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**Fikriye KARAMAN**

(Asst. Prof. Dr.), Samsun University / Türkiye, morpalto@gmail.com, 0000-0002-3600-3276

## Property, Entrepreneurship, Benefits and Corruption: Economic Portrait of A Hamidian Statesman Mehmed Memduh Pasha\*

*Mülkiyet, Girişimcilik, Menfaat ve Yolsuzluk: Abdülhamid Devri Devlet Adamı Mehmed Memduh Paşa'nın Ekonomik Portresi*

**Abstract:** Mehmed Memduh Pasha (1839-1925) was an Ottoman statesman who held various positions in the central and provincial administration of the Ottoman Empire for over half a century. The last three decades of his long and impressive career coincided with the rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II and he became one of the key figures of the Hamidian bureaucracy. This article examines the economic dimensions of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's life and present a comprehensive analysis of his assets, investments, and contracts based on the Ottoman State Archives, particularly the Documents of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Yıldız Documents. This analysis reveals an aspect of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's biography, which that has been overshadowed by his political, administrative, and literary activities. By examining the case of Mehmed Memduh Pasha, the article presents a portrait of the intertwining of public service, private enterprise, and personal interests within the bureaucratic and economic context of the Ottoman Empire. His administrative responsibilities, and entrepreneurial endeavors during his tenure as governor not only illuminate Mehmed Memduh Pasha's multifaceted character and aspirations but also provide a comprehensive perspective on the economic challenges and opportunities that shaped the careers of bureaucrats in the provincial administrative framework.

**Key Words:** Mehmed Memduh Pasha, economy, Ottoman bureaucracy, The Ministry of Internal Affairs, Sivas

**Öz:** Mehmed Memduh Paşa (1839-1925) Osmanlı Devleti'nin merkez ve taşra teşkilatında yarım yüzyılı aşkın çeşitli görevlerde bulunmuş bir devlet adamıdır. Uzun ve parlak kariyerinin otuz yılı Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri ile örtüşen Mehmed Memduh Paşa, Abdülhamid bürokrasisinin önemli şahsiyetlerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Osmanlı Arşivleri'nin özellikle Dahiliye Nezareti Defterleri ve Yıldız Evrakı'ndan istifade edilerek hazırlanan bu makale, Mehmed Memduh Paşa'nın hayatının ekonomik yönlerini araştırmakta; kendisinin arşiv belgelerinde kayıtlı mülklerinin, yatırımlarının ve aldığı ihale ve sözleşmelerin derinlemesine analizini sunmaktadır. Böylelikle genellikle siyasi, idari ve edebi faaliyetleri üzerinden değerlendirilen Mehmed Memduh Paşa'nın biyografisinin gölgede kalmış bir yönü ortaya çıkarılmaktadır. Makale, Mehmed Memduh Paşa örneği üzerinden Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun bürokratik ve ekonomik ortamında kamu hizmeti, özel girişim ve şahsi çıkarların içiçe geçmiş bir portresini çizmektedir. Dahası idari görevleri, girişimcilik çabaları ve valiliği sırasındaki faaliyetleri Mehmed Memduh Paşa'nın çok yönlü karakterini ve hırslarını ortaya koymakla kalmamakta, imparatorluğun taşra idari yapısı içerisinde bürokratlarının kariyerlerini şekillendiren ekonomik zorluklara ve fırsatlara dair kapsamlı bir perspektif de sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mehmed Memduh Paşa, Ekonomi, Osmanlı Bürokrasisi, Dahiliye Nezareti, Sivas

\* This article is derived from the PhD thesis titled "Mehmed Memduh Pasha: An Imperial Biography from Tanzimat to Republic" prepared by Fikriye Karaman.

## Introduction

This article delves into the economic aspects of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's biography, offering a detailed examination of his properties, investments, and contracts as documented in the Ottoman Archive. Through these documents, readers gain insights into economic life of a high-ranking Ottoman official. Statesmen like Mehmed Memduh Pasha had access to various resources, including economic ones, which they could leverage for personal gain. This principle underscores how holding a position of power can facilitate the accumulation and conversion of resources into economic benefits. Thus, the idea that "the state is in fact a set of positions to be conquered, where these positions offer the possibility of accumulating resources that can be converted in other arenas"<sup>1</sup> is particularly relevant in understanding Mehmed Memduh Pasha's career.

Coming from a family with a history of serving in various offices within the Ottoman administration, Mehmed Memduh Pasha benefited from the established connections and resources of his family. In addition to his writing skills, his family background might have facilitated his entry into the Ottoman bureaucracy. His father and maternal grandfather not only eased his entrance into government office but also bequeathed him valuable properties. Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his siblings inherited some fisheries in Antakya from their father Mustafa Mazlum Pasha. The communication between the central administration and Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his siblings with regard to these fisheries began in 1862 and continued until the demise of the Ottoman State. The main themes of the correspondences were whether to purchase, confiscate, or demolish the fisheries. The disagreements between the central administration and Mehmed Memduh Pasha regarding the fisheries remained unresolved.

The economic aspect of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's biography demonstrates how a civil servant could get by and possibly circumvent the regulations that ordinary members of the society were obliged to adhere to. His case demonstrates how officials were able to secure a range of benefits and properties through strategic navigation of the bureaucratic structure. Furthermore, requests from the Sultan with reverence and the close connection between the loyalty and reward attest the significance of personal allegiance for the official advancement and promotion in the Hamidian administration. Mehmed Memduh Pasha followed this convention by writing petitions to the Sultan with extensive praise. Despite his outward displays of deference in addressing the Sultan, Mehmed Memduh Pasha exercised a notable degree of autonomy in the provinces during his tenure as governor. This gave him the opportunity to pursue his personal interests.

As Mehmed Memduh Pasha advanced in his official career, he accumulated assets and gained access to contract opportunities. He benefited from the state's resources, including investment, housing, contracts, and certain privileges extended to his family members. Despite his reservations about certain practices of the Hamidian political system, Mehmed Memduh Pasha chose to remain within the system and align his fate with that of the regime. Consequently, he faded from prominence alongside the regime's decline in the aftermath of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution.

As a high-ranking official, he faced accusations related to corruption, abuse of power, and financial misconduct. It is difficult to ascertain whether these claims were true or not. What is clear, however, is that he seized every potential opportunity to invest in businesses. He was accused of having occupied the thermal springs, using the land and stones of a Muslim cemetery,

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Aymes, Benjamin Gourisse, Elise Massicard, "Order and Compromise: Government Practices", in *Turkey from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Early 21th Century*, (Eds) Marc Aymes, Benjamin Gourisse, and Elise Massicard (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2015), 12.

and embezzling more than thirty thousand kurush from the municipality's funds to cover construction expenses. It has been reported that he removed those who were in opposition to his decision of unauthorized privatization of the properties of a waqf.

The properties he obtained in the Hamidian era caused some legal disputes in the Second Constitutional period. The long inspection reports and correspondences regarding Mehmed Memduh Pasha's activities in Sivas focus on the hot spring bathhouse in Havza, public land issues in Kazabad, and the issue of tobacco smuggling in Tokat. The legal proceedings between Mehmed Memduh Pasha's family and the Young Turk Government continued until the demise of the Ottoman State.

Moreover, Mehmed Memduh Pasha's involvement in employing his son and the sons of his sheikh, İsmet Efendi, in government posts testifies to the importance of personal connections for the professional opportunities and advancement. In that respect, it was a practice which would guarantee loyalty while concentrating power building within a circle of trusted individuals.

In summary, Mehmed Memduh Pasha's case serves as a lens through which to understand the economic challenges and opportunities faced by Ottoman officials in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It provides a comprehensive view of how personal connections, administrative power, and strategic maneuvering played crucial roles in the career and economic success of Ottoman bureaucrats during a complex and transformative period in the Ottoman history. His contributions to regional economic development, the prolonged disputes over inherited properties, and the controversies surrounding his alleged misconduct demonstrate the multifaceted nature of his role beyond mere personal enrichment.

### 1. Brief Biography of Mehmed Memduh Pasha

Mehmed Memduh Pasha<sup>2</sup> was born in Istanbul in 1839 to a family with a bureaucratic background. His father Mustafa Mazlum Pasha was the Deputy Secretary of Naval Affairs (*Tersane Müsteşarı*). His mother's father, Ömer Lütfi Efendi, had been a well-established official with a history of high-ranking positions. Given his modest origins, it is likely that Mustafa Mazlum Pasha relied on his father-in-law's influence for his entry into the Ottoman bureaucracy. This connection paved the way for his own success and that of his two sons, Mehmed Memduh Pasha and Ahmed Tevfik Bey, as well as his grandsons.

Mehmed Memduh Pasha began his career in the Ottoman bureaucracy at fifteen years old, undertaking a six-year apprenticeship at the Foreign Ministry without financial compensation. Throughout his distinguished career, he worked as secretary and chief secretary in various ministries, including the Ministry of Education, the Treasury, and the Office of the Grand Vizier. His administrative roles extended to governorships in Konya (from 1887 to 1889), Sivas (from 1889 to 1892), and Ankara (from 1893 to 1895), culminating in his position as Minister of the Internal Affairs (from 1895 to 1908).<sup>3</sup> His service was recognized with numerous orders and medals from countries including the Ottoman Empire, Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, and Iran. He also played key roles in various commissions and was a close associate of Sultan Abdülhamid II.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Although Mehmed Memduh Bey was given the title of "Pasha" later in his bureaucratic career, for the sake of consistency the title "Pasha" will be used in all contexts throughout the article.

<sup>3</sup> Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), *Dahiliye Nezareti Sicill-i Ahval İdare-i Umumiyesi (DH.SAİD)*. Dosya No: 1, Gömlek Nu: 84. Tarih: 29 Zilhicce 1255 (4 March 1840).

<sup>4</sup> Mehmed Memduh Pasha has been the focus of various studies, reflecting both his prominent position within the Ottoman bureaucracy and his literary abilities. For different aspects of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's biography and

After the constitution was restored in July 1908, Mehmed Memduh Pasha's career as a government official ended. Faced with the challenges of serving under the Committee of Union and Progress, he stepped down from his ministerial position. Shortly after his resignation, he was apprehended and held in custody along with other Hamidian officials for about a month before being exiled to the Island of Prinkipo (*Büyükkada*) and then to the Island of Chios (*Sakız*). During the Tripoli War, when the Italian forces occupied these islands, in 1911 he was moved to Izmir, where he published several books on the late Ottoman History.<sup>5</sup> After an official pardon, he returned to Istanbul in 1912 and lived in seclusion at his Kireçburnu residence until his death in 1925. Unlike other figures from the Hamidian era, Mehmed Memduh Pasha did not engage in state administration after the collapse of the Hamidian regime, not due to opposition to the constitution but rather because he could not gain acceptance from the Committee of Union and Progress government. He was also one of the distinguished founders of the Association of the Friends of England in Turkey established in 1919.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Properties

### 2.1. Inherited Properties

#### 2.1.1. Lands, Shops, Cash

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's father, Mustafa Mazlum Pasha, was a prominent bureaucrat who held several key positions. In 1838, Mustafa Mazlum Pasha was appointed Grand Master of the Artillery (*Tophane Müdürü*) and later became Undersecretary of Naval Affairs (*Tersane Müsteşarı*) in 1839. Over the years, he occupied various significant roles, including membership in the Council of Judicial Ordinance in 1840. Sultan Abdülmecid I tasked him with returning the Ottoman Navy from Egypt, a mission he successfully completed. Subsequently, he was appointed to the Department of the Director of Military Expenditure (*Masarifat Nezareti*) and then to the High Council a position he held until his death in 1862. Mustafa Mazlum Pasha also served as the superintendent of Egypt (*Mısır Kapı Kethudası*) in 1842, and as Chief of Justice (*Deavi Nazırı*) until 1852. Upon Sultan Abdülaziz's ascension in 1861, he became steward to Sultan Pertevniyal and Minister of Sultan's Private Treasury (*Hazine-i Hassa Nazırı*), but he was soon removed from these roles and passed away that year.<sup>7</sup>

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's maternal grandfather, Ömer Lütfi Efendi endowed his properties to a waqf. After Ömer Lütfi Efendi's death, his sons and grandsons managed the waqf. As the eldest male in his family after his brother Ahmed Tevfik Bey's death in 1901, Mehmed Memduh Pasha pursued a seat in the board of trustees of the waqf of his grandfather.<sup>8</sup> In addition to various properties, Mehmed Memduh Pasha, his sister Ayşe Makbule Hanım and

literary life see Mahmut Kemal İnal, *Son Asır Türk Şairleri*, Vol II (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi 1969), 918-931; Selim Aslantaş, "Bir Osmanlı Bürokrati: Mehmet Memduh Paşa" *KÖK Araştırmalar: Kök Sosyal ve Stratejik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, III/1 (Bahar 2001); Orhan Bayrak, *Osmanlı Tarihi Yazarları* (Istanbul: Milenyum Yayınları, 2002); Zekeriya Kurşun, "Mehmed Memduh Paşa", *TDVİA*, 2003, Vol. 28. 495-497; Selim Aslantaş and A. Teyfur Erdoğan, "Mehmed Memduh" *Historians Of The Ottoman Empire*, 2006; Müjgan Çakır, "Mazlum-zade Mehmed Paşa'nın Poetikasına Dair" *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* (2009), Issue 39.

<sup>5</sup> Some of his books are Mehmed Memduh Paşa, *Feveran-ı Ezman* (İzmir: Vilayet Matbaası, 1324/1909- 1910); Mehmed Memduh Paşa, *Yemen Kit'ası Hakkında Bazı Mütalaat*. Dersaadet: Numune-i Tıbaat Matbaası, 1324 (1908/1909); Mehmed Memduh Paşa, *Esvat-ı Sudur* (İzmir: Vilayet Matbaası, 1328/1912-1913); Mehmed Memduh Paşa, *Mir'at-ı Şuunat* (İzmir: Ahenk Matbaası, 1328/1912-1913); Mehmed Memduh Paşa, *Serair-i Siyasiyye ve Tasavvulat-ı Esasiyye*. (Istanbul: 1328 (1912/1913); Mehmed Memduh Paşa, *Hal'ler ve İclaslar* (Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Hayriye, 1329/1913- 1914).

<sup>6</sup> Tanık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler II: 1918-1922 Mütareke Dönemi* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), 472.

<sup>7</sup> Mahmut Kemal İnal, *Son Asır Türk Şairleri*, Vol I (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi 1969), 384-385.

<sup>8</sup> BOA, *Y.EE*, 88/10, 7 Rebiyülahir 1319 (24 July 1901).

his brother Ahmed Tevfik Bey acquired over fifty thousand kurush from their father upon his death in 1862, which they deposited in a bank account. On May 28, 1865, Mehmed Memduh Pasha and Ahmed Tevfik Bey requested the immediate return of these funds due to financial difficulties.<sup>9</sup> During this period, both were employed in the Receiver's Office (*Amedi*), with Mehmed Memduh Pasha earning four thousand kurush and Ahmed Tevfik Bey about three thousand kurush annually,<sup>10</sup> indicating that fifty thousand kurush was a substantial but manageable sum.

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's wife, Nazlı Hanım, was the granddaughter of Giritli Mustafa Naili Paşa (1798-1871), a prosperous individual who owned various properties throughout the empire. Although it is unclear how much Nazlı Hanım inherited, she may have received a manufacturing plant in Balat. Mustafa Naili Paşa's biography mentions factories in Balat and Ayazma, as well as other properties.<sup>11</sup>

After the 1908 revolution, an investigation into Mehmed Memduh Pasha led to the confiscation of some of his properties. A June 1913 document lists a spinning mill owned by Mehmed Memduh Pasha, situated close to the ferry landing at Istanbul's Balat Karabaş neighborhood on the Golden Horn.<sup>12</sup> The mill might have been part of his wife's inheritance. It is uncertain if Mehmed Memduh Pasha operated the mill or profited from it. Additionally, the same document reveals that Mehmed Memduh Pasha owned a shop in the Grand Bazaar, although details about its acquisition or use remain unclear. Owning a shop in this prime commercial area of Istanbul indicates significant prosperity. The document also confirms his ownership of a spinning mill in Balat, further showcasing his entrepreneurial skills.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, Mehmed Memduh Pasha and Ahmed Tevfik Bey owned land with a dairy farm and mansion at the European side of Istanbul, in the Çobançeşme Taşköprü region, likely inherited from their father. This property was adjacent to state land used for military training and cannon experiments. A February 14, 1874 document noted the need for the military to purchase this land and farm.<sup>14</sup> While records do not confirm whether the purchase was completed, it is likely that the property was sold, as there is no subsequent correspondence or records regarding it.

### 2.1.2. Fisheries (*Dalyanlar*) in Antakya

Along with the estate in Çobançeşme, Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his sister and brother jointly possessed three fisheries in Antakya<sup>15</sup> and a sizable plot of land nearby in Karamurt.<sup>16</sup> The Amik Lake in Antakya was home to fifteen fisheries and three of them owned by Mehmed Memduh Pasha's father.<sup>17</sup> The exact means by which Mustafa Mazlum Pasha acquired these fisheries are unclear, and there are no records of them in the land records other than a contract through which Mehmed Memduh Pasha transferred ownership to his wife, Zehra Narin Hanım,<sup>18</sup> on November 28, 1891.<sup>19</sup> Despite their absence from the official records, these fisheries, along with a water mill (*asiyab*), remained under the control of Mustafa Mazlum

<sup>9</sup> BOA, *MVL*, 473/4, 2 Muharrem 1282 (28 May 1865).

<sup>10</sup> BOA, *DH.SAİD*, 4/156, 29 Zilhicce 1249 (9 May 1834); BOA, *DH.SAİD*, 1/84, 29 Zilhicce 1255 (4 March 1840).

<sup>11</sup> Davut Hut, "Mustafa Naili Paşa" *DİA*, EK-2, 2016, 328-329.

<sup>12</sup> BOA, *BEO*, 4185/313836, 15 Receb 1331 (20 June 1913).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> BOA, *A.MKT.MHM*, 474/17, 26 Zilhicce 1290 (14 February 1874).

<sup>15</sup> BOA, *MVL*, 502/20, 4 Rebiyülahir 1283 (16 August 1866).

<sup>16</sup> BOA, *BEO*, *Halep Ayniyat Defterleri* (AYN. d.), nr. 867/64.

<sup>17</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1901/11, 12 Cemaziyülevvel 1309 (14 December 1891).

<sup>18</sup> We are in the dark about Zehra Narin Hanım's family background.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, *DH.MUİ*, 69/37, 10 Rebiyülevvel 1328 (22 March 1910).

Pasha's family maintained ownership of the fisheries until the end of the Ottoman Empire. These fisheries were utilized for cultivating snakefish, a valuable commodity in the trade of Mediterranean.

Mustafa Mazlum Pasha and, following his death, Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his siblings, rented out the fisheries. As explained in a detailed petition presented to the central government in 1866, the annual income from the fisheries was 115,000 kurush.<sup>20</sup> Mehmed Memduh Pasha and Ahmed Tevfik Bey were working at the Receiving Office, each earning 5,000 kurush per month, at that time. This indicates that the fisheries could generate as much income as their combined annual salaries, making them relatively profitable despite the challenges.

The documentation related to Mustafa Mazlum Pasha's fisheries is extensive, primarily concerning complaints about the swamps they created and discussions about their destruction or expropriation. Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his brother frequently submitted lengthy petitions to prevent the demolition of the fisheries. Despite decades of complaints and proposals for their removal, the fisheries remained intact, illustrating the difficulty of implementing radical changes within the Ottoman bureaucracy and highlighting the influence of petitions, especially from civil servants. Following Mustafa Mazlum Pasha's death on June 3, 1862, Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his sister and brother inherited the fisheries. Attarizade Mehmed Efendi hired one of the fisheries and the water mill for 130 kurush, payable in three installments. However, due to a dispute over payment, the heirs considered canceling the contract.<sup>21</sup>

The primary issue with the fisheries was the swamping and flooding they caused. The ponds had barrages at the estuary of the River of Karasu, a tributary of the River of Asi, which prevented excess water from the Lake of Amik from flowing into the river. This led to increased flooding and swamp conditions along the lake's shores, heightening the risk of mosquito-borne diseases and affecting the lands and homes of the Reyhanlı tribe. A notable flood occurred in 1864, prompting discussions in the Ministry of Endowments about the potential destruction of Mustafa Mazlum Pasha's fisheries. Mehmed Memduh Pasha and Ahmed Tevfik Bey argued against the destruction by pointing out that other fisheries in Antakya caused similar issues but were protected due to local influence. They also contended that the previous year's rains were unusually heavy, causing widespread flooding, and emphasized the significant investment their father had made in the fisheries for farming of sea snake, arguing that to demolish them would be an inefficient use of valuable resources.<sup>22</sup>

In subsequent decades, complaints continued regarding the fisheries,<sup>23</sup> and Mursaloğlu Mustafa Şevki Pasha, a notable figure from the Reyhanlı tribe with close ties to the central administration, played a significant role.<sup>24</sup> He wired to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1893, expressing concerns about the fisheries of Mustafa Mazlum Pasha and referenced a petition he had presented to the Public Works Ministry in 1880, advocating for the destruction of the fisheries to create agricultural land and improve the Amik plain's prosperity.

After the 1908 revolution, discussions about expropriating or purchasing Mustafa Mazlum Pasha's fisheries, along with those of another regional owner, Vecihi Pasha, were brought up.<sup>25</sup> However, despite ongoing correspondence, the expropriation process was never

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<sup>20</sup> BOA, *MVL*, 502/20, 4 Rebiyülahir 1283 (16 August 1866).

<sup>21</sup> BOA, *A. MKT. MHM*, 261/31, 2 Zilkade 1279 (21 April 1863).

<sup>22</sup> BOA, *MVL*, 502/20, 4 Rebiyülahir 1283 (16 August 1866).

<sup>23</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1911/19, 13 Cemaziyelahir 1309 (14 January 1892).

<sup>24</sup> BOA, *BEO*, *AYN*. d., nr. 868, pages: 78, 116.

<sup>25</sup> The Finance Ministry bought Mustafa Mazlum Pasha fisheries for 7,000 kurush in 1913 (BOA, *BEO*, 4185/313850, 17 Receb 1331 (22 June 1913)).

completed before the Ottoman Empire's dissolution, as the legal proceedings between the State Treasury and Mehmed Memduh Pasha remained unresolved.

### 3. Residences

In addition to his land, shops, and fisheries, Mehmed Memduh Pasha possessed several residences. One of them was in Erenköy in Istanbul, where Mehmed Memduh Pasha and his family would spend their summers.<sup>26</sup> In April 1894, while serving as the governor of Ankara, Ahmed Pasha, the Sultan's groom, requested to rent this house. Mehmed Memduh Pasha declined, citing that his family was large and they had no alternative summer residence.<sup>27</sup>

Upon his return to İstanbul in 1895 as Minister of Internal Affairs, Mehmed Memduh Pasha sought a pleasant and affordable residence in a desirable area like the Bosphorus or Nişantaşı. Most bureaucrats lived there because they were in the vicinity of the Yıldız Palace. On November 18, 1897, he informed the Sultan that since returning from Ankara, he had been living in a seaside house with a monthly rent of 300 kurush, which he found excessive due to debts incurred from his daughters' marriages. He requested to move into the empty house in Nişantaşı previously occupied by Süreyya Pasha.<sup>28</sup> Five months later, he reiterated his request, highlighting the difficulty of accommodating his large family in rented spaces.<sup>29</sup> Although it is unclear whether his request was granted, an official document dated March 23, 1899, indicates that an imperial decree authorized payment for furnishing Mehmed Memduh Pasha's newly built mansion.<sup>30</sup>

Italian architect Raymonde D'Aronco created this home, which is currently known as the Mehmed Memduh Pasha Waterfront Residence, on a 3,095 square meter land. The mansion was encircled by tall walls adorned with purple ivy and included twelve rooms, three salons, and a sizable library with ancient Italian busts. The garden included various flowers and a pool with red fish, as well as a hydraulic elevator. In subsequent years, Mehmed Memduh Pasha also acquired a villa in Arnavutköy, another Bosphorus district. This villa was home to his Caucasian Circassian wife, Rukiye Şehbal, and their daughter Ayşe Mualla. Mehmed Memduh Pasha would visit the villa weekly to spend time with them.<sup>31</sup>

The villa had a notable history. Mehmed Memduh Pasha traveled to Yozgat following his appointment to Ankara in 1893, as a result of Armenian rioting. There he met Nebile Hanım. She, in order to ensure her family's future, handed Mehmed Memduh Pasha her daughter Rukiye Şehbal who was just twelve years old. Nebile Hanım, a Circassian who fled Russian oppression and settled in Boğazlıyan, entrusted Şehbal to Mehmed Memduh Pasha, who later took her to Istanbul when he was appointed Minister of the Internal Affairs in 1895.<sup>32</sup> After marrying Şehbal in the autumn of 1900, Mehmed Memduh Pasha moved her and their daughter Ayşe Mualla to the Arnavutköy villa. The villa's red exterior inspired Mehmed Memduh Pasha's granddaughter in Vahid to write a novel, *Boğaz'daki Kırmızı Köşk*, reflecting on the life of her family in the Bosphorus in the early twentieth century.

Another property of Mehmed Memduh Pasha was located in the Karacabevvb neighborhood of Edirne. The legitimacy of this residence came into question after 1908. It originally belonged to İsmet Efendi of Janina, a sheikh of the Naqshbandi order with whom

<sup>26</sup> Nermin Vahid, *Boğaz'daki Kırmızı Köşk* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2008), 26-27.

<sup>27</sup> BOA, *Y.PRK.UM*, 29/76, 14 Şevval 1311 (20 April 1894).

<sup>28</sup> BOA, *Y.EE*, 14/187, 8 Cemaziyülevvel 1315 (5 October 1897).

<sup>29</sup> BOA, *Y.EE*, 88/5, 29 Zilhicce 1315 (21 May 1898).

<sup>30</sup> BOA, *HH.İ*, 122/3, 11 Zilkade 1316 (23 March 1899).

<sup>31</sup> Vahid, *Boğaz'daki Kırmızı Köşk*, 26-27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Mehmed Memduh Pasha was affiliated. İsmet Efendi disposed the land, house, and mill that he had in Edirne before moving in the Ottoman capital in 1853.<sup>33</sup> On January 20, 1911, Mehmed Sıddık, İsmet Efendi's son, wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs seeking details about the purchase of his father's house by Mehmed Memduh Pasha from İsmet Efendi's widow, Advıye Hanım. Despite Mehmed Memduh Pasha's close relationship with İsmet Efendi and his involvement in securing official positions for İsmet Efendi's family,<sup>34</sup> Mehmed Sıddık's inquiry illustrates the challenges faced by high-profile bureaucrats of the Hamidian regime in the aftermath of the 1908 Revolution reflecting the broader trend of scrutinizing and challenging their acquisitions and conduct.

#### 4. Entrepreneurial Activities

Mehmed Memduh Pasha was a versatile individual, known for his roles as a statesman, poet, historian, and entrepreneur. His archival records reveal a dynamic career spanning both public service and private enterprise. Throughout his life, Mehmed Memduh Pasha not only held various government positions but also seized numerous opportunities to build his personal wealth.<sup>35</sup>

##### 4.1. Timber Business in Shkodra

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's entrepreneurial ventures began in earnest in 1877. After two decades in various governmental roles—including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Receiving Office, the Education Ministry, and the Secretariat of the Grand Vizier's Office—he started working for the Ministry of Finance with a monthly salary of seven thousand kurush. Following a reorganization and merger of some offices, he was dismissed and his salary reduced to two thousand kurush.<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, Mehmed Memduh Pasha spent three years out of official service, during which he explored alternative sources of income.

On April 12, 1877, he obtained a formal authorization for timber extraction and export in Shkodra, an Ottoman province in the Balkans with extensive forests. He leased a forest in the region and embarked on a timber business. In June 1880, he visited Shkodra,<sup>37</sup> and an official document from the capital instructed Shkodra's governor to facilitate Mehmed Memduh Pasha's dealings without detailing the specifics.<sup>38</sup> An additional document, issued eight years later, confirmed that while an official ban on logging had been imposed on Shkodra's demesne forests,

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<sup>33</sup> Muharrem Varol, "Bektaşiliğin İlgaı Sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tarikat Politikaları (1826-1866)" (PhD Dissertation, Istanbul University, 2011), 431-433.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 438. Varol suggests that this is an instance of the Ottoman practice in the nineteenth century of incorporating the relatives and inner circle of sheikhs into the bureaucratic framework.

<sup>35</sup> While Memduh Pasha's personal entrepreneurial activities and skills are noteworthy, it would be an injustice to focus solely on these aspects. He also took remarkable steps to revitalize trade activities and production in the provinces he governed. This was particularly evident during his tenure in Sivas, where he served for almost four years. Seeking to boost internal and regional trade, Memduh Pasha undertook various initiatives to enhance transportation efficiency. He built and repaired roads and made notable efforts to develop an inland river transportation system to link local agricultural produce with broader markets. The 1890 yearbook of Sivas underscores Memduh Pasha's significant impact on the province's economic and commercial activities, demonstrating his dedication to regional development. Fikri Karaman, *Sâlnâme-i Vilâyet-i Sivas (1308/1890)*, (İstanbul: 2001); Kemalettin Kuzucu, "Osmanlı Modernleşme Sürecinde İki Sivas Valisinin Raporlarının Karşılaştırılması ve Vilayetin Kentsel Dönüşümüne Etkileri" in *Osmanlılar Döneminde Sivas Sempozyum Bildirileri*, (Sivas: 2007): 335-352.

<sup>36</sup> *Mazuliyet maaşı* was a kind of unemployment pay of today.

<sup>37</sup> Shkodra is a city in the Republic of Albania today.

<sup>38</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1331/89, 4 Receb 1297 (12 June 1880).



Mehmed Memduh Pasha's leased forest was exempt due to his prior authorization.<sup>39</sup>

These documents highlight Mehmed Memduh Pasha's engagement in the timber business during his periods of official inactivity and his ability to continue this profitable venture upon reentering government service. Although there is no record of external support from his family in terms of capital or expertise, these activities underscore Mehmed Memduh Pasha's entrepreneurial spirit and resourcefulness despite his relatively limited experience in production and industry.

#### 4.2. Contract Opportunities

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's career exemplified how public office could intersect with private interests and business opportunities. His bureaucratic advancements opened doors to various contract opportunities, showcasing his dual role as a statesman and entrepreneur. Mehmed Memduh Pasha's interest in business ventures continued to thrive alongside his bureaucratic career. After his appointment to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs on December 6, 1895, his influence enabled him to seek various lucrative contracts. In the summer of 1896, he requested a share in a chromium mine in Finike nahiye, located in Elmalı, a district of Teke Sanjak in Konya Province.<sup>40</sup> Despite the Ministry of Forestry and Mining's failed attempts to secure interest in the mine through advertisements, Mehmed Memduh Pasha proposed taking on the contract with a ten percent share, as stipulated by mining regulations. While there is no confirmation of whether he secured the contract, his persistence and appeals for favors to the Sultan highlight his strategic approach to leveraging his position for business opportunities. Four years later, Mehmed Memduh Pasha sought another mining concession, this time for a copper mine in Kastamonu's Küre-i Nühas area. In his petition, he emphasized his loyalty to the Sultan and expressed his financial difficulties, including debts incurred from establishing a residence and supporting his children. He requested the concession as a means to alleviate his financial strain.<sup>41</sup>

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's requests extended beyond mining. He also sought a contract for dredging two critical straits - Dalyan and Dolap - at the Ayvalık port on the Aegean Sea, essential for the passage of commercial vessels.<sup>42</sup> He expressed his desire to be awarded the contract, citing his long-standing and unwavering service to the Sultan. Mehmed Memduh Pasha's words highlight that loyalty to the Sultan was a powerful tool that unlocked many opportunities during the Hamidian regime. On this occasion he pursued the contract in his son-in-law Cemil Bey's name who had long been employed at the Department of Agriculture. However, it was actually Mehmed Memduh Pasha who intended to carry out the work.

#### 5. Benefits for His Family and Relatives

Mehmed Memduh Pasha was also keen on securing benefits and opportunities for his family members and relatives. Shortly after his appointment to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, he petitioned the Sultan for rewards for three of his relatives, though the specifics of these requests are unclear.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Mehmed Memduh Pasha ensured his family's access

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<sup>39</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, 1436/28, 12 Zilkade 1304 (2 August 1887).

<sup>40</sup> BOA, *Y.EE*, 14/213, 20 Muharrem 1314 (1 July 1896).

<sup>41</sup> BOA, *Y.PRK.DH*, 11/31, 23 Zilhicce 1317 (24 April 1900).

<sup>42</sup> BOA, *Y.EE*, 88/37, 6 Rebiyülahir 1327 (27 April 1909).

<sup>43</sup> BOA, *Y.MTV*, 137/142, 23 Ramazan 1313 (8 March 1896).

Governors leveraged their personal connections to the palace for their own benefit, often by securing positions for relatives or requesting imperial honors for their family members. For examples see BOA, *Y.PRK.UM*, 57/104, 19 Zilhicce 1319 (29 March 1902); BOA, *Y.PRK.UM*, 73/20, 28 Zilkade 1322 (3 February 1905).

to prestigious institutions. On August 15, 1885, his younger son Mazlum was enrolled in the Galatasaray Imperial High School (*Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultanisi*), one of the empire's most esteemed schools, known for producing high-ranking Ottoman officials. The registration was made on the condition to pay two-thirds of the school payment, indicating Mehmed Memduh Pasha's commitment to securing elite education for his son.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Mehmed Memduh Pasha sought financial assistance from the Sultan, receiving two hundred liras in May 1897 for unspecified needs, reflecting his reliance on the Sultan's favor to support his financial obligations.<sup>45</sup> Mehmed Memduh Pasha's endeavors illustrate the intertwined nature of personal ambition, family interests, and public service during the Hamidian era, highlighting how bureaucratic roles could facilitate personal and familial advancements.

## 6. Corruption Allegations and Entrepreneurial Activities

### 6.1. Hotel and Bathhouse in Havza

Mehmed Memduh Pasha faced various allegations, particularly regarding his time as governor of Sivas. Beyond accusations of mistreatment of Armenians, he was also alleged to have exploited his official position for personal gain. One significant controversy involved his ownership of a hotel and bathhouse in Havza, Sivas Province, acquired during his governorship. The manner in which he obtained these properties was highly disputed and led to dissatisfaction among local residents.

Following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, Mehmed Memduh Pasha was dismissed from the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, and the new regime sought to prosecute him. They attempted to seize the Havza hotel and bathhouse to fund the Ministry of Education.<sup>46</sup> However, since these properties were registered under his daughter, Fatma Melek Hanım, the process of confiscation proved challenging. This strategic registration of valuable assets under family members during the relatively stable Hamidian era highlights both Mehmed Memduh Pasha's foresight and his entrepreneurial acumen, despite his role in the civil service, which was not typically associated with such skills.

Unable to directly confiscate the hotel, the new authorities temporarily transferred its operating rights to the Havza Municipality. Mustafa Efendi, the registrar managing the hotel, was dismissed.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently, Mehmed Memduh Pasha was accused of corruption and misusing his post for personal benefit. Lieutenant (*Kaymakam*) Ömer Pasha from Havza on behalf of local residents wired on November 22, 1908, accusing Mehmed Memduh Pasha for illegally seizing water from two thermal springs to construct a private bathhouse and hotel, which were originally established as public waqf properties.<sup>48</sup> It was alleged that he had misappropriated more than thirty thousand kurush from municipal funds for this construction

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<sup>44</sup> BOA, *MF.MKT*, 87/64, 4 Zilkade 1302 (14 August 1885).

<sup>45</sup> BOA, *ML.EEM*, 310/14, 13 Zilhicce 1314 (15 May 1897).

Considering that the monthly salary of the Minister of Internal Affairs was 4000 liras, this amount was relatively modest.

In addition to such requests Mehmed Memduh Pasha, like many of his peers, sought to improve his financial situation through salary increases. When he was governor of Konya, Sivas, and Ankara, his pay was set at seventeen thousand kurush (BOA, *DH*, SAİD, 1/84, 29 Zilhicce 1255/4 March 1840). In early February 1894, while serving in Ankara, Mehmed Memduh Pasha was notified via telegram of a planned increase in his salary from seventeen thousand to twenty-two thousand kurush. However, in the end of February of the same year he received a follow-up telegram informing him that his pay would remain at seventeen thousand kurush (BOA, *Y.MTV*, 91/18, 19 Şaban 1311/25 February 1894).

<sup>46</sup> BOA, *DH.H*, 37/2, 9 Ramazan 1328 (14 September 1910).

<sup>47</sup> BOA, *DH.H*, 37/2, 9 Ramazan 1328 (14 September 1910).

<sup>48</sup> BOA, *DH.MKT*, 2614/10, 27 Şaban 1326 (24 September 1908).

and expelled those who opposed his actions.<sup>49</sup> The telegram also requested that the hotel and bathhouse be returned to public ownership. The matter was taken to the Sharia court by local residents.

At the same time, a telegram from Havza to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, signed by 138 prominent local individuals, included serious allegations against Mehmed Memduh Pasha. It claimed that he had dismissed Halil İbrahim Efendi, the Sharia court judge, for opposing his acquisition of the waqf bathhouse spring. Ali Zihni Efendi, who succeeded Halil İbrahim Efendi, reportedly complied with Mehmed Memduh Pasha's demands to avoid dismissal. Another document alleged that Mehmed Memduh Pasha had purchased the waqf bathhouse for only five percent of its actual value. The accusations extended to the exile of Mahmud Ağa, a local figure who opposed the appropriation. To appease local discontent, Mehmed Memduh Pasha transferred the property to his daughter Fatma Melek Hanım. Despite this, public dissatisfaction persisted, and previous attempts to reclaim the thermal hotel had failed due to Mehmed Memduh Pasha's influence over administrative decisions.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, Fatma Melek Hanım fought to retain control of the hotel. Her representative, Ibrahim Sabit Efendi, submitted detailed petitions to the Havza district governorship, arguing for the legal right to keep the hotel based on its registered title deed.<sup>51</sup> Eventually, the hotel was taken over by Fatma Melek Hanım and repurposed to support the Ministry of Education, thus called as *Maarif Hamamı*. It was also referred to as *Paşa Hamamı* due to Mustafa Kemal Pasha's stay there in 1919. While the truth of these allegations against Mehmed Memduh Pasha remains uncertain, it is evident that he adeptly capitalized on every opportunity to invest in profitable ventures.

## 6.2. Tobacco Smuggling in Tokat & Public Property of Kazabad in Sivas

Tobacco was a significant source of revenue in Sivas, with the Tokat Sanjaq being renowned for its tobacco production. Since 1883, the Regie Company, a division of the Public Debt Administration, had monopolized the production of tobacco in the Ottoman territories. During Mehmed Memduh Pasha's administration, tobacco smuggling became increasingly prevalent. Inspection reports from Sivas even suggested that Mehmed Memduh Pasha might have encouraged this smuggling.<sup>52</sup>

In response, Mehmed Memduh Pasha accused Rasih Bey, the governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Tokat, of being responsible for the smuggling. Notably, Rasih Bey had been appointed by Mehmed Memduh Pasha himself, who had swiftly replaced Tokat's previous governor. Rasih Bey, in turn, alleged that Mehmed Memduh Pasha was involved in the smuggling activities. This exchange of accusations between the two officials led to no decisive outcome. Despite the serious nature of the allegations, no action was taken against either party. Requests for Rasih Bey's dismissal or for Mehmed Memduh Pasha to be replaced by the governor of Mosul were not approved by the central administration.<sup>53</sup> At this juncture it is important to highlight that one of the primary drivers of tobacco smuggling was the stringent regulations imposed by the Regie Company, combined with the involvement and abuse of authority by officials in the tobacco trade.

The inspection report revealed additional allegations against Mehmed Memduh Pasha,

<sup>49</sup> At that time Mehmed Memduh Pasha's salary was 17000 kurush.

<sup>50</sup> BOA, *DH.H.*, 37/2, 9 Ramazan 1328 (14 September 1910).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> BOA, *YEE*, 35/52, 6 Rebiyülahir 1327 (27 April 1909).

<sup>53</sup> BOA, *Y.A.HUS.*, 259/50, 8 Şevval 1309 (6 May 1892).

beyond his supposed engagement in the smuggling tobacco. Mutasarrif Rasih Bey claimed that Mehmed Memduh Pasha illegally registered a significant portion of public land (*miri arazi*) in the Kazabad Tokat sanjaq, which is part of the Sivas Province, under private title deeds. Specifically, two and a half shares of Kazabad district land - totaling 25,000 decares (25,000,000 square meters) - were recorded in the name of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's younger son Mazlum Bey. Furthermore, Mehmed Memduh Pasha allegedly transferred a large portion of Kazabad land to Hüsrev Pasha, the head of the provincial gendarmerie corps, to secure continued military support from the Ottoman Empire. The claim also indicated that while in Tokat, Mehmed Memduh Pasha had deposited 2000 liras into the Sivas branch of Ottoman Bank. Rasih Bey linked this sum to the illegal sale of certain lands near Kazabad Lake.<sup>54</sup>

In response to these accusations, Mehmed Memduh Pasha did not directly address the specific allegations. Instead, he wrote an extensive memorandum targeting the head of the Second Committee of Inspection, Brigadier Ziya Pasha. Mehmed Memduh Pasha and Ziya Pasha had a longstanding personal dispute that dated back twenty-five years, which Mehmed Memduh Pasha claimed was the source of Ziya Pasha's ongoing animosity towards him. By highlighting this personal vendetta, Mehmed Memduh Pasha implied that the inspection report was biased and lacked impartiality. Rather than defending his actions, Mehmed Memduh Pasha chose to discredit Ziya Pasha by exposing his alleged fraudulent activities.<sup>55</sup>

### Conclusion

In analyzing the life and career of Mehmed Memduh Pasha, one is struck by the remarkable intersection of administrative prowess, entrepreneurial spirit, and the complexities of political and social dynamics in the late Ottoman Empire. Born into a family embedded in the Ottoman bureaucracy, Mehmed Memduh Pasha's trajectory from a young apprentice in the Foreign Ministry to a high-ranking official and influential figure reveals much about the nature of Ottoman governance and the interplay of personal ambition with the public service.

Mehmed Memduh Pasha's administrative career was characterized by his ability to navigate and adapt within the shifting sands of Ottoman political landscapes. His early appointments to the Foreign Ministry and subsequent roles in various government departments had served to demonstrate his administrative capabilities. His governorate of Konya, Sivas, and Ankara was marked by valuable contributions to the economic and infrastructural development of the provinces he governed.

However, his entrepreneurial activities introduced an additional layer of complexity to his professional and personal endeavors. The investments he made in Shkodra's timber industry when he was unemployed and the diverse businesses he was involved demonstrate how he might have used his official connections for some personal purposes. Such activities not only illustrate his entrepreneurial skills but they also rendered him vulnerable to scrutiny and allegations of corruption. The cases such as Mehmed Memduh Pasha's possession of the hot spring bathhouse in Havza and engagement in tobacco smuggling in Tokat attest the challenges the senior Ottoman administrators encountered to balance their personal interests and official duties.

Furthermore, Mehmed Memduh Pasha's strategic management of family resources, inherited properties, and entrepreneurship make him a case study in how influential individuals could influence and benefit from both the public and private spheres. His efforts to provide for the family through seeking privileges in educating his son and trying to manage the complex

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

system of ownership of real estate, among others, demonstrate the intertwining of personal, family, and public interests.

The final chapter of Mehmed Memduh Pasha's life was characterized by his downfall following the 1908 revolution and subsequent exile. This volatility marked the last decade of the Ottoman politics. The shift from the Hamidian Period into the Second Constitutional Era was an important turning point, one that Mehmed Memduh Pasha attempted to navigate but ultimately failed. His exile and eventual return to Istanbul in 1912, coupled with the subsequent adoption of a life of seclusion, serve to illustrate the extreme changes in political fortunes that were a feature of the period for so many officials.

Overall, Mehmed Memduh Pasha represents one of the illustrative examples of the multifaceted role and intermingling of public service, ambition, and entrepreneurial activities among high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The article offers insights into his contributions to administrative and economic affairs, as well as the controversies and allegations of corruption that have marked his career. Mehmed Memduh Pasha's legacy is characterized by both significant successes and serious controversies. This allows for a deeper examination of the challenges and complexities of governance in the late Ottoman Empire.

Table: Mehmed Memduh Pasha's Bureaucratic Career and Salaries<sup>56</sup>

Office & Position	Period	Salary
The Foreign Ministry, Apprentice	1854-1861	no payment
Palace Secretariat Office, Scribe	1861-1862	1500 kurush
Receiving Office, Clerk	1862-1872	5000 kurush
Reporting Officer	1872-1873	6000 kurush
Ministry of Education, Clerk	1873-1875	5000 kurush
Grand Vizier's Secretary	1875-1876	10.000 kurush
Ministry of Finance, Clerk	1876-1877	7000 kurush
Unemployment	1877-1881	2000 kurush
Member of Council of State	1881-1887	5000 kurush
Konya, Governor	1887-1889	17000 kurush
Sivas, Governor	1889-1892	17000 kurush
Unemployment	1892-1893	6000 kurush
Ankara, Governor	1893-1895	17000 kurush
Minister of Internal Affairs	1895-1908	40000 kurush

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<sup>56</sup> BOA, *DH.SAİD*, 1/84, 29 Zilhicce 1255 (4 March 1840).

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DH, Dahiliye

DH.H, Dahiliye Hukuk

DH.MKT, Dahiliye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi

DH. MUI, Dahiliye Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdaresi

DH.SAİD, Dahiliye Nezareti Sicill-i Ahval İdare-i Umumiyesi

HH.İ, Hazine-i Hassa İradeler

MF.MKT, Maarif Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi

ML.EEM, Maliye Nezareti Emlak-ı Emiriyye Müdüriyeti

MVL, Meclis-i Vala Evrakı

Y.A.HUS, Yıldız Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı

Y.EE, Yıldız Esas Evrakı

Y.MTV, Yıldız Mütenevvi Maruzat Evrakı

Y.PRK.DH, Yıldız Perakende Evrakı Dahiliye Nezareti Maruzatı

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