

Regional Reform as an Ambition: Charles Blunt Sen., His Majesty's Consul in Salonica, during His Early Years in the Ottoman Empire (1835–39)¹

Michael Ursinus

The period immediately preceding the *Tanzimat-i Hayriyye* or Tanzimat proper deserves some special recognition in a volume focussing, among other topics, on centre and periphery issues. The reason is simple: It is a period during which many of the foundations were laid for what happened later in terms of state centralization; but they were laid during this period under conditions characterized by the still limited centralist powers of the Ottoman government. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839), the Porte had already started pursuing a policy of tying the provinces more closely to the imperial centre, not least by diverting more and more of the provincial resources towards various central institutions, in particular the army. The provincial powers, among them local elites and regional administrative cadres (who, let's not forget, could themselves be 'representing' the central state on the local or regional stage once in the position of recognized office-holders), were bound to feel the downside of the ambitious military and centralist reforms under Mahmud II. Provincial governments were increasingly compelled to respond as best they could by trying to maximize their remaining resources, leading them to what might be termed necessity-induced self-initiative in the way of ensuring sufficient flows of income. This self-initiative out of necessity seems a constituent factor in having motivated some provincial and regional governments towards improvements or 'reforms' on a provincial or regional level even when the central government was unwilling, or unable, to initiate corresponding steps on an empire-wide scale. It follows that the decade or so leading up to the Tanzimat proper, i.e. the period between 1826 and 1839, lends itself to

¹ This is an expanded and anglicized version of my article "Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich als persönliches Anliegen: Charles Blunt, britischer Konsul in Saloniki, als Beobachter und Akteur am Vorabend der Tanzimat" originally published in the memorial volume for the late Petra Kappert: Hendrik FENZ (ed.), *Strukturelle Zwänge—Persönliche Freiheiten. Osmanen, Türken, Muslime: Reflexionen zu gesellschaftlichen Umbrüchen. Gedenkband zu Ehren Petra Kapperts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 405–28.

an investigation into the nature of improvements or 'reforms' on the eve of the Tanzimat that have their origin neither in a general policy nor a specific directive emanating from the Ottoman capital, but rather in the necessity of 'improving' local conditions locally, in some cases evidently to compensate for what appears to have been a worsening financial situation (in relative if not in absolute terms) across at least some sectors of the provincial apparatus due to the Sultan's increasingly costly policies.²

In this context, little systematic research has so far been devoted to the role of European consuls—despite the known attempts by the Western Powers, first and foremost the British, to push for reforms in the Ottoman Empire with the (proclaimed) aim to ameliorate the situation of the Christian subjects of the Sultan. In a doctoral dissertation explicitly devoted to the pre-1839 'regional reforms' in the central district of the Rumelian *eyalet* centred upon Manastır/Bitola, the establishment of the British consulate in 1851 came too late to be relevant,³ but the detailed analysis by Marlene Kurz of the interaction between European consuls and Ottoman authorities during the introduction, in the Salonica of the 1830s, of a local quarantine system provides important insights into the workings of such interactions 'on the spot'.⁴ Even though D.C.M. Platt in his study on the British consuls since 1825 arrives at the conclusion that, collectively, they appear as "lonely, fragmented, distant and unable to communicate among themselves"⁵ (which is far from suggesting them as key figures with regard to our subject), we nevertheless know of several cases where individual European consuls, in particular from among those who remained in their host country for decades rather than years, to have played significant roles even beyond their immediate mandate and place of assignment. This was not only due to their diplomatic status as defined in their country's capitulations treaties and other conventions entered upon with the Ottoman government,⁶ but also a consequence of the fact that European consuls, even in the remotest part of the Empire, were able to draw on a diplomatic network at the centre of which stood, in close proximity to the Porte (and

2 Michael URSINUS, *Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich am Vorabend der Tanzimat. Reformen der rumelischen Provinzialgouverneure im Gerichtssprengel von Manastir (Bitola) zur Zeit der Herrschaft Sultan Mahmuds II. (1808–1839)*. (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1982).

3 URSINUS, *Regionale Reformen*, 107.

4 Marlene KURZ, *Die Einführung von Quarantänemassnahmen im Osmanischen Reich unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Saloniki* (unpublished MA thesis, Heidelberg 1997).

5 D.C.M. PLATT, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (Edinburgh: Longman, 1971), p. 1.

6 In the case of the British, these include, from the 19th century, the peace treaty of 1809, the British-Ottoman Free Trade agreement of 1830 and the Trade Convention of 1838.

this not necessarily in geographical terms alone), the ambassador as the representative of his government—a fact which the Ottoman authorities appear to have been generally fully aware of. From the point of view of an Ottoman provincial or regional governor it was therefore often a requirement of political astuteness to consider the local consul, or consuls, as persons with whom to enter into friendly talks if not (tactical) agreement when important matters were at stake, thereby still leaving open the possibility of aligning one consul against the other in an attempt to neutralize their powers of influence—to ignore them altogether was hardly an option. Had there not been cases of consular reports submitted to the embassy in Istanbul with critical remarks about the demeanour of a local governor which had led to remonstrations at the Sublime Porte and finally culminated in severe consequences for, or even disposal of, the accused? From the perspective of an Ottoman provincial government a circumspect handling of the local agents of the European powers suggested itself already for reasons of keeping a check on the local balance of power. The more so, since a local government in the Ottoman Empire tended to be faced with a multitude of potential local players whose individual or collective interests could make it imperative to side, if only temporarily, with one or more of the European diplomats in their midst. With respect to their ability to act, more particularly their ability to assert themselves internally, it was of no little importance for an Ottoman provincial or local government to prevent such a coalition between local and foreign interests. It is at precisely this point, however, through an alliance with the local elites (or some of them) directed against the governor, that an ambitious European consul could commence exerting pressure on the authorities.

More complicated, but also more promising for exerting political influence, were situations and locations where representatives from more than one level of Ottoman governance as well as the heads of the Jewish and Christian religious communities suggested themselves as potential coalition partners. This was typical above all for important trade centres such as Aleppo, Izmir and Salonica⁷ which, despite their size, did not function as the centre of a province (*eyalet*) under the authority of a *vali* or *müşir*, but merely constituted a sub-centre on the district level (*sancak*). It was here, perhaps more than anywhere else, that the hierarchical and social antagonism between the district governor (also called *kaymakam*), whose roots often reached no further than his district, and the *vali* or provincial governor (generally of a non-local background) in the (distant) provincial capital lent itself to being exploited profitably with the aim

⁷ For Ottoman Salonica in the period and context of reform see Meropi ANASTASSIADOU, *Salonique, 1830–1912: Une ville ottomane à l'âge des réformes* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

of exerting political influence—in addition to the latent tensions between the religious communities and social groups, which also merited some consular attention in the highly fragmented and tiered pattern of an Ottoman port city.

Without sufficient knowledge of the local circumstances it would have been difficult or even impossible for any stranger to exert pressure in a predictable manner. To live up to the challenge of knowing how to ‘pull the strings’ effectively, you needed to be a keen observer and an excellent judge of human nature, ready to learn fast. For any newly appointed consul one of the first questions to address was this: Who is friend, who foe? More particularly, it had to be decided who was going to be a useful ally, or a likely hindrance, in the execution of one’s own professional duties and the achievement of the prescribed tasks. Accordingly, suitable alliances had to be prepared. In order to be able to do so successfully, it was clearly imperative to understand as fully as possible the local balance of power (which however was never free from external influences) as a microcosm governed by personal and collective interests and ambitions for power within which the consuls (where appropriate) were to play their part. Only after these conditions were met it was possible to judge from which side to expect the most support for a given undertaking, suggesting a coalition of purpose which as such would of course not necessarily have outlasted its immediate aims.

For a start, however, the newcomer had to be able, with the intention of achieving his goal, to draw on reliable information regarding the land and the people. Let me quote here an authority from the first half of the 19th century with long years of experience from life in several Ottoman provinces:

Strangers of any appearance of respectability when travelling in the interior of the Ottoman Empire are generally, in consequence of their travelling with *ferman* or *buyruldu* either quartered upon the Christian Bishops, or at the houses of the *çorbacı* or rich Christian *reayas*. If at the house of the latter, his host in all probability a member of the community, will he give the requisite information and compromise himself? If he remains a day or two with the Bishop all the information he will obtain will most certainly mislead him. A passage through Turkey or a year or two in the country will not afford the necessary opportunities for obtaining the requisite information.⁸

8 Charles Blunt, quoted after Bülent ÖZDEMİR, “Being a Part of The Cinderella Service: Consul Charles Blunt at Salonica in the 1840s”, in: Colin IMBER, Keiko KIYOTAKI and Rhoads MURPHEY (eds.), *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*. Volume II (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 241–52; especially p. 244.

One of the keenest observers of all things Ottoman and an authority on the conditions in several Ottoman provinces, in fact one of the longest-standing European consuls in the Ottoman Empire of his time, is Charles Blunt senior, *His Majesty's Consul* in Salonica between 1835 and 1856,⁹ whose activities in the area have recently been the subject of a study by Bülent Özdemir, without however dealing in detail with the question of this consul's 'political' role during the first five years of his term in office.¹⁰ Neither will the present contribution be able to exploit this subject to the full, as the relevant documentation is vast and the space in this volume by necessity limited. Irrespective of a more detailed study at a later date or by another hand, an attempt is being made on the following pages to outline the career of Charles Blunt on the basis of selected passages from his reports.¹¹ They allow to show how the newly appointed British consul succeeded, in the course of his first Salonican years between 1835 and 1839, not only in building up a sound understanding of the situation in front of him, but also in advancing himself as an important factor in the interaction between the provincial governor with his headquarters in Yanya (Ioannina), the deputy governor (*kaymakam*) in the rank of a pasha based in Salonica (for whom Blunt regularly uses the term 'the Pacha'), the chief *kadı* of Salonica ('the Mollah'), the Greek-Orthodox metropolitan bishop ('the Bishop') as well as various local élites¹² (including the wealthy Muslim landowners of the district, labelled 'the Beys', who were for the most

9 The sketchy biographical information available on Charles Blunt the elder is summarized by Özdemir (ÖZDEMİR, *Cinderella Service*, 243). A comprehensive study of his life and career would appear to be still lacking. The papers of his son, Sir John Elijah Blunt (d. 1916), who was born in 1832 as the child of consul Charles Blunt and his wife Caroline Vitalis, were purchased by the University of Birmingham (England) on the initiative of Professor John Haldon and are now housed there in the Special Collections Department.

10 Bülent ÖZDEMİR, *Ottoman Reforms and Social Life, Reflections from Salonica 1830–1850* (Istanbul: Isis, 2003).

11 My quotations in the text are taken from the multi-volume edition by Hristo ANDONOV-POLJANSKI of Blunt's letters and reports to his superiors in Istanbul and London, the first volume of which comprises the documentation up to 1839: Hristo ANDONOV-POLJANSKI (ed.), *Britanski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod. Tom I (1797–1839) / British Documents on the History of the Macedonian People. Volume I (1797–1839)*, (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1968) (abbreviated as *Documents*). Page references are given to facilitate locating the quotation within the document as a whole; they do not allow drawing conclusions about the size of the document whose serial number given by the editor is here retained. Typographical and other obvious editorial errors are tacitly corrected; my own additions are placed in square brackets.

12 About various forms and appearances of local elites in the Ottoman Empire see now Antonis ANASTASOPOULOS (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire* (= Halcyon Days

part residing in Salonica and its vicinity). Even though this holds true strictly speaking only for the epistemological plane of Blunt's own narrative, the following quotations from his narrative are nevertheless highly suggestive of a rapid transformation 'in the real world' of their creator from being a mere rival of (some of) his consular colleagues in the third-largest Ottoman port city towards becoming a veritable active player not only in the context of the city of Salonica and its environment, but increasingly also within the framework of the entire province of Yanya by making his fame, in all but name, as the true *kaymakam* of the allegedly energetic and reformist governor, Mustafa Nuri Pasha (1798–1879)¹³ who, in 1837, was appointed governor general (*müşir*) of the province of Yanya with the *sancaks* of Trikkala and Selanik.¹⁴

The assignment letter of 2nd February 1835 by the Duke of Wellington addressed to Charles Blunt enumerates in detail the duties of His Majesty's newly appointed consul in Salonica (No 65):¹⁵

Sir,

With reference to Viscount Palmerston's Dispatch No 1 of the 17th of November last, acquainting you that The King had been graciously pleased appoint you to be H. M's Consul at Salonica, I herewith transmit to you printed Copies of the Capitulations with the Ottoman Porte and of the Treaty of Peace of January 1809, which secure great and important Privileges to British Subjects in the Ottoman Dominions.

It will be your duty to do all in your power to prevent those privileges from being impaired or infringed.

The late Levant Company under their Charter and By Laws, of which latter an Extract is annexed, confided extensive Powers of Jurisdiction to their Consuls, and the 4th Section of the Act of the 6th of His late Majesty

in Crete V. A Symposium Held in Rethymno 10–12 January 2003) (Rethymno: University of Crete, 2005).

13 The most recent assessment as to the 'reformist' stance of Mustafa Nuri Pasha in the context of other Ottoman provincial administrators during the first half of the 19th century and beyond can be found in Christoph HERZOG, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak. Die Provinz Bagdad, 1817–1917* (unpublished habilitation thesis, Heidelberg 2004), pp. 93–6.

14 The territorial divisions of the Ottoman Empire in its Balkan possessions up to 1878 are given in Hans-Jürgen KORNRUMPF, *Die Territorialverwaltung im östlichen Teil der europäischen Türkei vom Erlass der Vilayetsordnung (1864) bis zum Berliner Kongress (1878) nach amtlichen osmanischen Veröffentlichungen* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1976).

15 The National Archives, London (hereafter: NA), Foreign Office (hereafter: FO) 78/265. Turkey. Salonica 1835 (*Documents*, 242).

cap. 33a copy of which is herewith enclosed gives the like powers to the Consuls of His Majesty residing in the Levant.

Your permission had been forwarded to H. M's Consul Gen[era]l at Constantinople with Instructions to Him to obtain the usual Exequatur or Firman of the Porte, to enable you to execute the Duties confided to you.

The King's Commission and the Ottoman Exequatur will give you the necessary controul over British subjects (including in this denomination natives of the Ionian Islands) residing within the limits of your Consulate; who are bound by virtue of said Commission, to acknowledge and obey you in all cases as His Majesty's Consul.

You will keep H. M's Ambassador and H. M's Consul Gen[era]l at Constantinople fully informed of all matters of interest which may take place within your Consulate, and you will attend to the Instruction which you may receive from either of them.

Your Consular District will extend from the Frontiers of Greece to the Bay of Lagos exclusively, comprehending the Turkish Islands on the Coast.

[signed: Wellington]

After some interruptions and delays of his journey due to (man-made) supply shortages, Blunt had arrived in Salonica by boat on 5 June 1835 in order to take over the duties of his consular predecessor, Francis Charnaud. In the context of this somewhat impeded journey he had made a first indirect, but from his point of view nevertheless rather unpleasant acquaintance with his later 'ally' Mustafa Nuri Pasha, then acting governor of Adrianople (Edirne). On 12 June 1835 he writes to Lord Ponsonby, His Majesty's Ambassador in Constantinople (No. 66, *Inclosure*):¹⁶

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform your Lordship of my arrival here on the 5th Inst and having received from Mr J. Charnaud the Archives of the Consulate I have commenced my Official duties.

I am sorry to acquaint your Excellency that I was detained at Enos for ten days, for want of bread for the crew of the Vessel I had engaged to bring me here, there was no flower (sic) to be had owing, My Lord, I regret to say, to the speculations of Mustafa Pasha, who has bought up all the

16 NA—FO 78/253. Turkey. Ponsonby; FO 195/100. Turkey. Salonica 1835 (*Documents*, p. 243).

wheat, which he now supplies to the Villages and Towns near Adrianople at very high prices.

I have not yet had time, My Lord, to go minutely into the Trade of this place, however I find that it is greatly on the increase as regards imports from England four years back, what goods of British Manufactures, and produce were sold here were supplied from Syria, Constantinople and Smyrna, now there are yearly from five to six Vessels arrive direct from England (and some of them with entire Cargoes) with manufactures, Iron and Colonials, these goods the Jews send into the Interior for that place itself requires but a small portion of the Imports.

I am happy to acquaint your Lordship that the most perfect tranquillity reigns here and that the Town, and dependencies of this Consulate are free from Plague.

I have the honour to be, etc. etc. Char[le]s Blunt

In this first of a long series of reports from Salonica addressed by Blunt to his superior in the Ottoman capital, the principle concern of a British consul in the Levant becomes evident:¹⁷ To trace in detail, and to support, the development of the British trade going through the local port and the region at large. Soon, the trading activities of other foreign nations were to be recorded for reasons of comparison, such as the numbers of inbound and outbound trading vessels under foreign flags; grain exports from Salonica; the prices of the main agrarian products; but also general observations concerning the observance or otherwise of the trade conventions between Britain and the Ottoman Empire; as regards the political and military situation in the hinterland of Salonica; relating to the movements of troops and the thread from disease and epidemics, in particular the plague (which was again threatening to turn into a major epidemic during 1835–7)¹⁸—to mention but some of the topics on which regular information was demanded. Comprehensive statistics to back up individual statements and observations can often be found attached to the reports submitted, among them unusually detailed descriptions of the local

17 For the Levant and the Levantine in the 19th century see Oliver Jens SCHMITT, *Levantiner. Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im Osmanischen Reich im "langen" 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 2005).

18 See Daniel PANZAC, *La peste dans l'Empire Ottoman, 1700–1850* (Louvain: Peeters, 1985) and, specifically dealing with the situation in Salonica during the period in question: Marlene KURZ, *Die Einführung von Quarantänemaßnahmen im Osmanischen Reich unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Saloniki* (unpublished MA thesis, Heidelberg 1997).

tax regime which are remarkable for their wealth of information and grasp of the essential, complete with tables showing the compounded tax load of the local Christians (in comparison with similar data for the local Jews) for the period between 1830 and 1839, separately listing their part of the district's tax share (termed '*rokusija*') as well as their obligations for the upkeep of the auxiliary troops, the hospital, the prison and the commune (*'politaia'*).¹⁹

As mentioned before, it is not intended here to deal comprehensively with all aspects of our protagonist's activities while in office; rather, an attempt will be made to highlight his role as an active player in the sense outlined above. In order to do justice to the dynamics of the process under observation it would appear to be a useful tool if we divided his career (as *homo politicus*) up to 1839 into four distinct phases, only at the end of which we will observe a (temporary) high point in the way Blunt was to succeed in exerting his influence on the Ottoman side. Far from anticipating his later scope of action, but gradually leading up to it, the first phase commences rather modestly with an attempt by Blunt to secure advantageous alliances.

PHASE I: Blunt accuses Ibrahim Pasha, chief of the Ottoman administration in Salonica from December 1834, of frustrating the quarantine measures adopted by the town's superintendent during the summer of 1835 to be observed at sea and, later, on land too. Against Ibrahim Pasha Blunt secures the support of the Muslim notables, the Christian and Jewish communities and, above all, the (majority of the) European consuls resident in Salonica.

Already on 17 November 1835 Blunt had a meeting at the *konak* of Ibrahim Pasha, in company with the French and Russian consuls,²⁰ "upon Quarantine".²¹ Possibly referring to this meeting, Blunt was later to write in a letter addressed

19 Hristo ANDONOV-POLJANSKI (ed.), *Britanski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod Tom II (1840–1847) / British Documents on the History of the Macedonian People Volume II (1840–1847)* (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1977), enclosures no 2 and no 3 between pages 8 and 9. These documents from NA—FO 195/176 and FO 78/411 are reproduced here in Macedonian translation. On the fiscal terminology employed by Blunt see Michael URSINUS, "*Hane*" in Kalkandelen, '*Ru'us*' in Selanik. Regionalspezifische Verwaltungspraktiken und—begriffe im Osmanischen Reich bis zum Beginn der *Tanzimat*", in: Michael URSINUS, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und ihre Interpretation* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1994), pp. 25–47.

20 Conspicuously absent is the Austrian consul Chabert. On his opposition to the quarantine measures see KURZ, *Einführung*, pp. 43f.

21 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 69). This and the following episodes are described in KURZ, *Einführung*, pp. 43–58.

to the ambassador in Istanbul dated 2 May 1836 (No. 74) about the consuls' past efforts to introduce quarantine measures for the port of Salonica:²²

When accounts reached this [place] last summer, that the plague had broken out at Cavalla, efforts were made by the Consuls to endeavour to induce the Pacha to establish Quarantine, A Kind of Quarantine was established, for all vessels with foul Bills were obliged to anchor at some distance from the Town, and perform Quarantine, according to the decision of the Superintendent [*şehir kethüdası* ?]; the apathy, however, of the Pacha, and other intrigues, soon destroyed all our efforts.

I beg to assure your Lordship that the situation of Salonica offers local advantages for the establishment of Quarantine which few ports in Turkey can boast of, I have also the satisfaction of being able to state, that from the various interviews I have had with the influential Beys, and other Turks here, that I have invariably found them all much in favour of

22 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 249). This can be corroborated with some details from the Salonica court registers (*sicil*): Volume no. 231 of the *kadı sicilleri* of Selanik contains a list (pp. 12–14) of local expenses (*masarıfat-i vakı'a*) said to have occurred during the six months beginning with the first day of Muharrem and ending with the last day of Cemaziyülahir 1250H/10 May–2 November 1834. Among the items listed are 3.106 piastres 21 para for the hiring and provisioning of several men and their boats employed in the enforcement of quarantine measures at sea as “the cholera had broken out on some ships”. A subsequent list of local expenses (*sicil* no. 231, pp. 72f.), valid for the six-months period ending with the first day of Muharrem 1251H/ 29 April 1835, mentions 7.969 piastres 45 para “for the enforcement of quarantine measures regarding the ships from Egypt”, and the next in date (*sicil* no. 231, pp. 98f.) covering the six-months period till the end of Cemaziyülahir 1251H/ 22 October 1835 indicates the expenditure of 7.741 piastres 28 para “for the enforcement of quarantine measures regarding the ships from Egypt and other parts”—still suggesting merely a sea-borne quarantine. Yet a *masarf defteri* in *sicil* no. 232 (pp. 34f.), valid for the period 1 Receb 1251 until 1 Muharrem 1252 (23 October 1835 until 18 April 1836), shows that 12.200 piastres were now spent on the pay for personnel (*hademe*) and the rent of a building (*mahzen*) suitable for the performing of quarantine (*kurantina usuluna ri'ayet için*)—this time on land (for the important distinction between the two types of quarantine see KURZ, Einführung, 14–22; 43). A little later, on 2 August 1836, Blunt was to remark in a communication to Lord Ponsonby (*Documents*, 75) “It would appear my Lord, that His Excellency Ibraiem Pacha, may probably have received some instructions, from Constantinople, regarding Quarantine (...)” (NA—FO 78/276). I am grateful to Professor Vassilis Dimitriades, former director of the Archive of Northern Greece in Salonica, for his kind permission to take photocopies of all relevant materials from the *mahkeme sicilleri* relating to the introduction of quarantine measures in Salonica. On this issue see my “The Cadi and The Consul of Salonica: A Case Study of Complementary Sources, c. 1830–40”, in İlhan Şahin, Hikari Egawa, Emine Erdogan Özünlü, Tuncay Ögün (eds.), *CIEPO 19 Osmanlı Öncesi ve Dönemi Tarihi Araştırmaları 1* (İstanbul 2014), pp. 63–71.

the Quarantine, and perfectly alive to its advantages, the same feeling is expressed by the Jew[ish] and Christian communities, and I by no means advance too much in stating to Your Lordship that could a Firman be obtained, for the Establishment of Quarantine and the building of a Lazarette, that it would be received here by all classes with joy.

I have invariably found Ibrahim Pacha, opposed to the application for a Firman, he giving me his reasons viz. that it would be a power into the hands of the Pacha's for oppressing the people, but I have reason to think that his objection to a Firman arises from the fear of being ordered to build a Lazarette.

Similarly, but in more outspoken terms, on 14 March 1837 (No. 78):²³

I regret having to acquaint your Lordship that the Plague has again appeared in this Town, which I attribute to the obstinacy of the Pacha, who will not accede to the desires of the whole population for the establishment of Quarantine. It is true that a Quarantine Nazier has been appointed, but the measures adopted are, if I may use the term, ridiculous, for when a case of Plague occurs among the Christians, which is very rarely, they are obliged to leave the Town and perform Quarantine, but the Jews amongst whom there is the most plague, are allowed to remain in the town, and compromise the rest of the population. In my dispatch no 4 of 2 May 1836 I had the honour to communicate to Your Excellency the sentiments of the Beys of Salonica regarding the adoption of sanitary measures. They are all now so disgusted with the stupidity of Ibrahim Pacha that they have left the Town.

And again, on 14 June of the same year (No. 80):²⁴

It is to be regretted that the Pacha of Salonica could not, or would not, act with sufficient energy to overcome the prejudices of but a very small portion of the Turkish population, and thereby prevent that increase of Plague, which has for the moment ruined the commerce; the Custom-House might be closed, for receipts do not cover the daily expenses; the Bazars are for the most part closed, and the Town is deserted; the Jews who form two thirds of the population (about 30.000) have for the most part left the Town, the Pacha himself has also retired and lives under a Tent a short distance from the Castle.

23 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 254).

24 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 255, 257).

Finally, on 27 June 1837 (No. 81):²⁵

(...) owing to the want of energy on the part of Ibrahim Pacha, the plague had greatly increased, and the Commerce [has been] perfectly paralyzed. (...) the reports of the plague, greatly exaggerated however (for it has only on one occasion reached fifty in one day) have alarmed everyone, and for the last two months, no sales have been made, all which I attribute, My Lord, to a want of energy on the part of Ibrahim Pacha.

Whenever, in his reports dating from the period between summer 1835 and summer 1837, Blunt refers to Ibrahim Pasha and the steps considered necessary for containing the plague, he points his finger at the “obstinacy of the Pacha” or laments in no uncertain terms about his “lack of energy”. Even the Pasha’s word is eventually no longer taken at face value (No. 81, 27 June 1837, continuation of the above letter):²⁶

The Conversation I had with the Pacha which I reported to Your Lordship in Dispatch No. 5 of the present year I am now inclined to think was not sincere on his part, for I am given to understand that there was no opposition from, or occasion for, alarm of the Ulemas, There is hardly a Turkish inhabitant who is not desirous of Quarantine. Is it not then to be regretted, My Lord, that the lives and property of thousands should be injured and endangered, by the bigotry of one individual, whose only recommendation, is that of being sufficiently rich to pay for the situation he holds.

But Blunt’s alliance with the local elites against the highest-ranking representative of the Ottoman provincial government in Salonica was not to survive the 20th of July, 1837. By that date, messengers from Constantinople had brought to Salonica the intelligence of the appointment to the post of governor-general of the province of Trikkala (or Tirhala, which included the *sancak* of Selanik) of Mustafa Nuri Pasha, former governor of Edirne (see no. 83). Mustafa Nuri (1798–1879), to give but a brief outline of his career, had been taken into the palace of Sultan Mahmud II as an orphan, and was able, as a product of the palace school, to advance, in 1823, to the position of private secretary (*sirr katibi*).

25 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 257).

26 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 258).

In 1832 when, on the instigation of his principal rival Husrev Pasha,²⁷ he was removed not only from service in the palace but the capital at large, he served as *mütesellim* in the *sancak* of Trhala before being sent to Edirne. Despite his at times less than impeccable record due, to a large extent as it would seem, to his son-in-law Mehmed Pasha (d. 1870/1), he was later on, during his time as governor-general with headquarters in Yanya, to be repeatedly praised as an honest governor and energetic reformer.²⁸ As such he is lauded also by Charles Blunt who immediately takes position in favour of the new 'strong man' while at the same time commenting negatively on his former allies, the local *beys*. To what extent the new coalition between the two men marks a break with the mere alliance of convenience it was to replace becomes evident from Blunt's reports dating from the next phase:

PHASE II: Charles Blunt accuses the Muslim notables of Salonica of exploiting the rural population for their own gains. In so arguing Blunt expects to be supported by the energetic Mustafa Nuri Pasha who is considered capable of reigning in the powers of the oppressors of the poor *reaya*. The rejection as unlawful of the widespread exploitation of the *reaya* by the landowning local aristocracy of the *beys* constitutes, in this phase, the argumentative centrepiece of the new partnership between the British consul and the top brass of the Ottoman provincial government.

This changed stance becomes apparent already in Blunt's report to Lord Ponsonby of 20 July 1837 (No. 83): For the first time mention is made of "these abuses of the Beys"; "these disastrous irregularities" or "the intrigues of the Beys". This exploitative attitude of the *beys*, according to Blunt, he had already, even repeatedly, mentioned to Ibrahim Pasha (his erstwhile principal opponent in matters quarantine), but to no avail. Blunt's assessment of Ibrahim Pasha as having "latterly been upon a very bad footing with the Beys"²⁹ can therefore be considered a mere reminiscence of Phase I:

The appointment of Mustapha Nourie Pacha has caused, I am happy in being able to announce to Your Excellency, universal satisfaction, not only here, but as far as I am informed, throughout Thessaly and Macedonia, and there exists a general, and I trust, well founded, hope

27 About the several terms of office of Grand Vizier Husrev Pasha see the entry by Halil İNALCIK in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 5, 606–9 (abridged under "Khosrew Pasha" in *EI*², Vol. 5, 35f.).

28 HERZOG, *Osmanische Herrschaft*, 96.

29 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 260).

that under his able Governance there will be a speedy and general amelioration. I have found that all the well disposed and right thinking Turks entertain great expectations from the nomination of Mustapha Nourie Pacha, and foresee it would appear that it will lead to the abolition of the arbitrary Powers of the Beys, who now, to satisfy their unbounded expenses, do very great injury to the Country. Formerly (and I might say up to the present moment) any Pacha of Salonica who possessed sufficient nerve to remonstrate with the Beys, did not long remain in power; for being united, the Beys by their joint means were enabled to offer such Bribes to some of the parties in Power at the Sublime Porte as insured the speedy expulsion of their obnoxious Pacha (. . .). These Beys My Lord, are for the most part extensive land Proprietors, and they cultivate the greater part of these lands by Angaria or Impressments of the labourers of the Minor Farmers, who are thereby severely injured and in some instances ruined; these labourers, if paid at all, receive wages barely adequate to one half of what they would have received from the minor Farmers; the produce of the lands go in part payment of debts incurred in the support of their immense expenses, and in thus paying their debts it is well known that they force their Grain upon their Creditors, at a rate above the Market price, and when these Beys are called upon by the Pacha for their portion of grain, necessary to complete the quantity required by the Porte, they excuse themselves by reporting to the Pacha, the names of the Creditors, to whom they have given the Grain, When these unfortunate Creditors are obliged to deliver over this grain to the Stirayea [*iştira emini*] or Grain receipt at the Firman Price, by which the poor Rajyah Creditors, are subject to a very considerable loss, having been forced in the first instance, to receive the Grain at an exorbitant rate, and in the second, called upon to deliver over the same Grain to the Stirar [*iştira*], at the Firman Price, which is in general 35 and 40 per Cent below the market rate. I feel that I have but imperfectly detailed these abuses of the Beys, but Your Lordship will immediately embrace the subject, and see the full extent of the evil; Ibrahim Pacha is well aware of these disastrous irregularities, and I have often treated upon the subject with him, but either from fear, or not being able to counterpoise the intrigues of the Beys or, what is more probable, that his own real irregularities might be reported, has never attempted, as far as I can learn, any reform of such abuses, he has latterly been upon a very bad footing with the Beys, and it appears to be the same kind of Consolation for the loss of his Pachalik, that his successor, Mustapha Nourie Pacha is not a person, either to be bribed or trifled with, by the

Beys, a feeling I should say, rather emanating from a desire of revenge, than the good of the Country.

Less than a month before, on 27 June 1837 (No. 81), Blunt had, despite the warning of Ibrahim Pasha, arrived at the conclusion that there was “no opposition from, or occasion for alarm, of the Ulemas”.³⁰ But by 10 September of the same year (No. 85)³¹ he was to see things in a different light:

According to the instructions given by Mustapha Pacha, Izzet [Mehmed] Pacha [the lieutenant (*kaymakam*) of Nuri Pasha in Salonica] has been very active endeavouring to establish Quarantine, and to prevent the public sale of infected goods, but the Mollah desirous of receiving as early as possible his fees (10 per Cent upon the Value) has opposed the proposition of Izzet Pacha, which is to submit all the goods of infected houses to fumigation. The Mollah to gain his point told the Pacha that if he persisted, he should protest against him and deliver him the Keys of the Mékime and start for Constantinople.

Perhaps Ibrahim Pasha had been right all along in warning about the danger of an alliance between members of the *ulema* and the local *beys*? In a report to the Foreign Office in London dated 30 September 1837 (No. 86)³² Blunt describes how he was present when one day it was discovered that the local landowners had instigated the scribe of the *Kadı* to issue a certificate which had been tampered with:

(...) a Firman was published which gives considerable advantages to the Agriculturists, in as much as, the Export of Grain is free, after the Stirar [*iştirā*] or Grain Department has received the Quantity required by the Porte. The Pacha during his stay here, gave much of his attention to the Grain department, and ordered measures to be adopted, which will be beneficial to the Agriculturalists. The Pacha caused a list to be made of all Corn and Grain lands, and fixed a per Centage to be given by each Cultivator, to make up the Quantity required by the Porte, the which will be, for Wheat, 2/4 Killo of Salonica (1 1/7 Quarter) per Chiff [*çift*] or Plough. This plan will render the weight of the delivery to the Stirar,

30 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 258).

31 NA—FO 78/306 (*Documents*, 262).

32 NA—FO 78/314 (*Documents*, 263).

less onerous to the Minor Farmers. Formerly the Beys found means of evading the delivery of their portion of the Grain, to the Stirar, and even endeavoured to frustrate the good intentions of the Pacha by ordering the writer of the Mollah to make the Ilam (or Certificate) differ from the note sent by the Pacha, of the land's; but I was with the Mollah when the discovery was made, and reported it to the Pacha (. . .). Mustapha Pacha will, it is to be hoped My Lord, adopt measures to check the arbitrary powers of the Beys, who, to satisfy their heavy expenses; do much injury to the Country.

In the above quote there is evidence already of the increasingly active role Blunt was to play ("I was with the Mollah when the discovery was made, and reported it to the Pacha")—which is a characteristic of the next two phases:

PHASE III: Within the framework of his alliance with the governor-general Nuri Pasha, Blunt appears as a more and more active partner. Their joint endeavours are (still) directed towards the enforcement of quarantine measures, but first and foremost towards the improvement of the situation of the local population, in particular the Christian *reaya*.

On 30 January 1838 Blunt writes to Lord Ponsonby in Constantinople (No. 88):³³

I regret to acquaint Your Lordship that I have discovered some flagrant abuses here, emanating from persons in the employ of Izzet [Mehmed] Pacha, My continual indisposition has prevented my seeing Izzet Pacha on the subject, When I do, I shall hope to convince him, if not, I shall immediately write to Joannina; but I do not think that Izzet Pacha will push me to such extremities, for he well knows, that a statement of facts from me to Mustapha Pacha is sufficient to displace anyone in the Pacha's employ, Izzet Pacha is a good humane man, and wishes to do good, but he is unfortunately much influenced, by some of his people, who have nothing at heart but their own interests.

And on 6 July 1838, Blunt reports to his superior in the Ottoman capital (No. 92):³⁴

(. . .). I had the honour to report Your Excellency in my dispatch No. 11, June 1, that I had induced the Kaimakan [*kaymakam*] to establish Quarantine, and that the Greek Consul warmly opposed himself to

33 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 265).

34 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 271).

such measures, but I was more hurt than surprised to find after having written that dispatch, that the Russian Consul who at first agreed with me upon the subject, should have changed, and coincided with the Greek Consul; finding that these intrigues had some weight with the Kaimakan, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Beys and influential Turks, I went to the Kaimakan and told him that he should not allow himself to be led into the error of risking the lives and property of the population of 60.000 souls; to satisfy the party spirit and intrigues of the Consuls; and that if he did not conform himself to the regulations, first sanctioned by him, I should immediately report his conduct to Mustapha Pacha, I am happy to say that the warmth with which I took up the matter, induced the Kaimakan to do his duty and pay no further attention to the intrigues of the Russian and Greek Consuls.

PHASE IV: This constitutes a direct extension of the preceding third phase, albeit with evidence for an increasingly assertive role played by Blunt. The kind of engagement displayed by Blunt in Phase IV becomes most evident in his more and more 'investigative' reporting style which itself results from, and is sustained by, an increasingly 'interventionist' stance on his part, not least in his partaking in the selection of 'fitting' candidates for sensitive appointments on the local level and beyond. Repeatedly, some of his own endeavours as well as those of the governor-general are now explicitly referred to as 'reform' measures (highlighted with bold type in the extracts below) rather than mere attempts at 'amelioration'. In argumentative terms, his concerns focus on the three-fold oppressed class of the taxpaying *reaya* ('Rayjahs' in Blunt's orthography) which are seen as suffering from exploitation by the (provincial) government, the landowning elites (among whom the district's *ayan* or 'Aiyans'), and their own village elders (if not also the Christian clergy).

The following report to Lord Ponsonby of 31 August 1838 (No. 94) may serve as an example:³⁵

My Lord,

In my dispatch no. 16 of 1st November 1837, I had the Honour to report to your Excellency, that I had found on my arrival at Vodena, the Rayjahs, with reason, much discontented with their Aiyans, and that I had reported the case to the Pacha at Joannina; who took such immediate steps, as he considered necessary for the amelioration of the state of the Rayjahs of

35 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 273).

that Town, I also subsequently acquainted Your Excellency, that Mustapha Pacha had appointed one of his own people to that aiyanlick. This person I am acquainted with, and prior to his going to Vodena I had frequent interviews with him, and made him, as I hoped, convinced of the necessity of protecting, and not oppressing, the Rayjahs, I also gave him the names of some individuals in the Politea [town council] who, though Christian Rayjahs, were, as is but too often the case, abettors of the abuses of the former Aiyān; these he had the good sense to discharge, all for a time went well, and the Rayjahs were contented, but unfortunately My Lord the change for the better, did not last long; the new Aiyān has commenced aggravating the Rayjahs, and sent some of them here to be put in Irons; immediately that I was informed of this I sent him a letter by Express, stating, how much I was hurt to find that he had forgotten the good advice I gave him, and that his proceedings were directly at variance with the wishes of His Pacha; to which letter he replied, that he felt sensible of my attention, and hoped I should consider him justified in what he had done for the parties in prison were Revolutionists, for whose good conduct the Greek Bishop would not be answerable! This My Lord I know to be false!—the affair has been represented to the Pacha at Joannina, who sent for the Aiyān, but I trust that my representations will have some weight with the Vizier.

And he continues:

I am happy to be able to report to Your Excellency that Mustapha has paid attention to my reports regarding the irregularities of the Intizap and Damgagi Agassi's of Salonica as he has displaced them both, and appointed a person of whom I have some knowledge, to fill both situations; who, I have every reason to hope, will be correct in his conduct.

And again, still from the same report:³⁶

It having been represented to me My Lord, that the inhabitants of Madem, a few hours distant from Salonica, had great cause for complaint against their Aiyān, I took up the case, and made my enquiries, and finding that the reports were by no means exaggerated, I addressed a letter to Izzet Pacha on the subject, and induced him to send one of his people to

36 Ibid., p. 274.

make enquiries; I am in some hopes that a new Aiyān will be appointed, for I have taken the precaution of sending a copy of my letter to Izzet Pacha, to the Vizier at Joannina [Mustafa Nuri Pasha].

Not for the first time did Mustafa Nuri in this instance appoint someone who was a personal and esteemed acquaintance of Charles Blunt. On 6 July 1838 (No. 92) Blunt had already communicated to Constantinople that a certain Keut Oglu Hajji Mehemmed Agha was appointed lieutenant (*kethüda*) of Mustafa Nuri Pasha in Istanbul—not without his warmest recommendations.³⁷ As turns out, Blunt had known Mehemmed Agha from his time in Edirne. This episode shows how the British consul was gradually—at the expense of *kaymakam* Izzet Pasha—advancing into the position of true confidant of Nuri Pasha in Salonica, not without getting behind the back of Izzet whom he accuses of manipulations and outright intrigues against his superior in Yanya. On 23 November 1838 (No. 95) Charles Blunt reports to Constantinople:³⁸

(...) I take the liberty of calling Your Lordship's attention to an article which appeared in the Smyrna paper "L'Echo de l'Orient", some short time since, of which the enclosed is a copy. This article My Lord was written (...) at the request, I am given to understand of Izzet Mehemet Pacha, the Kaimakan who is intriguing at Constantinople to get appointed Pacha of Salonica independent of Mustapha—this intrigue, My Lord, is worked by the relations of the wife of Izzet Pacha who are people in power about the court; Izzet Pacha has My Lord for some time past acted in such a way as to make it appear absolutely necessary, that the Pachalick of Salonica should be independent of that of Joannina, but to my certain knowledge, My Lord, Mustapha Pacha has several times written to reproach his Kaimakan, for not being more active, and for constantly troubling him with trifling matters which it was his duty to settle instantly; but Izzet Pacha has not paid any attention to Mustapha Pacha's instructions, and many trifling affairs which might be terminated immediately have been suffered to remain unsettled for six and seven months! This Kaimakan, My Lord, has all the Salonica Bey's on his side, for they will support any one, rather than Mustapha should return here, fearing that he will treat them as he did Negib Bey at Larissa [i.e. to remove him from his office], the Mollah of Salonica has also been bought over by Izzet Pacha in case of

37 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 271).

38 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 276f.).

an Ilam being necessary. Should Izet Pacha succeed, My Lord, it will be a very serious injury to Salonica, and we shall witness nothing but oppression and abuses. I have in a former dispatch mentioned to Your Lordship the irregularities of the Intizap Agassi, who Mustapha displaced: this man I have ascertained, My Lord, was a mere creature of Izet Pacha, who was the chief gainer in all his nefarious acts. The wise and able policy of Mustapha has, My Lord, where he has established **reform**, entirely changed the state of the Rayahs, who now appear content and happy. In conclusion, My Lord, I take the liberty of stating a circumstance to Your Excellency which fears with it sufficient evidence, for the fears I entertain in the event of Izet Pacha's being appointed independent of Mustapha Pacha—some time since a Hatti Sherifée was received here from Constantinople, specifically for the protection of the Agricultural class of Rayahs, and to put a stop to the Oppressions of the Beys; This Hatti Sherifée which ought to have been read publicly, was read to the Beys only at a private meeting! Shortly after, a case of great cruelty and oppression occurred at the Farm of one of the Beys, and as these poor rayahs applied to me to speak on their behalf to Izet Pacha, I directed them to draw up a Petition, which I presented, requesting the Pacha, Izet, to give his attention to, and to grant the Petitioners the benefit of the Hatti Sherifée, the Kaimakan replied “this case does not come under the Hatti Sherifée”. Now this was false, My Lord, for the case of the Petitioners was that the Bey wanted them to remain on his Farm by force, and because they refused he had seized their cattle and effects which the Hatti Sherifée particularly ordains that the Beys shall not do. Finding I could do nothing with Izet Pacha, I called upon the Bey, and induced him to liberate the cattle and Effects. Mustapha Pacha, My Lord, is aware of the Intrigues of his Kaimakan and is somewhat fearful that his enemies at Constantinople may be induced to support them, particularly as Izet Pacha is a protégé of the old Serriaskier [*serasker* Husrev Pasha, 1756–1855], who, it is well known, is the greatest enemy Mustapha Pacha has about the Court.

After Izzet Pasha had finally, in the course of the winter of 1838/9, been substituted by a certain Ariffu Bey as the new *kaymakam* of Mustafa Nuri Pasha, the governor-general in Yanya could now boast of a new energetic lieutenant (based not in Salonica but in Serres) for whom Blunt, in a report to Lord Ponsonby, finds the following words of commendation (No. 98, 21 March 1839):³⁹

39 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 287f.).

I am in hopes My Lord, that the Town of Serres, will have every reason to be contented with the new Kaimakan Ariffu Bey; I have been for some years personally acquainted with him, and have hitherto known him to be firm and just in all his dealings. I consider the first act of Ariffu Bey, by order of Mustapha Pacha, a judicious proceeding which was, My Lord, discharging all the old employées of the Konack, most of these Clerks and writers were in the pay of the Beys, hence there was little chance of justice for the Rajyahs.

Again Charles Blunt highlights the circle of exploitation, oppression and injustice by which the taxpaying *reaya* are trapped in their development, but this time with a new emphasis on the negative role in this respect of the Greek-Orthodox church and its clerics (No. 98, 21 March 1839):⁴⁰

My Lord,

I have had the Honour to receive Your Lordship's letter of the 27th Ulto., expressing Your Excellencies approval of my humble efforts here, in search of reform, and desiring me to acquaint Mustapha Pacha, of the satisfaction your Lordship enjoys to find that he perseveres in his wise and just System, I have written to the Vizier, and can assure Your Lordship, that he will fully appreciate the value of your Opinions of his Conduct (...).

Since I last had the Honour to address Your Lordship I have been to Serres, a day's journey from Salonica, where I learned many particulars regarding this Mustapha Bey (...). This Mustapha Bey and his relations have held the Aiyalik of Menelick for the last 30 Years, and of late years the chief assistant in all his iniquity is a certain Costantine Carrithi, a Greek Rayjah Primate of Menelick. This My Lord is one of the numerous proofs we have in Turkey, that the Rayjahs suffer more from the iniquitous instigations of the Rayjahs themselves, than from the Turks, and you will invariably find My Lord that where there exists a Cruel Brutal and Rapacious Governor, that he is aided and abetted in all he does by some of the Tchorbagis [*çorbaci*] or Rayjah Chiefs (or as they are termed by some writers upon Turkey Elders), and I will also add, My Lord, that the Greek Bishops are by no means less active in such iniquitous proceedings when they have a chance of sharing the plunder; (...). Passing through

40 See, for instance, Pnelopi STATHI, "Provincial Bishops of the Orthodox Church as Members of the Ottoman Elite (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)", in ANASTASOPOULOS (ed.) *Provincial Elites*, pp. 77–83.

the villages, My Lord, on my way to Serres I heard numerous complaints against the Arch Bishop of Serres, who has lately made the first visit to all the villages within the District of his Diocese. Villages which have hitherto, on such occasions, given the Bishop p. 500 or 5 [Pounds], have been forced to pay him p. 200 or 20 [Pounds]! Being fully convinced, My Lord, of the truth of what I had heard, I immediately after my arrival at Serres, called upon the new Kaimakan of Mustapha Pacha, Ariffu Bey, to acquaint him of the proceedings of the Greek Arch Bishop, and found, My Lord, that Ariffu Bey had already taken steps to prevent the repetition of such Abuses; (...) I do not suppose he [the archbishop] will be allowed to remain; indeed, were he immediately deprived of the Diocese and turned out of the Church [underlined in the original], it would be no act of injustice owing to his disgraceful immorality.⁴¹

We can surmise that the recipient of Blunt's report was baffled by the kind of sanction which the consul had proposed in answer to the (as he put it) 'disgusting immorality' of the bishop of Serres. He must at any rate have felt compelled to underline the phrase "turned out of the Church" which Blunt had written down with recognizable vehemence as a synonym for excommunication—the very sanction the Orthodox clergy themselves were quick to apply to those they found guilty of severe violations of law and order—including the non-payment of communal taxes. Maybe the recipient in London, bewildered at the nonchalance of His Majesty's Consul's suggestion that the form of punishment should follow local practice, not any higher standards of justice, even felt close to asking himself: "*Is this evidence of Blunt's turning native?*"

It is evident from his report to Viscount Ponsonby of 7 June 1839 (No. 99)⁴² that Blunt continued to keep in close contact with the governor-general, Mustafa Nuri Pasha. On the occasion of a visit of the *müşir* Nuri Pasha in the port city on 31 May Blunt asks for an audience with the Pasha:

(...) I called upon him the following day, but could not then enter into any details, for according to the usages of the Country, the first three days after arrival are sacrificed for receiving visits, without treating of affairs, the Vizier however took the opportunity of thanking me for my constant advices, but as he was obliged to give his immediate attention to the Troops, which would occupy him ten days, he deferred to a more

⁴¹ NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 283, 287).

⁴² NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 288).

favourable moment, the subject of abuses in the Local Gov[ernmen]t when he would go into the subject with me.

Blunt's continued high esteem of Nuri Pasha is clear from the following passage (No. 100, 4 July 1839):⁴³

(...) Mustapha Pacha has but few friends at the Capital, still he might be of much valuable assistance here; his intelligence has been proved by the very able manner in which he has terminated the affairs of Albania—his putting down the Capitani or Klefti—his care of the Rayjahs—his opposition to the Arbitrary conduct of the Beys, and many other acts for the benefit of the Country—and the advice he could offer regarding the internal state of the country, would be supported by experience, and actual observation.

The following extract contains the description of concrete measures introduced by Nuri Pasha (No. 101, 15 July 1839).⁴⁴ It is worth noting in this context that the establishment of the office of a *sanduk emini* to replace the traditional system of revenue administration on the local level, which was to be part of the general *Tanzimat* regulations issued from January 1840, can here be traced back to the year 1838 as a local measure antedating the corresponding *Tanzimat* instructions by about a year and a half.⁴⁵

The Pacha; My Lord, put things in order at Serres, where he found there was much injustice in the distribution of the Kharatch [*haraç*], he obliged the Kharatch [*haraçci*] to return all moneys received for Children under 12 Years of Age—he put a stop to the interference of the Beys in the affairs of the Local Government—the Greek Politea having been considerably plundered by the Former Aiyān, he examined the accounts and obliged the Aiyān to refund the Politea p. 150.000 or 1500 [Pounds]—he established a Sendukaimeni [*sanduk emini*] upon the same footing as that of Larissa mentioned to Your Lordship in My disp[atc]h No. 16 of 31st Aug[us]t 1838.

43 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 290).

44 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 291).

45 KORNRUMPF, *Territorialverwaltung*, pp. 42, 62, 67, 131. In Manastır/Bitola a corresponding system was introduced even earlier: Ursinus, *Regionale Reformen*, pp. 213–59.

There are even examples which demonstrate that Mustafa Nuri Pasha did not hesitate to advance some of his own means to improve the local infrastructure (No. 102, 2 August 1839):⁴⁶

Within a short distance from Salonica, My Lord, is a small brook called Gallicoe, the which in winter becomes a tremendous and dangerous torrent, and numbers of persons are yearly lost in endeavouring to pass, the yearly loss of Cattle is also considerable. Mustafa Pacha, ordered a bridge to be built at his own expense, it was commenced, [but] a heavy rain on the Mountains, caused a torrent which carried every thing away with it; the Pacha then ordered that it should be built of Stone, the good which this Bridge will be to the Town of Salonica, is immense.

It was only in December 1839, after the *Hatt-i Şerif* of Gülhane had been announced and, instead of Izzet, the supposedly capable Hasib appointed Pasha of Salonica,⁴⁷ that Blunt began to express himself more cautiously about Mustafa Nuri Pasha (No. 109, 18 December 1839):⁴⁸

I regret much, My Lord, that it has never been in my power to report so favourably of Mustapha Nourie Pacha, as I am now enabled to do of Hassib Pacha, the former however *intended* doing much of what the latter has done, but was fearful of taking matters up with too firm a hand, having no friends at Constantinople amongst those about the late [Mahmud II.] or new Sultan [Abdülmecid], but Hassib Pacha appears to fear no one, he cuts at all the abuses root and branch, and if he continues his present system, he will gain for himself, the just reputation of having done more good to his Country, than any Pacha that ever yet held a Pachalick.

His sympathies for Hasib Pasha as well as his expectations and hopes for the future which Blunt evidently placed in the new Pasha had already been

46 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 292).

47 According to Mehmet Zeki PAKALIN, *Maliye Teskilatı Tarihi (1442–1930)*, (Ankara: Maliye Bakanlığı Tetkik Kurulu Yayını, 1977), Vol. III, pp. 117–36, the Istanbul-born son of Mehmed Emin Efendi and (altogether) five-time *Evkaf Nazırı* Hasib Pasha was removed from the capital (in September 1839) on the instigation of Husrev Pasha by being appointed *Selanik valisi* (Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi* VI, p. 72 is more correct when speaking of *Selanik mutasarrıfı*). PAKALIN, op. cit., p. 119. Hasib died on 23. Zilhicce 1288H/ 4 March 1872.

48 NA—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 302).

clearly stated in his November correspondence with his (departing) superior in Constantinople. Now that he mentions, in the following letter, the rumours of an impending deposition of Mustafa Nuri Pasha, we may conclude that this was the final straw which convinced Blunt that it was no longer opportune in his reformist endeavours to rely solely (or even primarily) on Mustafa Nuri as his opposite number, and that it was time to change horses (No. 108, Enclosure, dated 20 November 1839):

My Lord,

Since I last had the Honour to address Your Lordship on the 7th Inst., I have had more than one interview with the new Pacha of Salonica, and can but confess, that I found him well disposed towards the Rayjahs, and willing to enter with me upon the subject of abuses in the Local Gov[ernment]. I must also acquaint Your Excellency that he has given frequent proofs that he is not interested, for in all cases when aiyans and other Functionaries have been appointed by him, he has invariably refused the usual fees, or in other words, he has in no case sold, as is usual, such situations. When with the Pacha the other evening, the New Mollah of Vodena was presented, the advice he gave this functionary was very good, and after reminding him of his duties he finished by telling him it is as well that you should know, that any injustice to "the poor, I never will forgive". The same evening I entered upon the subject of the Oppressions of the Beys, he heard me very patiently and said "I shall learn all in time, and I am aware that I have much to do here for certain persons take more upon themselves, than they ought to do". I told him that he might depend upon my reports being correct, for I had witnessed what I reported to him during a period of nearly five years, and that it was by Your Excellency's express desire, that I gave such information, and I took upon myself further to say, that Your Excellency had assured me before leaving Constantinople, that I should find the new Pacha willing to enter upon such Matters, and a man who would exert himself for the good of his Country. He replied "I know that the English pay more attention to the real prosperity of Turkey than any other nation, and I trust that Your Ambassador will not be disappointed, regarding his opinions of me, and I shall be obliged by your always speaking to me without reserve, upon such matters.

I feel that it would be agreeable to Your Excellency to enter into these details, but I feel it equally my duty to acquaint you, that some of the acts of the new Pacha are at variance with his professions, and he appears to be entirely guided by a Certain Akmet Bey,—one of his acts are, Orders

have been read in the churches, that if any Rayjahs should allow the Pacha to pass his shop without rising to salute him, that the said Rayjah will be punished with the bastinadoe! Such an order was never issued even in the time of the janissaries. The Pacha has also fixed the prices of some articles of general consumption, at rates which will cause a loss of [figure missing] p. Cent, to the sellers!

I have My Lord received late advices from Joannina and am happy to say that perfect tranquillity reigns in that part of the Country, I am also informed from the same place, that it had been reported in Lower Albania that Mustapha Nourie Pacha was to be disgraced, and that the Albanians have declared that they would not receive any other Pacha, if such did take place.

Copies of the late Hatti Sheriffee have been received here, by the last Steamer but the Local Authorities have not yet received it Officially! This Hatti Sheriffee has given universal satisfaction, and both Turks and Rayjahs say that they hope that those Powers, who have induced the Sultan to publish it, will also exert themselves to see that it is put in force.

I have the Honour to be, etc. etc. Cha[rle]s Blunt⁴⁹

By 18 December 1839, however, even the last doubts about Hasib Pasha's suitability as Blunt's new (principal) ally had been overcome (No.109). As a result, by the end of the year 1839, the transition from Phase IV to a new chapter in the activity of Charles Blunt senior as His Majesty's Consul in Salonica (which already lies outside the aims and scope of this contribution) had come to a close:

My Lord,

It will afford your Lordship some satisfaction to learn that I am enabled to continue to report favourably of Hassib Pacha, the new Governor of Salonica.

On the night of the 5th Inst. Salonica was visited by one of the most dreadful Gales of wind from the E.S.E. During its continuance, a fire broke out in the upper part of the Town, Hassib Pacha was immediately on the spot, and by his activity succeeded in checking the further progress of the flames, and we are certainly indebted to him for salvation of the rest of the Town. One of the Pacha's people during the fire struck a Jew for not being alert in bringing water; this man was punished on the spot, and deprived of his employ.

49 PRO—FO 78/368. Turkey. Salonica 1839 (*Documents*, 300f.).

It would appear My Lord that Hassib Pacha has sent people into the interior within his jurisdiction to give the Rayjahs courage and to induce them to send in petitions, for the numbers which are presented daily is beyond conception. During the Ramazan the Pacha was out daily incognito, by which means he arrived at many facts, one day he was dressed as a common farmer, and went and seated himself outside the walls of the Town, where all the farmers collect before returning to their homes; he entered into conversation with some of these people concerning the Beys and encouraged them to petition, as he was going to do for which purpose, he said he had come to Salonica; a day or two after the Biram [*bayram*] 500 of these poor fellows came in from the Banks of the Varda [river Vardar] to apply for redress. I have not heard what was the exact nature of their complaints, neither have I learned if thus have redress [sic]. (...). I am happy to report also to Your Lordship that Hassib Pacha has since the Biram laid aside much of all that tedious etiquette and difficulty of approach, which is the bane of every good in this Country, (...). It would appear, My Lord, that the Beys will soon be taught how to behave themselves, and will no longer be permitted to arrogate to themselves powers which appertain to the Local Authorities only. Hassib Pacha has obliged the Beys to give in an exact account of all their Grain, which they were holding back to keep up prices. Akmet Bey whom I have had the honour already to mention to Your Lordship, is no longer in favour with the Pacha, and all those individuals who were given appointments by the Pacha, at the recommendation of the Bey, have been disgraced (...).⁵⁰

Some Concluding Remarks

Charles Blunt, His Majesty's Consul in Salonica from 1835, appears to have 'matured' in the course of just five years (corresponding with our Phases I–IV) from a newly-appointed consular 'greenhorn' to an influential player in the locality as well as in the region, assisted by the appointment of Mustafa Nuri Pasha as governor-general of the province of Yanya (Ioannina) in the summer of 1837. Blunt's agenda: To put pressure on the local authorities in line with the British government's (stated) endeavours at reform in the Ottoman Empire especially for the improvement (or 'amelioration' in contemporary terminology) of the living conditions of the Christian subjects of the sultan, but also, and more specifically, by supporting the 'reformist' policies of the governor-

50 PRO—FO 195/100 (*Documents*, 301f.).

general by means of what might best be labelled *investigative reporting* in conjunction with (direct or indirect) *reformist interference*. Even though it can be supported by direct evidence only in cases of his *investigative reporting*, Blunt appears to consider both his stratagems endorsed by the British ambassador in Constantinople. His determination to promote and help implementing the 'reformist' policies of Mustafa Nuri Pasha reaches a (temporary) climax in Phase IV during which Blunt takes on the guise of the effective confidant in Salonica of the governor-general in Yanya—instead of the latter's official *kaymakam* in the port city. Here, His Majesty's consul seems to be acting, in all but name, as the (self-styled) *unofficial agent* of His Sultanic Majesty's governor-general. If we call *indirect rule* where a colonial power draws on local forces to implement their policies, Blunt's example could almost be considered as a case of *inversed indirect rule*: Ottoman officials drawing on the British representative in Salonica in order to promote and implement their own 'reformist' policies—or else allowing themselves to be made an instrument in his hands. The latter could be considered a typical phenomenon of Britain's *informal empire*.⁵¹

In this process Blunt demonstrates a preparedness to adapt to local standards, even to the degree of showing signs of (ethical and political) acculturation (or a demonstration of it). When the archbishop of Serres is accused and finally convicted of having extracted from his flock arbitrary sums of money, Blunt portrays this misdeed as a severe violation of the Christian moral code (which view is likely to have coincided with that of the common churchgoers) and considers as a legitimate form of punishment the excommunication of the bishop. Not only does Blunt appear to be applying the standards of the local moral code, he also, with respect to the size of the verdict, seems to follow local practice by demanding the most severe form of punishment a clerical court is entitled to impose: expulsion from the Church. Such a 'rigorist' approach requires to be seen in its proper perspective: It reflects the increasingly determined policy during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II to roll back, or even abolish altogether, various practices or institutions on the local or regional level which were considered, in the terminology of the decrees advocating their termination, as 'parasitic' and 'oppressive' (most visible perhaps in the case of several *a'yan* being 'taken out' by the Porte itself, but also on the instigation of regional and provincial governments). In this attempt to limit the exploitation of the taxpaying *reaya* by cutting out the middlemen or intermediate powers the 'reformist' policies of the Ottoman government were corresponding neatly

⁵¹ Both terminology and concept of *unofficial empire* or *informal empire* are discussed by Lawrence JAMES, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: St. Martin's, 1995), pp. 169–83.

with the British stance. Blunt's vehement accusation of the Greek archbishop as having committed a "disgraceful immorality" is directed here against the upper echelons of the Orthodox clerical establishment whose tax privileges and fiscal powers made it a prime example of a 'parasitic' institution—for the British consul no less than for the Ottoman authorities.

Bibliography

- Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Vol VI, (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1302/1884–5).
- Anastasopoulos, Antonis (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire* (= Halcyon Days in Crete V. A Symposium Held in Rethymno 10–12 January 2003) (Rethymno: University of Crete, 2005).
- Anastasiadou, Meropi, *Salonique, 1830–1912: Une ville ottomane à l'âge des réformes* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
- Andonov-Polianski, Hristo (ed.), *Britanski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod*. Tom I (1797–1839)/*British Documents on the History of the Macedonian People*. Volume I (1797–1839), (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1968).
- (ed.), *Britanski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod*, Tom II (1840–1847)/ *British Documents on the History of the Macedonian People* Volume II (1840–1847) (Skopje: Arhiv na Makedonija, 1977).
- Herzog, Christoph, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak. Die Provinz Bagdad, 1817–1917* (unpublished habilitation thesis, Heidelberg, 2004).
- İnalçık, Halil, "Hüsrev Paşa" in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 5, 606–9 (abridged under "Khosrew Pasha" in *ET²*, Vol. 5, 35f.).
- James, Lawrence, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: St. Martin's, 1995).
- Kornrumpf, Hans-Jürgen, *Die Territorialverwaltung im östlichen Teil der europäischen Türkei vom Erlass der Vilayetsordnung (1864) bis zum Berliner Kongress (1878) nach amtlichen osmanischen Veröffentlichungen* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1976).
- Kurz, Marlene, *Die Einführung von Quarantänemaßnahmen im Osmanischen Reich unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Saloniki* (unpublished MA thesis, Heidelberg, 1997).
- , *Die Einführung von Quarantänemaßnahmen im Osmanischen Reich unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Saloniki* (unpublished MA thesis, Heidelberg, 1997).
- Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Levantiner. Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im Osmanischen Reich im "langen" 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 2005).
- Özdemir, Bülent, "Being a Part of The Cinderella Service: Consul Charles Blunt at Salonica in the 1840s", in: Colin Imber, Keiko Kiyotaki and Rhoads Murphey (eds.),

- Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West.* Volume II (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).
- , *Ottoman Reforms and Social Life, Reflections from Salonica 1830–1850* (Istanbul: Isis, 2003).
- Pakalın, Mehmet Zeki, *Maliye Teskilatı Tarihi (1442–1930)*, Vol. III, (Ankara: Maliye Bakanlığı Tetkik Kurulu Yayını, 1977).
- Panzac, Daniel, *La peste dans l'Empire Ottoman, 1700–1850* (Louvain: Peeters, 1985).
- Platt, D.C.M., *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (Edinburgh: Longman, 1971).
- Stathi, Pinelopi, "Provincial Bishops of the Orthodox Church as Members of the Ottoman Elite (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)", in Antonis Anastasopoulos (ed.) *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire* (= Halcyon Days in Crete V. A Symposium Held in Rethymno 10–12 January 2003) (Rethymno: University of Crete, 2005), pp. 77–83.
- Ursinus, Michael, "'Hane' in Kalkandelen, 'Ru'us' in Selanik. Regionalspezifische Verwaltungspraktiken und—begriffe im Osmanischen Reich bis zum Beginn der Tanzimat", in Michael Ursinus, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches und ihre Interpretation* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1994), pp. 25–47.
- , "Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich als persönliches Anliegen: Charles Blunt, britischer Konsul in Saloniki, als Beobachter und Akteur am Vorabend der Tanzimat", in Hendrik Fenz (ed.), *Strukturelle Zwänge—Persönliche Freiheiten. Osmanen, Türken, Muslime: Reflexionen zu gesellschaftlichen Umbrüchen. Gedenkband zu Ehren Petra Kapperts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 405–28.
- , *Regionale Reformen im Osmanischen Reich am Vorabend der Tanzimat. Reformen der rumelischen Provinzialgouverneure im Gerichtssprengel von Manastir (Bitola) zur Zeit der Herrschaft Sultan Mahmuds II. (1808–1839)*. (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1982).