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PROPERTY DISPUTE AND TEACHER DISCIPLINARY OVERSIGHT AT THE ESKİŞEHİR BOYS' RÜŞTİYE

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Abstract

In the Ottoman Empire, rüştiyes constituted the fundamental building blocks of the modern education system, shaped by the Tanzimat reforms, which assumed the dual function of preparing students for both idadî schools and directly for employment in the state bureaucracy, in line with the state's modernization policies. The Regulation of Public Education (1869) aimed to expand rüştiyes in the provinces, thereby laying the groundwork for the organization of modern education within a centralized system. In this context, the boys' rüştiye established in Eskişehir, a district of the Hüdavendigâr province, presents a typical example of a provincial school in both administrative and financial terms. The building constructed with public donations soon became the subject of a property dispute between the Ministries of Education and Finance; this situation highlighted the boundaries of financial authority between the state and the local community in the provinces. An examination of archival documents reveals the school's institutional structure through teacher appointments, disciplinary investigations, examination registers, curricula, and financial management practices. In particular, a disciplinary investigation against a teacher is noteworthy for highlighting the limitations of implementing modern educational principles in the provinces. The inadequacy of Darülmualimîn graduates, the shortage of financial resources, and the center-province tension in disciplinary practices are clearly evident in the Eskişehir case. The conversion of the school into an idadî in 1910 symbolizes Eskişehir's forward movement toward modernization during the restructuring of Ottoman secondary education.

Keywords: History of Education, Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye, Provincial Education, Ottoman Empire, Dispute.

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Eskişehir Erkek Rüştîyesi: Mülkiyet İhtilafı ve Pedagojik Disiplin Denetimi

Öz

Osmanlı Devleti'nde rüştîyeler; Tanzimat reformlarıyla şekillenen modern eğitim sisteminin temel yapı taşlarını oluşturmuş, devletin çağdaşlaşma politikaları doğrultusunda hem idadî mekteplerine öğrenci hazırlama hem de doğrudan devlet memurluğuna eleman yetiştirme işlevini üstlenmiştir. 1869 tarihli Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi, rüştîyelerin taşrada yaygınlaşmasını hedefleyerek modern eğitimin merkezi bir sistem içinde örgütlenmesine zemin hazırlamıştır. Bu bağlamda Hüdavendigâr vilayetine bağlı Eskişehir'de kurulan erkek rüştîyesi, hem idarî hem de malî bakımdan tipik bir taşra mektebi örneği sunmaktadır. Yerel halkın iane yoluyla inşa ettiği bina, kısa sürede Maarif ve Maliye Nezaretleri arasında mülkiyet ihtilafına konu olmuş; bu durum, taşrada devlet ile yerel topluluk arasındaki malî yetki sınırlarını görünür kılmıştır. Arşiv belgeleri ışığında yürütülen inceleme; muallim tayinleri, disiplin soruşturmaları, imtihan cetvelleri, ders programları ve mali yönetim uygulamaları üzerinden mektebin kurumsal yapısını ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle bir muallim hakkında yürütülen disiplin soruşturması, modern eğitim anlayışının taşradaki uygulama sınırlarını göstermesi bakımından dikkat çekicidir. Darülmuallimin mezunlarının yetersizliği, malî kaynak sıkıntıları ve disiplin uygulamalarındaki merkez-taşra gerilimi, Eskişehir örneğinde açık biçimde gözlemlenmiştir. 1910'da mektebin idadîye dönüştürülmesi ise, Osmanlı ortaöğretiminin yeniden yapılanması sürecinde Eskişehir'in modernleşme yönündeki ilerleyişini sembolize etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim Tarihi, Eskişehir Erkek Rüştîyesi, Taşra Eğitimi, Osmanlı Devleti, İhtilaf.

Introduction

The Ottoman Empire entered a comprehensive process of renewal and reform which began with the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (Gülhane Imperial Edict), known as the *Tanzimat Fermanı* (Tanzimat Edict), and continued to accelerate throughout the 19th century (Kaya Doğanay, 2011, p. 1; Patoğlu, 2018, p. 41;). One of the most profound transformations of this period occurred in the field of education; alongside traditional educational institutions, *rüştîye* schools (Ottoman modern middle schools / lower secondary schools) were established at the secondary level to meet the state's need to train qualified civil servants and to prepare students for military schools (Altınova, 2010, pp. 4-10; Kaya Doğanay, 2011, p. 11; Patoğlu, 2018, pp. 41, 385). The first rüştîyes opened in 1847, and with the General Education Regulation (1869) (Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi), significant decisions were made

to reorganize these schools and expand them throughout the provinces (Altınova, 2010, p. 47; Çakmak & Gökçeođlu, 2016, p. 42; Kaya Dođanay, 2011, p. 45). This regulation represents the institutional apex of Ottoman educational modernization and provides a systematic framework for the reform process initiated by the Tanzimat. Prepared during Saffet Pasha's tenure as Minister of Education, this regulation laid the groundwork for the organization of the education system within a centralized system across the empire by structuring it into levels: primary-rüştıye, secondary-sultanî, and higher education (Cücük & Dođan, 2020, p. 2477; Cücük, 2020, p. 290). The regulation stipulated the establishment of rüştıyes in settlements with more than 500 households, accelerating the spread of education and laying the groundwork for the emergence of a new intellectual class (Altınova, 2010, p. ii; Kaya Dođanay, 2011, p. 219; Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi, 1869, pp. 184-219). These modern educational institutions brought together classical Islamic sciences (such as the Qur'an and tajwid) with subjects from the positive sciences, including arithmetic, geometry, geography, and history, thereby contributing to the formation of a new educational standard (Kaya Dođanay, 2011, p. 294). This curriculum structure reflected a pragmatic understanding of modernization adapted to the Ottoman social and cultural context rather than a direct adoption of Western educational models (Cücük & Dođan, 2020). As the second level in the education system after the *sıbyan* school (primary school), rüştıyes aimed both to prepare students for higher schools such as military *idadis* (Ottoman higher secondary schools), the *Harbiye* (military academy), and the *Tıbbiye* (medical school), and to enable graduates to obtain direct employment as clerks in state offices (Altınova, 2010, pp. 411, 427; Kaya Dođanay, 2011, pp. 11, 20; Patođlu, 2018, p. 4). This dual function of the rüştıyes was a concrete reflection of the Tanzimat educational philosophy, which aimed to simultaneously meet the needs of raising modern individuals and the state's administrative needs (Cücük, 2020). As part of this education, the presence of "Conduct and Behavior" columns in examination and attendance registers reveals that rüştıyes did not merely assess academic success but also closely monitored, or attempted to monitor,

students' moral conduct and discipline (Patoğlu, 2018, p. 151). As Somel notes, this reflects one of the main objectives of Ottoman general education: the disciplining of society. Somel points out that the concept of *terbiye* (manners) includes not only the meanings of “raising” and “training” but also “punishment,” reinforcing the view that education was regarded as an instrument for instilling moral values (Somel, 2015, p. 86).

The literature on Ottoman educational modernization provides substantial information regarding the institutional history, personnel structure, and curricula of rüştiye schools. However, existing studies have generally focused on the experiences of particular districts such as Kilis, Milas, Akçaabat, and Tefenni (Akdeniz, 2025; Çakmak & Gökçeoğlu, 2016; Gülenç, 2024; Kısa, 2022a; Akdeniz, 2025; Kısa, 2022a; Gülenç, 2024). The importance of such micro-historical studies lies in their ability to provide deeper insight into institutional functioning, to uncover concrete information absent from the existing literature, and to make visible the problems encountered (Çakmak, 2017, p. 237; Patoğlu, 2018, p. 1).

This study aligns with broader historical and social challenges surrounding the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye's institutional existence. Indeed, the observations of Ahmet Serif, a correspondent for the newspaper *Tanin*, who visited the region in 1909, demonstrate that the structural problems observed in the rüştiye were also noted by contemporaries. Serif reported that the condition of the school was “far from heartening,” attributing this primarily to “the inadequacy of the teachers” (Çınar, 2005, p. 39). This observation confirms the chronic difficulties of provincial schools: the inability to recruit qualified teachers due to insufficient salaries, the limited number of graduates from the *Darülmüallimîn* (Ottoman teacher training college), inadequate buildings and poor sanitary conditions, and financial constraints arising from the dependence on community contributions to cover expenses (Altınova, 2010, pp. 58, 62, 214, 223, 349; Aydın, 2014, pp. 66, 75; Çakmak, 2017, p. 242; Çapar, 2023, p. 142; Çetin & Köse, 2025, p. 205; Tekdal, 2020, p. 393; Ürkmez & Tozlu, 2016, p. 109). Furthermore, despite being prohibited by the General Education Regulation

(1869), corporal punishment of students continued to be practiced in the provinces, making the maintenance of discipline a persistent problem for teachers and administrators (Altınova, 2010, pp. 326-329; Patoğlu, 2025, p. 133). Within this general framework, the establishment, financial administration, and institutional transformation of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye, founded in the Hüdavendigâr Province, have not been adequately examined in the literature. This study aims to fill this gap by presenting the school's establishment and operational trajectory, examining a disciplinary case in which a teacher was accused of physical abuse and insulting students -charges that ended with a *tekdirname* (warning) despite the case being deemed *adem-i sübut* (unproven) conclusion- and analyzing local and central administrative disputes regarding the ownership of the school building through archival documents.

This study aims to examine the conditions under which the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye was established, the balance between community support and central authority, the quality of instruction as reflected in examination registers and academic performance, and particularly the process by which the institution was transformed into an *idadî*. To this end, it seeks to answer questions concerning the extent to which complaints about the competence and discipline of teachers aligned with or contradicted the modern educational philosophy of the central Ministry of Education; the role of the local community in providing financial resources and the implications of this role for property rights; and finally, the institutional mechanisms followed by Eskişehir in the face of movements to abolish rüştiyes and merge them under primary schools or convert them into *idadîs* (Altınova, 2010, pp. 197, 263, 428). To achieve these objectives, the study employs a historical document analysis method based on primary sources. Archival documents from the Ottoman Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, provincial *salnames* (yearbooks), relevant legal codes, and periodicals were used as primary data sources. These documents were evaluated for chronological continuity and internal coherence, with multiple correspondences

on the same issue treated as complementary components. The data were systematically analyzed using content analysis, enabling the identification of recurring organizational patterns and thematic issues.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates, through the example of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye, how the Ottoman Empire's efforts at educational modernization materialized in the provinces and were reinterpreted by local dynamics. The examination of teacher discipline issues highlights the pressure to centralize and the difficulty of ensuring academic quality despite the Darülmüallimîn's teacher-training objectives. Additionally, by detailing the mechanism through which the institution was converted into an idadî, this study seeks to offer a methodologically grounded contribution to the literature of Turkish educational history by illuminating the local implementation practices of broader educational reforms.

1. Establishment and Physical Resources: Local Needs and Central Authorization

The establishment of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye in 1869-1870 (R. 1285) represents a concrete outcome of the Ottoman Empire's policy to expand the modern education network in settlements exceeding 500 households, as stipulated by the General Education Regulation (1869) (Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi, 1869, pp. 184-219; Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti, 1895 [1311], p. 33). In this context, the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye serves as a significant pillar of modernization within the Hüdavendigâr Province.

The construction and provision of the school building were carried out through aid from the local population rather than the central budget, as was frequently observed in the Ottoman provinces (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3; Altınova, 2010, p. 214; Çakmak & Gökçeoğlu, 2016, p. 60; Kaya Doğanay, 2011, p. 137; Kısa, 2022a, p. 156; Turhan Sarıköse, 2020, p. 3127). While school expenses in Malatya were covered by shops built in the bazaar by philanthropists, in Milas, the school building was constructed by local notables using their own resources (Çakmak & Gökçeoğlu, 2016, p. 60; Tekdal, 2020, pp. 369, 375). Similarly, the expenses of the

Kesriye Boys' Rüştiye were borne by the local community (Patoğlu, 2024, p. 372). The Eskişehir case thus confirms the tendency to sustain modernization institutions in the provinces through local participation and support.

However, in Eskişehir, because the building constructed with this local grant was registered in the name of the Ministry of Education, it could not be considered state real estate (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3). This situation laid the foundation for a long-standing dispute between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education regarding ownership and revenue sharing in subsequent years, particularly after the *idadîye* bond. As will be examined in detail in the following sections, this conflict became more visible during the school's conversion into an *idadî*.

2. Personnel Staffing and Discipline: Central-Province Interaction

The personnel structure of Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye, like that of other provincial schools, was determined by central administration appointments and salary regulations. Although the Ministry of Education aimed to prioritize the appointment of *Darülmualimîn* graduates, it was common to encounter difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers trained locally in the provinces (Altınova, 2010, p. 79; Kaya Doğanay, 2011, p. 240; Kısa, 2022a, p. 156). For example, the teacher appointed to the Tefenni Rüştiye being deemed inadequate, or the case of the second teacher (*muallim-i sani*) Tahir Efendi in Kesriye, who also served as a lecturer at the Ahmet Paşa Medrese due to insufficient staffing, reflects this chronic problem (Kısa, 2022a, pp. 158, 163; Patoğlu, 2024, p. 376).

The Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye commenced its educational activities with the appointment of a first teacher (*muallim-i evvel*), and the earliest individual recorded in this position is Hafiz Hasan Efendi. The trajectory of the school's teaching staff exhibits a pattern in which long-term continuity of a limited number of individuals coexisted with periodic vacancies in certain posts. The position of first teacher was initially shaped in the early 1870s by Hafiz Hasan Efendi; in the following years, the extended tenure of Mehmet Nazif Efendi established a clear sense of institutional continuity; by the early 20th century, the post was renewed with the appointment of

Cevat Efendi. By contrast, the positions of second teacher and third teacher (mualim-i salis) were marked by the periodic prominence of figures such as Hüseyin Efendi, Bekir Efendi, Numan Efendi, and Abdurrahman Efendi, while Hasip Efendi, Ali Rıza Efendi, and Ahmet Efendi served as instructors of calligraphy, and Mehmet Efendi, together with Mehmet Tevfik Efendi, held the position of porter (bev vap). In certain years, the first teacher post remained recorded as vacant, and auxiliary positions were carried out incompletely, rendering visible the structural difficulties encountered in ensuring staff recruitment and continuity in the provinces.

The personnel structure of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye evolved gradually from the early 1870s to the 1910s, shaped by appointment, transfer, examination, and inspection regulations. On 23 December 1872, First Teacher Hasan Efendi was transferred to the Karahisar-i Sahip Rüştiye, and Mehmet Fatih Efendi was appointed in his place, on the condition that he also teach *sülüs* (calligraphy). On the same date, the assignment of *rika* (calligraphy) instruction to the same person was considered, and the necessary procedures were initiated (BOA. MF.İBT, 2/42; BOA. MF.İBT, 2/43). On 28 December 1872, the transfer of Karahisar Rüştiye's Second Teacher Ibrahim Efendi to Boyabat was proposed. Still, due to the increase in student numbers in Karahisar, it was considered that he might continue in his post there. In the same correspondence chain, the transfer of Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye First Teacher Hafız Hasan Efendi to Karahisar as first teacher was also decided (BOA. MF.İBT, 2/58).

The staffing process continued with complementary steps between January 1873 and January 1874: the appointment of Mehmet Fatih Efendi as second teacher in Eskişehir was confirmed through correspondence with the *Şura-yı Devlet* (Supreme Council of State) and the Ministry of Finance (BOA. A.}MKT.MHM, 446/24). On 1 January 1874, Darülmualimîn graduate Mehmet Nazif Efendi was appointed first teacher, and correspondence regarding the procedure and budget aspects of the appointment was conducted with the Nizamiye and Finance authorities (BOA. A.}MKT.MHM. 472/72; BOA. I.DH. 677/47185; BOA. MF.İBT. 3/144). In

the same year, a merit-based selection was adopted for calligraphy instruction. In the record dated 12 July 1874, candidate Rasim Efendi's sample calligraphy (*rika*) work was deemed unsuitable, and another person with *hüsn-i hat* (calligraphy) was requested instead (BOA. MF.İBT, 4/104).

In the following years, the flow of appointments and transfers mirrored the general mobility of the provinces. A letter dated 6 November 1892 stated that although the return of Peri Rüştiye's Second Teacher, former Hafız Hasan Efendi, was approved by the province, it was no longer possible due to the transfers to Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye and the appointment of Cemal Efendi in his place (BOA. MF.MKT, 153/67). Thus, personnel movements were concluded in accordance with local needs and the implementation of existing decisions.

The long-term complaint and investigation process concerning Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye First Teacher Mehmet Nazif Efendi, conducted between September and December 1895, demonstrates the operation of a mechanism of provincial supervision over teacher performance. A complaint dated 29 September 1895 alleged that he had beaten and insulted students; the local report concluded with a lack of proof, and he was sent a warning to act carefully and diligently in educational activities (BOA. MF.İBT, 48/29). Rüştiye regulations strictly prohibited corporal punishment such as slapping, beating, or *falaka* (bastinado) (Altınova, 2010, p. 326; Patoğlu, 2025, p. 134). Resorting to such physical punishments or any form of student abuse could result in dismissal or regional intervention (Altınova, 2010, p. 332; Kaya Doğanay, 2011, p. 238). For instance, when Rasim Efendi of Çaycuma Rüştiye allegedly proposed a *fi'l-i şeni* (immoral act) to a student, locals declared they would not send their children to the school (Bilirli, 2021, p. 3845). Although the allegation against Mehmet Nazif Efendi could not be proven, the warning demonstrates the Ministry of Education's sensitivity to such behavior. This indicates that students' dignity and discipline were under central supervision while local communities actively intervened in cases of misconduct.

In another report submitted to the center during the same period, allegations were made about “lack of power and discipline”. When it was determined that the record belonged to Eskişehir, the investigation was referred to the Hüdavendigâr Maarif Müdürlüğü (Hüdavendigâr Education Directorate) (BOA. MF.İBT, 51/71). Similarly, Van Rüştîye’s First Teacher Abdullah Zühtü Efendi, was requested to be relocated due to “poor conduct and inability to fulfill teaching duties” (Altınova, 2010, p. 375). A comparable situation occurred in Çaycuma Rüştîye, where under-qualified teachers discouraged students and parents, resulting in declining enrollment (Bilirli, 2021, p. 3850).

Complaints in Eskişehir, when considered alongside subsequent merit-based reward requests, demonstrate that both the public and administrative authorities continuously monitored teacher qualifications. Indeed, 1899 marked a period when discussions of reward highlighted “hüsn-i hizmet, kadim ve ehliyet” (good service, seniority, and competence) for the same teacher. Correspondence from 28 February 1899 appreciated Mehmet Nazif Efendi’s performance and arranged a document for his promotion (BOA. MF.MKT, 551/18). Supporting memoranda from Kütahya Governorship and Hüdavendigâr Provincial authorities were submitted on 16 March and 10 June 1899, and the *tercüme-i hal* (official personnel) file was summarized and sent on 25 July 1899, including subsequent records of student numbers and certificates issued (BOA. MF.MKT, 551/18). This reward process provided a positive evaluation of the teacher’s long-term service without contradicting the 1895 investigation and warning.

At the beginning of the 20th century, central inspections regarding third teacher appointments sometimes conflicted with provincial staffing needs. In correspondence dated 12 June 1904, Eskişehir Boys’ Rüştîye Third Teacher Abdurrahman Efendi’s exam documents were sent to Kütahya Mutasarrıflığı; however, letters dated 30 June and 11 July 1904 informed the province that no appointment was possible due to the abolition of Third Teacher positions in provincial rüştîye schools

(BOA. MF.MKT, 791/63). Thus, central staffing policies prevailed despite local demand.

Teacher promotion and qualification processes were conducted through standardized examinations. On 26 September 1905, Second Teacher Ebubekir Efendi was examined in 14 subjects for first teacher; his combined scores in the Qur'an, Tajwid, religious sciences, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman grammar, Ottoman history, general geography, arithmetic, geometry, ethics, agricultural knowledge, calligraphy (hüsni-i hat), and composition were deemed sufficient (BOA. MF.İBT, 168/62). On 1 December 1906, he was officially granted the first teacher qualification based on this exam (BOA. MF.İBT, 183/102).

Merit principles guided other appointments as well. On 14 February 1906, Numan Efendi's candidacy for the second teacher position was evaluated, but the assembly decided to appoint Eski Zağralı Mehmet Kazım Efendi instead, and Numan Efendi's request was denied (BOA. MF.İBT, 173/73). Similarly, on 15 October 1906, it was stated that candidates' professional competence would guide appointments, and Hamidiye Agricultural School graduate Mustafa Vasfi Efendi could be appointed if he passed the exam (BOA. MF.İBT, 182/20).

Mass resignations and appointment requests were also notable. On 12 September 1910, Hafız Abdurrahman, teacher of the Qur'an and Arabic and Persian languages, requested, via examination, to be assigned to schools in Konya or Ankara, and his request was approved (BOA. MF.İBT, 298/50). On the same date, First Teacher Ali Cevat Efendi requested an appointment for Ottoman and Persian language instruction, but his request was denied because other candidates had already been appointed (BOA. MF.İBT, 298/54).

Records of assistant staff, such as porters, were systematically maintained. On 1 December 1909, following the departure of Porter Halil Efendi, Mehmet Efendi assumed the position, and the record was sent to the registry office (BOA. MF.İBT, 251/38).

In 1910, the agenda of converting rüştiye schools into idadî reshaped personnel flows. A decree on 13 September 1910 mandated the conversion of Mersin, Eskişehir, Gümüşhane, Taşlıca, Nevşehir, Zor, Basra, Bitlis, Muş, Siverek, Karahisar-ı Şarki, and Debre rüştiyes into idadî; teachers and staff were to be transferred, retired, or reassigned as appropriate (BOA. MF.İBT, 284/69). This practice differed in terms of personnel policy during the conversion process of some schools. Indeed, when the Antalya Rüştiye School was converted into an idadî in 1898, all teachers, except one, were directly incorporated into the idadî structure to ensure the institution's continuity (Kısa, 2023, p. 355). In the case of Eskişehir, the transfer and retirement conditions stipulated in the 1910 regulation are noteworthy because they reflect the central administration's strategy of employing high school graduates into secondary school staff and liquidating or restructuring rüştiye staff.

The decision in Eskişehir reflects the Hamidian policy of restructuring secondary education. Somel notes that after the 1870s, rüştiyes gradually lost their *raison d'être* and became part of the idadî system (Somel, 2015, p. 154). According to Fortna, Münif Paşa recommended closing rüştiyes in towns without idadî and transferring their resources to idadî, a tacit acknowledgment that idadî would assume the functions of rüştiyes (Fortna, 2005, p. 156).

Following the conversion decree, the staff lists were updated in alignment with the administrative transition. Although the official request for the staff roster of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye was recorded on 12 February 1910, a staff schedule had already been prepared a few days prior, on 6 February 1910. According to this schedule, the staff included: First Teacher Cevat Efendi (history, geography, science), Second Teacher Numan Efendi (Turkish, Persian), Third Teacher Abdurrahman Efendi (Qur'an, Arabic, religious sciences), as well as Ahmet Hamdi Efendi (civil information, calligraphy [hüsni hat]), İbrahim Efendi (arithmetic, geometry), Mihran Efendi (French, drawing), and service staff (BOA. MF.İBT, 265/34). These records verify that staff information was updated concurrently with the school's status con-

version implementation phases. Furthermore, a document dated 5 June 1909, submitted to the *Meclis-i Mebusan Riyaseti* (Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies), reveals that the idea of rewarding First Teacher Cevat Efendi by transferring him to Istanbul was deliberated. This correspondence was processed through various school directorates and administrations for further clarification and verification (BOA. MF.İBT, 234/97). This record is noteworthy as it illustrates the administrative mechanism of rewarding meritorious teachers in the provinces by transferring them to the center.

Taken together, the personnel history of Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye is characterized by: the completion of founding appointments and merit-based teacher selection for calligraphy instruction between 1872 and 1874; the cycle of transfer requests, complaints, investigations, warnings, and subsequent rewards between 1892-1899; the abolition of Third Teacher positions and operation of promotion exams between 1904-1906; mass resignations, exam-based appointments, and assistant staff changes between 1909-1911; the effect of the 1910 conversion decree on transfers and retirements; and the updating of the staff inventory. Thus, the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye personnel structure was shaped within the center-periphery interaction, governed by merit, order, inspection, and the operational necessities of promotion and conversion policies.

3. Economic Structure and Property Discussions

The economic framework of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye was shaped by salary allocations, travel allowances, miscellaneous expenses, and financial arrangements related to the rental value of the school building. In the initial phase, following the formation of staff positions, the regulation of monthly salaries and travel expenses, as well as the allocation of budgetary funds for instructional materials, drew attention. On 23 December 1872, it was reported that the salary of 330 kuruş designated for Mehmet Fatih Efendi, who had been selected as second teacher in Eskişehir, would be covered by the additional 150.000 kuruş appropriation made to the education budget that year (BOA. MF.İBT, 2/43). Subsequently, on 1 January

1874, it was stated that Mehmet Nazif Efendi, a graduate of the Darülmüallimîn, had been appointed as the first teacher with a salary of 600 kuruş and a travel allowance of 205 kuruş, and the budget category from which this payment would be made was specified (BOA. MF.İBT, 3/144). During the same period, the school's needs included the procurement of maps and the employment of a porter, for which additional funds were requested from the central administration (BOA. I.DH, 677/47185). In the selection process for the calligraphy (hüsn-i hat) teacher, the writing sample submitted by candidate Rasim Efendi was deemed inadequate on 12 July 1874, and it was decided that another individual proficient in calligraphy (hüsn-i hat) should be appointed with a salary of 80 kuruş (BOA. MF.İBT, 4/104).

The economic structure was not limited to salary payments but also included provisions for the families of deceased teachers. A record of the Şura-yı Devlet dated 5 January 1897 states that, following the death of Second Teacher Hüseyin Efendi, an allowance of 180 kuruş was granted to his wife and children (BOA. SD, 951/59). Similarly, in a document dated 26 November 1901, it was proposed that, upon his death, the family of First Teacher Mehmet Nazif Efendi be allocated a salary of 107 kuruş (BOA. SD, 999/81). These records indicate that a form of financial support akin to social security was also provided to the families of rüştiye teachers in the provinces.

At the beginning of the 20th century, one of the most debated issues concerning the school's budget was the miscellaneous expenses. In the record dated 27 June 1905, in accordance with the Ministry of Education's decision to "reduce all expenditures by 20%," it was requested that the expenses of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye be reduced to 258 kuruş; however, it was reported that the school required 500 kuruş for heating during the winter, and thus the reduced amount was insufficient (BOA. MF.MKT, 879/64). In a memorandum prepared on 22 July 1905, upon request, it was noted that the number of students at the school was high and that an increase in the appropriation was therefore demanded (BOA. MF.MKT, 660/5). Similar financial difficulties, particularly delays in teacher salaries, were observed in the

Bitlis and Rhodes Girls' Rüştıyes (Patođlu, 2025, p. 103). As a result of the correspondence conducted in Eskişehir, the allocation was first increased to 400 kuruş and subsequently to 500 kuruş (BOA. MF.MKT, 660/5). This demonstrates that essential expenses such as fuel and stationery were included in the school's budget.

Special budgetary arrangements were also made concerning the staffing structure. A record dated 24 October 1905 states that the position of third teacher in provincial rüştıyes had generally been abolished; however, this position was retained at the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştıye due to the school's significance (BOA. MF.İBT, 169/98). This practice is noteworthy as it reflects both the large number of students and the school's central role within the province. Furthermore, the teacher promotion was tied to their examination performance, and salary and title appointments were made accordingly. Indeed, in a record dated 26 September 1905, it was noted that Second Teacher Ebubekir Efendi, having obtained high scores in fourteen subjects, was deemed qualified for the position of first teacher, and on 1 December 1906, he was issued a certificate of competence (BOA. MF.İBT, 168/62; BOA. MF.İBT, 183/102).

Petitions requesting salary increases also appear in the archival records. In his petition dated 3 June 1909, Ali Cevat Efendi requested that his salary be increased to 800 kuruş, citing his twenty years of service and financial hardship; however, this request was rejected because "a raise would not be possible without budget approval," and the petition was filed without action (BOA. MF.İBT, 234/113; BOA. MF.İBT, 234/128).

Another component of the school's economic structure related to the use of the existing rüştıye building as a source of income following the conversion of rüştıyes into idadıs. A document dated 6 November 1912 reported that the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştıye, built with public donations, had been rented as a government office for 400 kuruş, and that the local education commission collected the income. However, the Kütahya Accounting Office argued that the building should be classified as state property and that the income should not be allocated to education. In response,

the Ministry of Finance stated that the school had been constructed with public contributions and therefore fell within the education budget. In the subsequent correspondence between the Treasury and the Ministry of Finance, the issue of ownership and revenue allocation remained contested; as no resolution was reached, the file was referred for inspection and review (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3).

Thus, the economic structure of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye was shaped by factors such as the determination of teacher salaries, appropriations for miscellaneous expenses, petitions for salary increases contingent upon budget approval, and the use of the school building as a source of revenue. This situation illustrates that both local needs and the strict oversight of the central administration played a decisive role in the financial functioning of provincial rüştiyes.

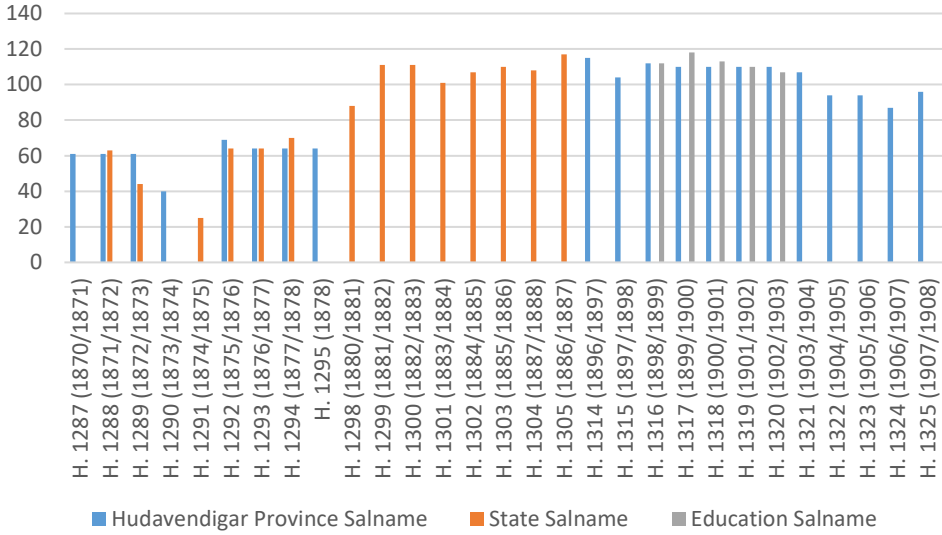
4. Education-Training Activities and Institutional Transformation

4.1. Implementation of the Central Curriculum

One of the most salient aspects of educational activities at the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye was the procurement of instructional materials and the provision of basic school equipment. Toward the end of 1875, the books and booklets requested by the provincial administration were placed in a crate and dispatched to the school via Mudanya, indicating that provincial schools relied on central channels to obtain essential teaching tools and supplies (BOA. MF.İBT, 8/6). In subsequent years, particularly in the records dated 1885, the lists sent directly by the first teacher to the Ministry of Education detail the rüştiye's material needs. These lists included maps of Asia and America, a globe, textbooks on geography, history, geometry, and arithmetic, Arabic and Persian grammar books, an ethics booklet, works on useful information, and blank diploma forms. Taken together, this material profile suggests a curriculum composed of language instruction (Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian), mathematical and scientific subjects such as geography, history, mathematics, and geometry, as well as moral education, hygiene, and calligraphy (BOA. MF.İBT, 18/83).

From the 1890s onward, student attendance at the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye was systematically monitored, and attendance tables prepared for this purpose were regularly submitted to the Ministry of Education. Indeed, in 1894, the attendance tables prepared by the Hüdavendigâr Province Directorate of Education were forwarded to the center. In the same year, the examination tables proceeded through the administrative chain -from the Kütahya Governorship to the provincial authorities and then to the ministry- thereby giving the recording of examination results a more systematic character (BOA. MF.İBT, 41/118; BOA. MF.İBT, 42/5). At the beginning of 1895, the attendance tables for 1894 were delivered to the central archival repository and formally archived (BOA. MF.İBT, 42/5). Subsequent documents from 1896 show that the examination tables of many rüştiyes, including the one in Eskişehir, were submitted to the Ministry, demonstrating that the educational activities of these schools were subject to central oversight (BOA. MF.İBT, 59/6).

Changes in student numbers also constitute an important indicator for assessing the educational activities of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye. According to the salnames, the school enrolled approximately sixty students in the early 1870s, a figure that dropped significantly in 1874 but rose again within a few years. In the 1880s, the state salnames reported that the school had more than 100 students, suggesting an increase in the institution's appeal within the city. Data from the Ministry of Education salnames corroborate this trend. The fluctuations in student numbers over the years can be interpreted as concrete reflections of both regional conditions and the impact of central educational policies on provincial schools. The following figure illustrates this development based on numerical data compiled from various salnames.

Figure 1: Student Enrollment at the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye According to the Salnames.

Source: Salnâme-i Vilâyet-i Hüdâvendigâr [SVH], 1287, p. 139; 1288, p. 108; 1289, p. 103; 1290, p. 115; 1292, p. 121; 1293, p. 121; 1294, p. 118; 1295, p. 113; 1314, p. 415; 1315, p. 304; 1316, p. 434; 1317, p. 330; 1318, p. 328; 1319, p. 340; 1320, p. 354; 1321, p. 256; 1322, p. 332; 1323, p. 344; 1324, p. 590; 1325, p. 331; SDÂO, 1288, p. 143; 1289, p. 236; 1291, p. 214; 1292, p. 153; 1293, p. 156; 1294, p. 524; 1298, p. 284; 1299, p. 270; 1300, p. 205; 1301, p. 388; 1302, p. 410; 1303, p. 332; 1304, p. 319; 1305, p. 245; Salnâme-i Nezâret-i Maârif-i Umûmiye [SNMU], 1316, p. 1033; 1317, p. 1147; 1318, p. 1284; 1319, p. 559; 1320, p. 476.

Examinations in this period acquired not only a pedagogical function but also a symbolic and public character. In 1902, it was announced that examinations would be held for the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye, the attached *iptidai* (primary) school, and the Gülşen-i Marifet İnas (girls') İptidai School. On this occasion, official invitations were prepared, and an announcement was submitted to the Directorate of Domestic Press (BOA. MF.MKT, 660/5). These records indicate that examinations had become ceremonial events in the provinces, attracting the attention of various segments of local society.

The most concrete documents reflecting the quality of educational activity are the examination tables. The 1904 examination table of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye sets out the class program in detail. The table includes courses such as

Qur'an recitation, tajwid, religious sciences, ethics, reading, dictation, grammar, Arabic, Persian, arithmetic, geometry, geography, Ottoman history, agricultural knowledge, calligraphy (*hüsn-i hat*), drawing, and hygiene. In addition, the sections titled *tavır ve hareket* (conduct and behavior) and *mülâhazat* (remarks) show that students' discipline and moral comporment were also evaluated. The results list students who graduated with a diploma, those required to complete remedial work, and those who failed the class (BOA. MF.İBT, 158/63). Records from 1905 show the same structure maintained in standardized form, with high-achieving students receiving awards and diplomas, while unsuccessful students were subjected to remedial or retention practices (BOA. MF.İBT, 163/28).

The disciplinary status of students during the educational process is also explicitly recorded in the documents. The "tavır ve hareket" column in the examination tables indicates that students' moral behavior outside the classroom was considered a component of academic success (BOA. MF.İBT, 158/63; BOA. MF.İBT, 163/28; Kısa, 2022a, p. 163). This finding parallels the observation that in Tefenni, student performance in religious sciences was higher than in the positive sciences (Kısa, 2022a, pp. 151, 163). Moreover, the 1895 investigation into First Teacher Mehmet Nazif Efendi, following complaints that he had beaten and insulted students, and the petitions defending his diligence and moral character, demonstrate that disciplinary oversight applied not only to students but also to teachers (BOA. MF.İBT, 48/29; BOA. MF.İBT, 183/102).

Overall, educational activities at the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye began in the late 1870s with the provision of teaching materials; became institutionalized in the 1890s with the integration of attendance and examination tables into the central reporting system; and matured in the 1900s as examinations acquired a public dimension and the evaluation of academic performance became integrated with behavioral assessment. This trajectory shows that provincial rüştiyes developed under the supervision of the central administration not only in curriculum but also in discipline, representation, and social legitimacy.

4.2. The Process of Converting Rüştiye's into İdadî

At the beginning of the 20th century, central reforms aimed at either integrating the rüştiyes into the iptidai system or converting them into idadîs were implemented in Eskişehir by converting them to idadî status (Kaya Doğanay, 2011, p. 12; Patoğlu, 2018, p. 44). The dissolution of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye and its conversion into an idadî were explicitly recorded in the Ministry's correspondence, thereby bringing the rüştiye level to an end in the city and continuing instructional activities at the idadî level (BOA. MF.İBT, 284/69). The conversion decision affected the status of the existing rüştiye staff; procedures of transfer, retirement, and appointment were carried out gradually. Following the decision, the process was publicly announced in Eskişehir. Indeed, an announcement in the *Eskişehir Gazetesi* dated 23 September 1910 declared that registration for the new idadî school had begun and that applicants were required to present their rüştiye or iptidai diploma (Eskişehir Gazetesi, 23 September 1910). A subsequent notice on 30 September 1910 reported that a "larger and more elegant" idadî had been opened in place of the former rüştiye, with its five-grade structure, admission requirements, and fee schedule detailed (Eskişehir Gazetesi, 30 September 1910). Likewise, the issue of 28 October 1910 announced that the idadî would open on 29 October (16 Teşrinievvel 1326 Rumi) and required students to be present in official uniform (Eskişehir Gazetesi, 28 Teşrinievvel [October] 1910). Finally, the report dated 2 November 1910 noted that the opening ceremony was attended by Eskişehir's parliamentary deputy Abdullah Azmi Efendi¹, the district governor, members of the *ulema* (scholars), representatives of various religious communities, and local notable families (Eskişehir Gazetesi, 2 Teşrinisani [November] 1910).

As noted earlier, following this decision, the fate of the former rüştiye building became the focal point of administrative correspondence. A provincial letter dated 6 November 1912 stated that the school building, constructed with public donations, was being temporarily used as a government office for a monthly rent of 400 kuruş, collected by the local education commission (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3).

However, when the Kütahya Office of Accounts claimed that the building constituted state property and that its revenue should not be allocated to education, the issue became a dispute over ownership and revenue between the Ministries of Finance and Education (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3).

In its reply dated 28 November 1912, the Ministry of Finance emphasized that the building had been “constructed by the public in the name of education”. It therefore, could not be regarded as state property. It also reminded authorities that finance officials were not permitted to interfere with properties and revenues under the jurisdiction of education commissions. Nevertheless, on 30 December 1912 the Hüdavendigâr Treasury Office declared that the former rüştıye building had been recorded in the state property register, that it had been vacated following the relocation of the idadî to another district of the town, and that certain government offices had moved into the building; therefore, its rental income should be entered into the treasury (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3).

In its response dated 16 January 1913, the Ministry of Finance stated that registration in the ledger was not sufficient to prove ownership by the treasury, and requested any legal evidence available -such as boundary, location, and parcel measurements- and asked that the investigation be completed. In subsequent letters of 5 and 17 February 1913, the Treasury Office reported technical details: that the rüştıye building's plot fell within the boundaries of the government complex, that no title deed existed, that it was registered in the property ledger as “rüştıye mektebi,” and that its assessed value stood at 1200 kuruş. Based on the street and garden boundaries, the Office argued that the building should be considered state property (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3).

In its letter of 2 March 1913, the Ministry of Finance stated that the rightful ownership of the rental income could not be determined until the investigation was completed and requested additional information and documentation from the provincial authorities. A subsequent report from the Treasury dated 9 March 1913 confirmed reliance on the earlier reply and that the process was ongoing. On 3 April

1913, the Ministry issued a general reminder concerning the legal framework governing immovable properties under the authority of education commissions. It emphasized that interventions would henceforth be subject to the general legal provisions (BOA. ML.EEM, 978/3).

This chronology demonstrates that following the conversion decision of 1910 and the building's temporary administrative use in 1912, an intensive exchange of correspondence unfolded between the Provincial Administration, the Treasury Office, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Education concerning the ownership status and allocation of rental income from the former rüştiye building. It further shows that while the central administration sought legal proof (records, boundaries, measurements, title deed, etc.), local authorities grounded their claims in actual use and previous registrations.

The transformation of the school was not merely an administrative measure; it also resonated within local social life. Reports in local newspapers reveal that the opening of the idadî attracted broad participation and was perceived as an important turning point in the city's social sphere. This public legitimacy demonstrates that rüştiyes had come to function not only as educational institutions but also as centers of social representation.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

In the Ottoman Empire, rüştiyes constituted a pivotal stage of the modern educational system that emerged during the reign of Mahmut II and gained wider institutionalization with the General Education Regulation (1869), assuming a dual mission of training qualified civil servants for the state and preparing students for idadî schools. As an institution established in the Hüdavendigâr Province, the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye became a concrete implementer of these general reform policies; through its instructional activities, procurement of teaching materials, and examination procedures, the school transmitted centralized standards to the provinces. In this respect, when considered alongside studies conducted on other provincial rüştiyes such as those in Kilis, Manastır, Çaycuma, Bartın, Düzce, and Akçaabat, the

institution indicates that the financial, administrative, and pedagogical problems of Ottoman educational modernization possessed a structural character that manifested itself in different forms at the local level (Akdeniz, 2025; Aydın, 2014; Bilirli, 2021; Çapar, 2023; Fortna, 2005, p. 16; Gülenç, 2024; Turhan Sarıköse, 2020). Like several other provincial rüştiyes, this school was established within a framework shaped by financial constraints and the necessity of local contributions. The property issue that emerged regarding the building constructed with public donations served as the basis for a prolonged dispute between the Ministries of Education and Finance. The debate over whether a structure built with public contributions should subsequently be classified as imperial state property demonstrates that modern educational institutions in the Ottoman provinces were not merely administrative units but also arenas in which financial and legal relations between the state and local society were concretized. While discussions concerning rüştiye buildings generally revolved around physical inadequacies and unhealthy conditions, the treatment of the Eskişehir school building as a source of revenue by the Ministries of Finance and Education reveals that educational institutions were also perceived as economic assets (Ürkmez & Tozlu, 2016, p. 102).

In this respect, although the rüştiye in question shared a similar financial basis with rüştiyes constructed through public assistance, such as those in Kilis and Bartın, it constitutes a distinctive example due to the institutional conflict that arose over its property status (Akdeniz, 2025, p. 1; Turhan Sarıköse, 2020, p. 3127). This situation clearly illustrates the financial and administrative limits of an educational modernization process that had to be carried out through a combination of central regulations and local funds. Another fundamental problem encountered by the institution concerned the competence and discipline of its teaching staff. Although the Ministry of Education adopted the appointment of Darülmüallimîn graduates as a new principle, issues related to teachers' neglect of duties and the questioning of their qualifications also came to the fore in Eskişehir. An investigation conducted against a teacher on allegations of physical assault and verbal abuse toward students

resulted in a warning, despite the accusations not being substantiated. This incident illustrates the challenges of establishing a modern understanding of discipline in the provinces, despite the rüştiye regulations' strict prohibition of corporal punishment, and demonstrates that the central administration subjected teachers not only to scrutiny of their academic competence but also to close oversight of their moral and pedagogical conduct. However, the relatively limited nature of the sanction imposed indicates that the issue of discipline was not merely a normative problem but also a structural one directly linked to the provision of personnel. The fact that the teacher received only a warning after the investigation suggests that the administration was reluctant to lose personnel altogether, given the difficulty of securing qualified teachers in the provinces. Indeed, the adoption of compulsory practices such as appointing elderly male teachers because female teachers could not be found, as seen in the case of the Çaycuma Rüştiye, may be regarded as a concrete indication of the persistent difficulties encountered in the provinces in procuring Darülmüallimîn-trained teachers (Bilirli, 2021, p. 3841).

From the perspective of educational and instructional activities, the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye, as in the cases of Akçaabat and Tefenni, implemented a curriculum that combined religious sciences, such as the Qur'an and tajwīd, with positive sciences, such as geometry and geography (Gülenç, 2024; Kısa, 2022a). The manner in which this distribution of subjects was reflected in classroom practices and student achievement is more clearly evident in light of studies conducted on provincial rüştiyes. These studies reveal that levels of achievement in religious subjects were higher than in modern courses such as geometry, geography, and mathematics, and that both teachers and students tended to remain more inclined toward traditional forms of training (Altnova, 2010, p. 267; Çetin & Köse, 2025, p. 219; Gülenç, 2024, pp. 183-186). Within this framework, the curricular practices of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye cannot be evaluated independently of the pedagogical transformation tensions experienced across the empire. The prominence of courses pre-

paring students for military and bureaucratic life in boys' rüştiyes, alongside the emphasis on subjects such as household management and sewing in girls' rüştiyes, demonstrates that Ottoman modernization pursued a gendered educational policy (Demir Görür, 2015, p. 315; Kısa, 2022b, p. 6; Pehlivan Ağırakça, 2017, p. 56; Somel, 2015, p. 16; Yıldırım, 2020, p. 78). This curricular structure was complemented by the recording of students' academic performance and moral condition in the "conduct and behavior" columns of examination registers, indicating that rüştiyes functioned as institutional instruments of discipline and moral supervision. Moreover, the transformation of examinations and graduation ceremonies into public events involving local authorities reveals that the school was not merely an educational institution but also a focal point that served as a social representation and source of legitimacy within the city. These pedagogical and institutional functions also entailed a redefinition of the rüştiye's status. In this context, the process of converting the rüştiye into an idadi demonstrates that Eskişehir took a forward step within the hierarchy of modernization. In the face of the general reform trend that saw rüştiyes either abolished and transferred (merged) into iptidai schools or transformed into idadis, Eskişehir opted for the latter path. This transformation was supported not only through correspondence of the Ministry of Education but also by reports in the local press emphasizing broad participation, indicating that the institutional change was perceived as a turning point embedded in local collective memory. The process concretely illustrates that rüştiyes evolved into higher educational levels without losing their functions in line with the restructuring of secondary education.

In conclusion, the history of the Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye reflects a multi-layered process of modernization in the Ottoman provinces shaped by the tension between centralist oversight and local participation. The Eskişehir Boys' Rüştiye demonstrates that problems such as inadequate funding, difficulties in recruiting teachers, and the limited implementation of modern disciplinary mechanisms in the provinces possessed a structural character across the empire, and that despite claims

of educational centralization, effective control over the provinces encountered various constraints (Altnova, 2010, p. 327; Türkol, 2007, p. 120). In light of these findings, future studies that examine in depth the legal and financial practices related to the construction and ownership of rüştiye buildings within the context of urban history, and that comparatively investigate teachers' professional positions and disciplinary mechanisms in relation to the objectives of the Darülmüallimîn, will make significant contributions to the history of Turkish education.

Final Notes

¹ Abdullah Azmi Efendi (Torun) was born in 1869 in Eskişehir to Hacı Kasım and Şerife Hanım. After graduating from Istanbul Law School, he served in various judicial positions, including membership in the Manastır Court of Appeals' Civil Chamber, chairmanship of the *Heyet-i İthamiye* (Committee of Review), and membership in the Extraordinary Court. In Istanbul, he also served as a civil judge and member of the Court of First Instance. Abdullah Azmi Efendi was elected as a deputy to the *Meclis-i Mebusan* (Ottoman Parliament) for Kütahya in its I, II, and III sessions, and for Eskişehir in the IV session. He later served as a deputy for Eskişehir in the I and II terms of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM). During the first term, he held positions such as the Chair of the Constitutional and Judicial Committee and Deputy Speaker of the Assembly; in the third and fourth Executive Cabinets, he served as Minister of Religious Affairs. In the second term, he chaired the 2nd Branch, Sharia and Waqf Committees, and the Religious and Waqf Committees. Abdullah Azmi Efendi was married and passed away on 27 September 1937 (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi [TBMM], 2010, pp. 29, 95).

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