

## ΚΑΤΑΤΥΠΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΟΥ «ΠΕΡΙ ΘΡΑΚΗΣ»

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# ΠΕΡΙ ΘΡΑΚΗΣ

ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΗ ΕΚΔΟΣΗ

Yonca Köksal

Reform in the Province of Edirne:  
Ottoman Archives on Local Administration  
During the Tanzimat Period (1839-1878)



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REFORM IN THE PROVINCE OF EDİRNE: OTTOMAN  
ARCHIVES ON LOCAL ADMINISTRATION DURING THE  
TANZIMAT PERIOD (1839-1876)

*1. Introduction*

From 1839 to 1876, the Ottoman state applied the centralizing and modernizing Tanzimat reforms which were a product of intertwining interests of the Ottoman central bureaucracy, its ongoing communication with the European elite and perceived needs to reform the state as a result of fiscal and administrative shortcomings<sup>1</sup>. In order to increase state control, the Tanzimat reforms addressed several areas of administration including the formation of a central bureaucracy, regulation of tax collection and maintenance of social and economic development in the Ottoman provinces.

This paper studies the application of the Tanzimat reforms in the province of Edirne. Scholarly studies on the Tanzimat usually interpret these reforms as top down applications that were planned in the center and forcefully applied in the provinces<sup>2</sup>. In studying the reforms at the local level, this paper emphasizes the negotiated character of the Tanzimat. The central planning of the reforms changed in application in the local level, and the outcome of reforms depended on negotiations and bargains between the imperial center and local groups, especially with the local elite.

In order to display state-local level relations, the paper sketches the socio-economic characteristics of the religious and ethnic communities (*millet*s) and demonstrates how changes in local relations affected the outcome of the Tanzimat reforms in Edirne using documents from the Ottoman archives. Documents housed in the Prime Ministry Archives in İstanbul, such as *Ayniyat Defteri*, *Mektubi Umum Vilayat* and *İrade* catalogues, provide a rare opportunity to study relations between the imperial center and local groups for a continuous time period from 1839 to 1876. These documents include both state directives and petitions on broad issues such as tax collection, development projects and public works, and complaints

<sup>1</sup> R. DAVISON, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire: 1856-1876*, New Jersey 1963.

<sup>2</sup> For an example of this literature, see S. MARDİN, Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics? *Dedalus* 102/1 (1973) 169-191.



about state officials. Thus, they contain valuable information about provincial administration and local responses to reforms.

The Balkan territories of the empire were very important for the application of the Tanzimat reforms. The European powers pressed for improvements in the position of Christian communities of the Empire. The independent Greek state and the policy it spread to the Slavic populations caused an important threat to the Ottoman Balkans which was populated by Greek and Bulgarian majority. Therefore, the reforms in Edirne as well as in other Balkan provinces (especially *Tuna vilayeti*) aimed to provide Ottoman citizenship under which both Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire will have an equal standing<sup>3</sup>. This recognition of equality, however, accompanied with increasing state control in the provincial administration. The state became more involved by centralizing bureaucracy and taxation and investing more on development projects in the province of Edirne.

The province of Edirne had always been an important administrative and economic center in the Balkans for centuries, and it enjoyed a strong revival in social and economic life during the Tanzimat era. The Ottoman state formed a new provincial bureaucracy, regulated taxation and undertook agricultural development projects in the province. Such reforms cannot be overlooked, but this paper focuses on the implementation of infrastructure projects, which scholarship has so far neglected. Such projects include the construction of regular transportation and communication networks and public buildings such as hospitals, orphanages and municipal buildings.

These changes caused both contention and cooperation of local groups in the province. Edirne was economically well-developed and tied to European markets commercially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Economic prosperity gave rise to two strong elite groups in the early Tanzimat years: Muslim landlords and non-Muslim merchants. Trade also changed local relations among different *millet*s. *Millet*s, especially non-Muslim *millet*s, became better organized internally and formed literary and aid societies with the help of the emerging bourgeoisie (e.g., merchants, lawyers and teachers). Another important development was the increase in the relations among different *millet*s as a result of frequent economic transactions that cut across religious and ethnic boundaries.

Increasing interactions among different *millet*s brought contention in everyday life but also provided opportunities for cooperation in support of state development projects. When locals understood that state development projects

<sup>3</sup> For the reforms in the Balkan lands, see T. SAHARA, *An Eastern Orthodox Community During the Tanzimat: Documents from a Register of the Bulgarian Society in Ruse (1860-1872)*, Tokyo 1997, I. ORTAYLI, *İmparatoriğün En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul 1983. For a short summary of the Tanzimat reforms, see E.J. ZÜRCHER, *Turkey: A Modern History*, London 2001, 52-75.

would provide them with a host of gains, they used their existing economic relations to provide local contributions for development projects. Transportation networks and public buildings were constructed as a public campaign that generated money and labor for the state. Examples of cooperation and contention are well documented in Ottoman archives, and this paper demonstrates the use of Ottoman archives for studying provincial administration and local relations during the Tanzimat period.

In the following pages I will discuss how economic development increased connections among local residents in the province. I will focus on the changing composition of the local elite and illustrate cooperation and conflict in local relations providing some examples from archive documents. Then, I will move to the discussion of reforms at the local level. I will study reform application focusing on changes in local councils, taxation and public works. In analyzing each dimension, I will show how the relations among different *millet*s influenced the reform outcome.

## 2. The Province of Edirne in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

A brief description of the social and economic characteristics demonstrates the influence of commercial activity on local relations in Edirne during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The province of Edirne was located in Eastern Thrace. It spreads over large fertile plains that bring three sections of the Danube together: the Maritsa, Arda, and Tunja. The former province is now part of Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. Its borders during Ottoman times extended from the Black Sea port of Burgas on the north to Gelibolu on the south. Komotini (Gümülcine) and Xanthi (in the kaza of Yenice-i Karasu during Ottoman times) in contemporary Greece and Tekfurdagi (Tekirdag or Rodosto) in Turkey were respectively located at the western and eastern borders of the province<sup>4</sup>. The city of Edirne was located on the ancient trade road of Via Egnatia that connected Asia Minor and Europe. Through the ports of Tekfurdagi and Enez, goods from Asian cities reached Edirne and continued on to East and Central European cities such as Salonica, Budapest and Vienna. Even as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, products from India and China such as spices, clothing and leather were available in the city. Trade of manufactured goods was the main economic activity in the region<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> In order to keep the case-study manageable, I only included examples from the districts of Edirne, Filibe and Tekfurdagi in this study. For a detailed study on the history of Edirne, see N. İŞLİ - S. M. KOZ (eds.), *Edirne: Serhatraki Payitaht*, İstanbul 1998.

<sup>5</sup> E.A. ZACHARIADOU (ed.), *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, *Halcyon Days in Crete II: a symposium held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994*, Rethymnon 1996.



By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the province of Edirne became an important center for trade and commerce. The transportation network and fertile land contributed to the development of commercial agriculture, and the province of Edirne became an important export center of rice and wheat to European cities. Rich merchants and moneylenders (both Muslim and mostly non-Muslim) invested in commerce and tax collection in the province. The cities of Filibe (Plovdiv) and Edirne were a stronghold for traders and moneylenders. Large commercial landholdings (*çiftlik*s), which mass-produced commercial grains such as rice and cotton for export, made up 17.4% of the arable land of Edirne<sup>6</sup>. In a monograph on seven villages in Filibe, Güran identifies eight *çiftlik*s in the region. The average small peasantry land was 8.75 acres, and the average size for *çiftlik* holdings were 28.5 acres (114 *dönüm*) in Filibe. Although large commercial landholdings were prominent, it should be noted that most land was held as small peasant property. In Filibe, small peasantry farmed 92% of the land, and *çiftlik* owners farmed 8%<sup>7</sup>.

The province of Edirne was in the early stages of industrial development. Archival records show that during 1860's and 70's, merchants and foreign industrialists requested official permission to build factories in the region<sup>8</sup>. A new clothing factory was established in İslimye (Sliven) in order to produce European style uniforms for the reorganized Ottoman army. In Kızanlık some factories produced rose water for export. Small-scale looms were also located in many villages<sup>9</sup>.

Commerce, commercial landholdings and limited industry allowed some of the region's individuals to prosper. The Muslim and non-Muslim elite benefited from increasing commercialization. Yet, there were differences in the form wealth took among religious and ethnic communities.

The province of Edirne was a densely populated region including several religious and ethnic communities. The Ottoman Empire organized its subjects into religious communities called *millet*s and granted them a considerable degree of autonomy. Each of the three major non-Muslim religions - Greek Orthodox Christianity, Judaism and Armenian Christianity - was granted *millet* status and placed under the direct authority of the leading church official<sup>10</sup>. In the nineteenth century the millet system gradually changed, and the Ottoman state recognized new

<sup>6</sup> T. GÜRAN, 19. *Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarımı*, İstanbul 1998, 82.

<sup>7</sup> T. GÜRAN, op. cit., 63-130

<sup>8</sup> One of them was so called Bulgarof who received permission to build a cotton textile factory in Filibe, BOA (Prime Ministry Archives, İstanbul), Ayniyat Defteri (Ayn. Dft.) 454, 1281.M.17 (21.06.1864).

<sup>9</sup> See the memoirs of A.K. BALKANLI, *Şark-ı Rumeli ve Buradaki Türkler*, Ankara 1986.

<sup>10</sup> W. CLEVELAND, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford 2000, 50-51

*millet*s such as Bulgarians. During the Tanzimat, the officially recognized *millet*s in the province included Bulgarians<sup>11</sup>, Greeks, Muslims, Jews and Armenians. Several sources provide different population statistics for the province. I will rely on population figures from the Ottoman censuses and the year books of the province of Edirne (*Edirne Salnamesi*). Although these registers can be taken as the most accurate of statistical sources with respect to population, some caution is always necessary<sup>12</sup>.

#### Ottoman Censuses for the district of Edirne<sup>13</sup>:

Year	Total	Muslims	Non-Muslims
1831	342,418	145,898 (42.6%)	196,520 (57.4%)
1870-71 <sup>14</sup>	181,096	57,921 (31.9%)	122,412 (67.6%)

The population of the district of Edirne in 1887-88<sup>15</sup>:

Total	200,808
Muslims	78,983 (39.3%)
Greeks	77,040 (38.4%)
Bulgarians	31,909 (15.9%)
Jews	8,760 (0.04%)
Armenians	3,657 (0.02%)
Catholics	417 (0.002%)
Protestants	42 (0.003%)

<sup>11</sup> Bulgarians were recognized as a separate *millet* after the formation of Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1870. For the formation of Bulgarian millet, see O. MAZDRAKOVA-CAVDAROVA, Political Struggle of the Bulgarian People for Legitimate National Representation, *Études Balkaniques* 32/1(1996) 58-79.

<sup>12</sup> The use of census data has several limitations: First, the population of the province fluctuated throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of constant wars. The Ottoman-Russian (1828 and 1878) and Crimean war brought waves of immigrants to the province. Second, the definition of religious and ethnic communities changed over time, and this makes the comparison of censuses very difficult. For example, prior to 1878, the Ottoman censuses had a broad category of non-Muslims. The reports of separate numbers for Greek, Bulgarian, Jewish and Armenian communities are available after 1887. Third, the geographical boundary of the Edirne province changed over time. For example, Gelibolu, which was a district in the province of Edirne in the early Tanzimat period, became a district in the province of Biga in the late Tanzimat period.

<sup>13</sup> The census of 1831 counted only males, and the number was multiplied by two in order to include estimates for the female population. 1831 census results were presented in D. PANZAC, *Population et Santé dans l'Empire Ottoman (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, İstanbul 1996, 126. 1870-71 figures were published in *Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi (Provincial Yearbook of Edirne)*, 1287-1288/1870-1871. The census of 1870-71 counted both males and females.

<sup>14</sup> In 1870-71 figures, gypsies (*kıptıyan*) were reported as a separate category. There were 736 of them living in the province.

<sup>15</sup> E. BALTA, La communauté grecque d'Andriantople (milieu du XIXe siècle-1922), *People et Production. Pour une interprétation des sources ottomanes*, İstanbul 1999, 209-24; EADEM, Edirne



These numbers show that although the number of Muslims living in the province increased throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims were a minority in the province of Edirne. Greeks made up the largest *millet* followed by Bulgarians, Jews and Armenians. In the next section, I will briefly discuss the Muslim and non-Muslim elite and focus on their role in community affairs. Then, I will describe frequent contacts between different *millets* and resulting increase in contention and cooperation. This discussion will allow me to discuss the effects of local structure on the application of the reforms in the province.

### 3. Local Relations in the Province of Edirne during the Tanzimat

Economic development had two important consequences in the province of Edirne: First, merchants, traders, commercial landholders and moneylenders gained importance in local politics as a result of their increasing wealth. Merchants, traders and moneylenders were usually non-Muslims, and landlords tended to be Muslims although there was considerable overlap in both categories. Second, trade relations brought the different religious and ethnic communities in frequent contact. Several communities were able to cooperate in support of public projects such as construction of transportation network and public buildings. I will first focus on the local elite among the Muslim and non-Muslim *millets* and then discuss their influence on increasing contacts among local communities.

#### 3.1. Muslim Notables: Landowners and State Officials

At the beginning of the Tanzimat period, the Muslim notables of Edirne were numerous, had moderate wealth, and competed with each other for commerce and state benefits. Muslim intermediaries between the state and local groups (*ayans*) were officially recognized as responsible for the local administration along with local governors in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *Ayans* became semi-autonomous rulers in their regions when they controlled important administrative tasks such as tax collection. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century reformers aimed to decrease the power of *ayans* and centralize the provincial administration. In the province of Edirne, famous notables (*ayans*) that belonged to local dynasties such as the Dağdevirenzades and Tepedelnilis were eliminated from the political scene during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century centralizing reforms of Sultan Mahmud II<sup>16</sup>.

During the Tanzimat, some descendants of *ayans* continued to hold considerable power in the local administration even though their influence was much limited compared to the earlier century. In contrast to Anatolia where prominent families

Rum Cemaati (XIX. yüzyıl ortası-1922), Edirne: *Serhataki Payitaht*, op.cit., 229-54.

<sup>16</sup> Y. ÖZKAYA, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ayanlık*, Ankara 1994, 293-306.

such as the Cabbarzades and Karaosmanoğlu still had considerable power in local administration, local notables in Edirne did not belong to local dynasties. The only exception was the Kavanozade family whose members held state offices and controlled rice cultivation in Filibe and Pazarcık (Pazardzhik).

Throughout the centralizing reforms of the Tanzimat, local notables were able to keep substantial economic power and accumulated wealth not only through tax collection and exploiting state resources, but also through trade and agricultural production. They owned considerable amounts of land and controlled trade in the province. The accumulation of wealth through overlapping layers of trade, tax collection and state offices was evident in the town of Filibe where trade with Europe was well developed.

Property registers of the town of Filibe (*Filibe Temettuât Defteri*) for the year 1260-61/1844-45 shows the degree of wealth accumulated by the local notables. The wealthiest individuals of this register were also important participants in local administration. Their names were frequently mentioned in issues relating to local administration in different state registers. Ayniyat Defteri registers certify that these notables belonged to the high ranks of the religious bureaucracy and that they controlled rice cultivation along with the members of local families<sup>17</sup>. Among them, a member of the religious clergy and a resident of the neighborhood of Hacı Ömer, [*müdürris-i kiramdân*] Enis Efendi, owned 12 shares of rice (*çiftlik*) paddies. His total produce from rice was 717,255 gurus for 1845. He also owned three other *çiftlik*s (landholdings) in the villages of Permene, Cesnigar and Elvebler? His net worth (after taxes) was 306,521 gurus in 1845. His neighbor, İzzet Bey who resided on the same street, belonged to the same religious clergy. Like Enis Efendi, he was a müdürris and owned paddies. He had more shares in rice cultivation (32 shares) than Enis Efendi, but his produce was lower than Enis Efendi: 517,725 gurus in 1845. In addition to rice fields, he owned a *çiftlik* in the village of Ahlat, merchandise<sup>18</sup> in the villages of Ragmos, Kebir Kanyon and Çoruklu as well as a mill in the village of Ayranoğlu. His net worth was 494,621 gurus<sup>19</sup>.

These product totals are remarkably high. To make sense of the extent of the wealth of these notables, I compare their wealth with that of other well-to-do residents. Compare Enis Efendi and İzzet Bey to another rich resident of Filibe: Hasan Efendi was a member of the local council of Filibe. He was also involved in

<sup>17</sup> A similar pattern of overlapping land ownership existed in Bosnia among the members of the religious bureaucracy. See Y. NAGATA, *Materials on the Bosnian notables*, Tokyo 1979.

<sup>18</sup> The nature of merchandise was not specified in the registers. Since he also owned a mill, I assume the merchandise referred to grain produce. It is interesting that he did not own lands in these villages, but only owned merchandise. This means that he either rented some miri lands (state owned) or became a partner with sharecroppers in these villages.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, Filibe Temettuât Defteri, 1260-61 (1844-45).



rice cultivation, and he cultivated 43.75 acres (175 dönümlük) of rice land. His total produce of rice was worth 70,648 gurus according to Filibe Property registers in 1845-46. He also owned a grain store that he rented for 800 gurus and a 0.5 acre (2 dönümlük) fruit garden that he rented for 150 gurus. His net earning (after taxes and expenses) was 8,279 gurus. Hasan Efendi was a very wealthy resident in his town, but not when compared to Enis Efendi and İzzet Bey.

As seen in these examples, holding state offices enhanced prosperity of the local elite because the elite was able to secure tax exemptions and subsidies through their connections with the state.<sup>30</sup> A similar pattern can be seen in other districts of the province. For example, Mustafa Cezzar of Edirne was both a local council member and tax collector in several towns, including Havsa, Didymoteicho (Dimetoka), Kızılağaç and Kırkılıse. He also owned several *çiftlik*s in Havsa. He took the advantage of his council membership to auction tax collection rights to himself. Then, he subleased these rights to local collectors, and benefited economically. One tax collector in Kırkılıse, Yorgaki, asked Cezzar's help in subleasing his own tax farming to local collectors. However, Mustafa Cezzar's control was not free of contention. Subleasing led to the double taxation of the peasants, and the local residents consequently complained to the center. Residents of Havsa complained about him and requested help from the state. The center ordered an investigation.<sup>31</sup> In 1874 when his inheritance was divided to his beneficiaries, some merchants and moneylenders appealed to local courts so that their debts would be paid from this inheritance.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the accumulation of wealth through controlling tax collection and state offices by the Muslim notables, the non-Muslim elite involved in trade and industrial activities.

### 3.2. *Non-Muslim Elite in the Province of Edirne*

Although they are not as detailed as intra-communal sources such as the church and the local court registers, the Ottoman archives provide important information about the characteristics of the non-Muslim elite and their relations with the state and other local actors. Nineteenth century developments led to the emergence of a new bourgeoisie (such as merchants, traders and professionals) in non-Muslim communities in Edirne. This new elite gradually rose to power. They contributed to their communities by supporting the formation of new schools, literary societies and aid societies.

In this paper, I focus on the Greek and Bulgarian *millets* since they were the two largest non-Muslim communities in the province. A short note on Jewish and

<sup>30</sup> BOA, Ayn. Dft. 395, 1261.S.14 (21.02.1845).

<sup>31</sup> BOA, Ayn. Dft. 821, p. 8, 1290, C.24 (18.08.1873).

<sup>32</sup> BOA, Ayn. Dft. 826, p. 43, 1291.R.8 (24.04.1874).

Armenian communities is necessary before discussing other religious and ethnic communities: The Jewish elite was composed of moneylenders and traders in the city of Edirne. The Jewish moneylenders of the city had considerable wealth second only to that of Istanbul moneylenders. Throughout the Tanzimat, they appealed to the state in order to gain the same privileges offered (in terms of tax exemption and commission fees in debt) as to Istanbul moneylenders.<sup>33</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Jewish community built its own schools such as the *Alliance Israélite*, and became increasingly organized.<sup>34</sup> The Armenians of the province of Edirne were a small segment of the population and were to be found in major cities such as Edirne and Tekfurdağı. Their elite was involved in jewelry-making and commerce. There were also some moneylenders among them.

During the Tanzimat period, there was increasing economic, cultural and social development within Greek and Bulgarian communities. They established new schools, newspapers and aid societies. The new bourgeoisie contributed to the development of their communities, but their rise to power was not free of contention. The rise of new groups challenged the authority of the old elite. After the recognition of the separate Bulgarian church, the newly emerging Bulgarian elite competed to gain power. They challenged their existing leaders, who were mostly *çorbacı*s and *kocabaşı*s (intermediaries between the state and the *millets*) and religious leaders.

These latter two groups traditionally mediated between the state and local populations. When local demands for autonomy increased, local intermediaries found it difficult to balance relations between the state and local residents. The emergence of a new bourgeoisie challenged the old elite and led to contention within the *millets*.

One example of the contention between the new and the old elite was documented in the Ottoman archives. In 1857 the state was notified that the Christians in Filibe had formed an illegal committee to administer communal affairs. When the members of this committee were questioned, they admitted that the *metropolid* (Metropolitan) of Filibe advised them to form this committee to address problems regarding the schooling of Christian children and aid to the needy. In his response, the metropolid admitted that he advised them to take care of community needs and told them to form a committee similar to committees in Istanbul and İzmir. Apparently, the Metropolitan wanted a more organized administration for the community, but things got out of hand when members of this community allied to help nationalist Bulgarians. The Metropolitan panicked when he saw that he was losing control over community affairs, and he complained about the committee to

<sup>33</sup> BOA, Ayn. Dft. 430, p. 53.2, 1269 (1852).

<sup>34</sup> R. BALL, Edirne Yahudileri, *Edirne: Serharraki Payitaht* op.cit., 205-228.



İstanbul. Both the Metropolitan and the notables, members of this committee, were taken into custody and sent to İstanbul for further questioning and the committee was dismissed.<sup>25</sup>

This case was related to the conflicts over the formation of a separate Bulgarian nation (*millet*) and the Bulgarian Church. The conflict between the Greek Metropolitan and Bulgarian elite was the source of complaints to the state. What is interesting in this case is that the state treated this issue as an intra-communal conflict instead of as a nationalist-separatist problem. Ottoman documents emphasize the conflict between the Metropolitan and the notables. They note that the governor of Filibe wrote to the center and asked whether he should send the deputy Metropolitan to the yearly council meeting of the Greek Metropolitan in İstanbul. Since Bulgarians were the majority, he was not sure if the Bulgarian deputy Metropolitan should attend the meeting in İstanbul. Nineteenth-century changes certainly affected the administration and the local relations in the province of Edirne, both in terms of population movements and the recognition of new *millets*.

The Tanzimat period was marked with the rise of a bourgeoisie class, and consequent tensions with the old elite in the Greek and Bulgarian communities. All religious and ethnic communities became more organized during the Tanzimat. This affected their relations with the state, and especially their contribution to the Tanzimat project. In the following section, I will discuss the effects of the changing role of Muslim and non-Muslim elite on relations among communities.

### 3.3. *Relations Among Millets in the Province of Edirne.*

Economic prosperity and developing associational activity in the communities contributed to the formation of local support for state development projects. Different communities were able to cooperate when they completed public projects. There were well-organized public campaigns that involved participants from different religious and ethnic communities in the construction of roads, hospitals and municipal buildings.

Yet, increasing organization and national awakening within each community also caused ethnic tensions. Tensions among different *millets* are reported in Ayniyat Defter registers. For example, in 1859, an open conflict between the Greek and Armenian communities led to a strike of the Greek shop owners in Tekfurdagi. The debate began with the construction of a house on the border of a Greek graveyard by an Armenian called Kirgor. The Greeks objected to the building of this house and appealed to the local Muslim judge (the kadi of Tekfurdagi). They claimed that the second floor of the house, with its window boxes which projected outwards, violated the boundaries of the graveyard. Certainly

<sup>25</sup> BOA, Ayn. Def. 441, 1273.R.23 (20.11.1856).

Armenian occupancy in the Greek property was not acceptable, especially given existing tensions between the two communities. The kadi ordered the demolition of the wall facing the graveyard.

This verdict made Armenian residents of the city angry, and some Greek notables headed by a chief (*muhtar*) of a neighborhood carried the issue to the local council in presence of the local kadi. The council did not support the kadi's decision. It ordered that Kirgor could build his wall as long as he left some distance from the graveyard. The Greek audience present at the council was upset by the decision. The representative of the Greek community in the council advised the Greek notables to be calm and understanding. However, the Greeks did not accept this advice. They captured the Greek council member, and took him under custody in the house of the chief (*muhtar*). The following day, the Greek community protested the decision of the kadi and the local council by not opening their shops for business. Shopkeepers announced that they would not open their shops until the decision was reversed. Local administrators informed the center about the strike, and a commissioner was sent from İstanbul. Following his investigation, both Greek and Armenians accepted a new construction arrangement.<sup>26</sup> This example shows that religious and ethnic communities were able to organize collective protest using their intra-communal mechanisms. Collective petitioning existed long before the Tanzimat, but organizing collective protest in the form of strikes was a new development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim groups was common in the form of brigands and bandits. Especially in mountainous areas, brigands robbed travellers and mail carriers. They also robbed villages, and the state tried hard to catch them. Following the 1860's, the activities of the brigands were inscribed with a nationalist character, as Bulgarians succeeded in mobilizing them in support of nationalist claims. They burned Muslim and Greek villages, causing both economic and human loss. Muslim brigands and Albanian troops also harmed non-Muslims<sup>27</sup>.

However, intra and inter-communal tensions should not be exaggerated. Despite some conflict, old intermediaries and religious leaders were influential in their communities during the Tanzimat period. Increasing commercial activity among different religious and ethnic communities provided an opportunity for cooperation on local projects. The Balkan provinces of the empire were very important for the Ottoman citizenship projects, and the Ottoman state was willing to invest in development projects in order to provide local content in the region. Residents contributed money and labor when the projects were economically beneficial for them. In the following section, I will examine some outcomes of the

<sup>26</sup> BOA, Ayn. Def. 445, p.129-130, 1276.C.2 (27.11.1860).

<sup>27</sup> BOA, Ayn. Def. 451, 1279.C.1 (24.10.1862 AD) and BOA, Ayn. Def. 820, 1287.S.31(30.05.1870).



Tanzimat reforms in the province by focusing on cooperation among these well-organized *millet*s and wealthy local elite. I will examine a few areas of reform application including taxation, local councils and public works.

#### 4. *Tanzimat Reforms in Provincial Administration.*

The Tanzimat reforms brought several changes in the province. Besides the formation of a new bureaucracy, there were social and economic development plans at the local level. The success of these public projects depended on local contributions. Local contributions to public works provided an infrastructure for the development of commerce, industry and agriculture. Yet, there was contention on other aspects of reforms such as taxation. I will provide some examples from state archives about taxation, local councils and public works to show how the application of the Tanzimat proceeded with local contributions.

##### 4.1. *Taxation.*

In 1843 the ex-governor of the province of Erzurum, Süleyman Paşa, was appointed as the governor of the province of Edirne. He enthusiastically reported his first experiences in Edirne to the center: First, he announced the beginning of the Tanzimat era to the newly founded local council. In turn, he reported that Muslim and Christian members of the council declared their mutual trust in each other<sup>28</sup>. By making local council members responsible to one another, he aimed to minimize tensions between community representatives. He expected that surety (*kefale*) which was a common practice in the earlier Ottoman administration would provide local councils with automatic balancing mechanisms and hence reduce corruption. Süleyman Paşa also reported that he implemented the use of population and property registers. The state needed to know how many people owned how much property. This registry made possible changes in taxation.

Ayniyat Defteri registries include several complaints of local residents about taxation. There were many complaints about the increasing tax burden in several villages and towns in the province of Edirne. Residents expected that the Tanzimat would reduce taxes. Non-Muslims hoped that their taxation burden would decrease significantly since they were legally recognized as equal to Muslims by the Tanzimat decree of 1839. However, new property and population registers, the recalculation of taxes and the state's desire to increase its revenue proved the opposite. Small village residents sent collective petitions complaining about the increasing tax burden. Depending on the results of the state's investigation, tax rates were reduced or kept the same. In most of the cases, however, local residents were either incapable or unwilling to pay yearly taxes. Thus, unpaid taxes were

<sup>28</sup> BOA, Cevdet Dahiliye, 633, 1259.Z.11 (2.12.1843).

deferred until the following year, and residents had to pay taxes for both the present and previous years. This provided a temporary solution but its long-term consequence was an increase in local tax burdens.

There were frequent complaints about the amount of the taxes collected. For example, the residents of Şipka village (in Kızanlık) complained to the Ottoman state that their village çorbacı attempted to collect extra taxes<sup>29</sup>. There was also confusion about who was responsible for tax collection: Residents of the town of Vize complained that the town governor (*kaymakam*) abused his power by attempting to collect taxes from residents<sup>30</sup>.

There were also frequent taxation conflicts among tax collectors, moneylenders, local state officials and the state. Taxation problems existed in previous administrations. However, new tax regulations caused confusion and made it difficult for tax collectors to extract sufficient amounts to repay to moneylenders. Thus, they tried to charge residents higher taxes. When residents were unable to pay, problems between tax collectors and moneylenders emerged.

Problems between tax collectors and moneylenders frequently appear in the Ottoman archives. Moneylenders (*sarraflar*) became sureties (*kefil*) to tax collectors (*mültezim*) and local governors<sup>31</sup>. For a *mültezim* or governor to have tax collection rights, a moneylender who was either Armenian or Jewish had to act as guarantor. This moneylender then made an advanced payment to the state. This advance payment guaranteed the state revenue. In return, the tax collector repaid the moneylender with interest once he had gathered taxes from local residents. Collecting taxes was not an easy job, and debt and credit disputes between tax collectors and moneylenders frequently appear in the state documents. Moneylenders became an integral part of problems between tax collectors and local groups. When residents disputed the amount of taxes, the moneylender could not collect his money and interest from tax collectors. Moneylenders and tax collectors were closely tied to each other as a result of debt relations. In the majority of the state documents, moneylenders brought claims against tax collectors and demanded their money without referring to the local residents. However, in some cases moneylenders acted as intermediaries between the center and the tax collectors.

For example, a moneylender named Sazir helped beneficiaries of Çubukzade Hüseyin Bey, the governor of Gelibolu, to collect the governor's debt from different people. This moneylender wrote to the state that the furrier Anton should pay his debt to the *voyvoda*, and that the center must take necessary measures

<sup>29</sup> BOA, Ayn. Dft. 422, p. 65.2, 1268 (1852).

<sup>30</sup> BOA, Ayn. Dft. 385, p. 19.3, 1260 (1844).

<sup>31</sup> Local governors were prohibited from tax collections in the later years of the Tanzimat, but tax collection by local governors was a common practice in the early Tanzimat years.



against the furrier<sup>32</sup>. Sazir probably thought that the only way he could get back his money was to force debtors to pay their beneficiaries. The relationship between tax collectors and moneylenders is an important subject of study since it provides information about intercommunal relations in the province. A detailed study on the moneylenders is yet to be done.

Despite conflicts and complaints about tax collection, the increase in the amount of the taxes that went to the state treasury was considerable. The state increased its tax revenue from 1839 to 1878. For example, in the budget year 1279/1863–64, the province of Edirne sent 106.727.579 gurus to the state<sup>33</sup>. In the budget year of 1288/1871–72 the total tax revenue of the province of Edirne was 130.331.655 gurus<sup>34</sup>. This increase was substantial when compared to some Anatolian provinces. For example, the tax increase in the province of Ankara was meager: from 31,401,118 gurus in 1863–64 to 41,864,248 in 1885<sup>35</sup>. The success of tax collection in Edirne was probably the result of the economic wealth of its residents, the ability of the state officials to generate more revenue and the willingness of the local residents to cooperate with the imperial center. In contrast to Ankara where there were constant demands for the reduction of the taxes without any mention of successful tax collection, the archive documents show that the state often congratulated Edirne's governors and residents for their successful tax collection in the province of Edirne<sup>36</sup>.

#### 4.2. Local Councils

The Tanzimat reforms also involved the formation of the local councils. Although they existed in select areas under different names in prior administrations, the local councils became a commonplace and an official administrative facet of the Tanzimat. One of the earliest councils was established in the city of Edirne. In the 1840's the major towns in the province (Edirne, Filibe, Tekfurdagi and Gelibolu) formed local councils. Local representatives were generally elected by the male tax-paying residents but some representatives were also appointed from the center<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> BOA, Ayn. Def. 253, p. 80, 1256 (1840).

<sup>33</sup> Data was published by A. ŞENER, *Tanzimat Dönemi Vergi Sistemi*, İstanbul 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Edirne Vilayet Salnamesi (Provincial Yearbook of Edirne), 1287-1288/1870-1871.

<sup>35</sup> A. ŞENER, *Tanzimat Dönemi Vergi Sistemi*, op.cit., 214 for 1863–64 figures; Ankara Vilayet Salnamesi 1299 (1884–85).

<sup>36</sup> For example, a local council petition from Filibe thanked Abdülahmed Ağa, the governor of the city (*kaymakam*) for successfully completing tax collection (BOA, Cevdet Dahiliye, no. 12875, 12660/1844).

<sup>37</sup> The Provincial Law of 1864 added provisions for elections of representatives on all levels for the first time. Male subjects who were older than the age of eighteen, paying direct taxes of 50 gurus yearly and not having convicted of any major crime were eligible to vote in elections. See S.J. SHAW, *Local Administrations in the Tanzimat*, in: IDEM, *Studies in Ottoman and Turkish History*, İstanbul 2000, 269-286.

Elections seemed to take place frequently<sup>38</sup>. Yet, once a local notable secured council membership, he stayed there for the long term by using his support from residents and alliances with local officials. Local council membership provided important control over taxation and land issues, and council members became key players in local administration. Selim Paşa, the chief commissioner of Rumelia, who was sent to the Balkan provinces to oversee the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms, reported to İstanbul that the council members in Edirne and Filibe tended to stay in their office once they were elected<sup>39</sup>.

In Edirne the councils were quite active in generating local support for the state reforms as reported in the archives. They contacted the state when they needed assistance, but they also wrote to the state in order to volunteer local support for the reforms. For instance, the local council members actively devoted money and material for the construction of telegraph lines, public buildings and schools.

A comparison of the petitions sent from the local councils in Edirne and Ankara shows the more important role of the local councils in Edirne. I collected data from several registries including *Meclis-i Vala Ayniyat Defterleri*, *Sadaret Mektubi Kalemi Belgeleri*, *Sadaret Mektubî Kalemi Umum Vilayet Yazışmalarına Ait Belgeler* and *Cevdet Tasnifi (Dahiliye and Maliye)*. Among all collective petitions sent from the province, 68.4% of them were council petitions in Edirne. This number was 57.9% in the province of Ankara.

Another interesting contrast in collective petitioning was the religious and ethnic composition of the petition signers in both provinces: In Ankara separate petitions were organized by Armenian and Greek communities, which were exclusively signed by non-Muslims. Only 42% of all petitions were signed by both Muslims and non-Muslims in Ankara. In contrast, in Edirne 95% of all petitions (including collective and local council petitions) were signed by both Muslim and non-Muslim residents. Separate petitioning for the *millet*s was the prevalent pattern in Ankara. In contrast to this disconnected local structure in Ankara, residents from different ethnic and religious backgrounds were able to organize collective petitioning together in Edirne. Residents who had frequent economic contact with each other were able to cooperate in voicing their common demands in Edirne.

There was evidence that increasing connections between Muslim and non-Muslim communities caused tensions too. Non-Muslim representatives in the councils, usually *çorbacı*, *kocabası* and religious leaders, were sometimes

<sup>38</sup> A comparison of archive documents on Edirne and Ankara shows different practices of the election and appointment: There is no mention of elections to the local councils in the Ankara provincial registers. In Edirne the elections and sometimes the votes council members received were registered. See: BOA, Ayn. Def. 821, p. 215, 1289.C.25 (30.07.1872 AD); BOA, İrade Meclis-i Vala (MVL), n. 25227, 1283.A.2 (16.05.1866); BOA, Ayn. Def. 448, p. 62, 1277.R.5 (20.09.1860).

<sup>39</sup> BOA, Ayn. Def. 824, p. 38.2, 1289 (1873).



discriminated against and were not invited to the regular meetings of the councils. They were only contacted when the council needed their signature to finalize reports<sup>40</sup>. After the Provincial Law of 1864, the election of local representatives became a legal obligation. Council members, both Muslims and non-Muslims, were elected by their community members every year, and no individual was allowed to be a candidate for two consecutive terms. This regulation aimed to prevent the accumulation of undue influence.

Over all, the region's densely connected local structure and economic wealth made local councils active participants in administration. Councils brought together representatives of different religious and ethnic communities together in support of development projects. For example, the 1868 yearly provincial council of Edirne recorded that Raşid Efendi of the town of Şarköy, a member of the annual council, requested that the ferry from İstanbul to İzmir make a stop in Şarköy to pick up passengers and goods. Raşid Efendi guaranteed to pay 5,000 guruş in order to cover any losses to the company in the event that the ferry company did not benefit from this additional stop<sup>41</sup>. Residents of Edirne needed to transfer their goods to markets, and they were willing to share the transportation costs. When the state and the local interests intersected, local initiative supported development projects of the state.

#### 4.3. Public Works

Another change that came with the Tanzimat reforms was the increasing number of the public works. Before the Tanzimat, it is difficult to talk about a public space in the form of a shared space for all residents irrespective of ethnic and religious origins in the Ottoman towns (except bazaars and open markets)<sup>42</sup>. Each community had its own schools and religious buildings financed by community members. Religious endowments (vakıf), both Muslim and non-Muslim, were primarily responsible for financing the construction of schools, mosques, churches and hospitals. The representation of the state in the form of public spaces open to all residents was a novelty of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Municipal buildings, courthouses, hospitals, orphanages and post offices were built in increasing numbers during the reform period. Central treasury financed public works whenever it was able to pay. In the absence of adequate state finances, local contributions became important for the completion of the public projects.

In the early Tanzimat years, the construction and repair of roads and bridges

<sup>40</sup> BOA, Ayn. Def. 394, p. 77-78, 1261.R.4 (11.04.1845); BOA, Amedi Mektubi (A.MKT), n. 92/94, 1263.B.27 (06.03.1847).

<sup>41</sup> BOA, İrade, Şuray-ı Devlet, no. 649, 1285 (1869).

<sup>42</sup> S. FAROQHİ mentions bazaars, hans, and coffeehouses as common spaces in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. See S. FAROQHİ, *Towns and Townspeople of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting 1520-1650*, Cambridge 1984, 31-56.

was needed to promote the movement of the agricultural products and to address military needs. Telegraph and railroads were introduced to the city during the Tanzimat period. Local residents willingly contributed money and labor to the construction of the transportation network. It was a part of the integration to the world market, and when there was money at the local level, residents were as willing as the state to support better infrastructure.

The state archives contain many documents about public works. In the province of Edirne, local inhabitants, councils and governors wrote to the center seeking permission to construct roads with local funds. For example, the residents of the town of Tekfurdagi collected money and began constructing roads. The town council of Tekfurdagi wrote to the center and complained about the engineers who took local money and left without completing the job (leaving the road one-full hour from the town). The state ordered a trial<sup>43</sup>. The state generally accepted local assistance in road construction except when roads were considered strategic. For instance, the state declined the demand of the Edirne council to locally finance a major road from the town of Filibe to the town of Hasköy. The traders and merchants of Hasköy's grand bazaar were allowed to pay for the construction of streets and roads within the town, but the construction of the road from Filibe to Hasköy was the duty of the center since the road was important for security reasons<sup>44</sup>. In this example the center's attempt to expand its control becomes apparent. In the new realm of contention between the state and the local areas of responsibility, the center was becoming more visible at the local level.

The same was true for the construction of the public buildings. Economic prosperity led the local demands to improve social and cultural life. The presence of European merchants and consulates displayed a new life style to the residents of Edirne. Some local residents, especially local notables and merchants, had also been abroad and had become accustomed with European life style<sup>45</sup>. They demanded cafes, hospitals, libraries, newspapers and theaters. Public spaces like tea gardens and theaters were founded in addition to the public buildings<sup>46</sup>. Between 1862 and 1868 the Edirne yearly provincial council considered building a hospital, orphanage

<sup>43</sup> BOA, Ayn.D. 824, 1289.M.3 (12.03.1872).

<sup>44</sup> BOA, Ayn.D. 457, 1282.Z.21 (06.05.1866).

<sup>45</sup> The attendance of non-Muslim residents of the city to schools in Europe is a well-known fact (See R. BALLI, *Edirne Yahudileri*, op.cit., 217). However, we do not have enough information about Muslim residents. Notables of the city who also held high-ranking state offices had been abroad on state duties. One example was the Ottoman Consul of St. Petersburg Kamil Paşa who was a resident of Filibe (BOA, Ayn. Def. 821, p.222, 1289.R.6 [08.09.1872]).

<sup>46</sup> T. AKPINAR, *Alman Seyahatnamelerinde Edirne*, in: N. İŞLİ - S. KOZ (eds), *Edirne: Serhatıki Payitahtı*, op.cit., 255-277; F. EMECEN, *Tarih Koridorlarında Bir Sınır Şehri*, Edirne, in: N. İŞLİ - S. KOZ (eds), op. cit.,



and military barracks in vacant state land close to the old palace. This was a major campaign since it included the construction of several state buildings at the same time. Although the center approved construction, it could not afford to fund them all. The military barracks were given priority because of security reasons, and the local inhabitants assumed responsibility for building the hospital and the orphanage. The governor subsidized construction by selling unused stones of the palace<sup>87</sup>. However, the construction of public buildings was largely carried by local inhabitants in Edirne. Yearly provincial council meetings became important gatherings to raise funds for public campaigns among wealthy members of community<sup>88</sup>.

In the late 1870's, forty-four new schools providing Western-style education were built mainly with local contributions although they were usually separate for each community<sup>89</sup>. The province had a well-maintained transportation and communication system, railroads, roads, bridges and telegraph lines. These were rebuilt and repaired with a combination of state money and local initiative. In addition, the state was expanding its control by increasing taxation, constructing new state buildings and reorganizing provincial administration.

##### 5. Conclusion

Similar to the rest of the Ottoman Balkans, nineteenth century Edirne was well integrated to the world economy<sup>90</sup>, and the province's dense trade relations cut across religious and ethnic boundaries. Local elite that acted as brokers between local communities and the state played an important role. Local elite utilized their dual status, both as state agents and representatives of people, maximizing their control over local administration. Muslim elite dominated state offices, landholdings and limited mercantile activity. Economic prosperity in trade and commerce led to the emergence of a new bourgeoisie mostly among non-Muslim groups.

Along with an increase in commercial activity came an increase in local cooperation. Each community organized cultural associations and aid organizations. Both conflict and cooperation went together: On the one hand, there was increasing tension between Bulgarian and Greek communities (in terms of the recognition of a separate Bulgarian church). On the other hand, different communities were able to form local initiative and invest in public projects such as

<sup>87</sup> BOA, İrade, Meclis-i Vala, no. 25885, 1284 (1868).

<sup>88</sup> BOA, İrade Şuray-ı Devlet., no. 487, 1284 (1868).

<sup>89</sup> E. BALTA, "Edirne Rum Cemaati (XIX. yüzyıl ortası-1922)", op.cit.

<sup>90</sup> R. KASABA, *Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century*, Albany N.Y. 1988.

constructing transportation network and public buildings.

This cooperation at the local level contributed to the success of the Tanzimat in Edirne. The Ottoman state centralized its bureaucracy, increased its taxation revenue and applied development projects in the province. Unfortunately, these developments were halted when the Ottoman-Russian war swept through the Balkans in 1877. Its results were devastating for the province of Edirne. With the invasion of the city of Edirne and other towns in the region, there was famine, epidemics and both human and property loss. Some parts of the province, including Plovdiv and Sliven, were incorporated to semi-autonomous Bulgaria at the end of the war. Following the Ottoman-Russian war, the Balkan wars (1911-1913) and the World War I (1914-1918) prevented any chances for recovery in the province.

In this paper I have shown that Ottoman state archives provide important information about interactions between the state and local communities, and especially among local elite during the Tanzimat period. Archive documents indicate that both contention and cooperation coexisted, and reform application was facilitated by local support in the province of Edirne. The combination of this material with other archival sources such as foreign consulate reports, memoirs and church registers would provide a more detailed picture of local relations.

YONCA KÖKSAL

## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μεταρρυθμίσεις στην επαρχία Αδριανούπολης: Τα οθωμανικά αρχεία για την Τοπική Αυτοδιοίκηση κατά την περίοδο του Τανζιμάτ (1839–1878).

Το άρθρο μελετά την εφαρμογή των μεταρρυθμίσεων του Τανζιμάτ στην περιφέρεια Αδριανούπολης και συγκεκριμένα στις επαρχίες Αδριανούπολης, Φιλιππούπολης, Ραιδεστού και Καλλίπολης. Το ενδιαφέρον εστιάζεται στη συμβολή των νέων πληθυσμών για τη μεταρρυθμιστική πολιτική της περιοχής. Το άρθρο αποδεικνύει ότι οι μεταρρυθμίσεις στην επαρχία Αδριανούπολης είχαν επιτυχή αποτελέσματα στους τομείς του κρατικού συγκεντρωτισμού και της κοινωνικο-οικονομικής ανάπτυξης. Ειδικότερα, οι μεταρρυθμίσεις αύξησαν τα φορολογικά έσοδα και πέτυχαν στο να επεκτείνουν την υλικοτεχνική υποδομή και τις δημόσιες υπηρεσίες και στο να αυξήσουν την αγροτική παραγωγή.

Εξημενώντας την εφαρμογή των μεταρρυθμίσεων, το άρθρο επικεντρώνεται στη δυναμική των σχέσεων ανάμεσα στο κράτος και στις τοπικές ομάδες, ιδιαίτερα στην τοπική ελίτ (όπως: φοροεισπράκτορες, παλιές οικογένειες προκρίτων [ayan], θρησκευτικοί και κοινοτικοί άρχοντες). Αναλύονται έγγραφα από τα οθωμανικά αρχεία (ειδικά τα Ayniyat Defterleri και τα İrades, τα οποία κατέγραφαν τις επαφές ανάμεσα στην Κωνσταντινούπολη και την τοπική διοίκηση), για να διαφανεί αυτή η δυναμική των σχέσεων ανάμεσα στο κράτος και στις τοπικές ομάδες στην επαρχία της Αδριανούπολης.

Τα πορίσματα της έρευνας δείχνουν ότι η αυξημένη οικονομική δραστηριότητα και το εμπόριο δημιούργησαν πυκνές σχέσεις και εντάσεις ανάμεσα στις κοινότητες. Οι πυκνές σχέσεις, εξάλλου, στήριξαν επίσης τη διαμόρφωση της τοπικής πρωτοβουλίας, η οποία συνέβαλε με χρήματα και με έργα στα κρατικά αναπτυξιακά σχέδια. Αυτή ήταν κυρίως η περίπτωση που η ντόπια ελίτ προσδούσε να κερδίσει από τα σχέδια των δημοσίων έργων. Το άρθρο παρουσιάζει αρχαιολογικό υλικό για να τεκμηριώσει την παρουσία της τοπικής πρωτοβουλίας και τη συμβολή της στην εφαρμογή των μεταρρυθμίσεων.

ΓΙΟΝΤΖΑ ΚΙΟΚΣΑΛ