Chronos- Revue d’Histoire de l’Université de Balamand, is a bi-annual Journal published in three languages (Arabic, English and French). It deals particularly with the History of the ethnic and religious groups of the Arab world.

Journal Name: Chronos

ISSN: 1608-7526

Title: The Patriarchate of Constantinople and the “Reform of the Synod” in the 18th Century Ottoman Context

Author(s): Elif Bayraktar Tellan

To cite this document:


Permanent link to this document: https://doi.org/10.31377/chr.v39i0.590

Chronos uses the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA that lets you remix, transform, and build upon the material for non-commercial purposes. However, any derivative work must be licensed under the same license as the original.
THE PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND THE “REFORM OF THE SYNOD” IN THE 18th CENTURY OTTOMAN CONTEXT

ELIF BAYRAKTAR TELLAN

Abstract

The Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople went through a series of changes in the eighteenth century. By 1763 gerontismos was established, and the Patriarchal seal was divided into four. As such, the metropolitans of the Holy Synod gained considerable power in the administration of the Patriarchate vis-à-vis the Patriarchs. The so called “reform of the Synod” was more than a mere internal struggle among the clergymen of the Patriarchate and the Phanariots. It was rather related to the Empire-wide economic developments in connection to the transformation of social roles in the Ottoman society. In the eighteenth century the collaboration between the Ottoman administration and ecclesiastical institutions was in rise, and by the time gerontismos was established, the institutionalization of the Orthodox Church as part of Ottoman administration had been culminated.

In September 1752, thousands of people walked from the Patriarchate Church in Fener to the Ottoman palace in Istanbul. The incident “gave the Ministers immediate uneasiness, but it diminished, when they found that the mob, were merely Greeks” as noted by the British ambassador James Porter. The number of people in the procession given by contemporary sources varies from four to ten thousand. This was a procession of the Ottoman Orthodox people aiming to get down Patriarch Paisios II and bring back Kyrillos Karakallos to the Patriarchal throne. At this time,

1 History Department. Istanbul Medeniyet University.
Kyrillos had been in exile on the island of Chalki [Heybeliada] for almost sixteen months since May 1751. Upon this incident, Kyrillos was “quickly put on a small boat” by the Ottoman authorities and brought back from Chalki to his Patriarchal throne in Fener. This remarkable event was recorded by ecclesiastical historians, ambassador reports, and western sources. (Hypsilantis 1972: 369-370, Makraios 1872: 209, Vendotis 1795: 88, Koumas 1831: 398, Vyzantios 1862: 542, Hammer 1986: 2238, Papadopoullus 1990: 165). The official Ottoman archival documents also give us clues on what happened at the time. The procession was one of the ways in the Ottoman society to demonstrate their demand to the administrators. In this case, the Orthodox population had been triggered by a number of factors, and one of the most important of these was their accumulation of anger against the Catholic infiltration in their society, a serious threat on Orthodox Christianity, and Patriarch Kyrillos appeared as their guard in this conflict.

Kyrillos V Karakallos was on the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople for nine years from 1748 to 1757 with an interval of sixteen months (Gedeon 1996: 534-541). His public popularity in the mid-eighteenth century was related to his position towards the issue of anabaptism. Anabaptism was basically the view that converts to Orthodoxy should be baptized again. Apparently, it was a delicate problem at the time, relating to the problem of conversion to Catholicism. Neither the Orthodox people nor the Ottoman administrators were strangers to the issue. Actually it was quite a popular subject to instigate a procession, and that is why and how the Ottoman administrators were involved in the issue. The Patriarch was supported by a group of guild members in Istanbul and traders from Chios [Sakız] against his opponents, who were a group of metropolitans of the Patriarchate. Kyrillos was especially supported by a monk from the village of Katırlı called Auxentios, who was capable of effecting thousands of people in his sermons. The sermons eventually led to the Patriarch’s coming back to his office in 1752.

The network of people for and against the Patriarch reveals that, beyond the incident and the problem of anabaptism, were issues over the control of the finances of the Patriarchate and power struggles, rather

---

3 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Istanbul (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, hereafter BOA) ŞK 174/280/2, 10-19 September 1752.
than being merely a theological issue. Behind this event, many factors were involved, including a conflict between a group of metropolitans in the Synod and Patriarch Kyrillos. While Kyrillos was supported by some metropolitans, others resisted Kyrillos’s policies. In one sense, the period of Kyrillos was an interval during a serious of changes that was taking place in the Patriarchate, that is, the shift from *synodos entemousa* to *gerontismos* which resulted in the growth of power of metropolitans in the Patriarchate by 1763. At the end of this process, the Patriarchate was represented in front of the Ottoman Porte not as a person by the Patriarch, but as an institution consisting of the Patriarch and the Synod together. As a result, the Holy Synod became a more visible part of the official decisive mechanism along with the Patriarch as person. Symbolically, the seal of the Patriarchate was divided into four, and the authority of the Patriarch was shared with the metropolitans from 1763 onwards (See figures 1 and 2). The official documents like petitions and communications addressing the Porte would be signed with a four-piece seal which necessitated the consent of four people. That is, the decisions on behalf of the Patriarchate were now to be given by some members of the Synod and the Patriarch, rather than the Patriarch as an individual.

Fig. 1: The seal of the Patriarchate on a document from 1763 (BOA D.PSK. 24/58)  
Fig. 2: The seal of the Patriarchate on a document from 1775 (BOA D.PSK. 27/49)

The gradual process was the shift from *synodos entemousa* to *gerontismos*. Etymologically, *synodos entemousa* takes its name from the “members of the synod who happen to be [in Constantinople] where
as *gerontismos* signifies “the system of the elders (*gerontes*)” of the Synod who reside in the city (Papadopoulos 1990: 48-51). How come did some members among others gain considerable power and efficiency? One explanation is that the geographical situation of the metropolitans of Herakleia [Ereğli], Chalkedon [Kadıköy], Nikea [İznilk], Nikomedia [İznilk], Derkoi [Terkos], and Kyzikos [Kapıdağ] was a factor that made them the prominent members of the Synod (Stavridis 1986: 554, Papadopoulos 1990: 49). According to Stavridis and Papadopoulos, the steps to *gerontismos* dated back to the seventeenth century (Stavridis 1986: 554-555, Papadopoulos 1930: 726). Stavridis considers the synodical tomes published by Kyrillos II in 1635, by Parthenios II in 1641, and in 1658 Parthenios IV, and the synodical letter of Kallinikos II in 1694 as the steps to *gerontismos* (Stavridis 1986: 555-556).

The account of Athanasios Komnenos Hypsilantis on the other hand mentions an incident in 1741 as the major step to *gerontismos*, and it has been used as a reference point by many modern historians (Papadopoulos 1990: 50, Papadopoulos 1930: 726, Konortas 1998: 133, Stathi 2005: 78). Athanasios Hypsilantis was an eighteenth-century member of the famous Hypsilantis family whose descendants in the nineteenth century would contribute to the formation of the Modern Greek state. Athanasios, proud to be related also to the Komnenos dynasty of Trebizond, completed a history study consisting of twelve books. The eight, the ninth and the tenth books of this study covering the period from 1453 to 1789 were edited and published in 1870. As the physician of Ragıp Mehmed Paşa, who would later be the Grand Vizier, Athanasios was in a position to become a close witness to many important events especially from the 1740s onwards. According to this Hypsilantis, the metropolitan of Herakleia managed to obtain an imperial decree in 1741 through paying Hayatizade, the chief physician of the Sultan. According to this decree, the Patriarch would henceforth be elected by the five metropolitans of Herakleia, Kyzikos, Nikomedia, Nikaea and Chalcedon. Additionally, the metropolitans had to present a good testimony for deeds of the Patriarch necessary for his election (Hypsilantis 1972: 350). The narrative starting with Hypsilantis’s account of 1741 has been prevalent in historiography concerning the

---

development of *gerontismos*. It was later referred to as the “Hayatizade event” during the election of the Patriarch Serafeim in 1757 (Hypsilantis 1972: 375-376).

As to the reasons behind the reason for the establishment of *gerontismos* which T. Papadopoulos calls “reform of the Synod” (Papadopoulos 1990: 50), he mentions the domination of the Church by Phanariot influence, and the tendency to emancipate the Church from lay interference. He also evaluates the events during the period of Kyrillos from this perspective, positioning lay influence as a basic factor (Papadopoulos 1990). Recent studies evaluating Ottoman ecclesiastical institutions in the context of Ottoman realities suggest that the eighteenth century was a period of increasing collaboration between the ecclesiastical institutions and the Ottoman administration. In this interplay, the Phanariots increasingly appeared as crucial actors through whom not only the archbishops, but also the Ottoman administrators handled ecclesiastical matters. This paper is an attempt to reconsider the eighteenth-century transformation of the Synod in the light of Ottoman documentation and in the economic and political conditions of the wider Ottoman context.\(^5\)

In addition to the evidence from ecclesiastical histories, documents from the Ottoman archive present further aspects of what happened in 1741. According to a series of documents, a group of twenty-three metropolitans presented a petition to the Ottoman Porte in 1741. Through this collective petition [*arz-i mahzar*] they claimed that the Patriarchate was going through problems in the recent years because of certain priests who replaced the Patriarchs against the “established order”. As a result of this turbulence the Patriarchate was in an economic crisis, owing their creditors a lot of money. In order to stop the confusion, they wanted the current Patriarch Paisios to remain as Patriarch for the duration of his life. In addition to this, they also demanded that the resident metropolitans in the City (those of Herakleia, Nikomedia, Nikea, Kyzikos and Chalkedon) to elect the future Patriarchs and be guarantors for their deeds. Upon this formal request, it was ordered by the Porte that without the guarantee of

---

\(^5\) This paper is based on my unpublished PhD Dissertation and my further studies on the subject. Elif Bayraktar Tellan, *The Patriarch and the Sultan: The Struggle for Authority and the Quest for Order in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2011, Ankara, Turkey.
these five metropolitans, the Patriarch would not be dethroned, and they would inform the Porte of any corrupt behavior of patriarchs.\textsuperscript{6}

It is important that as a result of the initiation of the clergy, the five resident metropolitans in Istanbul would be responsible for the election of patriarchs and be liable personally [\textit{kef\i l}], which was an important responsibility in Islamic law (Schacht 1982: 158-159). This change was a significant step towards the metropolitans’ increased efficiency in the decisions concerning the Patriarchate. The petitioners were aiming to prevent frequent changes of patriarchs\textsuperscript{7} which was a problem that was adding to the financial burden on the Patriarchate, as each time a Patriarch changed, considerable official fees would be paid to the Ottoman Treasury. The amount of fees paid in cash during accession to Patriarchal seat, the annual state taxes, additional fees plus unofficial payments reached a high amount that created tension for the administrators of the Patriarchate in the eighteenth century. Additionally, each change of Sultan meant renewal of all imperial \textit{berats}, i.e. more payment by the receivers of \textit{berats}. The names, the amount and the conditions of payments to the Ottoman Treasury on behalf of the Patriarchate changed over time during the Ottoman period and it was something subject to negotiation between the Patriarchate and the Ottoman Porte (Bayraktar Tellan 2011: 34-38, 163-169).

We have to note that the discourse of the petitions to the Ottoman Porte underlined two factors; the safety of the established order, and the ability to pay taxes properly, which is a perfect reflection of an awareness of Ottoman administrative principles. In the relationship between the Patriarchate and the Sultan, the words used by the metropolitans in their petitions were effective in getting the desired imperial decisions. As part of the Ottoman system, the representatives of the Patriarchate knew how to use the most appropriate language. The key expression in the discourse of the metropolitans’ petition was “to maintain order [\textit{nizam}] in the society”.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{6} BOA KK.d. 2542/09/02-03-04; BOA D.PSK 12/103; BOA D.PSK 12/104. The modified version of the \textit{berat} of Paisios is in BOA D.PSK 12/132. The modification was recorded once more on 22 November 1741 in BOA D.PSK 12/135.

\textsuperscript{7} The patriarchal changes of the period were as follows: Paisios II: 1726 – 1733, Ieremias III: January 1733 – July 1733, Serafeim I: 1733 – 1734, Neofytos VI: 1734 – 1740, Paisios II (2nd time) 1740 – 1743, Neofytos VI (2nd time) 1743 – 1744, Paisios II (3rd time) 1744 – 1748, Kyrillos V (1748 – 1751), Paisios II (4th time) 1751 – 1752, Kyrillos V (2nd time) 1752 – 1757 (Gedeon 1996: 775).
\end{flushleft}
This stemmed from the awareness of an Ottoman administrative principle; that the order of the Patriarchate and the Orthodox community was part of order in the Ottoman society. A second important thing in Ottoman policy concerned the stability of state finances. For this reason, a typical discourse of ecclesiastical petitions in this period was “the damage given to state treasury caused by improper tax-collection”, or the heavy burden of the financial debts of the Patriarchate to the creditors. In the petition of 1741, the metropolitans complained about the debts of the Patriarchate to various agents in the society as their creditors. In the end, although the demand that Paisios would stay on Patriarchal seat for life was not fulfilled, the decree of 1741 would be a reference point of future patriarchs who wanted to be appointed for life [te’biden].

The incident of 1741 was just the first step of the metropolitans to consolidate their power, a struggle that would go on for two more decades. However, the period of Patriarch Kyrillos V (1748–51, 1752–57) was not a time that the metropolitans made progress. Kyrillos, in conflict with the metropolitans, was supported by the Ottoman administrators in his acts. This was most probably because of the similar policies of the Patriarch and the Porte concerning the influence of the Catholics over the Orthodox population, which was apparent in the eighteenth century. This is again evident in the discourse of the Patriarch’s communications with the Porte about the Catholic [Efrench] influence over the Orthodox [Rum]. The Catholic missionaries and their influence on the Orthodox Christians of the Empire was a delicate issue that dated back to the seventeenth century, a turbulent time for the Patriarchs of Constantinople. While in the seventeenth century several Patriarchs were intellectually more inclined towards the Western Church, this attitude had changed by the first quarter of the eighteenth century especially on ecclesiastical and administrative matters, mostly due to the activities of the Catholics in the jurisdictions of the Eastern Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch. The Ottoman Porte on the other hand had to be cautious against the Catholic missionaries’ increasing influence over the Orthodox population, who had to remain within the boundaries of their own religion for the well-being of the society, and for the financial welfare of the Orthodox clergymen. On the other hand, the relations with the French who were also advocates of the Catholics in the Empire had to be kept in balance. The memoirs of Antoine Galland, a visitor to Constantinople as part of the French
Embassy, and an enthusiast in Orthodox manuscripts and books, vividly describes the complexity of the situation in the 1670s (Galland 1998). By the mid-eighteenth century, Patriarch Kyrillos Karakallos was churning out petitions over petitions complaining about the intermarriage of the Orthodox women to the Catholics [Efrenç], reciprocal visits among the two communities, baptism of the Orthodox by the Catholic priests, and asking for imperial orders against such practices which were prevalent especially on the islands of Chios, Kos, Rhodes and others. In this context, the Ottoman Porte, who also dealt with similar problems among the Armenian community answered the demands of Patriarch Kyrillos positively.

As a competent Patriarch, Kyrillos was able to take advantage of certain Ottoman policies especially during his second patriarchal term (1752-1757). To give an example, before 1751 his petitions to the Porte demanded that certain metropolitans stay in the Ottoman capital, on the grounds that the presence of metropolitans were essential for the performance of the rituals and other duties in the Patriarchate. After 1752 though, he made use of the Ottoman policy to prevent the accumulation of Orthodox metropolitans (besides the Armenian marhasas) in the city, and successfully sent the metropolitans he was in conflict with, to their own dioceses. In this way he in a way exiled the metropolitans away from Istanbul to be free from their pressures (Bayraktar Tellan 2011: 206-215).

In 1757, the French actors, as protectors of the Catholic Church and missionaries in Istanbul, managed to replace Kyrillos with Kallinikos as Patriarch. Kallinikos was one of the metropolitans whom Kyrillos had struggled against. In order to avoid exile, he had taken refuge to Galata and contacted the French ambassador Vergennes, as his brother-in-law Baron de Tott’s memoirs show. Kallinikos’s attempt to retain his archbishopric seat through intermediaries gave the French a new idea, noted as “tempted us to convert his [Kyrillos’s] victim [Kallinikos] to his rival”. Baron de Tott kept Kallinikos safe on the roof of his house, as his brother-in-law negotiated for a long time to finally secure his Patriarchate (Baron de Tott 1785: 108-112). Six months later, Kallinikos was this time replaced by Serafeim. During the new Patriarch’s customary visit to the Grand Vizier during the enthronement, The Grand Vizier Ragib Paşa told him to “protect the Orthodox” (Makraios 1872: 412). This was obviously a warning against the influence of Catholics, something that Ragib Paşa had witnessed during his previous governorship duties in Edessa and Aleppo.

In this context of “Catholic threat”, being on the side of the “Frenks” was the most serious accusation that an Orthodox clergyman could face with, especially in the petitions presented to the Ottoman Porte. On the other hand, the accelerating efforts of the archbishops of the Holy Synod to consolidate their power in the Patriarchate was in force. During the period of Serafeim (1758-1761), a conflict over the problem of the metropolitan of Balyebadra [Patras] reveals their ongoing claims; something that had decelerated during the time of Kyrillo (1751-1757). The conflict was about the metropolitan Parthenios of Patras who had been removed during the period of the former Patriarch Kallinikos in 1757 upon the petition of the subjects [reaya] and replaced by Ierasimos. Later on, Parthenios managed to regain his seat, and the Patriarch (this time Serafeim) excused him. The metropolitans should have reacted against the Patriarch’s remission, for in August 1758 a petition signed by the Patriarch and metropolitans demanded from the Porte to annul the berat of metropolitan Parthenios of Patras, on the grounds that “the Patriarch’s decision [to forgive the metropolitan] alone [was] not sufficient without the consent and agreement of the metropolitans”, an evidence of the degree of the metropolitans’ weight at the time and their ongoing struggle to emphasize their power.

Later in 1759 Patriarch Serafeim (1757–1761) demanded in a petition to the Porte that each new patriarch should pay for the expenses of his own appointment, a development mentioned also by Greek language chronicles (Makraios 1872: 228-229, Hypsilantis 1972: 379, Papadopoullos 1990: 55). The Ottoman documents reveal that this had been requested earlier in 1759 by some metropolitans. In their petition, after a description of the financially broke situation of the Patriarchate [keşişhane] –again caused by people in relation with the Catholic [Efrenc] community–, the metropolitans asked for a regulation to procure that the patriarchal candidates pay for their election expenses themselves. The metropolitans wanted to make sure that without the seals of certain metropolitans, the petitions of metropolitans would not be executed. The Porte accepted the request of the metropolitans.  

---

8 BOA D.PSK 22/44 and 22/46. 
9 The imperial order was recorded in the piskopos mukata’asi registers upon the petition of Patriarch Serafeim on 11 December 1759. BOA D.PSK 23/20, 11 – 21 December 1759.
considered the increasing power of the Synod as a stabilizing factor for the Patriarchate. It is not surprising that the Ottoman administration would endorse and support a more stabilized Patriarchate for the sake of order in the society. Moreover, the discourse included all the necessary ingredients like hostility towards the Catholic influence over the Orthodox subjects and the urge to be able to pay taxes properly.

During the period of Ioannikios III (1761–1763) the Patriarch, the metropolitans, the administrators of the Patriarchate and other prominent Christians continued their efforts to stabilize the situation of the Patriarchate. They requested imperial orders which would assist them in the collection of the debts of the former Patriarch Serafeim. In March 1762, Orthodox Ottomans testified in the kadi court that they were content with Ioannikios and requested that complaints about the Patriarch not be taken into consideration.

Samuel Hantzeris, the metropolitan of Derkoi, and a member of a notable Phanariot family, became the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1763 (Gedeon 1996: 550). It was in his period that the ongoing struggle of the metropolitans to consolidate their power in the Patriarchate was finally culminated. One of the earliest documents of his period is about the election of Dionysios as the metropolitan of Derkoi in his place. It is interesting that the petition was presented by the five prominent metropolitans and the Patriarch rather than Samuel alone. Samuel did not use his personal patriarch seal, but he used his former metropolitan seal (See Fig. 3). It seems that his readiness to except the new regulations was obvious and probably effective in his election.

Fig. 3: Samuel’s metropolitan seal under a petition he signed as Patriarch in 1763 (BOA D.PSK. 24/53)

---

10 18 – 27 December 1761, the copy of the order was recorded over the petition in BOA D.PSK 24/23, 4 October 1762.
11 BOA D.PSK 23/127, 9 March 1762.
12 BOA D.PSK 24/53, 5 June 1763.
The petitions presented to the Porte afterwards were signed and sealed as “the Patriarch of Constantinople and the metropolitans resident in the city”. 13 By 1763, the Patriarchate was no longer represented by the patriarch alone, but by the patriarch and the prominent metropolitans of the Synod resident in the capital, i.e. the elders (gerontes). Petitions presented the following years involved the same expression.14 There are some petitions with the Patriarch’s seal alone though in the piskospos mukata’asi collection dated later than 1763.

The division of the Patriarchate seal into four parts in 1763 signified the distribution of power between the Synod and the Patriarch. Hypsilantis notes that this was one of the first things that Samuel did when he became patriarch in May 1763. The patriarch would keep one part of the seal, while three metropolitans would hold the three other parts (Hypsilantis 1972: 397, Konortas 1988: 276). An imperial document from 1767 reveals the financial discourse behind the handing over of the seal of the Patriarchate to the metropolitans. Accordingly, the seal was consigned to the Synod to be able to cope with the debts of the Patriarchate. It was underlined that the patriarch’s opinion and consent [alone] were not sufficient either for the administration of the [Christian] subjects or for the expenses and debts of the Patriarchate, and that for this reason the seal was divided.15 In the berat document of Patriarch Meletios dated 1768, the consignment of the patriarchal seal to the Synod was again mentioned as a solution to the financial problems of the Patriarchate.16

The formulas of the stipulations of Patriarchal berats after 1763 changed in accordance with this new development. In the berats after 1763, the rights of the patriarch were now stated as the rights of the Patriarchate, consisting of the patriarch and the metropolitans resident in the capital. Gerontismos was in practice until the middle of the nineteenth century, when finally in 1861 the Patriarchate was influenced by the reform movement effective in all the institutions of the Empire.

13 “bendegan-ı hala Patrik-i İslambol Rum ve asitanede mukim cema’at-i metropolidan” as in BOA D.PSK 24/58 and “bendegan-ı hala Patrik-i İstanbul Rum ve asitanede mukim cema’at-i metropolidan” as in BOA D.PSK. 27/49.
14 Examples are in BOA D.PSK 24/87 and BOA D.PSK 24/90.
15 BOA D.PSK 25/93, 1767.
16 BOA KK.d. 2542/17/70-71, 1768.
The gradual establishment of gerontismos needs reevaluation in the context of the eighteenth-century developments of the Ottoman society and economy. The metropolitans had gradually increased their weight in the decisions and administration of the Patriarchate, and finally in 1763 they had consolidated their power. This was also a period of the increasing influence and prominence of the Phanariots. The notable people [archons] around the Patriarchate had already been influential actors since the earliest years of Ottoman rule (Zachariadou 1998). As cash was becoming an increasingly effective element in the Ottoman taxation system from the seventeenth century onwards, the archons’ role had changed accordingly, like the other prominent members of the society (Inalcık 1980: 283-337, Darling 1996). Phanariot rise in the eighteenth century, on the other hand, was also related to the Ottoman state’s growing need of diplomats dating back to the end of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century, which was a period of shift from a military to a bureaucratic state (Aksan 2006, 81-117). Neither the archons of the Orthodox community nor the clergy and the Patriarchate were isolated from the developments of the Ottoman society and economy. In the eighteenth century, apart from the Greek Orthodox archons, the Patriarchate was involved in financial credit relations with many other members of the Ottoman society like the janissaries, other Muslims and pious foundations as the documents testify.  

A further important development for the Patriarchate in the beginning of the eighteenth century was the emergence of the life-long Patriarchate de jure (Bayraktar Tellan 2011: 132-135). By the beginning of the eighteenth century (until 1714), patriarchal terms were renewed every three years, so the patriarchs had to obtain a new berat every three years. Despite the situation de jure, this sometimes happened more frequently de facto. For example, the berats of Kallinikos II were renewed in 1697 and 1699. The development of life-long patriarchate by the beginning of the eighteenth century was related to a transformation in the taxation system of the Empire at the time, that is, the life-long application of tax-farms [iltizam]. Briefly, the increasing need for cash and military needs by the sixteenth century had necessitated to expand the tax-farming system, in which tax was

17 BOA KK.d. 2540, p. 86; BOA KK.d. 2540, p. 7; BOA D.PSK 23/20; BOA D.PSK 25/93, and others.

18 BOA KK.d. 2542/10/31, 1700.
paid in advance by the tax-farmers [mültezim] to the state and collected by the representatives of the tax-farmers from people. In the eighteenth century, revenue units normally given as tax-farm for three years, started to be given for life-long [malikane] (Genç 2013: 95-142). This is not to propose that the Patriarch was only a tax-farmer in the system. Whether the Patriarch was a tax-farmer or not is a long-discussed subject in literature (Papademetriou 2015: 107-138, Kenanoğlu 2004:59-69, Bayraktar Tellan 2011: 3-23). Although the Patriarch collected the revenues of the Treasury and the method of tax-collection fits in the tax-farming system, this does not limit the Patriarch’s role to that of a tax-farmer. As a matter of fact, the power of the Patriarch over the Ottoman Orthodox Christians is most evident in a further eighteenth-century development, which is the increasing role of the Patriarch as an intermediary between the Porte and the Christians by the beginning of the century.¹⁹

Increasing social turbulence in the eighteenth century was another factor that influenced the role of patriarchs in this period. As the Ottoman sultan was trying to control mobility, the Patriarch was in an effort to control the Christians, a development which is also reflected in the stipulations of the Patriarchal berats of the eighteenth century²⁰. For example, people collecting Patriarchal taxes were now allowed to carry guns [alat-i harb]. In some cases, the Patriarchs tried to control itinerant priests who would provide religious services to Christians other than the local priests and metropolitans, as is evident again in the expanding stipulations of their berats.

The establishment of gerontismos was a gradual process complete by 1763. In this way, the elders of the Synod, that is, the resident metropolitans in Istanbul had attained considerable power in the Patriarchate vis-à-vis the Patriarchs. The Ottoman administration as well as the local churches were aware of the stabilized situation of the Patriarchate; in 1766 and 1767 the Patriarchates of Pec and Ohrid came under the administration of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Konortas 1998: 217).

¹⁹ See also Leal 2003: 194-199 for the “turning inward” among members of the Greek Orthodox community.

²⁰ For the Patriarchal berats of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria see Çolak & Bayraktar, forthcoming.
A reconsideration of the events relating to the Patriarchate and the Orthodox actors involved, in the context of the Ottoman society reveals them as active subjects influencing and being influenced by the dynamics of their era. The Empire-wide fiscal transformation was related not only to tax-collection, but it also changed social roles in the society. The representatives of the Patriarchate were well aware of two main Ottoman administrative principles which were the conservation of order in the society, and the proper collection of taxes. The Orthodox actors functioned efficiently in the Ottoman administrative system dealing with the Catholic problem, the rising demands of new economic realities and a more turbulent society. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the institutionalization of the Ottoman Orthodox Churches was complete. As part of the Ottoman society, the Orthodox people and institutions actively took part and contributed to the eighteenth-century developments. A closer look at the development of *gerontismos* from this viewpoint attests this dynamic picture of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the eighteenth century, and suggests that the “reform of the Synod” i.e. the shift from *synodos endemousa* to *gerontismos* was more than a mere internal struggle among the clergymen of the Patriarchate and the Phanariots.

July 2018
THE PATRIARCHATE OF constantinople AND THE “REFORM OF THE synod”

21

BIBLIOGRAPHY


ÇOLAK H., 2015, The Orthodox Church in the early modern Middle East: Relations between the Ottoman central administration and the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 282 p.

ÇOLAK Hasan & BAYRAKTAR TELLAN Elif, The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution, Istanbul, ISIS Press (forthcoming).


PAPADEMETRIOU T., 2015, Render unto the Sultan: Power, authority, and the Greek Orthodox Church in the early Ottoman centuries, Oxford, 256 p.


STATHI P., 2005, “Provincial Bishops of the Orthodox Church as Members of the Ottoman Elite (Eighteenth-Nineteenth Centuries”, in: Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire, ed. A. Anastasopoulos, Rethymno, 367 p.

