

*The Application of the Tanzimat Reforms in Bulgaria:
State Building in the Ottoman Empire (1839-1878)*

Yonca Koksal

I study the implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms under Ottoman rule and the responses of local groups to this centralization attempt in Bulgaria in the 19th century. The application of reforms differed from the Western European model, which assumes a strong state that is able to implement policies and eliminate intermediaries. Rather, the Ottomans combined centralized and decentralized policies by incorporating local intermediaries into the state administration.

The divergence of the Ottoman case from the Western European model can be understood at the conjunction of the technical environment (economic and political relations in the 19th century Ottoman Empire) and previous administrative practices, both of which defined the state-society interactions in Bulgaria. The state and society linkages that were shaped by this conjunction explain the failure of reforms in Bulgaria. Although the Ottomans succeeded in creating the basic structures of a central state and modern bureaucracy, they also created local state structures and promoted autonomous decision-making at the local level when they incorporated intermediaries into the central state, which in turn contributed to the failure of reforms in Bulgaria. The continuation of previous administrative practices of dealing with religious communities, not individuals, led to the rise of political and economic power of Christian notables, *corbacis*, who acted as intermediaries between the center and Christian peasantry. The *Tanzimat* reforms strengthened the relations between Christian notables and Christian peasantry with the implementation of election mechanisms, which promoted autonomous decision-making at the local level. This autonomy, however, led to the failure of reforms and loss of central control in Bulgaria within the context of the technical environment that was defined by the rise of nationalist ideologies, and increasing relations with the European merchants and Diaspora communities.

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Introduction

In November 1864 Midhad Pasha, the first governor of the province of Danube, read an official decree of Sultan before the citizens of Ruscuk and foreign councils. The decree was about the formation of the province of Danube, comprising the larger part of Bulgaria. In the decree, it was written, “all political, financial and administrative institutions in the province should function as a unified, well-run and constantly controllable body.”¹

The formation of the province of Danube was a part of the reform policy that the Ottoman state carried out in the nineteenth century. Following the Western European examples, the reforms aimed centralization and the formation of a modern Ottoman nation-state. However, the centralization process did not follow the Western European examples. The Ottoman case challenges Western based theories of the state formation that assume a unidimensional development from indirect rule, which uses intermediaries to direct rule, toward a centralized administration leading to a confrontation between centrally appointed state officials and local groups.² The Ottomans combined centralized administrative practices with decentralized practices by incorporating intermediate groups such as grant-holders and tax farmers into the central administration. The combination of centralized and decentralized policies in the Ottoman state led to different outcomes of state formation: while the reform policies were relatively successful in the Arab provinces and Anatolia, they failed to integrate the Balkans into the central state. Bulgaria became an important area for the application of the reforms in this process. The failures and successes of reforms in the province of Danube became an example for the application of reforms in other regions of the empire. In this sense, the reform period in the Ottoman empire is an interesting case study of state building and centralization that differs from the Western European model. The study of Bulgaria, the most prominent example of the failure of the *Tanzimat* reforms, is important for understanding the advantages and shortcomings of the Ottoman centralization model.

In this paper, I study the application of the *Tanzimat* reforms in Bulgaria (1839-1878). Existing approaches explain the failure of the *Tanzimat* reforms in Bulgaria by macro structural factors without paying attention to the state-society relations at the local level. The influence of Western European powers, Russia and Serbia, and the general social, economic and political decline in the Empire, which is assumed to lead an inevitable

¹ Safrastjan, R. “Ottomanism in Turkey in the Epoch of Reforms in nineteenth Century: Ideology and Policy, II,” in *Etudes Balkaniques*, 1: 34-44, 1989, p. 41.

² See Weber, M. *Economy and Society*, (eds.) G. Roth and C. Wittich, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, Mann, M. *The Sources of Social Power. I. A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, and Skocpol, T. “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in *Bringing the State Back in*, (eds.) P.E. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer & T. Skocpol, Cambridge University Press, p. 3-44, 1985.

twentieth century collapse are considered the main reasons for the failure of the Ottoman state in maintaining social control in Bulgaria. In contrast to these macro structural arguments, my claim is that the failure of the reforms in Bulgaria can be explained by the different configurations of the state-society interactions that occurred within the context of general economic and political environment. The reasons of the success of centralization in some regions and failure in others can be understood only by looking at state-society interactions at the local level. The linkages among the central state, provincial officials, local intermediaries and peasantry were influential in the centralization process. The *Tanzimat* reform period, which came to an end with an independent Bulgarian state in 1878, brought many changes in the province that affected the points of contention between the state and local populations.

There are two main tendencies in the literature on the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman state has been either seen as anachronistic or idealized as a golden age. Both of these approaches consider the empire as an irrational, fixed and enduring entity. The first approach considers the collapse of the empire as inevitable in the twentieth century. In the time of industrialization and integration to the global economy, nineteenth century empires, especially European ones such as Austria-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman empires, were destined to collapse since they did not adapt to their times. Thus, the first approach treats nineteenth century changes in Ottoman rule as incompetent steps toward an inevitable twentieth century collapse of the empire.³ The empire is a fixed entity, unable to change and destined to collapse. This framework disregards the changes in the nineteenth century, and it dehistoricizes the last century of the empire, therefore it cannot see the continuing affects of the empire in contemporary society. The second approach considers the reign of the empire as a golden age. Especially after the violent breakdown in the Balkans in 1990's, the Ottoman *millet* system (separating communities according to their religion, and giving semi-autonomy to them in their internal affairs) has been presented as an ideal administration.⁴ In the *millet* system, the religious and ethnic conflict was reduced since every religious community was administered according to its own rules. The religious communities were recognized as separate and equal under this system. How egalitarian this system was questionable, but this conceptualization of Ottoman rule includes many hidden premises of Turkish nationalism. Moreover, this idealization of the Ottoman administration ignores the historical developments, struggles, negotiations and alliances between the state and social groups in order to maintain Ottoman rule in the nineteenth century. Thus, both approaches have failed to develop a systematic and historical understanding of the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire.

³ See Sugar, P.F. *Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1977, Black, C.E. *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria*, Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1943, Todorov, N. *Society, the City and Industry in the Balkans, 15th-nineteenth Centuries*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, 1998, and Landau, J. "Bulgarian Studies on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 19 (1): 119-125, 1983.

⁴ See Aydin, M. *Osmanli Devletinden Uuncu Bulgar Carlagina*, Kitabevi: Istanbul, 1996. (From the Ottoman State to the Third Bulgarian Tzar), and Senturk, H. *Osmanli Devletinde Bulgar Meselesi (1850-1875)*, Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayinlari, Ankara, 1992. (Bulgarian Problem in the Ottoman State).

I reject both approaches: First, I challenge the tendency to treat nineteenth century changes in Ottoman rule as incompetent steps toward an inevitable twentieth century collapse of the empire. Second, I criticize the idealization of Ottoman rule by paying attention to the state-society relations in its historical context. Thus, I reject the historical insensitivity of general centralization model that draws only one path of development through centralization and rationalization of the system. The central state grows out of a historical environment that includes different alliances, negotiations, and conflicts among different social groups and the state in their response to internal conditions and external developments in the international arena.

Empires in the nineteenth century were considered unable to change and modernize their administrative systems, which led to their disappearance from the historical scene. The fact that is forgotten in this scheme is that most European empires including Austria-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires tried to reform their political and social structures. The Ottoman state applied reforms that aimed to modernize and centralize the administration in the nineteenth century. The outcome of the reforms was not predetermined, and the reforms produced successful outcomes in Anatolia. However, this centralization attempt formed social structures that increased local decision making and led to a failure in Bulgaria. This failure can be understood as a result of the interactions between the state and social groups that took place in the economic and social environment of the nineteenth century. My claim is that the Ottomans succeeded in creating the basic structures of a central state and modern bureaucracy in Bulgaria during the reform period. However, they also created local state structures and promoted autonomous decision-making at the local level when they incorporated local intermediaries, which in turn contributed to the dissolution of the Empire in the long run. In this paper, I will concentrate on the effects of restructuring the state administration in Bulgaria and discuss the emergence of autonomous decision making at the local level. First, I will define the mechanisms of centralization in the reform period. Then, I will identify the social actors and map the relations between the central state and social actors before and during the reform period, and discuss their influence on the centralization attempt in Bulgaria.

Reform Policies

The Ottoman reform policy aimed the formation of a central state whose main function would be the maintenance of social control and increase in state revenues in the nineteenth century. In order to understand the mechanisms of centralization in the Ottoman Empire, it is necessary to configure the state and society relations at the local level. The state building process cannot be studied apart from the relations between the central state and social groups at the local level. States embody an ongoing dynamic, a changing set of goals, as they engage other social groups. This sort of engagement can come through direct contact with representatives of the state at the local level, mainly provincial officials, and local power holders, notables or intermediaries between other social groups and the state. Resistance offered by other social forces to the designs of the state, as well as the incorporation of the groups into the organization of the state, changes

its social and ideological underpinnings.⁵ Thus, state-society relations are mutually transformative; different interaction patterns between the state and social groups shape the formation of the state and society. The important point, which is largely overlooked in the literature, is to identify the state and social groups whose interaction influenced centralization, and systematize the relations between them. In this study, I identify four groups of social actors, and analyze the changing relations among them during the reform period. These actors were the central state, provincial officials, local intermediaries and peasantry.

Among the provinces, different mechanisms of centralization can be observed as a result of region-specific political, economic and social conditions. During the *Tanzimat* reform period, the general trend for modern state building was not to eliminate old political elite and previous forms of political organization, but to incorporate both gradually into the new system. Although the centralization process shows differences among the Balkans, Anatolia and the Arab lands, I identify three common mechanisms of incorporation to the central administration. These strategies were 1) the mobility of political elites, 2) the inclusion of local powers in the provincial councils and 3) the use of informal networks between the center and periphery.

First, instead of eliminating, the central state incorporated old power holders whose status was challenged by the new state administration into the centralization project. The central state appointed the members or relatives of the old political elite to the new state bureaucracies both in the center and provinces. By transferring the members of three distinct elite groups (religious, military and bureaucratic officials) from one category to another, the Ottomans provided the communication among them and maintained the necessary support for the reforms. For example, when Mahmud II abolished the Janissaries in 1826 and formed the new army, the old ruling elites, especially the members of old religious and military elite, and their proteges monopolized the top military ranks. Although the formation of the modern army evolved slowly as a result of favoritism, the inclusion of old administrators into the military ranks provided the easy acceptance of the modern military by the old elites whose interests were threatened by this new institution.⁶ The findings also show that ulema, religious officials, and local families supported *Tanzimat* reforms in order to benefit from the bureaucratic openings at the local level.⁷

Second, besides the entrance of local notables into the administrative cadres, founding provincial advisory councils became an important mechanism for the incorporation of local intermediaries who had no previous administrative appointment by the central state. In the provincial administration the executive function was separated from the judicial

⁵ Migdal, J. "Introduction," in Migdal, J., Kohli, A., Shue, V. (eds.), *State Power and the Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁶ Levy, A. "The Officer Corps in Mahmud II's New Ottoman Army, 1826-39," in *IJMES*, 2: 21-39, 1971.

⁷ Winter, M. "The Ashraf and Niqabat Al-Ashraf in Egypt in Ottoman and Modern Times," in *Asian and African Studies*, 19: p. 17-41, 1985, and Kushner, D. "Career Patterns among *Ulema* in the Late nineteenth and Early twentieth Century," in *Tanzimatın 150. Yildönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, Ankara, p. 145-65, 1994.

function and given to the advisory councils in the beginning of the reform period.⁸ The establishment of the provincial advisory councils helped centralization of the empire and increased the role of local notables in decision making. The provincial councils were semi-bureaucratic structures since the governor (*kaza muduru*), the judge (*kadi*), a secretary (*katib*), and the leaders of the non-Muslim communities were members of these councils. The remaining six members of the councils were chosen among the male residents, and they were generally local notables.⁹ On the one hand, these councils represented the central state in the application of reforms. On the other hand, they were the focus of local power. By appointing local notables to the provincial advisory councils the central state made a historical compromise with the local elite: Istanbul, the center, retained political supremacy and local notables kept substantial power and wealth. The local elite dominated provincial councils both by being elected to them and by joining the provincial bureaucracy.¹⁰

The inclusion of local notables into the provincial administration and the mobility of the political elite was achieved by the use of the third mechanism for incorporation to the central state: the use of informal networks, i.e., patron-client relationships, between the periphery and the central administration in the decision making process. Patron-client relationships can work in various ways: patronage relations played an important role in the mobility of old political elite and in the election and appointment of the bureaucrats to the provincial administration. Local notables are elected and appointed to the provincial administration partly because they know the local world, and partly because of their patronage relations with the central state. An interesting illustration of this point is the 1861-1918 *mutasarrıfiya* period, the semi-autonomous rule of Mount Lebanon. Akarli shows how local notables, local state officials and European powers influenced the appointment of governors to Lebanon. Patronage relations played a significant role in the public life of Mount Lebanon. Patronage hindered the development of public-mindedness and diminished the efficiency of public services, but it also worked as yet another link between the people and government. The case of Mount Lebanon can be seen as a relative success since the structure of the modern Lebanese state was founded on the layer of institutions that were created during the Ottoman reform period.¹¹

The duality of organizations --the existence of both formal and informal networks responsive to the central state-- affected the centralization process. While the new state institutions were being created, the old political institutions were not directly abolished. Instead, they were eliminated gradually. A number of parallel institutions carrying out similar duties was the striking feature of the Ottoman administration. Even after the abolishment of old institutions, the groups whose interests were supposed to contradict

⁸ Shaw, S. "The Central Legislative Councils in the nineteenth Century Ottoman Reform Movement before 1876," *IJMES*, 1: 51-84, 1970.

⁹ Cadirci, M. "Turkiye'de Kaza Yonetimi (1840-1876)," in *Belleten*, LIII, 53 (206): 37-257, 1989. (The administration of towns in Turkey).

¹⁰ Quataert, D. "The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Eds. H. Inalcik & D. Quataert, Cambridge University Press, p. 759-934, 1994.

¹¹ Akarli, E. *The Long Peace, Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1993.

the new system -- such as the members of old institutions, certain religious leaders, and local notables who lost their privileged tax-farming rights -- influenced the relations between the center and the provinces by using their previous relationships which became informal ties with the members of the new central administration. The formation of informal ties was affected by many factors such as ethnic and religious origin, wealth and close relationships with the European powers. The mobility of the political elite and the inclusion of local notables in the provincial councils also became a part of this process. However, once an informal tie became structurally equivalent with the formal appointee for the same task, a triadic relationship was observed among the central state, appointed officials that had formal ties with the center, and local power holders who had informal ties with the center.

The duality of formal and informal ties does not necessarily lead inefficient administration at the local level. Depending on the form of triadic relationship informal relations can be a useful mechanism for maintaining central control since the center receives information from two sources. In other cases, however, this duality can diminish the responsiveness of bureaucracy to the top leadership depending on the task.¹² Since two people are responsible for the same job, officials can maneuver easily within the structural holes and escape from responsibility depending on the issue at stake.

The functioning of the system in a province necessitates the consensus of formally and informally responsible parties at the local level referring to their interests instead of referring upwards. The relationships among the central state, provincial officials and local elites affected the success of reforms and centralization. When the consensus between local intermediaries and provincial officials were maintained, the implementation of the reforms was more successful. The conflict between the local parties, however, constrained the success of centralization. Depending on the historical context and the task, the consensus of parties at the local level may not be the logical outcome. During reform implementation, the appointees of the state can encounter difficulties with the parties informally tied to the center or locals with strong informal ties with the center can challenge the appointed officials by using their connections.

The ties among peasantry, local intermediaries and provincial officials are also important since the ways both formally and informally responsible parties connected to peasantry affect their prominence in the triadic relations. If local intermediaries had strong relations with peasantry, provincial officials could have a low degree of social control in the absence of their strong ties with peasantry. In contrast, direct supervision of provincial officials over peasantry could decrease the importance of local notables in the triadic relationship. Although I will study the triadic relations once formally and informally responsible parties become structurally equivalent, I will pay attention to the role of peasantry in redefining the prominence of parties in the triadic relations when the data provide information.

What was the situation in Bulgaria? How did the relations among four parties operate in

¹² Fairbanks, C.H. "Bureaucratic Politics in the Soviet Union and in the Ottoman Empire," in *Comparative Strategy*, 6 (3): 339-68, 1987.

Bulgaria with what consequences? In order to answer these questions, I will investigate the changes in the composition of four social actors, and changes in the ties between these actors. The relations among the state and social groups affected the success and failure of the reforms. In order to understand the effects of state-society relations on the centralization process, I will describe the interactions among the central state, provincial officials, local intermediaries and peasantry before and during the reform period. Then, I will concentrate on the changes in these relations during the *Tanzimat* reform period and discuss its effects on the centralization process.

State-Society Relations in Bulgaria before the *Tanzimat* Reform Period

The first social actor, the central state, refers to the Sublime Porte that produced reform policies in Istanbul. Although the central state was able to produce unique policies, it was not a unified entity. There were divisions among the officials in the center. They were divided according to their educational background and occupational origins: Depending on their memberships to religious, military and bureaucratic cadres, and traditional or modern school attendance, the officials in the center were supportive of different policies.¹³ The relations among these three groups were highly conflictual and included a power struggle to dominate state administration. In contrast to this divergence, I will consider the central state a single category that was able to produce unitary policies (whether the production of policies came through by force or consent of all the officials is not an issue here). During the reform period, the general tendency in the center was to form a nation-state following the Western European example. Centralization of administration and the creation of the basic citizenship rights became the objective of officials in the center. However, the application of the reforms diverted from the Western European model. The preexisting legacies of the empire and the political and social structures that these legacies had formed influenced the relations between the central state and local groups, and transformed the Ottoman centralization attempt to a different form, that had many decentralized elements for incorporating local intermediaries.

The application of the reforms created conflicts between the center and local populations. In Bulgaria where the Christian population was in majority, the most important changes with the reforms were experienced in the realm of the *millet* and taxation systems. Before the *Tanzimat* reforms, the relations between the Ottoman state and non-Muslim communities were administered according to the *millet* system. Instead of directly dealing with the individuals, the central state recognized religious communities, and used religious leaders as mediators between non-Muslims and the center. In the *millet* system, non-Muslims were free to practice their religion, and they were subject to their own religious laws. There was no direct confrontation between the central state and non-Muslims. Religious communities were administered by their religious leaders according to their own religious rules. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were four

¹³ See Findley, C.V. *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*, Princeton University Press, 1989, and Mardin, S. "Religion, Ideology and Consciousness in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth Century," in *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said-I Nursi*, SUNY Press, p. 103-146, 1989.

*millet*s in the Ottoman empire; Greek, Jewish, Armenian and Muslim. Bulgarians were considered a part of the Greek *millet*, and they were depended on Greek Expatriate in Istanbul. The *millet* system was abolished with the reform decree, called *Gulhane Hatt-I Humayun*, in 1839. All subjects of the empire were declared equal regardless of their religion by this decree.¹⁴ Although this decree was favorable for the non-Muslim subjects of the empire, it opened new points of contention between the state and society.

In Bulgaria, the first important contention was about the formation of a separate church for the Bulgarians. Bulgarians did not have their own church, and they were administered by the Greek Patriarch in Istanbul. With the declaration of the equal rights for the non-Muslims of the empire, Bulgarians began raising claims for an independent church that would represent Bulgarian people. The Greek and Serbian independence were also effective in this process. The first reactions against the Ottoman regime emerged as a reaction against the Greek monopoly on religion in Bulgaria. The formation of a separate Bulgarian church, thus the first recognition of the Bulgarian *millet* began with the formation of the first Bulgarian church in Istanbul in 1848. In 1866, the Ottoman state appointed a separate Patriarch for Bulgarians. This process included many negotiations and alliances between Bulgarian elites and Ottoman government. The Bulgarian community in Istanbul and its leaders who developed personal ties with the state officials in Istanbul were influential in the formation and recognition of the Bulgarian church.¹⁵ Although the recognition of the Bulgarian *millet* had the first niche for self-determination by separating Bulgarians from Greeks, the formation of the Bulgarian church did not directly raised any open conflict between local populations and the center. It was an elite led movement, whose effects on local populations only felt in the long run.

Another point of contention that led to open conflicts between the center and local groups was caused by the changes in land and taxation system declared in the reform decree. For understanding the effects of land and taxation reform in Bulgaria, it is necessary to look at the preexisting land and taxation relations before the reform period. Land and taxation relations can be studied by figuring the relations among the actors at the local level, which were provincial officials, local notables (intermediaries) and peasantry.

Ottoman Land and Taxation System before the *Tanzimat* Reforms

In contrast to feudalism, in theory all land belonged to the Sultan in the Ottoman administrative system. However, in reality land was divided into three categories: *miri*, or state land; *mulk*, or private property; and *vakif*, which belonged to religious foundations. *Mulk* land was generally the small land given to the peasantry. These smallholdings were registered in the local courts, and peasants were given documents, called *tapu*, that showed their ownership of land. There were also a few large estates, the *gaz-I mulk*, given by the Sultan as hereditary, private possessions, to specially reserving generals. *Vakif* estates were the estates whose income had been entailed in part or in its entirety to

¹⁴ Jelavich, B. *History of the Balkans: eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries*, v. I, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983, and Sugar, P.F. *Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1977.

¹⁵ Mazdrakova-Cavdarova, O. "The Political Struggle of the Bulgarian People for Legitimate National Representation (1840s-1860s)," in *Etudes Balkaniques*, 1: 58-79, 1996.

the upkeep of a religious or charitable institution; on these estates the peasants were exempt from taxation.¹⁶ The timar system, the prevalent system until the eighteenth century, rested on *miri* land. Well into the 17th century, Ottoman Sultans divided land into timars, grants held by warriors so long as they served in the armed forces. These grant-holders extracted revenue from land and collected taxes from the peasants on the estates for the state, but they could not bequeath land to their children.

This use of intermediaries ended when the need for a central army emerged as a result of ongoing defeats to European armies and economic integration of the empire to the European market in the eighteenth century. The Empire tried a more direct rule-policy, mainly by leasing tax collection privileges to tax-farmers who in turn used their leverage to convert the lands they taxed into their own property. Most tax-farmers who were rich enough to buy the tax collection privileges (*iltizam*) were high-rank state officials, who were mostly living in Istanbul and other big cities, and they were unwilling to go to the areas far from their residences. Thus, these officials rented their *iltizams* to the people who were residents of *iltizam* areas. These tax farmers who were called *multezims* became the sources of local power. Since they had enough wealth to rent the *iltizam* from the state officials and they had local ties with peasantry, they became foci of economic and political power at the local level. As a consequence, power became more decentralized and tax-farmers assumed the status of semi-autonomous local rulers.¹⁷

In Bulgaria, this decentralization process was displayed by the formation of large land estates, *chiftliks*, mostly by Muslim landlords. Although *chiftliks* could differ in size, ownership and production patterns, they were vehicles for the preservation of wealth and power for the local notables; the *ayani* (notables), Janissaries, local officials, tax-farmers, money lenders and *pudari* (field guards), most of whom were Muslims. Although the *chiftliks* were generally large-scale agricultural units set up in response to commodity production, there were some *chiftlik* owners whose wealth and power lay in manufacturing and trading, one such being the Christian merchant, money-lender and entrepreneur, Khristo Rachev of Gabrovo, who bought an extensive estate of some eight hundred *dyunyuma*.¹⁸ The *chiftlik* owners acted as local intermediaries between the center and peasantry. They mostly held the tax-farming rights and acted as a semi-state official. Muslim landlords were likely to be state officials, who received their holdings as a result of their official appointments. At the time of the reform decree of 1839, Muslim landlords were dominant in terms of their wealth and land ownership although Christian notables had considerable wealth as a result of their intermediary role between the Christian peasantry and the central state. The use of local Christian leaders as tax collectors for the Muslim *chiftlik* owners, whose land were inhabited by Christian peasantry, and tax-farmers helped the accumulation of wealth in the hands of non-Muslim local leaders. Besides their intermediary role between the peasantry and the central state, non-Muslim notables increased their economic and political power by acting as intermediaries

¹⁶ Crampton, R.J. "Bulgarian Society in the Early nineteenth Century," in *Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence*, R. Clogg (Ed.), Mac Millan Press Ltd.: London, p. 157-204, 1981.

¹⁷ Keyder, C. "The Ottoman Empire," in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-building, the Soviet Union and Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, (eds.) K. Barkey & M. VonHagen, Westview, p. 30-44, 1997.

¹⁸ Crampton, R. J. "Bulgarian Society in the Early nineteenth Century," p. 161.

between the European merchants and peasants who produced agricultural goods for the world market.¹⁹ Istanbul, the capital city of the Ottoman empire, also became an important center for trading goods. Meat consumption and textile needs of Istanbul were met by the Bulgarian merchants, who mediated trade between the Bulgarian villages and the capital city. Studies on the guilds in Bulgaria has shown that the Christians were in majority in the trade and merchandise guilds, and the Muslim were the owners of the traditional manufacturing guilds in the beginning of the nineteenth century.²⁰

The third category of actors in this framework, peasantry, was under an underprivileged condition because of the increasing tax burden. The first quarter of the nineteenth century was a time of increasing accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small number of notables (both Muslim and non-Muslims) and an increasing tax burden and poverty for peasantry. The Ottoman state had engaged many wars, most of which was resulted in loss in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This led to a need for increasing state revenue and increasing tax burden for peasantry. The tax system had many layers in the Ottoman empire, and there were many different kinds of taxes depending on the type of the landholding. The only general rule was that the taxes were not collected from individuals, but from the households or village communities.²¹ For the state, individuals were not counted; the community was the unit of analysis, with whom the relations were mediated by the use of local intermediaries and provincial officials. Before the *Tanzimat* period, the tax-farmers collected the taxes for the state and the rent for the landlords in *miri* and *mulk* lands. Increasing number of the *chiftliks* also increased the tax burden on the peasantry living on the *chiftlik* lands. They paid both the state tax and rent, and they were burdened with providing corvee labor for the landlord in two or three days of a week. Peasants living on religious *vakif* estates were responsible for paying their rents to the religious estate, and their tax burden was relatively lighter. There were some villages exempt from the taxes. Some villages that provided special supplies to the Sultan's palace in Istanbul were exempt from taxes. Although the tax burden was quite the same for the Muslim and non-Muslim populations, non-Muslims paid the additional head tax, *cizye*, which was collected individually in return to the privilege of not attending military service.²² During long wars, the Muslim population had to leave their estates and economic activities for a long time of military service.

The fourth category of social actors, provincial officials acted as semi-autonomous governors in the late eighteenth century, which was a decentralization period for the Ottoman Empire. There was a certain overlap between the local notables and provincial

¹⁹ Stoianovich, T. "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant," in *Journal of Economic History*, XV: 34-313, 1960.

²⁰ Todorov, N. "Social Structures on the Balkans during the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries," in *Etudes Balkaniques*, 4: 48-71, 1985.

²¹ Sener, A. *Tanzimat Donemi Osmanli Vergi Sistemi*, Isaret Yayinlari: Istanbul, 1990. (Ottoman Taxation System in the *Tanzimat* Period).

²² Shaw, S. "Osmanli Imparatorlugunda Azinliklar Sorunu," in *Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete Turkiye Ansiklopedisi*, 4:1002-1006, Iletisim Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1987. (The Minority Problem in the Ottoman Empire), and Shaw, S. "Local Administrations in the *Tanzimat*," in *150. Yilinda Tanzimat*, D. Yildiz (Ed.), Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayınevi, Ankara, 1992.

officials at that time. Most of the provincial officials owned large estates and developed influential economic and political ties with local elite. Provincial officials were exclusively Muslim, and they were rentiers, who lived on the rent they collected from their landholdings. They were not involved in trade and mercantile activities, which were the realm of Christian, Jewish and Armenian notables. The famous example of these local governors was Pasvanoglu of Vidin, who rebelled against the central state in 1806. Pasvanoglu's power had been based on the twenty-five *chiftliks* owned by his father but to these he added scores of others, many of which were used to reward his supporters.²³ Pasvanoglu was defeated in 1813, and the central state tried to eliminate these semi autonomous rulers, by abolishing the private property of *khas* lands, which were given to the high ranked state officials by the Sultan. The reform decree of 1839 was an attempt to eliminate the power of the local governors and to incorporate them to the central administration.

If we summarize the relations between the center, provincial governors, local intermediaries and peasantry in Bulgaria in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the most noticeable fact was the decentralization of state power and increase in the economic and political power of provincial governors who also had close ties with local intermediaries. Most of the high ranked officials owned large estates and acted as local notables in their provinces. The ties between the central state and provincial officials were weak in the sense that the political power was decentralized in the hands of the provincial governors who acted as semi-autonomous rulers. Non-Muslim notables were an exceptional category; although they were the intermediaries between the non-Muslim peasantry and the central state, they were under the control of provincial officials. Thus, they did not have autonomous political power. In the early nineteenth century, Christian merchants, most of whom were local notables and tax-farmers, began to accumulate wealth as a result of their expanding relations with the European merchants. Muslim and non-Muslim peasantry was under the control of provincial officials and local intermediaries. In this period, Christian notables (non-Muslim local intermediaries) did not develop into full power. Provincial governors had the administrative control over landholdings, and Muslim local notables owned vast amounts of landholdings. Following the *Tanzimat* reform period, Christian notables increased their power as they developed their ties with the European merchants. This development was also sustained by the reforms. In an attempt to incorporate the provincial governors into the center, the Ottoman state encouraged the local decision making and increased the power of the local intermediaries, which in turn led to the failure of the reforms in Bulgaria.

State-Society Relations during the *Tanzimat* Reform Period

What happened to the relations among social actors in Bulgaria during the reform period? How did the three mechanisms of incorporation (the mobility of political elite, the inclusion of local notables in provincial councils, and the use of informal networks) work in the application of the reforms in Bulgaria? In order to answer these questions, I will explain the changing relationships among the center, provincial governors, local

²³ Crampton, R. J. "Balkan Society in the nineteenth Century," p. 167.

intermediaries and peasantry in this section.

During the reform period, the power of provincial governors changed its form and decreased to a certain extent. The central state tried to break down the overlap between the provincial governors and local notables by several mechanisms. The mobility of political elite became one mechanism, and the central state declared that a provincial governor cannot be appointed to his city/town of residence.²⁴ How well this decree was followed is a question since the state documents include a considerable amount of complaints about the appointment of local residents as the governors of towns. There are also documents that granted the appointment of local residents as provincial governors.²⁵ The use of informal networks, patronage relations, must have been effective in granting an appointment in one's own locality. The duration of these appointments was also limited for two years in order to prevent the excess and concentration of power by the governors. We do not have enough information about the low-ranking state officials. The secretaries, bureaucrats, police and gendarme probably continued to be recruited through the local networks in the absence of trained personnel. A significant decrease in the power of the local governors occurred in 1860's when the center limited the responsibilities of local governors and increased the duties of local intermediaries. This point directs us to the importance of another social group, local intermediaries and notables, in the reform period.

In 1832, the central state attempted agrarian reforms. The *sipahis*, Muslim landlords who had the tax farming and rent collection privileges on *miri* (state property) lands, were forced to withdraw from the land receiving a pension in lieu of their former income. Instead of openly revolting against to this policy, Muslim landlords chose to maneuver within the legal system. The sale of the land only applied to the *miri* (state property) lands. There were no obligations for withdrawal on *mulk* lands since they were private property. Although *mulk* lands were consisted of the small property holdings for peasantry, many landlords converted as much *miri* land as possible into *mulk* property. They were helped by the provincial officials who had close alliances with these Muslim landlords. The center also did not object the conversion of the land into private property in the frontier zone, border areas especially in the northwest of Bulgaria because of security reasons. This new landholdings called *gospodarluk*, and *gospodarluk* regime became prevalent in the northwest of Bulgaria in the 1840's.²⁶ The peasantry on *gospodarluk* land continued to pay both the state tax and rent and to do corvee labor for the landlord.

Gospodarluk regime remained limited to the frontier zones of Bulgaria, but the conditions of peasantry got worse in all parts of Bulgaria. After the reform decree of 1839, there was a certain confusion about the taxation system and land reforms. *Tanzimat* announced the equality of all the subjects, but it did not lay out the actual mechanisms of administration to carry out the reforms. With the conversion of large estates into state

²⁴ Prime Ministry Archives, *B.E.O. Sadaret Evraki, Umum Vilayat Kismi*, no. 144/68, 154/14, 246/18.

²⁵ Prime Ministry Archives, *B.E.O. Sadaret Evraki, Umum Vilayat Kismi*, no. 131/87.

²⁶ Inalcik, H. *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, Eren Yayinlari: Istanbul, 1992. (*Tanzimat* and Bulgarian Problem).

property, peasants living on these estates assumed that there would be a decrease in the amount of taxation. They assumed that they would not pay the rent that they had previously paid to the landlord in the new system. This was a false expectation, and taxes were not reduced. One of the main purposes of the *Tanzimat* reforms was to regularize taxation and increase state revenues. Tax farming was abolished because tax-farmers were keeping large sums of money for themselves, and there were no control mechanisms on tax farmers. With the reform decree, the abolishment of the large estates held by the Muslim landlords, who gained economic and political power by using their tax-farming privileges, aimed the close supervision of the tax collection. Taxes were not reduced. Instead, the center appointed state officials from the center to collect taxes in the provinces with extra tax burden for peasantry. The consequences were severe especially for the peasantry living in the frontier zone under *gospodarluk* regime. They had a double tax burden; they paid taxes both to the state and to the *gospodar*, Muslim landlord. Nish and Vidin peasant revolts were the results of this double tax burden in the northwest Bulgaria in 1841 and 1850 respectively.²⁷

After the revolts were suppressed, the center aimed to break the power of Muslim landlords who kept their power under *gospodarluk* regime in Bulgaria. The formation of the province of Danube shows the importance of Bulgaria for the application of the *Tanzimat* reforms. The Ottoman state tried to prove that it was capable of implementing reform policies without any European intervention. The appointment of Midhad Pasha as the governor of the province of Danube points out the need for reforms since Midhad Pasha was one of the leading figures of *Tanzimat*, and a progressive man with modern ideas. In order to integrate Bulgaria to the central state, Midhad Pasha eliminated the power of the Muslim landlords. However, the elimination of their power was not achieved through a direct confrontation and submission of all social group to central rule. Rather, Ottomans applied the general formula of the *Tanzimat* to Bulgaria. Instead of eliminating, they attempted to incorporate local intermediaries. In an attempt to reduce the power of the Muslim landlords, the center gave new privileges to Christian notables. The rise of Christian *corbaci*s raised to power as local intermediaries between the central state and peasantry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their power increased during the reform period. This happened in two ways: first, Christian notables, *corbaci*s, were appointed to the provincial councils after the reform decree. Although they were elected to the office by local male population, the election procedure was very selective. Provincial officials frequently registered Christian notables who already had close relations with them and the center as candidates.²⁸ Thus, the formation of provincial councils favored some notables and disfavored others. The local notables who had an appointment at the provincial councils become decisive in the administration, and they increased their power over peasantry. However, by becoming semi-state officials, Christian intermediaries were also incorporated to the state.

²⁷ Inalcik, H. *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, Eren Yayinlari: Istanbul, 1992. (*Tanzimat* and Bulgarian Problem), and Pinson, M. "Ottoman Bulgaria in the First *Tanzimat* Period –The Revolts in Nish (1841) and Vidin (1850), in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 11: 103-146, 1975.

²⁸ Shaw, S. "The Central Legislative Councils in the nineteenth Century Ottoman Reform Movement before 1876," *IJMES*, 1: 51-84, 1970.

The second mechanism that raised the power of the Christian intermediaries was the official recognition of the duties of the *corbaci*s as administrators of their localities. In 1852, it was declared that the status of the Christian intermediaries, *corbaci*s, *kocabasi*s and *knezs*, was raised to an equal status with the governor of towns (*mudur*).²⁹ Christian notables were not only responsible for collecting taxes, but they also gained some administrative responsibilities. Thus, a duality of organizations, which was a common feature of the Ottoman administration was created; both the governor and the Christian notables became responsible for the same task. This duality that proved useful in other cases such as the construction of Baghdad railroad in the Abdulhamid II's reign proved to be useless in the context of Bulgaria. One of the reasons for this failure was the strengthening of the ties between the Christian peasantry and notables, which had already become visible in the early nineteenth century. By strengthening these ties, the center also increased the autonomous decision making at the local level.

The rise in the status of Christian notables did not lead to the decrease in peasant complaints. The addition of new administrative duties to Christian notables increased their control over peasantry. For non-Muslim peasantry it was easier to reach the Christian notable, *corbaci*, than the Muslim governor. Since non-Muslim peasantry had previous ties with Christian notables and it was difficult to form new relations with the local governor who had two-years appointment in the town, the only option non-Muslim peasantry had was to obey Christian intermediaries to regulate their relations with the state. Non-Muslim notables gained visible economic and political power by using these privileges. Their increasing economic relations with European merchants also contributed to the accumulation of their wealth. The *corbaci*s exploited peasantry by collecting extra taxes, and forcing them to corvee labor.³⁰

Peasant complaints about these intermediaries and the danger of increasing autonomy of the *corbaci*s led the center to reformulate the status of *corbaci*s. After 1856 Bulgarian revolt, Midhat Pasha was sent to Tirnova, and a new legislature for the status of the *Corbaci*s was formulated by Tirnova provincial council under the supervision of Midhat Pasha. According to this new verdict, the term of the *corbaci*s was limited to a year and their election by the male residents became obligatory. The notables who completed their terms could not be reelected immediately. They had to wait for two years for reelection. *Corbaci*s were also forbidden to collect extra taxes and demand corvee labor. This new reform brought some democratic measures, which made the election of *corbaci*s obligatory even in the smallest administrative units. The election procedure led to the strengthening of the ties between Christian notables and Christian peasantry since it encouraged the patronage relations and direct interaction between them. However, when the political and economic environment of the nineteenth centuries is taken into account, the strengthening of the ties between peasantry and non-Muslim notables can be seen as a harmful attempt for the state control. Under the increasing influence of nationalism and

²⁹ Senturk, H. *Osmanli Devletinde Bulgar Meselesi (1850-1875)*, Turk Tarih Kurumu Yayinlari, Ankara, 1992. (Bulgarian Problem in the Ottoman State), the original document is in the Prime Ministry Archives, *B.E.O. BI*, no. 62, 24.

³⁰ See Todorov, N. "Social Structures on the Balkans during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," and Crampton, R. J. "Bulgarian Society in the Nineteenth Century," p. 169.

the increasing relations between the Diaspora communities in Europe (which mainly supported nationalist causes) and local notables, the election procedure would increase the autonomous decision making at the local level, which would provide a fertile ground for nationalist ideas. Unfortunately, there is not enough information about the results of election policy. What is visible from the Bulgarian experience is that a short-term peace existed and the center maintained control during the Midhad Pasha's governorship in 1860's. However, the long-term effects of strengthening the ties between local intermediaries and peasantry led to the failure of the *Tanzimat* reforms.

Between 1864 and 1870, the reforms applied in the province of Danube represented a combination of centralized and decentralized tendencies. On the one hand, the center aimed to merge Muslim and non-Muslim populations in the central administration, and to create a unified Ottoman nation state. On the other hand, by increasing the administrative power of Christian intermediaries in the relations between the center and non-Muslim peasantry, the central state decentralized the administration. The abolishment of the *millet* system aimed to dissolve religious communities and to integrate different religious groups into the state by making all people "the subjects of the Sultan." The Ottomans tried to reinforce this first niche of Ottoman citizenship by merging religious communities in the military and education system.³¹ Non-Muslims who were excluded from the military service for centuries were required to do military service by the reform decree (1839). The ideological implication of this policy was noticeable; for the first time, the Ottomans directly aimed to create the concept of citizenship. This attempt failed because both the Muslims and non-Muslims were unwilling to merge their interests in the common army. In the province of Danube, the obligatory service for the non-Muslims was never realized. Non-Muslims were unwilling to be interrupt their productive activities for a long time. The unwillingness on the Muslim side was based on the fear of distribution of guns to the non-Muslim soldiers, who could use them for a revolt. The solution that was also applied in other provinces of the empire was to collect an extra tax from non-Muslims in return for the exclusion from military service.

The second mechanism to merge the religious communities was to change the educational system. Before *Tanzimat*, religious communities had their separate school for primary and secondary education. With the formation of the province of Danube, Muslim and non-Muslim students were obliged to attend mixed schools after the first degree. Several mixed schools were set up in the province of Danube. The most famous one was Ruscuk school. It should be noted that Bulgarian language was not one of the subjects on the program, as Midhad Pasha stated, only the study of Turkish could guarantee Bulgarian children a happy future "so that they could serve both the Sultan and their fellow countrymen...".³² Midhad Pasha also drafted reforms for the formation of mixed schools in primary education, but he was objected by both Muslim and Christian communities. Besides the merging of education and military service, a mixed police force was formed although the number of Christian policemen was very few.³³

³¹ Safrastjan, R. "Ottomanism in Turkey in the Epoch of Reform in nineteenth Century: Ideology and Policy, I," in *Etudes Balkaniques*, 4: 72-86, 1988.

³² Safrastjan, R. "Ottomanism in Turkey in the /epoch of Reforms in XIX C: Ideology and Policy II," p. 43.

³³ Safrastjan, R. *ibid.*, p. 44.

Changes in the military and police organization and education system were the parts of the centralization attempt of the state. However, the transformation to direct rule included decentralized policies too. The incorporation of local intermediaries by the above mentioned mechanisms (the appointment of *corbaxis* to the provincial councils and an addition to their administrative responsibilities) into the central administration displayed the decentralized policies of the central state. The institutionalization of the elections aimed to provide a control mechanism on *corbaxis* by the local residents. However, the implementation of elections favored patronage relations between the Christian peasantry and local notables and laid first organizational structures for a national revolt. The Christian notables, *corbaxis*, who were imposed the nationalist ideas, became the leaders of the nation-state formation before and after the Bulgarian Independence. A detailed study on the role of *corbaxis* in Bulgaria is yet to be done, but the similar leadership of the Christian notables, *corbaxis*, was shown for Serbian and Greek Macedonian nation-state building.³⁴ By using their marriage relations with the different segments of society and distributing political resources to their followers, *corbaxis* became the main carriers of national ideology in Serbia and Greece.

However, during the *Tanzimat* reform period, Christian notables tried to increase their economic and political power by allying with the Ottoman state. The rise of certain *corbaxis* to power by the favors of the center in the provincial councils was explained above. These notables favored both sides; they supported the reforms in order to increase their power, but they were also imposed to the nationalist ideas as a result of their frequent interaction with European merchants and Bulgarian Diaspora communities in Serbia, Romania and Odessa. The sons of these privileged notables were sent to the schools in Western Europe and Russia where they made contacts with nationalist organizations. These sons of notables who returned to Bulgaria as priests and teachers – the first members of Bulgarian intelligentsia and bourgeoisie- were the leaders of nationalist activity. In their attempt to eliminate Ottoman rule they used the existing patronage networks between peasantry and local notables. The nationalist movement found a fertile ground on the local decision making mechanisms that were formed during the reform period.

A Comparison between Bulgaria and the Arab Lands: Why did the reforms fail in Bulgaria?

The common mechanisms for incorporating local intermediaries and old political elite (the mobility of political elite, the inclusion of local powers in the provincial councils, and the use of informal networks between the center and periphery) were used in the Balkans, Arab lands and Anatolia. The outcomes of the reforms, however, differed depending on the region specific characteristics, political, social and economic structures. I will briefly compare the application of reforms in Balkans and Arab lands in this section in order to clarify the mechanisms for the success and failure of reforms. Anatolia will be excluded here since it was a part of the center both in terms of geographical and political

³⁴ See Karakasidou, A. *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, 1996, and Sahara, T. "Patron-Client Networks and the State-Making in Early Nineteenth Century Serbia," in *Etudes Balkaniques*, 4: 57-65, 1994.

proximity.

In terms of geographical proximity, the Balkan Peninsula was closer to the center than the Arab provinces, yet politically became more disintegrated from the center in the nineteenth century. In terms of maintaining social control and increasing state revenues, the reforms can be considered more successful in the Arab lands than the Balkans. The Arab provinces stayed under Ottoman rule until the end of the World War I, and there were no major uprisings in the region. The region specific conditions were effective in these different outcomes. The Balkans was the border area between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The interruption of the European powers and the integration to world economy were more influential in this region. Christian populations, who were the majority, also made the impact of the European powers more visible. The Diaspora communities situated in European cities contributed to the spread of nationalist ideas among the emerging bourgeoisie in the Balkans. The maintenance of central control became difficult because of these factors in Bulgaria. In addition to these macro structural factors, the application of the reforms in the Balkans and Arab lands formed different opportunities for alliances and negotiations between the state and social groups at the local level.

The procedures of incorporating local intermediaries were similar in the Balkans and Arab lands. Local notables joined the bureaucracy by their appointments to the provincial councils and administrative cadres. The provincial councils had members from local families that were chosen by the male residents in both provinces. The difference between Bulgaria and the Arab lands was the appointment of local notables to provincial administrative cadres. The decree that forbade the appointment of local residents as governors to their own localities was effective both in Bulgaria and the Arab lands. However, the entrance of local notables to administrative posts followed a different pattern in the Arab lands. The foundation of religious endowments (*vakifs*) by Muslim local elite became an important mechanism to develop ties between the center and local notables. In the nineteenth century, the establishment of the endowments increased the economic and political power of local notables. The members of notable families who founded *vakifs* were frequently appointed as governors and religious officials in the provincial administration.³⁵ Winter also shows the similar trend of entrance of local notable families into the administrative cadres in Egypt.³⁶ Many ashraf and *ayan* families found appointments as religious officials (*kadi* or *mufti*) in provinces. The provincial officials were also transferred from one administrative category to another. Many members of *ulema*, religious officials, supported the *Tanzimat* reforms in order to benefit from the administrative openings at the local level. Yazbak shows that how certain families that had economic power became the members of provincial administration in Nablus. Although certain leading families among the traditional forces went into gradual decline, religious officials found adequate means not just to survive but to safeguard their

³⁵ Roded, R. "The Waqf and the Social Elite of Aleppo in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries," (paper presented at the workshop on Social and Economic Aspects of the Muslim Waqf, The Institute for Advanced Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, February, 1981).

³⁶ Winter, M. "The Ashraf and Niqabat Al-Ashraf in Egypt in Ottoman and Modern Times," in *Asian and African Studies*, 19: 17-41, 1985.

position of leadership until the end of Ottoman rule in Nablus.³⁷ In addition to the functions they held in the religious institutions, families of leading ulema also mobilized themselves successfully in order to obtain important bureaucratic posts, and they became a part of political elite.³⁸

The incorporation of local intermediaries and old political elite was more successful in the Arab provinces than Bulgaria. The local powers were integrated to the state by elections and appointments to the provincial councils. The same policies were applied in Bulgaria and the Arab lands with different consequences. The crucial difference between Bulgaria and the Arab lands was the religious composition of populations. Non-Muslims were a minority in the Arab lands. The population in the Arab provinces was more homogeneously Muslim despite the divisions within Islam. Local notables in the Arab lands were Muslims, and religious institutions became an important mechanism for incorporating them to the center. By establishing religious endowments, local notables became their administrators, and they were incorporated into the state. There was an increasing entrance of local notables to religious appointments at the local level even before *Tanzimat*. During the reform period, these religious officials transferred to the new bureaucratic posts at the local level in the absence of trained personnel. This channel of incorporation was closed to Christian notables in Bulgaria. Although the reform decree allowed the appointment of non-Muslims to the administrative posts for the first time, we do not have enough information about the entrance of Christians to the provincial administration. We know that Armenians were appointed to the important provincial ranks in the southeastern provinces of Anatolia.³⁹ How prevalent this practice was in the Balkan provinces is yet to be studied. The governors and high-rank officials continued to be Muslims since the control of the Balkans was an important problem under the increasing foreign pressure and the rising nationalist ideology in the region. Moreover, the existence of non-Muslim communities made the complete incorporation of Christian intermediaries into the center impossible. The reforms aimed to abolish the *millet* system and create the basis of citizenship, but the center had no means to carry out the reforms and overcome the previous practices of dealing with communities instead of individuals. Ottoman statesmen continued to deal with the communities even after the reforms. Local intermediaries, Christian notables, became officially recognized agents of the central administration. However, they did not merge into the regular bureaucratic cadres. They were recognized as a separate group of state agents that coexisted with the provincial bureaucracy. They never became state officials in the legal sense; they were officially recognized as intermediaries between the center and peasantry. The center did not have a complete control on them since their status was raised to an equal status to the local governor after 1854. There were no real control mechanisms on their activities at the local level. In contrast to the Arab provinces where the local families were incorporated into the center and became a part of provincial administration, Christian notables

³⁷ Yazbak, M. "Nabulsi *Ulema* in the Late Ottoman Period, 1864-1914," in *IJMES*, 29 (1): 71-91, 1997.

³⁸ Kushner, D. "Career Patterns among *Ulema* in the Late nineteenth and Early twentieth Century," in *Tanzimatın 150. Yildonumu Uluslararası Sempozyumu*, Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, Ankara, p. 145-65, 1994.

³⁹ Krikorian, M.K. *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1908*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.

survived as a separate group as a result of their brokerage role between the center and peasantry. Reforms aimed to create an equal status for all subjects of the empire, but the absence of mechanisms to carry out the citizenship concept led to the rise of local intermediaries to power. The strengthening of the ties between the Christian notables and the peasantry increased the autonomous decision making at the local level, and led to the failure of the reforms in the long run.

Conclusion: What did we learn from Bulgarian example?

The approach adapted in this paper sees the state as an institution, which emerged and developed in a historical context. The organizations are shaped by local, historical processes rather than by universal principals of rationality.⁴⁰ This approach rejects the unilinear progression toward increasingly efficient practices. Instead of applying unilinear model of Western European centralization to the cases in the developing world, paying attention to the diverse forms of centralization will improve the study of state building. Transformation to direct rule does not occur only at macro level. Rather the interaction of the state and society at the local level shapes the state formation and lead to the emergence of different centralization forms.

Western European centralization model premises a strong state that can implement state policies autonomously by eliminating local intermediaries. This model is not applicable to the experiences of many Third World states. Post-colonial states do not have well-formed state apparatus (except the cadres created during the colonial period), and they have to incorporate local powers and intermediaries into their rule in order to provide social control at the local level. The recent literature on state building concentrates on the role of state-society interaction in modern state formation. State-society relations are effective in reshaping both the state and society. In an attempt to map these state-society relations, Migdal argues that a triangular accommodation exists among policy implementers, politicians and strongmen at the local level. In times of state formation and implementation of reforms, state officials need the support of local notables, who can act in multiple ways: Strongmen can act as brokers between the central state and peasantry by using their patronage relations. They can become members of political parties and influence provincial officials by using their relations with the central state.⁴¹ In the lack of strong state capacity to maintain social control, states in the developing world have to find ways for incorporating local forces into their administration, which in turn affects the centralization process.

Migdal's model derives from the experiences in the developing world. It assumes a fundamental conflict between direct rule and local intermediaries who decentralize social control when they try to maximize their own control over local groups. In this framework, the central state accommodates local intermediaries only when it has a low

⁴⁰ On new institutional literature, see DiMaggio, P, Powell, W. (eds.) *The New Institutionalization in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991, and Dobbin, F. "Cultural Models of Organization: the social construction of rational organizing principles," in *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*, (ed.) D. Crane, Basil Blackwell Ltd., p. 117-143, 1994.

⁴¹ Migdal, J. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

capacity of social control. In contrast to Migdal's model, the incorporation policies can be used by both weak and strong states. Paying attention to local knowledge and incorporating intermediaries into the central state can be a deliberate strategy of a centralizing state for the most effective means of increasing social control and state revenues. Even strong colonial states can use decentralized policies for maintaining direct rule. British rulers in South Africa reinforced local chieftains instead of eliminating them, and combined centralized practices in the urban areas with the decentralized practices in rural areas.⁴² States that pay more attention to local practices are more likely to maximize their effectiveness.⁴³

Besides its shortcomings, Migdal's model outlines a model that can integrate state-society interaction into the state formation process. All cases of centralization, whether in the East or West, are contingent upon different configurations of state-society relations. Western European state formation can also be studied appropriately by taking the social structure into account. In a recent work, Tilly introduced connections between the central state and local groups and connections among social groups as a decisive factor to his model of European state formation. The combinations between coercion (all concerted means of action that commonly cause loss or damage to the social actors), capital (tangible, transferable resources that can lead increases in use value and enforceable claims on such resources) and connection (relations among social sites) affect state formation and democratization. Even within Western European experience there are variations depending on the different combinations of capital, coercion and capital, which leads to the emergence of democratic or authoritarian regimes.⁴⁴

Conceptualizing the state as an organization allows the study of variations in the centralization model.⁴⁵ State organization does not grow in a vacuum. In times of reform implementation, the central state has to take the social, political and economic conditions into account at local level. State institutions are formed as a result of continuous interaction between the prevalent practices at the local level and new policies formed by the central state. Legitimate practices of the past constrain and shape the future organizational forms. Technically efficient practices such as legal rational bureaucracy may not be successful if they do not take prevailing local practices into account. Even the meaning of efficiency is socially constructed; different societies can define rules of competition and cooperation in different ways. Thus, there is a certain overlap between efficiency and legitimacy (i.e., effectiveness). The survival of an organization necessitates the construction of a common set of understandings, by which actors come to

⁴² Mamdani, M. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

⁴³ Scott, J. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

⁴⁴ See Tilly, C. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1992, and Tilly, C. "Coercion, Capital and Connection," Unpublished Manuscript, Columbia University, 1998.

⁴⁵ Some recent works on state-building adapt an organizational perspective. See Barkey, K. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: the Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, Cornell University Press, 1994, Ikegami, E. *The Taming of Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, and Silberman, E.S. *Cages of Reason: The Rise of the National State in France, Japan, The United States, and Great Britain*, The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

recognize their mutual interdependence.⁴⁶ Thus, the construction of efficiency always necessitates legitimacy, the acceptance of common understandings, at the very least by the powerful sectors in society.

However, instead of emphasizing the effects of previous practices and set of understandings in the new organizational forms, we should investigate the ways in which social and economic imperatives reinforce and contradict each other.⁴⁷ The most fruitful approaches thus far have been those that emphasize the ways in which history and social relations shape both institutional and economic relations.⁴⁸ The Ottoman statesmen had to manage both the legitimacy problem and economic constraints during the reform period. Legitimacy problem led to the incorporation of previous political practices and old political elites into the new state administration. In contrast, technical environments also constrain the use of incorporation policies. Economic factors, the integration to the world market and relative decline in state capacity, favored the incorporation of decentralized elements into the central state in some regions such as Anatolia. In some other regions (i.e., Balkans), however, the limitations of the technical environment led to the failure of the incorporation policies. The approach I adopt here explains the centralization process in the Ottoman Empire at the conjunction of the effectiveness (incorporation of previous political practices into the centralization project) and technical environment (economic resources, local structure and state capacity).

This paper questions the interaction between the state and social groups, and studies how these relations shaped the outcome of the reforms in Bulgaria. By accounting for local processes, it adds another dimension to the Bulgarian studies, which explains the reform period only with macro structural factors. Macro structural factors, the foreign relations, economic integration and the general decline in the state capacity were certainly important in understanding the reform period in Bulgaria. They provided the general context, technical environment, in which the state-society interaction took place at the local level. The relations between the center and periphery were influenced by the previous practices of interaction between the center and periphery, which grew in a historical context shaped by macro structural factors. The practice of dealing with religious communities instead of individuals in the *millet* system in previous centuries continued in the reform period despite the abolishment of the *millet* system and declaration of the equality of subject with the reform decree. The need to incorporate non-Muslim populations of Bulgaria increased the power of Christian intermediaries, which mediated between non-Muslim peasantry and the center. Although the center tried to incorporate local intermediaries into the center by increasing their duties, it failed to incorporate them as a result of the specific configuration of relations between the state and local groups. *Tanzimat* reforms increased the power of Christian intermediaries when the center attempted to decrease the power of Muslim landlords in Bulgaria. The status of *Corbacis* (Christian intermediaries) was raised to an equal status with the local

⁴⁶ Fligstein, N. *The Transformation of Corporate Control*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

⁴⁷ Orru, M., Biggart, N., Hamilton, G. "Organizational Isomorphism in East Asia," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, (Eds.) W. Powell & P. DiMaggio, University of Chicago Press, p. 361-89, 1991.

⁴⁸ Fligstein, N., Freeland, R. "Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives on Corporate Organization," in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21: 339-68, 1995.

governors, and they became responsible for the administration of Christian peasantry. The institutionalization of the election of the local intermediaries also strengthened the ties between the Christian intermediaries and the peasantry, and provided the first mechanisms for autonomous decision making at the local level. Although the reforms aimed the centralization of the administration by maintaining social control and increasing tax revenues, they failed in Bulgaria as a result of the specific configurations of state-society relations that were constrained by general socio-economic conditions. Thus, the failure of centralization attempt in Ottoman Bulgaria can be understood at the intersection of institutional and technical environment of the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire. The previous practice of dealing with communities instead of individuals, and the resulting state-society interactions limited the practices of *Tanzimat* and favored the use of Christian intermediaries during the reform period. However, the use of Christian intermediaries contributed to the failure of the reforms under the constraints of the technical environment (economic decline, the rise of nationalist ideologies, the development of relations between the European merchants and Christian merchants in Bulgaria). This technical environment limited the success of centralization, and autonomous decision making mechanisms emerged at the local level. The conjuncture of coercion, capital and connection (wars, technical environment, and the configuration of the relations between central state, provincial governors, local intermediaries and peasantry) defined the failure of the *Tanzimat* reforms in Bulgaria.

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