

NESTORIANS, KURDS, AND THE STATE: THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN
THE FRONTIER IN THE LATE OTTOMAN PERIOD, 1839-1908



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NESTORIANS, KURDS, AND THE STATE: THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE IN
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“Nestorians, Kurds, and the State: The Struggle to Survive in the Frontier in the Late Ottoman Period, 1839-1908,” a thesis prepared by Sema Yaşar Baraç Göymen in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History degree from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Bogaziçi University.

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This thesis examines the effects of the Ottoman Empire's modern state-making practices on the lives of the Hakkari's Christian Nestorian tribes, and on the Nestorian tribes' relations with the neighboring Kurdish tribes. Starting from 1840s, the lives of the Nestorian tribes underwent significant changes. First, they were attacked in 1843 and 1846 by the Kurdish tribes, who were under the command of Bedirhan Bey. Second, throughout the period between 1850 and early 1870s, the central state tried to extend its authority over their settlements, and turn these "savage" tribes into loyal Ottoman subjects. From the 1850s onwards, the state's agents' attempts to secure regular tax collection from the Nestorian tribes, in line with the afore-mentioned objectives, led to the emergence of a continual tax problem between the two parties. The main reasons behind this problem were the irregularities that occurred during the collection of taxes such as repeated tax collection, and over-taxation, and also the coercive means employed by the tax collectors and the local government agents. During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, significant problems emerged between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes. From the 1880s onwards, the conflicts and power struggles between them were among the leading problems in Hakkari. Based mainly on Ottoman archival documents, the taxation problem and the conflicts between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes, together with the state agents' attitudes towards these problems, are analyzed in this study.

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Başlık: Nasturiler, Kürtler ve Devlet: Geç Osmanlı Döneminde Hududda Ayakta
Kalma Mücadelesi, 1839-1908

Bu tez Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun modern devlet inşa etme pratiklerinin Hakkari'nin Hristiyan Nasturi aşiretlerinin hayatlarına ve bu aşiretlerle Kürt aşiretleri arasındaki ilişkilere etkilerini inceleyecektir. 1840'lardan itibaren Nasturi aşiret mensuplarının hayatlarında kayda değer değişiklikler yaşanmıştır. İlk olarak, 1843 ve 1846 yıllarında olmak üzere Bedirhan Bey'in emri altındaki Kürt aşiretleri tarafından saldırılara uğramışlardır. İkinci olarak, merkezi hükümet 1850'den 1870'lerin ilk yıllarına kadarki dönemde otoritesini Nasturi aşiretlerinin yaşam alanlarına ulaştırmaya ve bu "vahşi" aşiretleri sadık Osmanlı tebaası haline dönüştürmeye çalışmıştır. Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda 1850'lerden itibaren devlet görevlilerinin Nasturi aşiretlerinden düzenli vergi toplama teşebbüsleri, devletle aşiretler arasında sonu gelmeyen bir vergi sorununun oluşmasına neden olmuştur. II. Abdülhamid döneminde Nasturi ve Kürt aşiretleri arasında belirgin sorunlar baş göstermiştir. 1880'lerden itibaren Nasturi ve Kürt aşiretleri arasında yaşanan çatışmalar ve güç mücadeleleri, Hakkari'de öne çıkan sorunlardan biri olmuştur. Bu çalışma bahsedilen bu iki ana sorunu, devlet görevlilerinin bu sorunlar karşısındaki tutumlarını da kapsayacak şekilde, temel olarak Osmanlı arşiv kaynaklarına dayanarak incelemektedir.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the effects of the Ottoman Empire's modern state-making policies on the lives of the members of Hakkari's Christian Nestorian tribes, and on their relations with the neighboring Kurdish tribes. It should be stated from the beginning that this thesis is not interested in a full history of the Ottoman Nestorians; hence, issues like their religious identity, the history of their church or the confusing debates over the various names that have been used to refer them (Nestorians, Assyrians, Chaldeans),¹ are out of the focus of this study. Throughout this thesis I prefer to use the name "Nestorian" first to avoid confusion, and second to abide by the archival documents in which this community in question is always referred as the Nestorians. My intention in this thesis is rather to illustrate a small part of the important changes in the social, political and economic structure of Hakkari that started from the second half of the nineteenth century, and how the Nestorian tribes were affected by these changes. In order to build a more understandable narrative regarding the impacts of the Ottoman modern state practices on the Nestorian tribes, this thesis also concentrates on the nineteenth century transformations of the social and political structures in the eastern provinces of the empire, and the central state's policies towards the Kurdish tribes, especially during the reign of Abdülhamid II.

This thesis has three main goals. First, I will present briefly the administrative structure of the eastern provinces up until the 1830s for a better understanding of which practices introduced by the Tanzimat state were new for the inhabitants of

¹ For a detailed discussion on this issue, see John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, & Colonial Powers* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 1-22.

these provinces, including Hakkari, the homeland of the Nestorian tribes. Second, I will try to show the central state's limited or partial "infrastructural power", the concept which is introduced by Michael Mann, and the contradictions among various state agents over the ways to turn the Nestorian tribes into loyal Ottoman subjects during the period between 1850 and the 1870s. Last, I will illustrate how the tribal Nestorians and to some extent the non-tribal Nestorian villagers were affected by the central state's policies towards their Kurdish tribal neighbors during the reign of Abdülhamid II.

The Nestorians lived in two areas within the territories of the Ottoman Empire: Hakkari and north of Mosul. The tribal Nestorians lived in the mountainous terrain of Hakkari.² Owing partly to the flexible administration policies of the Ottoman state towards its Kurdish territories, and partly to the geographical inaccessibility of their settlements, the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari enjoyed a semi-independent way of life far from the authority and control of the central state until the second half of the nineteenth century. What changed this state of affairs was the Ottomans' modern state-making policies under the name of the Tanzimat reforms. Starting from the 1830s the Ottoman state attempted to extend its authority into the frontier regions in line with its centralization aims.³ As it did in the rest parts of the Empire, the central state aimed to incorporate the frontiers into its new administrative and fiscal policies that it launched under the name of the Tanzimat. One of these frontier regions was the eastern Anatolia provinces which had been ruled by hereditary Kurdish dynasts for centuries, and thus, had not been under the direct rule of the central government until the nineteenth century.

² Joseph, 33.

³ Nilay Özok, "The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in the Kurdish Periphery: The Politics of Land and Taxation, 1840-1870" (Ph.D diss., Binghamton University, 2011), 21.

In this thesis, the area of Hakkari is treated as a perfect match for the concept of frontier as described by Eugene Rogan.⁴ Rogan makes a distinction between urban and rural areas of the eastern provinces regarding their assessment as frontier zones. For Rogan, most parts of these rural areas, which were more remote to the center than the urban areas, first brought under the direct Ottoman rule in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵ “These more remote areas are treated as *frontiers* inasmuch as they represented socio-political orders apart from the institutions of the Empire at large.”⁶

Rogan’s distinction regarding urban and rural areas inspired me to ask another question: Can we make a similar distinction within a frontier? In the case of Hakkari frontier, I treat the areas which the Nestorian tribes once lived as ‘the edge of the frontier’. During the period under review, the Nestorian tribes lived in the most inaccessible terrain of Hakkari, throughout the narrow valleys of steep mountains,⁷ in the southwest of Hakkari.⁸ Throughout this thesis it will be seen that the topographic features of the tribes’ settlements, and the harsh climate conditions of the region time to time appeared as important obstacles before the intentions of the local state agents to discipline the Nestorian tribes by brutal force.

The disadvantageous geographic conditions gave the Nestorian tribes the advantage of having very limited experience with the Ottoman administration until the mid-nineteenth century, arguably in comparison with, for instance, the

⁴ Inspired by the dissertation of Özok, 21-22.

⁵ Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5-6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ Hacer Yıldırım Foggo, *Kırmızı Püskül 1843-1846 Nesturi Katliamı* (İstanbul: Chiviyazilari Yayınevi, 2002), 21.

⁸ See Appendix A and B.

inhabitants of Çölemerik or Başkale districts. Thus, drawing on Rogan's description, it can be argued that one can make a distinction even between different parts within a frontier on the basis of different levels of governmental experiences.⁹ I call the parts that had the lowest level of governmental experience as the edge of the frontiers, as in the case of the settlements of the tribal Nestorians.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, during the period between 1830s and 1840s, the Ottoman state conducted several military campaigns against the traditional rulers of the Kurdish territories, whose existence was the main obstacle to the central state for bringing these territories under direct rule. During this period, the central state employed what Mann has termed as "despotic power".¹⁰ Mann defines despotic power as "the range of actions which the [state] elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups."¹¹

Throughout the above-mentioned period, the central state resorted to coercive and violent means as military operations in order to impose its new administrative decisions towards the Kurdish territories. Following the exile of Hakkari's last *mir* (the traditional title given to the rulers of the Kurdish emirates), Nurullah Bey, in 1849 in accordance with the centralizing aims, the central state started its efforts to establish its authority in Hakkari, and to turn the inhabitants of the region into loyal Ottoman subjects.

After the elimination of the traditional ruling dynasty of Hakkari, the Tanzimat state started to introduce new administrative and fiscal practices in the

⁹ Rogan makes the distinction between the rural and urban areas on the basis of their experiences of Ottoman administration. See Rogan, 5.

¹⁰ Rogan, 9.

¹¹ Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in *States in History*, ed. John A. Hall (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 113.

region, in conformity with its modern state making project. The first attempt of the central state to establish its direct rule in Hakkari was to change its administrative status. The province of Hakkari was created in 1849, and Ahmed İzzet Paşa was appointed its governor.¹² At this juncture, referring to Mann’s “infrastructural power” concept will be helpful to understand the central Ottoman elite’s modern state-making project.¹³ Infrastructural power has described by Mann as “the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.”¹⁴ A state can increase its infrastructural power and thus more easily penetrate society through a division of labor between its activities, literacy, standardized coinage, weight and measure systems, and a rapid communication system.¹⁵

In a similar vein, James Scott has introduced the term “legibility” to define the practices of the modern states’ to deeply penetrate on the lives of their subjects. According to Scott, contrary to the limited information of the pre-modern states about their subjects and resources, the modern state endeavors to make its subjects legible in order to better exploit them through the classic state functions as taxation and conscription. To this end, the modern state puts several processes into practice, such as the implementation of cadastral and population surveys, standardization of

¹² Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81, 85; BOA. A.MKT. 198/74, 27 Cemaziyelahir 1265 (20 May 1849).

¹³ Rogan builds his study about Transjordan frontier of the Ottoman Empire on the central state’s efforts to increase the capacity of its infrastructural power in the region. See Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Mann, 113.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

unit of measurements, and developments in communication, all of which would serve to turn the illegible and unknown subjects to legible and controllable ones.¹⁶

As will be discussed in Chapter Three, after the creation of Hakkari province, the central Ottoman state tried to increase its infrastructural capacity in the area through appointing officials and establishing administrative councils. Thus, it became able to collect more information about the inhabitants of the area, extend its authority over them, and introduce several taxes and new collection methods. The appointment of officials and establishment of local councils contributed also to the negotiation with the society aspect of the infrastructural power.¹⁷ One of the groups that were directly affected by the administrative and fiscal changes introduced by the central state was the Nestorian tribes. Starting from 1850, the main concern of both the local officials of Hakkari and the central state agents with regard to the Nestorian tribes was to succeed at collecting regular taxes from them. At first sight, this can be associated with solely economic concerns; however, the effort of the state agents to secure regular collection of taxes from the Nestorian tribes was a way to turn them into obedient, loyal subjects.

The struggle between the state agents and the Nestorian tribes that can be observed through examining taxation problems is one of the main themes of this thesis. Throughout the period between 1850 and the early 1870s, the problem which confronted the Nestorian tribes with the state was almost only taxation. During this process, the state agents resorted both infrastructural and despotic powers in order to bring them under authority. The coercive means employed by the government agents

¹⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1998), 2-3.

¹⁷ Mann, 113.

during the period in question show the limited infrastructural capacity of the Tanzimat state.

There is one other important issue seen throughout this period. Neither the central state nor its local agents made any attempts until the early 1870s to make the Nestorian tribes more legible. To be precise, the local government did not conduct any population or land surveys in the tribes' settlements despite the willingness of the Nestorians.¹⁸ As will be shown in Chapter Three, the first and last serious attempt at this issue was made in 1869; however, it was not put into practice. Thus, the central state missed an important opportunity to make the Nestorian tribes more legible and controllable on the basis of negotiation. This situation exemplifies the contradictions of the Tanzimat state with regard to its modern state-making project.

The second main theme of this thesis is the worsening relations, and the increasing power struggles between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes due to the central state's policies towards the latter during the reign of Abdülhamid II. As will be seen in Chapter Four, although the struggle between the two groups, which stemmed from mainly economic motives, started in the late 1880s, it escalated soon after the creation of the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments. As Rogan states, forming regiments from Kurdish tribes was a tool of the Ottoman modern statecraft, which aimed to turn the tribesmen into loyal Ottoman subjects, and use them as the safeguards of the frontiers.¹⁹ Within the context of the modern statecraft, Janet Klein points out another important advantage that the central state elite hoped to gain through the creation of the regiments. In the minds of the central elites the Hamidiye project would serve to settle the tribes, collect census information, and then more

¹⁸ See chapter 2.

¹⁹ Rogan, 14.

easily subjected them to conscription and taxation.²⁰ The Hamidiye project, which was the most important component of Abdülhamid's eastern policy, would deeply affect the lives of both the regiments' members and the other population groups of the eastern provinces. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, a part of the negative effects of the Hamidiye project on the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari will be presented.

Ottoman historians generally exclude the eastern Anatolia provinces, particularly regarding the effects of the modern state-making practices of the Tanzimat on the inhabitants of these provinces. This thesis aims to contribute to the scarce literature about the practices of the modern Ottoman state in the eastern provinces by focusing on Hakkari, and its rarely examined Nestorian inhabitants within this context. Nilay Özek, who is one of the rare historians who studies the eastern provinces within the context of Ottoman modern state-making project, discusses and rightly criticizes this tendency in her dissertation, which focuses on the effects of the Tanzimat state's land and taxation policies in Palu.²¹ She argues that the historiography on the eastern provinces is caught between the Kurdish and the Turkish nationalist perspectives. While the Kurdish nationalists have strived to link the contemporary Kurdish nationalism with the Ottoman past, and have mainly focused on the uprisings of the Kurdish elites against the Ottoman state to prove their arguments, the Turkish nationalist scholars have strived to disprove the arguments of the Kurdish nationalists.²²

²⁰ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 40.

²¹ Nilay Özek, "The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in the Kurdish Periphery: The Politics of Land and Taxation, 1840-1870" (Ph.D dissertation, Binghamton University, 2011).

²² Özek, 13-19.

In addition to Özkök's valuable analyses of the issue, I would like to add that probably there has been a belief that the Tanzimat state failed to penetrate the region and to implement its new policies there, so it is not worth studying the provinces of eastern Anatolia with regard to the centralization and modernization policies of the Ottoman state. This belief could also be the cause of the lack of attention from the scholars in regard to the history of the eastern provinces. The Ottoman government tried to extend its authority to every corner of the empire without exception. The level of the state's success in its attempts to extend its authority to the peripheries of the empire, or to implement the Tanzimat policies in these regions, was certainly varied, and in some cases it can be considered to have been a failure. However, through analyzing the reasons for the state's failure, or the low degree of success, important clues can be found about the relations between the rulers and the ruled, and on the social and political conditions of these regions.

In his important and inspiring article, to which my work owes much in regard to perception of the issue, Nadir Özbek discusses and rightly criticizes the little attention paid by Ottoman historians with respect to the Ottoman administrative practices in eastern Anatolia. Özbek's work is one of the rare studies that comprehensively examine the political and social consequences of the tax regime and collection practices in the eastern provinces, where Armenians and Kurds lived.²³ He argues that the tax regime and tax collection methods are integral parts of politics and as he written, "the Ottoman state and its tax system not as a thing or an institution, but rather as administrative practices felt in the daily lives of state

²³ Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the "Armenian Question" during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876-1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012), 770.

subjects.”²⁴ He emphasizes that the state’s taxation practices during the reign of Abdülhamid II escalated the already existing social and political discontent among the Armenian population, which suffered from the abuse of multiple actors -from government tax collectors to Kurdish tribal chiefs- and he concludes that the tax regime should be considered an important part of the Armenian Question.²⁵

Janet Klein’s study, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*, inspired me to look at the effects of the formation of the Hamidiye regiments on the Nestorian-Kurdish relations. Her work on the Hamidiye regiments is the most comprehensive and insightful one in the existing literature. She shows the changes that occurred in the social, economic, and political structure of the eastern provinces through the formation of the Hamidiye regiments.²⁶ One of her important contributions to the topic is challenging common assumptions on the Kurdish-Armenian conflicts, which treat them as either ethnic or religious. According to her, the main factor that lay behind the violent conflicts was the economic motives of the Kurdish tribes, seeking to possess Armenian lands by using the advantages gained through forming regiments.²⁷

As for the literature about the Hakkari’s Nestorians in Turkish, there has been an increase in studies in recent years. These studies mostly have focused on the Nestorians relations with missionaries starting from the 1830s, on their cooperation with Russia during World War One, and also on the aftermath of war for them. The

²⁴ Ibid., 772.

²⁵ Ibid., 784-794.

²⁶ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).

²⁷ Ibid., 169. For her remarkable analysis on this process see Klein, 128-169.

books of Yonca Anzerliođlu²⁸ and Bülent Özdemir,²⁹ and the theses of Selahattin Satılmış³⁰ and Tarık Ziya Arvas³¹ are among these studies. While Arvas’s study is detailed and covers more issues than the above-mentioned ones, such as the taxation problem³² and the Nestorian-Kurdish conflicts,³³ his approach to these issues is descriptive. The thesis of Osman Uçar mostly focuses on the Nestorian massacres of 1843 and 1846, and on the relations between the Nestorians and missionaries.³⁴ The dissertation of Murat Gökhan Dalyan³⁵ is another detailed study which tries to touch on every issue on the history of the Ottoman Nestorians. He partly deals with the taxation problem in his study, and focuses on portraying the tolerant Ottoman central government vis-à-vis the resistance of the Nestorians to taxation.³⁶ He also discusses the Kurdish and the Nestorian tribes’ conflicts of the 1880s and 1890s. According to him, the reasons for these conflicts were pasture disputes and the negative influence of the missionaries on the Nestorians.³⁷

²⁸ Yonca Anzerliođlu, *Nasturiler* (Ankara: Tamga Yayıncılık, 2000).

²⁹ Bülent Özdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War: Nestorian, Chaldean and Syrian Christians in the 20th Century* (Scotland: Whittles Publishing, 2012).

³⁰ Selahattin Satılmış, “I. Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Nasturiler ve Misyonerlik Faaliyetleri” (M.A. thesis, Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2006).

³¹ Tarık Ziya Arvas, “Hakkari Nasturileri (1836-1936)” (M.A. thesis, Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2010).

³² Arvas, 120-123.

³³ *Ibid.*, 125-135.

³⁴ Osman Uçar, “Osmanlı Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Nasturi Olayları (1840-1870)” (M.A. thesis, Mersin Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2010).

³⁵ Murat Gökhan Dalyan, “19. Yüzyıl’da Nasturiler (İdari Sosyal Yapı ve Siyasi İlişkileri)” (Ph.D diss., Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2009).

³⁶ Dalyan, 63-67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71-75.

This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the history of the Hakkari's Nestorian tribes, too, but, from a different perspective. The issue of taxation and the conflicts between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes during the reign of Abdülhamid II were at the center of the nineteenth century Ottoman Nestorians' history. These two issues are related to each other. Both of them mainly stemmed from the modern state-making efforts of the Ottoman Empire. As Özbek states, both the central state and its local agents caused chaos more than order in the frontiers of the empire, as in the case of Hakkari, while trying to bring these territories under authority.³⁸

The main sources used in this thesis are Ottoman archival documents. The correspondences between various central and local state agents, on the one hand, provide detailed information regarding the issues examined in this thesis and, on the other hand, reveal the different attitudes of the central and local government agents in handling problems. I examined documents from many catalogues, but I mostly benefited from the files under the catalogues of the Prime Ministry, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Yıldız collection.

In Chapter 2, first I will present the Ottoman administration of Kurdistan until the nineteenth century, and then the process to eradicate the Kurdish emirates. The situation of the emirate of Hakkari in the first half of the nineteenth century, and information about the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari with regard to their geographic location and population will be the following sections of Chapter 2. Lastly, the reasons and the aftermaths of the Nestorian massacres of 1843 and 1846 will be discussed.

³⁸ Özbek, 773.

Chapter 3 focuses on the perpetual issue of taxation between the Nestorian tribes and the Ottoman state. The attitudes of the local and the central state agents' vis-à-vis this problem, the reasons behind the resistance of the Nestorian tribes to taxation will be discussed in this chapter. The examples of the ill-treatments of Nestorians by various local state agents, from tax collectors to soldiers and governors, and the irregularities during the collection of taxes will be presented as sources of the central state's failure to turn the Nestorian tribes into loyal Ottoman subjects.

Chapter 4 deals with the changing and worsening relations between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes during the reign of Abdülhamid II. As can be understood from the size of this chapter, it covers a wide range of issues. The rise of the sheikhs as the new influential actors in the eastern provinces; Hamidian policies towards the Kurdish tribes, including the formation of the Hamidiye regiments; and the effects of these policies on the relations between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari are among the main themes of Chapter 4. Instead of presenting a dispersed narrative, I prefer to discuss the long conflict and struggle between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Kurdish Ertoşi tribe, which best exemplify all these themes in question.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROAD TO SUBDUE DISOBEDIENT SUBJECTS

The accession of Mahmud II (1808-1839) to the throne in 1808 marked the beginning of a long and hard road in the history of the Ottoman Empire. He initiated the reforms to centralize and modernize the empire that were officially declared in the Tanzimat Edict in 1839 in the reign of his successor, Sultan Abdulmecid. One of the first steps of the state to accomplish the centralization, and to extend its authority over the empire, was to eliminate the powerful local actors who stood between it and its subjects. The inhabitants of the large Ottoman territories became the targets of the Ottoman government more than ever to impose new fiscal and administrative policies, and the local elites were seen as the main obstacles to implement them. The traditional Kurdish emirates, which had ruled Kurdish territories of the empire for centuries, were among them in the eyes of Ottoman central elite.

The modern state-making efforts of the government, in other words implementing the administrative and political policies of the Tanzimat state in the eastern provinces, radically affected the relations between the different social and ethnic groups of these provinces. The Nestorians had close relations with the Kurdish tribes for centuries. Therefore, the new policies of the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire towards its Kurdish subjects indispensably affected their Nestorian neighbors, as well. Starting with a brief look at the Ottoman administration in Kurdistan, including Hakkari, the homeland of the Ottoman Nestorians, until the first half of the nineteenth century will be helpful to understand the pre-Tanzimat conditions of these territories. Then, the situation of Hakkari emirate in the first half

of the nineteenth century will be discussed. In the last part of this chapter, the tragic Nestorian massacres of 1843 and 1846 will be discussed in detail.

The Ottoman Administration of Kurdistan between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Starting from the incorporation of the Kurdish territories to the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, the Kurdish *mirs* (rulers of the Kurdish emirates), and tribal leaders enjoyed a considerable level of autonomy under the Ottoman rule. In 1515, Sultan Selim charged İdris Bitlisi to appoint the Kurdish *mirs* who had already ruled Kurdistan as the hereditary governors of the newly acquired Kurdish districts.³⁹ As Hakan Özoğlu states, the hereditary succession rule granted to the Kurdish *mirs* was an exception in the Ottoman administrative system.⁴⁰ It was not the only exception with regard to administration in the Kurdish districts. Both Özoğlu and Martin van Bruinessen discuss the two different types of administrative units in Kurdistan besides the traditional Ottoman *sancaks* (sub-province). The first and the most autonomous type of administrative unit was the Kurdish *hükümet* (government). The *hükümet*s paid no taxes to the Ottoman state and were not obliged to do military service, and the local population had the right to choose the *mir*'s successor.⁴¹

The second type was the Kurdish *sancak* (*Ekrad Beyliği*). In the Kurdish *sancaks*, there were *timar*⁴² holders like any other *sancaks* of the empire and their

³⁹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 144.

⁴⁰ Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State; Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 54.

⁴¹ van Bruinessen, 158.

⁴² *Timar* was the name given to one of the administrative units before the Tanzimat period. The *timar* holders –people who were the members of military or ruling class- had the right to

male population had to serve in the military. But again, as a privilege, there remained the rule of hereditary succession and the ruler could not be discharged from his position by the Ottoman government.⁴³ These sancaks were also called *yurtluk-ocaklık*, that is, the hereditary lands of the Kurdish beys which remained under their control by the permission of the Ottoman state.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, they were obliged to give some of their revenues from these lands to the central treasury, and provide troops to the Ottoman army in case of war.⁴⁵

These privileges prove the great importance of the Kurdish geography in the eyes of the Ottoman state. The incorporation of Kurdish territories to the Ottoman Empire cannot be defined as a conquest, but treated as an agreement on the basis of mutual interests. As Özoğlu explains, the Ottomans needed a buffer area between themselves and the Safavid Empire, and the incorporation of Kurdistan provided them the opportunity to create such an area. In return, the Kurdish dynasties gained the opportunity to consolidate their power in the region through the support of a strong empire.⁴⁶

There is one point on which I disagree with Özoğlu. He says that another gain of the Ottoman state was tax revenues from the Kurdish territories.⁴⁷ Even though the government could be expected to levy taxes on the Kurdish regions, it is clear from

collect taxes from the land granted to them, in return for their services. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 28.

⁴³ Özoğlu, 56.

⁴⁴ Nilay Özok, "The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in the Kurdish Periphery: The Politics of Land and Taxation, 1840-1870" (Ph.D diss., Binghamton University, 2011), 79.

⁴⁵ Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 41.

⁴⁶ Özoğlu, 49.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

the administrative agreement that was made between the Ottoman state and the Kurdish leaders that tax collection was probably the least important concern of the Ottoman state at the time. Even though there were Kurdish areas with financial and military obligations, van Bruinessen points out how flexible these obligations were, and states that the fulfillment of obligations changed from time to time with regard to the power of the central authority.⁴⁸ Consequently, it seems that until the nineteenth century, the main expectations of the Ottoman state from the Kurdish tribes were frontier protection, and to provide troops for military campaigns.⁴⁹

It is necessary to state that the administrative structure of the eastern territories explained in brief above was not permanent until the nineteenth century. The number of the Kurdish hükümete and the Kurdish sancaks, and also their administrative status changed in time as a result of the struggles between the state and the Kurdish leaders to gain control and to establish authority over the territories in question.⁵⁰ By using the accounts of Evliya Çelebi in *Seyahatname*, Özoğlu writes that by the end of the seventeenth century, most of the Kurdish hükümete, in other words the Kurdish emirates, had lost their autonomy to a certain degree, as a result of the state's increasing intervention into their internal affairs, for example the deposal of hereditary rulers by conducting military expeditions.⁵¹ However, the emirates re-consolidated their power and autonomy particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁵² As stated by van Bruinessen, two Kurdish emirates, which

⁴⁸ van Bruinessen, 159.

⁴⁹ David McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi* (Ankara: Doruk Yayıncılık, 2004), 57.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Özoğlu, 59.

⁵² Ibid.

were the Soran emirate, under the rule of Mir⁵³ Muhammed, and the Bohtan emirate ruled by Mir Bedirhan, enjoyed great autonomy and power in the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴

The Soran Emirate and Mir Muhammed

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the Kurdish territories some emirates had increased their power and authority. One of them, the Soran emirate, had been ruled by the Mir Muhammed of Rawanduz since 1814. Mir Muhammed had become an ambitious and powerful ruler who became a real threat in the eyes of Ottoman government by the 1830s. He brought nearly the whole territory that today is known as northern Iraq under his control. Due to his rise, in 1834 the Ottoman government charged Reşid Muhammed Paşa with the task of bringing him under control. In 1836, the army of Reşid Paşa surrounded Soran, with the support of two additional military units, one commanded by the governor of Baghdad, and the other by the governor of Mosul. However, instead of entering a bloody battle, mir Muhammed accepted the offer of Reşid Paşa, which was the continuation of his rule if he surrendered to the government. The Mir was sent to İstanbul, where he was welcomed by the Sultan. However, he was unable to return to Soran, he was killed on his way home.⁵⁵

Before his fall in 1836, Mir Muhammed had been known for his cruel attacks in the Greater Zab region. His first expedition had been against the Yezidi tribes in

⁵³ “*mir*” was the title used by the rulers of the Kurdish emirates, which means prince in Kurdish.

⁵⁴ van Bruinessen, 175-176.

⁵⁵ McDowall, 74-78; van Bruinessen, 176-177; Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origin and Development* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 55-61.

Şeyhan.⁵⁶ During the attack, thousands of Yezidis were slaughtered.⁵⁷ The subjugation of the Yezidi tribes paved the way for the invasion of the Bahdinan emirate by Mir Muhammed. The Yezidi tribes had been under the authority of the Bahdinan emirate at the time of Muhammed's attack. Since the rulers of the Bahdinan emirate made no objection to his cruelties, he recognized their weakness, and invaded the town of Amadiye, which was the capital of Bahdinan. In the end, the mir succeeded at overthrowing Bahdinan's traditional rulers, and brought the emirate under his control.⁵⁸

According to Hirmis Aboona, Mir Muhammed also tried to subdue the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari. A clash occurred in the lower Tiyari between his forces and the Nestorian tribes in 1834, which resulted in the defeat of the mir.⁵⁹ Aboona states that after the annihilation of the Soran emirate in 1836, along with the Bohtan emirate, both the Kurdish and Nestorian parts of the Hakkari emirate were the only remaining powerful centers of the region where the Ottoman state had not been able to establish its authority yet.⁶⁰ Asahel Grant, the first American missionary to enter the mountainous districts of Hakkari's Nestorian tribes, described the image of these tribes in the eyes of the Mosul governor Mehmed Paşa in 1839:

“To the borders of their country,” said the vigorous pasha of Mosul, “I will be responsible for your safety; you may put gold upon your head, and you will

⁵⁶ For an important study about the effects of the Ottoman modern state-making policies on the Yezidi tribes, see Edip Gölbaşı, “The Yezidis and the Ottoman State: Modern Power, Military Conscription, and Conversion Policies, 1830-1909” (M.A. thesis, Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2008).

⁵⁷ Jwaideh, 56-58.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 58-59.

⁵⁹ Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans-Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 173.

⁶⁰ Aboona, 174.

have nothing to fear; but I warn you that I can protect you no farther. Those mountain infidels (Christians) acknowledge neither pashas nor kings, but from time immemorial every man has been his own king!⁶¹

The ultimate end of the Bahdinan emirate was an important turning point in Kurdish-Nestorian relations. It is an example of the negative effect of the state's centralization policies on the centuries-old relations between them. As mentioned previously, the mir Muhammed brought the Bahdinan emirate under his control in 1832, and defeated its hereditary rulers. After the fall of the Mir, İsmail Paşa, the hereditary ruler of Bahdinan, returned to Amadiye with the aim of repossessing his emirate. However, after a while the governor of Mosul, Mehmed Paşa entered there with his forces and recaptured the capital. İsmail Paşa escaped from Amadiye and with the help of Bedirhan Bey, he succeeded at gathering his followers to retrieve his capital.⁶² Thereupon, the same events happened again; the governor of Mosul prepared his forces and attacked the town, but this time he gained an ultimate victory in Amadiye. İsmail Paşa was captured and exiled to Baghdad.⁶³

The importance of the annihilation of Bahdinan emirate for this study stems from the accusations against the Nestorian tribes in relation to the defeat of İsmail Paşa. Jwaideh states that when the governor of Mosul decided to make his last attack on Amadiye, İsmail Paşa appealed to Mar Shimon, who was both the leader and the patriarch of the Nestorians, for his support in the oncoming battle with the governor of Mosul.⁶⁴ The British missionary George P. Badger, who visited the Nestorian districts of Hakkari in 1843 and in 1850, related the event as follows:

⁶¹ Asahel Grant, *The Nestorians; or, the Lost Tribes* (London: John Murray, 1841), 50.

⁶² Jwaideh, 61-62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

In order to regain possession of his inheritance, Ismael Pasha applied to Mar Shimoon for assistance, who, with the consent of Noorallah Beg, headed a force of 3,000 armed Nestorians, many of whom were priests, and led them as far as the village of Ba-Merni, in the Supna. Just before this, the army of Mohammed Pasha of Mosul, had taken the castle of Daoodia, and a messenger was dispatched from thence to Mar Shimoon, informing him that it was the intention of the Pasha of Mosul to take Amedia, and consequently, if the Nestorians followed up their design of reinstating Ismael Pasha in the government of the province, they would be fighting against the Osmanlis. On hearing this, the patriarch sent a reply, to the effect that they never wished to oppose the Sultan's authority, and that as affairs had taken such a turn, he would contrive a scheme to withdraw from the contest. He accordingly informed Ismael Pasha that it was necessary for him and his troops to celebrate Easter, at the church of Araden..., promising to return as soon as the feast was over. In the dead of the night the Nestorian contingent crossed the Tcah Meteenah, and the day following re-entered the Tyari country. Ismael Pasha never forgot this treachery.⁶⁵

This event, no doubt, created tension between the Kurdish and the Nestorian tribes that would later be manifested in the Nestorian massacres as Ismail Paşa would be among the perpetrators of the massacres.⁶⁶

The Bohtan Emirate and Bedirhan Bey

The family of Bedirhan Bey was one of the oldest dynasties of Kurdistan.⁶⁷ Bedirhan became the Mir of the Bohtan emirate around 1821.⁶⁸ He consolidated his power through various strategies. He severely attacked his opponents, as in the case of the chief of the Miran tribe, who had refused to pay tribute, and thus challenged his authority. For this, he was killed and further, Bedirhan's tribal forces killed hundreds

⁶⁵ George P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals, with the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844, and of a Late Visit to Those Countries in 1850* (London: Joseph Masters, 1852), 1: 265.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁶⁷ Jwaideh, 62.

⁶⁸ van Bruinessen, 175.

of people from the Miran tribe and its allies, until they complied with the Mir's authority.⁶⁹ On the other hand, Bedirhan also made alliances with other mirs, like Nurullah Bey of Hakkari.⁷⁰

Wadie Jwaideh writes that the military campaigns conducted against the powerful Kurdish emirates in the period in question resulted in a power vacuum in Kurdistan, since the emirates that remained were relatively weak ones. Thus, Bedirhan became the only powerful leader left in Kurdistan.⁷¹ Ultimately, the areas between the borders of Diyarbakır, Mosul, and Iran were under the authority of mir Bedirhan by 1845.⁷²

The fall of Mir Bedirhan was directly related to the Nestorian massacres of 1843 and 1846. For this reason, the annihilation of his powerful emirate will be discussed in the last part of this chapter. Now, the focus will be given to the situation of the Hakkari emirate in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Situation of the Hakkari Emirate in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

The aim of this part is to show the limited relation of Hakkari's inhabitants with the Ottoman state and its administrative and fiscal practices until the second half of the nineteenth century. As discussed above, until the first half of the nineteenth century, some regions of Kurdistan were ruled by traditional dynasties that enjoyed certain privileges. There were some criteria that played critical roles on the autonomy of

⁶⁹ van Bruinessen, 178-179.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 179.

⁷¹ Jwaideh, 63.

⁷² van Bruinessen, 180.

these regions, some of which were the power of the resident Kurdish tribes, and the geographical location and inaccessibility of the region.⁷³ In his dissertation in which he examines the formation of the Ottoman-Iranian boundary within the context of state formation, Sabri Ateş states that Hakkari was among the most privileged areas of the region for centuries.⁷⁴ It was next to the Ottoman-Iranian border. Along with its proximity to the border,⁷⁵ the rugged topography, the rigours of the region's climate and, the power and skills of its rulers were all part of the underlying reasons for the region's considerable autonomy.⁷⁶

Hakkari was a Kurdish emirate; in other words, a hükümet that had been ruled by the same dynasty for centuries until the exile of its last mir, Nurullah Bey, in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ The existing information regarding the Hakkari emirate is mostly about the early history of it, and is not related to the period under consideration.⁷⁸ However, some details that will be discussed give clues about the situation of the emirate in the early nineteenth century.

Like most areas of the eastern provinces, insufficient data is a problem regarding the history of the Hakkari region between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. However, we know that the ruling family of Hakkari was among the few dynasties that maintained control and privileges over their hereditary

⁷³ Özoğlu, 56; van Bruinessen, 158.

⁷⁴ Sabri Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples" (Ph.D dissertation, New York University, 2006), 58.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ van Bruinessen, 147.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 147-150.

⁷⁸ For a detailed information related to the early history of the Hakkari emirate, see Şerefhan Bitlisi, *Şerefname*, trans. M. Emin Bozarslan (İstanbul: Hasat Yayınları, 1990), 107-124.

lands in the early nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Ateş notes that by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, some provinces and sancaks, included Hakkari, still had *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands. This indicates the ongoing privileges of the Hakkari's rulers at that time,⁸⁰ at least regarding their traditional landholding rights. In addition to this, Nurullah Bey of Hakkari had two titles in 1840, the traditional title of Hakkari's rulers, mir, and *müdir* (governor) of Hakkari, which had been given officially by the Ottoman state.⁸¹ This information on titles is meaningful in terms of reflecting the ongoing power struggle between the central state and the Kurdish rulers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Ateş states that while the official titles were the reflections of state's contemptuous view of these rulers, the local ones reflect their standings in the eyes of the region's people.⁸²

However, it should be noted that the appointment of the local elites to official or administrative positions was a common practice of the Tanzimat state.⁸³ As stated by Nilay Özok, this practice manifested itself mostly in the local councils that were established in the 1840s. The local notables appeared as members of these newly established councils. The main idea behind it was to win the support of the notables on behalf of the Tanzimat policies.⁸⁴ In this context, the official title given to Nurullah Bey could be interpreted as a reflection of the central state's dilemma: On the one hand, it shows the central state's desire to make its presence and control felt

⁷⁹ Ateş, *Empires at the Margin*, 65-66.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ateş, *Empires at the Margin*, 66.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapısı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 241.

⁸⁴ Özok, 89.

in the region; on the other hand, the central government was aware of the fact that appointing an official from the center would be pointless while Nurullah Bey was still the dominant force in the region. Instead of trying to totally exclude him, which was not yet a possible option in 1840, using him as an intermediate agent between the state and the region's people was a wise move.

It should also be stated that Nurullah Bey was not a passive actor in his relations with the Ottoman state. The historian Hirmis Aboona notes that Nurullah Bey himself requested an official position from the state. It was his strategy to protect himself from the oncoming threat, which was to bring all of the Kurdish territories under the state authority and eliminate the local Kurdish rulers.⁸⁵

After the defeat of the Soran emirate, the last powerful challenge to the central state's authority in the region was the emirate of Bohtan. Even though Nurullah Bey was not as powerful as the rulers of Soran or Bohtan, it is difficult to say that Hakkari was under the control of the Ottoman state in the 1830s and the 1840s. Apart from Hakkari's Kurdish tribes and their mir Nurullah Bey, the powerful Nestorian tribes were the main obstacle to the central government's desire to establish its authority in the area. As will be discussed later, the fall of mir Bedirhan of Bohtan also brought an end to the rule of Nurullah Bey. Additionally, these two mirs contributed to the central state's aims at the expense of the Nestorians to a large extent, just before their fall.

As mentioned earlier, the existence of *yurtluk-ocaklık* lands in Hakkari and the local title of the Nurullah Bey, could be regarded as signs of autonomy. However, these signs are still not enough to comment on the level of the area's autonomy or on the degree of state's penetration into the area by the first half of the nineteenth

⁸⁵Aboona, 187.

century. The Ottoman state's ability to regularly collect taxes was one of the main factors that determined its authority in a certain region. Likewise, the relative autonomy enjoyed by the Kurdish rulers mostly was associated with their traditional landholding rights and the state's inability to collect taxes from them. The following two documents will shed light on the degree of the state's authority in Hakkari to a certain extent between the 1830s and 1840s.

Using a document from the archives of Britain, Aboona writes that,

As for Noor Allah, Brant [the British consul at Erzurum] mentioned that he had visited Erzerum (Erzurum) by invitation from Mohammed Rashid Pasha [the former Grand Vizier and the governor of Sivas in 1833], where he had declared his complete submission to the Sultan and agreed to pay fixed annual taxes to the Porte. He had gone away loaded with gifts and courtesy but had not kept his promise.⁸⁶

The document used by Aboona was created in 1843.⁸⁷ Considering the fact that Muhammed Reşid Paşa died in 1836,⁸⁸ the event described in the document most likely would have occurred in the early 1830s. The document shows that the Ottoman government was unable to collect taxes from the Hakkari emirate, and the state agents tried to negotiate with Nurullah Bey in order to get a fixed annual amount.

Özok presents another document related to tax and landholding issues in Hakkari that contains more detailed information. The document, which was written by the governor of Kurdistan in 1848, shows how the state had been unable to collect any type of tax -neither tithe (*aşar*) nor poll tax (*cizye*)- from Hakkari, until that date.

⁸⁶ Aboona, 204.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 213, endnote 28.

⁸⁸ Jwaideh, 55.

Additionally, he emphasizes that based on their inquiries none of the land owners of this sancak had valid title-deeds.⁸⁹

On the basis of these documents, it can be said that until the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state was not able to levy regular taxes from Hakkari, which points to the low degree of state control and authority in that area. As will be discussed in the next chapter, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the inhabitants of Hakkari started to recognize different authorities above their mir or tribe leaders in their daily lives. This also indicates the limited interaction between the inhabitants of Hakkari and the state agents until that time. As mentioned before, the local state functionaries negotiated on tax payments with Nurullah Bey, as the Mir of Hakkari and at the same time as the official governor of the region, but their attempts failed. He was both the intermediary and the obstacle between the state and the inhabitants of the area. After the exile of the mir, which will be discussed later, the political and social structure of Hakkari underwent radical changes. The inhabitants of the area became acquainted with the Ottoman state's functionaries and their administrative practices that altered the centuries-old structure of the area.

The Nestorians of Hakkari

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Nestorians lived in two coterminous territories: Hakkari and to the north of Mosul.⁹⁰ The tribal groups of the

⁸⁹ Özok, 76.

⁹⁰ John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, & Colonial Powers* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 33.

Nestorians lived in mountainous terrain of Hakkari,⁹¹ and the non-tribal ones lived in several districts of Hakkari.⁹² The tribal Nestorians were composed of five tribes, the Tiyari, Thuma, Jelu (Cilo), Baz, and Dez.⁹³ The areas where they lived were sub-districts of Hakkari, named after them. The Tiyari tribe lived in two sub-districts which were the upper and the lower Tiyari, which both belonged to Çal (present-day Çukurca) district. The Jelu sub-district belonged to Gevar (present-day Yüksekova), and the Thuma, Baz, and Dez sub-districts belonged to Çölemerik. The non-tribal Nestorians lived in the districts of Gevar, Albak, Beytüşşebap, and Şemdinan.⁹⁴ Each tribe had its own leader who was called as *melik* (the title of the Nestorian tribe leaders). The Nestorian patriarch, known as Mar Shimon, was both the religious and the civil head of all the Nestorians. The leaders of the Nestorian tribes were appointed by Mar Shimon. The seat of the patriarch was the Koçanis village of Hakkari.⁹⁵

The exact population of the Nestorians who lived in the Ottoman Empire is unknown because no population censuses were taken in their settlements. The numbers given in the official documents were based on rough estimations. For instance, according to the account of the governor of Van in a document dated 1897, the Nestorians were composed of six tribes in Hakkari with a population of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Aboona, 5-7.

⁹³ Surma d Bayt Mar Samoun, *Doğu Asur Kilise Gelenekleri: Patrik Mar Samoun'un Katli* (Södertälje: Nsibin Yayınları, 1993), 81. For the location of these tribes, see Appendix A and B.

⁹⁴ BOA. Ş.D. 1503/13, 4 Rebiülevvel 1285 (25 June 1868).

⁹⁵ Aboona, 10, 34-35.

approximately ten to fifteen thousand people.⁹⁶ Based on the 1914 census registers of the empire, Justin McCharty gives the total number of Nestorians and Chaldeans as 62,400, and states that this number was estimation.⁹⁷ According to Vital Cuinet, the Nestorian population was 92,000 around 1870.⁹⁸ Based on the 1914 Ottoman registers, Kemal Karpat gives the population of the Nestorians as 8,091.⁹⁹ Other official statistics used by Karpat show the male population of the Nestorians as 29,350 around 1880.¹⁰⁰ The number of the Nestorians in Van and Hakkari was given as 25,054 in 1897.¹⁰¹ As seen, it is not possible to make an accurate estimation about the population of the Nestorians. However, considering that Badger gives the population of the village of Aşita as nearly two thousand,¹⁰² it can be argued that the numbers given in the official Ottoman registers were not even close to the actual number.

The status of the Nestorian tribes in Hakkari, their relations with the Kurdish tribes, and their obligations to the Mir should be clarified as far as possible to answer the question of what was implied by the “independence” of the Nestorian tribes. And also to understand the changes occurred in their lives in the second half of the nineteenth century, due to the state’s efforts to consolidate its authority in the area.

⁹⁶ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 30/29, 10 Zilkade 1314 (12 April 1897).

⁹⁷ Justin McCharty, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1983), 101-103.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹⁹ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 189.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁰² Badger, 185, 214.

One frequently comes across the phrase “independent Nestorian tribes” in many of the sources. For instance, John Joseph in his comprehensive work cites from missionary sources that, “early in that century, Rich had observed that the Ottoman Nestorians were the only Christians in the East that he knew who had maintained their independence against the Muslims to whom ‘they have rendered themselves very formidable.’”¹⁰³ He also writes that, “They are usually reported as a bold and hardy people who never paid tribute to anyone but their own patriarch.”¹⁰⁴ Van Bruinessen writes, “About half of these Nestorians were tribally organized and very independent-minded [refers to Hakkari’s Nestorian tribes], others were peasants subservient to Kurdish aghas.”¹⁰⁵

These phrases indicate first that, until the end of 1840s, the Ottoman state’s authority and control was quite limited in Hakkari as a result of the continuation of the emirate system; thus, like the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari, the Nestorian tribes had very limited connection with official state agents. The geographical features of the areas in which the Nestorians lived were another factor that preserved their relatively independent manner of life. In addition, in terms of their obligations to the Hakkari’s mir as the higher authority of the area, the first thing that comes to mind is the tribute or tax that they paid to him, because the emphasis on their “independence” is mostly connected with their privileges with regard to tributes. The most detailed information on this issue appears in missionary accounts. One of these belongs to Grant, who wrote that the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari paid a small sum to the mir,

¹⁰³Claudius J. Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan and on the Site of Ancient Nineveh* (London: James Duncan, 1836), 2: 121, quoted in Joseph, 60-61.

¹⁰⁴ Joseph, 61.

¹⁰⁵ van Bruinessen, 180.

but they regarded this payment as a gift, and the mir did not intervene in their internal affairs.¹⁰⁶ Badger gave more detailed information on the issue:

The Emeer of Hakkari has been for ages the presiding chief, and the predecessors of Noorallah Beg granted to the Nestorians the rights of clanship, which freed them from tribute, and gave them a voice in the election of the Emeer, and in all the councils of the tribes, on condition that they supplied a certain contingent of armed men for the common defence of the state. All the villages of Tyari enjoyed these privileges with the exception of Asheetha, Zaweetha, and Minyanish, from which the Emeer claimed a regular yearly tribute. Besides this...he exacted from all the other Nestorian provinces of central Coordistan *Kharaj*, a kind of humiliation tax, the same as is annually levied by the Turks from all the Christians of the empire....When in want of their assistance the Emeer generally abstained from levying the *Kharaj* upon the Nestorians...¹⁰⁷

Considering the accounts of missionaries, it seems the Nestorian tribes had good relations with the Hakkari mirs and the Kurdish tribes, at least until the second half of the nineteenth century. According to the account of Badger, the mir levied only one kind of tax from them, which was the equivalent of the poll tax,¹⁰⁸ and likely that money did not flow to the central treasury of the empire.

The Nestorian Massacres of 1843 and 1846 and the Removal of the Last Powerful Kurdish Emirate

The good relations between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes were damaged severely in 1843. Nurullah Bey applied for support from Bedirhan Bey to attack and suppress the Nestorian tribes who had lived in Hakkari for centuries with their Kurdish neighbors. The Nestorian massacres committed by Bedirhan Bey in 1843

¹⁰⁶ Grant, 85.

¹⁰⁷ Badger, 258.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

and 1846 resulted in great losses, and these events eventually led to his fall and that of his emirate.

The causes of the massacres are discussed in many sources with more or less the same arguments. Van Bruinessen presents the main cause of the massacres as British and American missionaries, who had discovered the Nestorians by the 1830s and tried to convert them.¹⁰⁹ He states that the existence of the missionaries in Hakkari disturbed the Kurds, and the Nestorian patriarch Mar Shimon “arrogated a political power that he had never before.”¹¹⁰ Hans Lukas Kieser also points to the roles of Mar Shimon and the missionaries, and states that Mar Shimon wanted to be recognized by the Ottoman Empire as the leader of Hakkari’s Nestorians, and intended to benefit from the elimination of the Kurdish emirates.¹¹¹

With reference to missionary activities, Jwaideh says that the construction of a big mission house in Aşita (the biggest village of Tiyari)¹¹² by Asahel Grant caused the spread of rumors, such as the building had been built as a fortress to suppress the Kurds, or there was the intention to use it as a bazaar, which would enrich the Nestorians and cause losses for the Kurdish business centers.¹¹³

There is no doubt the massacres can not be explained by the activities of missionaries alone, or the ambitions of the Nestorian patriarch. As stated by Wadie Jwaideh, they were the results of interest conflicts and power struggles among

¹⁰⁹ van Bruinessen, 180.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Hans-Lukas Keiser, *İskalanmış Barış: Doğu Vilayetleri’nde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet 1839-1938*, trans. Atilla Dirim (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 95.

¹¹² Aboona, 181.

¹¹³ Letter from Dr. Grant, *Missionary Herald* 39, no. 8 (Aug., 1843), 317-318, quoted in Jwaideh, 70

various individuals in the region.¹¹⁴ Jwaideh presents a comprehensive discussion of and gives several reasons for the issue. He states that one of the reasons was the conflict between Nurullah Bey and Mar Shimon. Nurullah Bey tried to consolidate his authority over Mar Shimon, especially to prevent him from cooperating with his rival and his nephew, Suleyman Bey.¹¹⁵ Suleyman Bey was the son of the former mir and, based on the hereditary succession rule, he should have become the new mir, but Nurullah had usurped his right. Mar Shimon supported Suleyman Bey, due to his personal friendship with the old mir.¹¹⁶

The conflict among the Nestorian tribes themselves was another factor that contributed to the occurrence of the massacres. Jwaideh states that one of the leading Nestorian tribes, the Thuma (Tuhub), which had been estranged by the patriarch, supported Nurullah Bey, and thus cooperated with Bedirhan's forces and attacked their own people.¹¹⁷

As discussed previously, during the attack of the governor of Mosul on Amadiye, İsmail Paşa of Bahdinan sought the support of Mar Shimon to defend his emirate, but the Nestorian forces who were under the leadership of Mar Shimon, left İsmail Pasha in the lurch. Aboona says that İsmail Pasha blamed the Nestorian tribes for the fall of his emirate.¹¹⁸ Jwaideh also presents this as an important reason for the massacres. The other Kurdish mirs likely considered the event as a betrayal against

¹¹⁴ Jwaideh, 66-67.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 67.

¹¹⁶ Joseph, 73-74.

¹¹⁷ Jwaideh, 68.

¹¹⁸ Aboona, 185.

all of them, on behalf of the Ottoman government.¹¹⁹ He emphasizes that one of the motives of Bedirhan in deciding on whether to support Nurullah Bey in his attack on the Nestorians or not was the material gains he expected from plundering.¹²⁰

Jwaideh puts forward striking arguments on the role of the local government agents in the massacres. Both the Kurdish and the Nestorian tribes were disobedient subjects in the eyes of the central and local governments, and a clash between them provided the elimination of the Nestorian tribes, and caused the central state to intervene into the Kurdish affairs. He supports his argument with the inactivity of the Mosul governor, whose forces were very close to the borders of Nestorian districts during the massacres.¹²¹ Furthermore, using missionary sources, he argues that the attacks were approved and supported by the governor of Erzurum.¹²²

The first massacre of Nestorians occurred in 1843. The Tiyari and Diz tribes were the first targets of the united forces led by Bedirhan Bey.¹²³ British archeologist and traveler Austen Henry Layard wrote that the first attack was against the villages in the Diz district. He described the devastating results of the massacre and suffering of the Nestorians in detail; people were slaughtered, houses were burnt, and even trees were cut down.¹²⁴ As for the Tiyari, Layard stated that 10,000 people were massacred, and a considerable number of women and children were taken as

¹¹⁹ Jwaideh, 69.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹²¹ Ibid., 71-72.

¹²² Ibid., 72.

¹²³ Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert* (New York: Harper&Brothers, 1853), 367; Austen H. Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: John Murray, 1867), 129.

¹²⁴ Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 367.

slaves.¹²⁵ A short excerpt from Layard's description of the scenes of the massacre in Lizan (a village of Tiyari) is meaningful to understand the cruelties of Bedirhan's forces:

It was near Lizan that occurred one of the most terrible incidents of the massacre (...) We soon saw evidence of the slaughter. At first a solitary skull rolling down with the rubbish; then heaps of blanched bones; further up, fragments of rotten garments. As we advanced, these remains became more frequent: skeletons, almost entire, still hung to the dwarf shrubs. (...) As we approached the wall of rock, the declivity became covered with bones, mingled with the long plaited tresses of the women, shreds of discoloured linen, and well-worn shoes.¹²⁶

The second massacre occurred in 1846. This time the targets were the districts of Thuma and Baz.¹²⁷ During his visit to the Nestorian districts after the first massacre, Layard wrote that the chief subject of conversation among people was the threat of a second attack of Bedirhan, this time against Thuma.¹²⁸ He gave an important detail when he wrote that when the rumors of an impending invasion reached to Thuma, the tribe members assembled to discuss the issue. At the end of the discussion, it was decided to send a deputation consisting of *meliks*, priests and some notables of the tribe, who would carry a letter sealed by the chiefs of the tribe, to the governor of Mosul to implore his protection against the oncoming threat.¹²⁹ But no one protected the Nestorians.

According to Jwaideh, the second massacre resulted in similar devastation and slaughter.¹³⁰ For only four villages in Thuma, Layard wrote:

¹²⁵ Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 129.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

¹²⁷ Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 372-373.

¹²⁸ Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 130, 145 and 147.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹³⁰ Jwaideh, 72.

From four of them alone 770 persons had been slain. Beder Khan Bey had driven off, according to the returns made by the Meleks, 24,000 sheep, 300 mules, and 10,000 head of cattle; (...) No flocks were left by which they might raise money wherewith to pay the taxes now levied upon them, and even the beasts of burden, which could have carried to the markets of more wealthy districts the produce of their valley, had been taken away.¹³¹

The deputation sent by the Nestorian tribes to the governor of Mosul to implore his protection¹³² that seems to have remained inconclusive supports the previously cited argument of Jwaideh that the clash between the two disobedient groups was seen as a chance by the central Ottoman government to subdue both of them.¹³³ The Nestorian tribes were subjected to massacre and plundering, and these events led to the downfall of mir Bedirhan.

After the second massacre, Britain and France started pressure the Ottoman government to punish Bedirhan Bey. A large Ottoman army was sent against him, who first succeeded at defeating them.¹³⁴ However, in August 1847, he surrendered to Osman Paşa;¹³⁵ together with his family members, he was first sent to İstanbul, and then exiled to Candia, on Crete.¹³⁶ The Ottoman government also decided to exile the mir of Hakkari, Nurullah Bey, in 1848.¹³⁷ He was sent to Crete as well, in 1849.¹³⁸

¹³¹ Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 373.

¹³² Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 152.

¹³³ Jwaideh, 71-72.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹³⁵ Arshak Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan* (London: The Harvill Press Ltd., 1948), 60.

¹³⁶ Jwaideh, 74.

¹³⁷ See, BOA. A.MKT. 160/52, 29 Zilhicce 1264 (26 November 1848).

¹³⁸ See, BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 13/54, 6 Recep 1265 (28 May 1849) ; BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 13/44, 4 Recep 1265 (26 May 1849).

The Nestorian massacres and the elimination of the last Kurdish emirates¹³⁹ started a new era in the eastern provinces. The Nestorian tribes of Hakkari would no longer be considered as “independent tribes,” and there remained no Kurdish emirates that challenge the authority of the central state. The taxes levied upon the Nestorian tribes by 1850, which Layard mentioned in his above-quoted travel writings, would be the beginning of a complicated tax question that brought them into confrontation with the various government agents during the second half of the nineteenth century. The following chapter examines the conflicts between the Hakkari’s Nestorian tribes and the various agents of the Ottoman state, within the context of Tanzimat practices.

¹³⁹ Detailed analyses on the elimination of the Kurdish emirates and the Nestorian massacres are beyond the scope of this thesis. For a comprehensive study about the annihilation of the Bohtan emirate, the implementation of Tanzimat policies in eastern Anatolia, and also the Nestorian massacres of 1843 and 1846, see Fatih Gencer, “Merkeziyetçi İdari Düzenlemeler Bağlamında Bedirhan Bey Olayı” (Ph.D diss., Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih (Yakınçağ Tarihi) Anabilim Dalı, 2010). For another detailed study about the annihilation of the Bohtan emirate, see Mehmet Alagöz, “Old Habits Die Hard A Reaction to the Application of Tanzimat: Bedirhan Bey’s Revolt” (M.A. thesis, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, History, 2003).

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONFRONTATIONS OF THE NESTORIANS WITH THE TANZIMAT STATE: TAXATION AS A MEANS TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY OVER THE NESTORIAN TRIBES

The Nestorian massacres of 1843-1846 committed by Mir Bedirhan and Nurullah Bey marked the end of an era for the both sides of the events. As seen in the previous chapter, Bedirhan and his family were exiled to Crete, and his emirate came to an end. Nurullah Bey, the last mir of Hakkari, was exiled to Crete as well. The Nestorian tribes of Hakkari could no longer be considered to be isolated in their mountain settlements or independent from the Ottoman state's authority. Considering their miserable situation, and the exile of the mirs, ostensibly no obstacles were left before the central Ottoman state to extend its authority to the frontier settlements of the Nestorian tribes, and implementing the Tanzimat practices.

What is particularly meant by Tanzimat practices are new modern state practices such as censuses, surveys, and a tax system rearranged to be more just, and the establishment of provincial and district councils as the bridges between the local and central governments. However, as will be seen in this chapter, the central state's aim of bringing the Nestorian tribes under its control met another obstacle, the maladministration of its own local functionaries in the region.

This chapter discusses the confrontations of Hakkari's Nestorians with the Tanzimat state especially through tax collection, which Özbek calls "politics in the everyday realm."¹⁴⁰ Relevant archival documents will be examined with the purpose of showing the irregular and unjust taxation system that led to the emergence of a

¹⁴⁰ Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the "Armenian Question" during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876-1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012), 771.

complex tax question regarding the taxation of the Nestorian sub-districts¹⁴¹.

Throughout the third quarter of the nineteenth century, securing regular tax collection, and extracting back taxes from the Nestorian tribes appears to have been the main concern of the local and central government within the context of their relations with them. Through archival sources, I will try to show the oppression of the Nestorians by tax officials and, in some cases by soldiers with the knowledge of the local government, and the underlying reasons for the unpaid taxes which were to some extent related to unimplemented Tanzimat practices but mostly stemmed from the irregularities and corruption in the collection of taxes. In addition, the conflicts between the central and local governments on the method of resolving the tax question will be examined.

It will be argued here on the basis of archival documents that both the implemented and unimplemented practices of the Tanzimat state adversely affected the lives of Hakkari's Nestorians, and led to the emergence of the unjust state image in their eyes. In the existing studies on the Nestorians, the tendency is either a superficial pro-Nestorian narrative or drawing a simple portrait with regards to the effects of the Tanzimat state's taxation policies on their lives. At one extreme there is a tolerant state that tried to levy taxes from its subjects, including the Nestorians, and at the other extreme there are "recalcitrant" Nestorians that abused the state's great tolerance and resisted taxation. Neither of these tendencies is enough to explain the intentions and expectations of each side. For this reason, a detailed analysis of relevant archival documents is necessary to understand the underlying reasons for the Nestorians' discontent and resistance.

¹⁴¹ For maps that show the settlements of the tribal and non-tribal Nestorians, see Appendix A and B.

A Prelude to Irregularities

The first attempt of the Ottoman state to establish its authority in Hakkari was to change its administrative status. In 1849 the province of Hakkari was created, and Ahmed İzzet Paşa was appointed as its governor.¹⁴² Soon after the creation of the province, the problems in relation to the collection of taxes from the Nestorian tribes emerged. The first attempt of the new government was to levy *cizye* (the poll tax) from them.¹⁴³

Before proceeding with our case, a citation from a part of a contemporary account of Layard will help in the formation of have an idea on the situation of Nestorian tribes:

The taxes, which the Porte had promised to remit for three years, in consideration of the losses sustained by unfortunate Nestorians during the massacres, had not been, it is true, levied for that time, but had now been collected altogether, whole districts being thus reduced to the greatest misery and want.¹⁴⁴

As understood from the Layard's account, the central government granted tax exemption to the Nestorian tribes, who had suffered due to the massacres, until 1850.

In July 1850, the village headmen (*kahya*) of the Tiyari and Thuma (Tuhub) sub-districts of the Nestorian tribes, and the patriarch of the Ottoman Nestorians, Mar Shimon, signed a petition before the members of the Hakkari provincial council (*eyalet meclisi*), to clarify the allegations against the tax officials, who had been charged with the collection of the poll tax from these sub-districts, and additionally

¹⁴² Sabri Ateş, "Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples" (Ph.D dissertation, New York University, 2006), 104; BOA. A.MKT. 198/74, 27 Cemaziyelahir 1265 (20 May 1849).

¹⁴³ BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850).

¹⁴⁴ Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert* (New York: Harper&Brothers, 1853), 365.

from Jelu (Cilo). In the document, the group stated that a while earlier the governor of Hakkari had charged an official to investigate the allegations against the tax officials, and also against a group of regular soldiers (*Asakir-i Nizamiye*) who had come from Cizre to Hakkari to discipline the Kurds of Guyan. The allegations against tax officials and soldiers were first that the tax officials had ignored the tax payment receipts of the Nestorians, and had forcibly collected the poll taxes over again from the inhabitants of Thuma despite the fact that the taxes had been already paid. Also, under the command of a high-ranking army officer, a thousand soldiers had seized food equal to the amount of 10,000 piastres, but had paid only 80 piastres for them. As mentioned before, the governor of Hakkari, by the order of the İstanbul government had charged an official to investigate these allegations. However, it seems that either he or the central government had not satisfied the official's investigation, and therefore the Mar Shimon, together with the village headmen of the Tiyari and Thuma had been brought to the provincial council in Hakkari for further interrogation.¹⁴⁵

The Mar Shimon and the other representatives of the sub-districts in question clearly declared that none of these claims reflected the truth. They said the tax collectors had not collected any money from people who had payment receipts for the poll tax, but they had collected 30 or 15 piastres per person from those who had not had any receipts (*yedinde evrakı bulunmayanlardan*), in proportion to their financial situations. The signatories also stated that those who had complained about the collection of the same taxes again and again, and the ill-treatment of the tax officials, were liars.¹⁴⁶ As regards to the ill-treatments of the soldiers, the signatories

¹⁴⁵BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

once again refuted the allegations and stated that the soldiers had paid for the food. However, they said, the payment of the soldiers had not covered the full price of the food. For the reason, the calculations of the soldiers had been based on the prices in Cizre, which were lower than the prices in Hakkari.¹⁴⁷ The Nestorian representatives also noted that the governor of Hakkari had charged an official to record the exact amount of money that should be paid to the inhabitants, and then he had conveyed the record to the military officers for redress.¹⁴⁸

This document was created before the Hakkari provincial council. It is understood that as soon as Hakkari was brought under the authority of the state, the provincial council was established in accordance with the Tanzimat reforms. Within the context of the Tanzimat, these councils served as the engines of the implementation of the reform policies.¹⁴⁹ Typically, the members of the councils were the provincial governor, a mufti, judge, provincial treasurer, and representatives of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities.¹⁵⁰ One of the key tasks that was to be performed by these councils was to ensure the proper collection of taxes. They had the authority to investigate corruption in tax collection, and to judge and punish offenders, in cases of abuse or mistreatment during the collection procedure.¹⁵¹

The allegations against tax collectors regarding the irregularities in the collection of poll taxes from the Nestorian tribes were discussed in the Hakkari

¹⁴⁷BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed account of the functions of provincial councils, see Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapısı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 218-224.

¹⁵⁰ Çadırcı, 219.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 220-221.

provincial council. The members of the council were the governor, deputy judge (*naib*) Es-seyyid Muhammed Emin, mufti Muhyiddin Abdullah, (*müdir-i mal*) the treasurer of sub-province, survey scribe (*katib-i tahrir*) Es-seyyid Ahmet Şükrü, scribe (*katib-i mal*) Muhammed Hayri, four representatives from the Muslim community, one of which was a sheikh, and a representative from the non-Muslim community.¹⁵²

The above stated accounts of the representatives of the Tiyari and Thuma Nestorians, and of Mar Shimon, were summarized in a report by the members of Hakkari council, which was sent to the central government. The report provides more information regarding the method of poll tax collection in this remote area of the empire. The poll taxes were collected by the priests and the representatives of villages, and then the collected amount delivered to tax officials.¹⁵³ The method of tax collection depicted by the council members was in conformity with the description in the imperial decree, which had been prepared in 1842. In rural areas, the poll taxes were collected by the bishops, priests and representatives of the villages under the supervision of the tax officials, who were charged by the governor of the province, and the officials would give receipts to the taxpayers in return.¹⁵⁴

This document is valuable because it is one of the rare documents that provide the chance to hear the voices of some members of the Nestorian community, and to examine their responses to the Tanzimat practices. It also reveals that even at

¹⁵² BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850). It is not clear in the document that the non-Muslim member of the council was belong to which millet, but Van which had a considerable Armenian population, was a sancak under the province of Hakkari at that time, thus the member was likely an Armenian. For the administrative status of Van, see BOA. MVL. 82/75, 16 Safer 1266 (1 January 1850).

¹⁵³ BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850).

¹⁵⁴ Abdüllatif Şener, *Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Vergi Sistemi* (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1990), 114-115.

such an early date, which can be considered as the infancy of the Tanzimat in the region, the state was able to collect taxes from the “inaccessible” Nestorian tribes. On the one hand, it proves that the state’s efforts to extend its authority to the eastern periphery bore fruits; on the other hand it shows the vulnerability of the formerly “independent” tribes vis-à-vis the state agents, as a consequence of the 1843 and 1846 massacres perpetrated by Mir Bedirhan.

The language that was used both by the Nestorians and by the members of the Hakkari provincial council, which reflects the positive views of both sides, is another interesting aspect of this document. As will be seen in the following parts of this chapter, many documents from the second half of the nineteenth century that related to tax collection from the Nestorians are full of pejorative words such as “savage” and “intractable” (*serkeş*), which were frequently used by the local officials to describe the Nestorian tribes. These words were also sometimes the life buoys of the local state functionaries while explaining the reasons for uncollected taxes to the central government.

Since last year, we have been under the protection of his Excellency the governor of Hakkari. He has assured the safety of our lives, wealth and honor. None of us have been persecuted or suffered under his ruling, and we pray every day for the perpetuity of the empire, and for the well being of the Sultan.¹⁵⁵

These phrases are the written expression of the Nestorians in the document in question, with respect to the Ottoman state and the governor of Hakkari. At first glance, they can be seen as typical statements that could be found in many documents. However, if these expressions are taken into consideration together with their acquittal of allegations against the tax collectors, two possibilities could be

¹⁵⁵ BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850).

deduced. Either this document was written under serious oppression, and the Nestorians were forced to sign it in order to avoid further atrocities, or it actually reflects their gratitude to the governor who was portrayed as a determined agent of the Tanzimat state, and endeavored to establish a just administration in Hakkari.

In my research I did not come across another correspondence between the local and central state agents regarding this case; but the account of Layard, who visited the Nestorian sub-districts of Hakkari towards the end of July of the same year, coincided with this case in many respects. Layard visited the Nestorian districts of Thuma and Jelu, nearly three weeks after the creation of the above document. He wrote several times about the misery of the Nestorian population due to the unjust taxes levied by the government officials and soldiers.¹⁵⁶ For example, regarding the situation in a village of Thuma, in July 1850, he wrote that, “A body of Turkish troops had lately visited the village, and had destroyed the little that had been restored since the Kurdish invasion. The same taxes had been collected three times, and even four times, over.”¹⁵⁷ He proceeded with describing the violence committed by the officers during the collection of taxes.¹⁵⁸

In Layard’s account, one part is especially important with regards to our case. According to him, in July 1850, the Nestorians were suffering from the unjust taxes, and the oppressive means used by the collectors, and finally they decided to convey their grievances to the governor of Hakkari by means of a deputation. He relates this process as follows: “A deputation sent to the Pasha had been ill-treated, and some of

¹⁵⁶Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert* (New York: Harper&Brothers, 1853), 365-372.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

its members were still in prison. There was no one in authority to plead for them.”¹⁵⁹

The members of the deputation were likely the same people who had been called liars in the document by the signatories.¹⁶⁰

There is a contradiction between the narrative of Layard and the one represented in the document. This contradiction can be seen as an indication of the aforesaid first possibility that the signatories had been forced to retract the allegations. Despite the lack of further correspondences regarding this case, a document sent from the İstanbul government to the Hakkari and Kurdistan governors and to the Ministry of Finance on 8 September 1850 reveals the corruption in the collection of poll taxes from the Nestorian sub-districts.

It is understood from the document that the central government was informed on the repeated (*mükerrer*) tax collection issue by the governor of Mosul. The central government ordered the governors to make sure the Nestorians were not ill-treated, and to avoid irregularities such as demanding poll taxes that had already been paid or seizing items from the taxpayers. It is also understood from the document that the local government of Hakkari had attempted to levy both the current and previous years' poll taxes, but this attempt had resulted in failure. In addition, the document said that considering the poverty of the Nestorian tribes, the central government had decided to grant them a one-year poll tax exemption and ordered the governor to give tax certificates to the Nestorians without extracting any payment.¹⁶¹

As understood from the above document, neither the accounts of the provincial council's members nor that of the representatives of the Nestorian tribes who were forced to retract the allegations, could convince the central government.

¹⁵⁹ Layard, 365.

¹⁶⁰ BOA. MVL. 233/84, 21 Şaban 1266 (2 July 1850).

¹⁶¹ BOA. A.MKT.MVL 31/28, 01 Zilkade 1266 (8 September 1850).

Despite the local council's report that tried to prove the well-being of the Nestorians, the central government was aware of their poverty, and accordingly decided to grant a tax exemption.

These documents show that by 1850 the situation in the districts of the Nestorian tribes was far from one of order and justice. Although the central government tried to prevent irregularities in tax collection and "showed mercy" to its subjects, the document sent from İstanbul to the governors does not include any statement related to the investigation or punishment of the offenders. While the central government strictly warned its local agents about the prevention of over-taxation, it did not ask who had been responsible for the irregularities. Thus the attitude of the central government with regard to the corrupt and oppressive behaviors during tax collection was rather superficial, and far from being a solution. Consequently, as will be seen in the following cases, similar allegations and grievances were made with regard to the over- taxation that continued in the following years, and constituted a major part of the relations between the local and central agents of Ottoman state and the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari.

At this juncture, it should be stated that the Ottoman state's desire to collect taxes regularly from the Nestorians was not just related to economic concerns. Ensuring the regular collection of taxes was an instrument of the state to turn them into loyal Ottoman subjects, and to extend its authority into their remote settlements. Regular tax payment was seen as the primary criterion of being loyal Ottoman subjects. Thus, the agents of the Tanzimat state's first task to transform these mountain Christians into loyal Ottoman subjects was to extract taxes from this community. However, it was not an easy task, and the local government mostly failed to carry it out properly. What lay behind this failure was mostly the over-

taxation of the Nestorians and the ill-treatment of the state's various agents from the very beginning. As seen in the above documents and in the account of Layard, the tax officials, soldiers, and even the governor of Hakkari were allegedly involved in the oppression of the Nestorians. However, in most cases, the local government only blamed the "nature" of the Nestorians by reason of their own failure to collect taxes. Selim Deringil examines the words or phrases frequently used by state functionaries in documents during the Hamidian era, and states that a close examination of them provides us an opportunity to analyze the state's view of its subjects.¹⁶² From this point of view, it can be seen how local government agents view the population under their authority, and also in what ways they reflect their views about the population to the central state.

As the people on the ground, the local officials had a position which enabled them to construct the views of the central government regarding its Nestorian subjects; in other words, they acted as intermediaries between the central state and its subjects. By using this advantageous position, in many examples the local government alleged the so-called disobedience of the Nestorian tribes as a pretext for their failure at tax collection.

For example, in a document sent from İstanbul to the governors of Van and Hakkari,¹⁶³ it can be seen in what manner the local officials reported on the difficulties they had faced during tax collection, to the central government. The issue in the document was the collection of the sheep tax from the Nestorian tribes who lived in the upper and lower Tiyari and Çal sub-districts. It is written that the local officials, likely the governor of Van or Hakkari, recently had sent a report to the

¹⁶² Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 39-42.

¹⁶³ In 1859, Hakkari was a sub-province of Van.

Ministry of Finance, and stated that the sheep taxes could not be collected since no one had wanted to buy tax farming in these regions. It is understood that the local government agents claimed to the Ministry of Finance that they had not been able to find any tax farmers, because the behavior of the Nestorians was not in conformity with being Ottoman subjects.¹⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the document does not include any details about what kind of behavior of the Nestorian community was shown as the obstacle before the tax collection, but most likely, their resistance to taxation, which resulted from unjust and irregular exactions, was asserted both as the obstacle to tax farming and as proof of their unsuitability for being Ottoman subjects.

In response to the local government's account, the Ministry of Finance proposed an alternative way to collect taxes, and ordered the governors to appoint a capable tax official for the collection of the sheep tax. It is emphasized that each sheep had to be counted in the sub-districts in question, and the whole amount of the tax had to be collected without any further delay.¹⁶⁵

As livestock farming was the main source of the tribal Nestorians' income, the amount expected to be paid by them, was no doubt crucial for their subsistence.¹⁶⁶ However, as can be deduced from the Ministry of Finance's account, the amount of sheep tax levied to these people was predetermined without any surveys having been done. The Ministry of Finance's alternative method of collection was more in accordance with the Tanzimat's practices. While it seems there was not a certain way defined with regard to the method of sheep tax collection during the early years of the Tanzimat, referring to Vefik, Abdüllatif Şener states that some arrangements were made on the issue such as the sheep tax was to be

¹⁶⁴ BOA. A.MKT.MHM 166/49, 28 Safer 1276 (26 September 1859).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ For the importance of sheep for the subsistence of the Nestorian tribes, see Chapter 4.

collected by tax officials, and the amount to be paid by the tax payers was calculated based on the number of animals, which was also to be counted by the tax officials.¹⁶⁷ Şener further states that in 1858, a regulation on the sheep tax was introduced, according to which it became a sort of income tax that would be levied based on the annual revenue generated from each sheep, and it was to be mostly collected by government tax collectors.¹⁶⁸

As seen, not surprisingly, these regulations were not applied to the Nestorian sub-districts in question. In this frontier region, some rules and regulations that formally should have been implemented in those years were taken into consideration when no other ways were left, as in the example given.

Pursuing Old Habits: The Intention of Military Operation to Collect Taxes

The document, dated 1850, discussed at the beginning of the previous part, sadly represents just the beginning of the tax-related problems in the Nestorian districts. The so-called peaceful relationship between the Nestorian tribes and the state agents depicted in it seems to have been damaged clearly in 1860, by the issue of over-taxation and the abuses of the tax collectors. But this time, contrary to the first case, no one tried to justify the allegations made about the collectors. The problem became inextricable due to the intention of the resorting military forces to collect the taxes. The related documents on the issue, which will be discussed below, reveal that the state's local functionaries in the region continued to use the old coercive methods of

¹⁶⁷ Abdurrahman Vefik, *Tekalif Kavaidi*, Dersaadet: Kanaat Matbaası, 1330 (1914), 1: 211, cited in Abdüllatif Şener, *Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Vergi Sistemi* (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1990), 141.

¹⁶⁸ Şener, 142-144.

the state, which was to conduct military operations against the unmanageable groups, without attempting to negotiate.

On 19 January 1860, İsmail Paşa, the governor of Van province, sent a report to the Grand Vizierate about the events that had occurred in the Çölemerik (Julamerk) district of Hakkari sub-province. The governor wrote that the Nestorians of Çölemerik had refused to pay their back taxes and also that year's sheep taxes. It is understood that in response to this situation, a group of soldiers (*Asakir-i Nizamiye*) who were already stationed in Çölemerik, had been sent to the Nestorian settlements in order to discipline them and to collect the taxes in question.¹⁶⁹

Apparently, resulting from an order of the Grand Vizierate, the governor had asked the reason for sending soldiers to the governor (*kaymakam*) of Çölemerik. Based on the answer of Çölemerik's governor, İsmail Paşa wrote to the Grand Vizierate that the Nestorians had been properly threatened (*tehdidiyye-i hakimane*), and as a result, the sheep taxes had been collected successfully, fortunately without the need to shoot rifles (*tüfeng patlamaksızın gaile-i mezkure bertaraf olmuş*). He further wrote that, in addition to this success, the head of the Nestorian community, Mar Shimon, had asked for mercy, and had said he would go to Başkale, the seat of the district governor, to meet with the governor on the subject of Nestorians' back taxes.¹⁷⁰

İsmail Paşa's account in the above document is not clear. It seems that he avoided giving details about sending soldiers, and tried to distract the central government's attention away from the use of soldiers for the purpose of tax collection. But another document penned by the British consul in Mosul, written on 6

¹⁶⁹ BOA, A.MKT.UM. 391/50, 25 Cemaziyelahir 1276 (19 January 1860).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

December 1859, to the governor of Van İsmail Pasha,¹⁷¹ says that the general (*mirliva*) Abdurrahman Pasha had demanded soldiers from Van and Mosul provinces, in order to discipline the Nestorians, who had resisted paying their taxes. The consul stated that Mirliva's request should not be approved, and alternatively he had recommended that the patriarch, Mar Shimon, who had great influence on the Nestorians, could be summoned to Başkale in order to leniently discuss the problem. He further said that, like the other patriarchs, the Mar Shimon should be awarded for the purpose of winning his heart.¹⁷² The consul's emphasis on over-taxation is also important. According to him, the resistance of the Nestorians was not baseless disobedience; indeed, their opposition was to the unjustness of the tax collectors, who once again had demanded taxes which had been paid already.¹⁷³

As can be seen, the report of the Van governor, İsmail Paşa, did not include any reference to the issue of over-taxation. Moreover, he did not give any details concerning the way by which the Nestorians were disciplined. His account is another example of how the local state functionaries tried to cover up the irregularities on the ground. On the other hand, another document, dated 15 January 1860,¹⁷⁴ shows the response of the central government to the issue, and the actual intention of the aforementioned Mirliva Abdurrahman Paşa.¹⁷⁵ The document was sent from the central government to the governor of Hakkari sub-province and to the commander-in-chief (*Serasker*). It was stated that Mirliva Abdurrahman Pasha had demanded regular

¹⁷¹ BOA. A.MKT.UM. 391/50, 11 Cemaziyelevvel 1276 (6 December 1859).

¹⁷² BOA. A.MKT.UM. 391/50, 11 Cemaziyelevvel 1276 (6 December 1859).

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ BOA. A.MKT.UM. 390/51, 21 Cemaziyelahir 1276 (15 January 1860).

¹⁷⁵ See the afore-mentioned document.

soldiers from Van and Mosul provinces, and he had the intention to form irregular forces from the inhabitants of the surrounding districts (*civar-ı kaza ahalisinden nefir-i amm tertib olunarak*) in order to discipline the Nestorians. Considering the season, which was winter, the central government did not approve his requests, and it was stated that the Paşa's plan had to be postponed. In addition, the central government recommended the governor to use a more proper way to collect taxes than resorting to brute force, and they ordered the commander-in-chief to inform the Mirliva Abdurrahman Pasha regarding their decision about his request. Last, it is emphasized that the issue would be discussed before the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Meclis-i Vala-yı Ahkam-ı Adliye*).¹⁷⁶ The Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances, which was established in 1838, operated as the highest judicial organ of the Ottoman state until 1867. Disputes over and cases on over taxation or the implementation of Tanzimat policies at the provincial level could be referred to the Supreme Council, as in the case under discussion.¹⁷⁷

This last document offers important clues about the oppression of the Nestorians. The Mirliva Abdurrahman Pasha was preparing to conduct a large-scale military operation in Çölemerik, with the excuse of disciplining the Nestorians and collecting back taxes. He had planned to use even civilians together with soldiers against the Nestorians. This shows the weakness of what Michael Mann terms as

¹⁷⁶BOA. A.MKT.UM. 390/51, 21 Cemaziyelahir 1276 (15 January 1860) ; Tarık Ziya Arvas, "Hakkari Nasturileri (1836-1936)" (M.A. thesis, Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2010), 122. Also, see Murat Gökhan Dalyan, "19. Yüzyıl'da Nasturiler (İdari Sosyal Yapı ve Siyasi İlişkileri)" (Ph.D diss., Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2009), 65; Osman Uçar, "Osmanlı Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Nasturi Olayları (1840-1870)" (M.A. thesis, Mersin Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2010), 48.

¹⁷⁷ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2: 76-79; Çadircı, 185-190; Şener, 87.

“the state’s infrastructural power,” in the region. Mann defines the infrastructural power of the state as “the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.”¹⁷⁸ The efforts of the Ottoman state to penetrate the Nestorian settlements started with attempts to secure the regular collection of taxes through its local functionaries. However, as seen in the above documents, the local functionaries were far away to consolidate infrastructural power, which should have included negotiation with the people living there.¹⁷⁹ Instead, they still relied on coercive means like military operations.

As discussed above, it was decided that the issue would be discussed before the Supreme Council. Approximately six months after the incidents, the Council took some decisions on the issue. A document which includes the decisions of the Supreme Council was sent from Grand Vizierate to the Ministry of Finance, the governor of Van sub-province, the governor of Hakkari district, and the tax officials (*bekaya memuruna*). The document described the oppression of the Nestorians by the tax collectors during the collection of back taxes, and upon the failure of the collectors, the local government’s decision to use more oppressive means to accomplish the duty. According to the document, the amount that had been tried to extract by the collectors had been approximately 6 *yük* (1 *yük* was equal to 100.000 piastres) piastres.¹⁸⁰ Then, it is pointed out that as a result of the ill-treatments, the Nestorians were terrified; they had fled their settlements into nearby Kurdish areas.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results,” in *States in History*, ed. John A. Hall (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 113.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ BOA. A.MKT.UM. 415/3, 29 Zilhicce 1276 (18 July 1860); Arvas, 121; Dalyan, 64. Also, see Uçar, 48.

From the account of the British consul it is known that the Nestorians' resistance to paying their back taxes was based on the claim that they had already paid some of the taxes in question.¹⁸¹ This claim was once again stated in this document, and further, it was said, they claimed that they had not received any receipts from the tax collectors to prove their payments.

It seems from the account in the document that the central government had taken the claims of the Nestorians into consideration to some extent. It was emphasized that even these claims were not acceptable within the context of law and order, due to the corroborations of these claims by several local actors, and as a precaution to avoid increasing the roughness (*huşunet*) of the Nestorians, their claims needed to be investigated.¹⁸²

It is understood from the document that these issues were discussed seriously in the Supreme Council. The decisions taken to solve the problems were as follows: To investigate the claims of the Nestorians by examining the registers and by asking when and to whom they had paid their taxes; to make an installment plan for their debts, but only after levying as much cash as possible; to prevent the ill-treatment of the Nestorians, and to use more diplomatic ways while collecting taxes; and to reward their patriarch, Mar Shimon, in order to gain their hearts and minds on behalf of the state (*bunların hükümet-i saltanat-ı seniyyeye ısındırılması*).¹⁸³

This document clearly presents the differences between the attitudes of the local and the central state agents. Unlike the views of its local agents, the central government seriously objected to the use of oppressive means to secure the

¹⁸¹ See the afore-mentioned document, BOA. A.MKT.UM. 391/50, 11 Cemaziyelevvel 1276 (6 December 1859).

¹⁸² BOA. A.MKT.UM. 415/3, 29 Zilhicce 1276 (18 July 1860).

¹⁸³ Ibid.

collection of taxes. It seems that the afore-mentioned recommendation of the British consul, rewarding their patriarch in order to win their hearts,¹⁸⁴ was found suitable as an alternative way to solve the problems. It can be inferred that the acceptance of this way by the central state stemmed from the fear of British intervention into the issue; however, as Deringil rightly states, “Decorating or otherwise rewarding men it could not discipline or control had always been a policy of the Sublime Porte. As real coercive power declined in the nineteenth century this became all the more prevalent.”¹⁸⁵ From this point of view, it can be said that the central state tried to pave the way for negotiations with the Nestorians, and the rewarding in question could be considered as a first step in opening negotiation channels.

Despite all these positive steps, some crucial points that could have brought a solution to the tax-related grievances of the Nestorians seem to have been neglected by the central government. While it was clear that the Nestorians were cruelly oppressed by the tax officials to the extent that they had to flee their settlements, the document includes no reference to the punishment of the officials. In addition, it seems the central state was not very interested in corruption, because there was no specific mention of preventing irregularities, such as the collection of taxes without giving receipts to the tax payers. On the other hand, the document includes several references to the collection of as large an amount of taxes as possible yet without resorting to oppression.¹⁸⁶

I did not find any further documents to tell us whether the claims of the Nestorians about the irregularities were investigated or not. However, the warnings

¹⁸⁴ BOA. A.MKT.UM. 391/50, 11 Cemaziyelevvel 1276 (6 December 1859).

¹⁸⁵ Deringil, 35.

¹⁸⁶ BOA. A.MKT.UM. 415/3, 29 Zilhicce 1276 (18 July 1860).

of the central government concerning the avoidance of oppression, and the rewarding of Mar Shimon in order to win the hearts of the Nestorians, seemed to have been successful for some time. On 29 August 1865, a document sent to Erzurum province in order to inform the provincial government about the recent tax payment by the Nestorians. According to the document, the patriarch, Mar Shimon, had accompanied some Nestorian notables to the Başkale region of the Hakkari district, and they had brought 26,390 piastres in their back taxes. The group had promised henceforth to pay their taxes on time, and declared their subjection to the government. In return for their payment and promises, a horse had been given to the patriarch and some *hi'lats* (robes of honor) were given to the Nestorian notables.¹⁸⁷

However, as might be expected, the problems related to tax collection in the Nestorian settlements reappeared in the following years. Three years later, the issue of unpaid taxes rose again on the local and central governments' agenda. The governor of Erzurum province, Ahmed, sent a report to the Grand Vizierate on 2 July 1868, to explain the amount of back taxes the Nestorians owed, and to propose a solution to collect these taxes. According to his account, the back taxes of Nestorians for the fiscal years 1865-66 and 1866-67, together with their late taxes until the end of the fiscal year 1864-65, amounted to 28 *yük* piastres.¹⁸⁸ These back taxes belonged to the Tiyari, Txuma (Tuhub), Baz, Dız and Cilo (Jelu) sub-districts, all of which were settlements of the Nestorian tribes; and also to the non-tribal Nestorian population of Çal and Beytüşşebap sub-districts and the Gevar district of Hakkari. He then stated that a while ago, government officials had gone to the village of Mar Shimon to inform him of the amount of their debt, and to discuss the payment. Mar

¹⁸⁷ BOA. MVL. 712/31, 6 Rebiülahir 1282 (29 August 1865).

¹⁸⁸ BOA. Ş.D. 1503/13, 11 Rebiülevvel 1285 (2 July 1868).

Shimon had not opposed the officials and promised the taxes in question would be paid.¹⁸⁹ “But up to now, no payment has been made” said the governor.¹⁹⁰

Another document that was prepared by the accounting department of Erzurum province (*muhasabe-i vilayet-i Erzurum*), and dated 25 June 1868, includes detailed information on the kind of taxes levied from the Nestorians.¹⁹¹ It is understood that Hakkari was now a sub-province of Erzurum province. The taxes demanded from the Nestorians were property tax (*mal-ı vergi*), military service exemption tax (*bedel-i askeri*), tithe (*bedel-i aşar*), and sheep tax (*ağnam rüsumu*).¹⁹²

At the end of the document which was written by the governor of Erzurum, it was stated that the taxes in question must not be wasted, but it was impossible to collect the taxes by using tax officials. According to him, the only way to collect them would be to send soldiers to the Nestorian settlements, and he asked the permission of the Grand Vizierate to do this.¹⁹³

The taxation problem in the Nestorian settlements was an endless story, which turned into an arena of struggle between the central government and its local agents. While the center tried to solve the problem by means of negotiation, the recipe of the local governors was usually to use violence. Their enthusiasm to resort to coercive means likely stemmed from the intention of covering up their inability to bring order and justice to the region, and accordingly their failure to increase the revenue of the central treasury. Thus, representing the Nestorians to the central state

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ BOA. Ş.D. 1503/13, 4 Rebiülevvel 1285 (25 June 1868).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ BOA. Ş.D. 1503/13, 11 Rebiülevvel 1285 (2 July 1868).

as an incorrigible community that had to be punished through military operations was a strategy the local governors used to avoid the wrath of the central government.

The Intention of Reform and the 1869 Petition of the Nestorian Tribes

This part examines the first serious steps of the local and central government to implement the Tanzimat policies in the settlements of Hakkari's Nestorian tribes, and the responses of the Nestorians to these steps. At this juncture, it is necessary to mention that, apart from the reflection of the Tanzimat's shadow on the lives of the Nestorians primarily through the tax burden, and their acquaintance with some of its institutions and agents, such as tax officials, governors, and the provincial councils, neither censuses nor income and property surveys, which were the essential elements of a just taxation system, were introduced in this part of the region, between 1850-1868. As a consequence of the lack of surveys and censuses, the amount of taxes demanded from the Nestorians was based on estimations, and thus far from being just. The censuses and surveys were means employed by the Tanzimat state to make its subjects "legible," thus the Ottoman Nestorians were still an "illegible" community up until the late 1860s.¹⁹⁴

Finally, in 1869 it seems a capable governor decided to put an end to this situation, and took a step to applying the Tanzimat practices in the districts of the Nestorian tribes. Hakkari was a sub-province of Erzurum province at that time. The governor of Erzurum province wrote a report to the Grand Vizierate on 9 September 1869 to explain the developments in Hakkari regarding his attempts to apply the Tanzimat practices to the Nestorian areas. The governor started his report with

¹⁹⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1998).

emphasizing the “savageness” of the Nestorians as a reason for the hitherto failure in implementing the orders of the central state in their districts. He stated that for this reason, the back taxes of Nestorians had accrued to a considerable amount.¹⁹⁵

It is understood from the document that sometime earlier the Sublime Porte (*Bab-ı Ali*) had given orders for the creation of a military unit to be sent to the Nestorian districts that would include troops from the Sixth Army, and also civilians from the local population. But the order was then canceled, and it was stated that the Nestorians should be reformed “without lamentation,”¹⁹⁶ and through giving reassurance (*taife-i merkumenin te'min u istimaletle sızıldısızca daire-i ıslahata konulmasına*).¹⁹⁷ This preparation for a military operation likely stemmed from the advice of Erzurum’s former governor, who had recommended this in the previously discussed document.¹⁹⁸ The new governor, İsmail, stated that as soon as he had taken office, he had set about introducing reforms (*ıslahat*) to the Nestorian districts. He had entered into negotiations with Mar Shimon in this respect. He had instructed the governor of Van sub-province to give priority to reforming the Nestorian tribes, and in consequence of the two governors’ efforts an “unprecedented” achievement had occurred that Mar Shimon and some notables of tribes had traveled to Van to discuss the reforms before the administrative council of the sancak (*meclis-i idare-i liva*). Consequently, the Nestorians in question had signed a promissory petition before the

¹⁹⁵ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 2 Cemaziyelahir 1286 (9 September 1869).

¹⁹⁶ I used Deringil’s translation of the word ‘*sızıldısızca*’. Deringil, 42.

¹⁹⁷ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 2 Cemaziyelahir 1286 (9 September 1869).

¹⁹⁸ See the afore discussed document, BOA. Ş.D. 1503/13, 11 Rebiülevvel 1285 (2 July 1868).

council. He summarized the articles of this petition, and finally asked the permission of the central government to put the issues in the articles into practice.¹⁹⁹

The petition in question, which will be examined next, contains much more than the promises of the Nestorians. It was full of their demands from the state, and of their responses to the implementation of the Tanzimat's surveys. Before discussing this petition, it will be meaningful to mention a last point from the governor's account. He stated that, due to alleging some obstacles, the implementation of the Tanzimat practices in the Nestorian districts had been postponed up until the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz. But now, he said, as a result of the Sultan's good intentions toward his subjects and by his orders, all the necessary practices would be perfectly implemented if allowed.²⁰⁰ With these statements, it seems the governor implied the inability or unwillingness of the former administrations to implement the Tanzimat practices in the region in question.

As I said before, some notables of the Nestorian tribes (seven *meliks* (heads of the Nestorian tribes) from the Tiyari, Baz, Diz, Cilo (Jelu) and Tuhub (Thuma) tribes; three *kahyas*; three clerics; four other notables; and the Nestorian patriarch, Mar Shimon) had signed a petition consisting of five articles. This petition is valuable in that it sheds light on the expectations and demands of the Nestorian tribes from the central and local governments regarding the administration of their own sub-districts. In addition some important answers to the long-standing unpaid taxes question can be found in the petition. It is a rare document that presents the actual state of the Nestorians. For that reason, here I will summarize each article of the petition as follows:

¹⁹⁹ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 2 Cemaziyelahir 1286 (9 September 1869).

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

In the first article, the petitioners stated that up to that time the five Nestorian sub-districts (*nahiye*) of Hakkari's Çölemerik district had not been administrated in conformity with the regulations and orders of the state. Now, thanks to the mercy and sense of justice of the Sultan, they (the members of the Nestorian tribes) also want to benefit from law and order, like the other subjects of the state. They wanted to participate in education, and engaged in trade and industry. For these reasons, they wanted their five sub-districts to be administrated like the neighboring ones. To this end, a Council of Elders (*ihitiyar meclisi*) should be constituted in their villages, and a governor (*müdüir*) should be appointed to the *nahiye* center along with the constitution of the administrative council (*nahiye meclisi*). They stated that since all these measures are necessary to establish an administration, which would be in conformity with law and order of the Sublime state (*devlet-i aliyye*), all steps should be taken immediately.²⁰¹

In the second article, they wanted that the taxes (the property tax, the tithe, the sheep tax, and the military exemption tax) that were levied from them to be re-arranged. According to their accounts, the amounts of these taxes had been determined in a hurry, during the creation of the now defunct Hakkari province (*Hakkari eyaleti*). Thus the determined amounts were based on rough estimations. They pointed out that their sub-districts mostly consisted of mountains and hills, and their lands were unfertile and rocky (*sengistan*). Due to these conditions, the amount of taxes in question never could have been paid totally. It was stated that although, decreasing their tax burden sometimes had been brought onto the agenda, it did not put into practice; thus their back taxes had accumulated. Now, they were demanding that the actual state of their sub-districts to be considered, and therefore their taxes to

²⁰¹ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 15 Rabiülahir 1286 (25 July 1869).

be justly re-determined. To this end, they wanted that the necessary land and property surveys, and the census to be taken. Also they said that their sheep must be counted, and their tithes and sheep taxes must be levied through appointed government tax officials (*emaneten*).²⁰²

Article three was related to the tax records of the Nestorian tribes in the sub-province's registers. According to the records their back taxes amounted to 31 *yük* 96,243 piastres. However, they said, this record does not reflect the truth. They claimed that they had paid quite amounts each year, and they had the receipts of these payments. It was said that though, they hadn't got receipts of some among them they could prove those payments too, through stating the time, place, and the way of their payment. Hence, by taking these claims into consideration, their demand was the correction of the records through the examination of an appointed accountant. It was said that after making this correction, and the implementation of the above-mentioned surveys, the actual amount of their debt would appear. Then if it would be considered worthy to forgive (*eğerçi sarkan kusur-ı bekaya borcumuz kemmen şayan-ı afv-ı ali ise*), they demanded forgiveness; if not then they were demanding to pay by installments which could be added to their annual tax amounts.²⁰³

In the fourth article they demanded that their representatives be permitted to participate as members in the councils in the other districts of Hakkari, where the non-tribal Nestorians lived.²⁰⁴

²⁰² BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 15 Rabiülahir 1286 (25 July 1869).

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

In the last article it was stated that although their language and the religious principles of their sect were taught by their clerics, called as *kaşe*, they wanted their children to be educated in the language of the state. However, they were not able to build a school on their own. Thus, they requested that an adolescence school to be opened in Çölemerik district, like the one that had been opened in Albak a while earlier.²⁰⁵

This petition was signed before the members of the Hakkari council. All the articles of the petition were discussed in the council, and again all of them were approved. The council's decision, which favored the demands of the Nestorians, was written under the petition, and it was stated that according to the orders that would be given by the province administration, they would put into effect all the relevant measures.²⁰⁶ The process continued with the Sultan's decree, dated 6 October 1869, which approved some of the decisions taken in this council.²⁰⁷

Both the aforementioned report of the Erzurum governor and the one presented to the Sultan by the Grand Vizierate contain an important detail related to the first article of the petition. It was stated that the five Nestorian sub-districts in question must be combined as a new administrative unit which to be called the Nestorian district (*kaza-i nevahi-i Nasturiyye*).²⁰⁸ It seems the governor thought that it would be easier to maintain order and to gain control in the Nestorian settlements if they became a single administrative unit. The governor seemed determined about the issue. On his order, a document was prepared which specified the numbers of the

²⁰⁵ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 15 Rabiülahir 1286 (25 July 1869).

²⁰⁶ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 23 Rabiülahir 1286 (2 August 1869).

²⁰⁷ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 29 Cemaziyelahir 1286 (6 October 1869).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

required of civil officials and *zabtiyes* (provincial paramilitary police)²⁰⁹ with their monthly salaries, and the number of the council of elders' members, which were intended to be formed in each sub-district.²¹⁰ It was stated that the monthly expense of this district would be 4,750 piastres, which could be considered an insignificant amount vis-à-vis the revenue expected by the implementation of the reform plan.²¹¹

It was mentioned earlier that some of the articles in the petition were approved by the Sultan. However, the articles related to education and the correction of back tax records were not included in the report which was presented to the Sultan. The most emphasized issues in the report were conducting surveys and census, and the formation of the Nestorian district.²¹²

The conflicts between the Nestorian tribes and the various state agents, which had started with allegations of oppression and corruption, and continued with the intention of military operations, were for now turned into negotiation. The petition, in fact could be considered as a summary of the undergoing problems since 1850, and also of the possible solutions. The unrecorded payments, which likely stemmed from corrupt officials, and the unjust tax amounts, which were based on rough estimations and determined without the implementation of necessary surveys, constituted the basis of the tax question.

What is significant in this petition is that the Nestorians—who had been presented to the central government as “savage,” “recalcitrant,” and “disobedient” people by the local agents—willingness to be incorporated into the Tanzimat

²⁰⁹ I used Özbek's translation for *zabtiye*. Nadir Özbek, “Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire (1876-1908),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no.1 (2008), 47.

²¹⁰ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 2 Cemaziyelahir 1286 (9 September 1869).

²¹¹ BOA. İ.DH. 599/41779, 29 Cemaziyelahir 1286 (6 October 1869).

²¹² Ibid.

practices. The surveys and censuses which caused the reactions and oppositions of the local population in some parts of the empire were demanded by the Nestorian tribes of Hakkari, in the hope of justice. Additionally, their demands related to the formation of local councils, and finding a place in these councils as members, show that the Nestorian tribes wanted to have a voice in their own administration.

Unfortunately, the demands and decisions in question were not fulfilled. There is no evidence that indicates the censuses or surveys were implemented in the Nestorian settlements. The Nestorian district, which seems to have been approved by the Sultan, was never created. The important question of what hindered the implementation of the decisions taken by the approval of all sides of the issue remains unanswered.

However, a last document that will be presented here gives clues about what happened next. In a document dated 9 December 1872, the central government informed Erzurum province of its decision to conduct a military operation in the Nestorian settlements of Çölemerik.²¹³ It is understood from the document, for a while, the central government, the provincial government, and the commander-in-chief corresponded with each other on the issue. There is no detail in the document related to the reason for the intended operation; however, it was stated that the plan for an operation stemmed from the necessity of “bringing the Nestorians into the fold of civilization (*daire-i medeniyete idhal*).”²¹⁴ However, the operation was postponed

²¹³ BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 443/33, 8 Şevval 1289 (9 December 1872). See also, Dalyan, 65.

²¹⁴ Ibid. I used Deringil’s translation of the phrase ‘*daire-i medeniyete idhal*’. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 41. Deringil argues that the phrases such as “they live in a state of nomadism and savagery” or “gradually include them in the circle of civilization” that used by the Ottoman officials to refer the situation of the nomadic populations, were the reflections of the Ottomans colonial attitude toward the peripheric groups of the empire in the nineteenth century, which he terms as “borrowed colonialism.” Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003), 317-318.

considering two possibilities. First, it was said, the neighboring Kurdish tribes might exploit the situation and might attack the Nestorians, or the Nestorians might demand help from the Kurdish tribes to fight back, and they might take their support.²¹⁵

As can be understood from the above document, three years after the previously discussed negotiation, the relations between the central and local state agents and the Nestorians of Hakkari went back to the beginning. Even though it was postponed, by 1872 conducting a military operation in order to discipline the Nestorian tribes was once again on the agenda of the central and the local government agents.

The next chapter looks at the worsening relations between the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. To this aim, the serious conflicts between the largest and most important Nestorian tribe, the Tiyari, and one of the most powerful Kurdish tribe of Hakkari, the Ertoşi, will be examined. Through examining their conflicts which started by the late 1880s, it will be shown that Abdülhamid II's policies towards the Kurdish tribes altered the power structure in Hakkari to the detriment of the Nestorians. Also, the reflections of the formation of the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments on the relations between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes in Hakkari, and based on this, the worsening Nestorian-Kurdish relations via the privileges that the Kurdish tribes gained through joining the regiments will be examined.

²¹⁵ BOA. A.MKT.MHM. 443/33, 8 Şevval 1289 (9 December 1872).

CHAPTER FOUR

NESTORIAN-KURDISH RELATIONS DURING THE REIGN OF ABDULHAMID II

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate a small piece of the chaotic situation and the power struggles in the eastern provinces of the empire, which started after the destruction of the Kurdish emirates as a part of the state's centralization efforts that discussed in chapter two, and escalated throughout the following decades, by focusing mainly the conflicts between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Kurdish Ertoşi tribe. As Janet Klein notes, "the centralization efforts were ineffective and/or differently applied in some parts of the empire; Kurdistan was one such place, where, instead of increasing order, general security, and the rule of law, they actually decreased in many parts."²¹⁶

The authority gap in the region that emerged after the abolishment of the emirates could not be filled by the state's government agents.²¹⁷ Van Bruinessen states that contrary to the intentions of the central state, indirect rule continued in the eastern provinces in the nineteenth century. The large tribes were the new political units of the region, and the leaders of these tribes struggled with each other to gain the support of the state.²¹⁸ In consequence of the intertribal struggles and lack of an effective authority that had legitimate power to reconcile the conflicts between the tribes, insecurity and lawlessness had become the rule of the day in the region.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 60.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 193.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 229.

As will be shown in this chapter, the situation of Hakkari during the reign of Abdülhamid II clearly exemplifies the above mentioned chaotic situation in the eastern provinces. Although the intertribal conflicts and the insecure environment that stemmed mostly from these conflicts in the eastern provinces had started years before the ascension of Sultan Abdülhamid to the throne, it can be argued that they accelerated ironically during his reign partly as a consequence of some policies of the central government, which indeed aimed to establish order and security in the region. As a frontier region that mostly dominated by tribal groups, it can be said that Hakkari was among the most affected regions from the socio-political changes that occurred in the eastern provinces from the 1830s onwards.²²⁰ Kurds and Nestorians constituted the majority of Hakkari's population, and an important part of both these two groups was tribally organized.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the central state's periodic efforts until the 1870s to bring one of these groups, the Nestorian tribes, under control, and to turn them into loyal Ottoman subjects had mostly failed. Starting from the late 1880s, the problem that confronted the Nestorian tribes with both the local and central state agents was their conflicts with the Kurdish tribes. One of these conflicts among many small scale ones between the members of these two tribal groups, occupied both the local and central government agents for long years. It was mainly the conflicts between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Kurdish Ertoşi tribe.

Through examining the conflicts between these tribes, one of the goals of this chapter is to present an example of the coalitions between the different power-seeking actors of the region, more clearly, the coalition between sheikhs and Kurdish tribal leaders. The first part of this chapter will focus on the coalition between Sheikh

²²⁰ See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Mehmed Nuri of Berwari, the Berwari-i Bala tribe and Hacı Ağa of the Ertoşi tribe against the Tiyari Nestorians. It will be a clear example that shows the influence of the sheikhs on the Kurdish tribes. In the second part of this chapter, the effects of the formation of the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments on the relations of the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes will be discussed, again through examining the conflicts between the Tiyari and the Ertoşi tribes.

The Intense Nestorian-Kurdish Conflicts of 1888: The Emergence of Hacı Bey's Notoriety

In July 1888, the governor of Van sent a telegram in which he informed the Ministry of the Interior about the gathering of the Tiyari Nestorians in an attempt to attack the Berwari-i Bala (presently within the boundaries of Duhok governorate in Iraqi Kurdistan) sub-district of İmadiye district. The Tiyari Nestorians had killed a man named Haydar from a village of Berwari-i Bala,²²¹ and also injured one of his friends. The governor wrote that the Nestorians were preparing to attack the sub-district again. According to the governor, to avoid the attack, two companies of soldiers from the Fourth Army Corps needed to be sent to Berwari-i Bala immediately. The Fourth Army had been contacted on 31 May 1888, but by the time he wrote, the companies had not been sent yet. In addition, the Nestorians had opened fire on the head of the provincial police (*zabtiye tabur ağası*) and his thirty five subordinates, while the zabtiye forces were trying to reach to İmadiye through Çölemerik to avoid the attack in question.²²² It is understood from another document

²²¹ Berwari-i Bala bordered on Tiyari.

²²² BOA. DH.ŞFR. 136/62, 29 Haziran 1304 (11 July 1888).

that the zabtiye forces fired back to the Nestorians, and as a consequence of the armed conflict a number of people injured from both sides.²²³

These incidents were the first reflections of a series of disturbance and conflicts between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and their neighboring Kurdish tribes in 1888, in the state documents. At first sight, it seems like an ordinary example of tribal conflict. However, the above documents, dated to July 1888, were just the beginning of a conflict that would continue about eight months, and would reveal the complicated relations, alliances and conflicts, between the different power groups in the region. These groups were sheiks and Kurdish tribal leaders of the region. At the end of this part of the thesis, through detailed analyses of relevant archival documents, a case that seems to be an example of tribal conflict and plundering will appeared as a clear example of the influence of sheikhs on Kurdish tribes, and of the cooperation of tribal leaders with sheikhs.

The correspondences between Van province, the İstanbul government, and the commander-in-chief, lasted through July 1888 with regard to the issue of sending two companies of soldiers to İmadiye in order to prevent an attack of the Tiyari Nestorians.²²⁴ In August 1888, new information about the issue appeared in the reports of the governors of Mosul and Van. The new correspondences between the governors and the central government contained information contrary to the ones reported a month earlier. This time it was stated by the governors that they had received information about the gathering of some Kurdish tribes to attack the Nestorians of Tiyari, and that they were investigating the issue and would take the

²²³ BOA. DH.MKT. 1521/112, 7 Zilkade 1305 (16 July 1888): “...zabtiyye tabur ağası maiyyeti efradıyla ve ihale memuruyla İmadiye kazasına gitmek üzere Nasturiler içinden geçerken hücum etmeleri ve silah dahi atmaları üzerine bi'l-mukabele tarafeynden birkaç mecruh vuku' bulduđu ve ileriye gidemedikleri...”

²²⁴ See BOA. DH.MKT. 1527/106, 23 Zilkade 1305 (1 August 1888).

necessary precautions as soon as possible.²²⁵ In the account of the Van governor, a name had appeared as the perpetrator of the conflict between the Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes; the leader of the Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Ağa was responsible from the incidents.²²⁶ The imperial aide-de-camp (*yaver-i ekrem*), Derviş Paşa, also accused Hacı Ağa in a report to the central government.²²⁷

Towards the end of August, it was reported that the tension between the Nestorians and the Kurds had been almost resolved,²²⁸ and gatherings on both sides had been dissolved.²²⁹ In the same document, it was stated that a while earlier, there had been a negotiation between the Nestorian patriarch, Mar Shimon; some notables of the Tiyari tribe; and the local state agents. Consequently, the Patriarch and the notables had promised to not attack the Kurds. However, they expressed their grievances against some Kurdish tribes concerning the stolen animals from Aşita (a village of Tiyari), and some Nestorians who had been killed by the very same tribes. Considering these complaints, two companies of soldiers were sent to the district of Beytüşşebap on the order of local authorities, in order to redress the losses of the Nestorians, and to arrest the offenders.²³⁰

²²⁵ BOA. Y.PRK.MYD. 7/46, 5 Zilhicce 1305 (13 August 1888); see also, Tarık Ziya Arvas, “Hakkari Nasturileri (1836-1936)” (M.A. thesis, Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2010), 125.

²²⁶ BOA. Y.PRK.MYD 7-46; see also, Arvas, 128.

²²⁷ Ibid. See also, BOA. Y.PRK.MYD. 7/47, 5 Zilhicce 1305 (13 August 1888).

²²⁸ BOA. DH.MKT. 1535/72, 18 Zilhicce 1305 (26 August 1888); Murat Gökhan Dalyan, “19. Yüzyıl’da Nasturiler (İdari Sosyal Yapı ve Siyasi İlişkileri)” (Ph.D diss., Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Tarih Anabilim Dalı, 2009), 72.

²²⁹ BOA. DH.MKT. 1537/109, 22 Zilhicce 1305 (30 August 1888); Dalyan, 72. See also, Arvas, 127.

²³⁰ DH.MKT. 1537/109; Dalyan, 72.

The above-discussed documents require some explanation, because as we have seen, the conflicts between the Tiyari Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes were reflected in the documents first as tension between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Kurdish Bervari-i Bala tribe of Bervari, Mosul. Then, the leader of the Ertoşi tribe of Hakkari, Hacı Ağa, had been accused of the same conflict. Second, at about the same time, another Kurdish tribe which inhabited the Beytüşşebap district, appeared as another party of the conflict, and they had been accused of murder and sheep-rustling.

In his thesis, Tarık Ziya Arvas writes about only the Tiyari-Bervari-i Bala conflict of the story. He shows the mutual accusations of the Van and Mosul governors with regard to their responsibility in the escalating conflict.²³¹ He also argues that the starting point of the Tiyari-Bervari-i Bala conflict was the plundering of the Bervari-i Bala by the Tiyaris. Thus, the Bervari-i Bala tribe had retaliated against the Nestorians' attack, and consequently both sides had suffered loss of lives and of property.²³²

Murat Gökhan Dalyan discusses the same case in his dissertation. He argues that the incidents of 1888 arose from conflicts over summer pastures.²³³ He discusses the second part of the story, the conflict between the Tiyaris and the Kurds of Beytüşşebap,²³⁴ and treats the Tiyari-Bervari-i Bala conflict as a separate incident.²³⁵

²³¹ Arvas, 125-129.

²³² *Ibid.*, 125-126.

²³³ Dalyan, 71.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 71-73.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 72, footnote 347.

According to him, the conflicts between the Nestorians of Hakkari and the Kurdish tribes stemmed from the influence of missionaries.²³⁶

However, both theses are descriptive, lack detailed research on the issue, and do not provide the reasons for and the connections between the incidents. These two incidents which seem separate at first sight, were deeply connected to each other, and as will be shown in the following pages; if they are discussed together in detail, they will show a clear example about the significant influence of sheikhs on Kurdish tribes, the alliance of sheikhs and Kurdish tribal leaders, and the effects of this alliance on the relations between the Kurdish and Nestorian tribes for this particular case.

A telegram sent from the governor of Van to the Ministry of Interior summarized the incidents and their results. The governor Halil reported that up to that date, four or five people from the Tiyari Nestorians had been killed by the Günduzi (Gravi) tribe²³⁷ of Beytüşşebap, who had also stolen some sheep and other animals of the Nestorians. As for the Bervari-i Bala tribe, he stated that there were statements by Nestorians who had accused the Bervari-i Bala of killing two Nestorians.²³⁸ The governor noted Mar Shimon's and the Nestorian tribal leaders' expressions of loyalty and their reliance on the state, and also their promises on not

²³⁶ Ibid., 75.

²³⁷ There are very different spellings regarding the name of this tribe in different documents. Such as Kirvi, Girvi, Giroy, Goyi and Günduzi etc. For the different spellings see, BOA. DH.ŞFR. 136/131; BOA. DH.MKT. 1550/12; BOA. DH.ŞFR. 137/32; BOA. DH.ŞFR. 137/8; BOA. DH.ŞFR. 137/18; BOA. DH.ŞFR. 137/65.

²³⁸ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 136/131, 17 Ağustos 1304 (29 August 1888): “...şimdiye kadar yalnız Hakkari sancağının Beytüşşebap kazası dahilinde kain Günduzi (?) aşiretinin bundan bir mah mukaddem Aşot karyesindeki Nasturiler'den dört beş nüfusu katl ve birtakım ağnam ve hayvanat-ı sair gasb eylediklerinden başka bir güne vukuat zuhura gelmemiş ve İmadiye kazası dahilinde kain Bervari-i Bala aşireti tarafından iki Nasturi'nin katl edildiği ifade olunmakta ise de sıhhati...henüz tahakkuk etmemiştir...”

to seek revenge. Last, he emphasized that all the necessary actions would be taken for the recovery of the stolen animals, and the arrest of the murderers.²³⁹

At this point, it must be stated that the tribe in Beytüşşebap was most likely the Gravi clan\sub-tribe of the Ertoşi tribe. Although the name of Hacı Ağa of Ertoşi and the Gravi tribe appeared separately in correspondences related to the conflicts, the former was indicated to have been as perpetrator, and the latter as the attacker. So, it can be easily figured out that the leader of the Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Ağa, had organized the attack of the Gravi against the Tiyari Nestorians.

Some details about the Ertoşi tribe of Hakkari need to be explained. The tribes of Hakkari divided into two groups as the left and the right sides, and there were two big tribal confederations on each side, which were the Ertoşi and the Pinyaniş.²⁴⁰ The Ertoşi were on the left side of the divide.²⁴¹ However, the term “confederation” was not used in the archival documents. So, in order to avoid confusion, the Ertoşi will be treated as a “tribe” in this thesis, and the tribes which belonged to the Ertoşi confederation as sub-tribes of it. Mark Sykes points to the significant size and importance of the Ertoşi, and gives a list of thirteen clans, some sedentary and some nomadic ones, under Ertoşi. However, his list is incomplete, and thus does not include the Gravi.²⁴²

The Ertoşi was composed of 7,000 families, according to Muhammed Emin Zeki Bey, who wrote in 1937. The Ertoşis had spent their winters in Zaho and

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ van Bruinessen, 75.

²⁴¹ Lale Yalçın Heckmann, *Kürtlerde Aşiret ve Akrabalık İlişkileri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 137.

²⁴² Mark Sykes, “The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 38, (1908), 462-463.

Dohuk of Mosul province²⁴³ and summers in the pastures of Çölemerik and Beytüşşebap of Hakkari.²⁴⁴ The Gravi was a sub-tribe of the Ertoşi. The members of Gravi tribe currently live in Hakkari, Gürpınar, Çatak and Beytüşşebap.²⁴⁵ By 1893, the large Ertoşi tribe inhabited 13 villages and 29 pastures in Beytüşşebap, as their summer residences. However, it should be stated that these thirteen villages were forcibly occupied in summers by the Ertoşi tribe through oppressing the settled population of the villages in question.²⁴⁶ The above discussed conflicts occurred during the summer season when the members of Ertoşi tribe inhabited the pastures of Beytüşşebap and Çölemerik. During my research, although I did not see any information regarding whether the Gravi tribe was a nomadic or sedentary branch of the Ertoşi in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, considering the season it can be said that in either case they were in Beytüşşebap at the time of the conflicts in question.

A telegram sent from the Van governor to the Ministry of the Interior revealed another source of trouble. This time, the governor pointed to a sheikh, Mehmed Nuri, who resided in Mosul, as the perpetrator of the conflict. According to the governor, a while earlier the Tiyari Nestorians had stolen some sheep that belonged to the lodge of the sheikh Mehmed Nuri.²⁴⁷ The sheikh's place of residence

²⁴³ Muhammed Emin Zeki Beg, *Kürtler ve Kürdistan Tarihi* (İstanbul: Nubihar Yayınları, 2011), 353, 356.

²⁴⁴ BOA. DH.MKT 214/20, 19 Kanunuevvel 1309 (31 December 1893).

²⁴⁵ Ferhat Tekin, "Hakkari Örneğinde Aşiret, Cemaat ve Akrabalık Örüntülerinin Modernleşme ve Kırsal Çözülme Sürecindeki Siyasal ve Toplumsal Sonuçları" (MA. thesis, Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: Sosyoloji Anabilim Dalı, 2005), 19, 28.

²⁴⁶ BOA. DH.MKT 214/20 19 Kanunuevvel 1309 (31 December 1893).

²⁴⁷ BOA. DH.ŞFR 137/32, 21 Eylül 1304 (3 October 1888).

was Bervari, which belonged to Mosul province.²⁴⁸ It was stated that, after this incident, two months earlier, the sheikh had gone to Beytüşşebap to speak with the tribe in question (the Gravi sub-tribe of the Ertoşi), and had given them a fatwa (religious rulings), which had declared that killing the Nestorians and plundering their property and animals were permissible (*helal*).²⁴⁹ On the basis of his investigation, the governor pointed to the vindictive personality of the sheikh, and recommended his exile in order to prevent any future troubles that might emerge because of his existence in the region.²⁵⁰

As seen, in the above document, the main source of the conflict between the Tiyari Nestorians and the Gravi tribe of Beytüşşebap was Sheikh Mehmed Nuri. Due to the sheikh's provocation the Gravi tribe had stolen the animals of Nestorians and killed members of their tribe, without hesitation. As for the Bervari-i Bala tribe's attack on Nestorians, although there are no clear statements about the sheikh's effect on the Tiyari-Bervari-i Bala conflict in the documents discussed above, Arvas states that both the leader of the Ertoşi tribe and a sheikh who resided in Mosul were referred to as the perpetrators of the conflict.²⁵¹ It is obvious that the sheikh in question was the Sheikh Mehmed Nuri of Bervari, and that members of the Ertoşi tribe were among the sheikh's followers. Thus, Sheikh Mehmed Nuri and the leader of the Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Ağa, had made an alliance in order to attack the Nestorians. The Bervari-i Bala tribe, which resided in the sheikh's homeland Bervari, was among

²⁴⁸ BOA. DH.MKT 1500/48, 30 Receb 1305 (12 April-1888).

²⁴⁹ BOA. DH.ŞFR 137/32: "...şeyh Mehmed Nuri'nin Nasturiler'in kendi tekkesi malından bir mikdar ağnam gasb eylemeleri üzerine iki mah mukaddem aşiret-i merkum içine gelerek Nasturilerin katl olunarak ağnam ve emval ve hayvanını gasb eylemek helaldir yolunda birtakım mevaiz-i muzirre ve ifsadatta bulunmasından neş'et etmiştir..."

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Arvas, 128.

the sheikh's followers, too. The attacks of this tribe against the Nestorians of Tiyari also stemmed from his orders.

According to Gökhan Çetinsaya, Sheikh Mehmed Nuri was a cousin of Sheikh Nur Muhammed, who was an important Naqshbandi sheikh of the Dohuk region of Mosul province.²⁵² However, according to Martin van Bruinessen, Sheikh Nur Muhammed was a Qadiri sheikh. The father of Sheikh Nur Muhammed, Abdullah, established a lodge (*tekke*) in Dohuk. After his death, he was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Nur Muhammed.²⁵³ The founder of this lodge was the prominent sheikh Nureddin Brifkani, who established his lodge in İmadiye, Mosul.²⁵⁴

Çetinsaya writes that, beginning from the mid-nineteenth century, the Qadiri and Naqshbandi sheikhs became very influential on the tribes of Mosul region by exploiting the power gap that had emerged after the removal of the mirs.²⁵⁵ The influence of Sheikh Mehmed Nuri of Bervari, the actor of our case, on the Kurdish tribes is an example of this situation. As seen above, his sphere of influence transcended the borders of Mosul and reached to the tribes of Hakkari, owing to the geographical proximity of the two places, and the nomadic way of life of the Kurdish tribes. As mentioned before, the Ertoşi tribe migrated between Hakkari and Mosul, and was under the influence of Sheikh Mehmed Nuri.

²⁵² Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908* (London: Routledge, 2006), 83; Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Hamidiye, Nakşibendiye ve Mülkiye: II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Musul Vilayetinden Bir Kesit, 1897-1901," *Kebikeç*, no. 10 (2000), 136.

²⁵³ Martin van Bruinessen, "The Qadiriyya and the Lineages of Qadiri Shaykhs in Kurdistan," in *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 225.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ Çetinsaya, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Kuzey Irak'da Tarikat, Aşiret ve Siyaset," *Divan İlmî Araştırmalar*, no. 7 (1999), 153-154.

Questions that remain to be answered regarding our case are what the first incident that triggered these conflicts was, and whether any earlier role had been played by Hacı Ağa of Ertoşi in these conflicts, besides organizing the attacks of the Gravi tribe against the Nestorians by the orders of Sheikh Mehmed Nuri.

A document which was written to the Grand Vizierate, solves the confusion about the beginning of the conflicts, and reveals the earlier role of Hacı Ağa and of his connection with Sheikh Mehmed Nuri more clearly. On 11 April 1888, almost three months before the conflicts discussed above, it was written to the Grand Vizierate that a while earlier 6,000 animals, some belonging to the lodge of Sheikh Nuri of Mosul Bervari, and some to his followers, had been stolen by the Tiyari Nestorians. This incident had been reported by telegram signed by one of the sheikh's followers named Abdülcebbar. Additionally, according to the account of Abdülcebbar, one follower of the sheikh, named Sofi Muhammed, had been killed by the Nestorians. Based on the denunciation of Abdülcebbar, an investigation had been carried out by the Hakkari government. At the end of the investigation, it was found out that in the first place, the nomadic Ertoşi tribe of Mosul had stolen some of the animals of the Tiyari Nestorians, and in retaliation for the Ertoşi's plunder the Tiyaris had stolen 2,500 animals of them.²⁵⁶

The document includes some interesting details about the attitude of the local government of Hakkari towards the two parties in this conflict. It was stated that some part of the Ertoşi tribe's stolen animals had been recovered, and the remaining would be recovered in the spring. It seems the government had no any corroborative evidence about the murder of the sheikh's follower. On the other hand, nothing was

²⁵⁶ BOA. DH.MKT 1500/48, 30 Mart 1304 (11 April 1888).

stated about the recovery or even the intention of recovery of the animals of the first victim, the Tiyari Nestorians.²⁵⁷

This document is significant for two reasons. First, the information it contains is key to understand the beginning of the conflicts between the Tiyari Nestorians and the Ertoşi tribe in the remainder of 1888. As seen above, the conflict had begun with the raid of the Ertoşi. The losses of the Tiyaris were ignored by the local state agents. Second, the reflection of the Nestorians' retaliation on the above document reveals the connection between the sheikh and the Ertoşi tribe of Hacı Ağa. As seen, the local state functionaries of Hakkari replied to the denunciation of the sheikh's follower, in which he alleged that the sheep belonging to the sheikh's lodge and also to his followers had stolen by the Tiyari Nestorians, by explaining the reciprocal raids between the Tiyari and the Ertoşi tribes.²⁵⁸ Thus, it is understood that the sheikh's followers in question were the members of the Ertoşi tribe.

Apparently, besides recovering animals of the Ertoşi tribe, nothing serious had been done by the Hakkari government regarding the conflict which had occurred in April 1888. Thus, as discussed before, the conflicts between the Tiyari Nestorians and the sheikh's follower tribes escalated in the following months. When the incidents came to a state of serious clashes, the local government started to take military precautions,²⁵⁹ and also entered with negotiations with the Nestorians.²⁶⁰ The seriousness of the incidents can be understood from a report of the Van governor to the central government, in which he asked permission to proclaim martial law in

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ BOA. DH.MKT 1537/109, 22 Zilhicce 1305 (30 August 1888); Dalyan, 72.

²⁶⁰ BOA. DH.ŞFR 136/131, 17 Ağustos 1304 (29 Ağustos 1888).

Hakkari in order to discipline the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes. However, the request of the governor was denied by the central government.²⁶¹

Eventually, on 24 October 1888, the governor of Van reported that a while earlier about 1400 sheep that had been stolen from the Nestorians by the Gravi tribe had been recovered, and also six persons from the same tribe had been captured for killing some Nestorians of the Tiyari tribe. However, according to the Van governor's account while the governor of Hakkari and the sub-governor (*kaymakam*) of Beytüşşebap, in company with soldiers, were trying to recover some more 300 sheep of the Nestorians that had been stolen by the inhabitants of a certain village of the Gravi tribe, the inhabitants in question had opened fire on them. The soldiers had fired back on the villagers, and as a result of the armed conflict, two soldiers and 15 villagers had died.²⁶²

As seen, the conflicts between the Tiyari Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes continued from April to October 1888. Eventually, on 22 November 1888, it was reported to the Grand Vizierate that the governor of Van had gone to the Çal (Çukurca) sub-district of Hakkari in order to meet with representatives from both sides of the conflicts. It was stated that he had succeeded in his mission.²⁶³ During this meeting, the head of the Kurdish side's representatives was Sheikh Mehmed Nuri,²⁶⁴ who several times had been treated as the perpetrator of the conflicts.

Although the conflicts between the two sides had been solved ostensibly during this

²⁶¹ Arvas, 130. For the negative decision of the Council of Ministers (*Meclis-i Vükela*) on the governor's request also see BOA. MV. 37/61, 21 Rebiülevvel 1306 (25 November 1888).

²⁶² BOA. DH.ŞFR 137/65, 12 Teşrin-i Evvel 1304 (24 October 1888).

²⁶³ BOA. DH.MKT 1567/73, 10 Teşrin-i Sani 1304 (22 November 1888). Also, see Arvas, 129; Dalyan, 72.

²⁶⁴ Arvas, 49.

meeting, it seems that neither the sheikh nor the leader of the Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Bey, was punished due to their depredations.

The Nestorian patriarch, Mar Shimon, was the head of the Nestorian representatives at the same meeting.²⁶⁵ This situation shows the status and political power of the Nestorian patriarch. He was not only the religious leader of all the Nestorians; he also was their civil leader.²⁶⁶ His position among both tribal and non-tribal groups of Nestorians bore a resemblance to that of the Kurdish mirs. As seen in this case, and discussed to some extent in the previous chapter, he acted as the mediator between the Nestorians and the state, and in some cases like the one discussed above between the Kurdish tribal leaders, sheikhs, and the Nestorians. In the eyes of the Ottoman government and the foreign states, he was more a political leader than a religious one.

As seen above, by 1888, Hakkari witnessed eight months of continuing clashes between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes. These incidents exemplify the inability of the local government agents to establish order and security in Hakkari. For eight months, the local government agents failed to get the conflicts under control, and as seen, at the end, they resorted military operations to recover the stolen animals from Beytüşşebap, where an armed conflict eventually occurred between the soldiers and the members of the Gravi tribe. The authority gap that emerged after the abolition of the emirates could not be filled by the state's government agents.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans-Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 10.

²⁶⁷ Klein, 60

The 1888 conflicts between the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes exemplify the power of the tribal leaders in the region. The leader of the large Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Ağa, got away with his attacks which had triggered eight months of conflict. But this case also represents an example of another important change in the social and political situation in the eastern provinces in the nineteenth century, which was the rise of sheikhs as new influential leaders of the Kurdish tribes. The second prominent actor of our case, Sheikh Mehmed Nuri who was not punished like Hacı Ağa, was obviously among the influential sheikhs of the region. Van Bruinessen states that the authority gap that occurred after the destruction of the emirates, filled by the sheikhs. The sheikhs had the authority in the eyes of the population to settle conflicts and feuds between tribes. According to van Bruinessen, contrary to the local government agents, the sheikhs had a prestigious and legitimate position in Kurdish society. This position gave them the chance to act as supra-tribe political leaders, and to establish authority over the tribes.²⁶⁸ During this process, “some tribes were entirely the followers of one or the other sheikh, but most shaikhs drew their following from more than one tribe, and the shrewder ones established themselves on the boundary between two or more important tribes.”²⁶⁹

Hakkari was no doubt one of the most affected regions by the political and social changes which occurred in the second part of the nineteenth century. As seen in the second chapter, the emirate of Hakkari was one of the two powerful remaining emirates until the exile of its last mir, Nurullah Bey, in 1848. The administrative reforms of the Tanzimat could not be properly implemented, taxes could not be

²⁶⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, “Kürtler Arasında Bir Siyasi Protesto Aracı Olarak Nakşibendi Tarikatı,” in *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 94; van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 229-230.

²⁶⁹ Martin van Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” in *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 25-26.

collected as intended, the tax collection methods, and the amount of taxes constituted the basis of the conflicts between the Nestorian population and the local state agents for long years.²⁷⁰

However, until the mid-1880s, there were no significant conflicts between the Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari. The disturbances in Hakkari coincided with the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1908). This situation leads us to ask about the general policies of Abdülhamid, his particular policies toward the Kurds of eastern Anatolia, and what the effects of these policies were on the relations of the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes. First of all, it should be stated that discussing the reform related continuities or differences in detail between the periods of Abdülhamid II and his Tanzimat predecessors is beyond the scope of this thesis.²⁷¹ What mostly concern us is his Islamic unity, and Kurdish policies. Stephen Duguid states that the most distinctive characteristic of the Hamidian period was the emphasis on Muslim unity. According to Duguid, the Muslim population of the empire had been alienated from the empire due to the earlier policies of the central governments, and the military and economic failures of the empire in the nineteenth century. For this reason, Abdülhamid tried to gain back the loyalty of the Muslim population to the empire through the use of the trend toward pan-Islamism.²⁷²

In this context, it can be argued that the Sunni-Muslim sheikhs were among the most beneficiary groups of the empire during the Hamidian period. Sultan

²⁷⁰ See chapter three of this thesis.

²⁷¹ For these discussions among many others, see Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 2 (May, 1973); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 175-210; Nadir Özbek, "Modernite Tarih ve İdeoloji: II. Abdülhamid Tarihçiliği Uzerine Bir Değerlendirme," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, no.3 (2004), 71-90; Eric Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 121-128.

²⁷² Duguid, 139-140.

Abdülhamid's policies towards them are impossible to discuss here in detail; however, briefly it can be said that Abdülhamid II's attitude towards the sheikhs, especially towards the influential ones, can be described as tolerant and forgiving, even in the many cases in which they needed to be punished seriously due to their crimes.²⁷³ As seen in our case, Sheikh Mehmed Nuri's acts and their consequences exemplify this situation. The sheikh exploited the religious sentiments of the Kurds, and used his influence to provoke his followers, which caused the attacks of the Kurdish tribes against the Nestorians. Despite the complaints and warnings of some local government agents about him, he went unpunished.

Abdülhamid II's well known policy towards the Kurds was forming the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments from the Kurdish tribes in 1891. On the other hand, the Sultan pursued a particular strategy with regard to Hakkari's Kurdish tribes, years before the formation of the Hamidiye regiments. According to Bayram Kodaman, in the first years of the 1880s Abdülhamid had charged Bahri Bey, the son of a powerful tribal leader of Van who also was at the service of Abdülhamid in İstanbul at that time, to gather the tribal leaders of Hakkari at a meeting. During this meeting Bahri Bey gave them presents and weapons from the sultan.

The reason behind this attempt was the rebellion of the prominent Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri (a village in Şemdinan, Hakkari) in 1880. Kodaman argues that giving presents and weapons to the Kurdish tribal leaders was the strategy of Abdülhamid to gain the loyalty of them, because he had recognized the possible dangerous consequences of the rebellion for the empire. More interestingly, Kodaman argues that a while after this incident, 26 retired soldiers had been sent to Hakkari by order of Abdülhamid, to provide military training to the Kurdish tribal

²⁷³ For a rich article about Abdülhamid's tolerant policy towards influential sheikhs, see Çetinsaya, *II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Kuzey Irak'da Tarikat, Aşiret ve Siyaset..*

members. According to Kodaman, the aim of these preparations was to organize the Kurdish tribes against the Christian minorities.²⁷⁴ The main objective behind all these was to prevent another Kurdish rebellion in Hakkari.²⁷⁵ However, Kodaman discusses these incidents within the context of the “Nestorian threat” in Hakkari.²⁷⁶ It can be argued that the arming of the Kurdish tribes was a twofold strategy which was considered as a precaution for both the “Kurdish and the Nestorian threats”.

The Sultan had further plans for the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari. According to the arguments of Halfin and Kodaman, in 1884, a year after the exile of the Sheikh Ubeydullah to Mecca, the new governor of Hakkari, Edhem Paşa, continued to arm the Kurdish tribes. The governor also established friendly relations with the Kurdish tribal leaders in an effort to bind them to the government.²⁷⁷ According to Halfin, these incidents were preliminaries for the formation of future Hamidiye regiments.²⁷⁸ As for Kodaman, by forming several Hamidiye regiments from Hakkari’s Kurdish tribes, the Sultan patronized the Kurds and brought the Nestorian tribes under control.²⁷⁹

The effects of the formation of the Hamidiye regiments on the relations between the Kurdish and Nestorian tribes will be discussed below. What is significant for this topic is the arming of the Kurdish tribes in the early 1880s, and

²⁷⁴ Bayram Kodaman, “Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları (II. Abdülhamid ve Doğu Anadolu Aşiretleri),” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 32, (1979), 436; Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri Doğu Anadolu Politikası* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1987), 101.

²⁷⁵ Halfin, *XIX. Yüzyılda Kürdistan Üzerine Mücadeleler* (İstanbul: Komal Yayınları, 1992), 101.

²⁷⁶ Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri*, 101.

²⁷⁷ Halfin, 101, Kodaman, *Hamidiye Hafif Süvari*, 437-438.

²⁷⁸ Halfin, 101-102.

²⁷⁹ Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri*, 102.

the tolerant attitude of the local government towards the Kurdish tribal leaders in conformity with the plans of the Sultan. These policies altered the power balance between the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes of Hakkari to the detriment of the former. It can be argued that these developments in Hakkari, and the general Islamic unity policy of the Sultan, paved the way for the 1888 conflicts between the Tiyari tribe of Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes, which were guided by a sheikh. At the end of these serious conflicts, the leader of the Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Bey, went unpunished, likewise his master Sheikh Mehmed Nuri.

Although I have not seen any information regarding whether or not the Ertoşi tribe of Hacı Bey was among the beneficiaries of the Sultan's above-mentioned policies with regard to Hakkari's tribes, Hacı Bey of Ertoşi served as the lieutenant-colonel of the 50th Hamidiye regiment in the following years.²⁸⁰ If we accept Halfin's argument that these policies towards the Hakkari's Kurdish tribes were the preliminaries of forming the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments,²⁸¹ in this case, Hacı Bey's career corroborates the possibility that he and his tribe were among the earlier beneficiary tribes of Hakkari.

The Hamidiye Regiments, Hacı Bey of the Ertoşi Tribe, and the Tiyari Nestorians: A Decade-Long Conflict

The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments were established in 1890. The Hamidiye regiments which were led by tribal chiefs composed of Kurdish tribes and one Turkish tribe (the Karapapak).²⁸² The regiments were based on the Russian Cossack

²⁸⁰ BOA.DH.MKT 337/44, 01 Şaban 1312 (28 January 1895).

²⁸¹ Halfin, 101-102.

²⁸² van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 85.

model.²⁸³ While the original idea of establishing the Hamidiye regiments belonged to Zeki Paşa, Şakir Paşa, who was the aide de camp of the Sultan between 1890 and 1895, was the other architect of the idea from the beginning.²⁸⁴ The plans related to the formation and organizations of the regiments were prepared by a commission led by Şakir Paşa, while Zeki Paşa was charged with the selection of the tribes.²⁸⁵ The regiments were under the command of the Fourth Army Corps, based in Erzincan. The commander-in-chief of the Fourth Army was Zeki Paşa. Thus, beginning from 1890, Zeki Paşa also became the top commander of the regiments.²⁸⁶ In 1891, the regiments were first established in and around Erzincan, Malazgirt, Van, and Hınıs, all places considered the targets of a future Russian attack; and later also they were established in places like Mardin and Urfa.²⁸⁷

The Hamidiye regiments have acquired certain notoriety due to their participation in the Armenian massacres of 1894-96, and after during the deportation of the Armenians in 1915. Hence, the regiments are one of the most debated topics of the Hamidian period. Based on Ottoman archival documents, Ali Karaca writes the official reasons behind the formation of the regiments. First, forming militias was a way to make use of the warlike characteristics of the Kurdish tribes, and of civilizing

²⁸³ Selim Deringil, “The Ottoman Twilight Zone of the Middle East,” in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey’s Role in the Middle East*, ed. Henri J. Barkey (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), 16.

²⁸⁴ Ali Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa (1838-1899)* (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1993), 28, 174.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁸⁶ Klein, 76.

²⁸⁷ David Gaunt, *Katliamlar, Direniş, Koruyucular: I. Dünya Savaşında Doğu Anadolu’da Müslüman-Hristiyan İlişkileri* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2007), 68; Karaca, 180-181. For a detailed list which shows both the actual locations of the selected tribes and their seat of brigades, and also the percentage of the Armenian population of these areas, see Janet Klein, “Power in the Periphery: The Hamidiye Light Cavalry and the Struggle over Kurdistan, 1880-1914” (Ph.D dissertation, Princeton University, 2002), 353-359.

them. Second, the Hamidiye regiments would serve to protect the Russian frontiers, and to prevent the activities of the Armenian revolutionaries. Last, the regiments were conceived as a way to discipline the Kurdish tribes, and to decrease the lawlessness in the region.²⁸⁸

Duguid points to the Islamic unity policy of sultan Abdülhamid in this respect. For him, the Hamidiye regiments would create a bond between the Muslim Kurdish tribes and the empire, and would decrease the power of the local notables, who stood against the centralization efforts of the empire. Duguid also draws attention to the interests of Britain and Russia in the eastern Anatolia, and to the “Armenian threat” at that time.²⁸⁹ Van Bruinessen analyzes the creation of the regiments in the context of the Sultan’s motive to control the Kurdish tribes and to suppress Armenian revolutionary activities.²⁹⁰

The most detailed contribution on the topic has come from Janet Klein. According to Klein, all the earlier arguments on the aims of creation of the Hamidiye regiments were true to a certain extent. Thus, she treats the creation of the Hamidiye as a “manifold mission.” However, she argues that the predominant reason among them was to create a force to hinder and suppress the “Armenian threat.” She corroborates her argument by mapping the regions where the tribes selected to raise the regiments lived. She shows that most of the selected Kurdish tribes lived in regions which had considerable Armenian populations or were near to the Iranian border.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Karaca, 174-75.

²⁸⁹ Duguid, 144-45

²⁹⁰ van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, State*, 186.

²⁹¹ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 20-51.

The focus of this chapter is to show the effects of the formation of the Hamidiye regiments on the relations between the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes of Hakkari. As discussed earlier, the situation in Hakkari was far from tranquil and order in the 1880s. The rise of the sheikhs and tribal leaders had damaged the relations between the Nestorians and the Kurdish tribes. I believe that the 1888 conflicts discussed earlier were only a small part of the whole story. Likely, the duration and the seriousness of the conflicts compelled local government officials to take precautions; thus, the incidents appeared in government documents. Some of the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari were selected to form Hamidiye regiments while the state of affairs in Hakkari had already been to the detriment of the Nestorian tribes.

Klein states that although Hakkari had no considerable Armenian population, it was one of the frontier regions of the empire that was used as a passage point by the Armenian revolutionaries.²⁹² However, in the case of Hakkari it should be kept in mind that in addition to the empire's fear of Armenian revolutionaries, Hakkari was the only area which had a considerable Nestorian population. According to Kodaman, forming regiments from among Hakkari's Kurdish tribes also served the purpose to control the Nestorians who had started to become a "threat" in the eyes of the government.²⁹³

The tribe that concerns us for the present discussion is the Ertoşi tribe of Hacı Ağa. The Ertoşi tribe constituted the 50th Hamidiye regiment, and Hacı Bey was

²⁹² Ibid., 27

²⁹³ Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri*, 102.

charged as the lieutenant-colonel of his regiment.²⁹⁴ The Ertoşi tribe belonged to the sixth brigade in Mardin.²⁹⁵ However, in Klein's words;

“Since the regiments rarely reported to their centers for training, they should be considered as belonging more to their home regions (winter and summer quarters and the points in-between) than to the brigade center, in the cases where the two did not overlap.”²⁹⁶

During my research, I could not find the exact date of the Ertoşi's enrollment in the Hamidiye, but the earliest document that I found which shows the Hamidiye connection of the Ertoşi tribe and Hacı Ağa was dated 1894. The document in question was related to the back taxes of the Ertoşi tribe, and also to the depredations committed by them in Beytüşşebap district where they lived four or five months of each year.²⁹⁷

The tribes which enrolled in the Hamidiye regiments enjoyed some privileges. First, the tribes that formed regiments were exempted from the sheep tax, the tithe, and conscription.²⁹⁸ As Kodaman notes, the exemption granted to them from the sheep tax had considerable importance for the tribes because they were either nomadic or semi-nomadic,²⁹⁹ like the Ertoşi tribe in question; thus their lives depended heavily on animal husbandry. Second, the Hamidiye tribes were armed with government rifles, and amnesty was granted to the leaders of the enrolled tribes for their past crimes.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ See note 62 above

²⁹⁵ Karaca, 181.

²⁹⁶ Klein, *Power in the Periphery*, 352.

²⁹⁷ BOA.DH.MKT 214/20, 20 Ramazan 1311 (27 March 1894).

²⁹⁸ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 31 and Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri*, 44.

²⁹⁹ Kodaman, *Sultan II. Abdülhamid Devri*, 44.

³⁰⁰ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 77-78

Last, and as one of the key assertions of Klein, in her own words, “the impunity granted to Hamidiye horsemen in any sort of animal-raiding or land-grabbing activity would draw many to apply for “membership” in this exclusive “club”.”³⁰¹ What Klein means is, in most cases, the tribes that formed the Hamidiye regiments would not be punished for crimes they committed. As seen in the previous part, the Ertoşi tribe and its leader Hacı Bey already had reputations for raiding and brigandage. The present discussion will demonstrate how the depredations of the Ertoşi tribe accelerated after their enrollment in the Hamidiye organization through the given advantages of being Hamidiye members, and consequently, how this situation caused further problems between the Nestorians and the Kurds. It will be seen how Hacı Bey and his Ertoşi tribe went unpunished despite the obvious crimes committed by them. Through the discussion of the career of Hacı Bey as a Hamidiye colonel, it will be shown that the crimes committed by him were not only against the Nestorian tribes, but also against the Kurds alike.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Ibid., 31.

³⁰² Janet Klein’s work on Hamidiye regiments is the most comprehensive and insightful one in the existing literature. I am inspired by her study, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*, for the present discussion, in which I will discuss Hacı Bey’s acts in order to show how he abused the advantages of being a Hamidiye chief, and their effects on the region’s Nestorian and Kurdish population. Klein has successfully showed how the Hamidiye chiefs made use of their advantageous position to increase their power and wealth to the detriment of non-Hamidiye tribes and Christian and Muslim peasants of the region, through analyzing the careers of three important Hamidiye chiefs. See especially Chapter 2 of Klein’s *The Margins of Empire*, in which she analyzes the career of Mustafa Paşa of Miran, whose story has similarities with that of Hacı Bey.

The Livin Incidents

The negative effects of the Hamidiye regiments on Nestorian-Kurdish relations have been mentioned in various studies.³⁰³ However, none of these studies provide clear examples related to the issue, particularly during the 1890s and in the early years of the twentieth century. On the other hand, some significant conflicts between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes which should be discussed in the context of the Hamidiye organization are treated as common examples of tribal conflict which were exaggerated by the “foreign consuls or missionaries” in some studies.³⁰⁴

The most significant conflict between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Ertoşi tribe of Hacı Bey started in 1896. This conflict turned into a serious feud continued for almost a decade. In July 1896, some sheep that belonged to the Tiyari tribe of Nestorians were stolen by the Mamhoran tribe of the Beytüşşebap district of Hakkari. After this raid, some rumors related to the preparations of the Nestorians for a retributive raid, were reached to the local government. It seems that the deputy governor of Van, Saadeddin Paşa, had requested a troop of soldiers from Mosul in order to discipline the Nestorians for their intention. However, soon it was found out that the Tiyari and the Tuhuma tribes of the Nestorians had given up their intention to retaliate. This information was obtained from the leader of the Ertoşi tribe, Hacı Bey, who informed the local government that the Nestorian patriarch Mar Shimon

³⁰³ For example see, W. A. Wigram and Edgar T. A. Wigram, *The Cradle of Mankind: Life in Eastern Kurdistan* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914), 67; Gabriele Yonan, *Asur Soykrımı: Unutulan Bir Holocaust* (İstanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 1999), 60; John Joseph, *The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western Christian Missions, Archaeologists, & Colonial Powers* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 125; Yonca Anzerlioğlu, *Nasturiler* (Ankara: Tamga Yayıncılık, 2000), 43; R.S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrian Minority in Iraq* /London: Kegan Paul, 2004), 23.

³⁰⁴ See Arvas, 108, 123 and 131; Dalyan, 73, 118.

had prevented the retribution plans of the Nestorian tribes.³⁰⁵ As understood from the document, the Mamhoran tribe was a sub-tribe of the Ertoşi tribe. Mark Sykes describes the Mamhoran sub-tribe of the Ertoşi as “very warlike nomads.”³⁰⁶ This first incident occurred in July, when the nomadic branches of the Ertoşi like Mamhoran, resided in some villages and pastures of Beytüşşebap. The Ertoşi tribe inhabited thirteen villages and twenty nine pastures of Beytüşşebap district during the spring and summer seasons.³⁰⁷

Three months after the above-mentioned incident, the British embassy sent a warning letter (*muhtıra*) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it stated that a large number of sheep belonging to the Tiyari Nestorians had been plundered in July by the Ertoşi tribe. Also some Nestorian bishops had been murdered on the order of Sheikh Muhammed Siddık of Şemdinan. According to the embassy’s account, the stolen animals had not been recovered to the Nestorians and the killers of the bishops had not been punished for their crime. Thus, the Tiyari Nestorians had expressed their intention for retaliation. Therefore, the local government had sent soldiers against the Tiyari Nestorians in an attempt to discipline them. The British embassy treated this action as an unsuitable precaution, and warned the Foreign Ministry about the recovery of the stolen animals and the punishment of the offenders.³⁰⁸

It seems the warning of the embassy caused some correspondences between the central government and local governments. The commander-in-chief wrote a report to the central government in which he explained the reason of sending soldiers

³⁰⁵ BOA. A.MKT.MHM 668/14, 12 Safer 1314 (23 July 1896). For the Tiyari-Ertoşi conflicts of 1896 see also Dalyan, 73, footnote 356; Arvas, 131-132.

³⁰⁶ Sykes, 462.

³⁰⁷ BOA.DH.MKT 214/20, 19 Kanunuevvel 1309 (31 December 1893).

³⁰⁸ BOA.A.MKT.MHM 668/14, 1 Teşrinievvel 1312 (13 October 1896).

against the Tiyari Nestorians. According to him, this precaution was taken in order to prevent an attack of the Nestorians on the Muslim inhabitants of the Livin sub-district of Beytüşşebap. He added that as soon as the soldiers arrived, the Nestorians had admitted their fault, and asked for mercy.³⁰⁹

Indeed, the deputy governor of Van, Sadeddin Paşa, wrote to the central government about this incident on 30 September 1896. However, it seems his letter did not reach the central government before 10 October, because as mentioned above, the commander-in-chief once more was writing the reason of the military precaution to the central government on that date.³¹⁰

Sadeddin Paşa's account included some details about the beginning of the issue. The Ertoşi tribe had stolen four hundred sheep from Tiyari. After this raid, some Nestorians of the Tiyari tribe had gone to Beytüşşebap in order to retrieve the stolen animals. These men had been injured by the Ertoşi tribe, and also their weapons had been seized. After all that had happened, the Tiyari Nestorians had attacked Livin sub-district.³¹¹ Sadeddin Paşa reported that two battalions of soldiers and two mountain artilleries had been sent to discipline the Nestorians due to their attacks to Livin..³¹² After this incident, the Thuma tribe of the Nestorians had tried to

³⁰⁹ BOA.Y.PRK.ASK 115/93, 3 Cemaziyelevvel 1314 (10 October 1896). For the Nestorians' attack to Livin see also, Arvas, 131 and Dalyan, 73, footnote 356.

³¹⁰ BOA.Y.PRK.ASK 115/93, 3 Cemaziyelevvel 1314 (10 October 1896).

³¹¹ BOA.Y.MTV 146/75, 22 Rebiulahir 1314 (30 September 1896); Arvas, 131; Dalyan, 73, footnote 356.

³¹² BOA.Y.MTV 146/75, 22 Rebiulahir 1314 (30 September 1896); Dalyan, 73, footnote 356.

mediate between the Tiyari tribe and the local government, and signed a document to ask for mercy on behalf of the Tiyari tribe.³¹³

In this attack, the specific target of the Nestorians was the Peyanis village of Livin. On 7 September 1896, it was reported by the Inspection Commission (*Tesri-i Muamelat Komisyonu*) that the Tiyari Nestorians were first attacked Dize village, and after that Peyanis village of Livin. A group of soldiers who had already been in Livin in the course of the event asked for help and weapons.³¹⁴ Thus, Saadeddin Paşa gave orders to send a battalion of soldiers and two mountain artilleries to Livin.³¹⁵

The reason that Livin became a specific target of the Tiyari Nestorians for the retaliation of Hacı Bey's raid against them can be explained in two ways. In the documents related to the incident, there is no explanation about who the inhabitants of this sub-district were. However, as the attack of the Nestorians was a retributive one against Hacı Bey's raid, the inhabitants of the sub-district and its Peyanis village most likely were members of some sub-tribes of the Ertoşi, or their dependent villagers, who were controlled by the Ertoşi. This confusing situation will become clearer at the end of this chapter through a small detail given in a document that corroborates the latter possibility.

The details of Sadeddin Paşa's military operation are unclear. During my research, I saw no documents that included any information regarding what

³¹³ BOA.Y.MTV 146/75: "...*Asakir-i Şahane'nin oraya vusulü üzerine Nasturilerin Tuhub aşireti tavassut ederek Tiyarilerin bu işe nedamet eylemiş olduklarına dair tanzim edip hükümet-i seniyyeye takdim ettikleri nedametname aynen takdim-i huzur-ı sami-i...*" The document signed by the notables of the Tuhuma tribe can be found in the same file. It was written in Persian. Thus, I could not give information about it.

³¹⁴ BOA.DH.TMIK.M 13/86, 29 Rebiülevvel 1314 (7 September 1896); see also Arvas, 131. Arvas briefly writes this incident in his thesis, however, he wrongly addresses this incident as a separate second attack of the Tiyari Nestorians in the same year.

³¹⁵ BOA.A.MKT.MHM, 668/14 25 Ağustos 1312 (6 September 1896).

happened during the operation, which culminated in the Nestorians' pleading for mercy. However, examining some correspondences between the central government and Sadeddin Paşa will offer clues about the different attitudes of the central and local governments towards the way of maintaining order and security. On 2 September 1896, Sadeddin Paşa wrote his concerns to the central government regarding the potential depredations of the nomadic tribes who were preparing to return to Mosul from their summer pastures in Van province. Sadeddin Paşa asked for permission to leave Van along with two battalions of soldiers and three mountain artilleries, in order to prevent the future depredations of tribes and to capture the potential offenders.³¹⁶ Undoubtedly, one of the tribes in question was the Ertoşi tribe of Hacı Ağa. In his account, Sadeddin Paşa also emphasized the raid of the Ertoşi against the Nestorian tribes and the Nestorians' plans for retaliation.³¹⁷

The decision of the central government about the request of Sadeddin Paşa was negative. In a document dated 10 September 1896, it was stated that the Paşa's request had been rejected by the decision of the Council of Ministers. Instead of military precautions, it was recommended that the leaders of the tribes be summoned, and then the necessary advices be given to them by employing a proper language.³¹⁸

It is understood that Sadeddin Paşa listened the advice of the central government related to the Kurdish tribes. Although it is unknown whether or not he

³¹⁶ BOA.A.MKT.MHM 668/14, 21 Ağustos 1312 (2 September 1896): "...*gerek yerli ve gerek Musul'dan gelup bu vilayet yaylalarında yazlayan aşiretler hadise-i zail akabinde köylerine iade olunan ahali-Hristiyanıyye'yi tekrar yağma ederek kışlaklarına avdet hazırlığındadırlar...önü alınmak ve muhtac-ı terbiye olanlar tutulup hükümete teslim edilmek...üzere iki tabur piyade ve üç kıta dağ topu ile Van'dan hareket-ı bendeganeme müsaade buyurulması...*"

³¹⁷ Ibid.: "...*burada Nasturi aşiretlerinin de dört beş yüz koyunlarını gasb etmiş olduklarından Nasturi dahi ahz-ı intikam tedarükünde buldukları haber verilmektedir...*"

³¹⁸ BOA.A.MKT.MHM 668/14, 29 Ağustos 1312 (10 September 1896).

tried negotiation in compliance with the central government's order, at least it is clear that he did not resort to military precautions. However, in the case of the Nestorian tribes, the Paşa did not hesitate to use soldiers against them, without asking for permission from the central government. He informed the government only after sending soldiers. He also referred to the above mentioned decision of the central government, but according to him, in the case of the Tiyari Nestorians, it was necessary to resort to military force.³¹⁹

The above-mentioned recommendation of the central government for the Kurdish tribes was accordant with the general Kurdish policy of Abdülhamid II. Since the beginning of the 1880s, the Sultan had employed negotiation and a concessive policy with regard to the Kurdish tribes. The formation of the Hamidiye regiments which brought certain privileges to the enrolled tribes was the peak point of the Sultan's policy. The Kurdish tribes, who Saadeddin Paşa sought to discipline through military actions, most likely included the ones that formed the Hamidiye regiments. The Ertoşi tribe, which was clearly a target in the mind of Saadeddin Paşa, exemplifies this argument. As seen in this case, the Ertoşi tribe and their leader, Hacı Bey once again went unpunished despite the clarity of their raid that triggered the later attack of the Nestorians. It can be said that if the stolen animals of the Nestorians had been pursued by the local government or the offenders had been punished at the beginning of the conflict, most likely the tension between two groups would have decreased. However, this was not the case; on the contrary, the Tiyari tribe was severely punished for their retaliation.

As seen both in the discussion above and here, the target of the Kurdish tribes was the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians. Some details about this tribe should be given

³¹⁹ BOA.A.MKT.MHM 668/14, 25 Ağustos 1312 (6 September 1896).

to show that it was not a random target. Tiyari was the most important and the largest tribe of the Hakkari Nestorians. Like the other tribes, they were named after the region in which they lived. The region known as Tiyari was separated into upper and lower Tiyari.³²⁰ Badger gives a detailed list which shows the name of the Nestorian villages and the number of households lived in these villages. His list included both the tribal and non-tribal Nestorians.³²¹ According to his list the Tiyari tribe, including both the upper and lower Tiyari, inhabited 51 villages. Thus Tiyari was the largest Nestorian tribe of Hakkari.³²²

The most populous village of Tiyari was Aşita, and it was also the closer one to the Bervari. According to Badger the population of Aşita was nearly 2000.³²³ Like the other Nestorian tribes, the source of living of the Tiyari Nestorians largely depended on raising sheep due to the scarcity of arable lands.³²⁴ They sold the wool and the other products of their flocks, like butter, in Bervari, İmadiye, Mosul, and Çölemerik.³²⁵ Badger provides a list of the stolen animals from Tiyari during the Nestorian massacres of 1843-46, which he estimates to have been approximately 100,000.³²⁶ His numbers are most likely an exaggerated, and it is not possible to give exact numbers, however, as the largest tribe, the Tiyari no doubt had a considerable

³²⁰ Aboona, 2

³²¹ George P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals, with the Narrative of a Mission to Mesopotamia and Coordistan in 1842-1844, and of a Late Visit to Those Countries in 1850* (London: Joseph Masters, 1852), 1: 392-399.

³²² *Ibid.*, 394-95.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 185; 214.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 215; Aboona, 41; Stafford, 13.

³²⁵ Badger, 215; Aboona, 41.

³²⁶ Badger, 366.

number of sheep. Thus, it can be argued that the underlying reasons for the raids against the Tiyari were economic.

As mentioned above, one specific target of the Kurdish tribes was the Aşıta village of Tiyari.³²⁷ Aşıta was not a random choice. Besides having a large population, it was also the center of business and commerce in Tiyari.³²⁸ In Badger's list for stolen property, the number given for Aşıta village was the highest one among all the other villages.³²⁹ Despite the fact that the numbers might not reflect the truth, one still concludes from the list that Aşıta was the wealthier place in Tiyari in terms of livestock. Therefore, it was a target in raids as was in our case.

The Ertoşi tribe, which was mostly nomadic, obviously engaged in animal husbandry, like the other nomadic Kurdish tribes of the region, which means their main source of income came from selling the products of their animals.³³⁰ In 1899, it was reported that the Ertoşi and the Miran tribes possessed about 200,000 sheep in total.³³¹ Here, Klein's discussion and arguments on the importance of the economic value of sheep and correspondingly the increasing number of sheep-rustling in the late nineteenth century³³² are very helpful to understanding the raids of the Ertoşi tribe against the Nestorians. Klein draws her discussion about the economic importance of sheep and their byproducts for the nomadic tribes on the study of

³²⁷ See the afore-mentioned document

³²⁸ Aboona, 7. For the location of Aşıta village, see Appendix A and B.

³²⁹ Badger, 366.

³³⁰ See Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 66.

³³¹ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 57/26, 12 Cemaziyelahir 1317 (18 October 1899).

³³² See Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 67-68.

Sarah Shields, who devotes a full chapter to this topic.³³³ Shields writes that raising sheep and selling their byproducts became the most valuable source of income for both the merchants and the nomadic tribes of Mosul gradually between 1874-1912, owing to the increased foreign demand for animal products such as wool and hides.³³⁴

Klein argues that the tribes that enrolled in the Hamidiye enjoyed certain economic advantages vis-à-vis the non-Hamidiye groups. She writes that an example of this situation manifested itself in the raids of the Hamidiye tribes; the increasing economic importance of sheep brought along an increasing number of raids. Klein states that the Hamidiye tribes were no doubt mostly the perpetrators of the raids, however, through the backing of the government, they usually went unpunished.³³⁵ In her words, “Hamidiye tribes were largely assured freedom of action in any raid or other offense committed against a non-Hamidiye party. Sometimes this impunity took the form of government’s simple ‘failure’ to establish guilt or capture the malefactor—or so the government claimed.”³³⁶ The unpunished raids of the Ertoşi tribe, discussed above, exemplify this situation.

As seen above, during the 1888 conflicts between the Ertoşi and the Tiyari Nestorians, the local government tried to recover the stolen animals of the Nestorians;³³⁷ however, in the presently discussed conflict which occurred after the

³³³ See Sarah D. Shields, *Mosul Before Iraq: Like Bees Making Five-Sided Cells* (New York: State University of New York Press: 2000), 161-182.

³³⁴ Shields, 169-171.

³³⁵ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 67-69.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

³³⁷ See the afore-mentioned document, BOA. DH.ŞFR 136/131, 17-Ağustos-1304 (29 August 1888).

Ertoşi tribe had enrolled in the Hamidiye regiments, the government agents did not make any attempt to recover the animals of the Nestorians. The officials came into play only to punish the retributive attacks of the Nestorians.

As said before, the 1896 conflicts between the Tiyari Nestorians and the Ertoşi tribe turned into a serious feud that continued in the following years. In 1898, the chief of the Ertoşi, Hacı Bey, once again appeared in the government correspondences that related to a raid against Livin. This time the targets of Hacı Bey and his tribe were the Nestorian and Muslim villages of Livin³³⁸-Beytüşşebap. The governor of Van, Tahir, reported to the Interior Ministry that Hacı Bey and his tribe had stolen sheep and other properties of these villages on the pretext that the Tiyari Nestorians had stolen some sheep belonging to him. It is understood that the governor had requested soldiers in order to recover the stolen property to its owners, and a group of soldiers had arrived Beytüşşebap a day before he wrote his report. However, he added that it had been necessary to send two more companies as backup force.³³⁹ Hacı Bey's pretext for the plunder clearly referred to the two years earlier attack of the Tiyari on Livin. As seen, this time the target of Hacı Bey was not the Tiyari Nestorians, but the less powerful villagers of Livin. As Klein notes in the context of the targets of raids, "weaker groups had fewer animals, but also fewer defenses."³⁴⁰

I did not find further information regarding whether or not the stolen animals of the villagers were returned to their owners. However, one thing is clear: Hacı Bey

³³⁸ Livin was the district center of Beytüşşebap for a while. Nuri Osman Akbayan, *Osmanlı Yer Adları Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2001), 110.

³³⁹ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 59/73 5 Eylül 1314 (12 September 1898).

³⁴⁰ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 68.

once again went unpunished, this time through the direct help of his top commander, Zeki Paşa.

About two weeks after this incident, the commander-in-chief of the Hamidiye regiments, Zeki Paşa, wrote a report to the central government in which he fully acquitted Hacı Bey. According to his account, an investigation had been made into the allegations against Hacı Bey and his tribe, and it had been found that they were not the ones that had stolen the sheep of the Nestorians. On the contrary, he said, the Tiyari Nestorians had stolen the Ertoşi's sheep. In addition, he argued that the sheep of the Nestorians had been stolen by some other tribe which did not belong to the Hamidiye regiments. As regards to the allegations of the Nestorians, he targeted a French missionary, who he said had incited the Nestorians, and tried to convert them to Catholicism.³⁴¹

Zeki Paşa's report is only another example showing his backing of the Hamidiye chiefs and tribes. During his career as the commander-in-chief of the Hamidiye regiments, he always protected them against the attempts of the local government agents to punish them for the crimes they had committed.³⁴² As the Hamidiye regiments belonged to the Fourth Army corps, in case of the transgressions of the regiments the only thing that could be done by the administrative or military officials was to inform Zeki Paşa. However, the efforts of the officials mostly came to nothing because the regiments had the endless support of Zeki Paşa, and additionally Zeki Paşa himself was protected by Sultan Abdülhamid.³⁴³

³⁴¹ BOA. Y.PRK.ASK 144/84, 17 Eylül 1314 (29 September 1898); Arvas, 108-109.

³⁴² van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, State*, 187.

³⁴³ Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 83.

Zeki Paşa's support of Hamidiye tribes was not limited to his denial of their crimes. Additionally, by using his influence with the Sultan, he caused the removal of administrative or military officials who tried to prevent the atrocities of the Hamidiye regiments and/or acted against his agenda.³⁴⁴ An example of this situation was the removal of the governor of Mosul, Ebubekir Hazim Bey (Tepeyran) through the efforts of Zeki Paşa. Ebubekir Bey held this position for two and a half years, until 1902.³⁴⁵ The reason for Zeki Paşa's hostility toward him was his efforts to implement the decision of the Council of State to transfer Hacı Bey and his tribe to Süveydiye due to the disturbances they caused in Mosul.³⁴⁶

Narrating the full story of Hacı Bey and his Ertoşi tribe is beyond the scope of this thesis.³⁴⁷ However, some examples of his depredations will be given in order to show how Zeki Paşa's report on Hacı Bey is hardly believable. For example, in November 1894, it was reported that Hacı Ağa had plundered ten villages that belonged to the Dohuk district of Mosul. The residents of these villages had to flee their homes due to his attacks. As a result of the continuation of his depredations, the

³⁴⁴ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 78.

³⁴⁵ Ebubekir Hazim Tepeyran, *Hatıralar* (İstanbul:Pera Turizm ve Ticaret A,Ş., 1998), ix.

³⁴⁶ Tepeyran, 433-436; also see Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 83-84 and Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 78. For the efforts of Ebubekir Hazim Bey for the removal of Hacı Bey and his tribe see for example, BOA. DH.TMIK.M 57/26, 23 Mart 1315 (4 April 1899); BOA. DH.TMIK.M 69/13, 4 Nisan 1315 (16 April 1899); BOA. DH.TMIK.M 76/12, 22 Eylül 1315 (3 October 1899): “Ertuşi aşireti reisi Hacı Bey Zaho kazası hududunu tecavüzle beraber Diyarbekir viayetine merbut ve hudud üzerinde kain köylerden birini ihrak ve bazılarını da yağma ettiği beyanıyla tazmin-i hasar ve istirdad-ı menhubat ettirilmesi vilayet-i müşarun-ileyhadan alınan telgraftamede iş'ar olunmağla beraber Zaho ve Dohuk kaymakamlıklarından gelen telgraftamelerde dahi bunların şu suretle tecavüz ve teaddisinden müteessir olan aşayir ve ahalinin teskinine çalışılıyor ise de Hacı Bey bermucib-i karar-ı Ali Süveydiye'ye müsaraaten sevk olunmadığı takdirde vuku'a gelecek mücadelatın men'i pek müşkil olacağından...”

³⁴⁷ For a part of Hacı Bey and his tribe's atrocities in Mosul see, Çetinsaya, *Ottoman administration of Iraq*, 83-84; Çetinsaya, *Hamidiye, Nakşibendiye*, 132-135, and Tepeyran, 433-435.

residents of some other villages of Dohuk were forced to leave their settlements. In order to prevent this situation, and potential depredations, it was suggested that Hacı Ağa and his tribe should not be permitted to live in Mosul during winters.³⁴⁸

In April 1897, a merchant caravan traveling from Mosul to Zaho stopped before its destination out of the fear of being robbed by the Ertoşi tribe of Hacı Bey. Several reports related to the attacks of the Ertoşi to the caravans, reached to Zaho. The Ertoşi were repeatedly attacking the villagers, merchants, and other tribes of Mosul, and damaging the trade of the region by attacking caravans.³⁴⁹ Another document sent by the governor of Mosul reported that on their return to Mosul from their summer pastures, Hacı Ağa and his tribe directly settled around the waterways of Zaho district in order to squeeze all of the residents of the district.³⁵⁰ The governor further wrote, “They have already devastated the arable fields of ten villages to feed their sheep.”³⁵¹

In June 1895, 29 notables of Doski, Mezuri, and Bervari sub-districts of Mosul sent a joint telegram to the Grand Vizierate. They complained of the atrocities the Ertoşi had committed since they had enrolled in the Hamidiye. They demanded either the removal of the Ertoşi from the Mosul area, or for themselves to be accepted into the Hamidiye regiments as the Ertoşi had.³⁵² Last, in December 1898, the village headmen of a Chaldean village in Zaho sent a telegram to the central government. He reported that about two weeks earlier Hacı Bey had attacked their

³⁴⁸ BOA. DH.MKT 303/3, 2 Cemaziyelevvel 1312 (1 November 1894).

³⁴⁹ BOA. DH.ŞFR 206/122, 29 Mart 1313 (10 April 1897).

³⁵⁰ BOA. DH.ŞFR 216/33, 5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1313 (17 October 1897).

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² BOA. A.MKT.MHM 723/17, 12 Zilhicce 1312 (6 June 1895).

village along with 30 horsemen, and stolen their mules and horses, which had been the only property the villagers owned. He stated that their grievances against him had been unanswered by the local government. Thus, in the last resort they were imploring the central government to recover their animals.³⁵³

Examples of the atrocities of Hacı Bey can be increased; however, those given above are enough to form an opinion about the behavior of him and his tribe, particularly after they enrolled to the Hamidiye regiments. Describing Hacı Bey as one of the main troublemakers in Hakkari and Mosul would not be wrong. As soon as he acquired the title of lieutenant-colonel of the 50th regiment, he started to attack and pillage several groups in or around the Ertoşi's winter residences and summer pastures. As should be understood from the examples given in this section, Hacı Bey attacked the Nestorians of Hakkari in summer, and both the Christian and Muslim villagers and also non-Hamidiye Kurdish tribes of the Mosul region in winter. However, it should be stated that while Hacı Bey was targeted different parties, both Muslims and Christians, anyone had property to be pillaged, during my research I did not see any information that related to Hacı Bey and his tribe's attacks to a different party in Hakkari apart from those against the Tiyari Nestorians, and to some extent the non-tribal Nestorian and Kurdish villagers of Livin.

Taking all of Hacı Bey's acts into account, it can be concluded that the above mentioned report of Zeki Paşa about Hacı Bey was false. However, it worked, and as explained with the above examples, Hacı Bey continued his atrocities in the following years without being punished for his crimes. On the other hand, the conflict between the Tiyari Nestorians and Livin Kurds, which had started with the

³⁵³ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 63/54, 19 Teşrin-i Sani 1314 (1 December 1898).

Ertoşi's raids, turned into a serious feud, and irreversibly damaged the relations between the two parties.

The Wronged Party: Slander and Punishment

Through the end of 1899, some people had made denunciations to the government of the Çölemerik district about the plans of the Tiyari Nestorians to attack the villages of Livin sub-district. Thereupon, the district governor went to the region along with provincial police, and arrested a group of Nestorians. About three months after this incident, the governor of Van sent a telegram to the central government, in which he wrote that the Nestorian patriarch, Mar Shimon, and several other Nestorians had requested an investigation of the incident from the local government through their petitions. In their accounts, the petitioners had asserted that the Tiyari Nestorians never had an intention to attack Livin, and thus the arrested Nestorians were innocent.³⁵⁴

It seems that the central government could not remain indifferent to the assertions of the Nestorians, and ordered to form a committee in order to investigate the issue. In May 1900, the committee finished its investigation, and Van governor reported the results to the Interior Ministry. It was stated the investigation had revealed that the assertions of the Nestorians were true; in other words, the arrested people were innocent. The denunciations about the crimes of the Tiyari Nestorians were made up of slander. Two names appeared in the account of the governor as the organizers of this conspiracy against the Nestorians; Muhammed Ağa from the

³⁵⁴ BOA. DH.TMIK.M. 88/26, 03 Ma 1316 (16 March 1900).

Peyanis village, and Taci Ağa from Livin. In addition to these two men, it was revealed that a number of Muslims had committed perjury during this conspiracy.³⁵⁵

Some more details about the case are revealed through the account of the governor. It is understood that sixteen Nestorians had been arrested, and they were charged with murder.³⁵⁶ In the first account of the governor, the reason for the arrests had been shown as the denunciations about the attacking plans of the Nestorians to Livin.³⁵⁷ However, it is understood that in the course of time the perjurers had taken their accusations one step further, and caused the Nestorians to be charged with murder. As remembered, the conflict between the Livin Kurds and the Tiyari Nestorians started with the Tiyari's attack on the Peyanis village of Livin in response to the Hacı Bey's raid on the Tiyari. As seen in this case, it caused a serious hostility between the two parties, which manifested itself in the above discussed conspiracy of the Livin Kurds against the Tiyari Nestorians.

The most interesting part of this case was the local government's recommendations to the central government after the truths about the incident had been revealed. Considering the fact that the arrested Nestorians were innocent, the Van governor pointed to the necessity of releasing them in accordance with justice.³⁵⁸ However, as for the punishment of conspirators and perjurers, the governor's remarks stated that,

“Under normal circumstances the conspirators and perjurers must be punished, however, this situation can cause a misunderstanding in the eyes of the Muslim population who are unaware of the truths. Also it will cause

³⁵⁵ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 246/113, 21 Nisan 1316 (04 May 1900).

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ The above-mentioned document.

³⁵⁸ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 246/113, 21 Nisan 1316 (04 May 1900).

further hostility between the Nestorians and the Muslim population of Çölemerik and Livin, which have already existed since years.”³⁵⁹

The recommendations of the governor related to the Muslim side were in concordance with Abdülhamid II’s policies. As Duguid has stated, during his reign, Abdülhamid tried to regain the loyalty of the Muslim population to the empire, which had been damaged by the policies of his predecessors.³⁶⁰ According to Duguid due to the policies of the earlier Tanzimat reformers, “the Muslim population seemed to be losing its traditional feelings of superiority to the non-Muslim which had for so long sustained the Empire.”³⁶¹

Although our case was a small and local one, it can be argued that the unjust attitude of the province governor in this case, who aimed to rescue the guilty Muslims in question, was an example of giving back the feeling of superiority to the Muslims over non-Muslims. However, it should be stated that my intention is not to oversimplify the attitudes of the local government agents or the policies of the central state to Islamist practices. I treat the Hamidian regime’s Muslim unity discourse as a tool of its modern-state making project, through which it aimed to incorporate and thus better control groups like the empire’s Kurdish population. Likely, the Nestorians in question were released as required; however, contrary to the views of the governor, the impunity given to the Livin Kurds would cause the escalation of the conflict between them and the Nestorians, and also once again eroded the faith of the Nestorians in the Empire.

About two months after this incident, the Nestorian patriarch, Mar Shimon, desperately asked for help from Sultan Abdülhamid by a telegram. He declared that

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Duguid, *The Politics of Unity*, 140.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

the persecution and attacks of the Kurdish tribes against the Nestorians of Hakkari had become more than they can bear.³⁶² He added that, “Although we have expressed our grievances to the local government several times, they were ignored by the governor whose maladministration is known since his governorship of Mosul.”³⁶³

It is understood that after Mar Shimon’s telegram reached the palace, the Sultan found it warranted to investigate the assertions of Mar Shimon, and ordered a decree (*irade*) in this direction. The Grand Vizier wrote to the Interior Ministry that immediately an official had to be charged with investigation.³⁶⁴ It is not known whether or not an investigation was conducted upon the order of the Sultan, and if it did what the consequences were. However, most likely nothing sufficient was done to redress the grievances of Mar Shimon because, as will be discussed next, about one and a half year later, the conflict between the Tiyari Nestorians and Livin Kurds escalated again. More clearly, the Tiyari Nestorians decided to take their revenge on their own.

Through the end of December 1901, the Tiyari Nestorians attacked to Peyanis village of Livin sub-district with a force of 2000 men. During the attack, 11 people from Peyanis—one of them the village headman—were killed, ten dwellings were burnt, and some properties of the villagers were pillaged. Their next target would have been the Salahi sub-district of Çölemerik, except with the arrival of the gendarmes and soldiers to the scene, causing the Tiyari Nestorians to retreat.³⁶⁵

³⁶² BOA. DH.TMIK.M 91/18, 12 Temmuz 1316 (25 July 1900).

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 91/18, 16 Temmuz 1316 (29 July 1900).

³⁶⁵ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 116/69, 17 Kanunievvel 1317 (30 December 1901); BOA. BEO 1785/133804, 16 Kanunisani 1317 (29 January 1902).

The reason for the Nestorians attack to Peyanis was explained by the Van governor in a telegram to the central government. According to his account, about one and a half year before this incident, four Nestorians had been killed, and additionally 20 of them had been robbed and their guns seized by the Peyanis Kurds.³⁶⁶ That was why the Tiyaris had attacked the village. At first glance, it was once again a retributive attack, but there was more than that. The incident that the governor mentioned as the underlying reason for the attack occurred during the times of the conspiracy against the Nestorians, discussed above. It seems that the act of the Peyanis Kurds was not limited to organize a conspiracy against the Nestorians; additionally, they killed four people and robbed 20 more.³⁶⁷ Some details in another document leave no room for doubt that the two incidents were closely connected. The Van governor informed the Interior Ministry that the murdered village headman was Taci Ağa, who, as said before,³⁶⁸ had been among the organizers of the conspiracy. In addition to this, two more ağas from Çölemerik, who had also been involved in the conspiracy were killed, by the Tiyari Nestorians.³⁶⁹ It seems the Nestorians punished the offenders themselves in a region where the government officials had been unwilling to establish justice.

However, it should be stated that not all the local government agents were like the governor of Van, who prevented the punishment of the conspirators. In a way, he paved the way for the retributive attack of the Tiyari Nestorians. It is understood that the governor of Hakkari sub-province had been charged with the

³⁶⁶ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 116/69, 17 Kanunievvel 1317 (30 December 1901).

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ The afore-mentioned document.

³⁶⁹ BOA. DH.ŞFR 278/101, 18 Şubat 1317 (3 March 1902).

investigation of the conspiracy against the Tiyari Nestorians. A while earlier, he had promised to some chiefs of the Tiyari tribe that the three ağas in question would have been exiled due to their crimes.³⁷⁰ However, he could not keep his promise, most likely because the difficulties raised by his superior, the governor of Van. Now, the Van governor incriminated the governor of Hakkari in a telegram to the Interior Ministry. According to him, the governor of Hakkari was responsible for the attack of the Tiyaris on Peyanis village, because he had established good relations with the Tiyari Nestorians, and had promised to these “savages” that the three men would be punished.³⁷¹ According to the governor, instead of making such promises, the Hakkari governor at least should have warned the deceased Taci Ağa about the Tiyari’s desire for revenge. He added that, as a consequence of the Hakkari governor’s acts, the hostility between the Muslims and the Christians escalated, thus, he recommended the removal of the Hakkari governor.³⁷²

The solution of the governor to discipline and punish the Tiyari Nestorians was familiar. In another telegram that predates the above one, he asked permission from the Interior Ministry to conduct a military operation against the Tiyaris. He requested two companies composed of 800 soldiers, and four mountain artilleries.³⁷³ It is understood from his telegram that he strived to persuade the central government.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ BOA. DH.ŞFR 278/101, 18 Şubat 1317 (3 March 1902): “...Zaten bu Tayyari tecavüzatına da muma-ileyh tedbirsizliği sebebiyet vermiştir çünkü tahkik-i me’uriyyetle Çölemerik’den geldiği vakit Tayyari rüesasıyla görüşmüş ve mücerred hazırladığı telgrafname ve müsâlaha-nameyi rüesa-yı merkumeye mühürletdirmek fikriyle kendilerinin her talebine mümaşat göstermiş ve maktullerin diyetlerini verdirmegi ve Tayyariler tarafından şu Peyanis vukuatında katl edilen muhtar Taci Ağa ile Çölemerikli diğer iki ağayı nefy u (...) etdirmeyi teahüd etmiştir. Devlet namına iş gören bir me’mur için değil böyle vahşilere...”

³⁷² BOA. DH.ŞFR 278/101, 18 Şubat 1317 (3 March 1902).

³⁷³ BOA. BEO 1785/133804, 16 Kanunusani 1317 (29 January 1902); BOA. DH.TMIK.M 116/69, 17 Kanunuevvel 1317 (30 December 1901).

He stated that although the only aim of the Tiyaris in this incident was get revenge, and they had targeted certain people; nonetheless their attack caused anxiety among the Muslim inhabitants of Livin, who asked for immediate punishment. He added that the Tiyari tribe had never paid their taxes, and they were under the influence of British and French missionaries. However, they had not been disciplined yet because it had been difficult to reach their mountainous settlements. According to him, considering all these situations, they needed to be disciplined by a military operation.³⁷⁴

It seems the request of the Van governor to conduct a military operation in order to discipline the Tiyari tribe was not approved by the central government. On March 1902, the Grand Vizier wrote to the Interior Ministry that conducting a military operation against the Nestorian tribe could cause an acceleration of the trouble in the region, and additionally it could lead to the involvement of foreign states to the issue. For these reasons, the central government recommended the employment of tolerant means, like negotiation, to solve the conflicts between the Livin Kurds and the Tiyari tribe.³⁷⁵

While the local and central government agents were trying to find a way to solve the conflict, the incidents continued in Hakkari. On 9 January 1902, it was reported that the Kurdish Gevdan tribe had attempted to attack the non-tribal Nestorian villages of Livin. This attack was prevented by the government of Çölemerik by sending soldiers to their passageway. However, another Kurdish tribe,

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 116/69, 25 Zilkade 1319 (5 March 1902).

the Oramar, attacked a Nestorian village which belonged to the Gevar district of Hakkari.³⁷⁶

In October 1902, the governor of Van reported that the Tiyari Nestorians, the Kurdish Gevdan, and Mamhoran tribes had made peace thanks to the efforts of the local government. He stated that the stolen animals of both the two parties had been recovered.³⁷⁷ In order to avoid confusion, it should be stated that the animals that had been stolen by the Tiyari tribe had belonged to the villagers of Peyanis, and those that had been stolen by the Kurdish tribes in question had belonged to the Nestorian villagers of Livin.³⁷⁸ It should be recalled that the Gevdan and Mamhoran tribes were among the sub-tribes of the Ertoşi tribe. Thus, it reveals that the villagers of Peyanis were subject to the Ertoşi tribe. That is why the Gevdan and Mamhoran tribes appeared to be on one side of the conflict at the end of the incidents. Klein has stated that the powerful tribes were usually not the targets of retributive raids, instead “their dependent villagers and less powerful neighbors were often the victims.”³⁷⁹ However, “It was the responsibility of the chief to ensure that the stolen property was returned to its original owners who were members or clients of the tribe.”³⁸⁰

Although the Gevdan and Mamhoran tribes carried out retributive raids on behalf of the villagers of Peyanis, the villagers were not passive bystanders of the incidents. They resorted in a more convenient way to express their grievances. Nine villagers from Peyanis, including men and women, sent a petition to the Grand

³⁷⁶ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 116/69, 27 Kanunuevvel 1317 (9 January 1902).

³⁷⁷ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 135/4, 17 Teşrinievvel 1318 (30 October 1902).

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 68.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

Vizerate on 3 February 1902. In the petition, they wrote the details of the Tiyari Nestorians attack, and stated that they wanted justice. The interesting part of this petition was the language of the villagers, which had a strong emphasis on Islam. The villagers tried to show the incident as a Christian-Muslim conflict free of any sort of economic motive or power struggle. It was emphasized that they had run out of patience, and if their grievances were not redress they would not hesitate to lay down their lives for the sake of Muslims.³⁸¹

As seen, the villagers made use of the Islamic discourse of the regime for their own interests. This situation shows that the population of the empire was not made up of passive receivers of the messages given by the central elite. They could employ and in a way test the reliability of the discourse of the central state, as done in the above-mentioned petition. Both this petition and the one written by the Nestorian patriarch, which discussed before, show one more important thing. As Zürcher states throughout the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the telegraph lines extended to each corner of the empire, which in turn provided the central government to rapidly communicate with its local agents, and thus to establish better control over them.³⁸² This development in the communication system was indeed an indication of the central state's increased infrastructural power. As has been stated by Michael Mann, one of the tools employed by the state to extend its infrastructural power is communication and transportation networks.³⁸³ As can be understood from the above mentioned petitions, the same tool was also enabled the state's subjects to express

³⁸¹ BOA. DH.TMIK.M 118/56, 21 Kanunusani 1317 (3 February 1902).

³⁸² Zürcher, 122-123.

³⁸³ Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," in *States in History*, ed. John A. Hall (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 116-117.

their grievances to the central state, and in some cases like the one above to use the state's discourse against itself.

The conflict between the Tiyari Nestorians and the Ertoşi tribe is a lens through which the power struggles, coalitions, and conflicts between different parties in Hakkari during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire can be examined. The struggles between these two tribes which were discussed throughout this chapter reveal only a small part of the tension between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes of Hakkari during the reign of Abdülhamid II. The already damaged relations between the two tribes in question worsened after the enrollment of the Ertoşi to the Hamidiye regiments. Although the attacks of the two sides that came one after another mostly stemmed from economic motives due to the growing economic value of sheep throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century,³⁸⁴ it turned into a serious feud in time.

As seen above, despite the fact that the conflicts between the two sides were far from a religious, both local government agents and the villagers of Livin tried to reflect them to the central government in this manner. By doing that, they used the central state's own discourse in an attempt to falsify the truths in line with their own interests. In conclusion, the struggle of the Tiyari Nestorians to protect their economic and social positions vis-à-vis the ever-increasing power of the Ertoşi tribe, was the basis of the long conflicts between the two sides. As said above, this chapter examined only a small part of the power struggles in Hakkari between the Nestorian and the Kurdish tribes during the last decades of the empire. Further studies based on a comparative research in Ottoman and foreign archives will provide opportunities for a more comprehensive story on this issue.

³⁸⁴ Shields, 161-182.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the relations between the state, and the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes of Hakkari by particularly focusing the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It demonstrated the effects of the Ottoman modern state-making policies on the lives of the Nestorian tribes and on the relations of the Nestorian tribes with the Kurdish tribes. The area of Hakkari where the Nestorian tribes lived during the period under review was a frontier that had been brought under the direct rule of the central Ottoman state in the late 1840s, in line with Tanzimat reforms. Thus, this study also examined the difficulties that both the central state and the Nestorian tribes faced while the former sought to incorporate the edge of the Hakkari frontier into its new administrative and fiscal structure, and to turn the “disobedient” Nestorian tribes into loyal Ottoman subjects.

The thesis discussed the taxation problem between the state and the Nestorian tribes that started as soon as the emirate of Hakkari was brought to an end, and continued throughout the following decades. The recurring attempts of the central and local government agents to secure the collection of more and regular taxes from the Nestorian tribes were not only related to economic concerns. It was much more related to penetrating their lives and making them feel under the strict authority of the Ottoman state. Thus, taxation was also a tool employed by the state to make its presence felt in the region.

There were several reasons behind the taxation problem between the Ottoman state and the Nestorian tribes. First, the Nestorian tribes were subjected to the

oppressive means, abuses, and ill-treatments of tax officials and soldiers from the beginning of their experiences with the newly introduced taxes and collection methods. Second, during the period between 1850 and the early 1870s, the issues of repeated (*mükerrer*) tax collection and over-taxation in the tribes' settlements again and again appeared in the related archival documents. The superficial efforts of the central and local governments to redress the grievances of the Nestorians about these irregularities and injustice deeply damaged the image of the state in the minds of the Nestorians. Third, the local government agents of Hakkari often resorted to or at least intended to conduct military operations against the Nestorian tribes to collect the unpaid taxes. On the other hand, the central state recommended to its local agents to use proper ways to handle the taxation problems, such as negotiation and rewarding the leaders of the tribes and the Nestorian patriarch, in order to win their hearts. However, both the oppressive means and the negotiation efforts were short-term solutions; therefore, none of them brought a permanent end to the taxation problem.

This thesis also examined the effects of the Hamidian policies towards the eastern provinces on the lives of the Nestorian tribes, and on their relations with their Kurdish neighbors. In Chapter 4, I showed a small part of the chaotic situation in Hakkari during the reign of Abdülhamid II, by focusing the worsening relations between the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes as a result of the reciprocal attacks between the two groups in question. It was shown that the attempts of the Hamidian regime to secure the loyalty of the Kurdish tribes, and to bind them to the empire, mainly through creating the Hamidiye regiments, escalated the conflicts and lawlessness in Hakkari.

By choosing to present the struggle between the Tiyari tribe of the Nestorians and the Kurdish Ertoşi tribe, I examined several issues which manifested themselves

in their struggle. For example, the increasing influence of sheikhs on the Kurdish tribes, the increasing power and atrocities of the Kurdish tribes which enrolled to the Hamidiye regiments, and the use of the Hamidian regime's own Islamic discourse by the Kurds against the central state's decisions, all of which were to the detriment of the Nestorian tribe in question. However, all the themes examined in this study must be further studied. Especially, the situation of the non-tribal Nestorians vis-à-vis the social, economic and political changes that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries is a challenging topic that waiting for research.

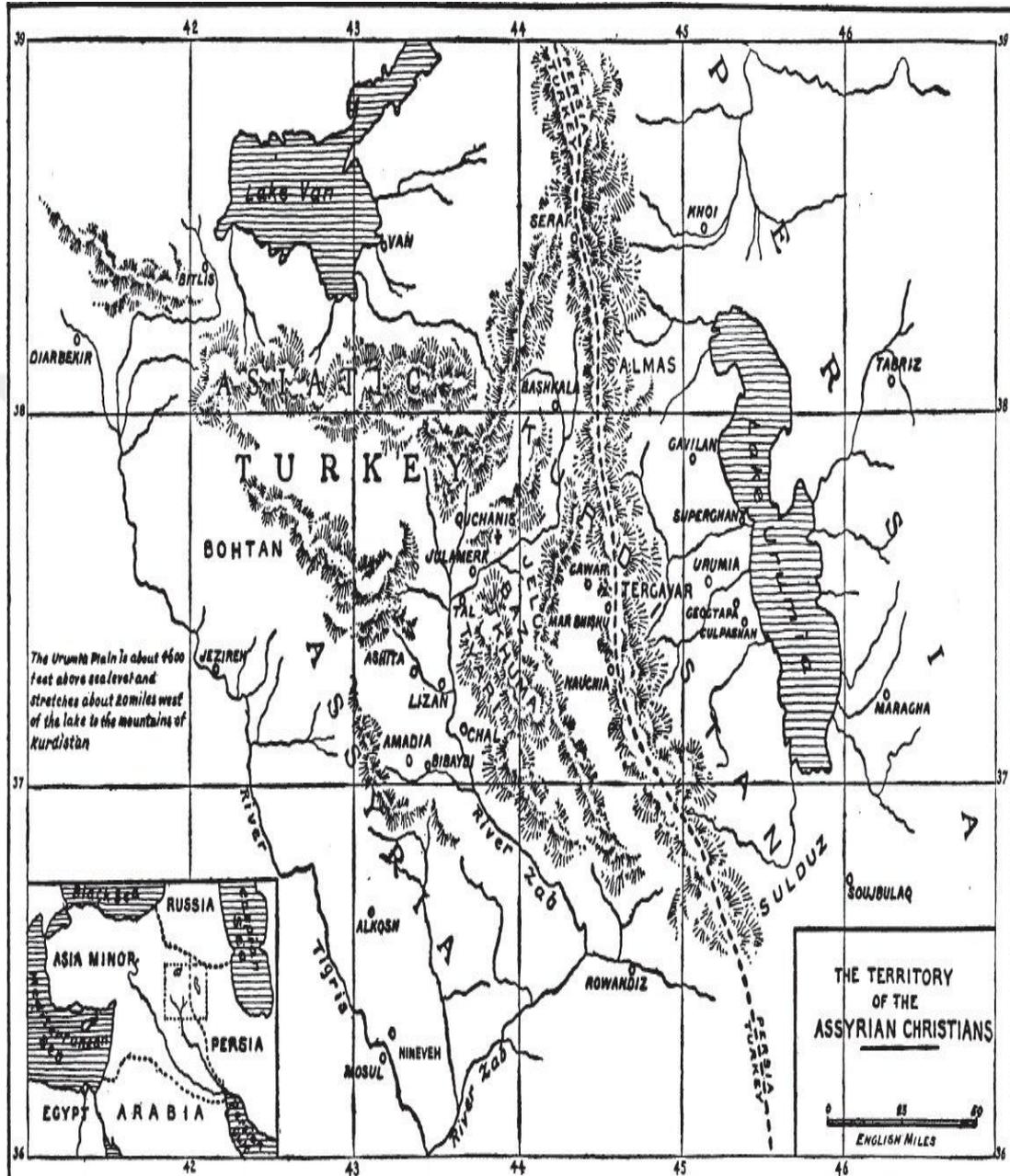
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Map Showing the Settlements of the Nestorians³⁸⁵



³⁸⁵ Assyrian Information Management, "Assyria Maps," <http://www.atour.com/maps/index.shtml> (accessed April 25, 2015).

Appendix B: Map Showing the Settlements of the Nestorians³⁸⁶



³⁸⁶ Assyrian Information Management, "Assyria Maps," <http://www.atour.com/maps/index.shtml> (accessed April 25, 2015).

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