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Going round the province for progress and prosperity: inspection tours and reports by late Ottoman governors

Abdulhamit Kirmizi*

Going on tour was, for the late Ottoman governor, the most important means of getting to know the districts and people under their control, and for reviewing the governmental activities in the province. Provincial reports written after inspection tours in sub-provinces are an understudied source in the historiography on the Ottoman Empire. Containing rich material for the debates on modernisation and the civilising mission, these vilayet reports are worth studying as a source for the genre of travel writing, as well. The reports included edited memoranda on the general conditions, the course of events, operations concerning the administrative branches, witnesses and local needs of sub-districts visited and inspected by the governor.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire; nineteenth century; provincial administration; governor; civilising mission

Scholarship drawing on postcolonial studies has challenged our understanding of the impact of travel in the nineteenth century. Important recent analyses of nineteenth-century travel writing focus on the questions of how imperial meaning-making worked and how power structures are replicated in textual patterns of signification and narrative authority. According to this literature, travel writing was crucially insinuating and cementing crude binaries with pejorative formulations of civilised/savage, scientific/superstitious, enlightened/dark, modern/primitive.1 Although the Ottoman Empire was far from being imperialist in the European sense, in my opinion, late Ottoman provincial governors, all appointed from and mostly educated at the centre, were on the frontline of such binaries of progress and stasis, acquiring and maintaining the power structure with patterns of signification reflecting orderliness. Through their mobility, knowledge of the provinces was gathered and passed to Istanbul, the centre of state, where it was considered to be distilled, arranged, systematised and used for the sake of order and control.

The Ottoman administrative and intellectual establishment of the Tanzimat-era certainly cultivated the idea of their own superiority, as well as prejudices with regard to the native populations of the provinces. They were clearly convinced that only men like themselves, with modern administrative training and a strong esprit de corps, were able to keep the empire running. This conviction led them to a sense of superiority vis-à-vis the local population, commoners and elite alike.2 In the words of Birgit Schäbler, ‘[e]mbarrassed by the primitives in their own backyard, and trying to demonstrate that their countries were part of the modern, civilised world to Europeans, non-European elites constructed their own countryside as an ignoble savage other’ and viewed ‘the countryside as the abode of the uncivilised, of objects in dire need of reform’.3 But difference never came to be institutionalised in the Ottoman provinces as rigidly as in French Algeria or

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British India. In the Ottoman case, the rationale for the officials’ feeling of superiority can be explained neither by means of imperialism nor by means of colonialism, but more justly with recourse to the concept of ‘civilising mission’. Based on the idea of being at the forefront of progress and having a mission to ‘uplift’ provincial populations to a higher level of civility, civilising missions are, in contrast to colonialism, not founded on the assumption of unchangeable difference. Together with the discourses on civilisation, the self-consciousness of the bureaucratic elite was available to render the provincial high officials as morally, physically and intellectually advanced in a Darwinian sense, which led to the self-perpetuation of supremacy in moral, cultural, economic, social and political matters.

To ‘mainstream’ the Ottoman Empire and integrate it into academic debates on imperialism and colonialism elsewhere in the world, some scholars have proposed an Ottoman notion of ‘imperialism as instantiating colonial situations’, with a warning that ‘one should not automatically equate colonialism with European expansion and European domination of overseas peoples and cultures’. According to this alternative proposal to the modernisation paradigm, ‘we are dealing with an Ottoman imperialism without colonies but one which generated, in certain places and at certain times, colonial situations’. Scholarship on ‘Ottoman colonialism’ is generally based on the conditions of the Arab provinces of the empire only, as can be seen from the title of the main collection of essays on the topic, *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2002). Another well-known historian who has written on the issue, Selim Deringil, also provides examples solely from Libya, Hicaz and Yemen. He claims that ‘the Ottoman elite conflated the ideas of modernity and colonialism, and applied the latter as means of survival against an increasingly hostile world’, and ‘adopted the mindset of their enemies, the arch-imperialists, and came to conceive of its periphery as a colonial setting’. Although positing clearly the difference with the British or French experience, by arguing that the Ottoman population had a far greater negotiating power, Deringil has focused on the Ottoman elite’s use of the ‘civilising motif’ similar to the *White Man’s Burden* applied by the British in India. He is rightfully pointing out their stance of moral superiority, leading to a position of moral distance, and a perception of ‘them’ and ‘us’ among the ruling elite.

One of my intentions is to show that the same arguments regarding the civilising mission and moral superiority can be used for core provinces of the empire, here represented by the case of Konya, the biggest province in Anatolia. My conclusion is that the signifying power of these elite feelings amongst the Ottoman administrative class cannot be confined to their deployment in colonialist situations in Arab lands precisely because a similar attitude and stance are voiced by the rulers of the core provinces of the empire.

**Ottoman governors, inspection tours and provincial reports**

Most of the late Ottoman governors were energetic modern bureaucrats following imperial instructions and shaping these instructions by their suggestions grounded on their observations. They engaged in substantial civic improvement projects and revitalised urban institutions. Going on tour was the most important means of getting to know the districts and their people, and reviewing the activities of the subordinated local governments. While the governor otherwise had to rely on the writings of the lower officials, by a tour in the province he could gain direct information. The aims of the inspections were to observe local needs directly, deal quickly with abuses and meet local officials, whom the governor also had to correct and motivate to work. The inspection
tour was a very important instrument in controlling the local sub-governors. Sub-governors and other provincial officials criticised for acting corruptly or tyrannically were charged and transferred as a result of such tours. Governors interviewed local officials, visited the main public institutions of the area and organised meetings with local people, who talked more freely in the open about their needs and grievances than they did in an office in front of the desks of officials. Under the auspices of the tours, the public needs of the towns and villages were observed directly. The governor was officially concerned with all matters affecting the conditions of the province’s subjects.

Although governors of the late Ottoman Empire occasionally engaged in inspection tours and ad hoc investigations, the powers and procedure of conducting the inspections had not been clearly defined by legislation. The first time an imperial order demanding inspection tours from all governors in general was sent to the provinces was on 27 February 1861. According to this order, the director of the smallest administrative unit (müdür) had to tour his kazा every three months, the sub-governor (kaymakam) his sancak every six months, and the governor of the province (vali) his vilayet at least once a year. It is possible to take this date as the beginning of ordinary inspection tours by provincial governors. But for a definite legislative policy, we need to have recourse to the Provincial Administration Law of 1871, which dictated that the governors had a specific obligation to undertake tours of inspection to outlying places under their control at least once or twice a year, not exceeding three months in total.

Providing a written account of these tours was not mentioned in the law and thus seems not to have been obligatory, since it was not specifically ordered. Some governors, however, wrote a detailed provincial report just after returning from the tour to the centre of the vilayet, and sent it on to Istanbul. The itineraries, the places and dates of departures, were mentioned in the beginnings of the reports, which were mainly sent to the Ministry of the Interior. Places were described elaborately. The reports included edited memoranda on the general conditions, the course of events, operations concerning the administrative branches, witnesses and local needs of sub-districts visited and inspected by the governor. Institutional and physical improvements were noticed. Sometimes statistical material and other figures were submitted as appendices.

During the sultanate of Abdulhamid II (1876–1909), which was the time of effective implementation of these provincial inspection tours, these reports were also sent to the palace as well as the Grand Vizier, and not just to the relevant Ministry of the Interior. Abdulhamid II is known for never having visited any province during his long rule. This fact makes the details in the reports more meaningful, considering that the reports were written with an expectation that the Sultan would also read them himself.

Although compelled by official decree, many governors were not regularly going round their provinces, or they were doing it in a rather casual way. Because of workload, fear of losing control of the conduct of business in the provincial centre, or lack of resources or interest, governors did not always comply with the exhortations of the law. And those reports written by energetic governors, at the very sunset of the Ottoman Empire, the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, have either been neglected or wrongly categorised in Ottoman scholarship. Little is known about the nature and complications of these tours and the reports written afterwards.

In Ottoman studies, vilayet reports are not distinguished as a specific category of sources and are usually treated carelessly as a part of the general bundle of reports presented to the Sultan. I have argued that the reports prepared by governors on their provinces, beginning with a clear formula that the text was written ‘after a tour in the sub-provinces’, constitute a category of writing, a genre, in itself. My further argument
Tour reports of the governor of Konya

This article will treat provincial reports as travel texts written by administrators who were mostly alien to the territories over which they ruled and through which they travelled. After a general description of the kind of texts being explored, which are all to be found in the Primeministerial Ottoman Archives (BOA) in Istanbul, the main focus will be on the reports of Avlonyašt Ferid Pasha (1851–1914), who served as governor of Konya between March 1898 and November 1902. The late Ottoman vilayet of Konya was far greater then than now, including many vilayets of modern Turkey: namely Karaman, Niğde, Nevşehir, Aksaray, Antalya, Isparta and Burdur. So, the governor had to cope with the demands of administering a territory as large as some European countries. After this post, because of his successful governorship, Ferid Pasha later served Abdulhamid II as his last Grand Vizier before the Young Turk Revolution (January 1903 to July 1908). Ferid Pasha is also known for having made various attempts to introduce modern institutions into the province of Konya.

Throughout his years of government, Ferid Pasha maintained a hectic schedule and travelled extensively throughout Konya province familiarising himself with local conditions. As his journeys were extensions of his official life as a governor, he inspected the general state of administration, incomes and expenditures, public works, the schools, the dispensaries, the state of water supply, settlement work and other such matters throughout the various sub-districts of Konya.

The governor’s general reports on many different specific topics were mostly based on his experiences from these provincial tours. Ferid Pasha openly remarked in one such a report, that he postponed exposing his observations, opinions and recommendations ‘to the consequences of experiences’ (netâyic-i tecârîbe terk eylemiş). Only after having ‘rounded and inspected all directions, the districts, subdistricts, and even towns and villages, forming the province in the last three-and-a-half years many times,’ did he consider himself able to present the whole picture on the provincial state of education.

The tours could be taken anytime during the year. Since the aim was not mere pleasure, announcing the difficulties of his journey and remarking on the unexpectedly harsh physical realities, Ferid Pasha described his tour in 1901 as follows: ‘In the midst of the heavy winter, my journey and work aimed at examining the local needs to procure effects like spreading the means of justice and ensuring the development of public works, and thus to cite the blessings about the holy entity [the Sultan].’ He returned from this tour encompassing Beyşehir, Seydişehir, Bozkır, Karaman and Belviran after 12 days of ‘inspecting the general conditions and the current transactions’ (ahvâl-i umumiyye ile mu‘amelât-i cârîye-i hûkûmeti teftîş). For him, all departments of the province needed to be pursued and inspected, even when most of the officials were doing their work at best.

The places and dates of departures are mentioned in the beginnings of the reports sent to the Minister of the Interior: ‘In order to do the rounds of inspection of the subordinate places of the province, I departed from Konya to Uluborlu on 30 August.’ We can understand the main motives of the inspection tours from the beginning sentences of his reports. The governor begins one report by mentioning that ‘[t]he edited memorandum on the general conditions, the course of events, witnesses and local needs of the kazas and the sancak of Niğde which [he] went round and inspected, is submitted in the appendix.’
On another case, he writes ‘[t]he conclusions of [his] witnesses and informations, and humble operations concerning the administrative branches’ of the sancaks of Hamidabad, Burdur and Teke. As usual in other writings of the era, these reports were also sent to the palace as well as the Grand Vizier, and not just the relevant Ministry of the Interior.

From his report of 20 November 1898, we learn that Ferid Pasha had been touring the districts of Beyşehir, Seydişehir, Akseki, İbradi, Alaiyye, Elmalı and Antalya for a month. Here, he describes his purpose again as ‘ensuring the good circulation of justice and completing the means of the prosperity of the province.’ In Seydişehir, he visited the Sufi Şeyh Abdullah Efendi, ‘who evinced the good will of all Anatolia because of his asceticism and piety and whose sainthood is famed,’ and took his blessings. According to local public memory, the Pasha was frequently using inspection tours as a pretext to visit the sheikh, because he was reputedly a disciple of the Nakşibendi Sufi order. Here it was that the governor stayed for a few days during his last visit, after which the sheikh ordered his hundreds of medrese students into the garden and prayed for the governor. When the sheikh told him that this was their last meeting, the governor feared that he was implying his death, but the sheikh relieved him: ‘We will not see each other again, but this is more fortunate for you.’ After the parting, he learned that he was summoned to Istanbul, where he was going to be appointed as Grand Vizier, the highest position to reach as a statesman.

A long tour in the midst of Anatolia

The longest provincial report of Ferid Pasha, consisting of 20 A3 pages and over 8800 words, the main text to be examined in this article, is dated 6 June 1899. This provincial report, a very good representative of the category, is organised around the subtitles of Administration (Mülkiye), Finance (Maliye), Education (Maarif), Justice (Adliye), Public Works (Nafia), Endowments (Evkaf) and Mines (Maadin). The report contains valuable accounts of small townships and even villages.

The diligent governor departed from Konya on Thursday, 18 May, travelled through Gaferyad, Karaman, Eregli, Hamidiye (Şücaeddin), Niğde, Nevşehir and Aksaray in twenty days, and came back to Konya on 6 June. The first point of destination of the trip was Gaferyad, a subdistrict of Karaman. The governor speaks of his trip in the mode of impersonal passive. His description of space is not immune to the workings of time; on the contrary, he historicises the places he observes. Here, Gaferyad takes its place in history, with a complex past revealed by his reflections upon the issue of population decrease. Overtaxation, health issues and water supply are pointed out as reasons for the decrease. Once an important place, its population had scattered in the last 20 or 30 years. For the benefit of prosperity, some notifications and advice were recommended to the newly appointed Director Remzi Efendi. Investigations were also undertaken regarding the reasons for many people moving away to neighbouring villages, especially to Aladağ. Although it appeared that a portion of the available population had departed to various places because of multifarious taxes, others had left with the hope of better agricultural opportunities and more productive farming. Meanwhile, an outbreak of syphilis in the township had conjoined with these spurs to dispersal and caused a deplorable devastation. The Pasha writes

As I perfected the means of the conservation of general health – by courtesy of the welfare loving sovereign – with the construction of a hospital to defy this disease, the dispatch of the fifteen persons verified as being afflicted with the syphilis disease and their treatment in the
The mentioned special hospital has been recommended and implemented. Another reason for the dispersion of the community was found to be the disproportion of water with the need and the incapacity of the land to produce without irrigation. If irrigation problems were solved, the township would gain its old prosperity, as put forth by some [people], but the conveyance from the lake, behind the ardous mountains enclosing one side of the township, by means of a designed watercourse, requires a huge amount of expenditure, and is therefore seen as impossible to be implemented.\textsuperscript{23}

The governor links the solution of the water supply problem to the facilitation of transportation. With the arrival of the railroad, the equipment for the construction of channels bringing water from the lake will also be accomplished: ‘With help of the convenience to be ensured and achieved by the railway soon to pass over Karaman, the conveyance of the water will be surely procured and supplied as well.’ Here he defines the railway as the ‘bearer of prosperity of a province.’ The fact that the provincial conditions may be improved by canals and railways is interesting for the way in which this proposal positions the province within a discourse of infrastructural potential and improvement. This discourse is the most important ongoing subject in all provincial reports.

The next day, the governor went on to Karaman. He expresses unintentionally an experience of nostalgia, remembering the old good days of this little town. Descriptions of every destination begin with information concerning the precise population. An accurate accounting of the population was an important element in the expectations of state bureaucrats and authorities at the centre of the imperial state.

The next day, having departed from here [Gaferyad], Karaman aka Larende, the centre of the district of Karaman, was reached. While this town was a giant city with 80,000 houses and 300,000 inhabitants three centuries ago, today the whole subdistrict has 5,848 houses and a population of 31,377. And now the town, with just 1,570 houses and 5,117 inhabitants, both its inner and outer landscape, is found looking like a ruin.\textsuperscript{24}

The report goes on with an account of historical monuments of the town. Ferid Pasha continues to use the metaphor of ‘ruin’ (\textit{harâbe}) in describing the desolation. But for Karaman he uses the word \textit{harâbezâr}, a reinforced version of \textit{harâbe}, the word used for the smaller town of Gaferyad.

Here, the holy grave of the mother of Hazret-i Mevlana, may God bless his divine soul, and some structures of ancient Islamic monuments like the Hatuniye Madrasah, are present, but most of them ruined with the lapse of time. Although allowance and direction for the reconstruction and revivification of one or two of them was given five years ago, somehow no acts and deeds were performed.\textsuperscript{25}

His use of the term I have translated here as ‘somehow’ (\textit{her nasılsa}) is worth attention. The governor uses this term to denounce the failures of his several predecessors. The term is also, furtively, used for an argument not proper to be spoken openly. He will use this phrase again when he points out that his demand for the appointment of an interrogator to Niğde has been ignored for a long time.\textsuperscript{26} In this sense, it is not only used as a valid critique of former governors or other officials.\textsuperscript{27} He used the word previously to refer to the spread of syphilis in Gaferyad, probably to avoid mentioning prostitution (\textit{kasabada her nasılsa Frengi illeti}), and will use it again below, when he states that Nevşehir ‘somehow did not progress as desired’ (\textit{her nasılsa arzu derecesinde terakkı edememiş}).

**Order and cleanliness**

Ferid Pasha worked and lived in Istanbul for over 10 years before he came to this Anatolian province totally unknown to him. One can particularly observe this background...
in his will to change the settings of towns according to his metropolitan expectations. The governor sought to impose metropolitan ideas of order and cleanliness, and medical care – as evidenced by the case of syphilis above – upon the province.

In his two days of residence here, all the matters of administrative departments were examined and inspected. The governor of the subdistrict was commended for the enjoyment of prosperity and sanitisation of the town. The wheat market, however, where various stores of provisions were bought and sold, was considered by the governor to be in a very inappropriate place within the town, because the provisions accumulating here sometimes hindered the traffic, and grain was stamped into dust by people’s feet.

We are led to surmise that it was out of an obsession with ordering provincial space in terms of a geometric shaping thought necessary for governing the placement and symbolism of buildings, as well as commercial efficiency, that the governor ordered the transfer of the market to another place. For this purpose, he prescribed the setting up of a commission, including some members of the municipality board and other concerned people. He instructed the commission also to gather the balance dues of the municipality taxes, the purchase of a fire hose and the repair of the present water pump, the medicine needed for the municipal pharmacy, supplying the arrears of the money to be paid for the syphilis hospital in Konya, and the transportation of the syphilis patients of Karaman.

The governor was not touring alone. One of his accompanying staff was the head of the military battalion of the centre of the province (merkez tabur ağası). The policemen of Karaman were inspected by this commander, and four of them who claimed to be in impaired health were reported as being fit for service after being examined by the municipal physician. After its inspection, the prison was found to be well provisioned with the means of ‘cleaning and hygiene’. Nevertheless, the governor stresses that he has instructed the staff about the need for cleaning and refreshing the dorms as often as possible.28

During his tour, the governor enjoys the fertile arable fields, but for a very pragmatic purpose. When he departs from Karaman to Eregli, he notes that on his way he observed cultivated lands, prayed to God for the signs of blessings and fertility, and stated his expectations of a beneficial year for the imperial treasure house.29 ‘Total benefit’ (menfaat-ı külliye) is the expression he uses, almost shamelessly. This articulation arises from seeing the land as an untapped resource, capable of providing considerable wealth for the central treasury. Exploiting a language of financial gain, the governor shows one side of the raison d’être of his governorship: to bolster the agricultural economy of the districts in order to feed the central economy.

Terakki and Umran: progress and prosperity

Indicative of the modern intellectual profile of his time, the governor is very progressive and makes comparisons between spaces. Although Eregli is ‘more capable of progress’ than Karaman, in terms of geography, because of its fertile soil and rich water sources, there was not much to be seen as evidence of prosperity.30 Cultivators were few, so the governor notified the district officials that they must do their best for prosperity and the increase in cultivation.31 Terakki and umrán, progress and prosperity, are almost the keywords of the report, easy to trace at every beginning of a description of a town. One has also to note that the word umran can be used interchangeably for both civilisation (medeniye) and progress (terakki), as indicated in the dictionaries of the day.32
Ferid Pasha uses this language of progress concerning all places he toured. Here he uses it also for Nevşehir, ‘which was anciently known as Nisa and a famous city’, yet ‘somehow did not progress as desired, and this was because of its distance to the railway, as well as the population’s indifference to education and industry’. But now, after the completion of the Ankara and Konya rail routes and the Niğde to Mersin road in recent years, the desire for trade has found its place in the public mind, he reports. The art of carpet weaving had also improved since he came to the province last year, and during this short period, the ‘results of prosperity’ have become visible. Ferid Pasha asserts his strong hopes for the eventual perfection of prosperity. Aksaray is also described by the governor as ‘a town at the edge of an immense domain, open to all kinds of progress’ (her dürül terakkıyata müste’id). Ferid Pasha mentions the favours of the Sultan in regard of public works and attributes him with the capacity to deliver progress (sâye-i terakkıyâye-i pâdişâhîde).

Just as he recalled the old name of Nisa for Nevşehir, the governor recalls ancient history while narrating his visit to Kilisehisar. This village, belonging to the sub-district of Bor in the Niğde sancak, was built on the ground of Tiyanşehir, ‘the centrum of the ancient province of Tiryantis’ (kadım Tiyantis eyaletinin merkezi olan Tiyanşehir şehrinin arsası üzerine mebni bulunan Kilisehisar karyesi). The governor paid a flying visit of two hours only to see this ancient site (uğrłamarak iki saat kadar tevâkuf olunmuş).34

In taking care of what he perceived to be problems, Ferid Pasha’s most visible accomplishments were in the development of educational facilities. He opened up many new primary and middle schools in the province. After counting his many services in this area, he states at the end of the chapter on education that ‘the most possible is done in an orderly fashion for the progress of educational issues, and everywhere [the number of] primary schools are increasing; the people are pressured and encouraged continuously, in accord with the recent instruction of the Sublime Porte to build a primary school in every village’.35

Non-Muslims and inter-communal affairs

The governor describes Hamidiye, a district in the sancak of Niğde, multi-dimensionally, by positing the town geographically, historically and statistically, all in a single sentence

Hamidiye, also called Şüca’uddin, is a broad village in-between the Toros mountains-chain, placed within a basin encircled by high hills. The population here included five to six hundred Christian miners emigrated from Gümüşhane of the Trabzon province to work in the imperial mine of Bulgardağı.36

Under the title of ‘Mines’, Ferid Pasha delivered further details on Bulgardağı

The mines here have been run by the government for seventy years. Although they number over one hundred, only thirteen of the mines are active, providing gold, silver and litharge (mürdesenk). The village has a population of six hundred, and two hundred of them are miners, almost all Christian, with quite a few Muslims.37

The governor states the unprofitability and financial difficulties of the mines by means of numbers (‘hard data’), calling for either increasing capital expenditure or outsourcing them to contractors by inviting bids. Under ‘Education’, the governor states again that most of the population of this tiny town were Christians and miners, and they had their own schools. He advised them to conduct carefully the education in these schools ‘within the official course’.38
We learn a lot about inter-communal affairs of some towns and villages. In the village of Melekubi at Nevşehir, for example, we read of a conflict between Muslims and Christians over a school project of the Muslims to be implemented on a ground neighbouring a Christian property. The Christians did not want the windows of the school to be open with views over their side of the property. Ferid Pasha ordered the **kaymakam** to send representatives of both sides to the provincial council in Konya to prove their cases legally. The governor also sent the government physician Andoniyadi Efendi, an Orthodox Greek, to preach to the Christians. Andoniyadi managed to calm the minds of his co-religionists, and convinced them not to hinder the construction of a building by Muslims for such a noble purpose as the ‘procurement of the splendours of education’.39

In Bor, when investigating the complaints about the sub-district governor, Ferid Pasha found out that one part of the problem was related to non-Muslims and education: ‘The **kaymakam** boosted and facilitated the attendance of Christian children at the middle school and attracted the anger of one or two members of the clerical establishment.’40

**Using a marble pillar as a road roller**

Among the governor’s many lively descriptions of towns, he reports how Aksaray is ‘a town at the edge of an immense domain, open to any kind of progress’. Despite these geographical advantages, Aksaray’s population was susceptible to malaria and other illnesses because of its bad climate. Ferid Pasha expresses his hopes that the projects he initiated to change the water sources will be able to decrease the incidence of illness. Another problem in Aksaray was the malfunctioning postal system, about which the inhabitants rightly complained to the authorities. Aksaray is far away, at a 28-hours’ distance, from Konya. Although it is possible to send letters with the railway in one and a half days, or to send horsemen (or tatars as the riding postmen were called) twice a week, postal documents are sent first to Niğde and reach Konya only in 11 days. The businessmen, tired of this inefficient operational logic, frequently called upon passengers going to Konya to mediate and act as conveyors.

Ferid Pasha’s report informs us also about the collapsed or ruined roads and bridges that hinder trade between villages and towns. He gave orders to repair two fallen bridges on the road from Konya to Karaman and reports that the three kilometres of incomplete road between Karaman and Silifke, as well as some other sections of the Konya-Karaman road, will be finished next year. There is no proper highway between Eregli and Niğde. Although the field system in between consists of flat plains and is easy to cross, in winter time most of the route becomes a marshland; some marshy areas remain throughout the summer and menace the postal transportation. Therefore, the best solution would be to build a highway through Bor, for which a project had already been undertaken the previous year.41 Meanwhile, another road is being constructed to connect Eregli to Konya through Karapınar. There is also no road between Eregli and Ulükışla. On this route there is a difficult place to pass, called Çiyanbeli. Considering that this pass is on the route of the Damascus post, its construction is urgent and will begin in the autumn. The way connecting Ulükışla to the Niğde-Mersin highroad will begin to be constructed next year. There is no way out from the mining town of Hamidiye. Ferid Pasha is aware of the importance of transporting the minerals to trade centres and has ordered the surveying of a road from Hamidiye to Çiftehan, located on the Niğde-Mersin highway. But he informs the authorities in detail about the disagreement over payments with the contractor, which have delayed the construction of the last five kilometres of the road.
A rather curious technological innovation of Ferid Pasha is foregrounded in this part of his report, after the observation of the difficulties in the road-rolling process on the Niğde-Bor road, a part of the Mersin highway: He recommends that the sub-governor use an ancient marble pillar weighing 1500 kilos, which he saw in Bor, as a road roller. This is a very interesting example of the practical and pragmatic working of the modern bureaucratic mindset of the time. In tune with the new era, the governor draws attention to past inefficiencies. He denounces his predecessors by remarking that ‘for the past six to seven years road construction is wholly abandoned in the province of Konya’ and reports that nobody seems to have cared about the work obligations of the subjects (amele-i mükellef), a case he has now revived and implemented for the development of the province. Whereas public works had been stopped fully, he managed to make many monumental achievements within a brief time.

In the concluding paragraph of the governmental tour report, he points to ‘the progress of the province, which expands from day to day, and its security, which is perfect’ (vilâyetin günden güne tevessül etmekde olan terakkiyâtyyla berkemâl olan âsâiyişi) and ensures that he will ‘further care for the ascendency of the prosperity of the land’ (izdiyâd-i ümrân-i memleket hakkında her dürûtü takâyyûdâta devam edilecegid). He also indicates that he had visited some of the same places the previous year, using these references to former journeys to measure and assess progress.

Conclusion

Depictions of travel appear in all manner of texts. Far from existing only as a distinct and coherent genre, travel writing has no neat and easily identifiable formal boundaries. Multiple subgenres of travel writing contain many formal differences from each other. Travellers of all kinds documented their experiences not only in private letters and diaries, or other kinds of life writing, but also in official correspondence: all these are forms of writing that contribute to the genre without fitting the remit of self-conscious works of ‘travel writing.’ My aim has been to draw attention to the inspection reports of provincial governors by setting them within the framework of travel writing and showing they are not exclusively a source for social and political historians, but should be read by scholars of travel writing as well. Like all forms of travel writing, they have their political determinants and contexts. Official reports naturally bear the stamp of governmentality in obvious ways. But all travel writing is conditioned by its contexts of production and reception. I hope to have shown how these reports share many features with other subgenres of travel writing.

Governors played the role of intermediary in bringing the vast territories of the empire under the desired firm control of the state. Their districts were invariably alien to the governors until they visited them: in other words, they were touring places to which they had never been before. Ferid Pasha, while governor of Konya, undertook periodic inspection tours, dutifully reporting his findings and suggestions to the relevant government authorities. His intention of presenting ‘the conclusions of his humble eyewitnessings and studies’ (netîce-i meşhûdât ve ittîlâ’ât-i âcizânem) was clearly a subjective enterprise. The governor’s discursive strategy was to present the bad conditions he inherited from his predecessors and to show what he had done to solve the problems. He tended to articulate a strong set of generic conventions when he praised the Sultan in his writings. One does not expect the expression of emotional experience in an official’s report. But the governor uses these conventions as a pretext to praise his own activities.
In a way, in his report he is constructing an image of himself, as a hardworking and intelligent official, who is very loyal to the Sultan and the state. He reports his journey mostly in third person, but from time to time he switches to the first person, in order to represent himself in this way.

Ferid Pasha’s audience was not a wide public, only the Sultan and the highest bureaucratic echelon. As a governor of one of the largest provinces of the late Ottoman Empire, Ferid Pasha spun webs of imperial power from within the province, despite the distance between the central city of the province, where the provincial bureaucracy was situated, and the capital. The reports reduce the provincial actors into objects of the governor’s more knowledgeable will and gaze. They become subject to his instructions and expected to obey him without questioning his interference into provincial matters, although this was probably not the case. Ferid Pasha demonstrates his imprinting or inscribing of imperial power and privilege within his very sentences by drawing attention to his orders precisely as they were delivered to his subordinates.

An important structure at work in the text is the language of progress. He has ‘translated’ the province’s landscapes into the language of the imperial centre, thereby ‘translating’ one place into another and for another. We can consider this kind of report writing as the project of a modernising state, undertaken in the interests of trying to make disappear a non-modern world by imprinting the seal of modernity over it. From this perspective, the governor’s journey is quite unlike the experiences of better-known colonial explorers, in a quest of the exotic and authentic, in the late nineteenth century. Ferid Pasha definitely was an enlightened man believing in the value of progress, working hard for the consolidation of a metropolitan culture in provincial towns. His engagement with technical details is an indication that he was coming encumbered with a certain metropolitan cultural baggage to these provincial corners. A kind of ‘civilising mission’ retained a profound resonance in his understanding of the provincial world, apart from any question of colonialist dominion as such. Agriculture, trade, public works and education are to be depicted as the most important means by which Ferid Pasha concentrated his efforts in this regard. Birgit Schäbler’s arguments, that ‘civilizing missions are born out of modernizing discourses at the inner boundary’ and that an Ottoman mission civilisatrice extended to the rural ‘countryside, in general, if not to the provinces as a whole’ is more than fitting to describe the discourse of his provincial reports.

This characteristic feature of the modern Ottoman bureaucrat is to be observed in many of Ferid Pasha’s other and earlier reports. In a foreword to a provincial report, he stresses the importance of progress and proliferation or increase (terakki ve tevevssü’), in agriculture, trade and public works, for stimulating ‘general happiness and wealth’, and the significance of education for ‘all kinds of progress and proliferation of civilisation’ (her dûrlût terakkiyât ve tefeyyûzûzât-i medeniye). He used the binary of savage and civilised many times in his earlier writings, long before he became governor of Konya. Just after the Russian War 20 years before, in his mission as judicial inspector in Diyarbekir, a province in south-east Anatolia, he described the population as savage and nomadic (ahalisinin vahset ve bedeviyeti), and drowned in the darkness of ignorance (ahalisinin mû斯塔గrak olduğu zulâm-i cehaled). Therefore, according to him, it was impossible immediately to implement the imperial regulations prepared for the more civilised parts of the Ottoman Empire. As a 30-year-old feverish young inspector of justice, he even dared to suggest the temporary application of martial law in the Diyarbekir province, offering the example of its success in British India. His opinions of this kind are extremely important when considering that he will become Grand Vizier after his governorship in Konya. Moreover, he was Albanian in origin, and, as the top statesmen, he had to read the reports of...
governors of the Albanian territories of the Ottoman Empire, which were also considered savage lands in the minds of his fellow bureaucrats. His sensitivities in this regard we can only speculate about, as he seems not to have written about them.

We still have many questions to answer in order to understand the writing process of these kinds of reports. How did the governor rework his observations? How did he modify his earlier notes into a formal report? Did he keep a journal to use as an aide-memoire, as the basis for the official version of the report? Were his co-travellers, the subordinate officials taking the notes and modifying them, perhaps even incorporating their own observations? Did the officials keep their own journals and see different things because of their different positions? And, what about the silences of the text, the very personal observations that would not fit into a formal report? Knowing more about the construction process of the text would give us important clues to understand the fin de siècle functioning of an imperial bureaucratic mentality, their technology of representation, as well as the cultural formations of which they were a part, and their specific discursive frames.

Notes


5. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, Stefan Weber, eds., The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire (Beirut: Orient Institute, 2002), 6–8.


7. ‘Kaza müdürlerinin aza-yi meclisden münasib zevatla üç, kaimmakamların altı ayda ve vali ve mutasarrıfların dahi lâ-ekall senede bir kere birkaç mah muhavvel-i uhdeleri olan mahalleri geçt ü guzâr ile sunûf-i ahali ve teb'anın emn ü istirahatları derece-i matûbede olub olmâdını bizzat teftiş ve tahkik eylemek lazım gelmiş olduğundan.’ BOA (Başbakancılık Osmanlı Arşivi), A.MKT.UM 462/83, 1277N (11).

8. ‘Valiler daire-i vilayeti müddet-i teftişin her defasında defa devir ve teftiş ederler,’ Ídare-i Umumiye-i Vilayet Nizamnamesi, Düstur (İstanbul: Matbaâ-i Amîre, 1289), I: 627.

9. Such an ad hoc imperial order was sent to the provinces on 28 August 1880, demanding that the governors tour their administrative units within the next twenty days and provide an objective and exhaustive report organised title by title on every possible issue: ‘Yirmi gün zarfında Vali, Mutasarrıf ve Kaymakamların devre çubuk memleket ve ahalinin ihtiyaçları ve hâvi ve garaz u tavzan arı ve mümeyyel olmak üzere bend bend layihâ tanzim ve takdim hâkkında.’ BOA, Y.PRK.UM 3/19, 1297 L (13).


12. ‘Uc bucuk seneden beri, vilayeti teşkil eden liva ve kaza ve hatta nahiye ve karyeler varmaya kadar her tarafta bı‘d-defa‘at dev u teşfi‘le i‘tikad-i açıçânemce bir fıkî-r-i sâhibî hasil etmiş olduğumdan.’ BOA, Y.PRK.U M 56/21, 1319 C (11).


21. BOA, DH.TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (1).


23. BOA, DH.TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (1).

24. BOA, DH.TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (1).

25. BOA, DH.TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (1).


27. Ferid Pasha uses this word in other reports with the same aim. For example, in another report to the Ministry of Interior he says that ‘although the conduction of the [Karaviran] lake to the lowlands of Konya was written many times before, somehow the objective ended up abortive’ (Mezkür gûlûn Könya sâha-i ves‘îmasa akımdâsına keyﬁfiyeti birkaç defa yazılıp ﬂızîlmis ıken, her nasîlsa maksad-ı şimdiye kadar akım kalmış , in BOA, DH.TMIK.S 27/25, 1317 Ca. 25.

28. ‘Hapishanenin muayenesinde dahi mevkûfînîn saye-i şahanedeye istirahatleri berkemal olduğu anlaﬂılmış ve hasbe‘l-mevsim hapishane derununda nezafet ve tahâre fevkâlade riayet olunmakla beraber koçûrlerin sicca sicca temizletdirilmesi ve havasının tecdid edilirilmesi lüzumu memurlarına telhîm olunmuşdur.’ BOA, DH.TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (2).


30. ‘Ereğli kasabası mevkîyen Karaman‘dan ziyâde terakkiye mûsta‘id . . . olduğu halde memleketin âsâr-ı umrânîndan pek cûzî bir şey görûlmüş.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (2).
31. ‘Memlekte mevcud olan istidâd ve kâbiyiyet nisbetinde âsâr-ı umrân vücuda getirilmesi ve âhâlîn tezyîd-i zîrâ’ât ve harâsete tevîkî edilmesi hakkında bazı teblîgât-ı şîfâhiyye icrâ olundu.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (3).
32. Ş. Sami, Kamus-ı Türkî (Dersaadet [İstanbul]: İkdam, 1317 [1899]), 950.
33. ‘Neşehir kasabasî kadîmî Nîzâm nâmîyle ma’rûf ve epeçeye meşhûr bir şehir iken, her nasîlsâ arzu derecesinde terakkî edememî, bu da denizden ve şimdîndîr hâttindan bu’dî kalmâsîyîla beraber ahlâlîn ma’arîfî ve sanâyet’e rağbet etmêmesînîdîn âleri gelmiş ise de, birkaç senîr Ankara ve Konya hatlari icmâl olunduktan ve Niğde–Mersîn caddêsinîn hitâmîndan sonra ticaret arzusu ezhân-ı umumîyyeye yerleşmiş ve haliçîk sanatî dahi terakkîyye yıû tutmuş olduğundan geçen senekî ziyaret ve müvâsâlat-ı çâkîrânemden âcîmîrîyîdî akar az bir mûddet içinde olarakca âsâr-ı umrân baﬂ göstermiştir. Ezcûemle memleketîn ortasında cesîm bir daire-i beledîye icmâl ve icmâlîbî ibtidaiyye tezîyîd ile halkda hiss-i maariîf perveri görünnür derecede uyumnuﬂ olarak mûddetî dîz’iyyede hûsûl-ı âmal ve zuhr-i kemâl-ı umrân me’mûl-î kavîdir.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (3).
35. ‘Boa, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (9).
36. ‘Hamiydîye kazasının merkezi olan Hamiyye’ nam-i diﬂi diğer Şûcüddîn kasabasî bec-âlî yüz halîne cesîmce bir kârîye halinde olup Toros sîlîsîlesîn ârashdâna cibîl-ı şâhika ile muhârî bir hava derununda müesses ve sekine-i mevcûdesi Bulgardagi Maden-i Hümayûnînda işlemek üzere Trabzon vilâyetî dâhilî Încemden Gümüşhane sancagînîndan hicret eden madencîlerîn ibaret olarak hemen cümlesi Hristiyanîndir.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (3).
37. ‘Gerek muğâralardârâ ve gerek amelîyât-ı sûreira istiddâm olunan amelenîn mi’kârîk iki yüz hadene takriben alîn yüz núfusa bâlîg olarak buradan dan ancaq birkaç tânamesi İslam ve mütebâkîşi Hristiyanîndir.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (9).
38. ‘Hamîdîye kasasînîn núfusa mevcûdesi kafetten Hristiyanî ve madencî görûrûndan olup kendîlerine ma’hsûs mevcûterî mevcûd olduğu görünûldûnden tedrîsînîn krâ-yî nizâmî dairesinde icrasına dikkat edilmesi lüzumu tenbîhîn çıkmıştır.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (9).
40. ‘Bazi Hristiyanî çocuklarîndan ma’kteb-i rûsdiye devammî tervîc ve teshîl etmekle ulemdan bir ikisinîn gayz u hîddetîn davet eleydî.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (3).
41. ‘Ereglı ile Niğde arasinda muhtamam bir yol olmayvî geçî biradakî arazi arîzâsiz bir âtalâm ovillardan ibaret ve selhût-ül-mûrûr ise de mevsim-i şîrda美丽乡村ların ekseri yerî bataklak halîn iktisât etmekle ve hatta bu bataklıklarîn bir kısmî yaz günerîlî belevî mevcût kalarak mûrûr ve ubûrû ve hususîyle posta takliyûtnî evvelkale’dî bir sûreti tehdid ve ta’vîk etmekle olduğu görülmûsîyle Niğde’den Bor taﬁkîyeyi Eregli’yeyi bir yolun iﬂası kararlaﬂdırîlirâk geççen senî amelîyât-ı mûbadelər olumnuﬂdır.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (12).
42. ‘Yolun Niğde-Bor kısmaﬂına ferî edilmekte olan taﬂlarîn tokmak vazastasya tazyîk edildîği görüllüldûnden ve şu usul pek de temnin-i resalet edememîndön, Bor kazasında mevcûd olan ve 1500 kîlo sikletinde olduğu tahmîn edîlen bir mermer sıtnûn parçasının silindir haline vazaîyeyi tazyîk-ı amelîyâtının o vaﬂta ile icca edirîlmesi mutasarrîflîgîa tenbîh edilmsîd.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (14).
43. ‘Alî şe yenîsînî Konya vilayetînîn tarîk-ı iﬂaﬂîtî kâmîlîn terk olumnuﬂ ve bedelât-ı nakdiye tâhsîlîyle amele-î mükellefenîn sevki keyfiyyetî kullîyeyi nazar-i ehemmiyetînden iskât edilmış olduğu halde sâye-i terakkîvîyeyi padişâhîdî geççen senî birçoq tarîkîlerîn inşa ve ta’mirine ibtidî ve amele-i mükellefenîn tahakkuk-ı mu’âmelâtîndan hasr-ı intizar edildîgînden’ and ‘Mükaddemâ Konya vilayetînîn dâhilînî Nâﬁ’a işleri kâmîlîn durumûk iken mûddet-i dîz’iyyede pek çok âsâr vucûda getirîlmiş.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (14).
44. ‘Balâda arz ve ta’dat olunan kazalîrîn ekseri geççen senî devrîlumnuﬂ ve mu’âmelât-ı müküyyeyî teftîş olumnuﬂ olub, aradan geççen bir mûddet içinde sayîe-i umrânvîyeyi padişâhîdî bir
hayli âsâr-ı terakki görüldüğü me’a’l-iftihar arz ve temin edebilirim.’ BOA, DH. TMIK.S 28/1, 1317 B 3 (5).


47. BOA, Y.PRK.UM 56/21, 1319 C 11.

48. ‘Bu havalinin dahi merkez-i saltanata bu’diyeti ve ahalisinin vahşet ve bedeviyeti cihetle bi’t-tanzim her tarafına neşr ü ta’ımim buryurulmakda olan nizamât dan bazılarının tehîr-i icraattı, yanı her duvûl hukucret-hürriyeti temin ile bir memleket-i mütemeddenin müstahak olduğu tarîk-i tanzim ve idareyi irâe eden nizamâtın sair memâlik-i mahrûse-i mütemeddine gibi sünûh-i iradeyi ta’kibin buralarda tamamiyle icraât kabîl olamayub, bir müddet-i düz’îyye imhâle ve onların gösterdikleri maksad-ı ıslahîn daha kısa bir tarîkle teminine ihtiyac gösterdiği vârest-i izah ve bu da her vakit görülen ahvâl ve müşkilât ile rehin-i rütbeye bedâhêt olub, çünkü ahalisinin müstârkak olduğu zulâm-i cehalet ve her nasîlsa şimdiye kadar esasen bir siyaset-i meşrû’a gösterilmemesi sûreleri, vilayetinde adeta bir hal-i ıstisnaya koymuşdur.’ BOA, ŞD.DH 1457/6, 1298 C 12. My thanks to Özge Ertem for the reference of this report which she used in a presentation: ‘Those of the seas and those of the mountains: Famine, crisis and unrest in Southeastern Anatolia, 1879–1880’ (*12th International Congress of Ottoman Social and Economic History* (ICOSEH), Retz, Austria, July 11–15, 2011).

49. ‘Bir müddet-i için bazı yerlerde Hindistan’da olduğu gibi bir idare-i askeriye tesiyesiyle tedâbîr-i fevkâlade itthiham ve daimi suaretle buralarda bir kuvve-i askeriyye bulunurulmas.’ BOA, ŞD.DH 1457/6, 1298 C 12.