

# AYAN ERA IN THE OTTOMAN GOVERNMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

*Ayan* (local notables) is the plural form of the word *ayn*-meaning ‘eye’ in Arabic and it denotes the notables, respected and eminent people of a city, town or society. *Eşraf*, *vücu*, *ekabir* and *emasil* are all synonyms of the word *ayan*.<sup>1</sup>

During the reign of Anatolian Seljuk Empire, eminent people of the cities and towns were usually artisans and tradesmen; whereas in the Ottoman Empire, the state managed to control its local social organizations by the political institutions. All over the empire imperial officials appointed by the state only were the people by whom the state exercised its administrative policy. However, due to problems in the administrative system, some of these officials managed to provide their children with the inheritance or endowment *vakfiyet üzere* of the farms and other properties that they somehow got hold of in their circles. Children of these officials, enjoying great opportunities, became *ayan* and *eşraf* of their community in time.<sup>2</sup> Especially in the imperial rescripts and decrees sent from the imperial capital to towns since the 16 th. century, these people were frequently addressed as *ayan* and *eşraf*, *ayan-ı vilayet*, *ayan-ı memleket* along with the official governor in matters concerning the province.<sup>3</sup>

Ottoman Empire’s provincial organization, when the central power was strong, consisted of provinces as a group of subprovinces (*vilayet*-later *eyalet*), subprovinces, districts smaller than subprovinces (*nahiye*), villages and smaller villages (*mezraa*).<sup>4</sup>

*Eyalets* were governed by *beylerbeys* and provinces were governed by *sancakbeys*. These governors had both the administrative and the military authority in the provinces and subprovinces they governed. In case of war, with the campaign order sent from the imperial capital, *timarlı sipahis* and *cebelüs* (auxiliary troops) in a province gathered under the leadership of *sancakbeys* and these *sancakbeys* with their military men were in turn under the command of the *beylerbeys*.<sup>5</sup> The person appointed as the agent when a *beylerbeyi* or *sancakbeyi* was absent, is called *mütesellim*. These agents flourished in the latter half of the 16 th. century and in time they came to stand in for *beylerbeyi* as

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<sup>1</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, “Ayan”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (from then on İA), Vol. 2, p. 40; Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Vol. 1, İstanbul, 1983, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Kuruluş ve İnkişafı Devrinde Türkiye’nin İktisadi Vaziyeti-II” *Belleten*, Vol. XIV, No. 55, Ankara 1950, pp. 329-330; M. Çağatay Uluçay, *18 ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Saruhan’da Eşkiyalık ve Halk Hareketleri*, İstanbul 1955, pp. 4, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umur-ı Belediyye*, Vol. 1, İstanbul 1922, p. 1657.

<sup>4</sup> Yusuf Hallaçoğlu, XIV-XVII. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlılarda Devlet Teşkilatı ve Sosyal Yapı, Ankara 1991, p. 73; Tuncer Baykara, Anadolu’nun Tarihi Coğrafyasına Giriş, I-Anadolu’nun İdari Taksimatı, Ankara 1988, pp. 29-34.

<sup>5</sup> İ. Metin Kunt, *Sancaktan Eyalete-1550-1650 Arasında Osmanlı Ümerası ve İl İdaresi*, İstanbul 1978, pp. 15-29; J. Deny, “Sancak”, *İA.*, Vol. 10, p. 188.

well. *Voyvades* formerly managing the income sources called *hass* on behalf of their owners, became the financial and administrative managers of revenue districts which were given to governors *mutasarrıfs* and higher officials as *arpatık* or *mülk*.<sup>6</sup>

Mustafa Nuri Paşa, in his work *Netayic ül-vukuat*, states that the person appointed by governors and *mutasarrıfs* for the administration of subprovinces was called *mütesellim* and of *kazas* was called *voyvoda*, besides, in every city and town there were *ayan* people elected by the community.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, in subprovinces and *kazas*, *kadis* appointed from the imperial capital took charge of the administrative, judicial, civilian and municipal duties, made decisions about the cases in a court of law and kept registers. The agents of *kadis* in *kazas* were *naibs*.<sup>8</sup>

#### Conditions That Give Rise The Ascendancy of *Ayan*

In the beginning, *ayan* was an intermediary between the state and the community about tax collecting as a well-informed person about that town or city. *Sancakbeys* and *kadis* cooperated with the *ayan* of the community in dealing with the concerns about the subprovince, and the distribution, collection and registering of taxes.<sup>9</sup> When needed, *ayan* and other leading men of the town took part in the entourage of *kadi* who was the highest-ranking civilian officer. *Ayans'* contact with the imperial center was enabled by *kadis* and *sancakbeyis* via various and related transactions. When issues concerning a province or a subprovince arisen, *ayans* were consulted on certain occasions.<sup>10</sup> In other words, *ayan*, as a local with no official duty, assisted the officials appointed from the imperial capital on behalf of the community by alleviating the administrative problems and helping take due action.

With the abundant opportunities provided by the geographical discoveries, Europe experienced new developments in the areas of economics and military. In turn these developments changed the economic and military balances between Europe and the Ottoman state in favor of Europe. Formerly, the Ottoman Empire had wars of swift course and the countries conquered and the means thus possessed contributed greatly to the wealth of the state. However, the organized and disciplined armies of the West whose soldiers were educated in military garrisons and the new technology of war instruments brought about innovations in war techniques as well. As the European armies gained strength, Ottoman armies could not be equipped with firearms soon enough. Moreover, lengthy wars both impaired the conduct of the *timarlı sipahis* and caused a crisis in the *timar* system. Deteriorating *timar* system resulted in financial straits in the Ottoman public finance.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları*, Ankara 1991, pp. 23-32.

<sup>7</sup> Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netayic ül-vukuat*, Vol. 4, İstanbul 1327, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "from then on Uzunçarşılı), *Osmanlı Devletinde İlmiye Teşkilatı*, Ankara 1965, pp. 91-117; Ebü'ula Mardin, "Kadı", *İA.*, Vol. 6, pp. 42-46.

<sup>9</sup> Osman Nuri Ergin, *ibid.*, p. 1657.

<sup>10</sup> Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 98; Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ayanlık*, Ankara 1994, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ömer Lütfü Barkan, "Timar", *İA.*, Vol. 12/1, pp. 319-325; Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi (XVIII. Yy'dan Tanzimat'a Mali Tarih)*, İstanbul 1986, p. 27; Mücteba İlgürel, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ateşli Silahların Yayılışı", *Tarih Dergisi*, No. 32, İstanbul

Crises in public finance and problems in political relations were reflected in the government of the state alike and adversely. The Ottoman economy depended mainly on agriculture and regulations in agricultural activities organized both the social structure and the relations between the state and *reaya*. The system that comprised the state-*reaya* relations was most adversely affected by the crises in the *timar* system which was based on the agricultural incomes.<sup>12</sup>

The reasons that accelerated the deterioration of the *timar* system lied within the system itself. The state continued to force the *timarlı sipahis* whose financial situation worsened to pursue their duties. Likewise *timarlı sipahis* forced the *reaya*, this eventually leading to the migration of the population and taxpayer villagers abandoning their villages. This state of the things caused the *timar* system to break up beyond any precautions to be taken in order to improve the situation.<sup>13</sup>

*Reaya* cultivated the state-owned lands and had to pay taxes to the tax-farmer and had some responsibilities towards the state. In the Ottoman state, on the way to the system of *ayan*, a tax called *avarız* had previously been collected due to war requirements. Collected only under extraordinary circumstances (such as war) and after the decision was taken at the *divan-ı hümayun* and approved by the emperor, this kind of taxes were called *avarız-ı divaniye* or *tekalif-i örfiye* and were collected from the country people in cash and in kind. This tax, called in short as *avarız*, was collected only in case of extraordinary circumstances in the beginning, but starting with the end of the 16 th. century it evolved as a regular tax.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, as the state started to give imperial officers and favored statesmen *arpalık* or *mülk*, *timar* system had major dysfunctions. These people transformed state-owned lands to endowed ones, thus new developments took place in the ownership of these lands and in the structure of the production.<sup>15</sup>

While new ways of using state-owned lands altered the ownership of lands, peasants involved in the agricultural production and having to pay taxes to the new owners and the state both, were thoroughly distressed. Peasants had a lower income now due to also the devaluation of the money by the state. Peasants set out to of depreciation money with due interest and when they could not repay their debts, their farms were confiscated by *riba-hor*. Meanwhile, *ayan*, who acquired property by taking their chances got hold of these farms as well. With a financial power at their disposal, *ayan* held the positions of *mütesellimlik*, *muhassıl* and *voyvodalık* in state administration whenever it was possible to gain power in administration and politics, too.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, since the end of the 16 th. century, some *kapıkulu* people and official such as *beylerbeyi*, *sancakbeyi*, *kadi* and *müftüs* when retired or disposed, settled in the

1979, pp. 301-318; Stefanos Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye 1-Bizans'tan Tanzimat'a*, İstanbul 1977, p. 414.

<sup>12</sup> Mustafa Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Leventler*, İstanbul 1965, pp. 190-191; Barkan, *ibid.*, pp. 286-332.

<sup>13</sup> Barkan, *ibid.*, pp. 328-332.

<sup>14</sup> Barkan, "Avarız", *İA.*, Vol. 2, pp. 13-19; Yavuz Cezar, "Tanzimat'a Doğru Osmanlı Maliyesi", *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 4, p. 925.

<sup>15</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Çiftliklerin Doğuşu: Devlet, Toprak Sahipleri ve Kiracılar", *Osmanlı'da Toprak Mülkiyeti ve Ticari Tarm*, İstanbul, 1998, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 99; Halil İnalçık, *ibid.*, p. 23; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 9, 11-12; Stanford J. Shaw-Ezel Kural Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, Vol. 2, İstanbul 1983, p. 31.

cities and towns where they held their positions formerly and thus they were well-acquainted. Here they mingled with the city *ayan* increasing the number of *ayan* community in great amount.<sup>17</sup>

Due to the above mentioned reasons, some of the peasants who left their farms and thus became *çift bozan* flooded cities and towns as an unemployed mob. Among the *çift bozan reaya* emerged rowdy *levends*, and as these *levends* started brigandary, so did start a social unrest in Anatolia called “great *Celali* rebellions”.<sup>18</sup>

While the Ottoman Empire was struggling with domestic and foreign affairs, its budget had considerable deficits due to plummeting expenses. As an example, while the budget deficit of the year 1592-93 was 70,000,000 akçe, in the year 1597-98 the deficit rose up to 400,000,000 akçes. However, in the four budgets we have of the period 1524-1547, there had been a surplus.<sup>19</sup>

The state, as an efficient administrative policy, formerly employing the *iltizam* system in only some of its institutions (such as, customs, mints and saltpans) because of its efficiency in terms of control, started to employ *iltizam* as a widespread and influential policy due to financial necessities.<sup>20</sup>

While *mültezims* (tax-farmers) who took the responsibility of *mukataas* by the *iltizam* system were formerly members of the military, later non-military people who had the means to pay for this right such as *sarrafs* and *ayan* and *eşraf* people with sufficient capital also enjoyed these *iltizams*.<sup>21</sup>

*Mültezims*, although they had no administrative right on the *mukataa* they undertook, gained the right to collect taxes. They very frequently and unfairly imposed heavy taxes on *reaya* with the support of government forces. It is determined that *ayan* having the financial control over *mukataa* areas got empowered generally.<sup>22</sup> In this course of the things, financial decentralization was leading to administrative decentralization and finally to a *feudal* society.<sup>23</sup>

The Ottoman-Austria war which started in 1683, continued for 16 years, eventually ending in 1699 with the Karlofça Treaty.<sup>24</sup> This lengthy war resulted in new financial difficulties for the Ottoman state and Ministry of finance searched for new revenue

<sup>17</sup> Mustafa Cezar, *ibid.*, pp. 326-329; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 7; Yuzo Nagata, *Muhsin-zade Mehmed Paşa ve Ayanlık Müessesesi*, Tokyo 1976, pp. 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası, “Celali İsyanları”*, Ankara 1975, pp. 115-149; Mustafa Cezar, *ibid.*, p. 169; Halil Sahillioğlu, “Sıvış Yılı Buhranları”, *İ.Ü. İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* (from then on İFM), Vol. XXVII, No. 1-2, İstanbul 1968, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmet Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken Osmanlı Maliyesi*, İstanbul 1985, pp. 14-15.

<sup>20</sup> Ali Kemal Aksüt, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, İstanbul 1939, p. 117; Mehmet Genç, “Osmanlı Maliyesinde Malikane Sistemi”, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi Semineri Metinler/Tartışmalar, 8-10 Haziran 1973*, Ankara 1975, p. 232; Halil Sahillioğlu, “Bir Mültezimin Zimem Defterine göre XV. Yüzyıl sonunda Osmanlı Darphane Mukataaları”, *İFM.*, Vol. XXII, No. 1-4, İstanbul 1963, pp. 2-5.

<sup>21</sup> Mehmet Genç, *ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>22</sup> Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> Murat Çizakça, *İslam Dünyasında ve Batı’da İş Ortaklıkları Tarihi*, İstanbul 1999, p. 126.

<sup>24</sup> Nihat Erim, *Devletlerarası Hukuku ve Siyasi Tarih Metinleri (Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Andlaşmaları)*, Vol. 1, Ankara 1953, pp. 23-35; Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Osmanlı Muahedeleri Kapitülasyonlar 1300-1920 ve Lozan Muahedesini 24 Temmuz 1923*, İstanbul 1934, pp. 76-81.

sources in order to provide for the budget deficits.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, in a rescript of 1695, a new system called *malikane* was implemented. With the implementation of this system, the state sold the *mukataas* by an auction open to all on the condition of *kayd-ı hayat* for the tax revenues to be collected on them. The entrepreneur to buy the *mukataa* (*malikaneci*) guaranteed that he would pay the downpayment called *muaccele* which was decided during the auction and a certain amount of cash (which was decided by the state previously and was called *mal*) annually.<sup>26</sup>

*Malikane* owners, took advantage of the financial difficulties of the state. They declared that *malikanes* were beyond the state control and free and they prevented governors and *kadiş* from intervention; so they continued easily to collect taxes from *malikanes* illegally.<sup>27</sup> In this way, the *sahib-i raiyyet* state started to suffer from a heavy loss of its population as well.

*Ayan*, as it is stated in sources, were a kind of representative of their community in the real sense of the word in the previous countries. They were the people of honor and wisdom regardless of their wealth. As the state experienced financial difficulties, these characteristics of the *ayan* underwent a transformation rapidly and people with financial means began to be considered as *ayan*; consequently nobility of fortune replaced personal merits.

*Ayan*, acquiring the *mukataas* that had certain profit and privileges and were usually given to *iltizam* formerly, became *mültezim* and by collecting taxes certain *mukataa* revenues had an influential position in the financial sector. With the fortunes amassed, they had the chance to acquire more fortune and thus to acquire *malikanes* that yield more revenue towards the end of the 18 th. century.<sup>28</sup>

The reason why the Ottoman state became to be depended on *ayan* and thus empowered *ayan* in financial matters was that *mültezims* collected more taxes from *reaya* than the amount stated in the registers. Additionally, the lack of local authority resulted in bullying powers. The fortune they amassed must have caused the *mültezims* incorporate *levends* into their entourage as an illegal force. This state of affairs was not only the result of the competition among *mültezims* but as a necessity to guard themselves and their wealth.<sup>29</sup>

Till the year 1726, the Ottoman state lost power in domestic and foreign affairs. *Sancakbeys* could not collect enough soldiers and could not provide for the soldiers they had. In order to satisfy the vital needs of the state, the most powerful and influential ones among the city *ayan* were appointed as *sancakbeyi*. As a result, *ayan*, enjoying the *mütesellimlik* and *mültezimlik*, now had the opportunity to wield power as a *feudal* lord in *sancaks* or *vilayets*.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> İlber Ortaylı, “İkinci Viyana Kuşatmasının İktisadi Sonuçları Üzerine”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, No. III, İstanbul 1981, pp. 200-202.

<sup>26</sup> Mehmet Genç, *ibid.*, pp. 236-242.

<sup>27</sup> Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 59-81; Özcan Mert, “Ayan”, *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi* (DİA), Vol. 4, p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> Mehmet Genç, *ibid.*, p. 245 footnote 31.

<sup>29</sup> Mustafa Cezar, *ibid.*, pp. 317-325; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 59-81.

<sup>30</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, “Osmanlı Tarihinde Ayanlık Düzeni Devri 1730-1839”, *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. XII, No. 23, Ankara 1975, p. 51; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 120; Yuzo Nagata, *ibid.*, p. 28; Yücel Özkaya, “XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Yerli Ailelerin Ayanlıkları Ele Geçirileri ve Büyük Hanedanlıkların Kuruluşu”, *Bellekten*, Vol. XLII, No. 168, Ankara 1978, p. 674.

In the Ottoman-Russia war of 1768, the state in need of money soldiers asked help from *ayan* who got hold of *kaza* administration, which in turn resulted in the mitigated state control over *ayan* and *ayan*'s administrative, economic and social power enhanced.<sup>31</sup>

#### The Services Rendered by *Ayan*

Due to prolonged wars and uncovered war expenses, the Ottoman state started to force the government system to provide for money. Taxpayers were forced to transact with non-governmental people. Thus, the power of the state was impaired whereas *ayan*, who overtaxed *reaya* forcefully in the name of state gained power and influence. During the latter half of the 18 th. century and earlier in the 19 th. century, *ayan* got more and more influential within a deteriorating system, more empowered by their uncontrolled and non-systematic governing, which was utterly beyond comprehension.<sup>32</sup>

The point not be forgotten is that, the *ayan* system emerged in *ayans*' locale by the opportunities that enabled the system, due to the chaos and disturbances in the state finance for at least 150 years and not by the initiation of the state.<sup>33</sup>

This new system that can be called *ayan* system or era spreaded initially in Anatolia and then in Rumelia. As *ayan* got hold of the positions of *mültezimlik*, *mutasarrıflık*, *muhassıllık* and *voyvodalık*, their administrative, military and financial duties when needed became systematized.<sup>34</sup>

About the services *ayan* rendered, authors tend to hold somewhat different views. The distinguished professor İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı states that "*ayan was responsible for the public order of the locale, collect taxes, provide for soldiers and their dispatching, supply provision, which all was actually the responsibility of kaza kadi s*".<sup>35</sup>

Avdo Suceška is of the opinion that *ayan* was responsible for "collecting taxes, providing order, preventing the smuggling of grains, cattle, etc, out of the state or contraband goods into the state, taking care of official prices, helping to build menzilhane and provide postmen, mobilizing, dispatching and managing all Muslim community to defend the country".<sup>36</sup> According to Juchereau de Saint Deny, "*ayan was in charge of the military and administration, whereas kadi dealt only with the judicial issues*".<sup>37</sup>

V.P. Mutafçieva agrees with Juchereau and states that, "in time *kaza ayans* did all the duties of *kadi* expect the judicial ones but later *ayans* having the authority along with the functionaries such as *kadis*, *sancakbeys*, and *valis* in provincial administration led to a discord in authority".<sup>38</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 7, İstanbul 1309, pp. 146-148; Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, p. 41; Yuzo Nagata, *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *ibid.*, p. 53; Yuzo Nagata, *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *ibid.*, p. 51; Mustafa Cezar, *ibid.*, p. 336; Yuzo Nagata, *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Uzunçarşılı, Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından Tirsinikli İsmail, Yılık Oğlu Süleyman Ağalar ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, Ankara 1942, pp. 5-6; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 141-146.

<sup>36</sup> Yuzo Nagata, *ibid.*, as quoted from p. 9: Avdo Suceška, Die Ayanen; Beitrag zur Erforschung der lokalen Gewalt in den Südlawischen Landern unter den Türkenzeit, Sarajevo 1965, p. 242.

<sup>37</sup> V.P. Mutafçieva-Trans. Bayram Kodaman, "XVIII. Yüzyılın Son On Yılında Ayanlık Müessesesi", *Tarih Dergisi*, No. 31, İstanbul 1978, as quoted from page 177: Juchereau de St. Deny, *Revelation Constantinople en 1807 et 1808*, Vol. 1, Paris 1882, p. 180.

<sup>38</sup> V.P. Mutafçieva, *ibid.*, p. 177.

As a result, the state required the *ayan*: to go after and arrest bandits, punish the rebels, provide soldiers during military campaigns and supply military provisions, send grain and provisions to İstanbul, provide for the saltpeter which is a vital ingredient of gunpowder, i.e. anything that was needed currently.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.1. Tax Collecting Duties of *Ayan*

Due to the deterioration of the *timar* system, endless disorders and lengthy wars all, Ottoman treasury's need for money increased incessantly. The state could not provide for the war expenses anymore, consequently new precautions had to be taken. Starting with the second half of the 17 th. century, the state implemented the *imdadiyye* in order to cover for war expenses.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, taxes imposed on towns and cities, called *tekalif-i örfiyye* (it was divided into two with the names *tekalif-i adiye ve tekalif-i şakka*), by the central government or local administrations amounted to 97 in kind and number.<sup>41</sup> We will not go into detail about the content of *tekalif-i örfiyye* but will shortly mention about the imposition and collection of the taxes in terms of tax collecting which was among the duties of *ayan*. A commission comprised of vali, *mütesellim* and *voyvoda* together with *kadi* and *ayan* of the locale determined the taxes to be imposed on the male or household population of the locale; these taxes were collected in two payments called *ruz-ı huzur* and *ruz-ı kasım* and they were registered separately in *tevzi* registers (*salyane* registers). Then these registers were reregistered in the local *şer'iyye* court files. All the taxes decided to be collected from the city or town population were included in *tevzi* registers; the total amount of tax in the registers then was distributed among the population equally.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, this tax *tevzi* register was supposed to be prepared before the new year and sent to the central government; there these were studied and approved and then were sent back to the locale with an imperial rescript.<sup>43</sup> Only after all the necessary steps were taken could the taxes be imposed and collected.<sup>43</sup>

As mentioned above, *ayan* was in the commission that prepared the *tevzi* registers; they represented the community against any trouble or injustice that can arise in the collection of the taxes.<sup>44</sup> In some cases, when the state or the provincial governors were in need of taxes severely, then this was borrowed from *ayan* who collected twice or more of the amount from *reaya*.<sup>45</sup>

*Ayan* took over the duty of tax collection totally starting with the later half of the 18 th. century when they became *mütesellim* and *resmi ayan*. The reason for this was that, the functionaries appointed from the central government or *mütesellim* that were not locales to collect state or *sancakbeyi* taxes proved to be inefficient and had problems

<sup>39</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *ibid.*, pp. 58-61; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 141-146.

<sup>40</sup> Yavuz Cezar, "Osmanlı Maliyesinde XVII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısındaki "İmdadiyye" Uygulamaları", *İ.Ü. Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Year 2, No. 2, 1984, pp. 69-102.

<sup>41</sup> Abdurrahman Vefik, *Tekalif-i Kavaidi*, Vol. 1, İstanbul 1328, p. 69; Süleyman Sudi, *Defter-i Muktesid*, Vol. 1, İstanbul 1307, pp. 22-25; Ömer Lütfi Barkan-Enver Meriçli, *Hüdavendigâr Livası Tahrir Defterleri I*, Ankara 1988, pp. 97-98; Ziya Karamürsel, *Osmanlı Mali Tarihi Hakkında Tetkikler*, Ankara 1989, pp. 181-184.

<sup>42</sup> Abdurrahman Vefik, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 70-71; Barkan, "Avarız", *İA.*, Vol. 2, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, p. 6; Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 486.

<sup>44</sup> Musa Çadircı, *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>45</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *ibid.*, p. 59; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 173.

in collecting the required amount. Therefore, the state assured the taxes be collected easily by appointing one of the *ayan* of the locale as *mütesellim*.<sup>46</sup>

State did not pay the *ayan* for services they rendered. It was the local people who had to pay them. Called *ayaniyye*, *ayanlık* payment or *ayanlık caizesi*, this payment were registered as a separate item twice a year when *sancak* expenses were calculated.<sup>47</sup> In addition, *ayan*, added new taxes for himself in the *tevzi* registers that included all the taxes *kaza* people had to pay and then put them into his account. In fact, certain measures were taken by the state in order to prevent the illegal earnings of *ayan*. These registers were to be distributed before the very eyes of *vilayet* officials, *kaza* expenses were to be deducted from the amount collected and the remaining amount to be sent to the imperial center. Nevertheless, this rule was frequently neglected and *ayan*, in cooperation with *kadi*, *sancakbeyi* or *naib*, added new taxes to the registers and continued to collect taxes illegally.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, *vilayet ayan* became the refuge of *reaya* who did not want to pay any taxes or left his land. These masses even joined the local families and helped these families become *ayan*. Actually they were the force behind *ayan*.<sup>49</sup>

In order to prevent the misconduct of *ayan*, the state tried not only to give the money *ayan* collected illegally back to the people but also take back their *mütesellimlik* and *ayanlık* positions and punish *ayan* with obliging them to pay back the amount they illegally acquired, exiling, confining to a fortress or even hanging the ones who committed a major crime. The ones not found severely guilty were tried to be rehabilitated by way of advice.<sup>50</sup>

### 1. *Ayan*'s Collective Policy and Conduct Towards the State

*Nizam-ı cedid* movement started by Selim III in 1793 aimed at reforms in military, political, administrative, scientific, economic and financial areas. These reforms initially started in the military area.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, approximately synchronic with these reforms started the rebellions that called *Kırcalı* or *Dağlı eşkiyası* and which caused havoc especially in Rumelia.<sup>52</sup>

*Ayans* and *feudal* lords in Rumelia, with *sekbans* in their entourage led these rebellions. In the year 1796, leading *ayans* that manipulated *Dağlı eşkiyası* for their cause, as determined by the state, were: *ayan* of Gümülcüne Mestan Ağa, *ayan* of Dimetoka Veysioğlu Halil Usta, *ayan* of Fera Ahmet Haseki, Emin Ağa in Hasköy, *ayan* Osman Usta in Çirmen, Devocioğlu in Çirmen, *ayan* of Sultanyeri Tokatçıklı Süleyman, *ayan* of Edirne Eyüp Ağa and of Siroz İsmail Bey.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Özcan Mert, *ibid.*, p. 196; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 149, 244-245.

<sup>47</sup> Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 147; Musa Çadırcı, *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, "Ayanlık Müessesesinin Düzeni Hakkında Belgeler", *Belgeler*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Ankara 1965, p. 221; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, pp. 171, 244, 247; Yücel Özkaya, "Rumeli'de Ayanlık İle İlgili Bazı Bilgiler", *VIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, Vol. 2, Ankara 1981, pp. 1413-1415.

<sup>49</sup> Mustafa Cezar, *ibid.*, p. 323; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>50</sup> Yuzo Nagata, *ibid.*, pp. 30, 32; Yücel Özkaya, *ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>51</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Hümayunları*, Ankara 1999, pp. 115-117; A. Cevat Eren, "Selim" *İA.*, Vol. 10, p. 447.

<sup>52</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 147; Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Dağlı İşyanları (1791-1808)*, Ankara 1983, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *ibid.*, p. 30.

Selim III, who wanted to establish the *nizam-ı cedid* army in Edirne too, attempted to dispatch the *nizam-ı cedid* soldiers to Edirne under the command of Karaman governor Kadı Adurrahman Pasha. Informed about this decision, *ayan* of Edirne Dağdevirenöğlü Mehmed Ağa, fearing that this would endanger his own order, provoked the people against *nizam-ı cedid* army.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, almost all of the Rumelian *ayans* were against the *nizam-ı cedid* with the same thought on mind. Even *ayan* of Ruscuk Tirsiniklioğlü İsmail Ağa and *ayan* of Silistre Yılıkoğlü Süleyman Ağa putting aside the trouble they had about borders, cooperated with Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, who rebelled against the state and stated that they would take side of Dağdevirenöğlü Mehmed Ağa. In 1806, in Rumelia, after the incident called the Second Edirne incident, which was against *nizam-ı cedid*, Selim III give up the project taking into account that both sides would suffer.<sup>55</sup>

This retreat caused the opponents of *nizam-ı cedid* to gain more power and with the dethronation of Selim III, these reforms ceased to be realized.<sup>56</sup> Some of the supporters of *nizam-ı cedid* were killed and surviving others took refuge behind Alemdar Mustafa Pasha who was in Ruscuk. Here was formed a secret agency comprised by Mustafa Refik, Mehmet Sait Galip, Abdullah Ramiz, Mehmed Tahsin and Mehmed Emin Behiç Efendi and called *Rumeli yaranları*. This group was led by Alemdar Mustafa Pasha and aimed at throning Selim III again and resume *nizam-ı cedid* reforms. Gaining a certain power, the organization left for İstanbul with the corps of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha and in an ambush to the palace could not save Selim III and found the overthrown sultan dead. Following the ambush, Mustafa IV was dethroned and Mahmud II was throned and Alemdar Mustafa Pasha became the grand vizier.<sup>57</sup>

Alemdar Mustafa Pasha was the of the opinion that the Ottoman state could only take a turn for the better with the collaboration of the central government with provincial administration. In this way, central state would gain power and the *nizam-ı cedid* army which was founded during the reign of Selim III would be revived.<sup>58</sup> To this aim, governors in Anatolia and Rumelia, most distinguished and influential *ayans* and local dynastic families were invited to a *meşveret-i amme* that would take place in *der saadet*. Additionally, Kadı Adurrahman Pasha, who was one of the most powerful supporters of the reforms of Selim III, was ordered to come to İstanbul with 5 to 6 thousand soldiers of the *tüfenkçi* corps who were formerly under the command of him but were demobilized after the abolition of *nizam-ı cedid*. The names of some of the *ayan* and families that attended the meeting in İstanbul are as follows: Saruhan *mutasarrıfı* Kara Osmanoğlü Ömer Ağa, Bozok *mutasarrıfı* Cebbar-zade Süleyman Bey (these were the most powerful dynaties of their region), Sitroz *ayanı* İsmail Bey, Çirmen *mutasarrıfı* Mustafa Bey, Bilecik *ayanı* Kalyoncu Mustafa, Şile *ayanı* Ahmed

<sup>54</sup> According to Uzunçarşılı: the person who leaded the Edirne incident was Tirsinikli oğlü İsmail Ağa, whereas Cemal Gökçe states that İsmail Ağa was not in Edirne during the rebellion but supported Dağdeviren oğlü Mehmed Ağa. On this see: Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, pp. 25-26; Cemal Gökçe, "Edirne ayarı Dağdeviren oğlü Mehmed Ağa", *Tarih Dergisi*, Vol. XVII, No. 22, İstanbul 1968, p. 99.

<sup>55</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 8, pp. 148-153; Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, pp. 62-64; Cemal Gökçe, *ibid.*, p. 102; A. Cevdet Eren, *ibid.*, p. 453.

<sup>56</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, p. 63; Enver Ziya Karal, *ibid.*, pp. 189-190; A. Cevat Eren, *ibid.*, pp. 455-456.

<sup>57</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 8, pp. 155-157; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Ankara 1983, pp. 82-89.

<sup>58</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Sened-i İttifak ve Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu", *Belleten*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 112, Ankara 1964, p. 604; Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, p. 140

Ağa and others. On the other hand, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha and *ayan* of Bulgaria did not attend the meeting.<sup>59</sup>

*Ayan* and dynastic families arriving in İstanbul, were accepted by Mahmud II first and then met in Kağıthane summer palace under the leadership of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha. After the negotiations that took place, in October 1808, finally, the notable document, called *sened-i ittifak* was signed and it was to have a crucial place in the Ottoman Empire's political and public law.<sup>60</sup>

The ones who signed under the *sened-i ittifak* which consisted of seven clauses and a supplement were high officials, *ulama*, representatives of the military, Cebbar-zade Süleyman, Sirozlu Kara Osman-zade Hacı Ömer of dynasties and *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen, Mustafa.<sup>61</sup> With this document, the central government guaranteed the help of the *ayan* in the practice of military, financial and administrative affairs, but at the same time recognized the *ayan*'s position in provinces legally. Thus, with this document addressed as "the first public law regulation", sultan's absolute power was limited partially and the feudal decentralization that prevailed since the latter half of the 18 th. century was legally recognized.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the scarce number of *ayans* and dynasties that signed the contract expresses the meagre popularity this document had among the existing *ayans* and dynasties of Ottoman state.

Departure of the *ayan* and dynasties that signed the *sened-i ittifak* from İstanbul, started the course that would lead to the assassination of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha. Mustafa Pasha died in a rebellion (November 1808) started by the Janissaries who were discontent with the *sekban-ı cedid* army which was created as a sequel to *nizam-ı cedid* and were provoked and encouraged by the population discontent with the regulations of the Pasha.<sup>63</sup> With the death of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, the *ayan* domination ceased to prevail in the central government and *sened-i ittifak* was annulled.<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless, the reforms in the Ottoman state did not cease to continue. Mahmud II, after abolishing the Janissary corps, emphasized centralization and sought to eradicate the domination of *ayan*. Because the new *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* army that was created to replace the Janissary corps did not prove to be successful, new solutions were sought after. The officers to be included in *Redif Askeri Teşkilan* army which was created to this aim, were going to be elected among the distinguished people of *kazas*, i.e. *ayan* via the governors. These officers, except the ones who could both service as an officer and as a director, would do their military service but not deal with administrative business.<sup>65</sup>

In this way, Mahmud II, utilized *ayan* and highborns in establishing the military organization *redif*. Despite this, the policy of mitigating the influence of *ayan* in order to strengthen the central government was pursued. When an obedient *ayan* passed away,

<sup>59</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 9, pp. 2-4; Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, pp. 138-144; Halil İnalçık, *ibid.*, p. 630.

<sup>60</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 9, pp. 5-8, 278-282; Halil İnalçık, *ibid.*, pp. 604-606; Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, pp. 140-144; Recai G. Okandan, "Amme Hukukumuzda Tanzimat Devri", *Tanzimat I*, İstanbul 1940, p. 100; İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul 1987, p. 29; Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, Ankara 1988, pp. 75-77.

<sup>61</sup> Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *ibid.*, Vol. 9, pp. 282-283; Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>62</sup> Halil İnalçık, *ibid.*, p. 630; İlber Ortaylı, *Türkiye İdare Tarihi*, Ankara 1979, p. 261.

<sup>63</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *ibid.*, pp. 154-158; Bernard Lewis, *ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>64</sup> Halil İnalçık, *ibid.*, p. 609; İlber Ortaylı, *ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>65</sup> Musa Çadırcı, "Anadolu'da Redif Askeri Teşkilatının Kuruluşu", *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. VIII-XII, No. 14-23, Ankara 1975, pp. 63-72.

instead of appointing one of his heirs, functionaries from the centre were appointed. The rebel *ayans* were taken care of and their properties were confiscated. Additionally, in some regions, *sandık eminliği* and *mahalle muhtarlıkları* were organized to perform the duties of *ayan*. During the *Tanzimat* era, every effort was made to weaken the influence of *ayan* and *resm-i ayanlık* institution was abolished. Nevertheless, *ayan*, as a distinguished group of people, continued to be important though not legally and in latter years they joined the administrative committees of cities and *kazas* as members.<sup>66</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The Ottoman State, in the years when it wielded power as a central authority, governed the empire by appointing functionaries from the centre to every position in the provinces. These functionaries, who were selected and educated very strictly and graduates of *Enderun* could hold their positions in the locale they were appointed to for at most a year or two.

*Ayan* and people from *eşraf*, who were born and grown in their own district emerged as helpful assistants to the state when the state was powerful. In the latter centuries as the state started to lose power, local *ayan* began to get stronger.

In the last centuries of the Ottoman state, malpractice of the still acting *mültezims*, coupled with the financial difficulties the state experienced, gave rise to the domination of *ayan*. The state felt the need to appoint the most influential *ayan* in their locale as *sancakbeyi* or governor so as to exercise administrative and financial authority.

These new governors, far from being functionaries and having no background in the government system wielded power chaotically. In that way, taxpayers had to transact with people whom they could not appreciate as government officials and eventually they became subordinate to *ayan*. Consequently, local dynasties about which the state was very sensitive started to proliferate, in other words local rulers emerged.

*Ayan* controled the collection of taxes and the functionaries appointed from the imperial centre were taken under *ayan*'s patronage. In order to control *ayan*, the state intervened in the election and appointments of them and started to punish the ones who harassed and exploited people.

The state could not compensate for the deficits it had. *Mültezims*, *ayans* and others amassing huge wealth, resulted in the acceleration of the confiscations, which was an eagerly adopted practice in the Ottoman state doctrine. The fact that the Ottoman emperors became emperors through heredity and stayed as emperors as long as they lived as is well-known fact, and they did not need money or property personally.

The worry about the appointed statesmen acquiring wealth after awhile and thus using these means politically involved conflicts, as well. In the Ottoman state the number of confiscations increased rapidly and although these were thought to be the collection of the wealth that belonged to the state in the first place back again, there had been unfair conducts, too. Besides, these confiscations embodied the idea that wealthy owners had an influence over the state. Hence, a powerful state would empower neither *ayan* nor others, so would not let any unfairness happen which in turn causes confiscations.

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<sup>66</sup> Musa Çadırcı, "Türkiye'de Muhtarlık Teşkilatının Kurulması Üzerine Bir İnceleme", *Belleten*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 135, Ankara 1970, p. 410.

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