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### **SITTING TOGETHER: LOCAL COUNCILS OF VIDIN COUNTY AS DOMAINS OF HYBRIDIZATION (1864-1877)**

This paper takes the nineteenth-century Ottoman administrative unit of county (*liva*) as its focus. Moving from a general analysis of its structure, to a specific analysis of the local institutions within Vidin County, I examine the politics of administering a county.<sup>2</sup> Local administration constitutes a set of practices where local agents and appointed officials negotiate within a set of bureaucratic roles, defined in idealized forms through rules and regulations issued by a central government. Analyzing the interaction of local agents with the administrative and judiciary institutions of the modern Ottoman state is interesting to me for three reasons: first by situating the local notability within the administrative structure, it helps me reveal the political nature of local administration. Second, it allows us to question the supposed separation of the “administrative” and “judiciary” spheres of the modern state on one hand, and “state” and “society” on the other. Third, by focusing on the agencies of local notability, it brings to fore the aspects of local administration that transcend narratives of “national formation.” Vidin’s local administrative council and its practices, in the period analyzed in this study, constitute a hybrid platform for Ottoman governmentality. Agents with different institutional roles (such as state appointed officials or local notables) or national

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2 I would like to thank people at the Center for Advance Study in Sofia, particularly to the organizers and the wonderful participants of the Roles, Identities and Hybrids Project for supporting this research and providing a stimulating environment for discussion. I am thankful to the staff of the Oriental Section at St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library – Margarita Dobрева, Zorka Ivanova, Rumen Kovachev, and Evgeni Radushev. Milena Methodieva, her wonderful grandmother Radka Stamatova Lavchieva, and Zülfer Finkova helped me find my way around in Vidin; I am grateful for that. For questions and comments please contact: msaracog@bloomu.edu See İslamoğlu (2004b), 277, where she points out that “separation of administration from the local or the political detracts from the understanding of the political processes which characterize the legal and administrative constitutions of social reality.”

“identities”<sup>3</sup> (Bulgarian or Turkish) engage in hegemonic negotiations within this platform.

In the first two sections, I present an outline of the structure of the county. My primary sources for this are the provincial regulations of 1864 and 1871. The third section uses these regulations to focus on two particular institutions: the county administrative council [*liva idare meclisi*] and the council of appeals and crime [*meclis-i temyiz-i hukuk ve cinayet*]. Following this introduction I engage into a theoretical discussion, in the fourth section, about how the political nature of these councils relate to their reports to the higher administrative center in Ruse. In the remaining two sections of the paper, I analyze the ways in which the local notability participated in the writing of these reports. There were two essential steps – or components – of this participation: election to the councils and attendance in their meetings. In delineating the politics behind this ambiguous process of participation, I rely mostly on the official yearbooks and copy registries of the administrative council. The election lists on these sources and other Bulgarian sources give insight about the important figures of local administration in Vidin county. Some orthographic elements of the copy registry, including the ways, in which the seals of these individuals were applied, inform us about the attendance patterns of the local notability in the processes of decision-making and report-drafting.

### ***“The Many Parts of the Imperial Dominions:”***

#### ***The County as an Administrative Unit***

A regulation of November 7, 1864, defined counties as administrative units that formed the basis for a new provincial division.<sup>4</sup> This regulation divided the empire into provinces, which were then “divided into counties [*livalara*], including the county [*sancak*] that is the administrative center, [and] in every county there will be an administration of a subgovernor [*mutasarrıf*]; and the principal city will be the seat of authority.”<sup>5</sup> In a similar manner, villages formed districts and districts formed counties.<sup>6</sup> While Ottoman Europe had ten provinces and 44 counties, the whole empire had 27 provinces and 123 counties.<sup>7</sup> With seven counties (Ruse [the administrative center], Vidin, Varna, Tulcha, Sofia, Turnovo, and Nish), the Danube Province had more than

3 For a discussion of the problematic nature of this term see Brubaker and Copper (2000).

4 The regulation of 1864 is titled “*Teşkilat-ı Vilayet Nizamnamesi*” and it was published in the first volume of *Düstur* in 1872-3 [1289]. See *Düstur: I. Tertib* (1872-3), 608-24.

5 *Ibid.*, 608. The terms *liva* and *sancak* refer to the same administrative unit and were used interchangeably.

6 In the cities and towns, 50 houses constituted a neighborhood, which had the same status of a village in this administrative hierarchy of settlements.

7 Çadırcı (1997), 251; Ortaylı (2000), 63.

the average 4.5 counties per province.<sup>8</sup>

This was not the only dissimilar thing about the Danube Province. It was the first one to be established; and the regulation of 1864 was almost a verbatim copy of the unique regulation that was drafted for this province a month earlier.<sup>9</sup> The model, prepared primarily by the efforts of Midhat Paşa, had certain parallels with the French provincial administrative system,<sup>10</sup> and emphasized, a separation of administrative, judiciary and commercial aspects of governance. Different councils staffed with local representatives in addition to those appointed by the state were to handle administrative, judiciary and commercial issues relatively independent from each other. Arguably, the model fit into the general efforts of the modern Ottoman state to limit the power potential of the local notables and Shar‘i judges by use of a newly emergent structured bureaucracy, regulations, and a codified legal system.

In a little more than six years, in 1871, a new regulation “annulled” the 1864 regulation without necessarily altering the institutional framework altogether. Elaborately specifying each administrative division’s power potential and responsibilities,<sup>11</sup> the new regulation emphasized the separation of the judicial institutions from the administrative ones and focused mostly on the administrative sphere of the existing system.<sup>12</sup>

These regulations shaped not only the administrative structure but also the geographical boundaries of Vidin county. When established by the regulation of 1864 as a county, Vidin served as the administrative center for the districts of ‘Adliye (modern-day Kula), Belgradcık (Belogradchik), Berkofça (Berkovitsa), İvraca (Vratsa), Rahova (Oryhaovo), and Lom (Lom); and within these districts there were 461 villages.<sup>13</sup> Prior to 1864, Vidin county encompassed

8 Teplov (1877), 3.

9 Şentürk dates the regulation for the Danube province October 13, 1864, based on the date of the imperial decree that announced the regulation (State Ottoman Archives, Istanbul [from now on cited as BOA], *İ. MM*, no 1245). There is a transliterated copy of both regulations—for the Danube province and for the whole empire—in Şentürk (1992), 253-71. The differences, with one notable point regarding the number of elected members, are stylistic, such as changing “this province” to “all provinces.” I discuss the issue regarding the number of elected members below.

10 Todorova (1993), 115; Şentürk (1992), 170. His successful governorship in the troubled province of Nish during the years 1861-1863 entitled Midhat Paşa to more than his second imperial decoration. The administration model he devised in the course of his service set the blueprint for the provincial regulation of 1864 and he was designated as the first governor of the first province, the Danube province.

11 *Düstur: I. Tertib* (1872-3), 625-51.

12 In the regulation of 1864 the administration of the counties is explained in two sections titled “civil affairs” and “legal affairs.” This separation-by-affairs changed into separation-by-personnel by 1871. The attempt to separate the legal sphere from the administrative one is noticeable at the very beginning of the text. It is made clear that the new regulation “does not focus on the administration of the state courts [*mehakim-i nizamiye*] but determines only the duties of executive clerks, administrative councils, municipal and regional councils because a special regulation has been issued and established for the courts of order,” *Ibid.*, 625.

13 St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library, Sofia, Oriental Section (from now on cited as [NBKM]), VD 93-36, VD 96-44.

a wider area extending further east along the Danube.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the new administrative division's geographic limitation did allow for better supervision; yet it would be difficult to argue that it meant more powers for the sub-governor. The power potential of sub-governors was restricted by the regulations of 1864 and 1871 as they were clearly made subordinate to the governors [*vali*] appointed from the imperial center.

The lion's share of articles in the 1871 regulation regulates the affairs and the staff of the highest administrative division—the province. Articles 35 and 36 of the 1871 regulation explain the duties of the sub-governors as follows:

**Article 35:** The county sub-governors are responsible for the administration of the civil, financial, and constabulary affairs, and for the proper application of criminal and civil laws. They share responsibility with the governors for the parts of the administrative duties that are defined in Part Two as pertaining to the county administration. Also among the requirements of the duties of the sub-governors are the determination, subject to the governor's approval, of the meeting times of the district councils; and the granting of permission for the execution, among the decisions of that council, of the important matters, which require approval requested through the district head officials (*ka'imakam*), and implementation according to [the instructions] obtained from the province level, and of the [other] matters that pertain to the general regulations and to county administration, [which can be implemented] with the decision of the county administrative council.

**Article 36:** The county sub-governors will not only apply the orders and instructions they receive from the governor but also oversee the course of [the application] of the laws and the overall behavior of the officials in the county; whenever anyone acts contrary to law and regulation, they will report to the governor their observations on the degree of the problem and its remedy; likewise, they will continually report to the governor their investigations and inspections concerning public works and those of the governor's duties that pertain to the administration of the county.<sup>15</sup>

The above two articles pertaining to the county sub-governors explicate the limitations on the power potential of sub-governors at the county level. The County, as a provincial unit, did not have much independence in its civil, executive, or legislative affairs. Sub-governors were responsible for making sure that the general principles of administration defined for the province were held effective at the county level. They “shared the responsibility of the governor” at the county level and “reported back to him” if there was anything wrong. Only the regular tasks—required to achieve/maintain those predetermined goals—could be done at the discretion of the sub-governor and *that* had to happen “with the required decision of the county administrative council.”<sup>16</sup>

14 Çakır (2001), 246.

15 *Düstur: I. Tertib* (1872-3), 634.

16 The permission to perform only the less significant tasks and the obligation to report anything that was of importance was not unique to the sub-governors. The governors had to perform in

In theory, the councils and the strictly rank ordered local administrators were checks and balances for the modern Ottoman bureaucratic order.

### ***Councils: Structure, Purposes and Limits***

One of the biggest novelties introduced by the provincial regulations of 1864 and 1871 was the system of administrative councils and councils of appeals and crime. Among other things, these councils served as means to limit accumulation of administrative power in the hands of a single administrator—a governor, a sub-governor, or the district head official. The sub-governors chaired the county administrative councils; the appointed members were the judge of the Shar‘i court (*hakim al-şer‘*), the religious leader(s) of the region (*müfti-i belde* for the Muslims and *re‘is-i ruhani* for the non-Muslims), the accountant (*muhasebeci*), and the director of correspondence (*müdür-i tah-rirat*). Complementing these appointed members were an equal number of “elected” ones (*a‘za*)—two Muslim and two non-Muslim.<sup>17</sup> The council of appeals and crime, on the other hand, was chaired by the judge of the Shar‘i court and had six elected members. The composition of these county councils mirrored the composition at the provinces.

The provincial regulation of the Danube Province, issued a month earlier than the 1864 regulation,<sup>18</sup> had the same number of appointed members for the county administrative councils. Curiously, however, in this earlier prototype, there were six “elected” members—three Muslims and non-Muslims—from the region as opposed to four. The elected members, representing the local interests, constituted the majority in this prototypical body—with a ratio of six to four plus the religious leaders. The regulation of 1864 eliminated this advantage by changing the ratio four to four plus the religious leaders.<sup>19</sup> Typically, the majority ruled in these councils. This play in numbers significantly challenged the power potential of the elected members in the decision making process against the appointed members representing the Ottoman state. The number of elected members in the council of appeals and crime,

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such ambiguous limitations as well. In such unclear terms, the regulation is far from defining a standard of relationship between a higher and lower rank administrator at the provinces. A risk-averse lower-rank administrator might report more than a risk-taker one; or a stricter higher-rank administrator might ask for more say in lower-level provincial affairs.

17 The specifics of this “election” process are discussed below.

18 Şentürk (1992), 168.

19 Ibid., 259. The same happened at the provincial administrative councils as well. It is difficult to include the local religious leaders in either of these groups. Their composition and patterns of tenure varied from one county to another, reflecting local religious composition. There were complaints that not all religious groups were equally represented in these councils: Ortaylı (2000), 75. Even when they were all included, we have very limited information on how influential they were in the decision-making process. In Vidin, for example, the Metropolitan did not participate in all the meetings.

however, remained at six until 1873, and was reduced to four after that. Such was the structural composition of these councils. What were their officially defined duties?

Article 34 of the 1864 regulation explains the scope of responsibilities of the administrative council as follows:

The administrative council will be in charge of affairs pertaining to the applications of civil, and financial, and public security, and educational, and public works, and down payment and title deed, and agricultural matters; and will not interfere with legal affairs...<sup>20</sup>

Article 37 defines the judge as judicial authority on the secular and Shar‘i courts.<sup>21</sup> The duty of the council of appeals and crime as a “secular” institution is explained in Article 40:

This council of appeals is charged with the investigation, hearing, and supervising of suits that can be separated and identified as legal (*kanuni*) and regulatory (*nizami*) cases apart from [the following]: first, the particular cases that pertain to Muslims and thus need to be heard in Shar‘i courts and likewise cases that pertain to non-Muslims and are heard in their spiritual administrations; and second, issues that relate only to commercial affairs and are heard at the council of commerce.<sup>22</sup>

It is worth noting that the judge of the county in this regulation is referred to as *hakim*; whereas in the provincial regulation of the Danube province another term is used: judge of the Islamic cannon law, *kadı*. This shift in terminology parallels the imperial attempt to secularize the judicial process.<sup>23</sup> Also noticeable is the distinction the regulation of 1864 makes between commercial suits and the civil and criminal ones. The commercial code served as a blueprint for the reorganization of the legal system along the secular lines prior to the 1864 regulation.<sup>24</sup> Although article 40 does not specify what constitutes “the particular cases that pertain to Muslims and thus need to be heard in Shar‘i courts and likewise cases that pertain to non-Muslims and are heard by their spiritual administrations,” several cases of conversion to Islam recorded in the registries of the Vidin Administrative Council indicate that even such religious cases fell under the authority of these new councils.

In addition to handling some local administrative tasks, the administrative

20 *Düstur: I. Tertib* (1872-3), 614.

21 *Ibid*, 615.

22 *Ibid*, 616.

23 For a very good account of this transformation see Akiba (2005).

24 See the report of the commission engaged in drawing up the Ottoman civil code, *Mecelle* to the grand vizier in March 10<sup>th</sup> 1869 in Grigsby (1895), i-x. Cf. Cevdet Paşa’s undated manuscript “Duties of the Legal Branch of the Court of Appeals”—most likely written shortly after 10 February 1869 following the publication of the internal regulation of the Imperial Civil Court [*Divân-ı Ahkâm-ı Adliye*]. The manuscript is located at the Atatürk Kitaplığı at İstanbul (Muallim Cevdet Yazmaları O.0006). See also Demirel (2003), 22 and passim; and Bingöl (2004), 110-44.

council and council of appeals and crime served as mediators in transferring a local issue or a dispute to the imperial center. Land disputes, issues pertaining to taxation and administration, and criminal cases were within the jurisdiction of these two councils. Through a chain of such councils at different administrative levels, civil cases were separated from criminal ones: the administrative councils in the provinces, counties, and districts focused on civil cases, and the councils of appeals and crime dealt with criminal cases. A similar two-council structure was formed at the district level. District administrative councils (*idare meclisi*) and councils of litigation (*deavi meclisi*) were supposed to make a report on and transfer “cases of significance” and appeals to the relevant councils at the county level. Likewise, the councils at the county level would transfer the cases to the provincial center and from there to İstanbul.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Elections: A Mechanism Designed for Change***

The complicated election process in these councils allowed the necessary space for the local politics of administration. The term “elected” for council members is somewhat problematic because the election was a two-stage process, in which candidacy depended on nomination by a special committee. The 1864 regulation defines the initial election of the four members of the county administrative council.<sup>26</sup> The appointed members of the council—the judge of the shari‘ court, the religious leader(s), the accountant, and the director of correspondence—constituted the nominating committee (*meclis-i tefrik*) for the elected members of the council. At least for Vidin County, the members of this committee, and hence the appointed members of the administrative council, were from the region. Local knowledge and experience were valued for positions such as director of correspondence.<sup>27</sup> The nominating committee selected three times the number of appointed members as candidates for election (3x4 = 12). Theoretically, in these nominations, maintaining

25 What constitutes “cases of significance” here seems to be ambiguous. Cevdet Paşa notes, for example, that local councils of commerce were not allowed to reach a final decision on cases above 5000 piasters (see his “Duties of the Legal Branch of the Court of Appeals”). Cf. Bingöl (2002), 15. Bingöl notes that district litigation councils could reach a final decision on cases that involves imprisonment up to a month, and the councils of appeals and crime at the counties could finalize a penalty decision up to a year. Anything above that would have to be referred to the appropriate councils at the provincial center or at İstanbul. From 1864 to 1868 cases coming from these local councils to İstanbul were sent to different departments of the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Meclis-i Vala-yı Ahkam-ı Adliye*). On the structure of the Supreme Council see Seyitdanlıoğlu (1999). In 1868, the Supreme Council was divided into two: Council of State (*Şura-yı Devlet*) and Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Divân-ı Ahkâm-ı Adliye*).

26 *Düstur: I. Tertib* (1872-3), 622-23.

27 “Local” here refers not strictly to Vidin County but to the Danube province as a whole. All the appointed clerks that appeared in the registry of Vidin county in 1871, including those who were appointed at the district level, were from the Danube province ([NBKM] VD 107-16).

a fifty-fifty ratio of Muslims to non-Muslims was important.<sup>28</sup> The names of these twelve candidates were then distributed to all the district administrative councils in the county. Members of each council picked two-thirds of these twelve candidates—i.e. eight members and reported their names to the nominating committee. After receiving the responses from all the districts, the nominating committee determined the four candidates who had received the most votes among the various district administrative councils and sent their names to the sub-governor. The sub-governor then picked two of the names and sent the final list to the governor for approval.<sup>29</sup>

The sub-governor's selection concluded the first election, which determined all four members who were to serve in the first year the council was established. Every year, through the same complicated process, half of the existing members were replaced at the county administrative councils. In these subsequent elections, the initial list sent to the districts contained only six names, as opposed to twelve. The district administrative councils selected four out of these six. The county administrative council then determined the four candidates who had received the most votes among the various district administrative councils. Finally, the sub-governor chose two names out of the four to submit to the province for approval. Re-election of those who completed their terms was permitted.

A member's re-election, however, was not a simple process. He had to be re-listed by the county nominating committee, selected by the district administrative councils, and favored by the sub-governor, who selected the final two council members. Finally, he had to receive the governor's approval. In a county like Vidin, with six districts, even when an ex-member's name appeared on the initial list, the chances of him being chosen as one of the top four at the county level were fairly low. Moreover, he would still need to be selected by the sub-governor and approved by the governor. This complex mechanism made the reelection of council members difficult and threatened the stability of any two-party alliance between the sub-governor and elected members. It limited the power potential of members and sub-governor alike, since the sub-governor could not guarantee that a member he considered an "ally" would be selected by the district administrative councils. Thus, theoretically, one might expect a high level of turnover in the membership of these councils due to the difficulty of remaining an elected member.

Another factor that contributed to change over time in the composition of these councils was the rotation of their appointed members. The 1871 register

28 This ratio depended on the actual composition of the population. In places where there were few or no members of either population, it was not observed.

29 At the province level the final list would have to be approved by İstanbul. Such an elaborate "election" system guaranteed that those who were not desired by the center were not elected at the province level. Yet, at the county level, the imperial government did not have a direct say. İstanbul could influence the "election" process only through the leverage of its governors at the provinces.

of the Vidin County administrative council is replete with reports of clerks within the region being reassigned from one post to another.<sup>30</sup> The frequent replacement of appointed Ottoman officials was partially due to resignations caused by low pay, bad working conditions, and work overload. To make matters worse, an appointed member had to be replaced by someone with experience in a similar post whenever possible. Often, this resulted in the vacation of another post, since those who had the required experience to be appointed member were usually office-holders.

Two examples from the register of the administrative council in Vidin help to clarify how these appointments were determined. The first concerns Osman Efendi, the registrar of title deeds in the district of Lom.<sup>31</sup> He was fired from his position after an investigation into claims that he had been unlawfully asking for money from deed holders. Osman Efendi's continuation in his post was considered "impermissible," and he was replaced by Mahmud Efendi, the land registrar of the district of Vratsa, who seemed to have sufficient ability to fill the post. A certain Mustafa Efendi from Vratsa was hired to replace Mahmud Efendi. All these appointments were made by the county administrative council, and the clerks had to provide a guarantor who would vouch for them.

It is curious that Mustafa Efendi from Vratsa was hired because apparently, he had not served as a registrar anywhere else. A month later the same administrative council refused to allow Hacı İlyas Ağazade Mehmed Bey to replace Yeter Bey, the land registry clerk in the district of Vratsa, who had resigned due to a recent cut in his stipend, on the grounds that the former did not have previous experience. The council was concerned that someone who had not been employed in land registry might throw the survey procedures into disorder. In their report to the Danube Province,<sup>32</sup> the council referred to a decree of the governor and noted that whenever one land registry clerk resigned, someone with knowledge and experience in that capacity should be appointed in his place.<sup>33</sup> The district administrative council in Vratsa reported that no one was available in the district who could replace Yeter Bey and asked the county to dispatch a replacement.

The shifting pattern of employees created a constantly changing body of clerks within Vidin County. Regardless of the seemingly inconsistent attitude of the administrative council toward the appointment of Mustafa Efendi and Hacı İlyas Ağazade Mehmed Bey, these two cases provide valuable insight into

30 This registry ([NBKM] VD 107-16) is a copy of the communication sent from the Vidin administrative council.

31 Report dated 19 Muharram 1288 in (NBKM) VD 107-16.

32 These reports are mostly directed to the administration at the province. Occasionally they might be directed toward the imperial treasury or different military offices but mostly the header reads "To the greater province of Danube." Both reports mentioned in this case were directed to the province.

33 Record 160 in (NBKM) VD 107-16.

the status of clerks in Vidin by early 1870s. In 1871 alone, there were more than fifty cases of shifting appointments due to resignations or expulsions from state service. Most of the resignations are related to insufficient pay, a decrease in salary, or excessive workload. Cases of bribery and resignation suggest a general dissatisfaction on the part of the clerks with demanding working conditions and insufficient pay. This dissatisfaction was matched by a suspicious administration that not only required clerks to provide guarantors for their performance but also insisted that these guarantors be checked and verified as alive and still valid twice every year.<sup>34</sup> This high turnover rate, as discussed below, contributed to the accumulation of power in the hands of select local notables. By shifting their position in the local administrative ranks, certain notables remained a part of the politics of local administration. Before discussing how notables retained their influence, however, I will comment on the nature of the reports written by these councils in order to emphasize the advantages of being affiliated with the councils.

### ***Councils: Conveying or Constituting Local Reality?***

How should we conceptualize the relationship between the reports of these councils and the local events to which they refer? Two cases exemplify the ambiguous nature of the information regarding local social and political realities. In one, a certain Şakir Efendi, claiming to represent the Christians of the district of Rahovo in Vidin, complained about high taxes. “Upon investigation,” it turned out that not only was there no excessive taxation; but Şakir Efendi had not been chosen as community representative. Apparently, Şakir Efendi, using the authority of his former position as state clerk, coerced the inhabitants of the region into signing a petition. Another case concerning Rahovo was brought to the attention of the council in the same month. Upon receiving the news that 200 people took a certain Mustafa from the district prison by force, the council appointed someone “to investigate” the issue. Again, “upon investigation,” no such use of force was found. Apparently a chief clerk who was in dispute with the governor of the district fabricated the story to get Mustafa out of prison.<sup>35</sup> These cases and several similar ones demonstrate how the instability of appointments hindered information-gathering at the local level and thus hindered state-society dialogue.

Instead of accepting the results of these investigations at face value, I propose to question the authority of our source of information. Both cases were “investigated” by a certain Marin Ağa from the region. More important than Marin Ağa’s findings is his institutional role in constituting a “local reality”

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34 Ibid. Record 151.

35 Ibid. Records 154 and 205 respectively.

of Vidin County. Administrators in Vidin, the Danube Province and, eventually, Istanbul, had to rely on the imperfect information gathered by Marin Ağa. This created a vacuum that Marin Ağa, who also served as an “elected” member of the council, filled as the “informant” for Vidin. The reports of the administrative council were located at the very center of this imperfect information system. Despite the administrative council system’s deficiencies, the province and Istanbul were forced to rely on its information.

How should we approach these reports to render the politics beneath them visible? Jack Goody refers to writing as a “technology”<sup>36</sup> that “has a particular kind of internal influence, since it changes not only the way we communicate but the nature of what we communicate, whether to others or to ourselves.”<sup>37</sup> It is with this understanding of writing as a technology that I would like to approach the register of 1871.

The communication from the county administrative council to the provincial administrative center, I argue, is a political domain that can be seen as a technology of modern Ottoman “governmentality,”<sup>38</sup> since it is a procedure aimed at establishing the authority of the Ottoman state over its population. At the same time, this correspondence—reports, petitions, letters and the like sent to the provincial center—served as a means of resistance and negotiation for the local populace since it gave them an opportunity to participate in how social reality was being reconstituted in those documents. It gave the inhabitants the limited means to oppose the Ottoman government even if this required them to become a part of Ottoman governmentality. This practice of report-writing, in other words, serves as the ground for what Anthony Giddens aptly calls the “dialectic of control”:

All strategies employed by superordinate individuals or groups call forth counter-strategies on the part of subordinates. This phenomenon represents what I call the *dialectic of control* in social systems, something that connects back directly to the theme of human agency.... To be an agent is to be able to make a difference to the world, and to be able to make a difference is to have power (where power means transformative capacity). No matter how great the scope or intensity of control superordinates possess, since their power presumes the active compliance of others, those others can bring to bear strategies of their own, and apply specific types of sanctions.<sup>39</sup>

36 Goody uses the term “technology” as defined by the National Academy of Sciences: “codified ways of deliberately manipulating the environment to achieve some material objective.” Goody (2000), 132.

37 Ibid., 136.

38 Foucault gives three interrelated meanings for this term. Here I refer to Foucault’s first definition of the term as “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.” The other two definitions are consistent but not necessarily related to the context of this particular study. See Foucault (1991), 102-03.

39 Giddens (1985), 10-11.

Therefore, the register in which these reports are recorded can be considered as a lens through which to observe how the dialectic of control functioned within Vidin. This can be done by means of three interrelated strategies. By focusing on each strategy, we can delineate the dialectic of control informing the uses of the reports. First, these reports can be used to understand how the councils constructed the social reality of the county of Vidin for the empire.<sup>40</sup> The register included information on the number of people and the taxes for which they were liable. It labeled certain practices “unacceptable” or “unlawful,” certain people as “exempt from taxes,” and certain people as “old” rather than “new” inhabitants. In short, the register was a compilation of reports that constituted a lens which rendered the countryside “visible” (to use James C. Scott’s term)<sup>41</sup> to the gaze of the imperial administration. By endorsing categories used in such reports—such as “title deeds”—the modern Ottoman state was asking the council to perceive the social reality that the council members were to report from a particular angle. People’s “traditional” rights on certain previously communal lands, for example, became “illegal claims” since ownership was now defined in terms of possessing the title deed to a piece of land. Despite the authority of the “superordinate,” the modern Ottoman state, to impose a vocabulary that defined what was “legitimate,” the “subordinate” institutions, the councils, were able to use their authority to determine what to report and how to do so using the particular vocabulary provided by the Ottoman state. This dialectic becomes more apparent in the election process (discussed below).

Second, the reports of the administrative council and the council of appeals and crime provide a vague understanding of the negotiated settlements among the members of the council. It would be naïve to assume that the members of the councils worked in harmony on issues that related to distribution of land to immigrants or to the auctioning of the contracts to provision the armed forces. The difficulty in analyzing this particular dialectic of control, however, is identifying the “subordinate” and “superordinate” parties. I do not have access to the council minutes, which would provide insight into the shifting power balances within these bodies. Recent studies reveal that local notables who held governmental posts were also likely to belong to big families or certain interest groups.<sup>42</sup> The power configuration within the county would have an impact on the ways in which these councils functioned, with alliances and oppositions forming among the members. The discussion of the election results below covers only a single aspect of these shifting power balances, namely, the struggle between the appointed and elected members.

40 I am not assuming that these reports were the only ways in which the imperial center was able to gather information regarding the provinces and the councils. Yet the authority given to these councils in handling and reporting local administrative and judicial cases rendered them *the* main source of information for the empire.

41 Scott (1998).

42 Meeker (2002).

Third, the reports of these councils can show how the local populace incorporated and utilized the language of the modern Ottoman state in order to achieve their goals. For ordinary townsmen, these councils represented an authority whose object was “men as a population in relation to the state.” As an institution, the council served as an apparatus for what Foucault refers to as “marginalistic integration of individuals in the state’s utility.”<sup>43</sup> By submitting their complaint letters to the councils, the inhabitants of Vidin County were agreeing to identify themselves as “individuals,” that is, as part of a social entity defined in relation to the modern Ottoman state. The presence of the council as an institution that organized and classified people and their possessions according to their potential benefit or harm to the state also forced the people to use similar terms in defining themselves and others in their communications with the councils.

Nonetheless, considering the council and its reports only as technologies of “governmentality” does not do justice to the situation in Vidin County in the second half of the nineteenth century. They also need to be viewed as a means of resistance to and negotiation over the way in which social reality was being constituted. My argument on this second conceptualization is based on works by Huricihan İslamoğlu<sup>44</sup> and Michael Meeker.<sup>45</sup> In different works, these scholars argue that the modern state did not have an absolute power over its populations. İslamoğlu argues that the “Foucauldian perspective, while transcending the liberal separation of state and society, in reducing the state to its governmental practices, abstracts these practices from the context of power relations in which they are exercised.”<sup>46</sup> Instead, she suggests utilizing a “constitutivist perspective” within which administrative orderings—and law—are conceptualized as hegemonic processes that are dynamic and reflective of the struggles of different groups. She calls for a more detailed analysis of the processes that generate the modern state. The state, in İslamoğlu’s argument,

represents a hegemonic environment where a dominant group or groups seek to reconcile and mediate multiple interests, in the process eliminating some and including others. Hegemony, or state power, refers to those abilities of the dominant group or groups to affect the power configurations that would enable orderings of social reality (including property relations, which are responsible for allocation of resources) to achieve defined objectives.<sup>47</sup>

43 Foucault (2000), 409. Foucault focuses on the “police,” broadly construed, and emphasizes that by the end of the eighteenth century “the aim of the police is the permanently increasing production of something new, which is supposed to foster the citizens’ life and the state’s strength. ... The true object of the police becomes ... the population; or, in other words, the state has essentially to take care of men as a population ... and its politics, therefore, has to be a biopolitics”: Foucault (2000), 415-16.

44 İslamoğlu (2004a), and İslamoğlu (2004b).

45 Meeker (2002).

46 İslamoğlu (2004a), 10.

47 İslamoğlu (2004b), 278. Cf. Chatterjee (1993), 12-13; Duara (1995), 65-69; Mallon (1995), 65; and particularly Gramsci (1971), 52-53; where he notes that “among the subaltern groups, one will

Such a dynamic and negotiational conceptualization of the state as a hegemonic environment allows room for other actors to interfere with and challenge the “governmentality” of the Ottoman Empire at different levels. This conceptualization invites us to analyze the dynamic politics of what Foucault referred to as a “very specific albeit complex form of power.”<sup>48</sup>

Michael Meeker’s elaborate analysis of the town of Of in the eastern Black Sea coast focuses on this negotiational coexistence of state and society at the local level. Meeker defines how “a single government of state officials and local elites” in the district of Of began to take shape in the course of eighteenth century:

The rise of local elites in the coastal districts of the province of Trabzon came about through the appropriation and adaptation of an imperial tactic of sovereign power. Individuals from the lower ranks of military officers formed interpersonal associations with their aghas, equals, and betters. With this development, the structure of political authority came to feature a distribution of sovereign power with both vertical and horizontal cleavages. State officials no longer enjoyed a monopoly of military force as they once had during the classical Ottoman period. They were everywhere confronted with local elites in the coastal districts who were able to mobilize armed followings.<sup>49</sup>

In the course of the nineteenth century, Meeker adds, “the local elites ... adapted themselves to the westernizing state system. The aghas and agha-families remained essential to the state system since they were still necessary for carrying out the most elementary governmental functions at the local level.”<sup>50</sup> He also notes that, despite their functionality in local administration, prominent notables and district governors kept the provincial governors in the dark about certain matters. “All centralized bureaucracies work by filtering out information as it passed upwards. Still, a centralized bureaucracy vertically segmented by tiered circles of interpersonal association could be expected to filter out information even more reliably and consistently.”<sup>51</sup>

The significance of Meeker’s analysis lies in its explanation of how the local social structures adapted to and challenged the reach of Ottoman governmentality at the local level. The dynamism of the Ottoman state as a “hegemonic environment” was matched by different groups’ and alliances’ negotiations at the local level, where the boundaries of the modern state were not very clear. At times, local agents were very much a part of this hegemonic environment; at other times, they were conspicuously absent from the imperial view. Resis-

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exercise or tend to exercise a certain hegemony through the mediation of a party; this must be established by studying the development of all the other parties too, in so far as they include elements of the hegemonic group or of the other subaltern groups which undergo such hegemony.”

48 Foucault (1991), 102-03.

49 Meeker (2002), 185.

50 Ibid., 278.

51 Ibid., 260.

tance to Ottoman governmentality, as Meeker points out, did not always fit into the categories defined by the institutions of local administration.

In conceptualizing the discrepancy between local realities and official categories, I would like to recall Giddens' emphasis on the "coding of information" as an essential step in the formation of the "nation-states."<sup>52</sup> This is where Ottoman governmentality resides. The adoption of a modern state language by the "subordinates" implies utilization of a new code in the "dialectic of control" by both the superordinate and the subordinate groups. Without understanding the negotiations within the hegemonic environment in which this language is constructed, we cannot fully understand the relationship between the coding a modern state uses and its administrative power. This administrative power, Giddens argues,

is based upon the regulation and co-ordination of human conduct through the manipulation of the settings in which it takes place. Surveillance as the coding of information is an essential element of such power, because the mnemonic and distributional advantages it allows over purely oral culture are immense. But administrative power can only become established if the coding of information is actually applied in a direct way to the supervision of human activities, so as to detach them in some part from their involvement with tradition and with local community life.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the language of reports, a language that speaks of "title deeds" and "income surveys," codifies local realities to fit them into the yearbooks and thereby detaches them from local community life. This, however, does not imply that "the subordinates"—to use Giddens' terminology—were altogether pacified. Even in the context of this detachment, those who were not a part of the Ottoman administration had the potential to act as agents with "transformative capacity" over structures in the dialectic of control taking place at the local level. The local notables and the populace at large were able to integrate themselves into the Ottoman governmentality by adopting the language and the practices of the Ottoman administration.

In Vidin in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is not possible to find a panopticon state, a "cold monster," as Foucault would have it, in opposition to a dominated society of different interests. As I will point out in the following section, the election results for the administrative council strongly suggest that local notables were able to integrate themselves into the local mechanisms of administration. The council did serve Ottoman "governmentality;" through its repeated procedures, it contributed to the "discursive dispersion"<sup>54</sup>

52 For Giddens, a "nation" "exists only when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed." Giddens (1985), 119. This emphasis on "administrative reach" renders cultural and lingual uniformity and territorial unity instrumental but not necessary (see especially 172 and *passim*).

53 Ibid., 47.

54 Foucault (1982), 31-39.

of the narrative of a powerful state. Yet, the local notables and other agents knew how to use the practices and the reports of the administrative council to filter out information and constitute a social reality readily visible to the eyes of the provincial administration. It is through this dialectic of control that the institutions of local administration of the modern Ottoman state were continuously challenged and reconstituted.

### ***Of Permanency and Change: Politics of Election***

The articles of the Ottoman provincial regulations of 1864 and 1871 and the reports of the county administrative council of Vidin reveal a high turnover rate among its appointed and elected members. Half the elected members were replaced every year, and several appointed members had to change posts due to existing policies of replacement. Who were the elected members of the administrative council? How long did they serve on the council? How did their elected status affect their interaction with the appointed members of the councils? All these questions relate to the election process and are significant in making visible the local politics of administration. This section focuses on the election—and re-election—of the members of these councils.

Serving as a member of these councils meant having a certain level of authority in the local judicio-administrative sphere. Through re-election, local notables could stretch this authority over a longer period. In theory, however, a member's chances of being reelected were rather low. Several factors determined whether a member's name would be included on the initial list of candidates distributed to the districts. These included the member's local reputation and relationship with the appointed members of the council who constituted the nominating committee, which determined the initial list. Even when a candidate's name appeared on the initial list sent to the districts, the chances that his name would be on the list of the four submitted to the sub-governor were only twenty-two percent. In addition, even when the sub-governor chooses one member over the other on the final list, the governor had the option of disapproving the sub-governor's choice.

Table 1 summarizes the candidate lists presented to the sub-governor in Vidin for the years 1871 to 1874. The elections were carried out in the first month of the hijri calendar, Muharram. The entries in the table are from two separate registries of the council's reports to Ruse, which covered the period from March 1871 to February 1874.<sup>55</sup> The procedure required the sub-governor to decide on two names (a Muslim and a non-Muslim) from the four on the list, and report them to the governor. This procedure, however, was not followed

55 (NBKM) VD 107-16 and VD 96-41.

in Vidin in these years. Instead, the sub-governor reported all the names in the candidate list and left the choice directly to the governor, asking for the appointment of whichever two names the governor deemed appropriate.

The list is informative in understanding the politics of the election process. Even more so are the added notes to the results (denoted by red boxes in the table) and the recurrence of particular names.<sup>56</sup> For all the years but 1872, there are four names in the final list. In 1872, the resignation of the two top candidates left a third candidate as the lone Muslim member. ‘Ali Bey and Hacı Ömer Bey, both among the notables in Vidin, resigned for no apparent reason and Duhani Derviş Ahmed Efendi was elected as the new Muslim member of the council. Something similar happened in the following year, when Hacı Ömer Bey appeared as a candidate again but resigned “mentioning the excess of his personal affairs.”

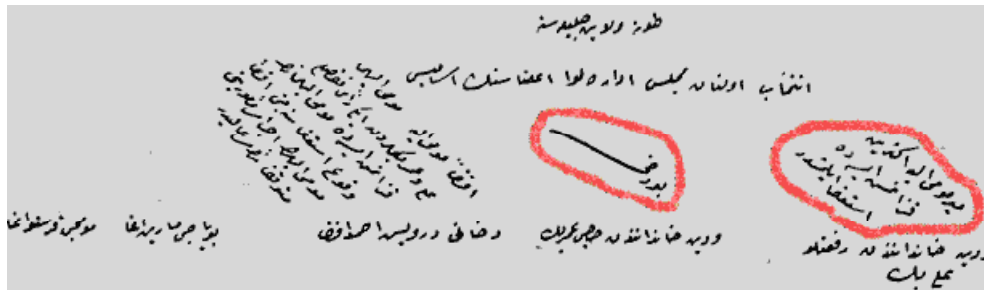


Figure 1. List of Elected Members in 1872. Detail from VD 107-16

A resignation is noted in a diagonal right above the name of the individual. In 1872, the resignations of ‘Ali Bey and Hacı Ömer Bey are noted down without any explanation of why they resigned. Notices of their resignation, the circled areas in Figure 1 below, are translated in Table 1. The following year, in 1873, the note above his name attributes Hacı Ömer Bey’s resignation to “the excess of his personal affairs.” Regardless of his reasons, Hacı Ömer Bey helped guarantee the election of a Muslim candidate both years by resigning. The report of the election results of 1873 explicitly refers to the requirement that two of the four candidates, “one being a Muslim and one a non-Muslim,” be appointed with the approval of the provincial governor. Resignation seems to be a means of forcing the governor to accept election of a specific candidate.

Hacı Ömer Bey’s resignation in two consecutive years is rather puzzling. Because it is not clear how the initial candidate lists were composed and distributed to the districts by the nominating committee, it is not possible to know whether Hacı Ömer Bey, or any of the candidates on the initial list, wanted to be there. If, on the one hand, the list was composed without consulting

56 The table is a compilation of the translations of the candidacy lists. The usual Ottoman titles, such as “eminent” (*rif’atlu*), are translated—using Redhouse (1890)—not to make them sound exotic, but to provide an accurate translation of the actual document. These titles were not unusual in the period under examination, as were the titles “honorable,” “esquire,” etc., in the British Empire.

the candidates, then the only way for a candidate to choose not to become a member would be resignation. But if Hacı Ömer Bey had the last say in determining whether his name would be included in the initial list, then his resignation should be explained as a result of his own calculations or of external forces.<sup>57</sup> There is, however, no further information regarding the resignation of these members, no statements implying a deal among the members. Although one may ask other questions about these results, the answers would be speculative for the most part due to lack of direct evidence.<sup>58</sup> One thing that is certain, however, is that the administrative council in Vidin did choose to report a single candidate. It presented the results of a local decision-making process at the county level to the provincial government as the only possible legitimate outcome.

There are some irregularities in the ways the council reacted to the resignation of these elected candidates. When the two top vote-getters resigned in 1872, the council did not hesitate to substitute the man who ranked third in the vote, Duhani Derviş Ahmed Efendi. Nevertheless, the council did not feel the need to add the name of the fourth candidate. The resignation of two candidates should have required two additional names on the list, not just one. Furthermore, in 1873, when Hacı Ömer Bey resigned for the second year in a row and left another local notable (*eşraf*),<sup>59</sup> Osman Bey, as the only candidate, the council could have added the name of a third candidate, just as it had a year previously, but it chose not to. This choice left a particular candidate's name as the only viable option. It seems as if the council used the report, an official document, to legitimize the settled outcome of local power negotiations. There are more intricacies to the "election process" than just such irregularities.

A brief look at the lists reveals that certain names occur more than once in this short interval. Ma'rufzade Ahmed Bey, for example, was a candidate in 1871, and in 1874 he appears with a slightly different title, Ma'ruf Ağazade Ahmed Bey.<sup>60</sup> In fact, as mentioned in the report of 1871, Ahmed Bey had served as a member of the administrative council prior to that date as well. In addition to Hacı Ömer Bey—who resigned twice—Marin Ağa, dye maker and "former member of the administrative council," appears in 1872 and 1874. Furthermore, these people were not candidates for only the administrative council.

57 That is, either Hacı Ömer Bey himself decided to step down for whatever reason or a more powerful notable or officer demanded his resignation directly. This, however, does not change the outcome: leaving only a single candidate for the seat of a Muslim member.

58 Why, for example, were all those who resigned Muslims? Why were they both members of the "Vidin dynasty?"

59 While in most cases this term refers specifically to purported descendants of the Prophet, "its pre-Islamic as well as its most basic use in Islamic cultures is to denote a free man who can claim a distinguished rank because of his descent from illustrious ancestors": *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Online ed., s.v. "Sharif,"

60 The suffix *-zade* translates as "son of." Thus Ma'ruf Ağazade means "son of Ma'ruf Ağa."

Every year, in a similar procedure, together with two members for the administrative council, the governor made the final decision on the names that would replace half of the examining clerks on the council of appeals and crime. This council, focusing mostly on judicial affairs within the county, was another way for notables to penetrate the state. The lists of candidates for the examining clerkships were reported together with the candidates for the administrative council memberships. Their numbers were different from those of the candidates for the council memberships. In 1871, there were eight candidates for the examining clerkships, in 1872 only six, and from 1873 onward, only four. Table 2 lists the names of the candidates for the council of appeals and crime on the candidate lists submitted to the province.

These lists do not tell us the governor's final choices. Table 3 presents the names of elected members from the yearbooks (*salname*) of the Danube Province from 1868-69 (1285) to 1877-78 (1294). The lists were composed every year in the first month of the lunar calendar (*Muharram*) and provided the names of the potential members for the coming year. The yearbooks, however, give the names of local administrators of the previous year. The names in the 1868-69 (1285) yearbook belong to the council members of 1267-68 (1284).<sup>61</sup> Combined with the candidate list in the local register, the information included in the provincial yearbooks, which were compiled to inform the center, allows for a more critical approach to the politics of election.

In analyzing Tables 2 and 3, the first thing to notice is the systematic reduction in the number of listed candidates for the council of appeals and crime: from eight in 1871 to six in 1872 to four the following year. The governor apparently selected four, three, and two members in those years respectively. The first drop in the judicial council's candidates does not conform to the results given in the provincial yearbooks. The yearbook of 1874-1875 (1291) shows that in 1873, the members of the council declined from six to four (See Table 3.3). However, no reason can be found in the yearbooks to explain why there were eight names in the candidate list of 1871. In the report accompanying this particular candidate list, the administrative council explains that the regular procedure has been followed to replace half the examining clerks of the council of appeals and crime:

Inasmuch as annual election of half the members, with provision for re-election of outgoing members, is among the requirements of the special article of the provincial regulation, eighteen persons were found appropriate in the nominating council (*cem'ıyyet-i tefrik*) for the year '87 [1287] to replace half the members and the examining clerks of the administrative and appeals councils. Of the eighteen men who were nominated for election, as listed at the head of this

61 In addition to the names of those employed in the provincial administration, the yearbooks provide statistical information regarding the number of soldiers, local population, forests, rivers, bridges, lakes, and the like. Their local publication and continuous nature render these yearbooks a useful source. I used all ten of the published yearbooks for the Danube province for Table 3.

report, four got the most votes, with unanimity of opinion, for membership in the administrative council and eight for the examining clerkship of the appeals council.<sup>62</sup>

The council concludes its lengthy report with a request that the governor of the Danube province “elect” half of these candidates for the councils without necessarily indicating why, in that year (1871), the number of the candidates was eight instead of six. Two years later, in 1873, the report accompanying the candidate list, sent by the council to the province, explains that an “imperial decree” had ordered a “reduction” of the number of the examining clerks of the council of appeals from six “to four from March of eighty-nine [1289, March 1873].”<sup>63</sup> The date of the order corresponds roughly with the date on which the council sent the candidate list for the year, March 10, 1873. This explains the reduction, to four, in the number of examining clerks listed in the yearbook of 1874-1875 (1291). The question, however, remains: What happened in 1871? Why does the candidate list for that particular year have an extra name? Why is there an apparent mismatch between the local and imperial registries?

The eight names in the candidate list for the council of appeals and crime in 1871 imply a council with eight members, as four of the names in the candidate list were to replace *half* of the council members. We know from the yearbook, however, that this was not the case. The candidate list of 1871 corresponds to the line for 1872-73 in Table 3, and there are six elected examining clerks on the council of appeals and crime. Four of them—Mansur Bey, Matyaş Ağa, Salamon Efendi, and Çako Ağa—are different from the previous year’s members and are included in the candidate list of 1871. It appears that Persiyado Efendi began serving on the council a year before he had to leave his post,<sup>64</sup> and a fourth elected member replaced him.

A similar irregularity in the tenure of the elected members appears in the first three lines of Table 3. All the names are the same for three consecutive years. The structure and contents of the yearbooks suggest that a typographical error is an unlikely explanation for this irregularity. For the first three years, the names of the elected members are the same in both councils while the names of other clerks change. Clearly, the compilers did not use the same information regarding members of these councils for the first three years. Tables of errors at each volume’s end say nothing that relates to this irregularity. And it is also unlikely that the information sent from the county was wrong for three consecutive years.

62 (NBKM) VD 107-16, report dated 13 Muharram 88.

63 (NBKM) VD 96-41, report dated 10 Muharram 1290.

64 Each examining clerk could serve for two years in a single term.

The presence of these names in the yearbooks may not necessarily mean that these people were actually serving. However, it is a public statement testifying to their positions in local governance, as these yearbooks, published by the government, were distributed to the counties and districts. If the recurrence of the same names for the three consecutive years was not due to a typographical error, or did not reflect an error in the information sent, what could be the explanation behind such an irregularity? A possible answer relates to another detail in Table 3.

The number of elected members for the administrative council in Table 3 increases to six for the year 1877. This appears to be the case for Vidin County alone. None of the other counties had administrative councils with six elected members. That this was not the general application in all counties might imply a certain change in the power configuration of Vidin County. Such details support the thesis that there were irregularities or peculiarities in the election process and the composition of these councils. It was possible to have a different number of elected members in similar administrative units in different counties, such as the councils mentioned above. It was also possible for a member to resign even after he was elected, or in the middle of his two-year term. As they were outcomes of the politics of local administration, such seeming irregularities reflect the particularities of the local power balance. Perhaps more important, the provincial government was aware of these irregularities. It did not hesitate to publish such irregularities in the yearbooks that were sent to different counties in the region as well as to Istanbul.

Table 4 lists the names of the elected members of these councils, together with when and where they served, in order to give a better sense of their total duration of service. The last column of the table indicates how many times a candidate served in one of the councils. The table shows how certain local notables switched from one council to another and thus remained an integral part of the local judicio-administrative sphere. Despite possible inaccuracies in the yearbooks, the details of Table 4 are too striking to be ignored. One can reach some conclusions regarding the re-election process in these councils. On the one hand, through limiting the number of elected members from the local population and imposing a complicated election system that did not allow high chances of re-election, the imperial center tried to keep the power potential of the local notables under control. On the other hand, through local politics and resignations, local notables were able to maintain their presence in these councils. This becomes more obvious from the provincial yearbooks. Tables 3 and 4 indicate not only that certain figures such as Ahmed Bey, Sevastaki Ağa, Hacı Tahir Ağa or Zayko Ağa served continuously for several years, but also that certain members served for three or five or seven years.

The provincial regulations of 1864 and 1871 define the nominating committees as composed of the appointed members of the administrative council of

the county. The local registries confirm that indeed this was the case for Vidin. A rough draft of a report<sup>65</sup> sent to the provincial administration on April 2, 1876, sheds light on problems with the election process. The report takes note of a dispute between two camps that were supposed to elect eight names out of the twelve that the nominating committee decided upon for each council. The nominating committee did not send the list to the district councils. Instead three to four members from the administrative and judicial councils of each district came to Vidin to elect two-thirds of these twelve candidates. These electors (*intihabci*) met the electors from the head district, Vidin. However, the lists of names offered by the district council members did not match those offered by the electors from Vidin. The gathering in the head district is not mentioned as an unusual incident in the report. This indicates that it might be a practice that was familiar, if not customary. Because they could not agree on a common list, it was necessary to draft the report.

The report details present a clearer picture of the dispute. The number of electors in each group appears to be rather uneven. On the one hand, twenty-one electors from the districts, all of them members of the district councils, represented a larger body of electors in the districts. On the other, eight electors from the central district, Vidin, which served as the center of the whole county, represented 61 electors from the villages and towns around Vidin. There is no detailed explanation in the report of who these 61 electors are, only that they are from the neighborhoods and villages of Vidin district. The yearbook of 1873-74 lists 59 different villages within the district of Vidin.<sup>66</sup> In a book of Bulgarian geographic names published in 1945, the district (Okolia) of Vidin has 58 villages.<sup>67</sup> Out of these village names, all but two match the list in the Ottoman yearbook.


It is likely that the 61 electors were notables from villages within the district of Vidin and that they agreed upon eight representatives in order to elect eight council members for that year. It is not possible to know the details of local politics in this election; nevertheless, it is clear that the eight representatives from Vidin had a significant influence on the process. Even the majority from the districts could not exert authority over the Vidin representatives. They were able to insist on a list different from the one supported by the other 21 electors, and this disagreement led to the report.

Based on their names, at least five out of these eight representatives were non-Muslims. Three of the five had the names of their villages clearly identified:

65 This draft is from a partial draft book of reports ([NBKM] VD 98-13) sent by the administrative council to the provincial center at Ruse. Since it is a draft book, its shape and structure differ from the other two registries I used to analyze the candidate lists; it has several corrections marked for the final report, yet its content is similar.

66 *Salname-i Vilayet-i Tuna*, vol. 6 (1873-74), 166-71. Teplov, who made use of the same yearbook for his work in 1877, lists 40 villages around Vidin: Teplov (1877), 173-74.

67 *Spis'k na Naselenite Mesta* (1945), 20.

Slanatrana karyeli Yovan Ağa, Helvacı karyeli Karin Dimitri Ağa, and Bregova karyeli Yovan Orta (  ). All three villages — Slanatrana, Helvacı, and Bregova—occupy a narrow strip to the north of Vidin. That some representatives used their village names together with their own names implies either that the other representatives were from the town of Vidin, or that they were familiar to the members of the administrative council to whom the report was addressed. Of the remaining five, Süleyman Efendi identified himself as the former Muslim religious leader of the region (*müftü-i sabık*). Another, Anastas Hacı İliya, was a member of the council of appeals and crime for three consecutive years between 1868 and 1871.<sup>68</sup> A third representative not affiliated with a village, Aleksandri Nikolço Ağa (in fact, another entry indicates that he is from Vidin), also appears on the list made by the 21 council members from the districts.

These details give some clues about the electors from the villages and neighborhoods of Vidin. The most essential criterion in the choice of electors seems to have been neither a geographically even distribution among all the villages, nor a candidate's former involvement with the local administration. Knowing the general pattern of the results of the “election process” for the councils, however, one can safely assert that these representatives would be on good terms with some of the most frequently elected members of the councils in the county. It comes as no surprise, then, that the lists compiled by both groups have a number of names in common, including Ma'rif Ağazade Ahmed Bey, who served in the councils for nine years beginning in 1868, and Zayko Ağa, who served for seven years during the same period. It should also be noted that the representatives' list features one candidate from the village of Slanatrana and one from Helvacı. It appears that notables from these northern villages of Vidin district were prominent enough to make it onto the candidate lists.<sup>69</sup>

Getting elected and serving on the county councils were significant achievements in the politics of local administration. Council membership meant power for the local notables who were elected and were able to maintain their positions. The report on the above-mentioned dispute regarding the drafting of the candidate lists indicates that there was a relatively stable hegemonic domination by certain notables at the county level. The central district of the

68 Hacı İliya's family members, his son and his son-in-law, were on the candidate lists for the same council a number of times in the following years, as well.

69 Based on the yearbook of 1873-74 (1290), Slanatrana (modern-day Slanotrün) was located three hours' distance from Vidin; it had a non-Muslim population of 40 households and 140 people and a Muslim immigrant population of 55 households and 225 people. Helvacı (Khalvadzhi or modern-day Maior Uzunovo) was two hours distant from Vidin and had a non-Muslim population of 39 households and 143 people. Bregova (modern-day Briagovo) located at six hours' distance from the center, was the most heavily populated village of Vidin according to both the yearbook of 1873-74 and the book of place names of 1945: 561 households and 5455 people. This is probably why a resident of this village was able to become a representative. The representatives from Slanatrana and Helvacı were perhaps there to support the candidates from their villages.

county and the other districts were expected to agree on certain names to represent the local interests in local administration. Yet, as this dispute and the analysis of the election process indicates, getting re-elected to these councils was rather difficult.

With a mathematically low likelihood of getting re-elected and the intricacies of local politics, how did people like Ma'ruf Ağazade Ahmed Bey serve for such long periods? In fact, a core group of local notables played key roles in regional politics well before the first imperial yearbook was compiled in 1868. The July 19, 1865, issue of the newspaper *Dunav* reports the establishment of an orphanage for orphans and poor children in Ruse. The donors from the region include not only Ahmed Bey but also Zayko Ağa. An interrogation report in 1865,<sup>70</sup> bears the seal of Sevastaki Ağa as an examining clerk at the council of appeals and crime, with three clearly identifiable letters, С І Г, representing his full name, Sevastaki Ivanov Gunzovyanov (Севастаки Иванов Гънзовяннов).<sup>71</sup> Even prior to the decree of 1864, the seals of Ahmed Bey and Zayko Ağa are prominent on a report regarding the bakers of the town and indicate their position as members of the tax collection council that preceded the administrative council.<sup>72</sup>

The discussion here has been limited mostly to the last ten years during which the two councils were active. However, there were other opportunities besides the councils for local notables to participate in the activities of the Ottoman state. In addition to many other civilian and military members of local government, all volumes of the yearbooks except the first one list the members of a commission of surveys. The dye-maker Marin Ağa, who reported many cases, including the two mentioned above, and who served as a council member for two years, was one of the four members of this commission for all nine years (1868-77) recorded in the yearbooks. In fact, it is possible to find many names that reappear over the years in various bodies, indicating a local judicio-administrative sphere that served as a means for local groups to wield influence by adapting themselves to the new institutions of the modern Ottoman state.

Sources other than the yearbooks further attest to the complicated relationship between these local notables and the modern Ottoman state. With a language that is typical of the pro-independence newspapers that were published outside the Ottoman Empire, the author of an anonymous article from the Bucharest-based newspaper *Svoboda* asks who should be blamed for the 500 years of Ottoman brutality: "Whom should we accuse? Who is to blame?"<sup>73</sup> The "Turcophilic" Sevastaki Ağa provides the author with a convenient rep-

70 (NBKM) VD 123-17 (June 23, 1865).

71 Vulchev (2003), 32.

72 (NBKM) VD 91-14.

73 "Kogo da obvinyavame? Koi e kriv?" *Svoboda*, January 8, 1872.

representative of those “who wish to feed themselves alone, just like the Turks, and are ready to live comfortably [*rahat*—a Turkish word].” “Sevastaki,” our reporter continues, “has big mansions naturally full of wealth: silk curtains, velvet cushions and pillows, sultans’ portraits, etc.” *Svoboda* was one of several newspapers whose reporters associated regime change with the elimination of the local notability, the *chorbadzhia*, who worked with the Ottoman government. The regime change, however, did not eliminate the names that I have been discussing so far.

Genadi Vulchev’s recent work<sup>74</sup> is helpful in explicating not only the family lineages of some of the prominent local notables mentioned so far but also the important role played by succeeding generations of these families under the Bulgarian administration. A significant detail one cannot detect from the yearbooks and the candidate lists is that Sevastaki Ağa (Sevastaki I. Gunzovyanov, 1825-1898) was married to Efimia Shishmanova, who was a younger sister of Ekaterina Shishmanova, mother of Hacı İliya Efendi (Ilia T. Tsanov, 1835-1901).<sup>75</sup> Hacı İliya’s brother, Nako Ağa (Naicho Tomov Tsanov), was a member of the council of appeals and crime later. Their father, Tomaki Tsanov, worked for the Ottoman administration and died in exile in “Asia Minor.”<sup>76</sup> The prominence of these individuals and families continued well after Bulgaria became independent in 1877. Zayko Ağa (Tseko Vanchov) represented Vidin in the Second General National Assembly (Obiknoveno Narodno Subranie) of the newly established Bulgaria in 1881.<sup>77</sup> Both he and Ahmed Bey—with his name semi-Slavicized to Akhmed Beg Marufov—were members of the municipal council and among the 38 people who donated 8131 Leva (Bulgarian currency) to the municipality in 1883.<sup>78</sup> The impact of these people on the local judicio-administrative sphere transcended the major changes of 1877. Not only did they retain their prominence after the regime change, but they were also able to integrate themselves into the new regime. Ma’ruf Ağazade Ahmed Bey, who was not only affiliated with the former regime but also a “Turkish Muslim,” was appointed by the Russian imperial commissar Duke (Kniaz) Dondukov-Korsakov to the Constituent Assembly in Veliko Turnovo in 1879.<sup>79</sup> Together with Hacı İliya Efendi, he was one of the 229 members who drafted the Turnovo Constitution that served Bulgaria from 1879 to 1947.<sup>80</sup>

74 Vulchev (2001).

75 Ibid., 32 and 158.

76 Ibid., 390.

77 Vulchev (2003), 624.

78 Vidin State Archives, ф. 17 К оп 1 л 30 гръб.

79 Vulchev (2001), 74.

80 Ibid. 622.



Zayko Ağa  
Tseko Vanchov

Sevastaki Ağa  
Sevstaki I.  
Gunzovyanov

Ma'ruf Ağazade  
Ahmed Bey

Hacı İliya Efendi  
İlia T. Tsanov

**Figure 2.** Some of the Prominent Members of the Councils in Vidin

### Conclusion

The regulations of 1864 and 1871 were attempts by the modern Ottoman state to establish a dynamic administrative structure that functioned in communication with but separate from the judicial structure at the local level. Although local councils were not a novelty for the empire, it was only after the provincial regulation of 1864 that we see the establishment of a council of appeals and crime in every county. These were state courts (*mehakim-i nizamiye*) that allowed the participation of local notables. The provincial regulations of 1864 and 1871 focused mostly on the local administrative councils and put special emphasis on separating the structure and duties of these state courts. This attempt by the empire to separate the administrative sphere from the judicial one, however, appears to have failed in Vidin County. By moving from one council to another, the local notables, such as Zayko Ağa, Sevastaki Ağa, Ahmed Bey and Hacı İliya Efendi, established a link between these councils. These prominent local notables formed the hybrid space between judicial and administrative institutions that the modern Ottoman state was aiming to separate.

In addition to emphasizing relatively independent administrative and judicial councils, the provincial regulations of 1864 and 1871 established a deliberate procedure of election that aimed to prevent the local notables from serving long periods on these councils. One may argue that the leading motive behind this procedure was the institutional design of the modern state, which is based on the separation of state from society. Lists of members in the yearbooks indicate that this attempt did not succeed, either. Several notables managed to get re-elected continuously for extended periods. That these yearbooks were published by the province indicates that the imperial administration was aware of this situation. The details of the election process described above also prove that the provincial administration did not do much to prevent the re-election of certain candidates. Instead it allowed the

local judicio-administrative sphere to serve as a platform for the hybridization of state and society.

The design, duties, and functioning of these councils enabled local notables to participate in this local, hybrid judicio-administrative sphere. The nature of this participation made getting elected—and re-elected—a very important aspect of the politics of local administration. The information available about some of these council members indicates that they retained their prominence even after the collapse of the Ottoman administrative structure. In that sense, the local notables outlived the empire in the region as agents of a new Bulgarian governmentality. Surviving the crisis of the Ottoman traditional social structure, these agents were able to integrate themselves into the emerging modern social structure and be a part of Ottoman/Bulgarian governmentality despite the political turmoil in the region. Regime change, coming with the collapse of the Ottoman administrative structure in the region, did not lead to a dramatic rupture in the local socioeconomic institutional structure.

**Table 1.** Candidate Lists for Potential Members of Vidin's Administrative Council (Local Register)

Year	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3	Candidate 4	Candidate 5
1871	Administrative council member <sup>a</sup> Ma'rufzade eminent Ahmed Bey	İvraniyelizade İsmail Efendi	Former member of the court of appeals <sup>b</sup> eminent Sevastaki Ağa	Merchant Hacı Todor Ağa	
1872	From the Vidin dynasty, <sup>c</sup> eminent 'Ali Bey	From the Vidin dynasty, Hacı Ömer Bey	Duhani derviş Ahmed Efendi	Candle maker Kristo Ağa	Dye maker Marin Ağa
1873	From the notables <sup>f</sup> of Vidin, Hacı Ömer Bey	From the notables of Vidin, Osman Bey	Member of the court of appeals Sefer Ağa	Vidin'li eminent Canko Ağa	
1874	Ma'ruf Ağazade eminent Ahmed Bey	Former member of the court of appeals Hacı Tahir Ağa	Former member of the administrative council Marin Ağa	Merchant Zayko Ağa	

Source: VD 96-41 and VD 107-16

[‘Ali Bey] resigned although he won the majority<sup>d</sup>

[Hacı Ömer Bey] resigned mentioning excess personal affairs<sup>g</sup>

He as well

Although this Efendi got two votes less than [...] ‘Ali and Ömer Beys, due to their resignation, employment of this member is contingent on your exalted opinion<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Meclis-i idare-i livâ a'zasından.

<sup>b</sup> Sabık meclis-i temyiz mümeyyizlerinden

<sup>c</sup> Vidin hanedanından.

<sup>d</sup> Mir-i mumaileyhe ekseriyet kazanmış ise de istifa eylemiştir.



<sup>e</sup> Efendi-i mumaileyhe mumaileyhüma 'Ali ve Ömer Beylerden iki

re'y noksan kazanmış ise de mumaileyhümanın vuku'-ı istifasına mebni aza-i mumaileyhin icra-yı memuriyeti mütevakkıf-ı re'y-i 'alidir

<sup>f</sup> Vidin eşrafından

<sup>g</sup> Mumaileyh umur zatiyesinin kesretinden bahsle istifa etmiştir.

**Table 2.** Lists of Candidates for the Council of Appeals and Crime in Vidin (Local Register)

Year	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3	Candidate 4	Candidate 5	Candidate 6	Candidate 7	Candidate 8
1871	Şerif 'alemdarzade Matyaş Ağa	Former district head official <sup>a</sup> of Mecidiye eminent Mansur Bey	Ahmed Beyzade Mahmud Bey	From the Belgrad immigrants Kerim Bey	Tailor Çako Ağa	Hacı İlyazade Taso Ağa	Arslan oğlu Salamon Efendi	Yusuf Vagitora(?)  Efendi
1872	From the Vidin dynasty <sup>c</sup> Ramiz Bey	Hacı 'Ali Şah Efendizade Cafer Efendi	Hacı Todor Ağa	Rukail Bazirgan	Tailor Sado Ağa	İlyaco's son-in-law <sup>d</sup> Yako Efendi		
1873	Member of the court of appeals <sup>e</sup> eminent Mansur Bey	From the Belgrad immigrants eminent Şakir Efendi	Şaul Efendi from Vidin	Salamon Efendi from Vidin				
1874	Hacı Ömer Efendizade Remzi Bey	Şerif 'alemdarzade Matyaş Ağa 	Former member of the court of appeals <sup>f</sup> Hacı Todor Ağa	Hacı İlya oğlu Taso Ağa				

Source: VD 96-41 and VD 107-16

- <sup>a</sup> Kaymakam-ı sabık.  
<sup>b</sup> Belgrad muhacirlerinden.  
<sup>c</sup> Vidin hanedanından.  
<sup>d</sup> Damadı.  
<sup>e</sup> Temyiz hukuk mümeyyizlerinden.  
<sup>f</sup> Sabık temyiz mümeyyizlerinden.

**Table 3. Members of the Administrative Council and the Council of Appeals and Crime in Vidin (Salname)**

Publication year		Elected Members of Vidin's Administrative Council According to the Salnames					
1868-69	1285	Zayko Ağa	Ömer Bey	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Angel Ağa		
1869-70	1286	Zayko Ağa	Ömer Bey	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Angel Ağa		
1870-71	1287	Zayko Ağa	Ömer Bey	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Angel Ağa		
1871-72	1288	Zayko Ağa	Ahmed Bey	Mehmed Ağa	Zelko Ağa		
1872-73	1289	Sevastaki Ağa	Ahmed Bey	Mehmed Ağa	Zelko Ağa		
1873-74	1290	Sevastaki Ağa	Ahmed Bey	Ahmed Ağa	Kristo Ağa		
1874-75	1291	Osman Bey	Sako Ağa	Ahmed Ağa	Marin Ağa		
1875-76	1292	Ahmed Bey	Sako Ağa	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Zayko Ağa		
1876-77	1293	Ahmed Bey	Sako Ağa	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Zayko Ağa		
1877-78	1294	Ahmed Bey	Ahmed Ağa	Hacı Petko Ağa	Aleksandire Efendi	Mehmed Efendi	İshak Efendi

Pub. year		Elected Members of Vidin's Council of Appeals and Crime According to the Salnames					
1868-69	1285	Sevastaki Ağa	Mahmud Efendi	Hacı İliya Efendi	Ahmed Bey	Ahmed Şükrü Efendi	Mişon Kalaf Efendi
1869-70	1286	Sevastaki Ağa	Mahmud Efendi	Hacı İliya Efendi	Ahmed Bey	Ahmed Şükrü Efendi	Mişon Kalaf Efendi
1870-71	1287	Sevastaki Ağa	Mahmud Efendi	Hacı İliya Efendi	Ahmed Bey	Ahmed Şükrü Efendi	Mişon Kalaf Efendi
1871-72	1288	Sevastaki Ağa	Mahmud Efendi	Nako Efendi	Şakir Efendi	Ahmed Şükrü Efendi	Persiyado Efendi
1872-73	1289	Mansur Bey	Matyaş Ağa	Nako Efendi	Şakir Efendi	Salamon Efendi	Çako Ağa
1873-74	1290	Mansur Bey	Matyaş Ağa	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Hacı Todor	Salamon Efendi	Çako Ağa
1874-75	1291	Mansur Bey	Hacı Tahir Ağa	Hacı Todor	Şaul Efendi		
1875-76	1292	Remzi Bey	Matyaş Ağa	Hacı Todor	Şaul Efendi		
1876-77	1293	Remzi Bey	Matyaş Ağa	Hacı Todor	Şaul Efendi		
1877-78	1294	Remzi Bey	Matyaş Ağa	Hacı Todor	Petra Ağa		

Source: *Tuna Vilayeti Salnamesi Def'a 1 (1285) to Def'a 10 (1294)*.

**Table 4. Names and Years of Appointments of Vidin's Council Members**

NAME	285 <sup>‡</sup>	286	287	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	Fr
Ahmed Bey	MT*	MT	MT	IM <sup>†</sup>	IM	IM		IM	IM	IM	9
Sevastaki Ağa	MT	MT	MT	MT	IM	IM					6
Hacı Tahir Ağa	IM	IM	IM			MT	MT	IM	IM		7
Zayko Ağa	IM	IM	IM	IM				IM	IM		6
Ahmed Şükrü Efendi	MT	MT	MT	MT							4
Mahmud Efendi	MT	MT	MT	MT							4
Matyaş Ağa					MT	MT		MT	MT	MT	5
Hacı Todor						MT	MT	MT	MT	MT	5
Şaul Efendi							MT	MT	MT		3
Seko Ağa							IM	IM	IM	IM	4
Angel Ağa	IM	IM	IM								3
Hacı İliya Efendi	MT	MT	MT								3
Mişon Kalaf Efendi	MT	MT	MT								3
Ömer Bey	IM	IM	IM								3
Mansur Bey					MT	MT	MT				3
Nako Efendi				MT	MT						2
Şakir Efendi				MT	MT						2
Ahmed Ağa						IM	IM				2
Çako Ağa					MT	MT					2
Marin Ağa						IM	IM				2
Mehmed Ağa				IM	IM						2
Zelko Ağa				IM	IM						2
Remzi Bey								MT	MT	MT	3
Salamon Efendi					MT	MT					2
Osman Bey							IM				1
Persiyado Efendi				MT							1

Source: *Tuna Vilayeti Salnamesi Def a 1 (1285) to Def a 10 (1294)*.

\* MT = Council of appeals and crime (*Meclis-i temyiz-i hukuk ve cinayet*)

† IM = Administrative council (*İdare meclisi*)

‡ The last three digits of the lunar year of the yearbook (285 = 1285)

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