FROM EUROPE TO TRIPOLI IN BARBARY, VIA ISTANBUL: MUNICIPAL REFORMS IN AN OUTPOST OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AROUND 1870

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The nineteenth century in North Africa witnessed the advance of European imperialism and diminishing Ottoman influence. Only Tripoli in Barbary, or Trâblus al-Gharb (Libya's current capital) was to remain under the authority of the Sublime Porte until the latter part of the century.

Located on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, Tripoli was, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, a modest city surrounded by a 'green belt' – the Manchia. Its *intra muros* population at the time can be estimated at about 12,000 inhabitants. The city experienced continuous growth, becoming an urban center of approximately 30,000 inhabitants by the 1870s.[1]

Between sea and sand, the town nevertheless appeared as an important strategic location between East and West, as well as between Europe and Africa. Trade and the other activities of the city had created a unique urban society. A pirate stronghold, it functioned as a virtually autonomous city-state during the Qaramânlî Dynasty (1711–1835).[2]

Tripoli later became a city of the Ottoman Empire directly administered from Istanbul, and was to remain as such until the Italian colonization (1911). Several *hûma* (quarters principally inhabited by Muslims), two *hâra* (Jewish quarters) and a mixed neighborhood composed the *intra muros* space of the walled city. A commercial and military harbor, houses, forts (12), mosques, synagogues, a church, baths (*hammâm*), souks, caravanserais, coffee shops, mills, schools and a castle (*al-hisâr*) made up the physical structure of the town.

The last bastion and peripheral province of the Ottoman Empire from 1835 onward, Tripoli is a unique case in the context of expanding imperialism in the Mediterranean. At the time, prey to various problems and in reaction to developments in Europe, the Ottoman Empire launched major modernization initiatives based on European models. The military reorganization was a success, and these *Tanzîmât* reforms were to be applied in other fields. Local administration was one such area, and cities, vital settings for modern life,

were the object of particular attention. While borrowing from the West, the achievements and organization of which were envied, a considerable effort was necessary to adapt such achievements to the Ottoman context – in short they had to be 'Ottomanized'.

A study of the impact of such reforms – at the forefront of which was municipal reform – in the province of Tripoli, implies taking into account the development of the Western European model and how this was transformed in its application. This article, after an overview of administrative reforms in the Ottoman Empire, will focus on the case of Tripoli in the mid-nineteenth century. We are dealing here with the development of an imported, borrowed model that was subsequently re-exported to a region far from the heart of the Empire. The article attempts to show how the model as known in the West, that is an administrative body composed of a group of people, mayor and elected representatives managing an area in urban, social, economic and even political terms according to a set of institutionalized rules, was accepted, modified and finally applied in such a peripheral province.

What is of particular interest in the case of Tripoli is to examine how, in a town that remained isolated from direct influence of the European colonial powers for much longer than its neighbors,[3] a 'European-inspired' reform of the local administration could be implemented. In such a reform, the impact of two distinct dynamics can in fact be detected: on one hand, the indirect influence of the European municipal model channeled through the Ottoman efforts of administrative modernization, and on the other a local process of transformation of the traditional exercise of power by the elites on urban society and space. The case study of Tripoli thus offers an excellent opportunity to discuss the role of the periphery and its elite in the modernization movement of the Ottoman Empire. It also allows analysis of the extent to which administrative modernization was, for the central power, a crucial stake in maintaining its influence on the provinces.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PROJECTS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THE CASE OF THE EUROPEAN-STYLE MUNICIPALITY

There has been much research into the *Tanzîmât*, the legal reforms conducted by the Ottoman State in the nineteenth century, both at the local and central levels.[4] In the case of urban reforms there are a number of high-quality pieces of research.[5] However, the smallest entity in the administrative system, intermediary between population, experts and authorities – namely the *baladiyya*, or municipality – has attracted much less attention, and studies on the transfer or importation of European-style municipalities to the Ottoman provinces are still quite rare.[6]

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Social, political and economic factors led the Ottoman rulers to seek to modernize. Little by little the paradigm of modernity through modernization took root, in multiple forms, appearing as essential to the elite on whom the future of the Empire depended. The desire for change and development implied by 'modernity' came from Europe, and at a time when a journey to the East was essential for anyone who claimed intellectual allegiance to the Enlightenment, when writers, scientists and merchants were developing a passion for the Orient, it was to the West that the Ottomans turned with growing curiosity. The economic successes of old Europe, its military expansion and scientific achievements were undoubtedly of huge interest to the Ottoman leadership, and Europe and modernity were intimately linked in its collective mind. The new technologies in diverse domains would have to be adopted one way or another.

However, regarding the city, this importation of European models was not to take place simply or on the basis of a continuous process of borrowing. Taking the example of the Western municipality, the transfer process was a slow one, beginning in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

A number of stages are clearly identifiable before the establishment of two model municipalities effectively copied from the West, namely in the Beyoghlu and Galata neighborhoods of Istanbul. The first stage began with the study of European institutions and urbanism by Ottoman ambassadors, students, military experts and emissaries of all kinds who traveled widely in Europe, observing and gathering information. Projects were then designed back home, and the two experimental municipalities founded. It was only later that the municipal experiment was widened to include other cities in the Empire – among the first of which was Tripoli in Barbary.

The observation of European institutions and the design of reform projects

Reforms were first launched under Mahmud II (1807–39), although initially they concerned only military matters. Civil reforms were to follow somewhat later. Officials and others were sent westwards on short special missions or for longer periods of study, while foreign technical experts were recruited in Istanbul, notably for the navy and the army. The Ottoman Empire opened up to the West, and in particular to France, and there was a huge growth in contacts between Ottomans and Westerners. A mixture of fascination and curiosity led the Ottoman leadership to draw inspiration from advances in Western techniques and institutions.

The task of determining what were the exact sources of inspiration, the places, the actors and the circumstances still remains to be applied to the municipal institution. Although it is relatively easy to discover precise details

regarding the transfer of a piece of military technology or organization, this task is much more difficult with regard to administrative reforms.[7]

Reforms, of course, cannot be reduced to the results of simple fascination with the Other and the Ottoman desire for change. The factors were much more complex, and there were major shifts – economic, social and political – taking place in the nineteenth century that underpinned the institutional developments of the day. Whatever the case may be, Istanbul, for example, underwent major organizational changes, and these have been well researched by Lewis, Dumont, Yerasimos and Çelik. The point to be stressed is that, from the early nineteenth century, there was a heightened – or quite simply new – awareness of the city as an entity in itself. The Western city was observed by the Ottomans, as was the organization of Istanbul, and the result was the drawing up of a design for a European-style municipality.

One of the first notable innovations in the capital of the Sublime Porte was a reform that made 'the urban services that were at one time undertaken by the janissaries – for instance the police and the fire brigade – into the responsibility of specialized urban bodies: the *muhtasib*, formerly officially responsible for markets, received the title of *ihtisab aghasi* (1828), and became one of the leading elements of the city, with neighborhood officials (*mukhtar, kahya*) under his authority; he was assisted by a Council of Elders, representing the different components of the city (religious, ethnic and economic communities)'.[8]

A new phase began in 1854 (1271 H.), when the *Majlis Ali lil-Tanzimāt*, the High Council on Reform, decided 'to create a municipal commission (*intizam-i shehir komisyonu*)'. 'The leading light in this commission was one Antoine Allion, member of a wealthy French banking family that had settled in Turkey during the French Revolution. The other members were mainly drawn from the local Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities, with a few Muslim Turks, including the *hekimbashi* Mehmed Salih Efendi, one of the first graduates of the school of medicine founded by Sultan Mahmud. The commission was charged with presenting a report on European municipal organization, its rules and procedures, along with recommendations on this question to the Sublime Porte.'[9]

The commission worked away for four years. The archives of the High Council on Reform, with its lengthy deliberations, show that it was felt that there was a very real need for the creation of a European-type urban administration. The main recommendations of the commission, regarding improvements in city conditions, 'concerned the building of pavements, sewers, water conduits, the daily collection of refuse, public lighting, street widening – where possible, the organization of municipal financial autonomy, the establishment of a city rate, and a request to be made responsible for the application of municipal regulations'.[10] Following this period of discussion, the recommendations were submitted to the authorities, and it was decided to test the reforms at a small scale before implementing them in all the towns and cities of the Empire.

Testing the reforms: two pilot municipalities

It was not until 1857 that the High Council decided to experiment with the new form of municipal management in two neighborhoods of Istanbul. The aim was to see what risks and problems could arise alongside the hoped-for advantages. The two areas chosen, Beyoghlu and Galata, had large populations of foreign residents. The experiment should be seen as a clear attempt to adapt the new model to local realities. The objective was clear: 'When the merits of these institutions have been shown by this example, and understood and accepted by all, then it will be time to apply them to all neighborhoods'.[11] The apparent slowness with which the reform was applied should perhaps be seen as an attempt to 'Ottomanize' the model.

This Ottomanization began with the selection of a suitable translation for the term municipality within the Empire. According to Bernard Lewis, the neologism belediyye in Turkish and other Near Eastern languages (in Tripoli, the Arabic adaptation is baladiyya) was chosen specially to designate the modern European-style municipal institutions in contrast to older Muslim forms of urban government. However, the term, derived from the Arabic balad, often used to designate the town, should be seen as an expression of the will of the reformers to modernize in accordance with local conditions without alienating the population. In fact, one quarter in Tripoli has been named baladiyya since at least the end of the eighteenth century; an important figure of the management of the city was located there – the shaykh al-bilâd, chief of the council of notables (primarily merchants and heads of guilds).[12]

The merits of the new institution were clear by 1868 (1285 H.). After numerous difficulties (as described by Lewis), including some cautiousness, or at least tardiness (14 years) in implementing the new reforms, most probably due to the weight of bureaucracy, the wariness of the decision-makers and the inertia of the established powers,[13] it was decided that the 'Ottoman' municipality, or belediyye, of Istanbul would be created as follows: 'Each neighborhood would have a committee of eight to twelve members, who would choose a president from among themselves. A general assembly (jemiyyet-i umumiyye) for Istanbul with 56 members would be set up, with three delegates for each neighborhood, named and remunerated by the imperial government. These two bodies would function under the control of the Prefect (shehremini), who would remain a State civil servant'.[14] The whole city was thus governed by some sort of municipal administration and conditions changed considerably, enabling it to compete with European capitals.

The Ottoman model surely had the secret ambition to imitate the administrative efficiency and opulence of Paris. Just like the French capital, Istanbul was divided into several arrondissements (daire). However, 'for the moment, only the sixth [arrondissement], covering the Galata and Pera neighborhoods, was created. The city officials [for this area] were given the task of

making it into a model neighborhood with paved streets, pavements, public gas lighting, tap water, and regularly aligned buildings . . .'[15]

By 1868, the 'modern' instruments of urban management had finally won a place in the reforming Ottoman system. Thanks to the success of the pilot municipalities, the Ottomanized European model was to be subsequently transferred to other provincial Ottoman cities, among them Tripoli in Barbary, discussed here in the light of new archival research.

THE LOCAL ADVOCATES AND SPONSORS OF REFORM

An examination of the adaptation, or Ottomanization, of the European model in Istanbul gives us an idea of what was to be exported in terms of urban planning and administrative organization to one of the seven 'test cities' in the eastern Mediterranean.[16]

Before moving into details about this re-exportation of the European model, two points need to be emphasized. First, the context must be taken into consideration. Tripoli was the westernmost bastion of the Ottoman Empire, and thus represents a special case in North Africa, a paradox in more than one way. It was thanks to a detour via Istanbul that the Western model was imposed in Tripoli, in contrast to the other countries of the region where the establishment of the European model resulted from direct influence from Europe. However, it is also true that the authorities in Tripolitania were from outside. Although these authorities might appear less radically different from the power structures imposed by the French on other North African populations – the Ottomans were Muslim, the dynasty overthrown in 1835 had never pushed its autonomy as far as total independence, and the historic and commercial links had never been broken – they were nevertheless imposed from above, from the center of the Empire, without much finesse. There is no doubt that the inhabitants of Tripolitania had little enthusiasm for the powers that be, and there was certainly strong resistance: the reoccupation of the whole territory by the Turkish army was to take some 20 years.

The second point that needs to be stressed is that it seemed more useful to seek out the local figures responsible for the implementation of the munic- ipal reforms, or the 'anonymous reformers' in Mantran's words. (Mantran has long stressed the importance of considering actors other than the major figures of the Sublime Porte in the implementation of the reforms.) These individuals are the best illustration of the human aspect of the issue, for as in many other human matters a taste for power and money accompanied a good dose of enthusiasm and hard work. The personalities and behavior of key individuals were essential to the success (or failure) of a project, often independent of other factors, be these economic, political, social or cultural. Another aspect of the reforms is that they were to lead to huge changes in the everyday habits of the population.

Among the reformers who played a leading role in Tripoli and who had remained 'anonymous' until very recently were the governor, representative of the Porte and the local *shaykh al-bilâd*, both of whom were crucial to the success of the enterprise at the local level. However, the population as a whole was involved – accustomed as it was to work against decisions taken at the central level.

An outstanding governor of Tripoli, 'Alî Ridha al-Jazayrî

'Alî Ridha al-Jazayrî, governor-general, or *wali*, of Tripoli, was a fervent partisan of reforms and of the modernization movement. In this he stands out from his predecessors – and even from his successors – for the other governor-generals appointed to Tripoli considered their posting there as a form of purgatory where the only possible activity was quick self-enrichment while ignoring the country and its people. It is also true, however, that their short periods of office were unlikely to lead them to undertake major projects or become heavily involved in local matters. 'Alî Ridha al-Jazayrî is thus an outstanding and unusual figure, and it is thanks to this individual that Tripoli set out on the path to modernization. He is undoubtedly the leading figure in the implementation of municipal reform.

As his family name – al-Jazayrî – indicates, this governor-general was a native of Algeria, and he held the post on two occasions, from 1867–70 and from 1872–73. He was born some time in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, in all likelihood in Algiers since 'his father had been *qadhi* of Algiers and his mother was still living in that city'.[17] However, he was to leave Algiers at an early age due to the French conquest of 1830.

Father and son took up residence in Constantinople, perhaps because of a parental desire to see his offspring equipped with an Ottoman education. The choice of Istanbul may have been a reaction to the French colonization of their homeland. The sources give us no information on this point, however it is ironic to note that 'Alî Ridha Pacha 'was sent to France with other young men to receive a French education. He spent five years at the military school and three years at the Ecole d'application in Metz'[18]. His native language was Arabic, although he spoke perfect French having spent eight years in France. As he had lived and been educated at Istanbul as well, he probably spoke Turkish too, although Féraud (one of the best sources on him) states that this was not the case.

Although as governor 'he was surrounded by Arabs and Algerians', according again to Féraud he seems to have maintained excellent relations with the French consulate in Tripoli or, at the very least, with the consul-general, one M. Botta. In fact, even though he was not the son of a diplomat,

he was a member of that generation of Ottomans who studied in the best French or English schools and who, once they had returned to Turkey, were among those to push hardest for reform.

The archival documents examined so far show that he also had close links with the sultan of the day, 'Abdul-'Azîz (1861–76), and with the Ottoman State apparatus. He would seem to have had full liberty to implement reforms in Tripoli. No doubt this was due in great part to the desire of Sultan 'Abdul-'Azîz to see the governors push forward the *tanzimât* in the provinces. In fact, 'at the suggestion of Ali Ridha Pacha, the Ottoman governor decreed in 1869 important measures to develop the resources of the vilayet of Tripoli and breathe new life into a province which had fallen into decadence'.[19] The construction of colossal new infrastructure at Tobrouk, and of a new city, shows the extent to which major Ottoman support, both financial and technical, was made available.

The confidence placed in 'Alî Ridha al-Jazayrî is also demonstrated by the fact that the Sultan adopted his major project without passing through the Council of State. The project consisted of developing the uninhabited land along the coast at Bomba for settlement (along with similar proposals for Tobrouk and Benghazi). Given the fact that it was an excellent natural harbor, Bomba had for many years been of interest to a number of maritime powers who had attempted to get the Ottoman Empire to cede the land to them. In all likelihood this was one of the reasons contributing to 'Alî Ridha Pacha's decision to undertake a major land development there. The following is an extract from Féraud's account of the project:

> . . . the travels of several foreign explorers had drawn ['Alî Ridha Pacha's] atten-
> tion to this coast. He understood the advantages that the creation of the Suez
> Canal could bring to this naval port, situated in the middle of an inhospitable
> coast between Crete and Libya. He thus presented the project which was adopted
> by an imperial decree emanating directly from the Sultan, without the approval
> of the Council of State. . . . [E]quipment was made available to facilitate the
> execution of his plans. . . . A large quarantine facility was constructed, along
> with barracks and storage depots. Families settling there were to benefit from
> ten years of tax exemption and received free food for a year, the animals neces-
> sary to work the land and sea and building materials. A small town thus grew
> up, protected from the nomads, within the perfectly conserved walls of a Roman
> castellum, whose ruins provided ready made construction material. The
> surrounding land seemed suitable for cereal growing, and wells were sunk and
> the ancient dams for river waters rebuilt. Ali Riza Pacha intended to visit the
> site as soon as possible and establish a small garrison chosen from among the
> married soldiers, who would receive plots of land and the means to farm them.
> A land concession was offered to the Missionary Fathers so that they might build
> a hospice and a chapel, with a view to attracting Maltese immigrants. Free trips
> were organized for anyone wishing to study the area with a view to creating an

establishment of some kind. Already, the Prefect of the Catholic Mission, a number of merchants and a certain number of workers and craftsmen had announced their intention to accompany the Pacha. In June 1869, Ali Riza set sail on the Ottoman vessel for Bomba and Tobrouk to attempt to implement the colonization plans he had conceived. There were around four hundred people on this first expedition. Although it began under the best auspices, the enterprise was totally unsuccessful. Certain powers had designs on the natural ports of Bomba and Tobrouk, and manoeuvred to portray the project at Constantinople as though Ali Riza Pacha had drawn inspiration from the procedures used by the colonising French in Algeria, which would lead to the natives being ill-disposed towards the Turkish government. Without any detailed explanation, Ali Riza Pacha received the order to abstain henceforth from any innovation and in the following May, this intelligent Pacha was recalled.[20]

This edifying example brings together the procedures for the use of new techniques, along with 'concepts' in vogue at the time, such as colonization by creating settlements and the construction of new cities, inspired no doubt by the colonization projects undertaken by France in Algeria.

Nevertheless, 'Alî Ridha's projects were not just simply derived from Western 'procedures'; he was working to establish genuine technical co-operation with the French. He had modern machinery, along with French engineers, brought over from his native Algeria.

> Aware of the magnificent results achieved by the drilling of artesian wells in the Oued Rir region of Algeria, Ali Ridha got the Porte to accept similar projects in the Regency. He addressed himself to the French Consulate, and via them he obtained from the Government General of Algeria a project manager from one of our drilling units in the South, managed by the engineer Jus.[21]

'Alî Ridha Pacha's projects were numerous and varied, and all were strongly marked by a desire to modernize – following a French template: 'He was interested in improving the postal service, and had inaugurated the first telegraph line from Tripoli to Homs. He built the Aziziya market, named for the Sultan 'Abdul-'Azîz, the name of which was later given to a street in the modern town. He gave Tripoli a public park and a clocktower, and he restored the Citadel Mosque'.

He also played an influential role in establishing a Western form of urban management in Tripoli. It was mainly thanks to 'Alî Ridha Pacha (and the shaykh al-bilâd as we shall see below), that the project was undertaken as an extension of the decision by the Council of State to introduce new forms of urban management in the capitals of the Ottoman provinces.[22] The correspondence of the Pacha and the decrees he issued clearly demonstrate that he was the driving force behind this project.

The walî and the shaykh al-bilâd

As regards re-exportation of the institution of the municipality, or *baladiyya* in Arabic, it would seem that the Sublime Porte, prior to 1867, had requested 'Alî Ridha Pacha – then posted in Tripoli – to give his informed opinion on the matter of creating a municipality there. On 1 August 1867, the Pacha replied favorably to the idea of creating a European type of municipal management in Tripoli, and included with his reply a report on the situation of Tripoli in terms of urban administration. He thus aimed to get the Porte to understand that modernization would be linked to this new type of city management and that at the same time certain elements of local administration should be retained given that they would benefit the reforms.

The arguments presented in order to have Tripoli benefit from the new style of municipal management are based on a presentation of the merits of the *shaykh al-bilâd*'s function, and of the person holding the position at the time, 'Alî al-Qarqanî. We thus have a good idea of the nature of this local position of authority that had taken root under the Qaramânlî Dynasty and had survived its fall from power.[23]

The different attributes of the *shaykh al-bilâd* are enumerated in 'Alî Ridha's report, including his responsibilities with respect to trade: 'he is responsible for circulation patents and contracts'. The *shaykh*'s social position is also established: he 'is one of the local notables[24] and he is even the example and model, the representative of the leading merchants of the corporations and the sheikh of the city streets and of the notables who represent the whole population resident in this locality (*al-bilâd al-mazkura*)'. It was most probably because his old functions and the new ones needed for the job were comparable in many ways that 'Alî Ridha Pacha considered the *shaykh* the person best suited to hold the office of *ra'îs* (chief), as provided for in the reform project. This is all the more true since 'he is known to all and because of this the *shaykh* in question will keep the official function of sheikh of the commune (*bilada*) in question, continuing to be what he has always been, loyal to the Sublime Porte and undertaking everything of which he is capable in his brilliant work'.

Loyalty to the central authorities was certainly one of the most important arguments, for the primary objective of the Porte, in addition to its reforming designs, was to keep the province in question in its possession. However, beyond these considerations it should be remembered that any reform project would be implemented with great caution so as not to alienate the local people, and above all the notables. Although he was a great enthusiast of 'European recipes', our governor drew up his projects on the basis of the pre-existing local traditions. In short, his vision of modernity was of one springing from the old system.

Just as on the Bomba project, where an old Roman site was to be used for the creation of a new, modern city, the use of already existing municipal management methods while adopting the modern European form, although certainly indicative of a reforming spirit, shows a high degree of skill and prudence. In the final analysis it is quite possible that the hidden drive behind all this reforming activity may quite simply have been personal ambition.

The formula put forward by this reformer was to maintain the *shaykh al-bilâd* in his office while expanding his prerogatives by making him president of the new municipality, with the title of *ra'îs al-bilâd*, even though this municipality did not yet in fact exist. Thus before getting the go-ahead from the central authorities, 'Alî Ridha al-Jazayrî had a decree promulgated and approved by the local *diwan* (the Council of the province), abolishing the office of *shaykh al-bilâd* and instituting a new post for the leading official of the town. Of course, for this decision to come into force it would have to be approved by the authorities in Istanbul. However, the decisions taken in Tripoli may be considered as a way of forcing the hand of the powers that be, of pushing forward change.

The policy based upon *fait accompli*, on undertaking projects independently, planning and obtaining the necessary human and financial means, whatever the obstacles, is clearly that of a reformer, fitting the general trend at the time towards reform. But any reformer must make use of other people to achieve his designs. At Tripoli, our Pacha was to find great support from the *shaykh al-bilâd*.

The role of the shaykh al-bilâd and the population of Tripoli

It was thus that 'Alî al-Qarqanî, ex-*shaykh al-bilâd*, became president of the new municipality, even before this institution had been formally established and before the central authorities had had time to accept the export of an Ottomanized municipality based on the experimental Istanbul model. It is true – and this is clear from a number of sources – that there were close relations between the *shaykh al-bilâd* and Governor-General 'Alî Ridha al-Jazayrî. For example, the explorer Nachtigal tells us that 'among the close entourage of the *vali* was the burgmeister of Tripoli (*cheikh-el-bled*), Ali el-Kerkeni'.[25] While it is not surprising that these two figures, at the top of the local hierarchy, should maintain close relations due to their official positions, it is also true that the preceding governors and the *shaykh al-bilâd* had never been as close.

Was it thus a matter of shared personal interests? Did they share the same desire to see urban and social modernization implemented? This is difficult to judge – after all, the *shaykh al-bilâd* was hardly going to reject a reform leading to a considerable extension of his powers.

The role of the *shaykh al-bilad* made 'Alî al-Qarqanî the most important locally born individual in the town. The office made of him an intermediary between the population and the central authorities. His role was to deal with the urban and social development of the city, as well as with certain commercial issues. At the urban level he was responsible for maintaining regulations on the buildings, construction and development of the town. From a social point of view he was responsible for guaranteeing morals and public order. He could settle certain differences, essentially of a commercial nature, arising between the inhabitants of Tripoli. However, on occasion his prerogatives might assume greater importance, as was the case when the Porte requested him to have all the forged currency in circulation destroyed.

The *sheikh al-bilâd* thus had a leading economic role, as monitor of the weights and measures in use in the markets, and also as president of the Chamber of Commerce. This was of course a highly strategic office, both for the trading activities he undertook for himself and on the governor's behalf. This position brought him into contact with foreigners and locals. If there was litigation to be settled at the Commercial Tribunal, the *sheikh al-bilâd* was responsible for informing the different parties concerned; he had to provide the Tribunal with lists of the goods and properties of debtor parties so that they could be seized if necessary. From an administrative point of view, he was the guarantor of commercial transactions between two individuals or two companies. He was also responsible for drafting letters of exchange for major transactions, and this activity, a purely financial one, was a further source of income.

This role of commercial mediator was a major source of power and influence, and doubtless a source of considerable wealth, both in terms of fees for official services and of various unofficial pay-offs. The *shaykh al-bilâd* also attributed certain contracts, notably with foreign companies. In addition, he was in an extremely good position to take the best contracts, since he could award himself those contracts that seemed most financially interesting.[26]

For 'Alî Ridha Pacha, 'Alî al-Qarqanî was clearly the man of the hour. Thus in his recommendations to the Sublime Porte he stressed the need 'to adopt an authentic project in which the Porte will find a governor of confidence.[27] You, assembly of official figures whom I address, I beg of you to ensure that the shaykh in question remain shaykh of the city and leave him all his attributes'.[28]

The participation of the *shaykh al-bilâd* may therefore be deduced from his activities when it became necessary to set up a municipal team to second him in his tasks. There is, however, a paradox here: hardly had he assumed his new functions than a section of the population accused him of abusing his authority.

As a result, it is legitimate to hypothesize that 'Alî al-Qarqanî had worked for the establishment of the new municipality out of personal ambition. But whatever the case may be, a number of developments in Tripoli were imple-

mented thanks to him. He was to be *shaykh al-bilâd* for 18 years, and during his period of office extensive new neighborhoods were laid out. He worked for the creation of the Tripoli Chamber of Commerce that he was to preside over. Local poet Ahmad al-Faqih Hasan, in an elegy composed a few years later, was to describe ʿAlî al-Qarqanî's achievements to the benefit of people and city.[29] However, it would also seem that ʿAlî al-Qarqanî was certainly not a man to neglect his own interests – in contrast to Al-Jazayrî who had a reputation for being fair and uncorrupt.

Al-Qarqanî and ʿAlî Ridha al-Jazayrî were not, however, the only people to be concerned with the creation of a European-type municipality. In fact, there were local residents who displayed radical opposition to any extension of the *shaykh*'s prerogatives – and were certainly against the abuses of power of which he had been guilty for quite some time. We cannot go into details here of the different demonstrations against the *shaykh al-bilâd*; the fact that there were such reactions shows just how attentive the notables of Tripoli were to changes in their local government. In fact, in the end, following a major scandal,[30] the population managed to get ʿAlî al-Qarqanî arrested in late September 1871; he was subsequently stripped of his assets and exiled. ʿAlî Ridha Pacha was recalled to Istanbul at the same time, which could lead one to suppose that he was the object of the population's wrath as well. This petition, however, never questioned his authority – quite the opposite in fact.

THE BIRTH OF A HYBRID INSTITUTION: THE MUNICIPALITY OF TRIPOLI IN BARBARY BETWEEN TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TANZÎMĀT

Despite numerous vicissitudes, the Municipality of Tripoli was established, at the same time as similar bodies were being created in other towns across the Ottoman Empire. Local actors played an important role, and private matters did not ultimately form an obstacle to this administrative project. A series of official measures, emanating both from the Sublime Porte and the governor-general of Tripoli, was to lead to the creation of the municipality. Archival research has produced a chronology of the main decisions, decrees and reports leading to this – as seen in the Appendix below. We thus have an idea of the models used to endow the city as a modern municipal institution.

It was on 7 December 1870 that the Municipality of Tripoli actually came into being with the signature of a decree, concerning the payment of salaries, by the president of the *baladiyya* and its members. The new municipality was henceforth to be called *baladiyya*, as in Istanbul, and was to deal with the city's problems, participating as well in the economic revival of the city – and even that of the country, for according to ʿAlî Ridha Pacha this new institution 'counts among the greatest tools for the construction of the city.

It has limitless merits. There is no doubt that the objectives of the Porte are linked to this intermediary which can guarantee the city's tranquility and the well-being of its population'.[31]

The idea was that an urban rates system would finance the needs of the city in terms of urban development and major public works. A municipal council was evidently vital to this. Giving a town its own development finance system represented a minor revolution and a convincing argument to the central authorities. Putting forward a team, already at work and with a reputation for competence and honesty, would no doubt be a convincing argument as well. 'Alî Ridha writes how a team was constituted as 'municipal council, the head of which was a town notable, 'Alî al-Qarqanî (the ex-*shaykh al-bilâd*), with his assistant the merchant Omar Efendi, whose salary was to be 1500 *qûrûsh* . . . We also took the decision to nominate a doctor, M. Dickson, as treasurer, with a salary of 400 *qûrûsh* . . ., a secretary (*kâtib*) . . ., a factotum (*mubashir*) . . ., and according to the project, we will use the persons already employed in the *wizara* with a salary from the Municipality . . .'. 'Alî Ridha also mentions the name of an engineer, Al-Kul Aghasi Efendi, a graduate of the Ecole militaire impériale d'Istanbul, and already an Ottoman civil servant who 'in this function will receive a salary from the *baladiyya*'. He adds a list of the members unanimously elected (missing in the document),[32] and mentions the presence of a Jewish member of the Council.[33] The list of members in this team, in the form of a decree issued by the governor-general and drawn up by this official, no doubt with the participation of the city notables and their representative 'Alî al-Qarqanî, was sent to the Sublime Porte for approval.

The council members were in all likelihood convinced that there were more advantages to be drawn from an officially constituted municipal organization than from a loose network composed of leading figures without any set regulations and no guiding principles regarding responsibilities or attributes. The constitution of the Municipal Council, with the election of members and the distribution of official posts, is incontestably European in form. Nevertheless, this system resembles the one already in existence in as much as it was the same sector of Tripoli's population, the notables, who remained in charge and the former *shaykh al-bilâd* who became the new *ra'îs*.

This reform was to help establish a body where recruitment and responsibilities were established on a formal legal basis for the first time in Tripoli. Replacing traditional local institutions, such an administrative instrument was to make the city more autonomous; it was more efficiently run, thanks to a qualified, salaried personnel working at specific tasks as in the French and British models.

But there is a relative silence in the sources concerning how the new *baladiyya* was received by the people of Tripoli. This silence is difficult to interpret: was it that the reform brought about few real changes in the daily life of Tripoli's inhabitants in the years immediately following its application?

The silence is perhaps not really surprising. There was no huge change in the governing group – apart from the introduction of a doctor and an engineer. Even the site of the old administration was retained by the new municipal institution, the café belonging to the *shaykh al-bilâd* in the Baladiyya district[34] in the medina, or old town.

The local notables and the chief of their assembly were very quick to adopt the idea of reforms. The municipal institution, re-exported from Istanbul, was to take root and develop in Tripoli from the 1870s right up to the arrival of the Italians in 1911. What was originally an experiment had in fact proved so successful that the model was extended to Benghazi, Homs and Misrata. The social actors responsible for the *baladiyya* ensured that it was a logical continuation of the old model of urban and social management, once upon a time made concrete in the office of the *shaykh al-bilâd*. The Municipality was to become a means via which the people of Tripoli could develop their city and reduce its isolation.

Other innovations in the Ottoman Empire were not as positive as the introduction of new municipal administrations. The reasons for the success of the latter are no doubt due to the fact that an essentially European institution was Ottomanized at Istanbul and was easily grafted onto existing systems. To the local populations, the changes thus seemed minimal and purely formal in nature.

CONCLUSION

It is an irony of history that the arrival and development of the Western-style municipality seems such a positive and successful re-exportation in the case of Tripoli. It was functioning so well that when the Italians arrived they left its structure and responsibilities untouched, changing only its name from *baladiyya* to *municipio*. This *municipio*, however, was not Italian, although it delivered what the new occupiers expected of a municipal body. Throughout the nineteenth century and right up to the Italian conquest of 1911, municipal management had been a feature of Tripoli life, and it survived ('resisted', if we take the point of view of the local people) successive changes of ruler – the Qaramânlî Dynasty, the Sublime Porte and Italian colonial administration. The example of Tripoli is thus highly revealing in terms of the importance of local actors in the success or failure of an imported piece of administrative machinery, and the quality of the project or reform is therefore really only of secondary importance.

This conclusion, then, leads into wider debates about local authorities and their relationships with foreign powers, be these colonial or otherwise. The case study of Tripoli in the implementation of Ottoman municipal structures within the framework of the reforms suggests that the idea of the importation

of a model in one direction only should be relativized, and also that the reform had more chances of successful implementation where the new institutions could lean on pre-existing structures. In Tripoli, the continuity between the function of the *shaykh al-bilâd* and that of the mayor is striking.

One further wonders if the very inspiration of the municipal reform was so external to the Arab world: in a way Tripoli offers the example of a city where a Western-style reform succeeded because it was superimposed on a network of notables and a type of functioning of local power configurations that were themselves in a process of significant redefinition. Imperialism and colonialism have had such a tremendous impact on the functioning of the local elites in the Arab world that it is almost impossible to assess whether these societies could, during the nineteenth century, have experienced a genuine process of institutional reform. The case of Tripoli, although it does not bring a definite answer, nor represent an experimental example totally closed to any external influence, helps assess the role of premodern structures of urban management in the movement of administrative modernization, as well as the dynamics of reform in the Ottoman framework.

APPENDIX

Chronology of the early development of the Municipality of Tripoli, 1867–77

Date	Event/Decree
30 rabi' I 1284/ 1 August 1867	The Porte agrees to the creation of the Municipality of Tripoli. Decree issued by Governor-General 'Alî Ridha Pacha re. *shaykh al-bilâd*. Nomination of 'Alî al-Qarqanî as *ra'îs al-baladiyya* and report of governor on the establishment of a municipality, based on institutions existing already in Tripoli. Report sent to Istanbul to Ministry of Interior to have decree approved.
9 Safar 1285/ 1 June 1868	Letter from the Porte (Ministry of the Interior) to 'Alî Ridha to inform him of the Porte's desire to implement new reforms concerning municipalities and rates (constitutional law laying down details of the implementation of the *arrondissements* (*dawa'ir*) supported by 'Alî Ridha Pacha).
Rabi' I 1285/ July 1868	Report sent by 'Alî Ridha Pacha to the Porte in which he supported the setting up of a municipal administration (*idarat al-baladiyya*).

Date	Event/Decree
5 Dhu al-Hijja 1286/ 8 March 1870	Letter from 'Alî Ridha Pacha to Mutassaraf *markaz al-wilaya* informing him of the Porte's agreement with the decision to abolish the office of *sheikh al-bilâd* and create a municipality headed by a *ra'îs al-baladiyya*.
10 Rabi' II 1287/ 16 July 1870	Census of the male population of Tripoli undertaken by the *baladiyya*.
4 Jumada al-Akhar 1287/1 September 1870	Decree promulgated by the *Majlis daira al-baladiyya* (the Municipal Administrative Council), re. first works undertaken by the Municipality, including street lighting and cleaning.
7 Jumada al-Akhar 1287/4 September 1870	Decree from the *ra'îs al-da'ira al-baladiyya* Mahmud Fa'iz re. the boring of a fresh water well.
17 Ramadhan 1287/ 7 December 1870	Decree issued by the Municipal Council re. payment of salaries signed by the president of *baladiyya* and its members.
1294/1877	Law voted on by the recently created Parliament in Istanbul, extending the Istanbul municipal system to all the cities of the Empire.

NOTES

1. These figures, based on various sources, do not include the inhabitants of the Manchia. This zone had, however, strong links since the very beginning with the built area, and at the end of the nineteenth century it became ever more integrated with it. But it is difficult to evaluate its population. See Nora Lafi (2002) *Une ville du Maghreb entre Ancien Régime et réformes ottomanes: Genèse des institutions municipales à Tripoli de Barbarie, 1795–1911,* Paris: L'Harmattan, 305 pp.

2. Tripoli was the chief town of the Regency of the same name, Trâblus al-Gharb, which comprised, depending on the times considered, three regions: the Fezzan, the Cyrenaïc and the Tripolitania. In the sixteenth century, when the Ottomans stepped in, the region of Tripoli became a *Pashaliq* (in Turkish a territory submitted to the authority of a pacha). At the time of the Qaramânlis, the region was known as Ayâla al-Trâblus al-Gharb, which can be translated as the Regency of Tripoli. See Dâr Mahfuzât Trâblus [Tripoli archives], religious court, file no. 60, 1253h./1837.

3. The Ottoman Empire lost its other North African provinces much earlier: Algeria in 1830 due to French domination, and Tunisia from mid-century, as a Regency, that was to be placed under a French Protectorate from 1881. At the time, Egypt had almost achieved de facto political independence from the Porte.

4. For our case study, see Lisa Anderson (1984) 'Nineteenth-century reform in Ottoman Libya', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, pp. 325–48.

5. See in particular Stephane Yerasimos (1992) 'A propos des réformes urbaines des Tanzimat', in Paul Dumont and François Georgeon (eds) *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'Empire*, Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 17–32, where such reforms are mainly viewed as a means to regain control over the provinces. See also Zeynep Çelik (1993) *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

6. An early reference is Bernard Lewis (1960) 'Baladiyya', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 1002–5 on the *Belediyye* institution in Turkey from its beginnings to the 1930s; see also William Cleveland (1978) 'The Municipal Council of Tunis, 1858–1870: A study in urban institutional change', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, pp. 33–61, and Michael Reimer (1995) 'Urban regulation and planning agencies in mid-nineteenth-century Alexandria and Istanbul' (with Documentary Appendix), *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 19, no. 1, spring, pp. 1–26.

7. The subject has been dealt with in part in *Medjell-i ummur-i belediyye*, a voluminous study by Osman Nuri Ergin. Unfortunately, this is still only available in Turkish.

8. Robert Mantran (1989) (ed.) *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, Lille: Fayard, p. 154.

9. Lewis, op. cit., p. 1003.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. On the origin and role of the *shaykh al-bilâd*, see Lafi, op. cit., pp. 131–66.

13. 'The movement favoring the introduction and expansion of Western-style municipal services continued however. In 1285/1868, a code of municipal regulations (*belediyye nizâmmâmesi*) was published, with the idea of extending the system of a municipal council to the 14 other districts of Istanbul.' Lewis, op. cit. p. 1005.

14. Ibid., p. 1004.

15. Paul Dumont (1989) 'La période des Tanzimât', in Mantran, op. cit., pp. 459–522 (quotation from p. 492).

16. Among these cities were Jerusalem, Alexandria, Beirut and Tripoli.

17. Charles Féraud (1927) *Les annales tripolitaines*, Augustin Bernard, Paris: Tournier-Vuibert, p. 421.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., p. 422.

21. Ibid., p. 421.

22. Baladiyya Trâblus (1973) *Baladiyya Trâblus fî mi'â 'âm: 1286–1391 H. (1870–1970)* (The municipality of Tripoli through a hundred years), Tripoli: Sharîka Dâr al-Tibâ 'al-Hadîth. Archives 1-2-3-4.

23. See the rich insights in the chronicle of Hasan al-Faqih Hasan, merchant in Tripoli, an important source for the study of the town during the first part of the nineteenth century: Hasan al-Faqih Hasan (1984) *Al-yawmiyyât al-libiyya. 958–1248 H./1551–1832*, with a commentary by al-Ustâ Mohammad and Juhaydar 'Ammar, University al-Fâtah and Libyan Studies Center, p. 977.

24. The Arabic expressions used at the time in Tripoli were *al-'a'yân* or *ahl al-bilâd*. For the nuances, see Lafi, op. cit., pp. 110–12.

25. Gustav Nachtigal (1881) *Sahara et Soudan*, translated from German by Jules Gourdault, Paris: Hachette, p. 29.

26. See Lafi, op. cit., pp. 166–83 and idem. (2000) 'L'affaire 'Alî al-Qarqanî', in 'Abd al-Hamîd Henia, (ed.) *Villes et territoires au Maghreb, Itinéraires de recherche*, vol. 1, Dynamiques des configurations notabiliaires au Maghreb, Tunis (forthcoming).

27. When he mentioned 'a governor of confidence' he of course meant himself.
28. Baladiyya Trâblus op. cit., Archives 1.
29. This author was close to 'Alî al-Qarqanî. He was the already mentioned son of the leading chronicler of Tripoli life in the nineteenth century, Hasan al-Faqih Hasan. See Ahmad al-Faqih Hasan (1988) *Al-Jadd: 1843–1866,* in texts and archives, 7, Tripoli: Markaz al-Jihad, p. 160.
30. 'Alî al-Qarqanî was accused of various illegal activities, speculation, abuse of power and fraud by an important group of notables in a petition sent to the Porte. See Istanbul, Basbakanlik Arçiv, dosya 2004, D. 61, Arabic Mss. See also Lafi, op. cit.
31. Baladiyya Trâblus, op. cit., Archives 1.
32. The sources used do not indicate clearly the form of elections of these members. However, the organization of the census of Tripoli's male population in 1870 suggests the existence of an electoral reform.
33. Baladiyya Trâblus, op. cit., Archives 2.
34. As it was named for many decades, as stated above.