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“Administrative Structure of Ardahan According to Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks (1870-1877)” *Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13/35 (2026): 194-216.

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Administrative Structure of Ardahan According to Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks (1870-1877)

Erzurum Vilayet Salnamelerine Göre Ardahan'ın İdari Yapısı (1870-1877)

Abstract: The modernization reforms initiated by the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century based on the Tanzimat and Islahat decrees led to fundamental transformations in provincial administration. The main subject and purpose of this research is to document, based on primary sources, how this process, which aimed to strengthen centralised administration, shaped the administrative, judicial, and financial structure of Ardahan within the framework of the Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks (Erzurum Vilayet Salnameleri), the 1864 and 1871 Provincial Regulations (Vilayet Nizamnameleri). In this regard, Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks were transcribed and document content analysis techniques were applied within the perspective of qualitative research methodology. A total of five yearbooks from 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, and 1877 were examined, and the information identified about Ardahan's administrative, financial, and judicial structure was incorporated into the study. The study compares Ardahan's administrative status before and after the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War. Although there are studies on the history of Ardahan in the literature, it is believed that this research will contribute significantly to the literature as a primary source, because of the lack of specific studies directly illuminating the administrative, judicial, and financial administration during and after the Tanzimat period.

Keywords: Ottoman, Administration, Erzurum, Yearbook, Ardahan.

Öz: Osmanlı Devleti'nin 19. yüzyılda Tanzimat ve Islahat fermanları temelinde başlattığı modernleşme reformları, eyalet yönetiminde köklü dönüşümlere yol açmıştır. Bu araştırmanın ana konusu ve amacı, merkezi yönetimi güçlendirmeyi amaçlayan bu sürecin, Erzurum Vilayet Salnameleri, 1864 ve 1871 Vilayet Nizamnameleri çerçevesinde Ardahan'ın idari, adli ve mali yapısını nasıl şekillendirdiğini birincil kaynaklara dayanarak belgelemektir. Bu bağlamda, Erzurum Vilayet Salnameleri transkript edilmiş ve nitel araştırma metodolojisi perspektifinde belge içeriği analiz tekniği kullanılmıştır. 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873 ve 1877 yıllarına ait toplam beş Erzurum Vilayet Salnamesi incelenmiş ve Ardahan'ın idari, mali ve adli yapısı hakkında tespit edilen bilgiler çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Çalışmada, 1877-1878 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı öncesi ve sonrası Ardahan'ın idari, adli ve mali durumları karşılaştırılmıştır. Literatürde Ardahan tarihi üzerine çalışmalar bulunmakla birlikte, Tanzimat dönemi ve sonrasında idari, adli ve mali idareyi doğrudan aydınlatan özel çalışmaların bulunmaması nedeniyle, bu araştırmanın birincil kaynak olarak literatüre önemli katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı, İdare, Erzurum, Salname, Ardahan.

Introduction

Situated in northeastern Anatolia within the Eastern Anatolia Region, Ardahan shares its borders with Georgia to the north, Armenia to the east, Kars to the south, and Artvin to the west.¹ Geographically, Ardahan occupies a strategic position at the edge of Anatolia, serving as the region most distant from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Furthermore, it functions as a crucial gateway to the expansive territories stretching from the Caucasus to Russia in the north and toward China in the east.² Ardahan, characterized by its high-altitude and mountainous plateau terrain, experiences a severe continental climate. Situated within the mid-latitude climatic zone, the region endures extremely cold winters, relatively warm summers, and receives precipitation throughout all seasons of the year.³ Ardahan's geography is predominantly shaped by mountain ranges, with elevated plateaus, expansive plains, and deep valleys situated between these mountainous formations.⁴ To the north lie the Yalnızçam Mountains, at 2,715 meters. To the southwest rise the Allahuekber Mountains, with a peak of 3,055 meters. To the northeast lies Mount Kel, at 3,033 meters, and on the eastern border lies Mount Akbaba, reaching 3,026 meters. The highest point in the province is Mount Kısır, located in the southern part, reaching 3,197 meters.⁵ The main river systems of the region are the Kura River and the Poshov Stream, which play a significant role in shaping the area's hydrography. Additionally, Lake Aktaş and Lake Çıldır stand out as ecologically valuable wetlands, contributing to the region's biodiversity and environmental significance.⁶ Due to its strategic location, Ardahan has historically come under the control of numerous civilizations and powers, including the Urartians, Sakha Turks, Romans, Byzantines, Khazar Turks, Abbasids, Georgian Kingdoms, the Great Seljuk Empire, and the Anatolian Seljuk State.⁷ In 1551, Circassian Iskender Pasha launched a military campaign targeting Ardanuç. This operation resulted in the incorporation of Ardanuç, Şavşat, Hanak, Göle, and Ardahan into his dominion. Consequently, the Çıldır region and its surrounding areas were brought under Ottoman control.⁸ Following the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, the region came under the control of Tsarist Russia. Although Russia implemented various administrative reforms in Ardahan, Çıldır, and Kars, which it had incorporated into its territory,⁹ Ardahan and its surroundings were returned to Ottoman administration through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed during World War I.¹⁰

During the 19th century, influenced by internal pressures and Western intervention, the Ottoman Empire initiated a series of reforms aimed at restoring centralized control and aligning with contemporary administrative principles. The Tanzimat Edict (*Fermanı*), proclaimed on

¹ Volkan Dede, "Ardahan İline Ait Bazı Temel Coğrafi Özelliklerin ve Arazi-Toprak Verilerinin Coğrafi Bilgi Sistemleri ile Değerlendirilmesi (Kuzeydoğu Anadolu)". *Toprak Bilimi ve Bitki Besleme Dergisi* 11, no. 2 (2023): 84.

² İhsan Kurtbaş ve Mustafa C. Timur, "Ardahan İlinin Sosyoekonomik Yapı ve Durum Analizi - İkincil Veriler Üzerinden Analitik-Sosyolojik Bir Analiz", In *Ardahan Değerlemeleri - Değerler, Potansiyeller ve Yaklaşımlar - 3*, (Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi, 2021), 3-72.

³ Muhammed Zeynel Öztürk, and Hediye Kılıç. "Ardahan'da İklim Parametrelerindeki Değişimin Zamansal Analizi", *Türk Coğrafya Dergisi*, no. 70 (2018): 37-43. <https://doi.org/10.17211/tcd.364239>.

⁴ Güler Ertem, "Ardahan Kazası (1926-1992)" (PhD diss., Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, 2025), 5.

⁵ T.C. Serhat Kalkınma Ajansı. *Ardahan Ballı Bitki Florası*. Edited by F. Özgökçe. (Serhat Kalkınma Ajansı Yayınları, 2024), 7.

⁶ Serkan Kükrer, "Pollution, Source, and Ecological Risk Assessment of Trace Elements in Surface Sediments of Lake Aktaş, NE Turkey." *Human and Ecological Risk Assessment* 23, no. 7 (2017): 1629-1644.

⁷ Zeyrek, Yunus. "Tarihimizin ve Kültürümüzün Ardahan Sayfaları, 'Ardahan'". *Türkiye İdareciler Derneği İdarecinin Sesi Dergisi* 37, no. 143 (2011): 91-93.

⁸ Ersin Doğanekin, "XVI. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Çıldır Beylerbeyliği" (PhD diss., Kafkas University, 2016), 34; Esra Timuçin, "Osmanlıya Kadar Ardahan ve Çevresi" (master's thesis, Ardahan University, 2021), 58, 88.

⁹ Muammer Demirel, "Doğu Anadolu'da İdari Yapılanma (1877-1878 Osmanlı Rus Savaşı'ndan Sonra)". *A.Ü. Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 37 (2008): 253-264.

¹⁰ Esin Dayı, *Elviye-i Selase'de (Kars, Ardahan, Batum) Milli Teşkilatlanma*, (Kültür Eğitim Vakfı Yayınları, 1997), 61-64.

November 3, 1839¹¹, was followed by the Islahat Edict (*Fermanı*) on February 18, 1856¹², marked key milestones in this reform agenda. These proclamations primarily sought to safeguard the lives and property of all Ottoman subjects—regardless of religion, language, or ethnicity—to restructure the taxation system, and limit foreign influence. A pivotal measure to prevent these reforms from remaining merely theoretical was the restructuring of the empire's long-standing provincial administrative framework to facilitate their practical implementation across its expansive territory. The province was the largest administrative unit under the administration of a governor in the Ottoman provincial organization.¹³ The Vilayet Law of 1864 was introduced to establish lasting order within the empire's provincial administration. This regulation replaced the traditional Ottoman provincial structure with a new hierarchical framework composed of provinces (*vilayets*), sanjaks (*livas*), districts (*kazas*), and villages (*karyes*). It laid the groundwork for a modernized provincial system, in which officials were centrally appointed. Governors, now appointed directly from the capital, were granted broader powers than their predecessors. This reform not only reinforced the principle of centralization but also distinctly separated the roles of civil and military authorities in local governance.¹⁴ However, challenges in the practical application of the 1864 regulation led to further reform. As a result, the Vilayet Law of 1871 was issued. This subsequent regulation provided a clearer definition of administrative hierarchies and responsibilities. Specifically, it introduced more detailed procedures for managing key functions such as finance, justice, and administration at both provincial and district levels. In this framework, the Tanzimat-era reforms were institutionalized in the provinces through the establishment of administrative councils (*Meclis-i İdare*), appellate courts, and a variety of bureaucratic offices.¹⁵ The most dependable sources reflecting the practical outcomes of the administrative, judicial, and financial reforms enacted by the 1864 and 1871 regulations are the provincial yearbooks from that era. These official annual records offer extensive quantitative and qualitative data, including details on a province's population, financial balance, number of judges, status of educational institutions, and development projects.¹⁶ Comprehensive information regarding the administrative, financial, and judicial framework of the strategically located Ardahan district on the Caucasus border, spanning 1870 to 1877, is available in the Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks. In the 1870s, Ardahan functioned as a district within Erzurum Province. A district was an administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire that represented the jurisdiction of the judge. *Sanjaks* were formed by the grouping of districts (*Kazas*).¹⁷ The Erzurum yearbooks from 1870 to 1877 detail the administrative, financial, judicial, and military officials serving in Ardahan, as well as the administrative units and councils they headed. Additionally, these yearbooks include information on the administrative council, municipal council, Deâvî council, the directorates of the Poshov, Çıldır, and Göle sub-districts, the district center, and the customs offices within the districts. According to Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname (Travel Book)*, Ardahan was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Selim I. throughout Ottoman rule, Ardahan was at times administered under the jurisdiction of Kars, Erzurum Province, or Çıldır Province. Between 1568 and 1574, archival records indicate that Ardahan was organized into two distinct sanjaks: Livâ-i Ardahan and Livâ-i Ardahan-ı Kuçek, both within the province of Erzurum. Sanjak is an administrative unit with city status attached to the provinces in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸ From 1578 to 1588, Ardahan continued to function as a sanjak under Erzurum's

¹¹ Ali Akyıldız, "Tanzimat." In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 40, (İstanbul: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2011) 1–10.

¹² Ufuk Gülsoy, "Islahat Fermanı", In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 19, (İstanbul: T.D.V. Yayınları, 1999), 185–190.

¹³ Halil İnalçık, "Eyalet", In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 11, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 1995), 548–550.

¹⁴ Selda Kaya Kılıç, "1864 Vilâyet Nizamnamesinin Tuna Vilayetinde Uygulanması ve Mithat Paşa". *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 24, no. 37 (2005): 99–111.

¹⁵ Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, "Yerel Yönetim Metinleri VI: 1871 Vilayet Nizamnamesi ve Getirdikleri". *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler* 5, no. 5 (1996): 89–103.

¹⁶ Gençoğlu, Mustafa. "1864 ve 1871 Vilâyet Nizamnamelerine Göre Osmanlı Taşra İdaresinde Yeniden Yapılanma". *Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2011): 29–50.

¹⁷ Tuncer Baykara, "Kaza." In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 25, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2022), 119–120.

¹⁸ İlhan Şahin, "Sancak". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 36, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2009), 97–99.

jurisdiction. Over the centuries, its administrative status saw various changes. In 1635, Liva-yı Ardahan-ı Kuçek was incorporated into the province of Kars, while Ardahan-ı Büzürg fell under the authority of Çıldır Province. During the late 18th century, specifically between 1777 and 1778, Ardahan was listed as a sanjak within Çıldır Province.¹⁹

According to the 1872 Erzurum Province Yearbook, compiled in the latter half of the 19th century, Ardahan district included three sub-districts (*Nahiyes*)—Çıldır, Göle, and Poshov—with a total of 110 villages, 2007 households, and a male population of 6,786.²⁰ The concept of sub-district, which was among the Ottoman administrative units, was used mostly for administrative units smaller than districts after the Tanzimat.²¹

1. The Border Position and Administrative Significance of Ardahan

The geopolitical and strategic position of Ardahan in 19th-century Ottoman provincial administration carries a significance far beyond that of an ordinary district. In light of the data presented in this article, this importance is consolidated into three fundamental points.

1.1. Modern State-Building and Defense-Oriented Administration in a "Frontier" Region

As a "frontier" (*Serhad*) region on the Caucasian and Russian border, Ardahan represents one of the locales where the Ottoman Empire most meticulously attempted to implement the Tanzimat reforms. The selection of the years 1870–1877 is not coincidental; this period reflects the Ottoman endeavor to maximize its bureaucratic presence in the region prior to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 (the '93 War). The establishment of a robust administrative structure on the border—comprising the District Governorship (*Kaymakamlık*), Municipality, and Councils—demonstrates an intent to integrate the region into the central authority not merely militarily, but also institutionally.

1.2. Multicultural Structure and the Representational Power of Councils

Border regions are characterized by high population mobility and a dense concentration of diverse religious groups. The presence of non-Muslim members, such as Bogos Ağa and Ervetin Ağa, as seen in the article's tables (specifically within the Administrative Council and the Court of First Instance sections), holds the following administrative significance: By incorporating diverse elements into the administrative apparatus, the Ottoman State aimed to foster loyalty and demonstrate a model of "co-governance" against external interventions—particularly Russia's claims of protectionism.

1.3. The Balance Between Decentralization and Centralized Control

The municipal organizations and local councils established in Ardahan address one of the article's central debates: "genuine decentralization versus stringent centralized control." Due to its peripheral location and the potential for delays in orders arriving from the center (Istanbul/Erzurum), authority was delegated to local councils; however, central control was maintained by ensuring that the *Kaymakam*, an appointee of the central government, invariably presided over these councils.

2. Methodology and Source Criticism

The primary sources of this research are the Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks for the years H. 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, and 1294 (1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, and 1877). These yearbooks were transcribed from the original Ottoman Turkish using standard academic transliteration methods to ensure linguistic consistency. While salnamer are highly dependable official records offering

¹⁹ Yusuf Halaçoğlu, "Ardahan." In *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2002), 350.

²⁰ Erzurum Vilayeti Salnamesi [Erzurum Provincial Yearbook], H. 1289 (1872–1873), 138.

²¹ Şahin, İlhan. "Nahiye". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2006), 306–308.

extensive quantitative and qualitative data—such as official personnel, population, and financial status—they possess certain methodological limitations. Some yearbooks may repeat the previous year's data if new information was not received from distant districts in time for publication. Furthermore, as state-published documents, they represent the official administrative perspective. In this study, document content analysis was applied to these records to reveal the dynamics of bureaucratic change and the practical application of Tanzimat principles in the Ardahan district.

2.1. Transcription Method and Reliability

The transcription of the *Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks* from Ottoman Turkish to Modern Turkish was conducted following the academic transliteration standards established by the Turkish Historical Society (TTK). To ensure the highest level of reliability and consistency, a cross-check method was employed during the transcription process. Proper nouns, administrative titles, and local toponyms were cross-referenced with contemporary administrative records and peer-reviewed historical gazetteers to prevent orthographic errors inherent in late 19th-century printing. Furthermore, the terminology has been standardized throughout the text; for instance, the term "*Kaymakam*" has been replaced with the administrative title "district governor" to preserve the institutional nuances of the era.

The consistency of the data presented in the tables was verified by comparing successive years of the *salnames*, and any discrepancies found in the original documents were noted as potential printing errors or administrative updates. This rigorous approach ensures that the administrative hierarchy and personnel lists reflect the most accurate historical reality possible.

2.2. Contribution to Ottoman Historiography

This study offers a significant contribution to Ottoman historiography by shifting the focus from the imperial center to the "periphery," specifically through the lens of a frontier district during a transformative era. While traditional Ottoman historiography has extensively documented the legal frameworks of the Tanzimat and Islahat reforms, the practical reflections of these policies in remote borderlands like Ardahan have remained relatively under-researched. By utilizing the *Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks*, this research provides empirical evidence of how the 1864 and 1871 Provincial Regulations were operationalized on the ground.

The case of Ardahan is particularly vital for the literature because it demonstrates the state's effort to establish a "modern bureaucratic presence" in a region under constant military threat. The integration of local Muslim and non-Muslim elites into the newly formed Administrative Councils and Judicial Councils (*Deâvi Meclisi*) challenges the center-periphery dichotomy, showing a more nuanced process of negotiation and administrative modernization.

Furthermore, documenting the administrative structure just before the 1877-1878 War preserves the "institutional memory" of a territory that would soon experience a forty-year hiatus from Ottoman rule. Thus, this study does not merely list officials; it reconstructs the administrative landscape of the late Ottoman state in a strategic frontier, providing a baseline for comparative studies on provincial governance and imperial transition.

3. Central Administration of Ardahan District

A review of the *Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks* for the years 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, and 1877 indicates that Ardahan functioned as a district within the Çıldır Sanjak, which was part of Erzurum Province during this period. The 1872 yearbook offers specific details regarding the district's administrative and geographical context, stating that Ardahan was located 36 hours from Erzurum, the provincial capital, and 18 hours from the sanjak center, Çıldır.²²

The administrative reforms introduced during the Tanzimat era to reinforce central authority were also extended to peripheral border regions such as Ardahan. In accordance with

²² Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 138.

these reforms, the district governor (*Kaymakam*)²³ functioned as the highest-ranking official in Ardahan, symbolizing state authority and civil order. Positioned at the top of the modern bureaucratic structure, the district governor acted as the sultan's representative, overseeing all administrative, financial, and security-related matters. Supporting this role were key officials: the regent (*Naip*)²⁴, who acted as a judge responsible for the enforcement of religious law; the mufti, in charge of religious affairs; the fiscal director, and the fund assurance manager, both of whom played essential roles in maintaining economic stability. The names and roles of these district officials in Ardahan during the 1870s are provided in the following table.

Table 1. The Central Administrators of Ardahan District.

| The Year 1870 | The Year 1871 | The Year 1872 |
|--|---|---|
| District Governor: Derviş Bey Regent: İbrahim Edhem Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Fiscal Director: Şerif Efendi Fund Assurance Officer: Abdülhamid Efendi | District Governor: Derviş Bey Regent: Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Fiscal Director: Şerif Efendi Fund Assurance Officer: Salih Efendi | District Governor: Derviş Bey Efendi Regent: Yusuf Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Fiscal Director: Şerif Efendi Fund Assurance Officer: Mehmed Efendi |
| The Year 1873 | | The Year 1877 |
| District Governor: Hacı Mustafa Efendi Regent: İsmail Hakkı Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Fiscal Director: Şerif Efendi Fund Assurance Officer: Sabit Efendi | | District Governor: Hacı Halil Ağa Regent: Hacı Ali Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Fiscal Director: Abdülhamid Efendi Fund Assurance Officer: Muharrem Efendi Events Clerk: Dede Efendi Treasury Trustee: Mehmed Şerif Efendi |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H. 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, 1293.

The table above illustrates the clear division of administrative, judicial, and financial functions within the district. The district governor serves as the chief representative of central authority, while the regent and mufti provide checks in legal and religious matters. At the same time, the fiscal director and fund assurance officer are responsible for maintaining financial discipline. This separation of roles reflects the central government's attempt to enhance provincial efficiency and oversight through Tanzimat-era reforms.

According to the 1870 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, the administrative head of the Ardahan district was District Governor Derviş Bey. Supporting him in district governance were Naip İbrahim Edhem Efendi, overseeing judicial affairs; Mufti Ali Efendi, responsible for religious matters; Fiscal Director Şerif Efendi, managing financial affairs; and chief of the fund Abdülhamid Efendi, who handled agricultural and commercial lending for local farmers and tradesmen.²⁵

The 1871 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook indicates several changes in the senior administrative structure of the Ardahan district. While District Governor Derviş Bey, Mufti Ali Efendi, and Fiscal Director Şerif Efendi remained in their posts, Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi was appointed as regent, replacing İbrahim Edhem Efendi. Additionally, Salih Efendi took over the

²³ The governor is the administrative head of a district under a sanjak in the Ottoman Empire (Yücel Özkaya, "Kaymakam". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 25, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2022), 84-85.

²⁴ The term "*Naip*" literally denotes "*a person who acts on behalf of another*" and more broadly refers to an individual who temporarily assumes the duties of an official position in the absence of its original holder (Casim Avcı, "Naip." In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32, (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2006), 311-312). He served as the deputy judge tasked with overseeing judicial matters within the Ottoman legal system. (Mehmet İpşirli, "Naip". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 32, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2006), 312-313).

²⁵ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1287 (1870-1871), 84.

role of fund assurance officer from Abdülhamid Efendi. Mufti Ali Efendi and Fiscal Director Şerif Efendi continued in their previous roles.²⁶

In 1872, Derviş Bey continued to serve as the district governor of Ardahan. Judicial affairs were overseen by Naip Yusuf Efendi, religious matters were managed by Mufti Ali Efendi, financial operations were handled by Finance Director Şerif Efendi, and the role of treasury trustee was fulfilled by Mehmed Efendi.²⁷ A comparison with the 1871 administrative structure reveals notable continuity in personnel. The district governor, mufti, and fiscal director all remained in their posts, while only Salih Efendi, the previous treasury trustee, was replaced by Mehmed Efendi. The fact that key administrative and financial figures, particularly the district governor, remained in office for three consecutive years (1870-1872) suggests a period of relative stability in Ardahan and reflects the central government's confidence in these officials.

In 1873, the administration of Ardahan district was led by newly appointed District Governor Hacı Mustafa Efendi. Naip İsmail Hakkı Efendi assumed responsibility for judicial affairs, while Mufti Ali Efendi continued to oversee religious matters. Şerif Efendi retained his post as Director of Finance, and Sabit Efendi was appointed as the new Chief of the Fund.²⁸ The year marked a significant shift in the district's administrative staff. Hacı Mustafa Efendi replaced Derviş Bey, who had served as district governor for three years. İsmail Hakkı Efendi took over from Naip Yusuf Efendi in judicial duties, and Sabit Efendi succeeded Mehmed Efendi as Chief of the Fund. Among the principal administrators, only Mufti Ali Efendi and Finance Director Şerif Efendi continued in their positions.

In 1877, Ardahan district was governed by District Governor Hacı Halil Ağa. That year, Hacı Ali Efendi held the position of regent, Ali Efendi served as Mufti, Abdülhamid Efendi was appointed as the treasury director, and Muharrem Efendi served as the trustee of the fund. Additionally, Mehmed Şerif Efendi worked as the land registry clerk, while Dede Efendi served as the events clerk.²⁹ A comparison of the 1877 administrative staff with that of 1873 reveals a comprehensive shift in nearly all positions, with the exception of Mufti Ali Efendi, who retained his role. Hacı Halil Ağa replaced Hacı Mustafa Efendi as district governor, Hacı Ali Efendi succeeded İsmail Hakkı Efendi as Regent, Abdülhamid Efendi replaced Şerif Efendi as director of finance, and Muharrem Efendi took over from Sabit Efendi as fund trustee. This sweeping administrative overhaul can be interpreted as part of the central government's broader strategy to restructure and reinforce the district's governance in anticipation of, and response to, the 1877-1878 War of '93.

4. Ardahan Administrative Council (*Ardahan İdare Meclisi*)

The Vilayet Law of 1864, reflecting the Ottoman Empire's centralization efforts during the Tanzimat era, sought to formalize provincial administration. This key regulation required the creation of various decision-making and executive bodies, forming a hierarchical system that extended from the central government to local levels. According to the regulation, a "*Provincial Administrative Council*" was established at the provincial center as the highest authority, convening regularly under the governor's leadership. This council shared decision-making power with the governor over provincial, fiscal, and disciplinary issues. The same hierarchical framework was applied to lower administrative units: "*Provincial Administrative Councils*" operated under the Sanjak Governor, while "*District Administrative Councils*" were set up in smaller districts. Mutasarrıf was the official title used for the civilian governor who administered the sanjaks in the Ottoman provincial administration.³⁰ This multi-tiered council system created a governance model where powers and responsibilities were gradually delegated to ensure the

²⁶ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288 (1871-1872), 83.

²⁷ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289 (1872-1873), 86.

²⁸ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290 (1873-1874), 92.

²⁹ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1294 (1877-1878), 90.

³⁰ Ali Fuat Öreng, "Mutasarrıf". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 31, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2020), 377-379.

centralized administration's effective operation across provinces.³¹ In accordance with the decisions outlined in the regulation, a District Administrative Council was also established in Ardahan. The District Administrative Council, created by the Vilayet Law of 1864 within the provincial organization, was positioned as the primary executive and advisory body responsible for managing administrative activities at the district level. The council's scope of duties and responsibilities was quite broad, encompassing the functions of a modern state at the time. It was primarily tasked with overseeing the orderly operation of civil administration. Additionally, as a reflection of the centralized fiscal system, it carried out financial duties. The council was also authorized to manage security affairs to maintain order in towns and cities. Within the scope of infrastructure and public services, it was directly responsible for executing fundamental public services such as tax collection and revenue management. This wide range of authority demonstrates that the District Administrative Council functioned as a central institution representing all state activities at the district level.³²

The District Administrative Council established in the district included officials such as the district governor, district mufti, regent, clerk, and the spiritual leader of non-Muslims. This structure of the District Administrative Councils was maintained with the Vilayet Law of 1871.³³ The members of the District Administrative Council who served in Ardahan between 1870 and 1877, along with their duties, are listed in the table below.

Table 2. The Members of the Administrative Board of Ardahan District

| The Year 1870 | The Year 1871 | The Year 1872 |
|---|---|--|
| Head of the Board: District Governor Derviş Bey Member: Tâhir Bey Member: Mustafa Ağa Clerk: Abid Efendi | Head of the Board: Kaymakam Derviş Bey Members Regent: Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi Mufti Ali Efendi Heads of the Finance Office: Şerif Efendi Mustafa Şükrü Efendi, Salih Ağa, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Mustafa Ağa Clerk: Abid Efendi | Head of the Board: District Governor Derviş Bey Efendi Members: Regent: Yusuf Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Head of the Finance Office: Şerif Efendi Şakir Efendi, Salih Ağa, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Mustafa Ağa Clerk: Âbid Efendi |
| The Year 1873 | | The Year 1877 |
| Head of the Board: Kaymakam Hacı Mustafa Efendi Regent: İsmail Hakkı Efendi Mufti: Ali Efendi Head of the Finance Office: Şerif Efendi Mustafa Şakir Efendi, Hacı Firuz Ağa, Abdülmeccid Ağa Clerk: Abid Efendi | | Head of the Board: District Governor Hacı Halil Ağa <i>Natural Members:</i> Regent Hacı Ali Efendi, Muffti Ali Efendi Head of the Finance Office: Abdülhamid Efendi <i>Elected Members:</i> Hacı Yusuf Bey, Yusuf Ağa, İsmail Ağa, Ömer Ağa Clerk: Mehmed Efendi |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H. 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, 1293.

In 1870, the Administrative Council of the Ardahan district, which served as the main decision-making body, was chaired by District Governor Derviş Bey. Tahir Bey and Mustafa Ağa were members, helping to maintain administrative and local balance. Clerk Abid Efendi managed

³¹ Özgür Y. Yılmaz, "Tanzimat Döneminde Osmanlı Taşra İdare Meclisleri (1840-1871)". *Journal of History Studies* 6, no. 6 (2014): 253-280.

³² Musa Çadrcı, "Türkiye'de Kaza Yönetimi (1840-1876)". *Belleten* 53, no. 206 (1989): 237-258. doi:10.37879/belleten.1989.237

³³ Sadık Fatih Torun, "Tanzimat'tan Meşrutiyet'e Türkiye'de Kaza Yönetimi (1842-1876)" (master's thesis, Ankara University, 2005), 59, 67.

the council's bureaucratic procedures and records.³⁴ This district-level administrative council reflects the extension of Ottoman Tanzimat reforms into sub-provincial units. The council, made up of both officials and local notables, placed the responsibility on the district governor—as the central authority's representative—to oversee local social balance and governance. Although the Vilayet Laws of 1864 and 1871 required non-Muslim representatives on administrative councils, it appears that Ardahan's council did not include any non-Muslim members.

In 1871, the Ardahan Administrative Council underwent changes in its institutional and membership structure compared to 1870. While Chairman Derviş Bey and Secretary Abid Efendi retained their positions in 1871, the council, which had been represented by only two members the previous year, saw the addition of four new members, along with three important officials: Naip Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi, Mufti Ali Efendi, and Finance Director Şerif Efendi. This significantly increased the number of members.³⁵ The increase in the number of members can be considered a strategy aligned with the central administration's strategy of integrating more local power into the system through the district council, thereby enhancing the local legitimacy of decisions.

There appears to have been no significant change in the administration of the Ardahan District Administrative Council in 1872. The council was once again headed by Derviş Bey. As in the previous year, the council's members included Naip Yusuf Efendi, Mufti Ali Efendi, and Finance Director Şerif Efendi. Mustafa Şükrü Efendi, Salih Ağa, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, and Mustafa Ağa, representing local notables, also served on the council. Abid Efendi also served as the council's clerk.³⁶

In 1873, the Ardahan Administrative Council was chaired by District Governor Hacı Mustafa Efendi. The council's ex officio members included Naip İsmail Hakkı Efendi, Mufti Ali Efendi, and Revenue Director Şerif Efendi, while local representation was provided by Mustafa Şakir Efendi, Hacı Firuz Ağa, and Abdülmecid Ağa. Abid Efendi continued in his role as council clerk.³⁷ This year marked notable changes in the council's composition: Hacı Mustafa Efendi succeeded Derviş Bey as chairman, and İsmail Hakkı Efendi replaced Yusuf Efendi as regent. While key officials such as the mufti, revenue director, and clerk retained their posts, local representation shifted, introducing new members and renewing the social composition of the council.

In 1877, the Ardahan District Administrative Council was headed by District Governor Hacı Halil Ağa. The council's ex officio members included Naip Hacı Ali Efendi, Mufti Ali Efendi, and Treasury Director Abdulhamid Efendi. Local representation was provided by members Hacı Yusuf Bey, Yusuf Ağa, İsmail Ağa, and Ömer Ağa. The council's clerical duties were carried out by Mehmed Efendi.³⁸

5. Ardahan Municipal Council (*Ardahan Belediye Meclisi*)

Until the 1850s, municipal affairs in the Ottoman Empire were managed by various local officials, including the judge, city council, and tax collectors. During the classical Ottoman era, the office of the judge held broad responsibilities, overseeing a wide range of municipal functions. These included maintaining public order, regulating relations among tradesmen, controlling prices, supervising markets, and managing public institutions such as schools and mosques.³⁹ The classical municipal structure of the Ottoman Empire began to dissolve with the Tanzimat-era reforms, marking a shift toward institutional and administrative modernization. The foundation

³⁴ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1287, 84.

³⁵ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 83.

³⁶ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 86.

³⁷ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290, 92.

³⁸ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1294, 90.

³⁹ İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı Kadısının Taşra Yönetimindeki Rolü Üzerine". *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 9, no. 1 (1976).

of a modern municipal organization in Istanbul was laid with the enactment of the "Sixth Municipal Department Regulations" in 1857 and the "General Regulations" in 1858.⁴⁰ The Vilayet Law of 1864 further formalized the provincial administrative system by establishing a clear hierarchy—province, sub-province, district, and village—and called for the formation of municipal councils within these administrative units. From 1864 onward, the Ottoman state implemented a systematic policy to extend municipal institutions across its provinces.⁴¹ In 1867, the adoption of the "Instructions Concerning the General Duties of Municipal Councils in Provinces" marked a significant step in expanding municipal governance beyond Istanbul, allowing for the creation of municipal bodies in various provinces and sanjaks. It is within this framework that a Western-style municipal organization is believed to have been established in Ardahan, the focus of this study. With the Tanzimat reforms, municipal institutions began to embody the regulatory, service-oriented, and supervisory features essential to modern urban governance.⁴² The Vilayet Law of 1871 provided further clarity by defining the structure of rural municipalities, the formation of municipal councils, and outlining their functions and responsibilities. According to this regulation, municipal councils were established in administrative centers where governors, mutasarrifs, or district governors resided.⁴³ Later, the "Dersaadet and Provincial Municipality Law" enacted on October 5, 1877, significantly expanded the legal scope of duties and authority assigned to municipal bodies. Within the framework of this law, municipalities were charged with numerous responsibilities, including organizing and supervising urban planning, carrying out public works, providing urban lighting and sanitation, managing municipal real estate, maintaining property records, conducting censuses, inspecting marketplaces and commercial areas, implementing hygiene measures to protect public health, opening slaughterhouses and educational institutions, providing firefighting services, and collecting municipal revenues.⁴⁴ An examination of the Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks from the 1870s reveals that many individuals served on the Ardahan Municipal Council. The names of these individuals and the years they served are listed in the table below.

Table 3. The Municipal Council Members of Ardahan District

| The Year 1871 | The Year 1872 |
|---|--|
| Head of the Council: Mustafa Efendi Members: Emin Ağa, Sabit Ağa, Ervetin Ağa | Head of the Council: Mustafa Ağa Members: Emin Ağa, Sabit Ağa, Ervetin Ağa |
| The Year 1873 | The Year 1877 |
| Head of the Council: Mustafa Ağa Members: Emin Ağa, Sabit Ağa, Ervetin Ağa | Head of the Council Derviş Ağa Members: Osman Ağa, Kâmil Ağa, Bogos Ağa |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H. 1288, 1289, 1290, 1293.

In 1871, the Ardahan Municipal Council was chaired by Mustafa Efendi, with council members including Emin Ağa, Sabit Ağa, and Ervetin Ağa.⁴⁵ The inclusion of Ervetin Ağa, a non-Muslim member, is particularly noteworthy as it reflects the implementation of Tanzimat-era principles promoting the participation of non-Muslims in local governance and municipal affairs.

⁴⁰ Mehmet Demiryürek, "Kıbrıs'ta Modern Belediye Teşkilatının Doğuşu (1868-1876)". *Belleten* 84, no. 299 (2020): 1115-1142. doi:10.37879/belleten.2020.1115.

⁴¹ Bayram Coşkun, Çiğdem P. Yıldırım, and Eyüp Şen. "Osmanlı Belediyeciliğinin Dönüm Noktası: 1877 Tarihli Vilâyât Belediye Kanunu". *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler* 30, no. 2 (2021): 1-20.

⁴² Ahmet Deniz, Pınar Akarçay, and Adem Karakaş. "Osmanlıda Belediyeciliğin Gelişimi ve Modernleşme Çabaları". *Akademik Bakış Uluslararası Hakemli Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 64 (2017): 314-325.

⁴³ Uğur Avcı, "Osmanlı Taşrasında Belediye Teşkilatının Kuruluşu: Karacasu Belediyesi". *Tarih ve Gelecek Dergisi* 10, no. 2 (2024): 71-92.

⁴⁴ İlber Ortaylı, "Belediye". In *Türkiye Diyanet Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 5, (İstanbul: T.D.V. Yayınları, 1992), 398-402.

⁴⁵ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 83.

In 1872 and 1873, Mustafa Ağa continued to serve as the chairman of the Ardahan Municipal Council. The composition of the council remained unchanged from the previous year, with Emin Ağa, Sabit Ağa, and Ervetin Ağa serving as members.⁴⁶

It appears that there were significant changes in the Ardahan Municipal Council staff in 1877. Derviş Ağa replaced the previous mayor, Mustafa Ağa, while Osman Ağa, Kamil Ağa and the non-Muslim representative Bogos Ağa replaced the other members.⁴⁷

6. Ardahan Deâvî Councils (*Ardahan Deâvî Meclisi*)

Starting in the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire began to delegate judicial authority to various specialized bodies based on the type of case and the parties involved. This marked a departure from the traditional centralized judicial structure. Special commissions were formed to handle particular types of disputes. After the proclamation of the Tanzimat Fermanı, significant reforms were introduced in the legal realm. As part of this process, multiple judicial councils were established at both the provincial and district levels across the empire to administer justice more systematically.⁴⁸ The first step toward the establishment of Nizamiye Courts, a cornerstone of the transition to a modern judicial system in the Ottoman Empire, was taken with the Vilayet Law of 1864.⁴⁹ This regulation reshaped not only the administrative structure but also the judicial organization. With this regulation, the Ottoman Empire divided the administrative units within its territory into provinces, sub-provinces, districts, sub-districts, and villages.⁵⁰

In parallel with this new administrative structure, a comprehensive reform was also undertaken in the judiciary. While traditional Sharia and Commercial Courts continued to exist, new judicial institutions, known as Nizamiye Courts, were established based on modern legal norms. In this context, in the lowest-level districts, Peace Councils, also known as Councils of Elders, were established to resolve minor public disputes. In districts, more extensively authorized Case Councils, also known as the Meclis-i Deâvî, were established.⁵¹ It was decided that this council would be chaired by the district governor. In addition, a total of four members were envisioned to handle appeals.⁵²

In accordance with this decision, one Deâvî Council was established in Ardahan, which had district status between 1870 and 1877. The members of the Deavi Council of Ardahan during the aforementioned years and their duties are listed in the table below.

In 1870, the Deâvî Council, which addressed the legal disputes of the Ardahan district, operated under the chairmanship of İbrahim Edhem Efendi. Among its members were Muhammed Ağa and Hacı Hasan Efendi. The 1870 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook states that the board's correspondence and recording duties were handled by a clerk.⁵³

⁴⁶ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 86; H.1290, 92.

⁴⁷ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1294, 90.

⁴⁸ M. Macit Kenanoğlu, "Nizâmiye Mahkemeleri". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 33, (Ankara: T.D.V. Yayınları, 2007), 185–188.

⁴⁹ İbrahim Durhan, "Tanzimat Döneminde Osmanlı Yargı Teşkilâtındaki Gelişmeler". *Erzincan Binali Yıldırım Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi* 12, no. 3–4 (2008): 55–111.

⁵⁰ Nazım Kartal, "İl Sistemine Geçiş Sorunsalı: Türkiye'de 1864 Vilâyet Nizamnamesi ile İl Sistemine Geçilmiş midir?". *Uluslararası Yönetim İktisat ve İşletme Dergisi* 10, no. 23 (2014): 279–294. <https://doi.org/10.17130/ijmeb.2014.10.23.611>.

⁵¹ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi VII: Islahat Fermanı Devri (1861–1876)*. Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2003, 167-169.

⁵² Torun, "Tanzimat'tan Meşrutiyet'e," 62.

⁵³ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1287, 84.

The Deâvî Council in Ardahan exemplifies a district-level judicial body instituted during the post-Tanzimat era, tasked with adjudicating cases outside the scope of Sharia law. Its leadership by a judicial official underscores its formal legal authority.

Table 4. Deâvî Council Members of Ardahan District

| The Year 1870 | The Year 1871 | The Year 1872 |
|--|--|--|
| The Head of the Council: İbrahim Edhem Efendi Members: Muhammed Ağa Hacı Hasan Efendi Clerk: Efendi | The Head of the Council: Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi Members: Abdullah Hulusi Efendi Hacı Hasan Efendi Hüseyin Bey Emin Ağa Clerk: Seyyid Efendi | The Head of the Council: Naip Yusuf Efendi Members: Abdullah Hulusi Efendi Hacı Hasan Efendi Hasan Bey Emin Efendi Hamid Efendi Kâtip Efendi |
| The Year 1873 | | The Year 1877 |
| The Head of the Council: Naip Efendi Members: Abdullah Hulusi Efendi Hacı Hüseyin Efendi Hüseyin Efendi Clerk: Tayfur Efendi | | The Head of the Council: Nâib Hacı Ali Efendi Members: Yusuf Efendi Dursun Efendi Hacı Hasan Efendi Ömer Efendi Clerk: Tayfur Efendi |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H. 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, 1293.

In 1871, Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi served as the president of the Deâvî Council in the Ardahan district. The council's members included Abdullah Hulusi Efendi, Hacı Hasan Efendi, Hüseyin Bey, and Emin Ağa, with Seyyid Efendi acting as the secretary.⁵⁴ A comparison with the 1870 composition reveals a significant restructuring of the council's leadership and membership. Yusuf Ziyaeddin Efendi replaced İbrahim Edhem Efendi as president, while among the members, only Hacı Hasan Efendi retained his position. All other members and the secretary were replaced, indicating a comprehensive reorganization of the assembly.

In 1872, Naip Yusuf Efendi presided over the Ardahan Deâvî Council. The appeals committee was composed of Abdullah Hulusi Efendi, Hacı Hasan Efendi, Hasan Bey, Emin Efendi, and Hamid Efendi.⁵⁵ In 1873, the Deâvî Council was chaired by the newly appointed Naip İsmail Hakkı Efendi. The council's members included Abdullah Hulusi Efendi, Hacı Hüseyin Efendi, and Hüseyin Efendi, with Tayfur Efendi serving as the clerk.⁵⁶ The 1877 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook records that the presidency of the Deâvî Council in Ardahan district was held by Naip Hacı Ali Efendi. The appeals committee comprised Yusuf Efendi, Dursun Efendi, Hacı Hasan Efendi, and Ömer Efendi. Tayfur Efendi continued to serve as the clerk of the Deâvî Council during the same year.⁵⁷

7. Ardahan Benefit Fund (*Ardahan Menfaat Sandığı*)

The Homeland Fund (*Memleket Sandığı*), founded in the mid-19th century, was the Ottoman Empire's first agricultural credit institution designed to address the financial needs of farmers. Initiated by Mithat Pasha, the fund operated on a model of collective capital accumulation and aimed to promote economic support and solidarity among rural communities.

⁵⁴ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 83.

⁵⁵ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 86.

⁵⁶ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290, 92.

⁵⁷ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1294, 90.

It represented a crucial step in institutionalizing rural credit and enhancing agricultural productivity, while also reflecting the broader goals of Tanzimat-era reforms in strengthening state involvement in local welfare and economic development.⁵⁸ As the Homeland Funds gradually lost their functionality and effectiveness, they were replaced by newly structured institutions known as “Benefit Funds,” which were organized according to updated regulations to better serve local financial and social needs.⁵⁹

The Benefit Funds, which collected state revenues and provided financial support to local populations and tradespeople in need, functioned as institutional embodiments of the Ottoman Empire’s goals for social welfare and rural economic development. These funds were primarily designed to promote economic stability at the local level by offering financial assistance to farmers and artisans. The official tasked with overseeing the fund’s operations and safeguarding public assets was known as the Assurance of the Fund.⁶⁰ According to the Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks, covering the years 1870–1877, a Benefit Fund operated in the Ardahan district, managed by an appointed fund assurance officer.⁶¹ The names of the individuals who served in this institution during those years are detailed in the table below.

The Benefit Fund in Ardahan district played a pivotal role in managing local financial resources and supporting economic activity in the region. In 1871, the fund operated with a considerable capital of 48,000 pennies (*Kuruş*), reflecting its importance in sustaining the local economy. The administration of the fund included Salih Ağa, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Hacı Abdullah Efendi, and Ali Efendi, with Ali Efendi serving dually as both trustee and clerk of the institution.⁶²

In 1872, as in the previous year, Salih Ağa, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Hacı Abdullah Efendi and Ali Efendi continued to take part in the management of the fund.⁶³

Table 5. The Members of Ardahan Benefit Fund

| The Year 1871 | The Year 1872 |
|---|---|
| Salih Ağa Members: Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Hacı Abdullah Efendi, Ali Efendi, Fund Assurance Officer and Clerk: Ali Efendi Funds: 48000 pennies | Salih Ağa Members: Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Hacı Abdullah Efendi, Ali Efendi |
| The Year 1873 | The Year 1877 |
| Hacı Abdullah Efendi Members: Ali Efendi, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, Ali Efendi | Hacı Abdullah Efendi Members: Ali Efendi, Another Ali Efendi |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H. 1288, 1289, 1290, 1293.

In 1873, the fund's deputy staff continued to consist of those who had served in previous years, with the exception of Salih Ağa. The four-person deputy list responsible for managing the fund's financial and administrative affairs included Hacı Abdullah Efendi, Ali Efendi, Hacı Süleyman Ağa, and another Ali Efendi.⁶⁴

A review of records from 1877 reveals that the number of members responsible for the Benefit Fund's financial and administrative operations had been reduced to three. These members

⁵⁸ Cabir Doğan, “Midilli Memleket Sandıkları”. *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 14, no. 53 (2015): 298–309. <https://doi.org/10.17755/esosder.38497>

⁵⁹ Bumin Küçük, “Türk Kültüründe Yardımlaşma Örneği: İmece Usulünden Yardım Sandıklarına”. *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, no. 113 (2025): 421–439.

⁶⁰ Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü III*. (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1983), 122.

⁶¹ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 83.

⁶² Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 83.

⁶³ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 86.

⁶⁴ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290, 92.

were Hacı Abdullah Efendi, Ali Efendi, and another Ali Efendi.⁶⁵ The names of Salih Ağa, the fund's president in previous years, and Hacı Süleyman Ağa, one of its deputies, are not included in this list. This indicates that a significant change had occurred in the Benefit Fund's management team after a four-year hiatus.

8. Ardahan Customs Directorate (*Rüsûmat*)

Until the 19th century, customs operations in the Ottoman Empire were managed through the eminent domain system. The first comprehensive legal framework for regulating customs administration was introduced in 1840. Under this framework, customs offices such as the Dersaadet and Galata Goods Customs were established, alongside provincial customs units, though still operating under the domain system. These institutions were initially affiliated with the treasury, but were later incorporated into the Ministry of Finance. Starting in the 1850s, a series of reforms were undertaken to modernize customs collection practices and institutional structures.⁶⁶

Beginning in 1860, the tax farming (*İltizam*) system in Ottoman customs administration was fully abolished. In its place, the "escrow method" was introduced, establishing "Customs Deposits" in major trade centers, each overseen by a designated official. These officials managed customs offices supported by clerks, record-keepers, and servants as required. In 1870, these Customs Deposits were reorganized and renamed as "Rüsûmat Deposits." At the same time, provincial customs depositories were reclassified as directorates, increasing the number of customs directorates to seventeen across the empire.⁶⁷

Accordingly, the Erzurum province, to which the Ardahan district was affiliated in the 1870s, was reorganized into the Erzurum Ministry and Erzurum Directorate. These ministries reported all administrative and financial activities directly to the Customs Depository. Official documents, records, and reports pertaining to all transactions undertaken in this context were continuously sent to the Customs Depository.⁶⁸ Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks for 1872-1873 indicate that the Customs Directorate also existed in the Ardahan district. Initially located in the Ardahan district center, this directorate was later supplemented by the Poshov and Çıldır Customs Directorates.⁶⁹

Table 6. The Members of Customs Directorate of Ardahan District

| The Year 1872 | The Year 1873 |
|---|--|
| Head Officer: Ragıp Efendi Clerk: Veli Arslan Second Clerk: Mahmud Efendi | Head Officer: Ragıp Efendi Clerk: Veli Arslan Second Clerk: Derviş Efendi Officer in Çıldır Customs: Ahmed Efendi Officer in Poshov Customs: Ali Bey |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, 1289, 1290.

In 1872, the establishment of the Directorate of Customs in Ardahan—a strategically important border district of the Ottoman Empire—marked a significant step in reinforcing financial control and overseeing customs revenue collection. Ragıp Efendi was appointed as the head of the directorate. Supporting the operation of this institution were two clerks responsible for managing documentation and bureaucratic processes: Chief Clerk Veli Arslan Efendi and

⁶⁵ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1294, 90.

⁶⁶ Birten Çelik, "Osmanlı Gümrüklerinde 19. Yüzyıl Son Döneminde Yapılan Reformlar ve Yabancı Uzmanlar". In *XVIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, 175–176. Ankara, Türkiye, (2022), 175–176.

⁶⁷ Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, "Gümrük". In *T.D.V İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 14, (İstanbul: T.D.V. Yayınları, 1996), 263–268.

⁶⁸ Aşlıhan Nakiboğlu, "Osmanlı Maliyesinde Süreklilik ve Değişim: Rüsûmat Emaneti" (PhD diss., Kocaeli University, 2011), 115–17.

⁶⁹ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290, 123.

Second Clerk Mahmud Efendi.⁷⁰ The inclusion of multiple clerical positions, including the designation of a second clerk, highlights both the institutional complexity and the growing specialization required in financial administration. The presence of such a directorate in Ardahan further underscores the district's strategic importance in customs oversight and its role in the broader economic and fiscal structure of the empire. In 1873, the Ardahan Customs Directorate continued to function actively, with notable developments in both its personnel structure and geographical scope. Ragıp Efendi remained as director, and Chief Clerk Veli Arslan Efendi retained his position. However, there was a change in the position of second clerk, with Derviş Efendi replacing Mahmud Efendi.⁷¹ A key administrative reform that year involved the geographical expansion of the directorate's jurisdiction, extending its oversight to nearby districts. As part of this broader fiscal strategy, Ahmed Efendi was appointed as Customs Officer in Çıldır, and Ali Bey as Customs Officer in Poshov. This expansion reflects the Ottoman central administration's growing emphasis on enhancing fiscal control, improving customs efficiency, and strengthening state authority in economically and strategically sensitive border areas.

9. Administrative Structure in the Sub-districts of Ardahan District

In the second half of the 19th century, the district of Ardahan was located within the borders of Çıldır Sanjak, which was part of the Erzurum Province. The district included three districts, Poshov, Çıldır, and Göle, and 110 villages.⁷² The status and names of the administrators in the districts of Ardahan during the 1870s are listed by year in the table below.

Table 7. Sub-districts of Ardahan District and Their Administrators

| The Year 1870 | The Year 1871 | The Year 1872 |
|--|---|---|
| The head of Göle Sub-district: Muhiyiddin Ağa Clerk: Emin Efendi The Head of Poshov Sub-district: Şakir Bey Clerk: Dursun Bey | The Head of Poshov: Şakir Bey Clerk: Tursun Efendi The Head of Çıldır: Naim Bey Clerk: Hurşid Efendi The Head of Göle: Rıza Bey Clerk Efendi | The Head of Poshov Sub-district Müdürü: Şakir Bey Clerk: Mehmed Efendi The Head of Çıldır Sub-district: Murad Bey Clerk: Gurban Efendi The Head of Göle: Mustafa Efendi Clerk Mehmed Efendi |
| The Year 1873 | | The Year 1877 |
| The Head of Poshov: Hacı Sadık Bey (Kapıcıbaşı: the chief of the palace gatekeepers) Clerk: Mehmed Efendi The Head of Çıldır: Derviş Ağa Clerk Gurban Ağa. The Head of Göle: Derviş Bey Clerk: Mehmed Efendi | | The Head of Poshov Sub-district: Osman Ağa Clerk: Ali Efendi The Head of Çıldır Sub-district: Naim Bey Clerk: Mehmed Efendi The Head of Göle: Nuri Ağa Clerk: Hasan Efendi |

Source: Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H. 1287, 1288, 1289, 1290, 1293.

According to the Erzurum Provincial Yearbook of 1870, the administrative staff in the Poshov and Göle districts of the Ardahan district were as follows. Muhiyiddin Ağa assumed the role of director in the Göle district, with Emin Efendi serving as his clerk. The administration of the Poshov district was led by its director, Şakir Bey, and Dursun Bey served as its clerk.⁷³

This structure within the sub-districts of Ardahan district reveals the administrative organization of the sub-district level, a small administrative unit located between the district and

⁷⁰ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 125.

⁷¹ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290, 123.

⁷² Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 144.

⁷³ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1287, 84.

the village in the Ottoman Empire, directly subordinate to the central government. The presence of a district director at the head of the sub-district demonstrates that the central administration extended its control to sub-districts.

According to the Nevahi-yi Maslahat list, which outlines the administrative arrangements in the districts of Ardahan in 1871, Şakir Bey served as the district governor of Poshov, Dursun Efendi as its clerk; Naim Bey served as the district governor of Çıldır, Hurşid Efendi as its clerk, and Rıza Bey served as the district governor of Göle. The name of the clerk in the Göle district is not included in the yearbook, but is listed only as "Clerk Efendi".⁷⁴ A comparison of the administrative staff of the districts under Ardahan in 1871 with those of 1870 reveals that Şakir Bey, the district governor of Poshov, and Dursun Bey, the clerk, continued in their positions. In the Göle district, Rıza Bey was appointed to replace Muhiyiddin Ağa as the director. In 1871, the Çıldır district was included among the districts of Ardahan. This is evident from the records in the yearbook. As of that year, the Çıldır district's administrator was Naim Bey, and its clerk was Hurşid Efendi.

In 1872, Şakir Bey continued as the district governor of Poshov, with Mehmed Efendi serving as clerk. In Çıldır, Murad Bey was appointed district governor, with Gurban Efendi as clerk. For Göle, Mustafa Efendi served as district governor, and Mehmed Efendi as clerk.⁷⁵ A comparison with the 1871 administrative staff indicates that only Şakir Bey retained his position. In contrast, there was a complete reshuffling of district governors and clerks in Çıldır and Göle. Murad Bey replaced Naim Bey in Çıldır, and Mustafa Efendi succeeded Rıza Bey in Göle. Additionally, the appointment of new clerks in all three districts reflects a broader effort to reorganize district-level administration, possibly in line with the central government's strategies to enhance bureaucratic efficiency and regional oversight.

In 1873, Hacı Sadık Bey was appointed to the Poshov district governorship, while Mehmed Efendi continued as clerk, as in previous years. Derviş Ağa was appointed to the Çıldır district governorship, and Gurban Ağa served as clerk. In the Göle district, Derviş Bey served as the governor, and Mehmed Efendi again served as clerk.⁷⁶ An examination of the administrative structure in the sub-districts of Ardahan district in 1873 reveals some administrative changes compared to 1872. Kapıcıbaşı Hacı Sadık Bey was appointed to replace Şakir Bey, the governor of Poshov, while Mehmed Efendi retained his position as clerk. Derviş Ağa was appointed to replace Murad Bey, the governor of Çıldır, and Gurban Efendi again served as clerk. In the Göle district, Derviş Bey was appointed to replace the previous director, Mustafa Efendi. Mehmed Efendi, who had been serving as a clerk in the Göle district, continued in his position.

The 1877 yearbook indicates significant changes in the administrative staff of the districts of Ardahan district compared to previous years. In the aforementioned year, Osman Ağa was appointed as the district administrator of Poshov, with Ali Efendi serving as clerk. Naim Bey was appointed as the district administrator of Çıldır, with Mehmed Efendi serving as clerk. In Göle, Nuri Ağa served as the district administrator, with Hasan Efendi serving as clerk.⁷⁷ An examination of the 1877 staff of the districts reveals a radical personnel change compared to 1873.

Osman Ağa replaced the head of the Poshov district, Kapıcıbaşı Hacı Sadık Bey, and Ali Efendi replaced his clerk, Mehmed Efendi. Naim Bey was appointed to replace Derviş Ağa, the district governor of Çıldır, and Mehmed Efendi was appointed to replace his clerk, Gurban Ağa. Nuri Ağa was appointed to replace Derviş Bey, the district governor of Göle, and Hasan Efendi was appointed to replace Mehmed Efendi, the clerk.

⁷⁴ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1288, 83.

⁷⁵ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1289, 86.

⁷⁶ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1290, 92.

⁷⁷ Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, H.1294, 90.

Conclusion

This study investigates the administrative, financial, and judicial institutional framework, along with the dynamics of bureaucratic personnel, in the Ardahan district—part of the Çıldır region, a strategically significant frontier zone on the northeastern edge of the Ottoman Empire. Utilizing the Erzurum Provincial Yearbooks from the years 1870–1873 and 1877 as primary sources, the research provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Tanzimat reforms in a peripheral province. These yearbooks offer valuable insight into the practical application of centralization policies, the balance struck between imperial authority and local governance, and the administrative transformations undertaken in anticipation of, and during, the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War (commonly referred to as the War of '93).

The institutional framework established in the Ardahan district serves as a clear illustration of the bureaucratic modernization initiated during the Tanzimat era. Distinct delineations between key administrative, judicial, religious, and financial roles—such as the district governor, regent, mufti, director of finance, and fund trustee—reflect a deliberate move toward functional specialization. This structural differentiation underscores the central government's objective to enhance administrative efficiency in the provinces and to eliminate overlapping or ambiguous lines of authority characteristic of the traditional system.

In 1864, a regulation modeled on the French administrative system restructured the Ottoman provincial organization into a hierarchical framework consisting of provinces, sub-provinces, districts, sub-districts, and villages. As part of this reform, administrative councils were established at each level—province, sub-province, and district—under the leadership of the respective governor. Accordingly, a District Administrative Council was formed in Ardahan, chaired by the district governor and composed of both ex officio and elected members. This body was responsible for overseeing various administrative, financial, and legal matters within the district. Throughout the 1870s, numerous officials served on Ardahan's District Administrative Council, with their roles and responsibilities detailed in subsequent sections of this study. The inclusion of prominent local figures among the council's members illustrates the Tanzimat-era strategy of incorporating local elites into the administrative framework, aiming to strengthen central control while ensuring local cooperation.

The Vilayet Law of 1864 mandated the establishment of municipalities in provincial, sub-provinces, and district centers. The existence of a Municipal Council in Ardahan in the 1870s demonstrates the establishment of Western-style municipal services at the district level. Furthermore, the presence of non-Muslim representatives such as Ervetin and Bogos on these councils demonstrates that the Tanzimat principle of non-Muslim community participation was implemented in the border region. Benefit Funds, operated under the auspices of local capital and notables, supported agricultural credit and development.

The Directorate of Customs was the administrative institution responsible for the collection of customs duties and other indirect taxes during the modernization period of the Ottoman Empire, particularly after the Tanzimat reforms. The establishment of the Directorate of Customs in Ardahan and the appointment of separate customs officers to the Çıldır and Poshov districts in 1873 are significant in demonstrating the centralized fiscal control over customs and other tax revenues.

Consequently, this research, covering the period 1870-1877, has attempted to reveal the profound and complex implementation of the Tanzimat reforms in the Ardahan district, located on the northeastern border of the Ottoman Empire, using data from the Erzurum Yearbooks. The institutional structure in Ardahan, with its separation of offices such as the district governor, regent, and mufti, clearly demonstrates centralized bureaucratic modernization. The district administrative council established under the 1864 regulation ensured both administrative

functionality and the integration of local influence into the system. Furthermore, the establishment of municipal services at the district level and the inclusion of non-Muslim representatives such as Ervetin and Bogos on the Ardahan Municipal Council demonstrate that the principle of community participation was implemented in the border region. The establishment of benefit funds in Ardahan demonstrates an attempt to foster regional development, while the establishment of a customs office also facilitated control over customs duties. Therefore, the administrative, financial and legal structure of Ardahan proves that the Tanzimat period reforms were established at an institutional level even in a geography far from the center.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. H.1287 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.84.

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| آردھان قضاہی | | |
|---|--|-----|
| قوجی باشی قضااندن | قائم مقام درویش بک نائب ابراہیم ادھم افندی مفتی علی افندی مال مدیری شریف افندی صندوق امینی عبدالحمید افندی | |
| محلیس ایدان | | |
| | رئیس قائم مقام طاہر بک مصطفی آغا عابد افندی | کتب |
| محلیس رعاوی | | |
| نواحی محلحقہ | رئیس نائب افندی محمد آغا حاجی حسن افندی افندی | کتب |
| کولہ مدیری محی الدین آغا کاتبی امین افندی پوسخو مدیر شاکر بک کاتبی طورسون بک | | |

Appendix 1. H.1287 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.84 Transcription

Ardahan Kazası
Kaimakam: Derviş Beg
Naib: İbrâhîm Edhem Efendi
Müftü: Ali Efendi
Mal Müdürü: Şerif Efendi
Sandık Emîni: Abdülhamîd Efendi

Meclis-i İdâre (İdare Meclisi)
Re'is: Kaimmakam Derviş Beg
AZA: Tâhir Beg
AZA: Mustafa Ağa
KATİB: Âbid Efendi

Meclis-i Deavi
Re'is: İbrâhîm Edhem Efendi
Muhammed Ağa
Hacı Hasan Efendi
Katib efendi

Bağlı Nahiyelerdeki İdareciler
Gölp Nahiyesi Müdürü: Muhiyiddin Ağa,
Katibi: Emin Efendi
Poshov Nahiyesi Müdürü: Şakir Bey
Katibi: Dursun Bey

Appendix 2. H.1288 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.83.

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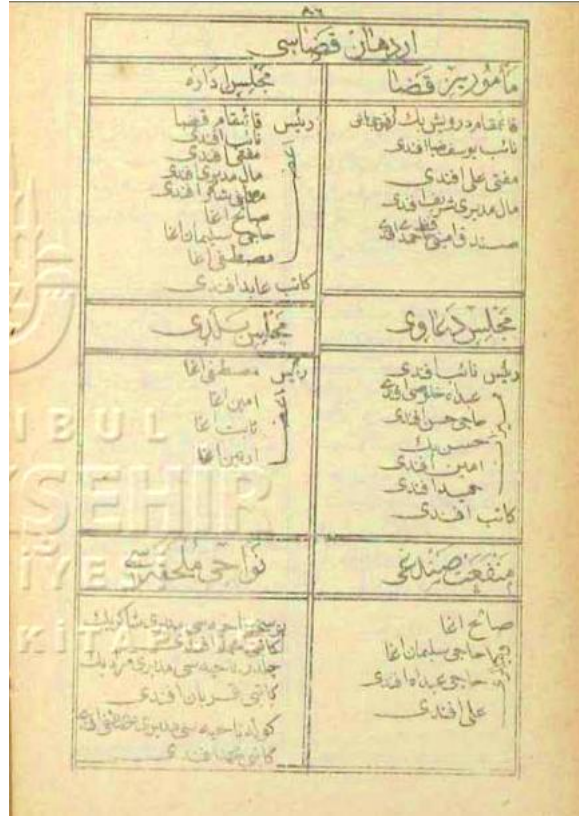
| آردھان قضاہی | |
|--|--|
| قائم مقام درویش بیک نائب یوسف ضیاء الدین افندی مفتی علی افندی مال مدیری شریف افندی صندوق امین صالح افندی | رئیس نائب افندی مفتی افندی مال مدیری افندی مصطفی شاگرد افندی صالح اغا حاجی سلیمان اغا مصطفی اغا عابد افندی کاتب |
| مجلسین دناوی | رئیس نائب افندی عبدالله غلوصی افندی حاجی حسن افندی حسن بیک امین افندی حمید افندی کاتب |
| مجلسین بلدہ | رئیس مصطفی اغا امین اغا ثابت اغا اروتین اغا |
| مفہمت صندوق | صالح اغا حاجی سلیمان اغا حاجی عبداللہ افندی علی افندی صندوق امینی وکاتب علی افندی سید مایہ ستی ۲۸۰۰۰ |
| نواحی مشرف | پوشو مدیری شاکر بیک کاتبی طویر افندی چلدرد مدیری نعیم بیک کاتبی خورشید افندی کولہ مدیری رضابیک کاتبی افندی |

Appendix 2. H.1288 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.83 Transcription.

Ardahan Kazası

| | |
|---|--|
| Memûrîn-i Kaza Kâimmakam: Derviş Bey Nâib: Yusuf Ziyâeddin Efendi Müftî: Ali Efendi Mal Müdiri: Şerîf Efendi Sandık Emîni: Salih Efendi | Meclis-i İdâre Reis: Derviş Bey Azalar Nâib-i Hükâm Müftî Efendi Mal Müdiri Efendi Mustafa Şükrü Efendi, Salih Ağa, Hacı Süleymân Ağa, Mustafa Ağa Kâtib: Âbid Efendi |
| Meclis-i Deavi Reis: Nâib Efendi A'zâ: Abdullâh Hulusi Efendi Hacı Hasan Efendi Hüseyn Bey Emîn AğaKâtib: Seyyid Efendi | Meclis-i Beledî (Belediye Meclisi) Reis: Mustafa Efendi A'zâ: Emîn Ağa Sabit Ağa Ervetin Ağa |
| Menfaat Sandığı Salih Ağa Hacı Süleymân Ağa Hacı Abdullâh Efendi Ali Efendi Sandık Emîni ve kâtibî Ali Efendi Sermayesi: 48000 | Nevahi-yi Maslahat Poshov Müdiri: Şakir Beg Katib: Tursun Efendi Çıldır Müdiri Naim Beg – Kâtibî: Hurşid Efendi Göle Müdiri Rıza Beg – Kâtib Efendi |

Appendix 3. H.1289 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.86.



Appendix 3. H. 1289 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.86 Transcription.

| Ardahan Kazası | |
|--|--|
| Meclis-i İdâre (İdare Meclisi) Reis (Başkan): Kâimmakam (Kaymakam) A'zâ (Üyeler): Nâib Yusuf Efendi Müftû Ali Efendi Mal Müdürü Şerif Efendi Şakir Efendi Salih Ağa Hacı Süleyman Ağa Mustafa Ağa Kâtib: Âbid Efendi | Memûrîn-i Kaza (Kazanın Memurları) Kâimmakam Derviş Bey Efendi Nâib Yusuf Efendi Müftû Ali Efendi Mal Müdürü Şerif Efendi Sandık Emîni Mehmed Efendi |
| Meclis-i Beledi Reis (Başkan): Mustafa Ağa A'zâ (Üyeler): Emîn Ağa Sâbit Ağa Ertevi Ağa | Meclis-i Deavi Reis (Başkan): Nâib Yusuf Efendi A'zâ (Üyeler): Abdül Hulusi Efendi Hacı Hasan Efendi Hasan Bey Emîn Efendi Hamid Efendi Kâtib Efendi |
| Nahiye Müdürleri Poshov nahiyesi Müdür-i Şakir Bey Kâtibi Mehmed Efendi Çıldır Nahiyesi Müdürü Murad Bey Kâtibi Gurban Efendi Göle Müdürü Mustafa Efendi Kâtibi Mehmed Efendi | Menfaat Sandığı Salih Ağa Vekilleri: Hacı Süleyman Ağa Hacı Abid/Abdullah Efendi Ali Efendi |

Appendix 4. H.1290 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.92.

| چلدر سنجاغی | |
|---|---|
| اردهان قضاىسى | |
| ماتورین قضا | مجلس اداره قضا |
| <p>قائم مقام حاجی علی افندی ناشی اساعلی افندی مفتی علی افندی مال مدیری شریف افندی صندوق قایم مقام افندی</p> | <p>رئیس قائم مقام قضا نایب افندی مفتی افندی مال مدیری افندی حاجی فیروز آغا عبداللہ افندی کاتب عابد افندی</p> |
| مجلس دعاوی | مجلس بلدی |
| <p>رئیس نایب افندی عبدالله خلوصی افندی حاجی حسین افندی حسین افندی کاتب طیفقور افندی</p> | <p>رئیس مصطفی آغا نایب ابن آغا ارستین آغا</p> |
| منفعت صندقی ویکالری | نواحی ملحقه سی |
| <p>حاجی عبد الله افندی علی افندی حاجی سلیمان آغا علی افندی</p> | <p>پوشو مدیری حاجی صادق بایک کاتبی محمد افندی چلدر مدیری درویش آغا کاتبی قربان آغا گوله مدیری درویش بایک کاتبی محمد افندی</p> |

Appendix 4. H.1290 Erzurum Provincial Yearbook, p.92 Transcription.

| Memûrîn-i Kaza | | Meclisi İdare |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Kaymakam | Hacı Mustafa Efendi | Reis Kaymakam Hacı Mustafa Efendi |
| Nâib | Naib İsmail Hakkı Efendi | Naib İsmail Hakkı Efendi |
| Müftî | Ali Efendi | Müfti Ali Efendi |
| Mal Müdürü | Şerif Efendi | Mal Müdürü Şerif Efendi |
| Sandık Emîni | Sabit Efendi | Mustafa Şakir Efendi |
| | | Hacı Firuz Ağa |
| | | Abdülmecid Ağa |
| | | Kâtib Âbid Efendi |

| Meclis-i Devai | Meclis-i Beledi |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Reis: Nâib Efendi | Reis Mustafa Ağa |
| Abdullah Hulûsî Efendi | Emin Ağa |
| Hacı Hüseyin Efendi | Sabit Ağa |
| Hüseyin Efendi | Ervetin Ağa |
| Kâtib Teyfur Efendi | |

| Nevâhî Mülhakası (Bağlı Nahiyeler) | Menfa'at Sandığı Vükelâsı |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Poshov Müdürü Hacı Hacı Sadık Bey (Kapıcıbaşı) Kâtibi: Mehmed Efendi | Hacı Abdullah Efendi |
| Çıldır Müdürü Derviş Ağa Kâtibi Kurban Ağa. | Ali Efendi |
| Göle Müdürü Derviş Bey Kâtibi Mehmed Efendi | Hacı Süleyman Ağa Ali Efendi |
| | |

