

## THE KOCABAŞIS AS INTERMEDIARIES?: THE LOCAL AND CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION IN İMVROS/İMROZ AND LEMNOS IN THE EARLY 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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Studies concerning center-periphery relations and the Ottoman rule of the Mediterranean islands of Crete and Cyprus have been well debated. The particular experience of the smaller Aegean islands, like Chios, Samos, Patmos, Andros and Rhodes, under the Ottoman rule also began to be analyzed by scholars. Studies about these smaller Aegean islands demonstrated communication of the islanders with the central government through Muslim local authorities.<sup>1</sup> Contributing to such discussions, this paper focuses on the relationship between local intermediaries/civil community leaders and islanders in İmvros<sup>2</sup> and Lemnos,<sup>3</sup> two small northern Aegean islands. It hopes to give voice to the overlooked ordinary insular lives under the Ottoman rule in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Veinstein, "Les documents émis par le *kapudan paşa* dans le fonds ottoman de Patmos," *Documents de Travail du CETOBAC*, no. 1, Les archives de l'insularité ottomane, ed. Nicolas Vatin and Gilles Veinstein, CETOBAC, Paris 2010, pp. 13-19; Michael Ursinus, "Local Patmians in Their Quest for Justice: Eighteenth Century Examples of Petitions Submitted to the Kapudan Paşa," in *ibid.*, pp. 20-23; Elias Kolovos, "Ottoman Documents from the Aegean Island of Andros: Provincial Administration, Adaptation and Limitations in the Case of an Island Society (late 16th - early 19th century)," in *ibid.*, pp. 24-7; Nicolas Vatin, Gilles Veinstein, *Insularités ottomanes*, Maisonneuve & Larose, Institut Français d'études anatoliennes, Paris 2004; Ali Fuat Öreñç, *Yakan Dönem Tarihimizde Rodos ve Oniki Ada* [Rhodes and the Dodecanese], Doğu Kütüphanesi, İstanbul 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The name İmvros (Ἰμβρος) is a pro-Hellenic name. It is transcribed as "İmbros" or "İmvros". August Fick, *Vöriechische Ortsnamen als Quelle für die Vorgeschichte Griechenlands*, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen 1905, p. 65; Çiğdem Özbek, "İmbros Adası'ndaki Kabeiroi Kutsal Alanı ve Hermes Tapınımları," *Anadolu/Anatolia* Ek Dizi/Suppl. no. 1, Ed. Zeynep Çizmeli-Öğün, Tunç Sipahi, Levent Keskin, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara 2004, pp. 167-182, 168, FN. 11; Eugen Oberhammer, "İmbros," *Festschrift für H. Kiepert*, Berlin, 1898, p. 293. When the Ottomans took over the island, they continued to use the name İmroz, which had been written in the Ottoman-Turkish documents as *امروز* from 16th to 20<sup>th</sup> century. Turkish government changed the name İmroz to Gökçeada by the government decree on 29 July 1970; Alexis Alexandris, "İmbros and Tenedos: A Study of Turkish Attitudes Toward Two Ethnic Greek Islands Communities Since 1923", *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 7 (1), 1980, p. 5. In this article, the author prefers to follow "İmvros", the transcribed form of the word from Greek to Latin letters.

<sup>3</sup> The ancient Greek name of the island is Lemnos/ Limnos (Λήμνος). A. H. De Groot, "Limni," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. V, Brill, Leiden 1986, pp. 763-764. Until the 18th century in the Ottoman documents

### Framing the Study Area: Imvros and Lemnos

Imvrians and Limnians, willingly or unwillingly, became Ottoman subjects shortly after the fall of Constantinople. Imvros and Lemnos islands were not conquered by force by Mehmed II, they were taken over by him between 1456 and 1479 through negotiation -*istimalet*- policy.<sup>4</sup> Mihail Kritovoulos, a leading Imvrian, and subsequently chronicler to Mehmed II,<sup>5</sup> organized peaceful surrender of Imvros and Lemnos to the Ottomans. The sultan agreed to leave the islands under the administration of a local person, in return for taxes and loyalty.<sup>6</sup> However, the islands were attacked by the papal forces and exchanged among the Ottomans, the Papal forces and Venice between 1456 and 1479. They came under the definitive rule of the Ottomans in 1479.<sup>7</sup> These geographically isolated, but strategically important islands on the Dardanelles were not of great economic interest for the Ottomans like Crete and Cyprus. Ottomans did show a specific interest to retain Lemnos during the Venetian-Ottoman war from 1463 to 1479 not only because of its strategic importance, but also its rare mineral source *terra sigillata* (Tiyn-ı Mahtûm trans. the “sealed earth”) played a role for the Ottomans’ insistence to regain the island.<sup>8</sup> Although, *terra sigillata* was important because of its therapeutic quality for plague, which was a devastating problem in the Ottoman capital in the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>9</sup> Lemnos, however was not a major economic gain for the Ottomans. The Ottomans attempted to provide integration of these two small Aegean islands with their overwhelmingly Greek population -Imvros composed of only Orthodox Christian Greeks- through issuing *kanunname* and installing Muslim local rulers.<sup>10</sup> The issuing of

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the name of the island had been written as **ليمنوس**, Limnos; from this century forward, the name of the island had been written as **ليمنى**, Limni, which is used in Modern Turkish. Heath W. Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities, Christian Peasant Life on the Aegean Island of Lemnos*, Eren Press, İstanbul 2002, p. 12. In this article, the author prefers to follow “Lemnos”, the transcribed form of the word from Greek to Latin letters.

<sup>4</sup> This was an Ottoman policy of “accommodation”, that is, taking over the Balkans by persuasion and assurances of good treatment. Halil İnalçık, “The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottoman,” in Halil İnalçık, *Essays in Ottoman History*, Eren Press, İstanbul 1998, pp. 196-8. For the application of *istimalet* policy on the Aegean islands, see Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities*, pp. 1, 3-4, 10, 42-5.

<sup>5</sup> Mihail Kritovoulos, *İstanbul’un Fethi* [Kritovoulos, the Conquest of İstanbul], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., transl. Karolidi, Kaknüs, İstanbul 2007, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> A. H. De Groot, “Limni,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. V, Brill, Leiden 1986, pp. 763-764.

<sup>8</sup> Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities*, 153-171; Yasemin Demircan, “Tiyn-ı Mahtûm: Akdeniz Dünyasının Mucize Toprağı”, *Acta Turcica*, 1/1, (Ocak 2012), pp. 281-295.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Yasemin Demircan, “Tiyn-ı Mahtûm: Akdeniz Dünyasının Mucize Toprağı”, *Acta Turcica*, 1/1, (Ocak 2012), pp. 281-295.

<sup>10</sup> The *kanunname* for Imvros and Lemnos islands are available in the tahrir -tax- registers for the years 875 (1470/1490) [Tahrir Defteri [TD] n. 25, 925 (1519), TD n. 75, TD n. 434 (period of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman), TD n. 490, 977 (1569), TD n.724, 1009 (1600). 75 Numaralı Gelibolu Livası Tahrir Deteri 925 (1519) Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara 2009, pp. 7-8.



*kanunnames* after a short while of their annexation into the Ottoman rule indicates the Ottomans' attempt to form a general administrative pattern for these islands. For example, although Chios was taken over in 1566, the first *kanunname* was issued for the island in early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> This can be seen as a belated Ottoman attempt to provide administrative integration of such small islands in the Aegean.

Although they were not conquered by the Ottomans, it is difficult to answer to what degree the Greek islanders recognized the claim of to be ruled by the Ottomans. We may say that they lived a modest way life in their subsistence economies and stayed away from upheavals, like not supporting the Greek revolt of 1821. Although Greek bandits attacked to and landed in Imvros and Lemnos in order to take sustenance support, the islanders did not help them so that Ottoman troops drove back the rebellions.<sup>12</sup> While the population of Imvros remained Orthodox Christian -except Muslim local rulers and soldiers- after the annexation to the Ottoman rule, in Lemnos there was a Muslim settlement since the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> 40 years after the definite establishment of the Ottoman rule in the islands, the population of Imvros was around 2,100 in 1519-except 84 *müselleman* (cavalrymen);<sup>14</sup> of Lemnos it was about 4,888 (1173 households).<sup>15</sup> Towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century -the given period of this study-according to the population census of 1831, the male population of Imvros was 2505,<sup>16</sup> of Lemnos 5491, of which 511 were Turks.<sup>17</sup> Both islands had been taken over by Greece in 1912, during the Balkan wars, and Imvros had been used by Britain, Lemnos by France as military bases during the First World War. As a result of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, while Lemnos remained in the Kingdom of Greece, Imvros -and Tenedos- took part in the national borders of the nascent Turkish Republic. The Greek Orthodox population of Imvros was 9,207 in 1923,<sup>18</sup> the population of Lemnos was around 25,000, when it was taken over by Greece in 1912.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Feridun M. Emecen, "Ege Adaları'nın İdari Yapısı" [Administrative Structure of the Aegean Islands] in *Ege Adaları'nın İdari, Malî ve Sosyal Yapısı* [Administrative, Economic and Social Structure of the Aegean Islands] ed. İdris Bostan, Stratejik Araştırma ve Millî Etüdler Komitesi [SAEMK], Ankara 2003, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hattı Hümayun (HAT) 862/38465, 3 Rebiülahir 1236 (8 January 1821); BOA, HAT 750/35418, 1 Zilhicce 1236 (30 August 1821); HAT 663/32280, 1 Zilhicce 1236 (30 August 1821); Feridun Emecen, "Limni," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, vol. 27, p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> Emecen, "Limni," p. 191.

<sup>14</sup> 348 *hane* [household], 315 *mücerred* [unmarried sons of taxpaying age]. 75 Numaralı Gelibolu Lıvası Mufassal Tahrir Defteri (925/1519) [Number 75 Tahrir Register of Gelibolu Lıva] vol. I, T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara, pp. 86-87.

<sup>15</sup> Heath W. Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities*, 54, noted from *Number 75 Tahrir Defteri*, pp. 137-196.

<sup>16</sup> Emecen, "İmroz," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, vol. 22, p. 236.

<sup>17</sup> Emecen, "Limni," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, vol. 27, p. 191.

<sup>18</sup> Aysel Aziz, "Gökçeada Üzerine Toplumsal Bir İnceleme," *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, sy. 28/1-2, 1973, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> [http://www2.egeonet.gr/forms/fLemmaBodyExtended.aspx?lemmaid=6874&boithimata\\_State=true&kefalaia\\_State=true#chapter\\_6](http://www2.egeonet.gr/forms/fLemmaBodyExtended.aspx?lemmaid=6874&boithimata_State=true&kefalaia_State=true#chapter_6)

### ***Kocabaşıs* as Ayans: Reporting to the Center**

Both islands were covered by churches and chapels, most of which were belonged to the Athonite foundations. This shows the crucial role of Christianity in the islanders' life. Priests of these Athonite monasteries were the main landlords of the islands.<sup>20</sup> The members of the Orthodox Christian clergy -priests/ despots, and metropolitans- were the community leaders and elites of the islands, until the emergence of *kocabaşıs* as influential civil leaders in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Non-Muslim *Kocabaşıs* were regarded as equal to *ayans* and as intermediaries between local people and central government and other Ottoman authorities in the present literature.<sup>21</sup>

The emergence of *ayans* -provincial elites and land notables- as politically and economically powerful authorities in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is a topic that attracted a scholarly debate. These studies commonly indicated that the struggle over resources led to a contest between those in the countryside and the central authority and as a result constant economic struggle occurred between the *ayans* and the central government.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Andreas Moustoxydis and Bartholomew Koutloumousianos, *A Historical Memorandum Concerning Island of Imbros*, Gokceada-Imbros Protection, Solidarity and Sustainable Development Association, Istanbul 2010, [Constantinople: A. Koromela & P. Paspalles Printers, 1845], pp. 178-82, 184-6; Hrisostimos Kalaycis, *Οι εκκλησιές και τα ξωκλήσια της Ίμβρου: Η θρησκευτικότητα και η λαϊκή παράδοση του νησιού* [Churches and Country Churches of Imros: Religiosity and Public Traditions of the Island], Eteria Meletis Tis Kathimas Anatolis, Athens 2007; Melitonos Karas, *Η νήσος Ίμβρος: Συμβολή εις την Εκκλησιαστικήν Ιστορίαν* [Imvros Island: A Contribution to the Ecclesiastical History], Patriarhikon Idrima Paterikon Meleton, Thessaloniki 1987; Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities*, pp. 141-152; John Haldon, "Lemnos, Monastic Holdins and the Byzantine State: ca. 1261-1453" in continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society, eds. A. Bryer, Heath Lowry, Dumbarton Oaks, Birmingham, England, Washington D.C. 1986; Heath W. Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities*, pp. 141-152.

<sup>21</sup> Halil İnalıcık, "Centralization and Decentralization" eds. T. Naff and R. Owen, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, Carbondale and Edwrdsville, London and Amsterdam 1977, pp. 27, 41-43; Yuko Nagata, *Muhsin-zade Mehmed Paşa ve Ayanlık Müessesesi*, Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa Monograph Series, Tokyo 1982, p. 5; Özcan Mert, "18. ve 19. Yüzyillarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kocabaşı Deyimi, Seçimleri ve Kocabaşılık İddiaları," *Hakka Dursun Yıldız Armağanı*, Marmara Üniv. Fen-Edeb Fakültesi Yay., Ankara 1995, pp. 401-407; Antonis Anastasopoulos, "The Mixed Elite of a Balkan Town: Karaferye in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Halycon Days in Crete V*, Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire, Crete University Press, Rethymno 2005,

<sup>22</sup> Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus*, vol 102, Winter 1973, pp. 169-190; Halil İnalıcık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration", *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, eds. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale 1977, pp. 27-52, "The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftlikliks: State, Landlords and Tenants," eds. J.J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont, Paul Dumont, *Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale de l'Empire ottoman*, Association pour le développement des etuder turques, Leuven 1983; Gilles Veinstein, "'Ayan' de la region d'Izmir et commerce du Levant (deuxième moitié du XVIII siècle)," *EB*, 12/3, 1976, p. 75; Immanuel Wallerstein, Reşat Kasaba, "Incorporation into the World-Economy: Change in the Structure of the Ottoman Empire 1750-1839," *Gelişme Dergisi*, 8/1 (1981); Bruce McGowan, "The Age of Ayans, 1699-1812," eds. Halil İnalıcık and Donald Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, pp. 637-757; Yuzo Nagata, "Ayan in Anatolia and the Balkans During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries: A Case Study of Karaosmanoğlu Family," ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Halycon Daysin Crete, Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete Univ. Press, Crete 2005, pp. 269-294.



Ottoman central government, attributing a political role to the *ayans*, expected them to collect taxes, provide public order and security. They were seen as local intermediaries not as official functionaries of the central government -like the *kadı*- but as the products of given society.<sup>23</sup> Although *kocabaşıs* were regarded as equals to *ayans* in the literature, regrettably though, their role and significance is not a well studied subject. Studies in the Ottoman-Turkish historiography, following a monolithic approach, focused primarily on the Muslim *ayans*, ignored their non-Muslim counterparts (*kocabaşı*).<sup>24</sup> Recently however some studies, albeit slightly, emphasized the interaction and cooperation of Muslim *ayans* and Orthodox Christian *kocabaşıs*.<sup>25</sup> What still remains to be comment on the relationship of the *kocabaşıs* with their people.

*Kocabaşıs* were locally rooted native people and elected by the islanders, not imposed by the central authority as a potential community leaders. The economic, political, and social conditions under which *kocabaşıs* gained influence and the power of *kocabaşı* over local people in different regions of the Empire is not well explored yet. Comparing *kocabaşıs* with *ayans* requires a further understanding of the political and economic conditions under which *kocabaşıs* gained economic and political power as local leaders. Using primary sources would be helpful to clarify this matter.<sup>26</sup> Ottoman archival documents used for Imvros and Lemnos islands for this study, for example, do not allow us to examine the social backgrounds and the base of the economic power of *kocabaşıs* of these Aegean islands. Therefore, this paper diverts from this aim and instead examines the relationship between the *kocabaşıs* and islanders, and the Muslim local and central administration. Understanding the relationship between local governors/elites -whether non-Muslim civil and religious leaders- and the Ottoman central authority would provide a better understanding of dynamics of power in the

<sup>23</sup> Antonis Anastasopoulos, "The Mixed Elite," p. 261.

<sup>24</sup> Johann Strauss, "Ottoman Rule Experienced and Remembered: Remarks on some Local Greek Chronicles of the Tourkokratia," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, Brill, Leiden 2002, p. 214; Antonis Anastasopoulos, "Introduction," ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Halcyon Days in Crete V, Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete University Press, Rethymno 2005, pp. xvi, xx, and xxv.

<sup>25</sup> For such kind of cooperation in Karaferye and elsewhere in the Balkans, Antonis Anastasopoulos, "The Mixed Elite of a Balkan Town: Karaferye in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," p. 266; For an example for a cooperation in Athens in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the examples from the local chronicle of Panayis Skouzes see Johann Strauss, "Ottoman Rule Experienced and Remembered," pp. 213-214. A cooperation example from Morea, Yuzo Nagata, *Muhsin-zade Mehmed Paşa ve Ayanlık Müessesesi* [Musinzade Mehmed Paşa and the Ayan Organization], Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa Monograph Series, Tokyo 1982, pp. 43-44.

<sup>26</sup> The study of the *kocabaşı* of Kalamata in Morea, Panayote Bénakis, constituted a good example for a comprehensive study of a *kocabaşı*. Gilles Veinstein, "Le Patrimoine Foncier De Panayote Benakis, Kocabaşı de Kalamata," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. XII, pp. 211-233.

Greek Aegean islands under the Ottoman rule and help to answer the question how the Greek Orthodox islanders were treated by their coreligionist local leaders and as well as the local and central Muslim Ottoman authorities. Such an analysis would help us to shed light on the life of the ordinary people in the Empire.

A *kocabaşı* could be from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Serbian, Latin Catholic or Protestant.<sup>27</sup> Leaders of Christian communities were known as primates or *primkur*, *knez*, *voyvoda*, and *protogeros* as called in different languages. These terms transformed into *çorbacı* -head of the town- and *kocabaşı* -head of the village- as the Turkish became widespread spoken language in the Balkans. The term *kocabaşı*, which means "big head", derived from the term *ocakbaşı* means the head of a hearth or simply a community.<sup>28</sup> In Kemal Karpat's explanation *çorbacı* was a superior figure to *kocabaşı* as a community leader of larger town. As for the term itself, various other names were used in Greek for *kocabaşı*, like *proesti*, *prouchontes*, *archontes*.<sup>29</sup> Halil İnalçık defined the term *kocabaşı* as a Christian *ayan* who were responsible of collecting taxes.<sup>30</sup> Referring to S. S. Bobcev's differentiation between the terms of *kocabaşı* and *çorbacı* in terms of their duties, İnalçık also mentioned that while the *kocabaşıs* were only responsible for collecting taxes, the *çorbacı*s on the other hand, were representative of local people, and the *kocabaşıs* were elected among the *çorbacı*s of the region once in a year.<sup>31</sup> *Kocabaşıs*, whose influence increased as the *ayans* gained more political, economic and social power in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were named as *çorbacı*s in the Balkans, Anatolia and Aegean islands.<sup>32</sup> For example, while the *naib* of Thasos Island informed the central government about doings of two *çorbacı*s used this term, however, in the seal of the same document the term *kocabaşı* was used.<sup>33</sup> We learn about existence of *başkocabaşı* -the head *kocabaşı*- who was elected by regular *kocabaşıs*, on Paros Island.<sup>34</sup> As for Imvros and Lemnos

<sup>27</sup> Mert, "18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kocabaşı Deyimi," p. 401.

<sup>28</sup> Kemal Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era" in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, v. I, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, Holmes & Miller Publishers Inc., New York, London 1982, p. 147.

<sup>29</sup> Anastasopoulos, "The Mixed Elite of a Balkan Town: Karaferye", p. 260. The equivalent of the terms *proesti* (pl. of *prestos*, *προεστίας*) and *prouchontes* (plural of *prouchontas*, *προύχοντας*) is *kocabaşı* and *ayan*. ΕΛΛΗΝΟ ΤΟΥΡΚΙΚΟ ΛΕΞΙΚΟ- *Yunanca Türkçe Sözlük* [Greek Turkish Dictionary] Kentro Anatolikōn Glossōn kai Politismō, Athens 1994, pp. 620, 631; *Archontes* (pl. of *archonta*, *άρχοντα*) means bey, ağa. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Tanzimat'ın Uygulanması ve Sosyal Tepkileri" [The Application of Tanzimat and Social Responses], *Belleten* XXVIII, no. 112 (1964): 642, FN. 51.

<sup>31</sup> Halil İnalçık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi* [Tanzimat and Bulgarian Issue], Ankara 1943, p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> "Kocabaşı," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 26, p. 141.

<sup>33</sup> Mert, "18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kocabaşı Deyimi, Seçimleri ve Kocabaşılık İddiaları," 402, FN. 4, BOA, HAT (HH), n. 40.594.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 405. FN., 28, 29, *Evamir Mecmuası*, no. 38 A, 38 B.



islands the terms *kocabaşı* and *çorbacı* had been used interchangeably in the Ottoman-Turkish documents.

The term *kocabaşı* was seen first time in an Ottoman-Turkish document dated to 1691, however the Greek equivalent of the term *kocabaşı*, *protokir*<sup>35</sup> was seen in an earlier date in 1651 in the court register of Crete.<sup>36</sup> The oldest known document about the election of *kocabaşıs* is dated 17 October 1726, from which we learn about their duties: *Kocabaşıs* should be eloquent, comprehensive, reputable, loyal to the state, able to deal with the problems of people, protect the honor of people and maintain their welfare; they should not collect extra taxes.<sup>37</sup> Local people elected the *kocabaşıs* and informed the central government about the elected *kocabaşı* and asked for its approval. If he was approved by the central government, a decree (*buyruldu*) was sent to the *kocabaşı*, then, he could hold his post officially.<sup>38</sup> It was seen that *kocabaşıs* could be elected from a variety of professions, like priests, monks, makers or sellers of saddle makers (*semerci*), and dyers.<sup>39</sup> Various examples indicated that *kocabaşıs* treated their people unjust and misused their authority by taking illegal taxes, therefore they were discharged of their position upon the complaint of people.<sup>40</sup> The *kocabaşı* of Morea, Panayote Benakis, is a telling example for the strong authority and influence of *kocabaşıs* among local people, which played significant role in the Morean revolt in 1770.<sup>41</sup>

### **Kocabaşıs as Local Elites? Defining the Term in Depth**

Ottoman rule recognized the existence of provincial elites. Furthermore, the use of the terms *ayan*, *derebeyler*, *vücut*, *iş erleri*, *söz sahipleri*, *muteberan*, *kocabaşılar*, *çorbacılar* to describe a certain group of people representing local population are enough to prove

<sup>35</sup> Protokir (πρωτοκίρης) means in Greek proto (πρώτο) -first- kyrios (κύριος)-gentleman, governor- which refers to the leading community member.

<sup>36</sup> Özcan Mert, "Tanzimat Dönemi'nde Çeşme Kocabaşıları (1839-1876)", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. 22, n. 35, 2004, 140, FN. 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> Mert, "18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kocabaşı Deyimi," 403, FN. 14, BOA, Cevdet Adliye (C.ADL.), no. 1060; Cevdet Maliye (C. MAL.), no. 30980; HH. No. 38896-C; (İrade Hariciye, (İ. HR.), n. 7529; lef: 26; İrade Meclisi Vala (İ.MV), n. 1550, 6392.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., FN. 15, BOA., C.ADL., n. 1825; Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH.), n. 13404; Cevdet Zaptiye (C. ZAP.), n. 3922; HH., n. 39316-A; *Evâmir Mecmuası*, n. 38 A, 39 B.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., FN., 24, BOA., C.ADL., n. 1825, 2847, 3302; C.DH., n. 5504; C. ZAP., n. 4192; FN. 25, BOA., C.ZAP., n. 2685, 4535.

<sup>41</sup> There is valuable detailed information about the characters, duties, elections, abuses of *kocabaşıs* and response of the central government in the narration of Morean Revolt by Süleyman Penah Efendi. Süleyman Penah Efendi, *Mora İhtilâli Tarihi* [History of the Morean Revolt], ed. Aziz Berker, Tarih Vesikaları, Ankara 1942-1943.

this.<sup>42</sup> For example, in the *kanunname* of Imvros in 1519, soldier (*leşker*) Sivastopoulo, Mihal Ralo and Papas Kostendin Konomo were defined as the *ayans* of the island.<sup>43</sup> When we think of that *ayans* gained their economic and political power by depending on the land, it makes sense to call them as “land notables”. However, how about the usage of the term “elite”, who were the elites of the Ottoman society, more specifically of the Aegean Islands? The elite formally represented the local population before the Ottoman authorities and providing taxation and security, they were expected to deal with local affairs efficiently.<sup>44</sup> Defining elites as people with economic power, who had the right to usufruct the land in perpetuity, excludes influential leading people in a society without economic wealth, like intellectuals and clergymen. Therefore, accepting those with economic and political power as elites of a society would be misleading.<sup>45</sup> Accepting wealth, which brings about political power, as the basic determinant of being elite is an insufficient assumption in its own right.<sup>46</sup> Although power and wealth usually interlinked, political authority/power and influence should be counted as other crucial characteristics of elite.<sup>47</sup> It is commonly accepted that being political interlocutors, provincial elites were the intermediaries between central government and its agents, and local people. The central authority in due time delegated them with official duties. However, this state centered approach curtails other influential agents in social life.<sup>48</sup> Abandonment of official state documents in the Ottoman archives brought about the development of a state centered approach, instead of a society oriented one.<sup>49</sup> An alternative approach could be a society orienting one, which defines elites as people with social power and influence, irrespective of economic wealth and having been involved in legal procedures.<sup>50</sup> Hence, it was quite possible for Muslim and non-Muslim clergy, who formed part of the Ottoman elite in administrative and social terms, could be among the elites.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Antonis Anastasopoulos, “Introduction,” ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Halcyon Days in Crete V, Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete University Press, Rethymno 2005, p. xv.

<sup>43</sup> 75 Numaralı Gelibolu Livası Mufassal Tahrir Defteri (925/1519), vol. I, p. 87, vol. II, p. 126.

<sup>44</sup> Antonis Anastasopoulos, “The Mixed Elite of a Balkan Town: Karaferye in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,” ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Halcyon Days in Crete V, Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete University Press, Rethymno 2005, p. 259.

<sup>45</sup> Anastasopoulos, “Introduction,” pp. xv, xix.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

<sup>51</sup> For the example for the influence of Orthodox Christian bishops see Pinelophi Stathi, “Provincial Bishops of the Orthodox Church As Members of the Ottoman Elite (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries),” in *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, Crete University Press, Rethymno, pp. 77-83.



It is possible to define *kocabası*s and bishops -despots, as written in the Ottoman documents- of the Aegean islands as elites of the island society. As for Imvros and Lemnos islands, until the emergence of *kocabası*s as influential civil leaders in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, elites of the islands were their religious -metropolitan and despot- leaders, who were chosen by the Patriarchate. Therefore, exploring the relationship of islanders with their metropolitans and despots -especially before the 19<sup>th</sup> century- will uncover the most important social aspect of island society. This could be possible not only with the analysis of state documents, but also with the examination of correspondences between islanders and the Patriarchate in İstanbul.

When we consider Imvros and Lemnos examples in terms of defining the elites of the islands, we also should take into consideration the rural life in these islands. This alerts us to think the concept of elite is not only an urban phenomenon, but also had some rural connotation with different characters and qualities. In geographically isolated islands, like Imvros and Lemnos, where islanders had parochial perspective, being a native of island should be necessary to have status and power, and influence over the islanders. In a relatively closed economic structure of these islands, it could be almost impossible for someone out of this locality to flourish economically and to have status and ability to control local population. One must add that in the island societies, both *kocabası*s and Orthodox Christian metropolitans and despots were among the elites of island societies.

As this paper indicates, in the Tanzimat years, islanders found new interlocutors to make their complaints other than their community leaders -civil and religious. In the given period of this study -the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century- state documents revealed, on the one hand, the relationship between *kocabası*s and islanders, on the other hand, between islanders and central/local administration. As will be discussed in the below, the archival documents used for this paper showed the central government acted as a mediator/broker between *kocabası*s and islanders in favor of islanders in the Tanzimat years.<sup>52</sup>

The Ottomans incorporated leaders of diverse groups into administrative roles and extended protections and claims over non-Muslim subjects. Petitions submitted to the Porte indicated, Ottoman central authority was invited by local parties to interfere in conflicts. During the times of local conflicts, as happened in the Karaferye town in the Balkans in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the central government played an active role to solve the problem when a conflict occurred between the elites of the island.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ali Fuat Öreñç, "Ege Adaları'nın İdarî Yapısı (1830-1923)", *Ege Adaları'nın İdarî, Mali ve Sosyal Yapısı*, Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüdler Milli Komitesi, Ankara 2003, pp. 32-56.

<sup>53</sup> Anastasopoulos, "The Mixed Elite of a Balkan Town: Karaferye in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," p. 268.

Likewise, in Imvros and Lemnos, a century later, central government interfered in conflict between the islanders and their *kocabaşıs*, and between a *kocabaşı* and a despot. The archival records showed that religious and lay leaders of the islands -despot and *kocabaşı*- who constituted a power group outside the Ottoman mechanism for maintaining coherent relationships between islanders and the central government, misused their power. Benefiting from the Tanzimat regulations, the islanders applied to the central government to complaint about them.

In Imvros and Lemnos, at times, there was a conflict between the despots and the *kocabaşıs*. As the examples will indicate in the following section, the *kocabaşıs* abused their power, the central government served as interlocutors between islanders and their *kocabaşı*.

### **Intricate Relations: *Kocabaşı*, *Despot*, *Kaymakam*, Central Government and Islanders**

*Kocabaşı* and *sandık emini* (treasurer) of Imvros -son of Kosta, Dimitri (Legofet)<sup>54</sup>- was in duty in the island in 1840s and 1850s. The discontent of the islanders about the *kocabaşı* Dimitri was reported in detail first time by the *kaymakam* of Tenedos<sup>55</sup> İsmail Kamil in July 1850.<sup>56</sup> He reported his observations to the Porte as a result of the trips he made to Samothraki (Semadirek) and Imvros islands in order to examine the public order and security: When he arrived on Imvros, islanders gave him a petition (*anafora*)<sup>57</sup> in which they expressed their complaints from the *kocabaşı* Dimitri: The

<sup>54</sup> In the Ottoman documents the name of the *kocabaşı* was written either as *Kosta oğlu Dimitri* or *Legofet*, which can be read Logofet, Lagafat, etc. depending on the vowel we use. In the Greek petition of the islanders was written as *Logothetis*. *Logothetis*, λογοθέτης, was a title used in the Byzantine Empire and in the administration of the Orthodox Greek Patriarchate under the Ottoman rule. Christine M. Philiou, *Worlds, Old and New: Phanariot Networks and The Remaking of Ottoman Governance in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2004, s. 32. Dipnot 42. Alexander Kazhdan, "Logothetes" *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Ed.> Alexander P. Kazhdan. © 1991, 2005 by Oxford University Press, Inc., The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium: (e-reference edition). Oxford University Press, Harvard University Library, In this paper, not to confuse the reader, only *Dimitri* it is used.

<sup>55</sup> *Kaymakamlık*s of Tenedos, Lemnos, Mytillini, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Cyprus were created under the province of Cezayir-i Bahr-ı Sefid, which was established as province -*eyalet*- in February 1534 under the rule of the *kapudan pasha*. From 1849 on, the neighboring islands, belonged to them as *müdürlük* (directorship). According to this arrangement, within the given period of this paper, Imvros was a *müdürlük* under the *kaymakamlık* of Tenedos. Emecen, "Ege Adaları'nın İdari Yapısı", pp. 12, 14; İdris Bostan, "The Establishment of the Province of Cezayir-i Bahr-ı Sefid," in *Halcyon Days in Crete IV; The Kapudan Pasha His Office and His Domain*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou, Crete University Press, Rethymnon 2002, pp. 240-51. Ali Fuat Örenç, *Yakın Dönem tarihimize Rodos ve Oniki Ada* [Rhodes and the Dodecanese], Doğu Kütüphanesi, İstanbul 2006, p. 67.

<sup>56</sup> BOA, Mektubi Kalemi, Umum Vilayet, (A.MKT.UM), n. 23/22, 9 Ramazan 1266 (19 July 1850).

<sup>57</sup> Greek word "anafora" (αναφορά) means report. Faruk Tuncay, Leonidas Karatzas, *Yunanca Türkçe Sözlük*, Kentro Anatolikon Glosson kai Politismou, Atina 1994, p. 57. In the report of İsmail Kamil'in the petition of Imvrians was written as "anaphora".



*kocabaşı* was conducting trade with his friend Laskari with the help of his supporters and did not deal with the islanders. The *kocabaşı*, who was angry with the despot of the island, collected stamps<sup>58</sup> of the leading islanders in the villages and used them for his self-interest, he did not pay his annual tax and even made the islanders pay for it. Since Dimitri had too many followers, the islanders could not dare to complain about him. He and his friend bought the products of the islanders with low price and sold them with high profit. They established monopoly over trade in the island with the help of *çorbacı* of Agia Theodori village, who was his son in law, and acted unfair to the islanders. To get rid of from this situation they elected another *çorbacı*, but Dimitri and his followers refused to accept the new *çorbacı*. The ill-natured (*fesad*) *kocabaşı* acted against the benefits of the poor (*fukara*) islanders.<sup>59</sup> İsmail Kamil noted that although he warned Dimitri various times, the *kocabaşı* did not care about his advises and continued his unruly actions. Islanders had prepared an *anafora* with the help of their despot and sent it to the Patriarchate. As a result, İsmail Kamil stressed that the dismissal of the *kocabaşı* was necessary for the well being of the islanders and public order of the island. He also noted a circulating rumor that *kocabaşı* Dimitri secretly served as a deputy to the Greek consulate.<sup>60</sup> This indicated the *kaymakam*'s concern for the Ottoman benefits on the face of the independent Greek kingdom -twenty years after its foundation.

The *kaymakam* requested help from the central government in favor of the Imvrians.<sup>61</sup> A month later after the report of İsmail Kamil, *Meclisi Vala*<sup>62</sup> wrote the inappropriate actions of the *kocabaşı* and explained all these complaints of the islanders by depending on the report of İsmail Kamil,<sup>63</sup> and asked from the new *kaymakam* of Tenedos to investigate the issue in order to understand if they are actual complaints or

<sup>58</sup> *Mühür/mühr* (seal): Everyone in government circles or among the public in the Ottoman empire had a personal *mühür*. It was used in petitions or letters after the author's name. Mübahat Kütükoğlu, "Mühür", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 31, pp. 530-1. Seals were used by local notables in their communications with the central government, and can be seen as an indication of civic life. Nora Lafi, *Esprit civique et organisation citadine: caractères de l'ancien régime urbain dans l'Empire ottoman et signification des réformes modernisatrices*, Thèse pour l'habilitation à diriger des recherches, Berlin 2011, pp. 27-30. In the complaint petitions or letters consulted for this study, the theft of other people's seals was viewed as unethical or corrupt behaviour. This response indicates the importance of *mühürs* in official correspondences in rural regions as well, including the small Aegean islands.

<sup>59</sup> The term *fukara* is used for the islanders in the Ottoman documents. BOA, A.MKT.UM, n. 23/22, 9 Ramazan 1266 (19 July 1850).

<sup>60</sup> BOA, A.MKT.UM, n. 23/22, 9 Ramazan 1266 (19 July 1850).

<sup>61</sup> BOA, A.MKT, n. 23/22, 9 Ramazan 1266 (19 July 1850).

<sup>62</sup> The *Meclisi Vala-yı Ahkam-ı Adliye*, in short the *Meclisi Vala* "Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances" was established in the Tanzimat era. It was responsible for preparing the Tanzimat laws and regulations, and was also a special administrative court for trying administrative staff acting contrary to Tanzimat regulations.

<sup>63</sup> BOA, A.MKT, n. 27/ 69, 17 Şevval 1266 (26 July 1850).

not.<sup>64</sup> Imvrians asked the exile of the *kocabaşı* Dimitri in 1852.<sup>65</sup> This shows that although the former *kaymakam* İsmail Kamil informed the central government about the problem in 1850, for two years there had been no any progress. However, we learn that the *kocabaşı* was exiled in 1852.<sup>66</sup> But, it was not the central government who exiled Dimitri, it was the despot, who first imprisoned him in the metropolitan house and then sent him to exile in Ahi Çelebi town in Edirne.<sup>67</sup> However, the *kaymakam* Fazlı Ağa, who was in charge after İsmail Kamil, investigated the issue and argued against the islanders wrote to the central government that in fact the Imvrians were happy with the *kocabaşı* Dimitri, but since the despot had hostility towards the *kocabaşı* he had been imprisoned and exiled him illegally.<sup>68</sup> *Meclisi Vala* was not convinced with the report of the *kaymakam* Fazlı Ağa, since the despot was known in the island with his good manners for 16 years, while the *kocabaşı* oppressed the islanders for 30-40 years and acted contrary to the Orthodox rituals.<sup>69</sup> He refused the claims of the islanders; since his imprisonment and exile by the despot was contrary to the Tanzimat principles, the *kocabaşı* applied to the Patriarchate and the central government for his release.<sup>70</sup> According to the Tanzimat regulations no one could be imprisoned without a trial. However, the islanders also complained about Fazlı Ağa to the central government, since he made the islanders to prepare the petition by force for the good behaviors of the *kocabaşı*. The islanders sent a complaint petition about Fazlı Ağa to the Patriarchate as well.<sup>71</sup> The availability of the petition of the islanders' -both in Ottoman Turkish and in Greek-contentment about the *kocabaşı* with their stamps indicates accuracy of the event.<sup>72</sup> The islanders put their stamps in Greek to the fake Ottoman Turkish petition, which Fazlı Ağa wrote on behalf of them. In the petition, it wrote:

“Respected Mr. Logothetis is dealing with trade in our homeland from the very old times on. Contrary to the sayings of the bishop Neofitos and his followers, he was never unfair to the islanders and he dealt with useful works. He has been a good and harmless tradesman regarding the issues related to the Kingdom. Therefore, all due respect, we request his situation to be reexamined.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. The *kaymakam* to whom the *Meclisi Vala* asked to investigate the issue was not İsmail Kamil; it was *kaymakam* Fazlı Ağa, who replaced İsmail Kamil. Fazlı Ağa was the former *muhassıl* of Chios Island and he was appointed as *kaymakam* of Bozcada in 27 Zilhicce 1260 (3 Kasım 1850), Sadaret Mektûbi Kalemî Meclis-i Vala, (A.MKT.MVL.), n. 33/132, 27 Zilhicce 1266 (3 November 1850).

<sup>65</sup> BOA, Hariciye Nezareti Mektûbi Kalemî (HR.MKT), n. 47/70, 2 Zilkade 1268 (18 August 1852).

<sup>66</sup> BOA, HR.MKT 49/60 9 Zilhicce 1268 (24 September 1852).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> BOA, Sadaret Mektûbi Umum Vilayet, (A.MKT.UM), n. 188/43, 9 Rebiülevvel. 1269 (18 August 1852).

<sup>69</sup> BOA, A.MKT.UM, n. 188/43, 9 Rebiülevvel 1269 (18 August 1852).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> BOA, A.MKT.UM, n. 131/46, 2 Receb 1269 (11 April 1853).

<sup>72</sup> *Meclisi Vala*, (MVL), n. 253/80, 1269 Ra 9 (20 Ocak 1853), BOA, MVL, no. 253/80, 9 Rebiülahir 1269 (20 January 1853), BOA; HR.MKT, n. 49/60, 9 Zilhicce 1268 (24 September 1852), BOA.

<sup>73</sup> HR.MKT, n. 49/60, 1268 Zilhicce 1852 (28 September 1852).



In this petition, 82 names were written in August 1852 from Sihunidi, 196 names from Panayia, 13 names from Gliki, 2 from Kastro, 47 from Agridia and 89 names from Agia Theodori villages.<sup>74</sup>

Dimitri, finally, was regretful for his wrong doings in Imvros. Since he was in exile for 7-8 months, the *Meclisi Vala* suggested the Patriarchate to decide for his release.<sup>75</sup>

In order to get rid of the maltreatment of the *kocabaşıs*, Imvrians applied to the central government either through their muslim *müdürs* or *kaymakams* and the Patriarchate. During the incident of the *kocabaşı* Dimitri from 1850 to 1853, the *müdür* of the island had changed four times. The first two *müdürs*, Cemal Efendi and Necip Efendi were dismissed by the central government, since they acted improper and unlawful to the islanders.<sup>76</sup> Afterwards, Abdullah Efendi was in charge after the demise of Ahmet Efendi in 1851.<sup>77</sup> The islanders heard that the *kaymakam* of Tenedos, Ali Bey, was going to be appointed as their *müdürs*. They petitioned to the central government their refusal of Ali Bey as their *müdürs* because of his bad reputation.<sup>78</sup> Another instance for islanders' communication with the central government was their complaint petition -to the *Meclisi Vala*- to report on the *müdür* Necip Efendi's wrongdoings, unfair behaviours and his disobedience to the Tanzimat principles.<sup>79</sup>

During the Tanzimat years, the islanders not only sent complaint petitions about their *kocabaşı* to the central government, and also about their Muslim local administrators. Their applying to the central government to benefit from the Tanzimat regulations indicates their awareness of the political developments and expectations from the Ottoman government.

We also learn the central government monitored the revenues of the natural salt pit resource (*memlaha*) in Imvros. Its revenues belonged to the Foça salt pit and both salt pits were administered by the company called the *Anadolu Kumpanyası* (Anatolian Company). There was a problem about the collection and delivery of the salt pit in Imvros.<sup>80</sup> In 1840s, there was 30 thousand bushel (*keyl*) salt came out in the year 1847 and it should be collected by *tuz emini* (Bekir Ağa). *Kocabaşı* Dimitri received an imperial

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> BOA, HR.MKT, n. 65/85, 28.Muharrem 1270 (31 October 1853).

<sup>76</sup> BOA, Sadarat Amedi Kaleml, (A.AMD), n. 27/29, 12 Safer 1267 (17 Aralık 1850), BOA; A.MKT. UM., n. 82/ 45, 10 Muharrem 1268 (5 November 1851).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.; BOA, A.MKTUM, n. 72/17, 28 Şevval 1267 (26 August 1851), BOA.

<sup>78</sup> BOA, MVL 121/ 109 19 Zilhicce 1268 (4 September 1852).

<sup>79</sup> BOA, MVL, n. 105/107, Petition of the islanders, 7 Zilhicce 1267 (3 October 1851).

<sup>80</sup> BOA, A.MKT 109/90, 3Rebiülahir 1264 (8 February 1848). The letter of *mutasarrıf* of Biga; A.MKT 109/60 29 Safer 1264 (5 February 1848).

order from the Porte about this.<sup>81</sup> The *memlaha* was not an old one, every 5-6 years no salt came out from the salt pit. *Voyvoda* and *mültezims* took three types of tax in Imvros: salt, wood (*resm-i ağaç*) and pork taxes (*resm-i hunzır*). The total amount of the tax the islanders paid was 17,000 guruş when the Tanzimat regulations began. It was an old custom in the island that the islanders used to benefit from the salt for their own usage. Although the *Anadolu Kumpanyası* sent an officer from Foça to take the salt in Imvros, the islanders were already shared out the salt. Hence, certain amount of salt was lost. Therefore, according to the *kaymakam* of Tenedos, it was not Dimitri who snatched the salt; it was the islanders who kept some salt for their own use as the custom in the island.<sup>82</sup> Reading this in the letter of the *kaymakam*, who explained all these in his letter to the central government, requested that the *kocabaşı*, some other *çorbacıs* and leading islanders would like to go to the Porte to present and clarify the issue. However, the *mutasarrıf* of Biga, who was superior to the *kaymakam* of Tenedos, wrote in his note it was the *kocabaşı*, who did not submit the salt to the *Anadolu Kumpanyası* and tried to cover up his fault, and the *kaymakam* of Tenedos was put in charge to investigate the issue by the *mutasarrıf* of Biga. He ordered the *kaymakam* to take the remaining amount from the *kocabaşı*.<sup>83</sup> Since *kocabaşıs* was responsible of distribution of products and collection of taxes, the *mutasarrıf* held the *kocabaşı* responsible for the lost amount of salt and wanted the *kocabaşı* of Imvros pay for the value of the lost amount of salt.

Similar *kocabaşı* corruptions happened in the neighboring Lemnos Island as well. In a long document in July 1839 -before the announcement of the Tanzimat in November 1839- we read about the corruptions of *kocabaşıs* and *voyvoda* of the island: In earlier times there was imbalanced situation regarding the collection of taxes on the Lemnos Island. *Kocabaşıs* used to take an extra tax which was named *aralık akçesi*.<sup>84</sup> In order to rectify this unfair situation, *kocabaşıs* were told by the center not to collect this tax, but continued to do so. Moreover, they began to collect *zeciriyye* tax, a tax for alcoholic drinks taken from the *reaya* and collected taxes for navy and capital from both Muslims and Christians according to the economic condition of the people. The islanders had consented to this kind of application for the taxation. Later on, in order to solve out this unbalanced taxation of *kocabaşı*, an imperial decree ordered formation of a *sandık ortası*, a common treasury, whose *kocabaşı* and *kabızmal* (fruit and vegetable seller) would be elected by Muslims and non-the Muslims of the island. This method was applied for some time.<sup>85</sup> However, the earlier *kocabaşı* and *kabızmal*, using

<sup>81</sup> BOA, A.MKT 109/60, 29 Safer 1264 (5 February 1848).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> BOA, A.MKT, n. 109/90 3 Rebiülahir 1264 (8 February 1848).

<sup>84</sup> BOA, C.MAL, n. 302/12281 29 Zilkade 1254 (13 February 1839).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



the old *voyvoda*'s -Tahir Ömer Bey- leave from his duty as an excuse began to execute their former inappropriate doings: deceiving the new *voyvoda*, Salih Ağa, they collected illegal *cizye* taxes and abused islanders.<sup>86</sup> Limnians sent a petition to the central government and explained their sympathy for the new *voyvoda*, his humble and fair attitudes, and requested new *voyvoda* remain in the duty. A similar petition for the same event was also sent to the central government by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.<sup>87</sup> In order to prevent the unfair treatment of the islanders, Muslim and non Muslims local rulers and leading islanders in Lemnos -Naib Hüseyin Efendi, Defter nazırı Ali Efendi, Ambar Emimi Mustafa, leading islanders Ali Mirzan, Halil bin Hacı Alil oğlu, Molla Hüseyin, new *kocabaşı* Yorgaki and new *kabzımal* Yannaki, earlier *kocabaşı* Hacı Pandeli and old *kabzımal* Anagnosti, tailor Yorgi and Atanaş- were referred to Istanbul so that the issue was transferred to the *Meclisi Vala*.<sup>88</sup>

In another document, we see an interference of the central government to the unfair treatment of the Limnians on the eve of the Tanzimat, in July 1839. The clerk of the island collected extra *cizye* tax from the islanders. Collecting from each islander two, one and half *guruş* extra, the amount he collected reached to 3,000 *guruş*.<sup>89</sup> The *voyvoda* of the island explained this inappropriate situation to the central government and guaranteed the islanders that the extra amount would be paid back to them with the help of Islamic law. It was decided that the money of those, who were absent during the repayment, will be entrusted to their *kocabaşıs*.<sup>90</sup> Since the central government considered *kocabaşı* as reliable community leader, it entrusted the islander's money to him.

### Conclusion

As these archival examples indicated, *kocabaşıs*, as influential local leaders in the Imvros and Lemnos, in other words being the elites of the Orthodox Christian island community, misused their power and abused the islanders. Mentioning the Tanzimat regulations, Imvirans' appeal to the central government to search for their rights, shows their awareness of the Tanzimat in the isolated insular space in the northern Aegean. This signs although these islands geographically isolated units and had subsistence economies, they had a good communication with the capital and were aware of the administrative matters. Although the Ottoman government recognized the *kocabaşı* as entrusted interlocutors of the Orthodox Christian islanders, it took into consideration

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> BOA, C.ML, n. 86/3948 19 Rabiülahir 1255 (2 July 1839).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

islanders' complaints for their coreligionist local leaders and attempted to prevent abuses of *kocabaşıs* in the islands. Moreover, as the archival records showed, in the case of Imvros, the central government dismissed various times Muslim local rulers *-kaymakam* and *müdür-* upon the complaints of the islanders. The responsive attitude of the Ottoman government towards *fukara* islanders had to do with the governmental policy of serving the needs of the Christian subjects, to gain their loyalty and to provide and maintain political legitimacy of the Ottoman political power, which was at stake apparently since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>91</sup> Tanzimat regulations, as everywhere else in the Empire, in Imvros, impaired privileges and benefits of the community leaders that not only this affected their relations with the islanders, but also led to the transformation or re-formation of the islanders' relationship with their community leaders and Muslim local/central administration. As for Lemnos, the documents dating back to early 1839 -before the announcement of the Tanzimat regulations- hinted at continuity in the Tanzimat years regarding the Porte's treatment of the Greek islanders. Another example regarding the *kocabaşı* corruptions in the collection of *cizye* and the intervention of the central government at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in favor of the islanders was Chios.<sup>92</sup> As a result of the abuses of the *kocabaşıs* in Chios, the sultan of the period, Ahmed III, sent two officials in order to inspect all *cizye* registers from the beginning of the century until 1719. The *kocabaşıs* of Chios were sent to İstanbul and imprisoned for a considerable period of time.<sup>93</sup> The Ottoman government interfered in *kocabaşı* and *vojvoda* abuses of the islanders regarding their illegal tax collection methods in favor of the people. That is to say, it was not, all of a sudden, the Tanzimat applications provided fair treatment of the islanders; in earlier times the central government intervened to protect the Greek islanders' unjust treatment by their co-religionist local leaders.

Although the Greek islanders' appeal to the Muslim local administrators and central government, and their interference in favor of the islanders tell us their acceptance of the Ottoman rule as legitimate and adoption to it in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it does not tell much about the perception of their identities whether they were insular Ottomans, Orthodox Christian Ottomans or Ottoman Greek islanders.

<sup>91</sup> As I discussed elsewhere: Feryal Tansuğ, "İstanbul and Aegean Islands: Imvros in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century," eds. Elisabeth Özdalga, Sait Özervarlı, Feryal Tansuğ, *İstanbul as Seen from a Distance. On the Relationship between Provincial Ottomans and their Imperial Centre*, Swedish Research Institute in İstanbul, Transactions No. 20; eddy.se publications, Visby, Sweden 2011, pp. 117-118.

<sup>92</sup> Dilara Dal, "XVIII. Yüzyılda Sakız Adası'nın EtnikYapısı ve Ortodoks-Katolik Reaya Arasındaki İlişkiler" [Ethnic Composition of Sakız Island in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and Relations between Orthodox Christian and Latin Subjects], *Tarihin Peşinde, Uluslararası ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* [The Pursuit of History. International Periodical for History and Social Research] 1, 2009, p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, FN. 20.



Religion, language, ethnicity and culture, which are the main determinants of identity, should be considered while commenting on insular lives. Ethnicity and religion, Greek Orthodox Christianity, were not distinctive features of islanders, since many Greek Orthodox Christians lived in overall Empire in *ad hoc* systems. What might distinguish Greek Orthodox Imvrians and Limnians from rest of the Orthodox Greeks in other provinces in the Empire is their lack of knowledge of Ottoman Turkish and their Greek and island cultures. They communicated with the local and central administration through their clerk and Patriarchate. Language, insular way of life, and customs must be the basic determinants of identities of these islanders. It must be illogical to think that these Greek speaking people defined themselves as Ottomans or felt as Ottomans in relatively isolated island society. This might not be the case for Greek Orthodox Christians who co-existed and interacted with other non-Muslims and Muslims in the larger cities of the Empire, like İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Nevşehir, and Trabzon. In Lemnos, there was an interaction to some extent between non-Muslims and Muslims, but in Imvros there were no Muslims, hence interaction with ordinary Muslims was not possible. Greek islanders used to live according to their customs and terms for centuries. The lack of interaction with ordinary Muslims and not sharing common language and religion of the ruling dynasty might prevent Imvrians, and also Limnians, from identify themselves as Ottomans. However, this did not preclude them to be loyal Geek Orthodox subjects of the Empire and to perceive the Ottoman rule as a legitimate rule, as the archival documents indicated in this paper.

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