Marmara region. When the initial dust of immigration settled in the early 1880s, economic expansion was on the way in this productive and fertile geography.⁷³⁰ Investments in infrastructure actually preceded the formation of the new district. When rural resources increased, the provincial societies did not wait for the Hamidian state to take lead; they started to invest in the physical landscape as they saw it fit. For example, the yearbook of Hüdavendigâr for 1883-1884 cites that since 1881, Yenişehir municipality had constructed about 10 kilometers of pavement. Four large bridges were erected over Bilecik, Lefke, İlyas Bey and Değirmen streets. Two public toilets (*abdesthane*) and a 500 meter –long sewage was constructed in the market place. 550 willow and plane trees were implanted all over the town. 25 lanterns were installed in the main streets for illumination. In the middle of the town center, a municipality building with a fountained- public courtyard was constructed.⁷³¹ Thus, Yenişehir was transforming itself even before the creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı*.

In fact, Hamidian administration was closely following the development of the Bursa region in the early 1880s through the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr. The late Ottoman state was quite aware of the potentials of this region, and therefore it occasionally demonstrated grudge when it felt like being left out of the political decisions about where the local resources would be channeled. A case in point is the exquisite public square built across the municipality building by Yenişehir municipality. The square included a roofed public fountain and benches for relaxation. About 40.000 *kuruş* from the municipal budget was used for the building of this square, without seeking authorization from the provincial capital. When Bursa discovered this expenditure, it could not help sparing a couple of quite furious comments for Yenişehir in the yearbook. Accordingly, this public square became a place where the idle inhabitants were spending all their days in inertia; as such, it was nothing but “a nest of

⁷³⁰ In fact, during 1880s and 1890s, the Ottoman economy faced deteriorating terms of trade and slower rates of growth in foreign trade due to the “Great Depression” of 1873-1896. Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Empire in the “Great Depression” of 1873–1896," *The Journal of Economic History* 44, no. 01 (1984): 116. However, demobilization after the Russo-Ottoman War and injection of new populations in this geography should have triggered economic recovery.

⁷³¹ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1301*, 210

lazies” (*tembelhane*). Instead of spending the resources of the municipality in such extravagant investments, the municipality should have undertaken a productive investment, such as building a roofed gas station. The yearbook states that Yenişehir was scolded for disregarding the laws and the interests of the country, and it was warned to consult with higher authorities when carrying out public investments, which should be economically more productive and feasible.⁷³²

Although the creation of the district of Ertuğrul drew on the economic recovery of the North-western Anatolia in the aftermath of the catastrophic Russo-Ottoman War, it still made a difference in the direction and extends of regional development. For example, the network of roads centered in the district capital of Bilecik integrated southern Marmara region with inner Anatolia. Without the organizational touch of the late Ottoman state, it would be virtually impossible to concurrently mobilize different rural communities for the construction of roads. Likewise, in 1889, the Ottoman government conceded the construction of Anatolia-Baghdad railway line, which had started in 1872, to German “Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d’Anatolie”.⁷³³ This railway line, which passed through Bilecik in 1892,⁷³⁴ tied İstanbul more closely with central Anatolia. On top of these, the district administration worked for rejuvenating the silk industry within the district. Silk-raising within the district was in a state of crisis due to pebrine disease. Thus, many mulberry groves were converted to fields throughout 1860s and 1870s. In mid 1880s, uninfected cocoons were imported from Europe, triggering a recovery in the industry. In this context, the district administration made cheap mulberry saplings available to the people, who wanted to re-plant mulberry trees for silk-raising. Moreover, the administration founded inspection commissions for ensuring that infected cocoons would not circulate to harm the silk-raisers. With these incentives, the factories in Bilecik, which used to work for about six months a year, could operate all over the year. In the report, the *mutasarrıf* stressed that the

⁷³² “Belediyeden keyfe-ma-yeşa israfat edilmesi (yle) nizamat-ı seniyye ve hamiyet-i vataniye kâil olamayacağı cihetle...”, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1301*, 210.

⁷³³ Kemal Beydilli, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 4*, s.v. “Bağdat Demiryolu,” (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1991), 442-444.

⁷³⁴ In 1871, 92 kilometer-long Haydapaşa-İzmit track was completed. In 1892, İzmit-Ankara tract passing through Bilecik was opened. In 1896, Eskişehir-Konya tract, to the south of Bilecik was completed and integrated with İzmit-Ankara line. See, Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 213-214.

rejuvenation of the silk industry functioned as a safety net for the inhabitants of the district in years of draught or in low-yield years.⁷³⁵

Overall, the greatest beneficiary of the Ertuğrul project was Bilecik, and therefore it responded the Hamidian administration's favor of choosing it as the district center with generous contributions. The economic locomotive of Bilecik was silk industry, which in turn was dominated by the Armenian inhabitants of the *kaza*.⁷³⁶ Thus, Ertuğrul as a quite "nationalist" project with Islamic underpinnings based itself heavily on "the contributions" of a provincial non-Muslim community. In fact, competition between *kazas* for obtaining İstanbul's approval to become a district center was intense.⁷³⁷ In the case of Ertuğrul, Söğüt was a contending opponent, constantly on the lookout for dethroning Bilecik by claiming that it included the most authentic sites where the Ottoman Sultanate was founded.⁷³⁸ Thus, whether the provincial societies actually bought "the myth of origins" and accompanying rituals and invented traditions of the Ottoman state remains an inconclusive question. But, they did significantly contribute to the creation of Ertuğrul district, eventually rendering it a feasible and resilient project in the long term.

Once the Hamidian state designated Bilecik as the center of the new district, not only the notables of this town competed for demonstrating their support, but also the local notables from the attached *kazas* made sure to put a brick to reserve their place within the Hamidian establishment. For example, Ayaslı Mustafa Bey from Yenişehir lobbied the governor of Bursa for getting a higher rank from the Hamidian administration in 1896. The letter of recommendation written by the governor, Mahmud Celaleddin Paşa, stated that in addition to donating 40 *liras* as military contribution, Ayaslı Mustafa Bey built three mosques, two schools, two bridges, two *tekkes* and a khan in the district. Furthermore, he donated candlesticks to the mosque built in the name of the Sultan nearby Bilecik's government building.⁷³⁹ In fact, the Hamidiye

⁷³⁵ Y. PRK. UM 11-38.

⁷³⁶ Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul*, 194-199.

⁷³⁷ Hamdi Özdiş analyzes this competition in detail in his dissertation on late Ottoman Trabzon. See, Hamdi Özdiş, "Taşrada İktidar Mücadelesi: II. Abdülhamid döneminde Trabzon Vilayet'inde Eşraf, Siyaset ve Devlet (1876-1909)," (PhD diss., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2008).

⁷³⁸ ŞD 1544-24.

⁷³⁹ Y. MTV 150-26.

mosque does not figure in the report that the founding *mutasarrıf*, Ahmed Fuad Bey prepared in 1888; however, he recounts his services related to the building of this mosque in a petition he wrote for being re-instituted in his post after his dismissal in 1893. He states that in addition to coordinating the building and decoration of this mosque in the name of the Sultan, he ensured that it had sources of income for its upkeep; namely, two shops under the mosque and a house as non-movable property procuring rents.⁷⁴⁰ Thus, Ertuğrul as a project not only delineated a rapprochement between the Hamidian state and the provincial societies, but also included elements of personalization of power based on Islamic and dynastic legitimation. I now turn to analyze how the Hamidian regime utilized public rituals and ceremonials for extending its reach over the local societies.

4.2.2. Public Rituals, Authoritarianism and the Codes of Hamidian Public Sphere

Historians working with the documents derived from the newspapers, magazines and journals of the Hamidian era would not help but notice many propagandistic news and detailed descriptions of strictly structured and meticulously staged events boldly promoting the Hamidian regime in the official and privately-owned media. In these documents, while many public rituals and ceremonials appear to be dutifully applauded by crowds; lists of “contributions” and philanthropic acts undertaken by bureaucrats, provincial officials and notables draw a “too good to be true” political imagery of the late Ottoman polity.⁷⁴¹ One way of dealing with such documents is obviously *apriorily* dismissing them as monotonous replications of the regime’s self-promotion. But, the very existence of such a significant, vocal public begs explanation beyond its immediate functions. In fact, in order to analyze such 19th century publics, some scholars revised and blended some 20th century concepts and notions within the framework of historical sociology. Among them Geoff Eley’s revision of the Habermasian public sphere found

⁷⁴⁰ Y. PRK. AZJ 27-61.

⁷⁴¹ Elizabeth Frierson notes that Ottoman regimes of censorship until 1909 were effective in promoting realms of loyalist print, but less effective in catching all criticism of internal events in the empire. See, Elizabeth Frierson, “Gender, Consumption and Patriotism: The Emergence of an Ottoman Public Sphere,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 105. I refer to “loyalist” print here.

some followers in the Ottoman studies.⁷⁴² Eley argues that Habermas' spontaneous and class specific (that is bourgeoisie) definition of the public sphere would be much more fruitful if it is reevaluated through Gramscian notions of hegemony. Accordingly, the public sphere makes more sense as the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or a negotiation among a variety of publics takes place. In order to control the public sphere, the ruling groups utilize the arts of persuasion, indicating a continuous labor of creative ideological intervention. Yet, the claim for being the hegemonic engine of the public sphere is constantly subject to uncertainty, impermanence and contradiction, because the public sphere provides opportunities for contesting as well as securing the legitimacy of the system.⁷⁴³

Following Eley, Nadir Özbek conceptualizes the public sphere of the Hamidian era as a political template where the authority of the sultan was formed and the people participated in the politics within the limits of the political imagery of the Hamidian regime.⁷⁴⁴ The expansion of the public sphere through campaigns of "contribution" and publicly acclaimed philanthropic activities, and, also by organizing public ceremonies and rituals potentially undermined the authority of the Sultan due to their pluralistic nature. In other words, the expansion of the public sphere made it more challenging for the regime to control it. Yet, an extensive public sphere promised unmatched opportunities for the Hamidian administration to pursue political legitimacy, given that it could effectively control this public.⁷⁴⁵ By the early 1890s, Yenişehir was already encapsulated in the social drama of the assertive Hamidian ideology. Events such as the birthday of the Sultan and his enthronement anniversaries provided ample opportunities for the Hamidian regime to draw the provincial publics into the ideological orbit of the central state through officially sponsored public celebrations. On top of these empire-wide events, the Sultan actually did a favor specifically addressing the inhabitants of Yenişehir by drawing on the populist opportunities of a Sufi tradition entrenched in

⁷⁴² Özbek, *Sosyal Devlet*, 37-44; Leila Hudson, "Late Ottoman Damascus: Investments in Public Space and the Emergence of Popular Sovereignty," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006): 156. For other Ottomanists, who address "Habermasian public sphere", see, Frierson, "Gender, Consumption"; Cengiz Kırılı, "Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 75-97.

⁷⁴³ Eley, "Nations, Publics," 309-322.

⁷⁴⁴ Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity," 63-68.

⁷⁴⁵ Özbek, *Sosyal Devlet*, 257; 261.

Yenişehir. He dispatched a *hilye* to the *celveti* order's *tekke* in Yenişehir as his personal gift to the inhabitants of the *kaza*. The transfer of this gift from İstanbul to Yenişehir was quite an “event” demonstrating how the Hamidian state formed and sustained its imprint in the public sphere.

The celebrations of events pertaining to the life-cycle of the Sultan, such as his birthday and enthronement were widely covered in the official newspaper of Hüdavendigar. Various *kazas* within the province apparently sent correspondences to the provincial capital, describing the celebrations in their respective localities to be printed in the official newspaper. In fact, the celebrations in different regions of the province resembled each other, hinting their quasi-official character. However, they also indicate that popular entertainment and spectacles geared towards the general populace were insightfully transplanted for expanding the spirit of celebrations to as many people as possible. I will briefly describe how such a celebration took place in Yenişehir, during the late summer of 1894 based on a piece published in the official newspaper of the province, Hüdavendigar.⁷⁴⁶ Accordingly, on the 19th of August (Julian calendar) at noon, the celebrations started with the firing of cannon per custom. Subsequently, the government officials, local notables and people gathered at the government building for celebrating the anniversary of the Sultan's enthronement. The students of the modern secondary school (*rüşdiye*) of Yenişehir arrived at the courtyard of the government building. There, everyone stood in an orderly fashion and respectfully and dutifully celebrated the anniversary of accession by listening to various speeches exalting the Sultan. Then, the people collectively prayed by uttering “Long live, my *padişah!*” Afterwards, *kaymakam* Tahir Efendi delivered a grateful speech addressing the Sultan. Aside from the official celebration at the government building, *Hüdavendigar* newspaper stressed that the people decorated the shops in the town in tandem with their expected loyalty towards the monarch. Furthermore, the newspaper reads that the mosques, madrasas, public buildings and all of the houses of the government officials and local notables were illuminated with colorful lamps for that joyful night. The municipality building and the public square in front of it were decorated with various lanterns. At this public square, original fireworks specifically purchased for this

⁷⁴⁶ The pieces I quote below from newspapers were in general written in a rather ornamental style; in reporting them I simplified their language; however, I tried to keep the enthusiastic language stressing loyalty, obedience and joy intact. That, however, should not be understood as taking them “true” representations of what happened.

occasion were displayed as musicians performed with many musical instruments up until midnight. A huge signboard on which the rhyming verses of “*Padişahım çok yaşa! / Ol muzaffer daima!*” (Long live my padişah! / Be victorious forever!) were written, covered the whole municipality building to the appreciation of the populace, who once again prayed for the health and glory of the Sultan.⁷⁴⁷

In fact, the celebrations of the accession anniversary and birthday of the sultans did not begin with the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Quoting Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Selim Deringil notes that Fuad Paşa had set aside the birthday and accession day of the sultan and made them official holidays for obliging the European states to reciprocate the Ottoman Empire’s congratulations of the foreign powers’ celebrations of such occasions. Before instituting these days as official holidays, the European states did not use to send their congratulations in Ottoman official days of celebration since these were religious holidays.⁷⁴⁸ However, the populist and structured nature of celebrations during the Hamidian era suggests that the regime utilized such occasions for addressing the internal Ottoman public as well. The fact that these celebrations were subsequently reported in the official newspaper of the province further highlights the government’s concern for achieving high publicity. As such, the Hamidian regime appropriated the existing political vocabulary so as to enhance its authority and legitimacy through publicity.

The Hamidian era is not only significant for overhauling the Tanzimat elements within the late Ottoman polity, but also for aspiring to assimilate socially ingrained elements of popular Islam. As Gökhan Çetinsaya notes, throughout the Hamidian era, religion (Islam) was deliberately employed as a means for linking Ottoman society to its ruler and *sufi* shaykhs and tariqas in particular came to be regarded as an important political mainstay of the regime.⁷⁴⁹ It was expected that the *sufi* shaykhs, who were endowed with the Sultan’s patronage, would take it upon themselves to act as

⁷⁴⁷ *Hüdavendigâr*, 12 Rebi’ul-evvel 1312, No. 1202, p. 2.

⁷⁴⁸ Deringil, *Well-protected*, 172.

⁷⁴⁹ Gökhan Çetinsaya, "The Caliph and the Shaykhs: Abdülhamid II's Policies towards the Qadiriyya of Mosul," in *Ottoman Reform and Muslim Regeneration: Studies in Honour of Butrus Abu-Manneh*, ed. Itzhak Weismann and Fruma Zachs (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 104-105.; Butrus Abu Manneh’s article sets the stage for this line of research. Butrus Abu- Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al- Sayyadi," *Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 2 (1979): 131-153.

ideological police upholding traditional religious beliefs and the Sultan's authority.⁷⁵⁰ In this respect, Yenişehir took its due attention from the Sultan through the dispatch a *hilye* to its inhabitants, thanks to being the *kaza* in which Shaikh İbrahim el-Visali of the *celveti* order was buried. The *hilye* was to be put in the *dergah* of this shaikh for the believers to visit during holy nights, so that they could please the prophet. The following account of the transfer of this gift was extensively reported in a privately-owned Bursa newspaper, named *Bursa*. Accordingly, the gift was sent to Bursa from İstanbul with the awqaf accountant of Hüdavendigâr, Süleyman Beyefendi. When Bursa was informed about the dispatch of the gift, the *kaymakam* of Mudanya, the local ulama and notables of this town rushed to the port for welcoming the *hilye*, since Mudanya was the connecting station between the ships coming from the capital city and the train heading to the city of Bursa. They respectfully celebrated the arrival of the gift through *tekbirs* and carried it to a special wagon added to the train going to Bursa. The train arrived Bursa late at night. At the Bursa station, the mufti of Bursa, Ali Rıza Efendi, various prominent ulama, the commanders of the Bursa gendarmerie (*alay beyi*, i.e. colonel) and battalion (*tabur ağası*, i.e. major) and various other prominent people were awaiting the precious gift.⁷⁵¹

The *mufti* of Bursa took the sacred *hilye* under his custody and everyone boarded their carts to head towards the Great Mosque of Bursa. In the mosque, the governor, Ahmed Münir Paşa, the treasurer and the *naib* of the province welcomed the gift. With great veneration, the *hilye* was put in the library of the mosque for temporary preservation. Then, the mufti of Bursa recited verses from the Quran and prayed for the Sultan. Everyone present in the mosque heartily said "amen" to these prayers.⁷⁵² A couple of days later, the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir, Mehmed Tahir Efendi, the mufti of the *kaza* and the shaikh of the *tekke*, Şeyh Ahmed Hafız Efendi and a local notable, Şemakizade Hasan Efendi came to Bursa upon the governor's invitation. The mufti of Bursa, various ulama, the governor and some officials and some other inhabitants of Bursa once again gathered in the Great Mosque. The governor took the chest of the gift with reverence and placed it on the specifically made stool within a cart at the courtyard

⁷⁵⁰ David Dean Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 115.

⁷⁵¹ *Bursa*, 27 Rebiul-Ahir 1311, No. 145, p. 2.

⁷⁵² *Bursa*, 27 Rebiul-Ahir 1311, No. 145, p. 2.

of the Great Mosque. The *kaymakam* and the *mufti* of Yenişehir were thus entrusted with the precious gift. The cart, in which the *hilye* was installed, was encircled by policemen. In front of the cart, walked madrasa students, followed by *sufi* shaikhs and dervishes. Behind the cart, forty more carts carrying the governor, some officials, the prominent ulama and notables of Bursa followed.⁷⁵³

The convoy thus proceeded slowly in the streets of Bursa. Thousands of men and women, for whom this special gift was priceless, stood on the pavements extending from the Great Mosque to the government boulevard and “the new road” for paying their respects. They prayed for the prophet and the Sultan as they enjoyed the sweet incense emanating from the censers accompanying the cart of the gift. The *hilye* thus reached the Great Station, where the prominent people got off their carts. Then, the *mufti* of Bursa, Ali Rıza Efendi prayed for the health and the glory of the Sultan in Arabic. Everyone heartily uttered “amen” to these prayers. Then, the cart started its journey to Yenişehir, protected by sufficient cavalymen. The gift reached Yenişehir, the same day at about 11 o’clock. The ulama, notables and people of Yenişehir welcomed it outside of the town in veneration. They gratefully prayed for the Sultan. With appropriate celebrations, the *hilye* was finally installed in its final destination at the celveti *tekke* in Yenişehir.⁷⁵⁴

Annual celebrations of the Sultan’s accession to throne and of his birthdays were geared towards cementing the personal authority of the Sultan through public spectacles and structured ceremonies. Aside from these events marking the imperial calendar, there were more localized occasions, such as the annual procession to Ertuğrul Gazi’s tomb that aimed at pursuing dynastic legitimation by linking with specific provincial societies. Yet, the Sultan’s gift to Yenişehir, which was just an ordinary, relatively small *kaza* in North-western Anatolia, demonstrates the great lengths that the Hamidian regime went for appealing to the provincial societies in a way that would not only co-opt the local notables, but also the populace at large. Such ostentatious public relations operations were expected to provide the provincial societies with means of affiliating with the political authority through familiar forms of sanctity derived from popular Islamic tradition. The Muslim reverence towards the prophet was not new; it was a

⁷⁵³ *Bursa*, 4 Cemaziyel-evvel 1311, No. 146, p.2.

⁷⁵⁴ *Bursa*, 4 Cemaziyel-evvel 1311, No. 146, pp.2-3.

well-established Islamic tradition. Likewise, ostentatious processions targeting the general populace by the Sultan were not also the inventions of the Hamidian administration; Sultan Mahmud II's ceremonial transfer of his portraits to the Porte and Selimiye barracks⁷⁵⁵, for instance, resembled the transfer of the *hilye* to Yenişehir. Yet, Sultan Abdülhamid's public display of patronage by employing the topos of the *sufi* tradition for deliberately reaching out relatively remote provincial societies was quite "inventive". Throughout the transfer of the *hilye*, the personalized power of the Sultan was stressed with a view of commanding the loyalty of his subjects through ideological campaigning. The provincial administrators, from the governor, Münir Paşa to the *kaymakam*, Tahir Efendi, the local ulama and notables, who partook in the ceremonial transfer, and more significantly perhaps, those people, who took to the streets in Bursa and Yenişehir to see the Sultan's gift were all rendered a part of the Hamidian rhetoric of power as subjects dutifully praying for and/or exalting their monarch around "shared" Islamic symbolism.

The problem was that forging legitimacy by drawing on the opportunities of widening public sphere was a risky business. For one thing, the Islamic discourses used for this purpose were not shared by all, since the late Ottoman Empire contained sizeable non-Muslim communities in the Bursa region. Moreover, political potentials of Islam were not saturated by the regime, because Islamically derived discourses transcended the monopoly of the regime.⁷⁵⁶ Put differently, even Islamically inspired critiques could form a subversive public against the Islamically peppered personalized power of the Sultan.⁷⁵⁷ I now turn to explore the limits of the regime's hegemony.

⁷⁵⁵ Süleyman Kâni İrtem, *Sultan Abdülhamid ve Yıldız Kamarillası: Yıldız Sarayı'nda Paşalar, Beyler, Ağalar ve Şeyhler*, ed. Osman S. Kocahanoğlu (İstanbul: Temel, 2003), 284-285.

⁷⁵⁶ Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends," 361-362.

⁷⁵⁷ İsmail Kara, *Hilafet Risaleleri cilt 1&2: II. Abdülhamid Devri, İslam Siyasi Düşüncesinde Değişim ve Süreklilik* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınlar, 2002); İsmail Kara, "Turban and Fez"; Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*.

4.3. The Limits of Hamidian Hegemony: Alternative Publics and Individual Agency

The superfluous language of the newspapers stresses obedience, orderly and appropriate actions of the various agents involved in the Hamidian state's ceremonials. Apparently, the idealized participation in the symbolic representations of the Hamidian government was supposed to act as a self-fulfilling prophecy, serving to supplement the regime's hegemonic presence in the public sphere. Yet, even the people who were closely associated with the Hamidian regime by profession (such as provincial administrators) were not mere pawns of the Sultan as they were depicted in the propagandistic news on public rituals. On the contrary, some of the leading actors of the ceremonies involving Yenişehir were well-educated, opinionated, high bureaucrats, who nonetheless fitted in the authoritarian and Islamically tuned political atmosphere. For example, the governor, Münir Paşa, who woke up in the middle of the night to welcome the arriving *hilye* at the Great Mosque of Bursa was a much-loved, successful and apt administrator, who remained in office in Bursa for quite a long time.⁷⁵⁸ In 1895, he did not abstain from clashing with the powerful lobby of rice cultivators in Bursa and the Minister of Forests and Mines, Selim Melhame Paşa, for defending the public health in the city against the concerted pressure of both parties for opening up Bursa plain to rice cultivation.⁷⁵⁹ Furthermore, he was a much revered governor by the non-Muslim communities of Bursa. During the tense atmosphere of the Armenian crisis in 1896, the head of the Bursa mission, Theo. A. Baldwin, wrote: "During the early months of the year (1896)... we felt considerable anxiety because our peace-loving and order-preserving Governor General (Münir Paşa) was supplanted by another (Zihni Paşa) whose record and personal bearing were anything but reassuring." He continued to note that Zihni Paşa's "partiality" for Muslims and "hatred" towards the Christians caused fear among the Christian communities of Bursa. A couple of months later, Münir Paşa was re-instituted in his post to the great relief of the non-Muslim communities.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁸ Ahmed Münir Paşa was the governor of Bursa in between 1891 and 1897, with the exception of a few months in 1896, when he was replaced by Zihni Paşa. He was proficient in Arabic, Persian and French. Before being appointed to the governorship of Bursa, he served as the minister of Finance in 1881 and the minister of Interior Affairs in 1885. He married the daughter of Bursalı Kazasker Agah Efendi, and died in Bursa in 1897. See, Yılmaz Akkılıç, ed., s.v. "Münir Paşa (Ahmet)," in *Bursa Ansiklopedisi Cilt 3* (Bursa: Bursa Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2002): 1231-32.

⁷⁵⁹ DH. MKT 336-66.

⁷⁶⁰ The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), *Brousa Station Report 1896-7*, p. 1.

It seems that M nir PaŐa’s involvement in the ceremonials targeting the “Muslim” public of the province did not in itself alienate the non-Muslim communities of the province. Apparently, non-Muslim communities of Bursa keenly distinguished ideological bombardments of the Hamidian regime from actual political initiatives. On the one hand, the authoritarianism and hegemonic claims of the regime for controlling the public sphere obliged many administrators to participate; declining participation was almost a non-option for anyone affiliated with the government. On the other hand, within the larger governmental system, different political actors, such as M nir PaŐa and Zihni PaŐa could opt for different policies. Hence, in spite of being a forceful political platform, the Hamidian public sphere was not all-encompassing; rather it was utilized as a tool of “governance” in the Foucauldian sense of the term. Significantly, the people, both the administrators and the targeted larger audiences were well aware of its ideological exigency as such. Rhetoric of power was not one and the same thing as exercise of power.

We do not possess documents or sufficient means to understand what ordinary people thought of the ceremonials and rituals of the Hamidian state in YeniŐehir. However, if we take into account the multiplicity and complexity of social existence, we would defer that the people’s responses were more varied than the dichotomy of affirmation vs. resistance could suggest. By the last quarter of the 19th century, provincial societies of the Ottoman Empire were not only multi-ethnic and multi-religious, but also they contained various interest groups such as immigrants and native inhabitants, and preserved some historical particularities even within and among miniscule social conglomerations like different *sufi* orders. Thus, opening up of the public sphere to wider segments of the population meant that if left alone, all these interests and identities making up various cross-cutting lifeworlds of the imperial subjects could claim their places in the public sphere. It seems that the Hamidian regime was acutely aware of the risks of the public sphere as an unbridled political platform. Thus, basing itself on the increased technologies of communication between the center and the provinces, the government opted for constantly screening and monitoring local contexts. For this purpose, it developed direct lines of communication between the palace and the “extensions” of the regime through recruiting informers in various local settings. The reports that were sent directly to Yıldız Palace by these informers were called “*journals*”. In İpek YosmaoĐlu’s words: “Journals completed the panopticon of

Hamidian autocracy, because they were written and sent not only by the known or secret spies on the palace's payroll, but also by simple subjects, who hoped for remuneration or who were simply attempting to comply instead of being labeled a dissident."⁷⁶¹ The openness and receptiveness of the palace towards these informers once again ensured the "popularity" of this type of socially destructive surveillance.⁷⁶² In this respect, the regime's tentacles reached Yenişehir, leaving their imprints in the state documents in the shape of glimpses from the intimate contexts of alternative publics.

We learn about one such spy report from Yenişehir from a coded telegraph sent to the palace by the governor, Münir Paşa with a note of urgency in February 1895. The provincial administration in Bursa received a report from a "loyal" informer, Mehmed Kemaleddin, recounting what had happened during the celebration of the Sultan's birthday in Yenişehir. Accordingly, after the celebration, the *naib*, *mufti* and *kaymakam* of the *kaza* and two more local notables were casually chatting in the municipality building at night. The *kaymakam*, Tahir Efendi, turned to the *mufti*, and asked: "Is tonight's spending from the state's treasury permissible from a religious point of view? Give me a fatwa about this!"⁷⁶³ When Mehmed Kemaleddin's *jurnal* reached Münir Paşa, he immediately ordered the *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul to go to Yenişehir to investigate this serious issue, which was subject to "political punishment" if it had actually happened. The governor added that he would immediately report the result of this investigation to Yıldız Palace.⁷⁶⁴ In fact, Tahir Efendi was the *kaymakam*, whom we have seen delivering a speech during the enthronement anniversary of the Sultan, as well as taking the *hilye* in his custody in Bursa to transfer it to Yenişehir with the *mufti* of the *kaza*. What he said after the celebration of the Sultan's birthday was indeed radical political criticism based squarely on Islamic tradition. He implied that the expenditures made just for exalting the Sultan as an individual contradicted the public

⁷⁶¹ İpek Yosmaoğlu, "Chasing the Printed Word: Press Censorship in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1913," *The Turkish Studies Association Journal* 27, no. 1-2 (2003): 23.

⁷⁶² Civil servants and simple subjects informed on other officials and people for improving their lots on the bureaucratic and social ladder. They wrote their suspicions and/or deliberate slanders about others, which in turn created an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust. *Ibid.*, 23. Principally, no informer was punished for passing false information, hence spying was actively encouraged by the Sultan. Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit: Yıldız Hatıraları*, ed. Kudret Emiroğlu (İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2008), 134.

⁷⁶³ "Bu akşam beyt'ül malden olunan masarîf şer'an caiz midir? Böyle bir fetva ver." Y. A. HUS 320-111.

⁷⁶⁴ Y. A. HUS 320-111.

good from an Islamic point of view, because they drained the resources originally and collectively belonging to the people. It does not matter whether Tahir Efendi was just joking, or whether the statement attributed to him was pure slander. The fact that such a spy report could be imagined and written reveals the undercurrents of Islamically framed critiques against the Hamidian regime in Yenişehir. That is why the spy report led Münir Paşa to “urgently” take action to contain the situation before it further evoked the suspicion of the Sultan.

The episodes involving the agencies of Münir Paşa and Tahir Efendi indicate that the vicissitudes of Hamidian hegemony were probably well comprehended by the provincial actors: The audiences of Hamidian ceremonials and rituals should have understood them as rhetorical devices of governance, which did not always correlate with actual policies and ideas of their leading participants. Within the autocratic political system, survival required, in addition to a stringent application of self-censorship, a pledge of allegiance stressing personal loyalty to the Sultan by “informing” on those who did not comply with this suffocating political culture.⁷⁶⁵ Yet, provincial politics was much larger than the strait jacket that the regime envisaged for the public sphere. There were many alternative publics and disparate political agendas with which the Hamidian state constantly tackled. As such, the public sphere was a double-edged knife that could be used for both silencing dissent within the society and for challenging the hegemonic claims of the regime. The Islamically tinted rhetoric of the Hamidian state did not guarantee loyalty even among Turkish-speaking Sunni Muslims; on the contrary it could hit the regime back like a boomerang thrown into the precarious public sphere. In this respect, the Hamidian regime had good reasons to be constantly apprehensive about the internal societal dynamics of the late Ottoman polity. It sought to overcome this problem through internal spying, which in turn proved to be the most resented legacy of the regime in Yenişehir; for one of the highest profile, leading spies of the regime, Fehim Paşa was eventually lynched by a furious mob in Yenişehir during the heydays of the Young Turk revolution.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁵ Yosmaoğlu, “Chasing the Printed Word,” 26; 47.

⁷⁶⁶ See chapter 6.

4.3.1. Reception of Education by the Local Societies

The main objective of the late Ottoman education system was inculcating loyalty and obedience to the central state in the minds of the young subjects by emphasizing Islamic morality in the curricular and extra-curricular educational activities. Sultan Abdülhamid II followed the blueprints of education reforms of the Tanzimat state and greatly extended the reach of state education in the provinces. In Ben Fortna's words, Public Education Regulation of 1869 was "being converted into bricks and mortar during the Hamidian era."⁷⁶⁷ In order to infiltrate more into the provincial societies through modern education, the Hamidian administration depended on the political rapprochement it engineered between the local societies and the central state. As Akşin Somel notes, the educational commissions formed especially at the *kaza* level enabled the Ottoman state to have access to local resources for funding the schools in the provinces. In this respect, the prevalence of primary and secondary schools reflected the availability of resources in specific regions and the local people's willingness to contribute to the modern schools in their respective regions.⁷⁶⁸ Thus, the ambitious nature of Hamidian educational reform meant that the government had to rely on local participation and initiative for pursuing its goals.⁷⁶⁹

Ertuğrul Sancağı was among the top ranking Ottoman districts with respect to the percentage of modern secondary schools (*rüşdiyyes*) per *kaza*. In between 1902 and 1908, the imperial average of *rüşdiyyes* per *kaza* was 0, 85; while Ertuğrul had almost three (2, 75) *rüşdiyyes* per *kaza*.⁷⁷⁰ In 1895-1896, Yenişehir contained two *rüşdiyyes* serving to 84 students in total: One at the town center, the other at the Sölöz Müslim village of İznik.⁷⁷¹ The *rüşdiye* at the town center was quite well-provided with its building rebuilt in mid-1880s through the contributions of the local notables.⁷⁷² In the spring of 1893, a visitor from Bursa passed through Yenişehir on his way to Bilecik and

⁷⁶⁷ Fortna, "The Reign," 51.

⁷⁶⁸ Somel, *The Modernization*, 108-117; 152-162.

⁷⁶⁹ Fortna, "The Reign," 53.

⁷⁷⁰ Somel, *The Modernization*, 357.

⁷⁷¹ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1313*, 131.

⁷⁷² *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1303*, 43.

wrote his observations for Bursa newspaper.⁷⁷³ He visited a modern primary school in Dinboz village (contemporary Erdoğanköy), which was a 95-household immigrant village at the western outskirts of Yenişehir. He also dropped by the rüşdiye of Yenişehir and chatted with the teacher of the school. He was much impressed with the new building of the rüşdiye. Before coming to Yenişehir, he heard from someone who had visited Yenişehir before him, that the teacher of the rüşdiye was a very apt person, who was much revered by the local people. The teacher, however, regrettably told the visitor that the parents of the students, whom he prepared for higher education with much labor, were not willing to send their kids away to Bursa for further educational “progress”.⁷⁷⁴

Indeed, the teacher’s observations about the parents’ attitude indicate that Yenişehir’s approach to modern education was marked by pragmatic concerns of a predominantly rural society. Their positive appeal towards rüşdiye education hints that they considered local official posts open to rüşdiye graduates as desired and reliable supplementary income.⁷⁷⁵ However, pursuing higher education in Bursa was not only much more costly for the families, but also it promised diminishing returns, because climbing up the educational ladder meant dissociation from Yenişehir in the future careers of the youth.⁷⁷⁶ Apparently, higher payments due to higher education did not make up for the unavailability of family resources located in Yenişehir.⁷⁷⁷ On the other hand, the meager conditions of modern primary schools further point out that the local society was not that much into the “modern” and “progressivist” aspects of state

⁷⁷³ The newspaper article does not include the name of the visitor/author. It is entitled “Bilecik’ten Mektup” (A Letter from Bilecik).

⁷⁷⁴ *Bursa*, 9 Ramazan 1310, No. 115, p. 2.

⁷⁷⁵ See, the employee files of Ahmed Hamdi Efendi, born in Yenişehir in 1877, DH. SAİD 0130-241, and Mehmed Kamil Efendi, born in Yenişehir in 1874, DH. SAİD 0074-381. Both of them pursued careers in Yenişehir after graduating from the *rüşdiye* of the town.

⁷⁷⁶ Mehmed Behçet Efendi, who was born in Yenişehir in 1887, for instance, continued his education in Bursa idadisi (high school) after attending the *rüşdiye* of Yenişehir. However, he was not a local of Yenişehir; he was the son of an employee of the Agricultural Bank’s head office. Three years after he was admitted to Bursa idadisi, he had to leave the school due to his father’s appointment elsewhere. DH. SAİD 139-253.

⁷⁷⁷ See for example, the memoir of Mollaoğlu Ali Rıza Üzüm, who as a local of Yenişehir was promoted to Bilecik branch of the Agricultural Bank in 1904, but told the director of Bilecik branch to send him back to Yenişehir, since he had a house in Yenişehir, and he would not be able to make his ends meet in Bilecik. (*Burada idare olamam, Yenişehir’de evim var, dedim.*) The manuscript entitled *Yenişehirli Mollaoğlu Ali (Rıza) Üzüm’in Hatıratı*, edited by Orhan Özkan, p. 7. I thank Salih Erol for making this manuscript available to me.

education. In 1895-96, there were just two modern primary schools in Yenişehir, as opposed to 99 traditional primary schools.⁷⁷⁸

İznik developed a more troublesome relationship with Hamidian schools than Yenişehir. In 1897, some inhabitants of the town attempted to get the teacher of the modern primary school dismissed. They petitioned the province claiming that the teacher was making the students attend his personal affairs, rather than educating and disciplining them.⁷⁷⁹ For this reason, attendance to school dropped to merely 10 students. The town requested the appointment of a better teacher in his stead. The Ministry of Education, however, did not rush to dismiss the teacher; it wrote to the provincial administration in Bursa that the teacher could not be dismissed without going through an official investigation about the issue.⁷⁸⁰ Thus, the Ministry was aware of the possibility of involvement of local intrigues in such cases.

More interesting than the uneasy presence of the modern primary school in İznik was the very existence of a modern secondary school in a village of İznik, namely Sölöz Müslim. At the beginning of the 20th century, not every *kaza* within the Empire had a *rüşdiye*; yet, İznik as a *nahiye* had a *rüşdiye*, located in one of its villages. The establishment of a *rüşdiye* in Sölöz Müslim was triggered most probably by the missionary activity of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM)⁷⁸¹ in the neighboring Sölöz Gayri Müslim.⁷⁸² In 1873-1874, the Bursa mission of ABCFM reported that they could finally gain a lodgment in Sölöz Gayri Müslim. A pastor and a student from ABCFM's seminary at Marsovan succeeded in hiring a house and at once commenced a school and started religious services. The report goes on to state that "the most determined efforts were made by the bishop of

⁷⁷⁸ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1313*, 133. Compare, for instance, with the nearby *kaza* of Gemlik, in which six modern primary schools (3 for girls and 3 for boys) were established through the initiative of the *kaymakam* of this *kaza* with local resources in 1881. Somel, *The Modernization*, 115.

⁷⁷⁹ "...menfaat-i zatiyyesine ait işlerle meşgul ederek talim ve terbiyelerine itina etmediği...." MF. MKT 370-17.

⁷⁸⁰ MF. MKT 370-17.

⁷⁸¹ The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was a Protestant agency founded in 1810 and chartered by the state of Massachusetts in 1812 to send missionaries abroad, primarily for religious motives, but also to pursue general altruistic labor, including opening schools and hospitals. See, "American Board Archives." *Digital Library for International Research*. Accessed October 1, 2017. <http://www.dlir.org/arit-american-board-archives.html>.

⁷⁸² The very existence of the *rüşdiye* in Sölöz evinces what Ben Fortna identified as a "struggle... tantamount to a battle for the hearts and minds of the empire's youth and hence, its very future." Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 243.

Broosa⁷⁸³ to drive them (the pastor and the student preacher) from the village and to prevent people from coming near them or sending their children to their school. They however held on and at latest accounts the student preacher and teacher were having a Sabbath audience of 40.”⁷⁸⁴ Indeed, the 1879-1880 Bursa report states that “the greater part of the brethren here gave a tithe of their produce last season, and they have promised to do the same this year.”⁷⁸⁵ By 1883-1884, Sölöz was described as the banner church of the Bursa field, for “...they completed their chapel by hard work and literal donations the year before. In the current year, they paid 15 liras to complete the school room under their chapel and have besides doubled the amount they pay towards their preacher’s salary.”⁷⁸⁶

Apparently, the Ottoman government was well aware of the persistent missionary activity in Sölöz Gayri Müslim. As Fortna states: “The Sultan believed that the aggressive presence of so many well-funded and well-organised minority and foreign schools, especially those run by the seemingly ever stronger missionary movement, represented a danger to the empire.”⁷⁸⁷ Thus, to counter the missionary activity in the neighboring Sölöz Gayri Müslim, the construction of a *rüşdiye* building was under way in the winter of 1880. Ahmed Vefik Paşa, then the governor of Bursa, wrote to the Ministry of Education stating that the building in Sölöz Müslim would be completed by March. In his usual hurry, he asked the immediate dispatch of a teacher and necessary educational materials. The Ministry, in turn, replied in late July with more questions to the provincial administration of Bursa. The Ministry wanted to know the number of Muslim households in the village, the number of expected students in the school, the numbers of traditional primary schools in the region and their students, since assessing the materials to be sent depended on these parameters.⁷⁸⁸ The point is that the *rüşdiye* of Sölöz was established without investigating its feasibility by the central state.

⁷⁸³ The report is not explicit about which “bishop of Broosa” worked against the protestant missionaries in Sölöz. Since Sölöz Gayri Müslim was an Armenian village, “the bishop” was most probably the bishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Bursa.

⁷⁸⁴ ABCFM, *Annual Report of Broosa Station for 1873-4*, dated June 1, 1874.

⁷⁸⁵ ABCFM, *Annual Report of Broosa Station for 1879-80*, p. 11.

⁷⁸⁶ ABCFM, *Brousa Station Report 1883-4*, dated May 19th, 1884.

⁷⁸⁷ Fortna, “The Reign,” 51.

⁷⁸⁸ MF. MKT 65-92.

Vefik Paşa's involvement further suggests that it was most probably the offspring of political engineering geared towards balancing the missionary activity in the region.

About twenty-five years after the establishment of the *rüşdiye* in Sölöz Müslim, the village clashed with the Ministry of Education over the building of the school. In 1880, the villagers constructed the school building through their donations and labor. However, by the early 1900s, the school had only 6 or 7 pupils. Thus, the Ministry closed it down and transferred its budget to the *rüşdiye* of Gemlik. So far so good, yet, about a year later, an unknown informant whispered to the Ministry that there was a buyer ready to pay 15.000 *kuruş* for the idle school building in Sölöz Müslim. Indeed, the building was donated to the Ministry by the villagers about five years ago, allegedly with the condition of keeping it as the *rüşdiye* of the village. Now that there was a buyer ready to pay 15.000 *kuruş*, the Ministry decided to sell the building through auction and use the money earned from the sale for providing much needed funds to the modern primary schools in the region. On the 21st of February 1908, when a crier was dispatched to the village from the local administration of Pazarköy⁷⁸⁹ to see whether there were any prospective buyers in the village, the villagers were caught off guard. Fortunately for them, no buyer came forward in the village or in the *kaza*. It seems that the mysterious 15.000 *kuruş* offer to the building posited by the anonymous informant had disappeared. Thus, the villagers wasted no time objecting the decision of the Ministry, and on the 27th of February, they petitioned the *kaza* administration of Pazarköy.⁷⁹⁰

In their petition, they recounted that their *rüşdiye* was closed last year, because of the resentful ex-teacher of the school, who could not get along with the people of the village. In order not to deprive the children of their village and of the surrounding villages attending to their *rüşdiye* of "illumination of education" (*nur-u maarif*), the Muslim inhabitants of the village hired a private teacher for 200 *kuruş* salary. Hence, under the tutelage of this teacher, twenty-five students were actually attending the school right now. On top of this, they stressed that they had built this building based on a sultanic order with their own resources twenty-five years ago and donated it to the Ministry of Education five years ago, with the condition of its preservation as a *rüşdiye*.

⁷⁸⁹ Sölöz was then attached to the *kaza* of Pazarköy.

⁷⁹⁰ MF. MKT 1043-8.

But, they had recently learnt that the Ministry decided to sell the building to someone else, which would leave the Muslim children in a state of ignorance. Therefore, the villagers asked the government to revoke the auction of the building and revert it back to a rüşdiye. Before forwarding the petition of Sölöz Müslim to Bursa, the local administration of Pazarköy undertook a quick investigation about the actual usage of the building. It found out that the anonymous information letter submitted to the Ministry was right on this account: A part of the building was allocated to the *imam* of the village as lodgment, and the other part was being used as stable. It was quite clumsy on the part of the villagers to make up a story about employing a private tutor for keeping their building, for it crumbled even before reaching Bursa. Immediately after the petition submitted to the *kaza* administration, a village notable, Ahmed (most probably the son of Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa) wrote another petition directly to the Ministry of Education. His letter did not include the story about the hired teacher; rather he used the ideological jargon of the Hamidian regime on education. Accordingly, the Muslim children of Sölöz and of the surrounding seven villages used to learn their religious responsibilities and duties of obedience (*vezaif-i diniye ve vazife-i ubudiyeti öğrenmekte*) in the *rüşdiye*, which was closed last year, supposedly due to the negligible number of its student body. Nowadays, all these children, who were graduates of modern primary schools, could not have access to modern secondary education, and therefore they were doomed to forget the things they had learnt before.⁷⁹¹ As such, the petitioner asked the Ministry to re-open the *rüşdiye* and to appoint an apt teacher to the school.⁷⁹²

By the early 20th century, the Ministry of Education could not be easily duped with misinformation produced at a village setting. Hence, the Ministry cross checked its records with the Directorate of Education in Bursa and concluded that the school had only 6-7 students during the last couple of years. Since, the budget earmarked for Sölöz Müslim's *rüşdiye* was transferred to the *rüşdiye* of Gemlik, it could not be reopened. At any rate, if the number of graduates from the modern primary schools in the region increases and sufficient demand for a *rüşdiye* arises in the future, then the school can be reopened. In the mean time, if any prospective buyer emerges, the building would be

⁷⁹¹ "...*rüşdiye* taliminden mahrum olarak öğrendiklerini de unutmakta idüğünden..." MF. MKT 1043-8.

⁷⁹² MF. MKT 1043-8.

sold for funding the primary schools in the region; if not, then the building should be well-preserved.⁷⁹³

Sölöz Müslim's clash with the Ministry of Education over the *rüşdiyye* building in the village reveals that the local community's support to the educational efforts of the Hamidian state was not unconditional; on the contrary, since they made the initial investment in education, the local people did not abstain from intervening in the affairs of these schools, as their disputes with the centrally appointed teachers demonstrate. The *rüşdiyye* in Sölöz Müslim was not created due to the local demand; rather, the central state and the Muslim villagers created it hand in hand for countering the perceived threat of the missionary activity in Sölöz Gayri Müslim. It could not survive due to its redundancy within a relatively sparsely populated rural setting. As a state-owned, modern secondary school, the *rüşdiyye* was supposed to serve the Muslim population of the region; for this reason, the villagers repeatedly emphasized the Muslimness of the youth, which was to benefit from the school by learning Islamic morality and by being disciplined to obey the sultan. However, its "Muslimness" could not save the school from the claws of the Ministry of Education, which opted for technocratic rationality against the villagers' superficial rhetoric of Islamically tinted progressivism and appeals to the Hamidian autocracy. When confronted with its own discursive weapons at the hands of the villagers, the late Hamidian state knew it all too well that "ideology" did not amount to bitter reality, which turned the modern "Muslim" school into a stable.

The difficulties, which Sölöz Müslim faced in reclaiming its resources from the state, pinpoint how the Hamidian state took advantage of keeping its doors wide open to informers. As long as nobody pinched the Ministry of Education, Sölöz Müslim could indeed do whatever it saw fit with the school building it originally owned. The content of the anonymous report submitted to the Ministry suggests that it was written by someone quite familiar with the context of Sölöz Müslim. Given the "traditional" competition between Sölöz Müslim and Sölöz Gayri Müslim⁷⁹⁴, the villagers of the latter might indeed be the usual suspects mobilizing the Ministry of Education by exposing the actual usage of the idle school building in Sölöz Müslim. It is true that the

⁷⁹³ MF. MKT 1043-8.

⁷⁹⁴ See chapter 2, pp. 163-167.

Hamidian state could tighten its grip on the local societies through information it derived from opposing parties; the problem was that it did not have well-thought out strategies for containing the negative series of reactions triggered by these interventions. The already fragile inter-communal relations during the last quarter of the 19th century were perhaps most vulnerable to such locally generated political agitations entangling the Hamidian state.

4.3.2. Non-Muslim Communities of Yenişehir and the Hamidian State

How non-Muslim communities of Yenişehir responded to the Islamic Ottomanism of the Hamidian state is a notoriously difficult question, because of the scantiness of documentation on a relatively small fraction of the population within the micro setting of the *kaza* of Yenişehir. For this reason, I will follow the lead of historical studies that primarily focus on late Ottoman non-Muslim communities and individuals for evaluating limited documents at hand about the non-Muslim communities in and around Yenişehir. Latest research on late Ottoman non-Muslim communities stresses the complexity and multi-layered nature of non-Muslim identities within the late Ottoman imperial establishment.⁷⁹⁵ For example, based on an Armenian shoemaker's memoir, Nora Lessersohn argues that non-Muslim Ottoman subjects experienced "quotidian vicissitudes of commingling", which she conceptualizes as "provincial cosmopolitanism". She writes: "...provincial cosmopolitanism was a local cosmopolitanism, a lived disposition, affinity and identity of individual persons and of collective groups that was the direct result of living in a demographically concentrated provincial urban environment in which individuals and groups of diverse and differentiated ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural composition engaged in an ecosystem of interaction."⁷⁹⁶ At the level of everyday life, such "provincial cosmopolitanism" can indeed be traced at the town center of Yenişehir. While a couple

⁷⁹⁵ Nicholas Doumanis, *Before the Nation: Muslim-Christian Coexistence and Its Destruction in Late Ottoman Anatolia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Ayşe Ozil, "Nationality," in *Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Study of Communal Relations in Anatolia* (London: Routledge, 2013); Cohen, "Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism," Lessersohn, "Provincial Cosmopolitanism,"

⁷⁹⁶ Lessersohn, "Provincial Cosmopolitanism," 552.

of Armenian notables dominated the local administration together with a few Muslim notables for more than twenty years in between early 1870s and 1890s; some other Armenian inhabitants were employed in governmental posts available in local administration.⁷⁹⁷ Not only did non-Muslim inhabitants of Yenişehir shared public spaces, such as the market place and the courtroom with the Muslim majority, but also they were very much part and parcel of everyday life due to their professions, such as being owners of convenient stores and bakeries, which both the inhabitants of the town and villagers frequented.⁷⁹⁸

If we put aside somewhat autonomous dynamics of everyday life at provincial settings, the Hamidian rhetoric of state power and symbolism, and the regime's educational policies were clearly Islamically oriented. Islam was promoted as the official religion of the empire, and Muslimness was defined as a significant marker of belonging to the polity. The logical conclusion from such state of affairs would be that the Hamidian state's ideological orientation openly excluded and/or marginalized non-Muslim subjects from the epicenter of political power. However, the Hamidian state's promotion of Islam as the official religion for cementing the loyalty of the majority of its subjects closely resembled other contemporary empires such as late imperial Russia and the Habsburg Empire. Julia Philips Cohen argues that examples from these polities suggest that a state's mobilization and public display of official religion did not always, or necessarily, prevent members of other faiths from identifying with that state. It seems that the Ottoman Empire was no exception in this regard: Some non-Muslim subjects continued to perceive their fortunes bounded with that of the late Ottoman polity throughout the Hamidian era.⁷⁹⁹

In the Bursa region, the ambivalent co-existence of marked religious difference with the Islamism of the Hamidian state can be traced in the persona of Münir Paşa in relation to the non-Muslim communities of Bursa. On the one hand, Münir Paşa as a prominent governor of the Hamidian regime led Muslim public rituals and ceremonials organized by the central state in Bursa. His role in the transfer of *hilye* from Bursa to

⁷⁹⁷ The yearbooks of Hüdavendigâr report many non-Muslims as members of secular courts and various local commissions, and as secretaries and trustees of local funds (such as *menafi* and municipality), and as Régie officials in Yenişehir.

⁷⁹⁸ See chapter 5 for more information on the provincial administration in Yenişehir during the Hamidian era.

⁷⁹⁹ Cohen, "Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism," 247-249.

Yenişehir for instance, marked him as the highest representative of the “Muslim” Ottoman polity in Bursa. On the other hand, he was a much venerated governor by the non-Muslim communities of the city. So much so that, when he was recalled from his post in 1896 for a short time, the Christians of the city feared that the calamities which had befallen their co-religionists in other parts of the Empire during the Armenian crisis would be experienced by themselves in Bursa without the restraints of “order-preserving” and “peace-loving” Münir Paşa. Armenians of Bursa were much relieved when the Paşa was reinstated to his post after an interregnum of a couple of months, during which some officials created disturbances in the province. On his return, Münir Paşa speedily removed them from office to the great satisfaction of the non-Muslim communities.⁸⁰⁰

The scholarship on late Ottoman non-Muslim communities posits that throughout the Hamidian era, Islamism coexisted with civic Ottomanism developed during the Tanzimat era. In other words, universal definitions of imperial citizenship were not officially disavowed by the Hamidian administration.⁸⁰¹ In fact, “...universal and exclusive definitions of imperial belonging were cyclical rather than linear: during moments of heightened tensions and violence, civic definitions of imperial belonging might suffer, only to be revived after the immediate source of tensions had passed.”⁸⁰² During the early phases of the Armenian crisis, the Hamidian administration utilized “Ottomanism” *a la* Tanzimat for shielding western Anatolia from the potential reverberations of inter-communal confrontations in other parts of the Empire. For example, in 1893, the Hamidian administration asked the governor of Bursa to prepare a detailed report about the Armenian subjects employed at different levels of provincial administration in the provincial center and in the attached districts and *kazas*. While submitting this report to the palace, the governor, Münir Paşa stated that the report was prepared for countering some seditious publications claiming that Armenians were not being employed in the service of the state.⁸⁰³ Hence, the Hamidian state used civic Ottomanism for countering “subversive” publics.

⁸⁰⁰ ABCFM, *Brousa Station Report 1896-7*, p. 1

⁸⁰¹ Çetinsaya, “II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası,” 380.

⁸⁰² Cohen, “Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism,” 239.

⁸⁰³ Y. PRK. UM 28-54.

In fact, even when inter-communal relations between the Armenians and Muslims further deteriorated in 1895 due to the escalation of the Armenian crisis, some Armenian communities of İznik petitioned the palace, demanding justice and protection from the assaults of unruly local officials. The pastors of Sölöz Gayri Müslim , which was then a large village of 4000 souls attached to the *kaza* of Pazarköy, filed a complaint in the name of the villagers about the recently appointed *kaymakam*, Hüseyin Nazmi Efendi. Accordingly, the *kaymakam* deliberately twisted an ill-founded quarrel, so as to present it as “Armenian treachery” (...*asılsız bir nizaya Ermeni fesadı rengi vererek...*). He thus imprisoned twelve people without a trial and released them only after extorting money from the villagers. Furthermore, he dispatched the tax-collector (*süvari tahsildarı*) Halil Ağa to the village, supposedly for collecting taxes. Halil Ağa insulted and beat up the villagers. He tauntingly said: “If you don’t pay your taxes, you’d better go to Armenia!” The petitioners added that they were virtually imprisoned in their village, for they could not go out to do their business and engage in trade. The Palace forwarded their complaint to the Grand Vizier Said Paşa, who immediately ordered Hüdavendigâr to undertake an investigation on the ground, and also informed the Ministry of Interior to follow-up the issue.⁸⁰⁴ On the one hand, Halil Ağa’s markedly exclusionary remarks about the local Armenians reverberates the side-effects of the late Ottoman Empire’s increasing gravitation towards being a polity made up of and for Muslims. On the other hand, the central state’s efforts to counter further alienation of its non-Muslim subjects through swift administrative redress highlight that Ottomanism was not a lost cause yet. The government was trying to curtail the excesses of Islamic Ottomanism through securing the rights of its non-Muslim subjects.

It was however much more difficult to uphold civic Ottomanism in the Bursa region when the political atmosphere in Istanbul was particularly tense due to the violent confrontations of the Armenian crisis in between 1894 and 1896. The southern Marmara region had close ties with the capital city. In this region, Pazarköy (contemporary Orhangazi) was densely populated by Armenian communities, who had links with the Armenians residing and working in İstanbul. For this reason, the Hamidian administration was particularly concerned about the activities of secret revolutionary Armenian organizations, which could potentially forge a societal base

⁸⁰⁴ DH. MKT 415-2.

among the prosperous Pazarköy Armenians. As a matter of fact, during the summer of 1894, the government observed some “revolutionary” activities in between Pazarköy and Bahçecik, involving Istanbul-based propagation. Apparently, “harmful” publications were being smuggled to the region from İstanbul in secret divisions made at the bottoms of grape barrels used for trading with the capital. Furthermore, there were intelligence reports about Armenians’ arms smuggling from İstanbul for the purpose of attacking the Muslim villages of the region when conditions ripened.⁸⁰⁵ Based on such reports, the Hamidian administration was alarmed when a gang of 7 or 8 brigands in Albanian and Georgian attire pillaged Akkaya in the district of Ertuğrul during the early autumn of 1894. The government apprehended that these could be revolutionary Armenian bandits disguising themselves in different ethnic garbs. The governor, Münir Paşa collected intelligence diligently so as to ascertain the identity of these bandits. The fact that the bandits turned out to be Circassians was a great relief for the governor.⁸⁰⁶

In August 1896, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnaktsutiun*) placed bombs throughout Istanbul and attacked the Ottoman Bank causing the death and wounding of some people. Subsequently, large mobs attacked the Armenian residents of İstanbul, murdering many of them and pillaging their property for two days.⁸⁰⁷ We have already seen that the Armenians of Bursa feared for their lives and property lest the events engulfed their hometowns, too. They were not however the only party which was anxious about inter-communal strife. In September, the government feared for Armenian attacks to Muslim villages in Pazarköy. There were police reports claiming, for instance, that the fully-armed Armenians of Orta village in Pazarköy attacked the Muslim Cihan village. Since the Muslim villagers had already left their village fearing their safety, the Armenians too left Cihan and escaped.⁸⁰⁸ However, it seems that within the tense political context of mid-1890s, both Muslims and Armenians of the region overestimated the escalation of ill-will within the other community. It was probably true

⁸⁰⁵ Y. MTV 100-79.

⁸⁰⁶ Y. MTV 104-56.

⁸⁰⁷ Edhem Eldem states that the events following the attack to the Ottoman bank quickly evolved into a massacre of the Armenian inhabitants of İstanbul, claiming the lives of a few thousand people. He is of the opinion that Sultan Abdülhamid deliberately reciprocated terror with terror in order to intimidate the revolutionary Armenian movement. Edhem Eldem, "26 Ağustos 1896 "Banka Vakası" ve 1896 "Ermeni Olayları"," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 5 (Spring 2007): 113-146.

⁸⁰⁸ Y. PRK. ZB 18-20

that some Armenian revolutionaries were working in the region for arousing nationalist feelings among Pazarköy Armenians. Yet, they could not apparently persuade the bulk of the Armenian community for their causes, since there were very few reports of Armenian aggression towards the Muslims. The ones like Orta vs. Cihan villages that I mentioned above are significant for their inconclusiveness, hinting that they probably reflected Muslim fears more than the reality on the ground. Likewise, there were not wide-scale Muslim attacks to the Armenians of the region, as they happened in eastern Anatolia and İstanbul.

In the Bursa region, the non-Muslim communities' relationships with the Hamidian state and Muslim communities were not only shaped by specific historical conjunctures like the Armenian crisis, but also these relationships fluctuated according to each community. As Julia Philips Cohen puts it: "...to speak of non-Muslim responses to Islamic Ottomanism may obscure as much as it illuminates. Such relationships were often uneven and complicated by the possibility that particular communities might gain favor with the government precisely as the position of another group became more tenuous."⁸⁰⁹ In this respect, Greeks of Yenişehir deserves to be addressed somewhat separately from the Armenian communities of the *kaza*. Indeed, my overall impression is that the Greek communities of Yenişehir and İznik were potentially more troublesome from the viewpoint of the central state, since a phenomenon like "Greek bandits" (*Yunan eşkiyası*), indicating supranational links between the local, Ottoman Greeks and the Greeks of the Kingdom of Greece figures in the late Ottoman documents.⁸¹⁰

However, until the conflict over Crete turned into a war between Greece and Ottoman Empire in 1897, the Hamidian government did not perceive the disturbances involving the Greek communities in and around Yenişehir as organized, nationalist rebellions; rather took them as spontaneous challenges to public order, occasionally reflecting communal discontent, but mostly following the path of ever-present, ordinary banditry in the region. For example, just before the anniversary of the Sultan's

⁸⁰⁹ Cohen, "Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism," 240.

⁸¹⁰ For, "Greek bandits", see chapter 2, footnote 363, p. 114. For the complexities posed by the establishment of the Hellenic Kingdom and its granting of citizenship to the Greek Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, see Ayşe Özil, "Nationality," in *Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Study of Communal Relations in Anatolia* (London: Routledge, 2013), 98-117.

enthronement in 1893, many Greeks from the south-eastern Marmara region gathered in İznik for a fair (*panayır*) at the town center. The mere fact that the authorities did not whatsoever see any threat in the organization of this most probably annual fair demonstrates their ease with the communal activities of the Greeks in the region.

But, on the night of 15th of August (Julian calendar), things started to go wrong in İznik. All the Greeks present in İznik for the fair gathered in front of the Orthodox church. Then, the Greeks from Derbend village, which was located on a hill cliff in between İznik and Yenişehir, overlooking the town-center of Yenişehir, started to fire into the air. The local policemen and the (ambulant) Bilecik gendarmerie (*Bilecik seyyar kolu*) stationed in İznik warned the Greeks by using “appropriate language”. But, some “Christians” responded with guns and knives, and insulted them. The other Greeks, who saw them likewise took up their weapons and chased the policemen. They beat them up and lightly wounded one of them, *zaptiye* Murad, from his leg. Subsequently, they dispatched 2 or 3 armed men at street corners and did not let any policemen and Muslims pass through. Up until morning, the Greeks gathered in the neighborhoods and marketplaces and enjoyed themselves with music and firearms. The next morning, the local administration asked the Greek metropolitan, who was present in İznik, to send the *muhtars* and notables of the Greek community, who were responsible from the previous night’s disturbances, to the government building in İznik. When he tacitly refused to comply, the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir went to İznik to undertake an investigation on the ground. Furthermore, the district gendarmerie commander was dispatched from Bilecik with sufficient forces, so as to ensure that the delinquents would be entrusted to the secular court after being identified through proper investigation.⁸¹¹

The unfolding of this event reveals many inter-connected points about the relationship between the practical embodiment of the Hamidian state’s Islamic Ottomanism and the Greek community of the region. First, the Greek fair was an alternative Christian public, which pushed the limits set forth in the public sphere by the Hamidian state. It is significant that in a situation whereby the Greeks clearly outnumbered the local security forces with respect to their weapons and numbers, they merely wounded one officer mildly. Their intention was not to kill or plunder; rather they wanted to have fun undisturbed by Muslim standards of public entertainment

⁸¹¹ Y. PRK. DH 6-93.

imposed on them. That is why they guarded the street corners throughout the night. Second, the local officials and the Muslim community of İznik understood their motivations as such. In reporting the event, the local administration stressed that the Christians who initiated these events should be punished, because they demolished the honor of the government, which should be immediately reinstated for precluding the reoccurrence of such events. However, in the heat of the event, the local security officials did not insist on clashing with the Greeks, since they claimed that “this could have brought about great misdeeds” (*büyük bir fenalık çıkacağı cihetle..*)⁸¹² In other words, they did not choose to mobilize the Muslim community against the “rowdiness” of the Greeks, but rather left them alone to complete their festivities. Apparently, the Muslims too, did not perceive any immediate threat from the Greeks gathered in town; they waited patiently for them to cut it out in the morning. Last but not least, the event took place within the governmental framework of the Hamidian state, meaning that the public order did not altogether broke down to the point of costing lives and property, rather “normalization” returned with the dawn. The government in turn, did not read the event as nationalist opting out from the governmental system, but perceived it as spontaneous rebellion that had to be addressed within appropriate administrative and judicial procedures.

I think that when it comes to the question of nationalism, a distinction between the late Ottoman regions, where non-Muslims formed the majority and where they made up a small fraction of the population should be taken into account. As Engin Akarlı puts it:

In those places where non-Muslims constituted a small percentage of the population, and when non-Muslims belonged to small communities scattered around the empire, the guarantees offered by the government appear to have balanced the emphasis that it was putting on Islam and Muslims. In places where Christians of the same ethnic background constituted a majority, or a significantly large segment of the population, however....Abdülhamid’s provincial policy aggravated conflicts.⁸¹³

Given the overall demographic outlook of the Bursa region, the idea of radical separatist nationalism was not feasible in practice. Therefore, I do not agree with the perspective

⁸¹² Y. PRK. DH 6-93.

⁸¹³ Akarlı, “The Tangled Ends,” 361. For comparison with the Bursa region, see İpek Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878-1908* (Cornell University Press, 2014).

that traces the roots of the atrocities committed by the non-Muslim communities of the Bursa region against the Muslims during the War of Independence to their nationalist radicalization during the last quarter of the 19th century.⁸¹⁴ In my opinion, this perspective is a smoothly linear reading back of historical facts by dismissing the complexity of social existence and open-endedness of historical processes. My objection, however, should not be understood as denying the presence of nationalist undercurrents in the Bursa region during the last quarter of the 19th century. All I point out is that historical evidence falls short of demonstrating a substantial societal base for these revolutionary movements; on the contrary, in spite of being impregnated with ethnic and religious tensions, the Hamidian state managed to pull the strings together of a multi-ethnic imperial polity, at least in this part of Western Anatolia. It took the atrocities of the Balkan Wars, the World War I and more importantly perhaps, the complete breakdown of public order during the Greek invasion in the War of Independence to turn a substantial number of non-Muslim Ottomans of this region violently against their Muslim neighbors and vice versa. It seems that in Western Anatolia, there was still a window of opportunity for sorting out ethnic and religious differences through non-violent means of a relatively flexible imperial framework during the Hamidian era.

Even though “nationalism” was not the dominant force at the societal level, there were surely signs of mutual alienation and disappointment on both sides. The exclusionary exclamation of the tax-collector Halil Ağa in Sölöz Gayri Müslim, whereby he told the local villagers to go to Armenia, for instance, invoked considerable grief among the villagers by adding insult to injury.⁸¹⁵ Likewise, the Turkish-Muslim elements of the imperial establishment experienced the widening gap between the Armenian Ottomans and the central state as a bitter process. For example, during the spring of 1892, a German prince, Prince De Saxe-Meiningen, undertook a trip in north western and central Anatolia. The prince travelled with an entourage made up of both Ottoman and German officers, accompanied by a palace official (a cavalry major)

⁸¹⁴ Saime Yüceer, "Bursa Ermenileri Üzerine Bazı Saptamalar ve Orhangazi'de Ermeni Olayları (1914-1922)," *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, no. 29 (2006). To substantiate her argument about the emergence of nationalist movements in the Bursa region during the last quarter of the 19th century, Saime Yüceer quotes the example of Orta vs. Cihan villages that I mentioned above.

⁸¹⁵ The petition makes it explicit that the villagers took the remarks of Halil Ağa in this regard as an insult: "...*"Vergi vermezseniz Ermenistan'a gidin!" gibi hakarat icrasına tasaddi eylediği...*" DH. MKT 415-2.

directly reporting the trip to the Sultan. As part of the trip, the group visited meerscham (lüle taşı) factories operated by Germans and local Armenians in Eskişehir. In the factories operated by the Germans, the factory-owners presented gifts to all members of the visiting group irrespective of their religions. However, Armenian factory-owners presented gifts only to the German officers and to Goltz Paşa, and thereby openly discriminated against Muslim officers. The palace official in turn described these factory visits to the Sultan as a heart-breaking experience.⁸¹⁶ The Hamidian government failed to contain and reverse mutual alienation between the non-Muslim communities and its markedly Muslim administrative framework. That in itself was a sufficiently formidable source of challenge for the future of the empire, let alone the subsequent nationalist upsurge of the following Young Turk era.⁸¹⁷

4.4. Conclusion

In chapter 3 of this dissertation, I argued that in the early 1880s, the Hamidian state faced a tradeoff between securing its legitimacy in the eyes of the immigrant masses and upholding the legal rights of big land-owners in the southern Marmara region. The state opted for the first option. This chapter examined how the Hamidian state's preference for building up its legitimacy among the wider populace paid off. In order to compensate for losing some of the most modernized and economically lucrative Rumelian lands, the Hamidian administration turned to the Anatolian and Arab provinces for investing in economic and administrative infrastructure that would sustain a viable, modern, central state structure. However, in mid-1880s, the dim situation of the Ottoman treasury and the recent defeat of the Ottoman army in *93 Harbi* ruled out extravagance and extensive use of force against the provincial societies for extracting more resources for the modernization efforts and state-building in North-western Anatolia. Thus, the new regime needed the cooperation of the local societies for

⁸¹⁶ "...mucib-i esef olarak dikkat ve taaccübümüzü celbeden..." Y. PRK. A 7-65.

⁸¹⁷ Yet again, there were still "Ottoman patriots" among the non-Muslim communities during the Young Turk era. See, Vangelis Kechriotis, "On the Margins of National Historiography: The Greek İttihatçı Emmanouil Emmanouilidis – Opportunist or Ottoman patriot?," in *Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann, and Selçuk Akşin Somel (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 124-142.

carrying out reforms. The creation of *Ertuğrul Sancağı* demonstrated the government's efforts in terms of both utilizing contemporary strategies of monarchical legitimation and presenting modernization as a common good for both the state and provincial societies. Many of the modernizing transformations associated with the Hamidian era, from construction of roads to building of mosques, schools and monumental government buildings, could take place with the resources and manpower contributed by the local societies.

I contend that the accord between the provincial societies of the Bursa region and the central state depended on the government's attunement to and responsiveness towards the various social strata within the local societies. Throughout the first half of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the central state managed to balance potentially conflicting interests of different groups by channeling their energies towards modernization and state-building. Yet, more than political enticement was needed for sustaining the grand coalition led by the Hamidian state; thus, the expansion of the public sphere as a political platform for promoting the autocratic rule of the sultan came to the forefront. The Hamidian regime drew on the familiar cultural repertoire of Islam for commanding the loyalty of the substantial majority of the subjects, the Muslims. But, the plurality of social existence within and beyond the Muslims in the late Ottoman imperial polity rendered the public sphere a perilous platform for the Hamidian state. For this reason, the regime sought to contain the threats of potentially subversive publics by constantly screening local contexts. Consequently, intimate ideological policing of the regime eventually engulfed many people in the stranglehold of authoritarianism.

The micro-setting of Yenişehir reveals that the Hamidian hegemony was not all-encompassing; on the contrary, criticism, dissent, pragmatism and skepticism were ever present phenomena. Even the Islamic tradition, which was supposed to enhance the obedience and loyalty of the Muslim subjects, could be evoked for criticizing the autocratic rule of the Sultan. In the field of education, where the Hamidian state strove ambitiously to weave together obedience, Islamic morality and modernity, the local societies of Yenişehir had semi-autonomous agendas reflecting the practical realities of life in a predominantly rural context. As for the non-Muslim communities' reception of the Islamic rhetoric of state power, Yenişehir offers some limited insights. At the level of individual inhabitants, there was the quotidian experience of living in a multi-ethnic

and multi-religious provincial context. “Provincial cosmopolitanism” indicated cross-cutting, multiple layers of identification. Political implications of such complex allegiances can indeed be difficult to comprehend within the post imperial and contemporary national order of things. However, the possibilities of non-Muslim communities’ identification with the Islamicizing late Ottoman polity should not be *apriorily* dismissed, since both the Hamidian state and the local societies of the Bursa region knew it all too well that the rhetoric of power did not automatically translate into exercise of power. Thus, alongside with Islamic Ottomanism, civic Ottomanism inherited from the Tanzimat era was available as a convenient political vocabulary for both the state and the non-Muslim communities of the region. As such, the real challenge for the Hamidian state in relation to the non-Muslim communities was not separatist nationalism; rather it was flexing the public sphere for including alternative non-Muslim publics. The apparent failure of the regime in this respect enhanced psychological barriers between the state and non-Muslim Ottoman subjects.

In this chapter, I mostly dwelled on the new socio-political atmosphere created by the Hamidian state in Yenişehir. The next chapter attends to the socio-economic continuities with the previous Tanzimat era by analyzing the local administration and political economy of Yenişehir at the quotidian level. During the summer of 1885, the Hamidian state was endeavoring to launch the new district of Ertuğrul as a feasible project of modernization reflecting the ideals of Hamidian hegemony. Yet, Yenişehir was up to something else; something admittedly defying the sublime ideals attached to the Ertuğrul project. Apparently, the reign of money in Yenişehir continued unabated from the Tanzimat era to the Hamidian era.



Photo 3: The entrance of the government building in Bilecik, the capital of Ertuğrul Sancağı, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Yıldız Sarayı Albümleri, 90448-0002.

CHAPTER 5

SCRAMBLE FOR RURAL RESOURCES IN YENİŞEHİR DURING THE HAMIDIAN ERA (1885-1905)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter consists of two sections: The first section is a survey of some of the main economic actors in the political economy of Yenişehir during the Hamidian era. The first section contextualizes the economic outlook of the Bursa region within contemporary trends of the world economy on the one hand, the Ottoman Empire's specific policies of coping with the challenges of these trends on the other. It demonstrates the diversification and multiplication of foreign and Ottoman economic actors, which contended for the control of the rural surplus of North-western Anatolia. The second section zooms into the intimate context of Yenişehir for tracing how surplus extraction occurred amid relations of power that conditioned local administration. I analyze the politics of "appropriation" in Yenişehir through a case study based on the detailed investigations that the *kaymakam* of the *kaza*, Mehmed Ramazan Efendi, underwent because of his dubious undertakings during the summer and early autumn of 1885. The second section uses narration of interrelated events for attaining a glimpse at the political economy of Yenişehir from below. As such, I use "the social drama" revolving around Mehmed Ramazan Efendi as an event, revealing latent conflicts, and illuminating social structures.⁸¹⁸ The overall objective of this chapter is to show how

⁸¹⁸ Peter Burke, "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 293.

some of the economic transformations analyzed in the first section coalesced with local relations of power examined in the second section. I hope to draw a lively picture of Hamidian Yenişehir by revealing the relationship between events and political economic structures, while presenting the opposing viewpoints of historical actors.⁸¹⁹

The political economy of Yenişehir during the Hamidian era was a fusion of older societal structures inherited from the Tanzimat era and newer institutions and actors that got involved in the economy of the Ottoman Empire during the last quarter of the 19th century. Waqfs, *naibs*, the local notables and bandits as “traditional” institutions and actors interacted with the Régie company, the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (the PDA), the Agricultural Bank and a more bureaucratized and intrusive central state structure. The multiplication of the political contenders for rural surplus intensified competition among different parties. Just like the mid-19th century of the Bursa region that I examined in chapter 1, throughout the Hamidian era, scramble for the rural surplus of North-western Anatolia was the hub of center-province relations on the one hand, the commercialized, liberal, market economy of the Bursa region on the other.

Yenişehir’s history as a micro-level study reveals continuities in socio-economic structures from the Tanzimat era to the Hamidian era by delineating how laws, regulations, institutions and historical transformations worked in practice. In an economic context shaped by fierce competition for the rural surplus, various economic actors, from ordinary villagers to the Régie company; from different governmental departments of the state to the local notables, explicitly and/or cunningly broke the rules, regulations and conventions: The villagers smuggled tobacco; the Régie withheld credit and cultivation permits from the peasantry; different governmental departments tried to dupe each other for getting more of the financial resources; the local notables allied with the centrally appointed *kaymakams* for pursuing their interests through the prerogatives of the local administration. Focusing on what actually happened in Yenişehir over the medium term reveals persistent socio-economic structures amid political and institutional transformations. Notwithstanding the novelty of the Hamidian rhetoric of power that I examined in chapter 4, when it boiled down to struggles for

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 297.

making more money at the turn of the 20th century, Yenişehir closely resembled the “mind-boggling” town, as it was described by Vefik Efendi in 1863.

One of the major economic actors in the political economy of the Bursa region was the central state. During the Hamidian era, increased bureaucratic specialization in the provincial administration generated competition for economic surplus among different governmental departments and administrative units. Drawing on anthropological revisions of “the state theory”⁸²⁰, I contend that the Hamidian state did not act as a monolithic and unified economic agent with coherent, unidirectional economic policies; rather scarcity of financial resources pitted different governmental institutions and agents against each other. It seems that what Nadir Özbek postulates for the presence of the Hamidian state in the Armenian provinces was valid for North-western Anatolia as well: the late Ottoman state was the unified symbol of an actual disunity.⁸²¹ On the one hand, different ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce competed for getting more of the rural surplus under their own jurisdiction. On the other hand, different levels of the provincial administration struggled to retain more of the rural resources under their own control at the expense of the upper units. In this scheme of events, Yenişehir tried to evade Ertuğrul’s extractions; Ertuğrul was in turn unwilling to transfer money to Bursa; and Bursa strove to hide the financial flows within the province from İstanbul. The financial stringency of the Hamidian Empire permeated all levels of the provincial administration in Hüdavendigâr.

Yet, the Hamidian administration was not completely directionless when it came to the development of rural credit institutions. Based on the previous experiences of *memleket sandıkları* (local funds) and *menafi sandıkları* (funds for development), the government founded the Agricultural Bank in 1888. The resources of the Bank could not meet the credit demand of the Ottoman agricultural sector.⁸²² Still, it was a

⁸²⁰ Philip Abrams, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977),” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 58-89. Nadir Özbek applies this theoretical paradigm to the late Ottoman politics of taxation. See the subsequent footnote.

⁸²¹ Nadir Özbek, “The Politics of Taxation and the “Armenian Question” during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 04 (2012): 772.

⁸²² Tevfik Güran, “Teşkilatlanmış (Resmî) Kredi Piyasası Kurma Çalışmaları,” in *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı Üzerine Araştırmalar* (İstanbul: Eren, 1998), 148-158; Donald Quataert, “Dilemma of Development: The Agricultural Bank and Agricultural Reform in Ottoman Turkey, 1888–1908,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 02 (1975): 210-227.

significant initiative through which the government sought to reach out to the small cultivators. The distribution of the Bank's funds in Yenişehir suggests that people with modest means could actually borrow from the Bank. But, limited resources of the Bank entailed that informal rural credit markets continued to thrive in the Bursa region during the Hamidian era.

In addition to the creation of the Agricultural Bank, waqfs as ancient institutions continued to flourish, albeit under the aegis of an ever more pervasive and centralized waqf administration. The late Ottoman state needed a huge bureaucratic cadre for monitoring the activities of the many modest waqfs in the provinces. For financing the centralized waqf administration, it introduced various fees and charges for recording, ratification and auditing of the economic activities of the waqfs, which were administered by their trustees. Yet, the economic potentials of the waqfs invited abuses within this administrative hierarchy due to fierce struggles for the control of the rural resources attached to the waqfs.⁸²³ In this respect, Hamidian era inherited not only a centralizing waqf administration, but also accompanying abuses and corruption from the Tanzimat era.

During the Hamidian era, family waqfs belonging to the local notables of Yenişehir persisted as pious endowments supporting public services; even new family waqfs were founded for supporting the mosques. On the other hand, after 1878, cash-waqfs attached to village and neighborhood mosques multiplied. The formation of new immigrant settlements after the Russo-Ottoman War accounts for the substantial increase in cash waqfs founded for financing the mosques of the new villages. The structures of these cash waqfs reflected alliances and networks of support between the native and immigrant Muslim communities of Yenişehir. Furthermore, these waqfs provided cheap credit to the rural communities through relatively informal channels. Hence, the Agricultural Bank functioned side by side with the cash waqfs as a source of credit. Notwithstanding the presence of these traditional and new sources of rural credit, it seems that the liquidity problems of the commercialized economy of the Bursa region could not be eliminated during the Hamidian era as well.

⁸²³ Nazif Öztürk, "Vakıfların Yönetiminde Gözlenen Bozulma," in *Türk Yenileşme Tarihi Çerçevesinde Vakıf Müessesesi* (Ankara: Türkiye diyanet vakfı, 1995), 276-313.

The PDA and the Régie Company were the two powerful international actors that got involved in the Ottoman economy during the Hamidian era. These two foreign actors controlled substantial sources of income, which the Ottoman state had to concede to them for liquidation of its debts. Among these, the PDA had a positive impact on the revival of cocoon raising in the Bursa region. During the Great Depression of 1873-1894, declining terms of trade for the Ottoman economy in general, and the depression of wheat prices in particular, rendered the revival of the silk industry a safety net for the inhabitants of the Bursa region. The persistent demand for raw silk in the international markets contributed to the recovery of the silk sector in the Bursa region. In this context, the PDA invested in the Bursa Silk Raising Institute for fighting the pebrine disease.⁸²⁴ Yenişehir benefitted from the PDA's investments in this regard; the local graduates of the Silk Raising Institute could produce healthy breeds in Yenişehir. When the economic surplus of the silk sector substantially increased during early 1890s, competition for the appropriation of this new source of income intensified. In the case of İznik, Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa's waqf successfully claimed the tithe of the cocoons produced within the waqf lands at the expense of the PDA. Hence, an "exceptional waqf" could wrestle its rights over the rural resources from a powerful international actor, thanks to the Ottoman state's arbitration in its favor.

Unlike the relatively pacific presence of the PDA at the local contexts, the Régie commanded wide-spread resentment within the societies of the tobacco-producing provinces. The Régie's entry into the tobacco sector imposed an overtly exploitative system over the cultivators, traders and consumers. To add insult to injury, the Régie abused its purviews over the governance of the sector. As a private company, it did not share the flexibility of the Ottoman state in bending rules and regulations for the sake of preserving legitimacy and social peace.⁸²⁵ Consequently, many people from the Bursa region got involved in the illegal market for tobacco. To fight with wide-scale

⁸²⁴ Donald Quataert, "The Silk Industry of Bursa, 1880-1914," in *Contributions À L'histoire Économique Et Sociale De L'Empire Ottoman*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Leuven (Belgique): Peeters, 1983), 481-503; Cafer Çiftçi, "1837-1908 Sürecinde Bursa'da Koza Üreticiliği ve İpekli Dokuma Sektörü," *Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 24, no. 1 (2013): 1-18.

⁸²⁵ Murat Birdal, "The Tobacco Sector and the Régie Company," in *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), 129-165; Filiz Dıġıroġlu, "Selanik Ekonomisinde Unutulmuş Bir Alan: Tütün Üretimi, Ticareti ve Reji (1883-1912)," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 43 (2014): 227-272; Emine T. Vardaġlı, "International Tobacco Politics and the Question of Social Movements in the Middle East: A Comparative Analysis of Ottoman and Iranian Cases," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 4 (2014): 606-621.

smuggling, the Régie used armed guards, called *kolcus*, who were eventually organized as military-like squadrons, known as *kordon bölükleri* in some provinces.⁸²⁶ Yenişehir was a part of the new political economy generated by the forceful presence of the Régie; the inhabitants of the *kaza* partook in the illegal sectors related to smuggling. The injected immigrant population provided the required human resources for illegal cultivation, transportation and smuggling. Some Muslim villages of İznik, which had long specialized in the ammunition production sector, provided gun-powder for sustaining this illegal market. Hence, a good deal of “mundane banditry” inherited from the Tanzimat era evolved into the lucrative business of smuggling with much bigger bands. The Ottoman government assisted the Régie’s fight with smuggling reluctantly. Many lives were lost amid clashes between the smugglers and the *kolcus*; yet many people continued to take advantage of the illegal tobacco market as an alternative to the oppressive conditions of the legal market. As such, the Régie could not collect the anticipated profits of the monopoly in its entirety.

How would local administration function within an economic context, which was shaped by fierce competition between various economic actors with traditional and modern genealogies? In what ways would the inhabitants of Yenişehir possibly experience the political economy of the Hamidian empire? The second section tries to answer these questions by focusing on a couple of inter-connected events that unfolded in Yenişehir during 1885. These events point out striking continuities in the dynamics of power in Yenişehir from the Tanzimat era to the Hamidian era. First, *naibs* in their dual roles of both the heads of religious and secular courts and their ex-officio membership in the local councils were still prominent figures in the local political arena. Not only the *naibs*, but also the *muftis* were salient actors, who could lead political camps against other contenders of power. Even though, *kaymakams* were appointed from outside of the *kazas*, they frequently had educational and social backgrounds that closely resembled the provincial ulama. Second, the local notables continued to exert immense impact over the utilization of the rural resources in Yenişehir. Not only did they manned various local commissions, from immigration commission to property commission, but also they controlled municipal and *menafi sandığı* funds. In Yenişehir, a couple of local elites, both Armenian and Muslim,

⁸²⁶ Ahmet Yüksel, "Türkiye’de Tütüncülerin Kaçakçılışma Sürecinde Kolculuğun Baskısını İki Kolcunun Tercüme-i Hâlinde Anlama Denemesi," *Kebikeç* 34 (2012): 187.

continuously remained in the local administration in between 1870 and 1890.⁸²⁷ Third, the peasantry did not miss opportunities to bring forth their complaints to the attention of the Ottoman government. The lower social strata tried to take advantage of the late Ottoman state's increased presence in the local political context of Yenişehir. Last, but not least, the provincial actors adapted to the institutional environment of the Hamidian era quite skillfully; *Yenişehirli*s could come together against a common threat, in this specific case Ramazan Efendi, by strategically using the administrative and judicial institutions of the late Ottoman polity. In that, they were fortunate enough to depend on the relatively peaceful integration of the immigrant communities in the social fabric.

Competition for the rural surplus in the Bursa region was replicated in Yenişehir within the framework of local relations of power. While the central state opted for knowing more about utilization of resources in Yenişehir through its interventions in the local context via inspections, interrogations and auditing undertaken by different governmental departments, the local notables and administrators of Yenişehir spoon-fed the government so as to maximize their own leverage over the control of the local economy.⁸²⁸ In fact, towards the third quarter of the 19th century, the Ottoman state had gained quite a lot of experience in handling provincial administration since the beginning of the Tanzimat era.⁸²⁹ Thus, it based provincial administration at the *kaza* level over three different foci of power: The centrally appointed *kaymakam*, the local judiciary⁸³⁰ and the local notables.⁸³¹ These three pillars of the local administration would check the activities of each other so as to minimize abuses and corruption. But,

⁸²⁷ Salih Erol, *Hüdavendigâr Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir Kazası 1870-1927: İznik ve Yarhisar Nahiyeleri ile Birlikte* (Yenişehir: Yenişehir İlçesi Merkez ve Köylerini Güzelleştirme Derneği, 2011), 17- 122. See below for more information.

⁸²⁸ Beshara Doumani describes the relationship between the local administration of Jabal Nablus and the late Ottoman state in similar political economic terms. See, Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus: 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 241.

⁸²⁹ Yonca Köksal, "Imperial Center and Local Groups: Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Edirne and Ankara," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (2002): 129-135.

⁸³⁰ Jun Akiba, "From *Kadı* to *Naib*: Reorganization of the Ottoman Sharia Judiciary in the Tanzimat Period," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies. Vol. 1. Vol. 1*, ed. Colin Imber, Keiko Kiyotaki, and Rhoads Murphey (London: I.B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2005), 52-55.

⁸³¹ Yonca Köksal defines two competing objectives of the Ottoman provincial administration: forming a provincial bureaucracy and incorporating different local actors into the provincial administration through the local councils. Yonca Köksal, "Local Demands and State Policies: General Councils (Meclis-i Umumi) in the Edirne and Ankara provinces (1867–1872)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 53, no. 3 (2016): 470-471. This uneasy balance was represented by the authority of the *kaymakam* and the acknowledged initiatives of the local notables within the administrative council at the *kaza* level.

the socio-political make-up of each and every *kaza* conditioned a plethora of frictions, alliances and backdoor lobbying among and within these powers. Under the circumstances of mid-1880s, it thus became possible for the local notables of Yenişehir to strategically use the institutions of the central state to settle their accounts with the unruly *kaymakam*. The focal point of contention between the notables and the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir was, as always, money.

5.2. Section I: Actors in the Political Economy of Yenişehir

The Ottoman economy faced unfavorable economic conditions in the world markets during 1873-1896 period, which is known as “the Great Depression”. Rates of growth in foreign trade declined after the expansion of the previous decades of pax-Britannica; external terms of trade deteriorated, and declining wheat prices adversely affected the peasantry. To make things worse, the establishment of the PDA for the liquidation of the Ottoman external debt meant an outflow of financial resources from a modestly growing economy.⁸³² In addition to the debt payments, the military spending of the empire remained high throughout the Hamidian era.⁸³³ Notwithstanding the scarcity of the economic resources and relatively lower growth rates of the Ottoman economy, economic actors competing for the appropriation of the rural resources multiplied during the first half of the Hamidian era. In addition to the diversification of various governmental agents, from different ministries to the newly founded Agricultural Bank, traditional economic actors such as the waqfs and the local notables persisted as contenders for economic surplus. Furthermore, foreign actors, namely the PDA and the Régie emerged as salient economic agents in the political economy of the Bursa region. The economic pie was not growing rapidly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, whereas contenders for scarce resources increased significantly. Thus, competition intensified within the commercialized economy of the Bursa region.

⁸³² Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Empire in the “Great Depression” of 1873–1896," *The Journal of Economic History* 44, no. 01 (1984): 107-118.

⁸³³ Engin D. Akarlı, "Economic Policy and Budgets in Ottoman Turkey, 1876–1909," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 3 (1992): 460-461.

Fierce competition for the economic resources of North-western Anatolia unraveled frictions within the governmental structures of the Hamidian state. The state did not act merely against non-state actors; on the contrary the boundaries between the state and non-state economic actors were rather elusive. On the one hand, the Hamidian state was not a monolithic agent, which strictly stuck to coherent economic policies at all levels of administration⁸³⁴; rather different governmental bodies competed against each other for controlling the economy of the hinterland of Bursa. On the other hand, the state closely worked with the local and foreign economic actors for governing the economy; as such the PDA, the Régie, the waqfs and the local notables assumed economic roles that were intertwined with the jurisdiction, sovereignty and overall governmentality of the Hamidian state.

5.2.1. The Hamidian State Deconstructed as an Economic Actor

Throughout the long 19th century, the Ottoman Empire strove to implement an optimal policy of surplus extraction from the provinces. In this endeavor, political actors, such as the local notables, tax-farmers and money-lenders emerged as formidable contenders siphoning off the resources in their localities before they could be transferred into the coffers of the central state.⁸³⁵ Towards the end of the 19th century however, bureaucratization of the late Ottoman polity reached a level, which produced various governmental bodies specialized in different aspects of governance. This in turn pitted different ministries, governmental departments and various levels of provincial administration against each other in the race for appropriating economic surplus. In other words, in addition to the persistence of extra-state actors in the political economies of different Ottoman provinces, the scarcity of resources and the seemingly insatiable financial needs of the whole Ottoman establishment generated

⁸³⁴ Here, I follow Nadir Özbek's methodology of demystifying the state's appearance as a unified economic actor by focusing on administrative practices in the realm of the everyday. Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation," 772.

⁸³⁵ Nadir Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli: Osmanlı'da Vergi, Siyaset ve Toplumsal Adalet (1839-1908)* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2015), 212; Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 769.

competition within the governmental structure as well.⁸³⁶ Thus, apportionment of economic resources between different institutions and governmental bodies indicated constant negotiations, which were not always characterized by fair play.

In theory, every administrative unit within the provincial administration would transfer the economic surplus that it collected and accrued within the regions under its jurisdiction to the upper level in the administrative hierarchy. In the case of Yenişehir for instance, the *kaza* would send money to the district of Ertuğrul, which would forward it to Hüdavendigar province (with the other money it collected from other attached *kazas*) after deducting some expenses of the district administration. Hüdavendigar in turn, would transfer money to İstanbul. In this chain of transfers, every lower unit tried to keep more for itself than it was supposed to channel to the upper administrative unit. Let us leave Yenişehir aside for the time being, since we will examine it more closely in the second section; according to this scheme, Ertuğrul tried to spare money from Bursa, while the latter tried to detain more for itself than the amount of money that İstanbul earmarked for it.

In fact, Hüdavendigar was a rich province, whose resources far exceeded the expenses of its upkeep and governance. Yet, it not only contributed to the military spending of the empire, but also shouldered the debt burden of the central state. For example, in the year 1902, the total income of the province was estimated to be 90.352.530 *kuruş*.⁸³⁷ Of this income, merely 18.549.877 *kuruş* was earmarked as the expenses of the province (including the spending on the gendarmerie). 46.633.815 *kuruş* of income was diverted to various debt payments of the Ottoman state (namely, the borrowing of 1896, payments on state bonds and the railway guarantees). 10.643.911 *kuruş* was diverted for financing the military spending of the empire. An additional 12.534.196 *kuruş* was earmarked as the weekly salaries of the soldiers, and finally 3.415.678 *kuruş* was directly transferred into the state's treasury. All in all, Hüdavendigar generated a budget deficit of 1.523.947 *kuruş*, on which the income that would not be collected for whatever reason would be added.⁸³⁸ Hence, in spite of being

⁸³⁶ Akarlı, "Economic Policy," 444-445.

⁸³⁷ Compare, for instance, with the province of Van, which had a population of 430.000, and an estimated income of about 10.756.968 *kuruş* in the year 1896. See, Ali Karaca, *Anadolu Islahâtı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa, 1838-1899* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Eren, 1993), 128; 140. Hüdavendigar's population was about 1.500.000 when it had an estimated income of about 90.000.000 *kuruş* in 1902. See, *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1320, 370*.

⁸³⁸ Y. PRK. ML 22-55.

a relatively prosperous administrative unit⁸³⁹, Hüdavendigâr too was in acute need of money.

In order to check Bursa's temptation to retain more for itself due to its centrally imposed budget deficit, the Hamidian state tried to institute a method of transfer that would at the outset ensure that İstanbul gets its due from the economic surplus of the province. Accordingly, all the money collected in the provincial center and in the attached *kazas* would be deposited in the Bursa branch of the Ottoman Bank. Only after the central state got its share through a bill of exchange, Bursa could use whatever remained. However, a document dated July 1899, indicates that these steps were not always observed by Bursa. In a financial investigation undertaken by the Ministry of Finance, it turned out that the provincial administration did not deposit 21.000 *liras* income derived in March and April of the current year to the Ottoman Bank; rather recorded it as income to be used for covering the province's budget deficit of the previous year. Since this 21.000 *liras* was not earmarked for any expenses or for the payment of any debts before, İstanbul comprehended that Bursa did not want to transfer the center's share. This was not however, permissible from the view point of the imperial center, whose financial needs were enhanced because of such evasions.⁸⁴⁰

The financial struggle between Hüdavendigâr and the central state was replicated between the district of Ertuğrul and the provincial administration in Bursa. In 1903, the governor of Bursa, Mümtaz Reşid Paşa gathered the district administrators (*mutasarrıfs*) in the provincial capital for apportioning the money that the central state demanded through a sultanic order for paying salaries of the government employees in eid al-fitr (*Ramazan bayramı*) and eid al-adha (*Kurban bayramı*). The governor knew that the district of Ertuğrul could raise more money than the other districts⁸⁴¹ during that fiscal year. Hence, he asked the *mutasarrıf*, Mustafa Nuri Paşa to send 8.000 *liras* to Bursa in two installments, roughly corresponding to the two eids. Mustafa Nuri Paşa

⁸³⁹ In 1894 (the fiscal year of 1310), Hüdavendigâr's total income was estimated as 89.844.870 kuruş, and its expenditure was estimated as 16.681.361 kuruş. See, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1312*, 368-369. Likewise, in the following year, its income, 86.088.081 kuruş, substantially exceeded its total expenditure, 17.451.859 kuruş. See, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1313*, 126-127.

⁸⁴⁰ Y. MTV 192-62.

⁸⁴¹ Though the document does not make it clear whether this collected amount was in nominal or proportional terms, it was most probably in proportion to the population size of Ertuğrul, since population-wise, Ertuğrul was not a big administrative unit within Hüdavendigâr. See the statistical charts on the sizes of different administrative units within Hüdavendigâr, *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 253.

bargained with the governor, and managed to lower this amount to 6.000 *liras*. However, as the Ramadan approached, he did not send the first installment, 3.000 *liras*, which he agreed on and promised to raise for the provincial administration. Reşid Paşa in turn got him dismissed, because of his failure to deliver the money. In objecting his dismissal in the Council of State, Mustafa Nuri Paşa attached the balance sheet of the district, which demonstrated that he could actually raise about 460.000 *kuruş* more money in 1903 than the previous fiscal year. In 1903, Ertuğrul made a budget surplus of 353.300 *kuruş*. Hence, he argued that Bursa's accusations about his inability to raise money were groundless.⁸⁴² If Ertuğrul indeed had the money, why did not Mustafa Paşa dispatch the demanded sum to Bursa, and thereby risked his career?

We do not know the exact answer to this question. But, previous undertakings of Mustafa Nuri Paşa suggest that he was probably using the money collected in the district for other ventures. In the spring of 1900, Mustafa Nuri Paşa summoned the official of the Agricultural Bank's Ertuğrul branch to his office on the upstairs of the government building. The bank official, Mazhar Efendi was counting money at the bank's room downstairs. When he refused to go to the *mutasarrıf*'s office, Mustafa Nuri Paşa furiously rushed downstairs, and broke the door of the locked bank room. He punched and kicked Mazhar Efendi in front of everyone, and insulted him. Then, he had him dragged out of the government building by the other district officials. The ensuing investigation initiated by Mazhar Efendi's complaint demonstrated that Mustafa Nuri Paşa's rage was due to Mazhar Efendi's preparation for sending the money collected for road construction in the district (*tarik bedelati*) to the provincial center, Bursa, in spite of the *mutasarrıf*'s objection. In alliance with the members of the district administration, Mustafa Nuri Paşa was withholding the money, which was supposed to be paid to the contractor, who had actually completed the construction of roads. Despite the orders from Bursa and from the Ministry of Public Works, the *mutasarrıf* wanted to channel the Bank's funds for unauthorized usages, such as the immediate payment for mulberry saplings bought from Bilecik to be sent to outside the district. Mazhar Efendi did not acquiesce Nuri Paşa's back-door operations, which required him to seal documents that the *mutasarrıf* drafted about the usage of district funds without proper discussions in related district commissions. Eventually, Nuri Paşa got mad, when

⁸⁴² ŞD 3024-48; ŞD 3038-31.

Mazhar Efendi unilaterally decided to send the road construction funds to Bursa in order to save them from the *mutasarrıf*.⁸⁴³ Thus, Ertuğrul had the money, but it also had an enterprising *mutasarrıf*, who had designs for making the “best” out of the public funds. Apparently, sending money to Bursa figured at the rather lower end of these designs.

Money did not always travel from the lower administrative units to the upper units of provincial administration. In times of crisis, the central state allocated financial resources to specific districts or *kazas* to alleviate local stringency. In such cases, it was not always possible to make sure that the money dispatched by the government was actually used for its specified purposes. For example, in 1888, the government sent 7.500 liras to Ertuğrul via Hüdavendigâr for making payment to merchants, who provided wheat to victims of famine through the special famine commission formed for this purpose. The commission apparently, took the wheat from the merchants, and distributed it to the needy people, yet the district administration did not deliver the money to the commission, which in turn damaged the credibility of the government. When İstanbul communicated with Hüdavendigâr about the issue, it became clear that 7.500 liras virtually disappeared due to the negligence of the district administration. Hüdavendigâr got a scolding from the government because of its inability to track down the money, in addition to being ordered to make the payment to the merchants from wherever it could find money.⁸⁴⁴

The struggle for access to economic resources was not only played out within the vertical administrative hierarchy of provincial administration, but it also took place between different ministries horizontally. Among the latter cases, the competition for control over the resources of the Agricultural Bank between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce is well-documented. According to the founding charter of the Agricultural Bank, two thirds of the net profits of the Bank should be spent in agricultural reform. However, in between 1889 and 1908, agricultural sector received only 45% of the legally prescribed amount. Within the late Ottoman governmental structure, the Agricultural Bank actually defied its name, because it was under the purview of the Ministry of Commerce, which authorized the spending of the Bank’s

⁸⁴³ ŞD 1578-5.

⁸⁴⁴ Y. PRK. BŞK 12-75.

funds. The battles between these two ministries were fought in front of the Council of State, which often times backed up the Ministry of Commerce.⁸⁴⁵

Other ministries also contended for the rural resources. Among these, the Ministry of Evkaf, which had rural lands under its jurisdiction, collided with the formidable Ministry of Finance, which was constantly on the lookout for cashing state-owned lands. For example, 2100 *dönüms* of land in Gündüzler village of Eskişehir, which used to belong to Yenişehirli Ahmed Bey due to his trusteeship of the waqf of Kara Mustafa Paşa was put on sale by the *kaza* administration of Eskişehir. The local administration of Eskişehir claimed that this land was a vacant state-owned land that could be sold to the villagers of Gündüzler for 10.000 *kuruş*. However, the local waqfs' official learnt about this initiative and mobilized for protecting the rights of the Ministry of Evkaf from the central treasury. Eventually, he was successful in asserting the rights of the Ministry of Evkaf, and the land was sold to the villagers for 14.500 *kuruş* in the name of the waqf of Kara Mustafa Paşa.⁸⁴⁶

Different levels of provincial administration and different ministries felt the financial strains of the late Ottoman Empire. Money was a much sought out commodity for almost all governmental departments. As such, financial expediency occasionally subverted the economic policies of the central state as orders travelled across ministries and between different levels of provincial administration. At any rate, increased professionalization and bureaucratization of the central state structure entailed ever more involvement of the central state in the political economy of the North-western Anatolian countryside.

5.2.2. *Menafi Sandıkları* and the Agricultural Bank

The Agricultural Bank was founded on 27 August 1888. It was crafted out of the experiences and fiscal structures of preceding agricultural credit institutions. The forerunner of the bank was “*memleket sandıkları*” (local funds) founded in the Nish

⁸⁴⁵ Quataert, "Dilemma of Development," 221-223.

⁸⁴⁶ VGM defter, 3659.00028; 3659.00033; 3659.00036.

province through Midhat Paşa's initiative in 1863. The *menafî sandığı* system (development funds), formed in 1883, was the outcome of some revisions of the deficiencies of the previous *memleket sandıkları* system. Yet, *menafî sandığıs* remained completely autonomous and locally administered by unsalaried officials, who were not responsible to a higher body. Even though, *menafî sandığıs* were attached to the Ministry of Commerce, lack of institutionalized auditing had invited abuses.⁸⁴⁷ The Agricultural Bank was designed to mend the deficiencies of the previous experiences with rural credit: It created a professional body of officials in the districts and *kazas*, who reported to either hierarchically upper branches or directly to İstanbul. The central administrative bank council, which consisted of eight to ten members, directed the empire-wide operations of the bank from İstanbul. In addition to strengthening the centralized features of the formal rural credit system by introducing professionalization and accountability to the system, the bank commanded a regular source of funds through the *menafî iane hissesi*, which was a compulsory, permanent, one per cent surtax on the tithe paid by all the cultivators in the empire. Unlike *menafî sandığıs*, which were envisaged as cooperatives based on voluntary contributions of their members, the bank represented a step taken in the direction of further taxing the agricultural sector, theoretically for providing self-help to cultivators in times of crisis and need, and for funding the agricultural reform programs.⁸⁴⁸

The loans of the Agricultural Bank did not meet the credit needs of the late Ottoman agricultural sector. It was estimated that annually about one per cent of Anatolian cultivators could use the low interest loans of the bank.⁸⁴⁹ The late Ottoman state encroached on the resources of the bank due to its constant financial needs, and therefore the liquidity that the bank could provide to the rural producers dwarfed in proportion to the demand for credit in the agricultural sector.⁸⁵⁰ However, in provinces where agriculture promised profitable returns, the bank lent more in proportion to the contributions of the cultivators to the bank funds from these relatively developed provinces. Aydın and Hüdavendigâr provinces contributed about 39 per cent of the tithe

⁸⁴⁷ See the second section below for the functioning of the *menafî sandığı* of Yenişehir. I will be focusing more on the Agricultural Bank in this section.

⁸⁴⁸ Quataert, "Dilemma of Development," 212-213.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, 216.

⁸⁵⁰ Güran, "Teşkilatlanmış (Resmi) Kredi," 156-158.

revenues, while getting 49 per cent of the value of all loans.⁸⁵¹ Albeit modest, the bank indeed pumped some money in the economies of these two provinces.

The distribution of the loans of the Agricultural Bank among the rural producers had some implications for the overall socio-economic structures of the rural regions. Whether the funds were usurped by the local notables and the wealthy, or they could actually reach the small producers is an important inquiry for assessing the overall effectiveness of the cheap credit offered by the bank. As a matter of fact, the bank tried to expand its base of customers through offering payment options designed according to the harvest season. For example, if a loan was contracted 5 or 6 months before or after the harvest season, the bank deferred the first repayment installment after the next year's harvest. The borrower would only pay the interest incurring in 5 or 6 months after the harvest of the year in which the loan was contracted.⁸⁵² Likewise, it was forbidden for the immigrants to alienate the lands granted them by the state for ten years. However, for some reason, the ban on sale was extended to 20 years. Consequently, there were some immigrant producers, who were paying their tithes and the agricultural surtax, yet could not apply for loans of the Agricultural Bank, because the bank accepted only immovable property as collateral. These immigrants could not in practice use their lands as security, in spite of contributing to the funds of the bank. To redress this difficulty, the government reverted back to the 10 year period as the legal limit of the ban on the sale of immigrants' lands.⁸⁵³

For Yenişehir, we have some clues regarding the distribution of the Agricultural Bank's credits in the *kaza*, owing to the outbreak of cholera in August, 1894. The epidemic broke out in İznik and Yenişehir before it reached Bursa. Yenişehir, İznik and İnegöl were cordoned off during the harvest season.⁸⁵⁴ Thus, for the fiscal year 1310, the tax-farmers could not collect and transfer the tithe of the *kaza*, since all economic activity with the outside world froze. Consequently, the crops of the whole *kaza* could not be cashed, leading the tax-farmers to default on their debts.⁸⁵⁵ People, who owed

⁸⁵¹ Quataert, "Dilemma of Development," 218.

⁸⁵² *Bursa Gazetesi*, 12 C.evvel 1311, no. 147, p. 4.

⁸⁵³ *Hüdavendigâr Gazetesi*, No. 1640, 20 Zilkade 1312; pp. 1-2.

⁸⁵⁴ Y. PRK. SRN 4-71; A. MKT. MHM 553-14; DH. MKT 349-4; *Hüdavendigâr Gazetesi*, No. 1604, 27 Safer 1312.

⁸⁵⁵ BEO 487-36525; BEO 507-37578.

money to be paid back with the income derived from that year's harvest also defaulted. Consequently, a good many enclosures on the property of the debtors and confiscations of the stored wheat of the tax-farmers followed. The tax-farmers owed installment payments to the Public Debt Administration.⁸⁵⁶ The tax-farmers were in general the local notables from the town-center and the villages of Yenişehir, whose extensive lands (often more than 100 *dönüms*) and other immovable properties like shops, mills and groves were seized by the PDA.⁸⁵⁷

Significantly, these wealthy people did not figure in the list of 20 defaulted customers of the Agricultural Bank's Yenişehir branch within the same year. The securities of the defaulted debtors auctioned off by the Agricultural Bank suggest that the bank indeed lent to middling and lower-income inhabitants of Yenişehir. Just a *dönüm* of vineyard or a house appeared among these securities. Furthermore, there were women, who borrowed from the bank with co-owned properties. Unlike the ventures of the tax-farmers, whose guarantors were more likely to be their business partners (such as İplikçi Ohannes putting his three shops at the town center as security to the tax-farmer Böcek İsmail Ağa from Yenişehir)⁸⁵⁸, the borrowers from the Agricultural Bank contracted loans on co-owned properties, and often delineated close family members as their guarantors. Except for the four top-ranking borrowers, who could designate more than 40 *dönüms* as security to their debts, sixteen defaulted borrowers should have contracted modest loans from the bank.

⁸⁵⁶ Some of the enclosure announcements published in *Hüdavendigâr* newspaper designate the PDA and "the bank administration" as the lenders. "The bank administration" should be the Ottoman Bank. The Régie, the PDA and the Ottoman Bank were closely related institutions. In the above mentioned cases, the Bursa branch of the Ottoman Bank should have extended credit to the tax-farmers through the PDA's more pervasive institutional organization in the hinterland of Bursa. The Ottoman Bank's Bursa branch was founded in 1875. In 1897, an inspector of the bank offered opening of new branches in some other provincial centers of *Hüdavendigâr*. Yet, the bank administration turned this proposal down by claiming that the banking operations in these provincial centers could be undertaken by the Régie's local branches. Christopher Clay, "The Origins of Modern Banking in the Levant: The Branch Network of the Imperial Ottoman Bank, 1890–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 04 (1994): 599; 610. The fact that the Anatolian branches of the Ottoman Bank specialized in extending credit by taking agricultural produce as security further suggests that the PDA mediated the loans that the Ottoman Bank expanded to the tax-farmers of Yenişehir. Edhem Eldem, *Osmanlı Bankası Tarihi* (İstanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Tarihi Araştırma Merkezi, 1999), 275.

⁸⁵⁷ *Hüdavendigâr Gazetesi*, No. 1598, 14 Muharrem 1312, p. 4 (the title of 1309); No. 1618, 7 C. Ahir 1312, p. 3 (the title of 1310); No. 1632, 16 Ramazan 1312, p. 4 (the title of 1310); No. 1639, 13 Zilkade 1312, p. 3 (the title of 1310).

⁸⁵⁸ *Hüdavendigâr Gazetesi*, No. 1639, 13 Zilkade 1312, p. 3. The epithet "böcek" most probably referred to silk-worms and "iplikçi" is most probably a silk-thread maker or a silk-thread merchant.

Table 3: Defaulted Borrowers of the Yenişehir branch of the Agricultural Bank (March 1895) and their auctioned properties⁸⁵⁹

Tavşanlılı Hacı Halil	222 dönüms of land
Karakiliselî Çoban Nedimo	81 dönüms of land
Çardakköylü Ali Molla	62 dönüms of land
Makri karyeli Aşçıođlu Mustafa	42 dönüms of land
Koçuköylü Mehmedođlu Kiraz Ali	26 dönüms of land
Köprühisarlı Molla Mustafa	24 dönüms of land
Karanfil damadı Halil Efendi	14 dönüms of garden
Menteşeli Şablıođulları Ali and Mustafa	12 dönüms of land
Kasabadan Muzallıođlu Emin	11 dönüms of land
Karasılılı Hacı Hüseyinođlu Recep	7 dönüms of land
Yazıcıođulları Ali Ađa and his daughters Edibe and Zeliha	5 dönüms of garden
Ayaslı Mustafaođlu Emin	4 dönüms of garden
Aşiretođlu Mehmed's guarantor, his father İsmail	1 dönüm garden ve 3 dönüms of land
Kozdereli İmamođlu Emin Ađa	2 dönüms of garden
Yenişehirli Hüseyin's guarantor, his brother Ali Çavuş	2 dönüms of land
Kalaycı Arap İsmail	1 dönüm vineyard
Tevfik Bey from İznik's town-center.	1 shop
Mustafa's wife Gülsüm and her daughter Ayşe and her son Mustafa from Yenişehir's town-center	1 house
Aşiret İsmail	1 house
Hurşid Ađa'nın Osman Bey and his sister Fatma Hanım	1 house

⁸⁵⁹ *Hüdavendigâr Gazetesi*, No, 1632, 16 Ramazan 1312, p. 4.

5.2.3. Waqfs Held by the Inhabitants of Yenişehir

In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I argued that the waqfs and the sharia courts in İznik and Yenişehir remained focal points of contention between the Muslim notables in the mid-19th century. These two ancient institutions adapted to the modern era through the reforms of the Tanzimat state. But, by mid-century various stake-holders attached to these institutions withheld substantial control in the actual utilization of the resources of the waqfs, because these institutions were enrooted in specific local contexts and social agents. In chapter 2, based on a land dispute involving Sölöz Müslim, Sölöz Gayri Müslim and the waqf administration of Bursa in 1870s, I noted that due to bureaucratic centralization, privatization of land and utilization of waqf resources were increasingly accentuated by the operations of a multi-layered bureaucratic apparatus. Gradual centralization of the waqf administration potentially produced abuses and corruption by the provincial and local waqf officials at the expense of the waqfs' stakeholders and the central state. In chapter 3, I explained how the late Ottoman state compromised the rights of the large land-owners, who possessed their lands through their trusteeship of waqfs, when it was pressured by the arrival of thousands of immigrants in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. This section focuses on the administration of waqfs owned by the local notables of Yenişehir during the Hamidian era on the one hand; creation of many cash waqfs for funding mosques, especially the ones in the immigrant villages, by the inhabitants of Yenişehir, on the other.

After the formation of the Ministry of Evkaf in 1828, the Ottoman state strove to tighten its control over the economic resources and administration of the waqfs. The general inclination towards centralizing the waqf administration was a protracted process wrought with tensions between the state and various stake-holders of the waqfs. In the process, many regulations were made, revised, cancelled and re-instituted according to the changing political and economic circumstances of the late Ottoman polity. Yet, notwithstanding the narrative of fateful decline and dissolution of the waqf as an institution during the modern era⁸⁶⁰, evidence from Yenişehir suggests that there were functioning family waqfs supporting mosques and traditional primary schools during the early 20th century. Not only did some of the pre-existing family waqfs of the

⁸⁶⁰ See chapter 1 for a discussion of the changing waqf administration in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century, pp. 63-67.

local notables continued to function within the centralized waqf administration, but also new family waqfs were founded for pious purposes in the town.

The waqf of Şemakizade family, for instance, was a relatively old waqf, founded around 1830 through the endowment of rather diverse properties by Şemakizade Hüseyin Efendi bin Mustafa from the Suk neighborhood. According to the deed of the waqf, Hüseyin Efendi endowed 5 *dönüms* of mulberry groves, a coffeehouse, a warehouse at the market place, another coffeehouse built on the land belonging to the waqf of Balibey (which the family possessed through a perpetual lease contract), a plot of land in the vicinity of Söylemiş village, three buildings built on state-owned lands and 8 *dönüms* of garden in the vicinity of these buildings. The income of these endowed properties would be used for paying the salaries of the employees (the *imam*, the *muezzin* and the teacher) of Şemakizade mosque and traditional primary school located in Çayır neighborhood.⁸⁶¹ The remaining income would be used for repair and renewal. We do not know the exact conditions of the endowed properties during the late 19th century. Yet, we know for sure that the family still administered the waqf at that time; the mosque continues to serve today; and there was a modern primary school carrying the name of the family in 1907, hinting that the traditional primary school was converted to a state-owned primary school.⁸⁶² The waqf of Şemakizade's demonstrates the resilience of the waqf as an economic institution used for financing public facilities in Yenişehir.

During the early 20th century, new family waqfs were founded for financing mosques. Some of the waqfs built by the local notables procured potential fringe-benefits for their families. For example, in 1903, Edhem Paşa attempted to award the preaching post (*hitabet*) of the mosque he built to his own son, Ahmed, who was then nineteen years old. However, the Office of Recruitment (*askerlik dairesi*) blocked his attempt, because young men liable for military service could not actually assume such posts according to the laws.⁸⁶³ Thus, Edhem Paşa's strategy to avoid the conscription of his son via the waqf he founded failed. Moreover, Edhem Paşa was a political figure, who had close ties with Yıldız Palace. He thus used his patronage of the mosque he

⁸⁶¹ VGM defter, 616-1-1.

⁸⁶² MF. MKT 1017-37.

⁸⁶³ EV. MKT 2810-28.

built for publicly demonstrating his loyalty to the Hamidian regime by undertaking the opening ceremony of the mosque during the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the sultan's accession to the throne.⁸⁶⁴ Thus, the pious endowments found new political niches in the changing political circumstances of the late Ottoman Empire.

Not only politically-charged figures like Edhem Paşa got entangled with the waqfs anew⁸⁶⁵ during the Hamidian era, but also even a well-off artisan could build a mosque and found a waqf for its upkeep. According to an endowment deed dated 1912, El-hac Hasan Ağa bin Ali, a blacksmith from Hıdırbali neighborhood founded a waqf for the upkeep of the mosque he built.⁸⁶⁶ Hasan Ağa, apparently retired around the early 20th century, because he converted his blacksmith's store in the Cami-i Kebir neighborhood into a bakery. He earmarked 150 *kuruş* from the rent of the bakery to the *imam*; and another 150 *kuruş* to the *muezzin* of the mosque. Likewise, 150 *kuruş* of rent would be spent for paying the oil used in the lanterns located inside the mosque and on its minaret. The remaining income would be used for repair after the deduction of annual taxes. In the years when the mosque would not require any repair, the surplus income would be left to the trustee of the waqf. Hasan Ağa's waqf was a family waqf; the deed stated that the trustee after Hasan Ağa would be his eldest son, İsmail and after him, his descendents would assume trusteeship.⁸⁶⁷ Thus Hasan Ağa envisaged the functioning of his waqf along the traditional lines of diverting family resources for pious deeds, while ensuring the control of the family members over the administration of these resources in the future.

The administration of the waqfs of the local notables was subject to the scrutiny of the branches of waqf administration in the provinces. The Ottoman state recorded the activities of these waqfs, such as a change of trusteeship and/or the award of posts within the waqfs through the Ministry of Evkaf. The local officials of the Evkaf Ministry collected various fees related to the economic and administrative activities of

⁸⁶⁴ DH. MKT 2411-84.

⁸⁶⁵ Edhem Paşa was also the trustee of the waqf of Kara Mustafa Paşa, which was an older family waqf he "inherited" from his ancestors. VGM defter 03652.00005.

⁸⁶⁶ The mosque was built before 1912, since the Yearbook of 1906-1907 mentions it. *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1324*, 370. The official recording of the waqf could have been a couple of years after the building of the mosque.

⁸⁶⁷ VGM defter 605-5-5.

the waqfs, and provided information for the auditing of the accounts of the waqfs in the administrative councils. In 1898, the change of trusteeship of the waqf of Şemakizade family revealed how the bureaucratic process could beget corruption. In July 1898, a member of Şemakizade family applied to the local sharia court of Yenişehir and obtained a verdict indicating his appointment to the trusteeship of the waqf. The verdict was later on ratified at the *Fetvahaneye*. Yet, by November 1898, the administrative council of the district of Ertuğrul had not yet attended the accounts of the waqf, and therefore the ratification of the trusteeship was delayed. The new trustee petitioned the Ministry of Evkaf and asked the Ministry to warn the district administration to accelerate the process.⁸⁶⁸

Soon, the reason for the delay surfaced; on December 1898, the Evkaf Ministry received correspondences from the director of Evkaf at the district of Ertuğrul. Accordingly, the director, Hasan Tahsin Efendi, was dismissed due to his operations about the waqf of Şemakizades. The director claimed that the dismissal occurred because of the animosity of some people, whose personal interests were harmed by his operations. The administrative council of the district appointed Mehmed Efendi, a member of the district council, in his stead.⁸⁶⁹ Apparently, the appropriation of the waqf resources triggered a clash of interests between the contenders at the level of the district administration. On February 1899, the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr got involved in the issue. The province stated that the ex-director of Evkaf in Ertuğrul, Hasan Tahsin Efendi, did not submit 2.300 *kuruş* fee for the succession of trusteeship (*harc-ı berat*) that he took from the trustee of the waqf of Şemakizades to the waqfs' funds. Since he was undergoing a trial due to this debt, the provincial administration appointed an official from the office of the evkaf accountant of Bursa in his stead. In this way, the operations about Şemakizade's waqf could proceed appropriately.⁸⁷⁰ Hence, during the Hamidian era, the state duly took its due from the waqf resources controlled by the notables of Yenişehir. Yet, the level of organization and bureaucratization entailed in the process of reaching out the relatively modest provincial waqfs, like the Şemakizades', paved the ground for frictions and corruption among the

⁸⁶⁸ EV. MKT 2429-61.

⁸⁶⁹ EV. MKT 2444-61.

⁸⁷⁰ EV. MKT 2677-48.

people who were involved in the administration of waqfs. It seems that at the turn of the 20th century, this kind of waqfs had the economic potential to ignite political contestations in the Bursa region.

In addition to the persistence of the family waqfs throughout the Hamidian era, the available records on Yenişehir in the General Directorate of the Waqfs' archive demonstrate an increase in cash waqfs founded for financing mosques in between 1878 and 1912. In fact, there were many waqfs founded for supporting small mosques and masjids before 1878.⁸⁷¹ But, the increase after 1878 reflects the changing demographic outlook of Yenişehir on the one hand, the overall revival of public services and infrastructure during the Hamidian era on the other. All in all, more than forty-cash waqfs were founded within this time span in Yenişehir, including İznik. The endowed money of these waqfs fluctuated between 500 and 1000 *kuruş*; while the rate of interest was around 10-15 per cent.⁸⁷² Many mosques attached to these waqfs were located in the immigrant villages.⁸⁷³ A couple of the waqfs founded by the inhabitants of the native villages provided financial resources for the personnel of the existing mosques.⁸⁷⁴ Two new mosques, one of which was built by Edhem Bey (later on Paşa), at the town center also had cash waqfs.⁸⁷⁵

The cash waqfs of the mosques of the immigrant villages were usually founded by well-off residents of the same villages.⁸⁷⁶ However, there were also cases, in which the local notables from the town center or from the neighboring native villages endowed money for supporting the newly built mosques of the immigrant villages. Some of these new mosques were also built by the same local notables, who subsequently endowed

⁸⁷¹ For the mosque waqfs founded before 1878, endowment deeds were not available in the Waqfs' archive; however employee records of these waqfs were available. See for instance, VGM defter, 189-18-26 (the waqf of Burcun village dated 1289 h.); 189-32-228 (the waqf of Ayaz village, dated 1259 h.); 189-38-275/276 (the waqf of Dere village, dated 1284 h.); 189-354-2829/2830 (the waqf of Karadiğın village in İznik, dated 1262 h.).

⁸⁷² See Table 4 at the end of this chapter, pp 338-340.

⁸⁷³ For example, VGM defter 1968-425-349 (Orhaniye village); 2316-123-148 (Fethiye village); 2325-212-213 (Şerefiye village in İznik); 2353-87-85 (Mecidiye village in İznik).

⁸⁷⁴ For example, VGM defter 2314-38-31 (Makri village); 2314-24-19 (Dere village).

⁸⁷⁵ VGM defter 602-231-379 (the waqf for the mosque in Babasultan neighborhood); 602-266-453 (the waqf for the masjid in Gaiberenler neighborhood.)

⁸⁷⁶ İbrahim Ağa bin Süleyman (Orhaniye Köyü) VGM defter 600-148-180; Uzun Ali oğlu Osman Ağa (Fethiye Köyü) VGM defter 2316-123-148; Ahmed Ağa ibni Ahmed (Kavaklı Köyü) VGM defter 2317-11-13.

cash for their sustenance.⁸⁷⁷ In one instance, a wealthy immigrant from Varna, who settled at the town center built a mosque and founded two cash waqfs attached to this mosque, which was located in the immigrant village of Osmaniye.⁸⁷⁸ Thus, the structure of the cash waqfs reflected solidarity networks and political alliances among and between the native and immigrant inhabitants of Yenişehir. Notwithstanding the Hamidian state's appropriation of the building of mosques in the immigrant villages in its Islamic rhetoric of legitimation, it was the local Muslim community of Yenişehir, which actually built and financed the new mosques. Furthermore, in the process of overhauling of the physical landscape during the Hamidian era, cash waqfs flourished in Yenişehir as ancient economic instruments, commanding ever more demand in the commercialized and monetarized economy of the Bursa region. Hence, even though the cash returns of the waqfs could be quite modest, cheap credits that they provided to the rural communities could be quite valuable in the traditionally credit-stricken economy of the Bursa region.

5.2.4. *Duyun-u Umumiye* (the PDA) and the Silk Sector

In 1881, the Ottoman government conceded the formation of an international consortium, the Public Debt Administration (the PDA), representing the bond holders of the Ottoman external debt. The PDA's aim was to liquidate the Ottoman debt contracted in the international credit markets. For the service of its debt, the Ottoman government allocated some of its revenue sources to the PDA. These were the salt and tobacco monopolies, together with the stamp tax, the spirits tax, the fish tax and the silk tithes in certain districts.⁸⁷⁹ The PDA, set up branches in the districts and *kazas* for overseeing the collection of revenues allocated to it. In the case of Yenişehir, the tobacco monopoly

⁸⁷⁷ For example, Hüseyin Ağa bin İbrahim from Babasultan neighborhood founded a waqf for Kible Pınarı village, VGM defter 602-172-292; El-Hac Ömeroğlu Ahmed Ağa ibn el Hac Mehmed from Sölöz Müslim village founded a waqf for the neighboring immigrant Bayır village, VGM defter 603-87-150; Hacı Emin Efendizade Hafız Mehmed Sabri Efendi from Cami-i Kebir neighborhood founded a waqf for Kozdere village, VGM defter 603-213-352. Although Kozdere was not an immigrant village *per se*, we know that an immigrant community, which squatted in the town center, was transferred to this village, see chapter 3.

⁸⁷⁸ The endower was identified as "Varnalı Banka muhasebe katibi Mehmed Efendi ibni Emrullah, from the notables of Cami-i Kebir neighborhood", VGM defter 2321-82-58; 2353-145-137.

⁸⁷⁹ Donald C Blaisdell, *European Financial Control*, 92.

and the silk tithes rendered the PDA a significant economic actor. The tobacco monopoly was however, farmed to the Régie (*the Société de la Régie Cointerésée des Tabacs de l'Empire Ottoman*), which was a banking syndicate formed by the Imperial Ottoman Bank, Austrian Credit Anstalt and German Bleichröder banking house.⁸⁸⁰

The literature on the involvement of the PDA in the Ottoman silk sector posits its positive impact on the industry due to its promotion of scientific methods for fighting the pebrine disease.⁸⁸¹ In January 1888, the government approved the establishment of the Silk Raising Institute (*Harir Darü't Talimi*) in Bursa under the directorship of Kevork Torkomyan, an Ottoman Armenian, who was a graduate of the Montpellier Agricultural School in France. The institute trained its students in Pasteur practices. Within three decades of Torkomyan Efendi's directorship, over 2000 people received education at the institute.⁸⁸² The Ottoman state, in general, supported the PDA's initiatives for reviving the silk industry. In fact, before the PDA took on a more active role in developing the industry towards the end of 1880s, the Ottoman government had already been trying to salvage the silk industry. During the establishment of the Ertuğrul sancağı in mid-1880s, the government tried to expand mulberry plantations in and around Bilecik.⁸⁸³ However, the industry then depended largely on the importation of expensive uncontaminated eggs. The Silk Raising Institute provided cheap, local, healthy breeds to the industry, thereby significantly revived silk-raising in Bursa-İzmit regions.

The revival of the silk industry in the Bursa region and the investments of the PDA and the Ottoman government in the sector were closely related to the global economic trends. After the economic expansion of the previous decades, in between 1873 and 1894, the world economy experienced a slump, known as the Great Depression. As a peripheral economy, providing mainly agricultural products to the world markets, the Ottoman Empire was adversely affected by the contraction of the international markets. Throughout these years, cheap American wheat invaded the world markets to the detriment of the Ottoman economy, whose agricultural production

⁸⁸⁰ Birdal, "The Tobacco Sector," 131.

⁸⁸¹ Quataert, "The Silk Industry," 481-503; Birdal, *Ottoman Public Debt*, 113.

⁸⁸² Quataert, "The Silk Industry," 488-489.

⁸⁸³ See chapter 4, pp 242-243.

was dominated by wheat. As a matter of fact, the wheat produced in the hinterland of the city of Bursa was not destined to the international markets; rather it was consumed within the domestic economy.⁸⁸⁴ However, the internal markets of the Ottoman Empire were not protected markets; on the contrary, the Tanzimat liberalization and the capitulations rendered the Ottoman economy one of the least protected markets in the world. As such, internal demand for wheat shifted towards imported, cheap American wheat, with which the Anatolian producers could not compete due to the exorbitant costs of transportation. In other words, when the locally produced wheat could finally reach urban centers, it was much more expensive than the imported wheat.⁸⁸⁵ In this economic context, the rural producers, who cultivated wheat for supplying the internal demand gradually turned towards other commercial crops that promised some profits. For the Bursa region, the silk sector had the potential to compensate for the declining terms of trade of the Ottoman economy, because there was a seemingly insatiable demand for silk in the international markets. Bursa's biggest trade partner in the silk sector was France; Bursa enjoyed a virtually guaranteed market and sold at least 80 per cent of its total production to France, which was the second largest consumer of raw silk after the United States.⁸⁸⁶ The mostly successful fight against the pebrine disease in the Bursa region and the promotion of the industry by the PDA and the Ottoman state thus enabled the regional economy to take advantage of the demand for raw silk in the international markets, especially in between 1890s and 1914.

Yenişehir followed the pattern of the Bursa region with respect to the development of the silk industry towards the end of the 19th century. In 1896-1897, the Yearbook of Hüdavendigâr highlighted the positive conditions of silk-raising in Yenişehir and İznik. Accordingly, in Yenişehir, it was estimated that about 8000 *dönüms* of land was allocated to mulberry groves. About 160.000 kilograms of cocoons were produced annually in these groves. In İznik, there were 4480 *dönüms* of mulberry groves, which produced about 37.500 kilograms of cocoons. In Yenişehir, some cocoons were sold to the merchants coming from outside of the town when they were fresh; the remaining cocoons were transported to Bursa and Bilecik for sale, after being

⁸⁸⁴ Halim Demiryürek, *Ertuğrul Sancağı: (1900-1918)* (Bilecik: Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 10.

⁸⁸⁵ Akarlı, "Economic Policy," 450-454.

⁸⁸⁶ Quataert, "The Silk Industry," 486.

dried in the town. The Yearbook stresses that silk-raising in Yenişehir had demonstrated a revival beyond the initial estimations, thanks to the (promotion of the industry by the) sultan. The inhabitants were trying to increase cocoon production by adopting scientific methods and thereby mulberry groves had been expanding. In this way, the wealth and welfare of the inhabitants of the *kaza* were enhanced.⁸⁸⁷ The Yearbook's reference to "scientific methods" used in the cocoon production indicates the Silk Raising Institute's reach over Yenişehir. Indeed, in 1907-1908, the Yearbook reported that since the establishment of the Silk Raising Institute in Bursa, six students from Yenişehir graduated from the institute.⁸⁸⁸ This means that Yenişehir could produce uninfected cocoons locally, and thereby could partake in the reviving silk sector through the positive impact of the PDA's involvement in the silk sector.

Beyond its policies of supporting the raw silk production in the Bursa region, the PDA was potentially a controversial institution from the viewpoint of the inhabitants of the Bursa region, because it was involved in the collection of the silk tithe from the producers. As a foreign institutional body, it did not enjoy the legitimacy structures that the late Ottoman polity took pains for building and sustaining amid the challenges and transformations of the modern epoch. The PDA was apparently aware of the difficulties it faced in this regard, therefore it deliberately pursued an employment policy, which left the provincial executive in the hands of the locals and entrusted only the duty of control and supervision to foreign officials.⁸⁸⁹ In Murat Birdal's words: "...while making several institutional reforms in the sectors ceded to the administration, the OPDA pursued a careful policy of 'keeping the old lines' whenever possible in order to avoid widespread public opposition."⁸⁹⁰ Indeed, such policies afforded the PDA a less troublesome presence in the Bursa region, especially when compared with the much resented presence of the Régie in the political economy of the region. Rather than the producers' individual clashes with the PDA, the documents from Yenişehir reveal its contestation with the exceptional waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa in İznik over the silk tithe generated on the waqf lands. The friction between these two contestants highlights

⁸⁸⁷ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1324*, 308.

⁸⁸⁸ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 298.

⁸⁸⁹ Birdal, *Ottoman Public Debt*, 105.

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 106.

not only the persistence of the waqfs as economic actors within the Ottoman Empire during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also left imprints indicating how the silk tithe was indeed collected at the quotidian level in this region.

In the early 1890s, the trustee of the waqf of Hayreddin Paşa wrote a petition to the Ministry of Finance, complaining that other parties were intervening in the tithes and taxes due to the waqf in Aydın, Kastamonu and Hüdavendigâr by disregarding the exceptional status of the waqf. More specifically, the animal taxes and the silk tithes of the waqf were usurped by the PDA. The waqf could not get the taxes of 1889-1890, and no precaution had been taken for it to take the taxes of the year 1891.⁸⁹¹ The clash between the PDA and the waqf was due to the exceptional status of the waqf. The Ottoman government conceded the silk tithes of Yenişehir and İznik, together with some other districts' silk tithes to the PDA. However, the silk tithes of the extensive lands belonging to the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa in İznik, did not belong to the Ottoman state.

At the beginning of the Tanzimat, eight waqfs were identified as exceptional waqfs, which would function autonomously from the Evkaf administration.⁸⁹² Later on, the number of these waqfs increased to fourteen. The Ottoman government tried to cancel the exceptional status of these waqfs, however it had to retreat from its initial decision and re-awarded exceptional status to twelve of them. Yet, it introduced new regulations that would make it easier for the government to track the economic activities of these waqfs. Accordingly, the tithes and other dues belonging to these waqfs would be farmed out together with the other taxes due to the state. Bills would be issued in the names of the trustees and the waqfs would be paid according to these bills after the tax farmers made their payments to the Ottoman state. For other types of property that were leased out by the waqfs, the trustees had to get the transfer and assignment (*intikal ve ferağ*) transactions recorded and ratified at the Land Registry Offices, without however paying any charges and fees.⁸⁹³ Hence, before the PDA took over the silk tithes of the

⁸⁹¹ İ. HAKKI 1862.

⁸⁹² Y. MTV 59-56.

⁸⁹³ See, especially “24 Zilhicce 1307 tarihli Meclis-i Mahsus Vükela Mazbatası Sureti” and “6 C. evvel 1309 tarihli Şura-yı Devlet Tanzimat Dairesi Mazbatasının Sureti” enclosed in İ, HAKKI 1862; ŞD 2883-17; ŞD 1780-4; Y. MTV 59-56.

Bursa region, the tithes and dues belonging to the waqf of Hayreddin Paşa were collected by the state, and subsequently handed over to the waqf.⁸⁹⁴

The PDA obviously did not feel itself bounded by the previous economic arrangements of the Ottoman state, and did not want to pay Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa's waqf the silk tithe generated within the waqf lands. As a matter of fact, silk raising on the waqf lands was triggered by the overall revival in the industry through the efforts of the PDA. Until early 1890s, the waqf lands did not produce significant silk tithe. When these lands began to produce taxable rural surplus through the expansion of mulberry groves, clashes of economic interests between the PDA and the waqf emerged. In 1900, the waqf could gain the upper hand through the arbitration of the Ottoman state in its favor; Hüdavendigâr province and the PDA received strict orders from İstanbul for ensuring that the waqf actually took the silk tithe belonging to it.⁸⁹⁵ Thus, as late as the beginning of the 20th century, an exceptional waqf operating in İznik could legally claim rural resources and taxes, even if it entailed challenging an institution representing international finance capital. As an ancient institution, the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa transformed to fit into the changing waqf administration of the late Ottoman Empire on the one hand, and took active role in claiming its due within an evolving regional economy, in which new international actors got involved, on the other.

The exceptional status of the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa led it to get involved in the political economy of İznik through collection of tithes and other taxes of extensive waqf lands. Consequently, quite a few local people clashed with the waqf because of the unpaid installments of tax-farms due to the waqf. Some of these people tried to invoke other institutions and governmental departments, which could potentially obstruct the waqf's activities, by drawing on the clashes of interest over the appropriation of the rural resources within the waqf lands. For example, a local inhabitant of İznik strove to get the Ministry of Forests take action against the waqf, due to the waqf's alleged usurpation of the tithes of many immigrant villages formed on

⁸⁹⁴ In fact, the waqf lands started to produce silk tithe after the establishment of the PDA. Here, I note the general regulations pertaining to the income of the waqf, which had to be applied to the silk tithe after the waqf lands began to yield taxes around early 1890s.

⁸⁹⁵ İ. HAKKI 1862.

waqf lands.⁸⁹⁶ In fact, the exceptional status of the waqf entitled it to collect these tithes, which were generated through the settlement of immigrant communities on waqf lands. Likewise, Oruçoğlu Süleyman from İznik's Elbeyli village⁸⁹⁷ wrote a letter to the PDA, complaining that the waqf was illegally collecting the cocoon tithe of his village. The trustee of the waqf in turn wrote that Oruçoğlu Süleyman was in fact the tax-farmer, who contracted the tithe of some waqf lands in 1898. When he could not pay his debt, the waqf seized his properties. The trustee claimed that Oruçoğlu Süleyman, who was convicted in the court of Yenişehir, habitually encroached on the rights of other parties and engaged in slander. (*Yenişehir kazasında mahkum olan bu erazil öteden beri şunun bunun hukukuna tecavüzat ve tezvirat mesleğini tutmuş...*) To prove that it was almost impossible for the waqf to usurp the silk tithe, the trustee described how it was collected from the waqf lands in detail.⁸⁹⁸

Accordingly, the waqf lands on which the mulberry groves stood were possessed as perpetual leases by the local inhabitants. In this respect, the trustee described the right of the waqf pertaining to these lands as “stain of olive oil”, meaning that the waqf did not intervene in the appropriation and usage of land; it just took a proportion of the crops cultivated on these lands as tithe. For the taxation of these lands, first, the *dönüms* of mulberry groves are recorded in a register. When the harvest of the cocoons approached, an official representing the waqf, a member from the local administration, and the local PDA officials (*redif ve mizan memurları*) visit each and every household engaging in cocoon production. They investigate the overall quantity of the crops and recorded the corresponding tithe in kilograms. A copy of this register is given to the waqf official. When the owner of the cocoons takes his or her crops for sale to wherever he or she wishes, there would be PDA officials weighing the crops to extract the silk tithe. The PDA, thus collects the entire silk tithe, and within two months makes the payment due to the waqf according to the register kept at the beginning of the harvest season. The waqf official prepares a receipt voucher and hands it over to the PDA to

⁸⁹⁶ ŞD 1571-27.

⁸⁹⁷ Oruçoğlu Süleyman was a village notable, who founded a cash waqf for supporting the mosque of Elbeyli village. See the table at the end of the chapter.

⁸⁹⁸ All the information cited about Oruçoğlu Süleyman's conflict with the waqf of Hayreddin Paşa and the following information about the collection of the silk tithe are enclosed in İ. HAKKI 1862, available in İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı Arşiv ve Kütüphanesi attached to the Selimiye Mosque in Üsküdar. İ. HAKKI 1862 is a large envelope containing many documents of the waqf of Çandarlı Hayreddin Paşa. These documents are derived from the personal collection of İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, and they were not properly indexed and paginated at the time of my research.

finalize the transaction. Hence, the trustee claimed that the waqf does not have any leverage for abusing the process of taxation at the expense of the PDA.

On the contrary, the system had loopholes enabling tax evasion at the expense of the waqf. The trustee described the evasions as followed: For example, Ahmed Ağa from the village Tacir produced 1000 kilograms of cocoons. At the beginning of the harvest, he does not register 1000 kilograms on his own account in the waqf register; rather he registers 100 kilograms and allocates the remaining crops to other people, who get Ahmed Ağa's crops registered under pseudonyms. When 1000 kilograms of cocoons reach the market place, Ahmed Ağa pays the tithe for just 100 kilograms. For the remaining crops registered under pseudonyms, the silk tithe is not paid; rather the fictitious owners incur debts to the state. Tax officials in turn could not track down many unpaid debts recorded with pseudonyms. The waqf thus gets one tenth of the tithe, which it was entitled to from Ahmed Ağa's cocoon production.⁸⁹⁹

The trustee's description of tax evasion suggests that the Ottoman government and the PDA refrained from getting the PDA and the tax-payers confront each other at the judicial and coercive fronts, which entailed seizures for unpaid tax debts or forcefully withholding a proportion of the payment made during the sale. The Ottoman state opted for intermediating the payment of the tithe when the tax-payers were unwilling or unable to pay their taxes during the sale of the crops. The PDA probably billed the unpaid silk taxes to the Ottoman government, which could not always collect the debts of the tax-payers due to its institutional inability to cope with wide scale fraud. It seems that the government preferred incurring financial losses throughout the collection of the silk tithe over getting a foreign institution intervene in its sovereign rights of policing the tax-payers and initiating legal procedures in cases of default. The PDA should have cooperated with the Ottoman government in this regard because of its policy of refraining from invoking protests among the local population.

⁸⁹⁹ İ. HAKKI 1862.

5.2.5. The Régie and the Tobacco Sector

On the 30th of May 1883, a sultanic order handed over the tobacco concession to the Régie Company. Subsequently, the government, the Régie and the PDA worked out the specifications of the company's contract.⁹⁰⁰ Cultivators, traders, money-lenders, factory-owners and provincial officials had to deal with the decisive entry of this new actor in the sector. As the company began its operations in the tobacco producing provinces, many problems between the company and various parties involved in the tobacco sector emerged. Even though specifications of the company's contract remained a binding point of reference for the governance of the tobacco sector, ensuing contestations, tensions and struggles engendered frequent breaches of the regulations specified in the contract. While the company tried to avoid its obligations towards the cultivators with a view of maximizing its profits⁹⁰¹, wide-scale smuggling and the government's reluctance for suppressing it, impaired the company's anticipated profits from the monopoly.

The cultivators' complaints about the Régie highlighted the company's abusive usage of its purviews related to monitoring the cultivation, transportation, storage and pricing of tobacco. The Régie had to buy all tobacco, except for the produce destined for export, from the producers. For this reason, it had to control the supply of tobacco in the domestic market in order not to incur financial losses due to overproduction. To achieve this, it arbitrarily withheld cultivation permits from prospective cultivators. The processes of transportation and storage further endowed the Régie with asymmetrical leverage over the cultivators. The company had to build warehouses within reasonable distances to the tobacco producing regions. The Régie's insufficient investments in this regard billed high transportation costs to the cultivators. Only the Régie officials and the people with appropriate transportation permits could transfer tobacco to these warehouses. Thus, the company could play with the supply-side of the market through delaying and/or obstructing transportation as well. Moreover, according to the specifications of its contract the company had to provide interest-free credit to the cultivators for supporting production. Yet, it adopted policies like demanding re-

⁹⁰⁰ Filiz Dıġıroġlu, *Memalik-i Osmaniye Duhanları Müşterekü'l-Menfaa Reji şirketi: Trabzon Reji İdaresi (1883-1914)* (Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2007), 32.

⁹⁰¹ Vardaġlı, "International Tobacco," 611-613.

payment before the harvest season to deter the cultivators from taking advantage of this option.⁹⁰²

Aside from these rather dubious undertakings of the Régie *vis a vis* the specifications of its contract, the interests of the company and the cultivators clashed due to the very nature of the tobacco monopoly. It was financially best for the company to keep the prices paid to the cultivators at the lowest possible level, while supplying the domestic market with quite expensive processed tobacco. The method of using appraisers in cases of disagreements about the prices between the Régie and the cultivators did not effectively prevent over-exploitation of the latter. The people kept complaining about the fact that the company was buying their tobacco very cheaply and selling it to them in the domestic market at inflated prices after being processed in its factories. Faced with the unfavorable terms of doing business with the company, many cultivators opted for using the illegal tobacco market as an outlet for their produce. Consequently, wide-scale smuggling emerged as a formidable problem for the Régie.⁹⁰³ Based on the specifications of its contract, the company employed many armed guards, known as *kolcus*, to fight with smugglers. The activities of the *kolcus* in turn, raised wide-spread resentment among the local societies that were subjected to the policing of this armed group, which in some provinces evolved into full-scale organizations, called *kordon bölükleri*, resembling military squadrons. Hence, unlike the PDA's relatively pacific presence in the local contexts, the forceful presence of the Régie in the countryside, perpetuated armament, smuggling and banditry, and thereby caused deterioration of public order.

Tobacco smuggling was not new in the Ottoman lands; it was practiced since 1690s, when the state began to tax tobacco. However, the state's fiscalism and provincialism led it to adopt a lenient policy towards smuggling in order not to diminish production and destruct the livelihoods of the producers.⁹⁰⁴ The Régie as a foreign company did not manifest such flexibility in favor of the cultivators. Anticipating such heedlessness, the Ottoman government made sure to include the appointment of a commissioner for inspecting the activities of the Régie. According to the eighth article

⁹⁰² Dığıroğlu, "Selanik Ekonomisinde," 236-243.

⁹⁰³ Ibid, 259.

⁹⁰⁴ See, footnote 13 in Dığıroğlu, *Trabzon Reji*, 33.

of the company's contract, this commissioner would be able to attend the company's meetings in İstanbul. He would have the right to vote in these meetings and he would facilitate communication between the Régie and the government.⁹⁰⁵

The report of a government official, Nuri Bey, who attended the meeting of the Régie during the summer of 1887 succinctly summarizes the contending views of the government and the company in relation to the cultivators on the one hand, and the difficulties of implementing the monopoly on the ground on the other. Nuri Bey stated that the director-general of the Régie complained about the resistance of the provincial administrations of Adana, Ankara and Hüdavendigâr for the extirpation and eradication of the tobacco cultivated without permits in these provinces. Nuri Bey responded him by saying that in the provinces of Adana and Ankara, the cultivators were suffering from a severe famine, and therefore the company should opt for a more permissible stance towards these cultivators due to humanitarian reasons. He added that flexing the rules for these two provinces would be in the interest of the company as well, because it was detrimental for a company, which holds the tobacco monopoly, to evoke hatred in the cultivators. Furthermore, such harsh measures would be condemned by all the cultivators throughout the empire, which in turn would demolish their trust and confidence in the Régie.⁹⁰⁶ Nuri Bey's statement reflected the general attitudes of the late Ottoman state in relation to the tobacco cultivators: The government did not want to harm the productivity of the cultivators, and it wanted to preserve the legitimacy of the system in the eyes of the rural populations in order to govern the sector more effectively.

The administrative committee of the Régie however, rejected Nuri Bey's proposal. The committee members asserted that Adana and Ankara cannot be exempted from the new regulations related to the cultivation of tobacco, since these regulations were being implemented in the other provinces. Furthermore, most of the provinces were putting forth thousands of obstacles and problems for avoiding the regulations. The members of the committee claimed that especially Hüdavendigâr province was constantly disregarding the regulations and notifications of the government. For this reason, the company incurred excessive losses in this province, and therefore it was

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁰⁶ Y. PRK. ML 7-23.

impossible for it to carry out its operations in Hüdavendigâr under current circumstances. Consequently, the committee decided to suspend its operations in this province, unless the provincial administration agrees on implementing the regulations within a week. Hence, Nuri Bey immediately notified the Ministry of Finance and Yıldız Palace about this decision, which would bring forth issues of damages, losses and compensation in front of the Ottoman government.⁹⁰⁷ Apparently, the status quo entailing wide-spread illegal cultivation and smuggling was enhanced by the provincial administrators' tacit protection of the cultivators through inaction. When the situation became unsustainable for the Régie, it turned to more radical instruments for pressuring the Ottoman government.

Soon, the government had to reluctantly acquiesce the formation of *kordon* squadrons in Selânik, Hüdavendigâr and Aydın. In the spring of 1888, the sultan, who was rather uncomfortable with these squadrons asked the Council of Ministers to inquire about such prerogatives and rights of the Régie by comparing the Ottoman example with the other states where a regie administration existed. He wanted to know whether a prerogative justifying the formation of *kordon* squadrons was indeed conceded to the Régie. The Council of Ministers stated that according to the specifications of the contract of the Régie, it had the right to employ armed guards, *kolcus*, for fighting smuggling. As a matter of fact, the company was using many *kolcus* at that moment. The objective of the formation of *kordon* squadrons was organizing the *kolcus* into a more orderly and disciplined body. The commanders of these squadrons would be recruited from among the officers of the gendarmerie or from resigned officers of the army. The weapons of the squadrons would be bought from the imperial arsenal by the Régie. Taking into account the state of affairs and the public good, the Council of Ministers approved the formation of these squadrons in the provinces of Hüdavendigâr, Aydın and Selânik.⁹⁰⁸

From the viewpoint of the Régie, *kordon* squadrons were a pressing necessity because of the scale of tobacco smuggling. The profits in the illegal trade in tobacco were so promising that a good part of "ordinary" banditry prevalent in Yenişehir-İzmit region evolved into smuggling networks, in which many immigrant villagers partook.

⁹⁰⁷ Y. PRK. ML 7-23.

⁹⁰⁸ MV 32-35.

The mountain ranges of Yenişehir and İznik were transit passages for the tobacco cultivated in the immigrant villages of İzmit, Düzce and Adapazarı, destined to Konya in central Anatolia through Kütahya.⁹⁰⁹ The more traditional bands preying on passengers and merchants in this region were made of about 8 to 12 members. The smuggling gangs, however, could be made of thirty and even one-hundred armed members.⁹¹⁰ In this regard, even *kordon* squadrons were not sufficient for patrolling the countryside. The Régie occasionally asked the government and the provincial administration of Bursa to dispatch regular army units for backing up the *kolcus* in chasing the smugglers. Yet, it had to settle for the gendarmerie forces stationed in the districts and sub-districts due to the unwillingness of the government to deploy the army for fighting smuggling.⁹¹¹

Moreover, the sultan could occasionally give contradictory signals to the smugglers. For example, two *kolcus* of the Régie were killed in the skirmishes with the smugglers in one of İznik's immigrant villages, Adliye in 1899. When the members of the gang were captured and transported to Ertuğrul for trial, a palace official sent to Adapazarı for a special mission communicated with the district of Ertuğrul via telegraph, and informed the local authorities that the sultan had pardoned some of the smugglers involved in the event and that they would be awarded five Ottoman liras from the public funds of Adapazarı. The judicial authorities of Ertuğrul in turn asked for clarifications via the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr: Were all the members of the gang pardoned? Did this pardon include the event, which involved the death of two *kolcus*? Which governmental department received the sultanic order containing the pardoning?⁹¹² We do not know what eventually turned out from the intervention of the palace as such. Yet, it hints that the Hamidian administration occasionally supported the livelihoods of the immigrant villagers involved in the illegal trade in tobacco through backdoor operations that ran against the existing regulations and the judicial framework of the empire. As Murat Birdal suggests, the Régie could not count on the government's

⁹⁰⁹ DH. MKT 1825-32; DH. MKT 645-11.

⁹¹⁰ Y. PRK. AZJ 44-85; DH. MKT 645-11.

⁹¹¹ Y. PRK. BŞK 66-13.

⁹¹² Y. A. RES 101-63; Y. A. RES 98-82.

good faith in honoring the article sanctioning its support for fighting smuggling in the specifications of the company's contract.⁹¹³

The magnitude of tobacco smuggling suggests that the illegal market for tobacco required an extensive logistical infrastructure. To begin with, many people were involved in this market: The villagers, who cultivated tobacco without permits, and several intermediaries involved in the storing, marketing and transportation of the produce kept this business running. Furthermore, smuggling by many armed men entailed the resilience of a secondary illegal market in weapons and gun-powder. Bursa region could provide the required human resources thanks to the injection of immigrant communities to its population base. As for the secondary industry of arms and gun-powder production, some villages of İznik had long been specialized suppliers of these goods for the illegal business of banditry and brigandage.⁹¹⁴ So much so that in 1896, the Council of Ministers had to authorize the dispatch of a regular army unit from İzmit over the two Muslim villages of İznik, namely Müşkire and Körüstan, for dismantling and confiscating their equipments of gun-powder production. The inhabitants of these two villages had long been thwarting the local security officials' attempts to search the villages. Due to their "unruliness", the government deliberated with the army officers whether a clash with the dispatched army unit was likely, and if so, whether the soldiers would retaliate the villagers' attack. Eventually, the commander of the İzmit division suggested that the villagers would not resist the army, since they were Muslims, and the dispatched unit would merely back up the officials assigned for confiscation by the local government.⁹¹⁵ Hence, Yenişehir and İznik were fertile grounds for a flourishing illegal tobacco market.

Wide-spread tobacco smuggling in the Bursa region did not mean that other traditional forms of banditry, such as abduction for ransom and highway robbery extinguished. On the contrary, the boundaries between smuggling and banditry were fuzzy, because the human element involved in both activities frequently coalesced. However, the attempt to create an artificial market that was supposed to be strictly controlled by the Régie at the expense of all the other stake-holders pushed "traditional

⁹¹³ Birdal, "The Tobacco Sector," 150.

⁹¹⁴ See chapter 2, p. 109.

⁹¹⁵ BEO 842-63113.

banditry” to a new scale of activity that thrived with the profits of the illegal market for tobacco. Aside from the armed smugglers, who resembled outlaws and bandits, many more “respectable” members of the society partook in smuggling and related illegal activities. For example, in 1900 the *kolcus* in İznik raided the house of a longtime foreign resident of the town, Italian Mösyö Fabiano and searched for smuggled tobacco. When they could not find anything, Mösyö Fabiano initiated a lawsuit against them in Yenişehir, claiming that his pregnant wife had lost her baby because of the terrorizing raid. He also had the Italian consulate lodge a protest to the Ottoman government about the event.⁹¹⁶ Mösyö Fabiano may not indeed have involved in the illegal trade in tobacco. Yet, the fact that he qualified for a likely person to do so hints the preeminence of the illegal market in tobacco. Likewise, in 1903, a member of the local council of Yenişehir, Attar Hacı Nazif Ağa was dismissed from his post due to storing smuggled gun-powder in his shop and house.⁹¹⁷ These examples indicate that the black market in tobacco and related economic activities for its upkeep in and around Yenişehir-İznik region were quite pervasive.

Some historians viewed smuggling as “popular resistance” against Western imperialism.⁹¹⁸ Some other scholars however, doubted whether smuggling can indeed be considered as an act of cooperation and organization among the people involved with the purpose of challenging international economic penetration in the Ottoman Empire⁹¹⁹ Examples of smuggling from the Bursa region suggest that these were indeed quite intricately organized undertakings of the many people, who did cooperate for overcoming the obstacles put forth by the Régie. For example, in 1903, the provincial administration of Bursa insisted on banishing tobacco smugglers, who also engaged in wounding, killing and illegal use of arms, to other provinces. Apparently, some of these men formed quite stable bands, whose members rejoined them after serving several prison terms. The Ministry of Interior, however, rejected Hüdavendigâr’s proposal,

⁹¹⁶ DH. MKT 2398-91.

⁹¹⁷ DH. MKT 655-88.

⁹¹⁸ Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 13-38; Birdal, “The Tobacco Sector,” 163.

⁹¹⁹ Engin D. Akarlı, “Donald Quataert, Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983). Pp. 229,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 03 (1986): 392-393; Ebru Boyar, “Public Good and Private Exploitation: Criticism of the Tobacco Régie in 1909,” *Oriente Moderno* 25, no. 86 (2006): 200.

stating that these convicts should be punished according to the regulations about tobacco smuggling and the penal code. The Ministry contended that if banished, these habitual offenders would cause troubles in their new destinations as well. Based on the advice of the commander of the provincial gendarmerie (*alaybeyi*), Bursa re-asked permission for banishing at least twelve such convicts. The Ministry of Interior in turn forwarded this request to the Council of State for review.⁹²⁰ Thus, smuggling was a persistent organized crime, which made it difficult for the authorities to contain it.

But, there is not sufficient evidence for suggesting that “resistance” through smuggling had an ideological component directed towards the private interests of a foreign company, which allegedly represented “Western imperialism”. To begin with, though smuggling indicated cooperation and organization within a band, we do not come across significant coordination between different bands against a common enemy, namely the Régie. Additionally, just like the PDA, the Régie recruited its *kolcus* and other local officials from among the local populations. In this regard, the smugglers and other people, who were subject to the Régie’s policing did not face foreigners; rather interacted with fellow Ottomans.⁹²¹ On top of these, the legal tobacco market was constructed as an overtly exploitative structure. Whether it was controlled by a foreign or native body did not make a significant difference for the people who experienced its unjust and ill-fated interventions. Hence, even the M. P. for Drama, Rıza Bey, voiced his criticisms of the Régie in the Ottoman Parliament in 1909 in terms of his own personal experiences and the experiences of others from the same small locality.⁹²²

I think Filiz Dıġıroġlu’s suggestions about the nature of tobacco smuggling in the province of Trabzon are valid for the Bursa region as well. She highlights the Régie’s role in triggering and enhancing smuggling, but she refrains from framing it as popular protest against foreign capital, because tobacco smuggling did not begin with the Régie.⁹²³ Just like Trabzon, the documents from the Bursa region indicate that the Régie as a private company did not share the legitimacy concerns and the flexibility of the Ottoman government in bending the regulations for the public good. Although such

⁹²⁰ ŞD 1584-17.

⁹²¹ Yüksel, “Türkiye’de Tütüncülerin Kaçakçılışma,” 185-199.

⁹²² Boyar, “Public Good,” 200.

⁹²³ Dıġıroġlu, *Trabzon Reji*, 105-106.

a stance surely contributed to the deterioration of the legal tobacco market, it did not automatically translate into conscious resistance to “Western imperialism” among the many people involved in smuggling.

In the early 1890s, the Régie cooperated with the local notables by handing over some of its operations to contractors chosen among them.⁹²⁴ In the case of Yenişehir, such an alliance between the Régie and a prominent local notable, Edhem Paşa, generated friction in the political arena of the town. I will address the Régie’s significance in Yenişehir in this respect in the next chapter.

5.3. Section II: Local Administration at the Quotidian Level

In exploring the history of Yenişehir and İznik during the second half of the 19th century, I located historical change mainly at the interstices of the political relationships between the local societies and the Ottoman state. Throughout this endeavor, I tried to trace a local point of view, highlighting various local actors as historical agents rather than *apriorily* taking the imperial elites and the bureaucratic apparatus of the late Ottoman state as the sole engine of historical transformations. In chapter 1, I argued that the reforms of the Tanzimat era were built on the structural continuities with the early-modern era. The Ottoman state did not initiate modernization on a blank page; on the contrary, centralization and modernization were bounded by social structures, leading the Tanzimat state to a relational approach of tightening and loosening saddles of reforms according to political conjunctures and local conditions. In chapter 2, I analyzed the inspection tour of Ahmed Vefik Efendi as a renewed attempt of the central state to tighten its grip over the provincial societies of North-western Anatolia. I contended that in spite of being an over-handed, inefficient and quite oppressive intervention, the inspection at the outset was a welcome development for especially the peasant masses, which were trapped in cycles of debt due to the local notables’ artful utilization of the opportunities of an unregulated market economy. In this context, the petitions written by “ordinary” women from Yenişehir and İznik around the middle of

⁹²⁴ Birdal, “The Tobacco Sector,” 150.

the 19th century hinted that the Tanzimat state's increasing presence in the local contexts proceeded through many provincial subjects' willingness to drag the late Ottoman state into their personal and local affairs.

In this section, I argue that the Hamidian era in Yenişehir was marked by striking societal continuities with the Tanzimat era. In order to delineate these continuities, I will trace the appropriation of economic resources in Yenişehir at the quotidian level of local administration. I will use the investigation processes of the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir, Mehmed Ramazan Efendi, in mid-1880s as a case study revealing the workings of local relations of power in Yenişehir. The practical operations of the local administration in Yenişehir reflected fierce competition for resources of the countryside that I highlighted in the first section of this chapter. Within this economic conjuncture, the *kaymakam*, the local notables and the local judiciary (more specifically the *naib*) emerged as the most significant contenders for power. Moreover, the state collected information about and intervened in Yenişehir through the hierarchical provincial administration, which also had a parallel judicial component. Officials sent from Bursa and Ertuğrul communicated the status quo in Yenişehir to the imperial institutions, such as the Council of State located in İstanbul. Though Yenişehir continued to have a local political context of its own, the Hamidian government's intermittent surveillance over the political economy of Yenişehir proved critical for local relations of power. Thus, just like the mid-19th century, "ordinary people" who found district officials investigating specific issues in Yenişehir did not miss opportunities to voice their complaints about local injustices and abuses. In a similar vein, the local notables and the local judiciary carried their pre-eminence as economic actors from the Tanzimat era into the Hamidian era. In addition to these societal continuities, the contemporary political circumstances of Yenişehir in mid-1880s conditioned the overall distribution of power between different actors of the local administration on the one hand, between "the local" and "the imperial" on the other.

Before delving into the events of the summer of 1885, let me introduce, the *kaymakam*, Mehmed Ramazan Efendi, according to his employee file (*sicil-i ahval*) kept at the Ministry of Interior. Ramazan Efendi was the son of the ex-*naib* of Aydın, Abdurrahman Hulusi Efendi from the ulama. He was born in 1841 in İbradi, a town attached to Antalya in southern Anatolia. After getting a traditional primary school education (in a *sıbyan mektebi*), he attended various secondary schools (*rüşdiyes*) in

İstanbul and at the provinces. At the same time, he took some classes, such as *fiqh*, *nahv* (Arabic grammar), logic and arithmetic at some mosques. He could write in Turkish. He started his career as a clerk in the sharia courts of various *kazas* and *livas* (districts) and as an acting-judge in various *nahiyes* (communes) attached to his father's posts. He took a third of a salary (*sülüs aidat ile*) for these jobs, which he undertook under his father's tutelage in between the ages of roughly 10 and 30. At the age of 31, he took his first independent job as a superintendent of a tomb in Hüdavendigâr for a monthly salary of 1000 *kuruş*. After two years, he resigned from his job. At the age of 35, he was appointed as the *kaymakam* of Simav in Kütahya for 1800 *kuruş* salary. Again, he resigned after two years, due to his "lack of concurrence with the circumstances of the town" (*havasıyla adem imtizacından dolayı*). In April 1884, when he was in his mid-40s, he was appointed as the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir with 1250 *kuruş* salary.⁹²⁵ Thus, Ramazan Efendi had a typical educational background, which he reinforced through his "practical" training in the sharia courts under his father's guidance. His father, as the *ex-naib* of Aydın province, should have commanded social standing, and possibly wealth that Ramazan Efendi would not be able to obtain through his standard education within the more meritocratically evolving career paths of the *ulama*. His frequent resignations hint that he was not a steady employee, completely dependent on his salary for making a living.

5.3.1. The Prelude to Crisis: *Naib* Mehmed Tevfik Efendi vs. *Kaymakam* Ramazan Efendi

Both *naib* Mehmed Tevfik Efendi and *kaymakam* Ramazan Efendi had written personal accounts of what happened between them in Yenişehir during the holy month of Ramadan, which corresponded to mid-June to mid-July of 1885. Ramazan Efendi's account was a response to the complaint of the *naib* submitted to the district administration of Ertuğrul, claiming that the *kaymakam* had attacked him during a secular court session, and thereby obstructed his official job. I will extensively quote Ramazan Efendi's account, written on the 4th of August 1885, to convey the political

⁹²⁵ DH. SAİD 4-437.

atmosphere of Yenişehir at the time, and then I will address the *naib*'s account of the same dispute. Ramazan Efendi wrote:

During the nights of the last Ramadan, we were having some pastime at the municipality building after performing the *teravih* (the long night prayers specific to Ramadans). One night, when all members of the local council, including *hakim efendi* (the *naib*), were present at the municipality, we observed that some children were playing with fireworks; they were shooting all sorts of cartridges (*fişenk*) in the streets of the neighborhoods. We decided to ban playing with fireworks, since these shootings could dangerous(ly) (start a fire). The members of the local administration thus agreed that the ban would be declared to the populace through criers dispatched to places where people gathered, such as the market-place of the town. If the children still continue to play with the fireworks, we would make it known that their parents would be subject to cash fines. (A couple of nights later), I personally witnessed from the Office (of the local branch of) Public Debt Administration that a couple of children were shooting cartridges despite the recent ban.

Subsequently, Ramazan Efendi informed the municipality to fine the parents' of these children, since the local administration decided that a five-*kuruş* fine per each child playing with firearms would be transferred to the budget of the municipality based on "municipal regulations" (*belediye nizamnamesi*). For rapid implementation, the report obtained from the municipality was immediately transferred to the police by the *kaymakam*. As a matter of fact, these fines had to pass through the secular court of first instance (*bidayet mahkemesi*) headed by the *naib* of the *kaza*, Mehmed Tevfik Efendi. Yet, one of the kids involved was a fatherless child, whose mother was the cook of the *naib*. When the policeman arrived at the *naib*'s house for claiming the fine from the mother of the child, he was told that she was not present there.⁹²⁶ Understandably, the *naib*'s account of the subsequent clashes between him and the *kaymakam* does not contain the above-mentioned background information, since it would personally implicate him with shielding an offense. Yet, the *naib* and the *kaymakam* had slightly different accounts of what followed at the government building after the policeman left the *naib*'s house.

According to Ramazan Efendi, immediately after the policeman left his house, Tevfik Efendi came to his office at the government building. He summoned a clerk of the municipality, Hasan Efendi and scolded him by shouting: "You, a couple of shameless men, gathered at the municipality, just to squeeze money from the people as

⁹²⁶ "1301 tarihli ve 131 numaralı Yenişehir Kaymakamlığı'ndan varid olan layihanın suretidir." ŞD 2497-9.

you wish. You have no right whatsoever to collect fines. I am responsible for authorizing the collection of fines!” Ramazan Efendi, who was reading the holy Quran in his office, could not help but heard the *naib*. Holding the Quran at his hand, he went to the office of the *naib* to warn him that it was not his business to scold the municipal clerk and that engaging in such disputes at the government building was rather unbecoming. When the *naib* saw the *kaymakam*, he told him: “You have no right to collect fines; I oversee the collection of fines.” The *kaymakam* calmly replied that he was the highest authority in the *kaza*, and that it was his responsibility to ensure public safety. For this purpose, the municipality was his instrument for taking effective action. Facing the *kaymakam*’s assertive stance, the *naib*, allegedly lost his temper and said: “You are ignorant; you don’t even know how to read and write...” At that point, the *kaymakam* too was taken over by his anger. He replied: “You are ignorant enough to think of yourself as a learned person. The fact that various court decisions you pass are rejected on the grounds of incompatibility with the sharia at the highest religious court of appeal in İstanbul testifies your ignorance!” Thus, Ramazan Efendi concluded that nothing like “himself attacking the *naib* during a secular court session” ever occurred in Yenişehir.⁹²⁷

The credibility of Ramazan Efendi’s account of what happened at the government building is highly questionable, not least because of the rather “civilized” self image he tailored for himself even when he was quite furious. As I shall explain below, Tevfik Efendi’s account of the event at the government building is much more consistent with the overall imprints that Ramazan Efendi left in the Ottoman documents. However, Ramazan Efendi’s account unravels some important clues about how the late Ottoman state came to envisage the provincial administration at the *kaza* level. Apparently, after moving back and forth between empowering the centrally appointed officials and the local notables, the central state found it optimal to disperse power between these two camps for checking potential abuses. Consequently, a *kaymakam* could not act unilaterally, but had to work together with at least a fraction within the local foci of power. In this specific case, without the cooperation of the municipality, Ramazan Efendi could not push for collecting fines. Likewise, the post of *kaymakam* as the highest executive authority should ideally assume the function of curbing the power

⁹²⁷ “1301 tarihli ve 131 numaralı Yenişehir Kaymakamlığı’ndan varid olan layihanın suretidir,” ŞD 2497-9.

of the local notables by overseeing their actions. The local judiciary on the other hand, would act as a further control mechanism over the activities of the local administration.

Tevfik Efendi described Ramazan Efendi's attack with precise date, time and witnesses. He wrote that on the 8th of June, a (secular) court session between Posbıyıköğlü Kirkor Ağa and Söğüdüoğlü İbrahim Ağa had just been completed. A subsequent session on 42.000 *kuruş* debt of Musasyan to Keşkeyan Agop Ağa, who was a prominent merchant from İstanbul, temporarily staying in Yenişehir, was taking place at the courtroom in the presence of the members of the secular court, namely, Şemakizade Mehmed Efendi and Ohannes Ağa. In addition to Posbıyıköğlü Kirkor Ağa, Söğüdüoğlü İbrahim Ağa, various clerks of the secular and religious courts (*katib-i sani* Mehmed Efendi, *mübaşir* İsmail Efendi and *mahkeme-i şeriyye mukayyidi* İsmail Efendi) and a few locals of Yenişehir were present in the courtroom. When the secretary (*başkatip*) of the court, Rıza Efendi, left the courtroom to store some documents of the debt session in the archive (*kalem odası*), the clerk of the municipality, Hasan Efendi came into the room with the report of the municipality on the offenders of the ban on playing with fireworks. The *kaymakam* transferred the report to the police, yet the report included only the names of the parents, and not the children. The report had to be ratified at the secular court in order for the fines to be claimed from the parents. The *naib* asked Hasan Efendi who these children were. Hasan Efendi told him that he did not know, for he wrote them with orders and did not pay attention to who they were. Then, Hasan Efendi left the courtroom and went to the *kaymakam*'s office. Subsequently, the *kaymakam* bursted into the courtroom furiously shouting: "I ordered the preparation of this municipal report; I am going to take these fines from them." Then, he attacked the *naib*, saying: "*Efendi, efendi*, what is your purpose? I will cut you into pieces!" When he was about to hit the *naib*, Acemyan Ali Ağa and Keşkeyan Agop Ağa intervened and took the *kaymakam* out of the courtroom. The enraged *kaymakam* came back to the fences of the courtroom and shouted insults to the *naib*. Tevfik Efendi enclosed his complaint by reciting the witnesses and the exact hour of this event.⁹²⁸

⁹²⁸ "18 Haziran 1301 tarihli ve 32 numaralı Yenişehir Bidayet Mahkemesi riyasetinden müzekkire suretidir," ŞD 2497-9.

Mehmed Tevfik Efendi's description of the courtroom draws a familiar picture of Yenişehir. Two local notables, Şemakizade Mehmed Efendi and Ohannes Ağa were there as members of the secular court. An even more interesting figure, Keşkekyan Agop Ağa was also in the scene, claiming a substantial debt of 42.000 *kuruş* from another Armenian. It is likely that Keşkekyan Agop Ağa had a relationship with Keşkekoğlu Karabet, who was engaging in wide-scale money-lending in İznik from his headquarters in İstanbul during 1860s. During the tour of inspection, Ahmed Vefik Efendi insisted on getting him sent from İstanbul in order to curb his activities in İznik. The authorities in İstanbul, then, resisted Vefik Efendi's repeated demands on the grounds of protecting the rights of Keşkekoğlu Karabet.⁹²⁹ Two decades after this event, we have another Keşkekyan from İstanbul playing with massive amounts of money in Yenişehir.

Besides the continuities in the political actors from the Tanzimat era into the Hamidian era, Tevfik Efendi's account is consistent with Ramazan Efendi's in delineating the potential pitfalls between the executive and the judicial powers at the *kaza* level. In fact, the tensions built into this rather uneasy relationship singled out *naibs* as foci of resistance to the civilian authorities appointed at various levels of provincial administration. For example, in 1893, the dismissed *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul pointed out the *ex-naib* of the district as the leader of an intriguing camp among the district officials. He noted that this *naib* habitually meddled with each and every civilian authority within his posts, and therefore he was dismissed from his posts before completing his terms.⁹³⁰ As we shall see below, not only the *naib*, but also the mufti in Yenişehir could contend for power at the expense of the *kaymakam*. Thus, in the local political scenery, the significance of the post of *naib* in particular, the preeminence of the provincial ulama in general, marks another significant structural continuity between the Tanzimat and Hamidian eras.

If we are to turn back to the incident between Ramazan Efendi and Tevfik Efendi, we would see that the *kaymakam*'s fall out with the *naib* was the beginning of the end of his term in Yenişehir. In October, the district administration of Ertuğrul

⁹²⁹ See chapter 2, p. 135.

⁹³⁰ "... *liva-yı mezbur naib-i sabıkı olup her bulunduğu mahalde memurin-i mülkiye ile uğraşarak ikmal-i müddet etmeksizin infisali vuku bulan...*" Y. PRK. AZJ 27-61.

inquired about the fact that official reports prepared at the local council of Yenişehir were not containing the stamp of the *naib* for some time. Tevfik Efendi replied this inquiry by stating that through two members of the local council, the *kaymakam* informed him that if he attends the administrative council meetings, the *kaymakam* himself would walk out of the meetings. Hence, since the last Ramadan, Tevfik Efendi was not attending the meetings.⁹³¹ Ramazan Efendi, on the other hand, claimed that the *naib* was not attending the council meetings because he was overworked with court sessions, and he was about to complete his term in Yenişehir anyway. The *kaymakam* wrote that when the reports of the council meetings were sent to him, the *naib* refused to stamp them, claiming that he would not stamp anything unless he was present in deliberations.⁹³² Apparently, Ramazan Efendi wanted to exclude Tevfik Efendi from the local administration, and the *naib* retaliated by withholding his stamp from official documents, eventually signaling the problems in Yenişehir to the district administration. Later on, the *naib*'s version of events was ratified by the two members of the local council, who communicated Ramazan Efendi's decision to exclude the *naib* from the meetings to him. They grounded the *kaymakam*'s decision in this regard to the contention between him and Tevfik Efendi. The Council of State, where all the documents about Ramazan Efendi's investigation ended up, highlighted that at this point the *kaymakam* was not telling the truth.⁹³³

However, the real blow to Ramazan Efendi came with the collective petition of almost all the people involved in the local administration of Yenişehir. Towards the end of October 1885, thirteen officials and elected members of the local administration submitted a long complaint to the district administration of Ertuğrul. Consequently, an in-depth investigation by the district administration took place in early January 1886 in Yenişehir, where detailed minutes of interrogations were compiled. Yet, by early December, Ramazan Efendi managed to exchange posts with the *kaymakam* of Kirmastı (contemporary Mustafa Kemal Paşa), Osman Sıdkı Efendi. Thus, the investigation in January took place in his absence, which led the Council of State to initiate a second round of investigation, which would include Ramazan Efendi's defense and a

⁹³¹ "Ertuğrul Sancağı Mutasarrıflığı canib-i alisine," from *naib-i kaza*, ŞD 2502-21.

⁹³² "Ertuğrul Sancağı Mutasarrıflığı canib-i alisine," from *kaymakam-ı Yenişehir*, ŞD 2502-21.

⁹³³ "Huzur-u âli riyaset penahiye," from *Şura-yı Devlet Bidayet Müdde-i Umumiliği*, ŞD 2502-21.

subsequent third round containing the petitioners' response to it, taking place in the late summer of 1886 and spring of 1887 respectively.

5.3.2. Yenişehir against the *Kaymakam*

If you were a relatively well-off, middle-aged, Muslim peasant living in a village of Yenişehir during 1880s, what would you possibly do with a little bit of cash that you saved? It seems that many such peasants, like Hakkı Bey and Emin Ağa from Söylemiş village spared some money for the unfortunate day, when their sons would eventually be chosen for conscription through lottery. During the mid-summer of 1885, Hakkı Bey and Emin Ağa needed 50 golden liras for buying out exemption from military service for their sons. Yet, for both parents, the gloomy day of the lottery arrived sooner than they anticipated. Hakkı Bey had saved 20 liras and Emin Ağa had 28 liras for “saving” their sons from conscription. To make things worse, they had to find money before the harvest, when they had almost no stored grain to be cashed. They explained what they did in such a situation during the investigation on Ramazan Efendi in Yenişehir in January 1886. Hakkı Bey said:

...I paid 20 liras of the required 50 liras from my savings. I borrowed the rest, 30 liras, from Ramazan Efendi and then I obtained the official document of exemption from the local administration. I took 30 liras last July with a 31-day option; as interest I gave 50 kiles of barley...I gave 25 liras of 30 liras to the *kaymakam*, when he was sitting with Karabacakoğlu Emin Ağa from Yenişehir, in front of the bathhouse at the market place. He transferred the remaining 5 liras to Hacı İbrahim Ağa from Söylemiş. Hence, I gave it to him in the village. The *kaymakam*'s partner in sheep trade, Halil Ağa from Söylemiş was with him. (The *kaymakam*) ordered me to immediately deliver the barley as well. I thus transported 50 kiles of barley to Yenişehir, and went to the *kaymakam*, when mufti efendi was with him. He sent me to the storage of Taraklı Hacı Mehmed with *tahsildar* (tax-collector) Ahmed Efendi. I delivered the barley and returned home.⁹³⁴

Emin Ağa gave a similar account of what happened. Accordingly, he borrowed 22 liras from the *kaymakam* with 40 kiles of barley as interest. He obtained 22 *liras* by selling his wheat to Todori the baker, in Yenişehir and gave 20 *liras* of it to Hacı Halil

⁹³⁴ “Yenişehir Kazasına tabi Söylemiş karyesinden Hakkı Bey'in 23 K.evvel 1301 tarihli tutulan varaka-i nutkiyyesidir,” ŞD 2502-21.

Ağa, the *kaymakam*'s sheep partner, at the presence of *bakkal* (convenience store owner) Taşu. He took the remaining two liras to the *kaymakam*'s office, where Ramazan Efendi was together with Hacı İbrahim Ağa from Söylemiş and another villager from Karasu. When he brought the barley, the *kaymakam* sent him to the storage of Taraklıoğlu, with his personal attendant Mehmed and the mayor of Yenişehir municipality, Emin Efendi. There, he delivered the barley under their watch.⁹³⁵

Ramazan Efendi thus earned about 90 *kiles* of barley as interest payment within a month. As we shall see, the inhabitants of Yenişehir were well aware that it was forbidden for *kaymakams* to engage in trade, let alone earning money through usury. Yet, Ramazan Efendi did not have any concern for hiding his activities; rather even the mayor of the town assisted him in his personal business. Moreover, Ramazan Efendi managed to form business partnerships with villagers from Söylemiş, thereby he could have direct access to the rural resources. Hacı Halil Ağa, whom the debtors made their payments was the *kaymakam*'s partner in sheep trade; whereas Hacı İbrahim Ağa was one of his partners in grain trade. As such, one of the main complaints of the petitioners was Ramazan Efendi's usurious activities in the *kaza*. His engagement in speculative grain trade was the other accusation in the list.

Just after the harvest of 1885, the villagers of Söylemiş collected 333 *kiles* of barley among themselves for paying their taxes. Hacı İbrahim Ağa from the village went to Yenişehir, allegedly looking for a suitable buyer. According to Hacı İbrahim Ağa, Ramazan Efendi heard the sale and offered him 8 *kuruş* per kile payment in advance. İbrahim Ağa accepted the offer and took the money to distribute it to the villagers. The *kaymakam* sold this barley to Ayaslı Mustafa Bey. He in turn came to Söylemiş to transport the barley to Çardak village. He had most of the barley transported in his own carts by paid laborers. Yet, he left behind about 150 *kiles* of barley, which the villagers of Söylemiş had to transport to Çardak without being paid. During his interrogation, İbrahim Ağa thus stressed the transportation of the remaining barley by the villagers as an undue demand, for which his co-villagers were not at all compensated.⁹³⁶ Ayaslı Mustafa Bey, too, conceded that he did not pay anything to the

⁹³⁵ "Söylemiş karyeli Emin Ağa'nın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 23 K. evvel 1301," ŞD 2502-21.

⁹³⁶ "Söylemiş karyeli Hacı İbrahim Ağa'nın varaka-ı nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301," ŞD 2502-21.

villagers for transportation and added that he did not know whether the *kaymakam* paid for it.⁹³⁷

Ayaslı Mustafa Bey actually bought from Ramazan Efendi 540, 5 *kiles* of barley for a price of 12 *kuruş* per *kile* to be paid on the next May. He took 333 *kiles* of the total barley from Söylemiş; 92,5 *kiles* of it from Taraklıoğlu's storage and 105 *kiles* of it from Umran village.⁹³⁸ We know that 92,5 *kiles* of barley at the Taraklıoğlu storage was the interest payments of Hakkı Bey and Emin Ağa from Söylemiş. Let us leave the mysterious 105 *kiles* of barley taken from Umran village aside for now. To sum up Ramazan Efendi's activities up until this point: He lent money for interest at a time when cash was quite scarce in Yenişehir. A month later, he recouped 50 liras and obtained about 90 *kiles* of barley as interest. At about the same time, he invested in buying 333 *kiles* of barley from the villagers of Söylemiş with ready cash and sold even more barley to Ayaslı Mustafa Bey with a 9-month option for a profit margin of about 50 per cent. He was not quite finished yet, for he was also involved in sheep trade, which offered profit opportunities as the Muslims' eid al-adha (*Kurban Bayramı*) approached.

Ramazan Efendi's partner in sheep trade, Halil Ağa, described the nature of their partnership as follows:

One day (*the kaymakam*) told me, "If you could find some cheap sheep, we may buy and sell these sheep together; we can trade in partnership. Let me know if you find inexpensive sheep for sale." I found 120 sheep belonging to Kürt Bektaş from Haymana village. I cut a deal for paying 70 *kuruş* per animal. I informed the *kaymakam*. He summoned Bektaş and examined the sheep. He had the treasurer (*mal müdürü efendi*) calculate the money and then paid Kürt Bektaş in the presence of the secretary of the local administration (*tahrirat katibi*). I took the sheep from Bektaş and kept them in Söylemiş for some time. As the eid approached, the *kaymakam* sent a message, ordering me to bring the sheep to the market place right away. I brought the sheep to the market place, he came and we sold them to the people together. He wrote the names of the buyers in a notebook and gave a copy of these records to me as well.... We could not collect all the money of the sheep we sold. I collected payments from the people and delivered them to him. He collected payments from some government officials and the policemen, whom we sold sheep.... We do not have a written record of our partnership. But, when we became partners, Hacı Osman Ağa, Hacı Tahir

⁹³⁷ "Mustafa Bey'in varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 21 K. evvel 1301," ŞD 2502-21.

⁹³⁸ "Mustafa Bey'in varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 21 K. evvel 1301," ŞD 2502-21.

Ağa, Hacı İbrahim Ağa, *tahrirat katibi* Ahmet Bey and the treasurer İbrahim Efendi were with us. They knew all about our partnership.⁹³⁹

Indeed, throughout the investigation taking place in January 1886, many *Yenişehirli*s, from municipal sergeant (*belediye çavuşu*) Mustafa Ağa to public bathhouse worker (*hamam natırı*) Osman came forward to explain how they bought sheep to be sacrificed during eid al-adha from the *kaymakam*. Almost all of them bought their sacrificial sheep for 85 *kuruş*. Ramazan Efendi did not abstain from harassing the poor for getting them pay their sheep debts.⁹⁴⁰ On top of these, he forcefully sold 26 sheep to 22 policemen in front of the big public bathhouse. The payments of these sheep were to be subtracted from the policemen's upcoming *Teşrinivevvel* and *Teşrinisani* salaries by the *kaymakam*.⁹⁴¹ Throughout the investigation, the people stressed that the *kaymakam* himself publicly sold the sheep in the market place by promoting his animals. Thus, Ramazan Efendi, apparently, invested about 8.400 *kuruş* in sheep trade, which he could not fully recoup, because of the people's inability to pay. He had already tied another 2664 *kuruş* (333 *kiles* x 8 *kuruş*) to the barley he bought from Söylemiş and sold to Ayaslı Mustafa Bey on credit. In total, he thus invested 11.064 *kuruş* in his business affairs in Yenişehir.

So far, we have seen three main complaints about Ramazan Efendi. These were his engagement in usury, and his involvement in grain and animal trade. The forth accusation investigated by the district was getting his personal attendant, Mehmed, appointed as summoner of *menafi sandığı* for 300 *kuruş* monthly salary. During the investigation, *menafi* official, Mihran Efendi stated that Mehmed, who was from Alanya, came to Yenişehir with the household of the *kaymakam*. He was appointed as summoner by the local council due to the insistence of Ramazan Efendi. However, in spite of being employed at *menafi sandığı*, he continued to attend the personal affairs of the *kaymakam*. He refused to go to the places where he was dispatched and stayed in the mansion of the *kaymakam* as before. The local council thus told Mihran Efendi to cut his salary. Yet,

⁹³⁹ "Söylemiş karyeli Halil Ağa'nın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301," ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁴⁰ "Hamam natırı Osman'ın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,"; "Yenişehirli Hacı Mehmed Ağa'nın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,"; "Belediye çavuşu Mustafa Ağa'nın varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,"; "Yenişehirli Suk mahallesinden Ahmed'in varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,"; "Yenişehirli Hacı Abdurrahman Efendi'nin varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301," ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁴¹ "Yenişehir Tahkik Memurluğu canib-i alisine," from *Zabita-i Yenişehir*, 24 K. evvel 1301, ŞD 2502-21.

Mehmed got paid in between February and October of 1885 without actually working for *menafi sandığı*.⁹⁴²

The petitioners spared what they thought to be the most serious accusation from the view point of the Ottoman state to the end of the petition.⁹⁴³ The fifth complaint was that Ramazan Efendi was not properly overseeing the construction of roads; he never truly went to inspect the construction sites, and therefore the construction job was halted, with only some workers constructing a limited stretch of road as they saw it fit. Since the construction season had already passed, the half-built Gemlik road awaited completion in the upcoming spring. In fact, the petitioners stated that Ramazan Efendi went to the construction site twice for a day, yet returned without actually seeing anything. In order to dupe the district and the province, which were continuously pressuring the *kaza* for the acceleration of the construction, Ramazan Efendi had the official documents stamped by the treasurer as “acting-*kaymakam*”. For about a week, he did not stamp anything, in spite of being present at the government building, just to evince that he was actually “on the road”.⁹⁴⁴

From the collective petition of the people involved in the local administration and the ensuing investigation, we derive an odd portrait of Ramazan Efendi. On the one hand, accusations and complaints about him were quite serious, and the inhabitants of Yenişehir seem to be fully aware of the unlawfulness of his activities. Yet, the interrogations reveal that Ramazan Efendi was in fact casually socializing with the inhabitants of the *kaza*, without any concern for hiding or placating his engagement in trade and usury. On the contrary, the local notables and some civil servants assisted him in his dubious personal affairs. The treasurer cooperated with him in engineering fictional road inspections, and even calculated the price of 120 sheep for him. The municipal mayor of the town, on the other hand, oversaw the deliverance of the barley as interest payment to the *kaymakam*. In fact, even the petition against Ramazan Efendi describes a congenial beginning for his term in Yenişehir. Apparently, the local council then, submitted a report to the district, indicating Ramazan Efendi’s studiousness and diligence

⁹⁴² “*Menafi Memuru Mihran Efendi'nin varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,*” ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁴³ The original complaint petition containing the stamps of 13 individuals involved in the local administration of Yenişehir is entitled “*Ertuğrul Sancağı Mutasarrıflığı canib-i âlisine*”, dated 18 Safer 1303, is enclosed in ŞD 1545-56.

⁹⁴⁴ “*Tahrirat katibi Ahmed Efendi'nin varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,*” ŞD 2502-21.

as a *kaymakam*. Yet, the petition continues to assert that for about a year, the *kaymakam* has gone through “moral alternation” (*tebdil-i ahlak ederek*), and thereby became an indolent and impertinent administrator.⁹⁴⁵ So, what happened to turn the notables and local officials against Ramazan Efendi as a united front? We have to dig the answer to this question in Ramazan Efendi’s defense.

But, before turning to Ramazan Efendi, it is important to note that his intractable and rampant personality alienated a lot of people, from ordinary villagers to government officials with immigrant backgrounds. A case in point in this regard is his attack to the tax-clerk (*vergi katibi*) Ali Sırrı Efendi, who was an immigrant from Filibe. In fact, immigrant officials seem to be quite well-represented in the local administration of Yenişehir. Aside from Ali Sırrı Efendi, two more clerks employed at the secular court of first instance (*bidayet mahkemesi*) were immigrants from Varna and Tırnova.⁹⁴⁶ The *kaymakam*’s dispute with Ali Sırrı Efendi reveals his contempt with immigrant backgrounds of the officials.

One day, Ali Sırrı Efendi went to the *kaymakam*. His salary had been in arrears for a couple of months, and he utterly needed money. He requested from the *kaymakam* the payment of his salary by presenting his salary bills. The *kaymakam* in turn got furious and yelled: “*Efendi*, there is no money! How dare you present your bills!” When the *kaymakam* rushed over to Ali Sırrı Efendi, he instantly fled, with the enraged *kaymakam* shouting, “you shameless, fag, banished Rumelian!” (*edepsiz, puşt, Rumeli sürgünü*). During the investigation, Ali Sırrı Efendi stated that this attack occurred at the presence of the administrative council. The following day, there were the public exams of the *rüşdiye* (the secular secondary school) of Yenişehir, where Ali Sırrı Efendi was going to serve in the exam jury. When he attempted to take his place in the jury, Ramazan Efendi saw him and furiously said: “If he is here, there is no need for me to stay.”, and then walked out. In order not to cause further estrangement in the exam jury, Ali Sırrı Efendi slipped out of the room.⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴⁵ “*Ertuğrul Sancağı Mutasarrıflığı canib-i alisine*”, from the 13 petitioners from Yenişehir, ŞD 1545-56.

⁹⁴⁶ ŞD 1545-56.

⁹⁴⁷ “*Vergi Katibi Ali Sırrı Efendi’nin varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301*,” ŞD 2502-21.

His fall outs with the *naib* and the tax clerk evince that Ramazan Efendi's petulance was obstructing administration at the quotidian level. In this respect, his scolding of the census official, Ali Osman Efendi, merely because he reminded him of the need to settle the financial accounts of the last census, reveals that working with the *kaymakam* became unbearable.⁹⁴⁸ But, how come such a man could list the support of the local notables at the outset?

5.3.3. Ramazan Efendi's Defense

When the first round of investigation in Yenişehir reached the Council of State, it demanded a second investigation, because the first investigation did not contain Ramazan Efendi's response to the allegations of *Yenişehirli*.⁹⁴⁹ Thus, on 29th of August 1886, the public investigator of the district council of Ertuğrul interrogated Ramazan Efendi and asked him to respond the accusations that petitioners brought forth. Ramazan Efendi denied the complaint about his usurious money-lending. He conceded that Hakkı Bey and Emin Ağa asked for borrowing money from him due to their acquaintanceship with him. But, Ramazan Efendi turned them down, because he had no money. Likewise, Ramazan Efendi adamantly denied his alleged attacks and insults to various people and local officials. As for the employment of his personal attendant, Mehmed, in *menafi sandığı*, he boldly stated that Mehmed was an independent worker and when he could find a better paid job, it was up to him to take it. Since there was no law banning his employment, he was appointed to the job by the decision of the administrative council. Finally, he repeated that the *naib* of the *kaza* did not attend the council meetings because of numerous court cases occupying him.⁹⁵⁰

As for accusations regarding his involvements in sheep and grain trade, he provided a seemingly odd, lengthy reply. Accordingly, Hacı Osman Ağa, who was a local notable and a member of the administrative council had a son, Ali Efendi, who in turn

⁹⁴⁸ “Nüfus Memuru Ali Osman Efendi'nin varaka-i nutkiyyesidir, 24 K. evvel 1301,” ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁴⁹ “Huzur-u âli riyaset penahiye,” from Şura-yı Devlet Bidayet Müdde-i Umumiliği, ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁵⁰ “Yenişehir Kaymakam-ı sabıki refetlu Ramazan Efendi'nin bu kere zabt olunan ifadesidir, 17 Ağustos 1302,” ŞD 2502-21.

was the trustee of *menafi sandığı*. During his trusteeship, a financial investigator from the fourth chamber inspected the *menafi sandığı* of the *kaza*, only to find out that Ali Efendi incurred a debt balance of 8.000 *kuruş*. When his father, Hacı Osman Ağa requested this balance to be presented as a proper debt, Ramazan Efendi rejected him on the grounds that such a loan was unlawful. Hacı Osman Ağa thus transferred 8.000 *kuruş* debt to Halil Ağa (from Söylemiş), since Halil Ağa owed him money. Halil Ağa, in turn, sold sacrificial sheep for paying his debt to Hacı Osman Ağa. Halil Ağa promised to immediately deliver the money he obtained from the sale of sheep to the *kaymakam*. Thus, Ramazan Efendi asserted that this arrangement did not at all imply partnership or trade; rather it meant efficient collection of debt for public good (*sürat-i tahsil kasdıyla revaç-ı maslahata medar...*).⁹⁵¹

After putting 8000 *kuruş* back into *menafi sandığı* in this way, Hacı Osman Ağa again took money from *menafi sandığı*, claiming its necessity. He thus took 12, 18 and 23 *liras* respectively, making up 53 *liras* in total. After a while, Ramazan Efendi again asked him to put this money back; but Hacı Osman Ağa offered to give barley instead. The *kaymakam* rejected him by telling that he was not a merchant. When Ramazan Efendi insisted on getting him put the money back, (Ayaslı) Mustafa Bey intervened, telling that he would buy the barley, and thereby pay Osman Ağa's debt. Hacı Osman Ağa delivered 105 *kiles* of barley to Mustafa Bey from his *çiftlik* (in Umran village) and transferred the delivery of the remaining barley to Hacı İbrahim (from Söylemiş). Ayaslı Mustafa Bey paid 22 *liras* of the 53 *lira*-debt. As such, 31 *liras* still remain to be paid by him. Hence, Ramazan Efendi claimed that what he had done in this regard had nothing to do with trade. His transfer of Hacı Osman Ağa's debt to Ayaslı Mustafa Bey for fastidious collection of money, upset the dignity of Hacı Osman Ağa, and therefore he became hostile to the *kaymakam*. Through provoking other people against him, Hacı Osman Ağa managed to engineer the collective petition complaining about him.⁹⁵²

⁹⁵¹ “Yenişehir Kaymakam-ı sabıkı refetlu Ramazan Efendi'nin bu kere zabt olunan ifadesidir, 17 Ağustos 1302,” ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁵² “Yenişehir Kaymakam-ı sabıkı refetlu Ramazan Efendi'nin bu kere zabt olunan ifadesidir, 17 Ağustos 1302,” ŞD 2502-21.

5.3.4. The Historian's Rendering of Events

More than twenty years ago, Ahmed Vefik Efendi described the intertwined nature of local political power and credit relations in Yenişehir as “mind-boggling”. The mobilization of Yenişehir against Ramazan Efendi in 1885, yet again reveals “mind-boggling” political alliances for ingeniously “cashing” rural resources of the region. Apparently, Ramazan Efendi was not only an indecent man; but also a magnificent liar. He built his defense on covering up his engagement in trade, which potentially produced more concrete evidence, such as the written records of his sheep sales, than issues of insult and informal usurious lending, which could only be substantiated through oral testimony. However, the stories he made up for denying allegations give away his senior ex-partner in Yenişehir. We already knew that Halil Ağa and Hacı İbrahim Ağa were his lesser partners in sheep and grain trade. Apparently, the real focus of power behind the *kaymakam* was Hacı Osman Ağa. As a matter of fact, roughly in between 1870 and 1890, Hacı Osman Ağa, Hacı Tahir Ağa, Karabet Efendi and Ohannes Ağa almost always remained in the local administration of Yenişehir as members of the administrative council or of some other local commissions.⁹⁵³ During Ramazan Efendi's term in Yenişehir, these men, who were 50-55 years old⁹⁵⁴, were active in the political scenery of the *kaza*. All of them signed the complaint petition against Ramazan Efendi. However, Ramazan Efendi was probably right in that the united front against him had been unleashed by Hacı Osman Ağa, who had good reasons to do just that.

The initial positive reception of Ramazan Efendi in Yenişehir was due to the alliance he forged with Hacı Osman Ağa, who controlled the *menafi* funds of the *kaza*. The two men formed a business partnership, whereby they used the *menafi* funds as their capital for trading. When they were on good terms, it was not difficult for Ramazan Efendi to obtain some “fringe benefits” through the local council, such as getting his personal attendant “employed” in *menafi sandığı*. Just before the harvest of 1885, precisely when ready cash brought the highest returns, Ramazan Efendi and Hacı Osman Ağa took 52-53 *liras* from *menafi sandığı* and lent it to Emin Ağa and Hakkı Bey, who had to buy their sons out of conscription. Immediately after the harvest, this money

⁹⁵³ Erol, *Vilayet Salnamelerinde Yenişehir*, 17- 122.

⁹⁵⁴ The interrogations of the third round of investigation in Yenişehir during the spring of 1887 includes the ages of the petitioners, ŞD 1545-56.

returned them with an additional interest of about 90 *kiles* of barley stored in Taraklıoğlu storage at the town. The partners used 2664 *kuruş* (333 *kiles* x 8 *kuruş*) of 53 *liras* for buying Söylemiş's barley collected for tax payment. They added 105 *kiles* of barley from Hacı Osman Ağa's *çiftlik* in Umran and sold all the barley to Ayaslı Mustafa Bey. Thus, about 31 *liras* (2664 *kuruş*) of *menafi* funds were hatched for return in next May, when Ayaslı Mustafa would pay for the barley.

The fall out between the partners probably occurred over Ramazan Efendi's sheep trade venture. The *kaymakam* should have taken about 8000 *kuruş*, which approximates the price of sheep he purchased (120 sheep x 70 *kuruş*= 8.400 *kuruş*) from Kürd Bektaş, from *menafi sandığı* without possibly getting the approval of Hacı Osman Ağa. At about the same time, *menafi sandığı* went through a financial investigation (which as we shall see was not a completely random inspection), singling out Hacı Osman Ağa and his son, the trustee of the fund, responsible for the deficit in the accounts. Hacı Osman Ağa should have opposed the sheep trade venture at that point by pressuring Ramazan Efendi to put 8000 *kuruş* back into *menafi sandığı*. However, Ramazan Efendi went on to sell sacrificial sheep in front of the eyes of the whole town. Furthermore, like a bull in a china shop, he forcefully sold sheep to the policemen and harassed the poorer inhabitants of the town for payment. Hence, Hacı Osman Ağa pulled the trigger for getting rid of Ramazan Efendi, who had already alienated quite a lot of officials, from the *naib* to the tax-clerk of the *kaza*. As such, Ramazan Efendi could not find any fraction within the local politics of Yenişehir to play against Osman Ağa. Soon, he understood that game was over in Yenişehir and hastily arranged an exchange of posts with the *kaymakam* of Kirmastı, Osman Sıdkı Efendi. Before leaving Yenişehir, he could apparently recoup his initial investment in sheep, and was able to put 8000 *kuruş* back to *menafi sandığı*. However, Hacı Osman Ağa's and his investment in Söylemiş's barley awaited Mustafa Bey's payment. For this reason, in his defense, he billed 31 *lira*-deficit to Mustafa Bey through a story about transferring Hacı Osman Ağa's debt to him.

After obtaining the defense of Ramazan Efendi, the public attorney of Ertuğrul wrote a report, indicating that there was no need to try Ramazan Efendi regarding the allegations of his involvement in sheep and grain trade, because there was no concrete proof about such acts. Allegations of insult and attack, on the other hand, were not within the purview of the public law, but pertained to common law. As for the *naib*'s accusation regarding the *kaymakam*'s obstruction of his attendance to the council meetings, the

witnesses in this issue were Hacı Osman Ağa and the mufti of the *kaza*. They communicated the *kaymakam*'s intent to exclude the *naib* from the meetings to him. Yet, the *mufti*, Ahmed Hulusi Efendi and Hacı Osman Ağa, later on, signed the petition of complaint against Ramazan Efendi; therefore they could not be taken as impartial witnesses. Hence, the public attorney proposed dropping the charges against Ramazan Efendi.⁹⁵⁵ Even though, the attorney's take on the event as such appears shockingly corrupt for contemporary readers, the ensuing legal correspondences reveal the logic behind the attorney's opinion on the case. The district attorney most probably deciphered the partnership between the local notables of Yenişehir and the *ex-kaymakam*, Ramazan Efendi. Getting Ramazan Efendi convicted laid at the hands of the local notables, who could provide concrete evidence about the *kaymakam*'s illegal activities. However, they were not willing to go so far, since such a course of action would reveal them as accomplices of the corrupt *kaymakam*. The aim of the collective petition was to get Ramazan Efendi dismissed from Yenişehir, which automatically happened just after their petition through the *kaymakam*'s exchange of posts. Thus, the district attorney should have comprehended that the case stood at a dead end, and therefore opted to close it without more hustle and bustle.

Yet, the Council of State was not quite convinced. It thus sent Ramazan Efendi's defense back to Ertuğrul for a new round of investigation, whereby Ramazan Efendi's defense would be cross-checked with re-interrogations of the thirteen petitioners.⁹⁵⁶ On May 1887, these thirteen people were re-interrogated in Yenişehir. All of them gave the same answer to the investigator, who asked them whether they were plaintiffs against Ramazan Efendi, and if so whether they could present proof supporting their claims. The petitioners stood behind their original complaints, yet strategically asserted that they were mere informers providing information to the state for the public good. As such, they were not personally plaintiffs. For this reason, it was not their job to provide evidence or proof; rather the state should undertake its own investigation. They all told the new investigator that during the first round of investigation that was exactly what they told Faik Efendi, then the investigator sent from the district.⁹⁵⁷ Hence, after achieving to get rid of

⁹⁵⁵ "İddianame," ŞD 2502-21.

⁹⁵⁶ "Ertuğrul Gazi Sancağı Mutasarrıflığı canib-i alisine," from Kaymakam-ı Yenişehir, Osman Sıdkı, ŞD 1545-56.

⁹⁵⁷ See the interrogations enclosed in ŞD 1545-56.

Ramazan Efendi, the united front against him disengaged from the public prosecution processes of the late Ottoman state. Through the Council of State, the Ottoman state strove to know more about what actually had happened in Yenişehir, but the *kaza* successfully closed on itself for burying its own dirty deeds.

Although the Ottoman state seems to be unsuccessful in extracting information about the true nature of the utilization of the financial resources of Yenişehir, it is significant that the whole series of events unfolded due to the assertiveness of the central state. During 1883-1884, the Ottoman government paid special attention to Yenişehir, most probably as a part of the preparation process for the establishment of Ertuğrul Sancağı. It was around this period of time that Bursa discovered the unauthorized building of the promenade in front of the municipality building, which the Yearbook of Hüdavendigâr criticized as “a nest of the lazy”.⁹⁵⁸ The Yearbook of the same year (that is 1883-1884) includes information about Yenişehir’s *menafi sandığı* as well. Accordingly, “the *menafi sandığı* of this *kaza* has been administered by an official since its inception. This official holds monopolistic power over the funds. The locals of the town parried questions about the workings of *menafi sandığı* by saying that the official manages the accounts on the ground and collects money by hand. According to the records, the *menafi sandığı* has 95 immovable properties and 326.882 *kuruş* cash.”⁹⁵⁹ Hence, the inspection of the *menafi sandığı* of Yenişehir during 1885 was not random; rather the town was under the closer scrutiny of the central state due to the information collected about the “unruly” situation of the *kaza* in the previous year. The auditing of the funds in turn cracked down the alliance between the *kaymakam* and Hacı Osman Ağa.

Moreover, in spite of the efforts of the attorney of the district to close the case, the Council of State insisted on the continuation of the investigation through a second round involving Ramazan Efendi’s defense, and a third round of re-interrogation of the local administrators and notables. In the third round, Hacı Osman Ağa was actually asked about 105 *kiles* of barley in Umran village that he sold to Ayaslı Mustafa Bey. Hacı Osman Ağa replied by saying that he sold 105 *kiles* of barley that year; but he could not exactly remember to whom he sold this barley. He claimed that this 105 *kiles* of barley

⁹⁵⁸ See chapter 4, p. 241.

⁹⁵⁹ Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1301, 265-266.

had nothing to do with the investigation about Ramazan Efendi anyway.⁹⁶⁰ His slippery answer suggests that the attorneys had most probably detected business links between Ramazan Efendi and Hacı Osman Ağa based on the several interrogations undertaken during the investigation about the *kaymakam*. In this respect, the central state's attentiveness to the political economy of Yenişehir was indeed a critical factor affecting the power relations within the *kaza*.

5.3.5. The Epilogue of Ramazan Efendi's Case

Ramazan Efendi left Yenişehir through an exchange of posts with the *kaymakam* of Kirmastı, Osman Sıdkı Efendi. Yet, Osman Sıdkı Efendi could not hold in his post in Yenişehir for long either. The new *kaymakam* had a fall out with the young *mufti* of the *kaza*, Ahmed Hulusi Efendi. When the enmity between them encapsulated the local notables as well, Hüdavendigâr asked the removal of Osman Sıdkı Efendi from Yenişehir in 1890. Instead of Osman Sıdkı Efendi, Ragıp Efendi was appointed as the new *kaymakam* of the *kaza*. Ragıp Efendi's background somewhat resembled Ramazan Efendi's. He was born in İstanbul in 1835, as the son of a scribe employed at the Imperial Chancery (*Divan-ı Hümayun Kalemi hulefasından*), Avni Efendi. He attended the traditional primary school of Beşiktaş, and then took some Arabic and Persian classes at some mosques. At the age of 16, he started his career as a trainee at the governmental department where his father was employed. After holding several positions at the Commercial and Penal courts of different provinces, he ended up as the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir in 1890.⁹⁶¹ Thus, the human resources that the late Ottoman state could earmark as the highest administrator of Yenişehir did not change much after Ramazan Efendi left the *kaza*.

Kirmastı, however, had to bear Ramazan Efendi for more than 5 years. The *kaza* compiled about 140 complaint petitions about Ramazan Efendi, and submitted them to the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr. Bursa dispatched an official, Asaf Bey,

⁹⁶⁰ “Yenişehir Kazası eşrafından ve meclis idare azasından izzetlü Hacı Osman'ın zapt olunan ifadesidir, 10 Mayıs 1303,” ŞD 1545-56.

⁹⁶¹ İ. DH 1166-091142.

for undertaking an investigation in Kirmastı. Asaf Bey stayed in the town for 15 days and recorded about 25 offenses and abuses of Ramazan Efendi. He then returned Bursa and prepared a 70-page report about the investigation he carried out. However, the provincial administration did not work on the report for about a year. Thus, the inhabitants of Kirmastı wrote a letter to an İstanbul newspaper, *Saadet Gazetesi*, in order to get the documents about Ramazan Efendi transferred to İstanbul for a trial at central judicial institutions under the sultan's watch. In their letter, they summarized the mischievous undertakings of Ramazan Efendi in Kirmastı.⁹⁶² Apparently, Ramazan Efendi found a fertile socio-political ground for pursuing his dubious activities in Kirmastı.

Just like in Yenişehir, most of the complaints about Ramazan Efendi in Kirmastı were related to the financial resources of this *kaza*. He allied with the tax-farmers and usurped the tithe and cash-taxes due to the treasury through various ploys. He sold vacant lands, and afterwards prepared documents indicating that these lands were given for free. He allied with the bands, which engaged in animal theft, for squeezing money from the people, who applied to the local administration for getting their animals back from these bands. He had another dubious local ally of his appointed as the director of the local orphans' commission (*eytam müdürü*), and had him remained in the same position for more than 5 years, when in fact the directors had to be changed in two years. He occasionally dispatched the local police forces over the poor inhabitants for collecting "fines" by unjustly implicating people with certain crimes.⁹⁶³

The biggest bone of contention in Kirmastı was, however, the utilization of an ancient pasture. Apparently, Ramazan Efendi illegally rented out this pasture to the desperate immigrant communities, and took all the rent to himself. When the crops of the immigrant communities was about to mature in the pasture, he induced some of the native inhabitants to attack the pasture and got all the crops eradicated. In other words, Ramazan Efendi cultivated dissension among the native and immigrant communities in order to play one societal force against the other. As a result, lives were lost in confrontations, many inhabitants got entangled with several court suits, and many

⁹⁶² "Saadet Gazetesi Matbaa-i Âlisine," Y. PRK. AZJ 16-47.

⁹⁶³ Y. PRK. AZJ 16-47.

people ended up in prisons.⁹⁶⁴ The main difference between Yenişehir and Kirmastı was that the *kaymakam* could not play with political cracks among the *foci* of power in Yenişehir, because of the relatively smooth integration of the immigrant communities in the social fabric. Consequently, the local notables could ally the town against the threats posed by the unruly *kaymakam* by isolating him from the local sources of power. But, in Kirmastı, Ramazan Efendi could enhance his power through recruiting allies from the locality, thanks to the frictional socio-political make-up of the *kaza* in the aftermath of the injection of immigrant communities. Hence, unlike Yenişehir, Kirmastı was more or less defenseless against the formidable *kaymakam*. For this reason, some of the local notables of Kirmastı opted for a “name and shame” strategy by drawing on the opportunities of an extended public sphere offered by the print media during the Hamidian era.

5.4. Conclusion

One of the most resilient economic structures of the Bursa region from the mid-19th century to the Hamidian era was that money beget more money. The powerful lobby of the moneylenders that used to run the commercialized economy of the southern Marmara region was mostly replaced by other institutions providing credit, such as the Agricultural Bank, the PDA, the Régie and the Ottoman Bank. Still, the liquidity demands of the countryside could not be sufficiently met, and therefore an informal rural credit market continued to flourish.⁹⁶⁵ Consequently, one can make a lot of money with money, as Ramazan Efendi did with 50 *liras* he lent to the villagers, who wanted to buy their sons out of conscription. Since money was a precious commodity promising high returns, the money collected at the *kaza* and/or district levels in *menafi sandığıs*, the Agricultural Bank and local treasuries of the municipalities and the waqfs were frequently put to unauthorized usages. In the case of Yenişehir, it was the *menafi*

⁹⁶⁴ Y. PRK. AZJ 16-47.

⁹⁶⁵ In a similar vein, Stefania Ecchia argues that it was the traditional informal market of credit, run by local notables, which financially supported the development of the small-landholding-based agricultural sector of the Haifa district in late Ottoman Palestine. See, Stefania Ecchia, "Informal Rural Credit Markets and Interlinked Transactions in the District of late Ottoman Haifa, 1890–1915," *Financial History Review* 21, no. 01 (2014): 5-24.

sandığı; and in the case of Ertuğrul, it was the funds of the Agricultural Bank that attracted entrepreneurial undertakings of the people who were supposed to monitor and administer these funds. Although the central state tried to tighten its control over the economic resources of the provinces, there were always informal ways and opportunities for the people with power, be them centrally appointed administrators, or the local notables, to play with public funds. As such, just like the mid-19th century, alliances and frictions over the utilization of the rural resources through the prerogatives of the local administration was the order of the day in the Bursa region.

In fact, Yenişehir was not a particularly troublesome administrative unit from the viewpoint of the Ottoman state; on the contrary, it had a predominantly Turkish speaking, Sunni-Muslim population, which could achieve the integration of the immigrant communities relatively smoothly. Moreover, it was located in an economically developed and prosperous region, which had close administrative, cultural and historical ties with the capital city. But, the events that unfolded in Yenişehir during 1885, reveals that notwithstanding its geographical and administrative proximity to the imperial center, the *kaza* retained its local character; it had a political scenery, which the central state could not fully permeate. Thus, as late as mid 1880s, forbidden and unlawful acts could happen in front of the whole town: A *kaymakam* could engage in usurious lending; and he could forcefully “sell” sheep to the local policemen in the market place. Such oddities could happen, thanks to the economic alliances he forged with the local notables. When the *kaymakam* became uncontrollable, the local *foci* of power not only got rid of him by instrumentalizing the administrative and judicial structures of the central state, but also they jealously guarded the political economy of the *kaza* from “excessive” interventions of the central state. Letting the state too much into the affairs of Yenişehir would upset the local balance of power.

The events that unfolded in Yenişehir during the summer of 1885 did not occur merely due to the indecency and immorality of Ramazan Efendi; rather a harshly competitive economic context led the inhabitants of Yenişehir acquiesce the *kaymakam*'s dubious undertakings. Competition for scarce resources caused various economic actors to disregard protective and regulatory measures instituted within the overall political economy of the late Ottoman establishment. In this context, not only the Régie as a private foreign company, but also the Ottoman state and the ordinary people found ways to bend rules. While the government usurped the resources of the

Agricultural Bank through the Ministry of Commerce due to its pressing financial needs, the people sought to evade taxation and conscription, and smuggled tobacco. At the end of the day, local relations of power remained of paramount importance for the political economy of Yenişehir. Towards the end of the 19th century however, the political arena of Yenişehir got more and more entangled with the politics of the imperial center concentrated in the Yıldız Palace. The next chapter analyzes “the reign” of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir as the last episode of the Hamidian era.

Table 4: Cash Waqfs of Yenişehir and İznik (1878-1912)

The Name of the Founder of the Waqf and the Archival Code of the Endowment Deed (VGM defter)	The Mosque of the Waqf	The Amount of Endowed Money and the Interest Rate	The Year of the Endowment Deed
Bursalı Haliloğlu Hacı Ahmed Ağa bin İbrahim (2314-38-31)	Makri Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1296
Mustafa Ağa bin Mehmed (2314-24-19)	Dere Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1296
Hacı Ali Ağa bin Hacı Salih (2314-62-51)	Barçın Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1296
Kara Mustafa oğlu Hasan (2356-151-138)	Afşar Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1300
Eyyub Efendi bin Hasan (2271-178-155)	Selimiye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1305
Mehmed Çavuş ibni Hasan (2271-211-184)	Kızılhisar Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1305
Çerkes Ahmed Ağa bin Halil (2316-97-111)	Papatya Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1306
Mustafa Efendi bin Osman (2356-82-77)	Sultaniye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1306
Uzun Ali oğlu Osman Ağa (2316-123-148)	Fethiye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i>	1307
Ahmed Ağa ibni Ahmed (2317-11-13)	Kavaklı Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i>	1307
Mustafa Ağa bin Osman (2317-98-93)	Süleymaniye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i>	1309
Varnalı Mehmed Efendi ibni Emrullah (2321-82-58)	Osmaniye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1309

Gacalođlu Huseyin bin Abdullah (607-110-173)	Mecidiye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 10 per cent.	1311
İbiş Ađa bin Hacı Hasan (1968-425-349)	Orhaniye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 10 per cent.	1312
Varnalı Mehmed Efendi ibni Emrullah (2353-145-137)	Osmaniye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1314
Oruçzade Süleyman Efendi bin İsmail (2325-127-130)	Elbeyli Village Mosque, İznik	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1314
Edhem Bey bin Ahmed Bey (602-266-453)	Gaiberenler Neighbourhood Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 10 per cent.	1314
Huseyin Efendi Bin Ömer (602-49-80)	Dere Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1314
Karaalıođlu Mustafa Ađa ibni Ahmed (2353-87-85)	Mecidiye Village Mosque, İznik	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1317
Hafız Abdullah Efendi bin Hacı Ali (2356-144-132)	Yörükler Village Mosque, İznik	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1317
Beşli Damadı Bekir Ađa ibn Ahmed (990-141-137)	Ađlan Village Mosque, İznik	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1318
El hac Osman Ađa İbni Şaban (2357-170-157)	Hayriye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1319
Dervişođlu Mehmed bin Ali (602-169-286)	Karabahadır Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1320
El hac Hasan Ađa ibni Mehmed (2327-150-102)	Seymen Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1321
Çoban ođlu Ali Osman Ađa bin Mustafa (603-84-144)	Kirazlıyayla Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1321
Hacı Emin Efendizade Hafız Mehmed Sabri Efendi (603-213-352)	Kozdere Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1321
El-Hac Ömerođlu Ahmed Ađa ibn el Hac Mehmed (603-87-150)	Bayır Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 15 per cent.	1322
Dülgerađa ibni Ahmed (2325-212-213)	Şerefiye Village Mosque, İznik	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1323
Huseyin Ađa bin İbrahim (602-172-292)	Kıblepınarı Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1323
Mülazımođlu Ahmed Ađa bin Mustafa (602-177-302)	Cedid Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1324
Ali Bey ođlu Bilal Usta ibn Ali bin Abdullah (602-231-379)	Babasultan Neighbourhood Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i>	1325
Bursalıođlu Tahir Ađa bin Halil bin İbrahim (602-157-263)	Karacaahmet Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1325

Kaymakçıođlu Hasan Ađa bin Hüseyin (603-273-437)	Kozdere Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1325
Kürt Hacı Halil Ađa ibn Hacı Mehmed (603-281-446)	Beypınarı Village Mosque, Yenişehir	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1325
Mustafa bin Ali (606-28-36)	Yalıngölet Village Mosque, Yenişehir	600 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1327
Osman bin Hacı Hasan (2321-223-154)	Alaylı Village Mosque, Yenişehir	900 <i>kuruş</i> , 9 per cent.	1327
Ali Onbaşı bin Ebubekir (2353-147-139)	Rüstüm Village Mosque, Yenişehir	400 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1327
Çakırođlu Ali Ađa bin Ali (603-298-47)	Alakaya Village Mosque, İznik	500 <i>kuruş</i> , 12 per cent.	1327
İbrahim Ađa bin Süleyman (600-148-180)	Orhaniye Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1328
Arif Ađa ibni Hac Selim (2355-67-68)	Toprakocak Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1328
Davudođlu Ali ibn Davud (604-20-23)	Bayır Village Mosque, Yenişehir	1000 <i>kuruş</i>	1330

CHAPTER 6

EMPIRE AS ENTERPRISE IN THE PROVINCE: THE REIGN OF EDHEM PAŞA IN YENİŞEHİR (1905-1909)

6.1. Introduction

We are dispersing from Tavukpazarı School. A magnificent cabriolet with its driver and servant, carrying someone passes by. (Later on, I learnt that) it was Fehim Paşa. There was Edhem Paşa's hotel in the place of the contemporary Agricultural Bank. He got off in front of the hotel. He came for Edhem Paşa...But, somehow ended up there... An order was received from higher authorities. He was disarmed, taken into custody, and his cart was taken away. They prepared Pıtırıcık İsmail's cart to send him back. I am watching the scene from (the roof of) *Çarşı Hamamı*, in between the domes of the bathhouse. The people should have conceived that he was going to be handed in (to higher authorities); thus a roar of anger rose. A terrible turmoil and commotion occurred among the people gathered by the clock tower. They killed Fehim Paşa... Shortly after, it was rumored that he was not dead. Upon this rumor, commotion broke out again. They killed him by hitting his head several times on the threshold of the coffeehouse of Edhem Paşa's hotel... I saw it with my eyes from in between the domes of the bathhouse.⁹⁶⁶

The excerpt above is an eye-witness account of how one of the most ill-famed political figures of the late Hamidian era, Fehim Paşa⁹⁶⁷, was lynched in Yenişehir

⁹⁶⁶ Dr. Niyazi Acar's interview with İbrahim Güven (born in Yenişehir in 1899) on 27 September 1986, published in "Hafiyeye Fehim Paşa'nın Linç Edilişi" by Yılmaz Akkılıç. The newspaper clip, which is undated, is available at Bursa Nilüfer Akkılıç Library, in a dossier entitled "Akkılıç Kent Yazıları, Bursa'da Zaman (1986-1992), Bursa Hakimiyet-Olayı".

⁹⁶⁷ Fehim Paşa was the son of Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey, a palace official, who was close to Sultan Abdülhamid II. He was among the leading figures of the sultan's espionage organization. Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit: Yıldız Hatıraları*, ed. Kudret Emiroğlu (İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2008), 133-135.

immediately after the Young Turk Revolution.⁹⁶⁸ In chapter 4, I analyzed the consolidation of the Hamidian regime in Yenişehir as a promising rapprochement, albeit fraught with socio-political tensions, between the state and provincial societies. This chapter focuses on how the Hamidian regime accumulated so much resentment and invoked anger among many inhabitants of Yenişehir so as to provoke the horrific homicide of a person, who was considered as embodying “the sins” of the regime. Especially after 1901-1902, the Hamidian regime failed to sustain “internal fine-tuning”⁹⁶⁹, which had enabled a precarious balance between different societal groups and political interests during the earlier decades of the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. In this debilitating process, Yenişehirli Edhem Paşa acted as a conduit transferring the vices of frictional politics of Yıldız Palace into Yenişehir, and vice versa. This chapter uses Edhem Paşa’s activities and “career” as a window for analyzing the socio-political outlook of Yenişehir during the final episode of the Hamidian era.

The most critical political factor conditioning the relations of power in Yenişehir during the late Hamidian era was the qualitative change in the structure of power of the Mabeyn, which Sultan Abdülhamid tactfully developed as the center of imperial power at the expense of the Porte.⁹⁷⁰ After 1900-1901, the sultan became virtually hostage to the political machinery he had built at the Yıldız compound. In this final episode of the Hamidian regime, spying (*jurnalcilik*) reached its apex, while Başkatip Tahsin Paşa and İkinci Katip İzzet Paşa el-Holo became the avatars of the Hamidian system⁹⁷¹, forming powerful competing factions in the palace⁹⁷². In other words, the Hamidian regime, which originally concentrated power in the person of the sultan as a shrewd arbitrator of competing interests and ideas of the upper reaches of Ottoman officialdom, degenerated

⁹⁶⁸ Yılmaz Akkılıç’s above quoted newspaper article states that the lynching of Fehim Paşa occurred after the attempted counter revolution of 1909. However, in his memoir, contemporary governor of Bursa, Tevfik Bey indicates that the lynching occurred during the turmoil following the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908. Mehmet Tevfik Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren’in Sultan II. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Hatıraları*, v. 1, ed. Fatma Rezan Hürmen (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2006), 451.ed. Fatma Rezan Hürmen (İstanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 2006), 451.

⁹⁶⁹ See chapter 4, p. 229..

⁹⁷⁰ Ali Akyıldız, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 27*, s.v. "Mabeyn-i Hümayun," (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2003), 285-286.

⁹⁷¹ Quoting British dragoman reports, Jens Hansenn describes İzzet Paşa as “the avatar of the Hamidian system”. Jens Hanssen, ““Malhamé–Malfamé”: Levantine Elites and Transimperial Networks on the Eve of the Young Turk Revolution,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 01 (2011): 33.

⁹⁷² Gökhan Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası: Bir Dönemlendirme Denemesi," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/ The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, no. 47 (2016): 393.

into a corrupt political factionalism centered in the powerful Yıldız compound.⁹⁷³ This chapter explores what this political turn meant for Yenişehir as a small provincial setting.

The bleak outlook of the political system after 1900-1901 had a rather long history of political shifts in the Ottoman imperial rule since the dawn of the Tanzimat era. During the early Tanzimat era, the central state attempted to make peace with strained subjects and servants of the state in the aftermath of Sultan Mahmud II's "dictatorship".⁹⁷⁴ The government stressed the supremacy of the sharia and kanuns, i.e. Islamic and secular laws, and tried to reestablish a system of checks and balances. It tried to assimilate provincial social forces, such as the ulama and the notables, into the institutional framework of the modernizing state. However, the later Tanzimat era was characterized by a concentration of power at the Porte under the leadership of Âli Paşa and Fuad Paşa. Bureaucratic cadres, which dominated the political orientation of the imperial system opted for building up a more powerful and intrusive central state. They meticulously established state organs such as a modern army, bureaucracy and other coercive organs, which would curb the power of provincial notables.⁹⁷⁵ Ahmed Vefik Efendi's inspection tour in North-western Anatolia in 1863 was a part of this new wave of centralization.⁹⁷⁶

In 1870s, high politics in İstanbul were in limbo: As economic and political catastrophies befell on the Empire, the statesmen demonstrated a disconcerted outlook, whereby different ideas competed for solving the crisis of authority for formulating and implementing imperial policies. On the one hand, there were the persisting legacies of the Tanzimat reforms, which were predicated on bringing to an end to the absolute rule of the sultan and arbitrary acts of the governors; enforcing rule of law; shifting the locus of power from the palace to the Porte; and the promotion of Ottomanism.⁹⁷⁷ On the

⁹⁷³ Engin D. Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization- an Overview," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26, no. 3 (2006): 363.

⁹⁷⁴ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," *Die Welt des Islams* 34, no. 2 (1994): 173-203.

⁹⁷⁵ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Later Tanzimat and the Ottoman Legacy in the Near Eastern Successor States," in *Transformed Landscapes*, ed. Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 61-81.

⁹⁷⁶ See chapter 2.

⁹⁷⁷ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "The Sultan and the Bureaucracy: The Anti-Tanzimat Concepts of Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Paşa," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no. 03 (1990): 257

other hand, “anti-Tanzimat” concepts were circulating due to the conceived failures of the Tanzimat reforms. According to the latter perspective, the center of power should be restored to the palace; the sultan should attend in person to the affairs of the state; the bureaucracy should be fully subject to him; and the Muslim community alone should form the body politic.⁹⁷⁸ Throughout the 1870s, the latter camp could not get the upper hand because of the accrued power of the Porte and the absence of a sultan willing to assume the critical role tailored for him in the “anti-Tanzimat” trends.⁹⁷⁹ It took the enthronement of Sultan Abdülhamid II and the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War to change the tide in the imperial political system.

At the beginning of his reign, Sultan Abdülhamid wrestled power from the Porte by transforming the *Mabeyn* into a huge bureaucracy submitting fully to the palace. He put himself at the center of the political system, and therefore wanted to have a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of almost everything taking place in the empire. He resisted delegation of power to the ministries and to his grand viziers; instead used his prerogatives for flexibly implementing his policies by balancing different interests and ideas within the political system.⁹⁸⁰

Sultan Abdülhamid also learned from the vices of the later Tanzimat era; hence he opted for forming a more congenial relationship with provincial notables and sheikhs of popular Sufi orders for extending the legitimacy of the state to the empire’s far-flung territories. In the 1880s, an Aleppo-born sheikh of Rıfa’i order, Abulhuda al-Sayyadi dominated the Mabeyn.⁹⁸¹ In a similar vein, Sultan Abdülhamid ambitiously instituted the Imperial School for Tribes (*Aşiret Mekteb-i Hümayunu*) for integrating the tribal communities into the political life of the state by educating the sons of leading tribal notables in İstanbul.⁹⁸² He established parallel lines of communication between the palace and provincial social forces.⁹⁸³ As such, it was not unusual for a provincial

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid, 264.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid, 266.

⁹⁸⁰ Engin Deniz Akarlı, "Friction and Discord within the Ottoman Government under Abdülhamid II (1876-1909)," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* 7 (1979): 3-26.

⁹⁸¹ Butrus Abu- Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abulhuda Al- Sayyadi," *Middle Eastern Studies* 15, no. 2 (1979): 131-153; Hanssen, "Levantine Elites," 33.

⁹⁸² Eugene L. Rogan, "Aşiret Mektebi: Abdülhamid II's School for Tribes (1892-1907)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 01 (1996): 83.

⁹⁸³ Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası," 378.

notable of some weight to have the ear of the sultan before his governor serving at that particular province.⁹⁸⁴ On top of these, the Hamidian regime extensively used bestowing hierarchically ordered ranks, medals and honors to provincial actors as a way to obtain their loyalty and support to the central state.⁹⁸⁵

The rapprochement between the central state dominated by Yıldız Palace and provincial social forces was, at the outset, socio-politically ameliorating after the reckless centralization drive of the previous Tanzimat era. Yet, it depended on the constant political fine tuning of the Hamidian regime, because “provincial social forces” represented a plethora of interests, political camps and socio-economic strata, whose demands and aspirations cannot always be smoothly reconciled. In this respect, alliance of the central state with a particular group, religious order and/or notable potentially upset the local balance of power at the expense of some other stake-holders. For example, in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War, Muslim Georgian immigrants from Batum-Çürüksu region migrated to Ordu-Fatsa-Ünye region in Trabzon province under extremely unfavorable social and economic circumstances. The leader of the group, Çürüksulu Ali Paşa, who had close ties with the palace, was appointed as the official responsible for settling the immigrants (*iskan memuru*). While Ali Paşa’s official capacities and his personal connections with the Hamidian regime enabled desperate immigrant communities to get settled in this region, the native inhabitants, both Muslim and non-Muslim, paid a heavy price by losing their properties and occasionally lives to the encroaching armed Georgian immigrants. Eventually, tense communal relations turned into mutual hatred between the Georgians and native communities, both rural and urban, which contributed to political instability and increasing insecurity throughout the Province of Trabzon.⁹⁸⁶

Likewise, in a completely different setting, Sultan Abdülhamid turned a deaf ear to all the complaints lodged against the Sharif of Mecca, ‘Awn, who made use of the system of personal connection with the sultan through courtiers for persisting in his abusive rule. In this case, Sultan Abdülhamid opted for a policy of enervation, which

⁹⁸⁴ Abu Manneh, "Sharifs of Mecca," 18.

⁹⁸⁵ Benjamin Fortna, "The Reign of Abdülhamid II," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 4*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 53.

⁹⁸⁶ Oktay Özel, "Migration and Power Politics: The Settlement of Georgian Immigrants in Turkey (1878–1908)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 4 (2010): 481.

would check different provincial forces with one another, thereby precluding the emergence of a popular leader overshadowing the benevolence of the sultan in Mecca.⁹⁸⁷ Either way, political enticement and policy of expediency in relation to the provincial societies constantly accrued some costs for the legitimacy of the Hamidian regime.

On top of the intrinsic pitfalls of the regime's provincial policies, during the final episode of the Hamidian empire, the political system lost its brakes of moderation and the sultan ceased to act as a hub balancing conflicting interests in İstanbul and in the provinces. Factions in the palace merged with some factions in the provinces through the direct political and economic links between the Yıldız compound and specific provincial actors. Formal, hierarchical provincial administration and the judiciary were seriously undermined amid harsh contestations of power between competing factions in İstanbul and in the provinces. The central state virtually lost one of the most significant pillars of its legitimacy in relation to the provinces: It was not functioning as a fairly "impartial" arbitrator of conflicting provincial interests anymore; rather it sided with specific provincial groups irrespective of the prevailing circumstances. Spying, favoritism and bribery were the order of the day, since they were tools for forming vertical links between the palace factions and specific interest groups.⁹⁸⁸ This political climate reverberated in late Hamidian Yenişehir: The direct links between the palace and Edhem Paşa became ever more unbearable for many inhabitants of Yenişehir, who were constantly harmed, and therefore disillusioned by the ensuing unjust and corrupt political system.

Degeneration of the political system was all the more magnified due to its contrast with the modern Ottoman society of Western Anatolia, which Hamidian reforms and public investments fostered. After the late 1890s, the Great Depression gave wave to economic growth⁹⁸⁹, from which the commercialized economy of the Bursa region benefitted. Although tax-farming and grain production were not very profitable endeavors⁹⁹⁰, silk and tobacco sectors, cultivation of rice and animal

⁹⁸⁷ Abu-Manneh, "Sharifs of Mecca," 18-20.

⁹⁸⁸ Akarlı, "Friction and Discord," 20.

⁹⁸⁹ Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı Ekonomisi ve Dünya Kapitalizmi (1920-1931)* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınevi, 1984), 32-34.

⁹⁹⁰ Engin D. Akarlı, "Economic Policy and Budgets in Ottoman Turkey, 1876-1909," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 3 (1992): 450-453.

husbandry promised handsome returns in the hinterland of Bursa at the beginning of the 20th century. Improved transportation, thanks to massive investments in road construction during the earlier decades of the Hamidian era, meant that the rural surplus of North-western Anatolia could be marketed much easily and cheaply than before.

On the other hand, except for the highest echelons of the officialdom, bureaucratic reforms of the Hamidian era created a structured and more professionalized bureaucracy, which could permeate more deeply into the provincial settings.⁹⁹¹ *Mülkiye* graduates began to occupy posts such as the governorship of Hüdavendigâr and *kaymakamlık* of Yenişehir, while modernization of primary education increased literacy. Improved communication technologies enabled ease of access to the capital city for the subjects on the one hand, punctual correspondences between different governmental bodies on the other. Indeed, it was high time to reap the harvest of previous infrastructural, economic and public investments of the Hamidian regime in Western Anatolia.

However, a politically and economically disappointing picture emerged from these favorable circumstances. On the economic front, as Engin Akarlı puts it: "...far from soothing political ambitions, economic development and new opportunities accelerated the polarization of the population...everywhere, the desire to have a larger and fairer share of the resources led to the formation of new political alliances in opposition to the existing regime."⁹⁹² On the political front, as I noted above, the nexus of favoritism, bribery, corruption and spying fed vertical factional links between the center and the provinces. "The rule of law" was down-graded to a hollow rhetorical device due to paralyzation of checks and balances within the political system. As such, provincial subjects increasingly faced an impotent and irresponsive government. Thus, the Hamidian regime became a political template too tight for the modern society it helped to create.

The following account of the late Hamidian Yenişehir revolves around the restless political portrait of Edhem Paşa. Apparently, Edhem was not a unique case; rather he seems to be a political type that flourished within the specific political circumstances of the late Hamidian era. For instance, in another *kaza* of Hüdavendigâr,

⁹⁹¹ Akarlı, "Tangled Ends," 362.

⁹⁹² *Ibid.*, 357-358.

namely Mihaliç, there was Galip Paşa, who resembled Edhem Paşa with his political links to the palace and forceful command of the rural resources.⁹⁹³ Moreover, Edhem Paşa's familial history and his rise and hold to power in Yenişehir correlate with not only the local history of the town, but also with the evolution of the Ottoman political system since the beginning of the 19th century. In this respect, even though this chapter concentrates on Edhem Paşa's activities in the late Hamidian Yenişehir, it nonetheless emphasizes the historical and political structures encapsulating his agency. So, I will accentuate a fraction of Edhem Paşa's life and the events surrounding him as an individual case revealing more general phenomena about the late Ottoman history.⁹⁹⁴

After recouping Edhem Paşa's family's background, I will address his rise to power in Yenişehir on the legacy of Bacaksızzade Hacı Osman Ağa. After 1902, Edhem became the municipal mayor and the head of the immigration commission of the *kaza*, carrying the official title of "Paşa" bestowed upon him by the Hamidian administration. In between 1902 and 1908, he increased his power by abusing the paralyzation of checks and balances within the late Hamidian system, which enabled his unencumbered extortions, usurpations and use of crude force. In this period, Edhem Paşa skillfully used land as a source of power fuelling his multi-faceted economic enterprises. I explore how his contestations of land with different political actors were intertwined with the prevailing local and imperial relations of power. After 1907-1908, Edhem Paşa began to clash with the new governor of Bursa, Tevfik Bey, who adamantly worked for curbing the illustrious Paşa's power. Their disputes, which centered on the Paşa's illegal rice cultivation, engulfed the most powerful political figures of Yıldız Palace. Finally, it took the Young Turk Revolution and the counter-revolutionary attempt of 1909 to weaken Edhem Paşa's standing in the political arena of the region. Still, as an embodiment of the controversial legacies of the long 19th century of the Ottoman Empire, Edhem Paşa managed to haunt even the Grand National Assembly of the young Republic of Turkey during the War of Independence.

⁹⁹³ ŞD 1606-17 and ŞD 1598-16; Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun'un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 124-125.

⁹⁹⁴ Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 112.

6.2. Edhem Bey's Rise to Power in Yenişehir

Edhem claimed to descend from “the 600 year-old household” of Kara Mustafa Paşa, the commander in chief of the Vienna campaign of 1683.⁹⁹⁵ His family indeed held the trusteeship of a waqf founded by Kara Mustafa Paşa. Yet, his most immediate familial link to power in the hinterland of Bursa was İnegöllü Dervişpaşazade Numan Bey, one of the provincial power holders, who was active in Yenişehir-İnegöl-Bilecik region at the turn of the 19th century. Sultan Mahmud II broke the power of Numan Bey and other provincial power-holders (*ayan*) of this region in the 1810s by manipulating the rivalry between contending *ayans*. Edhem's father, Ahmed Bey, who was known as “the grandson of Numan Paşa”, took part in the killing of foreign merchants in Yenişehir in 1859. He died in his mid-20s at Valide Sultan's hospital in İstanbul, when he was being tried at the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances for the violent crime.⁹⁹⁶

Ahmed Bey inherited the trusteeship of a couple of waqfs and 12 “estate” (*malikane*) villages from his father, Osman Bey. Osman Bey died around mid 1840s, leaving substantial debts to his wife and two minor sons, Ahmed and Emin. The most valuable asset of the family was the trusteeship of the waqf of Kara Mustafa Paşa. This waqf's lands were located in Eskişehir, while its charities were in Bursa. Due to his conviction for the murder of foreign merchants, injuries inflicted on some others from the same group, and usurpation of their money, Ahmed Bey was sentenced to pay high indemnities from his properties, some of which had already been mortgaged to money-lenders. Soon after Ahmed Bey's death in İstanbul, Edhem's uncle, Emin and his mother, Saniye died in Yenişehir.⁹⁹⁷ Hence, Edhem, who was born in 1850s, did not have a bright start in life.

Although Ahmed Bey appeared to have lost what he had inherited from his father, the waqf properties under the trusteeship of the family were immune to seizures due to debts. Hence, in mid 1870s, we observe that Edhem's elder brother, Osman was

⁹⁹⁵ “Dahiliye Nezaret-i Celilesine,” from Bilecik Mülâhakatından Yenişehir Eşrafından Edhem, ŞD 1601-27. See also the photo of Edhem Bey, Photo 4, attached to the end of this chapter, p. 410.

⁹⁹⁶ See chapter 1, p. 74.

⁹⁹⁷ See, chapter 1, pp. 74-75.

receiving fixed payments for the tithe of the waqf lands in Eskişehir.⁹⁹⁸ In the early 1880s, Osman must have died, because the trustee was Edhem, who corresponded with Bursa to get payments from the Ministry of Evkaf on the account of the waqf of Kara Mustafa Paşa.⁹⁹⁹ However, over the years, the fixed tithe payment that Osman and Edhem were entitled due to their trusteeship significantly decreased.¹⁰⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Ministry of Evkaf fell behind in the payments due to Edhem.¹⁰⁰¹ Finally, in 1897, 2100 dönüms of land belonging to this waqf was sold to the villagers of Gündüzler by the Ministry of Evkaf for 14.500 *kuruş*.¹⁰⁰² Hence, Edhem did not derive substantial income from this waqf, whose lands apparently lacked sufficient workforce for cultivation. Yet, as a supplementary income, the waqf should have kept him on board with relatively well-off inhabitants of Yenişehir.

We do not know what exactly Edhem owned and/or possessed in Yenişehir during his early adulthood. However, “12 estate villages” that Ahmed Bey mentioned during his interrogation should have slipped from the hands of the family, since these were not even counted as “property” that could be cashed for the payment of indemnity to the foreigners’ families in the early 1860s.¹⁰⁰³ The *temettuat* records of 1844 include merely 12 *dönüms* of land (which was then rented out), 3 shops and a couple of animals for the orphans, Ahmed and Emin.¹⁰⁰⁴ A later report prepared by the local administrative council of Yenişehir in 1860 designates the mansion (worth 15.000 *kuruş*) at the town center and 35 *dönüms* of land in the vicinity of Akdere village (worth 1.000 *kuruş*) as the only properties co-owned by Ahmed and Emin brothers.¹⁰⁰⁵ Thus, though carrying a tint of nobility, Edhem Bey did not command substantial wealth and property in Yenişehir at the outset. So, how did he climb up the ladder of political eminence in Yenişehir?

⁹⁹⁸ VGM defter 03473.00031.

⁹⁹⁹ VGM defter 03652.00005.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Compare VGM defter 03473.00031 with VGM defter 03652.00005. In the fiscal year of 1291 the fixed tithe payment of the waqf was 28.160 *kuruş* (net); whereas in the fiscal year of 1296, the fixed tithe payment was 16.250 *kuruş* (without subtractions).

¹⁰⁰¹ VGM defter 03652.00005.

¹⁰⁰² VGM defter 03659.00036.

¹⁰⁰³ See, chapter 1, footnote 246, p. 78.

¹⁰⁰⁴ ML. VRD. TMT. d. 09544-00021, p. 39.

¹⁰⁰⁵ İ. MMS 0019-000821-015-001.

Up until 1894, Edhem Bey does not figure in Ottoman state documents as someone commanding significant influence and power in Yenişehir. During the cholera epidemic of 1894, he emerges as the leader of the defaulted tax-farmers from Yenişehir, who incurred excessive losses due to the cordoning off the region during the harvest season.¹⁰⁰⁶ In this respect, we can surmise that by mid 1890s, he could accumulate some capital, and possibly wealth so as to function as a prominent tax-farmer in Yenişehir. We possess some clues as to how this came about. As part of Edhem's joined trial in Bursa in 1908 (which I will analyze in detail below), one of his local opponents submitted a long report about Edhem's "reputation" and crimes in Yenişehir. The report, which opens up by reciting the violent crime committed by Edhem's father, subsequently reads that Edhem got Yenişehirli Sofu İsmail Ağa murdered by burning down his house in order to get his money. It adds that Edhem was sentenced to hard labor by the Bursa criminal court, but released from prison after three years, because the court of appeal annulled his conviction and he acquitted in the re-trial.¹⁰⁰⁷ If "Sofu İsmail Ağa" was indeed "the İsmail Ağa", who continuously remained one of the few representatives of "*menafi sandığı*" of Yenişehir in between 1870 and 1880¹⁰⁰⁸, he might have been a potential target for the reckless Edhem Bey. Yet, the above-mentioned allegation should be taken with some caution, since its author was one of Edhem's staunch opponents.

On the other hand, Edhem married Bacaksızzade Hacı Osman Ağa's daughter.¹⁰⁰⁹ As we have seen in chapter 5, Hacı Osman Ağa, who engineered *kaymakam* Mehmed Ramazan Efendi's dismissal from Yenişehir, was virtually controlling the *menafi funds* of the *kaza* through his son, Ali Efendi. Thus, Edhem, as the son-in-law of a prominent figure in Yenişehir could have taken part in an economically motivated feud between these two men.

Unlike relatively modest non-waqf landed properties belonging to Edhem Bey's family, Bacaksızzade Hacı Osman Ağa's family possessed substantial lands and many

¹⁰⁰⁶ BEO 502-37578.

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Yenişehir Sakinlerinden Saadetlu Edhem Paşa'nın Ahval..." ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Salih Erol, *Hüdavendigâr Vilâyet Salnâmelerinde Yenişehir Kazası 1870-1927: İznik ve Yarhisar Nahiyeleri ile Birlikte* (Ankara: Yenişehir İlçesi Merkez ve Köylerini Güzelleştirme Derneği Yayınları, 2011), 20; 28; 33; 39; 45; 51; 57; 65; 69; 75; 81.

¹⁰⁰⁹ DH. MKT 394-34; "Yenişehir Sakinlerinden Saadetlu Edhem Paşa'nın Ahval..." ŞD 1601-27.

cattle in Umran village. The *temettuat* records indicate that Bacaksızzade Hüseyin Ağa (most probably Osman Ağa's father) owned 500 *dönüms* of land and more than 20 cattle in Umran.¹⁰¹⁰ In 1888, Hacı Osman Ağa's name appears for the last time in the Yearbook of Hüdavendigar as a member of the local administrative council, with the rank of "*ıstabl-ı amire müdürü*".¹⁰¹¹ Hacı Osman Ağa, whose name in the yearbooks can be traced as far back as 1870 (which is the first yearbook of Hüdavendigar containing information about Yenişehir), most probably died after 1888.

In the mid 1890s, his son-in-law, Edhem Bey appeared in the radar of the central state with his pressing financial difficulties as the leader of the tax-farmers from Yenişehir, who defaulted in their debts to the Ottoman state due to the cholera epidemic.¹⁰¹² In 1897, the government indeed seized Edhem's properties due to his 24.000 *kuruş* debt from the fiscal year of 1310, in which the epidemic erupted.¹⁰¹³ Just like his grandfather, Osman Bey, and his father Ahmed Bey, Edhem Bey got entangled with the judicial and administrative apparatus of the late Ottoman Empire through his debts. With Hacı Osman Ağa gone, Edhem apparently turned against his brother-in-law, Ali Efendi amid his financial stringency.

It seems that Edhem's motivation in fighting Ali Efendi was wrestling from him what was left from Osman Ağa to the family. In 1895, he got Ali Efendi's 20 year-old son, Şükrü, murdered in his *çiftlik*. Şükrü was probably an only son, who could legally claim more shares from his grandfather's estate than Edhem. Ali Efendi in turn petitioned the Office of the Grand Vizier complaining that in spite of the murder, Edhem was not taken into custody.¹⁰¹⁴ Yet, Edhem eventually got away with this crime;

¹⁰¹⁰ ML. VRD. TMT. d. 9539-3.

¹⁰¹¹ *Hüdavendigar Vilayeti Salnamesi 1305*, 69. "İstabl-ı amire" was an organization originally founded for the upkeep of the stables in which animals, especially horses, belonging to the sultan and other members of the imperial palace were kept. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II, this organization was reformed. The post of "*ıstabl-ı amire müdürlüğü*" was created within this organization in 1837. However, "*ıstabl-ı amire müdürlüğü*" was also used as a rank, which later on came to approximate "the deputy military commandership" (*askeri kaymakamlık*). Abdülkadir Özcan, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi vol 19*, s.v. "İstabl," (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1999), 203-206.

¹⁰¹² BEO 502-37578.

¹⁰¹³ ŞD 369-51.

¹⁰¹⁴ DH. MKT 394-34.

his man, who committed the homicide fled, and he himself was acquitted by the court due to lack of evidence.¹⁰¹⁵

In the following couple of years, Edhem raised his bid for controlling Osman Ağa's Umran *çiftlik* and the neighboring lands in the vicinity of Akdere village, where he owned some lands inherited from his own family. Since tax-farming and wheat cultivation did not promise high returns, Edhem made an entrepreneurial move and began to cultivate rice in these lands. However, rice cultivation harmed not only the lands, mulberry groves and grazes in the vicinity of Edhem's rice fields due to flooding for irrigation, but also adversely affected public health. Thus, Ali Efendi wanted to use this opportunity to lead the oppositionary camp against Edhem. In the showdown between them around 1900, Ali Efendi lost his father's Umran *çiftlik*. In another petition to the Office of the Grand Vizier, he wrote that Edhem had gotten him imprisoned in Yenişehir for five months by falsely accusing him of using arms against him, which he actually set up as a plot through his armed men. During his imprisonment, Edhem destroyed 700 kiles of Ali Efendi's crops and got his wooden *çiftlik* buildings demolished by getting them pulled down with his buffalos. Eventually, Ali Efendi had no other choice than leaving Yenişehir.¹⁰¹⁶ Thus, Hacı Osman Ağa's "Umran *çiftlik*" became "Edhem's *çiftlik*".

Meanwhile, Edhem was also enhancing his power on the political front. In 1895, he appears for the first time in the yearbook as a member of "the Municipal Office and the Immigration Commission" of the *kaza*.¹⁰¹⁷ From 1895 onwards, he was also a member in the Educational Commission of Yenişehir.¹⁰¹⁸ The Municipal Office and the Immigration Commission constituted a critical branch of the local administration. Many cash and in-kind dues and fees were collected through the municipality. More importantly perhaps, the immigration commission controlled the settlement processes of the incoming population by mediating the distribution of land within the *kaza*. As we shall see below, Edhem made the best out of these posts at the height of his power after 1902. In 1896, in addition to keeping his previous position in the local administration,

¹⁰¹⁵ "Yenişehir Sakinlerinde Saadetli Edhem Paşa'nın Ahval..." ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰¹⁶ DH. MKT 2356-23; "Paşa-yı müşarileyhin zorbalığa ve bu meyanda ..." ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1313*, 346.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1313*, 347.

he became an authorized seller of the products of the Régie (*Reji ser-bayii*).¹⁰¹⁹ In 1898, he was a member of the the Commission for the Supply of Means of Transportation to the Military, while keeping his position in the local Régie administration.¹⁰²⁰ In 1899, he served in the Office of Municipality and Immigration Commission with the rank of “*ıstabl-ı amire müdürlüğü*”¹⁰²¹. In 1900, he was awarded the higher rank of “*mirül ümeralık*”. Within the same year, he also assumed membership in the local *Evkaf* Commission.¹⁰²²

Just like the Municipality and Immigration Commission, Edhem’s membership in several commissions and the titles and privileges he officially upheld greatly contributed to his political and economic eminence. His attachment to the Régie for instance, in practice, meant that he could have access to the *kolcus* employed in Yenişehir, whose number reached 43 in 1898.¹⁰²³ More than 40 armed men was a significant asset for someone ready to deploy them in political and economic contestations in Yenişehir. Likewise, the Evkaf Commission provided ease of access to the local waqfs’ funds for the people, who were entrusted with administering them. But, until 1901-1902, Edhem’s power in Yenişehir did not reach its apex. In 1901, he became the municipal mayor of the *kaza*, simultaneously carrying the title of the head of the immigration commission.¹⁰²⁴ Finally, in 1905, he was awarded the higher rank of “*mirmiran*”.¹⁰²⁵

Edhem owed his rise to power to his boldness, ruthlessness and political skills. But, it was the Hamidian regime, which weaved his way into success by diluting legal obstacles and administrative restraints, which would ensure justice and societal balance. By donning Edhem with the title of “Paşa” in 1900¹⁰²⁶, Yıldız Palace sacrificed socio-political peace in Yenişehir to political expediency.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1314*, 209.

¹⁰²⁰ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1316*, 129-131.

¹⁰²¹ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1317*, 161-162.

¹⁰²² *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1318*, 165.

¹⁰²³ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1316*, 131.

¹⁰²⁴ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1319*, 166.

¹⁰²⁵ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1323*, 170.

¹⁰²⁶ *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1318*, 165.

6.3. Edhem Paşa's Hold to Power (1902-1908)

In between 1902 and 1908, many people with very different backgrounds, from villagers to the wealthy members of the Mahrukizade family; from Edhem Paşa's divorced ex-wife¹⁰²⁷ to Sultan Abdülhamid's sister, Cemile Sultan clashed with Edhem Paşa in one way or another. Edhem Paşa struggled hard against his many opponents. It is, however, quite striking that he managed to get away with almost all his misdeeds with minimal losses, given that he faced several formidable opponents. I argue that he owed his hold on power against all odds to the intertwined political and economic conditions of the late Hamidian empire. More specifically, the late Hamidian political system, which was based on forging direct links between the palace and some provincial notables, eventually overshadowed the functioning of formal administrative and judicial channels, thereby enabling Edhem Paşa to persist in his illegal and mischievous conducts unobstructed by law and executive power. Whenever Edhem Paşa was seriously challenged and cornered by his opponents and victims, his protectors in the palace intervened to help him. Soon enough, inhabitants of Yenişehir experienced the Paşa's links to the apex of imperial power as a "magical" aura rendering him quite untouchable within the parameters of formal provincial administration and judicial procedures. Edhem in turn was skillful in exasperating his awe by stressing his proximity to imperial favor. Many complainants recited that their applications to various courts and higher provincial authorities were inconsequential ("*semeresi görülemedi*"; "*neticesiz kaldı.*") due to Edhem's influence (*nüfuzuna mebni*). So, some of his opponents also turned to the real foci of power in the palace, and used political strategies and rhetorical devices of the late Hamidian regime in their struggles against Edhem Paşa.¹⁰²⁸

The main bone of contention between Edhem Paşa and his opponents was distribution and utilization of rural resources, especially the land. Village pastures and lands belonging to absentee landlords were the Paşa's potential preys. Some lands,

¹⁰²⁷ "Hüdavendigâr Vilayet-i Aliyesine" from Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemi (16 Şubat 1323), DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹⁰²⁸ DH. MKT 644-56; DH. MKT 537-23; ŞD 1584-11. See below for more details.

quasi-legally possessed by or earmarked for different immigrant communities were also on the radar of the enterprising Paşa. Because actual utilization of land barely corresponded with its official recording and legal status¹⁰²⁹, even the local notables, who occupied lands more than the amount registered in their names had to yield to the Paşa's forceful *fait accomplis*. Edhem Paşa used these lands mainly for rice cultivation and wide-scale animal husbandry. He also invested in mills and in some income-generating urban properties. In land disputes, Edhem, on the one hand, used his personal connections with the Hamidian regime against his local opponents; on the other hand, he deployed his locally derived administrative and legal arsenal against his İstanbul-based opponents. He did not abstain from resorting to violence and forgeries for achieving his objectives in contestations of land.¹⁰³⁰

Edhem was the boss of a multi-faceted enterprise, which flourished on the basis of the manipulation of pre-existing societal pitfalls by forming strategic partnerships with different groups in Yenişehir and beyond: Against the Mahrukizade family, he sided with the Armenian villagers of Marmaracık, and against the Greek villagers of Derbend, he sided with the immigrant village of Atiye. Some segments of the population were more vulnerable to Edhem's economically motivated, unethical schemes for making money. Many immigrant communities and native villages became victims of Edhem's extortions due to his abuse of his official prerogatives and many other "unofficial" threats as the head of the immigration commission of the *kaza*. On top of these, floating rural communities left behind in Bulgaria promised fresh demand for the real estate market in Yenişehir. Since these people were unaccustomed to the actual workings of the land market in Yenişehir, they got entangled with Edhem's swindling schemes. Hence, Edhem Paşa was the Machiavellian owner of a Yenişehir-based enterprise, which constantly drew on the political and economic opportunities provided by the late Ottoman imperial polity.

¹⁰²⁹ In this respect, Yenişehir seems to comply with the pattern that Yücel Terzibaşoğlu identifies for Ayvalık. Terzibaşoğlu, "Eleni Hatun," 144-147. For example, an accusation against Edhem reads, "25 dönüm kayıtlı ama hudud itibariyle 90 dönüm Suk Mahalleli Hacı İsmail Ağazade Mustafa Efendi'nin bankaya merhun tarlasını iki senedir zapt ve ziraat..." ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰³⁰ ŞD 64-10; DH. MKT 1236-6. See below for more details.

6.4. Paralyzation of Checks and Balances within the Late Hamidian Regime

At the end of 1902, the newly appointed *naib* of Yenişehir, İbrahim Halil Efendi, submitted a report describing the status-quo in the *kaza* to the Office of *Şeyhülislam*. He asked the *Şeyhülislam*'s support for initiating a thorough trial of Edhem in his absence. The report succinctly summarizes Edhem's position in the political arena of the town. Moreover, it includes clues as to how formal attempts to curb his power failed and how he utilized informal and illegal strategies to enhance his power.¹⁰³¹

The report in itself is quite striking in that it demonstrates how a *naib* sought the political weight of the Office of *Şeyhülislam* for dispensing justice. Yet, it turned out that the *Şeyhülislam* was not the appropriate foci of power to apply for redressing a politically charged situation in a provincial setting. In fact, Sultan Abdülhamid II was quite wary of the potential political powers of the *Şeyhülislam*, and therefore kept his office under extremely strict surveillance. Even under such circumstances, Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi could keep his post as *Şeyhülislam* for seventeen years in between 1891 and 1908.¹⁰³² It is not surprising then, that Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi opted for standing clear of politically risky businesses. In our specific case, notwithstanding the *naib*'s expectation to use the highest religious authority of the Empire as a solid rock to lean on while challenging the unlawful conducts of a powerful notable, the Office of the *Şeyhülislam* merely forwarded the report to the Ministry of Interior. As we shall see, the Ministry of Interior was overtly sympathetic towards Edhem Paşa. Still, the inconsequential report is worthy of quoting extensively, for it describes how the administrative machinery could not be mobilized as an impartial referee and how Edhem subdued the people of Yenişehir through political intrigue at gunpoint.

...Edhem Paşa, from among the notables of Yenişehir and a connoisseur of oppression, dares to engage in unlawful acts such as usurpation of property, rape, and previously murder. He opposes the government by encouraging all sorts of misdemeanor. Currently, he employs about 200 men, armed with rifles. In spite of the sultanic order banning such practices, he summons the people and the village headsmen to his house at nights, and gets them stamp petitions and other documents (*mazharlar*). Although the Paşa's (such) vicious conducts had been described in a report prepared by the administrative council of the *kaza* and

¹⁰³¹ DH. MKT 644-56.

¹⁰³² Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, 92-97.

sent to the higher authorities, no result can be obtained so far. The Paşa openly uses all the *kolcus* armed with rifles (for his own ends) by claiming connection to the Régie administration. For this reason, he dares to engage in incredible oppression, demonstrates hostility (towards other parties) and conducts extortions. Since he intimidated all the people by overawing them, if permission to undertake an investigation in his absence is granted, the issues that I humbly brought forth would be completely ascertained. I am compelled to ask for your graceful (support) in undertaking necessary measures against him without letting him cause any trouble...¹⁰³³

Several other documents about Edhem in the Ottoman state archives are consistent with the *naib*'s depiction. However, this was just one image of Edhem Paşa as it was perceived in the political arena of Yenişehir. The Paşa actually possessed remarkable skills to hold on power while making the best of the economic opportunities that the late Ottoman Empire offered in Western Anatolia at the time. Politically, he had perseverance and an ability to recruit allies by exploiting clashes of interest in Yenişehir and in İstanbul. As homo economicus, he was hardworking and enterprising. Above all, Edhem Paşa seems to know it all too well that in t(his) part of the late Ottoman Empire, the real source of wealth was land. So, he clashed with various parties for getting more and more of it. However, land alone meant very little unless it could be utilized by labor and/or cashed out through sale. The late Ottoman polity was an empire, which left behind a reservoir of relatively wealthy Muslim peasants in Bulgaria, who were willing to pay for land in Anatolia. On top of this, the loss of substantial regions in the Balkans disrupted the livelihoods of many Ottoman subjects, creating a substantial vagrant population ready to take up any sort of employment in Western Anatolia. Hence, -land, labor and capital- all “the factors of production”, so to say, were available to Edhem for running his enterprise in Yenişehir. Still, it required quite a lot of political virtuosity and boldness to put all “the factors of production” in “good use” amid the politically conscious and vocal local society of Yenişehir.

¹⁰³³ DH. MKT 644-56.

6.5. Land as a Source of Power

Although land disputes were mainly conditioned by clashing economic interests, they always got entangled with existing socio-political structures and relations of power. At the turn of the 19th century, different places in Anatolia, which received substantial immigrant communities due to the contraction of imperial borders, experienced contestations of land at the interstices of local and imperial politics¹⁰³⁴. In Yenişehir, aside from the population pressure stemming from injection of new communities to the political economy of the *kaza*, disputes of land between older actors were conditioned by the political system of the late Hamidian empire. On the one hand, land disputes enmeshed with Hamidian rhetoric of power. On the other hand, ensuing factionalism trickling down from the palace to Yenişehir rendered some communities, such as non-Muslims and immigrants, more vulnerable than others in land disputes.

In the land dispute between the native Muslim villages of Çardak-Çeltikçi and Edhem Paşa, Hamidian “symbolic” power expressed in the ranks awarded to the local notables, got “real”: The villagers tried to corner Edhem with the accusation that he wore the uniform of a higher rank, which he was not awarded. In a similar vein, Edhem’s clashes with some non-Muslim villages over land suggest that factionalism in the palace left these communities unprotected against the Paşa, because local officials were daunted by his palace-backed power, and the judiciary remained an ineffective body amid “lawless” power struggles between different factions in İstanbul and in the province.

Conversely, Edhem Paşa used his locally derived power against İstanbul-based, big landowners. He manipulated “prescriptive rights” and “customary rights” by illegally making inroads to official documents at the expense of the absentee landlords. He initiated the forgery of locally produced, yet legally acknowledged land documents in collaboration with villagers and local land registry officials to the detriment of Mahrukizade Eşref Cafer Bey. He even pressured the district administration for passing

¹⁰³⁴ For example, Özel, “Migration and Power Politics,” 477-496; Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “Land Disputes and Ethno-Politics: North-western Anatolia 1877-1912,” in *Land Rights, Ethno-Nationality, and Sovereignty in History*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Jacob Metzger (London: Routledge, 2004): 153-180; Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “Landlords, Refugees, and Nomads: Struggles for Land around Late-Nineteenth-Century Ayvalık,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 24 (2001): 51-82; Pınar Şenişik, “Cretan Muslim Immigrants, Imperial Governance and the ‘Production of Locality’ in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1 (2013): 92-106.

false information to İstanbul via the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr. His boldness in manipulating the local administrative framework infuriated his formidable opponent, Mahrukizade Cafer Bey. Thus, while using his links to a powerful palace faction as a weapon against his local contenders, Edhem used his locally derived weapons against his İstanbul-based opponents.¹⁰³⁵

In the early 20th century, Yenişehir did not experience massive influx of population comparable to the previous two decades. But, it continued to receive immigrant communities and families. It seems that most of the newcomers came for uniting with their co-villagers from their places of origin in the Balkans. However, scramble for land between the native and immigrant communities extended over the new century. In this competitive context, Edhem Paşa made the best out of the land market in Yenişehir, thanks to his armed men and his official role as the head of the immigration commission of the *kaza*. Rural communities, native and immigrant, who felt threatened by Edhem's arbitrary power over the distribution of land, developed different strategies for ensuring their access to land. These communities bribed Edhem, bargained and formed alliances with him. Many such communities eventually realized that the Paşa was a treacherous interlocutor, profiting from cashing out contradictory promises he made to both sides of the disputes. On top of these, his swindling schemes in the land market of Yenişehir reached out to rural communities in Bulgaria.¹⁰³⁶

6.5.1. Land and Rank: Muslim Villagers vs. Edhem Paşa

How could Edhem concentrate so much power in Yenişehir, where various societal groups were politically vocal and had relatively easy access to the legal and administrative platforms of the late Ottoman Empire? To begin with, as the *naib*'s petition suggests, Edhem had more armed men under his command than anybody else in Yenişehir. However, crude power was just one of the many prerequisites of the

¹⁰³⁵ For more information, see the subsection entitled “Weapons of “the Local” in Land Disputes: Mahrukizade Cafer Bey vs. Edhem Paşa” below.

¹⁰³⁶ For more information, see the subsection entitled “Cashing out Threats and Non-existing lands: Swindling in a Dwindling Empire” below.

unmatched economic and political power he wielded in Yenişehir. In fact, Edhem and many of his men, whom he used in his illegal and violent conducts, were several times sued by different parties at various courts. The courts in Yenişehir and Bursa indeed convicted him and his men for many crimes, misdemeanors and unjust acts. But, Edhem prolonged and diluted the trials by taking his cases to various courts of appeal. At the end of lengthy judicial processes, his men served short prison terms of a couple of years, if they had not already fled. Edhem, on the other hand, usually acquitted because of “lack of evidence” in re-trials after the appeal courts annulled the rulings of the courts of first instance. In cases pertaining to civil law, he either closed the cases by paying indemnities or by intimidating the plaintiffs to the point of compelling them to leave Yenişehir.¹⁰³⁷

Still, some of his quite obviously illegal undertakings were administratively and legally condemned by the provincial administration in Bursa and court rulings derived from related religious and secular courts. In most of these cases, the court rulings could not be implemented on the ground, because his political ascendancy in Yenişehir was translated into widespread intimidation among the populace and within the local administration due to the armed men under his employment. Even the provincial administration of Bursa could not get things done against Edhem in Yenişehir, because the local administration of Yenişehir and the people of the *kaza* very well knew that at the last instance Edhem was being protected by a powerful faction within the Hamidian regime. The ranks bestowed upon Edhem by the Hamidian administration further fortified his position in the local political arena. In this context, many of his opponents cited “the impact of his influence” (*tesir-i nüfuzuna mebni*) as the greatest obstacle before getting the judicial and administrative checks work on the ground. Hence, the central state, which was supposed to dispense justice and arbitrate local disputes, became a critical part of the Gordian knot that Edhem created in Yenişehir.¹⁰³⁸

Edhem’s clashes with the Muslim villagers of Çeltikçi and Çardak over the common pasture of these villages demonstrate how hard the villagers struggled against him within the political dynamics of the late Hamidian era. During 1901, Edhem expanded his usurpation of the lands of the pasture of these villages by force. He began

¹⁰³⁷ DH. MKT 2501-7; ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰³⁸ DH. MKT 537-23; DH. MKT 1236-6.

to construct corrals and employed 20-30 armed “Albanians” to obstruct the villagers’ usage of the pasture. The villagers, however, did not yield to the armed presence of Edhem’s men and released their animals into the pasture. Subsequently, armed clashes occurred between the villagers and the Albanians. In these clashes, many animals belonging to the villagers were killed, in addition to the killing of one of the Albanians.¹⁰³⁹ Then, the villagers petitioned the central state, complaining about Edhem’s ongoing interventions. The government ordered the provincial administration of Hüdavendigâr to investigate the issue. Next year, the villagers were able to obtain an administrative report from Bursa, supporting their cause, in addition to getting a court ruling indicating that the pasture was indeed within these villages’ borders. Edhem, in return, completely disregarded the government’s notifications and continued to occupy the villagers’ pasture, over which he began to build walls for further enclosure. On top of these, he retaliated by intimidating the villagers: He intervened in their fallow lands, and dispatched his armed men over these villages at nights, when the villagers gathered at the mosques for prayer. He got his men shoot bullets in the air just to terrorize the villagers.¹⁰⁴⁰

At the outset of the contestation between the villagers and Edhem, Hafız Emin from Çardak and the village headman Osman Ağa from Çeltikçi applied to the local administration of the *kaza*, which in turn disregarded their petition. Then, they applied to the district administration of Ertuğrul via telegraph. The *naib* of Yenişehir, then, got them imprisoned for 15 days, due to their application to higher authorities. A later investigation undertaken by the *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul and two other officials from the district indicated that the *kaymakam* and *naib* of Yenişehir threatened these complainants in order to serve the opinion and interests of the Paşa.¹⁰⁴¹

When usual legal and administrative appeals did not simply work against Edhem’s tyranny, the villagers of Çardak and Çeltikçi made another move, which would engage the Hamidian regime with its own vocabulary of symbolic power. They petitioned both the Office of the Grand Vizier and the Council of State, and reiterated

¹⁰³⁹ DH. MKT 2501-7; “Emlak-ı emiriye ve mevkufenin fuzulen zabt ve şuna buna tefviziyle veya kendi uhdesine kaydı” ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰⁴⁰ DH. MKT 537-23.

¹⁰⁴¹ “...gerek kaymakam ve gerek naib efendinin paşa-yı mumaileyhin eşkar ü âmâline hizmet kasdiyle müştekilerin tehdid olduğu tezahür etmiştir.” DH. MKT 1236-6.

Edhem's crimes and oppression, while openly stating that although his illegal acts were being investigated and tried, he could get away with whatever he did due to the gravity of his influence. Subsequently, they alleged that Edhem was wearing the official uniform of a higher rank (*Rumeli Beylerbeyliği*), which he was not awarded, to enhance his oppression by claiming superiority. In fact, the villagers took (or obtained) photos of Edhem publicly wearing this uniform, and submitted them with their petitions as concrete proofs of their accusation. They explained that Edhem held the rank of "*mirül ümeralık*", whose uniform did not contain embroidery on its front, whereas he was openly wearing the embroidered uniform of the higher rank. Quoting the article of the Penal Code pinpointing a prison term of 3 months to one year for such offenders, they asked for Edhem's punishment "at the very least" for this offense.¹⁰⁴²

Edhem was indeed convicted to 3 months of imprisonment for this offense at the court of first instance. Yet, in the court of appeal in Bursa, he acquitted due to "his ignorance". Meanwhile, he was constantly lobbying for actually getting a higher rank. He managed to get the governor of Bursa, Halil İbrahim Paşa, recommend the promotion of his rank (from *mirül ümeralık* to *mirmiranlık*) to İstanbul, based on his enthusiastic efforts in the collection of 250.000 *kuruş* "contribution" due to Yenişehir for the construction of the Hamidiye-Hejaz railway line.¹⁰⁴³ At the beginning of 1904, he found an even more powerful ally with the change of the governor of Bursa: Mümtaz Reşid Paşa was the new governor, who advocated Edhem's good standing at the face of the inquiries of İstanbul about the lawsuit regarding his wearing of the uniform of a higher rank. Reşid Paşa claimed that the offense took place due to Edhem's lack of knowledge about the official etiquette (which the villagers incidentally had!) and that he ordered the uniform from İstanbul, where it was produced according to a higher rank by mistake.¹⁰⁴⁴ Apparently, the struggle against Edhem regarding his proper rank did not stop at this point, since a later document states that the Ministry of Justice annulled the

¹⁰⁴² DH. MKT 537-23; "...hiç olmaz ise bu yüzden duçar-ı mücazaat edilmesi.." ŞD 1584-11.

¹⁰⁴³ Upon receiving the governor's recommendation, the commission for the construction of this railway line indicated that it had no information about Edhem's role in the collection of "contributions" from Yenişehir. It thus returned the governor's recommendation back to the Porte. BEO 1967-147487.

¹⁰⁴⁴ BEO 2243-168196.

court of appeal's decision to acquit Edhem. Yet, the document continues to stress that nothing had come out from this development either.¹⁰⁴⁵

The struggle between the villagers of Çeltikçi and Çardak and Edhem Paşa was mainly a contention for the utilization of economic resources. Both sides of the dispute wanted to obtain the rural surplus that animal husbandry promised in the early 20th century Yenişehir. Yet, this economically motivated struggle got enmeshed with the symbolic power and biased political interventions of the late Hamidian regime. The ranks and titles that the Hamidian empire bestowed upon the provincial notables, like Edhem, for gaining their loyalty and support became a tool of oppression. The intricate “internal fine-tuning” that the Hamidian administration exercised during the consolidation of the regime, failed in Yenişehir after 1901-1902, as Edhem Paşa emerged as a political actor transcending the rule of law. The parallel lines of communication between the local notables and the Yıldız Palace eventually rendered formal, hierarchical provincial administration an impotent body, in which quasi-official foci of power in Yenişehir could prevail over the provincial capital. The struggles of the Muslim villagers of Çardak and Çeltikçi reveal that the rural population was very much aware of the fact that Edhem Paşa owed his preeminence to the blank check that a powerful faction within the late Hamidian regime endowed him with. Hence, the villagers tried to challenge him with the symbolic political vocabulary of the regime pertaining to the hierarchically ordered ranks. Yet, the villagers failed to prevail over Edhem in this account, because it seems that the regime lacked consistence even while pursuing its own rhetoric of power. In other words, at this particular incident, the Hamidian administration did not or could not uphold the hierarchical system of ranks that it extensively used for legitimation, since it could not implement the laws against the transgressors of this system.

In spite of his eminence in the politics of the *kaza*, Edhem could not monopolize the whole power in Yenişehir. There were other notables, ordinary town dwellers and villagers, who constantly struggled against him. But, these forces of opposition could not significantly challenge and curb Edhem's power until 1907- 1908. One reason of their ineffectiveness was the political links that Edhem forged with Yıldız Palace. Another significant reason of the failure of the opposition was Edhem's ability to

¹⁰⁴⁵ “Yenişehir Sakinlerinden Saadetli Edhem Paşa'nın Ahval...” ŞD 1601-27.

exploit the existing societal tensions and clashing economic local interests for building up a base of support for himself in Yenişehir. Beyond “the Albanians” that he employed as his armed followers, he even “imported” immigrant populations from Bulgaria after he became the municipal mayor and the head of the immigration commission of the *kaza*. Edhem acted according to political and economic expediency. In this respect, social conglomerations such as native and immigrant; Muslim and non Muslim; rich and poor did not make much difference in his dealings with the local population. But, the relatively disadvantaged political position of the non-Muslim populations within the Hamidian administration made the non-Muslims of Yenişehir more vulnerable to Edhem’s extractions and overbearance. The way the Hamidian administration handled Edhem’s suppression of the Muslim villagers of Çeltikçi and Çardak was unjust; the way it handled his forceful interventions to the lands of the Greek village of Derbend and the Armenian village of Cedid was shamefully biased and inapt.

6.5.2. Non-Muslim Villagers vs. Edhem Paşa

When Edhem Paşa became the municipal mayor and the head of the immigration commission of Yenişehir in 1901, his office provided him immense power, given that he already possessed the means of enforcing his decisions through his armed followers. He used his prerogatives for benefiting from the land market, which was conditioned by competition between the native and immigrant villagers. In this context, he “sold” 400 *dönüms* of land belonging to 17 Greek villagers of Derbend village to the villagers of the neighboring immigrant Atiye village in İznik. When the Greeks of Derbend won all the court cases against the immigrants, officials were sent to the contested lands for executing the court rulings. However, the people of Atiye beat up and threatened these officials, and therefore the court rulings could not be executed. Then, Edhem came forward again, promising to take these lands back from the immigrants, and in exchange took quite a lot of money from the Greeks of Derbend. But, he did not fulfill his promise, and the Greek villagers continued to pay the taxes of their usurped lands, while

the immigrants continued to cultivate them. The cadastral officials could not even come close to these lands, because of their fear of Edhem.¹⁰⁴⁶

Such “informal” interventions of Edhem left relatively little traces in the Ottoman state documents, since in legal terms these were land disputes between native and immigrant villagers. Both the villagers of Atiye, who benefitted from Edhem’s “influence” and the villagers of Derbend, who eventually had no other option than trying to buy out Edhem’s “influence”, could not easily bring forth issues of bribery and swindling, because both sides of the dispute were compelled to “work” with Edhem. As such, we can trace such allegations from the reports and/or petitions that Edhem’s opponents in Yenişehir produced.¹⁰⁴⁷ Since these documents were produced by parties, who were hostile to Edhem, they should be evaluated with a grain of salt. However, some other better documented misconducts of Edhem converges with the Paşa’s such informal undertakings.

A case in point is his contestation with the Armenian Cedid village in İznik. Cedid’s troubles with Edhem Paşa closely resembled the case of Çardak and Çeltikçi. During the early summer of 1907, the Armenian villagers petitioned the Armenian Patriarchate, asking for help against Edhem’s interventions to their pasture, his destruction of their crops with his animals and his building of a huge corral nearby the village. With the mediation of the Patriarchate, the villagers of Cedid managed to get an order from the provincial administration in Bursa, which instructed to obstruct Edhem’s harmful activities.¹⁰⁴⁸ Yet, the order could not be implemented on the ground, and therefore the villagers continued to pull the central state to redress the unjust situation. Eventually, they could get a committee, composed of the *mutasarrıf*, and the cadastral and *evkaf* officials of Ertuğrul, to look into their troubles as part of a wider investigation about Edhem undertaken in Yenişehir during the spring of 1908. The committee addressed the complaints of the villagers one by one as they inspected the corral and the

¹⁰⁴⁶ “Emlak-ı emiriye ve mevkuftenin fuzulen zabt ve şuna buna tefviziyle veya kendi uhdesine kaydı” ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰⁴⁷ See the many allegations compiled and submitted to the Bursa court by the Paşa’s local opponents, ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰⁴⁸ ZB 607-126; BEO 003301-247510-005-001.

alleged destroyed properties of the villagers in Cedit, while Edhem accompanied them.¹⁰⁴⁹

The first complaint was that Edhem was keeping hounds for protecting his sheep from wild animals. These hounds were attacking the children, and injuring some of them seriously. Furthermore, the armed shepherds posed an ever-present threat to the villagers. In its report, the committee advocated the keeping of hounds as a renowned and wide-spread practice. It stated that indeed one of Edhem's shepherds was convicted at the court of first instance, because of the injuries that the hounds inflicted on a child. However, he acquitted after appeal. As for the presence of armed shepherds, the committee could not "conclusively establish" this as a fact.¹⁰⁵⁰

The villagers also complained about the partisanship of the *naib* and the *kaymakam* of the *kaza*, who did not execute the orders of the province, because of their affinity with Edhem. They claimed that both the *naib* and the *kaymakam* were attending feasts at Edhem's *çiftlik*. Since they were grateful to Edhem for these feasts, they sided with him in the dispute between Cedit and Edhem. Thus, the villagers stated that the *naib* and the *kaymakam* actually told Edhem's shepherds to graze Edhem's animals wherever they wished. Namely, they gave the shepherds a free hand in encroaching on Cedit's pasture. However, at the face of the Armenian villagers' complaints, the *mutasarrıf* seemed to be content with Edhem's vague promises: To counter the accusation of the destruction of the crops and properties of the villagers by his animals, Edhem "assured" the committee that he would transfer his 300 animals from the lands he rented in the vicinity of the village to the adjacent lands he owned. Furthermore, he would pay the indemnity determined by the local administration in case his animals harm the crops and trees of the villagers during grazing. Notwithstanding the partiality of the local administration of Yenişehir, the committee found these pledges sufficient for downplaying the losses of the villagers, which had accrued for about a couple of years by 1908.¹⁰⁵¹

¹⁰⁴⁹ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report prepared by *mutasarrıf* Osman Paşa, the district's land registry official and waqfs official, 4 Mart 1324).

¹⁰⁵⁰ "...*mertebe-i subute isale edilememiştir.*" DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹⁰⁵¹ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

As for the investigation of the material damages, the committee went into the village. All they could see was three chopped-down mulberry trees. The committee claimed that these trees could not have been cut down by the shepherds, because they were just two men and their corrals were far from the village. The report of the committee continues to reason as if it was written by Edhem himself: The Armenians themselves should have chop off these trees, and the village headsman's clamors should be due to the encouragement of Gökgöz Mustafa, a staunch opposer of Edhem in Yenişehir.¹⁰⁵²

We have traces of how the investigation was undertaken from the viewpoint of the villagers in another document compiled by the Armenian Patriarchate based on a petition from Cedid, which was received after the investigation. Accordingly, the villagers conceived the investigation as deliberately fraudulent. They claimed that the *mutasarrıf* rejected to travel to the lands, where crops were destroyed by Edhem's animals; he merely stood in front of Edhem's corral. In the vicinity of the corral, the rain had obscured traces of the sheep, and the Paşa had not released his animals from the corral for a couple of days then. Furthermore, the *mutasarrıf* ardently reprimanded and scolded the villagers based on his misconceptions about the issue. The villagers also asserted that the Paşa had about 500 sheep and 500 lambs, whereas he did not have sufficient land for grazing a herd of this size. Therefore, he would continue to intervene in the village pasture and harm cultivated lands of the villagers as before.¹⁰⁵³

How this dispute turned out can be gleaned from the allegations filed by Edhem's opponents during his trial in Bursa a couple of months after the investigation. Accordingly, Edhem had actually built his corral adjacent to the drinking water source of the village, and thereby polluted the water. He also intimidated the villagers, who led the opposition against him in this dispute. He had the houses of these four villagers opened by force and got his flock destroy the houses by driving his animals inside. These villagers had to move to other places. When the victims carried their cases to the court in Bursa, he had one of the complainants' silk-worm raising facility (*böcekthane*) arsoned. His men were taken into custody for trial, but they were soon released.¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁵² DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹⁰⁵³ BEO 3301-247510-005-001.

¹⁰⁵⁴ "Paşa-yı müşarileyhin zorbalığa ve bu meyanda ..." ŞD 1601-27.

Edhem, on the other hand, acquitted from “the Cedit issue” and the hounds’ attack to the children, because these could not be “procedurally ascertained” (*usulen sabit olamadığından*) at his joined trial in Bursa.¹⁰⁵⁵

Armenian Cedit village’s controversy with Edhem resembles Muslim Çardak and Çeltikçi’s struggles against the Paşa for protecting their common pasture from his interventions. In both cases, the villagers could not get justice through the judicial and administrative apparatus of the late Ottoman state. The fact that the *kaymakam* and the *naib* of the *kaza* were affiliates of Edhem was a serious drawback for their struggles. However, in the case of the non-Muslim villagers of Cedit, beyond the local administrators in Yenişehir, even the three highest dignitaries of the district administration acted partially to the detriment of the villagers. It was not the first time that Edhem toppled his opponents by destroying the livelihoods of the dissenting villagers of Cedit; because in addition to many other inhabitants of Yenişehir, he had done more or less the same thing to his own brother-in-law before. Still, it is significant that the Muslim villagers of Çeltikçi and Çardak could resist Edhem with their guns, and the inspection committee from the district took their complaints into consideration. The villagers of Cedit were apparently devoid of weapons (or the means to deploy them against Edhem) to protect their livelihoods, precisely when the late Hamidian regime failed to do so on behalf of them.

6.5.3. Squatting the Lands of the Imperial Family: Cemile Sultan vs. Edhem Paşa

Towards the end of 1901, Sultan Abdülhamid’s elder sister, Cemile Sultan, notified the sultan that the deeds of the *çiftlik*s of Mesnöz and Ada, and the lands within Burçin village of Yenişehir, which she owned with her family, were sent to *Hazine-i Hassa* (the Privy Purse) from the Office of Land Registration in Fındıklı.¹⁰⁵⁶ A couple of months later, an official from the Privy Purse administration in İnegöl went to Yenişehir to inspect Cemile Sultan’s lands. He prepared a report about Cemile Sultan’s

¹⁰⁵⁵ ŞD 1601-27 (The verdict).

¹⁰⁵⁶ Y. EE 85-73-5-1.

vast lands by comparing their actual borders, *dönüms* and utilization with the information included in the deeds. In total, Cemile Sultan owned 7.407 *dönüms* of land in Yenişehir according to her deeds.¹⁰⁵⁷ Yet, it turned out that Edhem and his allies had practically usurped quite substantial parts of her lands.

The lands of Mesnöz çiftlik were measured 968 *dönüms* less than the amount recorded in its deed. 300 *dönüms* of the missing lands were “sold” to Edhem Paşa by being designated among the lands belonging to someone called Mustafa Refik, who owned some other lands adjacent to Cemile Sultan’s plots. The court of first instance in Yenişehir undertook this fraudulent sale. Furthermore, Edhem built a corral by usurping another part of the lands belonging to this çiftlik. There were also some immigrant houses built on the lands of this çiftlik. Some of the lands within Burçin village on the other hand, turned into forests, while some stretches, which were recorded as winter and summer pastures, were under the possession of an adherent of Edhem and other neighboring land-owners. Hence, the lands in Burçin were measured 166 *dönüms* less than the amount recorded in their deeds. In total, Cemile Sultan practically lost the control of more than 1000 *dönüms* of her 7.400 *dönüms* of land in Yenişehir. The çiftlik buildings in Ada and Mesnöz, which were made of mud-brick, and their dilapidated homesteads were estimated to worth 22.000 *kuruş*. The çiftliks contained about 39.000 *kuruş* worth of animals and grains. The rents annually obtained from the lands of these çiftliks amounted to 220 *liras*. The official from the Privy Purse administration of İnegöl estimated the value of Cemile Sultan’s lands and çiftliks (including the buildings and tools) in Yenişehir about 3.000 *liras*.¹⁰⁵⁸

What we learn from this report is that the lands belonging to Cemile Sultan were poorly administered, and they were under-utilized. Along with some immigrant households, Edhem could squat the lands of Cemile Sultan for animal husbandry. Apparently, some lands were being rented out, but at the same time quite extensive lands turned into forests and open pastures. Under these circumstances, the official, who prepared the report, advised the buying of these lands by the Privy Purse administration, which could closely monitor the utilization of these lands from its İnegöl branch. In this way, 200 immigrant households could be settled in Yenişehir, and thereby the state’s

¹⁰⁵⁷ Y. MTV 225-69.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Y. MTV 225-69.

treasury could benefit from the surplus produced here in the long run. However, the official also stressed that about 2.500 *liras* should be paid to Edhem and other stakeholders to buy back the occupied and contested lands belonging to Cemile Sultan.¹⁰⁵⁹ Thus, in order for the Privy Purse to feasibly administer Cemile Sultan's lands worth 3000 *liras* in Yenişehir, it first had to pay Edhem 2.500 *liras* to save the lands he usurped! We do not know how things turned out for Cemile Sultan's lands, however, no traces of the active involvement of the İnegöl Privy Purse administration in Yenişehir can be located in later documents. Therefore, the advice of the official from İnegöl was not probably considered as a feasible option for administering Cemile Sultan's properties in Yenişehir.

6.5.4. Weapons of “the Local” in Land Disputes: Mahrukizade Cafer Bey vs. Edhem Paşa

How Edhem Paşa usurped Cemile Sultan's lands followed a well-known pattern used by the local notables for ensuring their possession of land by taking minimal legal and economic risks. Accordingly, a land belonging to someone else, preferably an absentee landlord, is recorded in somebody else's name, preferably a villager, who can easily get a certification demonstrating his prescriptive rights from his village council, and then “sold” to the notable through a legal contract. Since the sale, its recording and its ratification takes place in the locality, governmental departments and courts at the *kaza* level can be manipulated for upholding a facade of legality and formality.¹⁰⁶⁰ Just like Cemile Sultan's lands, the Mahrukizades' lands remained vulnerable to the interventions of the local societal forces' officially acknowledged leverage over land registration and disputes through local administrative and judicial institutions. Villagers and local notables of Yenişehir did not abstain from illicit utilization of these institutions to the detriment of İstanbul-based landowners.

To his credit, Edhem Paşa was quite skillful in abusing pre-existing contestations on land. He “mediated” land disputes by using his political influence for

¹⁰⁵⁹ Y. MTV 225-69.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Terzibaşoğlu, “Eleni Hatun,” 146-147.

making money out of competition for the rural resources between different parties. When he eventually clashed with the formidable Mahrukizade family, he expanded his operations from the *kaza* level to the administrative frameworks of the district of Ertuğrul, thanks to fortifying his power within the late Hamidian regime. Although Mahrukizade family had virtually lost control over some of their lands due to the settlement of the immigrants in the early 1880s, they diligently resisted further interventions by different parties to their vast lands. Just like Mahrukizade Ali Bey, his son, Eşref Cafer Bey, took pains to follow up lawsuits and administrative operations regarding the family's lands in Yenişehir at the turn of the 20th century.

In the late 1890s, Edhem Paşa realized an opportunity in the land disputes between Mahrukizade family and the Armenian villagers of Marmaracık. His objective was to safely possess 120 *dönüms* of Mahrukizade lands by engineering a sale of these lands from the neighboring Marmaracık villagers. He would then re-sell (or rent out) these lands to the neighboring immigrant villagers of Hamidiye, who were settled in the middle of Mahrukizade lands in the early 1880s.¹⁰⁶¹ By the end of the 19th century, the villagers of Marmaracık had already tried quite a lot of quasi-legal strategies against Mahrukizade family's enclosure of the vast waqf lands under their trusteeship. Their fake documents and fraudulent initiatives consistently failed against the legally fortified position of the İstanbul-based family.¹⁰⁶² However, the villagers' struggles had left imprints at the local courts, land registry and tax-recording offices of Yenişehir. Even though, the Mahrukizades consistently annulled the villagers' "unsound" and/or fabricated documents of ownership, they could not keep up with the villagers' attempts to build a legal stronghold for their claims at various governmental departments. Edhem Paşa succeeded in resurrecting the illicit inroads that the villagers had made over the decades in the official documents to the detriment of the absentee landlord family.

Throughout the land disputes between the two parties, the people of the surrounding villages sided with Marmaracık against the Mahrukizades' increasingly aggressive and exclusionary utilization of the rural resources within their waqf lands. As such, it was not difficult for the villagers of Marmaracık to obtain documents from the local administrative council supporting their claims and/or getting favorable results

¹⁰⁶¹ Many documents about this land dispute are enclosed in ŞD 64-10. Dates will be used for indicating specific documents within ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁶² See chapter 1, pp. 89-91.

from local investigations of the dispute.¹⁰⁶³ Once they managed to orchestrate such locally-produced legal “evidence”, it took years for the Mahrukizades to challenge these developments at various courts and administrative departments in İstanbul, Bursa and Bilecik.

During the mid-1860s, the villagers of Marmaracık managed to present documents indicating their ownership over some contested stretches of land. These documents were produced in the local sharia court (a sale document dated 1820-21)¹⁰⁶⁴ and the local administrative council of Yenişehir (dated 1843-44)¹⁰⁶⁵. They could also get some of the lands belonging to the waqf of Vani Efendi under the trusteeship of Mahrukizade family, recorded as state-owned lands within the borders of Marmaracık during the land survey of the early 1860s, following the promulgation of the Land Law of 1858.¹⁰⁶⁶ So, they also possessed illegally obtained deeds for the disputed lands. In 1865, Mahrukizade Ali Bey annulled the fake documents of the villagers, and asked for the removal of the records of their documents from the land registry department.¹⁰⁶⁷ However, the villagers of the region, apparently, allied with Marmaracık against Ali Bey’s moves to enclose waqf lands. Against this development, in March 1868, the administrative council of Yenişehir was compelled to warn “the people” not to intervene in Ali Bey’s lands, who was exerting pressure over the town through his contacts in İstanbul.¹⁰⁶⁸ Yet, a couple of months later, notwithstanding Ali Bey’s efforts, Simon from Marmaracık could get deeds for some allegedly “state-owned” lands due to his prescriptive rights.¹⁰⁶⁹ This was one of the legal strongholds of the villagers in the upcoming decades.

In August 1880, the administrative council of Yenişehir ratified the transfer of Simon’s and his brother’s lands to Simon’s son, Karabet due to the death of the two

¹⁰⁶³ See chapter 1, pp. 89-91 and chapter 3, p. 218.

¹⁰⁶⁴ 1236 H, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁶⁵ 1259 H, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁶⁶ 21 Temmuz 1314, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁶⁷ 9 Safer 1282, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁶⁸ 25 Şubat 1283, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁶⁹ “Sahib-i mülkün ism ve şöreti,” (undated); 21 Temmuz 1314, ŞD 64-10.

brothers.¹⁰⁷⁰ In 1883, Mahrukizade Ali Bey's son, Şefik Bey, personally attended a local investigation of the contested lands. During the investigation, the villagers of Marmaracık allied with the villagers of the region, who were witnesses providing "expert" opinion about ancient usages of land. In this investigation, the unified front against Şefik Bey succeeded in claiming about 4000 *dönüms* of land as the ancient pasture of Marmaracık.¹⁰⁷¹ In 1884, the villagers obtained a sharia court ruling backing up their claims.¹⁰⁷² Meanwhile, in spite of their legal advances over the years, the Mahrukizades did not let the villagers cultivate the contested lands. More than a decade later, Mahrukizade Ali Bey's other son, Cafer Bey, led a more aggressive legal battle against Marmaracık. To counter Cafer Bey, Marmaracık needed a more powerful ally, whom they found in the rising fortunes of Edhem Paşa.

On August 1898, the land registry official from the district of Ertuğrul visited Yenişehir for undertaking an investigation about the sale of some lands to Edhem Bey by villagers of Marmaracık. He interrogated the land registry official of Yenişehir, Hasan Efendi, who authorized this sale. Hasan Efendi told his superior that he undertook this sale based on the deed of Simon dated 5 Rebiulevvel 1285 (June 1868), the certification (*ilm-u haber*) produced by the village council of Marmaracık and a sharia court ruling that the villagers submitted as legal proofs of ownership. The official from Ertuğrul asked as to why he took the land on sale within the borders of Marmaracık, when in fact it was within Çardak village. Hasan Efendi responded that the deed presented designated the land in question as state-owned land, whereas Çardak village contained waqf lands. Therefore, he contended that the land should be in Marmaracık. The official from Ertuğrul, then, mentioned that the license of sale dispatched from the tax department clearly indicated that the taxes of the land on sale were being paid by the Mahrukizades. So, he asked Hasan Efendi, why he disregarded this information. Hasan Efendi replied by claiming that the villagers presented an ancient tax-stub (*atik vergi koçanı*) demonstrating that the taxes of this land were paid in the name of Marmaracık village. Furthermore, Hasan Efendi could find no records in

¹⁰⁷⁰ 11 Ağustos 1296, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷¹ 29 Şaban 1300, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷² 21 Temmuz 1314, ŞD 64-10.

the land registry office about Mahrukizades' ownership, whereas the villagers had deeds at hand.¹⁰⁷³

The official from Ertuğrul proceeded to ask how the sale of 140 *dönüms* of land (2 plots of 90 and 50 *dönüms*) in the same area took place between Edhem and the villagers, based on the prescriptive rights of ownership of the latter. Hasan Efendi replied that the villagers possessed a sharia court ruling dated 1300 hicra (ab ca. 1884) and they also obtained a certification from their village council indicating that the lands, which the villagers had inherited from their fathers, were under their possession for 30 years. The investigator from Ertuğrul pressured Hasan Efendi by stating that he had joined in an investigation of the Mahrukizade lands due to a contestation over a pasture before. Thus, he should have known that these lands in fact belonged to this family. Why on earth would he, then, let himself duped by a fake certification from the village? In response, Hasan Efendi claimed that such sales were done according to certifications from villages and that the cadastral office cannot ascertain the soundness of these documents. He added that there was no record about Mahrukizades at the land registry office; they should have sent the orders, official correspondences and court decisions to the land registry office for notification and record keeping.¹⁰⁷⁴

The investigator from Ertuğrul conceived that these sales depended on fabricated and previously voided documents of the villagers. The local land registry official, Hasan Efendi, was in fact an accomplice of Marmaracık villagers and Edhem Bey against Mahrukizade Cafer Bey. He thus notified Edhem to return the lands he occupied based on these sales back to the Mahrukizade family, and get a refund from the villagers.¹⁰⁷⁵ Edhem, on the other hand, argued that the Mahrukizades cannot expel him from the lands he "bought" without getting a court ruling ordering his evacuation. He claimed that the land registry office had no jurisdiction in this regard.¹⁰⁷⁶ Cafer Bey, on the other hand, continued his struggle by pressuring the Ministry of Land Registry to order the annulment of the villagers' fraudulent ownership documents at the district and *kaza* offices of land registry. He staunchly insisted on the correction of the records kept in

¹⁰⁷³ 21 Temmuz 1314, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷⁴ 21 Temmuz 1314, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷⁵ "Yenişehir Kasabası Hanedanından İzzetlü Edhem Beyefendiye," (21 Temmuz 1314), ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷⁶ 27 Temmuz 1314, ŞD 64-10.

Yenişehir, since he had to deal with the resurrection of the fraudulent documents that his father, Ali Bey, had actually voided.¹⁰⁷⁷ On March 1899, the official of the land registry office of Yenişehir formally notified Cafer Bey that the fake deeds of the villagers were canceled and removed from the records based on an order received from Ertuğrul.¹⁰⁷⁸

Cafer Bey did not merely pursue the interests of his family in courts and within the administrative framework of the Ottoman state. Just after the investigator left Yenişehir in the late summer of 1898, the villagers of Marmaracık wrote a petition to the Armenian Patriarchate in İstanbul. In the petition, the villagers stated that Cafer Bey and his brother were keeping 20-30 armed Albanians in their *çiftlik* located on the borders of Marmaracık. These Albanians obstructed the villagers' cultivation of their lands adjacent to the Mahrukizade's *çiftlik* by threatening them with guns. They were destroying the villagers' plowing tools and battering them. Moreover, they took the village pasture as an extension of the *çiftlik* lands, and therefore prevented the grazing of the animals belonging to the villagers. The Mahrukizades also built a corral nearby the water source flowing through Marmaracık. 8 or 10 armed shepherds and Albanians employed for the protection of this corral were driving away the animals of the villagers and even the passersby, who wanted to drink water. The villagers wrote that they were compelled to sell their animals, for they had indeed applied to the local government to no avail.¹⁰⁷⁹ Apparently, Mahrukizade family's enclosure strategies closely resembled Edhem Paşa's activities in this regard.

About six months later, during the spring of 1899, the Patriarchate re-applied to the Ministry of Interior on behalf of the Marmaracık villagers. Notwithstanding the Ministry of Interior's orders to the provincial administration of Hüdavendigar to address the problems of the villagers, Cafer Bey continued to threaten Marmaracık Armenians. This time, he himself went to his *çiftlik* and told the villagers that he would get their crops eaten up by his animals. The inhabitants of Marmaracık were perplexed and worried about their livelihoods. The Ministry of Interior ordered Hüdavendigar to undertake a quick investigation about this issue and inform the Ministry about its

¹⁰⁷⁷ 11 Ağustos 1314, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷⁸ 18 Mart 1315, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁷⁹ DH. TMIK. M 61-27.

outcome.¹⁰⁸⁰ Yet, the issue was quite deep indeed, because in spite of Cafer Bey's threats and the armed men he employed, Edhem Bey, who possessed even more Albanians under his command, continued to occupy the lands he "bought" from Marmaracık villagers.

In 1903, Cafer Bey succeeded in the conviction of the Marmaracık villagers and Hasan Efendi, the official who conducted the sale of Mahrukizade lands to Edhem, for fabricating fake certification documents (*ilm-u haber*) for conducting a fraudulent sale. Hasan Efendi was expelled from public employment for 3 months, and the villagers were sentenced to 3 month-long prison terms, cash fines and were subject to pay all the court expenses.¹⁰⁸¹ Facing Cafer Bey's legal and administrative advances, Edhem Paşa held tight to his previous legal position, as well as to his de-facto occupation of Mahrukizade lands. In 1905, he argued that Cafer Bey's conviction of the villagers and the local land registry official of Yenişehir due to fraud at the penal court had nothing to do with the sale of land to himself by the same villagers. He claimed that Cafer Bey had to sue him in a civil court for getting a permission to evict him by voiding his rights. Instead, Edhem was told to resort to a court after Cafer Bey annulled the sale through the administrative channels of the Ministry of Land Registration. Edhem thus contended that the executive powers of the late Ottoman state intervened in his personal rights, the protection of which fell into the jurisdiction of the judiciary.¹⁰⁸²

As a matter of fact, after 1902, Edhem's position became less tenable, because the Ottoman state got more actively involved in the issue as another related party. The Council of State began to investigate whether the lands that Edhem occupied were within the lands that the government "bought" for the immigrant village of Hamidiye from the Mahrukizades.¹⁰⁸³ Actually, the sale between the Ottoman government (on behalf of the immigrant community of Hamidiye) and the Mahrukizade family had not yet finalized; the family insisted on the sale of their whole lands with their actual worth, whereas the government insisted on buying only the lands occupied by the immigrants

¹⁰⁸⁰ DH. TMIK. M 61-27.

¹⁰⁸¹ 28 K. evvel 1318, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁸² 14 Eylül 1321, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁸³ 23 Mart 1318; 16 Şubat 1317, ŞD 64-10.

for a price far below their market price.¹⁰⁸⁴ At any rate, the lands occupied by Edhem were indeed earmarked for Hamidiye villagers, to whom Edhem unofficially “sold” (or rented out) after usurping from the Mahrukizades.¹⁰⁸⁵ When the issue between Mahrukizades and Edhem took this risky turn, Edhem tried to get the district administration of Ertuğrul pass false information to İstanbul about the nature of these lands. Thus, the district replied the inquiry of the Council of State by indicating that the contested lands occupied by Edhem were not within the lands that the government bought for the immigrants.¹⁰⁸⁶ Apparently, this false statement did not hold, and Bursa informed the Council of State that these lands were indeed within the lands designated for the immigrants within the Mahrukizades’ waqf lands.¹⁰⁸⁷

After this setback, Edhem changed his strategy; he argued that the lands he bought were different from the lands, which Cafer Bey conclusively proved as belonging to the Mahrukizade family through all the court cases and administrative initiatives he undertook since the late 1890s. In 1906, Edhem had been cultivating¹⁰⁸⁸ the Mahrukizade lands under his possession for about 10 years. When he was finally cornered by Cafer Bey through legal and administrative channels, he opted for more fraud to blur his long-time usurpation.¹⁰⁸⁹ By using the administrative tools of the local government, he engineered another fraudulent sale.¹⁰⁹⁰ This time, he “bought” some lands at a region called, *Kuyular Boğazı*, again in the middle of Mahrukizade lands. The local administration estimated the title of these lands as their actual worth and prepared a fictitious sale contract between Edhem and Mahrukizades, according to which the former allegedly paid the depressed price to the latter. With the documents pertaining to his ownership of land at *Kuyular Boğazı*, Edhem argued that he did not intervene in the Mahrukizade lands earmarked for the immigrants; rather the land he “bought” and “occupied” was located at *Kuyular Boğazı* and added that an investigation on the

¹⁰⁸⁴ See chapter 3, pp. 213-214.

¹⁰⁸⁵ 23 Mart 1318, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁸⁶ The district justifies its reply by referring to the records of (the annulled fake) deeds of the villagers obtained during the land survey of early 1860s, following the promulgation of the Land Law of 1858. 16 Şubat 1317, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁸⁷ 23 Mart 1318, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁸⁸ He was most probably renting out these lands to Hamidiye villagers.

¹⁰⁸⁹ 26 Temmuz 1322, ŞD 64-10.

¹⁰⁹⁰ 27 Temmuz 1322, ŞD 64-10.

ground would prove his point. Cafer Bey got mad about Edhem's bold moves (he refers to Edhem Paşa as "Katil Ahmedzade Edhem Paşa", i.e. the son of Ahmed the Murderer Edhem Paşa, in his petition to the Council of State about this issue); he conceived that not only Yenişehir, but also Ertuğrul engaged in fraud and deceit by changing land records, and submitting false information to Bursa and İstanbul. He managed to initiate yet another investigation on the ground, which detected Edhem's accomplices in Yenişehir and Ertuğrul. But, the report of the investigator somehow got lost in Bursa! Meanwhile, Cafer Bey found a valuable ally in Bursa; governor Tevfik Bey, who heedfully opposed Edhem Paşa. The governor succeeded in evacuating Edhem from Mahrukizade lands.¹⁰⁹¹

But, the game was not over for Edhem even after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. In the early 1909, Edhem's armed men attacked Cafer Bey's *çiftlik*; they damaged property and used guns against the *çiftlik* guards. Cafer Bey's intendant, İbrahim Çavuş applied to the local government to file a complaint against the attackers. Yet, he himself was imprisoned by the local government.¹⁰⁹² Moreover, Edhem got the Ministry of Interior to warn Cafer Bey through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he was employed. Accordingly, the imprudence of the intendant İbrahim Çavuş and Cafer Bey's employment of some dubious men as guards had caused crimes such as murder and injuries. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was supposed to tell its employee to change his *çiftlik* intendant, and to warn him to apply to the local government about the issues pertaining to his *çiftlik* lands, rather than taking unilateral actions.¹⁰⁹³ Edhem Paşa's clashes with Mahrukizade Cafer Bey ceased only after Edhem Paşa was imprisoned in Mytilene following the failed counter coup of 1909.

¹⁰⁹¹ "Şura-yı Devlet Riyaset-i Celilesi..." from Bab-ı Ali Hukuk Müşavir Muavinlerinden Cafer (14 Haziran 1324), ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰⁹² DH. MKT 2706-6.

¹⁰⁹³ DH. MKT 2706-25.

6.5.5. Cashing out Threats and Non-existing Lands: Swindling in a Dwindling Empire

The weight of local relations of power in the distribution of land rendered the “outsiders”, such as Cafer Bey and Cemile Sultan vulnerable to fraud and encroachments on their lands. However, they were not the only outsiders, who had stakes in the rural resources of Yenişehir. By the early 20th century, significant number of immigrant households had already settled in the *kaza*. These people were late-comers to the land market. As such, their access to rural resources was more at the mercy of local balances of power than the native inhabitants’. After 1902, Edhem became both the municipal mayor and the head of the immigration commission of Yenişehir. Moreover, he implanted his followers into the waqf commission, which monitored the utilization of waqf resources in the *kaza*. Edhem’s substantial power meant that he could play with potentially conflicting interests of the native and immigrant inhabitants of Yenişehir for making money. Thus, what he did to the Greek villagers of Derbend was not a unique case; rather he resorted to extortion and deceit in many other contestations over rural resources. His Machiavellianism led him to discover some creative ways of cashing out his power within the socio-economic context of the late Hamidian Empire.

One strategy that Edhem Paşa utilized for extracting money from rural communities was posing threats to their access to land, water resources and pastures, only to cease his obstructions after getting money from the people. For example, he decided to build a watermill on the “vacant lands” in the vicinity of the immigrant Selimiye (Kabaçınar) village. The villagers staunchly resisted his attempts, since the mill would restrict their access to water and also might flood their lands in its vicinity. Eventually, Edhem Paşa imprisoned 7 villagers and told the inhabitants of Selimiye to pay him 75 *liras* in order for him to release the imprisoned villagers, and to forgo the construction of the mill. The villagers handed him the money he asked. When the Paşa was asked about this 75 *liras* in the following investigation, he merely replied that he owned some lands there and sold them to the villagers.¹⁰⁹⁴

¹⁰⁹⁴ BEO 3077-230757.

Although the immigrant communities were more vulnerable, the native villages were also deterred by what Edhem was capable of doing in relation to the distribution of land. For example, in the native village of Subaşı, there were about 1000 *dönüms* of under-utilized lands. Edhem threatened Subaşı with settling immigrants within the borders of their village unless they pay him 80 *liras*. The villagers bargained with Edhem and succeeded in decreasing the amount he wanted to 40 *liras*. Every household within the village paid 45 *kuruş* for forestalling the settlement of a new immigrant community within the village lands. Apparently, this bargain was sort of “secret”, since the villagers filed a complaint to the local government before anybody else heard of the incident.¹⁰⁹⁵

One question that comes to mind is whether there was a significant inflow of immigrants to Yenişehir during the early 20th century. According to the Yearbooks of Hüdavendigâr, Yenişehir’s population increased from 34.459 in 1898 to 45.306 in 1907.¹⁰⁹⁶ However, the number of villages remained almost the same, merely increasing from 110 to 111.¹⁰⁹⁷ Hence, although Yenişehir should have received some new population, the incoming people were probably not new immigrant communities; they should be households, which united with their co-villagers from their places of origin. Other documents also do not hint mass Muslim immigration as it happened during 1880s and 1890s.¹⁰⁹⁸ The relatively more gradual nature of immigration did not extinguish Edhem’s aspirations to profit from the immigrants’ potential demand for the land market. In addition to playing with pre-existing tensions generated by previous waves of immigration, he “imported” Muslim villagers, who remained in the Balkans. For instance, the immigrants, who invaded the lands of the Greek Derbend village were referred as Edhem’s “*çiftlik* immigrants” (*çiftlik muhacirleri*) in the documents.¹⁰⁹⁹ Thus, some of the newcomers formed a societal base of support for Edhem by forming a patron-client relationship with him.

¹⁰⁹⁵ BEO 3077-230757; “Rüşvet Meselesi”, ŞD 1601-27.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1316, 317; Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325, 68.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1316, 317-320; Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325, 124.

¹⁰⁹⁸ In fact, about 10.000 new inhabitants recorded for Yenişehir in between 1898 and 1907 is substantial for a town like Yenişehir. Either the population figures recorded for 1898 were artificially low due to undercounts or there were some other population movements in addition to the Muslim immigrants from Rumelia. For example, due to the Armenian crisis of mid-1890s in especially eastern Anatolia, Yenişehir might have received some non-Muslim population from these regions as well.

¹⁰⁹⁹ 15 Nisan 1324, ŞD 1601-27.

Some other new immigrant communities, however, fell prey to Edhem's swindling schemes. A case in point is an immigrant community from Karlovo in central Bulgaria, which Edhem summoned to Yenişehir through some intermediaries with promises of cheap, abundant lands. Before the arrival of the community, he bought Karakilise çiftliği, which contained 800 dönüms of land, for 800 liras. When the immigrants from Karlovo arrived, he showed them the lands on sale as if they were far extensive than 800 dönüms. He thus "informally" sold the lands of Karakilise çiftliği for 3.200 liras to the immigrants. When the immigrants attempted to use the lands they bought, native inhabitants, who actually owned those lands, resorted to courts and the local government. Consequently, Karlovo immigrants understood that they were swindled by Edhem. They had already made a down-payment of 2.600 liras. They asked Edhem to cancel their remaining debt of about 500 liras. Edhem told them that he sold them only the lands of Karakilise çiftliği and therefore they needed to pay the remaining money.¹¹⁰⁰

Edhem not only played with the supply side of the land market, but he also manipulated demand for land by importing rural populations from outside. Most of these immigrant communities, who were unfamiliar with local usages of land and local relations of power governing the land market, became either tools of Edhem's power or his easy preys. But, besides the immigrant communities, many local notables, who knew the dubious undertakings of Edhem, lost their properties to him, because of his unmatched command of means of violence and the political shield that the late Hamidian regime provided him. For example, Sölözlü Mehmed Ağa's son, Sölözlü Ahmed Ağa bought a çiftlik in Mesnöz in partnership with Edhem Paşa. Ahmed Ağa held a quarter share of the çiftlik, but Edhem used the whole çiftlik until he sold it to somebody else without compensating Ahmed Ağa.¹¹⁰¹ So, why did the rich and poor, native and immigrant, Muslim and non-Muslim, in other words, people from all walks of life in Yenişehir unequivocally yield to Edhem? What did they face beyond Edhem's tentacles on the rural resources of the kaza?

¹¹⁰⁰ "Dolandırcılığı" ŞD 1601-27.

¹¹⁰¹ 15 Nisan 1324, ŞD 1601-27; "Emlak-ı miriye ve mevkuferin fulen zapt ve şuna buna tefviziyle ve kendi uhdesine kaydı," ŞD 1601-27.

6.6. Making a Dent in Edhem's Enterprise: A "Hamidian" Governor against Edhem Paşa

At the turn of the 20th century, it was indeed difficult to become a political figure as powerful as Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir. The *kaza* was not only close to İstanbul, but it also had vocal Ottoman subjects, who were relatively prosperous and willing to make use of the proximity of the town to the imperial capital for their own ends. Thus, Edhem had to juggle too many balls at once in order to preserve his power in the local political arena, where even villagers submitted photographs to the imperial capital just to get him jailed. Just like his father, Ahmed Bey and grandfather, Osman Bey, Edhem Paşa was "rich", yet he was in constant need of money. No matter how much he swindled, stole, usurped and oppressed the people, he was still indebted.¹¹⁰² His enterprise was surely begetting money; but keeping it up required even more money. He needed money to give generous feasts to his clients at his *çiftlik*s; to buy out officials; to pay indemnities to the courts; to present "gifts" to palace officials; to look after his allies and followers and to feed and keep quite a lot of armed men under his command; to cover up his losses due to tax-farming. As the boss of his own enterprise, he had to generate income beyond swindling and usurpation. In order to turn the wheels of his politically fortified business, he thus engaged in many other ventures.

So far, we have seen that Edhem Paşa undertook tax-farming, animal husbandry, rice cultivation and operating mills. He also possessed income-generating urban properties, such as a hotel (*khan*) with a coffeehouse and some shops at the town center. Yet, these business ventures were not purely economic; rather they involved political enticement and clashes of interest with different societal groups and individuals. By 1906, Edhem Paşa concentrated so much power at his hands that he could even get *kaymakams* dismissed quite easily. While Hacı Osman Ağa needed to mobilize the whole town to get rid of *kaymakam* "Tefeci" Ramazan Efendi (i.e. Ramazan Efendi the Usurer) in mid-1880s, Edhem was his own man, acting unilaterally and high-handedly

¹¹⁰² In addition to his bankruptcy due to the tax-farming of 1310 (when cholera broke out in the region), in 1904 he owed the state 83.398 kuruş for the tax-farming of the fiscal year 1316. He could pay about 19.000 kuruş of this debt. For his remaining debt, his properties designated as collateral were seized by the state. ŞD 412-2.

in Yenişehir. Hence, his clashes with various parties generated many enemies staunchly opposing Edhem's quasi-legal economic and political activities in Yenişehir.

Since Edhem leaned his back on some powerful cliques in Yıldız Palace, the judicial institutions within the provincial administration did not, at best, want to get entangled with his illegal actions,¹¹⁰³ let alone intervene on behalf of his opponents. In this context, Edhem Paşa's opponents also turned to the real source of power, namely, Yıldız Palace, to resist his assertive actions. In 1905-1906, a local merchant called Gökğöz Hacı Mustafa Efendi led the opposing faction against Edhem in Yenişehir. Excessive factionalism in Yenişehir coalesced with the excessively frictional politics of Yıldız Palace.¹¹⁰⁴ Each faction in Yenişehir sided with a specific faction in Yıldız Palace. Consequently, the functioning of judicial channels and hierarchical provincial administration were seriously paralyzed. As a result, at no time since mid-1850s, the imperial center was so much present in the affairs of Yenişehir to the detriment of societal balance and peace. Politics in Yenişehir became the alter-ego of the corrupt, factional politics of Yıldız Palace.

Had he lived, Ahmed Vefik Paşa would have finally found his match in Yenişehir in the persona of Edhem Paşa. But, the long reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II also produced some antidotes to the corrupt regime that it evolved into through favoritism, spying and nepotism. After 1900s, governors and *kaymakams*, who were graduates of *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* began to serve in Bursa and Yenişehir. Although these state-officials functioned within the autocratic late Hamidian regime, professionalization of civil service and modern higher education created a disposition in some of these bureaucrats to execute the rule of law against dubiously held political positions, like Edhem's, in the provinces. This new generation of bureaucrats, on the one hand, strove to keep their heads above water within the arbitrariness and stressful ambiguities of palace politics; on the other hand, they were acutely aware of the fact that the degenerated Hamidian regime harmed the social fabric, administrative

¹¹⁰³ For example, in a case involving Edhem's illegal sale and usurpation of stolen cattles brought to the municipality, the public and judicial prosecutors of Ertuğrul tried to avoid taking up the case by arguing that it falls into the jurisdiction of the other prosecutor. The judicial prosecutor attempted to disown the case by claiming that Edhem was some sort of government employee due to his municipal mayorship. DH. MKT 962-61.

¹¹⁰⁴ For the frictional politics of the Yıldız Palace see, İsmail Müştak Mayakon, *Mabeyn Kâtibinin Kaleminden Abdülhamid ve Çevresi: Yıldız'da Neler Gördüm?*, ed. Ali Yılmaz (İstanbul: Dün Bugün Yarın Yayınları, 2010); Süleyman Kâni İrtem, *Sultan Abdülhamid ve Yıldız Kamarillası: Yıldız Sarayı'nda Paşalar, Beyler, Ağalar ve Şeyhler*, ed. Osman S. Kocahanoğlu (İstanbul: Temel, 2003); François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid: Abdülhamid II, le Sultan Calife*, ed. Kerem Ünüvar. trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: İletişim, 2016).

machinery and judicial institutions.¹¹⁰⁵ Thus, in 1905-1906, opponents of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir and in İstanbul found worthwhile allies in two name-sake *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* graduates: *Kaymakam* Tevfik Bey¹¹⁰⁶ and governor Tevfik Bey. The two Tevfiks meddled in the affairs of Edhem Paşa, being determined to give him a hard time in his business ventures. Edhem smoothly toppled the *kaymakam*; whereas the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 took place before he could settle his accounts with the governor.

6.6.1. Problems Caused by Edhem Paşa's Rice Cultivation¹¹⁰⁷

Kaymakam Mehmed Tevfik Bey made a rather promising start to his career in Yenişehir. Just like Tefeci Ramazan Efendi, he obtained a promotion of his rank soon after his appointment to the *kaza* in 1905.¹¹⁰⁸ Since promotions of *kaymakams* were usually initiated by recommendation of local administrative councils, we can surmise that Tevfik Bey most probably concurred with Edhem Paşa at the beginning of his term in Yenişehir. However, animosity between the two men erupted soon. Tevfik Bey found an oppositionary group in the town, which was ever ready to support him against the Paşa. Hence, he dismissed Edhem Paşa from municipal mayorship, and appointed the leader of the oppositionary camp, Gökgöz Mustafa Efendi, in his stead.¹¹⁰⁹ Edhem Paşa in turn resorted to his connections in Yıldız Palace to get the *kaymakam* dismissed. Meanwhile, in March 1906, a new governor, Tevfik Bey replaced Mümtaz Reşid Paşa in Bursa. As we shall see below, Edhem Paşa had indeed forged an affinity with Mümtaz Reşid Paşa. But, unlike his predecessor, the new governor, Tevfik Bey chose to stand behind the *kaymakam* to curb Edhem Paşa's excesses in Yenişehir.

¹¹⁰⁵ Engin Akarlı describes this situation as "a general sense of alienation among the young bureaucrats". Akarlı, "Tangled Ends," 363.

¹¹⁰⁶ In the yearbook of 1906, the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir is recorded as Mehmed Tevfik Bey (Mekteb-i Mülkiye-i Şahane'den mezun), *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 364.

¹¹⁰⁷ A short article about this issue was published by Sinan Çuluk. Sinan Çuluk, "Bursa Yenişehir Eşrafından Edhem Paşa'nın Hüdavendigâr Valisi Tevfik Bey ile Olan Çeltik Anlaşmazlığı," in *Tarihten Günümüze Yenişehir Sempozyumu (Bildiri kitabı)*, ed. Mefail Hızlı and Sezai Sevim (Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2014), 337-347.

¹¹⁰⁸ İ. TAL. 367-48.

¹¹⁰⁹ DH. TMIK. S 72-12.

In October 1906, the new governor learned that İstanbul unilaterally dismissed the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir without seeking his opinion. He immediately warned the Ministry of the Interior that even if the *kaymakam* was appointed outside of the province with a promotion of his rank, his replacement would be still conceived as Edhem Paşa's initiative by the people, because the *kaymakam* and Edhem had been on bad terms. He added that such an administrative act would damage the reputation of the local government. He thus asked the ministry either to let him keep his post in Yenişehir, or to appoint him to Edremit within the province.¹¹¹⁰ Indeed, the governor had met Edhem Paşa immediately after his appointment to Bursa, and warned him to get the required rice cultivation permits in the next agricultural season for his rice fields.¹¹¹¹ About six months after his appointment to Bursa, Tevfik Bey could successfully avert Edhem Paşa's initiative to change the *kaymakam*, who stood up against him.

During the spring of 1907, Edhem Paşa's opponents, who were possibly encouraged by the decisive attitudes of the *kaymakam* and the governor, initiated a new round of attack against the Paşa by flooding İstanbul with complaint petitions. Eventually, the Grand Vizier, Avlonyalı Ferid Paşa, ordered the governor to keep Edhem Paşa at the provincial capital, while he was being tried for multiple charges in Bursa. Various plaintiffs and witnesses were summoned from Yenişehir to testify in the court. Meanwhile, the *kaymakam* helped out with the investigation of the Paşa's actions at the locality. His extortions from Selimiye with the threat of building a mill and from Subaşı with the promise of sparing the village from new immigrant settlements were brought forth as his older crimes. His exploitation of some villagers as forced labor in his agricultural enterprises, his interventions to the local government and use of influence for manipulating local administration were also brought to the court. But, the most pressing problem for many inhabitants of Yenişehir was the Paşa's rice cultivation. He flooded many people's gardens, vineyards and lands while irrigating his rice fields. When people tried to resist him, he had their grown mulberry trees cut down by his armed men at nights. He grazed his animals on the crops of some other people, thereby destroying their harvest. He usurped lands and properties of some inhabitants to cultivate rice or he put them in other uses for his own economic interests. He beat up

¹¹¹⁰ DH. ŞFR 372-47.

¹¹¹¹ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 458.

whomever he wished; the people were afraid of suing him, because he would harm them at his convenience.¹¹¹²

At the same time, Edhem Paşa applied to the province and asked for an inspection of his rice fields in order to get the required cultivation permits. Per custom, the mufti and the land registry official of the district of Ertuğrul were sent to Yenişehir to inspect the fields. On May 1907, they submitted their report to the province, indicating that the fields did not meet the standards required in the Regulations on Rice (*Pirinç Nizamnamesi*), and the method of irrigation flooded the lands in the vicinity of the fields, causing damage to other parties.¹¹¹³ Plucked off from his base of power in Yenişehir due to his ongoing trial in Bursa, and having failed to get the rice cultivation permits, Edhem Paşa sought the intervention of his powerful protectors at Yıldız Palace more aggressively than before. His immediate contact in the palace was Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey, who in turn worked closely with one of the most influential political figures of the Empire then, Başkatib Tahsin Paşa. Soon enough, Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey began to pressure governor Tevfik Bey to get him treat Edhem Paşa more mildly by implying that the *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul and the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir belonged to a faction opposing the one Edhem belonged to in Yıldız Palace.¹¹¹⁴ Hence, not only Yenişehir was in discord due to frictions between Edhem and his opponents, but also Yıldız Palace was split into competing factions, which liberally intervened in local administration on behalf of their political adherents in the provinces.

To turn back to the issue of rice, Edhem Paşa objected the report prepared by the officials sent from the district, claiming that these officials acted spitefully by writing that rice had already been cultivated in the fields and that the local inhabitants complained about the cultivation. The provincial administration in turn appointed a second committee made up of the province's agricultural inspector, a teacher from the school of agriculture in Bursa and the district engineer of Ertuğrul. The report prepared by this second committee affirmed the first report.¹¹¹⁵ The rice fields of the Paşa were closer to the settled areas than the required minimum distance, and he indeed flooded

¹¹¹² BEO 3077-230757. Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 458.

¹¹¹³ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 458.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 461. Biren's memoirs refers to Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey as "Esvapçıbaşı İlyas Bey". It should be a transliteration mistake of the editor of the memoirs.

lands belonging to other people and a common pasture while irrigating his fields. Upon receiving these two reports, the provincial administrative council decided to extirpate the Paşa's 30-40 *dönüms* of cultivated rice and informed the local administration of Yenişehir about the decision.¹¹¹⁶

Edhem Paşa in turn, applied to the provincial administration, claiming that he would harvest the rice in ten days. As such, he requested deferment of extirpation in exchange for paying one *mecidiye* cash fine per each *dönüm*. The provincial administration accepted this offer, but warned him that in case the flooding did not cease and the harvest did not happen in ten days, the previous extirpation decision would be executed. The Paşa, however, spent the 10-day grace period in applying to the Ministry of Interior, complaining about the province's decision. As a matter of fact, it was not possible to harvest the rice in 10 days; he had to wait until August to reap the produce anyway.¹¹¹⁷ Apparently, the Paşa tried to buy some time for his contacts at the Yıldız Palace to intervene on his behalf. Indeed, he managed to get the Ministry of Interior side with him. Alas, the governor had the Paşa's rice extirpated!¹¹¹⁸

Although, governor Tevfik Bey won the second round against Edhem Paşa by extirpating his illegally cultivated rice, he had to step back from his first victory of keeping *kaymakam* Tevfik Bey in Yenişehir. On July 1907, notwithstanding the governor's backing, the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir was about to be dismissed. Governor Tevfik Bey wrote to the Ministry of Interior: "...My humble opinion is that the *kaymakam* is a competent official and all ill-founded complaints about him are brought forth by either Edhem Paşa or his followers..." He stressed that Edhem Paşa's animosity towards the *kaymakam* waxed, when documents of investigation about him were compiled in Yenişehir during his forced stay in Bursa. The governor claimed that the *kaymakam*'s dismissal would further terrify the plaintiffs, who were already intimidated by the Paşa's potency; hence the people would not be able to come forward in the court testifying against the Paşa. On top of these, Tevfik Bey, repeated that the transfer of the *kaymakam* to elsewhere would be attributed to the Paşa's authority and prestige by the local people, which would mean that the new *kaymakam* sent in his place, would start

¹¹¹⁶ DH. ŞFR 385-57.

¹¹¹⁷ DH. ŞFR 385-57.

¹¹¹⁸ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 461.

up from a disadvantaged position. Having acted against a powerful faction in Yıldız Palace, the governor apparently conceded that he had to sacrifice the *kaymakam* soon. So, he offered Uşak as a suitable post for the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir.¹¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, Edhem Paşa was making bold political moves by tirelessly lobbying the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the Grand Vizier for his release from Bursa. Esvaçıbaşı İsmet Bey, on the other hand, kept pressuring governor Tevfik Bey through informal channels. The trial in Bursa seemed to be diluted and elongated, partly due to ceaseless complaints and political agitations of Edhem's opponents in Yenişehir. Thus, in spite of the district's and province's objections, Edhem Paşa succeeded in getting the permission to return to Yenişehir towards the end of the summer of 1907.¹¹²⁰ As soon as Edhem Paşa returned to Yenişehir, a roar of complaints rose from the town as the district and the province had anticipated. Petitions from the *kaza* flooded Bursa, because the Paşa lost no time in taking revenge from his opponents. He gave orders to his shepherds to get his sheep eat up the newly harvested crops of his enemies. His release before the finalization of the long processes of appeal and the indeterminate outcome of his current trial terrified the Paşa's adversaries in the town. Some people sent telegraphs to Bilecik and Bursa, stating that they were on their way to Bursa with their families for being settled elsewhere, because they would be subject to the Paşa's suppression in Yenişehir even more than before.¹¹²¹ Edhem Paşa's opponents' usage of the ancient leitmotiv of fleeing might as well be a rhetorical threat to the government, nonetheless, it demonstrated that the political turbulence in the *kaza* would not cease soon.

6.6.2. A Short Interlude to the Issue of Rice: More Problems with the Mills and Tobacco Cultivation

During the fall of 1907, Edhem Paşa once again became a headache for the governor of Bursa. This time, the provincial administration was trying to address complaints of the people, whose lands were flooded due to improperly built mill dikes

¹¹¹⁹ DH. ŞFR 384-12.

¹¹²⁰ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 463-464.

¹¹²¹ DH. ŞFR 386-13.

in Yenişehir. When the local administration attempted to implement the orders of the district by demolishing and re-building the dikes of a mill in a village, Edhem Paşa summoned the owner of the mill and encouraged him to resist the construction. Then, he gathered his men to obstruct execution of the provincial administration's decision to re-built unscientifically built dikes. Governor Tevfik Bey sent the province's police director to Yenişehir in order to investigate the issue, as well as to prevent eruption of troubles. Edhem Paşa opposed the re-building of the mill dikes, because he himself owned mills. When the governor invited Edhem Paşa to Bursa to discuss the problem, he disappeared. Soon, it turned out that he took quite a lot of money from his *çiftlik* and fled to İstanbul with his carriage via Karamürsel. After arriving at Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey's house, he had eight of his horses transferred to İstanbul. Meanwhile, his followers were circulating rumors, claiming that the Paşa would be received by the sultan and he would be honored with promotion of his rank thanks to the "recommendations" of Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey, Başkatip Tahsin Paşa and the Minister of Interior, Memduh Paşa.¹¹²²

Tevfik Bey got extremely worried about the possibility that this palace faction, which was overtly trying to preclude the prosecution of the Paşa, would provoke the sultan against him as well. He thus reverted to the methods of his adversary, and tried to reach the ear of the sultan through his own informal contacts at the palace. In a personal letter addressed to Sultan Abdülhamid, he summarized all the troubles caused by Edhem Paşa and how he himself was cornered by the interventions of the palace officials. At the same time, Tevfik Bey continued to receive "letters of recommendation" regarding Edhem from Tahsin Paşa, which openly threatened him. Fearing his own dismissal, the governor tried to appease Tahsin Paşa by submitting letters written in a concessionary tone to him. When this powerful palace faction finally contended that they have indeed "disciplined" the governor sufficiently, Edhem Paşa returned to Bursa in December 1907, equipped with a letter of recommendation from Tahsin Paşa.¹¹²³ A couple of months later, the Paşa sent a telegraph to the province and requested yet another investigation about the dikes of his mill and his rice fields, claiming that previous investigations and executive actions regarding his rice fields and mill depended on

¹¹²² Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 465-467.

¹¹²³ *Ibid.*, 467-471.

“wrong proclamations”. When Tevfik Bey rejected his request, both Esvabçıbaşı İsmet Bey and Tahsin Paşa immediately intervened to back up the Paşa.¹¹²⁴

By early 1908, Edhem Paşa should have achieved in getting a new *kaymakam*, who would definitely side with him, appointed to Yenişehir. During his stay in İstanbul, he somehow obtained the Minister of Interior, Memduh Paşa’s sympathy.¹¹²⁵ After the dismissal of *kaymakam* Tevfik Bey, an acting *kaymakam* was appointed to look into the affairs of Yenişehir during the fall of 1907.¹¹²⁶ The demolishing of the dikes should have happened during the short-term of this acting *kaymakam*. Simultaneously with Edhem Paşa’s return to Yenişehir from İstanbul, Rüşdü Efendi was appointed as the new *kaymakam*. Thus, the Paşa’s request of the renewal of local investigations was most probably a bet depending on the influence of the newly appointed *kaymakam*, who would favor him at all costs, thanks to his affiliation with the same palace faction. In March 1908, a committee headed by the *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul indeed undertook a new investigation about Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir.¹¹²⁷

This new investigation, which ostensibly scrutinized Edhem Paşa’s activities in Yenişehir, in fact aimed at cleansing him. Namely, this investigation mainly revolved around the alliance between Edhem Paşa and the new *kaymakam*, Rüşdü Efendi. First complaint that the committee addressed was that *kaymakam* Rüşdü Efendi bumped into Edhem Paşa and “borrowed” 32 *liras* from him before arriving at Yenişehir. Furthermore, he was obliged to Edhem Paşa for the feasts he attended at the Paşa’s *çiftlik*. Thus, the complainants claimed that the *kaymakam* served the interests of the Paşa through his official capacities. Even though the investigation committee stressed that the main cause of discontent in Yenişehir was the *kaymakam*’s partiality for Edhem Paşa, they took this complaint unfounded, since they could not locate any concrete evidence in this regard.¹¹²⁸

¹¹²⁴ Ibid., 472-473.

¹¹²⁵ Ibid., 467. It is interesting that Memduh Paşa was actually portrayed as a moderate political figure, who tried to resist factional politics of the Yıldız Palace, see Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, “Nazırlar, Müsteşarlar: Mehmed Memduh Paşa,” in *Maruf Simalar*, ed. Selçuk Akşin Somel and Mehmet Kalpaklı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 392-400.

¹¹²⁶ “Kaymakam vekili maiyyet memurlarından Yusuf Abbas Bey” *Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Salnamesi 1325*, 456.

¹¹²⁷ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹¹²⁸ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

The second complaint was that *kaymakam* Rüşdü Efendi dismissed the members of the waqf commission and appointed Edhem's followers in their stead. The investigation committee stated that in reality, there were two competing factions in Yenişehir: One headed by Edhem; the other led by the municipal mayor, Gökgöz Mustafa Efendi. Whoever from each faction was appointed to critical posts of local administration, the other faction strongly objected. Recently, the waqf commission and the educational commission of the *kaza* were detached from each other, and the affairs of the waqfs in Yenişehir were overhauled by the waqf official of the district. Thus, the committee did not consider this complaint worthy of further scrutiny.¹¹²⁹

As a matter of fact, another complaint regarding the local waqf administration in Yenişehir alleged that Edhem Paşa owed 30.000 *kuruş*, and his followers owed 90.000 *kuruş* to the waqf treasury. These substantial debts could not be liquidated due to the Paşa's authority. The committee could not locate any records about Edhem Paşa's debts to the waqfs, while the debts of his followers amounted merely to 9.900 *kuruş*, which were properly secured.¹¹³⁰ Their conclusions and comments demonstrate that the committee was in a rather difficult situation. On the one hand, it is not surprising that they too were intimidated by Edhem Paşa's influence and power, since even the governor feared what the Paşa was capable of doing through his powerful protectors in the palace. For this reason, the committee was unwilling to dig the truth out of the Paşa's informal arrangements. On the other hand, the frictional local political arena and some very obvious misconducts of the Paşa compelled the committee to address some issues, at least in between the lines of their report. Thus, while they chose to turn a blind eye on the possibility that the Paşa might have played with the waqf funds off-the-record, they had to tacitly concede that he indeed implanted his men in the waqf commission through his influence over the *kaymakam*.

The ambiguous attitude of the committee runs through the whole report. Whenever the committee needed to address a misdeed pointing out Edhem Paşa, they singled out the *kaymakam* and *naib* as the real culprits, whose affinity with the Paşa was allegedly the real source of troubles. For example, another complaint was that *kaymakam* Rüşdü Efendi threatened the opponents of the Paşa by telling them that they

¹¹²⁹ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹¹³⁰ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

would be ruined unless they make their peace with Edhem Paşa. The committee endorsed this claim without seeking further evidence, since “they felt that the *kaymakam* indeed tended toward Edhem Paşa”. (...*kaymakamın Paşa'ya mütemayil olduğu hissedilmiştir.*) In a similar vein, villagers from Çardak and Çeltikçi, who clashed with Edhem Paşa over their common pasture, were imprisoned for 15 days when they attempted to send a telegraph containing their complaints to the district administration. The committee, likewise, concluded that both the *kaymakam* and the *naib* threatened the villagers with a view of catering to the interests of the Paşa.¹¹³¹

On the other hand, the investigation committee consistently failed to find evidence for claims that directly spelled Edhem Paşa as the culprit. For example, another complaint was that the professional petitioners and lawyers (*arzuhalcilik ve vekalet eden kişiler*) were told not to write telegraphs against Edhem Paşa and the *kaymakam*. The committee slipped over this claim by stating that the petitioners were merely warned not to engage in activities contravening law and propriety, when in fact they ratified, in the same report, that some people could be jailed in Yenişehir for complaining Edhem to higher authorities. Another complaint was that Edhem Paşa got someone, who testified against him in the Bursa court, fined. The committee explained away this issue by stating that a villager sued the *kolcus* at the court of first instance in Yenişehir for beating him up, insulting him, and extorting cash from him. The *kolcus* acquitted and the villager had to pay all the court fees.¹¹³² The committee did not seem to take into account the fact that the *kolcus* were actually Edhem's armed men; while the *naib*, who headed the court, was his close affiliate.

One of the most serious allegations against Edhem was his employment of some men armed with rifles in his *çiftlik*s and mansion. This was an “open secret”, probably witnessed and known by all the contemporaries of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir and by many other people beyond Yenişehir. Yet, the committee stated that they have not seen men armed with rifles working for Edhem Paşa. In their report, they reminded that this practice is forbidden anyway- as if “forbidden” was a binding word for the ruthless Paşa. So, the committee settled for verbally ordering the confiscation of such weapons,

¹¹³¹ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹¹³² DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

if they were seen in anybody's possession.¹¹³³ Local people, who were present when the *mutasarrıf* gave this order, should have taken it as a joke.

The investigation committee concluded their report by highlighting that they did not consider intentions of Edhem Paşa's opponents lawful and their complaints justified; rather the real problem for them was *kaymakam* Rüşdü Efendi's and *naib* Tevfik Efendi's inclination towards the Paşa.¹¹³⁴ Meanwhile, *kaymakam* Rüşdü Efendi wrote a personal letter to the *mutasarrıf* of Ertuğrul, who undertook the investigation. In the letter, he not only disobeyed and challenged the orders of the *mutasarrıf* regarding implementation of regulations about tobacco cultivation, but also breached propriety by blackmailing him with his contacts at the Yıldız Palace.¹¹³⁵ Apparently, Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi and some other opponents of Edhem Paşa had applied to the local government to get tobacco cultivation permits. The *kaymakam* had to forward these requests to the Régie administration. Instead, he withheld them upon Edhem Paşa's prompting.¹¹³⁶ Edhem Paşa was, at the same time, the safeguarding official of the Régie (*Reji Muhafaza Memuru*) in Yenişehir. In April, cultivation season of tobacco approached, yet the Paşa's opponents could not obtain their permits. Since the seedlings of tobacco were produced a couple of months before the cultivation season, Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi and his followers were compelled to either incur serious financial losses in case they choose not to cultivate their seedlings, or they would cultivate it illegally, without a permit, in which case Edhem Paşa as the safeguarding official of the Régie would destroy their crops. In this context, *kaymakam* Rüşdü Efendi disobeyed the *mutasarrıf*'s order to forward the permit requests to the Régie, claiming that Edhem's opponents would market their tobacco to smugglers if they were given cultivation permits. According to his scenario, Edhem as the Régie official would be compelled to use force against them, which would erupt violence in the *kaza*.¹¹³⁷

¹¹³³ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹¹³⁴ DH. MKT 1236-6 (The investigation report of 4 Mart 1324).

¹¹³⁵ "Yenişehir Kazası Kaymakamı Rüşdü Efendi tarafından Ertuğrul Sancağı Mutasarrıfı Osman Paşa hazretlerine gönderilen hususi mektubun suretidir," DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹¹³⁶ "Dahiliye Nezaret-i Celilesine," from Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Valisi, (4 R. Evvel 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹¹³⁷ "Dahiliye Nezaret-i Celilesine," from Sadrazam Fehim (Paşa) (16 R. evvel 1326); "Huzur Sami-i Cenab Sadarepenahiye," from Hüdavendigâr Vilayeti Valisi (14 R. evvel 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

The *mutasarrıf* forwarded Rüşdü Efendi's personal letter to governor Tevfik Bey, who in turn demanded the immediate dismissals of both the *kaymakam* and *naib* of Yenişehir from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, the Ministry of Interior was pro-Edhem. It thus wrote to the Office of the Grand Vizier that Hüdavendigâr wanted to replace Rüşdü Efendi due to his subservience to Edhem Paşa. But, it added, that the problems between Edhem and his opponents have been going on for a couple of years, whereas Rüşdü Efendi was appointed to Yenişehir just 2 or 3 months ago. Citing the complaints brought forth against Edhem Paşa during the investigation on March, the Ministry reminded the Grand Vizier that the investigation committee found no conclusive evidence in these regards. Thus, it concluded that allegations against Edhem Paşa were trivial stuff made up of slanders of Edhem's opponents. The Ministry backed up Edhem Paşa by stressing the inconclusiveness of his recent trials, undertaken when he was kept in Bursa. All in all, the Ministry of Interior was of the opinion that the governor's passive stance towards the Paşa's opponents encouraged their dare.¹¹³⁸ Thus, the Ministry blamed governor Tevfik Bey with partiality.

Aside from its obviously favorable stance towards Edhem Paşa, the Ministry of Interior's memorandum included some valuable hindsight about the political outlook of the provinces beyond Yenişehir. Apparently, the local political arena of Yenişehir was not a unique case; for this reason the Ministry's opinion about the provincial administration is worth quoting at length.

...At the *kaza* centers in the provinces, notables and common people, who follow them, split into a couple of factions. Each faction engages in willful imposition against the other. If an official undertakes an action in favor of the notable of one faction, no matter how rightful his conduct is, the other faction tries to topple that official through various complaints and accusations. The situation in Yenişehir fits into this framework...Before Yenişehir, the people of the district of Kırşehir had made a habit of complaining about each other and engaging in slander. Upon such (mischievous) initiatives, the Porte decided not to look into their affairs anymore. Had they come up with claims of rights and allegations, they would be immediately directed towards related courts. The discord between the people of Yenişehir justifies such a treatment to this town as well. There seems to be no way out other than properly telling the people of Yenişehir that their complaints and applications would not be accepted and that they should carry all their cases to the sphere of law.¹¹³⁹

¹¹³⁸ "Huzur Âli-i Hazret Sadaretpenahiye," (26 R. evvel 1326); "Huzur Âli-i Hazret Sadaretpenahiye," (19 R. evvel 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹¹³⁹ "Huzur Âli-i Hazret Sadaretpenahiye," (19 R. evvel 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

The Ministry definitely had a point in describing the political situation in Yenişehir. However, we know that the solution it proposed, that is transferring everything to the related courts, did not work either, because the courts were not immune to prevailing relations of power at the local and imperial levels. Moreover, the discord in the provinces was a reflection of deteriorating factional high politics in İstanbul. For one thing, the Minister of Interior, Memduh Paşa and the Grand Vizier, Avlonyalı Ferid Paşa had been on bad terms for a long time; the two men did not miss opportunities to frustrate each other's plans and projects. The Minister of Forests, Mines and Agriculture, Selim Melhame Paşa also opposed the Grand Vizier with his own methods in almost every issue related to state finances.¹¹⁴⁰ "The court", so to say, for these highest bureaucrats was Sultan Abdülhamid, who instituted himself at the center of the regime as an arbitrator of various interests and opinions, constantly orchestrating (and occasionally setting up) different factions and political groups in the bureaucracy against one another. But, that "court" was not working properly either; because by 1908, the exhausted, aging sultan had already lost his balancing power to the rising fortunes of a couple of palace officials. Without the sultan functioning as a hub of the political system, the Empire became hostage to the ploys of Başkatip Tahsin Paşa and İkinci Katip İzzet Paşa el-Holo.¹¹⁴¹

While İstanbul observed the discord in the provinces, the social forces in the provinces comprehended the factional nature of high politics at the capital city. Thus, Edhem's opponents in Yenişehir and governor Tevfik Bey tried to make use of alternative factions in the capital city for solving their problems caused by the Paşa's assertive actions. Tevfik Bey skipped the Ministry of Interior and forwarded a copy of *kaymakam* Rüşdü's improper personal letter to the *mutasarrıf* directly to the Grand Vizier, Ferid Paşa.¹¹⁴² Ferid Paşa and Tahsin Paşa were quite close allies at the beginning of the former's grand vizierate, for they were united against the powerful İzzet Paşa. But, Ferid Paşa soon changed sides and Arap İzzet Paşa became his foothold in the palace.¹¹⁴³ So, the Grand Vizier was sympathetic towards inquiries implicating Tahsin Paşa's faction. Upon receiving the copy of the *kaymakam*'s letter, he thus wrote

¹¹⁴⁰ İrtəm, *Yıldız Kamarıllası*, 367-371.

¹¹⁴¹ Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid'in İç Politikası," 393; Akarlı, "Friction and Discord," 19-22.

¹¹⁴² Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 475.

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 254-255.

to the Ministry of Interior that the *kaymakam* breached the rule of neutrality and failed to uphold the law. He became a steppingstone for the deeds of the local safeguarding official of the Régie, Edhem Paşa. Ferid Paşa was particularly disturbed with a section of the *kaymakam*'s letter, which he quoted verbatim for the attention of the Minister of Interior. The *kaymakam* wrote: "... All the current troubles stem from the practices executed without foreseeing their future outcomes. Is that not right? These practices proved to have caused serious problems for the state and harmed it, in addition to bringing forth interventions of the foreigners."¹¹⁴⁴ The Grand Vizier probably thought that the *kaymakam*'s allusion to "the foreigners" implied his willingness to get the Régie more actively involved in the tobacco problems of Yenişehir on the side of Edhem Paşa. He thus ordered the immediate dismissal of the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir.¹¹⁴⁵

It seems that, in addition to governor Tevfik Bey, Edhem's opponents in Yenişehir used every possible channel to reach out to the Grand Vizier and the faction opposing Tahsin Paşa in Yıldız Palace.¹¹⁴⁶ Ferid Paşa did not stop at merely dismissing the *kaymakam*; he took away Edhem Paşa's local Régie safeguarding officialdom and ordered the governor to summon him to the provincial capital and keep him there to cease his aggression. If the Paşa disobeys once again, the governor was told to make him know for sure that he would be banished to a distant place.¹¹⁴⁷ Finally, on April 1908, the sultan got personally involved in the troubles of Yenişehir by sending Mirliva Yusuf Kenan Paşa to Bursa for undertaking a secret investigation about Edhem Paşa. To the great relief of governor Tevfik Bey, Yusuf Paşa recited a verbal sultanic order, acknowledging the difficulties that the governor faced during his term in Bursa, because of the interventions of palace factions. The sultan told the governor not to worry anymore, and to keep up his straight path, for he himself would shield the governor.¹¹⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the sultan's intervention, game was not over in Yenişehir, for it was high time to cultivate rice again.

¹¹⁴⁴ "Dahiliye Nezaret-i Celilesine," from Sadrazam Fehim (Paşa) (16 R. evvel 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹¹⁴⁵ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 476.

¹¹⁴⁶ Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey alludes to "Hacı Mustafa Efendi" and "Tüfekçibaşı Katibi Abdullah" as Edhem's opponents' contacts in the palace. *Ibid.*, 464; 473;474. Tüfekçiler department was made of the special body guards of the Sultan. These specifically recruited soldiers guarded the whole palace complex. They were independent of the *Mabeyn* and had direct access to the Sultan. Some members of this department did not hesitate to abuse extreme powers that the Sultan invested on them. Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, 196-198.

¹¹⁴⁷ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 476.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 476.

6.6.3. The Last Round of the Fight over Rice

In April 1908, Edhem Paşa once again resorted to the provincial administration for getting permission to cultivate rice. When the governor reminded him that his fields did not meet the required minimum distance from settled areas, he told him that he would cultivate rice in other places. The governor communicated with the district administration for sending some officials to inspect the lands of the Paşa in Yenişehir. However, the Paşa changed his mind; he wanted to bring officials directly from İstanbul for inspection.¹¹⁴⁹ He thus applied to the Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Mines, Selim Melhame Paşa, who favored expansion of rice cultivation for its fiscal returns to the state treasury.¹¹⁵⁰ Thus, the Ministry of Agriculture sent an official, Lebib Bey to Yenişehir. Lebib Bey traveled to Yenişehir without dropping by Bursa, in order to avoid possible interceptions of governor Tevfik Bey. But, when he resorted to the *kaymakam* of Yenişehir for getting local officials, who would take him to the sites of rice fields, the *kaymakam* asked him to bring an order from the province. Hence, Lebib Bey was compelled to apply to the province. Tevfik Bey, on the other hand, came up with a plan to preclude the Ministry's attempt to produce a report favoring Edhem Paşa. He would send officials from Bursa and Ertuğrul to merge with the official of the Ministry in Yenişehir. These officials would co-author their inspection report, which would have two copies. One copy would be submitted to the Ministry; the other would be preserved in the province, in case Selim Melhame Paşa distorts the content of the report with a view of favoring Edhem. The governor immediately communicated with the Grand Vizier and got permission to act as such.¹¹⁵¹

As expected, the co-authored report came out negatively for Edhem. Still, Selim Melhame Paşa tried his chances in coalition with the Minister of Interior, Memduh Paşa. Soon after the inspection report was compiled, a newspaper wrote that the recent

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 477.

¹¹⁵⁰ In 1895, governor Münir Paşa clashed with Selim Melhame Paşa over the latter's plan to open up Bursa plain to rice cultivation. See chapter 4, p. 251.

¹¹⁵¹ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 478.

inspection indicated that Edhem Paşa's lands were suitable for rice cultivation and therefore he was given a permit by the Ministry of Agriculture. Demonstrating this newspaper clip to his opposers, Edhem Paşa continued to cultivate rice. Soon enough, the Ministry of Interior informed the province about the permission given to Edhem Paşa by the Ministry of Agriculture. Anticipating such a move from Selim Melhame Paşa, Tevfik Bey sent the copy of the report signed by officials from the province, the district and the Ministry to the Grand Vizier. The Grand Vizier ordered the execution of what was required in the Regulations on Rice. Meanwhile, Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey and Tahsin Paşa were pressuring the governor to leave Edhem alone.¹¹⁵²

When the governor proved for sure that Edhem's fields did not meet the minimum distance from settled areas stated in the Regulations on Rice, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture stuck to a loophole in the Regulations. Accordingly, in towns, which were surrounded by swamps, local people and local administration had the right to decide whether lands closer to the settled areas than the required minimum distance could be used for rice cultivation. The reason behind such an exception was that the sanitary conditions and air of these towns were already harmed by the swamps; cultivation of rice would not induce extra problems. Thus, Edhem Paşa argued that since Yenişehir was surrounded by swamps, his rice cultivation could not make the air of the town any worse; he thus asked for a permit by promising to give up rice cultivation when these swamps were drained. Based on this argument, the two ministries insisted that the governor should bend the rules in favor of Edhem's rice cultivation.¹¹⁵³

Being backed up by the Grand Vizier, Tevfik Bey disregarded the two ministries' directives. Yet, he did not act in haste to extirpate the Paşa's rice, because all the local officials were terrified by what had happened thus far.¹¹⁵⁴ The new strategy of Edhem Paşa was to ask for a new investigation by officials sent from İstanbul, while he himself and his opponents stayed in the district capital.¹¹⁵⁵ His offer was partially

¹¹⁵² Ibid., 479.

¹¹⁵³ "Hüdavendigâr Vilâyet-i Âliyesine," from Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemî, (17 R.ahir 1326); "Dahiliye Nezaret-i Celilesine," from Orman ve Maadin ve Ziraat Nazırı Selim (Paşa), (12 R.ahir 1326); "Hüdavendigâr Vilâyet-i Aliyesine," from Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemî, (29 R.ahir 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹¹⁵⁴ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 479.

¹¹⁵⁵ "Huzur Âli-i Hazret Sadaretpenahiye," from Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemî, (5 R.ahir 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

accepted; a new investigation was done on 11 May 1324, but not by officials sent from İstanbul, rather by the officials of the province. As expected, this second report confirmed the first one.¹¹⁵⁶ Tevfik Bey forwarded the report with the maps to the sultan via Tahsin Paşa. No reply came from the palace, because the faction headed by Tahsin Paşa opted for gaining some time for Edhem to cultivate all his rice.¹¹⁵⁷

In the meantime, Edhem Paşa found a way to reach the sultan through the mediation of *Şehremini* (i.e. the municipal mayor of İstanbul) Mümtaz Reşid Paşa, who preceded Tevfik Bey in the governorship of Bursa. The petition, which Reşid Paşa forwarded to the sultan with his recommendation, demonstrates how Edhem Paşa understood the turn of events in Yenişehir with the governorship of Tevfik Bey. He wrote:

...My mills, which I operated for 15 years have been demolished and destroyed without any legal and administrative basis... My sheep, which were present in the lands I owned with deeds, were forcefully deported and my shepherds were beaten up and threatened... My rice cultivation, which I continued for 12 years without doing any harm to other parties, was obstructed and my produce extirpated...120 *dönüms* of land that I possessed with official records was ruined with all my crops and illegally handed over to my eight opponents... In order to implicate me with criminality, official documents kept at the governmental departments were deceitfully composed... In sum, my mill partner was killed and the intendant of my *çiftlik* was beaten up and injured amid all these ploys and forged proceedings. When the members of my family resort to higher authorities (to redress these injustices), they are turned down.

Edhem Paşa added that the sultan could inquire him by asking first hand information about him from the soldiers recruited from Yenişehir in the Söğüd squadron stationed in the palace. The Paşa claimed that realities pertaining to his activities were obscured by the administrative acts done under the influence of the governor. Thus, he asked the sultan to send impartial officials from İstanbul to undertake a fair investigation about him.¹¹⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, not a month passed over Yusuf Kenan Paşa's special investigation for the sultan. So, what Edhem asked for had already been done by the sultan. Edhem should have known about this, because he indeed terrorized Gökgöz

¹¹⁵⁶ The newer inspection report prepared by "Vilayet Nafia Dairesi Serkondüktörü, Rıza" includes some detailed maps of Yenişehir. BEO 003344-250768-002.

¹¹⁵⁷ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 479.

¹¹⁵⁸ Y. MTV 310-164.

Mustafa and his followers after Yusuf Paşa's investigation.¹¹⁵⁹ Apparently, all he hoped was that Tahsin Paşa could achieve sending a palace official more favorable to Edhem for investigation this time.

The governor waited no more and ordered the extirpation of the Paşa's rice. However, his order could not be implemented, because from the lowest official of the district to the *mutasarrıf*, each and every official of the local government were daunted by the Paşa, who resisted extirpation with his armed men.¹¹⁶⁰ Edhem made a last attempt to save his rice by offering to pay cash-fine through the mediations of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Agriculture.¹¹⁶¹ Alas, Tevfik Bey sent officials from the province, and once again got the Paşa's precious rice extirpated!¹¹⁶²

6.6.4. The Young Turk Revolution and the End of the Reign of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir

In July 1908, Sultan Abdülhamid had to submit to the demands of the Committee of Union and Progress, and the Ottoman Parliament convened in December 1908. Başkatip Tahsin Paşa, Esvaçıbaşı İsmet Bey and Selim Melhame Paşa abruptly fell from power. With Edhem Paşa's protectors gone for good, governor Tevfik Bey was finally relieved from the troubles of the Paşa.¹¹⁶³ A couple of days after the Young Turk Revolution, the leading spy of the regime, Fehim Paşa, who was previously banished to Bursa, tried to escape from crowds targeting him in the city. In the heat of events, he opted for seeking protection of Edhem Paşa. These two men were a sort of "buddies", sharing an interest in traditional wrestling.¹¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Fehim Paşa was

¹¹⁵⁹ Y. MTV 311-118.

¹¹⁶⁰ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 479. Edhem's resistance to local police officers is described in telegraphs of his opponents to the Grandvizier. Telegraphs by "Onaltı refikiyle Hacı Eminzade İsmail" and "Yenişehir ahalisinden Ahmed ve Emin," ŞD 1601-27.

¹¹⁶¹ "Orman ve Maadin ve Ziraat Nezaret-i Celilesine," from Dahiliye Mektubi Kalemi, (14 C.ahir 1326), DH. MKT 1236-6.

¹¹⁶² Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 479.

¹¹⁶³ Ibid, 479.

¹¹⁶⁴ Edhem Paşa's grandson's (Ethem Vardar's) testimony in "Hafiye Fehim Paşa'nın Linç Edilişi" by Yılmaz Akkılıç, enclosed in "Akkılıç Kent Yazıları, Bursa'da Zaman (1986-1992), Bursa Hakimiyet-Olay" in Bursa Nilüfer Akkılıç Library.

the son of none other than Esvaıbaşı İsmet Bey. Thus, he traveled to Yenişehir for seeking refuge in this family friend. As I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Fehim Paşa was violently lynched by a furious crowd gathered at the town center of Yenişehir.¹¹⁶⁵ From the view points of many inhabitants of Yenişehir, the special relationship between Edhem Paşa and some palace officials, especially Esvaıbaşı İsmet Bey, was the source of enduring injustices, violence and oppression in the *kaza*.

Beyond economic exploitation and bad governance; bribery, favoritism and spying tainted the very social fabric of Yenişehir. At the penultimate moment of the end of the Hamidian regime, the local political arena of Yenişehir hit a new low, when Edhem attempted to get Gököz Mustafa Efendi dismissed from the mayorship of the town: The Ministry of Interior was now dealing with what outwear a particular woman in Yenişehir wore with what jewelries in whose wedding! Edhem Paşa was trying to implicate Gököz Mustafa Efendi with aiding and abetting a famous bandit, Şaki Ali Bey. On January 1908, he went to the district capital to give information about “with whom Ali Bey stayed in Yenişehir after the robbery; with whom he communicated in the town; how long he stayed and whether he brought his wife, Nafia Hanım with him.”¹¹⁶⁶

As a matter of fact, Ali Bey was most probably hanging around Edhem Paşa. Both governor Tevfik Bey¹¹⁶⁷ and the Paşa’s opponents in Yenişehir were quite explicit about the links of the Paşa with the bandits of the region. The Paşa’s opponents claimed that after raiding the camping grounds of the nomads (*yörüks*), Ali Bey came to Yenişehir, depositing 60 *liras* and his rifle to the Paşa. He thus wandered in the town undisturbed. Later on, when he got caught, he asked the Paşa to either give back his rifle and money or to save him from the prison. Eventually, he escaped from jail, and once again asked the Paşa to return his money and weapons. Edhem Paşa in turn got himself “appointed” as some sort of sub-contractor for re-capturing Ali Bey (*Ali’nin derdestine kendisini memur ettirerek*). He used his prerogative to chase Ali Bey and meanwhile

¹¹⁶⁵ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 492-493.

¹¹⁶⁶ DH. TMIK. S 72-12.

¹¹⁶⁷ Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 469.

helped him to escape to Egypt, thereby succeeded in getting rid of this nuisance as well.¹¹⁶⁸

In his “statement” about Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi’s alleged aiding to Ali Bey, Edhem Paşa at first, made some vague claims about Ali Bey’s stay at Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi’s house 20 days after his brigandage in Kazgancı Bayırı in between Bursa and İnegöl. Based on some hearsay in Yenişehir, he added that Ali Bey entrusted Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi with 500 *liras* and told him to send some money to prison in case he gets caught. Edhem Paşa did not abstain from stressing the limitedness of his knowledge in this regard, because the big fish he caught about Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi’s relationship with Ali Bey was actually the relationship of the bandit’s wife, Nafia with Hacı Mustafa Efendi’s wife. The two women were relatives; Nafia resided in a village, Günceğiz at the outskirts of Yenişehir. After Ali Bey’s robbery, Nafia visited Hacı Mustafa Efendi’s house at the town center and stayed there for fifteen days. Edhem Paşa expressed that Ali Bey told his wife to buy a new outwear (*çarşaf*), earrings, an umbrella and golden jewelry (*beşi birlik*) in Yenişehir with the money he gave her. During her visit, Hacı Mustafa Efendi indeed bought all these items. Edhem stated that Mustafa Efendi went to Bursa, and bought two violet outwears; one for his wife, the other for Nafia from a drapery shop at Hamam çarşısı, in the presence of Kalaycının Hacı Hüseyin from Yenişehir. Nafia wore the violet outwear and substantial golden jewelry (*15 tane beşibirlik*) in the houses she visited at the town center, as well as at the wedding of Demirci Hacı İsmail.¹¹⁶⁹

Apparently, Edhem Paşa was right about the familial relationship between Ali Bey’s wife’s family and Gökğöz Hacı Mustafa Efendi. When Ali Bey was on the run, Edhem Paşa sent one of his men to his village to inquire his whereabouts. His man found out that his wife, Nafia and his mother in-law were living together, desperately in need of food. They told Edhem’s man to tell Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi to send some corn to them, for they were hungry. Edhem Paşa summoned Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi and asked him about this corn as well. Mustafa Efendi accepted that he was indeed sending corn to Ali Bey’s wife and mother in-law, because Ali Bey’s father in-law, the discarded policeman Çerkez Mehmed, entrusted him with some sacks of corn and

¹¹⁶⁸ “Eşkiyaya Yataklığı,” ŞD 1601-27.

¹¹⁶⁹ DH. TMIK. S 72-12.

requested him to send over some corn to Günceğiz from time to time. Mustafa Efendi was thus sending corn to Ali Bey's family for the sake of Çerkez Mehmed. Upon officially receiving this information from Edhem Paşa, the governor summoned Hacı Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi to Bursa for interrogation at the time when the Paşa formally re-testified at the district center.¹¹⁷⁰

Although Edhem's statement in Bilecik was stamped by his Machiavellian personality, it has the merit of providing a glimpse at the societal structure of a western Anatolian region at the beginning of the 20th century. It is true that Edhem was bold, ruthless and lawless, but at the end of the day, he was a man of his time. Gökğöz Mustafa Efendi's affinity with a famous bandit demonstrates that just like Edhem Paşa, many other inhabitants of Yenişehir lived at the brink of legality due to the socio-political and economic turmoil of the late Ottoman Empire. Many Circassian tribes settled in the area were still in a process of integration, which entailed wide-spread banditry.¹¹⁷¹ In the mean time, they inter-married with the existing populace. Thus, Nafia's father, Çerkez Mehmed was probably a gendarmerie official-turned-bandit on the run. In a similar vein, many armed "Albanian" shepherds employed by Edhem Paşa and/or Cafer Bey, were most probably the victims of the incredible upheavals in the Balkans. The native and immigrant villagers who bribed Edhem Paşa, and immigrant communities, who squatted the lands of the local inhabitants under Edhem's shield were among the helpless people trying to ensure their livelihoods at all costs. Under such competitive circumstances, where quasi-legal arrangements were the order of the day, the imperial center's spying and favoritism were specifically destructive interventions to the socio-political framework of Yenişehir.

By digging out the traces of what Edhem Paşa left in the Ottoman state archives, this chapter depicts him almost like a villain. Some of the accusations that his opponents brought forth, such as rape were actually supported by the complaints of the victims compiled at different dates.¹¹⁷² Even Edhem's ally, Esvaçıbaşı İsmet Bey could not

¹¹⁷⁰ DH. TMIK. S 72-12.

¹¹⁷¹ Banditry and smuggling were among the serious problems of Bursa that Tevfik Bey dealt with during his governorship. Biren, *Bürokrat Tevfik Biren*, 419-420; Y. MTV 291-44.

¹¹⁷² For example, BEO 1423-106667 (dated 14. Kevvel 1315) refers to the petition of Aişe, who demanded acceleration of her lawsuit against Edhem, due to his rape of her daughter. Many similar accusations, some of which included detailed descriptions of his sexual violence against women, were repeated by Edhem's opponents in ŞD 1601-27.

completely deny Edhem's "sins", when sponsoring him to Tefvik Bey.¹¹⁷³ Apparently, the Paşa was immoral and oppressive in many ways. But, he could afford to be like that thanks to the fertile grounds of the late Ottoman political establishment. He flourished in a provincial society, whose internal dynamics and historical evolution were accentuated by the fateful loss of substantial parts of the empire in the Balkans. Eventually, the Paşa got entangled with yet another historical turn of the late Ottoman establishment. In 1909, he was banished to Mytilene with life-long imprisonment (*müebbed kalebind*) for partaking in a counter-revolutionary organization, *Volkan Cemiyeti*. In June 1912, he wrote a petition to the Grand Vizier signed as "among the descendents of the commander in chief of Vienna (expedition) Kara Mustafa Paşa, from Bursa, Yenişehir, banished in Mytilene". It would be fair to conclude this chapter by citing what the Paşa made out of all the mess he left behind.

I am not a government employee; I am merely an agriculturalist. I do not understand politics. I am not a reactionary. I could not be present at the capital city during the reactionary movement. There was no reactionary movement in my hometown; just martial law was declared...I welcomed the constitutional period with honor, and supported it with all my means. I was sacrificed because of (other parties') personal animosities. I am banished for three years now. My household is destroyed. My family and dependents were obliterated. My household, which includes 100 people, is mourning. If there are plaintiffs against me, the courts are open for them. My properties were ruined. My *çiftlik*, which used to produce 5.000 *lira* surplus was rented out for just 100 *liras*; thus, I was and I am needy. A household, which used to pay 500 *lira* taxes and fees annually, has been wretched. If there is any good to the state and nation (in all these wrongdoings), I sacrifice my life and property for them...

Embellishing his request with a eulogy to the justice of the current constitutional regime, Edhem Paşa asked for his release from prison. He added that he had a kidney disease and needed medical operation.¹¹⁷⁴

He was released from Mytilene because of his illness. During the War of Independence, he came to the fore once again by surrendering Yenişehir to the occupying Greek army without any resistance. Subsequently, he was tried at the martial court (*İstiklal Mahkemesi*) and condemned to 15 years of imprisonment due to high

¹¹⁷³ "...Edhem Paşa'nın (gençlik zamanında herkeste olduğu gibi bazı ahval-i zindeganesi sebkemiş olabilirse de) kendisini tanıdığım yirmi sene evvelinden beri fukaraya bakmak, hükümete sadakatle muavenet ve hizmet etmek gibi mükerreren taltife mazhariyetini icab eden hareketleri, muhaberatı-ı resmiye ile sabittir." Biren, *Bürokrat Tefvik Biren*, 464.

¹¹⁷⁴ ŞD 004053-002.

treason. Because of his deteriorating health and old-age (he was about 70 years old) he was pardoned at the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) in October 1921. The sessions, in which the laws pardoning the Paşa were deliberated, witnessed heated debates among the MPs. Some MPs could not stand the possibility that a person, who consistently oppressed so many poor and vulnerable people with the backing of the Hamidian regime; who re-engaged in treason at his senior age after being pardoned by the Young Turk government, might again be pardoned by the current government. But, some other MPs claimed that it was not the personality of the Paşa *per se*, but his power, wealth and political circumstances that enabled him to engage in oppression. With Yenişehir's invasion, he lost all his means to do misdeeds.¹¹⁷⁵ So, they rhetorically asked, what could come out of a man who lost his wealth, properties, hometown and health? Those who opposed his pardoning answered by assuring them that he did not lose his malignance¹¹⁷⁶, since he welcomed the Greek army when he was blind and in bad health.¹¹⁷⁷ At the end of the day, the law on the pardoning of Edhem Paşa was passed with 109 MPs supporting it against the objection of 60 MPs.¹¹⁷⁸ Soon after he was released from prison, Edhem Paşa died.¹¹⁷⁹

6.7. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I highlighted the political and economic aspects of a special relationship between the center of the imperial power and Yenişehir during the late Hamidian era. In this relationship, the ties that Edhem Paşa forged with palace courtiers, especially with Esvapçıbaşı İsmet Bey, proved to be critical for local relations

¹¹⁷⁵ Mehmed Şükrü Bey (MP of Karahisar-ı Sahib): "...Efendiler, bunu yapan Ethem Paşa'nın şahsı değil, serveti idi. Ethem Paşa'nın muhiti idi. Bugün ne serveti kalmış, ne de muhiti kalmıştır. Ethem Paşa bugün muhtaç bir haldedir." *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre 1, Cilt 13, Doksan dokuzuncu içtima, 24.10.1337, Pazartesi, 253.

¹¹⁷⁶ Ali Şükrü Bey (MP of Trabzon): "...Şimdi arkadaşlarıma sorarım; madem ki malını, mülkünü, memleketini, dimağını, vücudunu gaybetmiş, bundan ne gibi bir fenalık sadır olacaktır?" Tunalı Hilmi Bey (MP of Bolu): "Şükrü Bey emin ol ki, habasetini kaybetmemiştir." *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre 1, Cilt 13, Doksan dokuzuncu içtima, 24.10.1337, Pazartesi, 254.

¹¹⁷⁷ *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre 1, Cilt 13, Doksan dokuzuncu içtima, 24.10.1337, Pazartesi, 252.

¹¹⁷⁸ *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, Devre 1, Cilt 13, Doksan dokuzuncu içtima, 24.10.1337, Pazartesi, 258.

¹¹⁷⁹ Yılmaz Akkılıç, ed., s.v. "Ethem Paşa (Yenişehirli)," in *Bursa Ansiklopedisi Cilt 2* (İstanbul: Bursa Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2002), 673.

of power. The assets that Edhem invested in this relationship were basically his ability to manipulate local politics on the one hand; substantial rural surplus he amassed through his firmly positioned trunks in the economic resources of the region on the other. He generously presented these assets to his contacts in İstanbul. In other words, long after “invention of corruption” in the Ottoman polity¹¹⁸⁰, it seems that Edhem Paşa presented some very handsome “gifts” to the most powerful political figures of the late Hamidian regime. Politically, Edhem Paşa offered his loyalty to the regime. Not only did he collect 250.000 *kuruş* contribution due to Yenişehir for the construction of Baghdad-Hejaz railway line¹¹⁸¹, but also he actively engaged in spying.¹¹⁸²

In exchange, the specific foci of power in İstanbul endowed him with titles and ranks, thereby fortifying his position in the local political arena. Furthermore, it bended rules, regulations and laws in favor of the Paşa. He amazingly acquitted from almost all his crimes at appeals and re-trials. He got away with his illegal conducts; from employing many men armed with rifles to wearing the uniform of a higher rank. On top of these, his contacts in the palace bequeathed him with the power of determining the appropriate persons to be appointed at local positions such as, *kaymakams*. Thus, these *kaymakams* would act as his ally, and he was able to keep his place in various local commissions and even abuse the prerogatives of the Régie thanks to his official capacity attached to the company.

For many inhabitants of Yenişehir, the political equation between Edhem and the late Hamidian regime should have been quite straight forward: Edhem was extracting rural resources by force, swindling, forgery, and to be fair, by producing surplus through agriculture and animal husbandry. He transferred a good part of what he collected in and around Yenişehir to certain people with power in İstanbul. These powerful figures in turn, provided Edhem with almost unconditional political support, enabling him to run his enterprise smoothly. Thus, direct lines of communication between Yıldız Palace and the provincial notables were eventually robbing the state’s treasury by oppressing many people to the point of sacrificing the complete fairness and

¹¹⁸⁰ Cengiz Kırılı, "Yolsuzluğun İcadı: 1840 Ceza Kanunu, İktidar ve Bürokrasi," *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 45-119.

¹¹⁸¹ It should be noted that his role in the collection of this contribution was somewhat dubious. See, BEO 1967-147487.

¹¹⁸² ZB 429-78. This document refers to two “journals” (*ihbar mektubu*) of Edhem about “muhacirin ve müderrisinden Hacı Mahmud Efendi, who has just returned from İstanbul”.

legitimacy of the governmental system. Looking at it from Yenişehir, the autocratic regime, which Sultan Abdülhamid instituted laboriously over the previous decades, was eating up itself after 1901-1902.

I contextualized “the reign” of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir at the interstices of historical and political structures and his personal agency. Edhem was an offspring of late Ottoman Yenişehir: His great grandfather was a provincial power holder, who lost his bid for controlling the eastern hinterland of Bursa due to Sultan Mahmud II’s decisive policies of breaking the power of *ayans*. The Tanzimat state took up a more gradual path of centralization in relation to local foci of power. Hence, Edhem’s family lost substantial income derived from their family waqfs as the waqf administration evolved during the Tanzimat era. At the beginning of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid, Yenişehir experienced the upheavals following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. Waves of migration received after the war radically transformed the socio-political landscape of the *kaza*, and accentuated competition for rural resources. Many of Edhem’s “entrepreneurial” moves and his hold on power after 1901-1902 depended on manipulating and abusing the political and economic potentials of elongated processes of immigration.

However, the most critical factor enabling Edhem Paşa’s unmatched political ascendancy in Yenişehir was the qualitative change in the Hamidian system at the turn of the 20th century. Sultan Abdülhamid’s policy of concentrating power in his personality through the Mabeyn reached its apex, precisely when the sultan ceased to function as an arbitrator of the political system. The powerful machinery he created at the Yıldız compound filled in the vacuum of power. Hence, the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid degenerated into cacophonous and corrupt factionalism centered in Yıldız Palace. In this context, the functioning of the judiciary and formal provincial administration were seriously curtailed, due to interventions of palace factions. Direct lines of communication between the palace and some provincial notables and the spying network that Sultan Abdülhamid established for controlling and containing provincial societal forces became a source of oppression for many Ottoman subjects. Palace factions merged with specific notables and/or factions in the provinces to the detriment of a good part of the populace, which was politically and economically exploited. Edhem Paşa successfully dwelled in this imperial political context for running his multifaceted enterprises unobstructed by law and/or administrative restraint.

Edhem Paşa's rise and hold to power in Yenişehir pinpoints his ruthless and Machiavellian personality. He worked hard and acted boldly for protecting his position. On the one hand, he leaned on the degenerated late Hamidian political system against his vocal local opponents. On the other hand, he used the tools derived from his locally entrenched position against absentee landlords. Hence, historical and political structures presented some unique opportunities to Edhem, who in turn chose to use them in certain ways. As such, while discussing pardoning of Edhem during the War of Independence in the Grand National Assembly (TBMM), the MPs in favor of his pardoning stressed the structures (*muhiti*, i.e. his environment) making up Edhem as a phenomenon, whereas the MPs against his pardoning highlighted his agency (*habaseti*, i.e. his evilness). In this chapter, I argued that "the reign" of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir during the final episode of the Hamidian era depended on the convergence of both of them: The late Ottoman political system evolved into the bleak late Hamidian regime and Edhem became the ruthless Paşa of this regime.

Photo 4: The photo of Edhem Bey, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, Yıldız Sarayı Albümleri, 90757.



The first standing young man from the right, holding a rifle in his hand is Edhem Bey. I thank Salih Erol, who kindly shared this information with me, based on an interview he had done with one of the descendents of the family in Yenişehir.

CONCLUSION

The revisionist historiography on the late Ottoman provinces situates itself against post-Ottoman, nationalist historiographies, which attempt to erase and/or conceal the Ottoman past so as to argue for the authenticity and ancient roots of the successor nation states. In a sense, the revisionist historiography redeems the Ottoman past by evaluating it on a par with other contemporary polities on the one hand, with its own imperial context preceding the national order of things, on the other.¹¹⁸³ During the early years of the Turkish Republic, similar mechanisms of erasure and censorship were at play, especially in relation to the late Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁸⁴ However, Turkey is not simply one state among the many other successor states; rather it is a direct descendent of the Empire, which inherited the imperial capital.¹¹⁸⁵ So, in Turkey what followed the initial denial of the Ottoman past was the emergence of a historiography, in which the institutional-legal outlook of the late Ottoman central state overshadowed practically everything else.¹¹⁸⁶ More specifically, the Anatolian provinces, which were imagined as a unitary whole within the new nation, presumably followed the general historical trajectory determined by the policies of the imperial center.¹¹⁸⁷ Hence, an enduring

¹¹⁸³ For example, Milen V. Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Paşa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864-1868," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006), 39-49; Eugene L Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-2.

¹¹⁸⁴ Esra Özyürek, "Introduction: the Politics of Public Memory in Turkey," in *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 2011), 3-6.

¹¹⁸⁵ Amy Mills, James Reilly, and Christine Philliou, "'The Ottoman Empire from Present to Past: Memory and Ideology in Turkey and the Arab World' Introduction to Special Issue on the Ottoman Legacy in the Middle East," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011): 133-136; Cristine Philliou, "When the Clock Strikes Twelve: The Inception of an Ottoman Past in Early Republican Turkey," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011): 172.

¹¹⁸⁶ In Halil Berktaş's formulation, "nationalism, state fetishism and document fetishism" have crippled Turkish historiography, Halil Berktaş, "The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/historiography," in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, ed. Halil Berktaş and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: F. Cass, 1992), 109.

¹¹⁸⁷ Jane Hathaway notes that while twentieth-century historians of the Anatolian provinces also focus on local notables, their approach tended to be far more centrist due to the state-centered historiographical tradition dominant

peculiarity of the Turkish historiography is the assumption that what the central state intended to do during the age of reforms translated into local realities in the core provinces more or less unadulterated. That is why to this day dissertations and master's theses focusing on late Ottoman Anatolian provinces mainly uphold an institutional-legal perspective stressing the state policies.¹¹⁸⁸

Yet, this study deliberately adheres to the revisionist literature on the late Ottoman provinces, which mainly focuses on far flung territories, rather than the core regions of the Empire. As such, with respect to the main analytical references of this historical account, Yenişehir- İznik region seems to resemble such places as Bulgaria, Transjordan and Jabal Nablus more than it does Hüdavendigâr, Ankara, Konya etc., in the way these are depicted in institutional-legal histories.¹¹⁸⁹ This is not because the studies in the latter category represent poor scholarship; on the contrary, some of these works are well-researched, serious pieces of scholarship. Rather, this choice is conditioned by an affinity with the analytical paradigms of the studies focusing on farther Ottoman provinces. Against the backdrop of nationalist historiographies, the revisionist studies basically argue that ethnic and religious differences and geographical distances do not preclude experiencing modernization *a la* Ottoman in these provinces. So, what made these provinces a part of Ottoman modernization should not be exclusively sought in ethnic, religious and communal tensions precipitated by living under an imperial framework, in which the dominant ruling classes differed from the provincial populations in terms of ethnicity and/or religion. Instead, processes of open-ended, fluid, yet unceasing engagements between the central state and provincial societies should be the main locus of Ottoman modernization in the provinces.

This study adheres to a similar theoretical framework by taking off from a different starting point. If non-Turkishness, non-Muslimness and geographical distances do not in themselves foreclose being a part of the late Ottoman universe, then

in modern republican Turkey, Jane Hathaway, "Rewriting Eighteenth-Century Ottoman History," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2004): 35.

¹¹⁸⁸ For example, Nursal Kumaş, "II. Abdülhamid döneminde Bursa'da Sosyal Hayat (1876-1909)," (PhD diss., Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2011); Zeynep Dörtok Abacı, "Modernleşme Sürecinde Bursa Kentinin Mekansal ve Sosyal Değişimi (1860-1910)," (PhD diss., Uludağ Üniversitesi, 2005); Nilgün Kiper, "Resettlement of Immigrants and Planning in İzmir during the Hamidian Period," (PhD diss., İzmir Institute of Technology, 2006).

¹¹⁸⁹ I stress methodological affinities and differences here. I should note that not all historical accounts on the Anatolian provinces are institutional-legal histories, which prioritize the state's policies and normative regulations. Some scholarly works on the Anatolian provinces produced by Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, Yonca Köksal, Hamdi Özdiş and Oktay Özel for instance, were widely cited and referred to in this dissertation.

Turkishness-Muslimness and proximity alone would not suffice to account for the ties of a provincial setting with the late Ottoman establishment. Hence, without downplaying the predominantly Turkish and Muslim character of Yenişehir-İznik region, this study seeks to locate Ottoman modernization at the interstices of open-ended entanglements of the local society with the late Ottoman imperial framework. After all, taking Ottoman modernization at the Anatolian provinces not as predestined transformations carried out mostly by the state, rather as open-ended processes like elsewhere, enables a more balanced and realistic examination of the Turkish nation state's late Ottoman heritage. In this way, both the assets and shortcomings; the vices and virtues inherited from the late Ottoman political system would be revealed.

In a way, this dissertation makes “the familiar” of the Turkish historiography on the late Ottoman era “unfamiliar” in order to unravel the material and ideological underpinnings of the social structures that continue to shape contemporary Turkey. In this respect, this study not only provides a comparative template for the historiographies of the farther provinces and the borderlands, but also it affords to address intra-Turkish-Muslim contradictions embedded in the late Ottoman political system. For instance, the processes of settlement after the 1877-78 War and the ways in which the land disputes between different Turkish-Muslim parties were eventually resolved, conditioned the socio-political outlook of Anatolia and the Republic of Turkey during the 20th century. Likewise, integrating the history of a core region into the wider revisionist literature on the late Ottoman provinces brings forth many issues, such as the positions of non-Muslim communities, which were extensively researched for the frontiers and/or far-flung territories, yet remained under-studied for the heartlands of the Empire. So, this study contributes to revealing different ways of dealing with and experiencing “difference”, which was embodied by various social conglomerations such as the non-Muslim communities, immigrants and nomads within the late Ottoman imperial framework. Thus, rather than boiling down “differences” to water under the bridge of a distanced imperial past, this study takes them as building blocks of not only the late Ottoman Empire, but also of contemporary Turkey with their historically conditioned presences and absences.

Another methodological objective of this dissertation is demystification of meta-concepts and narratives like state-building, modernization and centralization. As a micro-study, this historical account deals with tangible events and specific people.

Rather than focusing on norms, regulations, rules, formal outlooks of institutions and intended policies of the central state, I have focused on actual manifestations of the reforms and the experiences of different local groups and individuals. For example, both the tragic destruction of Ömer Hilmi Efendi by the inspector of Anatolia in the early 1860s and the ruthless “reign” of Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir in the early 1900s are used for demonstrating the discrete turns and shapes that the late Ottoman state-building and centralization took in different historical conjunctures. Put differently, throughout this study, intersecting episodes from the lives of different historical actors are presented for explicating more abstract concepts and structures. In this way, I have not only stressed the multiplicity of viewpoints and experiences of the historical agents, but also strove to approximate an emic perspective of historical transformations.

Moreover, the medium term temporal trajectory of this study enables attending to the dialectics of historical changes and continuities. On the one hand, persistent socio-economic structures from the early modern era into the modern era and from the Tanzimat era into the Hamidian era are identified. On the other hand, ruptures, turning points, ideological and political shifts, such as massive waves of migration after the 1877-78 War, Vefik Efendi’s inspection tour and the consolidation of the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, are evaluated for their repercussions over the medium term. I have resorted to extensive comparisons within and beyond the late Ottoman Empire for contextualizing an event and/or development in the continuum of historical changes and continuities. In a similar vein, I opted for balancing narrative with analysis and agency with structure for addressing the particularities of a local context without dismissing larger paradigms and historical trends affecting and conditioning it. As such, this study is an experimentation with producing a more dynamic and open-ended historical narrative for a core region, which was under the closer surveillance of the capital city compared to many other provincial settings.

Drawing on the above-mentioned methodological and theoretical premises, I have extended some arguments pertaining to the Tanzimat era, the historiography on the settlement of immigrants following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and the Hamidian Empire. Accordingly, I demonstrated that around the middle of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire’s accelerated integration into the world markets without developing well-functioning regulatory and protective institutions adversely affected the situation of the rural producers in the hinterland of Bursa. The monetary and taxation

policies of the Tanzimat state further strained the peasantry in the absence of cheap sources of credit. In this context, the local notables' acknowledged prerogatives in the reformed provincial administration brought the peasantry at the brink of dispossession due to being entrapped in cycles of debt with usurious interest rates. I argued that in 1863-64, the Tanzimat state not only responded to the cry of help from the countryside with Vefik Efendi's inspection tour, but it also changed the tract of provincial administration from co-optation of the local notables into increasing the weight of the central state. The state could pursue such a policy in North-western Anatolia because of the willingness of many provincial subjects to participate in the reform institutions for improving their material and political conditions in their localities. However, receptiveness of the society as such did not entail absence of dissent to the Tanzimat projects in the Bursa region. On the contrary, socio-economically ingrained practices like banditry and the nomadic way of life represented veins of opposition to the state's vision of containing populations through registration, taxation and conscription.

The new wave of centralization embodied in Vefik Efendi's inspection was partially successful. On the one hand, forcefully imposed sociopolitical schemes of the central state proved to be unsustainable over the long run due to lacking a societal base of support for pursuing costly modernization projects. On the other hand, a better-off peasantry and somewhat curtailed authority of the local notables, money-lenders and landowners paved the ground for the implementation of the *vilayet* system, which entailed more hierarchically designed provincial administrative units principally manned by centrally appointed officials in critical positions. Yet, the remedy of bureaucratic centralization to the problems of North-western Anatolia carried the seeds of its own problems: The local societies faced the abuses and exploitation precipitated by bureaucratic machinery that could not be effectively monitored by the central state. In this context, without open rebellion, the social forces of the countryside resisted the bureaucratic hegemony of the provincial capital, Bursa by foot-dragging to its undue demands. So, the dilemma for the provincial societies of North-western Anatolia was that when they were mostly left to their own devices in the economic conjuncture of the mid-19th century, the bulk of their population remained vulnerable to the forces of the free market on the one hand, to the oppression of the powerful political actors such as the local notables, money-lenders and landowners, who could control the local administration and the judiciary, on the other. When the Tanzimat state intervened to

redress this situation, the provincial societies faced with the overbearance and greed of a centralizing state structure in acute need of financial and economic resources. As a result, the provincial societies of North-western Anatolia tried to undermine the cumbersome and reckless centralization drive from within the late Ottoman political system. At the end of the day, the new wave of centralization represented two radical steps taken forwards, immediately followed by one step taken backwards towards moderation and feasibility.

This study takes the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and the following waves of migration as a turning point for the socio-political makeup of Yenişehir and İznik in particular, for the Southern Marmara region in general. I contended that the massive waves of migration pitted the rule of law entailing private ownership of land against the late Ottoman notions of legitimacy indicating the survival of independent, landed, small peasant households as the backbone of the Ottoman economy. I argued that in Yenişehir-İznik region, the state opted for legitimacy with a view of preserving its ability to govern in the long run. Significantly, the local political arena was conducive to such an outcome, thanks to the de facto and de jure initiatives invested in its hands throughout the elongated processes of settlement. Although the settlement of large numbers of immigrants seemed to have occurred relatively peacefully and smoothly in Yenişehir and İznik, it continued to generate tensions between different political actors and communities on the one hand; remained a source of economic and political opportunities, as well as exploitation well into the early 20th century, on the other.

When we come to the Hamidian era, I have observed that the consolidation of the Hamidian regime proceeded through efforts of consensus building between the provincial societies of North-western Anatolia and the central state in the aftermath of the catastrophic Russo-Ottoman War. A new round of modernization and bureaucratic centralization could be achieved with the resources, commitment and support of the local societies. In other words, unlike Vefik Efendi's unilaterally imposed modernization projects, the Hamidian regime pursued a policy of cooperation with the local social forces for advancing bureaucratic centralization and modernization in the provinces. However, the regime did not merely attend to the infrastructural investments and improving public facilities and services, which surely increased the quality of life and prosperity of the subjects, but it also waged an ambitious ideological battle for gaining the loyalty and support of the provincial societies behind the government. In

order to contain opposition and to ensure the obedience of wide segments of the populace, the Hamidian government strove to create a hegemonic hold on the public sphere through carrots like, ideologically loaded public rituals, ceremonies, state-sponsored education and awarding ranks and medals to specific individuals on the one hand, through sticks like heavy censorship and suffocating spying, on the other. Zooming into the local contexts of Yenişehir and İznik, I have demonstrated that the local people took such efforts of the Hamidian regime as tools of governance, drawing on the familiar vocabularies of dynastic and Islamic legitimation. As such, different groups and individuals found ways to evade Hamidian hegemony either by subverting its ideological and political claims from within its own referential universe or by duly resorting to alternative political vocabularies, such as civic Ottomanism inherited from the Tanzimat era.

In addition to analyzing the Hamidian era with its particular ideological features, this study marks significant economic and socio-political continuities with the Tanzimat era, as these were manifested in Yenişehir. In spite of the economic transformations and the ideologically charged atmosphere of the Hamidian era, provincial politics continued to revolve around struggles over the appropriation of the rural surplus. As in the Tanzimat era, the local administrative framework and the public funds attached to it got enmeshed with the opportunities of making money in the commercialized economy of the Bursa region. On the one hand, bureaucratic centralization since Vefik Efendi's inspection tour empowered centrally appointed actors like the *kaymakams* and *mutasarrıfs*, who could not be fully controlled by the state. On the other hand, the economic and financial conditions of the last quarter of the 19th century introduced new international economic actors, such as the PDA and the Tobacco Régie, to the political economy of North-western Anatolia. With the local notables' continuing influence over the political economy of their own hometowns, the competition for the control of the rural surplus intensified in the Bursa region. In other words, even though the actors, who contended for the rural surplus were multiplied and transformed, the ingenious search for cashing out the rural resources by using and abusing the institutional, legal and administrative set up of the late Ottoman state continued unabated from the Tanzimat era into the Hamidian Yenişehir. Hence, the Hamidian synthesis of integrating the local social forces into the body politic, while pursuing bureaucratic centralization

and modernization generated potential pitfalls in the political economy of the provinces along side with its achievements.

Finally, the Hamidian system carried the seeds of self-destruction in the degeneration of the political system with respect to the ties that were laboriously forged between the provincial foci of power and the Yıldız Palace. In order to cement his autocratic rule, Sultan Abdülhamid II had formed direct lines of communication between some provincial notables and the Yıldız Palace at the expense of the hierarchical, formal, provincial administration centered at the Porte. However, after 1901-1902, the Sultan seemed to be no more able to pull the strings together in this quasi-formal system, which invested extensive authority in his hands. From then on, palace factions formed around a couple of powerful courtiers got more and more entangled with provincial politics, thereby seriously undermining the rule of law, justice and the overall legitimacy of the regime. In Yenişehir, Edhem Paşa acted as a conduit transferring the vices of the palace politics into Yenişehir, and conversely, the frictional politics of Yenişehir into the palace. The ties that the formidable Paşa formed with the “avatars” of the Hamidian regime translated into oppression and exploitation for the many inhabitants of Yenişehir. Thanks to the backing of some powerful factions in the Yıldız Palace, Edhem Paşa could appropriate substantial rural surplus and accumulate immense political power, all the while being unencumbered by judicial and administrative checks. Yet, the Hamidian collage of governmentality also generated some antidotes to the arbitrariness and corruption embodied by Edhem Paşa in Yenişehir. Hence, at the pen-ultimate moment of the Young Turk Revolution, a governor of Hüdavendigâr, Mehmet Tevfik Efendi, who was a *mülkiye* graduate, worked hard to redress the problems caused by the Paşa’s restless and unlawful undertakings in Yenişehir. Yet, it was too late for the Hamidian government to turn the tide; many inhabitants of Yenişehir gathered at the town center to lynch Fehim Paşa - one of the most ill-famed political figures of the Hamidian regime- who was desperately seeking refuge by Edhem Paşa during the heydays of the Young Turk Revolution.

A couple of interrelated common themes cut across all the chapters of this study. Accordingly, this dissertation consistently reveals the resilience and durability of the local structures throughout the long 19th century of the Ottoman Empire. It demonstrates the local societies’ willingness to affect processes of modernization and centralization.

On top of these, it stresses the significance of individuals' agencies, strategies and conceptions of their world in the unfolding of Ottoman modernity.

Overall, this historical account is a call for putting aside the assumption that “the emergence of the Republic of Turkey in Anatolia, and of the neighboring nation-states in the surrounding territories of the disintegrated Ottoman polity, was the inevitable and predictable result of the decline of a sprawling multinational empire.”¹¹⁹⁰ Only then it would become possible to comprehend what indeed made the late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik “Ottoman” in the first place. Perhaps, a little bit of counter-factual thinking motivated by the contingent and open-ended character of history might help to clarify such a perspective: Why did the people of Yenişehir-İznik region, in general, accept the authority of the Ottoman establishment, which demanded their wealth, money, labor, loyalty, and of all the cherished things in life, a good many of their sons? These people had the guns and the sons, the ability to organize among themselves and the willingness to improve their lots in this world. So, they could have openly rebelled to the authority of İstanbul by uniting with the people of the wider Southern Marmara region and/or inner Anatolia, which would be all the more frightening for the imperial center due to the proximity of this region. Conversely, why did the late Ottoman imperial center constantly deal with the manipulations, slanders, evasions and foot-draggings of Yenişehir-İznik region among many other seemingly more serious, bewildering problems it faced? It could have just dispatched an army unit over this region, and made an exemplary case of destruction for all the other provincial settings causing such nuisances.

This historical account on the late Ottoman Yenişehir and İznik explains as to why these violent paths were not taken in this region. On the part of the provincial societies, lingering hope for improvement and solution within the Ottoman political system even amid hopelessly adverse political, economic and financial conditions kept their ties intact with İstanbul. On the part of the Ottoman state, a genuine interest in the well-being of the people and communities and in their destinies, not out of compassion, but mostly because of the fact that the people made up the body politic, prevented complete severing of ties. So, just like some of the revisionist historical accounts on the frontiers of the late Ottoman Empire, this study suggests that “the inclusion of the

¹¹⁹⁰ I follow Şükrü Hanioglu's critiques of teleological conceptions of late Ottoman history due to prevalent nationalist narratives, M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1.

population in efforts to build a modern, integral state is crucial for the success of these efforts. Unless anchored in penetrating political networks that help regulate the distribution of the good that accrues from integration and help generate a genuine sense of inclusion, modern technologies would not suffice to affect an integral state.”¹¹⁹¹ Thus, seen from Yenişehir-İznik region, Ottoman modernization was like a waltz, moving backwards and forwards in search of harmony that would at the very least make it worth for the partners to continue the dance.

¹¹⁹¹ Engin Deniz Akarlı, "Book Review on Eugene L. Rogan's *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 3 (2001): 351.

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A. MKT. MHM:	Sadaret Mektubi Mühimme Kalemî Evrakı
A. MKT. MVL:	Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî Meclis-i Vala Evrakı
A. MKT. UM:	Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî Umum Vilayet Evrakı
BEO:	Babıali Evrak Odası Evrakı
BEO. AYN. d:	Babıali Evrak Odası Ayniyat Defterleri
C. EV:	Cevdet Evkaf
C. TZ:	Cevdet Tımar
DH. MKT:	Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemî
DH. SAID:	Dahiliye Nezareti Sicill-i Ahval İdare-i Umumiyesi
DH. ŞFR:	Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Evrakı
DH. TMİK:	Dahiliye Nezareti Tesri-i Muamelat ve Islahat Komisyonu
EV. d:	Evkaf Defterleri
EV. MKT:	Evkaf Mektubi Kalemî
HR. MKT:	Hariciye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemî Evrakı
HRT. h:	Haritalar
İ. DH:	İrade Dahiliye
İ.MMS:	İrade Meclis-i Mahsus
İ. MVL:	İrade Meclis-i Vala
İ. ŞD:	İrade Şura-yı Devlet
İ. TAL:	İrade Taltifat

MF. MKT:	Maarif Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi
ML. VRD. TMT d:	Maliye Varidat Muhasebesi Temettuat Defterleri
MV:	Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları
MVL:	Meclis-i Vala Evrakı
ŞD:	Şura-yı Devlet Evrakı
Y. A. HUS:	Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı
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