


British Consul James Brant and His Reports on the Problems in Erzurum and Muş

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Abstract

The activities and the influences of the consulates in the Ottoman lands have recently attracted attention in Turkey. Specially, researchers have taken an interest in the reports of the British consuls, who examined the regions in great details. The intensification of colonial conflict between the European states since the early 19th century led to the expansion of consulates, as the states utilized the information from consulates to seek raw materials and new markets. Concurrently, alongside their imperialist concerns, the British adopted a policy of guarding the strategically significant territories of the Ottoman Empire for their interests. For this purpose, they opened consulates in different parts of the empire, and appointed James Brant Erzurum consulate in 1836. His detailed reports provided information about administrative issues, the implementation of Tanzimat reforms, and European interference in the internal affairs of the Ottomans. In this study, based on Consul Brant's reports, the influence of the British on the administration of the Erzurum Province, particularly the Muş Sanjak, will be discussed. Furthermore, the effects of Brant on the appointment and dismissal of officials will be examined. Additionally, the approach of the British regarding misgovernance and corruption in the provinces, specifically in Muş, will be discussed.

Keywords: Ottoman-British Relations, British Consuls, James Brant, Ottoman Provincial Administration, Muş

İngiliz Konsolos James Brant'ın Erzurum ve Muş'taki Sorunlara Dair Raporları

Öz

Osmanlıların yönetiminde bulunan bölgelerde görev yapmış olan konsolosların faaliyetlerine ve raporlarına yönelik ilgi Türkiye'de her geçen gün artarak devam etmektedir. Özellikle görev yaptıkları bölgeleri detaylı bir şekilde inceleyen İngiliz konsoloslarının raporları ve faaliyetleri araştırmacıların ilgisini çekmektedir. 19. Yüzyılın başlarından itibaren Avrupalı devletler arasında sömürge yarışının kızışması konsoloslukların yaygınlaşmasının en önemli sebeplerinden biriydi. Böylece söz konusu devletler konsolosluklardan elde etmiş oldukları önemli bilgileri kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda hammadde ve yeni pazar bulmak için kullanmışlardı. Bu dönemde İngilizler emperyalist kaygılarının yanında, çıkarları için son derece stratejik topraklara sahip olan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu koruma politikasını benimsemişlerdi. Bu amaçla da imparatorluğun değişik bölgelerine konsolosluklar açmışlardı. Bu politika gereği olarak Erzurum konsolosluğuna da 1836 yılında James Brant'ı atamışlardı. James Brant'ın hazırlamış olduğu oldukça kapsamlı raporlarda Osmanlı taşrasındaki idari sorunlar, Tanzimat reformlarının taşrada uygulanması, Avrupalı devletlerin Osmanlı Devleti'nin içişlerine karışması gibi konulara dair önemli ve ayrıntılı bilgiler bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada Konsolos James Brant'ın raporları temel alınarak, Erzurum Eyaleti ve özellikle bu eyalete bağlı olan Muş Sancağı'nın yönetimine İngilizlerin etkisinin olup olmadığı tartışılacaktır. Bunun yanında söz konusu dönemde Muş Sancağı'na atanan yöneticilerin göreve başlama ve görevden alınmalarında Brant'ın etkileri üzerinde durulacaktır. Ayrıca yine Muş sancağı özelinde Osmanlı taşrasındaki kötü yönetim, yolsuzluk gibi hususlara İngilizlerin nasıl yaklaştığına da değinilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı-İngiliz ilişkileri, İngiliz Konsolosları, James Brant, Osmanlı Taşra Yönetimi, Muş.

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1. Introduction

The Ottoman Empire became more significant in British politics at the beginning of the 19th century as a result of political, military, and economic developments. When Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa, the governor of Egypt, revolted in 1831 and marched his army as far as Kutahya, Sultan Mahmud II had to ask for Russians' help and signed the Hunkâr Iskelesi Treaty with them (Cameron, 1895: 162). Although Britain remained indifferent to the rebellion of the governor of Egypt in the first place, she reacted severely to the treaty that she saw as a threat to her interests (Sinouè, 1999: 323; Armaoğlu, 1997: 205). According to the British authorities, this treaty was so dangerous that the Russians would eliminate the Ottoman Empire and deal a death blow to the interests of the British (Bolsover, 1934: 99). Besides, the treaty would damage her image in the Near East, as it could be seen as a weakness of the British. For this reason, Palmerston described the indifference to Sultan Mahmud's request for help as a terrible mistake of the British government. In his view, at no point in the history of Great Britain had a mistake been made, such as Lord Gray's cabinet. Thus, protection of the Ottoman Empire became the official policy of Britain (Gencer, 2015: 634). Palmerston decided to use the consulates as an efficient way to implement the protection policy (Rodkey, 1929: 575). During the 1830s, the network of British consulates in the Ottoman territories expanded in line with the developing British-Ottoman relations (Dönmez, 2019: 365). The consulates were assigned to inspect Ottoman military and civil administrators in the countryside and were responsible for reporting any changes to the embassy. In accordance with this policy, James Brant, who was appointed to the Erzurum Consulate, conducted studies on the economic potential of the region and made recommendations to the governors regarding the development of economic resources. He also prioritized addressing public concerns and did so in a clear, practical manner, communicating these concerns to the Sublime Porte. Consequently, he ensured that the demands and circumstances of the region's inhabitants were better represented in Istanbul. The information he provided in his report is important in terms of the history of the region. Furthermore, since his tenure coincided with a period of Tanzimat Edict, the detailed reports he prepared, provide invaluable data for researchers studying the implementation and impact of these reforms in the provinces. The Ottoman documents generally confirm Brant's reports. However, details of Brant's reports cannot be found in Ottoman records. In particular, the Ottoman documents are inadequate with regard to the actions of the provincial authorities and the situation of the people. Brant's comments provide an opportunity to learn more about these issues because his reports are also more detailed and organised compared to those of contemporary British consuls like Alexandria, Beirut and Damascus.

2. British Consul James Brant and His Service in the Ottoman Empire

Brant's personal experiences gave him a solid foundation for successful career. Despite being born in London, he had the opportunity to know the Near East during his early years. His father was a silk merchant and his mother was from a Levantine family resident in İzmir. Additionally, in 1805, he began to work in his uncle's factory in Smyrna. Thanks to this background, he was proficient in Turkish when he was appointed as Trabzon vice consul on 2 March 1830 (Dönmez, 2019: 367-366). His fluency in Turkish enabled him to communicate effectively with both Turkish authorities and the local populace. (FO, 78/401, Brant to Bidwell, 25 January 1840). He closely followed all developments in the Eastern Anatolia and Russian actions concerning this region. He observed the social, economic and military reforms of the Ottomans that were

introduced at that time. He also provided his government with a number of recommendations for raising regional demand for British products.

James Brant realized that Erzurum was a strategically and commercially important city, while he was working in Trabzon. So, he advised to his government to establish a consulate in Erzurum, a region situated on an important trade route and adjacent to the Iranian-Russian border. In order to persuade his government, he underlined the value of the economic advantages of Erzurum and the growing threat of Russians to the eastern part of the empire. Palmerston eventually agreed to a strategy of enlarging Britain's diplomatic presence in Ottoman territory, which included establishing a consulate in Erzurum. In this regard, Brant's long uttered demand to establish a consulate in Erzurum was approved by the British King, and Brant was appointed to this post on 29 April 1836. His sphere of influence included Sivas, Trabzon, and Erzurum. Brant was responsible for obtaining pertinent information on trade, navigation, agriculture, and other topics since the British government had determined to increase trade and political contacts with the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire, particularly along the Russian and Persian borders (FO, 78/289, Palmerston to Brant, 15 September 1836). Palmerston wrote to the governors to inform them of Brant's appointment and requested that they offer him any necessary protection and assistance (FO, 78/289, Palmerston to Brant, 19 November 1836).

2.1. Brant's Activities in Eastern Anatolia: Erzurum

As soon as Brant reached Erzurum, he tried to get to know the city and its people. Shortly after his appointment, he organised a tour of main towns in the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire. He listed the reasons why his trip was helpful for obtaining political information. These included determining the new eastern border of Turkey along the Russo-Georgian provinces, learning about the communications opportunities presented by Asia Minor. Additionally, it involved acquiring understanding about the prevailing conditions of governance, agriculture, and civilization in these areas, familiarity with local productions, and devising strategies to promote the adoption of British products and manufactured goods. (FO, 78/289, Report of a Journey through A Part of Armenia and Asia Minor, 11 May 1836).

After finishing his tour, Brant went to Istanbul and received his exequatur, which limited his jurisdiction to Trabzon and Erzurum (FO, 78/314, Brant to Palmerston, 30 April 1837). He made an extensive tour to the Eastern Anatolia in June 1838 and travelled more leisurely to seek every occasion of visiting pashas and governors, and to communicate with every person in authority. (FO, 78/338, Brant to Palmerston, 31 December 1838).

The governors of Erzurum could not act freely as they did before, when Brant appointed to Erzurum Consulate. They were worried about the reports written to the British Embassy about them, as they feared Brant's political impact that could cause them to lose their post. For instance, being aware of the consul's power, Osman Pasha instructed some of his men to find out what had been said about him in the reports, and to lead Brant to say an occasional word in his favour to the British Ambassador. Brant, however, complained in a letter to the embassy that the pasha's greed prohibited him from carrying out the Sultan's good intentions for his subject (FO, 78/367, Report on the trade of Erzerum for the Year 1838, and a Sketch of the State of the Pashalik, 12 March 1839 (Report for 1838)). After the complaints about Osman Pasha, the Porte decided that he was insufficient to rule Erzurum. So, Osman Pasha was

immediately dismissed, even, he would not be employed in any other posts (BOA, İ.HR, 1/13, 27.B.1255; FO, 78/401, Brant, Report on the trade of Erzerum for 1839 and on the state of the Pashalik, 10 February 1840). In reality, the pashas' worries demonstrated that the consuls took on a kind of supervisory function of controlling the governors.

Brant believed that Kamili Pasha was an honest man and quite sensitive about ensuring the security and maintaining the peace of the province. If adequately supported by the central government, he could easily prove himself an excellent and effective governor. Therefore, he asked the ambassador to support the Pasha's reappointment (FO, 78/491, Brant to Canning, 15 February 1842). Thanks to Brant's efforts, the Pasha was reassigned for a year (FO, 195/175, Brant to Canning, 11 March 1842). According to Brant, Bekir Sami Pasha, the successor of Kamili Pasha, was a more imbecile or more despicable governor whom he had never come across (FO, 78/703, Report on the Trade of Erzerum, and on the State of the Pashalik, for 1846, 31 January 1846 (Report for 1846). His mismanagement encouraged the opponents of the Tanzimat and sparked uprisings in the province. It is highly probable that he was dismissed with the reports of Brant a few months after his appointment (FO, 78/654, Report on the Trade of Erzerum for the Year 1845, and on the State of the Pashalik (Report for 1845). Esat Pasha, who superseded Bekir Sami Pasha, was very old for the governance of Erzurum, so Brant advised Bahri Pasha to take this post. According to him, Bahri Pasha demonstrated his effectiveness during his administration of Kars. He secured the respect and obedience of all parties of the province. Therefore, he considered that Bahri Pasha's administration would be a fortunate circumstance for the people and the well-being of the country. So, Bahri Pasha was appointed as the governor of Erzurum at the end of 1846 (FO, 195/227, Brant to Canning, 2 January 1846; BOA, İMSM, 49/1235-8). While there may be additional instances demonstrating Brant's impact on appointments and dismissals, we believe that the examples outlined above suffice to grasp the extent of Brant's influence.

One of the key issues highlighted by Brant is the link of corruption and bribery from the highest officials, even ministers, to those in the most remote parts of the provinces. He, devotes a significant part of his reports to corruption, believed that the ministers did not want to carry out the intentions of the Sultan, and the complete ruin of the Empire was certainly not far distant (FO, 78/614, Brant to Canning, 11 July 1845). During this time, Erzurum was often mismanaged, and the poor people, the majority of the population, had difficulties in maintaining their living conditions. They also struggled to pay the taxes. The governors ignored their circumstances when collecting taxes, despite the fact that they were weakened by war, famine, and disease (BOA, İ.MVL, 10/154, 8.Ş.1256; FO, 195/175, Notes on a Journey from Batoom, Adjareh, Shavshet, Ardahan, Ghioleh, Benek and Olti to Erzerum, 31 August 1841). Because of the extensive network of bribery and corruption among politicians, many governors, who were often associated with corrupt individuals, ignored their misconduct (FO, 78/752, Brant to Palmerston, 12 June 1848). The people not only suffered from the mismanagement but also from the attacks of the bandits. Their goods, even within sight of the governors, were continually carried off by bandits, and all along the road to the frontier, caravans were constantly plundered in open daylight by parties of robbers (FO, 78/613, Brant to Canning, 9 September 1845). The inhabitants, especially villagers, oppressed under these challenging conditions, left their homeland whenever they had an opportunity (FO, 78/338, Brant to Palmerston, 24 April 1838).

In all his communications with the Pashas, Brant advised them on improving the administration and the welfare of the province. For instance, he spoke of the immense advantage a road to Trabzon would confer on the country, and how much it would increase the wealth of the people, placing them in a position to contribute more largely to the revenues of the state (FO, 78/491, Report on the Trade of Erzeroom for 1841, and on the State of the Pashalik, 20 January 1842). The reason for the consul's recommendations to improve the conditions in the Ottoman Empire was, of course, not only given for the development of the country but also making the people valuable consumers of the British industry (FO, 78/533, Brant to Bidwell, 5 February 1843).

Brant repeatedly emphasized, with some exaggeration, that the presence of consuls was beneficial to the Ottoman Empire. According to him, the consuls played a controlling role over governors, aided the cause of good government and civilisation, and helped to spread of humanitarian ideas among those in authority (Report for 1838). Therefore, he thought that the consuls were the pioneers of civilization in the country that was impoverished by a succession of extortionate governors and was becoming less productive every year. With the Tanzimat Edict, the abolition of monopolies, the exportation of every kind of produce, the repression of the abuses of the local administrators, and the protection extended to the productive classes, led to the hope that the country's prosperity would revive. Brant saw the consuls as a guarantee of sustaining this hope and the execution of the reforms promised by the Tanzimat Edict (FO, 195/175, Report on the Trade of Erzeroom for 1840, and on the state of the Pashalik, 21 January 1841). According to him, both from a commercial and political point of view, the territorial integrity and independence of Turkey were among the issues in which Great Britain was most interested. These could only be achieved through civilization and the development of the resources. Therefore, efficient consular officers should be stationed in every remote province throughout the empire (FO, 78/906, Brant to Rose, 20 August 1852). Brant's evaluations mentioned above are subject to interpretation, and their accuracy can be debated. However, it is clear that consuls exerted a supervisory influence over provincial officials. Furthermore, it is undeniable that consuls played a significant role in introducing European lifestyle, clothing, thoughts, and customs to the Ottoman provinces through their own lifestyle and practices.

2.2. Brant's Observations and Reports on the Sanjak of Muş

In this period, Muş was one of the significant and worst-managed cities under the responsibility of the Governor of Erzurum. As this city fell within Brant's jurisdiction, he closely monitored of any developments regarding it. The district was under the rule of Kurdish Beys (chiefs) named Alaaddin Pashazade (i.e. the sons of Alaaddin), the notable families of Bitlis. Since the laws gave the opportunity to all male members of the ruling family to become rulers, there was a struggle among Emin Pasha and his brother Şerif Bey with their cousin Hüseyin Pasha to dominate the government that could be a big threat to stability in the district. At this time, the governor of Muş was Hüseyin Pasha, but the whole power was exercised by his chamberlain named Ibrahim Efendi. Brant drew attention to the situation of Muş on 9 December 1844 with a report titled Memorandum Regarding the State of Moosh (FO, 78/572, Memorandum Regarding the State of Moosh, 9 December 1844 (Memorandum). According to this report, Ibrahim Efendi had great influence and accumulated riches for himself with unlawful means when Emin Pasha, the former governor of Muş, was in charge. After Emin Pasha's death, Kamili Pasha confined him because of his misconduct, but he could obtain his release with the money

he distributed (Memorandum). In the time of Sami Pasha, the successor of Kamili Pasha, he was condemned to pay a claim of 75.000 kurush. Nevertheless, he gave the pasha a 20.000 kurush bribe in exchange for screening him (FO, 195/227, Brant to Canning, 12 December 1845).

Ibrahim Efendi set up a corrupt rule with Christian and Muslim notables who enriched themselves at the expense of the poor and helpless people subjected to unjust practices, heavy taxes and oppression. Moreover, the kadi acted in concert with him. His other allies were Vartabet, the Armenian Bishop, the head of the convent of Changeri, and Osep, the millet başı (head of the nation). Thus, they exploited both the Muslims, and the Armenians.

The common means used in the struggle among the members of the ruling family to obtain governance was the so-called documents about the governors, which were ostensibly prepared by the inhabitants. There were many forged documents created to either discredit or glorify the chiefs in the eyes of the Sublime Porte. If Ibrahim Efendi and his allies wished to prepare a petition in favour of, or against, any governor, they penned it themselves; the Muslims were made to sign it by the kadi, and the Armenians, by the Bishop. Nevertheless, neither knew what they were affixing their seals. Thus, petitions of the most contrary nature were continually coming from Muş to the governor of Erzurum. They were, both in favour, and against Şerif Bey, as also in favour of Huseyin Pasha, as well as against him. Actually, these papers meant nothing more than the temporary purposes of these persons (Memorandum).

The people were reduced to the lowest state of misery by the enormous and increasing demands of them. The regular taxes were considerably higher than in 1843 when villagers paid 500 kurush. In 1844, they were taxed at 1.100 to 1.200 kurush. The same amount was demanded for poll-tax from the reduced population. Although the population decreased by a third, the poll-tax amount in the previous period was collected. Because of this, some had to pay 300 kurush, even though the greatest fee per person was often 60 kurush. The irregular taxes were without a number and limit. Ostensibly, Ibrahim Efendi levied monthly on every village for the supply of the pasha's establishment so; the villagers had to give a certain amount of barley, butter, straw, hay and sheep. The chiefs of the nomad tribes, the friends or supporters of Ibrahim Efendi, levied on the villagers, at their own discretion, barley, straw, hay, butter, cheese, and sheep. It was impossible for the peasant to compensate for their losses, if they resisted, they would be almost certainly exposed to the revenge of the chiefs (Memorandum).

Before 1841 in Muş, it was a custom to provide quarters in the villages for the tent-dwelling nomads and food for their cattle that was called 'kışlak', or winter quarters. The peasants, especially the Armenians, were forced to supply them with lodging and cattle with stabling hay and straw. As the great part of the summer, the villagers had to toil to collect the fodder required in the winter for the tribes' cattle, they could not increase their own stock (FO, 78/366, Brant, Report of a Tour through a part of Koordistan 1 June 1839). According to Brant, it was estimated that about 5,000 families of Muş and Van abandoned their homes because of the extremely harsh living conditions. This caused the agricultural population to decrease, and when deaths from famine and plague were added to this, the country was about to turn into a desert (FO, 195/175, Brant to Bankhead, 10 January 1842). The government abolished the winter quartering of the Kurdish tribes in Muş when Kamili Pasha was appointed to the governance of Erzurum at the beginning of 1841. However, when Ibrahim Efendi came to power in Muş, he continued the winter-quartering practice despite the government's

prohibition. When the tribes' chiefs came to Muş, for their own business, Ibrahim Efendi sent them, their servants and horses to lodge at the houses of Armenians. Even though the host had to bear a heavy expense, he was terrified of being punished if he opposed this unfair practice.

Every three to four months, the head of the villages of the villages were changed on some frivolous pretext. Each new head of the villages was required to give a gift to Ibrahim Efendi as a gesture of respect and tradition. Since they were burdening the cost of the gifts to the villagers, the taxes paid by the peasants were constantly getting heavier (Memorandum). Ibrahim Efendi, was also collected the state taxes as a tax farmer with aid of Osep from the villages. He arbitrarily increased the tax rate, and unjustly collected millions of kurush from the people. The houses of the people, who could not afford to pay the taxes, were put up for sale, and they were threatened to keep their voices down. As a result, many were hesitant to complain because they were afraid of getting into trouble with authorities and being punished (BOA, A.MKT, 30/13, 6.Za.1261/6 Kasım 1845).

Ibrahim Efendi obliged the bakers of Muş to buy wheat from him at exorbitant prices, in return he allowed them to cover their losses by increasing the price of bread to nearly double. Thus, people had to enrich this insatiable and avaricious head of the villages by paying a higher price for staple food than it should have been. Ibrahim Efendi was hiding his crimes by preparing fake documents that indicated the inhabitants were satisfied with him (BOA, A.MKT, 28/84). Brant reported that he knew very little about the oppression of Ibrahim Efendi and added that there were innumerable others, which would forever remain undiscovered (Memorandum).

Brant calls our attention to the results of the terrible conduct of the authorities in his yearly report. In his opinion, it was not a surprise that the villagers had been reduced to poverty. Because the authorities whose only concern was their own financial well-being, did not care about the improvement of the country or the miserable situation of the people. It was possible that within a few years, emigration could lead to a significant reduction in revenue and the country could become uncultivated and nearly uninhabited. Brant thought that the introduction of the Tanzimat was a step well calculated that could be taken to stop the country's impending destruction. Provided that a more equitable manner of assessing the taxes had been established, as was proposed, it would be anticipated that eventually the country may be returned to some degree of prosperity. According to him, these measures were not alone sufficient to repair the waste of ages. Because, authorities, like Ibrahim Efendi, were still continuing to destroy hopes for the future (FO, 78/613, Memorandum on the Means of Advancing the Prosperity of the Inhabitants of the Pashalik of Erzerum and of Augmenting the Revenue, 9 June 1845).

When Brant's report reached the British Embassy, Kamili Pasha had to send a man ostensibly to inquire about the situation in Muş. After returning, the pasha informed Brant that he was satisfied with what his emissary reported, and the complaints were inaccurate. Brant believed that the pasha knew the real state of things perfectly and that the man was sent to Ibrahim Efendi to discover how the consul got information regarding the province. At the same time, the pasha also questioned Osep about Brant's report, and demanded to know where Brant acquired his information. Brant was convinced that Pasha tried to prevent the people from communicating such to him in future (FO, 78/613, Brant to the Earl of Aberdeen, 16 January 1845).

In the summer of 1845, a group of people came from Bitlis to complain against the extortion of İbrahim Efendi. The chief of them, the head of the Armenian community at Bitlis, claimed a sum of about 70.000 kurush from İbrahim Efendi. Thereupon, İbrahim Efendi was put in prison, and was released on an engagement to pay in fifteen days. His release was said to have been ordered in consequence of a present of 30.000 kurush made to the pasha. The time expired, and every sort of pretext was used to put off the payment. The people, wearied out, requested permission to proceed to Istanbul since they thought that the affair could not be settled in Erzurum (FO, 195/227, Brant to Canning, 11 June 1845). Meanwhile, the head of the group was run over by a horseman in the street, and killed on the spot. It was at first stated that the horseman was a follower of İbrahim Efendi, but it had since been said that he was not known to be connected with İbrahim Efendi, that he could not control his horse, and that consequently the man's death was accidental (FO 195/227, Brant to Canning, 1 July 1845). Brant had started an inquiry to listen to those who witnessed the whole affair, and then he reported that the death of the head of the deputation was premeditated. According to him, the murderer was connected with İbrahim Efendi. Following this affair, İbrahim Efendi was allowed to go to Bitlis, under the pretence of settling his accounts. However, Brant emphasised that he had paid handsomely for his liberty, and by that means, had stifled all complaints against him (FO, 195/227, Brant to Canning, 9 July 1845).

Meanwhile, there was a great uprising against the application of the Tanzimat in Van. The authorities were worried that the revolt would spread to Muş as well. At the same time, Kamil Pasha, one of the members of the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinance (Meclis-i Vâlâ), sent to Erzurum to explain the benefits of the Tanzimat to the people. When the pasha visited Muş, he witnessed closely the persecution regime established in Muş and understood that everything that was said about İbrahim Efendi was true. The people of Muş even told him that İbrahim Efendi tortured the wives of those who resisted him by hanging them by their feet (BOA, A.MKT, 30/13, 6.Za.1261).

After Brant's report, Kamili Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, was dismissed, and a new governor was sent to Muş. However, the inhabitants of Muş sent a petition to Erzurum and requested to appoint Şerif Bey to the governance of Muş. (FO, 78/613, Brant to the Earl of Aberdeen, 1 April 1845). Thus, Şerif Bey was appointed after the public's demand, and it caused a great satisfaction of the inhabitants. As soon as he reached the province, Şerif Bey put Osep in prison on charges of peculation claimed against him by the Armenian community. When the repression, suffered by the inhabitants, eased up the Armenians of Muş addressed a petition complaining of Osep and Vartabet to the Armenian Patriarch, and Catholics did the same to the Catholic Patriarch. Accordingly, what Brant stated in his memorandum respecting Muş, was validated (FO, 78/613, Brant to The Earl of Aberdeen, 10 October 1845). Osep sent a message to Brant to request that he intercede with the pasha, to get him ordered to Erzurum. Brant did not attend to this request, because he did not believe the man deserved any interposition in his favour. He had a strong confirmation regarding the corruption of Osep and the Vartabet by seeing a memorial addressed to the Armenian and Catholic patriarchs, complaining of these two individuals, most numerous signed by the Armenians and Catholics of Muş (FO, 195/227, Brant to Canning, 8 October 1845).

When Şerif Bey came to Erzurum to receive his confirmation from Esat Pasha, he engaged to introduce the Tanzimat and faithfully acted up to its provisions and then was sent back to Muş

(Report for 1845). Esat Pasha ordered Ibrahim Efendi to pay his debt of 75.000 kurush in the time of Sami Pasha. He also threatened to throw him in jail. Finding the pasha serious, he had to give an obligation to pay within a specified time which was granted him (FO, 195/227, Brant to Canning, 12 December 1845). In 1846, the people were satisfied with the administration of Şerif Bey and they had no grievance against him. The Governor of Erzurum was also pleased with him, as he regularly paid the state revenues (Report for 1845). However, the complaints about Ibrahim Efendi continued in 1846, probably because the grievances of the people were not eliminated. This time, the Muslims and Armenians of Muş and Bitlis tried to make their voices heard in Istanbul through the Armenian Patriarchate and the Catholic Patriarchate. Catholic Patriarch Andon stated that people sent him petitions several times in 1845 and 1846 and that while the people were supposed to pay 2000 purses (1,000,000 kurush) in 1844, Ibrahim Efendi, together with his five partners, forcibly collected 6900 purses (3,450,000 kurush) from them. According to the patriarch report, Ibrahim Efendi did not take into account the complaints of the people, saying that no one could interfere with him, and threatened the complainants by using some nomadic tribes in Muş (BOA, A.DVN, 17/62-2, 23.Ş.1262).

After the patriarchs intervened in the case, Ibrahim Efendi and the representatives of Bitlis in Erzurum were confronted in the Erzurum Assembly. Ibrahim Efendi stated in the court that he had collected only 3700 purses (1,850,000 kurush) from the people, but denied the remaining amount. Thereupon, the representatives requested that the court send a special officer to the region. Ibrahim Efendi knew that he would definitely be found guilty in this case, and prevented the officer from being sent. The Armenian patriarch, who followed the incident, asked the government to appoint Enveri Efendi, a member of the Meclis-i Vâlâ who was in Erzurum at that time, to preside over the court (BOA, MVL, 43/42, 15.B.1262).

As soon as Ibrahim Efendi lost his post, he attempted to undermine his political rival, Şerif Bey, utilizing various strategies to discredit and undermine him. Ibrahim Efendi created some rumours to pass up to defame Şerif Bey that he and his brothers were persecuting the people in Muş and even committing murder. The Ottoman government asked Bahri Pasha, governor of Erzurum, to inquire about these allegations. After his investigation, Bahri Pasha reported that what was said about Şerif Bey was not true and that it was Ibrahim Efendi and an Armenian named Haçmanuk who made these allegations. Besides, Ibrahim Efendi's supporters in Muş had prepared many fake documents to denigrate Şerif Bey. Hence, it was understood that all the rumours about Şerif Bey were revealed a fabrication (BOA, MVL, 9/38, 9.Za.1262). Even though the conditions were always against him, Ibrahim Efendi somehow succeeded in delivering himself from being punished and even regained his position in Muş in 1852. As he did in the past, he extorted money from people for various excuses and punished many people for no reason. Thus, the endless cries of the people of Muş for justice reached Istanbul again (BOA, A.DVN, 82/99, 13.S.1269).

3. Conclusion

After the Treaty of Hünkâr Iskelesi, the British government understood how important the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire was for their interests. So, they aimed to expand the consulate network in the empire and to obtain more detailed information through the consuls. These consuls were not only responsible for providing information about the districts or protecting Britain's interests but also were encouraging the implementation of the reforms necessary to strengthen the empire against the Russians. In line with this policy,

the British government established a consulate in Erzurum and James Brant was appointed as a consul there. Brant closely followed all the political, social, and economic affairs in the region and reported information regarding anything to the British Embassy. After he took office in 1836, the governors of Erzurum feared Brant's political impact that could cause them to lose their posts. Therefore, the governors, even lower-level officials, had to act more cautiously. From this argument, it can be inferred that Brant took on a supervisory role in overseeing the authorities, leading to the dismissal or reassignment of several governors. On the basis of this, it can be concluded that Brant, had a significant influence on the eastern part of the Ottoman Empire in the first half of the 19th century.

In his reports, Brant constantly emphasized the link of corruption and bribery from Istanbul to the most remote parts of the provinces. But, it was not possible to prevent corruption or mismanagement in the region solely through Brant's reports. The case of Ibrahim Efendi and those like him shows that the gaps in the administrative system allowed them to regain their posts despite being found guilty on all charges. It also indicates that officials and a large influential group rejected the application of the Tanzimat Edict, and the administrative system encountered challenges in carrying out reforms because of officials' opposition to change. For that reason, Brant warned that the widespread mismanagement and the long-term implications of institutional corruption would cause the complete downfall of the Empire.

Brant attached significant importance to the situation in Muş, as he directly prepared a detailed report on the misgovernance and corruption in that region. Thanks to his efforts, the complaints of the people of Muş reached Istanbul, Ibrahim Efendi was dismissed and the governance of Muş was given to Şerif Bey. From this perspective, it can be seen that Brant's view of the beneficial impact of the presence of consuls on both individuals and the state is partially justified. Ottoman archival documents also confirm the accuracy of Brant's findings. However, these documents do not contain sufficient information on how the corruption was carried out and how people were affected by the poor governance. Without Brant's reports, it would not be possible to obtain such detailed insights solely from Ottoman archival documents. Of course, it is not possible to claim that Brant's reports are entirely objective. His biased view towards Ottoman officials and society is easily noticeable in his writings. Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, Brant's reports deserve to be among the reference sources for researchers studying Eastern Anatolia.

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