

Administrative Structures in the Upper Ottoman Kurdistan During the 18th Century

Di Sedsala 18'em de Pergala Îdarî li Bakurê Kurdistanana Osmaniyan

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ABSTRACT:

Desthilatiya Dewleta Osmanî ya li Kurdistanana Bakur a Osmaniyan (Serhed) bi piranî li ser bingeha tækiliyên navend û periferiyê hatiye hesabandin. Li gorî piraniya Osmanîperweran ew herêm ji aliyê dewletê ve bi awayekî hişk dihate kontrolkirin, herwiha hêzdarên herêmî di wê qada tamponê de ew çend jî bihêz nebûn. Ji ber vê yekê desthilatdarên herêmî wek bendeyên pasîf ên bindestên Osmaniyan hatine pênasakirin. Lêbelê heke em belgeyên Osmanî ji nêz ve analîz bikin û li ser wan bisekinin em ê bibînin ku tækiliyên rasteqîn ên hêzdarîyê yên di navbera hêzên herêmî de li ser bingehên hevpar ava dibin. Navenda emperyal a Osmaniyan siyaseta xwe ya kontrol û hevsengiyê bi rê ve biriyê, lê dîsa jî rola herî aktîf li ser serhedên Dewleta Osmanî yên sedsala 18an ji aliyê aristokratên herêmî ve hatiye lîstin. Yek ji armancên sereke yên vê nivîsarê ev e ku senifandina Hikûmeta Osmanî û Sancaqên Yurtluk/Ocaklık li Kurdistanana Bakur a Osmaniyan a sedsala 18an hewayê siyasî ya rasteqîn nîşan nadin. Wisa diyar e ku ew termînolojiyêke bêbingeh e û rêvebirên Sancaqên Yurtluk/Ocaklık hin çarvan ji Xanên Sancakên Hikûmetê yên Kurdistanana Bakur a Osmaniyan zêdetir xwedî hêz bûn. Di destpêka nivîsarê de hinek mînak hatine dayîn, da bê dîtin ka Osmanîperweran tækiliyên hêzdarîyê yên li Kurdistanana Bakur a Osmaniyan çawa pênasê kirine. Piştî xwendevan dê bibînin ka çarçoveya desthilatdarîyê ya Kurdistanana Bakur a Osmaniye ya di sedsala 18an de di eslê xwe de çawa hatiye pê. Rolên paşayên Sancaqên Erzurum û Wanê, Sancaqa Hikûmeta Bedîsê û Sancaqên Yurtluk/Ocaklık ên herêmê bûne mijara nivîsarê, da bê dîtin ka

atmosfera rasteqîn a li Kurdistanana Bakur a Osmaniyan ya sedsala 18an çawa bû.

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PUXTE:

Desthilatiya Dewleta Osmanî ya li Kurdistan Bakur a Osmaniyan (Serhed) bipiranî li ser bingehên nivîndî

hatine hesabandin. Li gorî piraniya Osmanîperweran ew herêma ji aliyê dewletê bi awayekî hişk dihat kontrolkirin, herwiha hêzdarên herêma di wê qada tamponê de ew çend jî bihêz nebûn. Ji ber vê yekê desthilatdarên herêma wek bendeyên pasîv hatine pênasîkirin yê ku bindestên Osmanîyan bûn. Lêbelê heke em belgeyên Osmanî ji nêz ve analîz bikin û li ser wan bisekinin em ê bibînin ku têkiliyên rasteqîn ên hêzdarîyê yê di navbera hêzên herêma li ser bingehên hevpar ava dibin. Nîvenda emperyal a Osmanîyê siyaseta xwe ya kontrol û hevserengiyê bi rê ve birîye, lê dîsa jî rola herî aktîf ji aliyê arîstokratên herêma ve hatiye lîstin li ser van serhedên Dewleta Osmanî yê sedesala 18an. Yek ji armancên sereke yê wê nivîsarê ev e: ew ê nîşan bide ku senifandina Hikûmeta Osmanî û *Sancaqên Yurtluk/Ocaklık* li Kurdistanê Bakur a Osmanîyê yê sedesala 18an hewayê siyasî yê rasteqîn nîşan nadin. Wisa diyar e ku ew termînolojiyêke bêbingeh e, û rêvebirên *Sancaqên Yurtluk/Ocaklık* hin caran ji Xanên *Sancakên Hikûmetê* yê Kurdistanê Bakur a Osmanîyan zêdetir xwedî hêz bûn. Di destpêka nivîsarê de hinek mînak hatine dayîn da bê dîtin ka Osmanîperweran têkiliyên hêzdarîyê yê li Kurdistanê Bakur a Osmanîyê çawa pênasî kirine. Piştî xwendevan dê bibînin ka çarçoveya desthilatdarîyê ya Kurdistanê Bakur a Osmanîyê ya di sedesala 18an de di eslê xwe de çawa hatiye pê. Rolên *Paşayên Sancaqên* Paşayan yê Erzurum û Wanê, *Sancaqa Hikûmetê Bedlîsê* û *Sancaqên Yurtluk/Ocaklık* herêma bûne mijara nivîsarê da ê dîtin ka atmosfera rasteqîn ya li Kurdistanê Bakur a Osmanîyê ya di sedesala 18an çawa bû.

Bêjeyên sereke: Dewleta Osmanî, begên Kurd, yurtluk-ocaklık, hikûmet, sencaq

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman Eastern Regions which concurrently called as Eastern Anatolia, or more historically Kurdistan, were a frontier of the state against a significant rival, the Iranian Empires.¹ From the time of Selim I the region became a political and military arena of the two Empires. Beyond the clashes of the states, the region had already possessed a complex political structure at local level. These structures composed of tribes, tribal confederations, and emirates. These tribal units were socio-political formations and they were far beyond the discourse of the modernist insights which often depict them as primitive subjects. More sophisticated structures were the Kurdish Emirates that they accomplished to unite tribes and tribal confederates living in their restricted lands. These Emirates mostly enjoyed autonomous power from impenetrable geographic conditions of their territories which did not let the imperial rules to conquer easily. Even though there was not so much difference between the ruling systems of the Hükümet and *Yurtluk/Ocaklık*, the latter system appeared in geographically penetrable regions. These complex

¹ Ottoman Kurdistan was not named as Eastern Anatolia during the 18th century according to the Ottoman documentations. Therefore, terminologically it would be an anachronistic usage if we address the region as Eastern Anatolia.

structures show that there are varied actors (*aghas, beys, valis*) in the same restricted region and all the actors attempted to control the same area.

As seen from the hitherto researches, during the 18th century the upper Ottoman Kurdistan, were controlled by the local Kurdish rulers. Their political appellations were sometimes called as Emirate or *Yurtluk/Ocaklık*. Although the current researchers make a far distinction between these two, at local level. This was rather a discourse of the central power since the rulers of the *Yurtluk/Ocaklık* structures were sometimes more powerful than a hakim of an Emirate. Both these political structures received their powers from the top (empire), and the bottom (tribal units) during this process of empowering themselves. Let us question how some historians represented the historiography of the region before we discuss the details of these structures in the upper Ottoman Kurdistan.

Some Ottomanists predominantly have modernist insights and see the tribal units and their activities as bandits and banditry.² They absorb the discourse of the Ottoman bureaucrats and do not make a distinction between them and the language of the documents. This approach causes some historians to adopt statist approach on writing the details of the Ottoman Eastern Frontier. Therefore, the local subjects and their activities are not seen as an agency. But rather the writers expected the locals to follow what was ordered them to do so similar to the modern citizenship. Otherwise, the writers accused them in the same manner as the Ottoman clerks wrote in the Ottoman documents simply as bandits.

In addition, the main argument writing on the Ottoman Kurdistan was only restricted to the autonomous structures of the region. For them, there were far distinction between the Hükümet (Emirate) and *Yurtluk/Ocaklık* systems. The main approach was not to investigate how the relations in the region were between the center-periphery on the one hand and between the local actors themselves on the other. They rather limit their discussion to say that the Ottoman Empire did not have a weak control over the region and the local actors did not really enjoy the autonomous conditions (Öz, 2003; İnbaşı, 2007; Kılıç, 2001). It should be seen as a fact that history as a discipline has a power in itself because the knowledge of the past can be used as a power in order to legitimize the current developments. The historicity of the claims makes the ideas more legitimate and can bring the discussion to the more common ground. In this case, a Kurdish autonomous structure can speak more to us in concurrent political atmosphere of the 21th century. A historical discussion of the Ottoman Eastern region, therefore, becomes more

2 The writers simply identify the Celali Tribal Confederation as bandit groups of people but nothing else since the writers only imaged this group based on their conflicts to the other tribal units (Demirci, 2014).

politicized and it even needs to be manipulated by the historians. Eventually, historians left a big gap in writing the history of the Ottoman Kurdistan up to the current periods and did not combine its structures to the main discussions of the Ottoman studies.

The most important of all why we do not know the structures of the Ottoman Kurdistan is believed to be related to the case that the central government had a weak power there and therefore there is a lack of documentation in order to be able to discuss it in details. Another claim is that the region mainly consisted of tribal units and their relations were mostly orally carried out dissimilarly to the state bureaucracy. Even anthropologists did not analyze the tribal structures of Ottoman Kurdistan profoundly and there are only a few researchers who broadly talked on the case of political structures of the Ottoman Kurdistan (Bruinessen, 1992; McDowall, 2007).

Administratively, the upper Ottoman Kurdistan had varied political structures during the 18th century. These administrative units were divided into the provinces such as Pasha Sancağı, Hükümet Sancak, and *Yurtluk/Ocaklık Sancak*. Although the former was mostly ruled by a kul of Sultan who was often foreign to the Ottoman Kurdistan and administratively they were the highest ranked officials of the region in the eyes of the Ottomans, the others were mostly local noble people and they were carrying out the real power in the Ottoman Kurdistan in practice.

2. PASHA SANCAKS

In the upper Ottoman Kurdistan, roughly north of the Taurus Mountains, there were some Pasha sancaks that the Ottoman central government sent his envoys and attempted to control this very complex zone during the 18th century. The foremost representative of the Ottoman central power was the Paşalık of Erzurum, namely Erzurum Paşa Sancağı. The province of Erzurum mostly carried out this mission of policing the area as it happened during the 18th century. During this period, almost all of pashas of Erzurum had the title Vezir and it shows that the Ottomans used to prefer Erzurum as the strategic headquarter to this border region (Kılıç, 1997: 167). However, it does not mean that the pashas of Erzurum were powerful enough to intervene the affairs of the provincial local rulers.

Sancaks of Hınıs, Malazgird, Bayezid, Eleşkird and Diyadin was controlled by *the vali* of Erzurum during the 18th century (Kılıç, 1997: 64). The rule of these sancaks was left to the local rulers mostly as *yurtluk/ocaklık* and the title of these rulers was mostly *bey*. The governor of Erzurum was superior to these rulers but his power was not always enough to break the power of these rulers. For example, in

a *Hatt-ı Hümayun* document *Sancak beyi* of *Eleşkird* was put in jail and instead of him another person was brought to power by mutasarrıf of Bayezid, Ishak Pasha, in 1779 (BOA, HAT 29-1387). *The vali* of Erzurum, Timur Pasha, could not have a choice on this occasion. This case shows that even though the province of Erzurum was the headquarter to the region; *the vali* of Erzurum did not have enough power to control the whole vilayet. As we are going to discuss in the following pages, the conflicts of power occurred among the local rulers rather than between the Ottoman center and the local sancak *beys*.

Vali of Erzurum mostly played a role of being an Ottoman counselor to the Ottoman Kurdistan. Their ties to the locals were not close and *the vali* was the representative of the *Dersaadet* according to the local rulers. He supervised the state on the subjects of the upper Ottoman Kurdistan and even for the political developments emerged in the Iranian and Russian lands.³ Another example can be given for the late 18th century: there are some *Hatt-ı Hümayun* records that show that *Dersaadet* asks for *the vali* 's suggestion or vice versa in order to solve the question of whom was going to be authorized in Hınıs and Tekman, Veli Paşa or Ishak Pasha of Bayezid (BOA, HAT 1414-57771).

Another significant center for the Upper Ottoman Kurdistan was the province and paşalık of Van. Similar to Erzurum, their rulers mostly were not chosen from among the locals. Instead, they were strong pashas appointed from the center or from other parts of the Empire.⁴ The location of Van was almost in the zone of the Ottoman Iranian borderland and therefore, its rulers frequently received the title of muhafız together with being a governor under the title of Beglerbegi or Vezir.⁵ Pashas of Van were given the mission of controlling the domains of Lake Van and its hinterland. The southern half of the region was mostly consisted of hükümet provinces of Kurdish Emirates, Bidlis, Hosab, Hakkari, and Hizan (Kılıç, 1997). And the governor of Van was superior to these local Kurdish rulers. In the northern part of the Lake, while some sub-provinces were *yurtluk/ocaklık sancaks*, Bargiri and Ebege, others, such as Adilcevaz and Erciş, were given to the locals without mentioning them as *yurtluk/ocaklık sancaks* (Kılıç, 1997).

3 (BOA, HAT 185-8650) In this record, *the vali* of Erzurum recommended the Sultan another person to the muhafızlık of Van instead of deceased Demir Pasha. (BOA, HAT 27-1281) this record of vali of Erzurum summarizes his decision on a case for Iranian controlled Tbilisi.

4 (BOA, HAT 188-8987) In this document, Damat Seyyid Ahmed Pasha was the governor of Erzurum but he was appointed as nişancı until he remained in Istanbul. BOA, HAT 1401-56447 In this record, the center permutated the places of Bahr-i Siyah Bogazı Muhafızı, Erzurum and Diyarbekir governors.

5 (BOA, HAT 1463-52) Governor of Ahmed Pasha's son was given *the valilik* of Van together with title of Beglerbegi and received payelik of Rumeli Beglerbegiligi.

3. HÜKÜMET SANCAKS

Had we except a few years of intervention made by the Ottomans, Bidlis was ruled by the autonomous Kurdish local elite from the period of its conquest from the Safavid Iran until the Ottomans, ended its autonomous character during the 19th century (Öz, 2003; İnbaşı, 2007). As much as we can see from the Ottoman archival records, the rulers of Bidlis did not use an Ottoman highest military title, pasha; instead, they were called as Khan or Hakim. Dissimilar to the so called *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak* rulers, called as *bey* or *pasha*, the titles of Bidlis' rulers also indicate that Bidlis was autonomous in its own ruling system.

In contrast to the regular Ottoman sancak system, we are short of Ottoman archival records on the affairs of Bidlis. It does not mean that there were no rulers in Bidlis especially during the 17th and 18th centuries, but rather, the Ottomans did not intervene in the internal affairs of the province of Bidlis. This autonomous character of Bidlis continued during the 18th century and this was not an irregular or marginalized condition of an Ottoman rule as many historians wanted to see it. Adversely, the Ottomans did accept the power of the locals and they collaborated with them by using some political tactics. During the 18th century, we know from the documents that the Ottomans supported the members of the ruling family against each other in order to control their region (İnbaşı, 2007).

The Ottomans legitimized their own discourses when they wanted to intervene the control of the province by supporting another ruler of the same family. In a document when the Ottomans supported another member of the same family for the administration, the Ottomans mention that the new candidate has enough quality to bring order and protection to the subjects⁶, and therefore, he should have been supported. It would be too simplistic to think that the Ottomans only cared about the subjects of Bidlis and especially in a land where the Ottomans mostly clashed with the two big powers, Russia and Iran, and the local rebels. Protection of subjects and lands in this document is rather related to the discourse of the state that the imperial rule adopted as a legitimization of their intervention to these borderland lands. Although the tradition was to leave the rule of Bidlis to its native aristocrats since the Selim I, this discursive power let the center intervene the rule of Bidlis. Almost every year the *Khans of Bidlis* changed and the Ottoman documents regularly used the same discourse. It mostly occurred not only because of the Ottoman intervention but rather the intra-family clashes of the local ruling elite (İnbaşı, 2007). In these conflicts, the center provided a basis for these intra-family clashes.

⁶ “memleketin rabtı ve reayanın siyaneti hususunda” (BOA, C. DH. 321-16019).

The ruling hakims of Bidlis also controlled the nahiye of Muş during the 18th century and most of the lands of Muş were khash of Bidlis's hakims (İnbaşı, 2007). The documents are clear enough that the khans of Bidlis appointed their own mutesellim to Muş in order to collect their own revenues.⁷ However, the muhassıl and mutesellim of Muş, Alaaddin built his own power in Muş and his descendants became the *mutasarrıf* of Muş region after the 3rd quarter of the 18th century onwards authorized under the title of *yurtluk/Ocaklık*. From this period, we understand that Khans of Bidlis did not control the city after this period.⁸ During the early 19th century Muş administratively belonged to the vilayet of Erzurum and Bidlis became the sub-province of Muş and the khans lost their power as administrators.

4. YURTLUK/OCAKLIK SANCAKS

Even though the historians make strong distinctions between *yurtluk/ocaklık* and hükümet systems, the two were not so much different from each other in practice. It does not mean that a *yurtluk/ocaklık* administration was less autonomous than a hükümet system especially during the 18th century. Historians mostly failed to distant classification of the two system and they mention that while the latter was mefruz'ul kalem ve'l maktu'ul kadem⁹ and the former one was in more control of *Dersaadet*.¹⁰ The main difference between the two was that the *yurtluk/ocaklık* provinces were paying taxes to the central government and their lands might have been surveyed by the center. However, paying of this tribute was not mostly regular and it was often manipulated by the *bey*s of the *yurtluk/ocaklık sancaks*. If we exclude Adilcevaz and Erciş, almost all other provinces were *yurtluk/ocaklık sancaks* during the 18th century. Some of these sancaks are: Bayezid, Diyadin, Eleşkird, Hınıs, Tekman, Bargiri (Muradiye), Ebege (Çaldıran). All of the rulers of these *yurtluk/ocaklık* provinces were carrying the title of *bey* but some of them were also pasha.¹¹ If we return to the discussion of autonomous character of the *yurtluk/ocaklık*, we can give some concrete examples from the province of Bayezid where the rulers were officially inferior to *the vali* of Erzurum but more powerful in their region.

7 (BOA, C. Dh. 270-13478) This record summarizes that *mütesellim* of Muş, Alaaddin, was appointed by the khan of Bidlis, attacked the neighboring regions belong to Erzurum and Bidlis provinces.

8 (BOA, C.ML 668-27357) Şerefeddin Bey and later Maksud Pasha of Alaaddin became the ruler of Muş. After him the same family carried out the governing.

9 There was no tax registers and census in hükümet provinces, and no Ottoman bureaucrats intervened the administration of the province.

10 Historians mostly received this classification from the writings of Ayn Ali Efendi (Ayn-ı Ali Efendi, 1979, 30).

11 Province of Bayezid was one of them.

The town of Bayezid was one of the most significant centers of the Ottoman Empire in the border zone to the Iranian lands. During the 18th century, it was a *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak* and its rulers carried the titles of *mutasarrıf pasha*. Even sometimes the pashas of Bayezid received the rank (paye) of Rumeli Beglerbeğliği.¹² The rulers of Bayezid were powerful enough to include the territories of neighbouring *mutasarrıflık* and enlarge its lands towards another Ottoman city. The *mutasarrıf* of Bayezid, Ishak Pasha II, marched toward the province of Eleşkird, which was also another *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak*, and he killed the ruler and appointed his own relative to the region in 1779.¹³ Another *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak* of Hınıs/ Tekman, and later Malazgird in 1793 (BOA, C. ML 210-8665), were also controlled by Ishak Pasha II and he appointed his own sons to these provinces (BOA, HAT 202-10396). In both cases *Dersaadet* had to authorize these expansionist movements of Ishak Pasha after he already attacked these regions. With this level of power, it seems that the rulers of Bayezid were more powerful than the hakim of Bidlis since we do not confront an expansionist policy from the rulers of Bidlis. As mentioned earlier, the province of Bidlis had the chronic problem of intra-elite conflicts. However, the rulers of Bayezid stayed in power for long periods when they became *mutasarrıf* of the province. For example, Mahmud Pasha stayed in power between 1720-1768 and Ishak Pasha was the ruler between 1775-1799. Even though Bayezid was a *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak*, its rulers were more effective in controlling and enlarging their lands compared to the case of Bidlis.

What did a powerful ruler mean in the eyes of the locals can be asked as a legitimate question to understand the real power relations in the upper Ottoman Kurdistan? Historians mostly mention that the Ottomans applied the rule of law, judiciary rule, and separated it from the administrative rule, and this led the Ottomans control of far distant lands. From the point of locals, this suggestion must be meaningless if a ruler, such as Mahmud or Ishak Pashas, was in power. Such real local rulers even taken down an approved ruler of another province from the power and expanded their lands against neighboring districts. In the shadow of a powerful *yurtluk/ocaklık* ruler, it would be hard to think that a kadi can properly practice the rule of law. Therefore, the argument, that the Ottomans had judicial authority and this brought direct Ottoman control of the distant provinces, is a weak one if we consider the upper Ottoman Kurdistan during the 18th century.

At local level, what represented the real power was in fact the local *bey* whose power was approved by *Dersaadet*. The main conflicts were not between the center

12 Mahmud Pasha received this title. (Karataş, 2014, 21).

13 There are some contrasts between the sources: while some mention he put them to jail, other described that Ishak killed many of them. (BOA, HAT 29-1387) and (Karataş, 2014, 36).

and periphery; on the contrary, the real struggles in practice were between the local *beys* or among the members of ruling family itself. During the late 18th century, when the province of Muş became a *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak* in its own, Malazgird, Hınıs and Tekman became a land of conflict because these lands remained in the control of Emirs of Bayezid and Muş.¹⁴ The conflicts in Bidlis also show that the local disputes among the family members played more significant role than compared to the involvement of the *Dersaadet* to the local political developments.

Let us now look at other *yurtluk/ocaklık* provinces and see how the situation was there during the 18th century. Similar to sancak of Bayezid, Hınıs and Tekman were merged together as a sancak under the vilayet of Erzurum. Hınıs was the center of this province and the local elite families competed against each other to rule the sancak as *yurtluk/ocaklık*. According to the Ottoman archival records, there were some killings between these local families, Mahmud Pasha versus Aladdin of Muş, and later between Veli Paşa and Ishak Pasha of Bayezid during the late 18th century (BOA, HAT 193-9635). According to the documentation available, Veli Pasha was a local from this region and he requested this sancak to be given to his family members (BOA, HAT 1414-5771). However, since Ishak Pasha of Bayezid was more powerful, his sons stayed in power and they held the province under the *yurtluk/ocaklık sancak* (BOA, HAT 1414-5771). As we can see, even though Hınıs and Tekman was a close province to the pashalık of Erzurum, the rulers of Muş and the Emirs of Bayezid attacked each other in order to expand their lands against the other and wanted to empower themselves further. In the latter document, the record describes that Ishak Pasha was so powerful and if *Dersaadet* authorizes Veli Pasha and his family members to control the city, problems might have increased, and therefore, the center approved the rule of Ishak Pasha in Hınıs and its surrounding. In this case, we see that so called *yurtluk/ocaklık* rulers were often powerful enough to control the neighbouring regions within the pashalık of Erzurum.

During the year of 1785, Hınıs was bestowed to *the vali* of Erzurum as a khas after the demand of *the vali* of Erzurum to remove ocaklık status of Hınıs. In this document, Hacı Ali Pasha claimed that the local *Beys* oppressed the subjects (BOA, C.DH. 299-14901). However, a few years later Veli Pasha controlled the province again and *Dersaadet* had to authorize the rule of this local family. It seems that the governor of Erzurum wanted to change the administration system of Hınıs by claiming that the *beys* tyrannized the reaya and in this way he wanted to increase his revenues. Beyond the control of valis of Erzurum, Hınıs and Tekman was mostly confronted the involvement of the local conflicts of *beys*. Therefore, power rela-

¹⁴ Both rulers of two provinces were called as mir-i miran so that we should not limit the usage of Emir to the Hükümet sancaks. (BOA, C.ML. 457-18547).

ons in the province of Hınıs did not zigzag between the center-periphery but rather continued among the local *beys* similar to hükümet of Bidlis during the 18th century. A strong order of *Dersaadet* in the upper Ottoman Kurdistan provinces did not appear in practice contrary to the claims by many historians when strong voices of state-centered Ottoman documents were read carefully.

The sancak of Malazgird also was in a similar situation during the 18th century. Whether members of the same family or not, there were strong competition between the local *beys*, and the sancak was ruled mostly by a *yurtluk/ocaklık* system. During some periods, the province was administered as a regular Ottoman sancak, however, even in this, it was the local family *Bezyades* under the title of *Mir-i Liva* who ruled it (BOA, HAT 25-1238; BOA, C.TZ 163-8146). According to two Ottoman records, when the local rulers were carrying the titles of *mir-i liva*, they requested the province as *yurtluk/Ocaklık* for themselves (BOA, HAT 25-1238; BOA, C.TZ 163-8146). Nuh *Bey* of Malazgird for instance ruled the province from 1736 to 1750 until he revolted together with the *mütesellim* of Alaaddin, who was appointed by the *khans* of Bidlis against the imperial administration according to the Ottoman records (BOA, C.DH 65-3220). The Ottomans ordered other *beys* to tackle these two, and later, their lands were controlled by other local *beys* by the authorization of *Dersaadet* (BOA, C. DH 210-10477; BOA, C.DH 306-15257). However, a few years later descendents of Nuh *Bey* controlled the city again until Ishak Pasha of Bayezid taken the control of the province with the authorization of the Ottomans.¹⁵ Also, the son of *mütesellim*¹⁶ Alaaddin of Muş, Maksud Pasha, became the mutarassarıf¹⁷ of Muş and he and Ishak Pasha competed against each other in order to control the province of Malazgird during the late 18th century (BOA, HAT 25-1238). As we can see, similar to Hınıs and Bidlis, the local *Mirs* or *Bezyades* competed against each other over lands in order to expand their power. Ishak Pasha seems to have become successful during the late 18th century in these regions Hınıs, Tekman and Malazgird. *Dersaadet* sometimes decreased the rank and titles of these local rulers but the real conflicts occurred between the local power-holding families during the 18th century. Almost all upper Ottoman Kur-

15 (BOA, C. DH 289-14434 and BOA, C. ML. 210-8665) Mahmud Pasha, mutasarrıf of Bayezid and received the rank of Rumelibeylerbeyliği, controlled Malazgird after Nuh *Bey* was taken from the power. Therefore, Ishak Pasha was not the first ruler of Bayezid who attempted control the province of Malazgird, contrary, he wanted to pursue this power in Malazgird. According to Karatas, Mahmud and Ishak Pashas were given the authorization by *Dersaadet* to whom will be appointed to Eleşkird, Diyadin, and Malazgird. (Karataş, 2014, 22-23).

16 *Mütesellim* was the collector of tithes in the sub-provinces on behalf of the governor or local Kurdish rulers. Here, Alaaddin of Muş ruled and collected tithes on behalf of the *Khans* of Bidlis.

17 Mutasarrıf was a title for the Ottoman sancak rulers during the 18th century. Sancaks were sub-districts of an Ottoman eyelet/vilayet.

distan consisted of many Beyzades and all carried a similar mission of expansion of their powers. The success of *Dersaadet* was that there were high number of these Beyzades in the region and the imperial administration had the option to use one against other to carry out a policy of check-and-balance. If we ask why Ishak Pasha of Bayezid became more successful, probably the most appropriate answer would be that he got rid of his enemies in his own province in Bayezid and continued to expand his power at the expense of other local Beyzades.

What else would be the cause for the success of the rulers of Bayezid? It seems that the central government saw their relations to the rulers of Bayezid fragile since the province of Bayezid was near the Iranian lands in the border zone and the last powerfully Ottoman garrison castle was actually Bayezid. Therefore, the rulers of Bayezid, especially Mahmud (1720-1768) and Ishak Pashas (1775-1799) acted more freely and the Ottomans tried to keep them in the Ottoman side. In a document, the imperial administration emphasizes that there is a possibility that Ishak might have worked with the Iranians if he was not kept in a good mood.¹⁸ Together with this, the most important success of these mutasarrıfs was the process of eliminating their possible enemies. For example, Ishak Pasha killed the beys of Eleşkird, together with some 70 members of the elite of Eleşkird, and put his allied relative in power (Karataş, 2014, 36). The power relations in the upper Ottoman Kurdistan were not simply designed according to the Ottoman policies. Instead, the local rulers mostly paved the way for the development of their own powers in the region. Bayezid's fully controlled sancaks, Eleşkird and Diyadin, and their appointees to these administrations show that the rulers of Bayezid were significantly autonomous in political arena during the 18th century. If we return to our discussion we can argue that the so-called differentiation between *yurtluk/ocaklık* and hükümet systems was not the case in real politics of the region during the 18th century. Although there was limited Ottoman involvement in the hükümet sancaks and the *khans* of hükümet provinces enjoyed a great degree of authority, so-called *yurtluk/ocaklık* provinces held by Kurdish rulers might have been more effective, autonomous, and expansionist in reality. And the status of a hükümet or *ocaklık* did not totally remove the chance of an Ottoman involvement in local politics by supporting one member of the ruling family against the other. Taxation might be considered as a symbol of distinction between the two administrative systems, however, what made the locals more powerful and autonomous was less related to taxation but depended rather on the challenge the rules that the Sultan or vali of Erzurum already ordered.

18 The Ottoman record describes that Ishak Pasha might have submitted his loyalty to the Iranian side. If this would happen, the sancak territories would have become an Iranian land unless the Ottomans began to a war to regain the territories (BOA, HAT 16-713).

The northern shores of Lake Van had a similar position during the 18th century. Bargiri (current region of Muradiye) was ruled by a single family from father to son between 1696 to 1731.¹⁹ There is not much information available to see whether the same family held the rule of the province but what is clear is that Bargiri was also in the hands of a local noble family, whose rule was recognized by the muhafız of Van and later approved by *Dersaadet*. Together with Bargiri, Abaga²⁰ was also controlled by a local noble family, Dergüzinli Mahmud Paşazade Yusuf, after 1737.²¹ According to Derviş Pasha and Mehmed Hurşid Pasha, who were the heads of the Ottoman commissions for drawing the border in mid-19th c., Dergüzin was one of the important castles in the region which protected the area from the attacks and Abaga was ruled from this castle (Mehmed Hurşid Paşa, 1997: 238; Derviş Paşa, 1286: 140). Both sources provide similar information that until the late 18th century Yezidi Kurds ruled the area until they fled from the region because of the attacks of tribes and neighboring local beys. Both say that there was a tomb of a Yezidi bey and according to inscription on it; the bey controlled the *serhad-ı Van*. For Dervish Pasha, according to a *sicil* in Van, *Sheikh* Taceddin Şerif was the mutasarrıf of Abaga and the region mostly controlled via Mahmudi sancak (current city of Saray) (Derviş Paşa, 1286: 142-162). As much as it is seen from the available sources, Yezidi Kurds were in power until the late 18th century in Abaga. The title of *sheikh* is also a sign that Yezidi Kurdish rulers sometimes used. Mehmed Hurşid Pasha does not hesitate to state that other tribal or sancak rulers tyrannized Yezidi Kurds, *Yezidi ta'ifelerine zulüm ve teaddi eylemeye mübâşeret ettiklerinde*.²² The case of Abaga also indicates that since the region had good pasture lands for livestock breeding, all the local actors of the region attempted to capture Abaga. The financial concerns lie in the center of this conflict and again a *yurtluk/ocaklık* practice became a part of expansionist desires of local beys and tribal aghas.

Was there no regular Ottoman sancak administration in the upper Kurdistan during the 18th century? According to Orhan Kılıç, Erciş was ruled by *the vali* of Van after 1722 (Kılıç, 1997: 195), even though before and after this date there were local beys who became the head of sancak of Erciş. For example, before 1722 Erciş

19 According to these records the bey of Bargiri was Şeref died and his two sons Osman and later Ali became the sancakbey of Bargiri (Kılıç, 1997, 195-196; C.DH 236-11763 and BOA, C. DH 301-15029).

20 Abaga (or Ebege according to the locals) refers to the lands from Çaldıran to the southern foothills of Mt. Tendurek. Abaga always remained a topic of dissention between the two empires and the local tribes who submitted their loyalty to one of those states.

21 Between 1719-1740 Abaga appears as *yurtluk/ocaklık* sancak (Kılıç, 1997, 197; Kılıç, 2001, 193).

22 "Mahmudi Beyleri ve kah Van ve Bayezid paşaları dahi birer bahane ile bunları yağma ve talan edip kendilerinden esir almaktan dahi hali olmadıklarından" (Mehmed Hurşid, 1997, 238; Derviş Pasha, 1286, 137).

was given to Abulkerim Bey in return of giving 1000 kile wheat, and after 1728, another local noble Ahmet Bey controlled the city under the title of mir-i alay.²³ Adilcevaz also had the condition similar to Erciş. In 1709, *Mir-i Liva* Yusuf Bey petitioned *Dersaadet* that Adilcevaz was given him in perpetuity ber vech-i te'bid²⁴ and, he says, *the vali* of Van tries to capture the rule of the city (BOA, İE. DH 21-1958). Local beys paid annual tribute to *the vali* of Van when they controlled the city during the 18th century (Kılıç, 1997: 195). We should not think that there was only one *yurtluk/ocaklık* administrative unit in a sancak since there might be more *yurtluk/ocaklık* lands belonging to the other locals. In 1743, we know from an Ottoman record that a piece of land was given to a tribe as *yurtluk/ocaklık* after they emigrated from Iran (BOA, C. DH 73-3647). As mentioned above, there might be *timar* fiefs given to the local family members too. Similar to vali of Erzurum who requested to abolish *yurtluk/ocaklık* status of Hınıs, vali of Van also attempted the same mission to increase his wealth and the local *Beys* seem to resist against them. Historians mostly place the orders of *Dersaadet* in the politics of upper Ottoman Kurdistan and they also omit the case of centrally appointed governors to Erzurum and Van. They saw the activities of governors as the modern civil servants who only applied the orders of *Dersaadet*, doing nothing else. This approach misleads us about the realities of political atmosphere of the regional politics especially if the matter of subject is related to the Ottoman Kurdistan wherein centrally appointed valis also played a different role sometimes.

5. CONCLUSION

The upper Ottoman Kurdistan had far more complex political structure than some Ottomanists suggest for the 18th century. Local noble families, *beys*, controlled the region and the main conflicts occurred among themselves. *Yurtluk/ocaklık sancak* rulers sometimes appeared to be more powerful than a ruler of provinces administered as hükümet. That's why, the assumption that *yurtluk/ocaklık sancaks* were under more state control compared to those of hükümet seems rather superficial. At this point, *yurtluk/ocaklık* and hükümet sancaks should not be considered as two different administrative practices in real term. Also, *the valis* of Erzurum

23 Ahmet Bey petitioned *Dersaadet* to be given a fief probably to a noble local in Erciş (BOA, C. TZ 91-4529; BOA, AE.SAMD III 24-2279)

24 ber vech-i te'bid (in perpetuity) means that the governance of a person in a specific land was authorized in perpetuity from the imperial government. This also indicates that another terminology was used for *yurtluk/Ocaklık* system. "Ve bir bahşi dahi Ocaklık dur ki, hin-i fetihtе ba'zı ümeraya hizmet ve itaatleri mukabelesinde ber-vech-i te'bid arpalık ve sancak hassı tarıkıyla tevcih olunmuşdur" (Kılıç, 2001, 203).

and Van appeared to be less powerful in the region than the local *beys* in practice and they, too, often carried out their own personal agenda instead of acting fully in the name of the Ottoman imperial center. Multiple actors who urged for more lands and power in this area can be considered as a chance for the Ottoman government for the principle of balance of power among the local actors. Therefore, it is another problematic approach to think that the Ottomans always attempted to limit the power of locals. To the contrary, the Ottoman central government pursued the protection and even empowering the local power-holding families in order to practice the policy of check-and-balance in the region. Maybe more inclusive terminology should be employed to describe the all above mentioned practices together.

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