

The Ascendancy of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa: Quelling Rebellion and Navigating Authority in Hamidian Aleppo

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to shed light on the rise of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa: Quelling Rebellion and Navigating Authority in Hamidian Aleppo .

Method: The researchers used a quantitative approach, specifically the inductive-deductive method, to analyze events reported in historical documents from the years under study.

Results: This study seeks to highlight the career of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa and his role in suppressing the Armenian rebellion that erupted in the provinces of Marash and Zeitun. These areas were administratively part of the province of Aleppo and experienced fierce resistance and political unrest in the late 19th century. Additionally, this study explores 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's rise to prominence against the turbulent backdrop of Ottoman politics and regional conflicts. By examining his strategies in dealing with the Armenian rebellion and navigating the complex power dynamics of the time, the study aims to gain insights into the intricacies of governance and military leadership during the Hamidian era.

Conclusions: 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa emerges as a central figure during this turbulent period of Ottoman rule, with his military role crucial in restoring stability and security to the region during the mentioned period. His adept handling of the Armenian rebellion underscores the importance of decisive action and strategic planning in suppressing internal disturbances. By effectively quelling the rebellion and implementing strict measures to maintain control, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa demonstrated his ability to navigate challenging circumstances and uphold Ottoman authority.

Keywords: 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa; Aleppo; Armenian Rebellion; Ottoman Rule.

صعود علي محسن باشا: قمع التمرد وسلطة التوجيه في حلب الحميدية

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ملخص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على صعود علي محسن باشا: قمع التمرد وتوجيه السلطة في حلب الحميدية.

المنهجية: استخدم الباحثان الطريقة الكمية؛ خاصة المنهج الاستقرائي-الاستنتاجي لتحليل الأحداث التي أوردتها الوثائق التاريخية في السنوات قيد الدراسة.

الأهداف: تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على مسيرة علي محسن باشا ودوره في قمع التمرد الأرمني الذي اندلع في ولايتي مرعش وزيتون. كانت هذه المناطق تتبع إداريًا لولاية حلب، وقد شهدت مقاومة شرسة واضطرابات سياسية في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تستكشف هذه الدراسة صعود علي محسن باشا إلى الصدارة في ظل الخلفية المضطربة للسياسة العثمانية والصراعات الإقليمية. من خلال فحص استراتيجياته في التعامل مع التمرد الأرمني والتنقل في ديناميات السلطة المعقدة في ذلك الوقت، تسعى الدراسة لاكتساب رؤى حول تعقيدات الحكم والقيادة العسكرية خلال العصر الحميدي.

الاستنتاجات: يظهر علي محسن باشا كشخصية مركزية في هذه الفترة المضطربة من حكم الدولة العثمانية، ويبرز دوره العسكري في استعادة الاستقرار والأمن للمنطقة خلال الفترة المذكورة. إن تعامله البارع مع التمرد الأرمني يبرز أهمية العمل الحاسم والتخطيط الاستراتيجي في قمع الاضطرابات الداخلية. من خلال قمع التمرد بفعالية، وتنفيذ إجراءات صارمة للحفاظ على السيطرة، أظهر علي محسن باشا قدرته على التنقل عبر الظروف الصعبة، والحفاظ على السلطة العثمانية.

الكلمات الدالة: علي محسن باشا، حلب، التمرد الأرمني، الحكم العثماني



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Introduction

In the annals of Ottoman history, the figure of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa emerges as a pivotal figure, particularly in the turbulent landscapes of Aleppo and its surrounding provinces during the late 19th century. His trajectory, from his initial assignment as a governor "kāymakām" in Aleppo to his eventual rise as a key military commander, sheds light on the complex political dynamics and challenges facing the Ottoman Empire during the Hamidian era.

Amidst the political intrigue and power struggles of the time, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's tenure in Aleppo was marked by significant events and pivotal roles. Often seen as a figure of exile, he found himself stationed in Aleppo, a common destination for officials perceived as a threat to the central authority in Istanbul. However, far from languishing in obscurity, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's tenure in Aleppo would prove instrumental in shaping the history of the region.

One of the defining episodes in 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's career was his pivotal role in putting down the Armenian rebellion that erupted in the provinces of Maraş and Zeytūn¹. These regions, which fell under the jurisdiction of Aleppo province, witnessed fierce resistance and political unrest in the late 19th century. 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's skillful handling of these rebellions not only cemented his reputation but also fueled his rise through the ranks of the Ottoman military hierarchy.

This article seeks to delve into the life and career of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa, exploring his rise to prominence against the tumultuous backdrop of Ottoman politics and regional conflicts. By examining his strategies for dealing with the Armenian rebellion and navigating the intricate power dynamics of the time, we aim to gain insights into the complexities of governance and military leadership during the Hamidian era.

By focusing on 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's efforts to subordinate the Armenian rebellion and the ensuing struggle for influence among various factions, this article seeks to shed light on a critical chapter in Ottoman history.

Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa Early life:

The available sources regarding the biography and early life of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa, unfortunately, offer limited insights. What we do know is that he is the son of Kel Haşan Paşa² (Süreyya,1996; Çıkar, 2004) governor of Adana in 1847, which suggests a background entrenched in political and administrative circles.

During the tumultuous Hamidian era, Aleppo served as a destination for government officials whom the Sultan sought to distance from the intrigues of Istanbul. 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa found himself among those exiled to Aleppo, suspected of involvement in the deposition of Sultan 'Abdül-'Azîz. This exile marked the beginning of his significant journey in the province. (Muhtar, TT-581131).

'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was appointed in Aleppo as General Commander Arriving in Aleppo in the 1880s with the rank of kāymakām, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa quickly assumed a prominent position within the Ottoman Army stationed in Aleppo. His tenure was marked by his pivotal role in quelling the Armenian rebellion in Maraş and Zeytūn, both of which fell under the jurisdiction of the Aleppo province during the nineteenth century. (Muhtar, TT-581131; Alparslan ,*Yakar*,2009; *Sâlnâme*(1302); *Sâlnâme* (1313H); *Sâlnâme* (1316). His adept handling of these volatile situations earned him a commendation and propelled his rise through the ranks, culminating in his appointment as the aide-de-camp to the chief of staff and the esteemed title of "Halep ve Adana fevkalade 'umûm kumândânı" (General Commander of Aleppo and Adana) after Müşîr Edhem Paşa. ³ (Muhtar, TT-581131, Hülâgü,1996).

¹ Zeytūn was a very mountainous town center in the Maraş province. It was called Zeytūn because of the many olive trees. The current name is Süleymanlı, and is located north-west of Maraş. (Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yay,1995).

² Haşan Hakkî Paşa, known by the nickname "Kel," was born in Tokat. He rose through the ranks of the military until he reached the rank of Ferîk. In 1826, as part of the changes in the Anatolian provincial system, the administration of the provinces of Aydın, Sığla, Menteşe, Saruhan, and Menteşe were combined and placed under the command of İzmir Guardian Hakkî Paşa. In 1838, he became the guardian of Cyprus, in 1839, the guardian of Aydın, and later appointed as the Ferîk of Teke, becoming one of the Anatolian dignitaries in the formation of the army. In January 1846, he was given the title of Vizier and appointed as the governor of Adana, and in August 1847, he became the governor of Konya.

³ Edhem Paşa was born August 12, 1844, served as Commander in Chief of Ottoman Army in the Ottoman-Greek War of 1897 and as

Given the gravity of these historical events, the subsequent exploration will delve deeper into 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's strategies to suppress the Armenian rebellion and the complexities surrounding his interactions with ruling authorities in pursuit of a resolution.

Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's Role in Subduing the Armenian Uprising of 1895 (Taoutel, 1922).

By 1897-1898, the Aleppo Vilayet had 23 districts, 64 subdistricts, and 4,541 villages. Throughout the 19th century, the province's administrative divisions experienced instability. The main reason for this was the rebellions and disturbances within the province, along with economic fluctuations. In the Aleppo province, there were some localities with dense Armenian populations, such as the Zeytūn district. However, Armenians constituted only about one-fifth of the province's population when compared to other districts and the total population. In the province, people of different ethnic backgrounds coexisted, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews, who mainly spoke Arabic. Turkish was the second most commonly spoken language, particularly in districts like Beylan (Belen), Antakya, Kilis, Ayıntab, Urfa, and Mara, where it was the predominant language. (Güllü, 2012). Ramazan Güllü, among those scholars who have conducted comprehensive examinations of the Armenian events in Aleppo during 1895, underscored the significant presence of Armenians within Aleppo society at that juncture. In the Aleppo province, Armenians held considerable influence in commercial and economic spheres, with a notable representation in various administrative roles. This influence extended beyond the provincial center, as Armenians occupied official positions within the *kaza*' and *sanjaks* of the province as well. (Güllü, 2012).

The Zaytoun Armenians living in the mountainous region took advantage of the difficult conditions of the land to form a kind of feudal rule. They constantly raised issues regarding the payment of taxes and sometimes rebelled against the Ottoman state. However, the "Armenian Question" that emerged in the last quarter of the 19th century affected the nature of the uprisings in Zeytūn. Zeytin's Armenians now began to rebel against the Ottoman state with the idea of gaining independence. One of the uprisings launched by the Armenians towards this goal was the 1895 uprising.

The Treaty of Berlin, which was contracted on 13 July 1878, proved a serious disappointment for the Armenians. Their disappointment was that the name "Armenia" was neither placed in the Treaty, nor was it even pronounced. Moreover, there was no notice about the nationality of the reform officers, and "reform was impossible with Turkish governors." (Nabandian, 1963), Uras, 1987).

The conditions of the Armenians in the Anatolian provinces were no longer in the foreground for the great powers, as they found little interest from France and from here the first beginnings of the emergence of The Hınçak federation. (Zeidner, 1976). After the failure of their attempt to be recognized by European powers at the Berlin Conference, the Armenian federation; Hınçak seemingly took it upon themselves to mobilize the people to fight the Ottoman. This federation tried to form separatist associations in Bitlis, Diyarbakir and Zeytūn in 1894, that spread nationalist principles among the Armenians and mobilized them to achieve independence from the Sultanate.

Starting at the end of October, Zeytūn Armenians attacked the surrounding villages and killed the inhabitants living there without distinguishing between children and women. At the same time, the Armenians of Maraş started a series of organized attacks and massacres.

Later, the Armenian rebellion moved to various parts of some Ottoman provinces, including Aleppo, in which the Armenians also refused to pay taxes, this resulted in disputes between the two parties, for example on September 24, 1311 (October 6, 1895), Gendarmerie Mülâzim 'Osmân Efendi went to the Alabaş district of Zeytūn district to collect the taxes,

Minister of War for 2 weeks in 1909. He graduated from the Military Academy and the Military Academy with the rank of Mülâzım -1 sani. After his military service as Lieutenant of Infantry II. He was part of the retinue of Abdülhamîd. He served as adjutant to the Minister of War on various military missions in Rumelia and Serbia. After the Ottoman-Serbian War of 1876-1877, he participated in the Ottoman-Russian War. He held the rank of Mirliva' from 1877 to 1878. After the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877 to 1878 he was appointed governor of Kosovo and Skopje with the rank of Ferik to Skopje to the governor of Beirut and then to the general commander of Adana and the surrounding area.

but the Armenians refused to pay. (BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/1, 8 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311 (October 20, 1895). 150 armed Armenians then gathered in the Karakütük district of Alabaş, with others from the surrounding area joining them. (BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/1, 8 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311 (October 20, 1895) The stated aim of the Hınçak Committee was to pillage the surrounding villages. (BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/2; BOA, BOA, HR. SYS. 2810/2, 24 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311 (November 5, 1895); BOA, Y.PRK.ZB. 16/82, 1311H (November 11, 1895).

There is a similarity between the causes of the clash that occurred between the Ottoman government officials and the Armenians in Sasun and Zeytûn, which was represented in the collection of taxes. Apparently, the Ottoman government created those events against the Armenians, to use it as a pretext and reason to attack and fight them in order to prevent any Armenian separatist movement.

Events escalated between the Hınçak Committee and Muslims in the Zeytûn region, with many people killed on both sides. The *kāymkāṃ* of Zeytûn sent a request to Muştafâ Remzî Paşa, the mutasarrıf of Maraş, pleading for protection for the villages from the attacks, and that any measures required should be taken against the Armenians, and that the killing would cease if soldiers were dispatched.⁴ (Sâlnâme, 1313H ,BOA, HR. SYS. 2810/2, 24 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311H (November 5, 1895). The Ottoman forces began a widespread campaign of arrests and on 15 November, more than eight hundred Armenians from Zeytûn, Fırnis, and Keban attacked the center of the Andirin district, killing an unknown number of Muslims and seizing their property. (Bağçeci, 2008; BOA, HR. SYS. 2810/2, 24 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311H (November 5, 1895); BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/14.) In addition to damage to the mosque and Christian houses in the incident, they looted and burned government mansions and Muslim houses. They then took local officers and families from the people who failed to escape to Zeytûn as prisoners.⁵ (BOA, HR.SYS. 2810/2, 2 Teşrin-i sâni 1311 (November 14, 1895; Koçak, 2007).

Armenian committees continued to be organized in the region, receiving external support from Europe, with serious incidents continuing to plague the region. Arms support provided to the Armenian committees from abroad was mostly transmitted by sea via Cyprus. Weapons were obtained from both Europe and America, and stored in Egypt and Cyprus, both of which were under British rule; they were brought to the shores of Iskenderun, Adana, and Mersin by British ships, and then transported to rebellious areas. The fact that British ships had the right to enter and exit Ottoman waters freely made it difficult for the Ottoman Empire to prevent these activities. (Günay, 2007); (BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ. 31/84, 29 Z 1312 (Jun 23, 1895); BOA, HR.SYS. 2810/2).

The Armenian rebellion escalated more throughout the province. The Hınçak committee attempted to encourage Armenians living around Antakya and Süveydiye to attack the people of Zeytûn and the military units in their area. (al-Ğazzî, 2006). It also threatened pro-government Armenians, threatening to attack any who did not support them. (BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/8, 26 Eylül 1311H (October 8, 1895).

Administrative and military measures were taken by government officials, and many of the committee's efforts were foiled, as, in addition to existing military forces in the region, a company of cavalry and 30 soldiers were sent as reinforcements. The activities of the committee members were followed closely, and most of them were arrested. In addition, the military demanded that any Armenian that could pose a threat were to be kept under surveillance, so they would not be able to harm innocent people. (BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/8, 26 Eylül 1311H (October 8, 1895)

However, these measures could not ensure the prevention of major events; in October and November 1895 in particular, as in many other regions of the country, the Zeytûn district was disrupted by serious upheavals stemming from the Armenian rebellion. Serious incidents occurred in the district of Zeytûn, together with its provincial centre, especially in the central Maraş Şancağ, as well as the Zeytûn and Urfa Antep districts. (Özşavlı, 2011, Güllü, 2010, Akköz, 2016).

However, the military troops were able to suppress the riots. Documents sent from the Armenian Patriarchate to

⁴ In 1895 Zeytûn was *kaza* subordinated Maraş mutasarrıflık. Sâlnâme 1(1313H), p. 329.

⁵ Since what happened during and after the riots does not constitute the main subject of our study, the details of the events are not entered. Although certain riot centres, which are in the forefront in the province in general terms, are mentioned above, similar incidents, albeit on a smaller scale, were experienced in almost every part of the province. For the events in the Zeytûn n Province in general.

Armenian delegations across the country regarding the reforms that were to be instigated in the eastern provinces, which were declared soon after these events, stated that the Armenian demands had been accepted by the government and that it was necessary to cease acts of violence. However, it was observed that ownership of weapons increased among the Armenian population and that Armenians made provocative overtures in various places (BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 646/12, 11 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311H (October 23, 1895).

Accordingly, armed rebellion occurred in many regions; it took a long time to quell the events in Zeytün, where the Armenian population was dense and where Armenian riots had been taking place for some time. The Zeytün barracks were captured by the rebels, with the captured weapons taken to the town of Zeytün. Telegram connection between Antep and Kilis was severed, and the kaymakam of Zeytün could only receive news from the Maraş Governorship. News of the events in Zeytün spread, in other regions as well. For example, the Syrian governor's office, fearing that the events would spread to the province of Syria, particularly in Damascus and its surrounding region, demanded that military units in Syria be strengthened due to the events in Zeytün. (BOA. A.VRK. 164/77 21 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311H (November 2, 1895).

With the intensification of the rebellion, Sadaret informed the Governor of Aleppo, Hasan Paşa, to gain control of the province as soon as possible, noting that, if the turmoil could not be prevented, it would have a detrimental effect on the provincial administrators. Hasan Paşa protested, stating that he had taken as many precautions as possible, and that the military in Maraş should be augmented, due to the serious situation, to ensure that security could be established. (BOA. A.VRK. 169/17, 3 Teşrin-i Sâni 1311H (November 15, 1895).

Aleppo governors failed to subdue the rebellion in Zeytün. In 1895, other massacres took place in Biricik and later in Urfa; this was the worst, with two thousand Armenians killed. In 1895, Hasan Paşa the governor of Aleppo was dismissed and replaced by Mehmed Kâmil Paşa⁶. (BOA. HR.SYS. 35/47 (November 28, 1895); Sultan Abdülhamîd instructed him to secure the region of Zeytün and suppress the rebellion. The military was to be mobilized immediately to settle the chaos, and necessary precautions undertaken immediately, to prevent the revolution from expanding into other regions. (BOA. Y.PRK.BŞK. 43/92; Bağçeci, 2008; Muhtar, TT-581131).

It is evident that Mehmed Kâmil Paşa, previously acquainted with the challenges of the Armenian uprising during his tenure as governor of Aleppo, declined a reappointment to the post, citing its complexity and distance from the center. Despite initial resistance from 'Abdülhamîd II, Mehmed Kâmil Paşa's insistence on an alternative appointment led to his designation as governor of Aydın. (BOA. Y.EE. 86/59, 8 Temmuz 1323H (September 31, 1907); BOA. Y.EE. 86/19. 27 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311 (November 8, 1895).

This shift left Muştafâ Zihni Paşa to assume governance in Aleppo on November 1895⁷, (Kuneralp, 1999; BOA. A.VRK. 163/33, 13 Teşrin-i Sâni 1311 (November 25, 1895); BOA. A.VRK. 163/38; Woods, 1911; Appletons, 1889). arriving amidst the tumultuous aftermath of violent riots, rendering effective governance arduous. Muştafâ Zihni Paşa's brief tenure of forty days underscores the challenges of maintaining stability in such volatile conditions. (al-Ğazzî, 2006; at-Tabbâh, 1988; BOA, BEO 702/52607, 28 Teşrin-i Evvel 1311 (November 9, 1895);

In response to the Armenian revolt, particularly in Zeytün and Alabas, Miralay 'Alî Muhsin Paşa, supported by the Ottoman army under Muştafâ Remzî Paşa, emerged as a central figure in spearheading the campaign against rebel forces.

⁶ Mehmed Kâmil Paşa's second appointment as a governor of Aleppo was seen by the representatives of Europe and America, as well as by western nations in general, that Mehmet Kâmil Paşa had been sent there in order to remove him from the centre of political influence.

⁷ Born in 1848, Muştafâ Zihni Paşa was a Kurdish prince, and the father of Ahmed Na'im Bey, the famous scholar. He was a member of the Great Knowledge Council in Istanbul, and held some important administrative positions during the reign of Sultan 'Abdülhamîd II, including the *Sadaret Müsteşarı* from January 1879 to September 1885. He was Minister for Endowments from September 27 to September 29, 1885 and from May 1890 to November 1891, Minister of Finance from September 30 1885 to December 1886, Minister of Trade from December 1886 to May 1890. He was the governor of Selanik from October 1891 to November 1895, governor of Zeytün from November 1895 to January 1896, governor of Hüdavendigâr from June 1896 to January 1897 and governor of Adana and Yanina. His final appointments were as Minister of Trade from January 1899 to August 1908, *Meclis-i â'yân azası* from December 1908, and *Şura-yı devlet reisi* from April to May 1909. He died in 1929.

His strategic efforts, including the siege of Geben, were aimed at restoring order and suppressing resistance. However, the intricate dynamics of the rebellion, exemplified by the retaliatory actions of Zeytūn fighters, underscored the complexity and depth of the unrest. (BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 646/13, 9 Cemaziyelevvel 1313 ve 16 Tesrin-i Evvel 1311 (October 28, 1895). Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa then moved to besiege the Geben region in Zeytūn and demanded that the Armenian cavalry surrender and not resist, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was equipped with 8,000 soldiers. On 20 November 1895, a military operation led by Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was launched against Armenian rebels in Geben. Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa successfully regained control of Geben from the rebels. Armenian cavalry surrendered and did not resist, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was equipped with 8,000 soldiers. On 20 November 1895, a military operation led by Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was launched against Armenian rebels in Geben. Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa successfully regained control of Geben from the rebels. However, after 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa withdrew from Geben, the Armenians seized the opportunity to attack the area again. Agasi, probably a participant or witness to the events, provided details of the retaliatory attack organized by the Zeytūn fighters. They formed a group to punish what they perceived as treachery by the people of Geben. With a large number of fighters, including young princes and friends, they launched a surprise attack on the villages of Geben. The villagers did not resist and sent their leaders away. The Zeytūn horsemen pursued and killed many of the fleeing people to inform 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa. They also looted the village before returning to Zeytūn. This account sheds light on the complex dynamics and retaliation during the Armenian Rebellion of 1895. (BOA, A.MKT. MHM. 647/27, 10 Teşrin-i sâni 1311 (November 22, 1895).

As tensions escalated, coordinated efforts involving reserve troops from Zeytūn, under the command of Muştafâ Remzî Paşa, alongside the leadership of Ethm Paşa and Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa, were pivotal in subduing the rebellion. Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's decisive role in restoring order earned him the esteemed title of "Halep ve Adana Fevkalade Umum Kumandanı," reflecting his prominence and authority in the region. (BOA, A.MKT. MHM. (647/27, 10 Teşrin-i sâni 1311 (November 22, 1895).

Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's military operations, notably the successful recapture of Geben from rebel forces, highlight his strategic acumen and leadership. Despite subsequent challenges, such as the retaliatory attack organized by Zeytūn fighters, Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa remained resolute in his efforts to stabilize the region.

Under Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's command, reserve troops from Zeytūn, alongside forces from Izmir and Adana under Muştafâ Ramzî Paşa and Ethm Paşa respectively, decisively quelled the rebellion, bringing order to the province of Zeytūn. 'Abdülhamîd's unwavering support for Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa, coupled with strict security measures and thorough patrols implemented by the commander, effectively maintained control and prevented further unrest. (aṭ-Ṭabbāḥ, 1988). Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa finally subjugated the rebellion and brought order to the province of Zeytūn. He was then appointed to the military unit in Zeytūn as "Halep ve Adana Fevkalade Umum Kumandanı." (aṭ-Ṭabbāḥ, 1988; Muhtar, TT-581131).

Sultan 'Abdülhamîd's unwavering support for 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa persisted amid the ongoing threat of Armenian insurgency. The entire province remained under vigilant scrutiny, with 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa tasked to maintain a central base and personally oversee patrols throughout the region. Reports indicating planned insurrection in Zeytūn prompted intensified security measure (Güllü, 2011; BOA. BEO. 39/70.8 Eylül 1313 (20 Eylül 1897); BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 653/3 18 Eylül 1313 (September 30, 1897).

'Alī Muḥsin Paşa not only augmented military presence in the area but also conducted thorough inspections of surrounding villages. Employing a strategy of stability and order "istikrar ve asayîşi", he advised the Armenian elite and clergy to exercise control over their communities, mitigating the risk of further unrest. During this period, a significant number of Hınçak Committee members were apprehended, and their incriminating documents were seized. (BOA. BEO. 42/9, 6 Teşrin-i Evvel 1313 (October 18, 1897).

Through his efforts in "stabilizing security and order," 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa consolidated his influence and bolstered Ottoman governance in the region. (al-Ğazzî, 2006; aṭ-Ṭabbāḥ, 1988). Consequently, 'Abdülhamîd II continued to extend his support, honoring 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa with a "medal of honor, second rank" and entrusting him with overseeing the

construction of key military and governmental infrastructure in Zeytûn and Adana provinces. (BOA. BEO, 1234/92478, 7 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1314 (November 19, 1898).

In summary, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa played a pivotal role in quelling the Armenian rebellion, particularly in Zeytûn and Alabas. As a commanding figure supported by the Ottoman army, he led strategic campaigns aimed at restoring order and suppressing resistance. Through meticulous planning and decisive action, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa successfully subdued the rebellion and brought stability to the region. His proactive measures, including increased military presence, patrols, and targeted arrests of insurgents, effectively prevented further uprisings and preserved Ottoman authority. 'Alî Muhsin Paşa's leadership and efforts in "stabilizing security and order" were instrumental in consolidating Ottoman control over the entire province, earning him continued support and recognition from 'Abdülhamîd II.

'Alî Muhsin Paşa and his disputes with two governors of Aleppo

In the realm of late Ottoman politics, the figure of 'Alî Muhsin Paşa looms large, especially concerning his conflicts with the governors of Aleppo. His notable success in quelling the Armenian rebellion bolstered his power and influence in the region, which became apparent through his disagreements with successive governors of Aleppo. These disputes often reached a boiling point, with 'Alî Muhsin Paşa's capabilities becoming evident as he occasionally sought the dismissal of these governors.

A longstanding feud emerged between Râ'if Paşa, the governor of Aleppo, and Miralay 'Alî Muhsin Paşa. Their interactions were marked by ongoing accusations and counteraccusations, culminating in Râ'if Paşa's eventual departure from Aleppo, partly due to the allegations leveled against him by 'Alî Muhsin Paşa. The core of their disagreement centered on the appropriate measures to address the Armenian question, with 'Alî Muhsin Paşa faulting Râ'if Paşa for what he perceived as leniency toward certain Armenian factions and criticizing his overall approach to Armenian affairs. (Güllü, 2011).

The tension between the two officials prompted Istanbul to intervene, dispatching a delegation to mediate and resolve the conflict. While Râ'if Paşa attributed the discord to differences in administrative philosophy rather than personal animosity, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa maintained that he always adhered to orders and attributed the conflict to Râ'if Paşa's ambitions to control Aleppo, echoing the aspirations of Midhat Paşa before him. (al-Ğazzî, 2006; BOA, Y.PRK.ASK. 144/36, 4 Eylül 1314 (September 16, 1898).

'Alî Muhsin Paşa further confirmed that he always obeyed the orders and never rejected them. He maintained order and security, and he sent four "layiha" concerning the Arabic Bedevîs who caused some problems. He finalized problematic cases with 250 bandits, murderers, and criminals in Antakya. As mentioned by 'Alî Muhsin Paşa; the governor of Aleppo Râ'if Paşa was angry with him, just because Râ'if Paşa pointed to the tax officers as the violent problems caused by Arabic Bedevîs. (Kırmızı, 2007; Güllü, 2011; BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 144/364 Eylül 1314 (September 16, 1898).

Furthermore, the conflict between 'Alî Muhsin Paşa and Râ'if Paşa continued, even though Râ'if Paşa had been dismissed, with the Sultan eventually exiling Râ'if Paşa to Aleppo. However, his exile was not of long duration, with the Sultan relenting and allowing him to return to Istanbul. (al-Ğazzî, 2006). It is clear that 'Alî Muhsin Paşa aimed to gain power by replacing Râ'if Paşa as the governor of Aleppo, but there is evidence that Râ'if Paşa was still able to consolidate his position in the province once the civil unrest had been contained.

After Râ'if Paşa was dismissed, he was replaced by Enîs Paşa. His appointment resulted in harsh protests from the European embassies, because of his attitude towards the rebel Armenians whilst governor of Diyarbakır during the events of 1895-1896. The British and French Embassies demanded the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remove Enîs Paşa from his post, stating that "[his] appointment to a place of importance was not appropriate". (BOA, BEO.1972/147832, 05 Cemaziyelevvel 1318H (August 31, 1900).

According to al-Ğazzî, as soon as Enîs Paşa arrived in Aleppo, the foreign consuls asked 'Abdülhamîd II to replace him, stating that he had been accused of inciting violence against the Armenians in Diyarbakır, and had caused the death of some residents. With the increase of accusations against Enîs Paşa, Sultan 'Abdülhamîd II appointed 'Alî Muhsin Paşa

as his deputy to act on his behalf. (al-Ṭabbā, 1988; al-Ğazzī, 2006) Enīs Paşa was then ordered "not to leave his house or meet with anyone", on the pretext that he was sick; these orders were sent to him by telegram immediately. According to al-Ğazzī, Enīs Paşa was virtually a prisoner for two months and was not seen by anyone. (al-Ğazzī, 2006). However, the more the administration attempted to conceal the true reason for his house arrest, the more the consuls would consider it to be an indication of their influence on government policy, thus encouraging them to continue their attempts to interfere in local politics. He noted that Ottoman officials being forced to bow to foreign pressure was unacceptable, not only to the people of the Ottoman Empire but to all the people of Islam. He also blamed 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa for siding with the consuls against the central government. It can thus be seen that Enīs Paşa also had problems with 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa, as had Rā'if Paşa. The telegram he sent to the Grand Vizier stated that 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa had always wanted to be governor, and had devised numerous strategies to achieve his aim, applying every means at his disposal. (BOA, Y. A.HUS. 410/22, 19 Ağustos 1316H (September 1, 1900). Besides that, the dispute between 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa and the two governors Rā'if Paşa and Enīs Paşa reflected the corollary to the system of patronage and nepotism during Hamidian time, in which some military command, was appointed through the influence of the Sultan, to serve him.

During the Hamidian era, Aleppo's governors found themselves in a precarious position, their authority constantly undermined by the pervasive influence of military commanders like 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa. This interference created a turbulent dynamic within the province, where governors struggled to assert control over internal affairs. The absence of clear jurisdiction over military forces further exacerbated tensions, leaving governors powerless to direct troop deployments, movements, or conduct. Consequently, this discord became fertile ground for disorder and intensified conflicts between civil and military leadership.

The intricate balance of power between civilian governance and military authority in Aleppo during this period underscores the complexities inherent in Ottoman provincial administration. The inability of governors to effectively manage military affairs not only weakened their control but also fueled administrative dysfunction, impeding the region's stability and governance. This historical context sheds light on broader themes of statecraft and power dynamics within imperial structures, highlighting the challenges faced by governors tasked with maintaining order and authority in a constantly shifting landscape of influence and control.

'Alī Muḥsin Paşa and tribal subjugation in Aleppo province

In 1894, the cavalry battalions of the desert forces were also reorganized and reinforced to consolidate the Ottoman authority, ensure the security of the desert, and protect the districts and villages from the attacks of Arab tribes. ("Çölün te'min-i asayışı ve ma'mūrenin 'urbān muḥācemātından muḥāfazası maksadıyla teşkīl olunan müfreze taburunun"). BOA, BEO, 355/26562, 24 Receb 1311 H (February 5, 1894). Miralay 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was appointed Commander of the desert forces." (al-Ğazzī, 2006; Muhtar, TT-581131).

Alī Muḥsin Paşa played an important role in subjugating the tribes in the Aleppo, Dair az-Zūr and Ūrfā provinces. He also put down the Armenian rebellion and maintained order ("istiḳrār ve asayışı") in the Zeytūn district, (BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 144/36, 4. Eylül 1314H (August 23, 1898). which was subordinated to Aleppo province during the nineteenth century. (*Ḥaleb Sālnāmesi* (1302H); *Ḥaleb Sālnāmesi* (1313H); *Ḥaleb Sālnāmesi* (1316H).

By "stabilizing security and order" throughout the province, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa was able to consolidate Ottoman authority over the whole region. (al-Ğazzī, 2006; aṭ-Ṭabbāḥ, 1988). As a result, 'Abdülḥamīd II, awarded him a medal of honor, second rank, and assigned him the authority to oversee the construction of important military and governmental

establishments in the Zeytûn and Adana provinces. (BOA. BEO, 1234/92478, 7 Teşrîn-i Sâni 1314 H (November 19, 1898).

Moreover, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa maintained order and security in the provinces of Aleppo and Antakya, where he successfully subdued 250 bandits, murderers, and criminals. (Güllü, 2011; BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 144/36 4 Eylül 1314 H (September 16, 1898). When in 1884 Hüseyin Camîl Paşa, Governor General of Aleppo, faced the difficulties of collecting taxes from the nomads, he selected 'Alî Muhsin Paşa on account of his ability and energy. (BOA, İ.TAL.110/48, 21 Şeval 1314 H (March 25, 1897).

There was some political tension between Râ'if Paşa, the general of Aleppo, and 'Alî Muhsin Paşa. Although hierarchically, Râ'if Paşa held a higher position, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa did not always follow his orders. Both officials complained about each other to the sultan. Râ'if Paşa claimed that 'Alî Muhsin Paşa objected to his commands; he also stated that 'Alî Muhsin's misguided policies were the source of disorder caused by the nomads in Aleppo and Adana. 'Alî Muhsin Paşa also called Râ'if Paşa Following in the footsteps of the Ottoman reformer Midhat Paşa, wanted to turn Aleppo into his position. (al-Ğazzî, 1998; BOA, Y.PRK.ASK. 144/36, 4 Eylül 1314 H (September 16, 1898).

In September 1898, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa sent his defense to the palace. He argued that Râ'if Paşa's claims, and complaints were false and that he neither objected to his commands nor mismanaged the nomads. On the contrary, he finalized 250 problematic cases of banditry, murder, and other crimes in Antakya. According to 'Alî Muhsin Paşa, "Râ'if Paşa turned against me because of my reports in which I demonstrated the tax collectors in the region as the source of the trouble caused by the Bedouin tribes. (Kırmızı, 2007; Güllü, 2011; BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 144/364 Eylül 1314 (September 16, 1898).

This refers to 'Alî Muhsin Paşa's earlier four reports about the nomadic tribes, in which he claimed that the nomads were causing the state so many problems because they opposed tax collection. As this was an administrative matter under the purview of Râ'if Paşa, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa indirectly blamed him, noting that Râ'if Paşa was unwilling to negotiate with or accommodate the nomads. (Kırmızı, 2007; Güllü, 2011.)

His rigid stance caused disobedience and revolt of the Arabs. Furthermore, under Râ'if Paşa, the Robe of Honour "Hilat" that was granted each year by the Sultan to the nomads as a means of increasing their loyalty to the state was not given to them. (BOA, Y.PRK.ASK, 144/36 4 Eylül 1314 (September 16, 1898). 'Alî Muhsin Paşa interpreted it as a slight which incensed the nomads. As a result, they stopped providing the state with vital assistance in tax collection among their kinsmen. Râ'if Paşa's rigid policies and tax collectors' actions alienated the nomads and caused much disturbance.

On the other hand, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa may have had ulterior motives in blaming the governor-general of Aleppo, perhaps hoping to gain more power for himself. According to the British consul Barnham, "'Alî Muhsin Paşa's command over the desert lasted nearly 13 years, during which he raised a force of mule-mounted infantry (müfreze') and was so successful at controlling the nomad that he became an object of their unrestrained dread. His ability to collect taxes from them raised large sums for the Government but also helped him amass a significant personal fortune"raising large revenues for the Government, but at the same time.

enriching himself. (FO 195/2054, (May 21 1899 and December 21, 1903).

Thus, having even more authority over tax collection provided him with substantial material benefits. Eventually, 'Alî Muhsin Paşa was succeeded as Governor of the Desert in 1895 by a subordinate of his, Mehmed Paşa, who (it is claimed) continued to plunder the Arabs, sharing his gains with 'Alî Muhsin Paşa. (FO 195/2054, (May 21 1899 and December 21, 1903; Lewis, 1987).

Though harsh, the administration of the Desert Province was not ineffective. Consul Jago wrote from Aleppo in 1890 that the inroads of the Şammar, 'Anizah, and other tribes into the settled districts of Aleppo and their defiance of the Government "practically came to an end for some years". (Lewis, 1987).

In conclusion, the tenure of 'Alî Muhsin Paşa as the Commander of the desert forces was marked by significant achievements and challenges. He played a pivotal role in establishing Ottoman authority and maintaining order in the Aleppo, Dair az-Zür, and Urfa provinces, effectively subduing tribes and quelling rebellions. His efforts to stabilize security and enforce taxation in the region contributed to the consolidation of Ottoman control.

However, his leadership was not without controversy, as evidenced by the political tension with Râ'if Paşa, the general

of Aleppo. Their disagreements and complaints to the Sultan reflect underlying power struggles and differing approaches to governance. 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's criticism of Râ'if Paşa's policies regarding tax collection and treatment of nomadic tribes underscores broader administrative issues within the Ottoman administration.

While 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's efforts to control the desert tribes yielded substantial revenues for the government and enriched himself, allegations of corruption and collusion with his subordinates tarnished his legacy. The transition of power to Mehmed Paşa in 1895 marked a shift in leadership dynamics but did not entirely resolve the challenges of governance in the Desert Province.

Despite the criticisms and controversies, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's command left a lasting impact on the region, demonstrating the complexities of governance in the late Ottoman period. His tenure highlights the intricate balance between authority, taxation, and tribal relations, shedding light on the challenges faced by Ottoman administrators in maintaining stability and order in the provinces.

Aleppo's Architectural Heritage: The Palaces of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa in the Late Hamidian Era,

In the late Hamidian era, Aleppo bore witness to the construction of the illustrious palace of 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa, a symbol of modern urban expansion in the city. Situated in the Jamīlyah neighborhood, this opulent residence stood as a testament to the architectural trends of its time, reflecting the influence of modern European design that permeated Istanbul and other major Arab cities during the twilight years of the Ottoman Empire. Erected in the mid-1880s, the palace boasted two floors and an expansive garden, according to accounts by Aleppo's historian al-Ġazzī in his seminal work, "Nahr aḍ-ḍahab." (al-Ġazzī, 2006) During World War I, General 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa's palace served as the headquarters for both the Red Cross Hospital and the Alliance School for Girls, established by the French Jewish Union in Aleppo.

Moreover, the palace's association with the Arslan and Oraz families, renowned for their Turkish-Armenian lineage, further underscores its rich heritage and familial ties. The interconnectedness between these families, forged through marriages and kinship networks, reveals the intricate social fabric that defined Aleppo's elite circles during that era.

Amidst these familial connections, General Ḥasan İzzet Paşa, a prominent figure in Ottoman military and political spheres, emerged as a central figure linked to the palace. His presence in Aleppo during World War I and subsequent involvement in Syrian governance underscore the palace's enduring legacy as a locus of political influence and familial heritage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Armenian uprising of 1895 presented a formidable challenge to Ottoman governance in Aleppo and its surrounding provinces. The strategic refusal of the Aleppo governorship by Mehmet Kâmil Paşa, the brief and tumultuous tenure of Muṣṭafâ Zihnî Paşa, and the intricate military operations led by figures like 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa underscore the complex dynamics and difficulties inherent in maintaining order during periods of civil unrest.

'Alī Muḥsin Paşa emerges as a central figure in this tumultuous period, showcasing the pivotal role of strong leadership and military acumen in restoring stability to the region. His adept handling of the Armenian rebellion highlights the importance of decisive action and strategic planning in quelling internal strife. By effectively subduing the uprising and implementing stringent measures to maintain control, 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa demonstrated his capability to navigate through challenging circumstances and uphold Ottoman authority.

Moreover, the appointment of certain officials to Aleppo, including Kıbrıslı Kâmil Paşa and Râ'if Paşa, reflects the political intricacies of the time. These appointments, often perceived as forms of exile, were strategic manoeuvres by 'Abdülhamîd II to mitigate the influence of certain individuals and counter potential threats to his authority. The dissatisfaction among some governors, such as Kıbrıslı Kâmil Paşa, further underscores the volatile political landscape exacerbated by the escalating Armenian uprisings.

In essence, the Armenian events of 1895 in Aleppo shed light on the multifaceted nature of governance and the intricate balance of power within the Ottoman Empire during the reign of 'Abdülhamîd II. Through the lens of historical analysis,

the contributions of figures like 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa in restoring stability and maintaining order serve as poignant reminders of the challenges faced by imperial administrations in navigating through periods of societal upheaval and unrest.

Index:



Sultan Abdülhamîd Khan's Deputy Commander of Aleppo and Adana Province Ferîk Muḥsin Paşa and his Wife.⁸



2. Sultan Abdülhamîd II Deputy Commander of Aleppo and Adana Province Ferîk 'Alī Muḥsin Paşa Cabinet Photograph in his Medalised Uniform, Misrlīan Photography House, Syria Aleppo.⁹

⁸ <https://www.janusmezat.com/en/product/5642635/sultan-abdulhamid-han-in-halep-ve-adana-havalisi-kumandan-vekili-ferik-ali-muhsi>

⁹ <https://phebusmuzayede.com/60551-sultan-abdulhamid-devri-halep-ve-adana-havalisi-kumandan-vekili-ferik-ali-muhsin-pasa-madalyali-uniformasiyla-kabin-fotografi-missirlīan-fotografhanesi-suriye-halep-haliyle-17x25-cm.html>

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A.MKT.MHM: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Sadaret Mektubî Kalemi Mühimme Evrakı, 646/1, 646/2, 649/3, 646/8, 646/12, 646/14, 653/3, 647/27..

A.VRK: Evrak Kalemi Evrak: 169/17, 163/33, 163/38, 164/77.

BEO: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Bâbîâli Evrak Odası Evrakı. 39/70, 42/9, 1234/92478, 702/52607, 1234/92478, 1972/147832, 355/26562

HR. SYS: Hariciye Siyasi Kısmı Belgeleri, 810/2, 35/47.

Y.EE: Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Yıldız Esas Evrakı, 86/19, 86/59

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