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ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE VILAYET OF PRIZREN 1870–1874

Abstract: During the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire enforced comprehensive reforms with the objective of strengthening centralization and establishing firmer control over the entire territory. This paper focuses on the territorial borders of the Vilayet of Prizren, as one of the provinces in the Balkans, and analyzes the enforcement of the administrative reforms, as well as their (un)successful effects. The reforms were enforced by the officials sent from the Empire's capital, and their success depended upon the influence of Muslim groups, but also on the non-Muslim population that had increasing tendencies toward national independence. The reconstruction of the territorial-administrative structure was possible due to the Ottoman state yearbooks (*Salname-i Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye*), and the issues of the provincial *salnames* of the Vilayet of Prizren (*Salname-i Vilayet-i Prizren*).

Keywords: Vilayet of Prizren, reforms, Provincial Reform Law, bureaucracy, vilayet salnames.

1. The Formation of the Vilayet

The main characteristic of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century was a comprehensive modernization. Reforms were necessary due to centralization and control strengthening, particularly in the remote territories, where the state unity was threatened by the newly awakened national awareness of the various peoples. Comprehensive reforms of the administrative structures that covered the territory of the entire Empire began in 1864 by passing the Provincial Reform Law (*Idare-i Vilayet Nizamnamesi*), which limited the borders of the former territorial-administrative units, eyalets, and created new provinces, vilayets. Vilayets were further divided into smaller administrative units whose governors were sent from the Empire's capital. The reform law defined the authorities of all levels of the vilayet governance, established the jurisdiction of the officials, and precisely stated the participation of non-Muslims in the mixed councils. The application of this law began in the newly formed the Danube Vilayet, and Midhat Pasha was instated as the new *vali*, governor of the province. Before that, he was the

governor of the Eyalet of Niš, where he successfully implemented reforms. As governor, he personally visited Prizren in 1863, which was part of the eyalet. Midhat Pasha remains remembered as one of the most significant Ottoman officials.¹

The situation in the actual vilayets showed all the advantages and disadvantages of the reform law, as well as the gap between the legal framework and the results achieved in practice. The process of centralization was possible because of the instated officials who adequately enforced the legal principles, as well as due to the cooperation of the hierarchically structured local bureaucracy. However, the provincial Muslim officials strived to keep their privileged positions and continuously denied the rights of the non-Muslim representatives, who, as a result, often complained. Hence, an amendment to the law was introduced, and its final version was issued in 1871 as the General Provincial Reform Law (*İdare-i Umumiye-i Vilayet Nizamnamesi*). This act proclaimed significant changes in the organization of the official apparatus, redefined the bureaucratic hierarchical structure, and established authorities of the mixed councils. Mixed councils consisted of representatives of various ethnic and confessional groups in the provinces, with the objective of ensuring equivalent participation of the Muslims and non-Muslims in official businesses. The reform law also increased the number of central government officials who were permanent members of mixed councils, but it did not increase the number of elected members who came from the lines of various local confessional groups.² Other necessary additions were incorporated through various acts. The terms of the Directive of Provincial Public Administration from 1876 (*Nevah-i Nizamnamesi*) were intended to contribute to the equality of council members on ethnic and religious levels in an attempt to show a visible and applicable principle of equality of all the inhabitants of the Empire, and to indirectly deny the existence of national pretensions of various peoples.³ Enforcing these reforms was limited, partly due to the motivation of the state officials who were direct government executives, and partly because of the socio-economic characteristics of particular vilayets.

After the successful implementation of the project of province organization in the Danube Vilayet, other provinces were formed throughout the Empire, one of them being the Eyalet of Prizren,⁴ established in 1865. The newly formed independent administrative unit consisted of only one element, the Sanjak/Liva of Skopje, with its name and territorial range changing in the following years. In the previous issues of the state salname, Prizren was not mentioned, which means it did not have the status of a sanjak but was a part of another one.⁵ Two years after establishment, there were new changes in the administrative structure: Skopje received the status of eyalet, and the Sanjak of Prizren became a part of it. The following year, 1868, Skopje became a vilayet, not including the Sanjak of Prizren, which means that this was not only a nominal change, but also a territorial-administrative one. The eyalets' territories were reduced and new vilayets were formed in an attempt to streamline centralization and control strengthening, which was all in accordance with previous

¹ Göyünç 1981–1982: 280–283.

² Gençoğlu 2011: 34–38; Davison 1963: 146–160; Findley 1989: 179–183; Çetinsaya 2006: 9–10.

³ İhsanoğlu 2004: 375–381.

⁴ Using the term *eyalet* in the Ottoman state yearbooks indicates that the newly proclaimed legal regulations were not immediately implemented in practice, as this process required more time.

⁵ SDAO 1865: 65.

government reforms. Prizren was temporarily annexed to the Vilayet of Skadar (*Vilayet-i İşkodra*), and in the summer of 1869, it became a separate territorial-administrative area, acting as the center of the vilayet of the same name (*Vilayet-i Prizren*). Sources offer different dates for the formation of Prizren as a separate province, and they vary in the chronological frame from 1868 to 1871. Hasan Kaleshi and Hans-Jürgen Kornrumpf claim that the Sanjak of Prizren was formed in 1868, after the dissolution of the Vilayet of Skopje, but after looking into state salnames, it is established that the Vilayet of Skopje still existed with the inclusion of Prizren or even any mention of it as a separate administrative unit.⁶ Yucel Yiğit claims that the Vilayet of Prizren was formed in 1868 by merging the sanjaks of Skopje and Debar, which were excluded from the Bitolj Vilayet, and Niš Sanjak, which was excluded from the Danube Vilayet. By inspecting the state salnames, it is confirmed that Bitolj was not an independent vilayet in 1868, but only a sanjak that belonged to the Vilayet of Thessaloniki (*Vilayet-i Selanik*).⁷

Upon its establishment, it comprised three sanjaks – Prizren, Skopje, and Niš, with Debar being annexed the following year.⁸ The Vilayet of Prizren functioned as an independent province until June 1874, when it was dissolved as a result of yet another in the line of frequent administrative changes in the Balkans.⁹ The Vilayet of Bitolj (*Vilayet-i Manastir*)¹⁰ was established then, and the change was instigated by the local officials, stating that Bitolj had been a provincial center before, that it was an important military center,¹¹ and that it had the potential to abandon the Vilayet of Thessaloniki and exist as an independent administrative unit.¹² The government in the capital accepted this suggestion and formed an independent vilayet by rearranging the borders of the surrounding provinces, the vilayets of Prizren and Skadar, thereby, losing their independent status. The Vilayet of Skadar was entirely incorporated into the newly formed province, the Vilayet of Bitolj, and the Sanjak of Niš was separated from the Vilayet of Prizren, only to be included in the Danube Vilayet. Other sanjaks, Prizren, Skopje and Debar, were included with their existing *kaza* structure,¹³ most likely because of easier organization.¹⁴

2. Territorial Structure

The territorial structure of the Vilayet of Prizren can be reconstructed based on the vilayet salnames. Salnames are specific state documents written on an annual level. Vilayet salnames are only one type of these documents that offer evidence of territorial changes,

⁶ Kaleshi, Kornrumpf 1967: 182.

⁷ Yiğit 2010: 126; SDAO 1868: 99–100.

⁸ Ünver 2015: 107–109; Savić 2025: 41; *Prizren*, no. 1, dated 2/14. August 1871; *Dunav*, no. 399, dated 3/15. August 1869; SDAO 1869: 132; SDAO 1870: 139–140.

⁹ The Bitolj Vilayet had existed before as an independent administrative unit, eyalet, from 1839 to 1844, and from 1853/1854 until 1867/1868, after which it was annexed to the Vilayet of Thessaloniki. Ünlü 1996: 6.

¹⁰ Sources offer various dates for the reformation of the Bitolj Vilayet, but the most probable date is June 1874, given that the vali took over his function the following month.

¹¹ The headquarters of the Third Army was in Bitolj. Gostović 2021: 71.

¹² Öztunç 2013: 15–19.

¹³ Every sanjak consisted of smaller administrative units, kazas.

¹⁴ MVS 1875: 67–94. Cf. Savić 2025: 40–43.

enable the reconstruction of territorial-military structure, show the demographic structure, economic potential and the development of educational institutions of certain provinces throughout the Empire. Two issues have been recorded for the Vilayet of Prizren. With the Provincial Reform Law, every province in the Ottoman Empire was divided into *sanjaks/livas*, and the center of vilayet governance was situated in the capital city of the central sanjak. *Liva* was further divided into *kazas*, and only certain *kazas* contained *nahiyes* consisting of several villages.¹⁵ The Vilayet of Prizren comprised four sanjaks: Prizren (*Prizren*), Skopje (*Üsküb*), Niš (*Niş*), which had up to that time been a part of the Danube Vilayet, and Debar (*Debre*). The central Sanjak of Prizren had eight kazas: Tetovo (*Kalkandelen*), Priština (*Prištine*), Đakovica (*Yakova*), Peć (*İpek*), Gnjilane (*Gilan*), Vučitrn (*Vučiitrn*), Gusinje (*Gosine*), and Ljuma (*Luma*). The Liva of Skopje had six kazas: Kumanovo (*Kumanova*), Palanka (*Palanka*), Štip (*İştib*), Kočane (*Koçana*), Radovište (*Radovište*), and Kratovo (*Kratova*). The Sanjak of Niš had six kazas: Pirot (*Şehirkoy*), Vranje (*İvranya*), Leskovac (*Leskoğça*), Prokuplje (*Ürgüp*), Kuršumlja (*Kurşumlu*) and Trn/Znepolje (*İznepol*). The Sanjak of Debar initially had three kazas: Elbasan (*Elbasan*), Donji Debar (*Debre-i Zir*) and Mat (*Mat*), with two more added later: Gornja Malesija (*Malsiya-i Bala*) and Donja Malesija (*Malsiya-i Zir*) (Table 1).

	Prizren	Skopje	Niš	Debar
1873	1. Tetovo 2. Priština 3. Đakovica 4. Peć 5. Gnjilane 6. Vučitrn 7. Gusinje 8. Ljuma	1. Kumanovo 2. Palanka 3. Štip 4. Kočane 5. Radovište 6. Kratovo	1. Pirot 2. Vranje 3. Leskovac 4. Prokuplje 5. Kuršumlja 6. Trn/Znepolje	1. Elbasan 2. Donji Debar 3. Mat
1874	1. Tetovo 2. Priština 3. Đakovica 4. Peć 5. Gnjilane 6. Vučitrn 7. Gusinje 8. Ljuma	1. Kumanovo 2. Štip 3. Palanka 4. Radovište 5. Kratovo 6. Kočane	1. Pirot 2. Leskovac 3. Vranje 4. Prokuplje 5. Trn/Znepolje 6. Kuršumlja	1. Elbasan 2. Donji Debar 3. Mat 4. Gornja Malesija 5. Donja Malesija

Table 1. Sanjaks and kazas of the Vilayet of Prizren, according to the salnames of the Vilayet of Prizren.¹⁶

Within several kazas, there were smaller units, *nahiyes*. According to the salname issued in 1874, on the territory of the Vilayet of Prizren, there were only three nahiyes recorded: Gostivar (*Gostivar*) in the kaza of Tetovo, Kačanik (*Kaçanik*) within the kaza of Kočane, and Palanka (*Palanka*) within the kaza of Pirot. By losing its position of an

¹⁵ Aličić 1962–1963: 221–222.

¹⁶ The kazas are listed according to the order from vilayet salnames. Jastrebov 2018: 99–100; Yiğit 2010: 126; Sezen 2017: 203–798; PVS 1873: 48–99; PVS 1874: 64–163.

independent territorial-administrative unit, Prizren lost the aforementioned nahiyes as they were annexed to other sanjaks: Kočane and Gostivar to the Sanjak of Skopje, and Palanka to the Liva of Niš.¹⁷

3. Administrative structure

Upon establishing the Eyalet of Prizren in 1865, the role of the governor was given to the official called mutasarrif who held the title of *Rumelian beylerbey*.¹⁸ The first mutasarrif of the Vilayet of Prizren was Nazif Pasha, but he was soon replaced by Haji Ismail Hakki Pasha Shehsuvarzade. The new governor came from a well-known Leskovac family, gained military education and advanced gradually in the service. His first known appointment was the position of *kapijibasha* (head doorkeeper). He was in charge of a variety of official business in provinces throughout Anatolia, until 1865 when he returned to the Balkans as vali of Prizren, and later of Skopje. He stayed for three years until his discharge, then retired to Aksaray where he died in September 1872. His son was Ali Galib Bey, a scribe and a poet.¹⁹ After him, the position of mutasarrif was held by Fehim Pasha and Edib Mustafa Pasha.

Upon forming the vilayet five years later, the governor held the title of the vizier, whereas the highest position belonged to the vali according to the Provincial Reform Law. The first vali of the Vilayet of Prizren was Ismail Rahmi Pasha, originated from a respectable Ioannina family Tepedelenli. He was the son of Veli Pasha and the grandson of the mighty ayan Ali Pasha. Ismail Rahmi received his military education in Istanbul. His first noted appointment was recorded in 1828, *kapijibasha*. He was sent to the function of mutasarrif of Tırhale in 1848 and Trabzon soon thereafter, followed by Edrine, and Ioannina in November 1849. The following year he overtook a two-year term as the governor of Silistria from where he continued to Thessaloniki. Ismail Rahmi Pasha was appointed the vali of Tırhale in 1862, then Kastamonu and Bursa in 1866. When the Vilayet of Prizren was established, he was appointed vali with one-year term. In August 1871, he returned to the capital and became a member of the State Council, then the Reform Committee (*İslahat Komisyonu*). He died in the capital in May 1875.²⁰

His successor was Safet Pasha, of Tatar origin. He was born in Anatolia, graduated from military school in the capital and later became a teacher. He was a member of the State Council from 1865, and three years later, he was the headmaster of the military school. In May 1869, he accepted the appointment of the vali of Bosnia with the military rank of marshal. The following year, Safet Pasha left for the Vilayet of Prizren to the vali position and remembered as one of the most talented and educated governors of Prizren. It was through his

¹⁷ PVS 1874: 65, 104, 150. Cf. Kaleshi, Kornumpf 1967: 183–184; Savić 2025: 42–43.

¹⁸ The term *beylerbey* was initially used to denote a high military commander and administrative governor. During the 19th century, it was exclusively used as a title for the province governor. The term *mutasarrif* literally meant *an official who deploys a function, duty and official position*, a possessor. A firman from November 1852 proclaimed the authorities of mutasarrif as the governor of a province (eyalet), and after the Province Reform Law, that term was used for the governor of sanjak/liva. Redhouse 1890: 1704; Pavlović: 2023: 66.

¹⁹ Süreyya 1996c: 827.

²⁰ Süreyya 1996d: 837.

initiative that the Prizren print was established, as well as the bilingual newspaper *Prizren*. It was a weekly newspaper, published from August 1871 until 1874, as the official gazette of the province. In addition to the official announcements, the newspaper also contained various articles about domestic and foreign politics written both in Ottoman and Serbian. During his term, the vali insisted on building the sewer lines in the province and invested significant amounts into education. He started building a trade school but never managed to finish it. By the end of 1871, he was transferred to Ioaninna, and the following year to Crete to the highest state position. As a successful vali, he served for a year in Hudavendigar, four years in Adana and Tripoli, three years in Trabzon and for a short time in Hejaz. He was dismissed in 1881, but reinstated later as the vali of Hejaz. He retired after another dismissal.²¹

The next vali was Galib Pasha Sari. After his military education, he earned the rank of colonel and became one of the founders of the Higher Military School in 1861. He gradually advanced in the military hierarchy and with the rank of general, he became the supervisor of military schools in 1869. Galib Pasha Sari accepted a one-year term as vali of the Vilayet of Prizren in November 1871, and then returned to the service of supervisor which he held until his death in January 1876. He remains remembered as a master of military skills, successful school administrator and a founder of the secondary military school.²²

Haji Abdurrahman Nurredin Pasha was appointed the vali of Prizren in 1872. He was born in 1836 in Kutahya, the son of Haji Ali-pasha, the governor of Kastamonu. He gained good education and gradually advanced on the administrative ladder. For six years, he governed Shumen, Varna and Niš, and in August 1872, he became a governor of Prizren, holding the title of vizier. The governor tried to secure the printing of the newspaper *Prizren* in the Bulgarian language instead of Serbian, but he failed. In April 1873, he was sent to Ruščik where he took over the function of the governor of the Danube Vilayet. After that, he governed Ankara, Baghdad, Diyarbakir, and then Baghdad again. In May 1882, he took over the duties of the grand vizier, but was dismissed after two months for not agreeing with the sultan regarding his policies toward the Egyptian province. He was sent to Kastamonu, where during his nine-year term, he managed to improve the province, particularly in the domain of education and trade. Later, he served as vali thereafter in Aydin and Edirne until 1895 when he was summoned to the capital to be appointed to a position within the Ministry of Justice, which he performed diligently for the next twelve years. Abdurrahman Nurredin Pasha retired after the proclamation of the Second Constitutionality, died in 1912 in the capital and was buried in the courtyard of the tomb of Sultan Mehmed Fatih. His son, Arif Hikmet Pasha was married to Naila, the daughter of Sultan Abdulhamid II, and he served as a state official. His other two sons were Feyzi Daim and Asim Bey.²³

The last governor of Prizren was Husein Husnu Pasha, who attempted to ban carrying weapons and he strictly punished the offenders. He spoke Greek, had good relations with the Russian consul Ivan Stepanovich Jastrebov. He allowed the Serbs to rebuild the church of Saint George.²⁴

²¹ Derviş 2007: 46–47; Stanković 1893: 309–310; Süreyya 1996: 1434.

²² Süreyya 1996b: 543–544.

²³ Stanković 1893: 313–315; Süreyya 1996a: 333.

²⁴ Kostić 2017: 217; Stanković 1893: 315.

The vali was appointed by the sultan himself and he was in charge of the direct enforcement of the orders sent from the capital, as well as of the control over all civil, financial, police, and political business of the vilayet, including enforcing court rulings.²⁵ The law specified that the provincial governors dealt exclusively with civil duties, not military, so that no individual would hold too much power. In practice, this was not conscientiously carried out due to the complexities of the political-social situation, particularly in the Balkan provinces. The Vilayet of Prizren is only one example of this (Table 2).

Governors	The date of assuming the function
Nazif Pasha	1865
Ismail Hakki Pasha	November 1865
Fehim Pasha	1867–1868
Edib Mustafa Pasha	1868–1869
Ismail Rahmi Pasha	1870
Safet Pasha	January 1871
Galib Pasha Sari	November 1871
Abdurrahman Nurredin Pasha	August 1872
Mahmed Akif Pasha	April 1873
Husein Husnu Pasha	May 1873

Table 2. The governors of the Eyalet/Vilayet of Prizren, according to the state and provincial salnames.²⁶

	Eyalet governor	Chief accountant	Judicial deputy in Prizren	Skopje sanjak governor	Judicial deputy in Skopje
1865	Mutasarrif Nazif Pasha	vacant	Vehbi Efendi	Mehmed Bey	Emin Efendi
1866	Mutasarrif Nazif Pasha	vacant	Ahmed Nazif Efendi	Mehmed Bey	Emin Efendi

Table 3. Members of the Eyalet of Prizren government.²⁷

Based on the Ottoman state salnames, it is not possible to reconstruct the entire administrative structure of the Eyalet of Prizren since only the names and functions of governing officials were recorded. The eyalet was governed by a mutasarrif, holding the title of the Rumelian beylerbey. The entire financial oversight was entrusted to one official, the chief accountant (*muhassebeci*), who did not assume the function despite the fact that the province had already been established. Within the eyalet, there was only one sanjak, the Sanjak of Skopje that was governed by the head official (*kaymakam*). The control over the

²⁵ Aličić 1962–1963: 222.

²⁶ Kaleshi, Kornumpf 1967: 195–197; Derviş 2007: 42–49; Yiğit 2009: 86–88; Kostić 2017: 211–212; Kuneralp 1999: 36, 41; SDAO 1865: 65; PVS 1873: 36; PVS 1874, 34.

²⁷ SDAO 1865: 65; SDAO 1866: 71; SDAO 1870: 139–140.

judicial system was in the hands of special officials, the judicial deputy (*naib*)²⁸ (Table 3). According to the practices in the Eyalet of Prizren, it is evident that the Provincial Reform Law was not immediately enforced, which was proved by the terminology and the structure of the officials with whom the governor shared his power.

	Officials in the capital	Officials in other sanjaks
1870	Governor Vizier Ismail Pasha Defterdar Celebi Efendi Chief Accountant Ibrahim Efendi Secretary Selim Sari Efendi Investigator Mehmed Muhaldin Efendi	Governor of Niš Kamil Bey Governor of Debar Mirimiran Rashid Pasha Governor of Skopje Reshid Pasha
1871	Governor Mushir Pasha Defterdar Celebi Efendi Secretary Selim Sari Pasha Investigator Omer Fehmi Efendi	Governor of Skopje Mirimiran Reshid Pasha Governor of Niš, Rumelian beylerbey Abdulrahman Pasha Governor of Debar Mirimiran Rashid Pasha Chief Judicial Assistant in Sharia Court in Skopje Ahmed Ferhad Efendi Chief Judicial Assistant in Sharia court in Niš Mehmed Salih Efendi Chief Judicial Assistant in Sharia court in Debar Rashid Efendi
1872	Governor Olub Pasha Defterdar Hakki Pasha Chief Accountant Selim Sari Efendi Secretary Selim Sari Efendi Investigator Omer Fehmi Efendi	Governor of Skoplje Mirimiran Reshid Pasha Governor of Niš, Rumelian beylerbey Abdulrahman Pasha Governor of Debar Mehmed Bey Chief Judicial Assistant in Sharia court in Skopje Mehmed Niazi Efendi Chief Judicial Assistant in Sharia court in Niš Mehmed Tefrik Efendi Chief Judicial Assistant in Sharia court in Debar Mehmed Hilmi Efendi

Table 4. The officials of the Vilayet of Prizren, according to the Ottoman state salnames.²⁹

The governor (*vilayet-i azım*) of the Eyalet of Prizren relied on his closest associates, whose titles were changed following the province's establishment in 1870, in accordance with the Provincial Reform Law. For example, the chief accountant of the vilayet was

²⁸ The term *naib* had various meanings during the 19th century. Initially, it denoted a judicial deputy, but after the Provincial Reform Law, it referred to the vali deputy, mutasarrif and kaymakam. The governor (of vilayet, sanjak or kaza) might be temporarily absent so he would be represented by the deputy during the sessions of the Administrative council. If the governor was dismissed, appointed elsewhere, or had left the province, the deputy would then take over the function of the governor (of vilayet, sanjak or kaza) until the arrival of the new official.

²⁹ SDAO 1870: 139–140, 147–148; SDAO 1871: 152–153, 163; SDAO 1872: 144–145, 154.

named defterdar instead of the previous title of muhasebeci. Defterdar of the vilayet was in charge of all financial dealings, and for his work, he answered to the vali and the ministry. The head of the finance office (*mal müdürü*) initially handled the finances for the sanjak, and after the Province Reform Law, it referred to the scribe who kept financial records for the kaza. The authority over the sanjak finances was entrusted to the chief accountant (*muhasebeci*). The vilayet chief secretary (*mektubçi*) handled the complete correspondence using the secretariat (*Tahrirat kalemi*). The official position of the provincial secretary of foreign affairs (*hariciye mudiri*) was canceled.³⁰ Judicial matters were in the authority of the court, with the sharia and civil courts functioning separately. In the center of the province, the work of the civil courts was overseen by the investigator and judicial assistants (*müfettiş hakam ve nüvab*), whereas in the central kazas of other sanjaks, this was managed by the sharia courts (Table 4).

The provincial salnames offer a more detailed insight into the complete administrative structure of the province on all levels of authority. Despite the fact that the Vilayet of Prizren was established in 1870, it was only through insight into provincial yearbooks that we can see how the administrative structure gradually became more complex and the number of officials increased. The members of the government on the vilayet level were the vali, his deputy (*naib*), defterdar, mufti, the vilayet secretary (*mektubçi*), as well as the principal (*reis*) of the Appeal divan (*Divan-i Temyiz*) (Table 5).

	The officials
1873	The vali Vali Deputy Muhamed Said Efendi Vilayet Defterdar Tahsin Efendi Vilayet Mufti Tahir Efendi Principal of the Appeal Council Hilmi Efendi Vilayet Secretary Sheriff Bey
1874	The vali Vali Deputy Muhamed Said Efendi Vilayet Defterdar Tahsin Efendi Vilayet Mufti Tahir Efendi Principal of the Appeal Council Bihaldin Bey Vilayet Secretary Ahmed Sheriff Bey

Table 5. Members of the government, according to the provincial salnames of the Vilayet of Prizren.³¹

The vali presided over the Administrative council (*İdare-i meclis*), which dealt with the entire domestic policy of the province, except the judicial business. The members of government would meet once a year in the provincial capital and would be in session for a maximum of forty days, discussing the matters of safety, construction, economy in the broader sense, as well as answering the pleas of the lower instances. The Administrative

³⁰ Aličić 1962–1963: 220–221.

³¹ PVS 1873: 36; PVS 1874: 34, 64–163.

council consisted of permanent/appointed members (*Aza-i Tabiye*), who dictated all the decision-making and members' election (*Aza-i Müntehabe*), and whose work was mainly advisory in its nature.³² Among the permanent members was the vali deputy who would step in for the vali in case of his temporary absence or dismissal, or more precisely, until the new vali was instated. Other members included defterdar, mufti from the provincial center, secretary and chief accountant. The elected members were supposed to include an equal number of Muslims and non-Muslims from the local population, but this was frequently abused in practice, in favor of the Muslim representatives. There is no conclusive evidence of the exact religious group that the elected members belonged to as their surnames were not recorded, only their first names.³³ The scribes and registrar (*mukayyid*) were present out of practical reasons: the need for diligent record keeping.³⁴ (Table 6).

	Permanent member	Elected member	Other members
1873	The presiding vali Vali deputy Financial administration director Mufti Secretary Financial Director Reshid Bey Chief Scribe Nuri Efendi	Zavalfakar Bey Ali Efendi Abdulah Aga Adam Aga Haji Kolo Aga Risto Aga	The Second Scribe Mehmed Yemin Efendi Clerk Ismail Hakki Efendi
1874	The presiding vali Vali deputy Financial administration director Mufti Secretary Financial director Chief Scribe Ziya Efendi	Dervish Bey Hiraldin Aga Zavalfakar Bey Abdulah Aga Haji Kolo Aga Risto Aga	The Second Scribe Yemin Efendi

Table 6. Members of the Vilayet administrative council, according to the provincial salnames of the Vilayet of Prizren.³⁵

The judiciary was not in the scope of the vali's authority. Cadi (*kadi*), judge of Islamic canon law, ruled over Sharia court (*Devair-i Adliye ve Mehakim Mahkeme-i Şeri'yye*), and the Commercial Court (*Ticaret Mahkemesi*) functioned separately. The highest judicial instance in the Vilayet of Prizren was the appeals divan (*Divan-i Temyiz*),

³² Ortaylı 1985: 67.

³³ The officials' titles (*bey*, *aga*, *efendi*) may indicate their social status. The term *bey* after the first name denoted an eminent member of the community, a gentleman. The term *aga* after the first name can be translated as gentleman, and it was used both for a local landowner and an older gentleman. The term *efendi* after the first name denoted a gentleman, particularly one who was respectable and literate. In salnames, it always followed the name of a clergyman.

³⁴ Aličić 1962–1963: 223–226.

³⁵ PVS 1873: 37; SVP 1874: 36.

where most of the employees were Muslims, with a negligible number of non-Muslims. In the central appeals council (*Meclis-i Temyiz-i Merkez*), non-Muslims had no part whatsoever, whereas in the council dealings with the civil and criminal disputes (*Meclis-i Temyiz Hukuk ve Cinayet Merkezi*), the number of Muslims and non-Muslims was equivalent. Every administrative level had a special appeals council (*Meclis-i de'av*), where Muslims and non-Muslim made joint decisions. Court and council officials also included the jurors (*mumeyyiz*), apprentices (*mülazim*), notaries, the chief scribe (*baş katib*) and other scribes (*katib*).³⁶

The vilayet also had several offices dealing with various businesses. The notary office (*Mektub-i Kalem*) handled the correspondence, separately from the accounting (*Muhasebe Kalem*), which was handled by numerous assistants (*muavin*) and associates (*refik*), with only a minority of them being local non-Muslims. A specific official took care of the waqfs, heading a special unit (*Evkaf Muhasebesi*), and the land registry was overseen by a special division of the imperial registry office (*Defter-i Hakani Dairesi*). The population changes were recorded by the officials within the census office (*Nüfus Kalem*). A special committee (*Tahsilat Komisyonu*) had control over the collecting of all the state revenue, and it was handled by officials in various divisions: tax and customs department (*Rüsumat İdaresi*), duties and fees (*Ma'a Tahrir Vergi İdaresi*), and others.³⁷ The common ground for every level of government was special offices, municipal councils (*Meclis-i Belediye*), managed by the chief (*reis*). These were not institutionalized councils but rather mixed ones with a consulting nature, where the local population of various confessions could make decisions regarding communal issues.³⁸ The judicial and administrative system functioned in the same principle in lower units as well, the only difference being that there were fewer officials due to a smaller scale of business, and the variety and extent of offices and committees depended upon the needs of the particular administrative unit.

The vilayet was divided into smaller units, sanjaks, which were managed by mutasarrifs. Each sanjak was further divided into lower administrative units, kazas, which were managed by head officials (*kaymakam*). Some kazas contained nahies managed by administrative officials (*müdür*). The titles of the lower administrative units were officially established only when the Provincial Reform Law was passed: mutasarrif, kaymakam and mudur were used instead of the previous head official, mudur and officer (*zabit*).³⁹ The source data confirms that the nomenclature was in use before, so the reform law only legalized the administrative practice with the objective of unification on a state level. The aforementioned officials reported to the vali and the ministry that appointed them to the province. On the local level, they were subordinate to the vali and were in charge of managing their administrative unit in accordance with the existing laws.

With the exception of the central,⁴⁰ all sanjaks had the administrative council of the sanjak/liva (*Meclis-i İdare-i Liva*), whose task was to enforce decisions of the vali and manage the sanjak in accordance with its authorities. Like the Vilayet administrative

³⁶ Gostović 2021: 55; PVS 1873: 38, 44, 46; PVS 1874: 36–37, 42.

³⁷ Kaleshi, Kornrumpf 1967: 184–190; Ünlü 2014: 50–57; PVS 1873: 37–47; PVS 1874: 36–46.

³⁸ Ortajli 2004: 134–144.

³⁹ Aličić 1962–1963: 220.

⁴⁰ In the central sanjak, more specifically in the province capital, the Vilayet administrative council presided.

council, the Administrative council of the liva consisted of bureaucrats sent from the Empire capital and the influential locals, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The appointed members included the mutasarrif, his deputy, the chief accountant (*muhasebeci*) and the correspondence clerk (*tahrirat müdürü*), as well as the religious representative—the mufti and the Orthodox archbishop.⁴¹ Elected members included the local Muslim and non-Muslim representatives, who were never equally represented despite the regulations, and always to the disadvantage of the non-Muslims. The remaining members were notaries and their associates (*refik*).

It was not unusual to see deviations in the enforcement of the legal regulations, as noted within the structures of administrative councils in sanjaks throughout the existence of the Vilayet of Prizren. It was largely in reference to the number of elected representatives of the local population: in 1873 in Skopje and Niš the balance was tipped in favor of the non-Muslims (two Muslim and three non-Muslim representatives), whereas in Debar, the situation was reversed (three Muslims and two non-Muslims), and this was repeated in the years to come. The administrative council of the Sanjak of Debar was the only one that never had a religious non-Muslim representative. This led to the confessional inequality. Occasional absence of certain religious representatives should not be seen as officials challenging the law, as it was evident in some situations that the positions were only temporarily vacant, mostly due to replacements. Such an example was recorded in the Sanjak of Niš in 1874, when, at the time of recording data for the yearbook, the mufti position was vacant.⁴²

	Permanent members	Elected members
1873	Kaymakam Haji Mustafa Aga Deputy Abdulah Efendi Mufti Husein Hilmi Efendi Chief Accountant Mehmed Effendi Archbishop Naum Efendi	Halil Efendi Mehmed Efendi Dimo Aga Yenkosh Aga
1874	Kaymakam Rejep Fevzi Bey Deputy Nejib Efendi Mufti Hasan Efendi Head of the Finance Office and Correspondence Clerk Haji Sadik Aga	Haji Sadik Aga Mehmed Efendi Peter Aga Yenkosh Aga

Table 7. Members of the Administrative council of the kaza of Tetovo, according to the salnames of the Vilayet of Prizren.⁴³

Kazas were presided over by the administrative council of the kaza (*Meclis-i İdare-i Kaza*) with a consulting function and governed by the kaymakam. His deputy, the head of

⁴¹ The Orthodox religious representatives were members of church municipalities—archbishops, bishops, protopresbyters and their deputies (*vekil*). Nušić 1902: 112.

⁴² PVS 1873: 64, 81, 94; PVS 1874: 95, 151.

⁴³ PVS 1873: 38; PVS 1874: 64.

the finance office (*mal müdürü*), the correspondence scribe (*tahrirat katibi*) and the religious representatives of the Muslims and non-Muslims were the council's permanent members. Elected members were the local Muslims and non-Muslims. The enforcement of the Ottoman Empire policies and the inclusion of the representatives of various and often conflicting confessional groups were meant to satisfy the interests of religious representatives in mixed councils and show the central authority's willingness to be consistent in enforcing the equality policies even in remote provinces (Table 7).

Inconsistencies in the numbers of administrative officials and elected members of administrative councils were recorded throughout the Vilayet of Prizren. Data from 1873 indicate that none of the administrative councils in the kazas of the Sanjak of Prizren had correspondence clerks. Religious representatives, the mufti and the archbishop, were also not present in the work of the mixed councils. In the kazas of the Sanjak of Prizren, the archbishop was situated only in Tetovo; Gnjilane, Vučitrn, Gusinje and Ljuma did not have a millet representative. In the kazas of the Sanjak of Skopje, the situation was a bit different: mufti was situated only in Kumanovo, Štip was the only kaza with no religious representatives, whereas in Kočane, a catholic representative presided (*papas*).⁴⁴ In the kazas of the Sanjak of Niš, mufti was not present in Leskovac, there was no archbishop in Vranje, and in Kuršumlja, there were no religious representatives at all. In the kazas of the Sanjak of Debar, there were no non-Muslim representatives anywhere, and the mufti was a board member only in Elbasan. The imbalance of elected representatives was also present throughout the vilayet. Muslims dominated in the majority of kazas in the Sanjak of Prizren: Đakovica, Peć, Gnjilane, Gusinje (three Muslims and one non-Muslim), whereas in Ljuma, they completely pushed out the non-Muslims (four Muslims). The only exception in the entire Sanjak of Skopje was kaza of Radovište where among the elected members there were only two non-Muslims, and in the Sanjak of Niš, only Kuršumlja had four Muslim representatives. In the kazas of Sanjaks Debar, Elbasan and Donji Debar, no non-Muslims were elected (three Muslims), and in the kaza of Mat, a unique example in the entire sanjak, there were no elected members whatsoever, Muslims or non-Muslims. The following year, in 1874, correspondence clerks were included in the work of administrative councils of the Sanjak of Prizren, except in Tetovo, Priština, Đakovica and Gusinje. Religious representatives of the Sanjak of Prizren were occasionally mentioned in records: the confessional balance of permanent members was only confirmed in Đakovica, whereas in the work of administrative councils of kazas Tetovo, Gnjilane, Vučitrn, Gusinje and Ljuma, these representatives were entirely neglected. In the Sanjak of Niš, the mufti was in charge only in Vranje and Prokuplje, and the archbishop in all other kazas except Pirot and Leskovac. In the Sanjak of Skopje, religious representatives were not included in the work of the kaza of Radovište, and a Jewish representative (*haham başı vekili*) operated only in Štip. There were no Muslim representatives in Palanka and Kratovo. Of all the kazas in the Sanjak of Debar, the only recorded religious representative was in Elbasan and as expected, it was a mufti. In 1874, the legal regulation of the equality of elected board members was

⁴⁴ The term *papas* in Ottoman documents referred to any clergyman, Catholic or Orthodox. In the salnames of Vilayet of Prizren, it referred exclusively to catholic representatives whereas for the Orthodox priests, the term was the archbishop (*mitropolid*).

violated. In the Sanjak of Prizren, the advantage was on the side of the Muslims in Đakovica, Peć and Gusinje (three Muslims and one non-Muslim), and in Ljuma, the leadership was completely taken over (four Muslims). Gnjilane was special, since the elected member was only one Muslim representative. The balance in the Sanjak of Niš was tipped by a sole example from Kuršumlija where there were four non-Muslims in operation, whereas all the kazas of the Sanjak of Skopje were very consistent in enforcing the legal regulations. The largest number of law violations happened in the Sanjak of Debar: non-Muslims were outnumbered in Elbasan (one non-Muslim and two Muslims), completely neglected in Donji Debar (three Muslims) and Gornja Malesija (four Muslims), whereas the administrative councils in kazas Mat and Donja Malesija operated without elected members.⁴⁵

The administrative council of the nahiye (*Nahiye Meclisi*) was not yet established in the time of the Vilayet of Prizren, but still nahiyehs had officials who handled the general affairs. In addition to the mandatory governor, for practical reasons, there was a scribe included, and the governor deputy if needed (Table 8). Office of the general government could be found only in bigger nahiyehs.

	Nahiye	Officials
1874	Gostivar	Governor Mustafa Bey Deputy Governor Representative Tahir Efendi Scribe Ismail Efendi
	Palanka	Governor Mehmed Arif Efendi Scribe Mehmed Shekir Efendi
	Kačanik	Governor Husein Hasan Efendi Scribe Rushdi Efendi

Table 8. Nahiye officials, according to the provincial salnames of the Vilayet of Prizren.⁴⁶

In the smallest territorial units, villages, governors were also elected in accordance with the regulations prescribed in the Provincial Reform Law. Villages inhabited by the population of only one confessional group elected one village elder (*muhtar*) from the local population and the head official confirmed the choice. In mixed villages, two elders of different confessions were elected. They were the link between the locals and higher instances of power: they collected tax revenue, organized the village police, and mediated in resolving village disputes. The law regulated the existence of the councils of elders (*İhtiyar meclisi*), which had between three and ten members of the locals, with the most respectable member being the religious elder, but it is not known if and in what way it functioned in practice.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ PVS 1873: 48–99; PVS 1874: 64–162.

⁴⁶ PVS 1874: 65, 104, 150.

⁴⁷ Aličić 1962–1963: 230–231.

4. Conclusion

The 19th century of the Ottoman Empire was marked by a complex reform endeavor initiated by the capital elite and the sultan himself. Constant foreign political pressures and national movements within the state additionally burdened the Ottoman statesmen and demanded efficient solutions. The process of modernization was intensively advanced, starting with the military-administrative structures that demanded stable finances and qualified bureaucratic staff. The reforms were finalized in the form of laws and regulations of universal nature. However, their success depended upon the socio-political relations in the field. By creating vilayets, the smaller territorial-administrative units, the aim was to ensure easier control and necessary centralization. The Vilayet of Prizren was only one of the Balkan provinces that experienced the enforcement of newly proclaimed reforms. Frequent territorial changes, both the outer borders of the Vilayet of Prizren and the inner administrative units, were intended to secure a more efficient centralization and adequate control. Governors of all administrative levels of authority (valis, mutasarrifs, kaymakams) were sent from the capital and approved by the sultan himself. Nevertheless, based on previous experiences, military power and judicial jurisdiction were excluded from the authority of vali in order to prevent the power from concentrating in the hands of one official. These regulations were consistently enforced in the Vilayet of Prizren even though there were exceptions recorded in other Balkan provinces that were justified by the unstable political situation that threatened to escalate due to ethnic and religious tensions. The vali relied on his closest associates to enforce the decisions dictated from the capital's highest instances, and he dealt with all the political, economic, and social matters of the province. The hierarchy system of local government subordinated the officials to the vali, which allowed for a more adequate state centralization. The local administration of the Vilayet of Prizren was constantly increasing through its organizational structure of sanjaks, kazas and nahiyes. This allowed for direct enforcement of the decisions from the highest instances on the lower levels, but, at the same time, it unnecessarily burdened the bureaucratic system that was becoming more and more sluggish. The elected members were included in the work of the provincial offices and councils in order to increase efficiency and ensure equality amongst non-Muslims in an attempt to offer an alternative to their national demands, except in kazas of the Sanjak of Debar, where the work of elected members was disabled. Despite the proclaimed principle of equality, Muslims still dominated the offices of the Vilayet of Prizren and obstructed the enforcement of regulations in order to preserve their privileged positions. However, the established mechanisms of local governance became the foundations of further state development and proof of the role of civil officials in political and bureaucratic affairs. The efficient work of mixed councils did not guarantee social stability, particularly in remote Balkan provinces.

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МИЛЕНА ГОСТОВИЋ
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**АДМИНИСТРАТИВНО УРЕЂЕЊЕ
ПРИЗРЕНСКОГ ВИЛАЈЕТА 1870–1874.**

Резиме

Током 19. века у Османском царству спроведене су свеобухватне реформе с циљем јачања централизације и успостављања чвршће контроле над целокупном територијом. У раду су сагледане територијалне границе Призренског вилајета, једне од провинција на Балкану и анализирано је спровођење административних реформи, као и њихови (не)успешни ефекти. Реформе су спроводили чиновници послати из престонице царства, а њихова успешност зависила је од утицајних муслиманских група, као и немуслиманског становништва, које је све више тежило националној самосталности. Реконструкција територијално-административне структуре била је могућа захваљујући годишњацима османске државе (осм. *Salname-i Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye*), и издањима покрајинских салнама Призренског вилајета (осм. *Salname-i Vilayet-i Prizren*).

Кључне речи: Призренски вилајет, реформе, Уредба о управи у вилајетима, бирократија, вилајетске салнаме.

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