

## Constructing Imperial Authority: Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's Governorships in Erzurum and Damascus (1659-1661)\*

### İmparatorluk Otoritesinin İnşası: Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın Erzurum ve Şam Valilikleri (1659–1661)

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\* This article is extracted from my doctorate dissertation entitled "A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha", supervised by Gábor Ágoston (Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA, 2016).

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Submitted/Başvuru: 27.11.2024  
Accepted/Kabul: 07.01.2025

Citation/Atıf: Çalısır, M. Fatih. Constructing Imperial Authority: Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's Governorships in Erzurum and Damascus (1659-1661). *İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi-Journal of Islamic Review* 15/1, (March 2025): 185-210.  
<https://doi.org/10.26650/iuitd.2025.1592042>

#### ABSTRACT

This article examines the early career of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (c. 1635–1676, grand vizier 1661–1676) within the context of the seventeenth-century Ottoman provincial administration, focusing on his contributions to fiscal discipline, crisis management, and the consolidation of imperial authority in the provinces. Appointed by his father, the reformist Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (c. 1575–1661, grand vizier 1656–1661), Fazıl Ahmed Pasha governed the strategically important provinces of Erzurum and Damascus from 1659 to 1661, addressing pressing issues such as frontier instability, famine, and resistance from local powerholders. In Erzurum, he introduced tax reductions, oversaw infrastructure repairs following a devastating earthquake, and managed vital resources. In Damascus, he organized famine relief efforts, restructured local Janissary units and quelled rebellions to strengthen the imperial authority. This study places Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's administrative practices within the broader framework of the Köprülü reform agenda, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between central and provincial governance. It also explores Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's intellectual and cultural pursuits, showcasing the blend of scholarship and statesmanship in his career. Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's early administrative achievements not only bolstered his reputation but also accentuated the critical role of reliable and skilled provincial governors in maintaining the Ottoman Empire's stability during a period of significant upheaval. By examining Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's provincial tenure, this study offers fresh insights into center-periphery dynamics in the mid-seventeenth century and illuminates the enduring influence of the Köprülü family on Ottoman governance.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Provincial Administration, Köprülü Era Reforms, Erzurum Province, Damascus Province, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha

#### ÖZ

Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın (1635 civarı–1676, sadareti 1661–1676) erken idari kariyerini on yedinci yüzyıl Osmanlı taşra idaresi bağlamında ele alan bu makale, Paşa'nın mali disiplin, kriz yönetimi ve imparatorluk otoritesinin

taşrada pekiştirilmesinde oynadığı kritik role vurgu yapmaktadır. Babası reformist Sadrazam Köprülü Mehmed Paşa (1575 civarı–1661, sadareti 1656–1661) tarafından taşra idaresine atanan Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, 1659-1661 yılları arasında Erzurum ve Şam gibi stratejik öneme sahip eyaletlerde valilik yapmış ve sınır bölgelerindeki istikrarsızlık, kıtlık ve yerel güçlerin disiplinsizliği gibi hayati sorunlara çözümler üretmiştir. Erzurum'da görev yaptığı dönemde, vergi indirimleri, yıkıcı bir deprem sonrası altyapı onarımları ve stratejik kaynakların yönetimi gibi konularda etkin bir idare sergileyen Paşa, Şam'daki görev süresi boyunca kıtlık yardımını organize etmiş, yerel yeniçeri birliklerini yeniden yapılandırmış ve isyanları bastırarak imparatorluk otoritesini güçlendirmiştir. Bu çalışma, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın idari uygulamalarını daha geniş bir çerçevede ve Köprülü reform ajandası bağlamında ele alarak merkezi otorite ile taşra yönetimi arasındaki dinamik etkileşime dikkat çekmektedir. Ayrıca, Paşa'nın entelektüel ve kültürel faaliyetlerine de eğilerek onun ilim ve devlet adamlığını bir araya getiren çok yönlü kimliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın idari kariyerinin ilk dönemlerinde elde ettiği bu başarılar, yalnızca kişisel itibarını artırmakla kalmamış, aynı zamanda yetkin ve güvenilir taşra yöneticilerinin Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun çalkantılı bir dönemde istikrarın korunmasındaki önemini de gözler önüne sermiştir. Elinizdeki makale, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın taşradaki idari kariyerine odaklanarak on yedinci yüzyılın ortalarındaki merkez-taşra dinamiklerine ışık tutmakta ve Köprülü ailesinin Osmanlı idaresi üzerindeki kalıcı etkisine dair yeni bakış açıları sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı Taşra İdaresi, Köprülü Dönemi Reformları, Erzurum Eyaleti, Şam Eyaleti, Köprülü Mehmed Paşa, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa

## Introduction

In 1958, Leften Stavros Stavrianos observed, “No adequate history of this important family [i.e., the Köprülü] appears to be available in any language”.<sup>1</sup> More than sixty years later, this statement largely holds true. While recent scholarship has generated renewed interest in the Köprülü family and their reforms—leading to a number of chronicle- and archive-based reconstructions of individual biographies—comprehensive and contextual studies tracing the careers of the Köprülü grand viziers in their entirety remain limited.<sup>2</sup> Building on the recent resurgence of biographical approaches in historical research and the growing focus on the Köprülü reforms in Ottoman historiography, this article explores Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s (c. 1635–1676, grand vizier 1661–1676) formative experiences in Ottoman provincial administration. It emphasizes his fiscal prudence, crisis management, and efforts to strengthen imperial authority in strategically important provinces, situating these achievements within the larger framework of the Köprülü reform agenda.<sup>3</sup>

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s entry into Ottoman governance was facilitated by his father, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (c. 1575–1661, grand vizier 1656–1661), the influential grand vizier who celebrated his sweeping administrative and military reforms. At Köprülü Mehmed’s behest, Sultan Mehmed IV (1642–1693, r. 1648–1687) appointed Fazıl Ahmed as governor-general of Erzurum, a critical frontier province along the Ottoman-Safavid border, despite his youth and lack of administrative experience. Following his commendable achievements in Erzurum, Fazıl Ahmed was reassigned to Damascus, where he addressed various political, social, and environmental challenges that tested and demonstrated his administrative acumen.

This study places Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s provincial governance within the broader context of the seventeenth-century Ottoman political and social dynamics. Building on Rhoads Murphy’s

1 Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1958), 892.

2 Fehmi Yılmaz, “The Life of Köprülüzaade Fazıl Mustafa Pasha and His Reforms (1637-1691)”, *Osmanlı Arařtırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 20 (2000), 165-221; Selim Hilmi Özkan, *Köprülü Amcazade Hüseyin Pařa (1644-1702)* (Vezirköprü: Vezirköprü Belediyesi, 2011); Metin Aydar, *Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pařa: Kızıl Elmaya Adanmış Bir Ömür* (İstanbul: TİMAŞ, 2023); Christopher Whitehead, “The Early Career of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha: An Archival Reconstruction”, *Review of Middle East Studies* 57/1 (June, 2023), 73-97.

3 For recent studies examining the structural changes in the Ottoman government during the Köprülü era, see Özgür Kolçak, “Köprülü Enterprises in Yanova ([Boros]Jenő/Ineu) and Varad ([Nagy]Várad/Oradea): Consolidating Ottoman Power and Accumulating Family Wealth (1657-1664)”, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 37 (2020), 69-86; Georg B. Michels, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege: Ottoman Expansion and Hungarian Revolt in the Age of Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661-1676)* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021); Cumhuriyet Bekar, “‘The Ottoman Revolution of 1661’: The Reconfiguration of Political Power under Mehmed IV and Köprülü Grand Viziers”, *Journal of Early Modern History* 27/3 (2022), 224-253; Yasir Yılmaz, “‘From Theory to Practice’: Origins of the Ottoman Grand Vizierate and the Köprülü Restoration: A New Research Framework for the Office of the Grand Vizier”, *Review of Middle East Studies* 57/1 (June, 2023), 7-42; Elisabeth Lobenwein, “Perspectives on Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha’s (1635-1676) Grand Vizierate by Imperial Resident Casanova”, *Review of Middle East Studies* 57/1 (June, 2023), 98-120; Kahraman Şakul, “İmparatorluğun Yapısal Sorunları ve Köprülüler Siyaseti”, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Köprülüler Dönemi (1656-1710): Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, ed. M. Fatih Çalıřır (İstanbul: İbn Haldun Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2024), 39-63.

emphasis on the critical role of provincial governors, it examines Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's administrative strategies and highlights their significance in stabilizing the empire's volatile regions.<sup>4</sup> Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's early career not only laid the foundation for his later tenure as grand vizier but also helped the enduring impact of the Köprülü family on the administrative and political evolution of the Ottoman Empire, a period later known as the "Köprülü Era".

## 1. From Ahmed Efendi to Fazıl Ahmed Pasha

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, initially known as Ahmed Efendi, experienced a remarkable transformation in his career trajectory, transitioning from a scholarly path to one rooted in state administration. As a recognized member of the Ottoman scholarly elite, Ahmed Efendi began his professional journey by teaching and engaging in intellectual pursuits at various madrasas in Istanbul, including the renowned Sahn-ı Semân and Sultan Selim-i Kadîm.<sup>5</sup> His journey took a decisive turn when his grand vizier father secured his entry into the imperial administrative hierarchy by submitting a formal memorandum (*telhîs*) to Mehmed IV.

In his *Târih-i Sülâle-i Köprülü* (*The History of the Köprülü Lineage*), Behçetî Seyyid İbrahim Efendi provides a detailed and vivid account of the grand vizier's presentation of the memorandum to the sultan and the subsequent events.<sup>6</sup> According to Behçetî, after the sultan approved the proposal, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha personally conveyed the news to Ahmed Efendi. Breaking the established protocol, he rose from his seat to warmly embrace his son. He then formally announced the sultan's decision to elevate Ahmed Efendi to the rank of vizier and ceremonially presented him with a vizier's turban, symbolizing his newly attained status.<sup>7</sup>

Behçetî records that on August 21, 1659 (2 Zilhicce 1069), Mehmed IV formally appointed Ahmed Efendi—now Ahmed Beg—as the governor of Erzurum, granting him the rank of vizier during a ceremony in Bursa.<sup>8</sup> Initially awarded two horsetails (*tuğs*), Ahmed Beg was soon elevated to three, reflecting the significance of his new role.<sup>9</sup> Erzurum, a strategically critical

4 Rhoads Murphey, "Köprülüler Dönemi'ne Taşradan Bakmak", *Osmanlı Tarihinde Köprülüler Dönemi (1656-1710): Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 23-26.

5 For an overview of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's scholarly career, see M. Fatih Çalısır, *A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2016), 59-67.

6 Mehmet Fatih Gökçek, *Behçetî Seyyid İbrahim Efendi 'Tarih-i Sülâle-i Köprülü' (Transkripsiyon ve Tahlil)* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2006), 115. For an analysis of propagandist elements in Behçetî's chronicle, see M. Fatih Çalısır, "Alternatif Haneler, Alternatif Tarihler: *Silsiletü'l-âsafiyye* (Târih-i Sülâle-i Köprülü) Özelinde Bir Değerlendirme", *Osmanlı'da İlm-i Tarih*, ed. Zahit Atçıl et al. (İstanbul: İSAR Yayınları, 2023), 331-345.

7 Gökçek, *Behçetî Seyyid İbrahim Efendi*, 115.

8 According to Evliya Çelebi, Ahmed Beg contracted malaria during his journey, requiring a brief period of convalescence at Kadiyaylağı near Bursa. See Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 308 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu - Dizini*, ed. Seyit Ali Kahraman et al. (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999-2006), 5/146. See also Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2007), 4/1839.

9 Nazire Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke (1065 – 22 Ca. 1106 / 1654 – 7 Şubat 1695) (Tahlil ve Metin)* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2012), 191.

province on the Ottoman-Safavid frontier, presented Ahmed Beg—now Ahmed Pasha—with his first opportunity to navigate the complexities of provincial administration. This appointment, made when he was approximately 23 years old and without prior administrative experience, astonished many contemporaries, who found it noteworthy enough to document in their accounts.<sup>10</sup> The news of the appointment reached the Ottoman Armenian community in Istanbul, led by Eliazar Ayn'taptsi. Recognizing the moment of opportune, prominent members of the community petitioned Köprülü Mehmed Pasha for the right to use the St. James Monastery in Jerusalem. As a mediator, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha facilitated their request, leading to the issuance of an imperial decree granting the Armenian community this significant privilege.<sup>11</sup>

Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's influence was pivotal in securing Erzurum's appointment for his eldest son. This was not an isolated example of his strategic placements; in November 1658, he had similarly positioned his brother-in-law, Kibleli Mustafa Pasha, as the governor-general of Sivas.<sup>12</sup> Such appointments were central to consolidating Ottoman authority in Anatolia during a period marked by widespread unrest and instability.<sup>13</sup> Erzurum, with its imposing citadel and harsh climate, served as both an administrative center and a crucial bulwark against the Safavid incursions.<sup>14</sup> However, the city had a tumultuous history, most notably the prolonged rebellion of Abaza (the Abkhazian) Mehmed Pasha, who controlled it from 1622 to 1628. This troubled legacy led Evliya Çelebi to describe Erzurum as a “shelter for the Celâli rebels,” reflecting its reputation as a haven for sedition.<sup>15</sup>

It is plausible to argue that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's appointment to Erzurum in 1659 took place in the wake of another Abkhazian governor's rebellion—this time Abaza Hasan Pasha's

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- 10 Ziya Akkaya, *Vecihî, Devri ve Eseri* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi, Doktor Tezi, 1957), 200; Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdi Paşa Vekayi'nâmesi*, ed. Fahri Çetin Derin (İstanbul: Çamlıca Basım Yayın, 2009), 140; *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 5/146; İsâ-zâde, *İsâ-zâde Tarihi*, ed. Ziya Yılmaz (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti Yayınları, 1996), 57; Kürd Mustafa Efendi, *Risâle-i Kürd Hatib. Dördüncü Mehmed Saltanatında İstanbul*, ed. H. Ahmet Arslantürk et al. (İstanbul: Okur Akademi, 2014), 37; Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1839.
- 11 *History of Armenia by Father Michael Chamich*, trans. Johannes Avdall (Calcutta: Printed at Bishop's College Press, by H. Townsend, 1827), 2/397-398.
- 12 Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1808; Ramazan Aktemur, *Anonim Osmanlı Vekayinâmesi (H.1058-1106 / M.1648-1694) (Metin ve Değerlendirme)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2019), 111.
- 13 Rhoads Murphey, “Continuity and Discontinuity in Ottoman Administrative Theory and Practice during the Late Seventeenth Century”, *Poetics Today* 14/2 (1993), 424. Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 153. For a comprehensive overview of the decades-long intermittent turmoil collectively referred to as the Celâli rebellions and their devastating impact on Anatolia, see Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), and Oktay Özel, *The Collapse of Rural Order in Ottoman Anatolia: Amasya 1576-1643* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
- 14 Aşhaneli Mustafa Pasha's 1656 report reveals that the Ottoman governors closely monitored the military activities of the Safavids, reflecting the strategic vigilance maintained along the empire's eastern frontier. See TSMA, e. 851/94.
- 15 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 2/104. For an important study on seventeenth-century Erzurum, see Bilgehan Pamuk, *XVII. Yüzyılda Bir Serhad Şehri: Erzurum* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür ve Sanat Yayıncılık, 2006).

revolt in 1658—as part of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's efforts to reassert imperial authority in Anatolia.<sup>16</sup> Described by Mücteba İlgürel as the most significant *Celâli* uprising, the 1658 rebellion began with a mutiny of approximately 30,000 soldiers who opposed Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's reforms and grand vizirate. The insurgents marched toward Bursa demanding that the grand vizier be dismissed. However, Mehmed IV firmly rejected their demands, branding the rebels as servants of the devil rather than loyal subjects of the state. The revolt continued into 1659, ultimately ending with the execution of Abaza Hasan Pasha and his allies in Aleppo, orchestrated through a calculated plot led by Murtaza Pasha.<sup>17</sup>

The unrest of 1658 revealed not only the military and administrative fragility of the Ottoman Empire but also the ideological tensions within its structure. Many preachers and members of the *ulema* rallied behind Abaza Hasan Pasha, portraying him as a divinely inspired leader.<sup>18</sup> In response, Mehmed IV and Köprülü Mehmed Pasha adopted symbolic and practical measures to restate the imperial authority. In 1658, they declared a *nefir-i 'âm* (general mobilization) against Abaza Hasan, bolstered by a fatwa.<sup>19</sup> The following year, after quelling the rebellion in Anatolia, the sultan and the ruling elite traveled to Bursa, the empire's first capital, to restore imperial prestige.<sup>20</sup> Bringing the *Hırka-i Şerîf* (Holy Mantle of the Prophet Muhammed) from Istanbul, they paid homage to the tombs of early Ottoman sultans, acts designed to reinforce their legitimacy. During their stay in the city, they also took decisive actions. Prominent figures, including Arab Numan Efendi, the judge of Bursa, were executed for allegedly interfering in imperial affairs, as noted by chronicler Abdi Pasha.<sup>21</sup> Historian Nihâdî mentions that the number of people, who were executed for welcoming Abaza Hasan Pasha to Bursa the previous year, was more than twenty.<sup>22</sup> To demonstrate their determination to eliminate dissent, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha entrusted Bosnian Ismail Pasha with investigating and punishing those connected to the rebellion in Anatolia—whether they were soldiers, governors, scholars, judges, or even descendants of the Prophet Muhammed.<sup>23</sup>

16 “What the Köprülüs sought to achieve generally was an age of Ottoman renewal, which in their view, as well as that of many others, meant restoring obedience to rightful authority. The efforts of Mehmed and Ahmad in particular focused on restoring obedience in the provinces.” Malissa Taylor, *Fragrant Gardens and Converging Waters: Ottoman Governance in Seventeenth-Century Damascus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2011), 44.

17 Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdi Paşa Vekayi 'nâmesi*, 130-131; Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1813-1822. For a detailed account of this episode in Ottoman history, see Mücteba İlgürel, *Abaza Hasan Paşa İsyanı: Huruc Ale's-Sultân* (İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2023). For an insightful analysis of the rebellion's dynamics and its connection to Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's earlier administrative roles, see Whitehead, “The Early Career of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha: An Archival Reconstruction”.

18 Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1790.

19 Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1791–1837.

20 For an analysis of Mehmed IV's stay in Bursa in 1659 and the construction of a new palace to serve as his residence, see Mustafa Çağhan Keskin, “Bursa'da IV. Mehmed Sarayı,” *Belleten* 84/300 (2020), 585-622.

21 Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdi Paşa Vekayi 'nâmesi*, 138-140.

22 Hande Nalan Özkasap, *Tarih-i Nihâdî (152b-233a)* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2004), 46. The Chief Gardener Hasan Ağa was also executed in Bursa. For a list of items from his inheritance that were transferred to the imperial treasury, see TSMA, d. 2315, 33b.

23 Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1837; Gökçek, *Behçeti Seyyid İbrahim Efendi*, 113-114. For imperial

The imperial visit to Bursa in 1659, marked by public executions and overt displays of state authority, demonstrated the administration's resolve to restore order.<sup>24</sup> Köprülü Mehmed Pasha leveraged post-rebellion regulations not only to suppress opposition groups in Anatolia but also to bolster treasury revenues.<sup>25</sup> It was within this climate of instability and reform that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha embarked on his administrative career, paving the way for his eventual rise as the longest-serving and one of the most influential grand viziers in Ottoman history.

## 2. Ahmed Pasha, Governor of Erzurum

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha departed from Bursa to assume his new role as governor-general of Erzurum, succeeding Aşhâneli Mustafa Pasha. His journey included a brief stop in his hometown of Köprü before continuing directly to Erzurum. Upon his arrival, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha articulated his guiding principles to his steward (*kethüda*), Hasan, stressing his commitment to serving the state and its people with honesty and integrity. According to Mühürdâr Hasan Agha, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's seal keeper, the pasha asserted that his appointment was neither secured through financial influence nor driven by personal ambition for wealth. Rather, he regarded his role as a manifestation of divine will and approached it as a duty to be carried out with the same integrity and dedication as his father.<sup>26</sup> If this account reflects genuine governance rather than rhetorical flattery, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's principles were closely aligned with those of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha. Upon his own appointment as grand vizier, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha famously declared that the state required service, not grandeur, from its officials.<sup>27</sup>

In line with this ethos, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha instructed his steward to reduce taxes to half their customary rate, ensuring that provincial revenues reflected only the legitimate earnings of the governor-general. He also issued strict orders prohibiting the misuse of imperial authority

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orders sent to various provincial governors in Anatolia to capture the supporters of Abaza Hasan Pasha, see Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 6b, 21b, 22b, and 23b.

- 24 Şenol Çelik, "Evliya Çelebi'nin, Sultan IV. Mehmed ile Birlikte Katıldığı Bursa ve Çanakkale Boğazı Gezisi", *Bahkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 15/28 (2012) 140.
- 25 "Anadolu'da muhâlif ve eşkiya teftişine me'mur olan vezir İsmail Paşa..." BOA, *MAD*; 7326, 5. Köprülü Mehmed Pasha confiscated 47,000 sheep, 300 mares, 370 camels, and 17 mules from the former grand vizier Melek Ahmed Pasha, claiming that these assets had originally belonged to the rebel Abaza Hasan Pasha but Melek Ahmed Pasha had unlawfully appropriated them as office dues. See Robert Dankoff, *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman, Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 224. For additional records listing the confiscated properties of rebel leaders and others, see BOA, *MAD*, 7326, 8, 9, 20, and 51. Metin Kunt noted that Ismail Pasha's central task was to restore the fundamental order of Ottoman society by ensuring that individuals were removed from groups where they did not belong and reinstated to their proper roles. As part of his extensive inspection, Ismail Pasha also undertook revisions of the provincial registers, aiming to rebuild a stable and accurate basis for taxation in Anatolia. See, Metin İ. Kunt, *The Köprülü Years: 1656-1661* (New Jersey: Princeton University, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1971), 118.
- 26 Ebubekir Siddik Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih* (Sivas: Asitan Yayıncılık, 2013), 95.
- 27 Râşid Mehmed Efendi, Çelebizâde İsmail Âsım Efendi, *Târih-i Râşid ve Zeyli (1071-1114/1660-1703)*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan et al. (İstanbul: Klasik, 2013), 1/18. Gökbilgin noted that Köprülü Mehmed remained committed to this principle until the end of his life. Tayyip Gökbilgin, "Köprülüler – I. Köprülü Mehmed Paşa", *Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı İslam Ansiklopedisi* 6 (1955), 897.

to impose additional levies on the populace. Mühürdar Hasan Agha, who was serving as the *hazine kâtibi* (provincial treasury record keeper) at the time, noted that while previous governors had collected an annual revenue of 15 million (150 *yük*) *akçes*, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha limited collections to only 40-50 *yük akçes* during his first year.<sup>28</sup>

In *Telhîsü'l-Beyân*, Hezârfen Hüseyin Efendi provides detailed insights into the administrative structure and income of Erzurum Province during the latter half of the seventeenth century. He noted that the province comprised ten *sanjaks* and 5279 *kılıçs*—registered *timar* units that were indivisible and allocated in full. Among these, 122 were classified as *zeâmets* (or *ziâmet*), while the remaining 5157 were divided into *tezkireli* (documented) and *tezkiresiz* (undocumented) *timars*. The *sanjaks* under Erzurum's jurisdiction included Tortum, Mamrevân, Kığı, Pasin, Hınıs, Malazgird, Tekman, Karahisâr-ı Şarkî, and Mecinkerd. The provincial administrative center, *Livâ-i Erzurum*, was designated as the *hass* for the general-governor, yielding an annual income of 1,214,600 *akçes*.<sup>29</sup> This figure is among the highest in the Ottoman provincial system.<sup>30</sup> Fazıl Ahmed Pasha appears to have managed this substantial income with prudence. Evidence of this can be found in his acquisition of fourteen *bağs* (gardens or vineyards) on Bozcaada, in an area known as Birgosi.<sup>31</sup> These properties were originally owned by Seyyid Mustafa b. Mahmud but was transferred to state ownership following the Venetian occupation and the subsequent Ottoman recapture of the island in 1657, during a naval campaign led by Köprülü Mehmed Pasha. Because Seyyid Mustafa did not reclaim his lands, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha purchased them directly from the imperial treasury.<sup>32</sup>

28 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih*, 95. An imperial decree issued in 1671, during the grand vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, mandated the removal of specific taxes in Erzurum, describing them as an “extra burden” on the city's residents. This decree was inscribed on a marble stone, which is still visible on the wall of the Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque in the city center. For a full transcription of the decree, see İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, *Abideleri ve Kitabeleri ile Erzurum Tarihi* (İstanbul: Erzurum Tarihi Araştırma ve Tanıtma Derneği Yayınları, 1960), 233.

29 Hezârfen Hüseyin Efendi, *Telhîsü'l-Beyân fî Kavânîn-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Sevim İlgürel (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1998), 129-130. While Hezârfen Hüseyin Efendi recorded ten *sanjaks* in the province of Erzurum, ‘Ayn Ali Efendi noted in 1607 that the province had 12 *sanjaks* and 120 *zeâmets*. See ‘Ayn Ali Efendi, *Kavânîn-i Âl-i Osmân der Hulâsa-i Mezâmîn-i Defter-i Divân* (İstanbul: Tasvir-i Efkar Gazetehânesi, 1280 [1863]), 52-53. Similarly, Evliya Çelebi, who visited Erzurum in 1640, recorded that the province had 12 *sanjaks*. See *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 2/104. A previously unknown record on the administrative units of the Ottoman provinces in the seventeenth century also mentions 12 *sanjaks* for Erzurum Province. See *Mecmua, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi*, 3384, 91b. It appears that two of these *sanjaks*, *livâ-i Kozancan/Kızıcaan* and *livâ-i İspir*, lost their administrative status and were downgraded to *zeâmets* by the time Hezârfen wrote his work. Paul Rychart recorded that the annual income of the pasha of Erzurum in the 1660s was 1,200,660 *akçes*. See Sir Paul Rychart, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Printed for Charles Brome, 1686), 96-97.

30 Halil İnalçık, “Erzurum – Osmanlı Devleti'nin Erzurum Beylerbeyliği”, *Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1977), 4/353.

31 Other records also highlight the entrepreneurial personality of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. For instance, he bought twelve mills in Kamanice for 65.000 *akçes*. See Mehmet İnbaşı, *Ukrayna'da Osmanlılar: Kamanice Seferi ve Organizasyonu (1672)* (İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2004), 206.

32 Cengiz Orhunlu, “1657 Tarihli Bozcaada Tahriri ve Adadaki Türk Eserlerine Ait Bazı Notlar”, *Tarih Dergisi* 26 (1972), 69.

In 1070/1659-60, Erzurum experienced a powerful earthquake that inflicted severe damage, toppling several buildings, a tower, and substantial portions of the citadel walls.<sup>33</sup> Recognizing Erzurum's strategic importance, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha promptly reported the disaster's extent to the imperial center in Istanbul. In response, the Ottoman administration issued orders for the immediate reconstruction of the citadel, granting the governor-general authority to levy taxes on the populace to finance the repairs. However, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, committed to alleviating the burdens on the subjects, opted to personally oversee the restoration efforts and financed the repairs using his own resources rather than imposing additional levies. His swift and effective leadership ensured the rapid reconstruction of the tower and the citadel's walls, a feat that earned him commendation from contemporary chroniclers.<sup>34</sup>

During Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's tenure as governor-general of Erzurum, the Kiğı region in the southwestern part of the province—home to one of the empire's principal iron ore deposits—played a critical role in supporting Ottoman military operations.<sup>35</sup> In response to an imperial edict, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was tasked with supplying iron from this mine to meet the logistical demands of Murtaza Pasha, the governor-general of Baghdad.<sup>36</sup> The strategic importance of the Kiğı mine extended well beyond Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's governorship. In 1673, during a campaign against the Poles, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, now the grand vizier, issued an order from the military camp at İsakçı. He instructed Mustafa Pasha, the then-governor-general of Erzurum, to expedite the shipment of all recently cast cannonballs from the Kiğı site to support the army.<sup>37</sup>

On the Safavid border, Erzurum was not only a vital frontier city but also a thriving cultural and educational hub. When Evliya Çelebi visited the city in 1640, he recorded the presence of 110 primary schools (*mektebs*),<sup>38</sup> while other sources noted at least nine active madrasas, reflecting Erzurum's significance in education and intellectual life during the seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> During his tenure as governor-general, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, himself a former professor (*müderris*), actively engaged with the city's intellectual community. He regularly participated in scholarly gatherings, one of which led to his acquaintance with Vâni Mehmed Efendi b.

33 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhîrî't-Tevârih*, 95; Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyli Fezleke*, 207; Nicholas N. Ambrayes and Caroline Finkel, *The Seismicity of Turkey and Adjacent Areas. A Historical Review, 1500-1800* (İstanbul: Eren Yayınevi, 1995), 72.

34 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhîrî't-Tevârih*, 95; Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyli Fezleke*, 207.

35 On the Kiğı iron mine and the production of cannonballs in the province, see Rhoads Murphey, "Construction of a Fortress at Mosul", *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920) / Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920)*, ed. Osman Okyar et al. (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980), 163-178; Yaşar Baş, "Kiğı Demir Madeni ve Humberahanesi", *Turkish Studies* 6/4 (2011), 409-430.

36 BOA, *MAD*. 7326, 34.

37 Abdurrahman Şerif Beygü, "Köprülüler Devrinde Kiğı Demir Madenlerinden Yapılan Top Güllelerinin Avrupa Seferleri İçin Erzurum'dan Gönderilmesine Ait Üç Vesika", *Tarih Vesikaları Dergisi* 11 (1943), 335-336.

*Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 2/107.

38 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 2/107.

39 Pamuk, *XVII. Yüzyılda Bir Serhad Şehri*, 91-2.

Bistâm (d. 1685), a renowned preacher in Erzurum.<sup>40</sup> Their relationship deepened over time, and following Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's appointment as grand vizier, he invited Vâni Mehmed Efendi to Edirne and introduced him to Mehmed IV.<sup>41</sup> In addition to fostering intellectual connections, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha pursued his own scholarly interests while in Erzurum. He explored Arabic philology and acquired two treatises on metaphor (*isti'āra*), which were copied by Veli b. Mehmed.<sup>42</sup> These activities and interactions reflect Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's commitment to cultural and intellectual enrichment, even as he navigated the administrative and military responsibilities of governing a strategic frontier province.<sup>43</sup>

While familial connections could facilitate entry into the Ottoman imperial hierarchy, they were not sufficient for personal advancement. Sons of high-ranking military and administrative officials were required to prove their competence as skilled soldiers and capable governors to advance through the ranks.<sup>44</sup> During his tenure in Erzurum Province, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha appeared to have established himself as a competent and reliable administrator.<sup>45</sup> His effective governance likely bolstered his reputation, paving the way for further opportunities. After spending a year in Erzurum, his capabilities were recognized with a transfer to Damascus, a more prestigious and demanding appointment. This transfer was formalized through an imperial decree delivered by Şâtır Süleyman Agha from Istanbul.<sup>46</sup>

### 3. Ahmed Pasha, Governor of Damascus

Mühürdâr Hasan Agha recorded that upon Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's arrival in Damascus, the city was grappling with a severe subsistence crisis. In response, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha convened a meeting at his residence with the city's millers, bakers, and prominent notables. Although it remains uncertain whether he relied on a translator, his clear proficiency in Arabic likely enabled him to communicate directly with local elites. During the meeting, he instructed the attendees to ensure sufficient food supplies to sustain the city's population for several days. Simultaneously, he reported the crisis to Istanbul and reached out to Gürcü Mustafa Pasha, the former governor-general of Damascus and then governor-general of Egypt. Alongside his letter, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha sent a bill of exchange (*poliçe*) for 10,000 *guruş*, requesting

40 It appears that during his stay in Erzurum, Evliya Çelebi attended the sermons of Vâni Mehmed Efendi, whom he compared to Ebu Hanife, the founder of the Sunni Hanafî school of *fiqh*. *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 2/107.

41 Kürd Mustafa Efendi, *Risâle-i Kürd Hatib*, 37; Uşşâkizâde İbrâhîm Hasîb Efendi, *Zeyl-i Şekâ'ik: Uşşâkizâde'nin Şakâ'ik Zeyli*, ed. Ramazan Ekinci (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2017), 855.

42 *Mecmua*, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, 1452.

43 For archival records highlighting Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's management of financial matters in the province, see TSM.A. e. 303/51, BOA, İE. AS. 17/1627, and BOA, İE. ML. 11/991. A direct communication between Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and the imperial army is also documented in the records; see BOA, A.DVNS.MHM. d. 93/436.

44 Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 55.

45 Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, ed. Erhan Afyoncu, trans. Nilüfer Epçeli (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2011), 5/193.

46 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhîrî 'l-Tevârih*, 95; Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke*, 208.

the shipment of provisions from Egypt. Using the grain storage facilities established by the Ottomans in Egypt, Gürcü Mustafa Pasha dispatched approximately 50 flat-bottomed boats (*řaykas*) loaded with supplies within 10 days.<sup>47</sup> To facilitate the efficient transport of provisions, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, with the support of Damascus's notables, organized mules, horses, and camels to transport goods from the port to the city. He entrusted Küçük Yusuf Agha, one of his close aides, to oversee the distribution of food to the public at affordable prices.<sup>48</sup> The historian Silahdâr Fındıklılı Mehmed Agha noted that this decisive and compassionate response earned Fazıl Ahmed Pasha the enduring moniker *abü al-fuqarâ*, or "father of the poor," among the people of Damascus.<sup>49</sup>

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's efforts to combat famine and widespread poverty in Damascus extended beyond securing provisions from Egypt. According to Mühürdâr Hasan Agha, the pasha petitioned Istanbul to eliminate additional tax levies, specifically the *řariba* and *dashisha*, which had been imposed by previous governors in Damascus and its surrounding areas.<sup>50</sup> The imperial center responded positively to his request, issuing an imperial decree on December 4, 1660, that officially abolished these burdensome levies.<sup>51</sup>

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's disaster relief efforts were consistent with the classical Ottoman approach to managing shortages.<sup>52</sup> As Rhoads Murphey observed, the Ottoman tax system was designed to provide relief during times of scarcity through mechanisms such as reducing tax collection rates, granting partial exemptions, or issuing full waivers. Murphey argued that the Ottoman Empire's ability to ensure food security and meet the basic needs of its population played a crucial role in maintaining political stability and fostering the widespread acceptance of Ottoman rule across its vast territories.<sup>53</sup> Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's actions in Damascus were an example of this broader imperial strategy.

47 It appears that after receiving Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's report, the Ottoman court issued an order to Gürcü Mustafa Pasha to promptly deliver provisions to Damascus. A copy of this decree is recorded in a hitherto little-known *mühimme* register housed in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden (Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 6b). This register was likely transferred to the Archduke of Saxony's possession after the Ottoman defeat at the gates of Vienna on September 12, 1683. See Akdes Nimet Kurat, "Avrupa Arřivleri ve Kütüphanelerinde Tarihimizi İlgilendiren Bazı Vesikalar ve Kaynaklar", *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara 15 – 20 Kasım 1943, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1948), 670-671; and Hans Georg Majer, "Alman Arřivleri ve Kütüphanelerindeki Osmanlı Belgeleri", *Avrupa Arřivlerinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, ed. Yonca Köksal et al. (Ankara: VEKAM, 2014), 21-22.

48 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih*, 96.

49 Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke*, 244. See also Taylor, *Fragrant Gardens and Converging Waters*, 46-47.

50 Katib Çelebi recommended the removal of extra taxes to alleviate poverty among the subjects. Katib Çelebi, *Düstürü'l-'amel li-İslâhi'l-halel* (İstanbul: Tasvîr-i Efkâr Gazetesi Matbaası, 1280 [1863]), 138. During the governor-generalship of Mustafa Pasha in 1659, the central authority abolished a tax known as *kalemiyye* in the Damascus Province. See BOA, *MAD*. 7326, 49.

51 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih*, 96. This imperial decree was recorded in Dresden in Eb. 387, 14a.

52 Ottoman subjects in Behiřte, near Bitola, were exempted from paying taxes due to famine by a *firman* issued in 1660-1661. See BOA, AE. IV. Mehmed, 9840.

53 Murphey, "Provisioning Istanbul", 218.

In alignment with the policies of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, who sought to strengthen the central authority in the Ottoman Arab provinces, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha undertook significant efforts to bring the local Janissaries of Damascus under imperial control.<sup>54</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, these local Janissaries, known as *yerli kulu* (Ar. *yerliyyas*), had become dominant figures in provincial politics, wielding considerable influence as power brokers. Ottoman sources reveal that several hundred Janissaries were dispatched from Istanbul to Damascus every decade. However, this practice gradually fell into disuse because of administrative neglect and the political instability of the preceding decades. In response to the growing need for military personnel, successive governors began recruiting soldiers locally and financing their salaries through the provincial treasury. Over time, these locally recruited regiments amassed significant power, allowing them to resist the governor's attempts to regulate the province's financial resources. Seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Ottoman historians, such as Na'îmâ Mustafa Efendi and Silahdâr Fındıklılı Mehmed Agha, noted that changes in the composition of the Janissary corps pointedly reshaped the dynamics of provincial governance in Damascus.<sup>55</sup> Modern historians, including Colette Establet and Jean-Paul Pascual, have further explored this transformation, demonstrating how local Janissaries often lived outside their barracks and engaged in nonmilitary occupations to supplement their income. By acquiring orchards, vineyards, flocks, houses, and agricultural equipment, these Janissaries became deeply embedded in the local economy and society. Their integration frequently resulted in strong ties to the broader population, leading them to align with local interests and oppose centrally appointed governors. This alignment not only weakened the governor-general's authority but also complicated efforts to assert imperial control, as the *yerli kulu* increasingly acted as influential political and economic actors within the province.<sup>56</sup>

Ottoman sources provide detailed accounts of the mid-seventeenth-century insubordination of local Janissaries in Damascus toward the central authority. Both Abdi Pasha and Na'îmâ Mustafa Efendi recount that in late 1656, Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha directed Siyâvuş Mustafa Pasha, the governor-general of Damascus, to mobilize the local Janissaries in support of the Ottoman siege of Candia. The local Janissaries, however, resisted the order, claiming that their primary responsibilities were confined to maintaining the security of Damascus and ensuring the safe passage of pilgrims. They further stated that participation in naval campaigns

54 Taylor, *Fragrant Gardens and Converging Waters*, 45-46. Köprülü Mehmed Pasha also implemented a series of measures to suppress the rebellions led by the Janissary aghas in Algiers. See Tal Shuval, "The Peripheralization of the Ottoman Algerian Elite", *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge, 2012), 270-271.

55 Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke*, 184. Na'îmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'îmâ*, 4/1723-1724.

56 Colette Establet and Jean-Paul Pascual, "La société militaire damascène et la campagne analysées à travers les registres de cadis", *Syria and Bilad al-Sham under Ottoman Rule. Essays in Honor of Abdul-Karim Rafeq*, ed. Peter Sluglett et al (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 371-398. See also Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723-1783* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 26.

lay outside their traditional duties.<sup>57</sup> Faced with the defiance of the local Janissaries, Siyâvuř Mustafa Pasha appealed to the imperial capital, sending petitions and letters requesting an exemption for the Damascus Janissaries from service in Crete. However, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, noting the lack of cooperation, dismissed Siyâvuř Mustafa Pasha and appointed Murtaza Pasha as his successor.<sup>58</sup> Murtaza Pasha's appointment was met with an outright rejection by the local Janissaries, who began preparing to expel him from Damascus.<sup>59</sup> Because of his focus on the ongoing naval campaign against the Venetians, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha opted to dismiss Murtaza Pasha as well, replacing him with Tayyazâde Ahmed Pasha as the new governor-general. Despite the turmoil of the situation, Tayyazâde Ahmed Pasha succeeded in deploying 500 Janissaries to Crete. However, his tenure was later overshadowed by his involvement in the rebellion of Abaza Hasan Pasha.<sup>60</sup> In response to the persistent unrest and the entrenched influence of the local Janissaries, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha decided to send five new Janissary regiments to Damascus. This strategic move counterbalanced the power of the local Janissaries and reasserted the imperial authority over the province.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the volatile political and military climate in Damascus, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was entrusted by the central Ottoman administration to address the widespread issues among the local Janissaries. An imperial decree, dated September 1660, condemned the provincial Janissaries for misappropriating the region's financial resources for personal gain and neglecting their core responsibilities.<sup>62</sup> The decree highlighted that Damascus' Janissaries had traditionally been recruited from the Balkans and Anatolia to ensure their loyalty and effectiveness. However, due to lax governance, the ranks had become diluted with Arabs, Kurds, Druzes, and even unqualified children added to the military payrolls. This lack of discipline and cohesion among the Janissaries resulted in widespread insubordination and an inability to perform critical tasks, such as protecting hajj caravans from raids by neighboring Druze and Bedouin tribes. To restore order and reassert imperial authority, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was tasked with conducting a thorough inspection of the Janissaries in Damascus. His mandate included removing unfit personnel from the ranks and replacing them with newly dispatched, disciplined contingents from the Balkans and Anatolia. While this strict policy successfully strengthened the central authority and improved the security of pilgrim caravans, it also sparked considerable tensions. As Abdul-Karim Rafeq noted, these reforms ignited conflicts between the newly arrived regiments

57 The archival records indicate that the local Janissaries of Damascus did not participate in the Transylvanian campaign of 1068/1657-8. BOA, *MAD*, 7326, 42.

58 Na'imâ claims that there was a rivalry and enmity between Köprülü Mehmed Pasha and Siyavuş Mustafa Pasha. Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1726-1727.

59 For a letter written in Arabic by Eyüp Halvetî requesting support from Istanbul to establish order following the appointment of Murtaza Pasha, see TSMA, e. 748/89.

60 Abdurrahman Abdi Pařa, *Abdi Pařa Vekayi'nâmesi*, 121; Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1780-1781 and 1823-1824.

61 Kunt, *The Köprülü Years*, 116.

62 Dresden, Eb. 387, 4b. For details on the lack of safety for pilgrim caravans in 1659, see Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1834.

and the entrenched local Janissaries, who fiercely resisted relinquishing their privileges.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, the newly dispatched contingents, emboldened by their imperial backing, began exploiting their positions for personal gain, further intensifying the already volatile situation.<sup>64</sup>

The inclusion of unqualified individuals, such as children, in the ranks of local Janissaries in Damascus not only intensified the fiscal strain on the Ottoman central treasury but also exposed broader systemic inefficiencies. Addressing these financial challenges became a key focus of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's reforms during his grand vizierate. He implemented aggressive measures to streamline bloated government payrolls, optimize tax revenues, and enhance the efficiency of tax collection across the empire.<sup>65</sup> As Linda T. Darling observed that the re-establishment of order in Anatolia under Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's leadership significantly improved tax collection safety and the secure transfer of revenues to the capital. These efforts helped the central treasury recover from budget deficits, enabling the timely payment of Ottoman soldiers' salaries in undebased coins.<sup>66</sup> Building on this fiscal pragmatism, both Köprülüs displayed steadfast commitment to safeguarding the annual hajj caravans, a matter of profound political and economic importance for the Ottoman government. As Suraiya Faroqhi noted, ensuring the security of pilgrim routes served as an annual reaffirmation of the empire's Islamic legitimacy, bolstering its prestige among Muslim societies worldwide.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, a secure pilgrimage fostered fiscal stability and economic prosperity in the surrounding regions by facilitating trade and regional development. Recognizing these implications, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, with the sultan's authorization, implemented a series of infrastructural and social measures to secure caravan routes. These included the construction of a fort, an inn, a primary school, and a mosque in Jisr al-Shughur, Idlib, northeastern Syria. This social complex not only enhanced the safety of pilgrims but also provided essential services to residents.<sup>68</sup>

63 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V. J. Parry et al. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 278-280 and 304.

64 A decree recorded in the *mühimme* register reveals that the newly dispatched Janissaries collected extra money from the pilgrim caravans. See Dresden, Eb. 387, 5b.

65 Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 78.

66 Linda T. Darling, "Public Finances: The Role of the Ottoman Center", *The Cambridge History of Turkey. vol. 3, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 123.

67 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottoman Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994). For the indispensable role of the hajj caravans in the socio-economic life of Damascus, see Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Damascus and the Pilgrim Caravan", *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawaz et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 130-143.

68 Sultan Murat Topçu, "Suriye'nin İdlip İlne Bağlı Cısr-i Şuğur Kasabası'ndaki Köprülü Mehmed Paşa'nın Vakıf Eserleri", *Bilgi* 60 (2012), 237-256. Like Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, the Chief Black Eunuch Solak Mehmed Agha commissioned the construction of an inn and a castle in Ottoman Aleppo. See Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 13b. For an examination of the influence and power of the Chief Black Eunuchs in the mid-seventeenth century, see Jane Hathaway, "The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt: The Waqf Inventory of 'Abbas Agha", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37/4 (1994), 293-317. These construction projects appear to have been part of the Ottoman ruling elite's efforts to revitalize the declining overland trade in the Levant. See Morris Rossabi, "The 'Decline' of the Central Asian Caravan Trade", *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 351-370.

The Ottoman pilgrimage to Mecca was facilitated through two main caravan stops: Cairo and Damascus. However, the pilgrimage routes in Ottoman Syria were notoriously dangerous and were plagued by frequent attacks by the Druze and Bedouin tribes. To address these security concerns, the central Ottoman administration directed Fazıl Ahmed Pasha to take decisive action. Questioning the reliability of the local Janissaries, he implemented measures to reduce their numbers and replace them with newly dispatched units. These fresh Janissaries were strategically stationed at critical locations, including the citadel and the gates of Damascus, to enhance security along the pilgrimage routes.<sup>69</sup> While these measures significantly enhanced the safety and comfort of the pilgrimage, they also placed considerable financial burdens on the provincial treasury. As Suraiya Faroqhi has shown, hajj-related expenses rose dramatically, consuming 52% of total provincial expenditures in 1661–62, increasing to 70% in 1664–65, and fluctuating between 55% and 66% in the following decade.<sup>70</sup>

After securing imperial control over the local Janissaries and ensuring the safety of pilgrims and trade caravans, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha turned his attention to the management of the province's pious endowments. In September 1660, an imperial decree tasked him with addressing payroll irregularities within the pious foundation of Süleyman the Lawgiver in Damascus. Lax oversight by the foundation's trustees (*mütevellilerin 'adem-i takayyüdü*) allowed several Damascenes to improperly register themselves as *zıvvâr* (visitors) and *duâgûs* (prayer reciters).<sup>71</sup> These unauthorized appointments diverted funds away from their intended purposes, significantly reducing the resources allocated for the annual alms (*sürre*) to Mecca and Medina. To address these irregularities, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was instructed to conduct a thorough audit of the foundation's account registers, cross-referencing them with the original sealed *waqf* records provided from Istanbul. Unauthorized positions were to be annulled to ensure proper allocation of the foundation's resources.<sup>72</sup> While these reforms successfully restored—and in some cases increased—the funds available for the *sürre* processions to Mecca and Medina, they had unintended adverse effects on the local *ulema*. Many members of the religious elite who had benefitted from unauthorized positions were negatively impacted by their removal.<sup>73</sup> These measures agreed with the strict fiscal policies of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, who had similarly

69 Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", 278; Taylor, *Fragrant Gardens and Converging Waters*, 195-196.

70 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Ottoman Documents Concerning the Hajj during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *La vie sociale dans les provinces, arabes à l'époque ottoman*, ed. Abdeljelil Temini (Zaghouan: Center d'Etudes et de Recherches, 1988), 3/155.

71 Another imperial decree, dated July 1661, reveals that the account registers of the pious foundation of both Sultan Süleyman the Lawgiver and Selim I in Damascus had not been properly maintained or audited over the preceding four years. See Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 5b.

72 Dresden, ms. Eb. 387, 5b. It appears that, in addition to the account registers of the pious foundations of Süleyman the Lawgiver and Selim I, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha also audited and controlled the incomes of other foundations in Damascus. See BOA, İE. EV. 2782.

73 Abdul-Karim Rafeq observed that the economic status and prestige of the Damascene *ulema* declined during this period because of the suspension of certain stipends previously granted by the sultan. Rafeq, *Province of Damascus*, 34.

reduced superfluous salaries and positions of religious figures across the empire to streamline central and provincial finances.<sup>74</sup>

One of the most formidable challenges Fazıl Ahmed Pasha faced during his governorship in Damascus was asserting imperial control over the Sunni Shihabs and Druze Ma'ns, two influential and rebellious groups entrenched in the mountainous hinterlands of Sidon (Sayda) and Beirut. These regions, long-standing bastions of resistance against Ottoman rule, were shaped by complex interactions among ethnic, religious, and tribal groups that persistently contested imperial authority. From the outset of Ottoman control, the central administration faced difficulties in governing these areas, oscillating between punitive military campaigns and the policy of *isti'malet*—a conciliatory approach aimed at integrating local leaders by granting them administrative positions such as *mukataacıs* (officials responsible for tax collection) and other roles tasked with maintaining order.<sup>75</sup> Notably, the Ottomans had appointed the prominent Druze leader Fakhr al-Din Ma'n (d. 1635) and his son as *sanjak* governors to stabilize the region and secure a semblance of imperial authority. However, imperial decrees from the 1640s reveal ongoing challenges in tax collection, particularly from the *mukataa* of Safed, which consistently failed to meet fiscal expectations.<sup>76</sup> Even punitive expeditions, such as one led by Murtaza Pasha, the governor-general of Damascus, in 1649, could not fully suppress local resistance.<sup>77</sup>

In 1660, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was tasked by the Ottoman central administration with leading a military campaign against the rebellious Shihabs and Ma'ns. Mühürdâr Hasan Agha, an eyewitness to the campaign, portrayed the military enterprise in religious terms, characterizing

74 For details on Sheikh Salim, who protested the reduction of his income, see Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, 4/1728-1729. Several archival documents reflect Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's financial policy; see, for instance, BOA, AE. IV. Mehmed, 211 and 2433. During his grand vizierate, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha continued his father's policies. BOA, C. ML. 329/13502. For the post of *duâgü* and its abuses, see Mehmet İpşirli, "Duâgü", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1994), 9/541-542. For a list of *duâgüs*, *sayyids* (male descendants of the Prophet Muhammed), and scholars living in Rumelia who received salaries from the imperial treasury in 1651, see TSMA, d. 1991: "Defter-i mütekâ'idin ve duâgüyân ve sâdât-ı kirâm ve 'ulemâ-yı 'izâm der vilâyet-i Rumili". This register indicates that 2272 individuals received salaries from the imperial treasury, with an annual total of 10.666.800 *akçes*.

75 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 1/40. For the challenges the Ottomans encountered in governing the Druze region, see Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, "Problems in the Ottoman Administration in Syria during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries: The Case of the Sanjak of Sidon-Beirut", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24/4 (1992), 665-675.

76 TSMA, e. 5207/25, dated January 3, 1644, and TSMA, e. 5207/60, dated November 10, 1646, are cited in *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Osmanlı Saray Arşiv Kataloğu. Fermânlar*, ed. Ülkü Altındağ (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1985), 29 and 31. Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn noted that imperial officials faced their most serious and prolonged challenge to authority in Safed, more than any other part of Ottoman Syria. *Ottoman Lebanon and the Druze Emirate* (London: Center for Lebanese Studies in association with I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2004), 12-13.

77 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 3/54 and 63. Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-El-Haj observed that collection of taxes "without exceptions" was a key indicator of early modern Ottoman centralization efforts. See Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 13.

the Druzes as a heretical group who denied God and the Prophet.<sup>78</sup> The campaign quickly expanded into a large-scale regional operation. Fazıl Ahmed Pasha drew forces not only from his household troops but also from the Quds, Gaza, and Damascus.<sup>79</sup> Provincial armies from Sidon, Safed, and Beirut participated in the effort, reflecting the campaign's broad geographic scope. In addition, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha negotiated with certain Druze factions, securing their cooperation and enlisting an additional 3,000 soldiers.<sup>80</sup> According to Maronite Patriarch and historian Estefan al-Duwayhî, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha led a force of 15,000 soldiers in the campaign.<sup>81</sup>

Under Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's command, the Ottoman army adopted a markedly different strategy compared to İbşir Mustafa Pasha's unsuccessful 1650 campaign against the Druze leader Emir Mulhim Ma'n. Rather than retracing the previous route, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha strategically redirected his forces to Wadi al-Taym, the stronghold of the Sunni Shihabs, recognizing the need to neutralize this key base of resistance. To further consolidate control, he ordered imperial officials along the coastal regions to block the sea routes, effectively cutting off the Shihabs' avenues of escape and resupply.<sup>82</sup> The campaign was characterized by scorched-earth tactics, with Ottoman soldiers burning homes and pillaging villages to weaken the Shihab's support networks and undermine their capacity for resistance.

While the Sunni Shihabs retreated to the High Kisrawan mountains, the Druze Ma'ns attempted to avoid further conflict by submitting to Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's authority. They offered 500 *kese* (purses of silver) *akçes* as a payment to spare their villages from attack.<sup>83</sup> Fazıl Ahmed Pasha accepted their offer but also demanded prominent hostages as an additional guarantee of their compliance. However, when it became evident that the Ma'ns could not deliver the promised payment, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, acting on imperial orders, launched a second punitive campaign against them.<sup>84</sup> During this campaign, Ahmad and Korkmaz, the Ma'n leaders,

78 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih*, 97. Silahdâr Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa, who based his description of events in Damascus in 1660 primarily on Mühürdar Hasan Ağa's work, reiterates the same claims in his account. Karaçay Türkal, *Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa Zeyl-i Fezleke*, 244-246.

79 For details of the campaign from a European observer's perspective, see *The Chevalier d'Arvieux's Travels in Arabia des Desert; written by Himself and Publish'd by Mr. De la Roque... done into English by an Eminen Hand* (London: Printed for D. Browne, M. 1723), 79-84.

80 Mühürdar referred to them as *Aklılar*, or those who carried white flags. Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih*, 97. Stefan Winter argued that the *Aklılar* represented the Yemeni faction among the local Bedouins, while the other group, called *Kızıllar* by Mühürdar, or those who carried red flags, represented the Qaysis. Stefan Winter, *The Shiite of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40.

81 Al-Duwayhi, *Tarikh al-azmina*, ed. Ferdinand Taoutel (Beirut: Daru Lahdi Hatır, 1950), 359. For the life and works of al-Duwayhi, see Abdul-Rahim Abu Husayn, "Duwayhi as a Historian of Ottoman Syria", *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 1/1 (1999), 1-13.

82 Dresden, ms. Eb. 387, 6b.

83 One *kese* equaled to 40.000 *akçes* in 1071/1660-61. See Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2004), 2/248. Al-Duwayhî offers a different account of who offered what. See Al-Duwayhî, *Tarikh al-azmina*, 359-360. See also Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 13b and Winter, *The Shiite of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule*, 75.

84 Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 28b and 42a.

abandoned the region and fled.<sup>85</sup> To recover the unpaid dues, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha dispatched Ali Efendi, the *Defterdâr* (Chief Treasurer) of Damascus province, to collect the outstanding amount from the villages under the Ma'ns' control.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, he submitted detailed reports to the imperial center, proposing a new administrative strategy to strengthen the Ottoman authority over the Druze-dominated mountainous areas. Acting on his recommendations, the Ottoman administration decided to establish a new province, Sayda (Sidon), from the larger Damascus province. Toward the end of 1660, Defterdâr Ali Efendi was appointed the first governor-general of this newly established province.<sup>87</sup>

The establishment of Sayda as the fourth province of Ottoman Syria was not, as Steve Tamari argued, a recognition of Druze autonomy in Mount Lebanon.<sup>88</sup> Rather, it was a calculated strategic move to tighten administrative and fiscal control in the region, reflecting the ruling elite's determination to assert more direct and centralized authority over the Levantine hinterlands.<sup>89</sup> Al-Duwayhi highlighted the profound political, social, and environmental repercussions of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's 1660 campaign. He noted that the campaign aimed to reduce the Arab influence in the area through the creation of a new province. Among its notable consequences was the uprooting of thousands of mulberry trees in the Beqaa Valley and Wadi al-Taym, carried out on Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's orders, likely as a punitive and symbolic act against the local economy. Additionally, Defterdâr Ali Pasha, the newly appointed governor-general of Sayda, reportedly converted the church of Mar Jirjis into a mosque, further signaling the empire's intent to consolidate its authority and reshape the region's political and religious landscape.<sup>90</sup>

85 The Pasha of Safed later captured Korkmaz and ordered his execution. See Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 89a.

86 Winter notes that Ali Efendi was sent from Istanbul to Damascus to establish a new Janissary regiment during Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's appointment. See Winter, *The Shi'ite of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule*, 76. Defterdar Ali Efendi struggled to collect 300 *kese akçes*. See Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 54b, 55b, and 69a. For a petition sent by the Defterdar of the province to Istanbul in January 1660, see BOA, C. ML. 430/17424 and BOA, İE. ENB, 350.

87 Yücel, *Mühürdar Hasan Ağa, Cevâhirü'l-Tevârih*, 98; Chevalier Laurent d'Arvieux, *Mémoires du chevalier d'Arvieux... contenant ses voyages à Constantinople, dans l'Asie, la Syrie...*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Labat (Paris: C. J. B. Delespine, 1735), 1/396. This is the second time the Ottomans created the Sayda province, with the first being a short-lived administrative arrangement in March 1614 during the exile of the Druze emir Fakhr al-Din al-Ma'an.

88 Steve Tamari, "Territorial Consciousness in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Bilad al-Sham among Syrian Christians and Muslims", *Cohabitation et conflits dans le Bilâd al-Cham à l'époque ottomane: musulmans et chrétiens a travers les ecreit des crhinqeurs et des voyageurs*, ed. Salim Dakdash et al. (Lebanon: University of Balamand, 2014), 65.

89 For a detailed discussion and analysis of the 1675 *avarız* register, which encompassed all janissaries, sipahis, members of the *ulema* and the *sadat*—groups generally exempted from paying *avarız* taxes—see Malissa Taylor, "Some Figures for the Urban and Rural Populations of Damascus Province in the Late Seventeenth Century", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 35 (2010), 211-231. This important register was published by Halil Sahillioğlu. See *Şam Şehrinin XVII. Asırda Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapısı - 1977 Numaralı 'Avârız Defteri' ne Göre / Al-binya al-iqtisâdiyya wa'l-ijtimâ'iyya li-madînat dimashq fi'l-qarn al-sâbi'- 'ashar* (İstanbul: IRCICA, 2005). For a discussion of the Ottoman administrative strategies in the region, see Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus*, 2-4 and recently Yahya Koç, *Bilâd-ı Şam'da Osmanlı İktidarı ve Yerel Güçler 1700-1775* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2021).

90 Al-Duwayhi, *Tarikh al-azmina*, 359. In line with al-Duwayhi's account, an imperial decree reveals that Fazıl

During this period, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha also oversaw a new land survey in and around Damascus and implemented reforms to regulate the region's posting-station network (*menzil*).<sup>91</sup> Despite these efforts to strengthen imperial control, the challenges persisted. In 1074/1663-1664, a rebellion led by the bey of Lajjun disrupted imperial operations by seizing a shipment of black gunpowder en route from Egypt and harassing Ottoman officials.<sup>92</sup> About a year later, in May-June 1665, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, then commanding the Ottoman army in Belgrade, issued an order to Halil Pasha (governor-general of Sayda), Salih Agha (commander of the Janissary units in Damascus), and the interim governor of Damascus to organize a campaign against the fugitive Druze leader Ahmad Ma'n and his followers.<sup>93</sup> These incidents underscored the persistent difficulties faced by the Ottoman administration in consolidating its authority over the region. Despite the concerted efforts of Köprülü Mehmed and Fazıl Ahmed Pasha to stabilize the Levant, the region remained a hotbed of rebellion and resistance against the Ottoman rule.<sup>94</sup>

Echoing his scholarly pursuits during his tenure in Erzurum, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha took full advantage of Damascus's status as a prominent intellectual hub in the Islamic world while addressing the administrative and military challenges of the province. He continued to expand his personal manuscript collection, acquiring new works that reflected his scholarly inclinations. One notable addition was a copy of *Fetâvâ el-Timurtâşî*, a highly regarded Hanafî judicial text authored by Muhammad ibn Abdullah el-Timurtâşî (d. 1595). This manuscript, reflecting Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's interest in Islamic jurisprudence, was copied in May 1661 by Muhammad bin İsmail, a custodian of the tomb of Prophet Yahya within the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.<sup>95</sup>

Although Damascus functioned as the primary administrative and military center of Ottoman Syria and was essential for managing the hajj caravans, Aleppo held unparalleled importance for the region's economy. As the principal terminus for trade caravans along the Silk Road, connecting Asia and Europe, Aleppo served as an economic hub. Despite the upheavals of 1658, when Abaza Hasan Pasha, then governor-general of Aleppo, rebelled against the imperial

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Ahmed Pasha prohibited the settlement of Druze tribes in Beqaa region and barred them from engaging in agricultural activities there. Abu Husayn, *The View from Istanbul*, 64.

- 91 An archival document dated 1104/1693 refers to the land survey conducted by Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. BOA, İE. EV. 2782.
- 92 Ercan Alan, *95 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (Tahlil, Transkripsiyon ve Özet)* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Türkiyat Arařtırmaları Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2008), 18-19.
- 93 BOA, İE. DH. 4/402. Ahmed Ma'n, the grand-nephew of the celebrated Druze leader Emir Fakhr al-Din, was the last of the Ma'n *multezims* of the Shuf, Kisrawan, and Lebanese mountain district. For details on his turbulent political career, see Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, "The Unknown Career of Ahmad Ma'n", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 17 (1999), 241-7.
- 94 For a critique exaggerated scholarly views regarding the wholesale imposition of Istanbul's hegemonic control over the Arab provinces following Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's centralizing reforms, see Rhoads Murphey's review of Dror Ze'evi's *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996) in the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26/2 (November 1999), 342-346. The balance of military power remained in the hands of the local janissaries in 1675. See Taylor, *Fragrant Gardens and Converging Waters*, 208.
- 95 *Fetâvâ el-Timurtâşî*, Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi, Fazıl Ahmed Pařa, 673, 211a.

government, his revolt had a minimal impact on the city's economy.<sup>96</sup> However, his successor, Hasekî Mehmed Pasha, reportedly undermined Aleppo's political and economic stability through his abuse of imperial authority. In late May 1661, Hasekî Mehmed Pasha, along with his steward, secretary, and moneychanger (*sarraḡ*), was summoned to Istanbul. Upon their arrival, the sultan ordered their execution for alleged misconduct, which Abdi Pasha described as "conducting business with debased coins, causing significant disorder and turbulence in Aleppo".<sup>97</sup> During this instability, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was appointed governor-general of Aleppo, tasked with restoring order and stabilizing the province. However, before he could depart from Damascus to assume his new post, he was unexpectedly recalled to the imperial capital. This marked a pivotal moment in his rapidly ascending administrative career, as he was eventually appointed grand vizier following the death of his father on October 31, 1661.<sup>98</sup> His appointment as grand vizier, which a contemporary European observer described as a "political inheritance",<sup>99</sup> reflected a deliberate policy by the imperial dynasty to sustain the Köprülü reform program. This decision ensured continuity in governance and the consolidation of the central authority, thus reinforcing the empire's commitment to stability and effective administration.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's early administrative career demonstrates the significant influence of provincial governance in addressing the Ottoman Empire's mid-seventeenth-century challenges. Positioned in key provinces such as Erzurum and Damascus through the support of his father, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, Fazıl Ahmed played a crucial role in stabilizing contested regions and advancing reforms associated with the Köprülü vision. His tenure, despite his limited prior experience, reflected practical administrative strategies that sought to strengthen imperial control and effectively address local crises. In Erzurum, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha focused on alleviating fiscal burdens, restoring damaged infrastructure, and mobilizing the province's

96 Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City", *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, İzmir, and Istanbul*, ed. Ethem Eldem et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 35-36.

97 Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdi Paşa Vekayi nâmesi*, 150; Dresden ms. Eb. 387, 35a.

98 Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Abdi Paşa Vekayi nâmesi*, 150; Özkasap, *Tarih-i Nihâdî*, 48; Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 77-80.

99 According to Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a French traveler and enterprising merchant who was in the Ottoman capital during the early years of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's grand vizierate, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha left a "political inheritance" to his son by equipping him with skills necessary to manage imperial affairs effectively. See Tavernier, *17. Yüzyılda Topkapı Sarayı*, ed. Necdet Sakaoğlu and trans. Teoman Tunçdoğan (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), 146-147.

100 Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's letter to Çavuşzâde Mehmed Pasha on the ongoing Transylvanian campaign reflects this continuity in policy. See Doğukan Akkol, *17. Yüzyıla Ait Bir Münşeât Mecmuası (Ankara Milli Kütüphane, 06 Mil Yz B 280) (Değerlendirme-Transkripsiyon)* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2024), 142. Cumhuriyet Bekar rightly argues that the appointment of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha marked a revolution in the Ottoman administrative system, as Mehmed IV deliberately orchestrated a seamless transition between father and son to ensure the continuity of the Köprülü reform program. See Bekar, "The Ottoman Revolution of 1661", 252.

resources to support broader imperial goals. Similarly, in Damascus, he addressed pressing issues such as food shortages, unrest within the Janissary corps, uprisings by local factions, and administrative inefficiencies in managing pious endowments. These efforts aligned with the empire's overarching objectives of reinforcing central authority while addressing the persistent difficulties of managing diverse and often resistant provincial populations.

Renowned for his ethical governance, as reflected in his title *Fazıl* (virtuous), Fazıl Ahmed Pasha garnered the respect of his contemporaries and skillfully balanced local interests with imperial mandates. His career offers valuable insights into the broader dynamics of Ottoman provincial administration, highlighting the crucial role of effective leadership in maintaining imperial cohesion during a turbulent period. While his efforts played a key role in stabilizing critical provinces, they also revealed the challenges of navigating entrenched local power structures and the limitations of central authority in peripheral regions. As this study has demonstrated, analyzing individual administrators within their historical and systemic contexts provides a deeper understanding of the interplay between personal agency and structural forces in Ottoman governance. Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's experiences not only shaped his future leadership as a grand vizier but exemplified the practical implementation of reform policies during the "Köprülü Era." His career serves as a compelling case study of how provincial governance functioned both as a mechanism for imperial consolidation and as a space for negotiation between the central authority and its peripheries, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the Ottoman Empire's administrative evolution in the early modern period.

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**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

**Grant Support:** The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

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