

# A Portrait of Syrian Deputies in the First Ottoman Parliament

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“The discussions upon these points [the internal organisation of the parliament] have been conducted with considerable ability and animation; and several of the Arabian and Syrian Delegates have been conspicuous for the energy they have displayed in opposing any measure of the government which appeared to them an infringement of Parliamentary privilege.”<sup>1</sup>

The following article attempts a prosopographical study of seven “Arabian-Syrian” delegates described by the British ambassador Nassau Jocelyn as energetic in defending the privileges of the parliament. The prosopographical portraits are presented in the first part of this article. *Sicill-i abval* entries, the official biographies of Ottoman bureaucrats kept and updated at the Ministry of the Interior, constitute a major source of information for this first part. They are complemented with biographies and available studies on these parliamentarians.

The seven deputies under study in this article are a selection of those who represented Syria in the two sessions of the first Ottoman parliament. They shared a common trait in that they all came from middle and upper stratum families of an urban background, were especially interested in urban developments, and served in the local administration.<sup>2</sup> Two of them were mayors, Yusuf Diya’ al-Khalidi and Manuk Karaca were mayors of Jerusalem and Aleppo respectively. Husain Beyhum and ‘Abd al-Rahim Badran were members of the municipal counsel of Beirut. Niqula al-Naqqash and Niqula Nawfal were especially interested in the efficacy and feasibility of implementing the municipal law in the provincial cities. Husni Baqi established a number of urban amenities in Iskenderun, Haifa and Antakya, for example, and he commissioned statistical information on two of these cities.

In order to keep this article within a reasonable scope and size, the parliamentary debates of Husain Beyhum and Niqula al-Naqqash only will be utilised as an example for this group. Their repeated attempts to amend the draft municipal law are examined. A selective interpretation of the parliamentary proceedings constitutes the second part of this article. An edited version of the parliamentary debates has been published in the official gazette of the Ottoman Empire (*Takvim-i vekayi*). The contributions of the members of the lower house of parliament (*meclis-i meb’usan*), who discussed and tried to amend a number of draft laws, shed

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<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, London, henceforth PRO, PRO/FO 424/51, p. 57. In a letter dated April 3, 1877, from the British ambassador in Istanbul Nassau Jocelyn to the Earl of Derby.

<sup>2</sup> For a study on urban administration in the Ottoman provinces, see: Malek Sharif, *Imperial Norms and Local Realities* (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2010).

some light on their political views, aspirations and perspectives. The reports in *Takvim-i vekayi* were meticulously compiled by Hakki Tarik Us and published in two volumes in 1939 and 1953. However, how reliable is this source? It seems that a certain measure of caution while using it is necessary. For it presents us with two problems: First, we are certain that some deputies in the second parliamentary session protested that their contributions to the debates were not honestly reported in it.<sup>3</sup> Second, the names of some deputies were, most probably, deliberately ignored, and the paper reported their discussions under “bir meb‘us” or “bir meb‘us didi.” But it is also certain that we cannot afford to dismiss this published material as being totally dishonest and irrelevant. For in spite of its limitations and the doctoring inflicted on some of its substance, it does still provide us, to our pleasant surprise, with some of the most critical voices in the debates, which were not edited out, as one would have expected.

Due to the paucity of material on the *meclis-i meb‘usan* and on the legal process in the Ottoman Empire, this source remains very important and informative concerning the parliament, the parliamentarians, legal thinking, intellectual history and the negotiation of power in 1876-1878.

### *Niqula al-Naqqash*

The Beirut Niqula al-Naqqash served as a representative of Syria in the two sessions of the first Ottoman parliament. His biography stands as an example for the politically engaged and public-spirited emerging upper stratum in the urban centres of the Ottoman Empire. The biographical information on al-Naqqash is derived mainly from the history of the press and a literary history of Syria in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Niqula al-Naqqash published newspaper articles including his political programme and his activities in the *meclis-i meb‘usan*. He also compiled and published four plays and a number of poems written by his elder brother Marun. The introduction to this compilation includes information on the literary writings of Niqula al-Naqqash.<sup>5</sup>

Niqula al-Naqqash was born to Maronite parents in Beirut in 1825. His family originated from Sidon, but his father Elias, seeking a better opportunity for promoting his career, moved with his family to Beirut just before the birth of his son. Elias occupied the post of dragoman at the French general consulate in his new hometown. In 1850 he was a member of the grand administrative council of the

<sup>3</sup> Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period. A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), 182.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Tarrazi, *Tārikh al-ṣabāfa al-‘arabiyya* (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘a al-Adabiyya, 1913), 2:121–124, and Louis Cheikho, *al-‘Ādāb al-‘arabiyya fī al-qarn al-tāsi‘ ‘ashar*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Beirut 1926), 2:151–153.

<sup>5</sup> Niqula al-Naqqash, ed., *Arzat Lubnān* (Beirut 1869). In the introduction Niqula writes about his own plays and his philanthropic activities.

province of Sidon/Beirut.<sup>6</sup> His elder son Marun was a member of the commercial court in the city of Beirut and requested to build a state theatre in the city carrying the Sultan's monogram (*tuğra*).<sup>7</sup> Along with his employment in the administrative council of the province, Elias was granted the right to farm some taxes in the province of Saida/Beirut on behalf of the Ottoman treasury. Between 1849 and 1852 Elias Naqqash, in partnership with Na<sup>c</sup>üm Kabbabe, was granted the concession of farming the tobacco custom's revenue in the province of Saida. For that concession they paid the sum of 6,590 *kise*.<sup>8</sup> The state treasury must have deemed the financial situation of Elias al-Naqqash secure and stable, for he was granted these tax farms without a guarantor, but, in 1869 Elias al-Naqqash passed away bankrupt and owing the state treasury the sum of 8,000 *kurus*.<sup>9</sup>

Niqula started learning Arabic and Syriac at the very young age of four years. After mastering both these languages he learnt Italian, the language of commerce at the time.<sup>10</sup> His elder brother Marun (1817–1855) taught him Ottoman Turkish, French and bookkeeping “according to the European method.”<sup>11</sup> His knowledge of Ottoman Turkish and foreign languages qualified him to occupy the post of chief secretary (*baş katib*) of the customs house in Beirut. He occupied this post for many years. In the meantime he independently improved his Turkish and studied Arabic further with some of the most prominent scholars in Beirut, such as Ibrahim al-Ahdab and Yusuf al-Fakhuri. His diligent studies enabled him “to write eloquent prose and elegant poetry.” During his tenure in the customs house he developed special interest in Ottoman laws and, hence, started studying them. He also studied the Islamic inheritance law with Yusuf al-Asir.<sup>12</sup>

Niqula al-Naqqash's knowledge of foreign languages and bookkeeping encouraged him to establish his own trade house in 1852, but he gave it up after a short period of time to work first as a bookkeeper, then as a manager for the commercial affairs of Antoun Bey al-Masri. Antoun Bey was a major tax farmer in Syria and the owner of Khan Antoun Bey, the largest real estate in Beirut at the time. In 1859 al-Naqqash established a bank in partnership with Na<sup>c</sup>üm Qıqano, under the name Qıqano-Naqqash & Co. This remarkably quick financial promotion enabled Niqula al-Naqqash to claim a place in the financial upper stratum of Beirut society.

Capitalising on his financial success, he became acquainted with the highest Ottoman bureaucrats in his hometown. This must have paved the way for him to a number of administrative offices. He was a member of the administrative coun-

<sup>6</sup> Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul, henceforth BOA, İrade-i Meclis-i Vâlâ, 5976.

<sup>7</sup> BOA, İrade-i Meclis-i Vâlâ, 5976.

<sup>8</sup> BOA, İrade-i Dahiliye, 10349.

<sup>9</sup> BOA, İrade-i Dahiliye, 41793.

<sup>10</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-şahāfa*, 2:121–122.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 9; Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-şahāfa*, 2:122.

<sup>12</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-şahāfa*, 2:122.

cil for the district of Beirut for the period of one year, 1868–69. Between 1869 and 1876 he was a member of the administrative council of the province of Syria. From 1869 al-Naqqash also worked as a lawyer in Beirut. He was one of the very first lawyers practising at the recently established courts. During this period of time he translated the following newly promulgated Ottoman laws into Arabic: The Land Code, The Penal Code, The Commercial Code, The Construction Law, The Court Organisation Law and The Legal Procedure Law.<sup>13</sup> He did not only translate these laws, but also wrote commentaries on all of them.<sup>14</sup> According to Tarrazi and Cheikho his translations and commentaries became standard legal reference works already during his lifetime,<sup>15</sup> and were used in the Arabic-speaking “provinces of Syria, Beirut, Aleppo, the Mutasarrifate of Mount Lebanon, and the Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem.”<sup>16</sup>

Naqqash’s translation of an array of Ottoman laws was acknowledged and rewarded by the Ottoman state.<sup>17</sup> The state was interested in spreading the knowledge of the latest laws throughout its provinces and among its non-Turkish speaking subjects.<sup>18</sup> The Ottoman central authorities encouraged Naqqash by awarding him the fourth rank of the Mecidi-decoration. Each time he translated a new law, he was promoted in rank,<sup>19</sup> finally reaching the second rank in June 1874.<sup>20</sup> One can observe in the biography of al-Naqqash rapid financial advancement accompanied by political office and official Ottoman sanction, a growth in wealth, power and influence.

Niqula’s brother Marun, the first playwright in Beirut and the founder of the pioneer theatre in Syria, translated Molière’s work *L’Avaro* into Arabic in 1848. It did not take Niqula long to develop a passion for theatre and to follow in his elder brother’s steps. In 1849, at the young age of 25, Niqula al-Naqqash translated Molière’s play *Le Misanthrope*, which he gave the Arabic title *al-Shaykh al-jābil*. In 1851 he wrote and staged a tragedy called *Rabīʿa*, and *al-Murwaṣṣiyya*. All his plays were staged at the theatre of his elder brother Marun.<sup>21</sup> Naqqash also staged plays for charitable purposes, donating the revenue to philanthropic organisations.<sup>22</sup> He had close relations with the Maronite bishop of Beirut, Yusuf al-Dibs,<sup>23</sup> who was a

<sup>13</sup> See Niqula al-Naqqash, *Mīn al-dustūr al-jadīd* (Beirut 1873).

<sup>14</sup> For example, Niqula al-Naqqash, *Sharḥ qanūn uṣūl al-mubākamāt al-jazāʿiyya al-muʿaqqat* (Beirut 1886).

<sup>15</sup> Cheikho, *al-Ādāb al-ʿarabiyya*, 2:151.

<sup>16</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-sabāfa*, 2:123.

<sup>17</sup> BOA, *Īrade-i Dahiliye*, 47923.

<sup>18</sup> For the translation of Ottoman laws into the different languages spoken in the empire see Johann Strauss’s article in this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-sabāfa*, 2:123.

<sup>20</sup> BOA, *Īrade-i Dahiliye*, 47923.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-sabāfa*, 2:33.

man of letters as well and the founder of the Maronite college called al-Ḥikma (the wisdom). For his social engagement in his community, pope Pius IX granted al-Naqqash the rank of cavalier of the order of St. Gregory.<sup>24</sup>

In 1872 al-Naqqash became editor-in-chief of the Beirut newspaper *al-Najāb*. He was aware of the important role of the press in forming public opinion. While serving as a deputy of Syria in the Ottoman parliament (1877–78), he made perfect use of this organ. He corresponded with the Beirut newspapers *al-Bashīr* and *Ḥadīqat al-akhbār*, where he published his longer talks and summaries of his different interventions in parliament.<sup>25</sup> One of his articles was translated into English and published in the English newspaper of Istanbul, the *Levant Herald*.<sup>26</sup> He published his electioneering programme in preparation for the second elections to the Ottoman Parliament that took place towards the end of 1877.<sup>27</sup> In 1880 he established his own newspaper, *al-Misbāḥ*, which was to become one of the leading Maronite newspapers in Beirut, and the mouthpiece of the bishop Yūsuf al-Dibs.<sup>28</sup>

The articles which al-Naqqash published in the Beirut newspapers make it possible to piece together his political stance. He described himself as someone who excessively loved his state, i.e. the Ottoman Empire, “*farṭ maḥabbatī li-al-dawla*,” and that he “sought the unity and the harmony of its peoples.” He added that the state and the people (*al-umma*) were the same and that the interests of the first could not be separated from those of the second; thus, from his point of view, the wealth of the state derived from the well being of its people. Therefore, he saw it as his obligation “to undermine the unfair taxes collected in Syria.”<sup>29</sup> He claimed that he “did not lean either to the right or to the left,” and that he “followed a middle path, with moderate ideas, desiring wholeheartedly the welfare of the state and the people.”<sup>30</sup> He was aware of the urgent need for reformations in the Empire, and he believed in a “gradual reform process,”<sup>31</sup> criticizing those who called for a radical change in “the whole Ottoman state from the top to the bottom.” He added that it had taken Europe two hundred years to undertake the necessary reforms, and that the Ottoman Empire could not be restructured in forty years. He called for firm but moderate questioning of the Ottoman cabinet when necessary.<sup>32</sup> His political views show a liberal patriotic nuance.

With his biography and successful career Niqla al-Naqqash epitomises the *Zeitgeist* of the Tanzimat. Firstly, he single-handedly translated a significant num-

<sup>24</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-saḥāfa*, 2:123.

<sup>25</sup> *Ḥadīqat al-akhbār*, May 11, 1877; *al-Bashīr*, May 11, 1877, July 6, 1877, January 9, 1878, and February 22, 1878.

<sup>26</sup> *Levant Herald*, May 23, 1877. Cited in Devereux, *First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 166.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Bashīr*, March 9, 1877, November 9, 1877, October 19, 1877, and November 16, 1877.

<sup>28</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-saḥāfa*, 2: 33-35.

<sup>29</sup> *Al-Bashīr*, October 19, 1877.

<sup>30</sup> *Al-Bashīr*, February 1, 1878.

<sup>31</sup> *Al-Bashīr*, February 22, 1878.

<sup>32</sup> *Al-Bashīr*, February 1, 1878.

ber of the Tanzimat laws and worked as a lawyer in the new court system. Secondly, he became a member of the administrative council of Syria as a representative of his Maronite community.<sup>33</sup> This was a new representation right granted to the non-Muslim Ottomans. This prerogative was enshrined in the provincial code of 1864. Thirdly, he was a journalist, editor-in-chief and founder of a newspaper, another innovation of the Tanzimat period. Fourthly, he was elected to the Ottoman parliament, the institution which crowned all of the Tanzimat reforms.

His success and the story of his social mobility can only be regarded as remarkable. Niqla al-Naqqash set out as the son of a new immigrant to Beirut and advanced to being an official representative of this city in parliament, in the capital of the empire Istanbul. His elder brother Marun wrote a petition to Sultan Abdülmeçid, asking for the Sultan's patronage and sponsorship for his theatre, but the Sultan declined.<sup>34</sup> In 1877 al-Naqqash presented petitions to the cabinet of Sultan Abdülhamid II on behalf of his electorate. As a member of the parliament he attended the most illustrious inauguration ceremony of the *meclis-i meb'usan* in the palace of Dolmabahçe. This ceremony was presided over by Sultan Abdülhamid II himself, where a speech on his behalf was delivered to the members of the parliament and the Council of State (*sura-yı devlet*).

The British Consul-General in Beirut expressed serious doubt concerning the financial position and political independence of al-Naqqash. The image of al-Naqqash in the short report of Consul Eldridge differs from that derived from the local biographical sources. He wrote the following on Niqla al-Naqqash at the occasion of his election to the first session of the Ottoman parliament:

"Nicholas Effendi Naccache, Maronite, Notable of Beyrouit, and an ex-member of the Administrative Council of the Vilayet [...] Nicolas Effendi Naccache, in many ways resembles Naufal [Niqla Nawfal, another elected deputy], but more moderate in his temper, and even subservient in his demeanour towards his superiors. He has had much experience in the public service, and is about sixty years of age; unfortunately his pecuniary circumstances are necessitous, and he is generally accused of accepting bribes."<sup>35</sup>

After the parliament was prorogued, Niqla al-Naqqash continued to translate different Ottoman laws. The frontispiece of two laws translated by Naqqash presents us with his belief in the legislative function of the parliament. He was of the conviction that it would reconvene in order to amend and discuss the Ottoman laws. In June 1879, 16 months after the parliament was suspended, al-Naqqash published a new translation of the 'Penal Code' and its amendments in which he

<sup>33</sup> The 1864 provincial code emphatically and repeatedly reiterated that the administrative council of the *vilayet* and *kaza* should consist of an equal number of Muslim and non-Muslim members. For an Arabic translation of the articles of the 1864 provincial code, governing the selection, function, rights and religious affiliations of the members of the provincial administrative council, see *al-Dustūr*, 1:383–386.

<sup>34</sup> BOA, İrade-i Meclis-i Vâlâ, 5976.

<sup>35</sup> PRO/FO 424/50, p. 144.

wrote that this law was temporary pending final legalisation in the parliament.<sup>36</sup> After ten years, in 1889, the title of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of his translation of the ‘Legal Procedure Law’ states that this law was only temporary pending the final approval of the parliament when it reconvened.<sup>37</sup>

Niqula al-Naqqash died in Beirut on December 4, 1894. A large number of journalists and intellectuals of the city wrote obituaries recalling his intellectual qualities, and some lamented his death in poignant poems.<sup>38</sup>

### *Al-Hajj Husain Beyhum*

Husain Beyhum served as the deputy of Syria in the first session of the first Ottoman parliament. Initially he was not elected to that post, but the resignation of Emin Efendi al-Jundi of Damascus qualified him to occupy that seat since he had acquired the second highest number of votes.<sup>39</sup> The British Consul-General in Beirut also states that he was elected for the second session; however, “he has declined to accept the charge to which he has been elected.”<sup>40</sup> No other source mentions this fact or speaks about his resignation. The most elaborate biography on Husain Beyhum is available in Tarrazi’s history of the Arab press. The following is a summary of that entry.<sup>41</sup>

Husain Beyhum, the son of Umar the son of Husain was born in Beirut in 1833 (1249 H.). He belonged to a family that “combined noble descent and extensive wealth known for its philanthropic activities.” From his youth he was especially fond of acquiring knowledge. He studied with the most prominent Shaykhs of Beirut ‘Abd Allah Khalid and Muhammad al-Hut. He worked for a short period of time in the family business, but he decided to relinquish commerce and dedicated himself to the promotion of education.<sup>42</sup> He wrote poetry and was known for improvising in that art. Beyhum collected an extensive library and made it accessible to interested scholars. He was sharp, known for his quick wit and learned in politics. He was well known for his piety and supported the

<sup>36</sup> Niqula Naqqash, translator, *Majmū‘at al-qawānīn al-‘adliyya* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Umūmiyya, n.d.) frontispiece of the Criminal law.

<sup>37</sup> Naqqash, translator, *Majmū‘at al-qawānīn al-‘adliyya*, frontispiece of the Legal Procedure Law.

<sup>38</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-sahāfa*, 2:125-126.

<sup>39</sup> PRO/FO 424/50, p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> PRO/FO 424/62, p. 148.

<sup>41</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-sahāfa*, 1:117-119. For other biographies see: Cheikho, *al-Ādāb al-‘arabiyya*, 2:21-23; Jurji Zaidan, *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughā al-‘arabiyya*, reprint (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār Maktaba al-Ĥayāt, 1992), 2:581-582; Khalil Mardam Bey, *A‘yān al-qarn al-thālith ‘ashar* (Beirut 1971), 233-234. For the role of Husain Beyhum’s family in the trade of Beirut see Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 96-98.

<sup>42</sup> Zaidan, *Tārīkh ādāb*, 2:581.

learned from the different religious affiliations in his city. He occupied different posts in the local administration. He was a member of the grand administrative council of the province of Sidon/Beirut, member of the court of appeal, a member of the municipal council of Beirut and a member of the administrative council of the province of Syria. In 1869 he became president of the Syrian Scientific Society, and aided in publishing its journal *Majmū'at al-'ulūm* (The Collection of Knowledge). He showed his special capabilities as a deputy of Syria in Istanbul. There he was warmly welcomed by the ministers and high-ranking bureaucrats.<sup>43</sup>

After returning to Beirut he relinquished all official posts and dedicated himself to performing philanthropic work and reading literature. As a reward for his public engagement and interest in the common good, he received an Ottoman order of the Izmir rank. He was one of the founding members of the *Maqāṣid* association in Beirut in 1878. The aim of that association was to establish schools teaching modern curricula and to promote the education of girls. His social standing and connections facilitated the establishment of that educational association. He died in Beirut on January 24, 1881, and he was buried amidst a public scene of grief as a sign of his noble character and his broad acquaintances.<sup>44</sup>

A concise introduction of the Syrian Scientific Society is imperative. It was established in Beirut in 1868. Its aim was to promote and spread general knowledge, science and literature. It was a forum for the discussion of scientific papers, literary works and even for staging theatre. Husain Beyhum was one of its founding members, and in its second year he was elected as its president. Another Beirut deputy to the first Ottoman parliament, 'Abd al-Rahim Badran, became a member of its administrative committee. The society collected a library, and it subscribed to a large number of French and Arabic newspapers from Egypt, Beirut and Istanbul. It also published the proceedings of its meetings in 1868 and 1869 in sixteen fascicules. One of the expressed aims of the society was to deal with "pure scientific works avoiding religious and political subjects." One of their hopes was that through the spread of knowledge harmony and unity would prevail among the different members of society. In its second year, the society had 116 members, most of them well-known intellectuals and public figures of their time.<sup>45</sup>

The legacy of Husain Beyhum is a divan of poetry and a theatre play. In a poem that he wrote especially for the inauguration of the Syrian Scientific Society he expressed his pride in the Arab contribution to the sciences, human knowledge and civilisation. He stated that "the Arabs were known for their sharp wit that resembled swords. However, these swords need to be polished every now and then" and that this was the function of the Syrian Scientific Society.<sup>46</sup> Husain Beyhum pub-

<sup>43</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-ṣahāfa*, 1:118.

<sup>44</sup> Tarrazi, *Tārīkh al-ṣahāfa*, 1:118.

<sup>45</sup> Yūsuf Quzmā Khūrī, *A'māl al-jam'īyya al-'ilmiyya as-Sūriyya 1868-1869* (Beirut 1990).

<sup>46</sup> Khūrī, *A'māl al-jam'īyya al-'ilmiyya*, 14.

lished a number of his poems in the Arabic newspaper of Istanbul *al-Jawā'ib*.<sup>47</sup> Some of his poetry was collected in a divan printed in Beirut, and he also wrote a play with a clear patriotic message. Thus, the Ottoman authorities encouraged its staging a number of times at public places during national celebrations.<sup>48</sup>

Theatre played an important role in the Syrian Scientific Society and fascinated Niqula al-Naqqash. The admiration of theatre was not peculiar to these deputies alone; Ahmet Vefik Pasha (1823–1891),<sup>49</sup> the speaker of the Ottoman parliament, adopted sixteen comedies by Molière and produced them on stage in Bursa.<sup>50</sup> The primary significance of the plays is that they enabled the playwrights to deliver their earnest messages to the illiterate public in a subtle entertaining manner. Naqqash, Beyhum and Ahmet Vefik Pasha's aim was to educate the populace by means of their plays. Naqqash clearly stated his objective by writing that "this art contributes to the success and the benefit of the general public."<sup>51</sup> Hence, it would show them the way to "progress,"<sup>52</sup> because the plays "include advice and instructions to the public."<sup>53</sup> They "are rife with moral lessons, wisdom and social criticism; they educate the people and refine their character... as well as informing them about the affairs of the wide world."<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, "the plays call for truthfulness and righteousness, and they can lead enthroned kings to the right ruling policies."<sup>55</sup>

This shows the commitment of members of the upper stratum and their self-confidence in assuming an enlightening, educating and leading role in society. Such a social commitment was common to a number of members of the urban upper stratum who were elected to the first Ottoman parliament.

### *Niqula Bey Nawfal*

Niqula Bey Nawfal was one of the deputies of Syria in the first Ottoman parliament's first session. A biography of Niqula Bey Nawfal is available in a bio-

<sup>47</sup> Salim Shidiyaq, compiler, *Kanz al-rağhā'ib fī muntakhabāt al-jawā'ib* (Istanbul 1875) 4:2, 70 and 106 for example.

<sup>48</sup> Zaidan, *Tārīkh ādāb*, 2:581; Mardam Bey, *A'yan*, 233.

<sup>49</sup> For the most recent and most detailed biography see B. Çeri, "Ahmed Vefik Paşa," in *Türk dünyası edebiyatçıları ansiklopedisi* (Ankara 2002), 184–190. See also Atilla Özkırmı, *Türk edebiyatı ansiklopedisi*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Istanbul 1987), 64–65; Recep Toparlı, ed., *Ahmet Vefik Paşa. Lehce-i Osmânî* (Ankara 2000), xi–xiii; Seyit Kemal Karaalioglu, *Türk edebiyatı tarihi. Tanzimat'tan cumhuriyete*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Istanbul 1982), 141–145; *Türk dili ve edebiyatı ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul 1977), 1:76–77; J. Deny, "Ahmad Wafik Pasha," in *EL*, 1:298; Isma'il Habip, *Türk teceddüt edebiyatı tarihi* (Ankara 1339/1921), 408–413.

<sup>50</sup> Deny, "Ahmad Wafik Pasha," 298.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Naqqash, *Arzat Lubnān*, 16.

graphical dictionary on the learned men of Tripoli compiled by his first cousin once removed, ‘Abd Allah Habib Nawfal, and published in Tripoli in 1929.<sup>56</sup> A relatively elaborate entry of half a ledger’s page is available on him in *Sicill-i ahval*.<sup>57</sup> A synthesis of both entries will provide a fairly developed picture of this parliamentarian.

Niqula Bey, the son of Luṭf Allah, the son of Girgis Nawfal was born in 1817 in Tripoli into an established Greek-Orthodox family, since generations serving in the Ottoman administration.<sup>58</sup> His father and all of his three uncles were in the service of the Ottoman and later Ibrahim Pasha’s administration of Syria. Upon the withdrawal of the Egyptians from Syria in 1840, they returned to the service of the Ottoman state.<sup>59</sup>

Niqula Bey started his education at elementary schools (*kuttāb*) in his native city. Later, he studied Arabic, Turkish and Persian grammar with private tutors. After mastering these languages, he learned French and Italian. In 1840 (1256 H.), immediately after the return of Syria to the Ottoman Empire, he occupied at age 23 his first official post in the office of provisioning the army (*sevkiyat*) in Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘mān in Northern Syria, earning a monthly salary of 1,200 *куруш* per month. In the same year he was moved to Sidon to act as secretary of the governor, earning the same salary. Later, he occupied the same post, but for a lesser salary, in his home town Tripoli and later in Beirut. At the beginning of 1857 (mid 1273 H.), now 40 years old, he became the translator at the accounting bureau in Sidon, earning 1,250 *куруш*. In the middle of 1859 (end of 1275 H.) he was earning 2,000 *куруш* and moved to Tripoli. In 1864-65 (1281 H.) he left that post and in 1865-66 (1282 H.) he represented the Greek-Orthodox in the administrative council of Mount Lebanon. Later, he became the deputy governor, (*kaimmakam*) of the *kaza* of Kura until 1867-68 (1284 H.). In that year he occupied secretarial offices in Tripoli and Hama until 1876 (1293 H.). In 1877 (1294 H.) he was elected as a member to the Ottoman parliament, earning a salary of 5,000 *куруш*.

In 1878 (1295 H.) he worked as the honorary president of the refugee relief commission in Tripoli. In March-April 1880 (Rabī‘ II 1297 H.), he became the president of the commercial court of Tripoli, earning a salary of 1,000 *куруш* a month. In March-April 1884 (Jumāda II 1301 H.) he was still occupying the same post, the last date concerning a public post mentioned in the *Sicill-i ahval* document. The sub-governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Tripoli, Mehmet Yusuf Pasha, the inspector of justice in Syria and the governor of Syria, Hamdi Pasha, testify in this document that he was fulfilling all his tasks with energy and perseverance, in spite of

<sup>56</sup> Habib Nawfal, *Tarājim ‘ulamā’ Tarāblus wa udabā’ihā* (Tripoli 1929), 91-94.

<sup>57</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 4, p. 950 B.

<sup>58</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 91. His entry in *Sicill-i ahval* states that he was born in 1235 H. which corresponds to 1819.

<sup>59</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 52-53 and 63-64.

the fact that he was known for his sharp temper (*hiddet-i miza*), and that during his tenure he was never accused or convicted of any crime.

He carried the decoration of the second order and in 1887-88 (1305 H.) he was promoted to the distinguished second order rank (*mutamayiz*). He also received the Russian decoration of St. Stanislas of the third rank. The information provided above is derived mainly from the document in the *Sicill-i ahval*.<sup>60</sup>

The British consul general in Beirut, Jackson Eldridge, wrote on March 3, 1877 to the ambassador in Istanbul, Mr. Jocelyn, the following concerning Niqula Nawfal:

“Nicholas Bey Nauphal, Orthodox, Notable of Tripoli. Nicholas Bey Nauphal, with whom I am not personally acquainted, is represented as about fifty years of age, and belongs to a highly respectable, though not wealthy, family of Orthodox Christians of Tripoli, he is said to be intelligent and energetic, with a fair amount of instruction and considerable experience in the public service, he is very eloquent, though a little quick in temper.”<sup>61</sup>

Niqula Bey’s biography written by his first cousin once removed provides us with further information. In 1860 he worked as a translator to the delegate of Russia negotiating with Fuad Pasha the protocol of Mount Lebanon. In 1878, a few months after the parliament was suspended, he invited Midhat Pasha to feast at his place in Tripoli. On this occasion he recited a poem he had composed celebrating a toast in honor of Midhat Pasha and describing the ceremony as “a sacrament for Midhat Pasha, the god of the sword and the pen.” As a former deputy he was not reluctant to invite Midhat Pasha after his return from his exile and to praise his drives for reform. Niqula Bey’s literary legacy is a book of poetry and an apologetic work for the Greek-Orthodox faith which was printed in Beirut. He died aged 88 in 1895, and his burial procession was crowded with a large number of eulogies read in his honor.<sup>62</sup>

He was succeeded by four sons and four daughters. His eldest son, Luṭf Allāh, followed in the footsteps of his father as a civil servant. In April-May 1864 (Dhu l-Qa‘da 1280 H.) he joined the first regiment of the Ottoman household cavalry (*silāhşoran*). In 1866-67 (1283 H.) upon dissolving that corps, he received the fourth rank and returned to his native city Tripoli. In April-May 1869 (Muḥarram 1286 H.) he returned to Istanbul and was appointed as a captain (*yüzbaşı*) and prepared to become one of the aides-de-camp (*yaver*) of Sultan Abdülaziz. He remained in Istanbul until July 1870 (Rabī‘ II 1287 H.). Between 1877 (1294 H.) and 1885-86 (1303 H.) he occupied different posts in Syria, earning between 1,300 and 1,500 *kuruş* per month.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 4, p. 950 B.

<sup>61</sup> PRO/FO 424/50, p. 143-144.

<sup>62</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 91-94.

<sup>63</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 26, p. 207.

The cousins of Niqla Bey Nawfal were spread from Saint Petersburg to Alexandria and were involved in the translation and revival of Arabic classical literature. His cousin Salim Nawfal (1828-1902), for example, worked as a translator in the Romanov court in St. Petersburg. He was a very prolific author and published in Arabic and French, writing in several of the newly established newspapers of Beirut and Cairo. Before his departure to Russia, he was a member of the Syrian Scientific Society.<sup>64</sup> Another cousin of his is Nawfal Nawfal (1811-1887), who worked as a civil servant and later as a dragoman in the German consulate in Tripoli. This cousin as well was a member of the Syrian Scientific Society and a prolific author. He translated Ottoman laws into Arabic and wrote a large number of books, one about the history of Arab culture, and an Ottoman-Arabic dictionary.<sup>65</sup> ʿAbd Allah Ibn Mikhail Nawfal (1815-1889), a third cousin and the brother-in-law of Niqla Nawfal, also worked for a long while as a civil servant in Mount Lebanon. He emigrated to Alexandria and supported two of his sons in establishing newspapers there.<sup>66</sup> His nephew Nasim Nawfal (1846-1903) in Alexandria was the first in the Middle East to publish a women's magazine.<sup>67</sup>

He was related through marriage to the rich Bustrus family of Beirut, the Debane family of Sidon, Khalil al-Khuri, the founder of *Hadiqat al-Akbbār* newspaper in Beirut, as well as to the Kestafis family, who served as consuls of Russia in Tripoli.

### *Manuk Karaca Efendi, Son of Krikor*

Manuk Karaca was a deputy of Aleppo in both sessions of the first Ottoman parliament. Our information on this deputy and his son Levon Karaca is restricted to their entries in *Sicill-i ahval*. A summary of these official biographies is provided here.<sup>68</sup>

Manuk Efendi was born in Aleppo in 1843 (1259 H.) and started studying in the elementary school of Aleppo. Later he learned Arabic, Turkish, French and Armenian in Istanbul. In 1872 (1289 H.), aged 30, he became an honorary member of the commercial court of Aleppo, and in 1874 (1291 H.) he became a member of the city's court of appeal for three years, earning a salary of 1,000 *kuruş*. In 1877 (1294 H.) he was elected to parliament, earning a salary of 5,000 *kuruş* for 4 months. In 1878 (1295 H.) he was reelected, earning the same salary for the same period of time.

<sup>64</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 114-121.

<sup>65</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 76-77.

<sup>66</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 81-82.

<sup>67</sup> Nawfal, *Tarājim*, 90-91.

<sup>68</sup> BOA, DH. SAÏD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 10, p. 283-284 and BOA, DH. SAÏD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 60, p. 401 B.

In the beginning of 1879 (beginning of 1296 H.) he was appointed mayor of the municipality of Aleppo, earning 2,000 *kuruş* a month. He remained in this post for three years. In 1884-85 (1302 H.) he became a public attorney in the province of Trabzon. One year later he was moved back to Aleppo to work at the court of first instance. In July-August 1890 (Dhu al-Hijja 1307 H.) he was removed from his post when he lost a case brought against him accusing him of corruption and embezzlement. In 1892-93 (1310 H.) he became the president of the commercial court of Tripoli, earning 1,200 *kuruş*. In December 1895-January 1896 (Rajab 1313 H.) he was appointed president of the commercial court of Yanya, with a salary of 1,000 *kuruş*, but he refused this position, which caused his dismissal from office. He was appointed inspector of the collection of agricultural taxation in the province of Aydin and inspector of the collection of taxes in the capital Istanbul. He held this office from 1897-98 (1315 H.) until April 14, 1908 (April 1, 1324 maliye). His salary ranged from 1,300 to 2,000 *kuruş*.<sup>69</sup> We do not know when he died. During his tenure as deputy, he received a decoration of the second order second rank.

His son Levon was born in Aleppo in 1868-69 (1285 H.). After studying in the Armenian school of Aleppo, he went to Istanbul where he joined the school affiliated to the Armenian hospital, following its regular curriculum and earning a certificate from it. He read and wrote Arabic, Turkish, French, English and Armenian and spoke Italian. He occupied his first official position in 1886-87 (1304 H.) in the accounting office of the imperial properties (*emlakî humayun*) and remained in this same bureau until August-September 1908 (August 1324 maliye). His initial salary was 200 *kuruş*, and his final salary was 500 *kuruş*. On December 14, 1909 (December 1, 1325 maliye), he was appointed to the telegraph office of Aleppo with a monthly salary of 700 *kuruş*.<sup>70</sup>

### ‘*Abd al-Rahim Badran Efendi*

Abd al-Rahim Badran was one of the deputies of Syria in the second session of the first parliament. There exists no known biography of Badran; therefore the information provided by the entry available on him in *Sicill-i ahval* gains special importance. The following is a summary of this official biography.<sup>71</sup>

He was born in Beirut on April 19, 1840 (16<sup>th</sup> of Şafar, 1256 H.), the son of Husain Badran, a sheikh of the Sa‘diyya mystic order and a merchant.

In the schools of Beirut he studied Arabic language and grammar, as well as logic and French. He spoke and wrote Arabic and Turkish. He was also very well acquainted with French, mathematics, history and geography. At the end of 1860

<sup>69</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 10, p. 283-284.

<sup>70</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 60, p. 401 B.

<sup>71</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, *Sicill-i ahval*, 10, p. 201.

or beginning of 1861 (in mid 1277 H.), at the age of 21 years, he was appointed to the *kontrato* bureau of Beirut, with a salary of 500 *kuruş*. In July 1867 (Rabī' I 1284 H.) he was appointed to the *defter nufus*. In March-April 1871 (Şafar 1288 H.) he resigned and went to Diyarbekir, where he was appointed to the accounting office of that province. During that year he taught the employees of that bureau the principles of accounting and decimal mathematics. On April 23, 1872 (13<sup>th</sup> of Şafar 1289 H.) he was appointed *kaimmakam* of the *kaza* of Kâhta in Ma'muretülaziz with a salary of 1,350 *kuruş*. In October-November 1873 (Ramađān 1290 H.) he was transferred to Eğin, with a salary of 1,800 *kuruş*. In April-May 1875 (Rabī' I 1292 H.) he left that post. In January-February 1877 (Muḥarram 1294 H.) he was appointed to the court of appeal in al-Balqa, with a salary of 380 *kuruş*. On November 9, 1877 (3<sup>rd</sup> of Dhu al-Qa'ḍa 1294 H.) he was elected deputy of Syria with a salary of 5,000 *kuruş*.

In July 1878 (Rajab 1295 H.) he was elected as a member of the municipal council of Beirut with a salary of 950 *kuruş*, and he also served as a member of the commercial court of that city. In November-December 1878 (Dhu al-Hijja 1295 H.) he was appointed president of the commercial court of Beirut with a salary of 4,000 *kuruş*. In July-August 1880 (Sha'bān 1297 H.) he was transferred to Damascus. In January 1881 (Şafar 1298 H.) while in office he received the decoration of the second distinguished rank. The minister of justice, Server Pasha, and Nashid Pasha, the governor of Syria, testified in July-August 1886 (July 1302 maliye) that Badran was very capable and enthusiastic for his work and that he was also famous for his integrity.

In March-April 1888 (Rajab 1305 H.) he was transferred to the court of appeal in Damascus where he became its public attorney with a salary of 3,000 *kuruş*.<sup>72</sup>

Badran was a member of the Syrian Scientific Society since its establishment; he was an active member in the inaugural year of that association. On 20 January 1869 he was elected as a member of its administrative committee, and Husain Beyhum was elected association president.<sup>73</sup> In one of the early meetings of the society, March 21, 1868, Badran delivered a study on Arabic grammar and syntax. In his detailed talk he proudly praised the beauty, brevity and precision of that language as well as the elegance and eloquence of its speakers. He called for reviving the study of Arabic syntax since it was the noblest of all languages. His talk was published in the fourth fascicule of the proceedings of the Syrian society.<sup>74</sup> He also wrote an article on the history of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid and presented it to the society.<sup>75</sup>

Badran spoke in the parliament of the necessity of equity between the different peoples of the empire. He demanded equality for the Syrians, asking why they

<sup>72</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 10, p. 201.

<sup>73</sup> Khūrī, *A'māl al-jam'iyya al-'ilmiyya*, introduction, the letter Kaf.

<sup>74</sup> Khūrī, *A'māl al-jam'iyya al-'ilmiyya*, 55-58.

<sup>75</sup> Khūrī, *A'māl al-jam'iyya al-'ilmiyya*, 185-189.

had never occupied an important post in the Ottoman administration for the last “600 years.”<sup>76</sup> He was stopped from proceeding in his argument, but he insisted that his speech should be included in the minutes of the parliamentary debates.<sup>77</sup>

Jackson Eldridge, the British Consul General in Beirut, wrote in a letter that he sent to Mr. Layard the ambassador in Istanbul, the following about him:

“Abd-ul-Rahim Effendi, Mussulman, belonging to a highly-respected family of Beyrout;...Abd-ul-Rahim Effendi is well known to me, and I have the highest opinion of his capacity and integrity. He has filled with credit various subordinate posts in the Ottoman services. He was for about five years kaimkam of various places in the Vilayet of Diarbekir; and has during the last five months filled the post of Musullman member of the Medjlis Temeez [court of appeal] of Beyrout, where his acuteness and honesty have gained him a high reputation among all classes, as he is a sworn enemy of injustice, abuses and corruption. As a Mussulman he is most liberal in his ideas, tolerant and conciliant towards Christians; and during the last two years of difficulty, his influence has always been exercised to prevent any excesses and fanatical demonstrations on the part of his coreligionists. He is thoroughly convinced of the necessity of reforms in the Ottoman Administration in general, and especially in the equal distribution and impartial collection of the taxes, in the administration of justice, and the organization of the police. Unfortunately for himself, he is by no means a man of wealth; in fact I believe he has no other resources than the salary he receives from the Government, which makes his proverbial integrity the more remarkable; but as he is firm in his convictions and eloquent in expressing them, I hope, for the sake of the public good, that his opinions will meet with the consideration they deserve, although they are not backed by the influence of wealth.”<sup>78</sup>

After this very positive note on Badran, Eldridge even went further, giving an upbeat opinion on Badran’s native city and its educated strata stating the following:

“The fact that the four deputies who were at the head of the poll are natives of Beyrout, ..., has been somewhat commented upon; but I consider it as a proof that the other districts of the vilayet appreciate the exceptional educational advantages offered by this town, which places its inhabitants in the van of civilization in Syria.”<sup>79</sup>

### *Yusuf Diya’ al-Khalidi*

Yusuf Diya’ al-Khalidi was the deputy of the *mutasarrıflık* of Jerusalem in both sessions of the first Ottoman parliament. Thanks to the works of Alexander Schölch<sup>80</sup> and Rashid Khalidi<sup>81</sup> we have a detailed picture of Yusuf al-Khalidi and his activi-

<sup>76</sup> Hakki Tank Us, ed., *Meclis-i Meb’usan 1293=1877, Zabıt Ceridesi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Vakıf Matbaası, 1939-1954), 2:222-223.

<sup>77</sup> Devereux, *First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 182-183.

<sup>78</sup> PRO/FO 424/62, pp. 148-149.

<sup>79</sup> PRO/FO 424/62, p.149.

<sup>80</sup> Schölch, Alexander, “Ein palästinischer Repräsentant der Tanzimat-Periode: Yūsuf Dīyā’-addīn al-Ḥālīdī (1842-1906),” in: *Der Islam* 57, 2 (1980), 311-322.

<sup>81</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity. The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 69-76.

ties as a parliamentarian. Both of these important works on the deputy of Jerusalem did not use the entry on him in *Sicill-i ahval*.<sup>82</sup> Comparing this document from the archives with the biographies mentioned above reveals differences, which will be discussed below after presenting a summary of the official entry.

Yusuf Diya' Efendi, the son of Muhammad, a descendant of Khalid ibn al-Walid, the companion of the prophet, was born 1841 (1257 H.) in Jerusalem. He acquired the principles of religious education. After that he visited the Fakhriyya school in Jerusalem to study jurisprudence, logic and Arabic language and grammar. Later he was in an English school in Malta, and the American Robert College in Istanbul, where he studied geography, mathematics, Greek, French and English. He spoke Greek, French and English and wrote Turkish.

He worked in the *sharia* court in Jerusalem from 1859-60 (1276 H.). Later he came to Istanbul and stayed for one year in the translation office of the foreign ministry. As of August-September 1867 (Jumāda I 1284 H.) he became mayor of Jerusalem with a salary of 700 *kuruş*, until July-August 1870 (Jumāda I 1287 H.), when he resigned. With a salary of 1,000 *kuruş* he was appointed inspector of the lands, but the post was cancelled after 6 months, and in January-February 1871 (Dhu al-Qa'ḍa 1287 H.) he became acting *kaimmakam* of Jaffa with a salary of 2,100 *kuruş*. In April-May 1871 (Şafar 1288 H.) he was reappointed mayor of Jerusalem with a salary of 1,000 *kuruş*. A year and 11 months later he resigned. In March 1873 (Muḥarram 1290 H.) he returned to Istanbul to work at the translation office of the foreign office. In March-April 1874 ( 26 Şafar 1291 H.) he was appointed consul in Poti with a salary of approximately 3,000 *kuruş*; he resigned repeatedly from this post due to an illness and returned on March 9, 1875 ( 1 Şafar 1292 H.) to Jerusalem to serve as mayor for a monthly salary of 1,000 *kuruş*. On March 9, 1876 (12<sup>th</sup> of Şafar 1293 H.) [sic.]<sup>83</sup> he was elected deputy of Jerusalem [to the Ottoman parliament] with a salary of 3,000 *kuruş*. He served for three months in this capacity.

In July-August 1876 (Rajab 1293 H.) he returned to Jerusalem and was reelected as mayor. In April-May 1877 (Rabī' II 1294 H.) [sic.] he was reelected as deputy of Jerusalem [to the Ottoman parliament]. He returned to Istanbul where he served for three months with a salary of 3,000 *kuruş*.

In January-February 1878 (Muḥarram 1295 H.) he returned to serve as mayor of Jerusalem. In October-November 1880 (Dhu al-Qa'ḍa 1297 H.) he was appointed acting *kaimmakam* of Gaza with a salary of 850 *kuruş*. He served in this post for four and a half months. In February-March 1881 (Rabī' I 1298 H.) he was appointed *kaimmakam* of Jaffa, and in December 1881-January 1882 (Şafar 1299 H.) he became *kaimmakam* of Gaza with a salary of 1,750 *kuruş*. He occupied this

<sup>82</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 4, p.382.

<sup>83</sup> For a discussion of this date see below.

last post until May-June 1883 (Rajab 1300 H.), when it was deemed unsuitable for him to occupy a post on the Egyptian borders after the British occupation of that country.

He was summoned to Istanbul where he remained without an official post until 1887-88 (1305 H.). During this period of time he wrote to the division of interior affairs in *şura-yı devlet* defending himself and asking for a post that would suit his accomplishments and previous career as a civil servant. In November-December 1885 (Şafar 1303 H.) the division of interior affairs in *şura-yı devlet* acquitted him of all accusations and deemed it unjust to deprive him of office. In November-December 1887 (Rabî' I 1305 H.) he was appointed *kaimmakam* of Balqa with a salary of 1,750 *kuruş*. In December 1889-January 1890 (Jumâda I 1307 H.) he was promoted to the rank of Mirmiran and appointed *kaimmakam* of Mutiki in the province of Bitlis with a salary of 2,500 *kuruş*. He resigned from this post in December 1891-January 1892 (Jumâda I 1309 H.). In April-May 1893 (Shawwâl 1310 H.) he was appointed *kaimmakam* of Hasbayya, his salary being 1,750 *kuruş*. He was transferred in September-October 1893 (Rabî' I 1311 H.) to Jabal al-Duruz with a salary of 1,250 *kuruş* and occupied this post until October-November 1894 (Jumâda I 1312 H.). This is the last entry in his official biography.<sup>84</sup>

After Yusuf Efendi's resignation from Poti, his official biography diverges from the more recent biographies. One might tend to accept the information in the official biography as being more authentic due to its nature and the fact that it is contemporary to the career and life of Yusuf al-Khalidi. However, it appears that the dates in this document are not precise and that perhaps an attempt to cover a gap of almost one year was systematically undertaken. In other words, the document reveals that it might have been doctored or altered in order to cover an embarrassing or an incriminating act. Hence, a discussion and a comparison between the official biography and the later ones are imperative.

Rashid al-Khalidi who used the private papers, letters and publications of Yusuf al-Khalidi, was able to show that Yusuf Efendi, after resigning from Poti, embarked on a trip through Russia to Vienna, where he worked as a professor of oriental languages.<sup>85</sup> The entry in *Sicilli-i ahval* would not be expected to cover this trip ending in a post since the record deals only with tenures that are paid for by the Ottoman treasury. However, it completely ignores it and claims that al-Khalidi returned from Poti to Jerusalem to act as a mayor of his native city. This created a gap of a full year in the document which was not altered; thus we see that al-Khalidi, according to the *Sicilli-i ahval* entry, was elected deputy to the Ottoman parliament even before the constitution was proclaimed.

The entry in *Sicilli-i ahval* reveals important information concerning suspicions about al-Khalidi. The division of interior affairs in *şura-yı devlet* discussed reports

<sup>84</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, *Sicilli-i ahval*, 4, p.382.

<sup>85</sup> Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 73.

written by an anonymous informer claiming that in Vienna al-Khalidi committed the grave crime of treason. The accusation was dismissed, but these reports were kept in al-Khalidi's file. The investigation commission in the *şura-yı devlet* recommended caution and special attention in granting al-Khalidi any future public office. The document informs us that al-Khalidi was himself aware of these reports and their effects, a fact which urged him to address the division of interior affairs in *şura-yı devlet* in order to refute these allegations and assert his loyalty to the state.

Yusuf Diya' al-Khalidi along with 'Abd al-Rahim Badran and Manuk Karaca were deported from Istanbul immediately after the parliament was prorogued.<sup>86</sup>

Yusuf al-Khalidi, while in Vienna in 1880, edited and published the divan of Labid, one of the most famous pre-Islamic poets. In 1893 he published a Kurdish-Arabic dictionary.<sup>87</sup>

### *Husni Baqi Zade Bey*

He was the deputy of Aleppo in the first session of the first Ottoman parliament. The biography of Husni Baqi Zade in *Sicill-i ahval* is very detailed and contains all the posts he occupied in his long career.<sup>88</sup> A summary of this official entry is presented below and followed by information from his biography in the history of Aleppo by Rāghib al-Tabbākh.<sup>89</sup>

Husni Baqi Zade was born in Aleppo on January 8, 1844 (17 Dhu l-Hijja 1259 H.).<sup>90</sup> He studied Arabic, Persian and Turkish. After that he learned Italian, French, geography, history and logic in the Terra Santa school in Aleppo. He trained in different departments of the administrative council of Aleppo. In February-March 1858 (Rajab 1274 H.), at the age of 15, he was appointed to the investigation bureau of the Zabtıyye.<sup>91</sup>

In January-February 1871 (Dhu al-Qa' da 1287 H.) he became the *kaimmakam* of Birecek, where he was paid a salary of 3,500 *kuruş*. In the beginning of 1873 (beginning of 1290 H.) he became governor of Antakya. In 1876 and 1877 (1293 and 1294 H.) he was entrusted with investigating complaints and riots in Urfa, Iskenderun, Antakya and Bilan. For this kind of work, he received a per diem and travel expenses. In mid-1877 (mid 1294 H.) he was elected to the parliament,

<sup>86</sup> Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 247; Schölch, "Palästinischer Repräsentant," 316 and Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 73.

<sup>88</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 10, pp. 277-278.

<sup>89</sup> Rāghib al-Tabbākh, *Flām an-nubalā' bi-tārīkh Ḥalab al-shabbā'* (Aleppo: al-Maṭba'a al-'Ilmiyya, 1345/1926), 547-551.

<sup>90</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 10, p. 277. His biography in al-Tabbākh, *Flām an-nubalā'* indicates the 15<sup>th</sup> Dhu al-Hijja 1259 H. as his birthday.

<sup>91</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 10, p. 277.

earning a salary of 5,000 *kuruş* and 6,000 *kuruş* to cover his travel expenses. After 5 to 6 month in this post he returned to the province of Aleppo.

Between 1878 and 1892-93 (between 1295 and 1310 H.) he was appointed as acting *kaimmakam* of Ayntab, then *kaimmakam* of Antakya, Iskenderun, Zeytun and Elbistan. During this period his salary ranged between 2,300 and 2,500 *kuruş*. In 1892-93 (1310 H.) he was dismissed from office due to a complaint brought against him claiming that he occupied all these posts without having been selected by the special commission for the appointment of civil servants.

In 1892-93 (1310 H.) his retirement salary was determined to be 1,250 *kuruş*. But in May-June 1894 (Dhu al-Qa'da 1311 H.) he was appointed *kaimmakam* of Haifa, and dismissed from this office in May-June 1895 (Dhu al-Hijja 1312 H.) due to a complaint filed by the governor of Beirut claiming that Husni Bey had insulted the officials and caused the people to hate the state.

During his tenure in Haifa he exerted special efforts and established two public schools. His entry speaks about his achievements in different public projects in the province of Aleppo, building bridges at his own expense, helping in establishing schools and orphanages, as well as contributing to the development of the network of roads between Aleppo, Iskenderun and Ayntab. Kamil Pasha wrote Husni Bey personally in 1880-81 (1298 H.) thanking him for his engagement and personal interest in public works.<sup>92</sup>

The biography of Husni Bey by al-Tabbākh highlights this interest especially during his tenure in the parliament. Al-Tabbākh attributes the municipal law of 1877 to the efforts of Husni Bey.<sup>93</sup> During his tenure as *kaimmakam* of Iskenderun and Haifa he commissioned studies on the statistics of these cities, the availability of water and agricultural potential. Both studies were presented to the Sultan's court. He was also interested in introducing new agricultural methods in his estate in Iskenderun. Husni Bey was an avid collector of books, and he had a large private library. He himself wrote in Arabic and Turkish. He composed a book in Arabic on the early Arab history including the pre-Islamic period, which remains as a manuscript, and a number of works in Turkish, one of which was printed under the title *Mersin'de iki düğün*, in which he criticizes the ruinous spendthrift habits of the Ottoman people and calls for a more reasonable, spartan way of life. He also prepared a report on the early Zionist activities in Palestine and presented it to the Sultan's court. Husni Bey died in 1907-08 (1325 H.) on his estate in Iskenderun.

<sup>92</sup> BOA, DH. SAİD, Sicill-i ahval, 10, p. 278.

<sup>93</sup> Al-Tabbākh, *Flām an-nubalāʿ*, 547.

### *Discussions in Parliament*

During the discussions in parliament, the representatives of Syria were especially active as the British ambassador to Istanbul testified.<sup>94</sup> They were interested in the rights of the parliament, the reform of the empire in general and urban reforms in particular. The affairs of Syria did occupy a considerable part of their interest. This fact sometimes irritated Ahmet Vefik Pasha,<sup>95</sup> the speaker of the house. During the deliberations on the press code (*Matbuat Kanunu*), for example, the latter clearly became irritated, telling the Syrian deputies: “Her taraf Suriye değildir.” (Syria is not all the districts [of the Empire]).<sup>96</sup>

Sometimes the debates took on the form of bargaining, as each representative tried to secure special privileges for his region. This practice was particularly characteristic of the Beirut representatives; for example, Niqula al-Naqqash tried to introduce amendments to the provincial law, bringing advantageous to Beirut at the expense of Damascus.<sup>97</sup> In 1864, the latter city had been designated as the capital of the province of Syria to the great dismay of a large number of Beirut citizens. Ahmed Vefik Pasha furiously dismissed al-Naqqash’s reasoning in favour of his home town with the words “Kanunlar, ya şöyle olsun, ya böyle olsun... Muhayyer olmaz. Kat’î olmalı.” (The laws should be either in this manner or in that manner...they can not be perplexing. They should be definitive).<sup>98</sup>

Naqqash’s argument for a special clause in the provincial law granting Beirut a privileged status as the seat of the administrative council of the province of Syria was rebuffed in the parliamentary meeting of April 1, 1877.<sup>99</sup> However, some Syr-

<sup>94</sup> PRO, PRO/FO 424/51, p. 57. In a letter dated April 3, 1877, from the British ambassador in Istanbul Nassau Jocelyn to the Earl of Derby: “The discussions upon these points [the internal organisation of the parliament] have been conducted with considerable ability and animation; and several of the Arabian and Syrian Delegates have been conspicuous for the energy they have displayed in opposing any measure of the government which appeared to them an infringement of Parliamentary privilege.”

<sup>95</sup> J. Deny wrote the following on the personality and character of Ahmed Vefik Pasha: “A strong personality, he was an energetic, honest and conscientious man, frank to the point of rudeness; at the same time he was whimsical and an eccentric, and possessed a dry wit.” See Deny, “Ahmad Vafik Pasha,” 298. Isma’il Habip described him as “One of the most eccentric personalities of the Tanzimat period. His life and character were full of strangeness and awkwardness.” See Habip, *Türk teceddüt edebiyatı tarihi*, 408. In one of the meetings he did not hesitate to silence a deputy by saying “Sus, eşek!” which translates as ‘Shut up, donkey!’, cited in Devereux, *First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, 158, and in Karpat, Kemal, “The Ottoman Parliament of 1877 and its Social Significance,” in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History* (Leiden 2002), 82.

<sup>96</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:227.

<sup>97</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:70: “Nakkaş Efendi (Suriye) – Vilâyet meclis-i umumîlerinin merkez-i vilâyette içtima edecekleri gösterilmiyor. Fakat, valinin münasib gördüğü yerde, diye tasrib edilse, münasib olur. Suriye için söylüyorum. Cemi, (Cemi) sancıklar Şama gidecek olursa, Beyrutta geleceklerdir. Onun için sebkat eden meclisler Beyrutta oldu.”

<sup>98</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:70.

<sup>99</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:70.

ian notables were not easily deterred; they rekindled such schemes for Beirut during the second session of the parliament. Notables from the Syrian coastal towns persisted in their demand to turn parts of the Syrian coast into a province independent of Damascus. In January 1878, twenty notables from the port cities of Beirut, Tripoli and Acre held a meeting in Beirut and wired a collective petition to the Grand Vizier and the speaker of the house, asking for the separation of the Syrian coast from the province of Syria.<sup>100</sup> They stated that such a new provincial division could only bring “great benefit” to the region.<sup>101</sup> The deputies of Beirut and Jerusalem in the Ottoman parliament seconded the petition and the demand put forward by members of their electorate. In the meeting of January 12, 1878, four Syrian deputies presented an official memorandum (*lâyiha*) demanding the division of the province. This memorandum was signed by Niqula al-Naqqash, ‘Abd al-Rahim Badran, Yusuf Diya’ al-Khalidi and Khalil Ghanem. It was read by al-Naqqash in that meeting and included in the minutes. According to proper procedure and in order not to be stopped from reading the memorandum in the assembly, al-Naqqash had deposited the memorandum on January 9 in the secretariat of the parliament.<sup>102</sup>

The discussion of Article 24 of the provincial code on April 12, 1877 provoked disagreement among the deputies.<sup>103</sup> This article provided that the mufti was to be ex officio a member of the district administrative council. It seems that the parliamentarians were divided along religious lines. The representative of Beirut, al-Hajj Husain Beyhum, proposed a compromise. He considered that the presence of the mufti in each and every meeting of the council, where sometimes a large number of business transactions were to be inspected, would only delay the business of the people. He argued that whenever a transaction concerned the affairs of the Muslim community, then the mufti should be invited; accordingly, a transaction concerning the affairs of the Christian community should be dealt with in the presence of their religious headmen.<sup>104</sup> Husain Beyhum proposed a pragmatic solution to the problem. In his proposal he did not seek to preserve the long-standing privileged position of the mufti or the ‘ulamā’, but he did put them on equal footing with non-Muslim religious headmen. Such a stance by Beyhum

<sup>100</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 2:252.

<sup>101</sup> *Al-Bashīr*, February 8, 1878.

<sup>102</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 2:132.

<sup>103</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:90–98.

<sup>104</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:91. The discussion translates as: “Al-Hajj Husayn Beyhoum Efendi ([Beirut] Syria) – In these councils three or four property transfer transactions come forth everyday. It is delayed longer [than necessary] because the Mufti has to be called for each and every transaction. The business of the people is interrupted. The presence of the Mufti and the judge in the council does not cause damages. Accordingly, when a transaction belongs to the affairs of Muslim clerics then the *ulema*, the learned and the sheikhs must be invited, likewise when a transaction belongs to the affairs of the Christian clerics then the [Christian] religious headmen could also be invited.”

portrays the struggle of the emerging Muslim upper stratum to establish for themselves a political role independent of the previously privileged ‘ulamā’ class.

During the early days of the war with Russia, Niqula al-Naqqash asked permission to deliver a speech in parliament. In his long speech he emphasised his loyalty and that of his electorate to the Ottoman state. However, he did not hesitate to remind his colleagues and the Ottoman cabinet that this loyalty should not be taken for granted because the Syrians deemed themselves overtaxed. His speech included a long digression about tax collection in Syria, which he deemed to be unfair and he repeatedly used the word “mağduriyet” (unjust treatment), and the phrase “pek çok mağduriyet” (excessively unjust), in order to stress his point. He called for the reduction of land and property taxes in his province and for the application of a fairer system of tax evaluation and land registration. He argued that the value of land in Syria was systematically overestimated upon the registration of property in the *tabrîr-i emlâk* (land register). The inflated land value in Syria led to higher taxes, while other provinces were paying much less, a fact which, so he held, could weaken the loyalty of the Ottoman Syrians. He ended his speech by quoting excerpts from a petition from Tyre by a plantation owner, complaining about the unfair overestimation of the tithe he had to pay. This petition was immediately referred to the cabinet for a prompt reply.<sup>105</sup>

The speeches of al-Naqqash concerning the taxation system were translated into Arabic and published in the Beirut newspaper *al-Bashîr*, which shows that he was interested in informing his electorate about his endeavour to “undermine the unfair taxation system in Syria,” as he had put it. In an open letter to *al-Bashîr* he assessed his achievements during the first session of the parliament; he attributed his failure in a few points regarding the reduction of taxation to the lack of consistency and persistence by his electorate, especially the upper stratum of real property and landowners.<sup>106</sup> He expected them to declare a civil disobedience by abstaining from paying the due taxes for that fiscal year, pending the publication of a favourable law. Such a radical action would have aided him in his negotiation and argumentation for reducing the property tax.<sup>107</sup> In another speech on the same subject al-Naqqash demanded that the provincial municipalities should play a greater role in assessing and collecting the property tax and the tithe. He urged that the municipalities should retain a certain amount of the collected taxes in order to invest it in a public benefit fund (*şandûq al-manâfî al-‘umûmiyya*). The main purpose of this municipal public benefit fund, according to al-Naqqash, was to cover the tax arrears in the case of drought and crop failures; in other words, to guarantee a stable income for the state treasury and at the same time relieve property owners from dire financial straits and persecution.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:184–185.

<sup>106</sup> *Al-Bashîr*, May 20, 1877, and February 1, 1878.

<sup>107</sup> *Al-Bashîr*, October 19, 1877.

<sup>108</sup> *Al-Bashîr*, February 22, 1878.

The representatives of Syria were especially concerned with urban affairs and the impact of the drafted municipal code on its development. Niqla al-Naqqash and Husain Beyhum took turns in discussions concerning article 47 of the Municipal Code. This article provided that one clerk (*katib*) in the municipal council should be responsible for population census and land registry, *tabrir-i nüfus ve emlâk*. Al-Naqqash and Beyhum argued that a single clerk could not manage such a task.<sup>109</sup> The Beirut representatives had ample experience with the municipal institution in their home town. The first mayor of Beirut, al-Hajj ‘Abd Allah Beyhum, was Husain’s uncle, and in 1877 Husain’s brother, Muhyi al-Din Beyhum, was the mayor of the city.<sup>110</sup> In their argumentation with Midhat Bey Efendi, the representative member of the Council of State, they stressed their concern for the efficiency of the municipal council. Article 47, as finally published, provided for the establishment of a department called *kalem-i tabrir-i nüfus ve emlâk* without specifying the exact number of its clerks.<sup>111</sup>

In order to ensure the efficiency of the municipal council, appropriate revenue was to be allocated to it. The discussions concerning articles 16 and 39, governing the municipal finances and expenses, were especially heated. Al-Naqqash complained that in Beirut a tax on fish was currently collected, which did not correspond to the practice in other Ottoman cities. It became apparent that the taxation system was not uniform throughout the Empire, and that revenues granted to the provincial municipalities were lower than those granted to the municipality of Istanbul, a fact which made one parliamentarian evoke the Constitution and

<sup>109</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb’usan*, 1:280–281. The discussions translate as: [Niqla] Naqqash Efendi ([Beirut] Syria) – As I have presented earlier, one secretary or clerk (*katib*) managing these tasks is not possible. They [The lawmakers] gave one secretary, only; and they assign (to him) an infinite amount of work (*dünya kadar*). This is not the work of one *katib*.

Hamazasb Efendi (Erzurum) – No need to repeat the same. Lately, this subject was passed in the municipal law of Istanbul.

The speaker of the house [Ahmed Vefik Pasha] – Indeed, at that time such a discussion took place... Therefore this is not the place to examine (this article once more).

Mithat Beyefendi (Şura-yı Devlet âzası) – This means one should know the functions of the registration department which belong to the municipality and the works relevant to it, which are to be found in this paragraph. At the right time the respectable members will see the proposed law which belongs to the reform at hand (*derdest-i tanzim bulunan*).

Al-Hajj Husain Beyhum Efendi ([Beirut] Syria) – This could not be understood: Here, it says this item will be momentary (*muvakkat olacak*) when it is only valid for a momentary period, let it be, but when it will be valid in a permanent form then the municipal registration of the people and property is not necessary. The expenses are too high (*masarif çok olur*). The revenue of the municipality is not sufficient [for such a costly task].

Mithat Beyefendi (Şura-yı Devlet âzası) – The revenue of the municipality is directly related to the expenses.

The speaker of the house [Ahmed Vefik Pasha] – This is the first discussion. The committee has listened to your views. We will have another discussion. Sometimes it is beneficial to spend a lot of money.

<sup>110</sup> *Thamrât al-funûn*, May 24, 1877.

<sup>111</sup> Article 47, in Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i umûr-ı belediyye* (Istanbul 1995), 4:1666.

state: "Since the Constitution considers all the cities as equal to Istanbul, therefore all the provinces must resemble Istanbul."<sup>112</sup>

Article 16 of the drafted law provided for the municipality to spend ten per cent of its income on the salaries of all its employees. A large number of parliamentarians deemed it too low and restrictive. Some of them argued that ten per cent of the revenue would not cover the salaries of all employees, taking into consideration that well-paid professionals like medical doctors, engineers and veterinarians were also on the payroll of the municipality. A long debate on this matter with the speaker of the house and the representative of the Council of State ensued. A vote by the majority insisted on allowing the municipalities to spend twenty per cent of their income on salaries. Their requests were acknowledged, the result of the vote was included in the minutes, and the demanded changes were put forward to the approval of the upper chamber (*meclis-i a'yan*) for final ratification.<sup>113</sup> The proposed changes were accepted and they were integrated in the final Imperial Sanction (*irade-i seniye*), which proclaimed this municipal law for the provinces.<sup>114</sup> The law stated that the permission to spend up to twenty per cent on salaries was temporary; however, it did not specify for how long. This indefinite wording of the law made it more suitable for a heterogeneous empire with different levels of urban development on its territories.

The reasoning and the courage of some parliamentarians during the parliamentary debates is remarkable. For example, Niqula al-Naqqash was against "restricting the freedom" of a large number of his electorate to nominate themselves to the municipal council simply because they did not know Ottoman Turkish.<sup>115</sup> Such an objection by al-Nakkash reflects great self-confidence and a willingness to defend what he saw as the rights of his Arabic-speaking people. It was well know

<sup>112</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb'usan*, 1:314: "*Bir Meb'us – Mademki kanun-i esasî her memleketi İstanbul ile bir tutuyor; taşraların dahi İstanbulla benzemesi lâzımdır.*"

<sup>113</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb'usan*, 1:312–313.

<sup>114</sup> Article 16 of the municipal law for the provinces was published as follows: "*Onaltıncı madde: Belediye memurları maaşıyla hâne kirası ve mübimmât-ı kırtâsiyye ve mabrûkât-bahâ ile masârif-i müteferrika-i sâire herhalde vâridât-ı belediyyenin öşrünü ve nihayet muvakkaten humsunu tecavüz etmeyecektir.*" Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i umûr-ı belediyye*, 4:1661.

<sup>115</sup> Us, *Meclis-i meb'usan*, 1:313. The discussion translates as follows:

Nicola Naqqash Efendi ([Beirut] Syria) – Here, the diction [of the law] is about speaking Turkish; this will limit the freedom of some people. For example, a large number of people in Beirut do not know Turkish.

The speaker of the house [Ahmet Vefik Pasha] – In four years, the intelligent should learn Turkish.

A member – What harm is there in the lack of knowing Turkish?

The speaker of the house [Ahmet Vefik Pasha] – This hinders the unity [of the Empire]. God willing they accept my advice and learn Turkish.

Sebuh Efendi (Constantinople) – We did not assign the knowledge of Turkish to other councils, why do we assign it to the municipal administration?

Ahmed Muhtar Efendi (Erzurum) – We did not assign the knowledge of Turkish to the administrative council, [but] we assigned the reading ability of Turkish [to this council].

that Ahmet Vefik Pasha, the father of Turkic studies in the Ottoman Empire, was uncompromising when it came to this matter, i.e. the Turkish language.<sup>116</sup> The speaker of the house condescendingly answered that the intelligent would learn Ottoman Turkish within four years; otherwise they would be hindering the unity of the Empire. This implied that those who did not learn Turkish even to occupy a minor communal post in a provincial municipality, were either *akılsız* (foolish) or intentionally endangering the unity of the Empire. This was a very serious accusation, given that the state was at war with its Balkan dependencies seeking independence, and with Russia which supported their national aspirations.

The representatives of Syria benefited from their long experience with the municipal institution. They also enjoyed a close knowledge of their electorate, which they tried to keep up-to-date concerning parliamentary activities by publishing their debates and contributions in parliament in the press. They were directly in contact with their electorate; the parliamentarians received and forwarded petitions on behalf of Syrians, making their complaints and demands public in parliament.

The general picture that could be drawn from the contributions of the Syrian deputies is that they were earnestly involved in the law-making process, and that they sought pragmatic solutions for some chronic administrative problems. This is a testimony that they were not apathetic to the new laws and regulations, and that they did not need the coercion of an especially reforming governor to push them towards a reform, as has so far been assumed. On the contrary, they had vested interests in the new laws; these laws would in the final analysis acknowledge their improved status in society and establish them as pioneers and political representatives of their ethnic and religious communities. They were particularly interested in the efficiency of the new institutions, especially in urban affairs, and, as a consequence, they did not hesitate to criticise the Ottoman provincial officialdom for their shortcomings.

### *Conclusion*

The varied regional experiences of the members of the *meclis-i meb'usan* played an important role in their contribution to the process of law writing and decision making within the Empire. The parliamentary debates as a primary source for the study of the political views of the representatives of Syria and their attitude to the proposed urban reforms showed that they were seriously involved in the reform process and that they attempted to improve the efficiency of the laws and institutions. Aided by the biographical knowledge of their education, social and eco-

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<sup>116</sup> Ahmet Vefik Pasha "made an impressive contribution to the Turkish purist movement." In 1876, a year before the parliament sat in Istanbul, his Turkish/Turkish dictionary *Lehce-i Osmânî* was published. See Deny, "Ahmad Wafik Pasha," 298.

conomic standing as well as their careers, one might safely state that they epitomised a new emerging upper stratum in Ottoman society, and that they attended to the specific interests of this social group.

It is imperative to describe some of the laws published in 1877 as innovations or developments, but it is also essential to reconstruct how and why these changes took place. Following this path we can show that ideas of the Tanzimat were more widespread than so far assumed. Protagonists of the peaceful gradual reform in the empire hailed not only from the elite of the capital, but from far away provincial urban centres as well. The deputies of Syria had high expectations from the new laws regulating the affairs of the provincial institutions. They expected them to play a major role in transforming Ottoman society.

The novelty of the laws promulgated in 1877-78 manifests itself clearly in the willingness to share the assessment and the experiences concerning these laws with the representatives of the provinces in parliament. Thus, for the first time, the amendments were not proposed by, or based upon a report prepared by, an Istanbul bureaucrat, or a governor appointed from Istanbul, but by members of a new emerging social stratum within the various provinces of the empire.

A considerable number of the parliamentarians, as the various articles in this volume have shown, were public-spirited tradesmen, high-ranking bureaucrats and large property owners who were at the same time intellectuals, politically and in many cases socially engaged in their immediate surroundings. They were aware of the prevailing social, economic and political conditions in the empire as a whole. This group regarded the laws in question as an opportunity to express its aspirations, extend its influence, and create institutions that might also increase its political influence and power. However, these aspirations were not in many cases contradictory to the common public interest. For, the parliamentarians were especially concerned with urban, social, political, educational and economic developments through modernised institutions. Such developments would reflect positively on their own economic and commercial interests, and simultaneously bring about the needed amenities and projects for the different cities of the empire.

The careers and biographies of a large number of the 45 deputies studied in this book show that they were interested in the transmission of knowledge in word and deed. They were active in establishing schools, reforming education, and organising scientific societies. They shared a belief that the spread of knowledge was the prime guarantor of the reform and survival of the empire. Many of them wrote books themselves that could be described as modern or secular in their subjects. They were interested in history, literature and politics. The nascent press of the time was supported by some of them and used as a new mean to spread their ideas. The press which they utilised as a vector to spread their ideas and political convictions was not written in the official language of the empire. Many of the non-Turkish-speaking deputies paid special attention to reviving and promoting their regional languages, believing that they would thus reach a broader public in

their own communities. Theatre was another new medium that was expected to teach lessons in moral earnestness, which was also sponsored and practised by a number of these deputies including the speaker of the house himself. Their regional languages occupied a considerable part of their attention. In spite of the fact that they mastered Ottoman, a large number of the deputies wrote books in their own languages or made translations from Ottoman. Classical works and manuscripts were also edited and revived by some of them, highlighting their individual heritage. Attention to the various languages used in the empire was not necessarily an attempt at secession, but it was an efficient means to democratise and spread knowledge among the largest possible number of people. Therefore, the unity and reform of the Ottoman Empire was called for not only in Ottoman, but in a large number of languages through lectures, books, newspapers, plays and associations.

Many deputies worked for a tax reform in the empire for the sake of equity and equality. They believed that a clear taxation scheme would reduce corruption and ensure the loyalty of the taxpayers. Most of these parliamentarians were also engaged in philanthropic activities aimed at fighting poverty and spreading education to the least-privileged of their communities. They strongly believed that education and knowledge were the best remedies for the social and political malaise on both the communal and the imperial levels. They can be considered as bona fide active protagonists of the Tanzimat, who were also able to spread its ideas and impact to the different corners of the empire. It is now evident that in order to achieve some of their aims these parliamentarians enjoyed and used all liberties and means available to them during the first Ottoman experiment in democracy.