PARTNERS OF THE EMPIRE

NOTABLES, COMMUNITIES, AND CRISIS OF THE OTTOMAN ORDER
IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS (1760-1820)

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Even though the text of all chapters is complete, some references in footnotes and bibliography are incomplete. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause to readers.
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INTRODUCTION

This book is about the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Revolutions, roughly between 1760 and 1820. Like many polities around the world during this period, the Ottoman Empire passed through a stormy phase of institutional shakeups, political crises, popular insurrections, and various pursuits for settlement. While the old order was collapsing, possibilities for a new one emerged. While some old institutions vanished, new institutions were tested and contested. The Empire became a political theater where different actors struggled, collaborated, and competed on conflicting agendas and opposing interests. Examining some of these episodes, actors, and institutions, this book attempts to understand the transformation of the Ottoman Empire in this radical age.

Ottoman History and World History

In the historical literature, scholars have barely considered the Ottoman World as part of a wider geography that was shaken by the age of revolutions. R. R. Palmer’s path-breaking book, The Age of the Democratic Revolution, presented the revolutionary period as transnational.¹ Roswell explored connected phenomena in Europe and the Atlantic world, suggesting that the boundaries of democratic revolutions extended to Poland, but not beyond. Many historians, following Palmer, have focused on a transnational revolutionary age, examining developments from central Europe to the Americas. These scholars have neglected the Ottoman lands. Historians of the Muslim World have only contributed to this oversight. Bernard Lewis, in his seminal works on the impact (or lack of impact) of the French Revolution on the Ottoman Empire, argued that the ideas of the French revolution approached the empire but hit civilizational walls dividing Islam from the West.² According to Lewis, Ottoman intellectuals were mostly indifferent to the revolution. Those who wrote about it were only interested in the revolution’s anticlerical nature and condemned it, along with the Enlightenment, as sacrilegious and immoral.

In this narrative, the Ottoman Empire makes a brief appearance in the age of revolutions during Bonaparte’s invasion of Egypt between 1798 and 1799. Many historians consider this Napoleonic moment the beginning of the “modern” period in the Middle East. This short interval triggered unexpected developments in Egypt that resulted in the rise of Mehmed Ali and his radical transformation of Egypt in the early nineteenth century. In this conventional narrative, the Ottoman Empire, including Egypt, constituted another

² Lewis, “The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey.”
world, distinct from revolutionary changes taking place in Europe. The top-down characteristics of the modernization reforms of the Ottomans sultans in the Balkans and Anatolia, or Mehmed Ali Pasha in Egypt, were not compatible with the revolutionary era’s democratic ideas and bottom-up movements. According to Lewis and many historians, the only impact of the French (and American) revolutions on Ottoman political culture was the nationalism of Christian Balkan peoples. Starting with the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, Balkan nations, under the influence of revolutionary ideas, separated themselves from the Ottoman Empire. According to this argument, the revolution’s only effect on Muslims was the rise of the Young Turks, the Ottoman constitutionalists, against the despotism of Sultan Abdülhamid II in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. It was their constitutional revolution in 1908, and the revolution in Iran in 1905, that epitomized Muslim versions of the French revolution, by ending sultanic despotism. 119 years after events in France, the revolution arrived in the Ottoman lands. Republicanism came even later, with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, which relegated the Ottoman Empire to history.

This narrative was based on a peculiar version of the philosophy of history, which depicted revolutionary changes as the progression of a certain universalist framework, shaped by the Enlightenment, that promoted the rights of the individual, market, and public against the privileges of the old order. This progression began with the American and French revolutions and the fall of the ancien régimes in the late eighteenth century, (for some historians with the Glorious Revolution of 1688). Revolutionary currents moved across the earth’s surface throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, country by country, region by region, and arrived in the Ottoman Empire after a delay of one hundred years. The Marxist version of this global narrative of revolutionary progress argued that the journey of revolutions was radicalized by the Russian Revolution of 1917, marking an ontological shift from bourgeois to proletarian revolution. While this process continued its journey with the Chinese revolution in 1949, other versions of revolutions continued to spread throughout the world, exploding at different times with different characteristics, in India (1947), Egypt (1952), Algeria (1954), Zanzibar (1964), Iran (1979), Eastern Europe (1989), and again in Egypt (2011), among other places. 3

Instead of engaging with the global history of revolutionary progression, some historians have recently generated another debate on the concurrent history of the age of revolutions. Franco Venturi, perhaps, planted the seeds of this debate in his massive survey, The End of the Old Regime in Europe 1768-1776 (published in 1979). 4 Venturi suggests that radical changes that ended the old order first appeared not in western Europe, but farther East on the kaleidoscopic Ottoman-Russian-Polish frontiers, in the entangled Hellenic, Slavic, and Islamic cultural zones. While relocating the roots of the revolutionary age from west to east, Venturi masterfully illustrates that connections between Europe, the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Poland were so profound and lively in the late eighteenth century that it is impossible to write their histories on separate pages.

3 For a recent compilation on History and Revolution, see Haynes and Wolfreys, History and Revolution: Refuting Revisionism.
4 Venturi, The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1768-1776, 3-72.
Recently, historians such as C.A. Bayly, David Armitage, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Jürgen Osterhammel have proposed a wider scope of analysis and have exploited the possibilities of a global or plural age of revolutions.

According to these historians, global interactions radically grew throughout the eighteenth century. Global trade and new financial economies expanded. Colonial empires were consolidated. Longer and more expensive wars pushed competing states to launch military and fiscal reform agendas. The mobility of people, commodities, and ideas increased. Diasporic communities and trans-regional networks proliferated. Under these conditions, a crisis in one region spread faster than ever before. The dispersion of crisis was followed by a rapid dissemination of competing reform ideas, and reforms triggered various reactions and episodes of unrest. Unrest sparked political turmoil and violence. In different regions, the commotion brought about profound institutional changes that reconfigured rights and privileges in a process we generically call revolutions. In *The Birth of the Modern World*, Bayly provides a map of converging revolutions occurring in different parts of the world, from Burma to Haiti, from the 1760s to the 1820s. Some of these revolutions were connected by similar political or philosophical agendas and different variations of Enlightenment. But most of these revolutions were not. Each political, legal, and intellectual culture responded to crisis in its own way. But according to Bayly, at some level, these responses are comparable and commensurable, occurring in the same stormy global context.

This book joins the debate on the plural age of revolutions and suggests how the Ottoman story contributes to our understanding of this age as a global phenomenon, and in return, how our discussions of the age of revolutions contribute to our understanding of the Ottoman Empire. I argue that during this period, the Ottoman Empire experienced challenges that were common for many polities in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. The Ottoman Empire responded to these challenges. These responses sometimes resembled events in other parts of the world, and in other cases, did not. In this respect, the purpose of this book is not to find the missing Enlightenment or the revolution in the Ottoman Empire. Rather, it tries to understand how the Ottoman Empire experienced challenges in the age of revolutions in its own way and on its own terms. Some of the themes of the age of revolutions—fiscal and military reform to overcome military and economic pressures, the increasing role of the common people and public opinion, the emergence of a new powerful and wealthy class that claimed to be part of the state, radicalism of urban crowds on the political stage, and attempts to codify the new political order—were also the overarching themes of the Ottoman Empire in this period.

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At the end of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was more than four hundred years old and still one of the world’s largest polities. The Ottoman lands encompassed Bosnia, Serbia, Wallachia and Moldavia, Crimea (until 1774), Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Anatolia, Kurdistan, Greater Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, the Hejaz, and Yemen, as well as several large and small islands, such as Crete and Cyprus, in the Eastern Mediterranean. The overall population of the empire was around ten million. Since Mehmed II conquered the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire in 1453, Istanbul was the seat of the Ottoman dynasty and center of their empire. In the late eighteenth century, Istanbul, with its hinterland, counted one million inhabitants, and was one of the world’s most crowded metropolises. Although urban life was lively in Istanbul and other major - mostly pre-Ottoman - port and inland cities, the majority of the empire’s population lived in rural areas. Although Sunni Islam was the dominant religious orientation of the ruling elite, the Ottoman world housed communities of three Abrahamic religions - Islam, Christianity, and Judaism - with their sectarian and denominational variations. Ottoman-Turkish was the dominant language of the Ottoman state apparatus. However, Arabic and Greek were widespread throughout the empire as ecumenical written languages, and more than twenty other tongues were spoken or written by different communities. This dizzying religious, ethnic, and linguistic diversity was further diversified by multiple forms of urban, rural, littoral, and pastoral life. 7

The founder and pillar of the empire, the Ottoman dynasty, ruled the Ottoman polity (or as they called it, the Exalted State) since the fourteenth century, without interruption or competition. Except for a short period of interregnum between 1402-1413, when four Ottoman princes became vassals of the Timurid Empire, there was always one Ottoman sultan at the top of the Ottoman Empire. Until the seventeenth century, Ottoman princes became sultans as a result of internal competition, which included civil wars and fratricide. In the early seventeenth century, the method of succession changed. Competition and fratricide gave way to primogeniture among the male heirs of the family. The Ottoman sultan, who also held other titles, including Padishah, Khan, Caesar, and Caliph (referring respectively to Persian, Turco-Mongol, Roman, and Islamic traditions), 8 was considered the omnipotent sovereign, who received his authority from God, without a partner or any institutional and formal limitations, such as estates or diets. However, the sultan was limited by God. Even though he was not bound by formal laws, like other absolute monarchs of the early modern world, Ottoman elites and the public expected the sultan to observe the stipulations of Islamic law and its customs as the ruler.

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7 Woodhead, ed., The Ottoman World; for a recent compilation of the Ottoman World in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Faroqhi, ed., The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839; also see McGowan, “The Age of Ayan, 1699-1812.”
8 Kołodziejczyk, “Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Emperor: The Multiple Identities of the Ottoman Sultan.”
and protector of the people under his reign. He was also limited by political action: palace politics within the imperial household, factionalism among imperial elites, and rebellions in the capital and provinces often drew the boundaries of sultanic authority.  

Around the Ottoman dynasty, there were clusters of imperial elites who functioned as office-holders, bureaucratic and military functionaries, and members of the learned hierarchy. The 

{\textit{devshirme}} system, or the taking of Christian children, as a levy, to be trained for posts in the Palace in the administration and military corps as slaves of the sultan, disappeared over time. By the eighteenth century, members of the imperial elite came from diverse backgrounds. Various households monopolized certain offices in the bureaucracy and learned hierarchy. Some elites descended from slave backgrounds or from humble families. Although the majority of imperial elites were Muslims, Christians also joined their ranks. The Greek Phanariots, namely the old Greek families of Istanbul, some of which had roots dating back to the Byzantine Empire, were part of the administrative elites, enjoying special ranks and statuses. While many imperial grantees were settled in Istanbul, others were centered in the provinces, holding offices as governors, commanders, and authorities charged with special duties. 

The Ottoman system did not recognize hereditary nobility except for a couple of vassal dynasties, such as the Gerays (the ruling house of Crimea), various Bosnian and Kurdish families, or the Christian Boyars of Wallachia and Moldavia (until 1711), who were granted hereditary statuses and privileges. Except for these families with hereditary statuses and special pedigrees (the Gerays, for instance, had Chingissid lineage), military and bureaucratic office-holders were seen as servants (\textit{kul}) of the sultans. In the patrimonial system of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the household and the state were integrated, and servants of the sultan were also considered members of the imperial household. As a result of this status, office-holders were stripped of private rights vis-à-vis their benefactors, the sultans. The \textit{kul} doctrine, which was consolidated in the mid-fifteenth century, equipped sultanic authority with the leverage to revoke offices without compensation, confiscate the wealth of office-holders, since it came from public service through the sultan’s grant, and in extreme cases, carry out executions without judicial process, often with just a generic legal opinion (\textit{fatwa}) from the grand mufti. Sultanic might over the wealth and life of office-holders produced and sustained volatility in the culture of the Ottoman imperial elite. The proximity between glory and mortality, wealth and death, provided elites with possibilities to ascend without noble descent, but also carried high risks to suddenly lose everything, including their lives. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this patrimonial system gradually gave way to a new bureaucratic establishment and the proliferation of elite households in Istanbul and the provinces. Despite that the growing number of elites, the sultan’s leverage to take

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10 For the Ottoman Imperial elite, see Fleischer, \textit{Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire}, 214-233; Şahin, \textit{Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman}, 15-19; Kunt, \textit{The Sultan’s Servants}, 31-76; Zilfi, \textit{The Politics of Piety}, 43-80; Philliou, \textit{Biography of an Empire}, 5-36.

11 Kırmıltı and Yaycıoğlu, “The Heir of Chingis Khan.”
property and the lives of the office-holders persisted until the mid-nineteenth century. The volatility of the imperial sector, for individuals serving the Empire as office or contract holders continued to characterize the Ottoman order.\footnote{İnalçık, \textit{The Ottoman Empire}, 65-103; idem., “Comments on Sultanism”; Mumcu, \textit{Osmanlı Devleti’nde Siyaseten Katl}, 23-47; 49-65; At the highest level, 44 of 188 grand viziers between 1453 and 1821 lost their lives at the orders of sultans. The wealth of many more office and contract holders was seized after natural death or after dismissal and exile. These conventions were only abrogated in the mid-nineteenth century, with the Tanzimat edict in 1838, Yaycıoğlu, Wealth, Power and Death.\footnote{İnalçık, \textit{An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire}, 103-131.}}

\textit{Provincial Order}

Empires consist of mechanisms that connect diverse regions and communities into one functioning entity. What was the main mechanism that allowed the Ottoman Empire to maintain its integrity? Looking at the earlier period, the conventional answer to this question is the \textit{timar} system. In the traditional order of the central provinces, the sultans allotted prebends (\textit{timar, zeamet, or has}), or administrative units, which produced revenues in terms of taxes or rent, to office-holders in return for military and administrative services, or sometimes as sinecure. At the higher levels, provincial governors, many of them from a pool of imperial grandees with various ranks, were appointed to administer large and small provinces, generally for short terms. The governors came to these units with their households and retinues, maintained order with their military forces, collected revenues from various tax units in accordance with provincial codes, and commanded members of the cavalry army scattered throughout the provinces. After a few years, governors were assigned to another location, sometimes a province at the opposite edge of the empire. Therefore, governors constantly moved from one corner of the empire to another, accompanied by their households and military entourages.\footnote{İnalçık, \textit{An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire}, 103-131.}

At the lower levers of the hierarchy, there were members of the cavalry army, known as \textit{timar} holders. These were local military notables who held small or mid-sized administrative units, called \textit{timar} and \textit{zeamet}, and had the power to rule and collect taxes. They participated in military campaigns when governors summoned them. Although \textit{timar}-holders were local, their status was not automatically hereditary. Renewal of their units and leaving these units to heirs depended on the sultan’s authorization. This system combined military and administrative duties and fostered a large provincial army of cavalry units. At the same time, it maintained the administrative apparatus in the provinces, by preventing imperial elites from becoming rooted in the provinces and establishing local dynasties. These office-holders, therefore, were not landlords in the traditional sense. According to Ottoman land law, which was consolidated in the sixteenth century, the majority of arable lands were state lands (\textit{miri}), and peasant communities, traditionally organized in small and free households, were tenants of the state rather than office-holders. At another level of the imperial hierarchy, the central authority sent judges (kadi) as judicial authorities to each district (\textit{kaza}), which often consisted of a city and its rural hinterland. Again, such appointments were generally for
short terms. The jurisdiction of the kadis and the administrative-military elite remained separate. The division of power between the military-administrative elite and the judicial authority was considered a guarantee for Ottoman subjects. Through the kadi court, subjects were able to write petitions and depose complaints about the administrative-military elite to the central authorities.\footnote{14 Gerber, State, Society and Law in Islam, 58-78.}

This system was, in reality, far more complex. A rigorous analysis of the Ottoman provincial order in the early modern period should consider the immense regional and geographic diversity in this centuries-old large empire. Various arrangements for different administrative units, such as rural and urban enclaves, diversified revenue collection and governance. Tendencies toward localization among imperial and local elites constantly challenged centralized integration. Collective actions by peasant, pastoral, and urban communities constantly re-negotiated their relations with the Ottoman center.\footnote{15 For various administrative and property categories, see İnalçık, “Autonomous Enclaves in Islamic States” and Moutafchieva, Agrarian Relations in the Ottoman Empire, 1-138; for Nomadic Communities and their interactions with the empire, see Kasaba, A Moveable Empire, 3-43; for peasant resistance, see Singer, Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials, 119-131; for unruly imperial grandees and various political tendencies, see Barkey, Bandits and Bureaucrats, 55-84;}

\textit{Empire Transformed, 1700-1760}

By the end of the seventeenth century, the traditional system dissolved as a result of complex transformations in the empire’s military and fiscal institutions. New military technology, based on firearms and infantry, gradually made obsolete cavalry troops in the provinces. While the timar-holding cavalry army became marginalized, the wage-earning infantry army, with the Janissary corps at its core, steadily expanded with new recruits, mainly young urban dwellers. By the eighteenth century, the Janissary corps lost its earlier character as a small professional infantry unit under direct command of the central government. It transformed into a massive military-civil organization, with thousands of affiliates in Istanbul and the provinces, who received salaries and/or other social benefits from the state for performing military duties. At the same time, these Janissary affiliates were integrated into the urban and rural economy through guilds, estate management, or similar mechanisms. In addition to the fiscal burden of maintaining such a large military-

\footnote{16 Kármán and Kunčević, eds., The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.}

\footnote{17 McGowan, Economic Life in Ottoman Europe, 47-55, 146-54.}
civil body, expensive and protracted wars against the Habsburgs and Venetians at the end of the seventeenth century, combined with costly projects to keep up with naval and artillery technologies developed in Europe and rising inflation, left the central administration in constant fiscal crisis.¹⁸

Fiscal pressures generated by war and military reorganization pushed eighteenth-century states to resort to various solutions, such as increasing direct taxes, debasement, internal borrowing, and confiscating and exploiting newly conquered lands. The Ottoman State tried all of these options, except the last on this list, since the empire’s expansion had stopped, and it began losing vast territories in Eastern Europe in the seventeenth century. One solution to the fiscal crisis, which had long-term repercussions on the logic of Ottoman governance, was the radical expansion and enhancement of tax-farming mechanisms, namely renting administrative units with different contracts, and outsourcing governing prerogatives to fiscal and administrative entrepreneurs. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, hundreds of large and small revenue units in the provinces, that were formerly under the jurisdiction of provincial governors and members of the cavalry army, were seized by the center and rented to financiers and entrepreneurs, first with short-term, and then life-term contracts, known as malikane-mukataa. The malikane holders were generally members of the imperial elite or provincial notables. As a result of this process, which continued during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, the central administration diverted assets from imperial and provincial elites to the central state. In return, it outsourced provincial revenue units - and the communities attached to them - as immune enclaves to semi-private entrepreneurs, who were also given administrative jurisdiction. In the central fiscal administration, special bureaus emerged to deal with complex fiscal relations between the state and the holders of these units. In some provinces, enclaves with malikane-mukataa status were bundled and granted to super-intendants (voyvoda), who were responsible for coordination and revenue remittance between the enclaves and the central administration. Within a short period, hundreds of individuals who acquired these units with various contracts, became shareholders of the Ottoman state.¹⁹

Enclaves that were outsourced to semi-private entrepreneurs were protected from the intervention of governors and other authorities, except for the judiciary. The designers of this system anticipated that holders of the enclaves, invested in their units, would protect the communities and increase productivity, and therefore revenues. The expansion of tax-farming was successful in diverting substantial assets from investors to the central


government in the first decades of the eighteenth century, and it ameliorated fiscal pressures. However, the reformists’ expectations that the imperial elite, who rented in these enclaves, would settle and invest in their units, did not materialize. Most of these malikane holders, instead of settling in their units, outsourced them to local managers. This created a market for managerial expertise. Several local notables, who developed proficiency in revenue-collection and revenue-remittance, as well as expertise in mobilizing local resources, captured ancillary positions and established partnerships with primary holders. Governors who were absentee authorities, imperial grandees who held enclave-like estates, and the charitable foundations (waqfs) of the Ottoman household, which had revenue units in the provinces, outsourced their jurisdictions to these local notables, using various contracts. In several regions, intricate fiscal nexuses extended from the center to provincial notables, and from provincial notables to sub-contractors in the localities and communities. As a result, provincial notables, who were not connected to the central establishment or military hierarchies, but were deeply entrenched in provincial society, were integrated into the imperial apparatus though deals, contracts, and new statuses. Gradually, the state began outsourcing to the entrepreneurial provincial elite almost all public services, from tax-collection to policing, and from recruitment to provisioning. Several notable individuals and families who had the managerial and financial capacity to mobilize resources in the provinces acted as fiscal, administrative, and eventually, military entrepreneurs, engaging in formal or informal contractual relations with the empire, based on the exchange of offers, acceptances, rejections, and counteroffers.  

Perhaps the most decisive element in this system was that in the eighteenth century, the Ottoman state was more ready than ever to accept provincial notables, who were not conventionally part of the imperial establishment, into the cadres of imperial hierarchies. Despite disagreement among Ottoman elites about whom to include in the hierarchies, a growing number of local power-holders ascended from ancillary positions to the highest echelons of the imperial elite, by acquiring imperial titles. These power-holders expanded their regional zones of influence by adding more offices and contracts to their portfolios. Some captured governorships, the highest provincial offices. As a result, the culture of governors was transformed. Distinctions emerged between mostly absentee governors who were connected to the imperial center by socio-cultural background, training, and personal allegiances, and others with provincial backgrounds who came from the localities, and held conditional loyalties. According to the imperial order, when these local magnates became governors and received imperial diplomas, they were to accept conditions that applied to other governors.  

Like members of the imperial elite, the provincial magnates who captured offices acted in a volatile institutional environment, since the empire did not provide them with hereditary rights and guarantees for their statuses, offices, or contracts, and threatened their efforts to accumulate capital with imperial seizures. This was perhaps the main difference between European nobilities and Ottoman provincial notables. Following the

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20 Salzmann, “An Ancien Régime Revisited”; idem., Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire, 122-175; Also see Chapter One of this book.  
21 See Chapter One of this book.
death of a contractor or office-holder, the provincial notable’s heirs had to begin negotiations with the state to keep status and wealth in the family. Usually, third parties intervened with more favorable offers. In practice, however, the state’s capacity to remove these provincial magnates was limited, since they were deeply rooted in their localities and built power with local resources. In this volatile imperial sector, some families rose and fell in just one generation. Others, maintaining power and accumulating enormous wealth, managed to keep governor positions for long terms. Some managed to transfer status to their heirs, even if the process was not automatic.  

While the imperial elite was marginalized in provincial governance, and notable houses became well established, the central administration lost direct control over much of its territory. How did these changes affect the provincial communities? In regions that were not closely-managed enclaves, provincial communities organized in the districts (kazas) developed bottom-up mechanisms to manage fiscal and administrative matters under the supervision of local notables. In the absence of updated tax registers, district communities paid their taxes and incurred other public expenditures through an apportionment system. According to this system, some provincial notables acted as patron-creditors, by incurring lump-sum expenses on behalf of the community and managing public matters. The community and the notables regularly met at judicial courts, settling accounts to apportion lump-sum burdens to taxpayers, and delivering aggregate amounts, with commissions, to the notables. In this process, judicial courts were transformed into local assemblies at which public deeds and budgets were deliberated and votes were cast. In many localities, taxes, shares of governors and imperial office-holders, as well as other public expenditures, were collected through this apportionment mechanism. While collective action in public finance became common practice, the district communities, under the leadership of their natural leaders, gradually transformed into active participants in the new Ottoman provincial order.

*War and Military Crisis, 1760-1790*

This brief summary of institutional currents belies the empire’s highly complex and multi-faceted reality. A profound understanding of what really happened in different regions requires case studies. This new provincial order that slowly emerged entered into a stormy period, beginning in the 1760s. The fifty years between the 1760s and 1810s were, by any measure, a time of crisis for the Ottoman Empire. Military defeats by Russia and Austria in 1768-1774, 1786-92, and 1806-12 coincided with internal mutinies and insurrections in Greece, the Balkans, Egypt, and Arabia. The Russian annexation of Crimea (1774-82) and the French expedition of Egypt (1798-99), two strategically critical and historically significant provinces, signaled that the partition of the Ottoman Empire, like Poland, was not impossible. Military defeat was accompanied by sharp economic and fiscal decline.  

Rising inflation and poor harvests were enmeshed in the efforts of a desperate central government to find cash to finance expensive wars. Regional mutinies flared in various regions in the Balkans, Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, and developed into

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22 See Chapter Two of this book.
profound security problems for the provincial communities. Pressing security matters increased the cost of provincial governance for the center and the leverage of provincial notables, who had military power.24

The new institutions that emerged in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century no longer met the financial needs of a state facing new challenges. Life-term contracts had increased state revenues, but gradually, revenue transfers from the enclaves farmed-out to contractors became more difficult to collect. The Ottoman administration exploited possibilities to abolish life-term contracts and institute new direct taxes. But this was not easy, owing to opposition from many families who monopolized certain malikane-mukataa contracts over generations. Fiscal administrators tried novel internal and external borrowing mechanisms. Attempts at external borrowing failed. But a new institution, called esham, allowed the center to institute a new internal borrowing method, through which the state sold shares (sehm) of various revenue units, and in return committed to pay annuities to investors for life. The esham system enabled the state to extract fresh assets, this time from the urban middle class, which included women and non-Muslims.25

In the provinces, the state initiated another reform. Beginning in the 1770s, the Ottoman administration, instead of revoking tax-farm contracts or launching a centralized tax policy, institutionalized the organically-developed apportionment system, but with modifications. Introducing several reform edicts, the state imposed electoral procedures and accountability mechanisms on the district communities. According to these edicts, the communities were to elect notables, who acted as patron-creditors/managers, and collectively approve their budgets. By the late eighteenth century, through such participatory instruments and electoral practices, collective action became a source of legitimacy in the new provincial order. Alongside district managers, who were elected by the community - or at least acquired public consent for office - new leadership emerged in the provinces. The prerogatives of these managers, who secured collective support, differed from those who acquired their positions from the state (or other holders) as appointees or contractors.26

Equally important, the wars between 1760 and 1792 illustrated the deficiencies of the Ottoman Empire’s military apparatus. Neither the expanded Janissary corps nor soldiers hired by governors or the outdated navy, was capable of confronting the Russian and Austrian military apparatus. The humiliation of the Ottoman armies pushed the Ottoman center to import new technology and expertise from Europe. Improving the military capacity of the cavalry army, the Janissary corps, and other mercenary groups was always an option. A radical plan, however, was to build a new army from scratch, trained according to European models. This reform project needed new sources of revenue. But more important, it required a political commitment, since such a program would threaten

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24 Neumann, “Political and Diplomatic Developments”; Aksan, Ottoman Wars, 129-258.
25 Çızakça, A Comparative Evolution of Business Partnerships, 178-190; Cezar, Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim, 74-151.
26 See Chapter Two of this book.
various segments of society, particularly thousands of Janissary affiliates, who were integrated into the social and economic life of Istanbul and cities in the provinces.

The New Order, 1792-1807

Crises gave birth to reforms. The reform movement that began in the 1770s was accelerated, beginning in the 1790s, with the accession of Selim III, who patronized reform attempts. Selim III came to power in 1789, during the storming of the Bastille. He launched a reform program in 1792, a year before the execution of Louis XVI, with whom he had corresponded when Selim was a prince to obtain advice on achieving reform. His reform program gained a boost from a number of assemblies attended by bureaucrats and intellectuals. Pamphlets submitted by attendees offered a wide-ranging repertoire of ideas for the reorganization of the empire. From 1792 on, a group of bureaucratic and imperial grandees, clustered around Selim’s patronage, began to take action to configure a new disciplined army under the name New Order, composed of conscripts from young Anatolian peasants and organized according to the French and Prussian models. Later, the term New Order was used for the entire reform project, including its fiscal and educational components, and for the party of elites who led the program.27

The New Order’s reform agenda went beyond building a new disciplined army. It also extended to economic, social, and intellectual life. A new treasury was established, and various estates and enclaves were transferred under its jurisdiction to finance the New Army. The New Treasury, sometimes directly, sometimes through outsourcing arrangements, managed these units across the empire. New educational institutions to train officers for the New Army, built under the patronage of Selim III, fostered various fields, such as medicine, geography, and astrology in addition to military sciences. Attempts at proto-industrialization were combined with the flourishing of new ideas on market regulation. Various European and Ottoman (Muslim, Greek, and Armenian) intellectual and commercial networks forged new connections with Enlightenment circles in Europe and Russia. While printing houses proliferated, new translations from European languages into Turkish, Greek, and Armenian (and vice versa) fueled intellectual life in Istanbul and provincial cities such as Izmir, Salonika, Trabzon, and Ioannina. Various religious groups and learned circles, such as the Naqshibandiya network, joined the agenda of the New Order, by openly supporting military reform. Meanwhile, the New Order developed mechanisms to control the public sphere. Fears that opposition to military reform would gain widespread support from the urban populace pushed the New Order to take various measures to discipline social life in the cities. The state launched regulations to control the urban population, new immigrants, social spaces, and gender relations using dress codes.28

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27 Shaw, Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Selim III, 1789-1807, 86-211; Çağman, III. Selim’e Sunulan Islahat Layihaları; Koç and Yeşil, Nizam-ı Cedid Kanunları, 1791-1800.
Reforms, like revolutions, have winners and losers. The consolidation of reform politics in Istanbul, with its agenda to build a new disciplined army and fiscal regime, triggered opposition led by tens of thousands of affiliates of the old Janissary corps. In the late eighteenth century, as I have mentioned, the Janissaries amounted to much more than an army. The Janissary corps was deeply enmeshed in the urban fabric of Istanbul and some provincial cities. Since the early seventeenth century, following the execution of Osman II in 1622 by the Janissaries, several Janissary-led popular riots in Istanbul and Edirne established the limits of sultanic authority. The legacy of these revolts provided a script for public opposition and popular mutiny. After 1792, Janissary affiliates, who were threatened by the New Army, which had the potential to render them obsolete, denounced the New Order, sometimes openly, sometimes quietly, in coffee houses and other public spaces. By the early nineteenth century, it was not clear whether the New Order would be able to convince the people of the necessity of reform, or whether the Janissaries had the capacity to mobilize the public for another revolt.

It was not just ordinary civilians who were forced to choose sides in the tacit competition between the New Order and the Janissaries. So too did male and female members of the Ottoman dynasty, bureaucrats and military grandees, members of the learned hierarchy, financiers and merchants, and foreign missions representing the interests of various countries following the silent battle between the New Order and its opposition. The real struggle, however, was in the provinces. Forced recruitment for the New Army and increasing taxes to finance it created tensions in the provincial communities. Although the success of the new troops in Syria against the French following Bonaparte’s expedition of Egypt heightened the reform agenda’s popularity of, it did not prevent provincial Janissaries in the Balkans from condemning the New Army. They did so more openly than their affiliates in Istanbul. In a clash between Serbian notables and the Janissaries in Belgrade in the early nineteenth century, Selim acted on behalf of Serbian notables, suppressing the Janissaries of Belgrade. This decision only increased tensions. The rise of Pazvantoğlu, an unruly provincial notable of Vidin, as a leader of the anti-New Order movement in the Balkans, who provided safe haven for the Belgrade Janissaries, as well as other forms of dissent, signaled that the clash between the New Order and a coalition against it was imminent.

Constitutional Crisis, 1806-1808

Between 1806 and 1808, the New Order fell after a series of radical events, insurrections, and mutinies in Istanbul and the provinces, which were depicted by contemporary observers as the Revolutions of Istanbul. These episodes took place amid the Ottoman-

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Russian wars and the Ottoman-French coalition. Hence, the process became deeply entrenched in the stormy diplomacy of Napoleonic Europe. In 1806, Selim III decided to move the New Army in the Balkans to handle the Belgrade crisis. The army was stopped in Edirne with a coalition of Balkans notables and Janissaries. The crisis in Edirne, combined with the British fleet’s arrival in Istanbul, elicited a series of events that resulted in the fall of Selim III and the New Order following a Janissary-led popular revolt and the restoration of the old order. At a critical juncture, a provincial notable from Ottoman Bulgaria, Mustafa Bayraktar, in alliance with members of the New Order party, changed the dynamics of the conflict. When Bayraktar and the New Orderists agreed on a deal, the earlier coalition between provincial notables and the Janissaries against the New Order gave way to a new coalition between provincial notables and the New Order against the Janissaries. In September 1808, Bayraktar and his associates initiated a coup in Istanbul and restored the New Order.

Following the coup, Bayraktar summoned fellow provincial power-holders to an imperial assembly. This assembly turned into a dramatic constitutional moment, when the sultan, the party of New Order, and provincial notables deliberated and signed an imperial contract called the Deed of Alliance. This document radically revised the basis of the Ottoman imperial order by shifting authority from the sultan and the imperial hierarchy to a broader coalition (or alliance) between imperial and provincial elites, with mutual recognition and guarantees of property and status. While the Deed ended arbitrary confiscations and executions, and gave guarantees to provincial notables to build dynasties in the provinces, it secured their open support for military and fiscal reform. The Sultan, Mahmud II, who was enthroned by Mustafa Bayraktar after the coup, signed the Deed as a contractor. The Deed envisioned a polyarchic empire in which elites of the center and provinces established an empire-wide partnership and collectively ran the empire. This process was short-lived: only a couple of months later, a Janissary revolt restored the old order. While stillborn, this document illustrated not only the limits and possibilities of Ottoman political culture in an age of revolutions, but also attempts at codification.

But the Ottoman Empire continued along a different path. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was not an empire collectively governed by elites in the center and provinces as envisioned by the Deed, but a bureaucratic, and in many ways, autocratic empire. Although the constitutional moment in 1808 did not shape the future, and the Deed did not become a reference point, various features of the Deed persisted as important themes in Ottoman constitutional struggles in the second half of the century.

**PLAN AND APPROACH**

This book analyzes the process that is briefly outlined below. Chapter One discusses the nature of the relationship between the provincial elite and the empire in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. I argue that during this period, provincial notables

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30 See Chapter Three of this book.  
31 See Chapter Four of this book.
acted as fiscal, administrative, and military entrepreneurs who engaged in formal or informal contractual relations with the empire, based on offers, acceptances, rejections, and counteroffers. Chapter Two offers an analysis of the ways in which provincial communities responded to changes in the eighteenth century. I argue that while the central administration was disconnected from the provinces, provincial communities developed various bottom-up mechanisms to manage fiscal and administrative matters under the supervision of local notables. Instead of reversing this process and launching a centralizing policy, the New Order institutionalized organically-developed bottom-up collective actions. In the new provincial order, collective action became a source of legitimacy.

The first two chapters provide analytical and thematic discussions of the institutional transformation of the Ottoman provincial order, and of how notables and communities experienced this transformation roughly between 1760 and 1820. Chapter Three, shifts to a narrative history of the events between August 1806 and November 1808. The provincial story discussed in the previous two chapters converges with a larger account of the empire, reform, the New Order, and popular opposition led by the Janissaries, as well as the trans-imperial story of Napoleonic wars and diplomacy. This narrative style enables me to highlight a process that consists of multiple episodes, contingencies, shifting alliances, zigzags, and dead-ends. Chapter Four presents a textual analysis of the Deed of Alliance. Close reading of the text, combined with commentary, lead to a discussion of the document’s reception in modern history and its place among other constitutional texts from the age of revolutions.

BEYOND DECENTRALIZATION AND CENTRALIZATION

I have already argued that this episode and its background belong in the general context of the age of revolutions. But where in Ottoman history should we situate this story? For a long time, the Ottoman Empire was depicted as the history of its fifteenth-century rise, sixteenth-century grandeur, seventeenth-century stagnation, eighteenth-century decline, and (unsuccessful) nineteenth-century reform. In this Gibbonian “rise and decline” narrative, the period between 1770 and 1820 was presented - rightly so - as one of the worst crises of the Ottoman Empire. But like all crises, this stormy era produced new actors, institutions, and coalitions, as well as new ideas, and social and political movements inspired by these ideas. Conventional historical discourse, which emerged during nineteenth-century bureaucratic modernization and twentieth-century processes of nation-state building, failed to see the importance of this earlier period of crisis. In Balkan, Arab, and Turkish versions, the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries symbolize the terrible end of the traditional Ottoman order, which was in decline. The Janissaries, who were eliminated in 1826, and the provincial notables – who were not eliminated but curbed and with few exceptions did not maintain power and wealth – were the losers of the nineteenth century. Power shapes discourse, making nineteenth- and early twentieth-century characterizations of this period as an assault by two reactionary and centrifugal forces: the Janissaries and the provincial notables. In Turkish historiography, this reactionary assault targeted the modernizing state. In Balkan and
Arab historiography, the provincial notables and Janissaries tightened the Ottoman-Turkish yoke, by operating against local people according to the tyrannical and arbitrary rules of a feudal order. Paradoxically, the rule of the notables was instrumental in fostering national awaking, since under their rule, the provinces were separated from the Ottoman state, preparing the ground for national movements and nation-building processes that followed.

Since the mid 1960s, historians have revised this “decline and breakdown” narrative from different perspectives. Albert Hourani’s work on the politics of notables opened new avenues for studies of the provincial elite. Hourani depicted notables in Arab lands not as feudal oppressors, but as local elites who gave voice to the interests of local people against the empire, as they were incorporated into local politics and the economy. Halil İnalcık, who modified his work on decline from the 1970s, argued that the military and fiscal transformation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gave birth to new provincial elites who promoted a process of decentralized but not disintegration of the empire. Avdo Suçeska, in his path-breaking work Ajani (The Notables), illustrated how in the eighteenth-century Balkans, local communities and notables were involved in contractual relationships through various legal and fiscal instruments. These three pioneering historians, while revising the old narrative, show that the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries were not a period of total breakdown, but one of multifaceted transformation that brought about new actors, institutions, and relationships.

After the 1970s, studies of the Ottoman long eighteenth century followed three tracks: (i) regional studies, (ii) military and fiscal transformations, and (iii) political culture and the politics of reform.

Regional Studies: Since the 1980s, several studies of regional settings, families, or economies have enriched and deepened the perspectives introduced by Hourani, İnalcık, and Suçeska. A rich literature emerged on Arab, Anatolian, Balkan, and Greek.
provincial centers, notable families and networks in the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. Recently, works by Dina Rizk Khoury on Mosul,39 Beshara Doumani on Jabal Nablus,40 Ariel Salzmann on Diyarbakır, and Khaled Fahmi and Alan Mikhail on Egypt illustrate the limits of Ottoman imperial space, the consolidation of regional political-economies and their connections to trans-imperial economic zones, and the transformative role played by provincial notables in provincial societies as new centers of the Empire. These studies, while focused on the local level, problematize local, regional, imperial, and global perspectives, and show their intersections and interactions through various ties, relationships, and institutions.

**Military and Fiscal Transformation:** Beginning in the 1980s, a number of studies appeared on the Ottoman institutional transformation from a tributary empire to a fiscal-military state with profound financial and administrative institutions. Mehmed Genç’s meticulous work on the expansion of tax-farming as the dominant fiscal mechanism,42 Bruce McGowan’s work on its structural implications in the rural economy43, and Yavuz Cezar on the creation of the new fiscal regime under the New Order and internal borrowing,44 were further developed by Ariel Salzmann, who suggests that the new fiscal transformation based on outsourcing provincial units and internal borrowing increased private entrepreneurial attitudes, and nexuses that fostered imperial integration through fiscal entrepreneurs. Recently, some economic historians have gone beyond the limits of fiscal history. Recent studies on the macro-economic performance of the Ottoman world and the gradual appearance of the market economy in the eighteenth century, not only

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39 Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834*.

40 Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants In Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900*


43 McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe, 121-169*.

44 Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyessinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi: XVIII. yüzyıldan Tanzimat'a Mali Tarih; Özvar, Osmanlı Maliyessinde Malikane Uygulamasi*.
rescue economic analysis from the framework of fiscal history, but also revise the established assumption that the eighteenth century was a period of economic decline.  

**Political Culture:** Other scholars have shown interest in the transformation of political culture and public life in the Ottoman World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Norman Itzkowitz’s famous essay on the realities of the eighteenth century in the Ottoman Empire was followed by Rifa’at Abou-El-Haj’s intervention, where he proposes that we should understand these two centuries as the moment when modern political culture and state developed in the Ottoman world, rather than decadence and decline. In *The Second Ottoman Empire*, Baki Tezcan responds to Cemal Kafadar’s invitation to understand the Janissary rebellions as social movements that resulted from the politicization of the urban communities, Tezcan argues that this transformation, fashioned by increasing political violence and participation, should be understood as proto-democratization in political and economic life. Recent studies on public life in Istanbul illustrate how various public oppositions and moral economies in the urban space responded to disciplinary reform politics throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Christine Philliou integrates the Greek Phanariot elites into this growing narrative, and shows that Greek notables were a major component of reform politics through their networks and connections, inside and outside the Ottoman world. Earlier studies of the Ottoman reforms, which reduced the politics of reform to a battle between old and new, have been reappraised by a new generation of historians who show that the reforms of the New Order amounted to much more than military reorganization. Instead, the New Order was a set of agendas, with political and social components, that were not necessarily coherent and systematic, but were inspired by old and contemporary trends within the Ottoman Empire, as well as Europe and beyond. Recent work on intellectual culture in the eighteenth-century Ottoman world shows that the Ottoman reform agenda cannot be understood without exploring how the Enlightenment was experienced in the Ottoman world.

This book engages in dialogue with these evolving literatures. However, it departs from these discussions on methodological matters and in terms of focus and scale. First, it examines various themes and problems, which are generally treated as separate by scholars in the field, in an integrated format, around a process, namely crisis, transformation, reform, revolution, and settlement in the Ottoman Empire in the age of revolutions. Themes such as fiscal transformation, military reform, the rise of provincial notables, consolidation of collective action and public opinion, political radicalism and

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45 Karaman and Pamuk, “Ottoman State Finances in European Perspective.”
47 Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?”; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation In the Early Modern World*.
49 Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*.
50 Shaw, *Between Old and New*.
51 Emiralioglu, *Geographical Knowledge and Imperial*. 
violence, and constitutional settlements are, I argue, analytical components of the same accelerated transformation.

Second, the level of analysis in this book is the empire, rather than a particular region or the transformation of the central government. Therefore, I constantly change scale, by zooming out and zooming in, from the provincial level to the regional, from regional to imperial, from the imperial level to the theater of Istanbul, and from there to the global politics of the revolutionary and Napoleonic period. In this respect, I analyze connections as well as autonomies, local as well as imperial and trans-imperial contexts. Clearly, I am unable to focus on every region and every event. Rather, I have chosen to represent unique cases from different regions, from the Balkans to the Arab lands, and examine these moments in comparative fashion. I do not dismiss the importance of local and regional realities. Rather, I propose looking at these local realities in tandem with the imperial and trans-imperial context, to examine how various levels of activity interacted with one another. By doing so, I propose that the relationship between the empire and the provinces is not a binary story of center and periphery. In my account, the Ottoman Empire appears as a relatively integrated unit, united through various ties, institutions, and relationships that were continuously renegotiated by various actors. Integration was not necessarily imposed by the center nor fully controlled by it.

My other point in this book concerns volatility. I do not propose a history of one-faceted and rectilinear processes of transformation. Instead, this is a story of the age of revolutions. Volatility and instability were major components in these processes. I discuss the various possibilities that appeared and disappeared in this volatile and accelerated period. Transformation occurred with zigzags, dead ends, and as Salzmann describes for the eighteenth century, paths that were not taken. But this volatility, while eliminating some actors, empowered others. Some suffered from instability, and others saw opportunities to rise. In this game of winners and losers, I argue, volatility did not produce anarchy, total chaos, or collapse. I hope to explain this contained volatility as one of the main characteristics of the Ottoman situation in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries.

This brings me to my final major point in this book, which is how to define the Ottoman Empire vis-à-vis its counterparts. In Empire of Difference, Karen Barkey examines the Ottoman Empire in comparative perspective, proposing a comprehensive framework for the Ottoman imperial system and its transformation. In the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries, Barkey argues, two major developments occurred: the empowerment of the political and the consolidation of networking society. The former pertains to the politicization of urban space, through Janissary-led public dissent, while the latter pertains to the rise of fiscal nexuses, based on fiscal contracts and tax farming. In her analysis, neither trend, both of which developed separately from the other, transformed into a viable alternative to Ottoman modernization. Eventually, in the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state was able to suppress dissent and eliminate networking society through centralizing policies and bureaucratic modernization.

52 Salzmann, Tocqueville and the Ottoman Empire, 176.
53 Barkey, Empire of Difference, 197-262.
Although this book is very much inspired by Barkey’s analysis, it offers a different take. I argue that in the long eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire tested three competing alternatives to reform the imperial order. First was a reform agenda, which was based on top-down reorganization through bureaucratic and military centralization. I call this alternative the order of state. The second alternative was based on the partnership of imperial and provincial elites, not only through fiscal ties, but also political and constitutional ties. I call this alternative the order of notables. The third alternative was based on bottom-up mechanisms, such as public opinion, accountancies, and electoral processes, which I call the order of communities. These alternatives were all enmeshed in the larger agenda of the New Order. The three reform agendas, horizontal based on partnership, top-down based on bureaucratic hierarchy, and bottom-up based on public opinion, echoed the aristocratic, monarchic, or democratic forms in the ideal terms of classical political philosophy. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire tested different combinations among the three alternatives.

Opposition of the Janissaries and the public targeted the first alternative in particular, namely the creation of a new army and increases in taxes. In the beginning, provincial notables participated in this oppositional bloc, since they were against military centralization. However, developments between 1807 and 1808 gave birth to a new coalition between reformists, who advocated for bureaucratic and military reform, and provincial notables, who sought guarantees from the central state for their wealth and status. The 1808 settlement signified the consolidation of a new horizontal empire, based on partnership, not only through fiscal, but also through constitutional ties with the Deed of Alliance. This new settlement, which established an empire of partnership, sacrificed the third option, the order of communities. But in November 1808, this alternative collapsed. In the nineteenth century, the other two options dominated. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the state as partnership model was viewed as a corrupt and reactionary option vis-à-vis the modern state, where stark divisions between public and private, politics and economy, state and society, emerged. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, forms of partnership, contracting and privatizing public services have once again become viable instruments for the modern state.
CHAPTER 1

The Notables

Business of Governance, Power, and Wealth
In the Ottoman Provincial Order (1760-1820)

The provincial people, generally, do not apprehend the honor of the sultanate.
Penah Efendi (1769)

In 1809, at a critical stage in the Ottoman-Russian war, the Imperial Divan sought a solution to the Empire’s financial crisis to fund the Ottoman armies fighting on the Balkan front. The deputy grand vizier submitted the Divan’s recommendation to Mahmud II. The Divan found one possible solution to the crisis: Mahmud II would personally ask four eminent power-holders of the Ottoman provinces for financial support.

Ali Pasha of Tepelenë/Tepedelen, the governor of Egypt Mehmed Ali Pasha, the Cabbarzades [Çapanoğlusu], and the Karaosmanzades [-oğlus] possess wealth and affluence. Each has the capacity to send a couple of thousand kises of akçe. In fact, they owe their wealth to the Exalted State. For that reason, in such a [troubled] time, it is obvious that it is incumbent upon them to help [the Exalted State]. However, if their assistance were to be requested through ordinary sultanic orders, they would put forward several excuses, because of their temperament, to escape from sending it. Thus it would be [more prudent] if your Majesty were to write special letters to each without informing the servants of the state of these letters. In these letters, if Your Majesty were to express his judicious imperial opinion, and to ask in his own imperial hand if they would “send that amount of akçe to my imperial abode, to be spent in the army’s campaign, which is to expel the enemy of our faith that is attacking the empire from various sides;” if these letters were to be enclosed together with imperial decrees and conveyed to each of them by palace stewards, and if the money were to be requested in similar fashion, it would be very likely that each would show urgent obedience to sultanic orders, and deliver the necessary amounts. Sending that kind of imperial letter to servants of the sultanate will not damage the glory [of the sultanate]. Previously there were occasions on which such aid was requested. We cannot think of any alternative to obtaining money from outside sources.¹

This account shows the ways in which the members of Ottoman imperial circles viewed magnates in the Ottoman provinces in the early nineteenth century. Ali of Tepelenë (or Ioannina) and Mehmed Ali of Egypt were powerful governors of Ottoman Albania/Central

¹ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi/Prime-Ministry Ottoman Archives, Istanbul (Hereafter BOA): HAT 42074.
Greece and Egypt, two strategic territories on each side of the Eastern Mediterranean. Although the two men remained deeply rooted in their regions, they stood – at least formally – at the highest level of the imperial pyramid of governors, which ranked them hierarchically. Ali of Tepelenë and Mehmed Ali of Egypt held the title “pasha” and banners with three horsetails, the insignia of their vizierate and governorship. But the Çapanoğlu and Karaosmanoğlu, two dominant households of Western and Central Anatolia, did not act as governors. These power-holders built zones of influence without belonging to the imperial hierarchy, by acquiring various offices, deals, and contracts. While Ali and Mehmed Ali were power-holders who acted individually as imperial governors, the Çapanoğlu and Karaosmanoğlu households collectively consolidated power and wealth in large regional zones. Despite the disparities between their formal standings, the Ottoman state treated these individuals and families as magnates, who built power and accumulated wealth in four primary regions of the Empire: the Balkans, West and Central Anatolia, and Egypt.

The two men and two families were to be carefully treated. The deputy grand vizier suggested that ordinary and formal sultanic orders would not be enough. The deputy grand vizier asked Mahmud II to write letters with his own hand, personally asking them to cover financial needs generated by the war. The deputy grand vizier implied that they also had leverage to refute formal orders from the sultan. This refutation would not be direct and explicit; instead, they could put forward excuses. Only if the sultan honored them with personal treatment and asked for a favor, they might - and only “might” - extend the necessary funding. Their obedience was conditional. The deputy grand vizier warned the Sultan that servants of the state, such as governors, generals, bureaucrats, palace dignitaries, chiefs of the Janissaries, and others who were not rooted in the provinces but directly connected to the imperial center, should not be informed of the letters. His warning contained a clear division between imperial and provincial elites. The sultan’s informal treatment of provincial power-holders, which the letters conveyed, had the potential to create disturbances among grandees of the central state. In the eyes of some of these important figures, the Sultan’s informal and personal treatment of provincial magnates would seem inappropriate. Mahmud II, who had just become sultan some months ago, might consider this treatment humiliating as well. Asking for financial support in personal letters, he approached the provincial power-holders as equals or partners in negotiations. The deputy grand vizier assured Mahmud that such negotiations were not unknown in recent history, and that these developments would not damage the glory of his sultanate.

In what context was Mahmud II advised to seek financial support from four leading provincial magnates? Throughout the eighteenth century, several individuals and families that emerged in various localities in the Ottoman empire, from the Balkans to Egypt, consolidated power, accumulated wealth, built headquarters, and formed regional zones of influence. While imperial elites connected to the central establishment, or to military and bureaucratic hierarchies were marginalized in provincial governance, these provincial magnates acquired offices and contracts from the empire. They acted as governors, deputy-governors, ancillary contractors, or as collectively elected district managers. By holding these offices and contracts, these provincial notables not only integrated themselves into the institutional apparatus of the empire, but also monopolized taxation, public finance, policing,
provisioning, conscription, and other imperial and public services in the business of governance in the Ottoman provinces.

In this chapter, I will focus on the relationships and interactions between the power-holding notables and the Ottoman state in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. I intend to illustrate the way that provincial power-holders were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire and how they became part of the Ottoman establishment. This process of incorporation, I argue, gave birth to a new order of notables, in which provincial power-holders were not servants/bureaucrats of the sultan/state organized in a top-down hierarchical fashion. Rather, I suggest, they came to act as administrative, fiscal, and military entrepreneurs, whose relations with the Ottoman establishment were based on ongoing deals, negotiations, and a process of give and take. The power-holders sometimes agreed with the orders and sometimes turned them down. Sometimes they offered services and asked for favors; or the power-holders received them, rendering services in return. In other words, they were engaged with the empire not as servants but servicers.

These new provincial elites also differed from the nobilities we know in Europe and elsewhere, which were clustered as corporate bodies with hereditary rights and privileges. In the Ottoman Empire, with the exception of dynasties in distant provinces that were integrated in the empire with special vassalage arrangements, such as Crimea (until 1774), Bosnia, Kurdistan, the Caucasus, and the Hejaz, power-holders did not enjoy hereditary rights for their offices and contracts. Status, wealth, and even the lives of the power-holders were in jeopardy, since according to old conventions, the Ottoman sultan reserved the right to dismiss officeholders, revoke contracts, and even confiscate property and carry out executions without judicial process. Ottoman provincial magnates were not only entrepreneurs, but also active risk-takers and risk-managers in a volatile imperial sector.

In the following pages, I discuss how these provincial power-holders consolidated themselves in the Ottoman provinces and how they were incorporated into the Ottoman imperial establishment; how they operated through negotiations and deals; how they built regional zones of influence and accumulated wealth; how institutional and political insecurity and volatility shaped the actions of power-holders. Some magnates discovered new possibilities and considered breaks with the empire in the turbulent political and diplomatic environment of the Age of Revolutions and the Napoleonic wars. I will discuss limits of their horizon to act as independent actors in this turbulent global age. My discussion does not resemble a prosopographic analysis, which would include all power-holding individuals and families in a systematic way. Rather, I focus on various themes and problems, which help us understand the order of notables, and provide comparative examples. This eclecticism is not without logic; I am particularly interested in families and individuals who played roles beyond the regional setting and participated in the imperial political theater of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

HOUSEHOLD, CITY, AND DYNASTY

It is virtually impossible to provide a complete picture of all the Ottoman Empire’s provincial elites in one chapter. From Bosnia to Egypt, and from Albania to eastern Anatolia, each
region gave birth to different forms of elites, resulting in great diversity. Some of these individuals and families had pre-Ottoman roots. Others originated during Ottoman times, from local people or Ottoman elites, who settled in various provinces and became localized. Some built power and wealth through activities in commerce and crafts. Others used cultural capital as people of learning. Others emerged through activities in the business of governance. Not all were Muslim. Christians and Jews built power and wealth in their respective localities. But the institutional framework of the Ottoman Empire allowed only Muslims to ascend to certain levels of office and status in the business of governance. These power-holders were integrated into the administrative and military apparatus of the empire through different mechanisms, deals, and terms. They provided order and security, collected taxes and revenues, managed public affairs and finance, conscripted soldiers and militia, and participated in war. The Ottoman institutional framework provided them with various statuses: They acted as provincial governors, contract holders, or district managers. Other than governors, the Ottoman system did not hierarchically rank these individuals by status and office, like European and Russian tables of ranking for nobility.

The Household

If we examine how provincial magnates organized their enterprises, we often see a patrilineal family at the nucleus – a unit of kin related by blood, marriage, or adoption – bound by a sense of common budget and political enterprise. Sometimes, the family was the conjugal group of a leader father, his wives (for Muslim notable families, generally more than one wife), concubines, sons, and daughters. But more often, the central kin group was a consanguine and agnatic clan that included several conjugal families attached to each other through bonds of kinship and a leading charismatic figure, a paterfamilias. First- or second-generation notables tended to act as a conjugal family. For figures like Ali Pasha of Ioannina and Mehmed Ali of Egypt, we do not observe large clans. Rather, a charismatic leader was the founder of the enterprise and his sons and grandsons the followers. The Çapanoğlu, the Karaosmanoğlu, the ‘Azms, and the Rişvanzades, who had established themselves in a couple of generations, were large family structures with multiple conjugal families knitted to one other. The centrality of the patrilineal family in provincial power-building was reflected in the use of clan names ending in oğlu or zade, both meaning “son of”, and indicating the founding father of the family, such as Karaosmanoğlu, the son(s) of Osman the Black. Despite the dominant role played by men, women, either as mothers, wives, widows, or concubines, often had important roles. Marriage was a device to ally households, or to co-opt a subordinate man into the family. Widows of charismatic family heads might be critical actors in decision-making about family strategy.

Typically, the family was surrounded by a household, generically known as kapı halkı (the people of the gate), which included dozens, sometimes hundreds, of retainers such as domestic servants, concubines, and eunuchs in the inner household and secretaries, treasurers, and stewards in the outer household. Kapı signified the administrative nature of

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3 Doumani, ed., *Family History in the Middle East*; Todorova, *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern: Demographic Developments in Ottoman Bulgaria*; Gerber, “Anthropology and Family History: The Ottoman and Turkish Families”; Duben, “Turkish Families and Households in Historical Perspective.”
the notable households, mimicking the central administration, which was known as the Sublime Gate (Bab-ı Ali). Armed bodyguards or militias under the command of captains constituted the household’s third layer. Possibilities to move within layers of the household, and even to become part of the central family, through marriage or adoption, always existed. As Jane Hathaway illustrates for eighteenth-century household-formation among Egyptian power-holders, the household might be considered a family-centered institution to which individuals, including slaves, could be attached though patronage relations, known as intisab, and gradually co-opted into the household at different levels.4

One of the main characteristics that differentiated provincial from imperial elites was the architectural representation of the households in the locality. Provincial power-holders built different patterns of residential buildings with annexes for administrative and soldierly purposes. The most striking examples were palaces. In Ottoman architectural history, scholars working on palaces generally focus on imperial residences, especially Topkapı Palace in Istanbul.5 Other examples of palace architecture, commissioned by notables in the provinces, have been ignored in the wider scheme of Ottoman patronage and relegated to the realm of local vernacular architecture. Perhaps the earliest example outside Istanbul is the Khan Palace (Hansaray) in Bakhchysarai/Bahçe saray, the capital of the Crimean Gerays, erected by the Geray dynasty in the sixteenth century, which had special status thanks to its Chinggisid ancestry.6 Throughout the eighteenth century, other notable families who did not have such pedigrees but were able to consolidate power and wealth, built palace-like residential complexes for large households in their respective localities, where they centered their power. The Ali Pasha Palace in the Castro in Ioannina, Ishak Pasha Palace in Doğu Bayazıt, Çapanoğlu palace in Yozgat, Haznedaroğlu Palace in Ünye/Ordu, and ‘Azm Palaces of Damascus and Hama provide important examples of such complexes.7

4 Hathaway, The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt, 17-31; also see. Lier, Haushalte und Hasuhaltpolitik in Bagdad, 32-64.
6 Kırımlı, Kırım'daki Kırım Tatar (Türk-İslam) Mimari Eserleri, see the section on Han Saray.
The main characteristic of these provincial palaces was the juxtaposition of residential and administrative functions as two sections of private and public life, which were organized around different courtyards divided by walls. The complexes were stretched with several annexes for administrative and soldierly functions, stables, and perhaps a small prison. A mosque, commissioned by the family, was often connected to the palace or erected in the vicinity (or both), sometimes in combination with a household cemetery. Both the palace and mosque featured inscriptions that glorified the family and references to the Ottoman state and dynasty. Some complexes were located in the city, such as ‘Azm Palace of Damascus, and others in the vicinity of the city, such as Ishak Pasha Palace of Doğu Bayazıt. In both cases, walls or natural cliffs protected notable households from enemies, brigands, and even the central state. John Macdonald Kinneir, a British diplomat and geographer en route to Persia stopped in Yozgat, where Süleyman Bey, the leader of the Çapanoğlu in the family’s palace, hosted him in 1813. Kinneir wrote in his diary:

The palace is a very extensive building, divided into suites of apartments, long galleries, and different courts and gardens, all of which are surrounded by high walls. It is built of brick and wood, only two stories high, and covers an immense area in the centre of the town. The apartments of the prince and his sons were painted and gilded and richly furnished; there were four state chambers, one at each corner of a long and handsome gallery, lighted by large glass windows - a red room, a yellow room, a brown room, and a room of variegated colors. On one side of the apartment, where his highness generally received company, I perceived a small organ, and a number of clocks and watches, which made so great noise that it was difficult to hear a person speak in a distant part of the room. A small door at the other end led into the cabinet of the Chakbook bashi, or master of the pipes, a closet completely surrounded with long amber-headed pipes, many of which, I was informed, were valued at five or six thousand piasters. The apartments of the haram I was not of course permitted to enter; but, according to [family’s French medical] doctor’s account, they far surpassed, in splendor and magnificence, those I had seen. […] The palace occupies a large space in the centre of the town; and a handsome mosque had been lately erected of hewn stone in imitation of St, Sophia.\(^8\)

\(^8\) Kinneir, *Journal Through Asia Minor, Armenia and Koordistan in the Years 1813 and 1814*, 90-91.
Kinneir was mesmerized by the lavish style and collections of goods and merchandise from different regions for conspicuous consumption. Dizzying traffic around the palace, the result of dozens of visitors, officers, messengers, and tradesmen who arrived each day from different parts of the empire, mostly from Istanbul but also beyond the Ottoman territories, might explain the palace’s diversity of materials and styles. Imitations of Istanbul were accompanied by strong local references. The Çapanoğlu buildings housed wall paintings representing panoramic scenes of their urban center, Yozgat. This preference for localism, while reaffirming the connections of the buildings with the visual memory of the Yozgat area, also functioned as self-aggrandizement of the family, the city they built, and the region under their control.9

Localism

Although most provincial power-holders were acquainted with Ottoman imperial conventions and Ottoman Turkish (the imperial language) to some extent, only some were native speakers of Turkish.10 Their ties to the urban space appeared in public memories, local songs, biographical dictionaries, local histories, and architecture.11 When members of a notable family built residential-administrative complexes, they also reorganized urban spaces with new walls, mosques, Sufi lodges, public libraries, military compounds, and infrastructural works.12 Outsiders, who were settled in a region (vatan tutmak), and started a career as a power-holder, either as ayan or alike, first needed a build a sheltered mansion, for his household and then some communal buildings, to show his generosity and public role. A late eighteenth century story from the Balkans about localization of a power-holder through architectural patronage would highlight this process.

He was settled in a village, name Kuzgun. He started to build a mansion for himself and his men. In a short time, he built mansion with sixty-two rooms. Three thousand cavalry soldiers could be camped in its yard. Then he built a fine school. He appointed teachers. Then he built a mosque and placed in it imams, who could read and write. Prayers were performed five times in the mosque with a congregation. (...) Then he built walls around the mansion to protect himself with seventeen towers. And then he acquired eight farms around the village... Then he acquired concubines. (...). Then God gave him two sons.13

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9 Acun, Bozok Sancağı (Yozgat İli'nda Türk mimarisi, 5-50; Mehmed Duru, "Yozgat Çapanoğlu Camii ve vakfiyeleri," 71-89. Members of larger households, who were not part of the central family, but operated within the administrative body of the household at different levels, also participated in the architectural vitalization of the city and surrounding areas. Various members of the Çapanoğlu household commissioned mosques and mansions in different neighborhoods of the city. Later, Armenian merchant families, who operated under the protection of the Çapanoğlu house, built an Armenian Church across from the family mosque. In the early nineteenth century, Yozgat was a city of the Çapanoğlus not only as a center of a political enterprise but also in its scenery. Neumeier, “There is a Çapanoğlu Behind This: Transformation in Patronage, Architecture and Urbanism in the Ottoman Provinces, 1779-1804,”

10 For various languages spoken and written in the Ottoman Empire, see Woodhead, “Ottoman Languages.”

11 Yenisehirlioğlu, “Architectural Patronage of Ayan Families in Anatolia.”

12 For the register of the kadı documents related to the activities of the waqfs of İsmail of Ruse, see Kiril i Metodii, Sofia: R 11. Also see Radushev, Ivanova, and Kovachev, eds. Inventory of Ottoman Turkish Documents about Waqf Preserved in the Oriental Department at the St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library: No: 471; Bakardjieva, "Between Anarchy and Creativity."

13 Gazzizade Abdullatif Efendi, Vekayi’i Baba Paşa fi’i-Tarih, 144-45.
Architectural and infrastructural patronage helped benefactors consolidate leadership and prestige for the local people who became the magnates’ primary constituency. Other magnates and grandees of the central administration also noted their architectural patronage. This was why, for instance, a report submitted to the central government concerning the affairs and deeds of Jazzar Ahmed Pasha included a section on the fortress and mosques he commissioned, in addition to his military capacity to lobby for a promotion in Istanbul.\(^{14}\)

In relations between notables and their cities and urban communities, we see different patterns. In Yozgat, the Çapanoğlular functioned as the founding family of the city, without competitors.\(^{15}\) Elsewhere the dominant household was *primus inter pares* among other notable families with historical local roots. These families had long-term matrimonial and business relations with other notables in the business of governance or those who specialized in a particular learning or trade. In Damascus, for instance, relations between the two families, the Azms and the Muradis, provided an example of partnerships over several generations. The Azms, who monopolized the business of governance and the Muradis, who patronized Islamic learning, united their political, economic, and cultural capital on different occasions as two distinctive houses of the city.\(^{16}\) In other cases, power-holders constituted a distinctive group came from outside as a part of an empire-wide network, such as the Janissary corps, or an ethnic and ethno-religious network and settled in the localities as military-administrative entrepreneurs. They acted as an oligarchy, detached from local civil society and other notable families. Similarly, the Albanian Mehmed Ali Pasha in Egypt, the Bosnian Jazzar Pasha in Acre, the Georgian households in Egypt and Baghdad, the Crimean Gerays in Ottoman Bulgaria, and Greek Phanariots in Wallachia and Moldavia built up power bases in different provinces and were not fully assimilated with local elites.\(^{17}\) By and large, Ottoman interconnectedness provided these administrative entrepreneurs from different parts of the empire with possibilities to find opportunities as outsiders in other regions far from their hometowns. There was a good chance that “outsider” magnates, after a generation or two, would be localized through matrimony and partnerships, or become integrated into local customs, memories, and languages.

**Dynasticization**

According to many historians, both Islamic law and Ottoman imperial conventions constituted obstacles against the continuity of powerful and wealthy families for generations in the Ottoman Empire. While Islamic law of inheritance had a clear mandate for the division of the patrimony among male and female heirs after the death of the paterfamilias,\(^{18}\) the


\(^{15}\) Duygu, *Yozgat Tarihi ve Çapanoğluları*, 2-25.

\(^{16}\) Barbir, *Ottoman Rule in Damascus*, 67-88; Schatkowski-Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 107-132; for the relationship between the urban literary culture and the notables, see Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 77-114; For how the Azms and other families constituted a social network in Hama, see Reilly, “Elites, Notables and Social Networks of Eighteenth Century Hama.”


Ottoman imperial order did not recognize hereditary privileges for office, contracts, and status. Offices, contracts, and status were granted for individuals, not families, and for short-term or maximum life terms. Only for a few vassal dynasties, such as the Gerays of Crimea, did the Ottoman state recognize heredity positions. But even for those dynasties, no clear system of succession, such as primogeniture, was formally acknowledged. Despite these institutional constraints, many families in the Ottoman provinces were able to develop strategies to keep power, wealth, and status within the family for transmission to the next generation. In Muslim societies, one of the earliest strategies for many families to maintain wealth for their progeny was transforming assets into family waqfs, or endowments for public good under the protection of Islamic law, while transferring some of the assets to family members as annuities. Recent studies illustrate that there was a proliferation of family waqfs in the eighteenth century Ottoman Empire. Likewise, some households bypassed the Islamic law of inheritance, by reaching collective decisions for a new family head, who formally or informally controlled the household’s wealth as joint patrimony through entail arrangements. But perhaps the most important strategy for office-holding families was to negotiate with the central government to reach a political or financial deal, so that the center agreed to renew offices, contracts, and deals for heirs. In the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries, thanks to these negotiations, several families were able to keep their deals with the empire for generations and accumulate power and wealth in the Ottoman provinces despite the lack of institutional guarantees.

The consolidation of the multi-generational notable families echoed in the political terminology of the period. Hanedan, the Persian word referring to the household in a generic sense, gained additional meaning and came to signify notable households of a city, region, or province with dynastic continuity. In imperial documents, the term hanedans of Rumelia and Anatolia refer to notable houses, testifying to a new empire-wide reality: the consolidation of

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19 Ibid.
21 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, 61-68;
new centers in the provinces, clustered around notable households. As Christine Philliou shows, the Greek Phanariot families of Istanbul were also called hanedan in official and semi-official texts. Meanwhile, several families produced their genealogical trees and emphasized their notable lineages. Did the expansion of the term hanedan signify a tacit acknowledgement that the Ottoman dynasty was no longer the only dynasty in the empire? Ottoman formal or informal documents contain no explicit acknowledgement that provincial “dynasties” were equals to or peers of the Ottomans. The term hanedan was an acknowledgment that some provincial units were notable families who were deeply rooted in their localities. Despite institutional insecurity that threatened the continuity of the families’ power and wealth, the term hanedan recognized the dynastization of provincial elites independent of a particular status bestowed by the sultan.

This recognition went hand in hand with the appropriation of some old honorific titles, such as "chief gatemen of the Sublime Abode" (Dergah-ı Ali kapıcı başısı) and "chief of the Imperial Stable" (mirahor-ı evvel). Originally, these titles connoted the outer circle of the imperial palace. Now, administrators granted them to members of provincial hanedans who were not formally in the Ottoman imperial hierarchy as governors, but rendered services to the empire with ancillary offices and contracts, thanks to their local power. These titles symbolized the extension of the sultan's might in the provinces. But they also functioned as a new titular mechanism to connect local notables to the empire and symbolically, to the sultan and his palace in an alternative web that differed from formal imperial hierarchies of governors, judiciary authorities, and Janissaries and holders of religious honorific titles, such as Sayyid or Sharif, which were used by proclaimed ancestral connections with Prophet Muhammad. Unlike the term hanedan that applied to both Muslim and Christian notable families, these titles were only granted to Muslim notables. Throughout the eighteenth century, we see that these titles of prestige were granted with greater frequency to provincial power-holders. Honorific titles could help provincial power-holders, who were considered part of the imperial web, to acquire other offices.

OFFICES, CONTRACTS AND DEALS

“Whenever an important matter arose, [imperial grandees] were forced to transfer these matters to the hands of a powerful person from a local community. Gradually, local notables were becoming responsible for every matter in the provinces while matters were taken from

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23 Philliou, Biography of an Empire, 58-60.
24 Emecen, “Osmanlı Hanedanına Alternatif Arayışlar.”
26 For the regulation of the steward of the Chiefs of the Sublime Abode and and Chiefs of the Imperial Stable, see, BOA: HAT 53753 dated 1807. Also see Pakalınlı, Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözluğu, vol. I, 426; vol. II, 542.
27 İnalçık, “Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration,” 40.
the hands of the governors," reported a late eighteenth-century Ottoman bureaucrat. This was a typical complaint from some members of the imperial elite in Istanbul, who observed that while provincial elites built power and expanded their control, imperial elites were marginalized in governance in the Ottoman provinces. Throughout the eighteenth century, several individuals and families, coming from local backgrounds, captured offices and contracts in the provinces that covered administration, taxation, management, policing, provisioning, public-finance, and conscription. This was a structural process, where individuals and families who were not connected to the Palace, military and administrative hierarchies, or the households of imperial grandees, but were closely connected to the local dynamics, were integrated into the apparatus of the Ottoman state in the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Arab provinces. The social base of the Ottoman state was being transformed. Provincials were integrated into the Ottoman establishment while the binaries between imperial and provincial, military/administrative and civil, and the ruling and the ruled, once key parameters of the Order of Empire, were now becoming blurred.

Offices and Contracts

In the eighteenth/early nineteenth century, the Ottoman institutional structure provided provincial notables with various possibilities and venues to be part of the state through business of governance. At the district level, several notables supervised the public matters of the districts, i.e. a town and its rural hinterland, on behalf of the district community. As I will discuss next chapter, the Ottoman government called these notables operating at the district level ayan (for Muslims) and kacabaş (for Christians). Ayan and kocabaş were generic terms for notables. However in the late eighteenth century, these two terms acquired new meanings as offices, which were held by collective nomination of the district community. The empire was not neatly divided into districts under the ayans and kocabaş. In different provinces, the central administration farmed out large and small revenue enclaves (villages, towns or sometimes entire district) to fiscal entrepreneurs for short and increasingly life-term contracts with immunity, known as malikane. Some of these holders were local notables, who acquired their units either through auctions or in lieu of administrative services. They were present in their units to carry out administration, management, and revenue collections. A majority of the others, however, were absentee holders. Especially the grandees of the empire, active and retired palace employees, bureaucrats, governors, and leading members of the major learned hierarchy often purchased malikanes contracts of revenue units in the provinces but they did not even visit their units. They often outsourced these units to local sub-contractors and managers. As a result, chains of contracting from the center to small local units functioned as fiscal nexuses that attached entrepreneurs to one another through financial contracts and deals. The estates of male and female members of the Ottoman dynasty as well as units under the jurisdiction of imperial charitable foundations (waqfs), were similarly contracted to local managers, generically

30 For the complex office and contract system of the Ottoman State, see Özkaya, 18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Toplumu, 189-243.
31 Chapter Two of this book.
known as *voyvoda*. In different regions, particularly in the eastern provinces far from the European and Russian borders, numerous small estates and *malikane* enclaves were bundled together and transferred to the supervision of super-intendants, called *voyvoda* or *muhassıl*, who were supposed to coordinate administration and revenue collection, and remittance.

At the higher level, the provincial governors often outsourced their jurisdictions to the local deputies, *mütesellims* who often acquired their office through a financial deal with the governor. The central government and governors sometimes preferred the highest bidder, or those whom they were convinced had the capacity to maintain security and order. After a local notable and a governor agreed on a particular deal, the governor issued a letter, addressing communities in his province: “I have appointed Kalaycizade Mustafa Agha, who was exemplary among his peers, as deputy-governor. May you regard him as your deputy-governor and let nobody interfere in his business and deliver him all required dues. (...) And you, the deputy-governor, you will collect our revenue from the communities (...) and deliver it to me.” These appointment letters were to be read aloud in the kadi courts of the province’s central town in the presence of community leaders. The deputies then informed the communities of the deal reached with the governor. “I acquire this deputy-governorship with a payment agreement (*iltizam*) and I paid a high down-payment. You should now assist me in collecting dues,” declared a deputy-governor to community leaders. The announcement made a public matter of the financial arrangement between the governor and his deputy.

In various provinces, mainly in the outer reaches of the Empire, such as Epirus, Albania, Damascus, Sidon, Çıldır, Baghdad, and Egypt, some local power-holders were able to capture the highest statuses, namely governorships. Each notable individual or family had its epic stories of ascendance from provincial backgrounds to the highest echelons of the Ottoman imperial hierarchy. Some offered military and administrative services or revenues to the empire in times of crisis, and in return, lobbied for governorship. Some entered the patronage of existing governors by becoming part of their households through matrimonial relations and then eliminated their patron and established rule. Others ascended from a petty military office after delivering a critical military service and securing reference letters from key figures among the imperial elite. Still others curbed political turmoil or repressed a rebellion, mobilized local communities, and had them declare collective consent or support to the central government. In each story of ascendance, provincial power-holders negotiated with the central government, directly through representatives in Istanbul, or indirectly through supporters in different factions of the central establishment. In extreme cases rebellion became a method of negotiation to ascend in the empire.  

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33 Özkaya, "XVIII. Yüzyılda Mütesellimlik Müessesesi," 386
34 Özkaya, XVIII. 18. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Toplumu, 204-5.
35 For the transformation of the governorship and provincial; administration, see İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire: the Classical Age, 104-119; Kunt, The Sultan’s Servants; Göyünc, "Osmanlı devleti'nde taşra teşkilatı (Tanzimat'a kadar)"; Kılıç, "XVII yüzyıllın ilk yarısında Osmanlı devleti'nin eyalet ve sancak teşkilatlanması"; Kılıç, 18. Yüzyıllın ilk Yarısında Osmanlı Devleti'nin İdari Takımını; Halacoğlu, XIV-XVII. yüzyıllarda Osmanlılarda devlet teşkilatı ve sosyal yapı, 83-7.
36 Gökhan and Bal, Dulkadirli ve Bayezidli İdareciler, 113-16; Karataş, Bayezid Sancağı ve İdarecileri, 17-49.
37 Clayer, “Ali Paşa Tepedeleni.”
38 Güler, Cezzar Ahmed Paşa, 53-63.
40 Zens, "Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791–1807."
We have to add to this list various other short term and ad hoc contracts and missions. The center was constantly asked them to collect armed forces and sent them to the army; to participate certain campaigns and provided provisioning and logistics; to capture outlaws; to carry out confiscation of some diseased office-holders on behalf of the state; buying crops from the rural communities on a fixed price in lieu of taxation or to mediate between the local communities and the imperial offices. These short term and ad hoc contact and missions sometimes provided them to make profit, but sometimes obtain other political or social benefits from the center. Some provincial notables collected various long and short-term offices, contracts and deals to their portfolio and developed ability to operate in multiple sectors of governance.\(^{41}\)

In sum, by the end of the eighteenth century, the local notables, who operated at different levels, held different offices, and had different deals, dominated the business of governance in the Ottoman provinces. As a result, while the office holders who were connected to the imperial center by socio-cultural background, training, and personal allegiances were marginalized, others who came from the localities with provincial backgrounds and conditional loyalties came to consolidate themselves. But, the localization of governance was only one of the structural trends, which changed the dynamics of the Ottoman provinces. The other was the monetization of governance. As we have seen, since the mid-seventeenth century, increasingly, the offices were transformed into fiscal contracts in the Ottoman provinces. The provincial units, which had formerly granted as prebend/fiefs in lieu of administrative and military services, were now farmed out with long and life term contracts. As Ariel Salzmann illustrates, as a result of monetization, several profit-ridden entrepreneurs, from the absentee holders to the local managers and sub-contractors, constituted various complex fiscal nexuses connecting provincial units to the central establishment.\(^{42}\) While the empire was re-integrated through these fiscal ties, the provincial administration became business. The third development was the increasing role of the provincial communities or what I call the expansion of collective action. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in many provinces, the district communities were more and more active participants of the administration through approving or disapproving their district budgets and electing or dismissing their district managers. Many notables, in order to function, needed to secure the formal consent of the district communities. As a result, various notables competed to secure the collective designation. District communities were divided into factions and the governance was politicized.

Localization, monetization and politicization of provincial governance, reoriented the strategies and priorities of provincial notables. They not only developed expertise in management of provincial tax units and ability to mobilize the local resources, also developed expertise in intrinsic financial matters. They hired fiscal bureaucrats and scribal professionals for their managerial and financial matters. Many of them worked with financiers and moneylenders. And many needed to responsive to the local communities. Those, who acted as ayans and kocabâşis, acquired their office, at least in theory, through collective nomination. But not only those, others too, such as the voyvodas, deputy-governors, or holders of the estates, needed to consider the collective action of the

\(^{41}\) Akarlı, “Provincial Power-Magnates in Ottoman Bilad al-Sham and Egypt, 1740-1840.”
\(^{42}\) Salzmann, “An Ancien Régime Revisited.”
communities under their jurisdiction. Even for the governors, a collective petition endorsing or protesting him were to be taken into consideration, as an asset or determent. As a result, several provincial notables became part of the Ottoman apparatus though different deals: Ismail of Serres and Ismail of Ruse were ayans, the Karaosmanoğlu monopolized the deputy-governorships in several sub-provinces in the Western Anatolia, the Çapanoğlu were holding Yozgat as malikane, and Ali of Ioannian and Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt were the governors. In addition to their primary offices, they all acquired several other short or long-term deals from the state or other primary holders.  

Porte-Stewards and Financiers

Several individuals and groups might be involved in these negotiations and deals between the power-holders and the central government. But perhaps two of the key persons were the official representatives of the power-holders in the center, known as kapt-kethüdasi, Porte-steward, and their financiers, known as sarrafs. Porte-stewards, who were appointed by the center with the approval of the power-holders or by the power-holders with the approval of the center, acted as caretaker of the business of the provincial power-holders, as well as imperial governors, in the central bureaucracy. For many educated men in Istanbul, who did not have post in Ottoman bureaucracy, being a Porte-steward of a provincial strongmen was a fine option. They carried out official correspondence as well as all kind of paperwork and revenue remittance between the center and their patrons. They presented the offers of their patrons to the state and participated auctions for contracts. Depending on trust between them and their patrons, they might act as political advisors, who reported the developments in Istanbul to their patrons, or they might perform like a broker, who intended to maximize his commissions from his transactions, or both. The sarrafs, namely financiers or the moneylenders, who were conventionally Jewish, Armenian or Greek, provided credits for the power-holders in their business of governance. In the Ottoman fiscal system, office and contracts holders, often worked with financiers, who provided not only loans, but also surety for the office or contract holder, he failed to pay his dues to the treasury. Often the state granted an office or contract, after the person who would hold the office or contract secured a financier as a surety. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these financiers organized in a guild in Istanbul, with regulations and limited spots for its members. There were also financiers in the provinces, some of which had business

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45 For a negotiation about the appointment of a Porte-Steward for Suleiman Çapanoğlu, between Suleiman and the central government, see BOA: HAT 53979 (1807).
46 For a note on a certain Şevki Efendi, who used to be a professor, changed career, and became Porte-Steward Istanbul, see BOA: HAT 51481 (1811).
47 For a case of revenue remittance carried out the Porte-Stewards of Mehmed Ali of Egypt. see BOA: HAT 16270 (1808)
49 Jamgocyan, Les banquiers des sultans: juifs, Francs, Grecs et Arméniens de la haute finance: Constantinople, 1650-1850, …; Cezar, “The Role of the Sarraf’s in Ottoman Finance and Economy in the
partnerships with those in Istanbul. The provincial power-holders worked with both central and provincial financiers in their activities. Sometimes, these financiers, operated as a network across the empire - sometimes even beyond - by extending different credit markets. Often, the partnership between the financiers and power-holders went beyond the financial relations. The financiers, like the Porte-Steward, participated in lobbying for their partners in Istanbul so that they acquired lucrative office and contracts with favorable conditions or for preventing any office or contract cancellation. Some went beyond their role as financier and lobbyist, and ascended important political actors in their regional setting, or even at the imperial level, as Manuk Bey, the financier of Mustafa Bayraktar, who later became a drogoman, namely chief translator and deputy-minister of foreign affairs, in Ottoman government.50

**Negotiations and Deals**

Acquisition and transmission of office and contract was always contingent upon new negotiations, offers, and deals. Most notable families, especially those who kept strategic offices and lucrative contracts directly from the state, had to renegotiate terms with the state after the death of the family’s office-holder. In a volatile office market, constant competition existed between provincial actors hoping to capture and retain offices or to add new ones to their portfolios and transmit them to the next generation. To acquire and/or keep offices, provincial notables simply offered the best financial deal to the center; or convinced decision-makers that they could offer the best military, fiscal, and administrative services. Meanwhile, they established alliances with imperial elites in Istanbul and local actors in their regions, while eliminating competitors. Collective petitions from the local communities in favor of a power-holder were considered important assets. The strongest well-connected power-holders collaborated with foreign powers to put pressure on the Ottoman administration to appoint or keep them in certain positions. In the most dramatic cases, power-holders defied the central authority and negotiated their rebellion for a better office, greater glory, and more revenue sources.

While provincial power-holders competed to capture, maintain, and multiply offices, the central authority also negotiated with power-holders to receive services and deals. During war or financial crisis, the state offered new opportunities in the office market, while its bargaining power diminished. Between 1770 and 1820, when the Ottoman center desperately sought the financial, administrative, and military support of provincial magnates on many occasions, the central administration often convinced provincial magnates to take part in governance and military campaigns by granting higher offices, additional revenue units, and lucrative contracts with short or life term arrangements. When the central administration frantically asked Mustafa Bayraktar, ayan of Ruse, to accept the governorship of Silistra and organize militia armed forces from the region against the Russian army in 1807, he negotiated and accepted the offer when the Tarnovo district was also granted to him as an additional revenue source.51 Stormy times provided opportunities to become integrated into

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50 Siruni, “Bairaktar Moustafa Pacha et Manouk Bey, “Prince de Moldavie,”
51 For negotiations between Mustafa and the central government, see Uzunçarşılı, *Alemdar Mustafa Paşa*, 44-62.

the empire on favorable terms. For some, however, additional offices were not necessarily favorable. “We heard that you have some concerns as to whether you would be granted a vizierate when you reach the imperial army or whether a service which is not appropriate would be asked of you” declared the Divan to the Hasan of the Karaosmanoğlu. Hasan was asked to guard the Dardanelles against a possible British attack. The center granted Hasan Aydınc district, a region that produced lofty revenues. When the center noticed that Hasan was reluctant, the administration guaranteed that no unwelcome service would be imposed on the family. “You would not be appointed to a position that is not fit to your state or there would not be a situation that would offend you.”

Formal and Informal Offers

From the perspective of the imperial authority, the formal orders of the sultan were in practice informal offers. At the beginning of this chapter, we saw that Mahmud II was advised to send personal letters to provincial magnates asking for financial aid, in addition to formal degrees, ordering them to send revenues. The discrepancy between informal and formal relations between the state and provincial power-holders enabled the latter, depending on their bargaining capacity, to negotiate sultanic orders, without formally rejecting them. The central administration tried to remove Jazzar Ahmad Pasha, the governor of Sidon, to Erzurum, to prevent him from consolidating power in Palestine. “However,” the Divan noted, “whether he would go to Erzurum or turn down this appointment, it is not known.” Jazzar, without explicitly rejecting the offer, in his long letters to the imperial Divan, explained why he should not be removed from Sidon. He stated that he had just cracked down on Zahir al-Umar, the magnate of Acre and would reestablish Ottoman rule in the region. Such negotiations, a process of give and take, offers, acceptances, and rejections were often carried out in the decorum of the imperial hierarchy. Letters constructed in the templates of imperial and bureaucratic discourse traveled back and forth. So did personal letters expressing gratitude or voicing open rebuke or even protest. In Greece, Ali of Ioannina was given Trikala, a province in Thessaly, which would open new avenues in Ali’s regional expansion. In 1809, the central administration removed Trikala from his jurisdiction. Ali protested in a personal letter to the grand vizier: “Since I have mobilized my sons and so many of my soldiers for the imperial campaigns and I was not at any fault, this decision hurts me greatly. While it was natural to expect gratitude from the grand vizier, the removal of the said sub-province from our jurisdiction caused excessive sadness.” After this touching letter, in 1812, Ali was offered the position of commander of the Danubian army. He declined the offer.

Counteroffers

In these formal or informal negotiations, third parties were often involved. They offered favorable financial deals or services to capture offices from their holders. In malikane

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52 BOA: HAT 2036; BOA: HAT 2036 and 2036-A.
53 BOA: HAT 895, 966, and 1208. Also see Güler, Cezar Ahmed Paşa, 64-65.
54 BOA: CD 16590.
55 BOA: CA 7587.
contracts, which were sometimes acquired through formal bids or political deals, interference by third parties was quite common. Since the early eighteenth century, Abdurrahman of the Rışvanoğlu clan, like his father and grandfather, held Malatya indentantship as malikané. In 1813, the new governor of Sivas, Pehlivan İbrahim Pasha, challenged the Rışvanoğlu. In his reports to the central government, Pehlivan stated that upon his appointment as governor of Sivas, he visited malikané units in Malatya and testified that the communities complained of rule by the Rışvanoğlu. Pehlivan recommended that the central administration revoke the contracts of Abdurrahman. Pehlivan lobbied in Istanbul to acquire the Malatya intendantship for himself. Most likely, Pehlivan had a larger project to build a regional power between Sivas and Tokat. The grand vizier supported Pehlivan’s project arguing that the Rışvanoğlu had difficulties paying annuities to the treasury. But Pehlivan had financial resources and was well connected to the imperial elite. His case was presented to Mahmud II, who declined the proposal on the basis that the Rışvanoğlu had paid a considerable down payment for the contract. If the deal were revoked, the treasury would be burdened, since the down payment would be remitted to the family. Mahmud II tried to protect the financial credibility of the Ottoman state and suggested that Malatya province could not be managed from Sivas. The distance was considerable. Eventually, the Rışvanoğlu were able to keep the Malatya intendantship under their jurisdiction. But the family failed to pay annuities and remained indebted to the treasury.56

These sporadic episodes illustrate formal and informal negotiations and how different actors fashioned offers and counteroffers. When a strategic and lucrative office and contract in a particular region was at stake, we see various central or provincial actors could be involved in such games. In these games, various calculations, political and economic priorities, concerns about trust, reputation, and credibility played different roles for different actors in different circumstances. In sum, acquiring and office or contract in the Ottoman provinces, was more than a bureaucratic and top-down process of order-and-commend. It was also, and more, a process of formal or informal, open or tacit bargaining, negotiations, give-and-takes, offers, counter-offers and rejections. Those who operated in business of governance, both the local notables, who were rooted in their regions, and imperial governors, who were moving from one region to another with their households on the surface of the empire, should be acquainted with the strategies with their representatives, networks and partners in Istanbul.

REGIONAL ZONES OF INFLUENCE

Many leading provincial families and individuals who were in the business of governance centered their power in a town or district. But some went beyond their locality and built regional zones of influence and exercised jurisdictional, political, or economic power. Between 1770 and 1820, some magnates were able to build regional zones of unprecedented size. Conventionally, these magnates expanded these zones by acquiring additional offices and contracts. Sometimes one individual acquired more than one office. Or, various members of the same family acquired different offices and expanded the family’s influence throughout a particular region. The most powerful and well-connected magnates eliminated competitors, often seized their wealth and status (with or without the authorization of the state), or

56 Söylemez, Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Yönetimi, 276-77; Sakaoğlu, Anadolu Derebey Ocaklarından Kösa Paşa Hanedanı, 201-07; BOA: HAT 16700.
incorporated them into their power-zone through different partnerships and/or patronage relations. The power-holders might lose these units/offices for several reasons including dismissals, confiscation by the Ottoman state, or interference by competing individuals or families who offered better deals. The Ottoman provincial order witnessed dizzying office traffic between holders of provincial units, and the boundaries of zones of influence constantly shifted.

The Zone of the Çapanoğlu: a Regional Contractor

The Çapanoğlu house under Süleyman Bey provides one of the most remarkable examples of expansion. Before the time of Süleyman, members of the family became established in Bozok province and its center, the city of Yozgat, that the family built from scratch from the early eighteenth century on, as deputy-governors for many years. In 1782, after the death of Mustafa, the oldest family member, his brother Süleyman, went to Istanbul and lobbied to have Bozok province with a malikane contract. The demise of an officeholder triggered new negotiations, lobbying, and networking. Despite the opposition of the grand vizier, Süleyman succeeded, thanks to his connections to the ruling party. The decision of the central government was made after Süleyman proposed a deal: if the state did not confiscate his brother’s wealth, which was expected after the death of an officeholder, Süleyman would deliver 1,900,000 gurus to the treasury as compensation. In return, he asked to inherit his
brother’s wealth and acquire Bozok with a *malikane* contract. The central government used the threat of imperial seizure of an officeholder as a negotiating tool to raise revenues from heirs and third parties who offered deals to buy the inheritance and position of the officeholder from the state. The central administration, facing financial pressures after the Ottoman-Russian war, accepted this offer and granted Bozok to Süleyman in 1782. According to the deal, although Süleyman would not become governor and a member of the imperial hierarchy, he would be a holder (*mutasarrîf*) of the sub-province with full administrative authority for life.\(^{57}\)

Süleyman was not able to pay what he promised. Until 1785, he only paid two thirds of the total, which created a crisis between the family and central administration. In 1786, the Ottoman administration decided to organize an intervention in Egypt to put an end to civil strife among the magnates. This presented an opportunity for Süleyman to recoup his debt. When he promised to contribute to the military campaign financially and with an armed division, not only his debt was postponed, but he also acquired a neighboring province, Çankırı, to help finance his recruitment. The Ottoman-Russian war of 1787-92 was an opportunity to get more deals by offering different services to the state. The central administration asked the Çapanoğlus to organize provisioning and recruitment in Anatolia for the imperial campaign. In 1788, when the family sent 3,000 soldiers to the campaign, Süleyman added the deputy-governorship of Ankara province to his portfolio.\(^{58}\)

Selim III’s enthronement in 1789 further improved relations between the family and the center. In 1790, Süleyman personally attended the campaign in the Balkans. Selim III honored him with an imperial title, Chief of the Imperial Stable, and Abdulfettah Bey, his son who stayed in Bozok, became a Chief of the Imperial Gate. The gesture helped the Çapanoğlus enthusiastically support Selim’s military reform project. Süleyman obtained several short-term contracts for revenue collection, estate management, and military recruitment for military and fiscal re-organization. However, the main challenge to the Çapanoğlus came from the north. The Canikli family was influential both in the central government and in the Black Sea region of Anatolia. One reason for the controversy was Amasya province, a strategic area connecting central Anatolia and the Black Sea. Its center, the city of Amasya, was a prestigious town and the seat of the crown princes in the sixteenth century. For a long time the Caniklis held Amasya with different titles. As a result of Süleyman’s service in the Balkan campaign against Russia and the Caniklis’ failure on the Caucasian front, Selim III decided to remove Amasya from the Caniklis and grant it to the Çapanoğlus in 1791. In the absence of Tayyar, the chief of the Canikli family, who became a political refugee in Russia, this move opened the Black Sea region to the Çapanoğlus. A couple of years later, however, when Tayyar was pardoned and returned to the Ottoman lands, Amasya was removed from the Çapanoğlus and once again granted to the Caniklis. While the central administration balanced its policies between the two families through this give-and-take process, the Çapanoğlus were allowed to expand in the south. In 1794, Süleyman added Tarsus sub-province, this time as deputy-governor, and the family’s zone of influence reached the Mediterranean coast. The family also acquired several strategically important mines in the central Anatolia that required diverse managerial expertise.


\(^{58}\) Mert, *XVIII. ve XIX Yüzyıllarda Çapanoğulları*, 47-72.
Political alliances, formal or informal patronage relations, and business partnerships were as important as acquiring additional offices and contracts for expansion for the Çapanoğlu family. In April 1803, an episode in Konya illustrates regional expansion through patronage relations. Kadi Abdurrahman Pasha, one of the leading architects of the military reform, was appointed governor of Konya, a central Anatolian province. Several estates in central Anatolia were granted to him to finance his army-building efforts. But the people of Konya opposed this mission and expelled the governor from the town. Abdurrahman’s humiliation alarmed Istanbul. The central government asked Süleyman, who also had already managed several estates in the region, to arbitrate between the community and the governor. Süleyman, whose political influence extended over central Anatolia, settled a dispute between the community of Konya and the state. He sent a representative to Konya and negotiated with the city notables, particularly the leaders of the Mevleviye Order, which had been the dominant religious and social association in Konya, the seat of their saintly founding-father, Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (1207-1273). Eventually, Süleyman’s arbitration proved successful. The people of Konya agreed to allow the governor to settle in the city. The governor gave a deed to the people of Konya and promised that he would not harm them (*Konyaluyu incitmemek*) and would leave Konya as soon as his mission was complete. The center thanked him for protecting the honor (*namus*) of the sultanate. But he was also protecting the rights of the community against the state. This episode would raise his prestige in the eyes of the central government and among local communities in his regional zone of influence.

The big move came in 1805. The Çapanoğlu’s fervent support for the New Order, their conscription activities for the new army, growing influence in central Anatolia, and Tayyar’s opposition to the new regime convinced the central government to once again grant the Amasya sub-province to Süleyman. In 1805, while Süleyman Bey acquired the deputy-governorship of Amasya, as well as Tokat and Zile, his younger son Celaleddin, was appointed governor of Sivas with a high rank. This move put almost the entire Central Anatolian province under the control of the Çapanoğlu with various offices, titles and deals. Soon this expansion triggered a regional armed conflict between the Çapanoğlu and Caniklis. In 1805, the two families fought, and the central administration backed the Çapanoğlu. When Tayyar was declared an outlaw, the Çapanoğlu expected to acquire the lands along the Black Sea coast under the control of the Caniklis. One strategy the family pursued to convince the central administration, was to let the central government believe that local communities were not willing to accept a governor from outside. When the Canik sub-province was granted to Yusuf Ziya Pasha, an imperial grandee, the communities allegedly complained to the Çapanoğlu, declaring that they had not consented to the appointment. Süleyman heralded Istanbul as the protector and spokesman of the local people announcing their unhappiness with (*dilgir*) Yusuf Ziya, and encouraging the State to appoint an intendant sympathetic to the poor (*fukara-perver*), implying himself. Süleyman followed similar

60 Dimitrov, "Les timars et le 'Nizam-i cedid' selon le defter matrucule des affermages de fiefs en 1804 et 1805": 33-56, 194-251.
61 BOA: HAT 11887.
62 BOA: HAT 2037.
63 BOA: C D 11831.
64 Topkapı Archive: E8465.
strategies in the south. Despite the resistance of the Kozanoğlus, the major household controlling Tarsus and the Cilicia region in southern Anatolia along the Mediterranean coasts, the family acquired Tarsus province. Meanwhile, Süleyman established alliances with local leaders and nomadic communities in the Taurus Mountains that were at odds with the Kozanoğlus. Local histories of the region depict how Süleyman invited the head of notable local families into his court, honoring them with robes and granting deputy positions to represent the family in the region. The incorporation of Tarsus in the Çapanoğlu zone was celebrated as an epic moment in *The History of the Menemencioğlus*, a mid-nineteenth-century family history. The Menemencioğlus were one of the houses that entered Süleyman’s network in the southern wing of the Çapanoğlu zone. \(^{65}\)

The Çapanoğlu’s expansion was blocked after the Janissary-led popular coup in Istanbul that ended the New Order. After Selim was dethroned and his nephew Mustafa IV became the sultan in 1807, Tayyar was pardoned; the new Sultan removed Amasya from the Çapanoğlu, and granted it to the Caniklis. A couple of months later, Tayyar was invited to Istanbul and asked to act as deputy grand-vizier. Meanwhile, Celaleddin Çapanoğlu, the governor of Sivas, was dismissed and soon appointed as governor of Diyarbakır, far from the family’s central zone. As we will see in great detail in the following chapters, the countercoup, led by Mustafa Bayraktar and his New Orderist allies, and the execution of Tayyar, once again presented the Çapanoğlu with new possibilities. The central government granted Karahisar (1808), Kayseri (1810), Kırşehir (1811), and Aleppo (1813) to Süleyman or his son Celaleddin, with different titles, contracts, and deals. Following Süleyman’s death in 1813, the family’s domain abruptly shrank to Yozgat when Mahmud II, the new sultan, did not reassign the offices and contracts to members of the family. Süleyman was one of the most successful regional magnates of his time. He employed all available mechanisms: financial deals, services, contracts, and local politics. He skillfully negotiated with the central government and local actors. To the state he offered generous payments, military service, or his prestige and influence in the region. While the central administration benefitted from Süleyman’s expansion, by requesting several services, including mediating between officers and local communities, he established bonds of trust with local actors in his zone of influence. \(^{66}\)

*The Zone of Ali of Ioannina*

*Vernacularization of Governance*

For a comprehensive analysis of the inner functioning of the regional zones, we should examine a wide range of sources such as local histories, literary works, popular accounts, and material and architectural culture. Among these sources, perhaps the most important and least well known are documents that were produced by the scribal bureaus of provincial power-holders. Some magnates, such as Ali of Ioannina, established their own bureaucratic and scribal institutions that paralleled the imperial administrative apparatus and were autonomous from the central administration’s surveillance. \(^{67}\) Unlike imperial records, the documents

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\(^{66}\) Mert, *XVIII. ve XIX Yüzyıllarda Çapanoğlu*, 47-72

produced in the scribal bureaus fostered vernacular conventions in the regions, in language (Greek in the Balkans and Arabic in the Arab provinces) and format. These documents constitute alternative archives of the Ottoman provinces, illuminating the inner workings of the regional zones of the power-holders.

In these rare archives are the records of Ali Pasha of Ioannina. Since the 1790s, Ali Pasha and his sons, Veli and Muhtar, built a regional zone of influence from Epirus to southern Albania along the Adriatic shores. In the late 1790s, the family expanded northward. After acquiring the province of Vlorë/Avlonya, Ali, who was a former mountain guard (derbendci) of the Pindus Mountains, monopolized his position, which helped him control the strategic area dividing the Adriatic from central Greece. In 1799, the Ottoman state granted Thessaly to Ali as an additional unit, to provide security of passage and rid the region of bandits. For a short time, Ali was made governor of all of Rumelia, which enabled him to acquire additional revenues and divisions in the Balkans. His tenure was short. The family later lost Thessaly but kept control of the Adriatic coasts of Greece for decades until 1822, when Mahmud II ordered the executions of Ali and his children.

The documents in Ali’s archives reveal that his regional expansion was based on delicate deals, strategies, and negotiations, not only with the central government but also with various local networks, leaderships, and communities in his zone. A similar give-and-take process that we see between the Ottoman central establishment and power-holders took place between Ali and local actors in his zone. The documents testify that local communities in Ali’s zone constantly sent petitions, sometimes declaring their loyalties, sometimes complaining about matters, or negotiating and re-negotiating their terms with Ali. His bureau responded to these petitions and sent inspectors and sometimes armed forces to protect or coerce the locals in his zone. There was an endless traffic of letters that served as emissaries between Ali’s bureau in the city of Ioannina and local communities. Ali’s sons Veli and Muhtar, who resided in different provinces under the family’s jurisdiction, Ali’s other agents, who were scattered across his zone, and those who followed Ali’s businesses in the imperial capital participated in this dispatch traffic.

This archive consists of documents primarily in Greek, the vernacular language of Ali’s zone of influence, with significant Turkish interpolations. His scribal bureau, while using Ottoman Turkish in Ali’s formal correspondence with imperial authorities, used Greek (we can call this style Ottoman Greek) in his correspondence with local communities and members of his network. The format of the petitions by the communities differed from those produced in the kadi courts or other areas of Ottoman officialdom. When Ali acquired a provincial unit from the center, he appointed his representatives or deputies (vekil or mütesellim) to act on his behalf. Often these representatives hired local militia who accepted Ali’s patronage. Ali’s financial representatives, who acted as fiscal officials as well as creditors, circulated within the zone to facilitate complex fiscal transactions and revenue collections with ayans, kocabasîs, and other community headmen. Many times, his bureau communicated with the localities in his zone and received collective petitions declaring that the communities were

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68 After changing hands many times, following Ali Pasha’s execution in 1822, his collection ended up in the Gennadius Library in Athens. Panagiotopoulos with the collaboration of Dimitropoulos and Michailaris, eds., Archeio Alē Pasa: syllogēs I. Chōtzē, Gennadeiou Vivliothēkēs tês Amerikanikēs Scholēs Athēnôn.
69 Ibid. vol. 1, no. 101.
70 Ibid. vol. 1, nos. 39, 221.
happy or unhappy with his representatives. One example of these collective declarations came in 1794 from the community of the Kokosi village in southern Albania:

Your most glorious, sublime, prosperous (devletli) pasha, our lord (effendi), we, your servants, the old and the young subjects of [the village of] Kokosi humbly kneel in front of your highness, and we kiss your noble hand and your footprints and plead to God - we do this night and day - to increase your prosperity/statehood (devlet) and to give you a long life, and to grant you the noble desire of your heart as you wish and even more so, amen, so that we, your servants, can have you as a great mountain to lean on whenever we are in need. With our humble letter we come first, to kneel in front of you, as is due, and second, to reveal to you, if you are enquiring, about Mahmud Bölükbaşı, whom you have sent to us; we have passed well, and our orphanhood has passed peacefully and quietly; and we plead to your highness again to let him stay with us for the next six months with your good command. Nevertheless, we plead to let him stay with us because we have known him, us and all the orphans, and he rules for the benefit of the poor, and the poor pray for you day and night. (...) [We request] that you shall write to him to protect our households. You shall also know, our efendi, from your messenger who has gone to all the provinces where the bandits are hiding and where this affliction is taking place, as it is to you. That is all, and may your years are plenty and good, from God, amen –
[September 4, 1794]

Your servants and well wishing elders of Platani, Sourpi, Koffi, and the rest of the villages:
We kneel.

The community of Kokasi humbly expressed its satisfaction with one of Ali’s men, Mahmud Bölükbaşı, who guarded the village on his behalf and obsequiously asked Ali to order Mahmud to continue his good conduct for another six months. Although Ali, who was portrayed as the patrimonial figure providing security with his men to the vulnerable community of the village, between the lines there was negotiation between the community and Ali. In return for protection, the community continued to be part of Ali’s network and delivered dues to him in an area where bandits and other imperial officers competed with Ali’s authority. Ali offered protection to various towns and villages in return for open deals and had members of the community declare that they were to be incorporated in his zone. The communities offered money or services to remain under Ali’s protection. “We concede to Ali Pasha our village as his lordship (ağalık) for 200 kurus, in return for his protection against the timar-holders as well as dues of road.” While this community offered a deal to gain protection from other officeholders or exemptions from certain fees, in other cases, notables of a community asked for revenue from Ali Pasha to integrate their community and locality into Ali’s realm. In these deals we hear statements from the headmen of the communities who declared themselves servants or friends of Ali. Becoming incorporated into Ali’s zone, accepting his protection, patronage, and/or friendship, did not end negotiations. Doors were always open for new deals, especially concerning payment arrangements and tax collection. In 1803, several village communities in Florina and Ali Pasha signed deeds for contributions to taxes and dues collected by Ali Pasha: We, the inhabitants of Gornizovo, have agreed with our most sublime vizier efendi to give his highness the above portion of the produce of our land.” In their deeds the community also offered to Ali shares of wheat, barely, rye, oats, and grapes they cultivated. Deeds signed

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71 Ibid. vol. 1, no. 9
72 Ibid. vol. 1, nos. 131, 142.
73 Ibid. vol. 1, nos. 149.
74 Ibid. vol. 1, nos. 192-196.
between Ali’s agents, local headmen, and the communities illustrate the ongoing transactions that took place between Ali and communities in his zone.

These deeds and deals between Ali and the communities in his zone should not suggest the absence of coercion and violence. On the contrary, while Ali could coerce those who rejected his patronage, communities might present him with threats to leave their lands, rise against him, or complain about him to the central government, as in 1802, when the notables of Chebelovo complained of Ali’s policy favoring neighboring villages and threatening to leave.75 In these situations, the Ottoman kadi courts, imperial authorities in neighboring provinces, or the possibility to directly petition the central administration in Istanbul provided different avenues for locals to express claims against Ali. His associates in Istanbul helped him, not only by providing information and strategies concerning the office market in the imperial city, but also conveying the grievances that the central government received. In 1797, Stefanos Misios, a member of the Phanariot elites and Ali’s close associate and head of his lobby in Istanbul, recommended tactics in a letter to Ali,76 to help him keep the office of mountain guard-ship. Since there was a challenger who proposed a higher bid to the state to acquire the office, Stefanos told Ali to increase his offer to the treasury. Stefanos also advised Ali to keep milder relations with local communities who gave their taxes to the mountain guard, since ongoing complaints provided an excuse for the center to take the office from Ali and give it to the challenger.77 Such delicate relations between Ali, local actors, communities in his zone, and the central administration pushed Ali to expand his connections to different groups and networks to help him enhance his control over his zone. Ali became involved in the politics of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul by lobbying for various appointments in his region.78

Zone of Ismail of Ruse: Patronage and Alliance

In addition to office acquisition and building coalitions with communities and power-holders, generating trust or patronage-based alliances played an important role in regional expansion. Shifting my focus to Danubian Bulgaria, let me briefly examine how Ismail of Ruse built his zones through collective alliances and patronage relations. Ismail was ayan of Ruse.79 In accordance with the office of aynanship, he was not appointed from the center in a top-down fashion and he did not purchase his position and units with a contract deal. Rather, he was elected by the local community to manage the district of Ruse. Beginning in 1800, Ismail consolidated a zone of influence in the region by placing several individuals under his patronage as the ayns of neighboring districts in the region. Many local notable became “friend” of Ismail, as his close associates Mustafa Bayraktar and Pehlivan Ibrahim. Pehlivan, for intendance, came to region with Alo Pasha, to suppress Pazvantoğlu. Later stayed in the region, as a power-holder, with his men, looking for a patron. According to an account about Pehlivan, after some tension between Ismail and Pehlivan, Ismail was informed Pehlivan’s

75 Ibid. vol. 1, no. 132.
76 Ibid. vol. 1, no. 54.
77 Ibid. vol. 1, no. 29.
78 Ibid. vol. 1, nos. 27, 30, 180.
79 Uzunçarşılı, Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, 8-32; Erdoğan Kaçan, Bayrak-Ferlibaş, Çolak, Rusçuk Ayam, 35-62; Bakardjieva, "Between Anarchy and Creativity."
military and organizational abilities. He followed his courage and the way that he amassed men around him. Ismail “fell in love” with audacity of Pehlivan. Following Ismail’s invitation, they met in Ruse, talked, embraced each other, and became intimate friend, like “father and son.” Then, Pehlivan became part of Ismail’s team (Tirsinikli Takımı or havadari).80 While the building Ismail’s team was fashioned by such epic stories about team building, gradually, Ismail started to have his men elected in different district ayans and expanded his zone. A report sent by an imperial inspector concerning the activities of Ismail in 1804 notes:

Tirsinikli İsmail Ağası has captured control of districts in Deliorman and Dobruca regions, which had been under the control of Yılıkoğlu Süleyman. He placed [among his men], Pehlivan Ağası in Dobruca, Gavur İmam in Hacıoğlu Pazar, Hüseyin Ağası in Umur Fakih district, Uzun Ağası in Topçu district as ayans. Then he invited them to Ruse and clothed them with robes of honor.81

According to the report, Ismail had men under his patronage elected by local communities as ayans of districts in eastern Danubian Bulgaria, since he was ayan of Ruse. Through a network of elected ayans Ismail would defeat Yılıkoğlu, his main regional competitor. However, Ismail’s regional consolidation alarmed Istanbul. He was warned not to interfere in the business of surrounding districts. This conventional warning, which reminded provincial power-holders of their jurisdictional boundaries, prompted Ismail to send a letter of response to Selim III. Ismail defended himself, arguing that he had taken the initiative to clean eastern Bulgaria of bandits and establish order in the region. In addition, he said, he did not impose his men on district communities, but sought the community’s popular consent to his choice of ayan: “My lord, my struggle with these rival ayans is just because I [have tried to have them] go to the places where they would serve. (...). From the notable families of Şumnu, el-Hac Mahmudzade el-Hac Mehmed Ağası, who was the choice of the community, was appointed ayan. The former ayan of the Cuma district, el-Hac Ali Ağası, was sent [by me] to oversee the matters of Cuma as before, only with the unanimous will of the people of Cuma.”82 Ismail built his zone not through office acquisitions, contracts from the state, or other primary holders, but through complex political engineering, mobilizing local communities so that they elected his protégées as district managers. Even after his death in 1806, his party, or as an Ottoman report stated, The Tirsinikli Party continued to dominate eastern Bulgaria, this time under the leadership of one of his followers, Bayraktar Mustafa.83

I have discussed three distinctive models of regional expansion. In Çapanoğlu’s case, expansion was accomplished by acquiring additional contracts and offices. In Ali’s case, expansion was carried out through acquiring offices; but the underlying mechanism was to build, alongside the system, a parallel institutionalization of officialdom in vernacular administrative culture. In Ismail’s case we see a provincial magnate expand his zone through collective declarations of local communities and by engineering informal alliances and bonds of trust with client local leaders and liegemen. In all three cases, however, acquiring

80 Gazzizade Abdullahî Efendi, Vekayî-i Baba Paşa fi’î-Tarih, 141.
81 BOA: HAT 2620.
82 BOA: HAT 3207.
83 BOA: HAT 2580.
additional offices, creating bonds of trust and patronage relations, using vernacular administrative and political models, and gaining the collective backing of communities were strategic. These regional zones, therefore, were amorphous, porous, fluid, multifarious, and variegated spaces rather than territorial divisions of exclusive and cohesive authority or sovereignty claims. Other actors always competed or shared power with provincial power-holders in their zones. Competition and/or patronage relations between regional power-holders and local heads were common. Multiple officeholders, including the kadis representing judiciary authority or tax collectors and military recruiters, who were independently authorized by the central administration, functioned in these zones.

These three cases, by no means, represent all possible regional formations developed under provincial notables in the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. To a more comprehensive analysis on the spatial configurations on the notable zones, one should add other cases studies, such as regional zones organized under large tribal clan networks, like Rişvanoğlu in central Anatolia\textsuperscript{84} and the Bedirhan clan in Kurdistan\textsuperscript{85}; intertwined zones built under political and economic partnerships of Greek notable (Kocabashi) families, such as the Benakis, in Peloponnese\textsuperscript{86}; or the overlapping zones of the various tribal Circassian and semi-pastoral Nogay networks in the Caucasus; or zones under the control of semi-religious political Shi'ite notables, the Shiabis in Lebanon.\textsuperscript{87} In all these examples, one can find different forms political mechanisms and ethno-religious and economic adherences and alliances linking localities to form regional zones. In all these different spatial formations, we should also consider overlapping zones and enclaves of local, trans-regional, imperial and trans-imperial actors.\textsuperscript{88}

**CAPITAL, WEALTH, AND PORTFOLIO**

Comparing the leading provincial power-holders shows that they accumulated wealth through a variety of activities in what I call the business of governance. These activities ran the gamut from tax/revenue collection to estate management and from extending credits to communities to participating in the provisioning of Istanbul and the imperial army. In addition to taxation, most power-holders, especially those who had strong connections to the central treasury, acquired short-term deals from the state, sometimes through formal auctions, but mostly through a combination of financial and administrative service deals. Personal connections and lobbying by power-holders in the central government helped them acquire these short-term contacts. But we also see the situation in reverse. Sometimes the central government tried to impose these services on provincial magnates, despite their unwillingness. These short-term activities concentrated around three main fields: provisioning for the army or the capital (i'aše); buying crops from producers, mainly peasants, at fixed lower-market prices for the state (mubaya'a); or confiscating the

\textsuperscript{84} Süylemez, *Osmanlı Devletinde Aşiret Yönetimi*, 52-104
\textsuperscript{85} Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 43-68
\textsuperscript{87} Winter, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule*, 117-45.
\textsuperscript{88} For a discussion on multifaceted spatial structures of different polities, see Brenner, New State Spaces, 27-68; For a discuss on various overlapping zone formations in the Ottoman World, see Yayçoğlu, “Space, Place and Territory in the Ottoman Empire.”
In the eighteenth century, we observe a proliferation of agricultural estates, generically called çiftlik, under the direct or indirect management of provincial power-holders in Macedonia, Bosnia, Epirus, and western and Northern Anatolia. Çiftlik was agricultural units consisting of arable land and a peasant community living in a village. In most cases, a building complex with a mansion, storage houses, small or large lands for stock farming, and a well were attached to the estate. Beginning in the second half of the century, power-holders came to control large number of estates from the central government or from other primary holders. Some of the power-holders had hundreds of estates spread out in their regional zones and beyond. By the early nineteenth century, the majority of the çiftlik were under the jurisdiction of a few of them: Karaosmanoğlu of Manisa, the Ali Pasha of Ioannina and his sons, the Kösepaşaoglus of Divriği, Tirsinikli Ismail Ağ of Ruse, the Çapanoğlu, and Tayyar Pasha of Canik. When power-holders acquired çiftlik as primary holders or contractor managers, some built close patronage relations with peasants in these estates. They provided seeds, credits, necessary equipment, and animal power and were engaged in sharecropping (muzara’a) with peasant communities. Some collected revenue or crops in kind as a tax without becoming involved in the cultivation process. In several cases, power-holders organized the marketing of crops produced by peasants, with foreign and domestic merchants or state commissioners.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in these in these multifarious tax/revenue collection processes was providing bottom-up revenue flow. In most cases, contractors and communities were not ready to pay taxes in due time. Not only community managers acted as creditors but also governors, contractors, and sub-contractors (the intendants and deputy-governors) extended credit to their contractors and communities. District judges (kadi) recorded these debts and credits in the court registers as deeds. Since actors in these nexuses might not have the cash to remit to representatives at higher levels, when higher officeholders outsourced their

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89 In the summer of 1805, Ismail of Ruse was appointed purchasing officer (mübaya’a memuru) and was asked to buy wheat and barley for Istanbul from several districts in eastern Bulgaria, BOA: CB 6168. Around the same time, he received 25,000 gurş from Ahmed Şakir Efendi, the chief of the provisioning of Istanbul, to be used for purchases and for his services, BOA: C B 3915. Ali of Ioannina and Hüseyin of the Karaosmanoğlu acquired the contract for provisioning Istanbul in 1805 and 1806, BOA: C B 2173; BOA C B 1824. In 1793, İbrahim Pasha, the governor of Niğde and Kayseri, was executed. The Çapanoğlu were asked to carry out the confiscation process and seize and register İbrahim’s inheritance, BOA: C ADL 521. That year, when the intendant of Bayındır, Karayilanoğlu Mehmed died, the central treasury asked Karaosmanoğlu Mehmed to administer the confiscation process. Karaosmanoğlu supervised the sale of Karayilanoğlu's inheritance, which his family bought for 20,000 gurş. BOA: C ML 3108.

90 In 1795 and 1804, extensive inspections targeted agricultural units, which had been used as prebends by members of now-shrinking provincial cavalry units. According to the 1804 inspection, 3,575 prebendal units were registered throughout the empire. 2,047 units appeared vacant, that is to say their holders did not appear at inspections. Czar, Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim, 183; Dimitrov, "Les timars et le 'Nizam-i cedid' selon le defter matruckle des affermages de fiefs en 1804 et 1805," 33-56; the register is published in the same monograph: 194-251. For the entire list, see Dimitrov, "Les timars et le 'Nizam-i cedid,'" 48-9.

jurisdictions to contractors, they carried debt (zemanet) on a regular basis. Consequently, we see a constant debt cycle and vibrant credit activities in the taxation process, from the center to the village level. While power-holders also extended loans to private individuals, in addition to the communities, they constantly sought loans from other individuals. Therefore, grandees and power-holders had often partnerships with moneylenders who served not only as links to credit markets but also as financial and fiscal advisors.92

We can extend our list of sectors pertaining to the business of governance to include trade. In fact, some magnates were involved in regional and international commerce. The Çapanoğlu zone covered central Anatolian trade routes and several hub cities, such as Tokat and Kayseri. The Çapanoğlu family actively interacted with merchants operating along East-West or North-South routes of the Anatolian trade.93 Ismail of Serres, who controlled large amounts of lucrative estates in Macedonia, also had patronage relations with merchants in Salonika, a critical port city in the Eastern Mediterranean.94 Similarly, the Karaosmanoğlu controlled the agricultural hinterland of Izmir, relying on strong ties to Izmir, the port city of the Aegean region. While commissioning several hubs for merchants in Manisa and Izmir to rejuvenate Aegean trade, the family developed connections to French merchants operating in the region.95 Ismail of Ruse not only oversaw the provisioning of meat and wheat for Istanbul from the Danubian regions with partner families, but also helped local producers and merchants participate in regional export markets.96 Ahmad Jazzar, while transforming Acre into the main hub of Levant trade, was heavily involved in French and British trade networks in the region.97 Undoubtedly, provincial power-holders were active participants in trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, in most cases, they did not act as merchants but as facilitators or superintendents of mercantile activities. In doing so, they sometimes established partnerships with peasants and established monopolies over products of some peasant communities. Buying products at lower than market price, they sold them to foreign merchants.

**Mustafa Bayraktar and Manuk Mirzayan**

**Debt and Credit**

A glance at the wealth of Mustafa Bayraktar, who accumulated immense capital in less than three years, offers a demonstrative case for understanding the nature of wealth formation and the debt/credit nexus. Mustafa Bayraktar was a minor ayan of Razgrad/Hazargrad in Danubian Bulgaria and a follower of Ismail of Ruse until 1806. After the death of Ismail in 1806, the community of Ruse elected him ayan of Ruse, a more important district on the

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92 Cezar, “The Role of the Sarrafs in Ottoman Finance and Economy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries”

93 Kinneir, *Journey Through Asia Minor, Armenia and Koordistan in the Years 1813 and 1814*, 80-93 For trade routs in central Anatolia Suraiya Faroqi, *Towns and Townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia*, 56-57; For the Armenian Merchants of Yozgat, see, Dareae and Erkanee, *Patmagirk Eozkati ew shrjakayits (Gamirk) Hayots* ...


97 Philipp, *Acre: The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City*, 1730-1831, 94-134.
Danube. Mustafa Bayraktar rapidly ascended the imperial hierarchy, first as governor of Silistra province, covering northeastern Bulgaria, then as intendant of Tarnovo, a rich district in central Bulgaria, and finally as commander of the provincial army during the outbreak of the Ottoman-Russian war on the Danubian front.

In his ascendance, the main partner of Mustafa Bayraktar was Manuk Mirzayan, an Armenian financier. Manuk, who was originally from Ruse, started his career as a merchant in the Danubian Bulgaria and Wallachia and real estate speculator in Bucharest in the late eighteenth century. In 1795, Manuk approached Ismail of Ruse, who desperately needed credit for the expenditures he should have incurred as the ayan of Ruse. In a short time, Ismail and Manuk became close associates. Manuk operated in silk, wool, cotton, tabaco and spice trade in the Danube basin with the shelter provided by Ismail. He attended fairs in Leipzig through his partners. He built a large inn for the merchants visiting Bucharest. He established close connections within Russian markets, through Alexander Ipsilanti, the Phanariot governor of Wallachia. With Ismail, he also acquired contracts for the wheat provisioning of Istanbul, which enable him to become an important member of an Armenian financial network in the early nineteenth century. When Ismail was killed in his farm in 1806, Manuk and Mustafa Bayraktar agreed to work together. As we saw in the last chapter, Manuk lobbied for Mustafa’s appointment as the ayan of Ruse in Istanbul through his acquaintances in the capital. With the loans Manuk provided, Mustafa Bayraktar was able to extend a substantial offer to the state for the inheritance of his late patron, Ismail of Ruse.98 After the inheritance was granted to Mustafa, Manuk went to the region, travelled with this associates, and secured 40,000 guruş receivable of Ismail.99 Ismail’s confiscated wealth was the starting capital of Mustafa Bayraktar.

As we will examine in the next chapter, with the fall of the New Order, Bayraktar became the leader of a party, known as Friends of Ruse, and some provincial power-holders. The party initiated a conspiracy and coup in Istanbul, which carried Bayraktar to the position of grandvizierate; the highest rank a provincial power-holder had ever reached. In this process, Manuk Bey continued to be the main business and political partner of Mustafa. After the coup, Manuk was appointed first as the intendant of Moldavia and then as the chief drogoman, a primary office in Ottoman foreign affairs after the minister. The short regime under his grand-vizierate ended when he was killed a couple of months later, in mid-November 1808, in a Janissary-led popular riot. Manuk fled lands controlled by the Russian Empire with considerable cash. Later, Manuk continued his career as a businessmen and diplomat in the Russian context. After Mustafa’s death, the imperial treasury confiscated his property, selling some of his immovable properties in the market. Other properties were transferred to the treasury or to officeholders. Fiscal bureaucrats prepared a detailed report on his inheritance in 1809.100 According to these accounts, Bayraktar had considerable wealth in kind, cash, and receivables. He also possessed substantial debt. Here is a summary of his inheritance:

- Provisions, which were transferred to the new grand vizier: 18,152.5 guruş
- Slaves and concubines in his household: 38,775 guruş

98 BOA: HAT 1730 contains negotiations between Mustafa/Manuk and the central state for the inheritance of late Ismail of Ruse; Siruni, “Bairakkar Moustafa Pacha et Manouk Bey,” 54-86; Ionescu, Manuc Bei, 31-38.
99 Ionescu, Manuc Bei, 38-39.
- Private cloths: 3,584 gurus
- Armors and military equipment used in his private retinue: 12,249 gurus
- Horses and livestock: 32,827 gurus
- Saddles and other horse supplies: 67,815 gurus
- House supplies from his mansions: 2,470.5 gurus
- Jewelry: 25,049 gurus
- Miscellaneous: 5,152.5 gurus
- Receivables: 1,391,741.1 gurus
- Debts: 908,048 gurus.

Excluding his debt, Bayraktar’s receivables from communities and individuals constituted more than 87% of his total wealth. However, 56.8% of his wealth was tied up in debt. Analyzing his receivables and debt illustrates a debt/credit nexus. According to the inheritance register, Mustafa Bayraktar had receivables from various individuals and communities. Some of these individuals obtained credit from Mustafa Bayraktar for their businesses. Mustafa extended loans to various merchants and military and administrative officeholders. The ayans of Balchik, Topçu, and Shumen, the deputy-governor of Silistra, and the customs manager of Ruse were also indebted to Mustafa Bayraktar. Apparently, these individuals were authorities or contractors; others were ayans who represented their communities. All operated in the regional zone of Mustafa Bayraktar and were supposed to collect revenues from their units or constituent communities and deliver Mustafa’s share. Meanwhile, the communities of Razgrad, Kazanlak/Kızıl, Tarnovo, and Svistov/Ziştovi were indebted to Mustafa as collective entities, not as individual representatives. Mustafa had considerable debts (but still less than his receivables) to various individuals, including Armenian moneylenders and Greek, Armenian, and Muslim merchants. While some were regional financiers, others operated trans-regions in Ottoman markets from Bulgaria to Egypt. Mustafa Bayraktar received credits from these moneylenders and provisioning from merchants for his household and militia.

**Portfolio Entrepreneurs**

How should we conceptualize the multifaceted “business” enterprises of the provincial magnates? Like the zamindars of seventeenth-century Mughal India who developed operational expertise in administrative, fiscal, and commercial fields as semi-public and semi-private entrepreneurs,101 Ottoman provincial magnates allocated their investments and managerial operations to various fields, from taxation to loan extension, confiscation to provisioning, and estate management to facilitating trade. In their diverse portfolios, the business of governance and public finance (credits extended to other contractors, officeholders, and communities) proved the main sector in which they accumulated wealth. In this respect it would not be wrong to define provincial power-holders as entrepreneurial contractors with large portfolios in the business of governance. They did not acquire their offices and contracts as appointees or hereditary holders. Rather, they acquired deals through bids, negotiations, bargaining, and offers in a volatile imperial sector. In the business of governance, however, power-holders also took risks. They could lose invested capital, for instance, without collecting more revenue from a unit under their jurisdiction than they paid

101 Subrahmanyam and Bayly, “Portfolio Capitalist and the Political Economy of Early Modern India”; also see Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 85-97.
the state to acquire it. They also took risks when extending loans to a community or acquiring a contract to organize the provisioning of the imperial army.

VIOLENCE, DISSENT, AND SEPARATISM

In the Ottoman provincial order, administration and violence were two sides of the same coin. In the late eighteen/early nineteenth centuries, in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, violence, insecurity, and fear were parts of everyday life. The wars with Russia, Austria, Britain, and France profoundly influenced social and political landscape. But it was not only the wars, which fostered military activity and violence. Rising ferocity of irregular militias, which failed to find patrons in the Balkans, known as the Kircalis or Dağlıs, the unsolved conflict between the Janissaries and the Serbian notables in Belgrade, Kapudans who increasingly employed bandit groups in Bosnia, unruly nomadic groups in southern Anatolia, who resisted to being settled, the Wahhabis in Arabia, which was a collective religious program transforming into a revolutionary movement, and various unruly provincial power-holders, who preferred to negotiate the empire, not through offers and counter-offers, but through their rebellions transformed the empire into a space of concomitant battlegrounds.\(^{102}\)

The increasing violence made the boundaries between legal and outlaw, negotiation and insurgency, loyal and rebel more vague. Under these conditions, an administrative entrepreneur or an officeholder would have been closely acquainted with military techniques, recruitment strategies, and martial practices to maintain small or large armed groups, a militia or an army, under his command. Sometimes, military organizations of the magnates produced their own codes of honor, family banners, regional styles, and dress. It was common for martial units of magnates to be trained by captains, Ottoman or foreign, who were hired from a growing international market of military experts during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.

In general, magnates built military power from four different pools. The first consisted of existing Ottoman forces connected to the center in the provinces, such as Janissary units in the towns and dispersed cavalry units in the countryside. Communities in the zones of the magnates provided the second pool of manpower. Increasing conscription activities from the Balkans to the Arab provinces expanded when Selim III unleashed his military reform program, beginning in the 1790s.\(^{103}\) The Çapanoğlu and the Karaosmanoğlu mediated regional conscription campaigns under some grandees and these efforts had the potential to trigger popular unrest.\(^{104}\) The third pool consisted of mercenaries and gangs. In wartime, provincial communities were regularly asked to assemble teams or recruit privateers, equip them with firearms, and send these forces to battlegrounds. Groups that left battle and scattered in the provinces were organized as brigands, known as levends, under charismatic

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\(^{102}\) Esmer, “A Culture of Rebellion: Networks of Violence and Competing Discourses of Justice in the Ottoman Empire, 1790-1808”; idem. “Economies of Violence and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Banditry in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1800”; Koller, Bosnien und der Schwelle zur Neuzzeit, 72-85; Moutaftchieva, L’anarchie dans les Balkans; Özkaya, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Dağlı İsyanları; Şeker, Osmanlılar ve Vehabilik, 196-223; Shaw, Between Old and New, 211-245, 283-326

\(^{103}\) Shaw, “The Nizam-ı Cedid Army under Selim III, 1789-1807.”

\(^{104}\) As we will see, the most significant example was Mehmed Ali of Egypt, who regularized and systematized mass conscription from young Egyptian peasants to a new army in the 1820s, similar to what Selim III tried but failed to achieve on an imperial scale between 1792 and 1807. Fahmy, All the Pasha’s Men, 76-111.
leaders, called sahib-i cumhur and ser-cemiyet (leader of a group or collectivity) in Ottoman documents. As a result of the growing market for freelance mercenaries, some bandit leaders became power-entrepreneurs, looking for patrons or communities to hire them. The fourth way to build an armed force in a regional zone was through other client magnates who acted with the patron magnate, either under his supervision (ma’iyyet) or in an alliance (ittifak). Regional webs helped magnates mobilize thousands of armed groups under the command of client power-holders, without maintaining a standing army.

Party of Tayyar of Canik, 1785-1807

From many examples of army building, let me focus on the Caniklis, the notable family of Northern Anatolia. We mentioned the family in our discussion of the Çapanoğlus. The Canikli house, which was founded by one of the leading generals of the Ottoman imperial army during the Ottoman-Russian war of 1768-1774, the renowned Canikli Ali Pasha (1720-1785), had controlled the governorship of Trabzon and the surrounding regions since 1774. The family’s competition with the Çapanoğlus for regional leadership caused a major crisis in 1802, when Tayyar began collecting military forces from several settlements and built a network in northeastern Anatolia against the Çapanoğlus and the New Order of Selim III. Before he was again declared an outlaw, the central government asked Hüseyin of the Cihanoğlus, the intendant of the neighboring town of Gümüşhane, to send a detailed report about Tayyar, the sources of his power, and whether he had acquired the support of notables and communities in the region. In his report, Hüseyin examined Tayyar’s regional power-base of.

Tayyar’s soldiers were basically collected from districts in the region. In other words, he has very few Ottoman soldiers (Osmanlı askeri). He had some affiliates, such as Denebaș, Yakmazoğlu, Cihhetoğlu, and Kadi Çırağı, and they have settled in some districts like ayans. In total, he must have one to two thousand cavalry [under his direct command]. Otherwise, his troops are composed of infantry collected from the districts. If necessary, he summoned them under the command of other power-holders [who acted with him]. When he says come to my site, troops from the communities, peasants, and laborers gathered with him. However, their obedience to him depends on their fear of him. I think that if they heard that the Sublime State issued an order against him, they might take sides against Tayyar. They would not want their regions to be wiped out by the state, and in fact they were seeking peace. Everyone knows

105 İnalçık "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700"; Cezar, Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler, 235-56.
106 According to a report prepared by French experts, Ismail of Ruse claimed to collect eighty thousand men from his region with the help of subordinate power-holders acting with him. AMAE: CP Turquie 212: 88 (A dispatch from General Sébastiani concerning the developments in Ottoman Rumelia, 25 August 1806); also see: Hurmuzaki, Supplement I, vol. II, no. CDLXXXIII, 348-49; Driault, La politique orientale de Napoléon: 37. In 1804, when a sizeable army, consisting of several Balkan magnates, was established to subdue brigands in eastern Bulgaria, most of the ayans and intendants (voyvodos) of Rumelia were asked to unite their forces under the leadership of Ismail Bey of Serres. BOA: CA 27990 (A register which includes a list of troops arriving in Sofia under the command of different provincial leaders of Rumelia N 1218/January 1804). We must add to this list the enduring mamluk system, or recruitment through networks that enslaved young men and marketed them as soldiers. Such mechanisms, though in decline, continued in Egypt and Baghdad, through networks operating from Caucasus to some of the Arab provinces in the late eighteenth century.
108 BOA: CD 4372.
that no one can go against the State. However, Tayyar Pasha controls them with tricks and artifice (...). Tayyar was in fact a capricious man and he is not one of those who are inclined to fight. The person who commands his soldiers is his steward, Lütfullah Ağa. His cousin Has Bey is a very skillful and courageous man. Tayyar takes him in his entourage when he goes into battle. In fact, it is Has Bey who seduced Tayyar Pasha [for such acts].

Tayyar provides an example of how a provincial power-holder built a military force from local resources against the military reforms of the Ottoman central government and fashioned his rebellion with larger ideological claims. While the military reforms asked provincial power-holders to recruit soldiers from the communities. Tayyar militarized their regional zones with local militias and former Janissaries who were at odds with the New Order. Many influential individuals, such as the mufti of Tokat, were reported to be followers (tarafdar) of Tayyar. When Selim declared Tayyar Pasha an outlaw, the central government warned local notables in the region not to join Tayyar and declared that amnesty for Tayyar would no longer be possible. Tayyar responded by banning peasants in his zone of influence from being recruited by the New Army. His men defied agents dispatched from Istanbul. Tayyar sent papers to local communities asking them to resist recruitment to the new army and not to pay taxes to the new treasury. He sent envoys to the Çildiroğlus and other power-holders and offered alliances against the New Order and the Çapanoğlus. Meanwhile, several communities rose up, expelled imperial governors in their towns, and declared loyalty to Tayyar. In the fall of 1806, as Tayyar fled to the Russian Empire for a second time, Selim III fell following the Janissary coup in Istanbul. In early 1807, during the armistice, the Russian emperor Alexander asked the Ottoman state to pardon Tayyar. After the fall of Selim III and the New Order, Tayyar was pardoned. The new Sultan, Mustafa IV, invited Tayyar to Istanbul and offered him the position of deputy-grand vizier in the restoration government. This development troubled the Cabbaroğlus. Süleyman declared that as long as Tayyar was alive, the Anatolian dynasties would not cross the straits to the Balkans to join the imperial army. In the summer of 1808, he was dismissed and his ranks removed after controversy with leaders of the Janissary coup in Istanbul. He went to Rumelia and joined Mustafa Bayraktar, but was later killed in a conspiracy.

Tayyar’s career was extraordinary, from his role as a member of a notable family in the Anatolian Black Sea region to his political dissent from Selim III and the New Order, and from his political refugee status in Russia to his rise to deputy-grand vizier of the restoration government in Istanbul. His career illustrates the range of possibilities for provincial actors during this turbulent period, who had the capacity to mobilize economic and military resources in their regions and play a role on an imperial and even trans-imperial scale. As Karen Barkey masterfully illustrates, in the early-modern Ottoman Empire, the boundaries

109 BOA: HAT 4051-D.
110 BOA: CADL 3109.
111 BOA: CD 6092.
112 BOA: HAT 4048-G.
113 BOA: HAT 4048-I.
114 BOA: HAT 4048-B, HAT 4079-B.
115 BOA: HAT 4072-E; HAT 4075.
116 BOA: HAT 4045-D.
117 BOA: HAT 53363 and 53421.
118 BOA: HAT 53472.
119 BOA: HAT 53700.
between legal and illegal, lawful and unlawful, were permeable.\textsuperscript{120} In fact, rebellion could serve as a form of negotiation for a higher office, greater glory, and wealth. In the stormy period between 1770 and 1820, several provincial power-holders, like Tayyar, were at the edges of legality and illegality, gratification and rebellion, glory and disgrace. Perhaps the best example of a transition from rebel to vizier was Pazvantoğlu of Vidin.

\textit{Pazvantoğlu: Rebellion, Separatism and Amnesty}

Osman Pazvantoğlu started his career as a Janissary chief in Vidin, a strategic city on the Empire’s Danubian Bulgarian Western front.\textsuperscript{121} From the early 1790s, Pazvantoğlu consolidated his leadership in the region. His involvement in the crisis of Belgrade on behalf of his Janissary comrades during the conflict between Serbian notables and Belgrade Janissaries created tensions between him and the New Order. “The Sublime State will abolish the Janissaries of Vidin. My effort is for you [for your protection]” declared Pazvantoğlu to the Janissaries in the region.\textsuperscript{122} When the central administration considered this behavior disobedience, Gürcü Osman Pasha, an imperial commander, attacked Vidin. Pazvantoğlu managed to resist the assault. Istanbul pardoned him as a result of the mediation of the elders of the Janissaries in Istanbul, who became guarantors (\textit{kefil}) for their comrade. In return for his compliance, Selim III appointed Pazvantoğlu intendant (\textit{muhassil}) of Vidin.

But he was soon declared an outlaw once again, when Pazvantoğlu implied that he would not be satisfied with this offer, that he wished to acquire the governorship, and would continue to support the rebel Janissaries of Belgrade. While he gathered local mercenary leaders around him, the center tried to mobilize major power-holders in the Balkans, who were known as loyal to the New Order. In 1798, a massive siege of Vidin under the command of the grand admiral, in which Ali Pasha of Ioannina participated, together with forces sent by the Karaosmanoğlu and the Çapanoğlu failed. This victory gave Pazvantoğlu a reputation throughout the Empire and beyond, as one of the main challengers of Selim III’s New Order. In June 1798, the administration closed several coffee houses in Istanbul and elsewhere where stories about Pazvantoğlu circulated.\textsuperscript{123} According to an Austrian diplomat, peasant communities in the Balkans saw him as the liberator against the new military and fiscal measures of the New Order.\textsuperscript{124} Story-tellers of the region narrated him in popular epics as a regional hero who could not be beaten by the empire in vernacular languages.\textsuperscript{125} While he was expanding his zone of influence and became a regional leader, chiefs of the Janissaries in Istanbul, as a result of the pressure of the New Orderists, withdrew their support for Pazvantoğlu and declared, “this wicked man is a shame to the Janissaries… we accept neither him nor those who join him.”\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{120}Barkey, \textit{Bandits and Bureaucrats}. 195-242. For a theoretical discussion on the relationship between law and rebellion in Islamic legal context, see Abou el-Fadl, \textit{Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law}, 320-42.


\textsuperscript{122}BOA: HAT 12581-A.


\textsuperscript{124}HHStA, Türkî V, Karton 23.

\textsuperscript{125}Sofroni. \textit{Osmanlı’da bir Papaz}, 34-5.

\textsuperscript{126}BOA: HAT 12581-A.
On this way to Istanbul, the French consul recorded songs by Greeks sailors about Pazvantoğlu: “After a hundred thousands bombs launched on Vidin/I, Pazvantoğlu, the dog of the Sultan/the Slave of the Sultana/Have raised the standard of defense.” Just like the song, Pazvantoğlu sent messages that he was not a rebel, but a loyal servant of the Sultan and the Sultan’s mother, who held important estates in the region. He was a victim of some New Orderists, he argued, who had bad intentions and prevented him from acquiring what he deserved. In 1799, an emissary, Hüseyin Agha, was sent to Vidin to settle the case with Pazvantoğlu. In the emissary’s report we hear Pazvantoğlu’s voice.

My request and will from my masters [in Istanbul] is only to be decorated with the rank of vizierate [highest ranked governorship]. Vizierate is my wish. [If I am made vizier,] I will serve with full loyalty and enthusiasm and demonstrate my servitude [to my Majesty]. If my masters illuminate me with the rank of vizierate, let them order me to go against the mountaineer brigands. Or let them order me to go to Greece for the imperial campaign. I will entrust the city of Vidin to a shrewd man, and I will proudly go to that place in accordance with the order. With the help of God, I will perform my service rightfully and with loyalty and demonstrate my servitude [to my Majesty]. If my will can not be completed in couple of months, to satisfy my poor heart, for the moment, I ask [at least] to be lifted to the rank of Head of the Gatemen of Imperial Abode and deputy-governor of Vidin.

Pazvantoğlu thought that he deserved to be the only authority of Vidin where he built political and military control. He offered the state a deal. Hüseyin Agha, in his negotiations with Pazvantoğlu, voiced the position of the state.

The Sublime State would not grant you horse tails [governorship or viziership] like that. If you do not take the path [of that career] and if you do not deserve it, you would not acquire it. Why not acquire the rank of Chief Gatemen, and after a while, if the State will grant you governorship, accept it? After a time of service, you might have the right to assume this noble status. Otherwise, it has not been heard of or known that a vizierate would be granted to a chief of a local militia.

Hüseyin Agha advised Pazvantoğlu not to start negotiations with the highest rank but to resume his career with a more humble title. In April 1799, the imperial council deliberated Pazvantoğlu's request. At the meeting, some members of the Divan argued that he could be granted vizierate. Bonaparte had just occupied Egypt and the central administration desperately sought to end the disturbance in Vidin. Selim III decided to give Pazvantoğlu what he wanted, granting him the vizierate and appointing him military governor of Vidin. Additionally, he acquired the sub-province of Nikopolis/Niğbolu as a revenue source.

But this was not the end of the story. From that point on, Pazvantoğlu began playing another game, this time a trans-imperial one, soon becoming an important actor in Napoleonic Europe, in alliance with Mehmed Cengiz Geray, a member of the Geray dynasty. Cengiz Geray was a different kind of power-holder. He was not a start-up like Pazvantoğlu, but a member of the most prestigious house of the Ottoman Empire after the House of Osman.

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127 Pouqueville, *Travels in Greece and Turkey*, 284.
128 BOA: HAT 16147-C.
129 BOA: HAT 16147-B.
130 BOA: HAT 45557, 45558, 45559.
131 Zens, "The Ayanlık and Pazvantoğlu Osman Paşa of Vidin in the age of Ottoman social change, 1791-1815"
thanks to his Chingissid ancestry. When Mehmed Cengiz Geray was declared an outlaw by the center following a controversy about the status of his estate, he fled Russia and spent several years in Moscow, as a political refugee. Upon his return, Pazvantoğlu invited him to Vidin. Pazvantoğlu and Geray developed an ambitious plan. Pazvantoğlu proposed assisting the French with the partition plan for the Ottoman Empire. If the Republic of France attacked the Ottoman Empire, Pazvantoğlu was to cooperate on the condition that the French government pledged to offer him and Cengiz Geray a province where they could rule in peace under the protection of French law. If the French government chose to preserve the Ottoman Empire as it was, Pazvantoğlu promised to cease all hostilities against the Ottoman Court and in turn, the French government would request his pardon from the Ottoman State. Pazvantoğlu gave his word to be faithful to the French Republic and serve its aims, provided these did not conflict with Islam.

This episode illustrates the possibilities and horizons of Ottoman power-holders in the age of revolutions. A rebellious magnate entered a partnership with a Geray who had strong trans-Ottoman connections and took part in the remaking of Eurasia. Pazvantoğlu united his organizational, economic, and military might with Geray’s domestic and international prestige, or what Devin DeWeese calls the Chingisid charisma. In this episode, where we see Napoleon and Chengis Khan in the same symbolic context, it becomes evident how the politics of notables intermingled with the radicalism of the age of revolutions. When Pazvantoğlu’s proposal reached Paris, the French Republic and the Ottoman Empire were about to conclude a peace treaty. But Pazvantoğlu also asked the French to help obtain amnesty from the sultan if the French opted to make peace with the Ottoman Empire. Pazvantoğlu was pardoned and confirmed as governor of Vidin again with high ranks.

When Pazvantoğlu died in 1805, a fresh crisis over who would become the authority in Vidin arose in the absence of hereditary office. The central administration considered appointing another governor from the imperial elite or placing Pazvantoğlu’s son, Ali, in his father’s seat, although he was only thirteen years old. The notables of Vidin gathered and wrote a collective petition to the Divan, asking the state to entrust the affairs of Vidin to Ali, Pazvantoğlu’s son, under the guardianship of Molla İdris, Pazvantoğlu’s old comrade and treasurer. This petition was not accepted by some of Pazvantoğlu’s followers, who refused İdris. Despite disagreement in the community of Vidin, successful lobbying by the İdris party convinced the Divan to appoint İdris governor of Vidin. İdris became İdris Pasha. Pazvantoğlu’s personal inheritance was transferred to İdris. He married Pazvantoğlu’s widow. Ali, Pazvantoğlu’s son, escaped the city, went to Istanbul, and started a new life under the protection of some of Pazvantoğlu’s friends. This was the end of Pazvantoğlu rule in Vidin and the beginning of the time of İdris of Vidin.

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132 The Gerays were the khans of Crimea. They accepted the suzerainty of the Ottomans in the fifteenth century and since then they operated within the Ottoman Empire as a semi-independent rulers of Crimea. After Catherine II annexed Crimea in 1782, most of the members of the family immigrated to the Ottoman Balkans. They settled estates (çiftliks) granted by the Ottoman central government. Kırımlı and Yaycıoğlu, “An Heir of Chinghis Kahn in the Age of Revolutions.”


134 DeWeese, “Fusing Islam and Chinggisid Charisma: Muhammad Shibanî Khan’s Religious Program in 16th-century Central Asia”.

135 BOA: HAT 6362.

136 BOA: HAT 47888.
As we have seen, the Ottoman central government did not exercise a monopoly over governance or organized violence. It did not have a monopoly over diplomacy either. There had always been regional actors in the Ottoman Empire who bypassed the Ottoman state, established diplomatic relations with the outside world, and pursued their own foreign policies. The power-holders, whose regional zones were close to borderlands and in coastal areas, developed close ties to broader regions outside the Ottoman territories. While they hosted diplomatic missions, foreign merchants, moneylenders, and military experts, they also sent emissaries, brokers, or spies to various centers, including some capitals of foreign powers. Some found safe haven through trans-Ottoman connections and became political refugees. In some cases, these power-holders were pardoned with requests and mediation of foreign rulers. The most fascinating episodes occurred when some power-holders participated in grand negotiations and alliances with the great powers in the stormy diplomacy of the revolutionary and Napoleonic years. Ali of Ioannina began his diplomatic connections with the French and British on the question of the Ionian Islands between 1801 and 1807. Ali’s active involvement in Adriatic diplomacy, as well as his achievements in Ottoman Greece and Albania, increased his reputation in European circles and even in popular culture, where a fantasy of an exotic Muslim “despot” ruling the lands of Ancient Greek civilization took hold. Ali, who was aware of this crafted depiction, deliberately used this image in his diplomatic missions. When Mustafa Bayraktar was the commander of the Danubian front in the Ottoman-Russian war of 1806-08, he offered Tsar Alexander an alliance against Napoleon and promised an Ottoman Army. His secret diplomacy with Russia during the Ottoman-Russian war concluded in a ceasefire and helped him initiate his coup in Istanbul to re-institute the New Order. These episodes illustrate that some regional magnates acted as autonomous political actors in European politics. They negotiated with new realities of the empire, of their regional settings and of the world. When old regimes collapsed and new grand designs appeared, they took the stage in the international arena, bringing with them their own agendas, calculations, and strategies.

DEATH AND CONFISCATION

How did power-holders die and what happened when they died? As I argue, the volatile imperial sector did not provide life-term or hereditary security for offices and contacts. However, the absence of institutional security was not limited to offices and contacts. The Ottoman order did not provide security for property or life for both office and contract holders. According to conventions that endured since the reforms of Mehmed II (r. 1451-81), members of the administrative and military elite were considered servants (kuls) of the sultan and were stripped of private rights vis-à-vis the sultan. This meant that an Ottoman sovereign could confiscate the wealth of an officeholder during his life or after his death. The Ottomans called this confiscation process müsadere or mirice/miri için zabt namely seizure by the

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137 Tayyar of Canik, during his long exile in Russia, set up relations with the Russian courts and met Tsar Alexander, returning to the Ottoman lands with the request of Alexander to the Ottoman Sultan BOA: HAT 53809 (A memorandum submitted to Mustafa IV concerning the meeting of Tayyar Pasha with the Russian Emperor, 1222/ca. February 1807).
138 Fleming, The Muslim Bonaparte, 70-178; Auguste Boppe, L’Albanie et Napoléon (1797-1814).
139 Hughes, Travels in Sicily, Greece & Albania, 183.
140 Miller, Mustapha Pacha Bairaktar, 268-77.
public authority. More dramatically, the sultan could execute these officeholders without judicial process. Most of the time, a generic legal opinion (fetva) from the grand mufti would provide adequate legal and religious legitimization. In Ottoman terminology, such executions were known as siyaseten katl, which could be translated as political or sultanic (or non-Sharia) executions. Hundreds of high-ranking officeholders, from grand-viziers to provincial governors, and many more low-ranking bureaucrats, tax collectors, and members of the Janissary and cavalry armies, were executed and their wealth sequestered by the Ottoman state.\textsuperscript{141}

Imperial executions and confiscations were conventions that only applied to servants of the sultan and the state, namely office-holding administrative and military elites. Members of the learned hierarchy (ulema) and civilian subjects were traditionally exempted from such executions and confiscations. These conventions represented the symbolic absolute power of the sultanic authority over members of the Ottoman state, rather than rules to be applied on every occasion. Often the center used this prerogative as an instrument for negotiating with wealthy office-holders. The threat of executions and confiscations boosted the influence of the central authority over agents of the state. Executions were more common during political crisis, civil strife, and military defeat. We see an upsurge in confiscations during fiscal crises and fewer confiscations as the state’s revenues grew. Between 1770 and 1820, as a result of fiscal and political crisis, these practices intensified. By the end of the eighteenth century, according to a new formulation, anyone who accumulated wealth as a result of public matters (serveti beytü’l-maldan olmağla), regardless of the nature of the office or contract, qualified for imperial seizure. The center asked the office-holders and notables to report the affluent people (eshab-i servet ve yesar), who passed away, for consideration for seizure.\textsuperscript{142} This new configuration increased the risks for provincial actors operating in the administrative and fiscal sectors at the same time offered new opportunities.\textsuperscript{143}

Although seizure of provincial wealth was a great source of income for the treasury, it was difficult, costly, and even risky to confiscate a local power-holder’s property, even after his death. Since these individuals were profoundly entrenched in their local worlds, local groups and households of deceased persons often resisted confiscation.\textsuperscript{144} Sometimes, resistance took the form of skirmishes between provincial forces and imperial agents. In different cases, the family members buried cash and valuables in different spots to hide from the authorities.\textsuperscript{145} The central government often lacked sufficient information about the deceased


\textsuperscript{142} BOA: CML 6959.

\textsuperscript{143} Yaycıoğlu, “Wealth, Power and Death.” BOA: C ML 5068; BOA: C ADL 5445; BOA: C ML 6959; BOA HAT 53309; BOA C ADL 3041; BOA: C ML 9301

\textsuperscript{144} When Mehmed Pasha of Azm died in 1784, Osman Agha, a confiscator sent by the center to Damascus brought a large military regiment of 600 troops to possible resistance from the family or people of Damascus. After the confiscation, the heirs of Mehmed Pasha came to Istanbul to renegotiate the confiscation process and offered new deals to acquire it back. Ahmed Vâsif Efendi, \textit{Mehâsinü’l-âsâr ve hakâikü’l-ahhâr}, 43 -4, 136-37.

\textsuperscript{145} When Halil Agha, the overseer of Yeni Zağra, a town in Ottoman Bulgaria, was executed in 1796, his property was confiscated by the state. However, it was reported that his family concealed his movable properties, including good amount of gold, in the houses of his wives. BOA: C ML 3125.
person’s debts and receivables. Settlement processes for debts and receivables could take months or years and were not only long and complicated but also costly. Some individuals indebted to the deceased simply disappeared. Others showed up in court with fabricated documents alleging that they had claims on the inheritance. In such cases, the central authority preferred to avoid tension and complications and made a transfer to one of the deceased’s heirs if the deceased’s family was willing to “buy” the inheritance from the state by offering redemptions such as new services. These offers to the central state as compensation were a type of inheritance tax. These deals, while allowing the central government to avoid the hassle of the confiscation process, enabled several families to maintain their wealth and status for generations.

However, there was always a possibility that third parties would offer a better deal to seize property in the name of the state. These power-holders, who acted as confiscation entrepreneurs, developed expertise concerning confiscations and information techniques. They employed fiscal experts, who were able to prepare intricate paperwork for complex accounting settlements. Some sent spies and agents, like the central state, to learn about elderly and wealthy individuals who might soon pass away, so they could propose that the state confiscate their property. Others used this confiscation right as a political strategy to suppress or eliminate competing families. The state preferred to transfer confiscation rights to these individuals and avoid involvement in local conflicts, minimizing the cost and receiving compensation in advance. Through these transfers, the state also avoided the risk of dealing with the inheritance, particularly in cases when the deceased had more debts than receivables. In fact, for confiscation-entrepreneurs to acquire confiscation rights was also to engage in risk analysis. Before confiscation, it was not easy to anticipate the particular amount that would be seized and the value of receivables and debt in this person’s budget. Only after settlement in court where debtors, creditors, and other parties were present, did the details of the accounts become clear. In any case, for the state, to transfer a wealth to a third person, by granting him the confiscation right, in return of compensation (muhallefat bedeli), was a strategy to maintain order in the provinces through wealth transfer, as well as to minimize the risk and transaction cost. As a result of this policy, intricate negotiations took place between the state and individuals who made offers for wealth of deceased.

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146 In 1807, Ali Ioannina asked the state to allow him to buy the inheritance of a certain Tahir Pasha. Ali had joined the war against Russia and he implied that this inheritance would help to finance his expenditures in the war. It was recommended to Selim to leave the inheritance to Ali Pasha. Sultan Selim refused: "How can we allow him to capture this inheritance, when its value has not been substantiated yet." BOA: HAT 56308.

147 In the summer of 1793, when the intendant (voyvoda) of Bayndır, Westmer Anatolia, Karayalanoğlu Mehmed Agha died, the family proposed 20,000 guruş to the Porte in return for the inheritance. The central government asked Karaosmanoğlu, a leading power-holder of the region, to send a report about the real value of the inheritance. After a report by Karaosmanoğlu Mehmed, the state accepted the proposal. BOA: C ML 3108.

148 When Ismail of Ruse died, Mustafa Bayraktar proposed a value of 800 kise (400,000 guruş) for Ismail’s property. However, the head of the customs of Ruse, Hasan Ağa, wrote a report and informed the central administration that the value of the inheritance should not be less than 1000 kise (500,000 guruş). In fact, he proposed that some portion of this amount should be granted to him, to refund earlier purchases that he had made on behalf of the treasury. The case was submitted to Sultan Selim III, who wrote that "As it was proposed, the value of inheritance was to be established at 800 kise. 500 kise shall be taken in cash and paid for the [immediate military] expenditures. The remaining 300 kise (150,000 guruş) is to be granted to the chief of the customs, and this amount shall be counted in exchange for his demand from the Porte." Eventually, Istanbul accepted the proposal of Mustafa and left the property of Ismail in his hold. A few of months later, Mustafa was appointed as the commander of the Danubian army. He re-negotiated the payment plans. As a result, the Porte
Confiscation of Jazzar Ahmad Pasha’s Inheritance

One of the most contentious confiscation processes during this period began in 1804, following the death of Jazzar Ahmad Pasha, who served as governor of Sidon for more than twenty years. Jazzar’s immense inheritance spread from Damascus to Beirut and from Jerusalem to Gaza. So many individuals and communities were involved in the inheritance settlement because Jazzar held hundreds of revenue units in his zone. He was also involved in debt and credit relations with communities and individuals during his long tenure. The Ottoman central government showed interest in Jazzar’s immense wealth prior to his death. In fact, in 1796, rumors about his health created anxiety in Istanbul and among other power-holders in the region, who were interested in seizing his property on behalf of the sultan. When Jazzar appeared, declaring that he did not die, the center apologized and stopped the investigation into his wealth. Jazzar was well acquainted with the confiscation process. He was actively involved in seizing the inheritances of three major figures: Zahid al-Umar of Galilee, Ali al-Kabir of Egypt, and Muhammad al-‘Azm of Damascus. Jazzar’s contract as confiscator helped him accumulate wealth.

When Jazzar died in 1804, Süleyman, one of Jazzar’s close associates, was appointed governor of Sidon. But the central government was neither willing to sell the patrimony to Süleyman nor entrust him with the confiscation process. The fiscal administration wanted to transfer the entire inheritance to the central treasury. Ragıb of Damascus, a fiscal bureaucrat, was chosen as an expert to settle the inheritance. For months, Ragib examined documents, consulted Jazzar’s moneylenders, and met individuals and communities who were debtors or creditors. Eventually, Ragib sent a detailed report to Istanbul. But when the settlement process began, the center was unable to seize the receivables. The debtors were not cooperating. Several individuals came to the courts claiming they had already paid their debts to Jazzar during his lifetime. Officers sent from the center did not have adequate information about local transactions or the capacity to settle intricate debt and receivable claims.

Ragıb’s mission to confiscate Jazzar’s immense wealth was a legendary episode. According to a popular story, circulating in Istanbul in these days, after he was appointed as a confiscator, he tried to find Jazzar’s buried treasures with magic and talisman. He also brought tens of experienced sappers and dredgers from Istanbul to Palestine. However, the result was disappointing. Ragib failed to uncover the immense wealth supposedly buried in various localities in Acre and Sidon. After he failed to unearth the wealth, people ridiculed him by changing his name from Ragıb al-Shami/Damascene to Ragib al-Maghribi/North African the Treasure Hunter (define-güşa), referring to the stereotype that the North Africans were notorious with their unsuccessful adventures of treasure hunting.

One problem was that Süleyman and Ragib disagreed over the items listed in the inheritance. As the new governor of Sidon and a former man of Jazzar, Süleyman still controlled most of

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149 Cohen, Palestine in the 18th Century, 53-77; Philipp, Acre, 136-68; Akarlı, “Provincial Power-Magnates in Ottoman Bilad al-Sham and Egypt, 1740-1840,”47-50; Güler, Cezar Ahmed Paşa.

150 BOA: AS 11391-1.

151 Danacı-Yıldız, Asiler ve Gaziler, 65, 128.
his master’s wealth. Ragib, however, intended to maximize the items he could substantiate, not only because this would increase his commission but also because he was ordered to. Eventually, the center was able to confiscate only a small portion of the list prepared by Ragib. Meanwhile, several individuals showed up in Acre and Istanbul for their receivables from the inheritance. Not only did the locals ask for their receivables, but the British merchant Richard George claimed that he had loaned Jazzar a substantial amount during the construction of the fortress of Acre during the French attack. George submitted deeds. Ottoman subjects, foreign merchants, and moneylenders also lined up before the Ottoman fiscal administration with different claims over the inheritance. Meanwhile, constant rumors about Jazzar’s uncovered wealth reached Istanbul. The Treasury sent new experts to prepare new reports. Endless investigations added little to the already confiscated amounts.

The confiscation of Jazzar Pasha’s inheritance was an unsuccessful process on the part of the Ottoman State. The center was able to secure only a little of the reported wealth. However, since bequest was confiscated by the state, the treasury was liable to pay debt to the claimers, who proved their receivables. The fiscal bureaucracy was rigorous in substantiating debt to private individuals. The treasury paid these debts in installments for several decades. We do not know what happened to Jazzar’s accumulated wealth. There was a good chance that the reports were misleading. Or, perhaps, the cash, jewelry, military equipment, and even a number of vessels remained in the hands of Süleyman, Jazzar’s successor.

The political determination of the Ottoman state to confiscate wealth of a dead office and contact holders, as well as competition among notables to seize wealth of their peers, contributed to the volatility of the Ottoman imperial sector. The assumption that wealth of office and contact holders came from their public service, therefore, after they died, the public authority had right to confiscate their property endured until the early nineteenth century. This pushed many families developed strategies to negotiate the endurance of their wealth and status with the central administration. Nevertheless, after each death of a rich person, the heirs of the deceased and the center started negotiations, often with the involvement of the third parties. This insecurity, on the other hand, offered new possibilities for others. Wealth transfer, like office and contract transfer, was significant component of the Ottoman business of governance. Death of a wealthy man was a beginning of new life for another.

CONCLUSION: ORDER OF NOTABLES

I have analyzed different aspects and illustrated episodes of how some notable individuals and families in the provinces operated in the Ottoman order. I argued that as a result of military, administrative, and fiscal transformations throughout the eighteenth century, several notable individuals and families, who were not part of the imperial establishment, but were rooted in the provinces, participated in governance and becoming essential components of the imperial apparatus. By the late eighteenth century, the Ottoman state and imperial elites were becoming dependent on the collaboration of these provincials in taxation, policing, management of public services, and drafting soldiers. They were incorporated into the Ottoman state by acquiring offices to collect taxes, managing public deeds, providing order

152 BOA: HAT 4155.
153 Güler, Cezzar Ahmed Paşa, 16-25;
and security, and building local military forces from local men. Some of these offices were short-term, some life-term, and others included limited rights to collecting taxes. Some came with a package of full jurisdiction, a wide range of revenues, and immunity. Governorships and life-term contracts came directly from the sultan/state by appointment or contract. Several ancillary offices were outsourced from absentee primary holders. And, some managerial positions at the district level were gained through nomination, popular consent, and elections in local communities that were approved by the state.

With these diverse offices and contracts, the notables not only consolidated power-bases in the localities; they also accumulated wealth from revenues they extracted from urban and rural units under their jurisdiction. Many were creditors to local communities and private individuals and were actively involved in estate management and commercial agriculture. The wealth they accumulated enabled them to expand their portfolios in the business of governance and commission palace-like residential complexes, fortresses, and public works in their localities. More powerful notables expanded their authority beyond their localities and created regional zones of influence. In these regional zones, they nurtured patron-client relations, partnerships, and alliances with subordinate notables, communities, and networks. Some even established parallel bureaucratic machinery with scribal bureaus specializing in vernacular languages as well as sizable regional armies through recruitment and alliances with local mercenaries.

Although in many regions, individuals and families established themselves through acquiring offices and monopolizing them over long periods, sometimes multiple generations, the Ottoman imperial sector did not provide them with any institutional guarantees. In principle, the state did not recognize any hereditary rights over the offices. The Sultan could dismiss any office-holder and revoke any contract. Even life-term contracts could be cancelled if a third party came up with a more favorable deal for the state. Furthermore, according to old imperial conventions, after the office-holder’s death, the sultanic authority could confiscate his wealth. In extreme cases, the sultan could execute an office-holder without judicial process. Under this volatile institutional order, without formal guarantees of office, wealth, and life, power-holders and the state were constantly engaged in negotiations. The state sought to benefit power-holders as servants who rendered services and loyalty. It also developed strategies to prevent them from gaining too much power in their local bases, which could challenge the central government by tacitly or implicitly threatening them with elimination. In return, power-holders developed strategies to acquire offices, retain them, expand, and transfer to the next generation power and wealth that were consolidated in the business of governance. The state formally or informally offered deals, and power-holders constantly negotiated these offers, made acceptations or rejections, or extended counteroffers. After the death of the office-holder, negotiations often started anew. These negotiations were open to third parties who interfered with the bids. In severe cases, negotiations included threats from the state and rebellions from the side of the power-holders. In this volatile imperial sector the provincial power-holders acted neither as hereditary nobility nor bureaucrats, but as fiscal, military, and political entrepreneurs and active risk takers.

In this volatile order games did not take place between the state and provincial power-holders as two monolithic blocks. There were always competitions and coalitions within the central state and provinces. These divisions also fostered alliances between certain factions in the
center and in the provinces. Communities often participated in these games with collective petitions that supported or protested the power-holders or central government. At the higher levels, foreign actors interfered in the Ottoman political theater, explicitly or implicitly collaborating with power-holders and factions in the center. These activities intensified in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the Ottoman center and various provinces were polarized between the New Order – with its agenda of fiscal and military reform – and public opposition led by the Janissaries. This was also a period of war and shifting coalitions between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, Austria, France, and England.

Competition, struggle, and insecurity were the main characteristics of the Ottoman order, but so was collaboration and the process of forging alliances, and trust. What were the possibilities and limits for a broader and trans-regional elite alliance, bridging various actors from the center and the provinces, to foster a more stable order? In Violence and Social Order, North, Wallis, and Weingast argue that when competing elites agreed that it was in their collective interest not to compete but to collaborate, they could create incentives to establish coalitions and recognize each other’s privileges, including statuses and property rights. Such a coalition would create access to resources for elites and political and institutional stability. There were various reasons that such a coalition to transform the imperial order was difficult to achieve in the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. First, the Ottoman system did not provide institutional possibilities for power-holders to communicate and deliberate with each other, similar to diets or assemblies. In the vast imperial geography of the Empire, most deliberations between actors or between power-holders and the central government in Istanbul took place on a regional scale, not across the Empire. Second, this volatile system, while challenging the established power-holders, who tried to keep their status and wealth, provided new opportunities for the start-ups. Especially during the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries, when political and economic instability dramatically increased with wars, unrest, and fiscal crisis, new actors, who entered the business of governance found new venues to consolidate power and wealth at the expense of old practices. Confiscations, in particular, provided a favorable environment for these start-ups, who often found opportunities to seize status and wealth from the deceased. Instability fostered social mobility.

The third obstacle to a larger elite coalition was the persistence of Ottoman political theory, which categorically rejected the idea that provincial magnates were legitimate actors with whom the sultan and grandees of the state could establish a mutually beneficial alliance and partnership. Although the Ottoman state constantly negotiated and built horizontal ties with the power-holders, formally the center did not recognize them as actors with the capacity to deliberate on institutional grounds. Despite real circumstances, those in the business of governance were formally servants of the sultan and state. Returning to the document at the beginning of the chapter, Mahmud II was advised to write informal requests to power-holders in addition to formal orders, asking for financial support. There was a discrepancy between the formal and informal empires. Even if the Ottoman state did not have the power to enforce the formal empire based on vertically and hierarchically ranked servants who were fully and unconditionally loyal to the sultan, there were no political or ideological conditions to change this formal order and institutionalize a new one. This was why the sultanic claim of

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154 Violence and Social Order, 251-272.
confiscations and executions was not revoked until the 1830s, although they were hardly applied in every case.

For many members of the Ottoman establishment, the consolidation of power-holders in their regions for long terms was just a temporary reality during a time of crisis. Şanizade Ataullah, an Ottoman historian and intellectual, summarized this view in the official chronicle he wrote during the early reign of Mahmud II. According to Şanizade, provincial magnates consolidated power “by seizing the public lands, killing men, confiscating property, collecting private armies and unlawfully grasping and occupying a piece of land of the Sublime State.” After drawing an analogy between Ottoman provincial magnates and taifas, namely the independent Muslim principalities in Medieval Iberia, Şanizade argued that recognizing these provincial power-holders as legitimate dynasties would act as though “they were the partners (teşrik) of the decisions and laws of the Ottoman sultan,” the only legitimate authority with the will of the Muslim people. Şanizade categorically rejected the institutional possibility of partnership with regional power-holders and the state, by granting them hereditary rights over their offices, wealth, and status. Despite these obstacles and resistance, as we will see in Chapter Three, such an alliance was almost achieved in September and October 1808, during a political vortex that shook the entire Empire, when Mustafa Bayraktar and his allied New Orderists successfully led a coup in Istanbul, summoned the chiefs of notable families to Istanbul for an imperial assembly, and initiated an imperial settlement for a new imperial order. We will see how this effort would collapse.

155 Şanizade Tarihi, vol. 1, 74-5.