Introduction

The documents published in this book comprise the English translations of select documents from the *Aynîyat* Registers [*Aynîyat Defterleri*] on the Greek Revolution preserved in the Ottoman State Archives in Istanbul. Every order dispatched from the grand vizier's office to various central state officials and provincial functionaries for the quelling of the Greek uprising was immediately copied into these bound volumes in chronological order to keep track of the rapidly accumulating correspondence. As a result, some thirty-three registers were compiled between June 1821 and April 1835, comprising 4,352 pages and, on average, 1.5 orders per page, providing us with a sea of information of great historical value regarding the Greek struggle for independence and the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece. The documents presented here span from June 1821 to April 1826.

The documents in these registers could plausibly be coined the “Ottoman view of the Greek Revolution.” However, this would only partly reflect the scope of the information collected in these volumes. The primary importance of these documents is that they are a clear testimony of the larger imperial context in which the Greek Revolution evolved and proved successful. Through these documents, we acquire penetrating insights into the workings of Ottoman governance, imperial allegiances, the military, the navy, the commissariat, the economy, and human capital. We learn extensively about the political and military forces and allegiances the Sublime Porte strived to mobilize to fight its battles against the Greek revolutionaries and also about the ways in which it kept the Greek communities that did not rise up under control.

The mass of information in these documents clearly denotes a highly ineffective and failing state, which could hardly perform its core functions and exercised only nominal authority over much of its territory, and a desperate but eager Mahmud II, who was the Ottoman sultan throughout the Greek Revolution. At the time of the Greek Revolution, the Ottoman central state had essentially no army and limited means to raise one. The navy was totally inept and could hardly sail out of the Dardanelles. The Sublime Porte severely lacked the military and naval manpower to put down a national uprising that broke out almost simultaneously throughout the empire wherever Greek populations constituted the majority. Hence, most documents in this book are unsurprisingly of a military nature, evincing the Sublime Porte's frantic efforts to rally every possible military human resource for its war effort. To understand what had happened to the Ottoman army and the consequent

developments during the Greek Revolution, it is necessary to examine briefly the preceding decade, which constitutes one of the most understudied periods of Ottoman history.

1 The Historical Context: “De-*ayanization*”

The Treaty of Bucharest (May 1812), which ended the Russo–Ottoman War of 1806–12, and Russia’s revised nonaggressive imperial agenda in the post-Napoleonic world order brought about the favorable conditions for a certain clique at the Sublime Porte to deal with the state’s internal affairs and to redefine its boundaries with the provincial magnates (*ayans*).¹ The *ayans* had carved out almost autonomous statelets for themselves in the previous half century, and, since the Russo–Ottoman War of 1768–74, the Ottoman central state could not raise an army or taxes without their support.

Until the fourth year of the Russo–Ottoman War of 1806–12, the *ayans* mobilized considerable resources. However, heavy defeats inflicted on the Ottoman armies made the *ayans* evermore independent and less responsive to the Sublime Porte’s demands. There is enough evidence to suggest that provincial magnates gave the Ottoman central state little chance of surviving the war with Russia. Especially after 1808, the magnates’ actions reflected their outlook: namely, that they were free agents in a dissolving empire and that they could not and did not wish to rely upon, nor lend their military and financial support to the Sublime Porte. During the six years of intermittent warfare, even minor *ayans* constructed their own castles and fortifications, acquired cannons, ignored the Sublime Porte’s orders to join the imperial army, built private armies by attracting vagabond elements, and ventured to extend their influence over the neighboring territories.

Luckily for the Sublime Porte, hostilities were not resumed in the 1812 campaign season, due to Napoleon Bonaparte’s expedition to Russia, and the war came to an end. In the following decade, the Sublime Porte endeavored to establish a capable defense system. It tried to save itself from being at the mercy of the *ayans* by uniting its borderlands under a central authority and by establishing a new provincial army under the command of imperial viziers,

1 For the most up-to-date literature review and theoretical framework regarding the Ottoman state’s relations with its provincial power-brokers until the end of 1808, see Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

whose soldiers would not turn tail and flee when they faced the disciplined, bayonet-using Russian *soldats* and light artillery.

Hence, in February 1813, the Sublime Porte officially announced and embarked upon a military and administrative project to reassert itself in the provinces. The project would be brought about through the reallocation of the tax farms and various state revenues [*mukataas*] from the *ayans* to imperial agents. As of February 1813, only imperial governors and sub-governors [*sancak mutasarrıfı*] were allowed to bid in auctions for the *mukataas* in their appointed domains.² In theory, this revolutionary measure did not stipulate an overall overthrow of local power structures. In practice, however, transferring the *mukataa* revenues (in other words, the *ayans*' main source of financial—and thus military and political—power) from the magnates to imperial agents in most cases could be carried out only through force. The project brought imperial viziers, who derived their power mostly from the employment of Albanian mercenaries, into direct confrontation with the provincial magnates and allowed the former to subject the locals to additional extortionary practices, causing extreme economic and political distress in the provinces.

What followed was, to all intents and purposes, a civil war between the Ottoman central state and a myriad of provincial magnates of varying calibers, religions, ethnicities, and levels of popular support. Official Ottoman documents and chronicles allow us to trace dozens of urban and rural uprisings led by provincial magnates throughout the empire, from Yemen to Wallachia, from Caucasia to Serbia. The last and probably the most significant one of these magnates was Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, who declined to submit to the Sublime Porte and revolted in 1820.

I suggest the term “de-*ayanization*” instead of centralization for this procedure, because, while what was destroyed and dismantled is apparent (for instance, the elimination of an *ayan* or of his entire family and retinue), what exactly replaced the old structures appears to have varied according to the particular conditions in each province and did not necessarily result in establishing the authority of the central state.³ The full breadth of the Sublime Porte's de-*ayanization* project and the exact number of its victims requires extensive research. To begin with, if we make an estimate based on the 153 ethnic Turkish *ayans* from Anatolia alone, who were ordered to join the imperial army for

2 Mandate to the chief accountant, February 9, 1813, BOA/C.ML 4819, in Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi: XVIII. Yüzyıldan Tanzimat'a Mali Tarih* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1986), p. 242.

3 For details of the Sublime Porte's de-*ayanization* project and the consequent uprisings, see H. Şükrü Ilıcak, “A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1826”, Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 2011), pp. 27–69.

the summer campaign of 1811 in the lower Danube region, the total number of provincial magnates throughout the empire before the commencement of the project must have approached a four-digit figure.⁴ Hence, it is impossible to follow the Sublime Porte's dealings with the provincial magnates to its full extent. What is important to understand is the striking contrast between 1811 and 1823: for the first planned and somewhat coordinated military expedition of the Sublime Porte for the suppression of the Greek uprising in 1823, there was not a single Anatolian *ayan* in the Ottoman army encampment in Larissa, and a mere twelve thousand out of fifty thousand soldiers had been recruited by the *ayans* of Rumelia. The only Anatolians in the encampment comprised freelance mercenary troops, totaling around three thousand soldiers, and the rest were Albanian mercenaries.⁵ Although the absence of the Anatolian *ayans* in the army does not mean that all of them had been exterminated in the preceding decade—as we can still trace them in official documents—the figures are particularly telling about the consequences of the project.

By 1821, the de-*ayanization* in Anatolia was almost complete and terminated in Rumelia, due to the commencement of the Greek Revolution. After almost a decade of internal warfare, large sections of the empire were ruined, and the Sublime Porte had exhausted its pool of military manpower. The elimination of some of the most powerful provincial political and military brokers had serious implications for troop recruitment. Provincial magnates were toppled hastily without replacing their networks and infrastructures with effective alternatives. Consequently, the imperial agents who replaced the magnates found it extremely difficult to recruit, mobilize, and fund soldiers. Strongly reminiscent of the circumstances attending the dissolution of several ancient empires, the Sublime Porte was obliged to employ mercenaries for the suppression of the Greek uprising.

This brief summary roughly sets the historical framework in which the documents in this book may be appraised.

2 The Use and Logic of Violence

In the first two years of the Greek Revolution, Ottoman political idiom and culture experienced an abrupt change. Unable to comprehend the “national idea” and the Greek revolutionaries’ self-sacrificial activities, the sultan and

4 Register of Anatolian *ayans* to dispatch troops, March 11, 1811, BOA/HAT 41621-A.

5 “Register of Soldiers Employed in the Morea and its Environs,” January 18, 1823, BOA/HAT 39969.

the Ottoman central state elite turned to Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth-century Maghrebi scholar, in order to make sense of the situation and to find a solution to the acute crisis. Ibn Khaldunian concepts and formulations did not only dominate the Sublime Porte administrators' moral and intellectual universe, but were also virtually put to the test as soon as the Greek Revolution broke out.

In his masterpiece, the *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldun determined that dynasties and states have a lifespan and go through five stages similar to those of human beings: they are born, grow, mature, and eventually die and are replaced by new ones. During the life stages of a dynasty, the society it governs also transforms from 'bedouinism' to 'urbanism' or, to use his terminology, from *bedevîyet* to *hazariyet*, losing its nomadic vigor to a sedentary lifestyle. In the bedouin stage, the culture is highly warlike; people are motivated, able, can carry out rapid mobilization, and are not plagued by moral and material corruption. The people do not possess conveniences and luxuries beyond the bare necessities. They wear simple clothes, live in tents or modest houses, eat humble food, always carry weapons, and do not entrust their security to others. Once people become sedentary, they indulge in a life of ease and sink into luxury and plenty; they become lazy and cowardly, and wastefulness and squandering dominate society. *Hazaris* entrust their security to the state. Behind the secure city walls and with a police system guarding their lives and property, they are carefree and trusting and cease to carry weapons. Successive generations grow up in this way of life, and the energy that motivates people and holds them together (*asabiyyet*) weakens to the point that the state and people are no longer able to defend themselves. Eventually, they are swallowed up by other nations. The rhetoric and terminology used by the Ottoman administrators following the outbreak of the Greek uprising indicate their belief that the Ottoman state was in the fifth and last stage of the Ibn Khaldunian dynastic cycle, namely, the stage of "waste and extravagance," when the people are indifferent, and the state is senile and begins to crumble.⁶

In an effort to regenerate society in the example of the state-forming ancestors, and to transform the state and society from urbanism (*hazariyet*) to bedouinism (*bedevîyet*), the Sublime Porte carried out compulsory mobilization and compelled the male Muslim inhabitants of major urban centers to mimic

6 For the deployment of Ibn Khaldunian terminology and concepts at the outset of the Greek Revolution and events of public violence, see H. Şükrü İlcak, "Ottoman Context," in Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Constantinos Tsoukalas (eds.), *The Greek Revolution: A Critical Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2021), pp. 58–46. For extensive documentation and transliterations of Ottoman documents on the subject, see İlcak, "A Radical Rethinking of Empire," ch. 2. For an example, see document 574/200 herein.

the warlike ways of the ancestors as described by Ibn Khaldun. The sultan's imperial rescripts demonstrate his endeavor to unite, mobilize, and eventually transform his Muslim subjects under an identity that would transcend religion and rally Muslims' loyalties to the state under a constant condition of mobilization by homogenizing Muslims and molding them "back" into the militaristic ethos of the ancestors. Hence, upon the news of the Greek uprising, male Muslims throughout the empire were ordered to arm themselves, wear military clothes, and acquire horses. The galvanizing proclamations of the Sublime Porte and the arming of the Muslim populace, however, paved the way for events unprecedented in Ottoman history. Major Ottoman cities became scenes of indiscriminate public violence against Greeks and other non-Muslim denominations. The Sublime Porte endeavored to monopolize and regulate the use of violence only when the chaos became too much to handle.⁷

Thus, although there was some indirect theory behind the use of violence, the feeble Ottoman government, experiencing utmost difficulty in recruiting and mobilizing troops, made use of violence as an important tool. The sultan's imperial rescripts clearly display the logic of violence: to dishearten the insurgents by making an example of them and exacting revenge. When a Samiot fleet imposed a blockade on Chios in the spring of 1821, the sultan ordered the massacre of the Samiots: "If our fleet could go to Samos and subdue it entirely, and kill and enslave all of its *reaya*, the others will be daunted and get into order. God forbid, otherwise it will be difficult in the end [to deal with the insurgents]."⁸ However, it was hardly possible to turn the common Muslim folk of the early nineteenth century into the bedouins described by Ibn Khaldun and mobilize them to the regions where Greeks constituted a majority. After receiving the news of the fall of Monemvasia in 1821, the enraged sultan expressed his frustration in these words: "I am grieved by this issue. Although the Muslims see that the infidels torment Muslims, I do not know why they have not displayed the sincere zeal I wish and could not crush and destroy [the Greeks] even at a single place."⁹

The exemplary punishment desired by the sultan was to be inflicted at Chios one year after the commencement of the Greek Revolution and is documented in detail in this book.¹⁰ Although, practically, the massacres of Ayvalık¹¹ and Chios were only an iota shy of what might nowadays be labeled genocide,

7 See, for example, documents 573/47 and 574/247 herein.

8 Mahmud II's imperial rescript, May 26, 1821, BOA/HAT 40614.

9 Mahmud II's imperial rescript, August 20, 1821, BOA/HAT 38431.

10 See documents 575/127, 575/132, 575/147, 575/150, 575/192, 575/199, 575/200, 575/226, 575/232, 575/233, and 575/252 herein.

11 See documents 573/83, 573/85, 573/160, 573/161, and 573/175 herein.

there was no coherent government plan to eradicate the Greeks. The aim of the Sublime Porte was to restore the Ottoman order by forcing the *reaya* to surrender and accept *raiyyet* [Ottoman subjecthood],¹² another theme amply documented here.

3 Punishing and Controlling Greek Communal Leadership

A theme that recurs numerous times in this book is the punishment of the religious and lay leaders of the Greek community.¹³ One of the key determining factors in the Sublime Porte's responses to the Greek Revolution was the Ottoman administrators' unyielding belief that a Russian conspiracy lay behind the insurgency. According to the Sublime Porte, Russia was the power conspiring, provoking, and secretly assisting the Greek insurgents, and the Greek communal leadership (both the clergy and the Fanariots) acted as a Russian fifth column.¹⁴ The most immediate result of this perception was the severe punishment administered to the Greek secular and religious leadership. By the second month of the revolution, the number of executed Greek dignitaries had passed one hundred. Through excessive punishment, the Sublime Porte was severing the link between the perceived protagonists of the insurrection with Russia, depriving its Greek subjects of communal leadership and making it virtually impossible for the Greek communities still under its control to organize themselves.

Another method deployed by the Sublime Porte to sever the Fanariots' connection with the outside world was to exile them to remote towns in Anatolia, where no sizable Greek communities existed. Members of the Mavroyiannis, Kallimaki, Hantzeris, Negris, Argyropoulos, and Mavrokordatos families, who had no clear association with the uprising, were nevertheless exiled in this way.

12 Hakan Erdem, "The Greek Revolt and the End of the Old Ottoman Order," in Petros Pizaniyas (ed.), *H Ελληνική Επανάσταση του 1821. Ένα ευρωπαϊκό γεγονός* (Athens: Kedros, 2009), pp. 281–8.

13 The fortunes of the Fanariots and Greek clergy have been adequately dealt with in the historiography. See Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); H. Şükrü İlcak, "The Revolt of Alexandros Ipsilantis and the Fate of the Fanariots in Ottoman Documents," in Petros Pizaniyas (ed.), *H Ελληνική Επανάσταση του 1821. Ένα ευρωπαϊκό γεγονός* (Athens: Kedros, 2009), pp. 225–39.

14 For extensive documentation and transliterations of Ottoman documents on the Ottoman perceptions of a Russian hand behind the Greek Revolution and the demise of the Fanariots, see İlcak, "A Radical Rethinking of Empire," ch. 3.

Along with the Fanariots, their whole retinues were also exiled.¹⁵ Moreover, their properties were also confiscated.¹⁶

The Sublime Porte also resorted to incarcerating provincial Greek notables in large cities, such as Istanbul, Thessaloniki, and Izmir. Throughout the revolution, both lay and clerical Greek dignitaries of the non-insurgent provinces were kept as hostages on a rotating basis. In case of a revolt in the province, the hostages would be executed. Provincial Greek communities applied to the Sublime Porte every year for the rotation of the hostages and sent new clerics and/or *kocabaşıs* to replace the imprisoned ones.¹⁷

This book provides previously untapped information regarding the end of Fanariot rule in Moldowallachia and the transition of authority to the local Romanian boyars.¹⁸ Mahmud II declared that: "It was known to everyone that the situation [the Greek Revolution] occurred because of Russian incitement, and even if Russia did not declare war after this point, the government could not venture to appoint any member of that group [the Fanariots] to the voivodeships of Wallachia and Moldavia."¹⁹ Despite the Sublime Porte's strong prejudice against the Fanariots and the eventual dismissal of Fanariots from office, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Oltenia were administered by the Greek *kaymakams* Stefanos Vogoridis, Konstantinos Negrıs, and Ioannis Samurkaşoğlu for another year following the beginning of the Greek Revolution.²⁰ Upon the petitions of local boyar dynasties,²¹ Ioan Sandu Sturdza and Grigore Dimitrie Ghica—who had left their sons as hostages in Istanbul to guarantee their loyalty to the Sublime Porte—were appointed to the voivodeships in July 1822, ending the century-long Fanariot rule in Moldowallachia and marking a milestone in Romanian history.²²

15 For a list of these Fanariots, see BOA/HAT 36544-A.

16 See, for example, document 574/81 herein.

17 For the sultan's imperial rescript ordering the implementation of this policy, see BOA/HAT 38031. For prominent local Greeks kept as hostages, see documents 574/1, 574/90, 574/268, 574/322, 575/23, 575/43, 575/126, 575/200, 575/271, 575/289, 577/68, 579/59, and 1713/124 herein.

18 See documents 575/342, 575/344, 576/58, and 576/78 herein.

19 Mahmud II's imperial rescript, undated, BOA/HAT 50178.

20 For the *kaymakams* in question, see documents 573/6, 573/9, 573/21, 573/110, 574/339, 575/342, 575/344, 575/346, and 577/172 herein.

21 For the plea of the Moldowallachian boyars to replace the Fanariots, see BOA/HAT 45723-B.

22 For the certificate of authority to Ioan Sandu Sturdza, see July 1822, BOA/C.HR. 2239.

4 Ottoman Soldierly during the Greek War of Independence

Readers will notice that, year after year, the Sublime Porte's plans and measures to quell the Greek Revolution looked impeccable on paper and that Ottoman ministers were always certain that they would bear fruit. Despite the most elaborate plans, however, each campaign season proved hopelessly unsuccessful until the advent of the Egyptian forces in 1825.

The Ottoman state engaged in unfamiliar and extremely challenging warfare with the outbreak of the uprising. Coping with a national uprising required the Sublime Porte to dispatch and maintain troops in a multitude of locations for prolonged periods, even where Greek communities did not participate in the insurgency. In most of these locations Muslims were either non-existent or constituted a minority, making local troop recruitment virtually impossible and mobilization extremely costly.

Another major impediment to the deployment efforts to the insurgent regions was the Sublime Porte's extreme anxieties about a possible Russian war. Throughout the Greek Revolution, Ottoman administrators considered Russia as posing a more concrete peril than the Greek insurgents and expected an eventual war with Russia, which finally took place in 1828. Hence, the Turkish soldiers of many Rumeliot functionaries could not be dispatched to the insurgent provinces and were kept in a state of vigilance along the Russian border.²³

Whatever Anatolian troops were leftover, on the other hand, were apparently busy on the Iranian front. The Ottoman–Iranian War of September 1821 to July 1823 is a neglected topic in historiography that presumably had a direct impact on the course of the Greek Revolution. The proxy battles between the Ottoman Kurdish magnates and Iranian Kurdish magnates, which began in late 1820, triggered an all-out Ottoman–Iranian War in the seventh month of the Greek Revolution. Despite the Sublime Porte's sustained appeals to the Iranian court to suspend hostilities, “at a time when the Ottoman state was fighting the infidels [the Greeks] and when Muslims should coalesce,”²⁴ Iranian forces occupied such major towns as Bitlis, Eleşkirt, Muş, Erciş, and Bayezid, forcing the Sublime Porte to deploy the Anatolian troops in the eastern provinces of the empire. The military human resources of Anatolia were so depleted that the Sublime Porte sought to dispatch mercenaries from Rumelia to fight the

²³ See document 575/105 herein.

²⁴ Hacı Salih Pasha (grand vizier) to Hüseyin Han (*serdar* of Revan), undated, BOA/HAT 36730-E.

Iranians; and yet it proved incapable of organizing this venture.²⁵ The battle between the fifty-thousand-strong Ottoman army²⁶ and the thirty-thousand-strong Iranian army resulted in the former's defeat. However, a major cholera epidemic in the Iranian army prevented further strife and forced both parties to sign a peace treaty.²⁷

The effectiveness of the janissaries and the *nefir-i amm* soldiers [peasant conscripts], namely the two forces the Sublime Porte initially managed to mobilize, was tested in the summer of 1821 during the Ypsilantis revolt in Moldowallachia and quickly proved unfeasible for the operations in the Morea. The janissary corps had ceased to be the standing army of the Ottoman central state for more than a century. The Sublime Porte's expectations were lowered to the point that the Imperial Council considered employing janissaries for putting down the Ypsilantis revolt only as a last resort after figuring out that the Governor of Anadolu Ebubekir Pasha would need over twenty days to recruit soldiers and reach Moldowallachia. The janissaries constituted the only manpower at the Sublime Porte's immediate disposal; yet, their deployment was a matter of negotiation. After lengthy discussions about their salary, the janissaries agreed to dispatch five regiments. Many of them deserted and were back in Istanbul by September 1821, provoking disorder in Moldowallachia and the towns south of the Danube. Janissary deployment throughout the rest of the Greek Revolution until the corps' abolishment in 1826 proved acutely problematic. Their contribution to the Sublime Porte's war effort remained only symbolic; the Sublime Porte's overriding concern regarding the janissaries was frankly to ensure that they did not rebel.²⁸

The *nefir-i amm* soldiers, on the other hand, were recruited from the non-military inhabitants of the areas around the combat zones when emergencies arose. Their provisions were paid by their own communities or by the people of their designated locations, often to the detriment of local economies. This was an inexpensive solution for the state in times of financial difficulty; however, *nefir-i amm* soldiers were practically useless as fighters. Their most important incentive to join the campaigns was to carry off booty, and, when they failed to do so or once they faced hardship, they often deserted their troops, despite all precautions to retain them. In September 1821, when the commotion in

25 Salih Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Ormenio) to the Sublime Porte, undated, BOA/HAT 37321.

26 Based on a brief examination, the Ottoman army apparently consisted mostly of tribal Kurdish troops.

27 For the Ottoman–Iranian War of 1821–3, see Sabri Ateş, *Ottoman–Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 52–4.

28 For a comprehensive study of the janissary complex during the Greek War of Independence, see Ilıcak, "A Radical Rethinking of Empire," ch. 4.

Moldowallachia died down, deserting *nefir-i amm* soldiers swarmed all over Rumelia, wreaking havoc.²⁹ By April 1822, they were simply a burden to the frontier administration.³⁰

Initially, the Sublime Porte tried to quell the revolution in the Morea and Rumelia by mobilizing a variety of resources, including the mostly Albanian troops employed by Hurşid Ahmed Pasha, who was then in charge of putting down the Tepedelenli revolt; the imperial viziers directly under the Sublime Porte, who also employed mostly Albanian mercenaries; bewildered strongmen of Tepedelenli's court trying to find their place in the revolutionary mayhem; and several *ayans* of Rumelia who had been spared from the de-*ayanization* project. Throughout the Greek Revolution, the Sublime Porte could not manage to coordinate these military brokers of different backgrounds and varying levels and natures of loyalty to the Ottoman state and it remained unable to centralize the administration of warfare. Functionaries put in charge of suppressing the insurgency often entered into open conflict with each other.

The majority of the imperial viziers dispatched to the insurgent regions—such as Seyyid Ali Pasha (a former grand vizier, who was deposed immediately after the outbreak of the Greek Revolution), Behram Pasha (governor of Aydın and Saruhan), Süleyman Pasha (governor of Sivas), Reşid Mehmed Pasha (governor of Karaman), Hasan Pasha (governor of Kayseri), and Seyyid Ahmed Erib Pasha (governor of Niğde, Beyşehir, and Kırşehir)—had their domains in the de-*ayanized* provinces of Anatolia. Nevertheless, they were cut off from the organic local ties enjoyed by the *ayans*. As a result, they derived less income and could recruit fewer soldiers from their assigned domains. The imperial viziers arrived in Larissa, the major Ottoman deployment base, with around one hundred men in their retinue and had to recruit mercenaries from their own pockets before heading to their assigned posts in the Morea. Since the viziers had to confine themselves to whatever amount was sent by the majordomos [*mütesellims*] in charge of their domains, they depended mainly on the Sublime Porte for money. The Sublime Porte often assigned a—usually Armenian—banker to the viziers, who lent them money in advance on their future revenues. There were occasions when they received substantial royal bounties or when the sultan paid the viziers' debt to the bankers following military success; in general, however, they were expected to take care of their own finances and were occasionally left to their own fate once they were unsuccessful.

29 For the full references regarding the janissaries' and *nefir-i amm* troops' adventures in Moldowallachia, see Ilıcak, "A Radical Rethinking of Empire," pp. 214–15, 262.

30 See document 575/183 herein.

Moreover, the viziers were not always military men and did not necessarily have any experience in warfare, for example, Seyyid Ali and Ahmed Erib Pashas. The situation necessitated the employment of “young administrators in military boots;”³¹ and the state of affairs was as alarming as the sultan remarked in his imperial rescript atop a report of Seyyid Ali Pasha, who was sent to organize the military campaign of 1822: “A vizier who had served as grand vizier and [is now appointed] commander-in-chief with full discretionary powers and authority is unable to recruit soldiers; and he is not only unable to comprehend the cost of twenty-thousand soldiers receiving forty piasters for a salary and how this amount would be paid, but he also does not know whether there are any viziers in Nafpaktos and Euboea who can manage three to four thousand soldiers. Good God [give me patience]!”³²

5 Mercenary Employment and the Albanian Issue

As numerous documents in this book attest, the Sublime Porte’s crumbling prospects for recruitment obliged the Ottoman state to resort to the “violence market,”³³ whose most important suppliers were first and foremost Albanian magnates-cum-warlords and, only in insignificant numbers, freelance ethnic Turkish mercenary troops. There are no references to the *nefir-i amm* soldiers in Ottoman documents after mid-1822, which points to the fact that the Sublime Porte gave up early on the common Muslim folk mobilizing their resources for religion and state. All Ottoman functionaries writing from the provinces preferred mercenaries over what would become the basis of the post-janissary Ottoman standing army a few years later. According to the functionaries, mercenaries were more controllable than the *nefir-i amm* soldiers, as they functioned under a certain chain of command [*başı bağılı*]. The Sublime Porte ministers were initially unwilling to resort to such a measure, because of the overwhelming burden on the imperial coffers.³⁴ By the spring of 1822, however, they came to understand that there was no other option. Under the given circumstances, it was more feasible to outsource the war to military contractors who would operate under the command of imperial viziers: “Therefore, the

31 Ebubekir Sıdkı (*mutasarrıf* of Trikala) to the Sublime Porte, August 5, 1824, BOA/HAT 31344-B.

32 Mahmud II’s imperial rescript, January 5, 1822, BOA/HAT 38516.

33 I borrow most of the concepts about mercenary employment from Sarah Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

34 Hacı Salih Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, August 6, 1821, BOA/HAT 45887.

only remaining course seems to be recruiting mercenary troops for the Morea. Although it will be financially costly, considering the significance of the matter and the critical condition of the situation, it is still preferable to clear up the Moreot issue as soon as possible by spending money instead of leaving the issue in the hands of the *nefir-i amm* soldiers.”³⁵

It is probable that mercenaries were technically a superior alternative to the *nefir-i amm* soldiers. However, the Sublime Porte made a serious miscalculation by composing the bulk of the army from an ethnic group which was not external to the issue. Albanian warlords and mercenaries were at the very heart of the matter and were eager to pursue their survival instincts.³⁶ They followed their own agendas to the utmost of their capability and remained quite unresponsive to the Sublime Porte’s demands. Hence, a good number of the documents in this book, especially those written after the spring of 1822, address the Albanian magnates, virtually imploring them to rally their forces against the Greek revolutionaries, while others command the governors of Rumelia to find a way to mobilize the Albanians. Clearly, to the Sublime Porte, the Greek Revolution was just as much an Albanian problem as it was a Greek one. Put frankly, the Ottoman state was literally at the mercy of Albanian warlords and mercenaries for the suppression of the Greek Revolution until the arrival of Ibrahim Pasha from Egypt in 1825.

This is a grossly neglected aspect in the historiography of the Greek War of Independence. “The history of the Greek Revolution would often be obscure unless the importance of the Albanian element, which pervaded military society in the Othoman empire, be fully appreciated,” wrote George Finlay, the great historian of the Greek Revolution, in his major work.³⁷ His assessment could not be more accurate. Nevertheless, most students of the period tend to downplay the role of the Albanian element; one way this is achieved is to treat Muslim Albanians as Turks—either by naming them Turco-Albanians [*Τουρκαλβανοί*] or completely ignoring their Albanian identity—and Christian Albanians as Greeks, reducing the events to a tug-of-war between two ostensible sides. The picture was much more complicated though. On the field, the

35 See document 575/105 herein.

36 For the Albanian involvement in the Greek Revolution, see Hakan Erdem, “‘Perfidious Albanians’ and ‘Zealous Governors’: Ottomans, Albanians, and Turks in the Greek War of Independence,” in Antonis Anastasopoulos and Elias Kolovos (eds.), *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760–1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation* (Rethymno: University of Crete, 2007), pp. 213–37.

37 George Finlay, *A History of Greece from Its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1877), 1/39.

Greek War of Independence was a power struggle among a multitude of players with incessant realignment of interests and redistribution of power.

6 Albanian Politics on the Eve of the Greek Revolution

Given the importance of the role of the Albanians in the Greek Revolution and the fact that serious investigation into this matter is lacking, a survey of their entangled affairs based on original research could serve as a guideline to appraise the documents in this book. In addition, in order to understand the peculiar policy followed by the Albanians, we first need to reassess the final years of the career of the legendary *Mutasarrıf* of Ioannina Tepedelenli Ali Pasha.

In a progression reminiscent of the establishment of the Ottoman state, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, a Tosk Albanian, had literally conquered the territories of the neighboring Albanian magnates one after another and carved out a state for his dynasty.³⁸ He acquired Gjirokastër and Libohovë through intermarriages of his family with the local magnates. Taking advantage of the pandemonium of the Russo–Ottoman War, he captured Berat, Vlorë, Kardhiq, and Peqin from their *ayans* and became the master of the entire Toskëria (the land of the Tosk Albanians) by 1812.

There were two major ethno-cultural Albanian groups, the Tosks and the Gëgs, the former inhabiting areas south of the Shkumbin River (Toskëria) and the latter the northern regions (Gegëria, the land of the Geg Albanians).³⁹ They spoke mutually unintelligible dialects and had different customs and ways of life. They also had a long history of frequent mutual strife, in which lies the pretext for the Sublime Porte's military expedition against Ali Pasha.

By capturing Tiran, Ohrid, and Elbasan between 1815 and 1817, Ali Pasha made himself a bold encroacher on Gegëria and utterly annoyed both the Geg magnates and the Sublime Porte. The possibility of an all-out fight between the Tosks and the Gëgs—which had barely been prevented in 1812—became too great to ignore when, in 1818, Ali Pasha embarked on a new aggrandizement project in the Geg lands. His campaigns in Kičevo, Mat, and Debar directly challenged and intimidated Mustafa Pasha Bushati, *Mutasarrıf* of Shkodër and the patriarch of the predominant dynasty of the Geg Albanians. The fight

38 For a critical biography of Ali Pasha, see K. E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

39 According to Finlay, the dividing line between Toskëria and Gegëria was the Via Egnatia, namely the line between Thessaloniki and Durrës. See Finlay, *A History of Greece*, 6/35.

between Bushati and Ali Pasha initially emerged as a proxy war in the Debar region, the former patronizing Abbas Bey, *Ayan* of Debar, and the latter, Hasan Bey, *Ayan* of Peshkopi. Bushati endured the fight, until his demise seemed imminent when Ali Pasha purchased the alliance of the Geg *mutasarrıfs* of Prizren and Skopje, Mahmud and Malik Pashas respectively. Bushati petitioned the Sublime Porte in panic and united most Geg tribes in an alliance to suppress Ali Pasha.⁴⁰

The mastermind behind the most crucial stage of the de-*ayanization* project was Palashzade Ismail Pasha, the scion of an Albanian magnate. According to the plan, the *sancaks* of Ioannina, Vlorë, and Delvinë, which were ruled by Ali Pasha, his son Salih, and his grandson Mehmed respectively, would be taken away from them, and Ali Pasha would be compelled to retreat to Tepeleni to spend the rest of his life there.⁴¹ Troubles began when Ali Pasha declined to submit to this imposition.

The Sublime Porte succeeded in eliminating Ali Pasha after one and a half years of serious strife and almost a year into the Greek Revolution. The *sancaks* of Ioannina, Vlorë, and Delvinë were united under the governorship of Ömer Vrioni, Ali Pasha's treasurer, who had defected to the Sublime Porte in a timely manner before his master's demise.⁴² Ömer Vrioni had become acquainted with Hurşid Pasha, commander-in-chief of the operations against Ali Pasha, in Egypt during his sixteen-year service under Mehmed Ali Pasha, and it was in consequence of Hurşid's particular recommendation that the administration of the Tosk lands was conferred upon him. Hurşid Pasha argued that no Turkish vizier could successfully rule in the *sancak* of Ioannina and that the

40 Mustafa Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Shkodër) to the Sublime Porte, April 28, 1819, BOA/HAT 21000-H; Derviş Mehmed Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 32684; Sırrı Selim Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, undated, BOA/HAT 21023.

41 Seyyid Ali Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 48891. Palashzade was also instrumental in securing the compliance of the locals in Berat and Vlorë. See Hüseyin Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, August 7, 1820, BOA/HAT 1550/50.

42 A document found in the Ottoman State Archives provides some information on Ömer Vrioni's background. According to the document, Ömer Vrioni began his career as the commander of the forces of the late *ayan* of Elbasan [name unknown]. He participated in the "Vidin and Egypt incidents" [most probably referring to the Pazvandoğlu revolt and the ensuing siege of Vidin in 1797; and Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of Egypt between 1798 and 1801], captured Ibrahim Pasha of Vlorë, and incorporated his domains into Ali Pasha's rapidly growing state. He defected to the Ottoman state together with Sulço Gorça (or Korço), who was another strongman of Ali Pasha's court. A native of Korçë, Sulço Gorça was a bandit in the last decade of the eighteenth century and joined Ömer Vrioni in the incidents of Vidin and Egypt. See Seyyid Ali Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 48871. In the same document we also learn that Ömer Vrioni owned *çiftliks* in Veroia.

sancak must be given to an Albanian in order to prevent the schemes of Ali Pasha's officers. Hurşid Pasha also claimed that no one was better fit to this assignment than Ömer Vrioni and that he was well-respected among his own kind [the Albanians].⁴³

The Gëgs recovered two historical Geg domains, Elbasan and Ohrid, when two Geg magnates, Zokazade Mahmud Bey and Debreli Abbas Bey, who had initially joined Ali Pasha in his revolt,⁴⁴ were rewarded with these *sancaks* for withdrawing from Ali Pasha's besieged castle.⁴⁵ Albanian lands were thus repartitioned along the traditionally coherent ethno-cultural lines between the Gëgs and the Tosks. Throughout the Greek Revolution, Mustafa Pasha Bushati controlled the districts to the north of Berat, where the extent of the Sublime Porte's authority was only nominal.

7 The "Tosk League"

Following Ali Pasha's downfall, in most of the Tosk lands the real power remained in the hands of what William Meyer, the British consul at Preveza and an extremely well-informed, erudite, and intuitive observer of Albanian politics, called the "Tosk League," namely a party of disgruntled strongmen of Ali Pasha's court. The Tosk League was not a formal political entity; however, Meyer termed it as such because of its members' common background and to differentiate them from the historical Tosk nobility. Being the insurgent Greeks' immediate neighbors and still controlling the most operational military manpower in the region after the disintegration of Ali Pasha's government, their stand against the Greek Revolution was of make-or-break importance. The members of this Tosk military oligarchy—such as Ali Pasha's arms bearer Silahdar Ilyas Poda, the seal keeper Mühürdar Ago Vasiari, the treasurer Ömer Vrioni and his nephews Ahmed and Hasan Vrioni, the chief of guards Tahir Abbas, the chief orderly Elmas Meçe [or Meço], and such military chiefs as Derviş Hasan and Sulço Gorça (Süleyman Agha)—were Ali Pasha's creatures. According to Meyer, the members of this Tosk League were a "new race of individuals who he [Ali Pasha] has selected from the lowest classes to replace them

43 Hurşid Ahmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, December 6, 1821, BOA/HAT 38279-F; Strangford to Castlereagh, March 5, 1822, TNA/FO 78-107/3.

44 Hurşid Ahmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, November 15, 1821, BOA/HAT 21119.

45 Sahhaflar Şeyhi-zade Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, ed. Ziya Yılmaz (Istanbul: OSAV, 2000), p. 65.

[the principal and powerful Albanian families], and who have been made the instruments of his dark proceedings."⁴⁶ In other words, they were not scions of Albanian nobility and owed their elevated status to their benefactor. They had become significant *çiftlik* owners under Ali Pasha, acquiring enormous lands all over Albania and Rumelia. Through the income they derived from the promotion of commercial agricultural production, they were able to maintain a vast clientele base and soldiers.⁴⁷

Despite the fact that most of Ali Pasha's officers had abandoned him and joined the Ottoman army at its first approach in August 1820, due to the imperial viziers' incompetence and sluggishness during the siege of Ioannina and gross misconduct and extortionary practices in the region, they signed formal pacts with the Greek revolutionaries in September 1820 through the mediation of Odysseas Androutsos⁴⁸ and, in Meyer's words, became "confederates."⁴⁹ Ömer Vrioni was the first to betray the pact in late September when he submitted to the Ottoman state. The Souliot revolt in support of Ali Pasha presented an opportunity for the most influential members of the Tosk League, Silahdar Ilyas Poda and Mühürdar Ago Vasiari, to decamp with their followers in January 1821 and pursue Ali Pasha's cause.⁵⁰

Meyer's reports provide the most prolific testimony of how each failed attempt of the Ottoman army to capture Ali Pasha resulted in the enhancement

46 TNA/FO 78-96/62-63, cited in E. Prevelakis and K. Merticopoulou, *Epirus, Ali Pasha and the Greek Revolution: Consular Reports of William Meyer from Preveza* [hereafter *EAGR*] (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1996), 1/129.

47 In a document dated September 21, 1820, we learn that "Ömer Vrioni and his seal keeper Mehmed Bey; Derviş Hasan Agha and his former chief orderly Hüseyin Bey; Hasan Vrioni; Bekir Çokador (castellan of Preveza); Sulço Gorça and other aghas and commanders" applied to the Sublime Porte to maintain their *çiftliks* following their defection from Ali Pasha. See BOA/HAT 21116.

48 On September 1, 1820, Androutsos met with Mühürdar Ago Vasiari, Ömer Vrioni, and Silahdar Ilyas Poda in Arta. After reproaching them for having betrayed the man who had given them wealth and honors, he drew their attention to the present intolerable conduct of the Ottomans and prevailed upon them to agree to try and effect Ali's deliverance. They then all signed a document promising "to raise Greece in revolt against the sultan and in favor of Ali Pasha and [subsequently] when these [same] Albanians would be sent to quell the revolution that would erupt in Greece—instead of obeying—they should themselves revolt in Albania." See Dionysios Nikolaou Skiotis, "The Lion and the Phoenix: Ali Pasha and the Greek Revolution," Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 1971), p. 210.

49 Meyer to Maitland, November 1, 1821, TNA/CO 136/441/36-7, in *EAGR*, 1/525; Meyer to Hankey, November 23, 1821, TNA/CO 136/442/199-202, in *EAGR*, 1/545; Meyer to Planta, December 22, 1821, TNA/FO 78/103/205-8, in *EAGR*, 1/573.

50 Hüseyin Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, January 4, 1821, BOA/HAT 34270.

of the understanding between the Tosk League and the Greek revolutionaries.⁵¹ The locals' disgust with the imperial viziers was a common theme of the *de-ayanization* period, and Albanian lands were no exception to the pattern. While Ali Pasha held out against the siege, his comrades in arms were in open cooperation with the Greek insurgents. By the end of 1821, the strife had assumed "the character of a national war of the united Albanian and Greek people against the Musselman [Ottoman] arms."⁵²

In an atmosphere of prolonged mayhem and uncertainty caused by the Greek uprising, the Commander-in-Chief Hurşid Ahmed Pasha managed to eliminate Ali Pasha in February 1822, thanks to his successful application of the *divide et impera* policy, by playing the Vrioni clan against the strongmen of Ali Pasha's court. Ömer Vrioni found himself as the ostensible, unpopular, and incapacitated governor of the Tosk lands, often at odds both with the members of the Tosk League and the heirs of the pre-Ali Pasha Tosk nobility.⁵³ Ali Pasha's officers were once again granted amnesty and reappointed to "places of trust and power."⁵⁴ Although the formal league between the Greek revolutionaries and Ali Pasha's men was henceforth dissolved, they maintained a quasi-secret alliance at least until 1826, the chronological boundary of this book.⁵⁵

As early as the spring of 1822, it had become evident to all parties that the Greek uprising would not be quelled unless the Albanians effectively cooperated with the Sublime Porte.⁵⁶ The Albanians acted on this principal and

51 See, for example, Meyer to Castlereagh, 15 March 1821, in *EAGR*, 1/322; Meyer to Londonderry, 15 July 1821, in *EAGR*, 1/421; Meyer to Maitland, October 18, 1821, TNA/CO 136/442/171–2, in *EAGR*, 1/516.

52 Meyer to Hankey, November 27, 1821, TNA/CO 136/442/203–4, in *EAGR*, 1/547.

53 According to Meyer, the Tosk oligarchy "looked with an eye of disdain" upon Ömer Vrioni, who "comparatively speaking was so greatly inferior" to his predecessor, Ali Pasha. See Meyer to Hankey, May 12, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/117–120, in *EAGR*, 2/80.

54 Meyer to Hankey, February 20, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/43–6, in *EAGR*, 2/27.

55 See, for example, an intercepted letter of Derviş Hasan, a member of the Tosk League, warning the Greek insurgents about Kütahi Reşid Pasha's upcoming operations in March 1825 and suggesting that they occupied Metsovo, BOA/HAT 40302-E.

56 When it became apparent that Seyyid Ali Pasha was too incompetent to carry out the operations, the suppression of the Greek uprising was entrusted to Hurşid Ahmed Pasha. In April 1822 he was licensed to hire thirty-thousand Tosk mercenaries through the mediation of Ömer Vrioni and ten thousand Geg mercenaries from Ohrid and Elbasan (Salih Pasha [grand vizier] to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 38037; also Salih Pasha to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 39121). Gëgs and Tosks would be dispatched separately via Nafpaktos to the Morea and through Amfissa and Arta to Acarnania (see document 575/105 herein). Hurşid Pasha coordinated the recruitment process, but he died before the beginning of the 1823 expedition. In the army he raised, the salaries of 31,464 mercenaries operating on a contract basis [*tezkere*] under 125 chieftains and totaling 3,528,531

confidence throughout the Greek Revolution.⁵⁷ Thus, in the following years, the cornerstone of the Tosk League's policy was twofold. First, as regards the Ottoman state—while they were still bitter about the downfall of Ali Pasha and extremely distrustful of the state—they did everything in their power to paralyze the Sublime Porte's operations to establish its authority in their lands. Moreover, the Sublime Porte's strife with the Greeks presented them with an opportunity to enrich themselves by absorbing the Ottoman fisc through mercenary salaries. Hence, the longer they protracted the strife, the richer they became.⁵⁸ Second, as regards the Greeks, although they harbored "strong feelings of jealousy and mistrust as to the ultimate views of the Greek nation,"⁵⁹ they had no grounds for hostility against the Greek insurgents and were truly disaffected to the cause of the Ottoman state.⁶⁰ Consequently, the Albanians' best interest lay in keeping the Greek Revolution alive by frustrating the Sublime Porte's plans and operations. The Tosks' "intimate intercourse and connection with the Greeks (who were quite blended with the Albanian nation) almost precluded them from carrying on any hostilities against the Greeks and much more such a warfare against them as the Osmanlis [the Ottomans] demanded. The policy of the Albanians therefore during the actual contest of the Greeks with the Porte, though not avowed, was in fact that of an armed neutrality, secretly counteracting the Turks when they were likely

piasters were paid by the Sublime Porte ("Register of Soldiers Employed in the Morea and its Environs," January 18, 1823, BOA/HAT 39969).

57 For reports to this effect, see document 575/105 herein; Meyer to Hankey, March 29, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/82–4, in *EAGR*, 2/52.

58 It appears that, for a while, the Sublime Porte ministers had entertained the fantasy of dispatching Albanians to the Morea as *nefir-i amm* soldiers by appealing to their religious sensitivities, but they were brought back to their senses by convincing reports from the region (Salih Koç Agha to the Sublime Porte, undated, BOA/HAT 38557-E). As the Grand Vizier Hacı Salih Pasha pointed out, "Albanian soldiers had become used to receiving a salary for a long time, and it would be impossible to recruit large numbers of soldiers from Albania without paying them salaries." (Hacı Salih Pasha [grand vizier] to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 39121). Being brothers in religion might only persuade them to offer a discount to the state and serve on moderate wages, which were at the time around 30–35 piasters (Salih Koç Agha to the Sublime Porte, undated, BOA/HAT 38557-E). Albanian mercenaries had a limited marketplace at this point; there was no competition for their services among Ottoman viziers. The only bidder was the Sublime Porte, and even for the viziers who would pay the mercenaries from their own pockets the Sublime Porte rates set the precedence.

59 Meyer to Hankey, February 20, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/43–6, in *EAGR*, 2/27.

60 Meyer often called Albanians the Greeks' brethren or half-brothers to emphasize the intimate connection between the two peoples. See Meyer to Hankey, June 25, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/204–5, in *EAGR*, 2/130; Meyer to Adam, May 8, 1823, TNA/FO 119/5/2; Meyer to Strangford, July 8, 1823, TNA/FO 119/5/1.

to gain the ascendant, and checking the Greeks when they were inclined to encroach upon the Albanian interests.”⁶¹

Temporizing and evading as far as possible the execution of orders were the most essential qualities of the Albanian “armed neutrality” policy. Despite the Sublime Porte’s reiterated exhortations, Tosk mercenaries were often tardy in taking to the field and obeying orders; even when they followed through, they were reluctant to fight against the Greeks. Ottoman army encampments and castles in and around the Morea were in a state of continuous unrest and trouble on the pretext of delayed salaries or provisions.⁶² When Albanian mercenaries faced hardship, they had no scruples about deserting the camps, surrendering the castles entrusted to their protection, or leaving the positions seized after considerable sacrifice, allowing the Greeks to break sieges, lifting sieges, or deserting from the army on the pretext of bad weather.⁶³

By early 1823, the state of affairs had become extremely complicated in the Albanian lands with multiple parties conspiring against each other and Ömer Vrioni trying to juggle among them. The descendants of the Albanian beys and aghas who had been dispossessed and/or driven into exile by Ali Pasha were in the ascendant in many districts, contradicting Ömer Vrioni’s authority.⁶⁴ The stand of some members of the Tosk League, especially Ilyas Poda, against Ömer Vrioni had also been hostile since the summer of 1822, impairing his

61 Meyer to G. Canning, March 31, 1824, TNA/FO 78–126/7.

62 Yusuf Pasha (castellan of Patras) to the Sublime Porte, December 9, 1823, BOA/HAT 38983-B; Seyyid Ali Pasha (commander-in-chief of the Morea) to the Sublime Porte, March 9, 1822, BOA/HAT 38557-B. In Patras, Albanian mercenaries revolted and threatened to surrender the town to the Greeks when they did not get their salary on time, coercing the Ottoman administrators to give them vouchers. See Sahhaflar Şeyhi-zade Seyyid Mehmed Es’ad Efendi, *Vak’aniüvis Es’ad Efendi Tarihi*, p. 169. The same thing happened in Nafpaktos, but this time the Albanian mercenaries threatened the inhabitants of the town to surrender the castle to Greeks and thus compelled the people to pay their accumulated salaries. See Yusuf Pasha (castellan of Patras) to Mehmed Reşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), November 3, 1825, BOA/HAT 40000-B.

63 The Albanian chieftains Elmas Meçe and Veli Paça ceded Tripolitza to the Greek insurgents after striking a *besa* [word of honor] with Theodoros Kolokotronis for their safe refuge from the castle. See Yusuf Pasha (castellan of Patras) to the Sublime Porte, January 9, 1822, BOA/HAT 38842. For the Ottoman translation of the *besa* between Kolokotronis and the Albanian mercenaries, see BOA/HAT 39895. For Tosk mercenaries allowing 450 Greek revolutionaries to break through the besieging forces and enter the Acropolis in October 1826, see BOA/HAT 40674-B.

64 The people of the core Tosk lands, Vlorë and Berat, with five thousand armed men, openly declined Ömer Vrioni’s authority by not accepting the administrator he sent and insisted on the appointment of Ismail Bey of Vlorë. See Meyer to Adam, December 20, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/480–1 in *EAGR*, 2/352.

operations against the Souliots.⁶⁵ In the spring of 1823 matters took a real turn in the Tosk lands when the Sublime Porte contracted the suppression of the Greek uprising to Mustafa Pasha Bushati. The prospect of the Geg Albanians' rising to the ascendancy in the event of fulfilling their task caused extreme distress among all Tosk parties. This would mean that they would lose their influence and probably be placed under Bushati's authority, just like their late master Ali Pasha had extended his control over the Geg lands in the previous decade. All Tosks of influence assembled in Preveza and held "frequent councils among themselves and with Ömer Pasha, who took a pride in stating himself not to be an Osmanli pasha."⁶⁶ As the Sublime Porte's efforts to separate Ömer Vrioni from the rest of the Tosk League failed, Meyer assessed that Ömer Vrioni "appeared to be quite in the hands of this powerful party."⁶⁷

When the Castellan of Patras Yusuf Pasha and Mustafa Pasha Bushati made strong allegations against Ömer Vrioni and his party in the autumn of 1823, ascribing the failure of the campaign against Missolonghi—which had become the epicenter of Greek resistance—to his clandestine plots, Ömer Vrioni became the perfect scapegoat for all evil in the region.⁶⁸ Yet, the Sublime Porte was obliged to defer to him, as it did not have the luxury to estrange the Tosks in the midst of the Greek Revolution.

Eventually, in the campaign season of 1824, the Sublime Porte's efforts to put down the Greek uprising were frustrated mostly by the counteraction of the Tosk League. Having no other feasible option at hand, the Sublime Porte once again charged Mustafa Pasha Bushati with the duty of quelling the Greek Revolution. Geg and Tosk troops were to be sent to different locations in order to avoid contact and prevent contention among them. Bushati was ordered to capture Missolonghi and quell the revolution in the region of Acarnania. Ömer Vrioni was ordered to lead eight to ten thousand Tosk Albanians in a march on Athens,⁶⁹ but Ebulebud Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Rumelia, opposed this decision on the grounds of the utter fiasco caused by these two Albanian chieftains at Missolonghi in the autumn of 1823.⁷⁰ Ebulebud Mehmed Pasha's

65 Meyer to Adam, November 18, 1822, TNA/CO 136/448/540-3 in *EAGR*, 2/321.

66 Meyer to Adam, May 8, 1823, TNA/FO 119/5/2.

67 *Ibid.*

68 See BOA/HAT 37784-B for Yusuf Pasha accusing Ömer Vrioni of preventing him from mustering mercenaries in Preveza; see document 1713/11 herein for the Sublime Porte blaming Ömer Vrioni for the dispersion of Yusuf Pasha's army in Vonitsa.

69 Mehmed Said Galib Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 47671; BOA/HAT 37954.

70 Mehmed Emin Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, undated, BOA/HAT 38822.

acrimonious relations with the Albanians necessitated a change in the governorate of Rumelia. Derviş Mustafa Pasha of Plovdiv was nominated to the position in March 1824 by consensus in the Imperial Council. However, he adopted an even more resolute anti-Albanian position than that of his predecessors. Derviş Pasha became the most strident proponent of an ethnic shift in the composition of the Ottoman military forces and, at first, he pursued fairly independent policies without prior authorization from the Sublime Porte. Convinced of the Albanians' lack of religious zeal and consequent uselessness in the field, he discharged six thousand soldiers from his predecessor's ten thousand-strong mercenary army and stressed the need to employ ethnic Turkish soldiers.⁷¹

On the other hand, the Tosk League's apprehension was that Bushati's army would advance upon Missolonghi via Berat and Ioannina. According to Meyer, the Tosk League, which by now formed an absolute oligarchy in the region, "felt itself extremely exposed, and the sphere of its influence contracted and with a view to support its power and interests and avert the dangers with which it was menaced, it was said to be secretly abetting the movement of the insurgents [the Greeks]."⁷² In his superbly written reports, Meyer also unveiled the real reason for the Tosk League's growing apprehensions; namely, that they had been established in southern Albania only upon the usurpation of Ali Pasha and that, should the Sublime Porte succeed in suppressing the Greek Revolution, their tenures in their domains would be rendered precarious.⁷³ Meyer also anticipated that the Tosk League was concerned about the possible cooperation of the Tosk nobility with Bushati in order to get rid of the remnants of Ali Pasha's reign.⁷⁴ Although these glorified warlords had the forts and defiles throughout southern Albania in their possession, they had no historical claim to legitimacy or a strong local support base, in contrast to the Tosk nobility. When the Sublime Porte began diversifying its pool of military resources, they felt the rug pulled out rapidly from under their feet.

Bushati accepted the task on the condition that Ömer Vrioni be removed from the region in order to secure an unimpeded march for his army and to prevent debacles similar to those of the year before. Ömer Vrioni was instructed to join the army of the new Commander-in-Chief Derviş Mustafa Pasha at Larissa and thence march rapidly on Athens, which he ignored. However, the

71 Derviş Mustafa Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, April 6, 1824, BOA/HAT 40226; also Derviş Mustafa Pasha to his agent at the Sublime Porte, August 27, 1824, BOA/HAT 39723.

72 Meyer to G. Canning, March 31, 1824, TNA/FO 126/7.

73 *Ibid.*

74 Meyer to G. Canning, June 9, 1824, TNA/FO 126/12.

peculiar “armed neutrality” policy of the Tosk League required them not to be in open rebellion against the Sublime Porte and that their noncompliance be justified. Thus, in order to afford Ömer Vrioni sufficient pretext not to quit his *pashaliks*, they “secretly instigated and gave facilities to several of the insurgent Greek leaders (their former Confederates during the rebellion of Ali Pasha) to advance along the eastern frontier of Albania and occupy the unguarded passes of Tzumerka, Agrafta and Krio-Vrissi, bordering on the great pass of Metzovo. The fresh incursion of these insurgent chiefs has again placed all that tract of country in a state of revolt with aggravations of misery to the wretched inhabitants. The towns of Kalarites and [illegible place name] which had been partially plundered three years ago have just been completely destroyed.”⁷⁵

Derviş Mustafa Pasha’s policies estranged the Albanians to such an extent that the Sublime Porte had to replace him with someone more tactful to prevent an Albanian rebellion. As the campaign of 1824 was obstructed by the Tosk League, the Sublime Porte, although frustrated by their independent agenda, had no option but to keep the Albanians in check until the arrival of Ibrahim Pasha’s army from Egypt. Although the sultan called Ömer Vrioni a traitor, he saw it unfit to act against him rashly, as the Sublime Porte could not handle an Albanian uprising on top of the Greek one.⁷⁶ As of December 1824 the Imperial Council “came to the conclusion that none of the commanders-in-chief could achieve anything, because they could not find and deploy soldiers other than the Albanians. Yet, the Albanians are a people who have become accustomed to receiving military salaries [*ulufe*] and have no desire to put an end to this affair. Based on the fact that it is not possible to recruit sufficient numbers of serviceable Turkish soldiers to put an end to this affair and prevail over the Albanians, it is necessary to make some concessions and use the Albanians in this affair.”⁷⁷

In order to break up the Tosk League and convince them to rally their forces for the suppression of the Greek Revolution by giving them assurances, the Sublime Porte launched a plan devised, once again, by Palashzade Ismail Pasha.⁷⁸ The plan was to revert to the pre-Ali Pasha order in the Tosk lands by separating the different *pashaliks* and voivodeships into distinct jurisdictions and placing members of the native dynasties at the head of their

75 Meyer to G. Canning, June 9, 1824, TNA/FO 126/12; Meyer to Adam, June 12, 1824, TNA/FO 126/14/1; Meyer to Adam, June 24, 1824, TNA/FO 126/14/3.

76 Mahmud II’s imperial rescript, undated, BOA/HAT 37982; see also Derviş Mustafa Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, undated, BOA/HAT 27805.

77 See document 1769/49 herein.

78 Meyer to Adam, December 23, 1824, TNA/FO 78–126/31/1.

governments.⁷⁹ The compliance of the strongmen of the Tosk League would be earned by putting them in charge of lesser positions. As a first step, Reşid Mehmed Pasha (Kütahi), who was known to have better relations with the Albanians, was named governor of Rumelia in November 1824.⁸⁰ Ömer Vrioni was appointed governor of Thessaloniki in December 1824 to distance him from Albania, so that he could not engage in sedition. The *sancak* of Vlorë was given to the heir of the leading family of the region, Süleyman Pasha Vlora, whose father had been dispossessed by Ali Pasha in 1810. Mühürdar Ago (Osman) Vasiari was appointed *mütesellim* of Berat and Süleyman Pasha Vlora's steward. Ioannina and Delvinë were temporarily given to the governor of Rumelia, with the prospect of being given in the near future to the mastermind behind the plan, Palashzade Ismail. Tahir Abbas was reappointed to the position he held under Ali Pasha and became chief of guards at Ioannina. Ilyas Poda was appointed *derbend agha* and was put in charge of the mountainous passes.⁸¹

Ömer Vrioni initially resisted moving to Thessaloniki, but, having found no support from the other members of the Tosk League, he was unable to do what he did best, which was to procrastinate. Without any local support base and owing his office and legitimacy to extraordinary circumstances, he became a mere glorified soldier of fortune.⁸² The members of the Tosk League, now under its natural leader, Mühürdar Ago Vasiari, found it in their interest to align their affairs to a certain extent with the Sublime Porte. However, they did not have a good reason to drop the "armed neutrality" policy until the arrival of the Egyptian troops in early 1825. They still "reserved to themselves to forego, as far as circumstances might enable them, all their engagements to cooperate in the war against the Greeks, which it is their special interest to keep alive. They calculated on being able to play off all their former wiles and shifts and, while making great demonstrations for attacking the Greeks, to counteract in reality all the operations of the Ottoman Porte to reduce them."⁸³

79 Regarding the reorganization of the administration of the Albanian provinces, see documents 1769/19 and 1769/24 herein.

80 Mehmed Selim Sırrı Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA/HAT 39988.

81 See documents 1769/61, 1769/65, 1769/173, 580/2, 580/29, 580/53, and 580/170 herein. Also Meyer to G. Canning, February 20, 1825, TNA/FO 78–134/10.

82 Although the Vrionis claimed a line of noble ancestry for themselves, they were seen as "parvenu" by the oldest established family of Berat, the Vloras. See Stefanos P. Papageorgiou, "The Attitude of the Beys of the Albanian Southern Provinces (Toskaria) towards Ali Pasha Tepedelenli and the Sublime Porte (mid-18th–mid-19th centuries)," *Cahiers Balkaniques* 42 (2014), p. 12.

83 Meyer to G. Canning, May 30, 1825, TNA/FO 352/11/269–75a, in Theophilus C. Prousis, *British Consular Reports from the Ottoman Levant in an Age of Upheaval, 1815–1830* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), p. 87.

8 The Geg Counteraction

The Geg Albanians were as disinclined to put down the Greek uprising as the Tosks, following a policy of tarrying throughout the unrest. At the outset of the Greek Revolution, Hurşid Ahmed Pasha advised the Sublime Porte to appoint Mustafa Pasha Bushati as commander-in-chief of the Ioannina army. However, for unknown reasons—perhaps still hopeful about the Tosks' contribution to quell the Greek uprising and considering a Geg encroachment to be detrimental to that end—the Imperial Council vetoed the proposal.⁸⁴ As a result, when Bushati was ordered to march onto the Morea in the summer of 1821, he “found it inappropriate to desolate his domain [Shkodër] at that time.”⁸⁵ In the summer of 1822 the Geg pashas once again dragged their feet to enter the Morea and left the field in the winter without any remarkable success.⁸⁶

The Ottoman state's gamble with Albanian soldiery reached crisis proportions by late 1823. The Sublime Porte had made the most extensive preparations yet to quell the Greek uprising in the campaign season of 1823,⁸⁷ but the expedition ended in an abject fiasco when Bushati lifted the siege of Missolonghi in early December on the pretext of Tosk counteraction and the winter weather.⁸⁸ Bushati also blamed the Governor of Rumelia Ebulebud Mehmed Pasha for intentionally avoiding the provisioning of his army: “Without money, provisions, military stores, or reinforcements of troops, it had been only by the application of his private fortune that he had met the exigencies of the campaign and having exhausted all his means, he and the remnants of his troops had been compelled to retire.”⁸⁹ Moreover, Albanian mercenaries, having already served beyond the period for which they were contracted, refused to continue any longer in the field.⁹⁰

84 Hacı Salih Pasha (grand vizier) to Mahmud II, June 30, 1821, BOA/HAT 40733.

85 Mustafa Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Shkodër) to the Sublime Porte, July 29, 1821, BOA/HAT 38638.

86 Hurşid Ahmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, June 7, 1822, BOA/HAT 45873; Hurşid Ahmed Pasha to the Sublime Porte, October 16, 1822, BOA/HAT 39913.

87 For details about military preparations, see Strangford to G. Canning, March 26, 1823, TNA/FO 78–114/33.

88 See documents 1713/179, 1713/180, and 1713/200 herein. Also see Ebulebud Mehmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, December 17, 1823, BOA/HAT 38316; Ömer Vrioni (*mutasarrıf* of Ioannina) to the Sublime Porte, December 7, 1823, BOA/HAT 38316-C; Ebulebud Mehmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to the Sublime Porte, December 27, 1823, BOA/HAT 38348.

89 Strangford to G. Canning, December 30, 1823, TNA/FO 78–118/21; Yusuf Pasha (castellan of Patras) to the Sublime Porte, March 26, 1824, BOA/HAT 38773.

90 Strangford to G. Canning, January 10, 1824, TNA/FO 78–121/4.

The Bushati crisis was yet another moment of truth brought about by the Greek Revolution, compelling the Sublime Porte to a radical rethinking of both its military and governmental organization and imperial allegiances. Ottoman administrators now became convinced that the Greek revolt could not be suppressed by relying on Albanian warlords and mercenaries. The consternation and alarm in the Ottoman capital was such that when the news of Bushati's retreat arrived, the sultan, possibly for the third time in his fifteen-year reign, went around in person from one office to another at the Sublime Porte without any prior notice, "urging, threatening and even imploring his ministers to make some decisive effort to terminate the Greek rebellion."⁹¹ The sultan and his ministers even considered raising the Banner of the Prophet Muhammad [*Sancak-ı Şerif*], which was customarily taken out of its safe only for extraordinary occasions, in order to summon the Turkish population to take up arms. Possibly concerned about a Russian encroachment after another Ottoman military campaign which ended in failure, several ministers hinted at the expediency of inviting one or more of the Christian powers to mediate between the Sublime Porte and the Greek insurgents, but this suggestion was rejected by the majority of the Imperial Council.⁹² We learn about the repercussions of the Bushati crisis and the Sublime Porte's panic only from the British documents. The official historiographer of the period, Esad Efendi, criticized Bushati for raising the siege of Missolonghi and retreating ingloriously, despite his initial swaggering shows of bravery; however, he did not mention the crisis in Istanbul, nor did he relate any of the consequences that followed the Bushati affair.⁹³ The most immediate outcome of the failure of the 1823 campaign was a change in the Ottoman cabinet, whose first initiative was to contract out the suppression of the Greek Revolution to the Governor of Egypt Mehmed Ali Pasha.

The number of Ottoman documents bearing scornful remarks about Albanians is innumerable. Ottoman administrators considered and presented the Albanian counteraction, Geg and Tosk alike, as the chief impediment to the suppression of the Greek uprising. Frustrated by the Albanians' averseness to put on a united Muslim front against the Greeks, the sultan and 'Turkish' viziers accused them of being devoid of religious zeal and faith.⁹⁴ Despite the rhetoric

91 Strangford to G. Canning, December 30, 1823, TNA/FO 78–118/21.

92 Strangford to G. Canning, January 10, 1824, TNA/FO 78–121/4.

93 See Sahhaflar Şeyhi-zade Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'aniüvis Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, p. 261.

94 See, for example, Derviş Mustafa Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to his agent, August 27, 1824, BOA/HAT 39723.

about 'religion and state,' the essence of the issue lay in the sultan's assessment of the Albanian warlords: "They did not have any fear of the Exalted State."⁹⁵ Accordingly, throughout the Greek War of Independence, Albanians had a free hand to disobey or dodge orders and enter into alliances of their own choosing.

There is not much historiographical enigma for the period after the summer of 1825. The French-trained, disciplined, and bayonet-using Egyptian forces rapidly changed the fate of the war in favor of the Sublime Porte. In a single year, Ibrahim Pasha captured most of the Morea and laid siege to Missolonghi, events all well-known in the historiography of the Greek War of Independence and also documented in detail in this book.

The Sublime Porte's humbling experience with Albanian soldiery and the success achieved by Ibrahim Pasha's modern troops fueled the Ottoman state's desire to create a disciplined standing army operating under its direct command, and this played a central role in propelling the question of janissary reform to the fore. Arguably, the most important consequence of the Greek Revolution for the Ottoman polity was the abolition of the janissary complex. The Sublime Porte's years of unsuccessful mobilization efforts against unyielding Greek insurgents translated into the need to create a new Muslim man, who would mobilize and sacrifice all his resources, including his life, for 'religion and state.' With this goal in mind, the janissary came to be viewed as the antithesis of this imagined proto-citizen, and the existence of the janissary complex doomed to failure the prospects for imposing a sense of Muslim patriotism and military mobilization. The fall of Missolonghi at its third siege, only after the arrival of the Egyptian troops, turned a possible milder solution to the janissary issue into a radical one, and in June 1826 the Ottoman central state managed to dismantle the five-century-old body so deep-seated in society.

9 Provisioning the Troops

A good number of the documents concern the provisioning of the navy, armies, and the besieged castles in and around the Morea. Supplying the troops was as important as their recruitment and proved to be a gargantuan task and source of anxiety for the Sublime Porte throughout the Greek Revolution. Sourcing food from the insurgent provinces was apparently extremely difficult, if not impossible. For the production and purchase of supplies for the land troops, the Sublime Porte appointed commissary officers [*nüzül emini*] and chief

95 Mahmud II's imperial rescript, June 1, 1824, BOA/HAT 33867.

butchers [*kasapbaşı*] from among the notables of Rumelia who were known for their wealth. The Sublime Porte was obliged to provide the troops with rations of hardtack and meat, and its lack in the castles and army encampments was reason for mutiny among the troops.⁹⁶ The hardtack factory in Gallipoli was the most important location of production for the consumption of the imperial navy. Due to the Greek blockade in the Aegean, hardtack and grain were transported to the Morea from such major hubs as Istanbul, Izmir, Thessaloniki, Varna, and Alexandria only by *müstemen* merchant vessels. From the documents in this book, we understand that especially the British and Austrian merchants were very active in this service. However, by 1823, after several occasions of failed delivery, the Sublime Porte ceased to put its trust in the *müstemens*.⁹⁷

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All in all, when one examines the Greek War of Independence as an Ottoman experience through these documents, several themes revolving around the issue of mobilization stand out as fundamental. The documents in this book evince that the forces of the Ottoman *ancien régime* proved untrustworthy and inefficient allies for the Ottoman central state to fight its battles against the Greek revolutionaries, who, on the other hand, are almost always alluded to as some abstract, anonymous throng of infidels, motivated by malice and stained with treachery. The Greeks' betrayal of Ottoman patrimonialism was the most recurrent topos invoked by Mahmud II, the Sublime Porte ministers, and later by Ottoman/Turkish historians: "Although the Greek infidels were given all kinds of permits and benevolence under the compassionate protection of the Sublime Sultanate, they have been ungrateful and engaged in betrayal and abominable acts against the Sublime State and its religion."⁹⁸

Throughout what they called "*Rum Fesadı*," namely, the "Greek Sedition," the Ottoman sultan and functionaries denied historical agency to the Greeks, who set out to determine their collective future by themselves. Although thrown into consternation by the events in which the Greeks "sacrificed their malignant souls in the name of their fallacious religion,"⁹⁹ to them, the weakness

96 For the Albanian mercenaries rebelling at Alamana in October 1823 and retreating on the pretext of a lack of provisions, see BOA/HAT 37891. For Nafplio capitulating to the Greeks because of *müstemen* merchants' failure to transport provisions, see document 578/79 herein.

97 See, for example, documents 578/128, 578/140, 579/3, and 1713/40 herein.

98 See, for example, document 576/113 herein.

99 See, for example, document 574/162 herein.

of the state, lack of unity and zeal among the functionaries, and the decadent condition of the Muslim Ottomans in general were more significant causes for insurrection than the conscientious political action of the Greeks.

As a matter of fact, the line of thinking, the discourses, and the imperial hubris that would be spawned in each confrontation between the Ottoman state and separatist national movements in the following century—or even in the Republican era—were first manifested during the Greek War of Independence. Fear of collapse and dissolution, heavy emphasis on foreign conspiracy and intervention, categorical denial of the insurgents' historical agency, the pampered “other” turning into pawns in the hands of foreign powers, a discourse of isolation in the international arena, and a feeling of victimization are the main themes that run through the documents in this book, mainstream Ottoman/Turkish historiography, and, indeed, the speeches of contemporary Turkish politicians. If one use of the study of history is to see patterns that rhyme, the publication of these documents two hundred years after they were penned will shed light not only on the conditions in which the Greek Revolution evolved, but also on our times.

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FIGURE 5 Title page of BOA/Ayniyat Register 573