

8-2013

Imagining Kurdish Identity in Mandatory Syria: Finding a Nation in Exile

Ahmet Serdar Akturk
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Imagining Kurdish Identity in Mandatory Syria: Finding a Nation in Exile

Imagining Kurdish Identity in Mandatory Syria: Finding a Nation in Exile

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

Ahmet Serdar Aktürk
Middle East Technical University
Bachelor of Science in History, 2004
University of Arkansas
Master of Arts in History, 2006

August 2013
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Dr. Joel Gordon
Dissertation Director

Dr. Richard Sonn
Committee Member

Dr. Nikolay Antov
Committee Member

ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at the activities of the Kurdish nationalists from Turkey who were exiled in Syria and Lebanon during the period of the French mandate, and especially Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan. Scions of a princely Kurdish family from the Botan region in Eastern Anatolia, the Bedirkhan brothers initiated a Kurdish cultural movement in exile following the failure of two armed rebellions against the new Turkish Republic in 1925 and 1930. Central to this cultural movement was the publication of journals in Damascus and Beirut, namely *Hawar* (1932-1943) *Ronahi* (1942-1945), *Roja Nu/Le Jour Nouveau* (1943-1946), and *Ster* (1943-1945).

This study critically analyzes these Kurdish periodicals and other publications from Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s to understand how exiled Kurdish nationalists imagined a new Kurdish identity in the Middle East following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the nation states. Kurdish journals became the platform for a vibrant discussion about the future of the Kurds across the region. They also became the vehicle for the formalization and spread of a national language as well as the construction of a new identity, rooted in tradition but also with the aim of creating new Kurdish men and women.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was a great pleasure to work with my dissertation director, Dr. Joel Gordon. His comments, critiques and constant encouragement have made this dissertation possible. My dissertation committee members, Dr. Richard Sonn and Dr. Nikolay Antov, also helped me to look at my research topic from different angles. I am grateful to Dr. William Tucker who directed me to many sources on Kurdish history. I also want to thank Dr. Adnan Haydar for the years of enjoyable and rigorous Arabic training.

I am thankful to the King Fahd Center for Middle East Studies and the History Department at the University of Arkansas for funding my graduate studies and research overseas. The chair of the History Department, Dr. Lynda Coon, and the Directors of Graduate Studies, Dr. Kathryn Sloan and Dr. Trisha Starks were extremely helpful throughout my graduate years. I also want to thank my office mates and especially Matt Parnell and Amanda Ford who read parts of my dissertation.

I spent almost a year studying Kurmanji Kurdish at the Kurdish Institute of Istanbul. I am grateful to my Kurdish teacher, Mamoste Mevlüt, my tutors Aysel and Ali, and to the former and current chairs of the institute, Sami Tan and Zana Farqini. I should also thank Reşit Koçeroğlu for giving me insight into Kurdish madrasa life in Syria. Firat Ceweri, who republished *Hawar* in Stockholm in 1998, was kind enough to meet me during his visit to Istanbul. I give special thanks to my friend Hüseyin Burhan, who hosted me in Ankara several times. In Ankara it was inspirational to meet the Turkish sociologist İsmail Beşikçi, the late Şerafettin Elçi, and Mahmut Altunakar, all of whom shared with me their deep knowledge of the Kurds and their personal experiences. I want to especially thank Ahmed Kurdi who hosted me in Mardin and told me a lot about Jaladet Bedirkhan, his experience as a Kurd in Turkey and Syria,

and how he smuggled the Kurdish periodicals across the border. Also, I am thankful to Cafer who hosted me in Cizre and showed me his historical town.

Special thanks go to my friends Said, Hasan, and Mehmet who hosted me in Damascus. Dilawer Zengi kindly shared his collection of Kurdish periodicals published in Syria and introduced me to the Kurdish neighborhood in Damascus. I am grateful to Dr. Jordi Tejel for providing me with contacts in Qamishli. Rustum Mahmoud hosted me in Qamishli and introduced me to many people who had much to teach me regarding my research topic. It was exciting to meet the late Yousef Haji Harsan in Amuda who published a few pieces in the periodicals that I analyze in this dissertation. I would like to thank my friend Akif for his hospitality in Sulaymaniya, Iraqi Kurdistan. Mazlum Doğan in Sulaymaniya also helped me meet many people interested in Kurdish journalism. I was very privileged to have been granted an interview in Erbil with Sinemkhan Bedirkhan, the daughter of Jaladet Bedirkhan. She was very hospitable and she shared many family documents and recounted her childhood years with her father.

The staffs of the Turkish Prime Ministry Republican Archives and Syrian National Archives were very helpful during my stays in Ankara and Damascus. I am also thankful to Kendal Nezan and Joyce Blau from the Kurdish Institute of Paris for letting me use their collections. The staff of Mullins Library at the University of Arkansas, especially the Interlibrary Loan department, deserves special thanks for their helpful service.

My parents, my brother, my sister, and my grandmother have always supported me and encouraged me with their prayers. I am also thankful to all of my friends who made Fayetteville a second home. I will miss them and Fayetteville. Last, but not least, I want to thank Rıdvan, my close friend and countryman who was always there to lend support.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mentor, colleague, and good friend, al-Ustaadh Dr. Joel Gordon

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Unfortunately, there is not a standard transliteration system for Kurmanji Kurdish. Transliteration of Kurdish names and terms in this dissertation follows the system adopted by Wadie Jwaideh in his *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006). For the transliteration of Arabic names and terms I have used *the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies'* transliteration system.

1. Introduction

The Turkish nation was tired of their sultans and kicked them out of their country. The nations, which had gathered around the Ottoman throne and the Muslim Caliph, broke away. Each got its own share except the KurdsWhat we (Kurds) should have had according to the principles of wisdom and of Shariah ...fell into the hands of others. That is what we lay claim to today. That is the question of Kurdistan. When we defend our rights, the nations around us say that we are all Muslims and brothers, and there is not difference between us. That argument might be true but what they did is not fair. Because when a father dies, each son gets his own share. A brother cannot take others' shares.¹

The editorial in the Beirut-based Kurmanji Kurdish newspaper *Roja Nu* (The New Day) dated Monday, May 1st 1944 utilizes a metaphor to clarify the frustrations of the Kurds within the new regional order after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. If we stick to the author's metaphor, we can say that the distant members of the Ottoman household, namely Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Albanians, had already left the Empire with their own shares by the beginning of the Great War. The end of the war brought further dismemberment as the empire lost its Arab territories. Kurds, however, remained loyal to the Ottoman sultan and caliph and fought side by side with the Turks to defend the remaining Ottoman territories in the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923). The Kemalist Turkish Republic, founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), destroyed the ties that had held Kurds and Turks together for centuries: the Ottoman sultanate and the caliphate. Moreover, the ardently secular and exclusively Turkish nationalist character of the new regime along with the attempts to assimilate the Kurds further alienated the Kurds of Turkey. In that context, some Kurds stayed in Turkey and struggled against the new regime. Others voluntarily or involuntarily went into exile, a process that had started before the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and accelerated with the consolidation of the Kemalist regime and the failure of the Sheik Said Rebellion in 1925. Syria and Lebanon, put under the French Mandate by the League of Nations in 1920, became a safe

¹*Roja Nu* (1 May 1944), p.1.

haven for the Kurdish exiles from the Kemalist regime. Considering the existence of a Kurdish quarter in Damascus and the scattered Kurdish territories across northern Syria, Kurds were not alien to Syria. However, the arrival of Kurdish exiles and their nationalist activities made the Levant an important center for Kurdish nationalism and for a Kurdish language press by the early 1930s. Their activities in French mandatory Syria and Lebanon during the interwar years and the years of World War II constituted an important stage of Kurdish national development and shaped the post-Ottoman identity discourse in the region.

This study will critically analyze the Kurdish press in the Levant from the early 1930s through the second half of the 1940s. I will demonstrate how exiled Kurdish nationalists in Syria and Lebanon used the press as a vehicle to shape a Kurdish national identity, to address problems in Kurdish society, to educate, unify, awaken and mobilize the Kurdish masses, to revive and unify the Kurdish language, to pen Kurdish literature and folklore, to refute Turkish claims regarding Kurds and the Kurdish territories, to claim existence of a nation with its ancient history and homeland, and to introduce the “case of Kurdistan” to the West. This study will deal with both the history and content of the Kurdish press from the Levant. Through a careful reading of the Kurdish periodicals and other publications in Syria and Lebanon, I will demonstrate how the Kurdish nationalists in exile imagined a nation through the medium of press. The Levant was not the only center of Kurdish nationalist literary and press activities. Kurdish intellectuals in Iraq, Iran and the Soviet Armenia were also leading their own cultural movements in the 1930s. Thus, this study focuses on one of the centers of Kurdish nationalism in the post-Ottoman Middle East, and, I hope, contributes to the understanding of broader identity issues in the Middle East in the decades following the World War I in the post-Ottoman Middle East.

Nationalist elites living in the former Ottoman territories in the interwar years and even in the following decades were, not surprisingly, products of the Ottoman institutions that had trained them. Whether they were ethnically Turkish, Arab or Kurdish, they all had studied and/or worked in the same Ottoman institutions and had pondered the problems of the Ottoman Empire in its last decades. However, when their Ottoman brotherhood ended, they took different paths. William L. Cleveland's invaluable studies on Sati' al-Husri (1880-1968), Shakib Arslan (1869-1946) and their respectively Arabist and Islamist responses to Ataturk's regime in Turkey clearly exemplifies this point.² The Arab territories were cut off from the new Turkish state and in those territories the French and British carved out new nation-states under their mandate authorities. Neither Husri nor Arslan had any links to the new Turkish regime. However, for them, as former-Ottoman gentlemen, to envision a future without any reference to the Ottoman past and to the new regime established in Turkey by Ataturk would be impossible. Their writings, as analyzed by Cleveland, provide us with the first hand response to the new Turkish identity by the two former Ottoman Arab elites.

Kurdish nationalist elites, and especially those from the Kurdish territories under the control of the Turkish republic, were operating under different circumstances during the interwar years. They felt betrayed by the new Turkish regime and frustrated by the failure of their attempts to liberate Kurdish territories from Turkish control following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The Shaykh Said rebellion in 1925

² William L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); "Ataturk Viewed by His Arab Contemporaries: The Opinions of Sati'al-Husri and Shakib Arslan," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2, no. 2 (1983), pp. 15-23; and *The Making of an Arab Nationalist; Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati al-Husri* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971).

was the first major manifestation of Kurdish reaction against the Kemalist regime, and its failure was a major blow to the struggle to free Kurdish territories from Turkish control through armed struggle. The second major armed attempt was organized in Lebanon and Syria by the Kurdish exiles, who had established an organization called Khoybun (“Be Yourself”). However, the Ararat Rebellion (1927-1930), organized by Khoybun and led by a former Ottoman officer, proved another disappointment. Following the failure of the military alternative, the brothers Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan (1893-1951) and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan (1895-1978) left Khoybun and in 1932 initiated a cultural movement under the auspices of French authorities and with the cooperation of French Orientalist scholars. Their activities centered on the publication of periodicals and books on Kurdish language, history, culture and literature, which they continued to produce until the end of French mandate. They tried to create self-conscious Kurds and to validate Kurdish aspirations for an independent nation-state. Jaladet Bedirkhan edited the literary magazine *Hawar* (Cry for Help 1932-1943) and its illustrated supplement *Ronahi* (Enlightenment 1942-1945) in Damascus. Kamuran Bedirkhan edited the weekly newspaper *Roja Nû /Le Jour Nouveau* (The New Day 1943-1946) and its supplement, *Ster* (Star 1943-1945) in Beirut. Jaladet Bedirkhan also operated the Hawar press that published numerous short books in Damascus.

Even though publication of these Kurdish periodicals in the Levant came to an end by 1946, their legacy lived on, especially among Kurds speaking the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish. Kurdish intellectuals from Turkey living in European countries continued the Bedirkhan brothers’ legacy and published Kurdish journals in exile in the 1960s and the following decades. Since the late 1970s, facsimiles of *Hawar*, *Rohani*, *Roja Nu*, and *Ster* have been published in Europe and recently in Northern Iraq and in Turkey, which indicates their continuing legacy.

Kurdish intellectuals emphasized the role of *Hawar* as a model for later publications in Kurmaji Kurdish. Some even regarded *Hawar* as “the little encyclopedia of the Kurds.”³ Because earlier Kurdish publications from the late-Ottoman period were in the Arabic-Persian alphabet, they were not accessible or widely available to the Kurds, who had adopted the Roman script in 1932.⁴ *Hawar*, which introduced the new Kurdish alphabet, became a major source on Kurdish history, literature, and language for the later generations who knew only the new alphabet.⁵ For example, the linguists working on Kurdish grammar or compiling Kurdish vocabulary in Turkey and in European countries have found *Hawar* and other Kurdish periodicals from the Levant as major works of reference.

Like Atatürk, Sati' al-Husri and Shakib Arslan, the new ideologues of Kurdish nationalism had been shaped by Ottoman institutions. The first Kurdish journals date back to the late Ottoman period. Miqdat Bedirkhan, an uncle of Jaladet and Kamuran, had published the first Kurdish newspaper, *Kurdistan*, in Cairo in 1898 and Ottoman Istanbul had become an important center for the Kurdish associations and publications since the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period in 1908. Since then, Kurdish associations and publications proliferated in Istanbul and other places. The Kurdish periodicals from the late Ottoman period had imagined Kurdish community within an Ottoman framework. Janet Klein's “Claiming the Nation: The

³ Yusuf Karataş, “Kürtlerin Küçük Ansiklopedisi: *Hawar* [The Little Encyclopedia of the Kurds: *Hawar*],” *Evrensel Kültür* 126 (June 2002).

⁴ Kurdish periodicals from the Ottoman period were both in Kurdish and Ottoman Turkish and they were in Arabo-Persian Alphabet. Some of them have been transliterated since the 1980s. See for example *Kurdistan: Rojnama Kurdi ya Pesin, 1898-1902/İlk Kurt Gazetesi [Kurdistan: The First Kurdish Newspaper, 1898-1902]*, 2 Volumes, translit. M. Emin Bozarslan (Uppsala: Deng Press, 1991); *Jîn: Kovara Kurdi-Turki/Kurdce-Turkce Dergi, 1918-1919 [Jîn: A Magazine in Kurdish and Turkish, 1918-1919]*, V Volumes, translit. M. Emin Bozarslan (Uppsala: Deng Press, 1985-1988); and *Rojî Kurd* (1913), translit. A. Mertowar, C. Amedi, and S. Azad Aslan (Istanbul: War Press, 2002).

⁵ The first 23 issues of *Hawar* were half in Arabo-Persian and half in the Latin characters. Starting with the 24th issue, the magazine was published in Latin characters only.

Origins and Nature of Kurdish Nationalist Discourse” analyzes Kurdish cultural movement, its historical context and major themes in the Ottoman Kurdish periodicals.⁶ Similarly, Djene Rhys Bajalan, in his “Kurds for the Empire: “Young Kurds” (1898-1914),” analyzes the meaning of Kurdish associations and journals in the context of the late Ottoman period.⁷ Martin Strohmeier’s book, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes*, examines the evolution of Kurdish national discourse from the late 19th Century through the 1930s. Strohmeier dedicates the first part of his book to the Kurdish associations and Kurdish publications in Ottoman Istanbul.⁸ Klein, Bajalan, and Strohmeier analyze and contextualize the content and function of the Kurdish periodicals in the late Ottoman period and ask if they meant the beginning of the Kurdish nationalism vis-à-vis Ottomanism or Turkism.

When the Ottoman Empire faced major crises such as the Balkan Wars and the First World War, the Ottoman Kurdish elite stressed their Ottoman and Muslim identity. This was clear in the writings of Jaladet and Kamuran during the last several years of the Ottoman Empire.⁹ However, following the final defeat of the Empire and the rise of the Kemalist

⁶ Janet Klein, “Claiming the Nation: The Origins and Nature of Kurdish Nationalist Discourse” (master’s thesis Princeton University, 1996); and “Kurdish Nationalists and Non-nationalist Kurds: Rethinking Minority Nationalism and the Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1909,” *Nations & Nationalism* 13, no. 1 (January 2007), pp. 135-153. Also see Malmisanij, *Abdurrahman Bedirhan ve İlk Kurt Gazetesi Kurdistan*, Sayı 17-18 [*Abdurrahman Bedirkhan and the First Kurdish Newspaper, Kurdistan, Issues 17-18*] (Spanga, Sweden: 1992); and *Li Kurdistan Bakur û li Tirkiyê Rojnamegeriya Kurdî* [*Kurdish Journalism in Northern Kurdistan and in Turkey (1908-1981)*] (Uppsala: Weşanên Jîna Nû, 1989).

⁷ Djene Rhys Bajalan, “Kurds for the Empire: “Young Kurds” (1898-1914)” (master’s thesis, Bilgi University, 2009).

⁸ Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

⁹ See Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanin-i Harb* [*The Resonance of War*] (Darul Hilafe [Istanbul]: Yeni Osmanlı Press and Library, 1331 [1916]), in *Bobi’nin Hatasi* [*Bobi’s Mistake*], translit. Metin Yuksel (Istanbul: Avesta, 2011), pp. 11-24; Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Osmanlı*

movement in Turkey, they become exclusively Kurdish nationalists. This is reflected in the propaganda pamphlets of Khoybun published in various languages in the late 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁰ The Kurdish language periodicals published in the 1930s and 1940s in the Levant repeated, elaborated and expanded ideas and topics addressed in the Ottoman Kurdish periodicals. However, the Kurdish cultural movement in the Levant arose in a new context. In French controlled Syria and Lebanon, former Kurdish-Ottoman gentlemen were coming to terms with the post-Ottoman order. Their publications and writings constituted a Kurdish response to the new regime in Turkey, a new phase of the Kurdish national movement, and means to win Western sympathy for the Kurdish cause. For example, in his 1933 open letter to Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), Jaladet Bedirkhan explained Kurdish claims in Turkish and through a pamphlet in French published in 1934, he addressed a foreign audience.¹¹

The Kurdish language publications in the Levant were cited and analyzed by many scholars. Making extensive use of *Hawar* and *Ronahi*, Father Thomas Bois' 1946 article, "L'âme des Kurdes à la lumière de leur folklore," in *Les Cahiers de l'Est* was probably the first

Tayyareciliğinin İlk Şehidleri İçin Hükümetten Rica [A Request from the Government for the First Martyrs of the Ottoman Air Force] (Istanbul: Sadayı Millet Press, 1329 [1914]), in *Bobi'nin Hatasi*, pp. 25-34; and Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutunun İcyuzu* [Inside Story of the Fall of Edirne] (Istanbul: Serbesti Press, 1913), translit. Metin Yuksel (Istanbul: Avesta, 2009).

¹⁰ *Les Massacres Kurdes en Turquie*, Publication de la Ligue Nationale Kurde: Hoybun (Cairo: Paul Barbey, 1928); *The Massacres of Kurds in Turkey*, Publication of Kurd's National League: Hoyboun (Cairo: Paul Barbey, 1928); *Türkiye'de Kürtlerin Katliamı* [The Massacres of Kurds in Turkey], The Kurd Khoybun League, (Cairo: The Arabic Press, 1928); Sureya Bedirkhan, *The Case of Kurdistan Against Turkey*, By Authority of Hoyboon: Supreme Council of the Kurdish Government (Philadelphia: The Kurdish Independence League, 1928); Bletch Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde: Ses Origines et Ses Causes* (Cairo: Paul Barbey, 1930).

¹¹ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub: Türkiye Reisi Cumhuriyet Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa Hazretlerine* [A Letter to His Excellency President of Turkey Ghazi Mustafa Kemal] (Damascus: Hawar Press, 1933), translit. Mustafa Aydoğan, in *Bir Kürt Aydınından Mustafa Kemal'e Mektub* [A Letter from a Kurdish Intellectual to Mustafa Kemal] (Istanbul: Doz, 2010); and Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), *De la Question Kurde* (Damascus: Hawar Press, 1934).

scholarly work relying on the Kurdish periodicals published in the Levant. A member of the Dominican religious order, Father Bois lived in the region and contributed to the Kurdish periodicals. His article, an attempt to explain Kurdish folklore, is a great fist-hand source through which one can see the Orientalist reading of the Kurdish nationalist press of the 1930s and 1940s.¹² Father Bois was not the only French orientalist who shaped, what Jordi Tejel calls “the Kurdish-French connection” in the Levant during the French mandate period. Two other French officers, Roger Lescot¹³ and Pierre Rondot,¹⁴ also worked closely with the Kurdish nationalist elites. The Institut Français de Damas provided the institutional support for their research. Like Thomas Bois, Lescot and Rondot contributed to the Kurdish periodicals and played an important role in the Kurdish cultural and linguistic movement in the Levant. They published books and articles in scholarly journals on Kurdish culture, society, history, and language. Other old and recent major sources on the Kurds, though mostly focusing on Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and Iran,

¹² Thomas Bois, *L'âme des Kurdes à la lumière de leur folklore*, Reprinted from Les Cahiers de l'Est, no. 5-6 (1946) (Beirut: 1946).

¹³ See for example Jaladet Bedirkhan and Roger Lescot, *Grammaire Kurde (Dialecte Kurmandji)*, (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1970); Roger Lescot, "Le Kurd Dagh et le Mouvement Mouroud," *Studia Kurdica* (1988), pp. 101-25; Roger Lescot, *Textes kurdes I, Contes, proverbes et énigmes* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940); Roger Lescot, *Textes kurdes II, Mamé Alan* (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1942); and Roger Lescot, *Enquête sur les Yezidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjār* (Beyrouth: Institut Français de Damas, 1938).

¹⁴ See for example Pierre Rondot, “Vêtue masculine et Artisanat du Vêtement chez les Kurdes de la Haute Djézireh Syrienne,” *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 25 (1972), pp. 257-264; Pierre Rondot, “Les Kurdes de Syrie,” *France Méditerranéenne et Africaine* 1 (1939), pp. 81-126; Pierre Rondot, “Les Tribus Montagnardes de l'Asie Antérieure: Quelques Aspects Sociaux des Populations Kurdes et Assyriennes,” *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 6 (1937), pp. 1- 49; Pierre Rondot, “Trois Essais de Latinisation de L'Alphabet Kurde: Iraq, Syrie, URSS,” *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 5 (1935), pp. 1-31; Pierre Rondot, “L'Alphabet Kurde en Caracteres Latins d'Arménie Soviétique,” *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 3 (1933), pp. 411-417 ; and Pierre Rondot, “Publication Kurde en Caracteres Latins,” *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 2, (1932), pp. 300-304.

also mentioned the Kurdish political and cultural movement in Syria and Lebanon during the mandate period.¹⁵

More specific studies based on Turkish, British and French archival documents introduced the Kurdish national movement in Syria and Lebanon under the French mandate and referred to Kurdish publications. Rohat Alakom's book in Turkish on the Ararat Rebellion contributes to the topic by providing a good analysis of the formation of Khoybun, struggles within its leadership, the course and failure of the rebellion, and, finally, dissolution of Khoybun organization in 1946.¹⁶ Nelida Fuccaro has examined the history of the Kurdish quarter in Damascus from the early 18th century through the mandate period and the relations between the French mandate authorities and the Kurdish communities in northern Syria.¹⁷ A more recent article by Benjamin T. White further analyzes the Kurdish national mobilization by the Kurdish elites of different social backgrounds in the Kurdish quarter of Damascus in the 1930s based on French official documents.¹⁸ White dedicates a chapter in his book, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria*, to the emergence of the Syrian-Turkish border during the mandate period and its influence on the Kurds in various

¹⁵ See for example Basile Nikitine, *Les Kurdes: Étude Sociologique et Historique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1956), chapters 10 and 12; Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. 143-146; and David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 466-484.

¹⁶ Rohat Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması [Khoybun Organization and the Ararat Rebellion]* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1988).

¹⁷ Nelida Fuccaro, "Ethnicity and the City: The Kurdish Quarter of Damascus between Ottoman and French Rule, c. 1724-1946," *Urban History* 30, no. 2 (2003), pp. 206-224; "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria: Politics, Culture and Identity," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2003), pp. 191-217; and "Minorities and Ethnic Mobilisation: the Kurds in Northern Iraq and Syria," in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), pp. 579-595.

¹⁸ Benjamin Thomas White, "The Kurds of Damascus in the 1930s: Development of a Politics of Ethnicity," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 6 (2010), pp. 901-917.

Kurdish and non-Kurdish parts of Syria and their responses to Syrian Arab nationalism, Kurdish nationalism, Turkish propaganda and French mandate authorities.¹⁹ Velud Christian's unpublished dissertation and other works put the Kurdish community of the Jazira region in northern Syria in the context of the transformation of the region by the French mandate authorities. He highlights the relations between the different ethnic and religious groups in the region and between the French authorities and local leaders including Kurdish tribal leaders.²⁰

Malmisanij (Mehmet Tayfun)'s books introducing the Jamilpasha and Bedirkhan families and their roles in Kurdish political and cultural history since the late Ottoman period include valuable information on these two major families whose exiled members in Syria and Lebanon were deeply involved in the Kurdish political and cultural activities.²¹ Malmisanij also transliterated and published Jaladet's journal entries between September 1922 and May 1925. This short book traces Jaladet's departure from Istanbul, higher education years in Germany, and his arrival to Egypt based on his own daily notes.²² Konê Reş's book on Jaladet Bedirkhan is a good source on Jaladet's life and his cultural activities including publication of books and periodicals. The author is an independent researcher from the Kurdish town of Qamishli in Syria. The book is based on documents that Jaladet Bedirkhan's wife, Rawshan Bedirkhan, shared with

¹⁹ Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 101-127.

²⁰ Velud Christian, "Une Expérience d'Administration Régionale en Syrie durant le Mandat Français: Conquête, Colonisation et mise en valeur de la Djézireh, 1920-1936" (PhD diss., University of Lyon 2, 1991); and "French Mandate Policy in the Syrian Steppe," in *The Transformation of the Nomadic Society in the Arab East*, ed. Martha Mundy and Basim Musallam (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 63-81.

²¹ Malmisanij, *Diyarbakirli Cemilpaşazadeler ve Kürt Milliyetçiliği [The Jamilpashazades of Diyarbakir and the Kurdish Nationalism]* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2004); Malmisanij, *Cizira Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları [The Bedirkhans of Jazira-Botan and the Minutes of Bedirkhan Family Association]* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2000).

²² Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Günlük Notlar [Daily Notes]*, ed. Malmisanij (Istanbul: Avesta, 2007).

the author and the author's interviews with people who knew Jaladet.²³ Martin Strohmeier's above mentioned book devotes two parts to Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan's writings in Turkish, German and French in the 1920s and 1930s. He analyzes the impact of German romantic nationalism on the Bedirkhan brothers and their collaboration with the French Orientalists.²⁴ Moreover, since the 1960s some of the Kurdish nationalists, who had participated in political and cultural activities in the Levant have published their memoirs. Those include Akram Jamilpasha, Qadri Jamilpasha, Jegerkhwin, Hasan Hishyar, Osman Sabri, Nuraddin Zaza, and Nuri Dersimi. Most of them had contributed to the Kurdish press in the 1930s and 1940s. Their memoirs include valuable anecdotes on the cultural, social and political history of the Kurds in Syria and Levant under the French mandate.²⁵

Husên Hebeş's doctoral dissertation under the supervision of the famous Soviet Kurdish scholar Qanate Kurdo was the first study to focus more specifically on one of the Kurdish periodicals published in the Levant under the French mandate, namely *Hawar*. Hebeş' study is in Russian but it was later translated and published in Kurmanji Kurdish.²⁶ In his study, Hebeş analyzes the content of the journal after giving a brief history of Kurdish journalism and of the

²³ Konê Reş, *Celadet Bedirxan, Jiyan u Ramanen Wi* [Jaladet Bedirkhan, His Life and Ideas] (Stockholm: Jina Nu Press, 1997).

²⁴ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, part II and III.

²⁵ Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim: Kemalizme Karsi Kurt Aydininin Mucadelesinden Bir Yaprak* [My Brief Life Story: A Page from the Kurdish Inteligencia's Struggle against Kemalism] (Ankara: Beybun, 1992); Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan: Kürt Milletinin 60 Seneden Beri Esaretten Kurtulus Savasi Hatirati* [The Case of Kurdistan: The Sixty Years Memoirs of Kurdish Nation's War for Emancipation from Subordination] (Beirut: Stewr, 1969); Nuri Dersimi, *Hatiratim* [Memoirs] (Istanbul: Doz, 1997); Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem* [My Life Story], trans. Gazi Fincan (Istanbul: Evrensel Press, 2003); Osman Sabri, *Hatralarım* [My Memoirs], trans. Abdullah Kocal (Ankara: Lis, 2012); Nuraddin Zaza, *Bir Kürt Olarak Yaşamım* [My life as a Kurd], trans. A. Karacoban (Istanbul: Peri, 2000); and Hasan Hishyar, *Görüş ve Anularım* [My Views and Memoirs], trans. Hasan Cuni (Istanbul: Med, 1994).

²⁶ Husên Hebeş, *Raperina Canda Kurdi di Kovra Haware de* [The Development of Kurdish Culture in the Journal of Hawar] (Bonn: Belavgeha Hogir, 1996).

Kurdish national movement. Then, he introduces major Kurdish and French contributors to the journal and major themes covered in its pages. Hebeş' work can be considered "a fact book" on *Hawar* without much analysis of its content or context. Another independent researcher from Syria, Dilawer Zengi, a Damascus based writer, had access to Jaladet's personal documents also through Rawshan Bedirkhan. Zengi's most important contribution is his publication of the list of Hawar's subscribers from Jaladet's notebook.²⁷ A well-known Kurdish author, Mehmed Uzun, provides us with a vivid picture of Jaladet Bedirkhan's life in his 1995 novel, *Bira Qadere* (The Well of Destiny).²⁸ The novel, which traces Jaladet Bedirkhan's life from Istanbul to Munich and finally to Damascus, is based on Uzun's long interviews with Rawshan Bedirkhan, Jaladet's cousin and wife, and on Bedirkhan family records.

The most extensive study on the Kurdish political and cultural movement in the Levant is Jordi Tejel's book, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie en Exil*.²⁹ This book fills a big gap in the literature by providing a clear picture of the Kurdish political and cultural movement in the Levant since the foundation of the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon. Tejel examines the Kurdish communities in Syrian and Lebanese urban centers and in the Syrian Kurdish enclaves, especially in the Jazira region. He presents the story of the Kurdish national movement in the Levant, not only as the continuation of Kurdish nationalism of Turkey, but also as an element in the politics of the French mandate in Syria. He introduces important information on Khoybun

²⁷ Dilawer Zengi, "Wasaiq Min Arsheev Majallat Hawar [Documents from the Hawar Magazine]," in *Atyaf al-Madi [Spectrums of the Past]* (Beirut: Ameral Press, 2009), pp. 183-209.

²⁸ Mehmed Uzun, *Kader Kuyusu [The Well of Destiny]*, trans. Muhsin Kızılkaya (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2006). Uzun's another novel is about a Kurdish intellectual and a member of Khoybun organization, Memduh Selim Beg. Mehmed Uzun, *Yitik Bir Aşkın Gölgesinde [In the Shadow of a Lost Love]*, trans. Muhsin Kızılkaya (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2006).

²⁹ Jordi Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie en Exil: Continuités et Discontinuités du Nationalisme Kurde sous le Mandat Français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)* (Berne: P. Lang, 2007).

movement, the Ararat Rebellion, and the Kurdish cultural movement in the aftermath of the rebellion. He makes extensive use of archival materials from France and Britain along with the Kurdish periodicals from Syria and Lebanon. He emphasizes the significance of the relations between the French orientalist and the Kurdish nationalist elite and demonstrates the emergence of nationalist symbols in the Kurdish publications. The first chapter of his other book, *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, can be considered a summary of his first book in English.³⁰ In his other works, Tejel further elaborates many aspects of Kurdish national movement in French mandatory Syria and Lebanon.³¹

Why another study on the topic? It is clear that existing scholarship has already covered many aspects of the Kurdish national movement and cultural activities in the French mandates of Syria and Lebanon. Many of these works have relied on Kurdish periodicals published at the time. However, a more focused textual analysis of the Kurdish periodicals is missing. As a nationalist endeavor, editorship, publication, dissemination, readership, and impact of the Kurdish periodicals on the Kurdish masses are worth examining. Focusing on the major themes covered in the Kurdish publications, I will critically examine the self-view of Kurdish nationalists who contributed to Kurdish periodicals, their attempts to educate, nationally awaken

³⁰ Jordi Tejel, *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, trans. Emily Welle and Jane Welle (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).

³¹ See for example Jordi Tejel, "Un Territoire de Marge en Haute Djézireh Syrienne (1921-1940)," *Etudes Rurales*, no. 186 (2010), pp. 61-76; Jordi Tejel, "The Terrier Plan and the Emergence of Kurdish Policy under the French Mandate in Syria, 1926-36," *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 21, nos. 1 and 2 (2007), pp. 93-108; Jordi Tejel Gorgas, ed., *La Ligue Nationale Kurde Khoyboun Mythes et Réalités de la Première Organisation Nationaliste Kurde* (Paris: Fondation-Institut Hurde de France, 2007) and Jordi Tejel, "Les constructions de L'identité Kurde sous L'influence de la 'Connexion Kurdofrançaise' au Levant (1930-1946)," *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Thematic Issue, No. 5 (2006) (<http://www.ejts.org/document751.html>).

and unify their people, their determination to refute Kemalist claims to deny the existence of a separate Kurdish identity, and their struggle to convince the Western world to side with the Kurds. Besides Kurdish periodicals and other nationalist publications, this study makes use of memoirs, interviews, archival documents, and secondary sources on the topic.

Chapter Two, “An Overview of Kurdish Identity and History,” introduces the Kurds’ country, language, religious beliefs, and briefly analyzes their social structures, highlighting major theories related to the Kurds’ historical origins, and summarizes Kurdish history until the end of the First World War. It specifically describes the evolution of Ottoman-Kurdish relations from the early-sixteenth century until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Chapter Three, “Kurds’ Search for a Place in the Middle East without the Ottoman Empire: Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism since the End of World War I,” describes the Kurdish national movement in the first few decades following the demise of the Ottoman Empire. One of the major questions answered in this chapter is why the majority of Kurdish leaders turned down the opportunity to have their own state and, instead, sided with the Turks between 1918 and 1923. This chapter analyzes the causes and consequences of the 1925 Shaykh Said rebellion against the young Turkish Republic. Finally, the foundation of a nationalist organization, Khoybun, by exiled Kurdish nationalists from Turkey in the Levant under the French mandate, the Ararat Rebellion (1928-1930) against the Turkish Republic, and the Kurdish nationalist movement in the Levant until the end of the Second World War and of the French Mandate in the Levant are explained.

Chapter Four, “The Kurdish Press in Syria and Lebanon,” introduces the Bedirkhan family, their legacy in Kurdish history, and specifically their role in the history of Kurdish journalism. Sureya, Jaladet, and Kamuran Bedirkhan all played significant roles in exile following the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Thus, their life stories are briefly presented.

Then, Kurdish publications in Syria and Lebanon, edited by Jaladet and Kamuran in the 1930s and 1940s are introduced and their various aspects are analyzed. Their production, material features, prices, editorship, readership, and their impact across the Middle East are examined. Financial problems, censorship, and the influence and contribution of the French mandate authorities to the Kurdish press are other issues analyzed in this chapter. Finally, major Kurdish and French writers besides the Bedirkhan brothers, who published in the Kurdish press, are introduced.

Chapter Five, “Kurdish History, Kurdistan, and Kurdish Language and Literature in the Kurdish Press,” analyzes Kurdish nationalists’ description of origins, history, country, language and literature in the pages of the Kurdish periodicals. This chapter also shows how the same themes were covered in the Ottoman Kurdish press and how Kurdish intellectuals later modified their discourse in the Middle East when the Ottoman Empire was replaced by nation-states. Kurdish nationalists tried to prove the individuality of a Kurdish nation with its roots in the ancient past, racial identity, language, alphabet and literature, and its attachment to a homeland through their articles in Kurdish and French. In this way, they also refuted Turkish, and to some extent Persian and Arab nationalists, who denied the existence of Kurdish identity. Furthermore, the Kurdish press played a major role in mobilizing people to speak only Kurdish, learn and teach reading and writing with the new Kurdish letters, and participate in a campaign for the unification of the Kurdish dialects.

Chapter Six, “Kurdish Nationalists Analyze Their Society, Religion(s), Women and Men,” demonstrates how the contributors to the Kurdish periodicals tackled social issues and religion in Kurdish society from a nationalist perspective. Moreover, this chapter presents the depiction of Kurdish women and men and description of their “proper” roles. These issues were

addressed in the late-Ottoman period Kurdish press and continued to be significant topics for the exiled Kurdish nationalists in a new political context. The leadership question, disunity, and the power of tribal chiefs and Kurdish elites' self-assigned role to educate and awaken ordinary Kurds struggling with poverty and illiteracy were recurring themes. An additional mission of Kurdish nationalists was to refute the discourse of Kemalist Turkish nationalists in Turkey, also claiming to civilize the Kurdish east in Turkey. This chapter also shows how Kurdish nationalists viewed the Kurds' Islamic identity as a powerful element, working against and, at the same time, supporting their nationalist agenda. They blamed their religious ties with neighboring nations, and religious and sectarian disunity for the failure of the Kurdish national movement. They advocated authentic Kurdish religions and in some cases presented nationalism similar to a religion. However, at the same time they relied on Islam to make their nationalist messages more popular among the Kurdish masses. Finally, this chapter analyzes male Kurdish nationalists' view of Kurdish women and men. Their writings clearly demonstrate how these men's ideals and anxieties were reflected in their view of gender roles.

The concluding chapter looks at the two decades following the end of the French Mandate in 1946, which also put end to the publication of Kurdish periodicals in the Levant. It examines the major developments regarding the Kurds in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran in the context of the Cold War. It also shows how the significance of the themes covered in the Kurdish periodicals continued under new circumstances.

2. An Overview of Kurdish Identity and History

“What do you mean by Kurdistan?” is the question many Turks immediately ask when they hear someone using the word “Kurdistan.” In fact, other non-Kurdish people in the Middle East, too, view Kurds’ claim to self-rule as a potential threat to their own happiness and to the delicate stability in the region. Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East after Arabs, Persians, and Turks with their distinct language and culture. However, unlike the last three ethnic groups, they do not have a nation-state of their own. Their aspirations for self-rule and statehood, or at least political and cultural autonomy in the countries they live constitute one of the major challenges in the contemporary Middle East. Today, an autonomous Kurdish region called “Kurdistan” and a semi-independent Kurdish government exist in the Kurdish territories of northern Iraq. There is also a province in Iran also called “Kurdistan” though not including all Kurdish territories of Iran. As for the Kurdistan with a capital k, although it designates no nation state, it means “the country of the Kurds” and comprises “the [whole] region where majority of the inhabitants are Kurds” and where most have lived for a thousand years.³²

Kurdistan is described as “a vast, crescent-shaped area in the heart of the Middle East.”³³ It is divided by the international borders and, thus, consists of territories under the sovereignty of five states. It encompasses large and mostly mountainous territories in the eastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, and north eastern Iraq; small enclaves in north and northeastern Syria along the Turkish border; and southern and southeastern Armenia. There are also Kurdish enclaves in central Anatolia, Turkey, and in northern Khurasan, Iran. Moreover, many Kurds have moved to

³² McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. xii.

³³ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 3.

the cities outside Kurdish territories like Istanbul, Ankara, and Damascus in search of employment. The eastern Taurus and the Zagros mountains are considered the hearth of Kurdistan.³⁴ The isolated nature of many regions and historical, socioeconomic, cultural, political reasons cause existence of subdivisions in Kurdistan working against the imagination of Kurdistan as a socially and culturally unified land.³⁵

Language (s) of the Kurds: Kurds speak Kurdish, a western-Iranian language and a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. To Kurdish nationalists, their language is a central aspect of their separate ethnic identity. Even though Kurdish is similar to Farsi as both languages are from the same language family, it is very different from Turkish and Arabic.³⁶ Even though Kurdish differentiates Kurds from their neighboring ethnic groups, the non-existence of a standard Kurdish dialect has long produced fragmentation of Kurdish identity. The mountainous character of Kurdistan and absence of a centralized state have been the reasons for diversity of dialects among the Kurds.³⁷ Differences among the dialects make communication of the Kurds living in different regions difficult.³⁸

³⁴ Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook* (Washington: Crane Russak, 1992), pp. 1-3; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p.3; and Maarten Martinus van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan* (Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteit, 1978), pp. 16-17.

³⁵ Izady, *The Kurds*, p. 8. Izady lists five major subdivisions in Kurdistan: southern Kurdistan centered on the city of Kirmanshah; central Kurdistan centered on Erbil; eastern Kurdistan centered on Mahabad; northern Kurdistan centered on Bayazid [Agri]; and western Kurdistan centered on Diyarbakir.

³⁶ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "On the Kurdish Language," in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, ed. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 68-70.

³⁷ Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1992), pp. 4-5.

³⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 29-30; M. v. Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism Versus Nation-Building States: Collected Articles* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), pp. 13-21; Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, pp. 4-5; and Konrad Hirschler, "Defining the Nation: Kurdish Historiography in the 1990s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 3 (July 2001), p. 147.

The two major dialects of Kurdish are *Kurmanji* and *Sorani*. They are as different from each other as English and German from linguistic and grammatical perspectives. Thus, some scholars preferred to call them as “languages” rather than “dialects.”³⁹ Kurmanji is spoken by most of the northern Kurds, namely those in Turkey and Syria, where it is written in Roman script; in the Caucasus, where it is written in Cyrillic script; and in the northern parts of Iraq and Iran, where it is written in Arabic. Sorani is spoken by most southern Kurds in Iraq and Iran and written in Arabic script. Both Kurmanji and Sorani dialects have a rich literary tradition. The *Zaza* dialect, written in Latin script, is spoken by the Alevi and Sunni Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan in the area north and west of Diyarbakir. Even though most Kurmanji speakers in Turkey do not know *Zaza*, *Zaza* speakers know Kurmanji.⁴⁰ Due to their linguistic difference from Kurmanji speakers, *Zaza* speakers tend to claim a distinct *Zaza* identity.⁴¹ Another dialect, *Gurani*, is spoken in several parts of southern Kurdistan and written in the Arabic alphabet. *Zaza* and *Gurani* dialects are historically related.⁴² Finally, there is *the south-eastern dialect* spoken in the region from Sanandjah to Kirmanshah and written in Arabic alphabet. There are also local sub-dialects of each dialect, adding further difficulty to the development of a standard Kurdish language.⁴³ Creating a unified and standard dialect and alphabet has been a major aim of Kurdish intellectuals from the late 19th Century to this day.⁴⁴

Religious Beliefs among the Kurds: Like language, religion is a source of division among the Kurds. Before their conversion into Islam in the 7th Century most Kurds were *Zoroastrian*, which

³⁹ Kreyenbroek, "On the Kurdish Language," pp. 70-71; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, p.9.

⁴⁰ Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism*, pp. 13-21.

⁴¹ Hirschler, "Defining the Nation," p. 159.

⁴² McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 10.

⁴³ For the various classification of the Kurdish dialects see: Kreyenbroek, "On the Kurdish Language," pp. 68-71; Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, pp. 4-5; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 29-30; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴ Kreyenbroek, "On the Kurdish Language," pp. 68-69.

some Kurdish nationalists have been trying to revive as the native religion of the Kurds.⁴⁵ Today, most Kurds, like most of their Arab and Turkish neighbors, are *Sunni Muslims*. However, in their preference of the Islamic school of law or jurisprudence (*madhhab*), they differ from their Sunni Arab and Turkish neighbors. While Turks and Arabs follow the *Hanafi madhhab*, Kurds follow the *Shafi madhhab*. The Kurdish madrasa education tradition and the Kurdish mystical sufi or dervish orders, Naqshbandi and Qadiri tariqas, are seen distinct Kurdish colors in Islamic practice.⁴⁶ Kurds' being Sunni distinguishes them from Shia Persians and Azeris in Iran. However, there also exist *Twelver Shia Kurds* in Kirmanshah besides the Sunni Kurdish majority in Iran.⁴⁷ Existence of many isolated regions in the Kurdish territories explains the presence of religious communities considered as "heretical" or "extremist" by the "mainstream" Muslim Kurds.⁴⁸ *Alevi Kurds* live in the northwestern Kurdish territories in Turkey, namely in the Dersim region. Alevi religion is a heterodox sect of Islam with elements from Shia Islamic, Zoroastrian, Manichean and Shamanist beliefs. The majority of the Kurdish Alevi speak the Zaza dialect. Despite the similarities between the two faiths, Kurdish Alevism is different from Turkish Alevism in terms of historical tradition. However, similar to the Alevi Turk's view of Sunni Turks, Alevi Kurds see themselves different, namely more modern and moderate, than Sunni Kurds.⁴⁹ *Ahl-e Haqq* (people of the truth) is a belief system rooted in the Sevener Shiism

⁴⁵ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 18; Martin van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), pp. 36-57.

⁴⁶ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 81; Hirschler, "Defining the Nation," p. 156; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 11; and Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.31.

⁴⁷ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 31-32; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p.11; and Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 10; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 32; and Hirschler, "Defining the Nation," pp. 156-159.

with Zoroastrian influences. The Ahl-e Haqq speak the Gurani dialect of Kurdish.⁵⁰ There are also *Yezidi* Kurds who are also mistakenly known as “devil-worshippers” for seeing Satan as a fallen angel. Yezidism is a syncretic religion unique to the Kurds, which makes it special in the eyes of Kurdish nationalists. It has elements from Ismaili Shiism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Judaism and Christianity. Besides the small community in Turkey, the majority of Yezidi Kurds live in the Mosul province, specifically in the Senjar mountains area across the Iraqi-Syrian border, and in the Shaykhan district where their religious sanctuaries are located. The belief systems and practices of the Alevi of Turkey are very similar to those of the Yezidis and Ahl-e Haqq.⁵¹ There have been *Christians* (Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Suryanis) and *Jews* living side by side with the Muslim Kurds for centuries. Starting in the 19th century, the Western Christian powers’ interest in the Middle East made local Christians a threat in the eyes of Muslim people to their existence. Local Christians were seen as a fifth column, which led to their persecution through mass deportations and massacres by the Muslim elements in the region in the second half of the 19th and early decades of the 20th century. This eventually shrank the number of Christians living among the Kurds and made the Kurdish territories relatively more religiously homogenous. As for the Jewish Kurds from Iraqi Kurdish territories, they left for Israel after 1948.⁵² The religious diversity played a divisive role during the history of the Kurdish national movement. For example, in Kurds’ support or indifference to the Kurdish

⁵⁰ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 21; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 10; and Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.32.

⁵¹ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 19-20; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 32-33; Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics*, pp. 37-57; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 12.

⁵² Martin van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Refugee Problems,” in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, ed. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 38-40; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 33; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 12.

rebellions in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s the Alevi-Sunni difference played an important role.⁵³

Kurdish Society between National identity and Particular Loyalties: Kurds see themselves as a people distinct from Arabs, Persians, and Turks. However, it is hard to say there is a homogenous Kurdish society. As it is explained above, Kurds are divided not only by international boundaries but also linguistic and religious differences. Besides their national identity, there are more particular identities based on religion, as in the case of Alevis, and on language, as in the case of Zaza speakers. Moreover, primordial loyalties to their rival tribes and to the rival mystic religious orders create further division within Kurdish society.⁵⁴ Kurdish society has been described as a society based on “kinship ideology.” The tribal identity is symbolically very important for the Kurds to explain their ancestry. Their tribal landscape shapes the Kurds’ attachment to the land.⁵⁵ Kurdish tribes were historically semi-nomadic or pastoral nomads, who historically have dominated sedentary peasant communities without tribal organization. Tribal Kurds constitute only a small part of the Kurdish society. This social stratification between the dominant tribal and subject non-tribal Kurds was reinforced and used by states like the Ottoman and the Persian empires in ruling Kurdistan.⁵⁶ They ruled Kurdish territories far from their imperial centers through tribal chieftains (aghas) to whom they gave military and bureaucratic titles. Not only tribal chieftains but also the leaders of popular mystic orders (shaykhs) cooperated with the ruling states for formal recognition and titles. Despite their

⁵³ Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism*, pp. 13-21; and Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics*, pp. 37-57.

⁵⁴ Hirschler, “Defining the Nation,” p. 147; and Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism,” p. 34.

⁵⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 13-4.

⁵⁶ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 27-28; and Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism,” pp. 40-41.

initial attempts in the 1920s and 1930s to eliminate the influence of traditional power structures in the Kurdish regions, the new Turkish and Iranian states would realize the practicality of working with them later on.⁵⁷ The power of traditional chieftains, rivalries among them, and its manipulation by the ruling states have been seen by the Kurdish nationalists as a social ill preventing the unity of the Kurds along with the differences in religion and dialect. The periods when the Kurds went beyond tribal organization and established more complex political organizations are praised by them. The important socioeconomic changes since the 1950s such as mechanization of agriculture, migration to the cities, expansion of mass education and, popularity of secular nationalism, and rise of class-politics caused decline of the traditional tribal elite's power. However, aghas and sheikhs, and Kurds' loyalty to their tribes and religious orders have not disappeared completely and, in fact, tribal pride continues to be an important element in the social and political affairs of the Kurds.⁵⁸

Kurds in History: The available information on the origins of the Kurds and their pre-Islamic history are a product of the late 19th and early 20th Century Russian and British Orientalists. Kurdish nationalists and scholars have been relying on the same sources to explain pre-Islamic Kurdish history.⁵⁹ Despite the general assumption that Kurds are one of the oldest inhabitants of the Middle East, there is little evidence about the history of the Kurds before the conquest of Kurdish territories by Arab armies in the 7th Century. In the Kurdish nationalist historiography

⁵⁷ Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism," pp. 41-43.

⁵⁸ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 30-31; Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism," pp. 41-43.

⁵⁹ The Russian Orientalist scholars Alexander Jaba, Basile Nikitine, Vladimir Minorsky, Mark Sykes; and the British Orientalist scholars Mark Sykes, Ely B. Soane, E. M. Noel, and C.J. Edmonds were some of the examples. Martin van Bruinessen, "The Kurds as Objects and Subjects of Their History: Between Turkish Official Historiography, Orientalist Constructions, and Kurdish Nationalists' Reappropriation of their History" (paper presented at Artuklu University, Mardin, Turkey, April 30, 2012).

the Medes, the Guti, the Hurrians, the Kassites, the Urartians, the Khaldis are presented as the ancient ancestors of Kurds who are claimed to be Indo-Europeans. Though refuted with linguistic evidence,⁶⁰ Vladimir Minorsky's thesis of the affinity between the Kurds and the Medes remains popular among some Kurds.⁶¹ Based on the Orientalist sources, Kurdish nationalists also claim that the Karduks who fought with the Ten Thousands and are mentioned in Xenophon's *Anabasis* were the ancient ancestors of the Kurds.⁶² For the Kurdish nationalists, Kurds are also the only Aryans who succeeded in preserving the purity of its Aryan identity. Kurds as the descendants of the Aryans have been living in Kurdistan, the land of the Aryans since ancient times. More moderate Kurdish nationalists indicate that Kurds mixed with other inhabitants in the region while preserving their unique ethnic identity and national characters.⁶³ The linguistic (or substantial dialectical) and religious variety among the Kurds is also presented as a proof for their varied origins.⁶⁴

Kurds were one of the major elements in the Middle East during the Sassanid period. Kurdish tribes in the Sassanid armies fought with the Muslim Arabs during their invasion of Mesopotamia in the late 630s. The resistance against the Muslim invasion failed, and Kurdish tribes converted to Islam following the collapse of the Sassanid Empire. Kurdish tribes became troops in the Islamic armies. They played a part in the rebellion against the Umayyids and the

⁶⁰ D.N. Mackenzie, "The Origins of the Kurdish," *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1961), pp. 68-86 cited in Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism*, pp. 13-21.

⁶¹ Thomas Bois and Vladimir Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Volume V, new edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 438-486.

⁶² Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 11-13; and David McDowall, "The Kurdish Question: A Historical Review," in *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, eds. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London: Routledge, 1992), p.11.

⁶³ Hirschler, "Defining the Nation," pp. 152-153; and Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 11-13.

⁶⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 10. McDowall indicates that Zaza and Gurani dialects are related. It is likely that the Zaza and Gurani speakers were in the Zagros region when Kurmanji and Sorani speakers entered it. During this population movement it is believed that the Zaza speakers may have been pushed westwards.

foundation of the Abbasid Empire in the 8th Century. Following the weakening of the Abbasid power, Kurdish warriors established their own dynasties in the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries. The Shaddadids (951-1075), the Marwanids (984-1083) and the Hasanwayhids (959-1095) were three of those dynasties.⁶⁵ Kurdish elements were also present in the armies of the Turkish Great Saljuk Sultan Alp Arslan when they defeated the Byzantine forces and opened the gates of Anatolia to the Muslims in 1071. It was the Great Saljuk Empire that utilized the term Kurdistan officially for the first time for a province ruled by Turkoman officers. The most well-known Kurdish figure in Islamic history was Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shadi, known as Saladin (1138-1193), who established his own dynasty stretching from North Africa to Mesopotamia and became a respected Muslim hero for his resistance against the Crusaders in the late 12th Century. Along with other peoples, the Kurds were affected badly by the chaos and instability caused by the invasion of the Mongols in the 13th Century and of the Tamerlane in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The consolidation of the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires in Anatolia and Persia would eventually restore stability in the Kurdish territories.⁶⁶

Kurdish Tribes between the Ottoman and Persian Empires

Even though rise of the Ottoman and the Safavid empires would restore order and stability to the Middle East, their initial conflicts would turn the territories of the Kurdish tribes into a battle ground, caught between the Sunni Ottomans in the west and the Shia Safavids in the east. The rising Safavid dynasty led by Shah Ismail (r. 1501-1524) and backed by his zealous Qizilbash followers constituted a serious challenge to the Sunni Ottomans. The Ottoman defeat

⁶⁵ Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (Harlow: Longman, 2003), pp. 248-264.

⁶⁶ P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 38-59; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 13-17; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 21-23.

of the Safavids at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 put an end to Safavid expansion in the Middle East and limited Shia influence in what is modern Iran and parts of Iraq. The continuing rivalry divided Kurdish territories between the rival Ottoman and Safavid dynasties. The greater part of Kurdistan would be under Ottoman rule. Many Kurdish tribal chiefs supported the Sunni Ottomans. Those Kurds in the Safavid part of Kurdistan would remain Sunni and that would constitute a major difference between them and the Persian state which, after the Chaldiran war, abandoned the extreme Qizilbash branch of Shia Islam and adopted Twelver Shiism as the official religion. The Ottoman-Safavid border along Kurdistan continued to be a major matter between the two empires. They attempted to fix it by the Peace of Amasya (1555) and then with the Treaty of Zohab (1639), which initiated a long period of peace between the two empires.⁶⁷

Through his Kurdish statesman, Idris Bidlisi, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) made a deal with the chiefs of the Kurdish tribal confederations known as emirates or principalities. In exchange of their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish emirs would be autonomous or semi-independent rulers of their own territories. They were incorporated into the Ottoman system and in time of war were expected to provide the Ottoman army with manpower. The Ottoman government kept an eye on the emirates and interfered in their internal conflicts to ensure their loyalty to the state. On the other hand, Kurdish emirs were aware of their power and exploited it from time to time by switching sides between the Ottomans and their rival Safavids, and later Qajars. This equilibrium between the Ottoman central government and the Kurdish principalities as the centrifugal forces in Ottoman Kurdistan proved to be efficient until the mid-

⁶⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 23-27; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 17; Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 27-49; and Nelida Fuccaro, "The Ottoman Frontier in Kurdistan in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: Routledge 2011), pp. 237-250.

19th century. The Kurdish emirates like Ardalán, Botan, Baban, Soran, Bahdinan, Hakkari, and Bayazid symbolized Kurdish sovereignty within the Ottoman framework.⁶⁸

Decline of the Emirs and the Rise of the Shaykhs

By the late 18th Century, the decline of Ottoman power, incursions of the Western powers in the empire and the Ottoman response would influence the fate of semi-independent principalities in Ottoman Kurdistan. Not only did the Ottoman Empire lag behind Europe's technological, industrial and institutional advancements, but also a European ideology, nationalism, inspired the Greek, Slav and Bulgarian communities to demand independence from the Ottoman rule. In the Ottoman East, as in the Ottoman Balkans, the Russian Empire posed a serious challenge to the Ottoman sovereignty by aligning herself with the Ottoman Armenians and other Orthodox communities. Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox missionaries were active in the East among the Christian communities of the region as well. As central imperial authority was weakened, the power of local notables in the Balkans, Anatolia, and in Kurdistan increased. The full-fledged reforms initiated by the Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1807) were continued by the Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) in the early 19th Century and were followed by the Tanzimat (reorganization) reforms initiated in 1839. Modernization, for the Ottoman government, initially meant the creation of a more effective and centralized administration. That meant the suppression of the local power centers in the Ottoman provinces including the Kurdish emirates. Thus, the Ottoman attempts to suppress the semi-independent Kurdish regimes led to the rebellions by the Kurdish emirs. Even though the Kurdish nationalists later would depict those

⁶⁸ Hakan Özođlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 43-59; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 28-31; and Ebru Sönmez, *Idris-i Bidlisi: Ottoman Kurdistan and Islamic Legitimacy* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2012).

rebellions as nationalist uprisings, they were actually manifestations of a power struggle between centralizing policies of the Ottoman state and the Kurdish principalities' determination to retain their autonomy. Eventually all the Kurdish principalities were abolished by the Ottomans.⁶⁹

Botan Principality, located in the south of the Lake Van and centered in the town of Jizra, was a good example of the powerful Kurdish principalities in the Ottoman Empire. Its ambitious leader, Emir Bedir Khan Beg, was from the Azizan family, the hereditary rulers of the region. He assumed the leadership of the principality in 1820. He was given the rank of pasha in the Ottoman Army for his participation in the Ottoman forces with his men against Egypt's Ibrahim Pasha's Anatolian expedition in 1839. He was determined to expand his principality at the expense of the neighboring Kurdish principalities in the early 1840s. In that context, the infamous massacres of the Nestorian Christians took place (1843-47). Bedir Khan Beg was not happy as the Nestorian Christians supported other emirs and had close relations with the Western missionaries. The Western powers were closely following the incidents in the region thanks to the reports by the Christian missionaries. Ottoman authorities used the incident as a pretext to get rid of Bedir Khan Beg's quasi-independent principality. He rebelled against the Ottomans in 1847, initially defeated the Ottoman forces and proclaimed his independence. The Ottomans eventually defeated him thanks to the support of one of his relatives. Bedir Khan Beg surrendered to the Ottoman forces and he was taken to Istanbul. From there, with his family he was sent to the Island of Crete with an official post. Thanks to his role in the suppression of the

⁶⁹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 38-44; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 59-68; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 54-74; M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 60-71; and Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 11-51.

Greek Rebellion in Crete, he was allowed to return to Istanbul in 1856. He was later sent to Damascus, where he died in 1868. Bedir Khan Beg had many sons and some his descendants would play important roles in the Kurdish politics before and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁰

The semi-independent Kurdish principalities as supra-tribal organizations had been providing stability in the Ottoman Kurdistan. Their elimination by the Ottoman government and the ensuing quarrels among the Kurdish tribes led to disorder. The Ottoman government was unable to fill the power vacuum following the suppression of the principalities. The shaykhs would fill that gap eventually. The Naqshbandi and Qadiriya religious orders had been already very influential in Kurdistan. With the destruction of the Kurdish principalities, they would also assume a political role. In other words, the Ottoman government's decision to suppress the Kurdish emirs led to the rise of new leaders who would play a significant role in the political history of Kurdistan. For example, the Barzinji shaykhs replaced the Baban principality in the Sulaymaniya region and the shaykhs of Barzan began to rule over parts of former Hakkari and Bahdinan principalities. Another example was a Naqshbandi shaykh, Shaykh Ubaydullah of Shamdinan who would control the territories which used to be under the control of Botan, Bahdinan, and Hakkari principalities in the Ottoman Empire and Ardalan region in Qajar Persia. His being from a family descendant of the Prophet Muhammad made him very popular among his followers. His authority was approved by the Ottoman government when Sultan Abdulhamid

⁷⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 45-47; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 62-74; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 69-72; and Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 57-58.

II appointed him as the commander of the Kurdish tribal forces during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878.⁷¹

Abdulhamid II, Kurds, and the Russian interest in the Ottoman Empire

Russia's interest in the Caucasus in the 19th Century and their close relations with the Christian communities such as Armenians and Assyrians in the Ottoman and Qajar territories⁷² convinced the Kurds to cooperate with the Muslim Ottoman state. The Treaty of Berlin signed after the 1877-1878 war required the Ottoman Empire to protect the rights of Armenians. Thus, it justified the Kurdish fears about Russia's determination to support the Armenians which would threaten both Ottoman rule and the position of the Kurds living in the same region. This made majority of the Kurds loyal to the Ottoman Sultan Caliph despite the Russian contacts with the Kurdish chieftains in the borderlands.⁷³ However, Shaykh Ubaydullah harbored greater political ambitions. In 1880, he and his son, Shaykh Abdulqadir, led rebel forces with the aim of establishing an independent principality in the Ottoman and Qajar Kurdish lands. For the first time a traditional Kurdish leader utilized the modern concepts of political nationalism; however,

⁷¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 53-56; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 75-77; and Klein, *The Margins*, pp. 58-62.

⁷² In Persia the collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1735 followed by a long period of instability which finally ended with the foundation of the Qajar dynasty in 1794. Pacifying the Kurdish tribes was the Qajars' main goal. For that reason, besides exploiting conflicts among the tribes, the Qajar state used marriage diplomacy to integrate Kurds in to the Persian state. The Qajars blamed the Ottomans when Shaykh Ubaydullah violated the Ottoman-Persian border to invade Kurdish territories of the Persian Empire in 1880. In the meantime, controlling Persia became a matter of conflict between the Russian and the British Empires in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. In the 1890s, the Russians' interest in converting the Nestorian Christians into the Orthodox Christianity alarmed the Qajars. In 1906, Persia went through a constitutional revolution thanks to the pressure from Shia ulama, intellectuals and urban merchants. As a result, Persia had a constitutional assembly. The Anglo-Persian conflict, also called the Great Game, on Iran ended in 1907 with the Anglo-Russian Convention. Southern Persia became the British sphere of Influence and Northern Persia including the Kurdish territories became the Russian sphere of influence. McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 66-84; and Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 90-103.

⁷³ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 115-117; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 56-57.

the nationalist nature of his revolt is still a matter of debate. Even though he was playing the independence card, according to many historians, he was willing to negotiate with the Ottoman government in return for the leadership of an autonomous principality. Shaykh Ubaydullah's rebellion and dreams were suppressed by Qajar forces and he was exiled to Istanbul and then to Mecca, where he died in 1883.⁷⁴

Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign (1876-1909) constitutes an important stage in Kurdish history. He believed in the necessity of the reforms initiated during the reign of his predecessors and in fact he was brought to power by the people, who were associated with the Young Ottomans, to rule the Empire with a constitution that was proclaimed in 1876.⁷⁵ However, due to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 he suspended the constitution and ruled in a dictatorial fashion for thirty years. Abdulhamid also believed in the idea of Islamic unity as the only way to hold the empire together. Kurds in the east had a special place in his plan to counterweigh the Armenian threat and the Russian designs for the region. That does not mean that there were not any Kurdish tribes and Kurdish notables collaborating with the Russians against the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁶ The Ottoman state created the Hamidiya Cavalry in 1891 consisting of Kurdish irregular forces from the Sunni tribes. The Ottoman state also established a tribal school in Istanbul for the sons of the tribal chiefs who constituted the backbone of the Hamidiya cavalry. It

⁷⁴ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 76-101; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 72-77; and Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), pp. 1-26.

⁷⁵ For the Young Ottomans please see Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought; A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962).

⁷⁶ Even though majority of the chiefs preferred the Ottoman side, there were those who negotiated with the Russians. Moreover, Russia tried to exploit Kurdish tribes' resentment of the Ottoman centralizing reforms following the suppression of the Kurdish Emirates by the Ottoman Empire. After the foundation of the Hamidiya cavalry, Russians invited a member of the Bedirkhan family to Tiflis to negotiate an alliance against the Ottomans. McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 62.

was a successful way to incorporate the Kurdish tribes in to the Ottoman state system. The Armenian communities became the main targets of the Kurdish tribal forces. Nationalism was a powerful ideology among some Armenians and the Armenian revolutionaries created their own militia forces. Armenian nationalist groups were organized not only in the east but also in other parts of Anatolia and in the Ottoman capital, Istanbul. The incidents between the Armenians on the one hand and the Turks and Kurds on the other would lead to the mutual massacres. Even though the Armenian uprisings were organized by the small group of Armenian revolutionaries, the Turkish and Kurdish response did not differentiate between the revolutionaries and the innocent Armenians living in the towns or rural areas. The massacres of the Armenians at the hands of the Kurds in the east would create a negative Kurdish image in Europe and the United States at the time.⁷⁷

The authoritarian nature of the Ottoman state during the reign of Abdulhamid II led to the formation of many opposition groups by the reform minded Ottoman elite in the Ottoman territories and in exile in cities like Paris and Geneva. They wanted the restoration of the constitution suspended by Abdulhamid II in 1876, and introduction of more comprehensive military and administrative reforms. They believed that in the idea of Ottoman nationalism or Ottomanism as the new basis of loyalty for the empire's various ethnic and religious communities. Even though the opposition to the Hamidian rule was labeled as the Young Turks altogether in the West; they were from various ethnic origins. They created secret societies the most influential of which would be the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) founded in 1889. The core members of the CUP included two Kurds, one Albanian and one Circassian at the

⁷⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 59-63; Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, pp. 72-144; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 52-89; and Klein, *The Margins*, pp. 52-94.

Military Medical School in Istanbul.⁷⁸ The Kurdish urban elite were the graduates of the Ottoman schools, military or civilian bureaucrats in the Ottoman government, and members of the Ottoman intelligentsia. Like the Christians subjects of the Ottoman Balkans, the educated Muslims from the Albanian, Arab, Circassian, Kurdish, and Turkish backgrounds began to apprehend the significance of their ethnicity.⁷⁹ Like other Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman Kurdish elite initiated a cultural movement stressing Kurdish culture, history and language. At the same time, they were active members of the Ottoman opposition against Abdulhamid's authoritarian regime and believed strongly in reforming the Ottoman state via more liberal democratic institutions. As for the traditional Kurdish leadership including tribal leaders and religious shaykhs in Kurdistan, their political orientation was different and they were identified with Abdulhamid II, the Sultan Caliph.⁸⁰

In the 19th and 20th Centuries, Istanbul became the center of Ottoman Kurdish activism. There were influential Kurdish families living in that city like the Sayyids of Shamdinan and the Bedirxhans. Both families, as explained above, were associated with rebellions against the Ottoman government and their leading figures were exiled by the Ottomans.⁸¹ The Ottoman authorities made sure that the exiled members from both families would not return to Kurdistan,

⁷⁸ For a detailed description of the Young Turk's ideas and activities within and outside the Ottoman Empire see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁷⁹ Fatma Müge Göçek, "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Arab Nationalisms," in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. F. M. Göçek (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 15-83.

⁸⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 87-89; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 102-103; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 90-94; and Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, pp. 144-149.

⁸¹ The two families would later become representatives of two alternatives of Kurdish politics in the Ottoman Empire: autonomists and secessionists. Their rivalry was an example of factionalism that has been a persistent feature of Kurdish leadership. McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 89-90; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 87-103.

their base of their power. Their stories constituted an important aspect of leading Kurdish families' integration into the Ottoman system. After his revolt, Shaykh Ubaydullah of Shamdinan had been exiled to Istanbul and then to Mecca in 1880. After his death in 1883, his son Shaykh Abdulqadir was allowed to return to Istanbul. However, because of his involvement in the underground activities of the Committee of Union and Progress, he was exiled once again and would be away from Istanbul until the Young Turk revolution in 1908.⁸² Emir Bedir Khan's revolt in 1847 had been suppressed, he was exiled to Crete and then to Istanbul with his family. His sons and grandsons became a part of the Ottoman elite.⁸³ One of his sons Midhat Bedirkhan began publishing *Kurdistan*, a journal in Turkish and Kurmanji Kurdish in Cairo in 1898. The Bedirkhans were supportive of Young Turk opposition to Abdulhamid. Another former-princely family, the Babans, also backed the Committee of Union and Progress. In 1902, Abdurrahman Bedirkhan and Hikmat Baban participated in the 1902 Young Turk Congress held in Paris. This congress proved to be decisive for the future of the Ottoman reformists. The schism between centralists and decentralists became clear in that Congress. The latter established the Ottoman Decentralization Party emphasizing federalism over the centralized state.⁸⁴

The Young Turk Revolution and the Kurds

The Young Turk Revolution in 1908 created a free political atmosphere, especially in its early years. The Committee of the Union and Progress came to power and reinstated the 1876 Constitution. The authoritarian regime of Sultan Abdulhamid eventually came to an end in 1909

⁸² McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 90.

⁸³ It is hard to talk about a unified Bedirkhan attitude toward the Ottoman Empire. For example, in 1879, two of Emir Bedir Khan's sons, Osman and Huseyin, rebelled against the state. In 1889, two other sons of him, Amin Ali and Midhat Ali tried to unify the Kurdish tribes for another rebellion but their attempts failed. McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 90.

⁸⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 90-91; Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, pp. 144-9; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 90-94.

and replaced by a new sultan, who ruled in the shadow of the CUP. The new regime emphasized the equality of all Ottoman religious and ethnic communities.⁸⁵ However, the freedom of speech and of press under the new regime would mean the competition of the Ottomanism with Islamism and emergent Turkism. Especially, after the arrival of Turkish refugee intellectuals from the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th Century, the emphasis on Turkish culture and history became very powerful.⁸⁶ This would eventually encourage other ethnic groups, including Arabs and Kurds, to emphasize their own ethnicity within the framework of the Ottoman fraternity. Ironically not only ethnically Turkish intellectuals, but also some Ottoman intellectuals of Kurdish origin would play an important role in the formulation of Turkish cultural nationalism. Ismail Hakki Baban, Suleyman Nazif, and Ziya Gokalp,⁸⁷ the famous ideologue of Turkish Nationalism, were examples.⁸⁸

Other prominent Kurdish figures in Istanbul and in Kurdistan supported the new regime following the 1908 revolution while advancing a new Kurdish cultural agenda. They established Kurdish societies and published periodicals in Istanbul. The Society for the Rise and Progress of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Taali ve Terakki Jamiyati) was founded by Amin Ali Bedirkhan, Shaykh Abdulqadir of Shamdinan, and General Muhammad Sharif Pasha, a Baban Kurd from the city of

⁸⁵ For a critical analysis of the 1908 Revolution see Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997).

⁸⁶ For an examination of Turkism or Turkish cultural nationalism before and during the Young Turk era see David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London: Cass, 1977); M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "Turkish Nationalism and the Young Turks," in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. F. M. Göçek (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 85-97; and Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

⁸⁷ Ziya Gokalp was a great example as he, initially, had been interested in the Kurdish issues but, eventually, became an ideologue of the Turkish nationalism whose ideas would influence the founding cadre of the Turkish Republic including Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk). McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 92-93; and Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, pp. 187-188.

⁸⁸ Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 97-116; and Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 150-167.

Sulaymaniya.⁸⁹ Another one was a cultural society, the Society for the Propagation of Kurdish Education (Kurd Nashri Maarif Jamiyati), which opened a school for the Kurdish children in Istanbul. A number of periodicals either in Turkish or in Turkish/Kurdish were also published after the Young Turk Revolution. *Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress Gazette* was one of them. *Kurdistan*, originally published in Cairo, also began to be published in Istanbul.⁹⁰ It was edited by Sureya Bedirkhan, Amin Ali's son and Emir Bedir Khan's grandson. The pre-existing tensions between the Bedirkhans and Shamdinan manifested itself in the Kurdish politics. As it was explained above, Shaykh Ubaydullah had ruled the territories which used to be under the rule of Emir Bedir Khan's principality until 1847. Shaykh Ubaydullah's son Shaykh Abdulqadir published an alternative journal *Kurdish Sun*. Shaykh Abdulqadir's base of support was much larger than that of Bedirkhans as the Kurdish artisans and laborers in Istanbul tended to support a more traditional leader. Shaykh Abdulqadir became a member of the Ottoman Senate and the president of the Council of the State.⁹¹

The free political atmosphere created by the Young Turk Revolution did not last long. After Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria's independence, the CUP

⁸⁹ Said Nursi was another Kurdish religious figure who supported the Unionist cause. He had tried to negotiate with Sultan Abdulhamid II but his attempt to convince him to open madrasas in Kurdistan teaching both religious and positive sciences had failed. Before and after the 1908 Revolution, as a conservative Ottoman Kurd he addressed the problems of people living in Kurdistan: Özoğlu (2004), pp. 82-3 and 113-5. For Said Nursi and his influential modernist Islamic movement in Turkey see Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁹⁰ The Bedirkhans had started the publication of *Kurdistan* (1898-1902) in Cairo and later moved it to Europe (Geneva, London, Folkestone) due to the Ottoman government pressure and also to be closer to the Ottoman opposition in exile. After the 1908 Revolution publication of *Kurdistan* was resumed in Istanbul. McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 89-90.

⁹¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 93-94; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 104-105 and Janet Klein, "Kurdish Nationalists and Non-nationalist Kurdistans: Rethinking Minority Nationalism and the Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1909," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 1 (January 2007), pp. 135-153.

regime became more centralists. A failed countercoup in 1909 was used as a pretext to depose Abdulhamid and silence the opposition against the CUP. Contrary to the expectations, the CUP began to imitate Abdulhamid's authoritarian methods. They banned all the political associations with ethnic names, Greek, Bulgarian or Kurdish. Amin Ali Bedirkhan, General Sharif Pasha and Sureya Bedirkhan had to leave the country as they were associated with the countercoup and sentenced to death. The CUP's idea of liberalism and equality were transforming into a more authoritarian rule emphasizing Ottoman and also Islamic unity especially after the loss of most Christian Balkan territories. The Unionists basically realized the fact that their liberal revolutionary principals welcomed by various ethnic and religious groups, far from forging unity, in fact accelerated the disintegration of the Empire. In response to the CUP's authoritarian policies and the emphasis on the use of the Ottoman-Turkish language educated elites from other ethnic groups began to express their own ethnic identity in the Ottoman context. Arabism, Kurdism, Circassianism as cultural movements became popular in this context. Even though, Shaykh Abdulqadir expressed the idea of Kurdish autonomy in 1910, the Kurdish elites' were still Ottomanists. Younger politicized Kurds, sons of urban notables and also sons of Hamidian cavalry chiefs in Istanbul for education, created a group called Kurdish Hope Society and published a weekly paper in Kurdish and Turkish, *The Kurdish Sun* . This society would continue its activities until the First World War and reappear after the end of the First World War.⁹²

⁹² McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 93-94; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 104-105; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 97-116; Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, pp. 150-67; and Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

In Kurdish territories away from Istanbul, the new Young Turk regime's centralist policies threatened the status that aghas, shaykhs, and notables had enjoyed during Abdulhamid's reign. Immediately after the Young Turk Revolution, there were uprisings in Kurdistan. Ibrahim Pasha, the chief of Milli tribal confederation, in northern Jazira, revolted against the government. In the southern Kurdistan, Shaykh Said Barzinji, head of the Qadiri order, also rose up against the new regime. Both revolts were suppressed. Aware of the discontent with the CUP government in Kurdistan, the leading Kurdish figures like Shaykh Abdulqadir, the Bedirkhans, General Sharif Pasha, and Said Nursi were in contact with the local notables, tribal chiefs and shaykhs in the region. As a response to the political activism in the region, the CUP reversed its policy of lessening the authorities of traditional local rulers. In 1910, they reinstated the Hamidian Light Cavalry under a new name, the Tribal Light Cavalry and they also began to use a more religious discourse to rally Kurds against the Armenians and the Russians in the region. However, the rebellions stemmed from the secular character of the new regime continued like Shaykh Abdussalam Barzani's uprising in Barzan and another religiously inspired rebellion in Bitlis.⁹³

The First World War, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kurds

The beginning of the First World War constituted a new era in the history of the Middle East and of the Kurds. Kurdish territories located along the Ottoman-Russian border became a battle field between the two empires. Even though there was a minority group of Kurdish notables ready to negotiate with the Russians and the British right before and during the war,⁹⁴

⁹³ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 95-101; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 105-109; and Klein, *The Margins*, pp. 95-127.

⁹⁴ General Mustafa Sharif Pasha, Shaykh Sayyid Taha of Shamdinan and some members of the Bedirkhan family including Sureya Bedirkhan, the eldest son of Amin Ali Bedirkhan and the

many Kurds would respond positively to the call of jihad by the Ottoman Sultan and the CUP government. Even the prominent Kurdish leaders, who would soon lead the Kurdish national movement in the Levant in the interwar years, like Jaladet Bedirkhan, Kamuran Bedirkhan or Akram and Qadri Jamilpasha of Diyarbakir, as their writings and memoirs indicate, were enlisted in the Ottoman Army and fought for the Empire.⁹⁵ The fate of the Kurds was tied to that of the Ottoman Empire. The Kurds knew that they would not only defend a Muslim empire against Christian powers, they would also defend Kurdistan against the Russian invasion through their Armenian and Assyrian allies. As the CUP government was not sure of their loyalty, Armenians living in territories bordering the Russian Empire were uprooted. This led to the infamous deportation and massacres of the Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Kurds and Turks or the controversial “Armenian genocide” that still tortures Turkish-Armenian relations within the Turkish republic and abroad. Kurds’ involvement in these incidents would damage the image of Kurds in the West where the Armenians and Assyrians were seen the primary victims of the war in the Ottoman territories.⁹⁶ The government allowed the Muslims in the region to take over the Armenian properties which became a clear indication that the deportations would be permanent. In July 1915, some Armenians would come back with the invading Russian armies to Eastern Anatolia and retaliate for the earlier massacres of the Armenians. Russians continued their war efforts after the March 1917 revolution which abolished the monarchy. What would save the Ottoman Eastern Anatolia and Kurdistan from falling to the Russian hands was the Socialist

brother of Kamuran and Jaladet were the examples. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 128-130 and 204.

⁹⁵ Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Osmanlı Tayyareciliğinin*; Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanin-i Harb*; Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*; Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*; and Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim*.

⁹⁶ For the impact of the great power competition on the people of Anatolia, Caucasia, Balkans and the Middle East in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries see Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the End of Empire* (London: Arnold, 2001).

Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. The Muslims were not free from the CUP social engineering projects either. Many Kurds and Arabs were relocated during the war as well. Kurds were influenced deeply by the violence and destruction caused by the war.⁹⁷

The Ottoman Armies were defeated in Syria and Mesopotamia, and the Ottoman Empire had to sign the Mudros Armistice on 30 October 1918. The end of the war would mean a new order in the Middle East. In fact, before the end of the war the Allied powers had already determined the fate of the Ottoman Arab territories and partitioned the Ottoman Empire on paper with the secret Sykes-Picot agreement signed in May 1916. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in March 1917 and the following disclosure of the secret Sykes-Picot agreements by the Bolsheviks would lead to some revisions after the war. The territories which had normally been reserved to the Russians including Armenia and Kurdish territories were put under British control. The United States, which entered the war on the Allied side in 1917, had different plans for the post-war world. President Woodrow Wilson was hoping to build a just and enduring peace by putting an end to the problems that had led to the war. He issued his famous fourteen points in January 1918 including the establishment of the League of Nations and the principle of national self-determination. The principle was welcomed by the nations living under the Ottoman rule not only Arabs, Armenians, and the Kurds⁹⁸ but also Turks to have their own

⁹⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 102-107; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 125-127; Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, pp. 177-182; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 116-137; and Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 55-122.

⁹⁸ For example, in 1919 a Kurdish chieftain's, Shaykh Mahmud Barzinji's, reference to Wilsonian principles along with Quran for the independence of Kurds indicates the awareness and excitement of the Wilsonian Principles among the Kurds and especially of the promise of the self-determination. McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 158.

independent states after the war. However, the interests of Great Britain and France would undermine the idealistic vision of President Wilson.⁹⁹

The partitioning of the Empire following the war was to be officially declared by the Treaty of Sevres (August 10, 1920) between the Allied powers and the Ottoman Empire. The claims of the former Ottoman nations for independence and the determination of France and Britain to preserve their influence in the region would shape post-Ottoman politics following World War I. In the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire, the new order would mean the end of Turkish rule and the emergence of the Arab states, namely Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The Turks, with the help of the other Ottoman Muslim elements including the Kurds, would defeat the Armenians, Greeks and French in the Independence War. The new Turkish state, recognized by the Allies with the Treaty of Lausanne (July 24, 1923), would be larger than it had been envisioned in the Treaty of Sevres. Kurds, in that context would emerge as a national group without a state.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 115-117; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 138-153.

¹⁰⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, 115-117, Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 138-153.

3. Kurds' Search for a Place in the Middle East without the Ottoman Empire: Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism Since the End of World War I

1918-1923: the Era of a Lost Opportunity?

The Kurdish territories had already been under the rule of the Ottoman and Safavid empires since the 16th Century. The new regional order shaped by the end of World War I would put the Kurdish populated territories under the control of five states: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and the Soviet Union (in the south Caucasian territories). Why did Kurds, unlike Arabs and Turks of the Empire, not have a state of their own following the war? This is the most important question to understand Kurdish history in the immediate aftermath of World War I. As scholars of Kurdish nationalism indicate, the Kurds lost an opportunity between the end of the war in 1918 and the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Instead of having their own nation-state, they became a minority group, or the second majority group, in several countries in the Middle East. Factionalism within the Kurdish leadership, the Turkish propaganda during the Independence War emphasizing Islamic unity, the possibility of the foundation of an Armenian state incorporating some Kurdish territories, and British interests in the region can be listed as the major reasons working against Kurdish statehood at the time.¹⁰¹

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the Great War, the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination, signature of the Mudros Armistice, and the arrival of the Allied troops in Istanbul activated both the traditional and Westernized Kurdish leadership inside and outside the Ottoman Empire. For example, Sureya Bedirkhan, the son of Amin Ali Bedirkhan, established the Committee of Kurdish Independence in Cairo. He contacted the British authorities in Cairo in

¹⁰¹ Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," p. 464; Kemal Kirişci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997) p. 67; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. xi.

July 1919 to represent the Kurds. General Muhammad Sharif Pasha, a former Ottoman diplomat residing in Europe also contacted to the British to become the ruler (emir) of an independent Kurdistan.¹⁰² Shaykh Taha of Shamdinan contacted the British in the spring of 1919 to announce his willingness to assume leadership of a united Kurdistan including Iranian Kurdistan.¹⁰³ The leader of the Milli tribal confederation in Botan, Mahmud, was very influential in the region. However, because of the rivalry between his tribe and another tribe, he switched sides and in the summer of 1919 began to support the Turkish independence war led by Mustafa Kemal. These Kurdish leaders like many other were claiming to be the representatives of all the Kurds but their influence was limited to a region or certain groups of people. Moreover, they easily switched sides because of rivalries among themselves. The fragmented nature of the Kurdish leadership would undermine any possibility of collective Kurdish action.¹⁰⁴

Istanbul had already been a major center of Kurdish activism especially with the foundation of Kurdish clubs and the publication of Kurdish periodicals by leading Ottoman Kurds following the 1908 Revolution engineered by the Committee of Union and Progress. However, when the CUP government's liberalism later changed into authoritarianism, the Kurdish organizations had been banned. New possibilities emerged immediately after the end of the war, which led to the revival of Kurdish activism in Istanbul. Nationalists, ambitious former army officers and CUP members, and traditional dignitaries allied. The elite Kurdish cultural nationalism of the pre-war decades gave way to an elite Kurdish political nationalism after the

¹⁰² He had been also an active member of the liberal Ottoman Decentralization Party which was critical of the centralist policies of the CUP.

¹⁰³ Ironically, he later decided to support the Turks, when he found out the close relations between his uncle, Shaykh Abdulqadir and the British. McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁰⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 95-97 and pp. 122-3; Andrew Mango, "Ataturk and the Kurds," *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1999), pp. 4-5; and Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 105 and 130.

armistice. The two prominent Kurdish figures in Istanbul, Amin Ali Bedirkhan¹⁰⁵ and Shaykh Abdulqadir of Shamdinan, established the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan on December 17, 1918. They were joined by representatives of other leading Kurdish families with different political views in Istanbul and met representatives of foreign powers to talk about the future of the Kurdish people in the new order.¹⁰⁶ Moreover the society founded branches in Anatolian Kurdish cities like Mardin and Diyarbakir.¹⁰⁷

Kurdish activists in Istanbul designated Sharif Pasha, an experienced former Ottoman ambassador, as the Kurdish representative to the Paris Peace conference (January 18, 1919-January 21, 1920). He presented Kurdish demands and signed an agreement of Kurdo-Armenian solidarity against the Turks with Boghos Nubar Pasha, the Armenian representative. This declaration was welcomed by some Kurdish nationalists as the Armenians officially had recognized the Kurdish claims. The agreement would also have played an important role in the West to overcome the negative image of the Kurds due to their role in the extermination of the Ottoman Armenians. However, the map of Kurdistan that Sharif Pasha, along with Boghos Nubar Pasha, presented to the peace conference would mean the end of Sharif Pasha's political ambitions. The map would mean leaving some Kurdish territories in Anatolia to the proposed Armenian state, something seen as an unacceptable concession by the Kurdish nationalists in Istanbul. The Kurdish chiefs and notables who had been fighting against the Armenians also

¹⁰⁵ Amin Ali Bedirkhan's two sons Kamuran and Jaladet who would play major roles in the following decades had participated in the Kurdish Society in 1919.

¹⁰⁶ The society was headed by Shaykh Abdulqadir of Shamdinan. It included members of the prominent Kurdish families: Bedirkhan (Amin Ali, Murad, Khalil Rahmi, and Kamuran); Baban (Hikmat, Husayn Shukri, Fuad, Mahmud, Ali); Jamilpasha (Akram). Amin Zaki Beg and Mustafa Pasha from Sulaymaniya and other prominent Kurdish leaders from Dersim, Kharput and Malatya were the members of the Society. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁷ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 130-137; Klein, "Kurdish Nationalists and Non-nationalist Kurdistans," pp. 135-153; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 121-122; Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p. 8; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 81-84.

found it unacceptable. By April 1920, Sharif Pasha resigned and gave up his role as the Kurdish representative in Europe. Moreover, some Armenians opposed the agreement because they had already laid claim to the six Ottoman eastern wilayets (Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Mamuretulaziz or Kharput, Diyarbakir, and Sivas) by applying to the Peace conference in February 1919.¹⁰⁸

Despite their unified opposition to Sharif Pasha's concessions to the Armenians, the members of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan were not unified in their ultimate national goal. Some believed in autonomy, while others were dedicated to full independence. The Ottoman Empire, despite its defeat, was still alive. Shaykh Abdulqadir openly proposed autonomy within the Ottoman system as the best option for the Kurds. He was a member of the Ottoman Parliament and a prominent official in the government. Moreover, being from a Naqshbandi family, his unquestionable loyalty to the Ottoman Caliph influenced his stance. The other group led by the Bedirkhans advocated secession from the Ottoman Empire. They and other European educated Ottoman Kurds believed that, with Allied support, it was time for Kurdish independence. The secessionists tried to depose Shaykh Abdulqadir from the presidency of the Kurdish Society. However, when new elections were held, his popularity among the Kurds of Istanbul led to his reelection. As a response, the Bedirkhans established their own club, the Kurdish Social Organization Society.¹⁰⁹ The disagreement between Shaykh Abdulqadir of Shamdinan and the Bedirkhans was also influenced by the pre-existing conflicts and rivalries

¹⁰⁸ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 130-137; Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," p. 463; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 131-134; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p. 81; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 38-40 and 81-84.

¹⁰⁹ Amin Ali and his sons Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, Kamal Fawzi, Akram Beg Jamilpasha, Dr. Shukri Muhammad, and Mamduh Selim were the leading members of this new society. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 105; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 81-84; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 122-125.

between the two families in Kurdistan.¹¹⁰ The victory of the Shaykh in the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan was not a coincidence, as he was more popular among the Kurds of Istanbul than the secular Kurdish nationalists. That was the case in Kurdistan as well, where the traditional leaders like shaykhs and tribal chieftains preferred autonomy to independence.¹¹¹

In the Kurdish territories within the borders of the Ottoman Wilayet of Mosul, the British held control by the end of the War. The strategic position of the former Wilayet of Mesopotamia would overshadow Kurdish claims there. Shaykh Mahmud Barzinji, an influential figure in Sulaymaniya region, contacted the British when they replaced the Ottoman forces in the region.¹¹² As a response to his claims to represent all the Kurds, the British established a Southern Kurdish Confederacy with Shaykh Mahmud its ruler.¹¹³ However, it would not satisfy his ambitious goal of becoming ruler of an independent Kurdish kingdom. Shaykh Mahmud was aware of the Wilsonian principles and did not hesitate to remind the British to apply them in Kurdistan under his leadership. He was a traditional leader and called for jihad, but aware of the nationalist discourse and the idea of self-determination and demanded the independence of Kurdistan. His rebellion in 1919 failed and he was sent into exile. In 1922 he was invited back by

¹¹⁰ After Bedir Khan Pasha's Rebellion in 1847 against the Ottoman government's efforts to establish central authority in Kurdistan was suppressed and the Kurdish principalities were crushed elsewhere in Kurdistan, the power vacuum was filled by the shaykhs. Shaykh Ubaydullah of Shamdinan replaced the Bedirkhans in a region including Botan. Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 69-72, and 87-120.

¹¹¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 123-124 and 133-134; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p. 8; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, p. 84.

¹¹² Up to this time Sulaymaniya is considered the most nationalist region in the Southern Kurdistan free from outside influence.

¹¹³ Ironically as he was from the Qadiri order, Naqshbandi shaykhs in the region were not willing to cooperate with him: McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 119-122.

the British to counter the Turkish threat in the wilayet of Mosul. His second rebellion (1923-1924) ended in failure as well because of the British air force assaults.¹¹⁴

Kurdish chieftains in Persia also wanted to take advantage of the new conditions created by World War I. A tribal leader from the Shikak tribe, Simko, came into prominence in the Kurdish territories of southwestern Persia on the Turkish border. He initially allied himself with the Iranian government against the Turks and Russians. However, he later switched sides and negotiated with both antagonists. Also, since 1918 he made an alliance with a prominent figure across the border, Shaykh Taha of Shamdinan. They were united by their determination to prevent the Armenians and the Assyrians from controlling the region. In 1919, when the British rejected his demands for Kurdish independence, Simko sought help from the Turks. The British were not willing to support Simko's movement because of his treatment of the Assyrians and the Armenians in the region and because they were dedicated to the stability of the Turko-Iranian border. Simko rose against the Persian government with Shaykh Taha and with material support from the Turks. The rebellion went well until the rise of Reza Khan who came to the power in 1921 and restored central authority over the provinces.¹¹⁵

The Ottoman government was closely following Kurdish separatist activities inside and outside the Empire. In fact along with the pan-Kurdish nationalist movement working for the independence of Kurdistan, there was also a pro-Turkish pan-Islamic movement among the Kurds after the war. Shaykh Abdulqadir, the President of the Council of the Ottoman State, supported by many Kurds in Istanbul, was offered a position in the Ottoman government.

¹¹⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 119-122 and 155-158; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p.70; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 139-142 and 185-202; and Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," pp. 466-467.

¹¹⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 214-217; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 138-143; and Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p.75.

Influenced by the Wilsonian principle of the national self-determination, the Turkish officers and CUP members established an Association for the Defense of the Eastern Wilayet to mobilize the Kurds for the independence of the Ottoman Empire. Some Kurds even participated in both the Kurdish clubs and the Association. In 1919, the CUP activists were establishing the Committees for Turco-Kurdish Independence in Kharput, Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakir and Jazira bin Umar. Even Turkish nationalist organizations like the Pan-Turanist Turkish Hearths were actively recruiting members in the Kurdish region.¹¹⁶

Kurds and the Turkish (or Muslim) Independence War

In the meantime, Mustafa Kemal, at the time a colonel in the Ottoman army, landed at Samsun, a Black Sea town, in May 19, 1919 and initiated the Independence War by transforming the already existing local resistance groups into a national movement.¹¹⁷ He was appointed by the Istanbul government as the military inspector of the Ninth Army in order to restore order in the region. Instead, he organized the military forces, notables and the Muslim population in Anatolia into a national independence movement. When he was recalled by the Istanbul government under British pressure, he resigned from the army. His stated goal was to save the caliphate and the sultanate. Mustafa Kemal and his comrades signed a protocol in Amasya renouncing the authority of the Istanbul government and called a National Congress in Sivas. In the meantime, a congress was organized in Erzurum by the Society for the Defense of the Rights of Eastern Anatolia (July 23-August 7, 1919) and they declared that the six eastern wilayets

¹¹⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 124-125; and Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 133-137.

¹¹⁷ Under the influence of Mustafa Kemal's own account of the Independence war, some scholars have tended to start the Independence of War with his landing at Samsun in 1919. More critical scholarship indicate that before his arrival to Anatolia a network local resistance movement had already been organized in Anatolia by the former CUP supporters who later accepted Mustafa Kemal's leadership. Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 138-149.

(Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Mamuretulaziz or Kharput, Diyarbakir, and Sivas) were an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. As Ottoman Muslims, they vowed to defend those territories against any Christian invasion.¹¹⁸

In the name of saving the Caliphate-Sultanate all the Muslim population including Albanians, Circassians, Kurds, Laz and Turks were expected to join the Independence War. Mustafa Kemal recognized the multi-ethnic characteristic of the Muslim population in Anatolia and emphasized Islamic unity during the War of Independence. He intentionally used Islamic symbols to mobilize people, which would conflict with his later ardent secular image.¹¹⁹ Mustafa Kemal contacted the Kurdish urban notables, tribal chiefs and shaykhs and guaranteed their support against the threat of an Allied supported Armenia in the region in exchange for administrative autonomy in the Kurdish regions. Mustafa Kemal was not new to Kurdistan, as he had served in Diyarbakir as an Ottoman officer in 1916. The Kurds and the Turks were united to defend the Ottoman sultan and caliphate, which they claimed were captive of the British and the government in Istanbul. In the presence of Christian invaders, namely the Greeks and Italians, and of the possibility of the foundation of an Armenian state [which would include Kurdish territories], giving voice to Kurdish independence or autonomy became equal to suicide for many Kurdish notables.¹²⁰

Mustafa Kemal's activities in Anatolia coincided with a British mission led by Major Noel, a military intelligence officer, to Kurdistan to investigate the possibility of Kurdish

¹¹⁸ Mango, "Ataturk and the Kurds," pp. 5-6; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 138-149.

¹¹⁹ E. J. Zürcher, "The Vocabulary of Muslim Nationalism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137, no. 1 (1999), pp. 81-92; Kirişçi and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p. 91; Mango, "Ataturk and the Kurds," pp. 1-25; and M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 86-159.

¹²⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 127-128 and 186.

sovereignty in the region and to counter the pan-Islamic propaganda seen as detrimental to British interests.¹²¹ Known as “Lawrence of the Kurds,” Major Noel would try to convince the British authorities of the necessity of Kurdish independence. The mission was approved by the Istanbul government and he was accompanied by Jaladet and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan. Noel met the Bedirkhan brothers in Aleppo and travelled with them to Ayntab and to Malatya where Kurds, unlike in other parts of Kurdistan, were more nationalistic and less supportive of the Kemalist movement. This is because there was no Armenian threat in those towns to convince them to cooperate with the Turks. Mustafa Kemal was aware of the mission and the Bedirkhans’ goal to establish an independent Kurdish state. On September 3, 1919, when Mustafa Kemal and the local representatives of the nationalist movement were at the Sivas Congress, Major Noel and the Bedirkhan brothers reached Malatya, a province close to Sivas. The governor (mutasarrif) of Malatya, Khalil Bedirkhan, had been ordered by the provincial governor, Ali Galip, to attack the nationalists assembling in Sivas before the arrival of Major Noel. Mustafa Kemal later claimed that Major Noel and the Bedirkhan brothers were part of a plot against him. However, their plan did not work and they had to flee to Syria. Mustafa Kemal would use this incident against the Ottoman government led by Damat Ferid Pasha, which on September 30, 1919 was replaced by a government sympathetic to the nationalists in Anatolia.¹²²

Developments in the spring of 1919 convinced most Kurds to support the Independence War and thus weakened the appeal of Kurdish secessionism. In April the Italians invaded the southern province of Antalya and in May the Greeks invaded Smyrna to secure their own spheres

¹²¹ Edward William Charles Noel, *Diary of Major Noel on Special Duty in Kurdistan* (Baghdad: 1920).

¹²² McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp.128-129; Mango, “Ataturk and the Kurds,” pp. 9-10; and Kemal Ataturk, *A Speech Delivered by Ghazi Mustapha Kemal, President of the Turkish Republic, October 1927* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1929), pp. 100- 120.

of influence in the defeated Ottoman Empire. Allied plans to carve an independent Armenia out of Ottoman eastern Anatolia helped the nationalists in Anatolia to forge pan-Islamic unity against a “Christian” invasion. The Kurdish associations were closed down by the Ottoman government following the Greek occupation of Anatolia. Moreover, in 1919, the Bolsheviks promised to help the Kemalists against the Allied powers’ plans in Anatolia to carve out Kurdish and Armenian states. Besides the Greek and Armenian attempts to control Anatolia, the British did not have a definitive policy toward the Kurds despite the personal initiative of Major Noel; this left cooperation with the Turks as the only credible solution for the Kurds.¹²³

In the meantime, a schism between the Istanbul government and the Nationalist Movement led by Mustafa Kemal in Anatolia became apparent when the Istanbul government was invited to Paris for the Peace Conference. Mustafa Kemal announced the Istanbul government would not represent the interests of the Turkish nation. Moreover, he guaranteed the support of many Kurdish tribes and notables for the Independence War. The British occupied Istanbul in mid-March 1920 and as a response the Kemalists in Anatolia founded the Grand National Assembly in April, which was approved by the Sultan. The members of the National Assembly created a National Pact (Misak-i Milli) based on the decisions they had taken in Sivas. They repeated their dedication to the independence of the Empire in its non –Arab territories, which included whole Kurdish populated territories of the Ottoman Empire in Eastern Anatolia and Mosul. The Nationalists were in contact with the leading Kurdish figures like Shaykh Mahmud of Sulaymaniya in Iraq and Ismail Simko Agha in Iran.¹²⁴

¹²³ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 125-134; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 137-138; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p.69; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 153-163.

¹²⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p.130; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p.70; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 185-202; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 153-63.

In the San Remo Conference (April 19-26, 1920), the Allied powers finalized the partition of the Ottoman Empire and justified their occupations of the Arab provinces with the mandate system under the supervision of the League of Nations. The Ottoman territories would be given to the Allied powers to prepare the local people for independence. On August 10, 1920, the Ottoman representatives had no alternative but to sign the Treaty of Sevres ratifying the decisions taken at San Remo Conference. The Treaty of Sevres created an independent Armenia in the four Ottoman provinces of Trabzon, Erzurum, Van and Bitlis. It gave autonomy for the lands where there was a Kurdish majority, namely the east of the Euphrates, south of the Armenian frontier, and the northern Turkish frontier with Syria and Mesopotamia. Kurdish people would have the right to appeal to the League of Nations in a year for complete independence. Southern Kurdistan or the former Ottoman province of Mosul was attached to Iraq under the British mandate. According to the Treaty, it was also would be able to be added to an Independent Kurdistan.¹²⁵ The Treaty of Sevres, which recognizes the right of Kurdish

¹²⁵ SECTION III/KURDISTAN/ARTICLE 62: A Commission sitting at Constantinople and composed of three members appointed by the British, French and Italian Governments respectively shall draft within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty a scheme of local autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may be hereafter determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia, as defined in Article 27, II (2) and (3). If unanimity cannot be secured on any question, it will be referred by the members of the Commission to their respective Governments. The scheme shall contain full safeguards for the protection of the Assyro-Chaldeans and other racial or religious minorities within these areas, and with this object a Commission composed of British, French, Italian, Persian and Kurdish representatives shall visit the spot to examine and decide what rectifications, if any, should be made in the Turkish frontier where, under the provisions of the present Treaty, that frontier coincides with that of Persia.

ARTICLE 63: The Turkish Government hereby agrees to accept and execute the decisions of both the Commissions mentioned in Article 62 within three months from their communication to the said Government.

ARTICLE 64: If within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty the Kurdish peoples within the areas defined in Article 62 shall address themselves to the Council of the League of Nations in such a manner as to show that a majority of the population of these areas

independence officially, is still seen as an important document by Kurdish nationalists. However, Kurdish nationalists like Shaykh Abdulqadir were not satisfied as Jazira, Urfa, and Mardin were put under French control and some territories to the west of the Euphrates were excluded from the Kurdish autonomous region. Shaykh Abdulqadir continued his alliance with the Turks as he preferred an autonomous unified Kurdistan under the Ottoman rule to a fragmented independent Kurdistan.¹²⁶

The Allies' division of Ottoman Anatolia was approved by the Ottoman government on August 10, 1920. However, for the Kemalists, the Treaty of Sevres was not acceptable and they continued fighting to recover the lost Ottoman territories. Even though the treaty of Sevres provisioned a Kurdish state, it would leave most of eastern Anatolia to the Armenian state. This convinced many Kurdish tribal chiefs and urban notables to cooperate with the Turks. Turkish forces were able to defeat the Armenians in the east by May 1921 and destroyed the idea of an Armenian state including eastern Anatolia. In the Kemalist success, the material and moral support of the Soviet Union played a very important role. In the meantime, the Kemalists and

desires independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considers that these peoples are capable of such independence and recommends that it should be granted to them, Turkey hereby agrees to execute such a recommendation, and to renounce all rights and title over these areas. The detailed provisions for such renunciation will form the subject of a separate agreement between the Principal Allied Powers and Turkey.

If and when such renunciation takes place, no objection will be raised by the Principal Allied Powers to the voluntary adhesion to such an independent Kurdish State of the Kurds inhabiting that part of Kurdistan which has hitherto been included in the Mosul wilayet. "Division of the Ottoman Empire: The Treaty of Sevres, August 10, 1920," in Akram Fouad Khater, ed., *Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), pp. 136-145.

¹²⁶McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 136-137 and 464-465; Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," pp. 463-467; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p.68; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 131-132 and 186; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 153-163; Robert Olson, "Five Stages of Kurdish Nationalism, 1880-1980," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 12, no. 2 (1991), pp. 399-400.

the Bolsheviks had signed a Treaty of Friendship in March 1921.¹²⁷ Despite the Kurds' general support for the Independence War, not all Kurds stood with the Kemalists. The Alevi Kurds in Dersim were not interested in the Kemalist Sunni call for Turkish-Kurdish unity. The major center of the Alevi Kurds, Dersim, located to the west of the Euphrates, was excluded from the proposed autonomous Kurdish state. The Kurds of Dersim rose up against the Kemalists in the fall of 1920, known as the Kochgiri rebellion, when the Kemalists were still fighting against the Greeks and the Armenians. Their demands, initially autonomy and less state intervention and later independence, were shaped by the Kurdish Social League which was active in the region. The league was dominated by Sunni Kurdish elites like the Bedirkhans, but included Alevi Kurdish nationalists. The Alevi Kurds' indifference to the call of Turkish-Kurdish unity against the Christian enemies and the Sunni Kurdish tribes' indifference to the Kochgiri rebellion calling for an independent Kurdistan clearly showed the disunity of the Kurds.¹²⁸

The Greeks in the meantime negotiated with the Kurdish nationalists in Istanbul including the Bedirkhans. The Greeks were ready to help the Kurdish nationalists in Anatolia against the Kemalists. The Kemalists simultaneously were using pan-Islamic and anti-Arab propaganda to attract the Kurds in Mesopotamia. In October 1921, Khalil Bedir Khan and other members of the Kurdish Club arrived in Baghdad to discuss the prospect of an anti-Kemalist

¹²⁷ However the relations between the Kemalists and the Soviets would get worsened when the British-Turkish relations were improved in the 1930s. It would also lead to the Soviet interest and encouragement of Kurdish cultural activities among the Kurds in the Soviet Territories. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 122-123; and Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, pp. 105-120.

¹²⁸ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp.137-138; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 131-132 and 204; Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 26-41; Elise Massicard, "The Repression of the Koçgiri Rebellion, 1920-1921," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, [online], published on 28 September 2009, accessed 27 November 2012, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/The-Repression-of-the-Kocgiri-Rebellion-1920-1921>, ISSN 1961-9898; and Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey from Tacit Contract to Rebellion," in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, ed. Abbas Vali (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers: 2003), pp. 172-173.

rebellion in Dersim, Diyarbakir, Bitlis and Van with the help British officers like Major Noel. The Greeks were ready to support such a plan. The plan was not approved by the British government, and France decided to end hostilities with the Kemalists by signing the Treaty of Ankara in October 1921. It was based on the borders set out in the National Pact with the exception of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Nusaybin and Jazirat ibn Umar became a part of Turkey. Abdurrahman Bedirkhan was disappointed by French indifference to the Kurds. He had hoped Jazira, Botan's old capital would be incorporated into Iraq.¹²⁹

Turkish forces defeated the Greek armies in the late summer of 1922 and occupied the Straits Zone. The British forces occupying Istanbul at the time signed the Armistice of Mudanya on October 3, 1922. Defeating the Armenians in the East, Greeks in the West and the French in Cilicia, the Kemalists could now focus on Mosul. The strategic position of Sothern Kurdistan namely, the wilayet of Mosul, for Mesopotamia made it very important in the eyes of the British. Economic considerations, particularly after the discovery of oil, began to play an important role in British policy regarding the region by 1920 as well. The Turks were not willing to give up their claims to Mosul. Anti-Christian and anti-British propaganda in Mosul had started in 1919. The Mosul Wilayet, according to the National Pact, should be a part of the Turkish state. In that context, Turkish Colonel Ali Shafik, known as Özdemiş, who was based in Rawanduz gained the support of many Kurdish tribes. The uncertainty of the British plans regarding the Kurdish territories and the Kemalists emphasis on Islamic unity convinced those Kurdish tribes to be on the Kemalists, rather than the British side. Britain finally decided to include the wilayet in Mesopotamia in April 1920 and until the end of 1925, it was not clear that Iraq would remain in the British sphere. Even though they had promised the Kurds self-determination without

¹²⁹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 139-140.

explaining how it would work, the British realized that an independent southern Kurdistan was not viable because of the disunity of the tribes, the lack of communications and the underdeveloped condition of the region.¹³⁰

The Allies invited both the Ankara and the Istanbul governments to Lausanne to discuss peace terms on October 27, 1922; the Grand National Assembly in Ankara abolished the sultanate on November 1 in order to represent the country alone. During the Lausanne Peace talks the Turkish representatives led by Ismet Inonu emphasized the unity of Turks and Kurds. The Treaty of Lausanne was signed on July 24, 1923 and the Kemalist got what it wanted with the exception of Mosul wilayet. The Mosul wilayet was strategically vital to the rest of Mesopotamia, economically important to retain the oilfields and politically important to keep the promises given to King Faisal concerning to the extent of his domain. The sides decided to submit the dispute to the League of Nations, if they could not solve the issue among themselves. If the treaty of Sevres had created hopes for the independence of a unified Kurdistan, the Lausanne treaty which replaced the treaty of Sevres ended those hopes.¹³¹

The issue of the Mosul wilayet remained an unsolved issue between the British and the Kemalists. For the Turkish side, Mosul was a part of the National Pact. For the British, Mesopotamia without the Mosul wilayet would not be economically, politically and militarily viable. A commission sent by the League of Nation arrived Mosul in January 1925. In Mosul, the commission found a diverse population and conflicting ideas for the future of the wilayet. The commission decided that Turkish claims on the wilayet were baseless. Moreover, the abolition of

¹³⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 135-141 and 151-153; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 147-159; and Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 176-177.

¹³¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p.142; Mango, "Ataturk and the Kurds," pp. 11 and 16; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp.195-202; Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," p. 464; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 167-70.

the caliphate in March 1924 ended the last important link between the Turks and the Kurds which would lead to a rebellion by a Kurdish Naqshbandi Shaykh in Turkey 1925. The rebellion weakened the Turkish claims to Mosul. The temporary border between Turkey and Mesopotamia, known as the Brussels Line, was created by the League of Nations on October 29, 1924. In the League of Nations report, the Kurds in Iraq were given cultural and local political rights but not autonomy. On 16 December 1925, the League confirmed the report and finally Turkey and Britain accepted it bilaterally on June 5, 1926.¹³²

That meant that both the British and the French broke their promises, since on November 7, 1918 they had emphasized the Kurds' self-determination. This was repeated when British diplomats met the Kurdish chiefs on December 1, 1918 in southern Kurdistan. Mosul's attachment to Iraq meant the end of that promise. Since his coronation, the King of Iraq, King Faisal, wanted to see northern Kurdish territories as a part of his kingdom to balance the Shiite and Sunni populations. Even though the Iraqi Council of Ministers guaranteed Kurdish cultural rights, the idea of Kurdish autonomy was abandoned by 1926 as well. Disunity of the Kurdish chiefs to counter British and Arab claims in Mosul and British political preferences to not alienate either the Turks or Faisal's Iraqi Kingdom played a role in the failure of the Kurdish national demands. Even though their cultural rights were guaranteed, their political rights would not go beyond those of other Iraqi citizens. That did not mean the end of Kurdish nationalist sentiments in Iraq. Kurdish clubs and papers continued to address Kurdish nationalist claims as the conflict between the central government and the Kurdish nationalists continued. The major

¹³² McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 143-146 and 153; Sarah Shields, "Mosul, the Ottoman Legacy, and the League of Nations," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 3 (2009), pp. 217-230; and S. Shields, "Mosul Questions: Economy, Identity and Annexation," in *The Making of Modern Iraq*, ed. Reeva S. Simon and Eleanor Harvey Tejirian (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 50-60.

manifestation of the conflict was Shaykh Ahmad Barzani's revolt. The penetration of the central government's control to the Barzan district led to the conflicts between the Shaykhs' forces and those of the central government in the early 1930s. He was defeated and had to surrender to the Turkish government. Those who remained in Iraq had to accept the terms of Baghdad. His brother Mulla Mustafa Barzani would take over the leadership of the Kurdish cause in Iraqi Kurdistan against the central government.¹³³

What Went Wrong?

The years between 1918 and 1925 were important because during this time the Kurds lost an opportunity to form their own nation-state. They, instead, became a minority group, or the second majority, in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Persia (later Iran).¹³⁴ The defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Allied powers in the First World War had led a group of Ottoman Kurdish elites to consider the possibility of a new future for the Kurds free from Ottoman suzerainty. Without mass support; however, they constituted only a minority within the Ottoman Kurdish community. The majority of the Kurdish leaders preferred to cooperate with their Muslim coreligionist Turks to fight against the invading armies during the Independence War (1919-1923). Their common goal was to free the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph from foreign control, suppress the Greek occupation of Western Anatolia, and to prevent the creation of an Armenian state including the Kurdish territories. However, once the Independence War successfully ended, the Turkish nationalists not only began to destroy the ties keeping the Kurds and Turks together for centuries, but also began to assimilate the Kurds through their authoritarian secular and

¹³³ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 163, 168-171 and 174-180; Kirişci and Winrow, *The Kurdish Question*, p. 71; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp.219-229; and Robert Olson, "The Second Time Around: British Policy toward the Kurds (1921-22)," *Die Welt Des Islams* 27, no. 1/3 (January 1987), pp. 91-102.

¹³⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. xi.

nationalist policies. It is then that the Kurdish national movement began to appeal to the Kurdish leadership with mass support. However, it was too late as the ideal international conditions of the 1918 and 1923 for the independence of Kurds and Kurdistan ceased to exist with the foundation of the Turkish Republic. This also explains the failure of the Kurdish rebellions in Turkey in 1925 and 1930. It was in that context that many Kurds from Turkey would flee to Syria and Lebanon under the French mandate.

The Decline of Muslim Brotherhood and the Rise of Turkish and Kurdish Nationalism

With the exception of the Kochgiri rebellion (1920) and the activities of some Kurdish nationalist elites, the Kemalists had enjoyed Kurdish support during the Independence War. The Kurds had supported Mustafa Kemal who emphasized the unity of Turks and Kurds for a common cause since his landing to Anatolia in 1919. He did not hesitate to mention the names of different Muslim nations namely Kurds, Circassians as well as Turks defending the Ottoman caliphate and sultan together. In the meantime, ideas like autonomy or a national assembly for the Kurds were entertained in the Turkish National Assembly. An autonomous Kurdish State, though not including all the Kurdish territories, was envisioned in the abortive treaty of Sevres in 1920. When threat of external enemies came to an end with the final defeat of the Greeks, the tone of Kemalist discourse began to change. At the Lausanne Conference Ismet Inonu, representing Turkey, introduced his government as representing both Kurds and Turks, and Mustafa Kemal himself mentioned the possibility of autonomy for the Kurds in January 1923. However, as David McDowall indicates, by February 1923 Mustafa Kemal stopped mentioning the Kurds, let alone the Kurdish autonomy. The Turkish Republic was proclaimed on October

29, 1923. In March 1924 Kurdish language was banned from using in the courts and the schools. On March 4, 1924, the Caliphate was abolished.¹³⁵

Shaykh Said Rebellion in 1925

If the traditional classes' support had been vital to the Kemalist victory previously, it ended with the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 for which Kurds and Turks had fought together.¹³⁶ Moreover, the new regime abrogated Sharia Law and closed the madrasas, religious schools, which had been important educational institutions in Ottoman Kurdistan. The Kemalist regime's reforms to westernize, secularize, and Turkify the Kurdish territories alienated conservative Kurdish religious and tribal elites, who now joined forces with the secular Kurdish nationalists. A rebellion under the leadership of Shaykh Said of Piran, a Naqshbandi religious leader, took place in this context.¹³⁷

Shaykh Said was not only an important spiritual figure but also a political leader thanks to his matrimonial alliances with the tribal chiefs especially from among the Zaza speaking Kurds of Dersim region. There was also a Kurdish nationalist organization, Azadi (Freedom), working together with the Shaykh. It had been originally founded in 1923, but would attract traditional classes only following the Kemalist secular reforms. The organization was dominated

¹³⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp.184-191; Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 166-168, Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 170-176; and Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması, 1923-1931* [*Foundation of the Single-Party Regime in the Turkish Republic, 1923-1931*] (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), pp. 70-72.

¹³⁶ Kemalist reforms can be considered a new and radical stage of the reform movement that had started in the late Ottoman period: Erik Jan Zürcher, "Ataturk as a Unionist," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey*, ed. E. J. Zürcher (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 136-150; and Roderic H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 243-264.

¹³⁷ Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 176-181; Tunçay, *Türkiye*, pp. 133-146; and Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf, and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 87-92.

by urban nationalists like Ihsan Nuri Pasha, a former Ottoman Officer, Dr. Fuad, a Kurdish medical doctor, and Akram Jamilpasha, an educated urban notable from Diyarbakir. The leader of the organization was Khalid Beg Jibrán, who was a product of the Ottoman-Kurdish alliance. His father was an agha and he attended the tribal military school, joined the Hamidian cavalry, and eventually became an officer in the Ottoman army. Even though, the Azadi organization had prominent urban educated members, the soul of the movement was the Naqshbandi shaykh and his Sufi network. Shaykh Said was also supported by Shaykh Abdulqadir, son of the famous Shaykh Ubaydullah of Shamdinan and a former high Ottoman official. Shaykh Said's goal was to restore the Sultan-Caliph and the Shariah abolished by the Kemalist Republic. With the participation of the aghas and shaykhs, the Kurdish national movement gained a mass character.¹³⁸

The Shaykh Said Rebellion erupted in March 1925 and initially became successful, although the rebels failed to take Diyarbakir from the Turkish authorities. The call for rebellion was not very effective beyond the Zaza speaking tribal areas near Palu and the Zaza speaking quarters of Diyarbakir. Eventually, the revolt was suppressed; the rebel leaders were tried at Independence tribunals and those who were found guilty, including Shaykh Said himself, were executed on April 16, 1925. Many shaykhs and aghas with their families were deported to western Anatolia. According to the Turkish state, it was a reactionary rebellion, not a nationalist one, by the religious and tribal leaders against the progressive and secular reforms of the Turkish Republic in the east. The regime's ruthless measures were presented as the means to civilize the

¹³⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p.10-11; Bozarlan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey," pp. 163-190; Robert Olson and William F. Tucker, "The Sheikh Sait Rebellion in Turkey (1925): A Study in the Consolidation of a Developed Uninstitutionalized Nationalism and the Rise of Incipient (Kurdish) Nationalism," *Die Welt Des Islams* 18, no. 3/4 (January 1978), pp. 195-211; Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 169-173; Klein, *The Margins*, pp. 173-175; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 176-182; and Tunçay, *Türkiye*, pp. 133-146.

region by emancipating people from the traditional leaders. In reality, it was both a religious and national rebellion, a Kurdish response to both the secularizing and assimilationist policies of the Kemalist Republic.¹³⁹ This first militant challenge to the Turkish Republic was used as a pretext to eliminate the political opponents throughout Turkey and to introduce further secularizing reforms. Political opponents of the Kemalist regime were blamed for supporting the rebellion, popular Sufi religious orders were banned and their convents closed.¹⁴⁰

The Turkish state also charged the British involvement in the rebellion, especially since the rebellion broke out when a League of Nation commission was in the wilayet of Mosul to determine if its pre-dominantly Kurdish population wanted to be a part of Iraq or Turkey. The Rebellion definitely undermined Turkish claims to Mosul, as many questioned how Turkey could lay claim to a territory dominated by the Kurds at a time when the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia rebelled against the Turkish state. Ironically, when many Kurds in the south of the Brussels line, in the Wilayet of Mosul, were willing to join Turkey, the Kurds in the north of the Brussels line, the Eastern Anatolia, were fighting for their independence from Turkey. Ironically, again, by the end of the rebellion, the northern Kurdish territories would remain as a part of Turkey and the southern Kurdish territories (wilayet of Mosul) would stay a part of Iraq. The dispute between Britain and Turkey was resolved with the treaty of Ankara in 1926.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1925, Vol. I: The Islamic World since the Peace Settlement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), cited in Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 209.

¹⁴⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 191-200; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 203-211; Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," p. 464; Olson and Tucker, "The Sheikh Sait," pp. 195-211; Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 91-127; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 376-406; Tunçay, *Türkiye*, pp. 146-179; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 176-182; and Üngör, *The Making*, pp. 122-148.

¹⁴¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 204-208; Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 128-152; and Tunçay, *Türkiye*, pp. 137-41.

The Kurdish National Movement in Exile

After the failure of the 1925 Shaykh Said Rebellion, the center of Kurdish resistance against the Kemalist regime shifted from Turkey to Europe, the USA, Iran, Egypt, and especially to Syria and Lebanon.¹⁴² The new Turkish-Syrian frontier determined by the Turkish government and French mandate authorities would influence Kurds as well as Arabs and Turks living in the region. With the Franklin-Bullion Agreement (October 20, 1921) the French left Cilicia to the Turks and they created a special administration for the Sanjak of Alexandretta, which was left in the Syrian side but still claimed by the Kemalists for its Turkish population. The border did not match social and demographic realities of the region. For instance, Kurds from the same tribe wound up on different sides of the border under the rule of different states. Still, close relations remained between the Kurds in Turkey and their relatives in Syria. In fact, the existence of a new administration in Syria made it a safe haven for the Kurds who rebelled against the state on the Turkish side. Some rebel tribes in Turkey along the border fled to Syria after the Shaykh Said Rebellion. Some tribal groups like the Hewerkan confederation led by Hajo Agha, the Jalalis, and the Haydaranlis, who did not support the rebellion, or even those who sided with the Kemalists, were transferred by the Kemalist state to western Anatolia. They rose up against the government and eventually fled to Syria with their tribal followers. Kurdish nationalist elites, most whom had to leave Turkey even before the Shaykh Said Rebellion, like

¹⁴² According to a 1948 Central Intelligence Agency Report, the total population of the Kurds was estimated as 2,850,000 at the time. 1,500,000 in Turkey out of 18,871,203 Turkish population; 600,000 in Iran out of 14,000,000 Iranian population; 500,000 in Iraq out of 4,799,500 Iraqi population; 200,000 in Syria and Lebanon out of 2,860,411 Syrian and 1,126,601 Lebanese populations; and 50,000 in the Soviet territories. "The Kurdish Minority Problem," Central Intelligence Agency: U.S. Government Printing Office, 8 December 1948, pp. 15-16.

the Bedirkhan brothers, would join forces in the Levant for a new attempt to free Kurdish territories from the Kemalist control.¹⁴³

Khoybun and the Ararat Rebellion

The Kurdish émigrés and exiles in Syria and Lebanon continued their struggle for the independence of the Kurdish territories from Turkish rule. They were allowed to do so by the French authorities, which led to a powerful pro-French tendency among the Kurds in Syria and which persists among the Kurds in general to this day. In fact, the assimilationist and ardently secular policies of the Kemalist state which led to the Shaykh Said Rebellion in 1925 in Turkey put an end to the pro-Turkish feelings in Syria and especially in the Jazira region, which had been very powerful since the French occupation of Syria. The new Kurdish national organization, Khoybun (“Be Yourself”), was founded in Beirut in 1927 by the Kurdish émigrés/exiles from Turkey.¹⁴⁴ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan became its first president and it brought leading Kurdish figures from different social and ideological backgrounds together, including tribal chiefs and intellectuals. The major goal was to organize a well-planned armed struggle against the Turkish state. They also made an official alliance with the Armenian Dashnak Party in the Levant to work together for the independence of Kurdish and Armenian territories.¹⁴⁵ Khoybun League was determined to make the Kurdish cause known abroad. Along with its representatives in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, Khoybun had branches in Cairo, Paris, Detroit, Philadelphia and London; it also had diplomatic relations with Iran, France, Great

¹⁴³ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 143-145; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 199.

¹⁴⁴ For the important French documents on Khoybun compiled by Jordi Tejel see Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*.

¹⁴⁵ On Khoybun-Dashnak connection see Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 106-115 and 133-136; Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 220-231; Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 11-4 and 51-5; and Fuccaro, “Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria,” pp. 197-201.

Britain, Italy and the Soviet Union. Khoybun intellectuals and activists published booklets in various languages. The Kemalist government in Ankara was watching the Kurds in the Levant closely and pushed French mandate authorities to end the Kurdish nationalist activities in Syria.¹⁴⁶ The French were dedicated to their cooperation with the Turkish government and during the Shaykh Said Rebellion had allowed Turkish forces to use the railway going through Syrian territories. Despite this, French authorities were now willing to make Khoybun to stop its activities, which they were watching closely through their intelligence service and informers within Khoybun. As Jordi Tejel indicates, the Kurdish card was used by the French in their negotiations with the Turks. They restricted the activities of Khoybun to satisfy Turkey, but they did not want to lose the Kurds, a central element in French plans to counterbalance Arab nationalism in the Syrian national politics.¹⁴⁷

Khoybun's executive committee consisted of former Ottoman Kurdish intellectuals, military officers and tribal leaders alienated by the Kemalist regime, especially following the 1925 Shaykh Said Rebellion. Thus, Khoybun aimed to bring together exiled Kurdish leaders from different socio-economic backgrounds who wound up in the Levant under the French Mandate.¹⁴⁸ The list of Khoybun's founding members and the oath of allegiance clearly show that the Kurdish tribal leaders and nationalist intelligentsia determined to forget their differences and work together against a common enemy.¹⁴⁹ The oath of allegiance was couched in a

¹⁴⁶ For example, during the Ararat Rebellion, following the request by the Kemalist state, Sureya Bedirkhan was asked to leave Syria for France by the French authorities. Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 146; and Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁴⁷ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 4, 17-19 and 144; Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 5-11 and 35-7; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 202-203; and Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 143-146.

¹⁴⁸ Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 36-60; Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 197-199; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 17-22.

¹⁴⁹ Khoybun's leading members according to the Intelligence Services were: Jaladet Bedirkhan (1893-1951), Kamuran Bedirkhan (1895-1978), Sureya Bedirkhan (1883-1938), Mamduh Selim

traditional language with references to tribal values and kinship ties. The exiled Kurds promised not to attack any Kurd for two years.¹⁵⁰ However, the failure of the Ararat rebellion unleashed rivalries within the Kurdish leadership in Syria and Lebanon. Factionalism or rivalry within Khoybun was not always between the “traditional” tribal chieftains and the “modern” nationalist intelligentsia. Not only there were rivalries between the leading families for leadership, but also some tribal leaders wholeheartedly supported the Kurdish nationalist cause that led their rival tribal chieftains to oppose it.¹⁵¹

The Ararat Rebellion (1927-1931), the second major Kurdish rebellion against the Turkish state, was organized under the leadership of Ihsan Nuri Pasha, a former Ottoman officer, a leader in the 1925 rebellion, and a member of Khoybun League.¹⁵² In the Ararat region he was joined by local tribal leaders, including those who had sided with the Turkish government during the Shaykh Said revolt. Rebels were very successful initially. They negotiated with the Turkish side and even established a small regional Kurdish government in 1928. As the rebellion area was located on the Iranian border the rebels got support from the Kurds of Iran, Turkey, and Iraq and it lasted longer than previous rebellions. Moreover, groups of Kurds from northeastern Syria joined the rebellion. The tide of the revolt changed when the Turkish government convinced the

(1897-1976), Mahmud Shukru Sakban (1881-1960), Ihsan Nuri (1893-1976), Amin Raman (Amin Parikhane died in 1928), Bozan (1895-1968) and Mustafa Shahin (died in 1953), Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi (1869-1932), and Rifat Mawlanazade (died in 1930). Those who arrived in 1929: Akram Jamilpasha (1891-1974), Qadri Jamilpasha (1892-1973), Osman Sabri (1905-93), Ahmad Nafiz Zaza (1902-1968), Arif Abbas (1900-84), Shawkat Zulfı (1899-): Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 144, end note 19.

¹⁵⁰ Fuccaro, “Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria,” p. 204; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 18; and Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, p. 28.

¹⁵¹ Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 100-102; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 144, note 24; Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 115-166; and Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 14-18.

¹⁵² For Ihsan Nuri Pasha's account of the rebellion see Ihsan Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı [The Ararat Rebellion]* (İstanbul: MED Yayıncılık, 1992).

Iranian government to end the rebels' free border crossings. Air power and more advanced weapons owned by the Turkish armed forces played a part in the failure of the Ararat rebellion as well.¹⁵³

With periodically announced amnesties, the Turkish state encouraged Kurdish refugees in Iran, Iraq and Syria to come back to Turkey in order to keep them under control. The state also attempted to end the authority of traditional chieftains by disturbing their lands among the Kurdish peasants. Turkification efforts of the state through building roads and opening schools continued. The Turkish state continued its assimilationist policies during the 1930s, "the High Kemalist era." The Kemalist Turkish nationalism in this new era emphasized ethnic nationalism and initiated a new movement to assimilate all the people in Turkey into Turkishness.¹⁵⁴ The June 1934 Turkish Settlement Law became a new attempt to resettle Kurds in the Turkish areas. Although it was never materialized, this showed the Kemalist regime's determination to assimilate the Kurds by uprooting them from Kurdish territories.¹⁵⁵

The Dersim Rebellion (1937-1938) would become the third and, for a long time, the last major challenge to the Kemalist regime mounted by the Kurds. The Kemalist regime was determined to subordinate this last bastion of Kurdish resistance to the Kemalist control. The first step was to Turkify the name of Dersim as Tunceli. Dersim was besieged by the Turkish forces and the local chiefs decided to rebel. Turkish airplanes bombed and Turkish forces invaded Dersim. Thousands of people, including civilians, were killed. The icon of the rebellion

¹⁵³ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 219-261; Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 18-22, McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 204-227; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 211-215; and Olson, "Five Stages," pp. 402-403.

¹⁵⁴ Soner Çağaptay, "Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 3 (2004), pp. 86-101; Poulton, *Top Hat*, pp. 87-129; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 186-191; and Tunçay, *Türkiye*, pp. 242-245.

¹⁵⁵ Üngör, *The Making*, pp. 148-169.

was Sayyid Riza, an Alevi chieftain. He appealed to the British government during the rebellion but it did not help. He was caught by Turkish forces and hanged along with other rebel leaders in November 1937. After this last serious Kurdish challenge to the Turkish state in the 1930s, the center of Kurdish nationalism shifted to the Levant completely.¹⁵⁶

Kurdish Nationalism in the Levant after the Ararat Rebellion

Syria was one of the new states in the post-Ottoman region that contained a substantial Kurdish population. Along with Syria, Lebanon became a new destination for the Kurdish refugees. Thousands of Kurdish refugees from Turkey would join already existing Kurdish population of Syria and Lebanon.¹⁵⁷ It was these newcomers, especially the former Istanbul-based Ottoman Kurds, who would stimulate a nationalist movement among the Kurds in Syria. In northern Syria, Kurds are concentrated in the disconnected areas (Kurd Dagh and Afrin, Jarablus and the Jazira) and in the major Syrian cities such as Damascus, Aleppo and Hama. Under French mandate policy, religious and ethnic minorities would play an important role to balance the challenge to the French rule by the nationalist representatives of the Arab-Sunni Majority. In that sense, it differed from the British mandate policy, which tended to promote cooperation with the Sunni Arab leaders rather than an alliance with the minorities. The scattered nature of the Kurdish territories would make the Kurdish movement in Syria different from those

¹⁵⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 201-209; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 215-216; and Hans-Lukas Kieser, "Dersim Massacre, 1937-1938," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, [online], published on 27 July 2011, accessed 27 November 2012, URL : <http://www.massviolence.org/Dersim-Massacre-1937-1938>, ISSN 1961-9898.

¹⁵⁷ According to Pierre Rondot, a French mandate official and Kurdologist, the total Kurdish population of the Kurds in the Levant, by 1939, were approximately 110, 000 (Rondot, "Les Kurdes de Syrie," 81-126) and according to the 1943 population statistics the Kurdish community included between 200, 000 and 220, 000 individuals of whom perhaps 22,000 were refugees from Turkey (Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 192-3).

of the compact minorities, namely the Druze and the Alawis. However, being the largest non-Arab Muslim community in Syria, they would play an important role in Syrian politics.¹⁵⁸

Damascus was an important center for Kurdish activities during the French mandate. In fact, the Kurdish presence in Damascus dated back to the 12th Century when Saladin, the famous Muslim commander of Kurdish origin, was fighting against the Crusaders. His army included Kurdish soldiers who eventually settled in the Qasyun Mountain region. Their settlements would evolve into two Kurdish quarters in the expanding city, al-Salhiyya and Hayy al-Akrad (the Kurdish Quarter). The Kurdish neighborhoods would continue to be important destinations for Kurdish immigrants from the Ottoman Kurdish territories especially in the 19th Century. In the meantime, many residents of the neighborhood were assimilated into Arab culture. The leading Kurdish families in Damascus represented a good example of the “politics of the notables” and became a part of the Ottoman system by the 19th century and, thus, opposed the rising Arab national sentiments in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. During the French mandate, they would prefer to cooperate with the French authorities. Young Kurds from Damascus were even recruited by the French to fight against the Arab nationalists and were later accepted into Les Troupes Speciales du Levant, the regular forces created by the mandate authorities. Kurdish nationalists from Turkey, including Jaladet Ali Bedir Khan, would settle in Damascus and succeed to recruit some Kurdish notables in Damascus, as elsewhere, into the Kurdish national cause.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 1-16, McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 466; and Philip Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 55-57 and 78.

¹⁵⁹ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 10-13; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 80 and 526; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 144-145; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 466-468; White, “The Kurds of Damascus,” pp. 901-9117; and Fuccaro, “Ethnicity and the City,” pp. 206-224.

The Kurdish traditional elite living in the Kurdish enclaves in the northern Syria were demanding autonomy as early as the late 1920s. However, since the three Kurdish areas were disconnected, a French Intelligence Service officer, Captain Pierre Terrier, came up with a new idea, the Terrier Plan. He suggested that Kurdish leaders focus their activities in Jazira, one of the three disconnected Kurdish regions in northern Syria along the Turkish border. The Kurdish pastoralist tribes, along with the Arab tribes, had lived in Jazira for centuries. The Milli tribal confederation is a good example. In the 1920s, especially after the Shaykh Said rebellion, more Kurdish tribes arrived in the region. Despite their initial resistance to the French troops, many Kurdish tribes eventually preferred to cooperate with the new authority. Along with Kurds, Armenians, Suryani, Kaldani and Greek Orthodox Christians, and Assyrians fleeing Iraq in 1933 were welcomed by the French to the Jazira region to settle down in the towns of Hassetche (al-Hasaka), Qamishli, and Amuda. The French authorities encouraged the settlement of the tribes and cultivation of the land for the stability of the region and transformed an almost an empty district into an important Syrian province. Tribal chiefs became feudal lords owning villages and intermediaries between the Syrian government under French supervision and their own people. Some of them also would engage in Kurdish national activities and anti-Turkish movements by violating the new border from time to time. In response, the Turkish government would pressure French authorities to keep the Kurdish nationalists away from the border region. The new border determined by the railway also separated Syrian Jazira from its major urban centers like Diyarbakir. The French authorities created two towns, Qamishli and al-Hasaka, and villages around them. Qamishli was right across from another town on the Turkish side, Nusaybin which

still symbolizes the artificiality of the border. The border dividing the members of the same tribes remained uncontrolled until the 1960s.¹⁶⁰

A French colonial project, the Jazira province became a multi-ethnic and multi-religious region with localist inclinations which the Arab nationalists in Damascus always viewed as a threat to Syrian national unity. The mandate authorities established a separate sanjak for the Jazira in 1932. The Terrier Plan, therefore, made Jazira, along with Damascus and Beirut, a center of Kurdish nationalism in the Levant between 1928 and 1936 and consolidated the cooperation between the Kurds and the French Mandate authorities. There were Kurdish origin government officials in Jazira, the Kurds were recruited in to the French Army of Levant, and the French encouraged Kurdish cultural activities in Damascus and Beirut. Kurdish-French cooperation was damaged in 1936 when the Franco-Syrian treaty, envisioning Syrian independence in three years, was signed. This meant the triumph of the National Bloc, the Syrian Arab Nationalist group. Moreover, as result of the border agreement with the Turkish republic, Kurds were no longer needed against Turkey.¹⁶¹

The French mandate authorities' encouragement of the minorities against Arab nationalism and the influx of the Kurdish nationalists from Turkey made Syria and Lebanon a new center of Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish nationalists and traditional leaders in Syria had to negotiate with mandate officials, the intelligence service, Arab nationalists and other minority

¹⁶⁰ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 33-61; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 9 and 27-29; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 469-470; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 145; Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 201-209; Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon, A Political Essay* (London: Oxford university Press, 1946), pp. 140-141; and White, *The Emergence of Minorities*, pp. 101-131.

¹⁶¹ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 61-69; Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 209-217; and Fuccaro, "Minorities and Ethnic Mobilisation," pp. 579-595.

leaders. Though limited, they had a freedom of action in the Levant. The foundation of Khoybun in 1927 was a good example. Khoybun officials assured French officials that their political activities would be directed at the Kurds in Turkey, not those in Iraq and Syria. Turkey's diplomatic pressure on the French authorities led to restrictions on Khoybun's activities. However, Syria and Lebanon continued to be an important bastion of Kurdish nationalism throughout the French mandate period.¹⁶²

Following the failure of the Ararat Rebellion in 1931, Khoybun League was weakened by internal struggles and became passive until the turbulent years of the Second World War. A number of prominent members left Khoybun because of its close relations with the Armenian nationalists. However the major conflict that led to the rupture within Khoybun was rivalry for leadership between the Jamilpasha family, represented by Akram and Qadri Jamilpasha, and the Bedirkhan family represented by Kamuran and Jaladet. The Jamilpasha family was an Ottoman Kurdish urban notable family from Diyarbakir. They fled to Syria in 1929 and joined Khoybun. Like the Bedirkhan brothers, the Jamilpasha brothers integrated into the Ottoman system, got a European education and joined the Ottoman Army during the First World War.¹⁶³ Rohat Alakom indicates that charges of financial corruption against Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan by the Jamilpashas led to his ouster and, as a protest, Jaladet's resignation from Khoybun. Thus, the conflict was between the two "modern" families over the issue of leadership and it ended with the Jamilpashas' victory and Bedirkhans' giving up "active politics" in favor of a cultural renaissance movement. Alakom also indicates how the conflict between the two families created three groups within Khoybun. While many members chose between the two families, others

¹⁶² Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p.5; and McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 468.

¹⁶³ On the Jamilpasha family and specifically Akram and Qadri Jamilpasha brothers see: Malmisanij, *Diyarbakirli*; Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*; Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim*, and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 103-107.

were more conciliatory and attempted to walk a middle path. After the end of the conflict, Khoybun League would be dominated by the Jamilpasha family. As for Jaladet and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, they would start a cultural movement through the publication of periodicals in Kurmanji and French in Damascus and Beirut in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁶⁴

The internal conflict within Khoybun after the Ararat Rebellion alienated some nationalists from the political struggle who decided to initiate a cultural reawakening movement and thus create self-conscious Kurds before unifying or creating Kurdistan. The cultural movement was shaped by Kamuran and Jaladet Bedirkhan and the Kurdish nationalists allied with them. Central to the Kurdish cultural movement were their writings on the Kurdish language and literature, and the publication of a number of influential periodicals in Kurmanji Kurdish in Damascus and Beirut. Jordi Tejel indicates that they were inspired by the Kurdish cultural revival in Iraq and Soviet Armenia, especially by the Armenian model. Despite the divisions within Khoybun League, even those Kurdish nationalists who were critical of the Bedirkhan brothers supported their cultural activities and publication of the Kurdish periodicals. Kurdish nationalists were not alone in their cultural activities. French orientalist officer-scholars, notably Pierre Rondot and Roger Lescot, were working closely with them. Along with Rondot and Lescot, a Dominican father, Thomas Bois, would become the preeminent French Kurdologist. They worked closely with the Bedirkhan brothers, and contributed to the Kurdish

¹⁶⁴ Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 99-118; Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 22-27; and Dersimi, *Hatıratım*, p.195.

press and played a prominent role in the articulation of Kurdish national identity in the 1930s and following decades.¹⁶⁵

The Kurdish national awakening was not welcomed by Arab nationalists in Syria who regarded it as supported by the French authorities. However, the leading Kurdish figures were allowed representation in the Syrian parliament during the mandate period. As a response to the rising tide of Syrian Arab Nationalism and to the formation of a Syrian government in 1936, the local Kurdish and Christian forces in Jazira raised their voices to express discontent with the rising tide of the Syrian central government and their demands for regional autonomy. They demanded a separate administration for the region. As a result of the Franco-Syrian treaty, Syrian officials replaced the French ones in the Jazira region. Kurdish and Arab tribes were divided between the unionists and the autonomists. The Kurdish nationalist figures including Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan along with Kurdish traditional leaders like Hajo Agha sided with the Kurdish-Christian bloc and supported the autonomy of Jazira which, in fact, was encouraged by the French. However, there were also those Kurdish leaders who allied themselves with the Syrian nationalists and those who turned against the French under the influence of Turkish propaganda in the region. Turkish propaganda in 1936 demonstrates that Turkish interest in recovering the former Ottoman territories was not limited to the Sanjak of Alexandretta. The autonomist movement represented by the Kurdish and the Christian notables in Jazira demanded a special status for Jazira like that of the Alawi and Druze region or that of the Sanjak of Alexandretta. That means administrative, cultural and economic autonomy within Syria. However, the 1936 Franco-Syrian Treaty disappointed the autonomists by not including anything about the status of

¹⁶⁵ Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 99-105; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 468; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 21-25; and Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 267-339; and Tejel, "Les constructions."

Jazira. The victory of the autonomist candidates in the 1936 Syrian legislative elections strained the relations between the Jazira's autonomous notables and the National Bloc in Damascus.¹⁶⁶

The tension between the unionists and the autonomists led to a revolt in August 1937. Members of the Kurdo-Christian alliance stormed the National Bloc government offices. However, there were also pro-Damascus Kurdish groups inspired by a religious movement who attacked Christians in the city of Amuda. Despite the existence of pro-Damascus Kurds, the Kurdo-Christian alliance eventually triumphed to show their determination for an autonomous Jazira. The incidents in Jazira and in other parts of Syria proved the incapability of the National Bloc. Not only was the Franco-Syrian Treaty not approved by the new French government, but the Syrian constitution was annulled and parliament was dissolved. Eventually, the Jazira region was put under direct French control by the French High Commissioner in 1939.¹⁶⁷

Kurds and the Second World War

During the Second World War, Khoybun League maintained connections with countries from both sides: France, the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and Italy. Their negotiations with the Germans to initiate a rebellion in Turkey failed when the Germans were defeated on Soviet soil and Vichy control in the Levant was eventually replaced by the Free French movement supported by the British.¹⁶⁸ Kurdish nationalists' negotiations with

¹⁶⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 468; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 146-147; Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 209-217; Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 71-110; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p.5 and 30-35.

¹⁶⁷ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 71-110; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 33-36; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 470-471; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 146-147; Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*, pp.215-216; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 525-534; and Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 209-217.

¹⁶⁸ For Anglo-French relations during World War II see Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 583-618.

the Soviet Union did not bear any practical consequences, but encouraged some Kurdish nationalists to borrow the Soviet ideological discourse.¹⁶⁹

The beginning of the war had a great impact on the French mandate in Syria. Syria and Lebanon initially fell to the Vichy forces, but were later reclaimed by British and the Free French Movement. Kurds identified themselves with the nations occupied by the Nazi armies. The declaration of the Atlantic Charter by the Great Britain and the United States in January 1942, like the Wilsonian principles earlier, raised false hopes among many Kurdish nationalists, who wrote many articles praising the Allied powers' dedication to the independence and self-determination.¹⁷⁰

Kurdish Nationalists in Syria were asked by the French and British not to work against Turkey during the War and they agreed. As the German threat in Syria led the British along with the Free French forces to occupy Syria, the Kurdish nationalists got in touch with the British authorities in the Levant. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan personally called Colonel W. G. Elphinston from the British Intelligence in Syria and affirmed their people's loyalty to the Allies. The Allied powers did not give the Kurds any promises, but Kurdish nationalists hoped their unconditional loyalty would reap rewards. The Allied powers, however, would support the Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi governments in the face of the growing Soviet influence in the region. This, in return,

¹⁶⁹ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷⁰ That was especially the case in the Kurdish periodicals, *Roja Nu* (and its French version, *Le Jour Nouveau*) and *Ronahi*.

would convince some Kurds to turn to the Soviet Union to back the Kurdish case against the regional governments.¹⁷¹

The Mahabad Republic in Iran

The Second World War created new opportunities for the Kurds in Iran where Simko's rebellion was suppressed in the summer of 1922. Simko had to go into exile in Turkey and Iraq. He later returned to Iran in 1925 and was eventually killed by the Iranian government in 1928. Like his counterpart in Turkey, Reza Khan had determined to subordinate all the tribal entities to the central government, not only Kurdish but also Turkoman and Lur. Reza attempted to play tribes against each other; he created Kurdish irregular forces to restore order in the Kurdish region, later disarmed and settled the tribes, conscripted young Kurds into the national army, and banned public use of Kurdish.¹⁷² Suspecting the Nazi plans in Iran, Britain and the Soviet Union invaded western Iran in August 1941. Reza Shah, known for his pro-Axis stance, was forced to abdicate. His abdication and the Allied presence in the Western Iran convinced Kurdish notables to strive to attain what they could not have achieved under his authoritarian rule. The traditional leaders like aghas and shaykhs were not the only figures in the Kurdish society seeking political rights for the Kurds and independence if possible. There were also urban educated middle class Kurds influenced by the idea of nationalism and the soviet ideology and they established the Committee for the Revival of the Kurdistan (Komala-i Jiyawari Kurdistan). Even though in their publications they harshly attacked the traditional classes like aghas, mullahs and shaykhs, they later would collaborate with the traditional leadership who were attracted by the nationalism of

¹⁷¹ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 146 and 267-269; and W. G. Elphinston, "In Memoriam. The Emir Jeladet Aali Bedr Khan. The Passing of a Kurdish Prince," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Volume 39, Issue 1 (1952), pp. 91-94.

¹⁷² Denise Natali, *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), pp. 117-125.

the Committee. In April 1945, Qadi Muhammad (1893-1947) became the Komala's president. Starting in 1944, the Soviets were encouraging the Azerbaijan and the northern Kurdish territories in Iran toward formal independence. Under the auspices of the Soviets, Qadi Muhammad and the notables transformed the Komala into the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDPI) in 1945. They were also joined by Mullah Mustafa and Shaykh Ahmad Barzani with their fighting men who fled to Iran following the failure of their rebellion in Iraq (1943-45). On December 1945, the Azerbaijan People's Government was proclaimed and in January 1946 Qadi Muhammad declared the independence of the Kurdish People's Republic centered in Mahabad. Khoybun actively supported the Mahabad Republic.¹⁷³ Qadri Jamilpasha, representing Khoybun, visited Mahabad and met Qadi Muhammad. The Mahabad Republic was crushed by Iranian forces and its leaders, including its president, Qadi Muhammad, were executed despite their willingness to negotiate with the Iranian government. When the Mahabad Republic was crushed, Khoybun disappeared too.¹⁷⁴

The End of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon, and the Kurds

The end of the French mandate faded the Kurdish hopes for administrative and cultural autonomy in Syria. The French could not resist British pressure and unwillingly agreed to the independence of Syria and Lebanon. The Free French representative in the Levant announced

¹⁷³ In a CIA report on the Kurds published in December 1948, Khoybun was presented one of the three most prominent Kurdish secret societies that were active during the war. Besides Khoybun operating in Syria and Turkey, the Komala Kurd with pro-Soviet sympathies operating in Iraq and Iran, and the Hewa operating in Iraq listed in the document. It is also indicated that Khoybun ended its active cooperation with its Armenian counterpart during the Second World War. "The Kurdish Minority Problem," Central Intelligence Agency: U.S. Government Printing Office, 8 December 1948, p. 13.

¹⁷⁴ William Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963); McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 218-246; Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," p. 466; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 230-266; Olson, "Five Stages," 403-404; Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, p. 117; and Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 125-129.

their promise for the independence of Syria and Lebanon in June 1941. Parliamentary elections were held in Syria in July 1943 and in Lebanon in August 1943. Finally, the last French troops left the Levant in April 1946. Influenced by all these developments and internal problems, the Kurdo-Christian Alliance in the Jazira province was also weakened. Kurdish leadership in Syria had to look for alternative means for survival, which would mean their integration into the political system in Syria. Negotiations with the independent Syrian government and later with the military dictators some of whom happened to be Kurdish in origin (Husni Zaim and Adip al-Shishakli), participation in the new political parties, and sometimes cooperation with the foreign powers as in the case of Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan's service to Israel were some examples. Finally, the triumph of Baath style Arab nationalism, suspicious of minorities, would destroy any hopes for Kurdish rights in Syria. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan moved to Paris in 1948, from where he continued his cultural and political activities until his death in December 1978. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan remained in Syria, but died in an accident in an agricultural field in July 1951.¹⁷⁵

The Kurdish national movement in the Levant during the interwar years and the years of the Second World War could not succeed to liberate Kurdish territories or establish an independent Kurdish state. However, the Kurdish cultural revival in the Levant would significantly shape Kurdish national discourse in the following decades. In the following chapters, I will try to examine how Kurdish nationalists from various socio-economic backgrounds, along with the Kurdish orientalists, viewed themselves, their enemies, and their language, homeland, history, religious beliefs, and the role of new men and women in shaping Kurdish national aspirations. I will also show how the basic means of the Kurdish cultural

¹⁷⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 471-475; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 35-46 and 149.

movement in the Levant, the Kurdish press, functioned and what it meant to the nationalists and the ordinary Kurds.

4. The Kurdish Press in Syria and Lebanon

The political and cultural activities of Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s constitute an important point in the history of the Kurdish national movement. As explained in the previous chapter, following the revolt led by their grandfather, Bedir Khan Beg, which had been suppressed in 1847, the Bedirkhan family was uprooted from the Ottoman Kurdistan and integrated into the Ottoman system. Bedir Khan Beg's sons and grandsons played important roles in late Ottoman political and social life. The major developments before and after the First World War affected their political stance. Initially, the Bedirkhans were for constitutionalism and against the authoritarianism in the empire. Later they favored Kurdish independence and opposed the Kemalist regime. The rich legacy of the family, and the specific roles of Jaladet, Kamuran and Sureya has traditionally been examined in the context of Kurdish nationalism. However, an analysis of their transition from the "Kurds for the Ottoman Empire"¹⁷⁶ to exclusively Kurdish nationalists makes their story more interesting and sheds light on identity transformation in the Middle East in the early 20th century. What Jaladet and Kamuran had done, written, and published prior to the end of World War I differed significantly from their activities and publications after the Ottoman defeat in the War and the establishment of the Turkish republic. The Kurdish press in the late-Ottoman period and afterwards constituted a great example to what Anthony Smith defines as vernacular mobilization of a "vertical ethnies", or a subject community by the intelligentsia. Smith defines

¹⁷⁶ Bajalan, "Kurds for the Empire."

“vertical ethnîe”, as opposed to “lateral ethnîe,” or a dominant community mobilized by the bureaucratic elite.¹⁷⁷

The Bedirkhans and the Ottoman-Kurdish Journalism against Abdulhamid II: *Kurdistan*

When the exiled Bedirkhan brothers published their Kurdish-language periodicals in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s, Kurdish journalism already had a relatively long history.¹⁷⁸ Kurdish journalism had started as a part of the opposition to Abdulhamid’s authoritarian rule (1876-1909). One of Jaladet and Kamuran’s uncles, Miqdad Midhat, had published the first Kurdish journal, *Kurdistan*, in 1898 in Cairo, an important center of opposition to Abdulhamid.¹⁷⁹ Cairo was not only far from the Ottoman capital and thus relatively free from the state surveillance, but also had been a center of publishing and press in the Middle East since the 19th Century along with Lebanon and Istanbul.¹⁸⁰ *Kurdistan* was a bilingual (Kurmanji Kurdish and Ottoman Turkish) journal and like many other Ottoman opposition newspapers supported the Committee of Union and Progress, advocated the revival of the Ottoman constitution, and criticized Abdulhamid II’s authoritarian regime.¹⁸¹ As an Ottoman Kurdish periodical, it also called attention to the problems of the empire’s Kurds. Under the Ottoman government’s pressure the paper moved from Cairo, first to Geneva, then to London

¹⁷⁷ A.D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 26-64 cited in Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 152-157.

¹⁷⁸ On the history of the Kurdish Press please see Roger Lescot, “La Presse Kurde, *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943), p. 4; Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (Mellen Research University Press, 1992), chapter 7; and M. Malmisanij, *The Past and the Present of Book Publishing in Kurdish Language in Turkey and Syria* (Istanbul: Vate, 2007).

¹⁷⁹ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 21-26.

¹⁸⁰ Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), pp. 2, 6, 13-14, and 48; and Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁸¹ Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*.

and Folskstone, centers of the Committee of Union and Progress abroad.¹⁸² After the movement of *Kurdistan* to Geneva, Miqdat's brother, Abdurrahman Bedirkhan took over as editor.

Abdurrahman was not only a member of the Young Turk opposition in Geneva but also had close contacts with Abdullah Jawdat and Ishak Sukuti, the two leading Kurdish founders of the CUP. They also published a newspaper, *Osmanli*, in Geneva.¹⁸³ Other Ottoman Kurdish elites in Istanbul and in Anatolia would publish periodicals or books as vehicles to promote Kurdish identity in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁴ However, the pioneering role of the Bedirkhans in the Ottoman Kurdish Press had always been noted. Both Jaladet and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan were aware of their family's legacy in the history of the Kurdish press.¹⁸⁵

After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the Bedirkhan family, along with other prominent Kurdish families such as the Babans and the Shamdinans, was very active in Istanbul. The prominent example was Amin Ali Bedirkhan (1851-1926), one of Bedir Khan Pasha's sons, and Jaladet and Kamuran's father. He was born in Crete where his father had been exiled by the Ottoman government. After their return to Istanbul, he studied law in Istanbul and served the Ottoman state in various parts of the Empire as a public prosecutor, judicial inspector and judge. Amin Ali played a significant role in the Kurdish cultural activities during the initial free atmosphere of the Young Turk Revolution. Amin Ali's eldest son, Sureya, edited *Kurdistan* once it was moved back to Istanbul in 1908. Many Kurdish organizations and Kurdish periodicals appeared in Istanbul at that time. *Kurd Teavun ve Terakki Gazetesi* (Kurdish Mutual

¹⁸² Klein, "Claiming the Nation," pp. 21-27.

¹⁸³ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 21-26.

¹⁸⁴ Malmisanij, *The Past and the Present*, pp. 33-34.

¹⁸⁵ Jaladet, for example, republished the poem that his father, Amin Ali, sent to *Kurdistan* in 1898, in which he wrote, "you [the editor] guided the Kurmanches [the ordinary Kurds] with it [the newspaper]." Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "1898 u 1943: Roja Me A Nu [1898 and 1943: Our New Day]," *Roja Nu*, Year 1 Issue 3 (17 May 1943), p. 1.

Aid and Progress Gazette), *Hetawe Kurd* (Kurdish Sun), *Jin* (Life) and *Roji Kurd* (Kurdish Day) were some of them. As Janet Klein indicates, they were published by Ottoman Kurdish intellectuals and should be viewed within the larger Ottoman social and cultural context. The editors and publishers were cultural nationalists who identified themselves as Kurds and addressed a Kurdish audience in a larger Ottoman-Islamic context. They were cultural nationalists who regarded themselves as Ottoman Kurds and identified with the state. This, however, would not last long. The tone of the Kurdish press would change before the end of the First World War toward political nationalism.¹⁸⁶

The content of the Kurdish periodicals reflected the changing visions of the Ottoman Kurdish elites in Istanbul after the First World War. They were divided between those who demanded autonomy under the authority of the Caliphate and those who demanded independence. The Bedirkhans, and specifically Amin Ali Bedirkhan, led the secessionist group. Soon after the Ottoman government signed the Mudros Armistice, the first post-war Kurdish journal, *Jin (Life)* appeared in Istanbul. As it became clear that the victorious Allies would partition the Ottoman Empire, Kamuran Bedirkhan, writing in *Jin*, demanded the application of the Wilson principle of self-determination for the Kurds.¹⁸⁷ Thus, considering the Bedirkhans' prior attachment to the Ottoman Empire, it was a radical shift. Each of Amin Ali's three sons personified this shift.

¹⁸⁶ Janet Klein, "En-Gendering Nationalism: The 'Woman Question' in Kurdish Nationalist Discourse of the Late Ottoman Period," in *Women of A Non-State Nation, The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2001), pp. 25-51; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 90; Bajalan, "Kurds for the Empire," pp. 78-86; Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 36-55; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 95-102.

¹⁸⁷ Lescot, "La Presse Kurde," p. 4; Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 57; and Klein, "Claiming the Nation," pp. 35-47.

Sureya Bedirkhan (1883-1938)

Born in Istanbul in 1883, Sureya was the eldest son of Amin Ali Bedirkhan. He studied agricultural engineering at Istanbul University. Following the Young Turk Revolution he was appointed the sub-governor in a town in Western Anatolia. However, his involvement with the opposition movement favoring decentralization and his Kurdish cultural activities made him suspicious in the eyes of the new regime and in 1910 he was exiled to Cairo.¹⁸⁸

Between 1916 and 1917, under the pseudonym of Ahmad Azizi, Sureya published a newspaper in Cairo entitled *Kurdistan* with British approval and support.¹⁸⁹ After the armistice, he founded a branch of Kurd Taali Jamiyati, known as the Kurdish Club, in Cairo.¹⁹⁰ As the eldest son in the family, he represented the interests of his family. He requested to the British that the territories that his grandfather had ruled should be given to him.¹⁹¹ Centered in Detroit, he represented Khoybun and the Kurdish cause against Turkey in the United States in the late 1920s. He returned to Syria during the Ararat rebellion. Due to the Turkish pressure during the Ararat Rebellion, Sureya was requested by the French authorities to leave Syria in 1930. He went to Cairo first and then to Paris.¹⁹² As Martin Strohmeier indicates, Sureya was a kind of “ambassador-at-large” for the Kurdish cause, a role which was later assumed by Kamuran.¹⁹³ He also published the short books to present the situation of the Kurds and Kurdistan to the Western world: *Les Massacres Kurdes en Turquie* and *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey*.¹⁹⁴ In 1930,

¹⁸⁸ “Sureya Bey Bedr Khan,” in *Personalities in Kurdistan*, Published by Civil Commissioner’s Office (Baghdad: Government Press, 1919), “Addition and Corrections,” p. 6; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 95-100.

¹⁸⁹ Lescot (1943), “La Presse Kurde,” p. 4 and Elphinston, “In Memoriam,” p. 92.

¹⁹⁰ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 57

¹⁹¹ Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh, State*, p. 372; and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 100.

¹⁹² Elphinston, “In Memoriam.”

¹⁹³ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 100.

¹⁹⁴ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 100-101

he also published a book entitled, *La Question Kurde. Ses Origines et Ses Causes* under a pseudonym, Dr. Bletch Chirguh.¹⁹⁵ He died in a car accident in Paris in 1938.

Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan (1893-1951)

Jaladet was born in 1893 and raised in Istanbul. He studied at the Ottoman military academy and later he studied law in Istanbul University. On the second anniversary of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution he attended a lecture by two leading proponents of Turkism. As a response to their emphasis on the Turkish race, Jaladet wrote an article on the Kurds and Kurdistan in the newspaper of the Ottoman military school, where he was a student at the time.¹⁹⁶ He served as an officer in the Ottoman army during the Balkan Wars and the First World War. Jaladet also published a book along with his brother, Kamuran, explaining the reasons why the Ottomans lost Edirne to the Bulgarians in the Balkan Wars during which they were officers in the Ottoman Army.¹⁹⁷

However, in 1919, along with his brother, Kamuran, Jaladet accompanied the British Colonel E. W. Noel on a tour of Mardin, Diyarbakir and Malatya to find out what the local Kurds' thought on Kurdish independence. In Malatya, they were welcomed by the local governor, Khalil Rahmi, another member of the Bedir Khan family. This tour angered Mustafa Kemal who was organizing the local defense organizations into a national conference at the time.¹⁹⁸ Colonel Noel informs us, Jaladet was at this time the assistant editor of a newspaper,

¹⁹⁵ Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanlı*, pp. 99-116; and Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, p. 138.

¹⁹⁶ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*.

¹⁹⁷ Jaladet Bedirkhan and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutunun*.

¹⁹⁸ Noel, *Diary of Major Noel*, pp. 17-25. It was also during that tour the Bedirkhan brothers met another British officer, W. G. Elphinston. His close relations with Jaladet would continue until latter's death in 1951. Noel, *Diary of Major Noel*, p. 28; Elphinston, "In Memoriam," pp. 91-94; Ataturk, *A Speech*, pp. 100-120.

Serbesti (*Freedom*), which had “an Anglophile attitude.”¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Jaladet with his father Amin Ali attempted to collaborate with the Greeks against the Kemalists. In 1922, after the victory in Turkey, the two brothers went to Germany along with two other brothers.²⁰⁰ For their anti-Kemalist activities, Jaladet and his brother were later sentenced to death in Turkey. Jaladet was in Munich between 1922 and 1925 where he pursued graduate studies in law.²⁰¹

In his memoirs, Jaladet describes his daily life in Germany dominated by the financial difficulties caused by the inflation. He worked as a gardener, a waiter, a house-painter, and a type-setter in a printing shop. Thanks to his printing shop experience, he would later be able to print and publish *Hawar* by himself.²⁰² He also gave Kurdish, Turkish and Greek language lessons. His and his brother’s stay and studies in Germany made them familiar with German Romantic nationalism which would shape their view of Kurdish nation.²⁰³ Jaladet published articles, stories and translations in some German newspapers and magazines. For example, he translated a story of Nasraddin Hodja (or Mullah Nasraddin) for a newspaper and wrote a story in German about the hunting tradition in Kurdistan.²⁰⁴ In 1926, he left Germany for Cairo where his dying father, and elder brother, Sureya, were staying.²⁰⁵

Jaladet became the first president of *Khoybun* founded in Beirut in 1927 and supported the Ararat Rebellion against Turkey (1928-1931). Following the failure of the rebellion, Jaladet went to Iran in 1930 to seek help for the Kurds from Reza Shah. Reza Shah, however, wanted Jaladet to give up his political ambitions and work as a diplomat for Iran in Europe. Jaladet did

¹⁹⁹ Noel, *Diary of Major Noel*, p.55.

²⁰⁰ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 95-103.

²⁰¹ Olson, *The Emergence*, pp. 63-64 cited in Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 129, note 6; and Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Günlük*.

²⁰² W. G. Elphinston (1952): 91-94; and Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Günlük*.

²⁰³ Strohmeier (2003), pp. 155-162.

²⁰⁴ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Günlük*.

²⁰⁵ Reş, *Celadet*, p. 23.

not accept the Shah's offer and moved to Iraq where he was not welcomed by the British, who then were busy trying to pacify the Kurdish rebels against the Iraqi central government.²⁰⁶ When he returned to Syria, along with other Khoybun leaders, he was requested by the French authorities to stay away from the Turkish border and to settle down in Damascus.²⁰⁷

Following the failure of the Ararat rebellion, Jaladet and Kamuran left their official posts in Khoybun and initiated a cultural renaissance movement in the Levant under the auspices of the French mandate authorities which included the publication of Kurdish periodicals in Damascus and Beirut. Jaladet died in a village outside Damascus on April 20, 1951 and buried in a cemetery in the Kurdish neighborhood in Damascus.²⁰⁸

Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan (1895-1978)

Kamuran was born in Istanbul in 1895 and, like Jaladet, studied law in Istanbul University and participated in the Kurdish cultural and political movement in Istanbul after the Young Turk Revolution. Kamuran wrote a thin book of poems during the First World War to give morale to the Ottoman soldiers.²⁰⁹ Along with Jaladet he also published a petition to the Ottoman government in the form of a pamphlet memorializing the first martyrs of the Ottoman air force who lost their lives in a plane crash in Damascus.²¹⁰ Like his brother, he studied in Germany, and he earned a doctoral degree in law in Leipzig. In 1927, he became the representative of Khoybun in Beirut. Complementing his involvement in the Kurdish press in the

²⁰⁶Reş, *Celadet*, p. 26; and Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), "Kurden Ecemistane u Hale Wan [The Kurds of Persia and Their Current Situation]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), pp.10-12.

²⁰⁷ Reş, *Celadet*, p. 27; and Jaladet Bedirkhan, "Cemile Haco," *Hawar*, Year 1, Issue 7 (25 August 1932), pp. 1-2.

²⁰⁸ Reş, *Celadet*, p. 35.

²⁰⁹ Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanin-i Harb*.

²¹⁰ Jaladet Bedirkhan and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Osmanli Tayyareciliginin*.

1930s and 40s, he was in charge of Kurdish radio broadcasting in Beirut run by the French mandate authorities.

After the Second World War Kamuran moved to Paris where he taught Kurdish at the Institute of the Oriental Languages and opened a center for the Kurdish studies. His goal was to make the Kurdish question known in the West. He traveled to the United States and submitted petitions to the United Nations demanding application of the principles of the Atlantic Charter and of the UN Charter to the Kurds living in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq.²¹¹ He assumed the role of representing Iraqi Kurdish chief Mullah Mustafa Barzani in the 1960s and 1970s, and coordinating relations between the Israelis and the Iraqi Kurds.²¹² He died in Paris in 1978.

The Kurdish Press in the Levant

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the center of Kurdish press activity moved from Istanbul to Iraq (Baghdad, Sulaymaniya, Erbil, and Kirkuk); Iran (Tehran, Mahabad, Tabriz); Syria (Damascus), Lebanon (Beirut) and Soviet Armenia (Erivan).²¹³ Kurdish nationalists, both traditional leaders and the educated intellectuals, viewed the press as an important tool to mobilize people. For example, Simko Agha, the Kurdish nationalist chieftain in Iranian Kurdish territories published a short-lived journal, *Roji Kurdistan (Sun of Kurdistan)*, to publicize his cause.²¹⁴ Under the British mandate, Iraq became the center of the Kurdish publications in Sorani dialect of Kurdish. Independent of British authorities, Shaykh Mahmud, who declared himself the king of Kurdistan in Sulaymaniya, published his own newspapers

²¹¹ Elphinston, "In Memoriam," p. 93.

²¹² Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 161, note 30.

²¹³ For the list of the periodicals published in these centers please see Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," pp. 484-486; Lescot, "La Press Kurde," p. 4; and Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, pp. 225-239.

²¹⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 221.

starting in 1919.²¹⁵ In 1920, the Mandate authorities founded the Government Press in Sulaymaniya publishing books and periodicals in Sorani. Huzni Mukriyani, a Kurdish intellectual and journalist, bought a printing press in Syria, and brought it to Rawanduz in 1926 and later to Erbil. Piremerd, another Kurdish nationalist, opened his own press in Sulaymaniya.²¹⁶ *Reya Teze* (The New Way), published by the Communist Party of Armenia, would be the most enduring periodical.²¹⁷ Damascus and Beirut under the French mandate were also the centers of Kurdish press in the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish starting with the publication of *Hawar* in 1932.

The Kurdish Press in Syria

The use of the press to promote Kurdish nationalist claims in Syria predated the periodicals published in the 1930s and 1940s by Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan. On March 19, 1919, Yusuf Haydar and Khayr al-Din al-Zerguli, the owners of *al-Mufid*, an Arabic language Damascus newspaper, published an article addressing the Kurds in the Northern and Southern Kurdistan and advocating Kurdish independence in reference to the Arab Revolt and President Wilson's principles. Free copies of the newspaper were distributed in Aleppo.²¹⁸ Based on French archival documents, Benjamin Thomas White shows that an Iraqi Kurdish writer living in Aleppo requested French financial assistance to be able to publish a book on the history of the Kurds in Kurdish with Arabic characters.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 158 and 174.

²¹⁶ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, pp. 171-173.

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 253.

²¹⁸ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 144.

²¹⁹ White, *The Emergence of Minorities*, p. 115.

After the foundation of Khoybun and during the Ararat Rebellion the Bedirkhan brothers collaborated with other Kurdish nationalists and dedicated themselves to the success of the rebellion. In that context, Khoybun Organization's propaganda booklets in various languages (English, French, and Turkish) attempted to make the Kurdish cause against Turkey known to the world. Those included *The Case of Kurdistan Against Turkey* (Philadelphia, 1928), and *The Massacres of Turks in Turkey* (Cairo, 1928) in English; *Turkiye'de Kurtlerin Katliami* (*The Massacres of Kurds in Turkey*, Cairo, 1928) in Ottoman Turkish; *Les Massacres Kurdes en Turquie* (Cairo, 1928) and *La Question Kurde Ses Origines et Ses Causes* (Cairo, 1930) in French. The arguments of these booklets conflicted with the earlier books published by the Bedirkhan brothers and clearly show their conversion from Ottomanism and Kurdish cultural nationalism to exclusively political Kurdish nationalism.

In Turkey the failure of the Ararat Rebellion by 1931 and the Dersim rebellion in 1938 forced many Kurdish nationalists to accept cooperation with the Kemalist regime. One example was Sukru Mehmet Sekban (1881-1960), a medical doctor and one of the founding members of Khoybun. His 1923 open letter in Turkish entitled "What do the Kurds want from the Turks" (Kurtler Turklerden Ne Istiyor) was the first Kurdish political statement following the treaty of Lausanne, a Kemalist Turkish diplomatic victory and a blow to the Kurdish nationalists' demand for independence. In his letter, as a Kurdish nationalist, he gave voice to the Kurdish nationalist claims and criticized Turkish assimilationist policies.²²⁰ Following the failure of the Ararat rebellion, Sekban decided to return to Turkey and abandoned his Kurdish nationalist stance. In his 1933 book, *La Question Kurde*, he advocated Kurds' assimilation into Turkishness, arguing

²²⁰ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 77-85.

that Kurds and Turks are the same race.²²¹ Some members of the Bedirkhan family who stayed in Turkey either stayed away from the politics or collaborated with the Kemalist regime. For example, Hüseyin Vasıf Çınar (1895-1935), a member of the Bedirkhan family, became Turkish minister of education. Atatürk, himself, knew the significance of the Bedirkhan family and gave a branch of the family name Çınar (Sycamore), signifying its long history.²²²

Unlike their fellow Kurdish elites in Turkey, the Bedirkhan brothers continued the Kurdish national struggle against Turkey even after the Ararat Rebellion. In 1933 Jaladet wrote and published an open letter in Turkish to Atatürk to criticize the amnesty planned by the Turkish Republic for the tenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic. Jaladet's intention was to discourage Kurds from accepting Turkish amnesty. The letter was the last Kurdish nationalist publication in Turkish from the Levant. It was also a kind of Kurdish analysis of the Kemalist Turkish reforms and policies regarding the Kurds.²²³ Following the failure of the rebellion, the Bedirkhan brothers would leave Khoybun and dedicate themselves to cultural activities to awaken the Kurdish people including the publication of Kurdish periodicals and books. Of the Kurdish periodicals, *Hawar* (1932-1943) and its supplement *Ronahi* (1942-1945) were owned and edited by Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan in Damascus. *Roja Nu* (1943-1946) and its supplement, *Ster* (1943-1945), were under Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan's editorship in Beirut. As Syria and Lebanon were under the French mandate at the time, it would be impossible to think that Kurdish cultural activism operated free from the mandate authorities. The Special Service, a branch of the French High Commission in Syria and Lebanon, was in charge of intelligence, the press, propaganda

²²¹ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 116-127.

²²² Malmisaniş, *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 231-232; Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım [My Memoirs]* (Istanbul: Doz, 1990), p. 80 cited in Malmisaniş, *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 231. Jaladet had got disappointed in Germany in 1923 when he learned that Vasıf was appointed by the Kemalist government as a public prosecutor in 1923. Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Günlük*, p. 55.

²²³ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 128-136.

and national security.²²⁴ Based on French archival documents, Jordi Tejel indicates that the French had strong influence on the working of the Bedirkhans' publications through their financial support and material help, by providing them with, for example, photographs and printing characters. Tejel goes as far as to argue that *Hawar*, the first Kurdish periodical in Syria, was an instrument of France's Kurdish policy in Syria.²²⁵

This French support can be explained as a policy of counter balancing Arab nationalism through empowering minority religious and ethnic communities.²²⁶ Pierre Rondot, Roger Lescot and Thomas Bois were three major French orientalists who played significant roles in the Kurdish cultural movement in Syria and Lebanon. Their keen interest in the Kurds and their close relations with the Bedirkhan brothers and other nationalists made them the French "Kurdologists." Regarding the nature of relationship between the French Orientalists and the Kurdish Nationalists, specifically the Bedirkhan brothers, there are two different opinions, both relying on Edward Said's formulation of Orientalism.²²⁷ For Strohmeier, the paternalistic role of the French orientalists is a good example of Said's assessment of the dichotomy of the advanced and civilized "us" and, primitive and incapable of self-rule "them."²²⁸ Tejel, on the other hand, refers to the Bedirkhan brother's involvement in the construction of the knowledge on the East and more specifically on the Kurds to modify Said's generalization of the role of the Orientalists and their passive Oriental subjects.²²⁹

²²⁴ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 78 cited in Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 15.

²²⁵ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 26 and 29.

²²⁶ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 130; and Fuccaro, "Minorities and Ethnic Mobilisation."

²²⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

²²⁸ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 151, note 1.

²²⁹ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 326-339; Jordi Tejel, "Les constructions;" Jordi Tejel, "The Construction of the Kurdish Identity under the Influence of Orientalism, 1920-1945"

Pierre Rondot (1904-2000) was a French military officer who worked for the Intelligence Service centered in Beirut in 1928. Encouraged by Robert Montagne, director of the French Institute of Damascus, he researched and published on the Kurds and especially their social structures. He became the Bedirkhan brothers' personal friend and edited the French as well as Kurdish part of *Hawar*.²³⁰ Roger Lescot (1914-1975) was a French diplomat and Orientalist who began to study Kurdish in 1935. He published on the Yazidis, and Kurdish grammar and literature. He, too, became a close friend of the Bedirkhan brothers and wrote many articles and translated many Kurdish literary pieces into French for *Hawar*, *Ronahi*, and *Roja Nu* (*Le Jour Nouveau*).²³¹ Thomas Bois (1900-1975) was head of the Dominican mission in Jazira between 1936 and 1940. His interest in and publications on Kurdish folklore, culture, literature which started in the 1940s would continue in the following decades. Knowing the Kurdish dialects besides Kurmanji, he also helped the Bedirkhan brothers in their linguistic studies.²³²

The Press and the Nation

In an undated communique, probably from the late 1920s, Khoybun organization called for a Kurdish journal for the Kurdish nation like other nations in the world. According to the communique, journals are necessary for the social, political and civilizational existence. They are required to preserve and develop Kurdish language, literature and historiography.²³³ From the Bedirkhan brother's perspective, the twin goals of the Kurdish periodicals were educating or

(paper presented at the World Congress of Kurdish Studies, Erbil, Northern Iraq, September 6–9, 2006).

²³⁰ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 145, note 31.

²³¹ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p.145, note 32; and Tejel, Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 330-332.

²³² Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p.145, note 34; and Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 332-333.

²³³ Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 107-109.

awakening the Kurds and making the Kurdish nation and its claim to freedom and independence known to the world. These goals were summarized in an editorial in *Roja Nu* by Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan. He indicated that “before everything we should work with all our strength so that our people learn their own language and be able to read the books, magazines, and newspapers in their language and understand their country’s needs. Without knowing the needs of their country, people cannot be useful to their country.” Then he continued, “on the other hand, the world must hear of the Kurdistan question and understand the cause of Kurdistan.”²³⁴ *Ster*’s address to the readers clearly exemplified the first goal: “In order to awaken people, there is no better means than books and magazines. It is true that people are awakened with theaters, cinemas, and schools too. Indeed, in all countries schools and universities have been established for that reason, namely opening children’s eyes and for the advancement of the people.” Kurds did not have their own schools or theaters and that is why the only means they had to awaken the Kurdish masses were the Kurdish publications.²³⁵ An article by Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan on Johannes Gutenberg appeared in *Ronahi* in a series entitled “those who served humanity.” Before Gutenberg, Louis Pasteur and Young Simpson were introduced to *Hawar* readers. Jaladet indicated that the last two men saved millions from death with their medical discoveries. As for Guttenberg, he was a not a medical doctor, but, his invention, the printing press, was as important as the medical discoveries of the two other. This is because with the printing press, Guttenberg saved people from a moral death, ignorance. He added, “without his invention people would not be able to read this magazine [*Rohani*] and other magazines and books.”²³⁶

²³⁴ “Mina Ko Em Dixwazin [What We Want],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 47 (8 May 1944), p. 1.

²³⁵ “Xwendevan [Readers],” *Ster*, Year 2, Issue 2 (28 February 1944), p. 1.

²³⁶ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), “Yen Ko Xizmeta Insaniyete Kirine: (3) Yohannes Gutenberg (1400-1468) [Those Who Served the Humanity: (3) Johannes Guttenberg (1400-1468)],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), pp. 6-8.

The Kurdish nationalists used every opportunity to emphasize the significance of the press for the salvation of the nation. Occupation of France by the Nazi forces and the establishment of a collaborationist regime in Vichy during the Second World War were seen as parallel to the Kurdish case. Referring to the French people collaborating with the invading German forces, a *Roja Nu* editorial indicated that “there are traitors in France too.” At the same time, the same article praised those French who participated in the resistance movement that published and distributed magazines and newspapers in order to open the people’s eyes. According to the same article “there were three hundred underground magazines and newspapers secretly published and distributed in France at the time.”²³⁷ To emphasize the significance of the Kurdish press, the nationalists let even the martyrs speak. In Osman Sabri’s imaginary journey to Amed (Diyarbakir) and in his long conversation with the martyrs of the Shaykh Said Rebellion Kurdish press is an important topic. One of the martyrs informed him that they follow the Kurdish periodical from the Levant and they even publish their own political newspaper, to be titled *Hisyari* (Awareness). Sabri’s “informant” goes on to list the names of the editor-in-chief, publisher, editorial writer and the reporter of the newspaper, all well-known Kurdish nationalists who lost their lives in the Shaykh Said Rebellion.²³⁸

In the first issue of *Roja Nu*, Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan mentioned publication of novels and newspapers as an important stage in the progress of nations. He referred to two Kurdish poets, Ahmad Khani (1650-1707) and Haji Qadriye Koyi (1817-1897), to support his point. Jaladet argues that both men, living in different eras, gave voice to Kurdish aspirations. Thus, Khani had

²³⁷ “Xebata Welatperweran [The Efforts of the Patriots],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 35 (17 January 1944), p. 2.

²³⁸ Osman Sabri, “Li Goristanek Amede [In a Cemetery of Amed],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 11 (8 May 1933), pp. 2-6.

said: “All nations possess books, Kurds alone are without them.”²³⁹ As for Koyi, he reinterpreted Khani’s message according to his time by saying: “If the goal is our ancestors’ language, this is an age of novels and newspapers.”²⁴⁰ Kurdish nationalists would follow the examples of Ahmad Khani and Haji Qadriye Koyi, re-evaluate their messages and stress the books and periodicals as the “cultural hallmark of national existence.”²⁴¹ Jaladet in one instance quoted *Gelawej*, a Sorani Kurdish magazine from Iraq, writing “Kurds today, more than any other time, are in need of magazines and books. This is because when the nations make the case for their own existence tomorrow, the other nations, who are entitled to give them their rights, will ask from them if they have magazines, books, and newspapers.”²⁴² In one instance, Jaladet called *Ronahi* and *Hawar* “drops in a big sea, a sea of knowledge.” In that sea, he indicated, there is no nation that has fewer shares than the Kurds. According to Jaladet, every nation making the case of its existence and its rights had to contribute to that sea.²⁴³

²³⁹ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, p. 185.

²⁴⁰ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Merhele [The Stages],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943), pp. 1-2.

²⁴¹ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, p. 185.

²⁴² “Gelawej,” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p. 12.

²⁴³ Xwediye Haware [The Owner of Hawar], “Kiryariye Haware [Subscription to Hawar],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 43 (5 May 1942), pp. 8-9.

*Hawar (Cry for Help)*²⁴⁴

Hawar was the first Kurdish periodical published in the Levant following the failure of the Ararat Rebellion. A Khoybun communique suggests that the Kurdish nationalists had been inspired by the first Kurdish journal, *Kurdistan*, and wanted to publish a new journal with the same name.²⁴⁵ Jordi Tejel indicates that the mandate authorities probably suggested another name so as not to anger Turkish authorities.²⁴⁶ *Hawar* was the first publication to utilize the new Kurdish alphabet in Latin characters designed by Jaladet Bedirkhan and it became the icon of the Kurdish cultural movement in the Levant. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan received official permission to publish *Hawar* from the Syrian Ministry of Interior on 26 October 1931. Addressed to “Emir Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan,” the short official letter, or the license document, indicated that his request to publish an illustrated scientific and literary newspaper (*jarida*) in Damascus every fifteen days in Kurdish and optionally in Arabic and French “without interfering with political subjects” had been approved.²⁴⁷ The format of the letter sent to Jaladet was similar to letters

²⁴⁴ For my dissertation, I have used the reprint edition of all 57 issues of *Hawar* edited by Firat Ceweri and published in two volumes by Nudem Press (Sweden, 1998). Ceweri also transliterated the Arabic alphabet sections of the first twenty three issues of the magazine. However, Ceweri was not the first person to republish the magazine. Hemres Reso published a reprint edition of the last thirty-four issues (24-57) in 1976 in Berlin, and Mihemmed Bekir republished the first 9 issues in 1987 in Sweden in a volume. He was planning to publish the remaining issues in two other volumes, but because of health reasons he was not able to do so. Finally, Kawa Press, under the editorship of Salah Badreddin, republished Firat Ceweri’s reprint edition in Erbil in 2001. Firat Ceweri, “HAWAR hat hawara me [Hawar came to our help],” in reprint edition of *Hawar*, Volume I, ed. Firat Ceweri (Stockholm: Nudem Press, 1998), pp. 15-18; Mihemed Bekir, “HAWAR, Denge Zanin u Xwenasine [HAWAR: The Voice of Knowledge and Knowing Oneself],” in reprint edition of *Hawar*, ed. Mihemed Bekir (Stockholm: Hawar Press, 1987), pp. VII-XXVII; and Nuraddin Zaza. Pesgotin: “*Hawar*” u Canda Kurdi [Foreword: *Hawar* and the Kurdish Culture],” in reprint edition of *Hawar*, edited by Hemres Reso (Berlin: Dürschlag, 1976).

²⁴⁵ Tejel, *La Ligue Nationale*, pp. 107-109.

²⁴⁶ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 284.

²⁴⁷ Unfortunately, I could not locate a copy of this letter in the Syrian National Archives, nor any other documents on the Kurdish Periodicals during the French Mandate. However, Jaladet Ali

received by publishers of other magazines or newspapers in Syria. In all the letters that I encountered in the Syrian Archives, not “interfering with the political issues” was emphasized. This can be seen, for example, in the permission letters to the three Arabic language magazines to be published in Damascus namely *al-Asima*, *al-Manahij*, and *Al-Insaniyyah*.²⁴⁸

In his book on *Hawar*, Husên Hebeş refers to an article written in Sorani and addressed to readers in Iraq indicating that *Hawar* was neither the organ of a party nor the voice of any organization.²⁴⁹ Jaladet might have wanted to emphasize that he, along with his brother, Kamuran, had left Khoybun organization and thus were not a part of the political factionalism that weakened the unity of the Kurdish leadership following the failure of the Ararat rebellion. He might have also wanted emphasize that he would not disappoint the French mandate authorities by “interfering in the Syrian national politics” dominated by the tension between the Syrian National Bloc and the mandate authorities.

The first issue of *Hawar* came out on Sunday, May 15, 1932. Emir Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan appeared as the owner and editor-in-chief. His mail address was given as “The Kurdish Quarter, Damascus.” The dimensions of *Hawar* were 21x29 cm. Of fifty-seven issues of *Hawar*, thirty-eight had sixteen pages, nine had eight pages, eight had twelve pages, one had fifteen and another had twenty pages. The First forty-four issues had independent front and back cover

Bedirkhan’s wife, Rawshan Bedirkhan, and his daughter, Sinemkhan Bedirkhan, have shared Jaladet’s own copy of the letter with many researchers on the topic. I saw the original framed copy of the letter in Sinemkhan Bedirkhan’s house in Erbil, Kurdistan province of Iraq. It is interesting that in the letter the new publication was identified as a newspaper (*jarida*) not as a magazine (*majallah*). [See Appendix, Image 1].

²⁴⁸ Syrian National Archives, Ministry of Interior, Newspapers and Magazines, Document # 6529-5624, 4 October 1930; SNA, Ministry of Interior, Newspapers and Magazines, Document # 22205-2282, 16 June 1931; and SNA, Ministry of Interior, Newspapers and Magazines Document, # 1068-924, 15 February 1931.

²⁴⁹ *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), p. 8 cited in Husen Hebeş, *Raperina*, p. 30.

pages. The forty-fifth issue had only a separate front cover. From the forty-sixth until the last issue, the magazine did not have independent cover pages. Although *Hawar* was an illustrated publication, there were far more images in its supplement, *Ronahi*. In the first issue it was indicated that the magazine would come out once every fifteen days. However, it ended up being published every eighteen days due to the financial difficulties.²⁵⁰

The first twenty-three issues of *Hawar* had two sections, one in the Latin alphabet and the other in the Arabic-Persian alphabet. From the twenty-fourth issue on, *Hawar* was published only in the Latin alphabet designed by Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan. Each issue of *Hawar* also had a French language section. The First issue of *Hawar* was exceptional that in the Arabic-Persian alphabet section there is an article on the Kurdish alphabet in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish. Ironically, the Turkish article was in Arabic characters in spite of the 1928 alphabet reform in Turkey adopting the Latin alphabet for Turkish. As the magazine was published in Damascus, the editor might have felt obliged to publish the goals and form of the work of the magazine in Arabic as well.²⁵¹ From the second issue on, however, *Hawar* would become a Kurdish-French bilingual magazine. Thus, Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan would put an end to a long tradition of the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals writing or publishing in Turkish as well as in Kurdish.²⁵²

The editorial in the first issue of *Hawar* asserted “*Hawar* is the voice of knowledge. Knowledge is to know oneself; knowing oneself opens for us the way of salvation and beauty. Every person that knows himself can make himself known.” The goals of the magazine was

²⁵⁰ Nivisanoqa Haware,”Heyineqe Yeqsali [A One Year Old Existence],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-3.

²⁵¹ *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), pp. 1-5.

²⁵² His 1932 open letter to Mustafa Kemal [Ataturk] would be naturally an exception as it was in Turkish.

explained as the dissemination of the new Kurdish alphabet, and its teaching among the Kurds, studies on the Kurdish language, dialects, classical and folk literature, dance and songs, customs and the history and geography of Kurdistan.²⁵³ In the first anniversary issue, the editorial defined the magazine as “a one year-old child whose birth and survival, despite all the odds, is an important step.” The editor explained that thanks to *Hawar* “our language is no longer just a spoken language; it has become a written language at the same time.” He emphasized the role of the language for the salvation of the Kurdish nation and how *Hawar* improves the language by publishing both poetry and prose in Kurdish and especially new genres including theatrical plays which, the author claims, did not previously exist in Kurdish.²⁵⁴

For its readers, *Hawar* was also a source of world news. Starting with the thirtieth issue of the magazine (July 1, 1941), *Hawar* informed readers about the course of the Second World War and other global and regional developments in a column entitled “World Situation.” A close reading of the news also shows the editor’s view of the developments. For example, Jaladet seems to be disappointed by the agreement reached by the British and the Turks who were threatened by the advance of Hitler’s armies in the Balkans.²⁵⁵

The list of the subscription fees for Syria, Turkey, Persia, Iraq, Caucasian countries and for other countries indicates that the editor of *Hawar* hoped to capture the attention of Kurds in a vast area. The subscription fees for the specified countries were 500 Syrian Piastres or 100 Francs for a year, and 300 Syrian Piastres or 60 Francs for six months, and 175 Syrian Piastres or

²⁵³ “Armanc, Awaye Xebat u Nivisandina Haware [The Goal, and the Form of the Work and Writing of *Hawar*],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁴ Nivisanoqa Haware, “Heyineqe Yeqsali [A One Year Old Existence],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-3.

²⁵⁵ Nerevan, “Rewsa Dinyaye [The Situation of the World],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 30 (1 July 1941), pp. 7-13.

35 Francs for three months. For the other countries the fees were 150 Francs for a year, 90 Francs for six months, and 50 Francs for three months.²⁵⁶ From the second issue on, the three month subscription was replaced with a four month subscription fee: 200 Syrian Piastres or 40 Francs for the listed countries; and 60 Francs for other countries.²⁵⁷

Publication of *Hawar* was suspended twice. The first issue was published on 15 May 1932. Publication was stopped after the twenty-third issue, published on July 25, 1933. Publication was resumed again with the twenty-fourth issue on April 1, 1934, and ran until the twenty-sixth issue on August 18, 1935. The second interval without publication would last much longer as the twenty-seventh issue had to wait until April 15, 1941. The last series of fifty-seven issues ran through August 15, 1943.²⁵⁸ Nuraddin Zaza, known for his short stories in *Hawar* (by his pseudonym Nuraddin Youssef), in his foreword to the 1976 reprint edition explained that there were not sufficient subscriptions sold to support publication. He also indicated that clients of *Hawar* were the Kurds of Syria and some Kurmanji speaking Kurds of Iraq. The journal rarely and always secretly reached Kurds in Turkey. There was no society or government helping *Hawar*. Since Kurmanji Kurdish, in which *Hawar* was primarily published, was not being taught in the schools, *Hawar* could not be widely read. As a result, “the cry of *Hawar* was not heard.” The arrival of the British to Syria and their pragmatic decision to help the Kurds during the Second World War allowed Jaladet Bedirkhan to resume publication of *Hawar*. According to Zaza, the major motive of the British was to keep the Kurds on their side during the Second World War. Later, Zaza continued, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and the Turks

²⁵⁶ *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 11.

²⁵⁷ *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 2 (1 June 1932): the inside front cover page.

²⁵⁸ Xwediye Haware, “Se Tarixen Haware: 15 Gulan 1932, 18 Tebax 1935, 15 Nisan 1941 [The Three Histories of *Hawar*: 15 May 1932, 18 August 1935, 15 April 1941],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 4-5.

slowly began to distance themselves from the Germans, the value of the Kurds decreased in the eyes of the British.²⁵⁹ Based on his interviews with people who knew Jaladet Bedirkhan, Kona Res lists similar reasons for the intervals in the publication of *Hawar*.²⁶⁰ Finally the end of the French mandate in the Levant brought an end to the Kurdish press and related cultural activities.

*Ronahi (Enlightenment)*²⁶¹

Ronahi was a free monthly supplement of *Hawar*, although publication was irregular. The publication of *Ronahi*, Jaladet wrote, is “a novelty in the history of the Kurdish press and an important event in the Kurds’ national life.” This is because until then no illustrated magazine had been published in Kurdish. He indicated that *Ronahi*’s subscription fee was only 5 Syrian Liras and called upon readers to support it.²⁶² *Ronahi*’s dimensions were 29x21 cm. The page numbers have no uniformity. Eight issues had thirteen pages, seven issues had twenty pages, twelve issues had twenty-four pages, and one issue had thirty-two pages. *Ronahi* was in Kurmanji Kurdish in the Latin alphabet. It was published monthly and its run lasted for twenty-eight issues. The first issue came out on April 1, 1942 and the last one in March 1945. In the last issue of *Rohani*, as in the last issues of *Hawar*, *Roja Nu* and *Ster*, there was no indication that publication would permanently cease.

²⁵⁹ Nuraddin Zaza, “Pesgotin: “*Hawar*” u Canda Kurdi [Foreword: *Hawar* and the Kurdish Culture],” in Reprint Edition of *Hawar* (Issues 24-57), ed. Hemres Reso (Berlin: Dürschlag, 1976)

²⁶⁰ Financial difficulties and especially shortage of subscribers or buyers and lack of interest among the Kurds in reading Kurdish materials played a part. The publication of the periodicals in the Levant was resumed during the war. However, when the French and the British needed the support of the Turks and Arabs, the freedom of Kurdish activities in the Arab countries were limited: Reş, *Celadet*, pp. 65-67.

²⁶¹ For my dissertation I used the reprint edition of *Ronahi* (Uppsala, Sweden: Jina Nu Press, 1985)

²⁶² Xwediye Haware, “Kiryariye Haware [Subscription to *Hawar*],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 43 (5 May 1942), pp. 8-9.

The Second World War years meant censorship for the press throughout Arab world. The British and French did their best to curtail any pro-Nazi propaganda in the region.²⁶³ However, the beginning of the Second World War and the rising influence of the British in the Levant also created opportunities for the pro-Allied journals like the Kurdish periodicals. British authorities not only allowed Kurdish cultural activities to continue, but also helped Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan by providing him with newsprint which was very expensive at the time. However, as explained earlier, these favorable conditions changed toward the end of the war.²⁶⁴

During the Second World War, the news from the battle fronts and home fronts of Europe, Africa and Asia, developments in the technology of war, and the news praising the Allied soldiers and the leaders of the Allied countries dominated the content of *Ronahi*. There were articles about the Kurdish society, culture and literature in the magazine, but, *Ronahi* really became “Kurdish” in terms of content starting with the twelfth issue in which the news about the war was balanced with the Kurdish folkloric and literary pieces, articles on Kurdistan, and news about the Kurds from the Syrian Jazira region. Besides the editor, Kurdish nationalist writers such as Osman Sabri, Mullah Anwar and Hasan Hishyar published many pieces in *Ronahi*.

*Roja Nu (The New Day) and Le Jour Nouveau*²⁶⁵

Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan founded *Roja Nu* and *Le Jour Nouveau* with the expressed goal of publishing a political newspaper rather than a literary or cultural publication. The subscription fees were listed as 10 Syrian Liras for Syria and Lebanon and 2 English Liras for other countries.

²⁶³ Ayalon, *The Press*, pp. 104-106.

²⁶⁴ For the factual information on *Ronahi* please see Reprint edition of *Ronahi* (Uppsala, Sweden: Jina Nu Press, 1985), pp. 3-6.

²⁶⁵ For my dissertation I have used the reprint edition of *Roja Nu* and *Le Jour Nouveau* (Uppsala, Sweden: Jina Nu Press, 1985).

The price of a single issue was 10 piasters.²⁶⁶ *Roja Nu* and its French edition, *Le Jour Nouveau*, appeared as a weekly newspaper. Initially, the Kurdish and the French pages were published together, but later on the Kurdish and the French issues were published separately. It appeared as 73 issues between May 3, 1943 and May 27, 1946. Its dimensions were 29-30 cm x 44-46 cm. Each issue was 4 pages with the exception of issue 68 which was two pages.

Like *Hawar*, and especially *Ronahi*, *Roja Nu* was full of news about the war in global and regional contexts. It was an illustrated newspaper and the source of many photos was a Beirut-based French Language newspaper, *Le Miroir D'Orient*. The declaration of the Atlantic Charter was welcomed as a sign of hope for the freedom and independence of nations like Kurds.²⁶⁷ *Roja Nu* had a reporter based in Jazira, Northern Syria, reporting the events and developments influencing the Kurdish population of the region.²⁶⁸ It monitored the newspapers in Arabic, French, German and Persian and quoted the articles about the Kurds from them.

Even though *Roja Nu* was primarily a political newspaper, it published Kurdish folk stories, histories, songs and other literary texts, which makes it an invaluable source for Kurdish folklore studies. In the French section and/or edition of the newspaper, the major goal was to make Kurdish history, culture, and political demands known to foreigners. The French section

²⁶⁶ *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943): 1; and *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943), p. 1.

²⁶⁷ For example see the editorial of the newspaper from 13 March 1944, "Azahi-Serbesti: Armanca Hemi Miletan [Freedom-Independence: The Goal of All Nations]," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 41 (13 March 1944), p. 1. The activities of Kurdish nationalists in Syria and Lebanon during the war were in some way similar to those of the Kurdish clubs and periodicals after the end of the First World War, when Kurdish elites had been influenced by Woodrow Wilson's 14 principles and had promoted Kurdish aspiration for a separate political entity. For example, an article published on October 8, 1945 was on running a state. "Gerandina Dewleteke [Running A State]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 58 (8 October 1945), p. 1; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 143, note 16.

²⁶⁸ As an example see "Nucegihaye Me Ji Cizire Dinivise [Our Reporter from Jazira Writes]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 58 (8 October 1945), p. 3.

also included news from the war along with Kurdish poems, songs and other literary pieces in Kurdish translation.²⁶⁹

*Ster (Star)*²⁷⁰

Ster, the illustrated supplement to *Roja Nu*, appeared only three times and there were long intervals between each issue. The first came out on December 6, 1943, the second on February 28, 1944 and the third on October 22, 1945. Like *Roja Nu*, it includes examples from Kurdish folklore literature and modern Kurdish poems. The first two issues cost 5 Syrian Liras, and the last issue cost 20 Syrian Liras. *Ster* has also a motto that appears on each issue: The Homeland before Everything (*Welat Beri Her Tisti*). *Ster* was in Kurmanji only. Its dimensions were 29x44 cm and each issue has four pages.

Reading, Readers and Distribution of the Kurdish Publications in the Levant

Newspapers and magazines play an important role in the emergence of national communities by exposing readers across vast distances to the same coverage of the news. The participation of the readers and their awareness of being a part of a “mass ceremony” are highly important towards claiming membership in “an imagined community.”²⁷¹ Who participated in the “mass ceremony” of reading the Kurdish periodicals published in Damascus and Beirut? It is hard to determine the size of the readership for the Kurdish press in the Levant due to the shortage of evidence. I came across only one subscribers’ list to Kurdish periodicals in the Levant. It was a long but undated list of the subscribers to *Hawar* that Jaladet Bedirkhan’s wife,

²⁶⁹ For the factual information on *Roja Nu* please see Reprint of *Roja Nu* (Uppsala, Sweden: Jina Nu Press, 1985), p. 3.

²⁷⁰ For my dissertation I have used the reprint edition of *Ster* edited by Hazim Kilic in Denmark (Copenhagen: Xani & Bateyi Press, 1992). The introduction to the reprint edition (pp. 9-21) contains valuable information about *Ster* and its editor, Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan.

²⁷¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 35.

Rawshan, kept along with some of his personal documents including his notebook. Dilawer Zengi, a Kurdish writer from Damascus, published the list of subscribers to *Hawar* from Jaladet's notebook. The list indicates that *Hawar* had readers from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. In Syria, the number subscribers and their towns were: al-Hasakah (7), Qamishli (21), Qubr al-Bayda (10), Amuda (38), Darbasiya (11), Derek (5), Ra's al-Ayn (4), al-Bab (1), Ayn al-Arab (6), Kurd Dag (7), Aleppo (4), Hama (1), Homs (1), Damascus (32), Qatana (1), Duma (1), Qayntara (1), Dara (2). In Lebanon the subscribers were from Beirut (3) and Tarabulus (1). There was one subscriber from Mecca, three from Cairo, one from Alexandria, two from Jerusalem, and one from Jaffa. *Hawar* had subscribers from the Iraqi cities as well: Baghdad (48), Kirkuk (27), Zakho (18), Erbil (30), Amadiya (33), Sulaymaniya (17), Ranya (3), Mosul (16), Duhok (18), Sanjar (1), Basra (2), Koisancaq (6), Rawanduz (4), Aqra (4), Khanaqin (1), Habaniya (3), Diwaniyah (2), Zibar (6), and Jalula (1). *Hawar* had subscribers in the following Iran cities: Tehran (4), Kermanshah (4), Hamadan (8), Sanandaj (11), Saqiz (1), Qasr-e Shirin (1), Mahabad (1), Ravansar (1), Gilan-e Gharb (1), and Songhor-Koliai (1). In the original copy of Jaladet's notebook I also found noted French Orientalist Pierre Rondot's name and Paris postal address.

The list also indicates that the individual subscribers were a diverse group of people including mullahs, aghas, imams, merchants, village heads, school teachers and principals, local officials, military officials (especially in Iraq), pharmacists, British and French mandate officials, Kurdish magazine and newspaper editors, a Kurdish member of the Syrian parliament, and well-known nationalist leaders like Mullah Mustafa Barzani. Besides individuals, a number of Kurdish and foreign organizations subscribed to the magazine, such as the French Institute in Damascus, the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, the Iranian Institute in New

York, the Kurdish Saladin Club in Damascus, Yane-i Serkewtin Club and *Gelawej* Magazine in Iraq. In Jaladet's notebook, I also noticed the mail addresses of University of Uppsala and the French Institute of Archeology in Beirut.²⁷² The representative nature of a single list is arguable but it is highly informative. Most subscribers got their magazine via postal service. The above mentioned list of subscribers also indicates that others received their copies through a representative or a trustee in their towns.²⁷³ Ami Ayalon and Amir Hassanpour respectively indicate that this method, locating trustees or appointing an agent (wakil) in each town, was used by the Arabic periodicals in the Middle East in general and by Iraqi Kurdish periodicals in particular.²⁷⁴

Elizabeth L. Eisenstein indicates that "printed materials encouraged silent adherence to causes whose advocates could not be located in any one parish and who addresses an invisible public from afar."²⁷⁵ Reading the Kurdish periodicals was not always an individual silent act. We can see examples of collective reading of the Kurdish periodicals. In a letter to Jaladet, Wajdi, a young member of the famous Jamilpasha family, praised Bedirkhan's activities and criticized wealthy Kurds for not opening schools for Kurdish children who, as a result, were forced to attend the foreign schools.²⁷⁶ In a published response, Jaladet praised the thirteen year old Wajdi

²⁷² Dilawer Zengi, a Kurdish writer from Damascus, showed me the original list. He also published the subscribers' names in the list in his book. Zengi, "Wasaiq," pp. 183-209. Moreover, a response from Cairo to the questions of readers regarding the unity of the Kurdish language shows that *Hawar* was followed in Egypt as well. Lacey Hene, "Sehiti Le Bo Yeqitiya Zmane Qurdi-5 [Announcement for the Unity of the Kurdish Language]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 23 (25 July 1933), pp. 7-8.

²⁷³ Zengi, "Wasaiq," pp. 183-209; and *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 25 (May 1944), p. 24.

²⁷⁴ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, pp. 202 and 242; and Ayalon, *Reading*, pp. 80-1.

²⁷⁵ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, "Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought," *Journal of Modern History*, 40, no. 1 (March 1968), p. 42, cited in Anderson, *Imagined*, p. 35.

²⁷⁶ Wajdi Jamilpasha, "Hawareq [A Call]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), pp. 5-6.

as “a little Kurd, [but] a big hope.”²⁷⁷ Fawzi Mustafa Shahin, son of the Barazi tribal chief, sent a letter to *Hawar* in which he wrote that his father had read Wajdi’s article to a gathering of people from his tribe. The assembly had been moved by the article and shed tears. Fawzi himself said he always stayed up and read *Hawar* in bed until he fell asleep.²⁷⁸ In another example, Sayyed Huzni, the editor of *Zare Kurmanci (Kurdish Language)* from Iraq, sent a letter to Jaladet informing him of a similar gathering in which someone read from *Hawar* out loud.²⁷⁹

The Kurdish press did not consider the buyers merely silent readers but participants in a social and cultural movement to awaken the masses. *Hawar*’s address to its readers is in the form a quatrain: “*Hawar* is your *hawar* (cry)/ [It is] your voice and call/ [It is] your life and knowledge/Oh come, [and] become your own cry.”²⁸⁰ In an article in *Ster*, the readers are called “brothers, male cousins, and sons,” who were expected to promise to work and guide the people until the trouble of illiteracy or ignorance ceased to exist among the Kurds.²⁸¹ Ami Ayalon’s analysis of the impact of illiteracy on the press in Palestine holds true for the Kurdish press in the Levant. Ayalon indicates that “the spread of written message...was faster than the expansion of reading ability.”²⁸² One of the major reasons why the Kurdish press lacked readers or supporters was the problem of illiteracy. The editors of the Kurdish Press were aware of this reality and they wanted readers to teach others how to read and write.

²⁷⁷ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Qurdeqi Qiciq, Heviyeqe Mezin [A little Kurd, A big Hope],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p. 6.

²⁷⁸ Fawzi Mustafa Shahin, “Ji Pismame Min Weddi Cemil Pasa Ra [To My Cousin Wajdi Jamilpasha],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), p. 7.

²⁷⁹ *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5 (20 July 1932), p. 5. This old practice namely conveyance of a written message verbally by someone who can read was applied in the dissemination of the nationalist messages in other Middle Easter societies too as Ami Ayalon explains in the case of Palestine. Ayalon, *Reading*, pp. 4, 109-116, and 131-148.

²⁸⁰ *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 2.

²⁸¹ “Xwendevan [Readers],” *Ster*, Year 2, Issue 2 (28 February 1944), p. 2.

²⁸² Ayalon, *Reading*, p. 3.

Mobilizing readers was an important goal of the journals in other ways as well. In the first issue of *Hawar*, readers were encouraged to disseminate the alphabet published on inside pages among the fellow Kurds and to suggest any improvements to the editors.²⁸³ Jaladet Bedirkhan sought readers' cooperation active participation in the collection of folk literature. He wanted them to interview illiterate Kurds and collect their songs, stories, and proverbs, to put them in writing and to revive forgotten Kurdish words.²⁸⁴ Readers were also asked to send *Hawar* articles about their villages, tribes and regions. In one instance, Jaladet asked mullahs and feqhes [madrassa students] to compare their copies of Malaye Jaziri's (1570-1640) anthology of poems with the one transliterated by Qadri Jamilpasha and serialized in *Hawar*.²⁸⁵

For the Kurdish nationalists, the press was also a means to solicit readers' opinions on important social, cultural, and linguistic issues in Syria and beyond. On February 15, 1933, *Hawar* published a questionnaire in both Sorani and Kurmanji on the unity of the Kurdish dialects and the purification and the development of the Kurdish language. Readers were asked to reply three questions by the beginning of May.²⁸⁶ However, an editorial dated June 5, 1933 reveals that the editor was disappointed by the fact that there was only one answer from Iraqi

²⁸³ "Hevi Ji Xwendevanan Ji Bona Elfabeya Qurdi [A Request from the Readers for the Kurdish Alphabet]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 6.

²⁸⁴ "Stuna Xwendevanan [The Column of the Readers]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 29 (10 June 1941), p. 11.

²⁸⁵ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "Diwana Mele [The anthology of the Mullah]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), pp. 4-6.

²⁸⁶ *Hawar* and Hevinde Sori, Sehiti Le Bo Yeqitiya Zmane Qurdi [Announcement for the Unity of the Kurdish Language]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 16 (17 February 1933), pp. 1-2.

Kurds. The reason behind that, as explained in *Hawar*, was the ban by the Iraqi government on *Hawar* from circulating in the Iraqi territories for the prior six months.²⁸⁷

Roja Nu and *Ster* also received congratulation letters from readers. One came from Amuda in the Jazira region of Northern Syria congratulating Kamuran Bedirkhan for “this immortal work,” and praising the entire Bedirkhan family for its work on behalf of the Kurdish nation.²⁸⁸ Another young Kurdish nationalist’s article in *Roja Nu* on the occasion of the publications of its supplement, *Ster*, highlights the meaning of these publications to their readers: “a friend of mine who recently learned to read in Kurmanji, like a child with a toy, put a new newspaper to my hands and cheerfully said: this is *Ster*.” Seeing the new newspaper took him back fifteen years to when he was a student in a foreign [Turkish] school. He indicated how happy he had become when he had seen an article by Kamuran Bedirkhan on Kurdish history and society when the existence of the Kurds and the Kurdish language were denied and the Kurds were humiliated. In the same article he indicated that “hatred of bondage, servitude, deficiency; and love of freedom, independence, bravery and vengeance are the characteristics of the Kurdish race.”²⁸⁹

The publication of *Hawar* also echoed among Iraqi Kurds. A reader from Iraq, Hamid Faraj, sent a greeting letter in Sorani on the occasion of *Hawar*’s publication. In response, Jaladet indicated how the Kurdish press cemented unity among the Kurds: “until now we did not know Hamid Faraj. This is the first time we are hearing of him. He has not known us either. However,

²⁸⁷ Laweki Kurd, “Sehiti Le Bo Yeqitiya Zmane Qurdi [Announcement for the Unity of the Kurdish Language],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 21 (5 June 1933), pp. 1-2.

²⁸⁸ Lawe Telo, “Piroznama Stera Celeng [Congratulations for the Cunning Star],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 37 (31 January 1944), p. 2.

²⁸⁹ “Kovar u Rojname: Ster [Magazines and Newspapers: Ster],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 40 (6 March 1944), p. 1.

as *Hawar* is the *Hawar* of all young Kurds, it is his *Hawar* too.”²⁹⁰ Another letter to Jaladet from Iraq in Sorani became a cover article in *Hawar*, “The Echo of *Hawar*’s Voice.”²⁹¹ *Hawar* also informed its readers that a Kurd from *Marivan*, a town in Iran close to the Iraqi border, sent a book to the magazine.²⁹²

In *Hawar*’s fifth issue we see a photo of a group of young Iraqi Kurdish students.²⁹³ On the cover of *Ronahi*’s twelfth issue, the readers saw another picture of a group of young Iraqi Kurds, one of whom holds a sign reading “Long Live the Unity of Kurdish Youth.” According to the caption, they sent the picture as a gift on the occasion of a national feast. Then, the names of the people in the picture are listed.²⁹⁴ Bisare Segman from the city of Duhok, a Kurmanji speaking town in Northern Iraq, actively contributed to *Hawar* with his historical stories.²⁹⁵ Mullah Anwar was another follower and contributor to *Hawar* and *Ronahi*. He was from the city of Amadiya, another Kurmanji speaking town of Northern Iraq.²⁹⁶ When *Hawar* quit having a section in Arabic characters beginning with the twenty-fourth issue, the number of its readers from Northern Iraq among the Kurmanji speaking readers declined because they continued to use the Arabic-Persian alphabet. However, there were still readers and contributors from Iraq. *Ronahi*, too, had readers from among the Iraqi Kurds. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan thanked all the “young people and adults of Southern Kurdistan in Iraq” who had written to *Ronahi* from

²⁹⁰ *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 11.

²⁹¹ Pirot, “Eksi Sedayi Hawar [The Echo of Hawar’s voice],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), pp. 1-3.

²⁹² “Kiteban [The Books]: Gorani,” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 15 (23 January 1933), p. 7.

²⁹³ *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5 (20 July 1932), p. 5.

²⁹⁴ *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), the front cover page.

²⁹⁵ As an example please see Bisare Segman, “Selahedin u Ricarde Serdil [Saladin and Richard the Lionheart],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), pp. 3-5.

²⁹⁶ As an example of his writings please see Mullah Anwar, “Beyta Kewe [House of the Partridge],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), p. 7.

Baghdad, Hawler (Erbil), Duhok, Amade, Zakho, Raniye, Sulaymaniya, Aqre, Kerkuk, Atrush and Rewandiz. He also requested that they write in Kurdish letters [in the Latin characters adopted by him] in a readable style.²⁹⁷

An article in *Rohani* about Mullah Anwar from Amadiya, Northern Iraq, also gives us a clue about the popularity in Iraq of the Kurdish cultural movement in the Levant. Amadiya, like Zakho and Duhok, was a Kurmanji speaking town in Northern Iraq, so readers easily followed the Kurdish publications in Kurmanji from the Levant especially when *Hawar* came out in both Latin and Arabic-Persian characters. But Kurds in Iraq and Iran, unlike the ones in Syria and the Soviet Armenia, did not have an alphabet change and so found it difficult follow the Kurdish publications that used only Latin characters. That is why the thirty year old Kurdish mullah, Anwar, according to the article in *Rohani*, taught his students not only the religious subjects but also the new alphabet. He also sent *Ronahi* many writings which were listed in the article.²⁹⁸

In his analysis of reader responses to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Robert Darnton indicates that “when the philosophes set out to conquer the world by mapping it, they knew that their success would depend on their ability to imprint their world view on the minds of their readers.” Darnton indicates how “sentiment overwhelmed Rousseau’s readers in the 18th Century.”²⁹⁹ Kurdish nationalists’ communications with the readers and readers’ enthusiasm can be compared to the experience of Rousseau and his readers. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan was very excited by the letters or articles submitted by young readers, as they convinced him that his message was being

²⁹⁷ “Resbelek Ji Xort u Mirzayen Kurdistana Nivro li Iraque [A Note to the Young People and Adults of the Southern Kurdistan in Iraq],” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 4 (1 July 1942), pp. 2-3.

²⁹⁸ M. Ermexani, “Mela Enwer,” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), pp. 10-11.

²⁹⁹ “Readers Response to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity” in Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), pp. 215-256.

heard. Some of his readers, like Rousseau's, seem to "throw themselves into the text" and "apply it into their own lives."³⁰⁰ Jaladet regarded *Hawar* as a school for young Kurds in the absence of conventional schools teaching in Kurdish. Probably the best example to illustrate how the Kurdish press had passionate readers from among the ordinary Kurds who regarded "reading as a moral preparation for living,"³⁰¹ was Arafat, a young villager from the small town of Tirba Spi in the Jazira Region. Jaladet learned about Arafat from Hasan Agha, a chieftain from Jazira visiting Jaladet in Damascus. While plowing, Arafat read *Hawar* and other Kurdish publications provided by Hasan Agha. Jaladet Bedirkhan defined Arafat's reading behind the plow as "the beginning of a new era in our social life, beginning of the era of enlightenment (*ronahi*)." He wrote: "Arafat is not an emir, son of an emir, an agha, or son of an agha. Arafat is a poor villager, one of the thousands of Kurmanch villagers."³⁰² Arafat sent a letter to Jaladet in order to thank him for his gifts, a collection of *Hawar* and *Ronahi*. In his letter, Arafat thanked Jaladet, whom he called "my emir," and explained how reading in Kurdish had increased his dignity and status among his friends. In response, Jaladet indicated that Arafat's enthusiasm to learn was more precious than a thousand subscribers.³⁰³ Arafat's correspondence with Jaladet also shows that even though most subscribers were city people, there were readers in the countryside as well.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 250.

³⁰¹ Ibid, p. 251.

³⁰² "Erefat Kure Brahime Ezem Ji Mala Emo Reso An Xwendevane Der Cot [Arafat, the son of Ibrahim Azam from the Emo Resho Household, or the Reader Behind the Plow]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p. 7.

³⁰³ Xwediye Ronahiye, "Resbelek Ji Xwendevane Me E Bercot [A Note from Our Reader Behind the Plow]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 15 (1 August 1943), pp. 14-15.

Financial Aspects

In an article on the history of the printing press, Jaladet Bedirkhan informed readers about the technology behind publication of a newspaper. Using photographs from London to demonstrate how publishers regulate the letters of a linotype printing machine, how the staff check the pages of the newspapers, and how newspapers are packed and finally distributed to a newspaper boy.³⁰⁴ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan had to deal with every aspect of the publication process himself. For example, from one editorial we learn that he went to Beirut to buy newsprint, bargained with the owner of the store for the price, and took the paper for the cover pages with him back to Damascus and shipped the rest via train.³⁰⁵ As Ami Ayalon indicates, this image of journalist who “performs all of the paper’s editorial, administrative, and technical duties single-handedly” was the case for Arab journalists at the same time.”³⁰⁶

Amir Hassanpour indicates that the publishers of Kurdish journals may not have thought about the possibility of making a profit.³⁰⁷ Non-profit and the nationalistic nature of the Kurdish press in the Levant was emphasized by the editors too. For example, Jaladet indicated that as *Hawar* is for unity in everything for the Kurds, its cost is the same for all the countries where the Kurds exist. In this way, *Hawar* loses money. This is because postage for Syria is 10 centime but

³⁰⁴ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), “Yen Ko Xizmeta Insaniyete Kirine: (3) Yohannes Gutenberg (1400-1468) [Those Who Served the Humanity: (3) Johannes Guttenberg (1400-1468)],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), pp. 6-8.

³⁰⁵ “Sereniya Zmane Qurdmanci [Sweetness of the Kurdish Language],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), pp. 1-2.

³⁰⁶ Ami Ayalon, *The Press*, p. 224.

³⁰⁷ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, pp. 240-241.

it is 150 centime for Iran, Iraq, and the Caucasian countries. However, we are satisfied with it so that Kurds be equal in purchasing *Hawar*.³⁰⁸

Hawar relied financially on the readers' support and donations. Jaladet wrote "*Hawar* is an infant, our infant, infant of the Kurds. Like every infant, it can live with the protection of its mother and father, brothers and male cousins. Everybody, every Kurd can help *Hawar*... Everybody succors *Hawar* in one way or another."³⁰⁹ In the seventeenth issue of *Roja Nu*, readers were reminded that majority of them had not yet sent their subscription fees.³¹⁰ In a poem Jegerkhwin described *Hawar* as a "young girl...very charming, polite, and adolescent...her bride money is little, cheap and five hundred qurush."³¹¹ Carrying on this motif, in another article Jaladet encouraged Kurdish readers in Iraq to buy and support an Iraqi Kurdish magazine published in Sorani, namely *Gelawej*, facing financial difficulties at the time. He wrote: "that great magazine comes in an envelope ...like a new bride whose head is covered."³¹²

In reference to a French official document, Jordi Tejel indicates that in 1933, the circulation of *Hawar* was around 500. However, only 75 of the subscribers paid their subscription fees.³¹³ Ahmed Nami informed fellow readers in an article in *Ronahi* that he fell asleep while reading *Hawar* one night. In his dream he appeared before a court for not paying his subscription fee (200 piasters). He felt very embarrassed and eventually was set free after paying

³⁰⁸ Xweyiye Haware [The Owner of *Hawar*], "Li Ser Yekitiya Zimane Kurdi [On the Unity of the Kurdish Language]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), pp. 6-8.

³⁰⁹ "Armanc, Awaye Xebat u Nivisandina Haware [The Goal, and the Form of the Work and Writing of *Hawar*]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), pp. 1-2 cited in Hebeş, *Raperina*, pp. 30-31.

³¹⁰ "Xwendevanên Delal [Dear Readers]," *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 17 (23 August 1943), p. 1.

³¹¹ Jegerkhwine Kurdi, "Ji Bona Haware [For *Hawar*]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), pp. 4-5.

³¹² "Gelawej," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p. 12.

³¹³ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 284.

his debt. Nami encouraged his fellow readers, whom he calls his brothers, to be generous and support the Kurdish periodicals. It was, he reminded them, their responsibility and he even cited a Quranic verse: “and do not let your own hands cast you into destruction.”³¹⁴

The Kurdish periodicals in the Levant did not have many advertisements. Starting with the second issue, *Hawar* had a few ads in the inside cover pages for two medical doctors in Damascus and a photography studio, Ayoubiye Brothers. Starting with the fifth issue we see the advertisement of books published by *Hawar*. On the back cover of twenty-sixth issue readers were encouraged to follow the French magazines including articles about the Kurdish literature and art. Starting with the issue twenty-seven, the only advertisement was the list of seventeen books published by *Hawar Press* in Damascus and Berlin. In issue fifty-four, there was an ad for a book about the history of battle tanks published by the propaganda department of the Fighting French in the Middle East.³¹⁵ *Roja Nu* was the richest of all in terms of advertisements. First of all, there were ads for books on Kurdistan and the Kurdish question.³¹⁶ A scholarly journal entitled *Les Chaiers De L'est* was advertised in *Le Jour Nouveau* and *Roja Nu*.³¹⁷ Both *Roja Nu* and *Le Jour Nouveau* included advertisements for an international transportation and tourism company based in Damascus and Aleppo and ads for cigarette brands.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ *Quran*, Chapter Baqara, Verse 195. He refers only a part of this verse: “And spend in the cause of Allah and do not let your own hands cast you into destruction and give for charity for Allah loves the charitable.”

³¹⁵ *Hawar*, Year 11, Issue 54 (15 May 1943), p. 5.

³¹⁶ Please see “Kiteben Nu [The New Books],” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 52 (30 July 1945), p. 3.

³¹⁷ *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 51 (30 July 1945), p. 4; and *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 54 (13 August 1945), p. 4.

³¹⁸ *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 51 (30 July 1945), p. 4; and *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 54 (13 August 1945), p. 4; *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 56 (10 September 1945), p. 4; and *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 64 (17 December 1945), p. 4.

In April 1942, to mark the first year of distribution since the magazine's reappearance, Jaladet assessed the financial situation of *Hawar*. He indicated that when *Hawar* first reappeared in 1934, he had to find new subscribers. However, this time, Kurds by themselves have taken care of the magazine. He praised those unknown men and poor youth, like the youth of developed nations, who sent money to *Hawar* and who encouraged others to help. Jaladet reminded readers that *Hawar* was the Kurds' sole magazine, thus, it was their duty to make it live. He noted that *Hawar* had appeared sixteen times "in a year [1941-2] that everything has become expensive. The paper which used to be one piaster is now 15 piasters. Everything is like that." However he emphasized that he had not increased the subscription fee. Besides the support from ordinary readers, he also mentioned the names of "great and rich" Kurds who donated money to *Hawar*. He published a list of twenty-nine people who had donated more than 5 Syrian Liras.³¹⁹ The list of donors shows the significant financial support by the tribal chiefs and notables. Hasan Agha Hajo donated the largest amount (400 Syrian Liras). Then there are notables from the Jamilpasha family and nationalist elites like Mamduh Salim Beg. The French Orientalist Roger Lescot also appeared in the list of donors with his nickname "Lezgin Agha."

³¹⁹ 1) Hasan Agha Hajo: 400 Syrian Liras 2) Ali Agha Zilfo: 50 Syrian Liras 3) Mahmud Agha Zirki: 50 Syrian Liras 4) Dr. Ahmed Nafez Beg: 30 Syrian Liras 5) Muhammad Beg Jamilpasha: 25 Syrian Liras 6) Suleyman Afande Qotrash: 25 Syrian Liras 7) Umar Agha Shamdin: 20 Syrian Liras 8) Baker Agha Alosi: 20 Syrian Liras 9) Ahmad Agha Qaracholi: 20 Syrian Liras 10) Qadri Beg Jamilpasha: 15 Syrian Liras 11) Akram Beg Jamilpasha: 15 Syrian Liras 12) Badre Beg Jamilpasha: 15 Syrian Liras 13) Miqdat Beg Jamilpasha: 15 Syrian Liras 14) Faiz Beg Kurdi: 15 Syrian Liras 15) Shahkmus Agha Haji Khalef: 15 Syrian Liras 16) Lezgin Agha: 12 Syrian Liras 17) Aref Beg Abbas: 10 Syrian Liras 18) Shaykh Muhammad Zaki: 10 Syrian Liras 19) Someone from Sarhad Region: 10 Syrian Liras 20) Muhsin Beg Barazi: 10 Syrian Liras 21) Mamduh Salim Beg: 10 Syrian Liras 22) Muhammad Ali Agha Shakhmus (10 Syria Liras) 23) Muhammad Haj Avda Agha: 10 Syrian Liras 24) Nezamedden Bag Qubar: 10 Syrian Liras 25) Bedirkhan Agha: 10 Syrian Liras 26) Dr. Nuri Beg: 10 Syrian Liras 27) Rajab Agha Zilfo: 10 Syrian Liras 28) Tahir Beg Bedirkhan: 10 Syrian Liras 29) A lady: 10 Syrian Liras.

Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan did not hesitate to rebuke those wealthy people and notables who did not donate anything.³²⁰

Despite the shortage of readers the French authorities supported the Kurdish periodicals and Bedirkhan's reliance on the French financial support meant French influence on the content and orientation of the Kurdish periodicals.³²¹ Jordi Tejel indicates that that the High Commission, and later its intermediary branch, the French Institute in Damascus (I.F.D.), and specifically the Commandant Robert Montagne, chair of the Institute, financially supported the Bedirkhan brothers. Likewise, Nuraddin Zaza notes the British contribution to the Kurdish press in the Levant. He indicates that when the British arrived in Syria in 1941 they allowed publications in Kurmanji and Sorani Kurdish in Beirut and Amman, and *Hawar*'s publication was resumed. The British generously provided Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan with paper. Jaladet used some of that paper to publish *Hawar* and sold the rest in the black market in order to make money to continue the publication of his journal.³²²

Kamuran and Jaladet Bedirkhan were both careful to present the survival of the Kurdish periodicals as solely thanks to the subscriptions fees and donations by the Kurdish people themselves. In the Kurdish press, we do not see any information regarding French or British material support. On the other hand, they thanked the British authorities for publishing in Kurdish or supporting Kurdish periodicals in Iraq. For example, in *Ronahi* and *Roja Nu* they introduced a new Kurdish magazine from Iraq, *Dengi Gitiyi Taze (Voice of the New World)*. Kamuran and Jaladet indicated "that magazine is published by the British embassy in Baghdad"

³²⁰ Xwediye Haware, "Kiryariye Haware [Subscription to Hawar]," *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 43 (5 May 1942), pp. 8-9.

³²¹ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 311-312; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 26.

³²² Zaza, "Hawar u Canda Kurdi."

[...] “that magazine is a big and invaluable gift to the Kurds by the English.”³²³ As another example, it was mentioned in *Ronahi* that *Gelawej*, the Baghdad based Kurdish magazine, was facing the problems because of the paper shortage. However, recently the British representative, Mr. Grace, increased the paper given to *Gelawej*. Jaladet thanked Mr. Grace for *Gelawej*.³²⁴

Book Publishing

Kurdish nationalists in the Levant published books as well. Jaladet Bedirkhan wrote, “We should read and write a lot. We should keep our books clean so that we can make use of them, offer them to our friends instead of tea or coffee, and read them together.”³²⁵ By 1941 Hawar Press (Kitebxana Haware) had published seventeen books, which were advertised in *Hawar*.³²⁶ A

³²³ “Kovareke Kurdi a Nuh [A New Kurdish Magazine],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 38 (14 February 1944), p.1.

³²⁴ “Dengi Gitiyi Taze,” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), p. 15.

³²⁵ Rasteder, “Bi Xwehen Guhderz Re,” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 30 (1 July 1941), p. 11.

³²⁶ See for example: *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), Back Cover Page. Here is the list of the books from the back cover of *Hawar*: 1. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan (Herekol Azizan), *Rezana Elfabeya Qurdi* [*The System of Kurdish Alphabet*] (Damascus: Tereqi, 1932) 2. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Rupelinen Elfabe* [*The Pages of the Alphabet*] (Damascus: Tereki, 1932) 3. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Dile Quren Min* [*The Hearth of My Sons*] (Damascus: Tereki, 1932) 4. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, ed., *Mewluda Nebi* [*The Birth of the Prophet*] (Damascus: Tereki, 1933) 5. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, ed., *Nivejen Ezediyan* [*The Prayers of the Yezidis*] (Damascus: Tereki, 1933) 6. *Mustafa Kemal Pasa’ya Mektub* [*A Letter to Mustafa Kemal Pasha*], (Damascus: Tereki, 1933) 7. Basil Nikitine, *Mesela Kurdistane* [*The Question of Kurdistan*] (Damascus: Tereki, 1934) 8. Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), *De La Question Kurd* (Damascus, 1934) 9. Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Elfabeya Kurdi* [*The Kurdish Alphabet*] (Damascus: Tereqi, 1938) 10. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Xwendina Kurdi* [*Reading Kurdish*] (Damascus: Tereqi, 1938) 11. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Elfabeya Min* [*My Alphabet*] (Damascus: Tereqi, 1938) 12. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Dersen Seriete* [*The Sharia Lessons*] (Damascus: Tereqi, 1938) 13. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Carinen Xeyam* [*The Quatrains of Khayyam*] (Damascus: Tereqi, 1939) 14. Lucy Paule Margueritte and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan *Proverbes Kurdes* (Paris, 1937) 15. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan and Adolphe de Falgerolle, *Le Roi du Kurdistan* (Paris, 1937) 16. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan and Herbert Ortel, *Der Adler von Kurdistan* (Berlin 1937) 17. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan and Curt Wunderlich, *Der Schnee Des Lichtes* (Berlin, 1937).

Kurdish translation of an English story,” Johnny and Jemima” was announced in *Rohani*.³²⁷ *Kiteba Sinemxane (Sinemkhan’s Book)* was a book published by Jaladet Bedirkhan so that the children like his daughter could learn the grammar of their language.³²⁸ Cegerkhwin’s anthology was another book published by *Hawar* press. The advertisement of the book in *Ronahi* introduced Cegerkhwin as “our national poet.”³²⁹ His novel, *Cim u Gulperi* [Cim and Gulperi], was published by the *Hawar* press in 1946.³³⁰ The Kurdish periodicals also serialized books. One example was the Russian author Grigory Petrov’s book, *In the Country of White Lilies*, which appeared in *Roja Nu* in 1943. The book is about the transformation of Finland from an underdeveloped country with its uneducated society into a modern civilized country under the leadership of the intellectuals and with the involvement and the support of the ordinary people.³³¹ Another serialized book was a Kurdish epic novel entitled *Le Roi du Kurdistan* by Adolphe De Falgairolle. Its publication in *Le Jour Nouveau* started in July 1945.³³²

Presentation of Other Periodicals and Radio Broadcastings

In many issues of *Roja Nu* the readers were informed of the titles of Kurdish periodicals across the Middle East. In May 1943, Kurdish newspapers and journals published at the time were listed as: *Roja-Nu*, *Reya Teze*, *Jiyan*, *Gelawej*, *Hawar* and *Ronahi*. There was also information about their place of publications, dialects and alphabets in which they were

³²⁷ “Kitebxane Haware, Hejmara 18: Coni u Cimema [Hawar Library, Number 18: Johnny and Jemima],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), p. 12.

³²⁸ Bave Cemsid (Cemsid’s Father), “Resbelek (4) [The Notes (4)],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 19 (1 October 1943), pp. 11-12.

³²⁹ “Mizgin: Diwana Cegerxwin Kete Cape [Good News: Cegerkhwin’s Anthology is Published],” *Ronahi*, Year 4, Issue 28 (March 1945), pp. 2-3.

³³⁰ Reş, *Celadet*, p. 74.

³³¹ The publication of the book started in the 4th issue of *Roja Nu*: “Di Welate Zembeqe Gewir De [In the Country of White Lilies],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 4 (24 May 1943), p.4.

³³² “Le Roi du Kurdistan,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 49 (16 July 1945), p. 2.

published.³³³ The same list was published in the French edition of the newspaper, *Le Jour Nouveau*.³³⁴ Later, to that list *Nistiman* (Homeland), the magazine published in the province of Kurdistan in Iran was added. The editor of *Hawar* happily introduced *Reya Teze* as “the Kurmanji newspaper with the new letters” by the “Kurmanches of Erivan.”³³⁵ In *Ster*, the list was expanded: *Reya Teze* (Erivan, the Soviet Armenia); *Jiyan* (Sulaymaniya, Iraq); *Gelawej* (Baghdad, Iraq); *Hawar* and *Ronahi* (Damascus, Syria); *Nistiman* (Iran); and *Roja Nu* (Beirut, Lebanon).³³⁶ The editor of *Hawar* often praised *Gelawej*, a Baghdad based Sorani Kurdish dialect magazine and even called it the best of the Kurdish magazines, though he added that it would be even better if it was published in the “Kurdish letters,” not in Arabic ones, to make it more accessible to Kurmanji readers.³³⁷ In one issue of *Ronahi*, Jaladet transliterated the table of contents of few issues of *Gelawej*.³³⁸ When he learned that *Gelawej* was having financial difficulties and a shortage of authors, he wrote another article in which he compared *Gelawej* with a famous French magazine, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and called upon Kurds in Iraq to support their magazine to show the existence of Kurdish nation to the world.³³⁹

The introduction of a new magazine from Iraq indicates how closely and passionately the Bedirkhan brothers were following the Kurdish publications in other countries. As they wrote in *Roja Nu* and *Ronahi*: “Until now the Iraqi postal service has been bringing us *Jin* and the respected Kurdish journal, *Gelawej*. This time the postal service has enlightened our eyes with a

³³³ “Capa Kurdi [Kurdish Press],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 2 (10 May 1943), p.2.

³³⁴ “La Presse Kurde,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 7 (14 June 1943), p. 3.

³³⁵ “Reya Teze,” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p. 2.

³³⁶ “Kovar u Rojanameyen Kurd [Kurdish Magazines and Newspapers],” *Ster*, Year 1, Issue 1 (6 December 1943), p. 3.

³³⁷ “Nesreyen Kurdi [Kurdish Publications] *Gelawej*,” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 8-9.

³³⁸ “*Gelawej*,” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), p. 8.

³³⁹ “*Gelawej*,” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p. 12.

new magazine, *Dengi Gitiyi Taze (Voice of the New World)*.”³⁴⁰ The editor of *Roja Nu* celebrated the twentieth anniversary of *Jin*, a Kurdish magazine published in Sulaymaniya by the famous Kurdish poet Piremerd.³⁴¹ *Roja Nu* also introduced the readers to *Azadi (Freedom)*, the magazine of the Kurdish Communist Party of Iraq, and reprinted the anthem of the Kurds from that magazine.³⁴²

The Bedirkhan brothers also informed readers about the days and time of the Kurdish radio broadcasts. This was during the Second World War years when the major powers used the radio, as well as the press in various languages as a propaganda tool to shape public opinion in the region.³⁴³ The first list in *Hawar* included three radio stations. Radio Levant from Beirut started Kurdish broadcast on March 5, 1941. The station, directed by Kamuran Bedirkhan, broadcast in Kurdish on Wednesdays and Fridays for half an hour from 5:00 to 5:30 P.M. Readers were informed that in addition to the world news, the station played Kurdish songs and they could even submit requests by mail. As Jordi Tejel indicates, even though the Kurdish program was short, it was symbolically important because it could reach the Kurds of Turkey where education, publication or broadcasting in Kurdish was unthinkable.³⁴⁴ Radio Levant also broadcast in French, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, English and Czech.³⁴⁵ The second radio station listed in *Hawar* was Radio Baghdad, which broadcast news and songs in Kurdish for a quarter hour every day. Finally, Jaladet indicated that he heard some Kurmanji songs on a Caucasian radio station. Even though he was not sure about it, he thought that it might be from Erivan.

³⁴⁰ “Kovareke Kurdi a Nuh [A New Kurdish Magazine],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 38 (14 February 1944), p. 1.

³⁴¹ *Roja Nu*, Year 4, Issues 70-71 (25 March 1946), p. 1.

³⁴² “Kovara Azadiye,” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 61 (5 November 1945), p. 1.

³⁴³ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language*, pp. 282-293.

³⁴⁴ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 22-23.

³⁴⁵ Valerie Bouissou, “La Presence Francaise en Syrie De 1941 a 1946” (PhD diss., Paris I Sorbonne, October 1990), p. 91.

Thus, he requested from readers to inform him, if they knew anything about it.³⁴⁶ Later, Radio Azerbaijan, which began broadcasting in Kurdish every day at 5. P.M. from northern Iran, under the Soviet influence, was also added to the list.³⁴⁷

Roja Nu reported that until the arrival of the Soviet and British troops in Iran, publication in Kurdish was forbidden. With the coming of the Soviets and British, Kurds published their newspapers and magazines: *Peyam*, *Ciya*, *Nistiman*, *Kuhistan*, *Tiruske*, *Zegros*, and *Yekitiya Tegusin*.³⁴⁸ *Roja Nu* harshly criticized an Iranian newspaper for saying the Kurdish publications should be destroyed and that Kurds' mouth should be filled with iron.³⁴⁹ The publication of a Kurdish magazine in Mukri dialect, namely *Nistiman*, in Lahijan appeared as good news in *Ronahi*.³⁵⁰ The editors of the magazine sent the first issue of *Nistiman* as a gift to *Gelajew* (published in Baghdad), *Hawar* and *Ronahi*. To the editor of *Ronahi*, publication of *Nistiman* was happy news since it meant that "in Kurdistan under the control of Iran, the Kurdish language is written and published. In this way, there are Kurdish publications in Iraq, Iran, Syria and the Soviet Union. Now there remains only one country where the Kurds are deprived of that blessing." Jaladet did not name that country, but he meant Turkey.³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ "Di Radyowe de Wesineken Kurdi [Kurdish Broadcasting in the Radios]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), p. 11.

³⁴⁷ *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 52 (30 July 1945), p. 4. The same list appears in *Ster*, Year 3, Issue 3 (22 October 1945), p. 2.

³⁴⁸ "Kurdistane Irane [Iranian Kurdistan]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 63 (26 November 1945), p. 1.

³⁴⁹ "Bersiv Ji Rojnameyen Irane En Farisi Re [Answers to the Persian Language Newspapers of Iran]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 64 (17 December 1945), p. 1.

³⁵⁰ For the Kurdish press in Iran before and during the Mahabad Kurdish Republic please see McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 238-245; and Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, p. 253.

³⁵¹ "Mizgini Ji Bo Capa Kurdi [Good News for the Kurdish Press]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 19 (1 October 1943), p. 23.

Censorship

The Turkish Government closely followed Kurdish publications abroad. Thus, the Turkish archives have a rich collection of documents banning the circulation of Kurdish magazines, books, and audio records in Turkey. A document signed by Atatürk banned the import of *Hawar* into Turkey because of its “harmful publications.” The document indicated that it was a resolution taken by the Turkish Interior Ministry on May 25, 1932, only fifteen days after the first issue of *Hawar* appeared. Mistakenly, *Hawar* was described as “a newspaper” and “the organ of Khoybun Organization.”³⁵² In 1931, the Turkish Ministry of Interior banned a book published in French by Khoybun entitled *La Question Kurde* because of its harmful content. Interestingly, the document identified it as a periodical, not a book, propagating Kurdism (Kurtculuk). Thus, the Turkish intelligence information about the Kurdish publications was not always correct.³⁵³ A 1934 decision by the Turkish Ministry of Interior banned four books and their translations that the ministry claimed were published by Khoybun. Three of them were in Turkish and one in Arabic: *Türk Affi Umumisi Karsisinda Kurtler* [*Kurds vis-à-vis the Turkish General Amnesty*]; *Türkiye Reisi Cumhuriyet Gazi Mustafa Kemal Hazretlerine Mektub* [*A Letter to His Excellency Turkish President Ghazi Mustafa Kemal*]; *Bir Ecnebi Noktai Nazarina Gore Kurt Meselesi* [*The Kurdish Question from a Foreign Point of View*]; and *Al Qadiyya Al Kurdiyya* [*The Kurdish Question*].³⁵⁴ Two books by Muslu Hilmi Yildirim were targeted by the Turkish government, one in French, *Une Voix de Kurdistan*,³⁵⁵ and the other in Turkish,

³⁵² Prime Ministry Republican Archives (Basbakanlik Osmanli Arsivleri (BCA), 030-0-018-001-002-29-43-13, May 30, 1932. [See Appendix, Image 2].

³⁵³ BCA, 030-0-18-01-02-19-30-002, May 16, 1931.

³⁵⁴ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-47-54-16, August 1, 1934.

³⁵⁵ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-65-46-12, June 2, 1936.

Kurdistan'da 20nci Asirda Turklerin Medeniyeti [The Civilization of the Turks in Kurdistan in the 20th Century].³⁵⁶

The ban on books in Kurdish and in other languages continued under the presidency of Ataturk's successor, Ismet Inonu. Sureya Bedirkhan's book published in Philadelphia in English, *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey*, was banned from circulation and sale in Turkey in 1939.³⁵⁷ Cegerkhwin's anthology published in 1945 was banned and existing copies in Turkey were confiscated.³⁵⁸ The same rule, ban and confiscation, was invoked for other "harmful" publications such as the Soviet Kurdish writer Arab Shamo's novel *Sivane Kurd (The Kurdish Shepperd)* published in Beirut in 1947.³⁵⁹ Nationalist publications from Iraqi Kurdistan were banned as well, such as the nationalist memorandums "Kurt ve Hurriyet" (Kurds and Freedom) and "Yukse Serdar Barzani ve Kurdistan Hurriyet" (The Grand Leader Barzani and the Freedom of Kurdistan) in 1948.³⁶⁰ Another example was the ban in 1949 on the magazines *Kelavij (Gelawej)* and *Yadigari Lavan* published in Baghdad by Ibrahim Ahmed.³⁶¹ It seems the Charter of the Kurdish Philanthropic Organization founded in 1932 in Jazira of Syria was discovered by the authorities in 1949 and banned.³⁶² In the same year, a book by the deceased Khoybunist Hajo's son Suleiman, *Selected Texts from the Modern Kurdish Literature* published in Aleppo was banned by the Turkish government.³⁶³ Kamuran Bedirkhan's book, *Xwendina Kurdi (Reading Kurdish)*, a Hawar Press publication was banned in 1949.³⁶⁴ Audio records were

³⁵⁶ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-68-74-1, September 4, 1936.

³⁵⁷ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-86-23-1, March 14, 1939. [See Appendix, Image 3].

³⁵⁸ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-110-5-15, January 10, 1946.

³⁵⁹ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-117-75-13, November 18, 1948.

³⁶⁰ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-117-75-16, November 18, 1948.

³⁶¹ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-120-71-7, September 22, 1949.

³⁶² BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-121-84-1, November 25, 1949.

³⁶³ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-121-84-2, November 25, 1949.

³⁶⁴ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-121-88-1, December 8, 1949.

targeted by the Turkish government. A 1936 document bans the entrance and sale of two records numbered 506 and 506 according to the Press Law. The records were labeled as SODWA, produce by a Syrian company. According to the document, they were about “the Kurdish Rebellion” and recorded by Saidi Kurdi in Syria.³⁶⁵ Another record by Shaykh Said numbered I-256 was banned in 1937 for including harmful statements.³⁶⁶

The freedom of the Kurdish press in the Levant was also limited by French mandate authorities in Syria, who made the publication of Kurdish periodicals possible in the first place. In general, French authorities kept the press under the control through “the methods of licensing, censorship, suspension, imprisonment, and reward for complacency.”³⁶⁷ They wanted to make sure that anything that they considered “troubling for the public order” was not published and the periodicals doing that were suspended.³⁶⁸ For example, according to a ministry of interior document dated June 15, 1926, publication of the newspaper *Suriya al-Jadid* was suspended because of a series of articles influencing public opinion and the working of the government negatively.³⁶⁹ From another document dated July 15, 1930 we learn that Najib Al-Rayis, owner of *al-Qabs*, a pro-National Bloc newspaper, had petitioned for resuming the publication of the newspaper as “the reasons behind the suspension of his newspaper had disappeared.”³⁷⁰ As Jordi Tejel indicates French financial support to the Kurdish periodicals allowed them to influence content and orientation of the Kurdish periodicals.³⁷¹ The clear evidence of censorship on the Kurdish press appears on back cover of *Ronahi*’s twenty-fourth issue where readers saw two

³⁶⁵ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-67-69-9, August 17, 1936.

³⁶⁶ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-71-8-6, January 28, 1937.

³⁶⁷ Ayalon, *The Press*, p. 85.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ SNA, Ministry of Interior, Newspapers and Magazines Document, # 2158-5103, June, 15, 1926.

³⁷⁰ SNA, Ministry of Interior, Newspapers and Magazines Document, # 4926-2911, July 5, 1930.

³⁷¹ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 311-313 and Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*, p. 26.

empty spaces with titles in Kurdish and Arabic indicating that the stories had been censored. The title of one of the writings, “Complaint and Hope,” seems to be forgotten or purposely left there.³⁷² As mentioned earlier, there is evidence in *Hawar* that it was banned in Iraq around the year 1933 as well. It seems that the *Hawar* circle had already applied to the Iraqi government to lift the ban by saying *Hawar* was only a literary magazine, not a political one working against the Iraqi government. Since, they did not get a positive response from the government, they decided to confront it on the pages of the magazine.³⁷³

The Writers

A brief introduction of the writers who contributed to the Kurdish press is necessary to understand the major actors in Syria and Lebanon besides the Bedirkhan brothers. In fact, Jaladet Bedirkhan used many pseudonyms, perhaps to hide the shortage of writers. His pseudonyms such as Herekol Azizan had references to his princely family, tribe, and ancestral homeland.³⁷⁴ From the content and style of his writings, I also think that Hevinde Sori, who contributed articles on major issues like the unity of the Kurdish dialects or Kurdish nation and literature, was another penname used by Jaladet Bedirkhan. As explained earlier, there were also contributors from Iraq in both Kurmanji and Sorani dialects.

Tribal chiefs from Turkish side of the border who fled to Syria and joined the nationalist movement also contributed to the Kurdish press. Hajo Agha, the chief of the Hewerkan tribal confederation, and his son, Jamil Hajo, were two examples. Originally from Mardin area in

³⁷² *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 24 (April 1944), p. 24.

³⁷³ Laweki Kurd, “Sehiti Le Bo Yeqitiya Zmane Qurdi [Announcement for the Unity of the Kurdish Language],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 21 (5 June 1933), pp. 1-2.

³⁷⁴ Ibrahim Seydo Aydogan, “Celadet Bedirxan, Çavkaniyên Hawarê û Kurdayetiya Nû [Jaladet Bedirkhan, the Sources of *Hawar* and the New Kurdishness],” *Zend* (Summer 2009), pp. 40-55.

Turkey, Hajo Agha defended traditional Kurdish leadership against harsh criticism by young nationalists. Mustafa and Bozan Shahin, the chiefs of the Barazi tribe, located on both sides of the Turkish-Syrian border, also contributed to the Kurdish press. Along with Hajo, they represented Khoybun and worked to disseminate Kurdish nationalist ideas among the tribes in the Jazira region in Syria.³⁷⁵ Ihsan Nuri Pasha (1893-1976), too, contributed to the Kurdish press. He was a graduate of the Military Academy in Istanbul. He was an officer in the Ottoman army during the First World War. He had contributed to the post-First World War Kurdish periodicals and welcomed Wilson's Fourteen Points for the nations like Kurds.³⁷⁶ After the foundation of the Kemalist regime, he participated in the foundation of the *Azadi* organization and was involved in the Sheikh Said Rebellion. He was the commander of the Kurdish forces during the Ararat rebellion. He fled to Iran after Kurdish rebellion was suppressed by the Turkish forces in the summer of 1930.³⁷⁷

Urban notables from Turkey exiled in Syria also published in the Kurdish periodicals. Akram (1891-1974) and Qadri (1891-1973) Jamilpasha were the best examples. Born in Diyarbakir, the cousins were from an urban notable family named after Ahmed Jamil Pasha (1837-1902), a local notable and Ottoman bureaucrat. His grandsons, Akram and Qadri, first studied in their native city, then in Istanbul, and finally in Europe. When they were in Istanbul, they were involved in the foundation of the Kurdish Student Society of Hope (Hevi Kurt Talebe Cemiyeti), which published a journal, *Roja Kurd (The Kurdish Sun)*. When the First World War began, Akram and Qadri were in Switzerland for their studies. They were called back to serve in the Ottoman army. Following the defeat of the Empire in the war, they, like the Bedirkhan

³⁷⁵ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 131; Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 202-203; and Rondot, "Les Kurdes de Syrie," p. 121.

³⁷⁶ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p.58.

³⁷⁷ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 131.

brothers, adopted the secessionist approach and participated in the activities for the independence of Kurdistan. Akram Jamilpasha was with Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan when they accompanied Major Noel to Kurdistan in 1919, which made them a traitor in the eyes of the Kemalists. Mustafa Kemal mentioned their names and harshly criticized them in his book, *Speech*.³⁷⁸ Akram and Qadri were arrested after the Sheikh Said Rebellion; following their release in 1928 they fled to Syria and joined Khoybun and participated in the Ararat rebellion. The Turkish government officially stripped them of their citizenship in 1933, considering their activities abroad similar to military service for a foreign country. Following the failure of the Ararat rebellion, the disagreements between them and the Bedirkhan brothers led to the latter's breakaway from Khoybun organization. However, Akram and Qadri supported the cultural activities led by the Bedirkhan brothers and published articles in their Kurdish periodicals.³⁷⁹

Osman Sabri (1905-1993) was one of the most productive writers in the Kurdish press. He was born in the village of Narince in Kahta, Adiyaman in Turkey. The son of a tribal leader and a self-educated nationalist, he participated in the Sheikh Said and Ararat rebellions. As Jordi Tejel indicates, despite his ideological differences with Jaladet Bedirkhan, his contribution to the Kurdish periodicals was welcomed by the latter. He published articles on many social and political issues.³⁸⁰ Qadrijan (Abdulqadir Aziz Jan) (1911-1972) was born in the town of Derik in the city of Mardin, Turkey. He moved to Syria in 1928 and became one of the major Kurdish writers. He published short stories and poems in *Hawar*, *Ronahi*, and *Roja Nu*. He also translated

³⁷⁸ Ataturk, *A Speech*, pp. 100-120.

³⁷⁹ Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha); *Doza Kürdüstan*, Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim*; Malmisanij, *Diyarbakirli*; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 103-107; and Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, p. 137.

³⁸⁰ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 133.

a book, published in series in *Roja Nu*. He died in Damascus in 1972.³⁸¹ Shekhmus Hasan (1903-1984), better known by his pseudonym, Jegerkhwin (“bleeding liver”) was a madrasa graduate and former madrasa teacher. He was originally from the Turkish side of the border, but lived in Amuda in the Syrian Jazira since he was eighteen. His poems that he started to publish in *Hawar* and Kurdish periodicals in Syria and Lebanon made him known as “the Kurdish national poet.” In his poems he advocated social reforms and harshly criticized traditional religious and tribal leadership.³⁸²

Nuraddin Zaza (1919-1988) was one of the youngest writers in the Kurdish press. He was known for his short stories. He was born in Maden, a sub-district in the modern city of Elazig, close to Diyarbakir. His older brother, Ahmed Nafiz, was a physician in Diyarbakir, who immigrated to Syria due to the impossibility of Kurdish political activity in Turkey. Nuraddin went to Syria with him. Ahmed Nafiz worked as a physician in Syria and published articles in the Kurdish press to educate readers about medical issues and hygiene. Nuraddin Zaza studied in Syria and since 1941 contributed to the Kurdish periodicals. He later went to Switzerland for his studies and there he founded the Association of Kurdish Students in Europe. After he finished his studies, he returned to Syria and became the leader of the Democratic Kurdish Party of Syria. Later he would return to Lausanne, where he died in 1988.³⁸³ Mustafa Ahmad Boti, originally from Botan region and resided in Beirut, and Hasan Hishyar Serdi (1907-1985), originally from Siirt and resided in Jazira region, were two other young contributors to the Kurdish press. Boti

³⁸¹ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 273, note 484; and Osman Sabri, *Hatıralarım*.

³⁸² Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 134; and Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*.

³⁸³ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 130, note 8; and Zaza, *Bir Kürt*.

mostly published fable-style stories and poems with nationalist messages, and Hishyar penned articles with political messages.³⁸⁴

In the following two chapters, the Kurdish nationalists' treatment of the major themes in the Kurdish press will be analyzed. Their view of the Kurdish history, their descriptions of "homeland" and Kurds' attachment to their homeland, and the significance of the Kurdish language, linguistic unity and the Kurdish literature will be the topic of the following chapter. In the last chapter, Kurdish nationalists' view of Kurdish society, influence of religion(s) and their impact on Kurdish nationalism, and how gender roles are viewed by the nationalists will be examined.

³⁸⁴ Hishyar, *Görüş ve Anılarım*.

5. Kurdish History, Kurdistan, and Kurdish Language and Literature in the Kurdish Press

On February 8, 1933 Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan wrote an open letter to Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), the president of Turkey. The letter was published as a pamphlet by the *Hawar* series. Jaladet Bedirkhan wrote the letter on the occasion of a comprehensive amnesty marking the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic. In his letter, Jaladet attempts to expose the real intention of the Turkish amnesty. He claims that the amnesty was planned to end bifurcation between the “internal” Turkey and “external” Turkey, namely opposition groups exiled in neighboring countries that challenged the Turkish state. Jaladet adds that even though the Turkish authorities did not openly declare it, their major target was the Kurdish nationalist movement in exile and their goal was to lure Kurdish nationalists back to Turkey in order to pacify them. Jaladet warned fellow Kurdish nationalists in exile not to accept the amnesty to go back to Turkey and not to give up the Kurdish nationalist movement, which some had already done.³⁸⁵

For its “harmful content,” Jaladet’s letter was banned in Turkey through an official document signed by the addressee himself, Mustafa Kemal.³⁸⁶ The letter constitutes a very significant source as Jaladet, as a former fellow Ottoman citizen and officer, evaluates Kemalist reforms, and especially the Turkish state’s assimilationist policies toward Kurds over the first ten years of the Republic. Jaladet sees parallels between the late-Ottoman and early republican Turkish states’ views and treatments of the Kurds, in many cases in reference to his personal experiences. In the letter, he also informs Ataturk about Kurdish history, language and literature, and the “Kurdistan question.” He also mentions the problems of Kurdish society and how Kurds are exploited by Turks, their coreligionists, and how Turks used religion against the interests of

³⁸⁵ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp.116-127.

³⁸⁶ BCA, 030-0-018-001-002-47-54-16, August 1, 1934.

Kurds. These issues resonated in the Kurdish periodicals published in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s. Thus, similar to other “nation building” or “imagining” processes by the dominant or non-dominant ethnic groups, Kurdish intellectuals in the Levant relied on resources like “the memory of the past,” “the existence of a written language,” and their nation’s attachment to their homeland.³⁸⁷ The Kurdish nationalist publications in Syria and Lebanon from the 1930s and 40s contain vivid examples of how the former Kurdish nationalists exiled in the Levant attempted to re-define who the Kurds were. That process included re-writing the history of the Kurds, defining their homeland, and explaining the Kurds’ language and literary tradition. Through these endeavors, the Kurdish nationalists in the Levant tried to prove the existence of a unique Kurdish nation with ancient roots, a particular homeland, and a vibrant language and literary tradition.

Rediscovering the Remote History and Reinterpreting the Recent Past

The former Ottoman Kurdish nationalists had defined themselves as ‘Ottoman’ and ‘Muslim’ Kurds.³⁸⁸ However, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish Republic with its ardently secular and Turkish nationalist vision, Kurdish identity found no place for expression. Thus, a redefinition of Kurdish historical identity was necessary. The task for Kurdish nationalists was to write a new history according to their current needs. Within the writings on Kurdish history, we find nationalists playing up several common themes, such as

³⁸⁷ Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe,” *New Left Review*, Issue 198 (1993), pp. 3-20; and “National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective,” in *Notions of Nationalism*, ed. S. Periwal (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), pp. 65-82, cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 118.

³⁸⁸ For example, during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan had served in the Ottoman army and their writings at that time reflect their determination to protect the Ottoman Empire and Islam. Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutunun*; Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Osmanlı Tayyareciliginin*; and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanin-i Harb*.

the antiquity of the particular nation, the golden age, the periods of recess or ‘somnolence’ and the theme of the national heroes.³⁸⁹ In fact, the Kurdish intellectuals living in Syria and Lebanon were not foreign to those themes and history writing in general. As former Ottoman Kurdish intellectuals, their interest in history had started during the late Ottoman period and is reflected in their writings in the Ottoman Kurdish press. The Kurdish intellectuals in Istanbul, such as members of the Bedir Khan family, emphasized the Kurds’ role in Islamic and Ottoman history and at the same time tried to create a separate history of the Kurds.³⁹⁰ Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish intellectuals continued writing Kurdish history but they no longer situated Kurdish history in an Islamic or Ottoman context. Similar to the case of the Kemalist historiography in Turkey beginning with the 1930s, Kurdish nationalists in the Levant emphasized the pre-Islamic “national” history of their people.³⁹¹

Kurdish authors in the Levant relied on multiple sources to legitimize the ‘national’ history. To these nationalists, Western Orientalist scholarship on the Kurds was an important proof for Kurds’ being a distinct ethnic group.³⁹² Kurdish nationalists also cited medieval sources such as Sharafkhan Bidlisi’s *Sharafname* and Evliya Celebi’s *Seyahatname*.³⁹³ The 1931

³⁸⁹ Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, pp. 51-52.

³⁹⁰ In her M.A. thesis, Janet Klein examines the historiographical themes and arguments in the Ottoman Kurdish press. Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” pp. 59-74.

³⁹¹ Poulton, *Top Hat, Gray Wolf*, pp. 101-109.

³⁹² Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” p. 62; and Bruinessen, “The Kurds as Objects and Subjects of Their History.”

³⁹³ *Sharafname* was known as the first book written by a Kurd on the Kurdish history. This medieval source on the Kurds was written in 1596 by Sharaf Khan of Bitlis, the ruler of the Bitlis emirate, and presents a history of Kurdish tribes and dynasties. The 17th Century Ottoman traveler, Evliya Celebi’s *Seyatahname (Book of Travels)* is another source cited in the Kurdish press. It is considered an important source because in his book Celebi not only reports his travels through the towns in Ottoman Kurdistan but also uses the terms Kurds and Kurdistan, which became a taboo in Turkey by the 1930s. Kamuran Ali Bedir Khan, “Bere Cawan Bu [How Was It in the Past?],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 16 (15 February 1933), pp. 2-4;

study, *A Brief History of the Kurds and Kurdistan*, by the Iraqi Kurdish intellectual Muhammad Amin Zaki, provided an important contemporary source on Kurdish history and was frequently cited in the Kurdish press.³⁹⁴ Zaki's book was presented as the first modern history of the Kurds.³⁹⁵ Using these and many other sources, Kurdish nationalists presented their vision of history to their readers in the 1930s and 1940s. Kurdish nationalists also published books including valuable information on Kurdish history. For example, Sureya Bedirkhan's 1930 book, *La Question Kurde: Ses Origines et Ses Causes*, was an important contribution to Kurdish historiography in the Levant and shaped several foundational myths of Kurdish nationalism.³⁹⁶

Origins and the Ancient History: Kurds and their Male Cousins

'Re-discovering' or inventing origins is at the heart of all nationalist history writing projects. The origins and long history of a nation legitimizes the nation's claims to independence and makes members of that nation proud. An additional motive for the Kurdish nationalists in the Levant was the Kemalist denial of a separate Kurdish identity in Turkey as the claim by some

Klein, "Claiming the Nation," p. 60; and Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, pp. 27-35.

³⁹⁴ An Iraqi Kurdish nationalist and a former Ottoman military officer, Muhammad Amin Zaki explains why he needed to write his book. He indicates that when concept of Ottomanism was replaced by the concept of Turan or Turkish nationalism, he was inclined to think about his own national feelings. However, he did not know where to start because in the Ottoman school system they had learned nothing about Kurdish history. Abbas Vali, "Genealogies of the Kurds: Construction of Nation and National Identity in Kurdish Historical Writing," in *Essays on the Origins*, pp.74-75.

³⁹⁵ The book was praised and critically reviewed in *Hawar* by Osman Sabri in 1941. Sabri describes the book as the first on Kurdish history after Sharaf Khan's 1596 *Sharafname*. Osman Sabri, "Tarixia Kurd u Kurdistan (1) [History of the Kurds and Kurdistan (1)]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 28 (15 May 1941), pp. 5-6.

³⁹⁶ He, in fact, published this book with a German pseudonym, Dr. Bletch Chirguh. Dr. Bletch Chirguh, *La Question Kurde: Ses Origines et Ses Causes*, A Publication of Kurdish National League, Hoybun (Cairo: Paul Barbey Press, 1930); and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 100, note 3.

Arab historians that Kurds are Arab in origin, namely from the line of Qahtani Arabs.³⁹⁷ These examples motivated Kurdish nationalists to define their ‘real’ ancestors and their ancient national history in the Kurdish press.

In the Ottoman Kurdish press, the Medes had been introduced as the ancestors of the Kurds.³⁹⁸ This line of ancestry was continued in the 1930s and 1940s by Kurdish nationalists in the Levant.³⁹⁹ In an address to Kurdish youth, Jaladet says “You are the sons of the Kurds, grandchildren of the Medes, and the descendants of the Aryans.”⁴⁰⁰ In a *Roja Nu* article, it was indicated that according to the Sumerian sources Kurds were living in their countries for two thousand years before Christ. Kurds, then, were battling with their neighbors, the Babylonians, Hittites, and Assyrians who were trying to invade Kurdish territories. The Kurds fell under their suzerainty from time to time but not for long periods. They assisted Cyrus the Great, and with him conquered Babylonia and Nineveh. Six hundred years before Christ, the Kurds protected Zoroastrian places of worship, and the teachings of *Zand Avesta* from uncivilized people.⁴⁰¹ An important historical source cited for documenting the antiquity of Kurdish history was Xenophon’s account of the Persian expedition, *the Retreat of Ten Thousand* (401-400 B.C.). Xenophon relates how a group of people called Karduks challenged the Greek armies near the

³⁹⁷ Osman Sabri, “Tarix a Kurd u Kurdistane (1) [History of the Kurds and Kurdistan (1)],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 28 (15 May 1941), pp. 5-6.

³⁹⁸ Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” p. 61.

³⁹⁹ “Ferhengog [The Glossary],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 4 (3 July 1932), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Xwe Binas [Know Yourself],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), pp. 1-6.

⁴⁰¹ “Kurdistan II,” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 43 (27 March 1944), p. 1.

Tigris River around 400 B.C. Kurdish nationalists claimed that the land of the Karduks is the land of the Kurds and the Karduks were the Kurds.⁴⁰²

Complimenting their historical perspective, Kurdish nationalists emphasized racial identity by presenting the Kurds as members of the Aryan race and as an Indo-European people. Jegerkhwin's poem's title, "We Are Aryans," reflected this argument clearly.⁴⁰³ Jaladet indicates that the Kurds are from the Aryan race, something on which he claims all experts agree. The same experts, he asserted, also indicate that Kurds have preserved their Aryan qualities better than other Aryan nations in the Near East.⁴⁰⁴ The French Orientalists, too, stress Kurds' racial identity. Thomas Bois, for example, notes that Kurds are Aryans, not Semites.⁴⁰⁵ The Kurdish nationalists were also aware of the Turkish history thesis claiming the Turkishness of the early inhabitants of Anatolia (Hittites, Sumerians and Urartians).⁴⁰⁶ The Turkish claims and Kurdish responses were, in fact, not new. In the Ottoman Kurdish press, in reference to the European sources, Kurds' being Indo-European and Iranian had been emphasized to counter the some Ottoman Turkish intellectuals' claim that the people of eastern Anatolia were all Turkish.⁴⁰⁷

Turkish and Kurdish nationalists' claim over Indo-European and Aryan ancestry is an important aspect of the identity politics in the Middle East after the First World War. According to the Turkish history thesis, Turks, who are originally from Central Asia, were Aryans. Kurdish

⁴⁰² Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), "Kardux u Welate Karduxan [Karduks and the Land of Karduks]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 32 (1 September 1941), pp. 4-7; and Bois, *L'âme des Kurdes*, p. 6; and "Kurdistan II," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 43 (27 March 1944), p.1.

⁴⁰³ Jegerkhwin, "Em Arî Ne [We Are Aryans]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 28 (15 May 1941), p. 7.

⁴⁰⁴ Actually, Jaladet explains the Aryan identity of the Kurds in reference to a reader's question. A reader from the Kurdish neighborhood in Damascus asks the editor of *Hawar*, "I wonder if it is true that we, Kurds, are from the Aryan race. "Stuna Xwendevanan [The Column of the Readers]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 31 (1 August 1941), pp.10-11.

⁴⁰⁵ Bois, *L'âme des Kurdes*, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁶ Bruinessen, "The Kurds as Objects and Subjects of Their History."

⁴⁰⁷ Klein, "Claiming the Nation," pp. 63-66.

nationalists refuted this theory by claiming that Kurds were the real descendants of the Aryans.⁴⁰⁸ According to a Kemalist Turkish nationalist scholar, the term Aryan (Ari in Turkish), adopted by the Europeans, was originally Turkish, not Indian or Persian. It was originally from the Turkish word “er.”⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, the Turkish history thesis was partly a reaction to the European view of the Turks’ being from “inferior races.”⁴¹⁰ Ironically, the Kurdish history thesis which claimed the Kurds’ Aryan identity was partly a response to the denial of Kurdish identity by the Kemalist regime in Turkey.

In his letter to Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), Jaladet Bedirkhan challenged the Turkish history thesis. Jaladet indicates that he was aware of Mustafa Kemal’s interest in ancient history and tells him about Xenophon’s works. In a sarcastic tone, Jaladet also indicates that Mustafa Kemal’s recent pursuit of history, his interest in the issue of Aryan race, his efforts to detach Turks from their well-known Mongol origin and to connect them to the Aryan race should have taught him a lot about the Kurds and Kurdistan in history.⁴¹¹ Jaladet also could not understand why Ataturk was determined to assimilate the Kurds and thus mix the Turkish blood with Kurdish blood. Jaladet seems concerned about the purity of all races, not only the Kurdish race.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Hirschler, “Defining the Nation,” p.152; and Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁹ İsmail Beşikçi, *Türk Tarih Tezi ve Kürt Sorunu [Turkish History Thesis and the Kurdish Question]* (Stockholm: Denge Komal, 1986), pp. 145-146

⁴¹⁰ Poulton, *Top Hat, Gray Wolf*, p. 101.

⁴¹¹ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 39-40.

⁴¹² He writes “Your eminence Pasha! To care for the purity of the race and the protection of its characteristics is a sublime emotion, and a sublime idea. It is worthy of respect. Such an emotion is not peculiar to the human being. It is present even among animals-you know that noble horses cannot be harnessed with ordinary ones. Families too are always attentive to this concept of *kufi*. What the Germans want to ensure today, with their segregation policy, is to prevent the mixing of German with foreign blood, so as to preserve the characteristics and the intelligence of the

Believing themselves to be a member of the Aryan racial family, Kurdish nationalists expanded their discussion to include their racial “male cousins.” In *Ster*, the readers are reminded that Kurds and European nations are male cousins.⁴¹³ In a *Roja Nu* article, Kamuran Bedirkhan tried to encourage Kurds to take Europeans as an example in work and education, writing, “we, like them [Europeans], are Aryan, our languages from the same source.”⁴¹⁴ In 1930, Sureya Bedirkhan criticized Europeans’ indifference to the extermination of the Kurds at the hands of the Turks despite the fact that the Kurds and the Europeans are of the same white race, as opposed to the Turks who are from the yellow race, also known as the Mongolian race.⁴¹⁵

The Persians, too, are presented as a “brother nation” or “male cousins” of the Kurds,⁴¹⁶ justifying the appropriation of many historical Persian figures into the Kurdish nationalist historical narrative. Rostam son of Zal, the epic hero of the Persian epic, *Shahnameh*, written by Firdawsi around 1000 A.D., is presented in the Kurdish periodicals as a Kurdish hero.⁴¹⁷ Another hero in *Shahnameh*, Guhdarz is mentioned along with more recent Kurdish heroes like Shaykh

German race. But what is it you want to do? As if the accumulation of racial and congenital degeneracy were not sufficient, you want to inject, in limitless quantities, the blood of other races and nations into Turkish blood. That is a great insult to the Turkish nation that you wish it to assimilate to other nations, as if it were inferior.” Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 44, translated in Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on the Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980),” in *Essays on the Origins*, p. 31. Jaladet also warns readers about the significance of preserving the purity of Kurdish race and its Aryan blood. He writes that “in the Near East and among the nations, racially affiliated with the Kurds, there is no nation that has kept its blood as pure as ours. From now on, too, we should be careful about the purity of our blood, and we should protect the purity of our race from disaffection and deficiency; and especially from mixing with the blood of non-Aryan nations.” Bave Cemsid u Sinemxane (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Naven Kurdmanci [Kurmanji Names],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 31 (1 August 1941), pp. 6-9.

⁴¹³ *Ster*, Year 1, Issue 1 (6 December 1943), pp. 1-2.

⁴¹⁴ “Ceng & Siyaset [War & Politics],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 47 (8 May 1944), p.1.

⁴¹⁵ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 3

⁴¹⁶ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, pp. 33-35; and “Ferhengog [The Glossary],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), p.4.

⁴¹⁷ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Sultan Selaheddine Eyyubi,” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

Said who led the Kurdish uprising in 1925 and Ihsan Nuri Pasha who led the Kurdish forces in the Ararat Rebellion (1928-1931).⁴¹⁸ Both nations' pre-Islamic belief in Zoroastrianism and celebration of the New Year, Newroz, are regarded important by the Kurdish nationalists. Kamuran Bedirkhan presents Zoroaster as the pride of the Aryan nations, writing "Zoroaster is from us," and indicates his service to humanity by introducing the oneness of God.⁴¹⁹ Jaladet praises Zoroaster as a guide and mentor of the Iranian nations.⁴²⁰ He also introduces Newroz as a Kurdish "national and racial" holiday. Jaladet also indicates that Iranian nations who, before any other nations, recognized the oneness of God under the leadership of Zoroaster celebrated that day. He adds that Newroz was set by the legendary Iranian shah Jamshid.⁴²¹

While quite a lot of emphasis is placed on the Kurds' affinity with their Aryan and/or Iranian male cousins, there is also a tendency to present the Kurds as the purest of all the Aryan and Iranian nations. Kamuran Bedirkhan in a short article on Zoroaster quotes the editor of *the Iran League* magazine published in Bombay who wrote of "our dear and valiant brethren, the Kurds, the only heroic people who have preserved the purity, integrity, and independence of the old Iranian race."⁴²² In fact, the Kurdish nationalists' sympathy for the Persians due to perceived racial affinity was not unconditional. In 1944, *Roja Nu* republished a memorandum by the Organization of the Kurdish Youth in Iran, harshly criticizing some Persian language newspapers' call to put an end to all Kurdish nationalist activities. It states:

⁴¹⁸ It is in the same poem Jegerkhwin addresses to Reza Shah for help and he calls him "the Shah of Persia" and "Our Male Cousin Reza Khan." Jegerkhwin, "Em Arî Ne [We Are Aryans]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 28 (15 May 1941), p.7.

⁴¹⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Zerdest u Reya Zerdest [Zoroaster and the Path of Zoroaster]," *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp. 10-11.

⁴²⁰ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), "Newruz: Bist u Siseye Nisane [Newruz: April 23]," *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 42 (15 April 1942), p. 5.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Zerdest u Reya Zerdest [Zoroaster and the Path of Zoroaster]," *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp. 10-11.

You [Persians] cannot continue your exploitation [of the Kurds] in the name of Kurds and Persians' being of the same race....Based on the things you learn from the foreigners [racial theories] you make the claim of sovereignty over us and you regard yourselves in a privileged position compared to us. How can you claim that to us? Don't you know that no purity remained in your blood? Your blood today is like a scramble in which Greeks, Arabs and Mongols walked passed over you. Kurds, on the other hand, we can make such a claim. This is because Kurds preserved their pure blood thanks to their bravery and to the arduousness of their territories.⁴²³

Kurds and Islam

As mentioned above, Kurdish historiography emphasized Kurds 'being Zoroastrians before their conversion into Islam. However, in the Kurdish periodicals there is almost no information about the initial encounters between the Arab armies and the Kurds before their conversion.⁴²⁴ A Kurdish nationalist implies the Kurdishness of Abu Muslim Khorasani (700-755 A.D.) who led a major rebellion which put an end to the Umayyad Empire.⁴²⁵ Moreover, Sureya Bedirkhan indicates that between the years 888 and 903 A.D., the Kurds revolted many times against the Abbasid caliphs centered in Baghdad.⁴²⁶

Saladin: The Kurdish great man in the service of the Arabs and "their religion"

Saladin has a special place in the Kurdish press in the Levant as a Kurdish hero.⁴²⁷ He was important because he was the rival of the Richard the Lion Heart and unified a majority of

⁴²³ Komela Xorten Kurdistane [The Organization of Youth of Kurdistan], "Bersiv Ji Rojnameyen Irane En Farisi [A Response to the Persian Language Newspapers of Iran]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 64 (17 December 1945), p. 1.

⁴²⁴ On the other hand, "the bloody encounter" between the Umayyad Arab armies and the Turkish armies was an important theme in the Kemalist Turkish historiography. Ahmet Serdar Akturk, "Arabs in Kemalist Turkish Historiography," *Middle Eastern Studies*, volume 46, no. 5 (2010), pp. 633-653.

⁴²⁵ Jegerkhwin, "Hey Felek [O Destiny!]," *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 27 (August-September 1944), p. 20.

⁴²⁶ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 10.

⁴²⁷ Osman Sabri, "Diroka Jina Napolyon [Napoleon's Life Story]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 16 (1 July 1943), pp. 12-13; and Osman Sabri, "Diroka Jina Selahedin [Saladin's Life Story]," *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), pp. 12-14.

the Kurdish tribes under his leadership.⁴²⁸ The power of his dynasty, extending as far as Egypt, Syria and Yemen, was a source of pride for Kurdish nationalists.⁴²⁹ Jaladet refers to Saladin as “Muhammad the Second,” since he saved Islam from extinction by defending the faith against the Crusaders.⁴³⁰ The Ayyubid Dynasty is introduced in French in *Le Jour Nouveau* under the title of “The Great Kurds in History.”⁴³¹ One of the few cover images published in *Hawar* was Saladin’s.⁴³² Jaladet’s need to emphasize Saladin’s Kurdishness is important.⁴³³ Having played a significant role in the world history, Saladin has been appropriated by Turkish, Arab, and Kurdish nationalists as their own.⁴³⁴ Ironically, Saladin’s legacy was controversial for some of the contributors to the Kurdish press, who criticized him for never speaking of his national identity.⁴³⁵

The Kurds and the Ottomans or the Turks

According to Kurdish nationalist historiography, in their long history the Kurds often lived under the yoke of other people such as the Macedonians, Parthians, and Sassanids.⁴³⁶ In the 13th Century, they fought against the “bloodthirsty” Mongols and kicked them out of

⁴²⁸ “Kurdistan II,” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 43 (27 March 1944), p. 1.

⁴²⁹ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 10.

⁴³⁰ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Sultan Selaheddine Eyyubi,” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁴³¹ “Les Grands Kurdes De L’Histoire: La Dynastie Des Ayoubites (1169-1260),” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 30 (6 December 1943), p. 1.

⁴³² *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932).

⁴³³ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Sultan Selaheddine Eyyubi,” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 1-2; and Bisare Segman, “Ciroka Tarixi: Selahedin u Ricarde Serdil [Historical Story: Saladin and the Richard the Lionheart],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), pp. 3-5.

⁴³⁴ Bruinessen, “The Kurds as Objects and Subjects of Their History.”

⁴³⁵ Bisare Segman, “Ciroka Tarixi: Selahedin u Ricarde Serdil [Historical Story: Saladin and the Richard the Lionheart],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), pp. 3-5.

⁴³⁶ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 10.

Kurdistan.⁴³⁷ However, the Kurds' relations with the Turks were different. Kurdish nationalists divided Kurdish history into two main periods, before and after the coming of the Turks. As Sureya Bedirkhan explains, prior to this the Kurds had accepted the suzerainty of other states without losing their semi-independence. This continued until the arrival of the Ottoman Sultan Selim I in 1514.⁴³⁸ In many of their writings, Kurdish nationalists present Ottoman history in nationalist terms. The Ottoman Empire, of which they used to be loyal members, became a Turkish Empire.

“The Kurdistan question,” for the Kurdish nationalists in the Levant, had started during the reign of Selim I, when Kurdistan became a contested plain between the rival Turkish and Persian Empires in the 16th Century. It was then that the Sunni Kurdish emirs sided with the Sunni Ottomans against the Shia Persians (the Safavids) despite the fact that Kurds and Persians were from the same grand Aryan family.⁴³⁹ According to the nationalists, the Ottoman-Safavid conflict marked the beginning of Kurdistan's modern history. After the Turks defeated the Persians in the Battle of Chaldiran with the help of the Kurds in 1514, relations between the Turks and the Kurds were formalized. According to the agreement between the “Kurdish nation” and Sultan Selim I, the Ottoman state would not interfere in the internal affairs of Kurdistan; Kurds could live freely and independently in their country. In case of foreign invasion, Kurds would help the Ottoman rulers, recognized as both the Caliph of the Muslims and the Sultan of

⁴³⁷ “Kurdistan II,” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 43 (27 March 1944), p. 1.

⁴³⁸ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, pp. 10-11.

⁴³⁹ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), *De La Question*, p. 6, cited in Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 141.

the Ottomans. According to the Kurdish historiography, the Kurds kept this promise, sacrificing their lives in the thousands for the grander of the Ottoman state.⁴⁴⁰

For the Kurdish nationalists, it was unfortunate that Kurds and Persians, who were from the same racial family and the same religion before their conversion into Islam, became rivals later because of their sectarian (Sunni-Shia) differences.⁴⁴¹ Jaladet explains how the Shiite Persian Empire tried to assimilate the Sunni Kurdish emirs of the Ardalán region through marriage alliance, encouraging the emirs to adopt Shiite Islam, and thus differentiating Sunni Kurdish subjects from their rulers.⁴⁴²

The era of the autonomous Kurdish emirates under Ottoman rule from the 16th Century until their suppression in the 19th Century was seen as an important period in the Kurdish historiography.⁴⁴³ However, for some, the Kurds lost their independence when they accepted the Ottoman rule. The Kurdish flag was invented by the Kurdish Society for Social Organization (Kurd Tashkilati Ijtimaiya Jamiyati) led by Amin Ali Bedirkhan in the late Ottoman period.⁴⁴⁴ Some Kurdish nationalists, however, present a Kurdish flag that they claim to have existed in the medieval Kurdistan. In a short story, a Kurdish nationalist writes that the enemy removed the Kurdish flag and replaced it with their own four centuries ago by which he refers to

⁴⁴⁰ “Kurdistan II,” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 43 (27 March 1944), p. 1.

⁴⁴¹ Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁴² Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), “Kurden Ecemistane u Hale Wan [The Kurds of Persia and their Current Situation],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), pp. 10-12; and Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), *De La Question*, pp. 4-5, cited in Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 138-139.

⁴⁴³ Martin van Bruinessen, “Ehmedi Xani's “Mem u Zin” and its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness,” in *Essays on the Origins*, pp. 48-49.

⁴⁴⁴ Ismail Goldas, *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Istanbul: Doz 1991), cited in Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 69-70 and 189, note 30.

the beginning of the Ottoman rule in Kurdish territories.⁴⁴⁵ When considering the “rhetorical presentation” of a Kurdish flag, comparison can be made to George Antoniou’s presentation of an Arab flag in a period when it did not exist.⁴⁴⁶ When we look at the Kurdish case, we find first a reinterpretation of old traditions and institutions according to new conditions which is the main tendency in the Kurdish press. Second, there is the deliberate “invention” of new traditions for similar purposes as in the example of presenting a Kurdish flag in the 16th century.⁴⁴⁷

“Kurdish Nationalism” before the age of Nationalism

The Kurdish nationalists claimed that there had been “a Kurdish question” since the 16th Century when the Kurdish emirs recognized the Ottoman rule, and it always continued in different forms according to considerations of the time. Jaladet Bedirkhan writes that it was a feudalistic conflict at one point, at another time it took the form a conflict between the two different schools of Islamic law (Hanafi and Shafi Maddhabs), to which the Kurds and the Turks adhere, and it later arose in the form of tribal rebellions. For Jaladet, all those things were the manifestations of a national movement.⁴⁴⁸ For the Kurdish nationalists, Kurds gained nothing from their service or sacrifices to the Ottomans. Instead, their country had lost its magnificence,

⁴⁴⁵ Sibhi Resul, “Dilawere Cardesali [The Fourteen Years Old Dilawer],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 29 (10 June 1941), p. 7; and Dilkule Doski, “Serbesti [Freedom],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 26 (June-July 1944), p. 22.

⁴⁴⁶ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening; The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1939); William I. Cleveland, “The Arab Nationalism of George Antonius Reconsidered,” in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James P. Jankowski and I. Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 65-86.

⁴⁴⁷ E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Chapter 7, cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, pp. 94-97.

⁴⁴⁸ He also refutes the assumption that Kurdish nationalism was a modern phenomenon. For Jaladet, it was much older than Turkism, Turkish cultural nationalism that began with the activities of the Turkish Hearths (founded in 1912). Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 40.

and the rule of the Ottoman civil and military officials resulted in a miserable state. Kurdish schools were closed and Kurds lagged behind the rest of the world in science and progress.⁴⁴⁹

The coming of the Turks to the Kurdish territories was presented as an unfortunate moment, since Turks blocked the progress of Kurdish nation.⁴⁵⁰ The Kurdish grievances, indicated in a *Hawar* article, were voiced by a 17th Century mystic poet, Ahmed Khani (1650-1707), who was portrayed as a nationalist before the age of nationalism.⁴⁵¹ Khani's most notable work, *Mam u Zin*, an epic love story inspired by a Kurdish folk tale and published in 1693/4, was considered a foundational work of Kurdish nationalism.⁴⁵² The following lines are displayed as important evidence for Khani's "nationalism." "If only we had a king ... then the Rom [the Ottomans] would not dominate us;"⁴⁵³ and "If only there were harmony among us/If we were to obey a single one of us/He would reduce to vassalage/ Turks, Arabs and Persians, all of them." Nationalists saw "a group consciousness" in Khani's words as he positioned Kurds in opposition to Arabs, Persians and Turks.⁴⁵⁴ In his letter to Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), Jaladet cited *Mam u Zin*, and emphasized that the idea of Kurdishness or the idea of nationalism among the Kurds dates back over two centuries.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁴⁹ "Kurdistan III," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 44 (3 April 1944), p. 1.

⁴⁵⁰ Bozarslan, "Some Remarks on the Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980)," in *Essays on the Origins*, p. 30.

⁴⁵¹ "Memozin," *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 45 (20 June 1942), p. 7.

⁴⁵² Bozarslan, "Some Remarks on the Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980)," in *Essays on the Origins*, p. 25. The French Orientalist Roger Lescot claims that the roots of Kurdish nationalism can be found in the 17th Century, specifically referred in *Mam u Zin*. Robert Surieu (Roger Lescot), "Kurdistan (V)," *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 2, Issue 44 (3 April 1944), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁵³ Bruinessen, "Ehmedi Xani's "Mem u Zin" and its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness," in *Essays on the Origins*, pp. 42-3.

⁴⁵⁴ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, pp. 31-33.

⁴⁵⁵ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 40-41.

Imagining “Homeland” and Its Physical Geography

From Ottoman Vatan to Kurdish Welat

For the former Ottoman Kurdish nationalist elite, the meaning of ‘homeland’ or ‘fatherland’ (*vatan* in Turkish and *welat* in Kurdish) shifted following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The first Kurdish newspaper that appeared in 1898 was titled *Kurdistan*. However, in their writings Kurdish intellectuals used the term *vatan* for both *Kurdistan* and the Ottoman Empire in general.⁴⁵⁶ Kamuran and Jaladet Bedirkhan’s writings during the Balkan Wars and the First World War include striking examples of their attachment to the Ottoman fatherland. The fall of Edirne to the Bulgarians so upset them that the two brothers wrote a book explaining the Ottoman failure.⁴⁵⁷ Similarly, during the First World War, they were concerned about their “sacred and honored *vatan*,” which included Egypt, under the British occupation.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, until the final defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the Kurdish intellectuals viewed *Kurdistan* as a part of their greater homeland, the Ottoman Empire. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, however, their attachment to the Ottoman *vatan* was replaced by their attachment to Kurdish *welat* as reflected in the Kurdish press in the Levant.

“Space, place, and territory” are presented as the fundamental aspects in national imaginations. Nationalism is described as “the most territorial of all political ideologies.”⁴⁵⁹ It was especially so for the exiled Kurds in Syria who were separated from their homelands after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the failure of the Shaykh Said and Ararat

⁴⁵⁶ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 25.

⁴⁵⁷ Jaladet and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutunun*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁵⁸ Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanin-i Harb*, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁵⁹ J. Agnew, ‘Nationalism,’ in *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, ed. J. Duncan, N. C. Johnson, and R. H. Schein (Oxford, UK: Blackwell 2008), p. 233, cited in Tristan Sturm and Nicholas Bauch, “Nationalism and Geography: An interview with Rogers Brubaker,” *Geopolitics* 15, 1 (2010), p. 185.

rebellions. Following the Ararat rebellion, the Turkish daily *Milliyet* published a cartoon marking the victory of the Turkish army over the rebels. On a grave stone on Mount Agri (Ararat), it was written that “the imagined Kurdistan is buried here.” [See Appendix, Image 4] While recognizing the magnitude of the defeat, the cartoon also unintentionally challenged the Kemalist claim that there is no territory called Kurdistan. In his letter to Mustafa Kemal, Jaladet Bedirkhan refers to the same cartoon as a theatrical act by the Kemalist regime. For Jaladet, the way the Kemalist regime and press treated the rebellion actually ridiculed the Kemalist regime and would convince the rest of the world of the existence of the Kurdistan question.⁴⁶⁰ Partly in response to this denial, the Kurdish nationalists in the Levant would dedicate themselves to describing their homeland(s), to proving the Kurdishness of every corner of Kurdistan, and to keeping the idea of a unified and independent Kurdistan alive through their writings in the Kurdish Press.

Describing homeland (welat) in exile

A thorough examination of the “geography of Kurdistan” was one of the goals of the Kurdish press.⁴⁶¹ Describing Kurdistan meant two things. On the one hand, the exiled nationalists wrote about their localities, their ancestral homelands or the different regions of their greater homeland. Most of the contributors to the Kurdish press in the Levant were from Kurdish territories of Turkey.⁴⁶² One could argue that is why they wrote articles about their localities or native areas in Turkish Kurdistan and expressed longing for their hometowns. On the other hand, they would define their greater homeland, and try to teach the Kurdish people to adopt the same national outlook transcending parochial local attachments. In the absence of school textbooks, the Kurdish press would be the means to teach people to identify themselves with Kurdistan.

⁴⁶⁰ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 100-101.

⁴⁶¹ “Armanc, Awaye Xebat u Nivisandina Haware [The Goal, and the Form of the Work and Writing of *Hawar*],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁶² Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 18.

Like the term *pays* in French or *memleket* in Turkish, the Kurdish term *welat* means both one's hometown or locality in a narrow sense and national territory or fatherland in a larger sense. To explain the flexibility of the term, it is important to mention that the term "welat" is also used in a much wider meaning. For example, the editor of *Roja Nu* in one instance uses the term to mean the region of the Middle East (welatê Rohelatê Navîn).⁴⁶³ Thus, the Kurds exiled in Syria would talk about their homelands and would use the term *welat* meaning their localities and their fatherland, Kurdistan, at the same time. Graham Robb translates the French term *pays* as "country-referred not to the abstract nation, but to the tangible, ancestral region that people thought of as their home. A *pay* was the area in which everything was familiar."⁴⁶⁴ This definition is true for the term *welat*, in its narrow meaning which was used by the Kurdish nationalists over and over again in the Kurdish periodicals.

The exiled Kurdish nationalists in Syria and Lebanon would write about their *welats*, regions in which everything was familiar to them. Even though there were contributors from the Kurdish enclaves in Syria and from Iraqi Kurdistan, the content of the Kurdish press was dominated by the Kurds from Turkey.⁴⁶⁵ They felt in a state of exile even when they were in the Kurdish parts of Syria and expressed their feelings about their "actual" homelands on the other side of the Syrian-Turkish border. A good example is Qadrijan who writes about his travels through the Kurdish towns in Syria, namely Qamishli, Amuda, and Ayn Diwar and expresses

⁴⁶³ "Kurdistan (1)," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 42 (20 March 1944), p. 1.

⁴⁶⁴ Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France: A Historical Geography from the Revolution to the First World War* (New York: Norton, 2007), pp. 28-29.

⁴⁶⁵ The Kurdish press had readers from Iraqi Kurdistan and especially from its Kurmanji speaking areas, who described their territories as well. For example, a reader from Amadiya sent an article to *Ronahi* about his city. Sblih Resid Amedi, "Amediye u Silav [Amadiya and Greetings]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 15 (1 June 1943), p.14.

longing for “his welat.”⁴⁶⁶ Nuraddin Zaza’s adaptation of Lamennais’ poem, “L’Exile” into Kurdish as “*Derketi*” indicates the feelings of many Kurdish nationalists who were in exile in Syria and away from their ancestral homelands in the Kurdish territories of Turkey. The poem discusses the strangeness of a foreign country and longings for home, obviously what many contributors to the Kurdish press were feeling at the time.⁴⁶⁷ For example, Jegerkhwin alternated writing about Kurdistan as a whole with poems on his home town, Derik, which is now a district of the city of Mardin.⁴⁶⁸ Another contributor defines the same district as “the land of his ancestors and a piece of land from paradise.”⁴⁶⁹ A tribal chief exiled in Syria expresses his homesickness by describing the high mountains, cold waters, and colorful springs of his “welat.”⁴⁷⁰

In addition to Jegerkhwin and Qadrijan, or to tribal leaders who were recently dislocated from their “homes” in Kurdish territories in Turkey, the nationalist elite such as Kamuran and Jaladet Ali Bedir Khan, who had spent most of their lives outside Kurdistan, especially in Istanbul, wrote on their ancestral homeland (*welat*), Botan in Turkish Kurdistan. In fact, “the early advances of Kurdish nationalism” started outside Kurdistan by way of Ottoman Kurdish elites, publishing Kurdish periodicals in Cairo, European cities, and Istanbul.⁴⁷¹ This fact draws similarities to Benedict Anderson’s words in describing the process of “long distance nationalism,” meaning the nationalists imagine, describe and idealize their homelands from a

⁴⁶⁶ Qadri Jan, “Rojen Derbasbuyi [The Past Days],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶⁷ Nuredin Usif (Nuraddin Zaza), “Derketi [The Exiled],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 29 (10 June 1941), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁶⁸ Jegerkhwin, “Pesna Deriqe [Praise for Derik],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5 (20 July 1932), p. 7.

⁴⁶⁹ Newzad, “Derik,” *Hawar*, Year 2, Issue 24 (1 April 1934), p. 7.

⁴⁷⁰ Axaye Mirdesi [The Mirdesi Agha], “Welat [The Country],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), p. 2.

⁴⁷¹ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, pp. 455-461.

distance.⁴⁷² Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan exemplifies this point clearly in a literary article, in which he writes: “Oh My Brother! Even if my longing and love are for a land that I have never seen or an aroma that I have never smelled, do not forget that I have seen it [the land] with the eye of my hearth and felt it [that aroma] with the smell of my blood.”⁴⁷³ In his poem entitled, “The longing for the homeland (Beriya Welat),” he writes “only in that place, within that beauty, can I genuinely smile.”⁴⁷⁴

Jaladet Bedirkhan, too, explains the significance of Botan, the ancestral home land of his family, the Azizan, when he published the lullaby that his father had recited to one of his brothers. Jaladet praises his father as: “that father who gave me his pure Kurdish blood that for a thousand years cooled off on Botan’s pastures and that was boiled in Jazira in the heat of the stones and rocks of Burca-Belek [The Palace of Botan Emirs].”⁴⁷⁵ Not only his writing but also his musical preference indicates his longing for his country. One of Jaladet’s favorite songs was “My Beloved Country (Ala Baladi al-Mahboub) by the famous Egyptian singer, Umm Kulthum. Even though it was about Egypt, some of the lines expressed Jaladet’s feelings of separation from his own homeland: “Take me to the country of my beloved/My passion has increased and the separation is burning me.”⁴⁷⁶

Jaladet Bedirkhan’s poem, “Longing for Botan,” is another example of the Bedirkhan brothers’ attachment to their homeland from afar. It was not a coincidence that Jaladet dedicates

⁴⁷² Benedict Anderson, “The New World Disorder,” *New Left Review* 193 (1992), pp. 3–13, cited in Sturm, and Bauch, “Nationalism and Geography,” p. 187.

⁴⁷³ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Quvan [Sadness],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), p. 3.

⁴⁷⁴ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Beriya Welat [The Longing for the Homeland],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p. 6.

⁴⁷⁵ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Loriya Bedir-Xan [The Bedirkhan Lullaby],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5 (20 July 1932), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with Sinemkhan Bedirkhan in May 2010 in Erbil, Northern Iraq; and <http://mazlan.wordpress.com/2008/07/04/ala-baladi-el-mahboub-my-dear-beloved-country/>

this poem to the late Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi from whom he had learned much of Botan, its history, culture, folklore, and geography. In the poem he laments that Kurdish people were separated from such an important part of Kurdistan. The poem includes so many references to specific place names in Botan, folk tales, and historical personalities that Jaladet felt obliged to put a glossary at the end. One such place was Herekol, a high mountain in Botan, and the origin of one of the many pen names of Jaladet utilized, “Herekol Azizan” (Herekol of Azizan).⁴⁷⁷

Kurds’ Attachment to their Homeland

The intent of Kurdish nationalists was to express their deep attachment to their homeland and how well they know their localities. In *Hawar*, Jaladet Bedirkhan refers to a book by Field-Marshall Moltke, a Prussian officer in the Ottoman Empire in the 1830s who published his memoirs in the late 19th Century,⁴⁷⁸ translating a key sentence from the book into Kurdish to prove his point: “Kurds are very attached to their land. It is so much that there is no nation in the world attached to their land more than Kurd.”⁴⁷⁹ The nationalists wanted to put all the available information about different parts of Kurdistan in print. In one article Jaladet indicates that Kurds, “know the details of their villages, tribes and cities as well as they know the inside pockets of their trousers.” He adds that “among us there are such men who can list the rocks of the

⁴⁷⁷ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Beriya Botan [The Longing for Botan],” *Hawar*, Year 3, Issue 25 (19 August 1934), pp. 2-4.

⁴⁷⁸ Hereqol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Qurd u Qurdistan Bi Cave Biyaniyan (2) [Kurds and Kurdistan through the Eyes of Foreigners],” *Hawar*, Year 2, Issue 23 (25 July 1933), pp. 1-3.

⁴⁷⁹ The original sentence in the English translation of the book is “If any nation is bound to the soil, it is the Kurds. Heirs of an ancient agriculture, they live in the valleys of the Armenian table-land, shunning the plains where the brooks of their native mountains are dried up, and though the winters are severe, they enjoy long and beautiful summers. Among them are a few wandering shepherds, but for the most part they are an essentially agricultural people, to this extent nomadic that when the heat in the valleys becomes oppressive and the rays of the sun free the mountain pastures from the snow, they drive their herds a step higher, for a time exchanging their houses for tents of black goat-hair.” Field-Marshall Count Helmuth von Moltke, *Essays, Speeches and Memoirs*, Volume I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), p. 279.

mountains, low lands and high lands in their countries.”⁴⁸⁰ He encourages the readers to collect the folk literature and analyze them on the pages of the magazines in detail as well. Some exiled Kurds responded to Jaladet’s call and wrote about their own tribes and tribal territories. These articles gave invaluable information about the tribal landscape of Kurdistan, including the Mirdesans, Berazans, Jilans, Kikans, Zirikan, and Azizans tribes from the Kurdish territories of Turkey.⁴⁸¹

Kurds and Mountains

Writers in the Kurdish press also celebrated the physical geography of Kurdistan, namely the mountains, uplands and plateaus. The idea that the mountains saved the Kurds from subjugation to the rule of foreign governments and kept their ethnic identity pure by isolating them from other ethnic groups made them symbols of Kurdistan. From Moltke’s book, Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan translates a paragraph into Kurdish explaining the inaccessibility of the Kurdish mountains, providing them with “freedom from all taxes and military service,” and an Ottoman governors’ attempt to “transform these people into faithful subjects of the port” by “transplanting them from their inaccessible mountains into the plain.”⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Qurd u Qurdistan Bi Cave Biyaniyan [Kurds and Kurdistan through the Eyes of Foreigners],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸¹ See for example Qadri Jamilpasha, “Gawestiyayi u Koceran Kurdan [Gawestiyayi and the Nomads of the Kurds],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), p. 1; Osman Sabri, “Mirdesan u Gawestiyani Wan [Mirdesan Tribes and Their Gawestis],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), pp. 6 and 11-2; and Hasan Hishyar, “Esira Zirikan [The Zirikan Tribe],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17, (1 August 1943), pp. 19-20.

⁴⁸² Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Kurd u Kurdistan Bi Cave Biyaniyan (3) [Kurds and Kurdistan through the Eyes of Foreigners],” *Hawar*, Year 2, Issue 24 (1 April 1934), pp. 1-3; and Moltke, *Essays*, pp. 283-284.

The mountains were considered allies, proving an obstacle the Kurds' enemies could not infiltrate.⁴⁸³ Thus, it is not a coincidence that in play written by Jaladet Bedirkhan about the Ararat rebellion the story takes place on a mountain plateau. At the end of the play, the Kurdish fighters sing: "Our places are not cities but rocky places."⁴⁸⁴ In the same play the Kurdish mountains, once the inaccessible shelters for the Kurds, are bombed by enemy planes. Osman Sabri, too, emphasizes the significance of the Mount Agri (Ararat) and writes Kurds "shed their blood on that mountain's heights during the Ararat Rebellion to protect their country."⁴⁸⁵ *Roja Nu* identifies the high and sacred" Ararat Mountain with the independence and freedom of Kurdistan,⁴⁸⁶ while another writer idealizes another mountain, Mount Judi in Eastern Anatolia in *Hawar*.⁴⁸⁷

Based on his interview with an agha from Iraqi Kurdistan, Jaladet Bedirkhan relates even the origins of the Kurdish tribes to a mountain. According to Kurdish agha's fictional story, there was a man living on the Ararat Mountain called Kurd who had many tribes. Only two of his sons called Mil and Zil survived an avalanche, immigrated to the lowlands, married and founded their own tribes, namely Mils and Zils.⁴⁸⁸ In *Roja Nu*, it is indicated that the Kurds kept the purity of

⁴⁸³ Maria T. O'Shea, *Trapped Between the Map and Reality: Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 140; Martin Van Bruinessen indicates that unlike the Turks and Arabs who are the masters of war in the plains, the Kurds are superior mountain warriors. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 18.

⁴⁸⁴ "Hevind [Hope]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-11.

⁴⁸⁵ Osman Sabri, "Agiri [The Ararat (Agri) Mountain]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 36 (1 December 1941), pp. 8-9.

⁴⁸⁶ *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 63 (26 November 1945), p. 4.

⁴⁸⁷ M. E. Boti, "Ciyaye Cudi [The Cudi Mountain]," *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 45 (20 June 1942), p.6.

⁴⁸⁸ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), "Mil u Zil: Bir u Esasen Esiren Kurdan [Mil and Zil: Sections and Foundations of Kurdish Tribes]," *Ronahi*, Year1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), pp. 12-14.

their blood thanks to their courage and the craginess of the landscape.⁴⁸⁹ While emphasizing the significance of the mountains for the Kurds, the Kurdish nationalists also rejected the Turkish and Persian claims that Kurds are “mountain Turks,” or “mountain Persians.” Jaladet writes that Turks and Persians use such terms “with the implication of savagery or backwardness” of the Kurds. While rejecting those implications, Jaladet thanks God for the existence of the mountains in Kurdistan which protected the Kurds from Turks and Persians.⁴⁹⁰

Kurdistan as the Welat

The Kurdish nationalists regarded teaching their readership to view their greater homeland (welat) rather than their villages or localities as an obligation. A statement that might sound redundant to most Kurds today is the opening sentence of an article by Jaladet Bedirkhan in 1933: “Kurds are us, and Kurdistan is our country.”⁴⁹¹ The terms homeland or country (welat), citizens (welatin) are explained in a nationalist sense.⁴⁹² As an exiled nationalist in Damascus, Osman Sabri was teaching the youth of the Kurdish quarter in Damascus about the same concepts.⁴⁹³ Some Kurdish nationalists cite the Prophet Muhammad’s saying “the love of homeland is part of faith.”⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁹ “Bersiv Ji Rojnameyen Irane En Farisi Re [Answers to the Persian Language Newspapers of Iran],” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 64 (17 December 1945), p. 1.

⁴⁹⁰ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Kurden Ecemistane u Hale Wan [The Kurds of Persia and their Current Situation],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), pp. 10-12.

⁴⁹¹ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Qurd u Qurdistan Bi Cave Biyaniyan [Kurds and Kurdistan through the Eyes of Foreigners],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), p. 1.

⁴⁹² Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Welat, Welatini u Al [Homeland, Citizens, and Flag],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 9 (30 September 1932), pp. 1-2

⁴⁹³ Osman Sabri, “Hevaleke Cak [The Good Friend],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 18 (1 September 1943), p.7.

⁴⁹⁴ Jegerkhwîn, “Pendname [The Advice Letter],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), p. 4; and M. Bashir Hasani, “Re Ji Ber Winda,” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p. 32.

The readers of the Kurdish press also learned about antiquity of their homeland.⁴⁹⁵ As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Jaladet Bedirkhan resorts to Xenophon's account of the Persian expedition, "*the Retreat of Ten Thousand* (401-400 B.C.) as a proof for the long history of Kurdistan.⁴⁹⁶ He indicates that the land of the Karduks is the land of the Kurds and the Karduks are the Kurds. He concludes, "The Kurds have lived in their own territories for 2380 years."⁴⁹⁷ He cites the same source in his letter to Mustafa Kemal as evidence to Kurds' claim to Kurdistan.⁴⁹⁸ The boundaries of Kurdistan are spelled out as well. A three part editorial article in *Roja Nu* entitled "Kurdistan" is a good example.⁴⁹⁹ What would appear as "The Cairo Map" created by a group of Kurds in Cairo in 1946 appears along with a text explaining it would be identical with the description of the boundaries of Kurdistan in this *Roja Nu* article in 1944.⁵⁰⁰

Kurdistan under Occupation

For the Bedirkhan brothers in the Levant, expressing pain for their "country" occupied by enemies was nothing new. In 1913 and then again in 1916, Kamuran and Jaladet had explained how the Bulgarians and British had ruined their fatherland (vatan), then Ottoman territories, during the Balkan Wars and the First World War.⁵⁰¹ Exiled in the Levant in the 1930s, they described in a similar way how the Turks ruined a fatherland (welat), that was now clearly designated as Kurdistan. To explain the "Kurdistan question" to an American journalist,

⁴⁹⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," pp. 447-449.

⁴⁹⁷ It was not a coincidence that Jaladet used his pen name Herekol Azizan in this article containing information about the Herekol Mountain in his ancestral homeland, Botan. Herekol Azizan, "Kardux u Welate Karduxan [Karduks and the Land of Karduks]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 32 (1 September 1941), pp. 4-7.

⁴⁹⁸ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁹⁹ "Kurdistan (1)," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 42 (20 March 1944), p. 1.

⁵⁰⁰ *Notes Concerning the Map of "Kurdistan,"* (25th May 1946); and O'Shea, *Trapped between the Map and Reality*, p. 178.

⁵⁰¹ Jaladet and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutunun*; and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanin-i Harb*, pp. 18-19.

Kamuran Bedirkhan describes a beautiful carpet and asks him if it would be good to cut it into pieces. He compares a Kurdistan divided into five pieces to that beautiful carpet.⁵⁰² Like other nationalists did before, Jaladet Bedirkhan compares Kurdistan to Poland in his letter to Mustafa Kemal in 1933.⁵⁰³ Kamuran implies Poland's division among Russian, Austrian and German Empires.⁵⁰⁴ Likewise, one finds articles on the Free French Movement, led by Charles de Gaulle, operating from the Great Britain to free Nazi occupied French territories during the Second World War years, and articles on Czechoslovakia, which had gained independence in 1918 "following five hundred years of foreign rule." However, after twenty five years the country again fell under the rule of enemies, their schools, magazines and newspaper were closed down.⁵⁰⁵

Kurdish nationalists' expression of the feeling of loss was another prevalent theme. A contributor to *Hawar* writes, "We are refugees. Our country became the property of others."⁵⁰⁶ Mustafa Ahmad Boti's poem on the Tigris River, which he wrote on the shores of Tigris River in Iraq is another good example. The Tigris River flows through Boti's homeland, from where he was separated for several years. Thus, he talks to the river as if a person bringing news of home: "Oh Tigris, we know that you come from Kurdistan." He describes the sad flow of the river, the water mixed with the blood of Kurdish youth from Turkey. He compared the river to Karbala, a city where the Prophet Muhammad's grandson was martyred in 680 by the rival Umayyad Dynasty.⁵⁰⁷ Kamuran, in one of his short stories, explains how "enemies" enjoy a park in

⁵⁰² "Pirsa Me [Our Question]," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 46 (1 May 1944), p. 1.

⁵⁰³ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p.39.

⁵⁰⁴ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 81.

⁵⁰⁵ "Cekoslovakya," *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 27 (8 November 1943), p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ Nezire Lewend, "Bi Xwale Xwe Ve [With Our Own Maternal Uncle]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), p. 3.

⁵⁰⁷ M. E. Boti, "Ava Dicle [The Tigris River]," *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 47 (25 July 1942), p. 5.

Diyarbakir which contains the unmarked grave of Shaykh Said, the leader of the 1925 rebellion executed by the Kemalist government.⁵⁰⁸ In a poem he writes, “Meadows and fields have been devastated/The villages and the palaces have become tombs/Nightingales are dead, roses are dead/.../The eyes of the brides are weeping/.../ Neither the herds remain, nor the shepherds/.../Neither a prince remains nor a sultan/.../The rose garden (gulistan) has become a grave yard (qevristan)/.../Jaybirds, owls, wolves, and eagles/Are smiling and happy.”⁵⁰⁹ A mullah expressed the same feelings and writes, “the country is devastated/once look at your country/it has become a place of foxes since the departure of the lions.”⁵¹⁰ A reader describes the gruesome situation of the country as “roads without passengers... chimneys without smoke...ruined villages...neither herds nor shepherds...creeks are full of foxes, the pastures are without lions...the weddings are without tambourine and dance...”⁵¹¹

Kurdish Alphabet, Language, Literature and Nationalism

In the Kurdish periodicals published in Syria and Lebanon, Kurdish language and literature were also presented as essential evidence for the individuality of Kurdish nation. As Jaladet Bedirkhan indicates in the first issue of *Hawar*, the fundamental goal of *Hawar* was to promote the Kurdish language. This would entail dissemination of a new Kurdish alphabet, creation of a standard dialect, studies on Kurdish grammar and vocabulary, the collection of Kurdish folk and classical literature, and the introduction of modern Kurdish writers and

⁵⁰⁸ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Dildiziya Guleqe,” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5 (20 July 1932), pp. 5-6.

⁵⁰⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Birin [The Wound],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 7 (25 July 1932), p. 3.

⁵¹⁰ Mela Ali, “Gulbanke Hisyariye [A Hymn for Awakening],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), p. 4.

⁵¹¹ Sebistan, “Ji Sebistan Ji Rastedar Re [From Sebistan to the Editor],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 49 (15 September 1942), p. 6.

poets.⁵¹² The emphasis on linguistic unity as the first step toward political unity and on the significance of language and literature as a national marker can easily be noticed in the pages of the Kurdish press.⁵¹³

Linguistic Nationalism: Learning Kurdish and Unlearning Turkish

The leading editors of the Kurdish press in the Levant, Kamuran and Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, had been Ottoman urban intellectuals, who naturally wrote and published in Ottoman Turkish, the lingua franca of the Empire. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire led the Bedirkhan brothers and other Kurdish nationalists to consider the importance of language. In fact, their interest in Kurdish culture, history, language, and folklore had started long before the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire. As explained earlier, there had been Kurdish associations and publications in Istanbul since the Young Turk Revolution. However, unlike the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals of that period, Kurdish nationalists in the Levant adopted an exclusively Kurdish stance. In this reorientation of Kurdish identity, the stress on Kurdish language would play a major role. Thus, the Bedirkhan brothers in the 1930s and 1940s ceased to publish in Turkish and Kurdish, an important tradition of the Kurdish periodicals of the Ottoman era. The Kurdish periodicals in the Levant would remain bilingual, but now in Kurdish and French.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² “Armanc, Awaye Xebat u Nivisandina Haware [The Goal, and the Form of the Work and Writing of *Hawar*,” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), pp. 1-2. I used the English translation of this article that Laura Shepherd kindly shared with me. Also see “Buts et Caracteres de la Revue *Hawar*,” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), pp. 7-8.

⁵¹³ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 59-60; and Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Merhele [The Stages],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1 Issue 1 (3 May 1943), pp. 1-2.

⁵¹⁴ There were rare exceptions. One was an article in Ottoman Turkish on the Kurdish alphabet in the first issue of *Hawar*, “Kurtce Alfabe [The Kurdish Alphabet],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 4; and the other was Jaladet’s 1933 open letter to Mustafa Kemal in Ottoman Turkish. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*.

A glimpse into the story of Bedirkhan family can explain their emphasis on language. Bedir Khan Beg, Jaladet and Kamuran's grandfather, had been the rebellious prince of Botan principality in Ottoman Kurdistan. On the occasion of his revolt in 1847 he had to communicate with Ottoman representatives in Persian as he could not speak Turkish.⁵¹⁵ It seems he had not felt it necessary to learn Turkish as he was living in a remote province of the Ottoman Empire. After the rebellion was suppressed, he and his family were uprooted from Ottoman Kurdistan. Bedirkhan Khan Beg was given an Ottoman official title (Pasha), incorporated into the Ottoman system and lived in exile (in Crete, Anatolia, and Syria). This naturally meant that he and his sons learned and spoke Turkish besides their native language. Some of Bedir Khan Pasha's sons spoke Turkish with a Kurdish accent.⁵¹⁶ As for the next generation, they were fully integrated into the Ottoman system, they lived in Istanbul, and they were fluent in Turkish. Infact, the British Major Noel, who traveled through a part of Kurdistan along with the Bedirkhan brothers in 1919, noted in his diary that Kamuran did not know Kurdish.⁵¹⁷ So, not only did language become a means and symbol of their integration or assimilation into the Ottoman system, their native language, Kurdish, did not have a primary importance for them until the collapse of that system.⁵¹⁸ In 1932, Kamuran described the struggle for linguistic survival as a law of nature, a

⁵¹⁵ Ahmet Lutfî Efendi , *Vak'anüvîs Ahmed Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi [The History of the Court Chronicler Ahmed Lütfi Efendi]* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1999), pp. 1246-12147, cited in M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 35, note. 66.

⁵¹⁶ Khalil Rahmi Bedirkhan whom Jaladet introduced in *Hawar* on the occasion of his death was a great example. "Xelil Rami Bedir-Xan," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), p. 6.

⁵¹⁷ Edward William Charles Noel, *Diary of Major Noel on Special Duty in Kurdistan* (Baghdad, 1920), p.55.

⁵¹⁸ Ironically, Kamuran, who had not known Kurdish in 1919, would play a major role in the Kurdish cultural movement in the Levant centered on the revival of the Kurdish language. In 1950, he would become a professor of Kurdish language and culture at the Sorbonne University in Paris.

struggle in which languages try to destroy each other. He added that many Kurds could not read and write in their own language. He was not pessimistic though, for he encouraged the readers to learn and teach Kurdish language.⁵¹⁹

The Kurdish press strongly urged readers to not speak the language of the enemy.⁵²⁰ In his address to Kurdish youth Jaladet writes “they [Arabs, Persians, and Turks] want to cut out your tongue and put their own tongue in your mouth so that you cannot express your Kurdishness.”⁵²¹ Language, along with religion, was presented two means for the subordinated nations to preserve their national identity. Jaladet indicates that thanks to their religious differences with the Turks, the Christian Armenians and Greeks preserved their national identity and gained independence eventually. As for the Kurds, who were under the control of three coreligionist nations [Turks, Arabs, and Persians], language remains the only means for national independence.⁵²² Thus, readers are reminded that “your language is your existence.”⁵²³ They are also warned to avoid foreign words in Kurdish as much as they can and use their Kurdish equivalents.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Di Dora Hevexistina Zmanan De [On the Conflict of the Languages],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 3 (15 June 1932), pp. 1-3.

⁵²⁰ Lawe Findi, “Hisyarname [Warning],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p. 3.

⁵²¹ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Xwe Binas...[Get to Know Yourself...],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), pp. 1-6.

⁵²² Nivisanoqa Haware, “Heyineqe Yeqsali [A One Year Old Existence],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-3.

⁵²³ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Ji Ciroken Yewnanistana Kevin: Cira Zanine [From the Stories of Ancient Greece: The Light of Knowledge],” *Ronahi*, Year 4, Issue 28 (March 1945), p. 22.

⁵²⁴ Laura Shepherd indicates that Jaladet Bedirkhan was more moderate than the current Kurdish linguists in terms of purification in language. Even though he worked to revive the old words, he continued to use words that have an Arabic root such as “cimle,” meaning sentence. Current Kurdish linguists prefer a pure Kurdish word, “hevok” to “cimle.” Laura Shepherd, *Advanced Kurmanji Reader* (Hyattsville, Md: Dunwoody Press, 2009), p. 246. Also see “Dersxane [The

An Aryan Language Denied

The policies of some of the newly established states in the Middle East in the 1920s and 1930s also made reviving the Kurdish language and developing educational materials in Kurdish a top priority for Kurdish nationalists. A relative freedom for Kurdish existed in Iraq, the Soviet territories, and in Syria, but this was not the case in Iran and Turkey.⁵²⁵ Under the authoritarian rule of Reza Shah, the use of Kurdish was not allowed in Iran. The short period of freedom for the Kurdish language with the foundation of the autonomous Kurdish republic in Mahabad ended after less than a year when the Iranian army crushed the Kurdish republic and banned Kurdish again.⁵²⁶ In Turkey under the Kemalist regime, Kurdish was officially banned in public places

Classroom], “*Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 17 (6 March 1933), pp. 2-5; “*Cuhaba Dayike* [The Answer of A Mother],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), p. 3; and “*Diktor Ehmed Beyreqdar* [Dr. Ahmed Bayraktar],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), pp. 7-8.

⁵²⁵ In fact, in Iraq and the Soviet Caucasia, Kurdish was officially recognized. In 1918, British authorities in Mesopotamia introduced Kurdish [Sulaymaniya sub-dialect of Sorani] in place of Turkish as the written official language of the Kurdish local administration centered in the city of Sulaymaniya. In 1926, the British mandate authorities assured the use of Kurdish as an official local language in Iraq. As Kurdish was an official language, it was used as a language of instruction in schools too. The Soviet Union also officially allowed the use of Kurdish in education in the Soviet Armenia. A Latin alphabet was created in 1929 for Kurdish which was later replaced with a Cyrillic one, and books and periodicals were published in Kurdish. In Mandatory Syria, the use of Kurdish was “free but not official.” Despite petitions by the Kurds as early as 1928, the Mandate authorities did not give permission for the education in Kurdish in the public schools due to pressure from Syrian Arab nationalists and so as to not harm the relations with the Turkish Government. However, publications in Kurdish, independent initiatives to teach Kurdish with night classes and in religious schools were allowed by the French. Amir Hassanpour, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Michael Chyet, “The Non-Education of Kurds: A Kurdish Perspective,” *International Review of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 4, The Education of Minorities (1996), pp. 367-379; Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, pp. 103-118 and 136-143; C. J. Edmonds, “Suggestions for the Use of Latin Characters in the Writing of Kurdish,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1 (January 1931), pp. 27-9; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 468; and Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*, pp. 21, 26 and 29; and notes 37-9 on page 146.

⁵²⁶ Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, pp. 125-132.

and in education in March 1924.⁵²⁷ Since the exiled Kurdish nationalists in the Levant were originally from the Kurdish territories of Turkey, they closely followed the new policies of the Kemalist regime in Turkey, which denied the existence of Kurds as a nation. In Kemalist publications, nationalist scholars claimed that Kurdish was not an authentic language. One example was an article by Kadri Kemal entitled “The Language Question in the East of Anatolia” in *Ülkü*, the semi-official Kemalist magazine. Kemal indicates that more than fifty percent of the people living in the east and southeast of Anatolia speak languages other than pure Turkish, namely “the primitive languages of Kurmanji and Zaza [the two dialects of Kurdish].” He claims that those people are “the mountain Turks.”⁵²⁸ In this logic, Kemal posits the Kurmanji and Zaza speakers in Turkey are racially Turkish and the languages they speak are actually “the two corrupted dialects of Turkish.”⁵²⁹

It is obvious that the Kurdish nationalists in the Levant read what Kemalist scholars like Kadri Kemal wrote about the Kurds and the Kurdish language. In his 1933 open letter to Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), Jaladet criticizes the ban on speaking Kurdish for the people who could not speak Turkish. He also tried to refute the Kemalist Turkish historical, linguistic, and sociological claims denying the existence of a Kurdish nation and language. Mentioning Ataturk’s interest in linguistics, Jaladet devotes several pages of his long letter to introduce the uniqueness and richness of the Kurdish language. He went so far as to pick a Turkish book, *Kurtler Hakkında*

⁵²⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, pp. 191-192.

⁵²⁸ He further explained they were originally the Shiite Turkomans from Central Anatolia who immigrated to Eastern Anatolia to avoid the cruelty of the Ottomans. They hid their identity because of the harsh treatments of the Turkomans at the hands of the Ottomans and the Timurids. They mixed with Shafi Kurds and spoke their language.

⁵²⁹ To prove his point, he referred to a Kurdish-Russian-German dictionary, in which of the 8307 words 3080 are listed as “old Turkish.” Given this, he wondered if the remainders were not also from Turkish roots. Kadri Kemal, “Anadolunun Dogusunda Dil Meselesi [The Language Question in the East of Anatolia],” *Ülkü* (June 1933), pp. 404-407.

Tetebbuat (Analyses on the Kurds) and critically review it. Jaladet, in fact, went back to the works on which the authors of this book refers; a book on Kurds by a “German scholar,” Dr. Fritz and a Kurdish-French dictionary by M. Auguste Jaba.⁵³⁰ With detailed examples and explanations, Jaladet refutes the claims that the Kurdish vocabulary is mostly a collection of Arabic, Persian and Turkish words, and that Kurdish has no proper verbs, considered the bases of a language. In fact, Jaladet not only refutes the Kemalist claims that an individual language called Kurdish did not exist, but also argues that Kurdish is ahead of Turkish in linguistic development.⁵³¹ Moreover, in response to a reader’s question, Jaladet indicates that Aryan languages originated in Kurdistan and from there spread to the rest of the world. Besides their common origin and similar grammar structures, he adds, Kurdish and other Aryan languages have similar words. He points to a lot of cognates to demonstrate his point.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Later historical studies would show that that this book cited by Kemalists had actually been written by Habil Adem (with the fake name of Dr. Fritz) in 1918 in the Young Turk Period. On its cover, it was written that the book was an Ottoman Turkish translation of a work published by the Oriental Institute in Berlin. This strategy of letting “a Western scholar” confirming the nationalist claims against the individuality of the Kurdish nation should have been chosen to be more convincing. The book, later, would be used by the Kemalist scholars. Please see Christopher Houston, “An Anti-History of A Non-People: Kurds, Colonialism, and Nationalism in the history of Anthropology,” *Journal Of The Royal Anthropological Institute*, Volume 15, Issue 1 (March 2009), pp. 26-29. M. Auguste Jaba, *Dictionnaire Kurde Francais* (St. Petersburg: Commissionnaire de l’Academie Imperiale Des Sciences, 1879).

⁵³¹ Jaladet presents the classification of languages into three types: the most primitive type was monosyllabic; secondly agglutinative type that is most of the world languages including Ural-Altaic languages such as Turkish; and finally the most developed flexion type including Semitic and Indo-European languages like Kurdish. Moreover, he indicates that unlike Turkish, Kurdish like German is very prolific and very quick to make up words for the new objects. He also adds that Kurdish, unlike Turkish, has gender and definitive and indefinite forms. Jaladet finally adds that even the Turkish nationalist of Kurdish origin Ziya Gokalp, “the prophet of Turkishness,” argued that Kurdish is the richest of the Eastern languages including Arabic. Jaladet Ali Bedir Khan, *Mektub*, pp. 55-91.

⁵³² One example he gave was the word “star” which is “ster” in Kurdish, “star” in English, “stern” in German, “astre” in French, “astron” in Greek and “stella” in Italian and “sitare” in Persian. To explain the same point to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he gave the example of “neh” in Kurdish, “neuf” in French, “neun” in German, and “nine” in English. “Stuna Xwendevanan [The

Jaladet Bedirkhan's role model for reviving Kurdish was Eliezer Ben Yehuda (1858-1922), the Sorbonne educated Jewish lexicographer and newspaper editor from Lithuania. In an article entitled "a man, and a language" Jaladet writes that the Jews were not only without a country and government but also without a language and thus speaking the languages of other people. Ben Yehuda revived the Hebrew language through creating a dictionary and publishing a newspaper in Hebrew.⁵³³ In fact, the Ottoman Kurdish elite's interest in the Kurdish language had started in the late 19th century in the context of cultural awakening movements of the Empire's various ethnic communities. The Kurdish educated elite later regarded it as a political as well as cultural necessity when the collapse of the Ottoman Empire became certain toward the end of the First World War.⁵³⁴

The Kurdish nationalists exiled in the Levant wanted to create a standard written language for the nation they imagined. They were determined to make Kurdish more than a spoken language.⁵³⁵ Thus, Jaladet Bedirkhan introduced a new alphabet replacing the Arabo-Persian characters with Latin ones, prepared a grammar for Kurdish, and compiled a dictionary in the pages of the Kurdish press. The publication of a Kurmanji Kurdish grammar and a

Column of the Readers],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 31 (1 August 1941), pp. 10-11; and Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 72. Ironically, what Jaladet was doing sounded very similar to the attempts by the Turkish linguists in the 1930s and 1940s to prove the Sun Language Theory according to which Turkish is the origin of all the languages. As an evidence for this theory, a Turkish linguist gave the example of the Turkish word “dört” meaning “four” and compared it with the French word “quatre.” Samih Fırat, “Türkçe ve Diğer Lisanlar Arasında İrtibatlar [The Relations between Turkish and Other languages],” *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi [The First Turkish Historical Congress]* (Ankara, 1932), p. 59.

⁵³³ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Zilamek u Zimanek [A Man and A Language],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 40 (28 February 1942), pp. 4-6.

⁵³⁴ Kreyenbroek, “On the Kurdish Language,” p. 69.

⁵³⁵ Nivisanoqa Haware,” Heyineqe Yeqsali [A One Year Old Existence],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-3.

dictionary in the pages of *Hawar* started with the 27th issue.⁵³⁶ Later, Jaladet published a grammar book for children entitled *Sinemkhan's Book (Kiteba Sinemxane)* so that the children like his daughter, for whom the book is named, could learn the grammar of their own language. In 1941, the French Kurdologist Roger Lescot would cooperate with Jaladet to write a Kurdish grammar in French that was published in 1970, long after Jaladet's death.⁵³⁷

The new alphabet, with twenty-eight Latin characters, appeared in the first issue of *Hawar*. Even though there were previous attempts to Latinize the Kurdish alphabet,⁵³⁸ Jaladet Bedirkhan's version, with minor changes, would be the standard alphabet for the Kurmanji

⁵³⁶ Xwediye Haware [The Owner of Hawar], "Se Tarixen Haware: 15 Gulan 1932, 18 Tebax 1935, 15 Nisan 1941 [The Three Histories of Hawar: 15 May 1932, 18 August 1935, 15 April 1941]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 4-5; "Bingehen Gramera Kurdmanci [Fundamentals of Kurmanji Grammar]," and "Ferhengoka Haware [The Glossary of *Hawar*]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 11-2.

⁵³⁷ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, and Roger Lescot, *Grammaire Kurde (Dialecte kurmandji)* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1970).

⁵³⁸ Europeans had used the Latin alphabet to transcribe Kurdish literary and folkloric texts as early as the 18th Century. However their intention was not to create a Latin alphabet for Kurdish but just to transliterate the Kurdish texts. In the late Ottoman Period, in the late 19th and early 20th Century, Ottoman Kurdish intellectuals, inspired by their Ottoman Turkish counterparts, voiced the necessity for a reform in Kurdish language in the Ottoman Kurdish Press. Intellectuals such as Abdullah Jawdat, Salih Bedirkhan, Khalil Hayali, and Muhammad Amin entertained ideas including the adoption of the Latin alphabet for the Kurdish language. Later, after the First World War, the Department of Education in Iraq under the British control introduced a Latin alphabet for Kurdish through a booklet entitled *The First Kurdish Reader [Kitab-i Awalamin-i Qiraat]* prepared by the two Kurdish school masters and two British officers and published in 1920. British policy to encourage Kurdish nationalism was later abandoned when the British settled the Mosul question with Turkey; and the Iraqi Arab Government founded by the British was interested in integrating the Kurds and Kurdish areas into the new Iraqi Arab state under the British Mandate. The British no longer worked to create a Latin alphabet for Kurdish. Later, however, there would be private attempts by the Kurdish intellectuals to Latinize the alphabet. In the Soviet Armenia Latin characters were adopted for Kurmanji Kurdish in 1929 and used in schools and publications until 1939. However, like in the case of British in Iraq, for political reasons the Soviet authorities replaced the Latin alphabet with a Cyrillic alphabet ten years later. Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, pp. 104-107 and 369-76; Edmonds, "Suggestions for the Use of Latin Character," pp. 27-46.

speaking Kurds living in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and Europe.⁵³⁹ The first twenty-three issues of *Hawar* had two parts, one in Arabic script and the other in the new Latin alphabet. With the 24th issue, the magazine was published only in the Latin alphabet.⁵⁴⁰ Jaladet proclaimed that the new script freed Kurdish from “the suzerainty of other nations’ alphabets.”⁵⁴¹ It is interesting that he repeatedly calls the Arabic script in which Kurdish had been written “a foreign alphabet,” with the Latin characters presented as “our own letters.”⁵⁴² Jaladet argued that the Arabic alphabet was insufficient for Kurdish because it lacked some vowels.⁵⁴³ A contributor to *Hawar* agreed that since Kurdish is an Aryan, Indo-European language, it should be written in the alphabet used by other Aryan language speaking nations.⁵⁴⁴ The Kurdish alphabet designed by Jaladet was not without flaws. In the 24th issue of *Hawar*, the editor announced a change in the alphabet and swapped the letters “k” and “q.”⁵⁴⁵ For example, the adjective “Kurdish” which had been written as “Qurdi” until then would now be written as “Kurdi.”⁵⁴⁶

⁵³⁹ For example, \ddot{x} used as the equivalent of the Arabic letter $\dot{\text{g}}$, and $\dot{\text{h}}$ as the equivalent of the Arabic letter ح would later be dropped out. Bedirkhan and Lescot, *Grammaire Kurde*, pp. 6-7; and Shepherd, *Advanced Kurmanji Reader*, p. 244.

⁵⁴⁰ *Hawar* (Latin and Arabic Alphabet Sections), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932).

⁵⁴¹ “Hevi Ji Xwendevanan Ji Bona Elfabeya Qurdi [A Request from the Readers for the Kurdish Alphabet],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 6; and Xwediye Haware [The Owner of Hawar], “Se Tarixen Haware: 15 Gulan 1932, 18 Tebax 1935, 15 Nisan 1941 [The Three Histories of Hawar: 15 May 1932, 18 August 1935, 15 April 1941],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁴² See for example “Diwana Mele [Anthology of the Mullah],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), p. 4.

⁵⁴³ One example is the letter “i” [like the sound “e” in number]. So, for example, the Kurdish words “misilman” and “Sileman” which include the Kurdish sound “i” could not be written properly in Arabic alphabet. “Elfabeya Qurdi -14 [The Kurdish Alphabet-14],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), p. 3.

⁵⁴⁴ “Ez u Hawar [I and Hawar],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 9 (30 September 1932), p. 6.

⁵⁴⁵ *Hawar*, Year 2, Issue 24 (1 April 1934), p.1.

⁵⁴⁶ Herekol Azizan [Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan], “Beriya Botan [Yearning for Botan],” *Hawar*, Year 3, Issue 25 (19 August 1934), pp. 2-3.

As the Kurds were “a nation without schools,” the Kurdish press encouraged the literate to teach the new letters to others. Jaladet regarded *Hawar* as “the field of the Kurdish language,” a means to spread the Kurdish alphabet among the Kurds.⁵⁴⁷ The first two books published in 1932 by the Hawar press were on the Kurdish alphabet.⁵⁴⁸ It is emphasized that learning the new alphabet is very easy even for illiterate people.⁵⁴⁹ To underscore the simplicity of the alphabet, Jaladet Bedirkhan presented Jamil Hajo, a twenty-one year old illiterate whom he met in the Kurdish quarter of Damascus in 1930 as model. In one week, according to Jaladet, Jamil learned how to read and write the new alphabet and he even published a short article in *Hawar*.⁵⁵⁰

While novel in its own right, many scholars agree that Jaladet Bedirkhan, for practical reasons, imitated Ataturk’s 1928 alphabet reform in Turkey. As most Kurmanji speaking Kurds were living in Turkey, Jaladet thought that it would be easier for Kurds learning the Latin alphabet in Turkish schools to learn Kurdish written with similar characters.⁵⁵¹ Roger Lescot, who was a close friend of Jaladet, confirms this influence.⁵⁵² In his own version of the story, Jaladet partially admits the Turkish influence, but also dates the idea to the year 1919. He writes that during their journey through a part of Kurdistan British Major Noel wrote Kurdish with Latin letters and Jaladet noticed the ease of writing and reading them. Thus he decided to create

⁵⁴⁷ “Dersxane [The Classroom],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 17 (6 March 1933), pp. 2-5.

⁵⁴⁸ *The System of the Kurdish Alphabet [Rezana Elfabeya Qurdi]*; and *The Pages of the Kurdish Alphabet [Rupelnine Elfabe]*. Later Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan would publish *The Kurdish Alphabet [Elfabeya Kurdi]* in 1937; and *Reading Kurdish [Xwendina Kurdi]* and *My Alphabet [Elfabeya Min]* in 1938.

⁵⁴⁹ Xwediye Haware, “Se Tarixen Haware: 15 Gulan 1932, 18 Tebax 1935, 15 Nisan 1941 [The Three Histories of Hawar: 15 May 1932, 18 August 1935, 15 April 1941],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁵⁰ “Qurdmanc Kenc in Le Nezan in [Kurmanches are good but ignorant],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 7 (25 August 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁵¹ Kreyenbroek, “On the Kurdish Language,” p. 73.

⁵⁵² Bedirkhan and Lescot, Introduction to *Grammaire Kurde*, pp. v-vi.

an alphabet with the help of his knowledge of Russian, Greek and French. He in fact created a thirty-six letter alphabet and a dictionary which was later seized by a Turkish court in 1925. Jaladet continued his alphabet project when he was a doctoral student in Germany. In order to make it easier for Kurds living in Turkey, he later modified his alphabet and made it similar to the Latin characters adopted by the Turks in 1928.⁵⁵³ Despite the link to Kemalist language reform, the Turkish authorities banned all books designed to teach the new Kurdish alphabet.⁵⁵⁴ Not only the Kurdish alphabet but also the Circassian alphabet with Latin characters also designed in Damascus was officially banned in Turkey in 1932 [See Appendix, Image 5].⁵⁵⁵

Interestingly, European Kurdologists dedicated themselves to the Latinization of the Kurdish alphabet. Besides the French Orientalists in the Levant namely, Roger Lescot, Pierre Rondot and Thomas Bois, the British Officer C. J. Edmonds in Iraq and the Russian scholar Vladimir Minorsky wrote articles advocating the Latin alphabet for Kurdish and experimented with characters. Edmonds argued that the Arabic script is entirely unsuitable to Kurdish.⁵⁵⁶ Minorsky explained that Semitic alphabets disregard vowels and were thus unsuitable for languages with a developed vocalic system. He concluded that the Latin alphabet should be utilized in Kurdish.⁵⁵⁷ Father Thomas Bois, a Dominican missionary who was very active in the Levant during the Kurdish cultural movement, would later write in 1965 that Arabic characters

⁵⁵³ “Pesgotingeq [A Foreword],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁵⁴ See the official document in the Turkish Prime Ministry Republican Archives (Basbakanlik Cumhuriyet Arsivleri) banning the books published in Damascus to teach the new Kurdish alphabet, *Reading Kurdish* [Xwendine Kurdi] and *My Alphabet* [Elfabeya Min] : BCA 030-18-01-02-121-88-1, 8 September 1949, BCA 030-0-018-001-002-128-29-13, 14 April 1952.

⁵⁵⁵ BCA 030-0-18-01-02-29-44-016, 9 June 1932.

⁵⁵⁶ C. J. Edmonds, “Suggestions for the Use of Latin Characters,” pp. 27-46.

⁵⁵⁷ V. Minorsky, “Remarks on the Romanized Kurdish Alphabet,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No 3 (July 1933), pp. 643-650.

are inconvenient for Kurdish.⁵⁵⁸ Pierre Rondot argued that Latin characters are suitable for Kurdish and easy to learn quickly for illiterate Kurds.⁵⁵⁹ Referring to a book written in 1826, Rondot applauded the adoption of the Latin alphabet as “a great and happy moral revolution capable of regenerating Asia.”⁵⁶⁰ He mentioned not only Kurds but also “oriental republics of the U.S.S.R.” (including the Kurds in Armenia and Azeri Turks), and Kemalist Turkey. He added that abandoning the *traditional* [emphasis is mine] Arabic characters might not be a reasonable option for the Arabs because of Islamic reasons and for Persians because of their immense written literary treasure. As for the Kurds, since their language remained oral for so many centuries and since the Arabic alphabet is artificial for Kurdish, there was no reason not to adopt Latin. Moreover, since the immense majority of developed nations use it, adoption of Latin characters would make the relations between them and Kurds easier.⁵⁶¹

As in the case of the Turkish alphabet reform in Turkey, not all Kurds welcomed the adoption of the Latin alphabet for Kurdish. Some religious circles did not like the idea of giving up the Arabic letters in which Quran is revealed. Under such pressure, Jaladet Bedirkhan cooperated with nationalist mullahs and shaykhs. One example was Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi who gave a religious legal approval (*fatwa*) to Jaladet in response to a direct query. Shaykh Garisi answers that God conveyed his rules with words and not with letters or figures. In fact, the shape of the letters in the first copy of Quran was different from the current letters in the Quran.

⁵⁵⁸ Thomas Bois, *Comment écrire le Kurde?* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965) [An extract from *Al-Machriq* (May-June, 1965)].

⁵⁵⁹ Pierre Rondot, *Publication kurde en caractères latins: comptes rendus* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1933) [An extract from *Bulletin D'Etudes Orientales de L'Institut Francais De Damas*, Volume II].

⁵⁶⁰ C. F. Volney, *L'alphabet Europeen Applique aux Langues Asiatiques* (Paris, Frpment-Parmantier, 1826), p. xviii.

⁵⁶¹ Pierre Rondot, *Trois essais de latinisation de l'alphabet kurde : Iraq, Syrie, U.R.S.S.* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1936.) [An extract from *Bulletin D'Etudes Orientales de L'Institut Francais De Damas*, Volume V].

Garisi gives Bedirkhan permission to find the best letters for the Kurdish language. Jaladet indicates that shaykh Garisi's own religious students learn the Latin letters.⁵⁶² If the new letters were a sign of progress for the nationalists, keeping the Arabic letters was a matter of faith for many other conservative Kurds.⁵⁶³ A reader from Syria writes that the shaykhs in the city of Amuda say those who befriend nationalists like Jegerkhwin are "Kurds," as opposed to the "Kurmanjes" who are on the path of religion [Islam] and do not read magazines in Latin characters.⁵⁶⁴

Unity of Alphabet

The Kurdish nationalists in the Levant were also concerned with the unity of the Kurdish language since Kurds spoke different dialects. Jaladet indicates that as in the case of the unification of Germany, the unity of Kurds will start with the unity of language and the unity of language will start with unity of the letters.⁵⁶⁵ *Hawar* introduced the new letters, and the next step was to convince Sorani speaking Kurds in Iraq to adopt the new Kurdish alphabet designed

⁵⁶² Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "Şex Evidirehmane Garisi Cu Rehmete [Sheikh Evidirehmane Garisi Passed Way]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), pp.1-3.

⁵⁶³ "Xwe Ji Bave Xwe Vedizi, Terka Gund u Mala Xwe Da Ko Hini Xwendin u Nivisandina Zimana Xwe Bibe [He Hid Himself from His Father, Left His Village and Family so that He Learns How to Read and Write His Own Language]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 7 (1 October 1942), p. 7.

⁵⁶⁴ Bashir Hasani, "Re Ji Ber Winda," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p. 32. Some of *Hawar*'s readers from the Kurdish madrasas, however, found the new alphabet insufficient for other reasons. They claimed that the new alphabet lacked letters for some sounds. Jaladet, however, wrote "our readers who studied in the madrasas and who are under the influence of Arabic alphabetical system are saying that in Kurdish too [as in Arabic] besides ق there are two kinds of ك." It seems they also believed that in Kurdish as in Arabic there should be two kinds of s sounds [س and ص] and two kinds of t sounds [ت and ط]. "Elfabeya Qurdi -15 [The Kurdish Alphabet-15]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 23 (25 July 1933), p. 5. This question namely if every sound in Kurdish needs a separate letter was asked by Kurdish linguists not only in the Levant but also in Iraq. Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, p. 357.

⁵⁶⁵ *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 3 (15 May 1932), pp. 3-4.

by Jaladet Bedirkhan. There are articles in Sorani Kurdish in *Hawar*, *Ronahi*, and *Roja Nu* written in Latin characters. The editorial in *Hawar*'s fifth issue on the Kurdish literature by Jaladet Bedirkhan with his pseudonym, Hevinde Sori, is a good example.⁵⁶⁶ As a response to readers' letters from Iraqi Kurdish cities, the editor of *Ronahi* informed them the magazine was willing to publish articles in any dialect as long as they are written "in our Kurdish letters."⁵⁶⁷

In fact, Jaladet tried to cooperate with an Iraqi Kurdish intellectual, Tawfiq Wahbi, to create a common alphabet with Latin characters.⁵⁶⁸ Wahbi (1891-1984), originally from the city of Sulaymaniya in Iraqi Kurdistan, was a former Ottoman officer, linguist, and a government official in Iraq. Jaladet actually had met him in Damascus and agreed to work on a common alphabet. After Tawfiq Wahbi had returned to Iraq, Jaladet wrote to him four times but did not hear from him, probably because Jaladet's letters did not reach him. For this reason, he waited for four months to prevent duality in the Kurdish alphabet. However, as he did not hear from Wahbi and did not want to wait any longer, he went ahead and published *Hawar* with his own Latin alphabet. Jaladet expected Tawfiq Wahbi and others to focus on and advance the alphabet that *Hawar* introduced.⁵⁶⁹ In many articles in the Kurdish press, Jaladet attempts to convince the

⁵⁶⁶ There is no biographical information available on Hevinde Sori. From the content of the articles we can conclude that it was another pseudonym used by Jaladet to have made the new letters known to the Sorani Kurdish readers. Hevinde Sori (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), "Edebiyata Qurdi [The Kurdish Literature]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5(15 July 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁶⁷ "Resbelek Ji Xort u Mirzayen Kurdistan Nivro li Iraqe [A Note to the Young People and Adults of the Southern Kurdistan in Iraq]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 4 (1 July 1942), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁶⁸ For a comparison of the Latin alphabets by Tawfiq Wahbi, Jaladet Bedirkhan and the Soviet Kurds see Rondot *Trois essais de latinisation*, p. 28.

⁵⁶⁹ Xweyiye Haware [The Owner of Hawar], "Li Ser Yekitiya Zimane Kurdi [On the Unity of the Kurdish Language]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), pp. 6-8. We do not know Wahbi's version of the miscommunication between the two, but he presented his own Latin alphabet in a book entitled *Traditional Literacy [Xöndewari Baw]* in 1933. The conservative and Communist Kurdish circles in Iraqi Kurdistan opposed to Latin

Iraqi Kurds and especially the editors of the Iraqi Kurdish periodicals to adopt the new Kurdish alphabet.⁵⁷⁰ Yet, the French orientalist were not happy with Iraqi Kurds' loyalty to "the Arabic characters which fits their language very poorly."⁵⁷¹

Unity of Dialects

As explained earlier, the principal dialects of Kurdish language are Kurmanji, Sorani, Zaza and Gorani. The two primary Kurdish dialects are Kurmanji, spoken by most Northern Kurds, and Sorani, spoken by most Southern Kurds.⁵⁷² From a linguistic and grammatical perspective Sorani and Kurmanji differ as much from each other as English and German, and they can be more properly called as "languages."⁵⁷³ Even though it was not as intense as the "conflict of languages," described by Kamuran Bedirkhan earlier, there was an attempt in Iraqi Kurdistan to assimilate Kurmanji speaking Kurds in the Bahdinan region into Sorani in 1931, which can be described as a conflict of dialects.⁵⁷⁴ The Kurdish nationalists exiled in the Levant mainly represented regions inhabited by Kurmanji speakers.⁵⁷⁵ The Kurdish periodicals and almost all other publications were in Kurmanji and French. However, as the Kurdish nationalists promoted the unity of the dialects they welcomed articles in other dialects and especially in

alphabet. Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, pp. 373-374; and <http://kurdishacademy.org/?q=node/88>.

⁵⁷⁰ "Nesreyen Kurdi [Kurdish Publications] Gelawej," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 8-9; "Sahir u Edebiyata Kurdi, Refiq Hilmi [Kurdish Poetry and Literature by Rafiq Hilmi]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 34 (15 October 1941), p. 15

⁵⁷¹ Roger Lescot, "La Presse Kurde, *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943), p. 4

⁵⁷² Shepherd, *Advanced Kurmanji Reader*, p. 244.

⁵⁷³ Kreyenbroek, "On the Kurdish Language," p. 71; and Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁷⁴ Shepherd, *Advanced Kurmanji Reader*, p. 244 and 247-256; and Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, pp. 156-8.

⁵⁷⁵ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 18.

Sorani.⁵⁷⁶ Jaladet Bedirkhan refuses the idea that Kurmanji and Sorani could be classified as two different languages. In an article in *Rohani*, he indicates that sometimes dialects of a language differ so much from each other that they have different grammar structures. Despite those differences they are still considered one language.⁵⁷⁷

Creating a standard dialect was one of the major goals of the Kurdish press in the Levant. In order to popularize this cause and encourage the readers to cooperate with them, a questionnaire was published in *Hawar* in early 1933. Readers were asked to send answers to the following questions: 1) How can the Kurdish language be purified? 2) How can the dialects of Kurdish be brought together to create a dialect through which all the Kurds could understand each other? 3) How can Kurdish progress and move forward?⁵⁷⁸ On June 5, 1933, *Hawar* began to publish the responses. Unfortunately, the Iraqi government banned the entry of magazine into the country, so only one response arrived from Iraq. This was frustrating since a major goal of the questionnaire was to hear from Iraqi Kurds and especially those who spoke Sorani. The Iraqi Kurdish reader proposed the foundation of a language association to compile the Kurdish words related to science, art, government affairs, publication of books, magazines and newspapers to disseminate the new words, and combination of Tawfiq Wahbi's and Jaladet Bedirkhan's alphabets.⁵⁷⁹ Another reader suggested the replacement of all the Turkish and Arabic words in Kurdish with their Kurdish equivalents, selection of a dialect for reading and writing, and putting

⁵⁷⁶ Some Sorani writers and poets published in the Kurdish press in the Levant were Goran, Huzni Mukriyani, Faiq Beqes, Pirot, Haji Qadriye Koyi, Sayid Husaynzade Abdulkhaliq Asiri, and Mamosta Ismail Haqqi.

⁵⁷⁷ "Zarava: Zaravaye Cizire [The Sub-Dialects: The Sub-Dialect of Jazira]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁷⁸ *Hawar* and Hevinde Sori (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), "Sehiti Le Bo Yeqitiya Zmane Qurdi [Announcement for the Unity of the Kurdish Language]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 16 (17 February 1933), pp. 1-2; and (Arabic Alphabet Section), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷⁹ Laweki Kurd, "Sehiti Le Bo Yeqitiya Zmane Qurdi [Announcement for the Unity of the Kurdish Language]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 21 (5 June 1933), pp. 1-2.

words from other dialects into that selected one.⁵⁸⁰ Osman Sabri suggested the unity of the Kurdish alphabet, formation of a scientific society, and publications like a big dictionary.⁵⁸¹ Jegerkhwin suggested the formation of an association consisting of scholars representing all the Kurdish dialects, selection a light and nice Kurdish dialect spoken by many Kurds to replace all the other dialects, and reinforcement of the standard dialect with the vocabulary from the others.⁵⁸² A reader from Cairo suggested publication of three books in all dialects so that educated Kurds could learn vocabulary from other dialects, and encourage other educated young Kurds to learn a dialect besides his own.⁵⁸³ The Kurdish nationalists' attempt to create a standard dialect did not yield any result and the issue continues to be a major issue for Kurdish nationalists to this day.

Sub-dialects of Kurmanji

The Kurdish press in the Levant was especially concerned about the sub-dialects of Kurmanji.⁵⁸⁴ The sub-dialects were seen as a sign of richness and samples for various dialects of Kurmanji (such as Hewerkan, and Jazira-Botan) were published in the Kurdish periodicals.⁵⁸⁵ However, the presentation of sub-dialects served to undercut attempts to present a unified Kurdish language. In *Ronahi*, Jaladet praised the Iraqi Kurdish magazine, *Gelawej*, for

⁵⁸⁰ Eli Seydoye Gewri, "Sehiti Le Bo Zmane Qurdi 2 [Announcement for the Kurdish Language 2]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 22 (1 July 1933), p. 1.

⁵⁸¹ Osman Sabri, "Sehiti 3 [Announcement 3]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 22 (1 July 1933), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸² Jegerkhwin, "Sehiti Le Bo Zmane Qurdi 4 [Announcement for the Kurdish Language 4]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 23 (23 July 1933), p. 6.

⁵⁸³ Lace Hene, "Sehiti Le Bo Zmane Qurdi 5 [Announcement for the Kurdish Language 5]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 23 (23 July 1933), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁸⁴ "Zarava: Zaravaye Cizire [The Sub-Dialects: The Sub-Dialect of Jazira]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁸⁵ "Zarava: Zaravaye Cizire [The Sub-Dialects: The Sub-Dialect of Jazira]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), pp. 14-15; and "Ehmede Zeydan," *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp. 4-6.

publicizing *Ronahi* and *Roja Nu* in Iraq; however, he disagreed with the presentation of *Ronahi* and *Roja Nu* as the magazines in “Botan Kurdish.”⁵⁸⁶ He clarified that even though the owners of the magazines [he and his brother Kamuran] were from the Botan region, there is nothing called “Botan Kurdish.” Then, he clarified the differences between concepts of language, dialect, and sub-dialect. This notice is very significant to show how Jaladet was aware of the fact that favoring one sub-dialect of Kurmanji might cause further divisions within Kurdish, which is already divided among three major dialects.⁵⁸⁷

V. Kurdish Literature and Authors: Folk, Classical and Modern

Putting Kurdish literature into print was an important function of “the Kurdish cultural renaissance movement” in the Levant.⁵⁸⁸ The Kurdish nationalists define the national literature as a product of national life, ideas, feelings, sentiments, sayings, stories and histories.⁵⁸⁹ In an article in *Hawar* on the evolution of the Kurdish literature, Jaladet Bedirkhan presented the Kurdish literature, along with Persian, Indian, Greek, Russian, French, and German literatures, a part of the Indo-European literary tradition.⁵⁹⁰ He gives Greek literature as an example to explain its evolution from musical poetry to poetic storytelling and finally to theater. He then adds that Kurdish literature took the first two stages but not the last one.⁵⁹¹ Kurdish nationalists regarded it

⁵⁸⁶ Interestingly, C. J. Edmonds in his 1931 article indicated that the newspaper [*Kurdistan*] had been published [by Jaladet’s uncles] in Cairo and England between 1892 and 1902 was in “the Bohtan dialect.” Edmonds, “Suggestions for the Use of Latin Characters,” p. 27.

⁵⁸⁷ “Bo Agahdari [For Information],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁸⁸ Rondot, *Publication Kurde*, p. 3.

⁵⁸⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Edebiyata Welati [The National Literature],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, and Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p.5.

⁵⁹⁰ Hevinde Sori (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Edebiyata Qurdi 1 [The Kurdish Literature 1],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 5(15 July 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹¹ Hevinde Sori (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Edebiyata Qurdi 2 [The Kurdish Literature 2],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 7(25 August 1932), pp. 3-4.

as their duty to develop a Kurdish national literature. Thus, they tried to compile Kurdish folk and classical literature and to put new genres into Kurdish through the cooperation of young authors.

Folk Literature

As Pierre Rondot indicates, Kurdish popular literature constituted the essential inspiration for the Kurdish periodicals and especially for *Hawar*.⁵⁹² The Kurdish nationalists' interest in the folk culture and literature since the First World War was not a coincidence. Even though many Kurdish nationalists like Jaladet and Kamuran had been heavily influenced by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Istanbul, they had been rediscovering and redefining their national-self free from Ottoman cosmopolitanism especially after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Kamuran Bedirkhan expressed this reorientation by saying "we should write in the language of our fathers and mothers, we should adopt our ideas and feelings from our [folk] songs and stories."⁵⁹³ The Kurdish nationalist elite regarded the culture of ordinary Kurds as a national treasure uncontaminated by outside influences.⁵⁹⁴ During their studies in Germany in the 1920s, the Bedirkhan brothers came into contact with the idea of Romanticism stressing folk culture.⁵⁹⁵ Moreover, in the 1930s and 1940s they were under the influence of French Kurdologists in Syria, who emphasized the individuality of "a Kurdish type" or "a Kurdish soul" in their writings in reference to Kurdish folk literature.⁵⁹⁶ Kurdish nationalists were proud of the

⁵⁹² Rondot, *Publication Kurde*, p. 3.

⁵⁹³ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Edebiyata Welati [The National Literature]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 5.

⁵⁹⁴ Bois and Minorsky, "Kurds and Kurdistan," p. 480.

⁵⁹⁵ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 152-162.

⁵⁹⁶ Thomas Bois' 1946 books title is a great example. *L'Ame des Kurdes A La Lumiere De Leur Folklore* [The Soul of the Kurds Under the Light of Their Folklore] (Beirut, 1946); and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 24.

richness of their folklore. Jaladet even claimed that the “folklore of no nation in the Near East has reached the level of Kurdish folklore.”⁵⁹⁷ He defined Kurdish folk literature as a bottomless spring.”⁵⁹⁸ *Hawar*, *Ronahi* and *Roja Nu* would publish hundreds of examples to support his claim.⁵⁹⁹

In the Kurdish press *Meme Alan* is presented as the masterpiece of the Kurdish folk literature. Jaladet cites an article by an Arab author comparing *Meme Alan* to the Greek epic poems and suggesting the possibility that the creator of *The Thousand and One Night* stories might have been influenced by the Kurdish epic story.⁶⁰⁰ However, Jaladet is suspicious of an Arab author’s claim that *Meme Alan* is sung by the Arabs of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey in Arabic as well, which damages the authenticity of Kurdish folk literature.⁶⁰¹ *Meme Alan* was translated into French by Roger Lescot.⁶⁰² Besides *Meme Alan*, the Kurdish periodicals presented examples of many genres of Kurdish folk literature including autumn songs (pahizok), love songs (lawik), war songs (şer), dance songs (durik), stories and legends (çirok and çirçirok), proverbs (gotina pesiyan or medhelok), songs (stran and hayran), enigmas or riddles (mamik), berceuse or

⁵⁹⁷ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Klasiken Me An Sahir u Ediben Me en Kevin [Our Classics or Our Old Poets and Literary Men],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 33 (1 October 1941), pp. 6-12.

⁵⁹⁸ “Dersxane [The Classroom],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 17 (6 March 1933), pp. 2-5. Jaladet himself began collecting Kurdish stories, sayings, and proverbs during his voyage with Major Noel to Turkish Kurdistan in 1919 before he left Turkey. “Pesgotinqeq [A Foreword],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹⁹ Bois and Minorsky, “Kurds and Kurdistan,” p. 480.

⁶⁰⁰ “Meme Alan,” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), pp. 8-11.

⁶⁰¹ Jaladet most probably was aware of the claims by the Turkish nationalist scholars of the late Ottoman and early Republican period that “the same existing [Kurdish] tales can be found among Turks, Arabs, Persians, Assyrians, Tatars, and even Armenians.” Firiç (Dr. Fritz), *Kürtler: tarihi ve içtimai tedkikat [Kurds: A Historical and Sociological Analysis]* (İstanbul: Kütüphane-yi Sudi, 1916); cited in Süleyman Sabri Paşa, *Van tarihi ve Kürtler hakkında tetebbuât [History of Van and the Analyses on the Kurds]*, (İstanbul: Matbaa-yı Ebüzziya, 1928), ed. Gamze Gayeoglu (Ankara: Turk Kulturunu Arastirma Enstitusu, 1982), p. 63.

⁶⁰² Roger Lescot, *Meme Alan*, Textes Kurdes: Deuxieme Partie (Beirut: Institut Francais de Damas, 1942).

lullabies (lori), Yezidi hymns (qewil), and laments (şin)⁶⁰³ Many examples of humorous writings also existed in the Kurdish press. There was a section for jokes in *Ronahi*.⁶⁰⁴

The contribution of readers was vital when it came to compiling folk literature.⁶⁰⁵ Readers were mobilized to interview story tellers, bards (dengbej), and gypsies to collect and archive the Kurdish oral folk literature.⁶⁰⁶ One example was Abdulhadi Muhammad, who compiled many folk songs published in *Roja Nu*.⁶⁰⁷ Another person from the town of Amuda, Northern Syria with the penname “Song Collector” contributed many Kurdish songs.⁶⁰⁸ Some readers sent alternative versions of stories or songs to be published in the Kurdish press.⁶⁰⁹ The French Orientalists affiliated with the mandate authorities were also interested in Kurdish folklore and published articles on the topic. For examples, Father Thomas Bois, compiled some

⁶⁰³ Sureya Bedirkhan, “La Litterature Populaire et Classique Kurde,” a Paper Presented at the 16th International Anthropology Congress, Brussels, 1935 (Brussels: Imprimerie Medicale et Scientifique, 1936).

⁶⁰⁴ See for example: “Hinek Ji Henek,” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 24 (April 1944), p. 24.

⁶⁰⁵ “Stuna Xwendevanan [The Column of the Readers],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 29 (10 June 1941), p. 11.

⁶⁰⁶ Dengbejs (professional story tellers or bards) transmitting stories through generations and singers were important informants for Jaladet Bedirkhan and other Kurdish folklorists. We learn from an article in *Hawar* that in one instance two dengbejs from the Northern Syria visited him in Damascus. The main dengbej who informed Jaladet about many songs and stories was Ahmad Farman Qiqi. We can see many references to him in *Hawar*. The songs sung by Ahmad Farman Qiqi were published in *Roja Nu* too. According to Sinemkhan Bedirkhan, Jaladet’s daughter, Jaladet spend a lot of time with him in Damascus transcribing folk songs from his mouth. Hereqol Azizan, “Miso u Xido [Misho and Khido],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 7 (25 August 1932), pp. 5-6; *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 55 (September 1945), p. 3; Interview with Sinemkhan Bedirkhan in May 2010 in Erbil, Northern Iraq; and Mehmed Uzun, *Dengbejlerim [My Dengbejs]* (Istanbul: Ithaki, 2008), pp. 95-118.

⁶⁰⁷ See for example “Strana Kurdi: Sitiya Nimet Axa [The Kurdish Songs: Sitiya Nimet Agha],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 37 (31 January 1944), p. 4.

⁶⁰⁸ See for example: “Strana Kurdi [The Kurdish Songs],” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 52 (30 July 1945), p. 3.

⁶⁰⁹ “Du Guharto [Two Variations],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 14 (31 December 1932), pp. 5-6.

songs and published them in *Roja Nu*.⁶¹⁰ Roger Lescot, with his pen name, “Tawusparez” (The Peacock Worshipper), translated Kurdish songs, stories and proverbs into French.⁶¹¹

Classical [Written] Literature

Along with compiling the folk literature, the Kurdish nationalists tried to discover all Kurdish speaking authors who had produced written works that were considered the Kurdish “classical literature.” This was a response, in part, to Turkish claims that “Kurdish literature consists of some poems, folk songs, and legends. These can be considered a product of the Kurds’ lives. However, there is no literature showing Kurdish national life. The existing literature was the works of some Kurdish mullahs under the influence of Ottoman, Iranian, and Persian literature.”⁶¹² Even though Kurdish nationalists criticized some Kurdish writers who lived centuries before them for not writing in a pure Kurdish, they celebrated the existence of a Kurdish classical literature as a marker of the Kurdish nation’s existence.

In a comprehensive article in *Hawar* entitled “Our Classics,” Jaladet presents an anthology of classical Kurdish literature. C. J. Edmonds, a British officer known for his studies on Kurdish, wrote that prior to 1919 Kurdish was not ordinarily written with the exception of

⁶¹⁰ *Roja Nu*, Year 4, Issue 69 (25 February 1946), p. 3.

⁶¹¹ See for example Tawusparez (Roger Lescot), “Chahino” and “Quelques Chansons,” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 41 (15 March 1942), pp. 10-12; “Proverbes,” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 45 (20 June 1942), pp. 12-3; and “Conte Kurde,” adapted from Kurdish by R. Lescot, *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 3 (10 May 1943), p. 1; and “Chanson Kurde,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 7 (14 June 1943), p. 1. Western Orientalists interest in the Kurdish proverbs began even earlier. See for example Edward Noel, “The Character of the Kurds as Illustrated by Their Proverbs and Popular Sayings,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, University of London*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1920), pp. 79-90.

⁶¹² Firiç (Dr. Fritz), *Kürtler: tarihi ve içtimai tedkikat*, cited in Süleyman Sabri Paşa, *Van tarihi ve Kürtler hakkında tettebbuât*, p. 63.

poetry.⁶¹³ Thus, it is not a coincidence that in the list of the classics published in *Hawar*, almost all the titles are poetry. It is a long list of writers who wrote in Kurmanji and Sorani based on Jaladet's conversations with late Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi and a book by a Russian Orientalist, Alexandre Jaba. Jaladet indicates that nothing was left behind from pre-Islamic Kurdish literature. After Kurds' conversion into Islam, many Kurds wrote in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish and, thus, served the literature of other nations. He gives examples of famous Ottoman poets Nabi, Fuzuli, and Nafi who were Kurmanji speaking.⁶¹⁴ Sharafkhan, ruler of the Kurdish principality of Bitlis in the late 16th Century, is another example for his famous book on the history of Kurdish principalities, *Sharafnama*, written in Persian.⁶¹⁵ As for the ones who wrote in Kurmanji, Jaladet writes, they were not very cautious about the language and took delight in using Arabic and Persian words. Then he gives a list of Kurdish literary men and poets since the Islamic period who wrote their works in Kurdish (mostly Kurmanji but also in Sorani) including Ali Hariri (15th Century) Malaye Jaziri (15th Century), Faqi Tayran (15th Century), Malaye Bate (15th Century), Ahmad Khani (16th Century), Sharaf Khan (16th Century), and the 20th century poets Siyahpush, Mawlana Khalid, Mullah Khalila Sarti, Haji Qadriye Koyi.⁶¹⁶ Readers sent letters indicating names that should be added to the list.⁶¹⁷ Moreover, separate articles were

⁶¹³ Edmonds, "Suggestions for the Use of Latin Characters," p. 27.

⁶¹⁴ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, too, tackled the issue of Kurds who wrote in the languages other than Kurdish and said many Kurdish scholars had written in foreign languages. He wanted the Kurds, like the European and Eastern nations, to correct this mistake and write in their own national language. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Edebiyata Welati [The National Literature]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 5.

⁶¹⁵ Joyce Blau, "Kurdish Written Literature," in *Kurdish Culture and Identity*, ed. Philip Kreyenbroek and Christine Allison (London and New York: Zed Book Ltd., 1996), p. 21.

⁶¹⁶ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), "Klasiken Me An Sahir u Ediben Me en Kevin [Our Classics or Our Old Poets and Literary Men]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 33 (1 October 1941), pp. 6-12.

⁶¹⁷ Selim S. M. Hiseni, "Mela Ehmed," *Hawar*, Year 11, Issue 54 (15 May 1943), p.4.

published on many of the classic authors and the transliterations of their works in to the new alphabet, which were published in series in the Kurdish periodicals.⁶¹⁸

The Kurdish nationalists also celebrated “nationalistic messages” in the Kurdish classics. Ahmad Khani’s *Mam u Zin*, known as the Kurdish *Romeo and Juliet* was transliterated into new Kurmanji Kurdish alphabet and published in series in *Hawar* starting with the 45th issue.⁶¹⁹ *Mam u Zin* was Khani’s written version of the anonymous epic story, *Meme Alan*, introduced earlier. Even though it is a tragic love story taking place in the Botan region, it has been seen as the Kurdish national epic by Kurdish nationalists since the late Ottoman period.⁶²⁰ Jaladet refers to Kurdish poet Haji Qadriye Koyi who called the book “the book of our nation.”⁶²¹ In his article on the Kurdish literature, Hevinde Sori compares the book to [Homer’s] *Iliad*.⁶²²

Hawar Literary School

The Kurdish press became a school to train the cadre of the modern Kurmanji literature and to develop the Kurdish language, including articles with advice to new writers. For example, the young Kurdish poet Jegerkhwin presents meters in Kurdish poetry.⁶²³ Osman Sabri’s article

⁶¹⁸ See for example “Jinenigari: Melaye Cizeri [Biography: Malaye Jaziri],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), p.3; “Ji Mele [From the Mullah],” *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), p.8; and “Diwana Mele [Anthology of the Mullah],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), pp. 4-6.

⁶¹⁹ Nivisanoqa Haware,”Heyineqe Yeqsali [A One Year Old Existence],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp.1-3; and Jemal Nebez, *The Kurdish Language From Oral Tradition to Written Language* (London: Western Kurdistan Association publications, 2005), p. 18.

⁶²⁰ For a more recent debate on the topic please see Amir Hassanpour, “The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Discourse,” in *Essays on the Origins*, pp. 106-162; and Bruinessen, “Ehmedi Xani’s “Mem u Zin,” pp. 40-45.

⁶²¹ “Memozin,” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 45 (20 June 1942), p. 7.

⁶²² Hevinde Sori, “Edebiyata Qurdi 3 [The Kurdish Literature 3]” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), pp. 4-5.

⁶²³ *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 22 (1 July 1933), pp. 1-3.

on writing in Kurdish includes many tips for the new writers who wanted to write prose. Comparing Kurdish to other written languages, he indicates that Kurdish needs at least a hundred years to develop. Without underestimating poetry Sabri encourages the Kurdish youth to write prose to develop the Kurdish language. He also recommends that those who can should translate the texts from foreign languages, especially from English and French into Kurdish to bring new terms and ideas into Kurdish.⁶²⁴ Jaladet, too, encourages the readers to write prose which he claimed as the basis of a language.⁶²⁵

Eventually, the Kurdish press introduced young Kurdish writers and became a vehicle for many publications of modern poetry, short stories, and novels. This new cadre of writers would be known as the members of the “*Hawar* School” or “*Damascus* School.”⁶²⁶ Roger Lescot lists the young members of this literary school and the genres they preferred in a short article in *Roja Nu* in 1943.⁶²⁷ One example is Jegerkhwin, known as *the poet* of the Kurdish press. Thomas Bois introduces him in French in *Le Jour Nouveau* as an example of modern Kurdish poetry,⁶²⁸ while Jaladet introduces him as “our national poet.”⁶²⁹ Nuraddin Zaza, with his pen name Nuraddin Youssef, would come to be very famous with his short stories which he began to publish in *Hawar* in 1941.⁶³⁰ Thanks to his popular short stories, he would become known as the

⁶²⁴ Osman Sabri, “Ziman u Nivinsandina Wi [Language and Its Writing],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 24 (April 1944), pp. 22-23.

⁶²⁵ “Stuna Xwendevanan [The Column of the Readers],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 29 (10 June 1941), p. 11.

⁶²⁶ Ferhad Pirbal, “*Damascus’ School for Kurdish Literature (Part Two)*,” *The Kurdish Globe* (2 January 2008); and “*Damascus’ School for Kurdish Literature (Part One)*,” *The Kurdish Globe* (17 December 2007).

⁶²⁷ Roger Lescot, “*La Presse Kurde*,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943), p. 4

⁶²⁸ Th. Bois, “*Un Poete Kurde Contemporain: Cegerxwin*,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 53 (13 August 1945), p. 4.

⁶²⁹ “*Mizgin: Diwana Cegerxwin Kete Cape [Good News: Cegerkhwin’s Anthology is Published]*,” *Ronahi*, Year 4, Issue 28 (March 1945), pp. 2-3.

⁶³⁰ “*Xursid [Khurshid]*,” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), p. 10.

Kurdish Antov Checkhov. Qadri Jan is another product of the *Hawar* School who published stories in *Hawar*, while Osman Sabri is probably the most prolific prose writer in the Kurdish press. These writers were very important because along with Kurdish folk and classical literature they showed that Kurdish language has a living literary tradition.

6. Kurdish Nationalists Analyze Their Society, Religion(s), and Gender

In the Kurdish periodicals we have considered one can find rich details concerning the daily lives of real people. Jaladet Bedirkhan's family members and people from all walks of life – aghas, peasants, and madrasa students – seem to be active participants in the Kurdish press. For self-appointed nation builders like the Bedirkhan brothers, understanding and transforming their people was a primary concern, even a duty. This chapter will look at Kurdish nationalists' views on Kurdish society, the role of religion among Kurds, and Kurdish women and men. In fact, these topics had been covered in the late-Ottoman period Kurdish periodicals in which some of the same intellectuals had played significant roles.⁶³¹ In the 1930s and 1940s, Kurdish elites, operating under new political conditions, addressed the same issues, now as Kurdish nationalists rather than Ottoman Kurds.

Kurdish nationalists writing in the Kurdish press often expressed highly opinionated views of society and the progressive and regressive roles of traditional social forces. There are many articles on “social ills” in Kurdish society, from a perceived leadership vacuum to the disunity of the Kurds due to tribalism, illiteracy, and poverty. Kurdish nationalists, like their counterparts in Turkey and in European countries, both glorified ordinary people as the bearer of authentic nationalist values and at the same time considered them as ignorant masses in need of education and a national awakening. The proclivity of religion and religious elites to promote or retard national aspirations is another major issue. The nationalists blamed Kurds' religious affinity with their Muslim neighbors as an obstacle to Kurdish independence and criticized their religious leaders' counterproductive role against the national awakening of ordinary people. At the same time, they viewed Zoroastrianism and Yezidism as authentic Kurdish religions and

⁶³¹ Klein, “Claiming the Nation”; and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 21-74.

even described nationalism as if it were a secular religion of its kind. However, knowing the mobilizing power of the religion among Kurds, they also emphasized Kurds' historical contribution to Islamic civilization, praised nationalist shaykhs and mullahs, underscored the role of Islamic religious institutions and scholars in the so-called advent of Kurdish nationalism in the pre-modern age, translated Islamic sources into Kurdish to help Kurds to learn their religion rationally, and used an Islamic vocabulary to disseminate nationalist ideas. Thus, both the uniqueness of Kurdish religious identity and relationship to a broader Muslim world are analyzed in the Kurdish press.

Kurdish nationalists' view of Kurdish men and women, too, reflected their current ideas and anxieties. Almost all nationalists who contributed to the Kurdish press were men and, thus, the presentation of gender roles reflects their patriarchal vision. They were concerned about the wellbeing of Kurdish women, whom they saw as preservers of national values. Therefore, the nationalists promoted the education of Kurdish women so that they could be better mothers and wives who were expected to perform their 'natural' duties to support male nationalists. Besides the perceived role of new women and men in building a new society, in the Kurdish press, one can also see the challenge to Kurdish males, traditional defenders of their families and communities, to rise to the occasion in the aftermath of military defeat. The expression of a "challenge" to Kurdish masculinity was clear as Kurdish nationalists perceived their powerlessness in relation to their homeland at a time when young men of other nations struggled to free their countries and overseas colonies from Nazi occupation.

Kurdish Society and its “Social Ills”

“Social ills” of Kurdish society constituted an important theme in the Kurdish periodicals published in Syria and Lebanon. The prominent social issues addressed in the Kurdish press were the leadership question, relations between traditional chiefs and nationalist elites, traditional leaders’ attitude toward Kurdish nationalism, traditional chiefs’ and elites’ view of ordinary Kurds, nationalists’ attempts to re-define Kurdishness, and their struggle to awaken and “civilize” masses. The Kurdish periodicals in the late Ottoman period had addressed similar issues like the problem of illiteracy and poverty among the Kurds of the Empire.⁶³² However, the Kurdish press in the Levant had a more complex mission. On the one hand, they continued tackling social problems among the Kurds. On the other hand, as an additional task, the Kurdish press in the Levant refuted the Kemalist Turkish discourse of civilizing the backward “Anatolian east” and labeling the Kurdish nationalist uprisings as backward reactionary movements against the Turkish modernization project.⁶³³

Kurds “without an Owner”

Factionalism amongst the Kurdish leadership led discontented nationalists to bemoan the absence of a powerful leader to guide the Kurds.⁶³⁴ For some, the Bedirkhan brothers remained the unquestioned leaders. They were, after all, the grandsons of the Emir Bedir Khan (1806-1869), the ruler of the Kurdish Botan principality. The family’s standing in Ottoman Istanbul at the turn of the twentieth century made Jaladet and Kamuran potential candidates for leadership.

⁶³² Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” pp. 87-99.

⁶³³ Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*, p. 19; and M. Asim Karaomerlioglu, “The Village Institutes Experience in Turkey,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 1 (1998), pp. 47–73.

⁶³⁴ Mirzango Belbesini, “Kurdmançino [Oh Kurmanches],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 18 (1 September 1943), p. 21.

This explains why people like Jegerkhwin stayed loyal to the Bedirkhan brothers. In one poem he says: “Oh my beg, my leader, Jaladet/My shah and my guide who is very just.”⁶³⁵ However, Jegerkhwin was also aware of the fact that Kurds did not have a leader whose legitimacy was recognized by all. In another poem he says: “Isn’t it a shame that today you [Kurds] are without an emir, without a head.”⁶³⁶ The Kurdish press echoed the words of the 17th Century Kurdish writer Ahmad Khani’s call for a powerful leader for the unity and the salvation of the Kurds. Khani’s famous lines are repeated many times: “‘If only we had an owner (master)/⁶³⁷ who is generous and witty.”⁶³⁸

Factionalism within Khoybun organization led the nationalists to ponder the leadership issue. As explained before, this split was especially due to the leadership rivalry between the Jamilpasha family, represented by Akram and Qadri, and the Bedirkhan family, represented by Sureya, Jaladet, and Kamuran. This had caused the Bedirkhans’ resignation from Khoybun.⁶³⁹ Ironically, members of the Jamilpasha family, who had competed with the Bedirkhans for leadership, later wrote on the issue of leadership in the periodicals edited by the Bedirkhan brothers. Badri Jamilpasha’s article entitled “The Nation Without a Head” was a good example. Badri writes “today we are without a head, without a leader, without an owner ... as we are jealous of each other and cannot call one of us our leader.” He reminds the readers how a

⁶³⁵ Jegerkhwin, “Qula Dil [The Heart Wound],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 9 (30 September 1932), p.6, and “Mire Mezin u Mezine Meran, Xorte Xurt Zanaye Kurd Dr. Kamiran Ali Bedir-Xan [The Great Emir and the Great Man, The Powerful Young One, The Kurdish Savant Dr. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 10 (5 July 1943), p. 2.

⁶³⁶ Jegerkhwin, “Hey Kurd [Oh Kurd],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 18 (1 September 1943), p.14.

⁶³⁷ In fact, in one poem the term is used for the Bedirkhans, “Know that we have a master (owner)/Our master (owner) is Bedirkhans.” Selaheddine Serhedi, “Dile Min Pir Disewite [My Heath Burns A lot],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), p.7.

⁶³⁸ Jegerkhwin, “Du Bend [Two Articles],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 16 (15 February 1933), p. 3.

⁶³⁹ Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 99-118; and Dersimi, *Hatıratım*, p.195.

Kurdish tribe without a chief would be subordinated by the other tribes. Thus, he says, as the Kurdish tribes have never been without leaders, the Kurdish nation cannot be without one. He urges the Kurdish people to choose a patriotic, selfless, humble leader and obey him without stubbornness.⁶⁴⁰ Therefore, despite the rivalry between the two families, members of the Jamilpasha family participated in the cultural activities of the Bedirkhan brothers through their writings in the Kurdish press and also through their financial support.⁶⁴¹

The longing for a powerful and unifying leader would continue to be a major issue for Kurdish nationalists. In an article dedicated to Rawshan Bedirkhan, Jaladet's wife, Osman Sabri challenges traditional Kurdish ideals of leadership. He indicates that being an agha, pasha, beg, emir, or even a sultan (padishah) does not make one a leader. Rather, he defines leaders as those who awaken their nations.⁶⁴² As for Jaladet, he explains Kurds' internal enemies as jealousy, rivalry, and discord. He is especially unhappy with those who do nothing for their nation but, out of jealousy, oppose those who do. He complains that everyone wants to lead the community, yet

⁶⁴⁰ To support his point, he reminds the readers the Prophet Muhammad' saying that "when three men travel together, they should make one of them their leader." Badri Jamilpasha, "Milete Beseri [The Nation Without a Head]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 32 (1 September 1941), p. 8.

⁶⁴¹ Alakom, *Hoybun Örgütü*, pp. 101-102. However, the rivalry between them would not end. In his memoirs published in 1969, Qadri Jamilpasha would continue criticizing them for having acted with an emotional pride emanating from the Emirate of Botan and claiming for themselves credit for all the good deeds related to the Kurdish national movement. Acknowledging their service to the Kurdish language, Qadri Jamilpasha criticized them for having aimed to recreate the Emirate of Botan or even a Kurdish Kingdom instead of a Kurdish Republic with a president and a parliament. Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*, p. 166.

⁶⁴² Osman Sabri, "Mezin u Mezinati an Sergevaz u Sergevazi [The Great and Greatness Or the Leaders and Leadership]," *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), pp. 9-10.

no one is willing to serve.⁶⁴³ In another article, he also cites a German author's contention that "Kurds will rise up when they find the right man" to emphasize the leadership vacuum.⁶⁴⁴

Disunity of the Kurds

The leadership question appeared in the Kurdish press as only one face of the real "social ill" that afflicted Kurdish society, namely disunity. Kamuran Bedirkhan writes, "Shaykhs, aghas [tribal chief or landlords], villagers, and laborers, they are all one and the homeland becomes free with the work and effort of all." He continues: "Villagers, mullahs, shaykhs, aghas/Saydas [madrassa teachers], feqhes [madrassa students], illiterates and educated ones/We are same in happiness and sadness."⁶⁴⁵ Jaladet with his pseudonym Hevinde Sori, in a series of articles entitled "Unity" looks at the Kurdish society as a self-appointed "doctor of society." The major problem he diagnoses is disunity caused by the tribes, which has led the Kurds to serve other nations for centuries.⁶⁴⁶ He recommends that Kurds take the European nations as an example, since Kurds like Europeans are an Aryan nation, and explains the evolution of social relations and ideas from primitive to more complex: from family to clans and tribes, and to religious beliefs, and finally, nationalism (*gelperesti*).⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴³ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "Xwe Binas [Know Yourself]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), pp. 1-6.

⁶⁴⁴ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "Qurd u Qurdistan Bi Cave Biyaniyan [Kurds and Kurdistan through the Eyes of Foreigners]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴⁵ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Bi Yek Bin [Be One]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 28 (15 May 1941), p.7.

⁶⁴⁶ A contributor to *Roja Nu* also indicates that like other people Kurds should move from the tribal stage to the national one: R. Dilistan, "Insaniyet Ci Ye [What is Humanity]," *Roja Nu*, Year 4, Issue 70-71 (25 March 1946), p. 1.

⁶⁴⁷ Hevinde Sori (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), "Yequetiman (I)" [Unity], *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), pp. 3-4; "Yequetiman (2)" [Unity], *Hawar*

Kurdish nationalists viewed the tribes as a major source of factionalism and an obstacle to statehood.⁶⁴⁸ Many believed that Kurds were the victims of their own disunity, which was exploited by the ruling states. Jaladet Bedirkhan, in an article based on his observations during his brief stay in Iran after the Ararat rebellion, explains how the Persian government takes advantage of the ignorance of the Kurds in Iran and plays Kurdish tribes against each other. Jaladet met gendarmes from a Kurdish tribe recruited by the Iranian government and he explains how they use their power against the rival tribes until the government switches sides and empowers their rival tribe.⁶⁴⁹ He also shares foreigners' observations about tribes with his readers. In an article in Sorani Kurdish in Latin characters, he cites Major Hayy, a British officer in the southern part of the Iraqi Kurdish regions, saying: "They [Kurds] are a collection of tribes without any cohesion, and showing little desire for cohesion. They prefer to live in their mountain fastnesses and pay homage to whatever government may be in power, as long as it exercises little more than a nominal authority."⁶⁵⁰ This sentence is translated into Kurdish in Jaladet's article. The following sentence from the book, however, quoted in English, states "The day that the Kurds awake to a national consciousness and combine, the Turkish, Persian, and Arab states will crumble to dust before them."⁶⁵¹

(Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 12 (27 November 1932), pp. 1-2; "Yequetiman (4)" [Unity], *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 14 (31 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴⁸ Hamit Bozarslan, "Tribal Asabiyya and Kurdish Politics: A Socio-Historical Perspective," in *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, ed. Falih Abd al-Jabbar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2006), p. 130.

⁶⁴⁹ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet A. Bedirkhan), "Kurden Ecemistane u Hale Wan [The Kurds of Persia and their Current Situation]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 35 (12 November 1941), pp. 10-12.

⁶⁵⁰ W. R. Hayy, *Two Years in Kurdistan, Experiences of a Political Officer 1918-1920* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., 1921), pp. 35-36.

⁶⁵¹ Hevinde Sori (Jaladet A. Bedirkhan), "Hawari Beganeyeq [Exclamation of a Foreigner]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 17 (6 March 1933), pp.1-2. The last sentence in that paragraph which seems more pessimistic than the previous one is not quoted in the Kurdish text: "That day is yet far off." Hayy, *Two Years in Kurdistan*, pp. 35-36.

Some Kurdish writers used partridges as a metaphor to address the issues of treachery and disunity among the Kurds.⁶⁵² In one of his many fables in *Hawar*, Mustafa Ahmed Boti presents a long dialogue between a partridge and a cormorant bird. The cormorant says that unlike the partridges, they are more plentiful because they get unified against their enemies. The partridges, on the other hand, are treacherous, do not join forces against their enemies, and easily lose their babies to the predators when they are attacked. Boti urges his “brothers and male cousins” [Kurds] to get lessons from the example of partridges and cormorants.⁶⁵³ There are also references to the recent past to indicate how Kurdish rebellions failed due to the treason of some Kurds. Nuraddin Zaza, without using any metaphor, expresses the same idea in a short story in which rival Kurdish notables of a city make peace with each other against their enemies, the Turks, in 1925. However, because of the “treachery and ignorance” of some other Kurds helping the Turks, the Kurds were defeated.⁶⁵⁴

Kurdish nationalists always called for unity. Jaladet writes “It is time for civilization, progress, and nationalism...(and) to end disunity within the nation.”⁶⁵⁵ In another article he uses nature as a metaphor and indicates that in their struggle with the earth, rain drops defeat soil only when they join their forces and turn into a flood. He emphasizes the necessity of unity and alliance to overcome troubles caused by disunion and factionalism.⁶⁵⁶ He depicts his hope for

⁶⁵² See for example the story published in *Ronahi*. In the story, each group of partridges is presented as a different tribe with various good and bad qualities including treachery. “Zaravaye Cizire [The Accent of Jazira],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), pp. 14-15.

⁶⁵³ Mustafa Ahmed Boti, “Kew u Qitik [The Partridge and the Cormorant Bird],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 12 (27 November 1932), pp. 7-8. Also see M. Emin Sileman, “Mir u Necirvan [The Emir and the Hunter],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), p. 2.

⁶⁵⁴ Nuredin Usif (Nuraddin Zaza), “Keskesor,” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 30 (1 July 1941), pp. 4-5.

⁶⁵⁵ Hevinde Sori (Jaladet A. Bedirkhan), “Qurd u Qurdistan [Kurds and Kurdistan],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), p.1.

⁶⁵⁶ “Lehi [Flood],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 2 (1 June 1932), p. 2.

unity of the different segments of the Kurdish society in a play entitled “Hope” (Hevind) published in *Hawar*. The major characters in the play are a beg from a noble family, a tribal chief (*agha*), a physician who is the son of an agha, the beg’s personal servant, soldiers, and young and old ordinary women and men. They are all on a battle field on a mountain fighting against the Turks. Place names imply that the play is about the Ararat Rebellion (1929-1931). Sarwar Beg is distinguished by his tight European clothes and European education and most likely impersonates Jaladet Bedirkhan himself. As a European educated intellectual, he works in tandem with the traditional chiefs and common people to defend his own country and dies in the battle.⁶⁵⁷ In *Ronahi*, Switzerland is presented as an example for Kurds to overcome their disunity. It is stated that like Kurdistan, Switzerland is surrounded by powerful states but it is an independent country. Until 1291, the Swiss people were divided into twenty-two cantons and resembled “the mountainous, brave and warlike tribes of Kurdistan,” who were threatened with falling under the control of another state every day. The tribal chiefs’ decision to be unified on August 1, 1291 is praised in the short historical description followed by the so called “Oath of the Swiss.”⁶⁵⁸

Aghas and Shaykhs: Villains and/or Heroes

Traditional chiefs were neither voiceless in the Kurdish Press nor they were anti-nationalist. In fact, the Kurdish press became a venue for dialogue among the educated Kurdish notables, intellectual, professionals, and urban and tribal traditional chiefs.⁶⁵⁹ Hajo Aga, the charismatic chief of the Hewerkan tribal confederation, is a good example. He authored a cover

⁶⁵⁷ “Hevind [Hope],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-11.

⁶⁵⁸ “Peynama Iswicriyan [The Oath of the Swiss],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), p. 3.

⁶⁵⁹ Fuccaro, “Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria,” p. 208.

article in *Hawar*, challenging educated young Kurds who are critical of aghas and shaykhs. Giving Shaykh Said's rebellion in 1925 as an example, he argues that "all the national movements in Kurdistan up to this time were organized by aghas or shaykhs. The enlightened youth, on the other hand, were indifferent to the calls of aghas and shaykhs, did not lay claim to Kurdishness and preferred to study in the big cities away from Kurdistan." Hajo Agha also advises the traditional chiefs not to exclude educated and intellectual youth for being nonreligious.⁶⁶⁰

Hajo Agha's article sparked a lively debate on the pages of *Hawar*. A reader with the pseudonym of Evin Jiweleq responded by relating a dream in which he revisits the failed rebellion of Shaykh Said in 1925. He encounters Kurds who lost their lives in the rebellion and implies that Hajo Agha and some other tribal chiefs had either followed orders from the Turks to march against the rebels or remained neutral for tactical reasons.⁶⁶¹ Though Hajo Agha had never fought against the Kurdish rebels, some Kurdish nationalists accused him of collaborating with the enemy. As Martin van Bruinessen indicates, regional identities had played an important role in his tactical decision not to join Shaykh Said's uprising. Despite his earlier attempts to form national alliances among the tribes, Hajo Agha hesitated to join a Kurdish revolt organized and led by another chieftain who was supported by tribes from a different region, northern

⁶⁶⁰ He, in fact, raised a valid point in his argument. As indicated before, with the participation of the aghas and shaykhs the Kurdish national movement gained a mass character. Hajo, "Shex, Aga u Munewweran [Shaykhs, Aghas, and the Intellectuals]," *Hawar* (The Arabic Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 15(23 January 1933), pp. 1-2; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp.10-11; Bozarlan, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey," pp. 163-190; Olson and Tucker, "The Sheikh Sait Rebellion," pp. 195-211; and Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish*, pp. 169-171. Interestingly Hajo's article published again in the Latin alphabet section to analyze in Hajo's regional sub-dialect of Kurmanji Kurdish language in French. "Dialectologie: Parler de Heverqan," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 15 (23 January 1933), pp. 5-6.

⁶⁶¹ Evin Ciweleq, "Resbeleka Meriyan [Notes from the Dead Ones]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 17(6 March 1933), pp. 1-2.

Diyarbakir.⁶⁶² However, after the suppression of the Shaykh Said rebellion the Kemalist state attempted to deport all the Kurdish traditional chieftains, whether they were loyal to the state or not, to the west of Turkey. In response, Hajo Agha rebelled against the government and eventually fled to Syria in 1926.⁶⁶³

The editors of the Kurdish press were happy to publish views from different strata of society.⁶⁶⁴ Jegerkhwin was another contributor who criticized traditional chieftains and notables (*aghas, begs and emirs*) as well as religious classes (*shaykhs, mullahs, saydas*). He blames the traditional leaders for exploiting ordinary Kurds financially, becoming rich off their labor and money and letting them remain backward and uneducated. In one poem he writes, “From the pashas and begs of Kurds/None were awakened in this path/For the freedom of Kurds/For them (Kurds) none (of them) cared/All of them are plunderers and blood-shedders.”⁶⁶⁵ In another instance he addresses the Kurds: “You have been ill for two hundred years, you have tuberculosis. /Shaykhs and aghas have become germs and entered your body.”⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶² Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 114.

⁶⁶³ Hajo Agha, the chief of the Hewerkan tribal confederation, was an example of the tribal leaders who supported the Kurdish national movement in the later 1920s and 1930s. Settled in the Northern Syria, he was recognized as the representative of Kurds in Jazira by the French mandate authorities. Historically, his tribal confederation had belonged to the Emirate of Botan and his ancestors were vassals of the emir of Botan. This historical affinity might have played a part in Hajo Agha’s close relation with the grandsons of the Bedir Khan Beg, the Bedir Khan brothers and especially Jaladet. There were other tribal chiefs who opposed the national movement led by the Bedir Khans. The Milli tribal leaders, for example, sided with the National Bloc, the major Syrian Arab nationalist party, against the French who favored Hajo Agha as the leaders of the Kurds. Moreover, the Milli tribal leaders had considered themselves the “national” leaders of the Kurds that put them in opposition to the Bedir Khan brothers’ claim to leadership. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp.110-112; and Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*, p. 30 and p. 144, endnote 24.

⁶⁶⁴ “Shex, Aga u Munewweran [Shaykhs, Aghas, and the Intellectuals],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 17(6 March 1933), p. 1.

⁶⁶⁵ Jegerkhwin, “Dive Em Bibin Yek [We Must Be One],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 30 (1 July 1941), p. 6.

⁶⁶⁶ Jegerkhwin, “Hey Kurd [Oh Kurd],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 18 (1 September 1943), p.14.

Patriotic Aghas and Shaykhs

Despite the young nationalists' harsh criticism of the aghas, the general tendency was a close relation between the nationalist leaders and those tribal chiefs who were considered "patriotic." Hajo Agha and his family's close alliance with the Bedirkhans was a good example. Hajo Agha and his successors contributed to the Kurdish nationalist movement by spreading nationalist ideas among the tribes in northern Syria, constituting a good example of "tribal nationalism."⁶⁶⁷ There were other tribal leaders like Mustafa Beg Shahin of the Barazis and his brother Bozan, and Abd al-Rahman Fawzi of the Jilan tribe who cooperated with Jaladet Bedirkhan and contributed to the Kurdish press with their writings or with their wide knowledge of Kurdish tribes and Kurdish territories in Turkey.⁶⁶⁸ Abd al-Rahman Fawzi Agha's call for unity among the Kurds represents a case of a traditional leader adopting the nationalist discourse.⁶⁶⁹ Even those who did not actively support the Bedirkhan brothers, adopted similar tendencies. For example, Mustafa Beg Shahin from the powerful Milli tribe, in his poem combines his "traditional" tribal identity with his national identity saying: "I am a Milli Kurd/.../I am Milli not Barazi [another major Kurdish tribe]."⁶⁷⁰ In other words, he was aware of both his Kurdishness and tribal identity (Milli) that differentiates him from the Kurds from the other tribes (Barazi).

The list of donors published in *Hawar* shows the vital financial role played by tribal chiefs and notables in the Kurdish national and cultural movement in the Levant. For example, in

⁶⁶⁷ Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," p. 201; and Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 114-116.

⁶⁶⁸ Mustafa Beg Shahin was a deputy in the Syrian Parliament from the Jarablus Area. Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria," pp. 203 and 208.

⁶⁶⁹ Evdirehman Fewzi, "Gazi [Call]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 12 (27 November 1932), p. 3.

⁶⁷⁰ Mustafa Milli, "Ziyareta Haware [The Visit of Hawar]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 12 (27 November 1932), p. 6.

1942 Jaladet Bedirkhan listed twenty-nine people who had donated more than five Syrian Liras. Hasan Agha Hajo had donated the largest amount (400 Syrian Liras) and the list includes other tribal leaders and notables. Jaladet rebukes those wealthy people and notables who did not donate anything, although without mentioning their names.⁶⁷¹ He also admits that everyone dreams of “supremacy or being an agha,” however, “the real aghas are the ones who serve their nations.”⁶⁷²

Why did aghas buy into the Kurdish nationalist discourse and why did the nationalists cooperate with the tribal chiefs, whom they normally regarded as an obstacle to national unity? The cooperation between the “traditional” chiefs and the “modern nationalists” were to the advantages of both groups. Primordial loyalties to the aghas and the shaykhs were very strong among ordinary Kurds. Thus, their cooperation was vital to mobilize the masses for the nationalist cause. The human and financial resources controlled by the aghas were what the Kurdish nationalists needed. That is why Jaladet Bedirkhan and other nationalists did not hesitate to cooperate with them. As for the tribal chiefs, their ability to adopt the new political discourse was vital to their survival in the new situation. Thus, in order to perpetuate their authority and consolidate their legitimacy among the Kurdish masses they did not hesitate to be tribal Kurdish nationalists.⁶⁷³ Together they worked to create national consciousness among the Kurdish communities in Syria. On one hand they glorified the noble values of the Kurds; and on the other

⁶⁷¹ Xwediye Haware [Owner of the Hawar], “Kiryariye Haware [Subscription to Hawar],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 43 (5 May 1942), pp. 8-9.

⁶⁷² Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Xwe Binas [Know Yourself],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), pp. 1-6.

⁶⁷³ Hamit Bozarslan, “Tribal Asabiyya and Kurdish Politics,” pp. 130 and 136-137; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 9-11; and Fuccaro, “Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism in Mandatory Syria,” pp. 201-204.

hand they initiated a crusade against the social ills among the Kurds such as poverty and illiteracy.

Kurmanches and Idealizing the Ordinary Kurds

A careful reading of the Kurdish press shows that the term “Kurmanch” is used in many texts to mean of “commoners” as opposed to their chieftains or notables. Martin van Bruinessen indicates that the term is used as an ethnic label for Kurds who speak the northern dialect, Kurmanji (Kurmanchi) and/or in a narrower sense to mean the Kurdish subject peasantry.⁶⁷⁴ The usage of “Kurmanch” to designate commoners can be traced back to the late Ottoman period Kurdish press. In *Kurdistan*, Miqdat Bedirkhan addresses readers as “Emirs, aghas and Kurmanches (*Geli mir u axano u kurmancno*).”⁶⁷⁵ We can also say that the term Kurmanch, in the same vein, appears to be an adjective for a well-preserved, pure traditional Kurdish life style or values.⁶⁷⁶

Kurdish nationalists regarded the culture of ordinary illiterate Kurds as a national treasure uncontaminated by outside influence. As explained earlier, Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan had studied in Germany in the early 1920s and they were under the influence of German nationalists’ glorification of *Volk*. Moreover, the French orientalist influenced Kurdish nationalists’

⁶⁷⁴ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 141-142.

⁶⁷⁵ *Kurdistan*, Year 1, Issue 4 (3 June 1898), p. 6, in *Kurdistan*, Volume I, translit. M. E. Bozarslan, p. 150; and Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” p. 117.

⁶⁷⁶ In his short list of etymological origins of some Kurdish words based on his personal guesses, Jegerkhwin tackles with the term Kurdmanc as a compound word consisting of “Kurd” meaning a wrestler or a blood-shedder, and “manc” meaning black. Jegerkhwin, “Xeyalen Cegerxwin [Imaginations of Jegerkhwin],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 16 (15 February 1933), pp. 3-4. During a visit to several madrasas, Jaladet Bedirkhan met students from different parts of Kurdistan and indicated that their clothing was Kurmanchi. “Stuna Fekehan [The Column of the Quranic Students],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 4.

perception of ordinary Kurds.⁶⁷⁷ For example, Thomas Bois indicates that over all Kurds are uneducated, however, he refers to a Kurdish proverb published in *Hawar*, *nezani xwese cani* (ignorance is sweet for the soul), and adds that their ignorance does not prevent them from being intelligent, full of common sense, and reflection.⁶⁷⁸ As indicated in the previous chapter, the Bedirkhan brothers emphasized the significance of the folk literature. As Kamuran indicated, “we should adopt our ideas and feelings from our [folk] songs and stories.”⁶⁷⁹ The Turkish nationalists of the time shared the same belief. The semi-official Kemalist magazine in Turkey, *Ülkü* (Ideal), includes many articles on the virtues of peasants and folk literature. One Turkish contributor to *Ülkü* seems to echo Kamuran’s statements by saying: “the ideas and values based on village life should be taken as a point of departure for the future of Turkey.”⁶⁸⁰

Though tribes were depicted as an obstacle to Kurdish national unity, they also appear to be an important aspect of Kurdishness. In *Hawar* Osman Sabri, in an “Anthem of the Youth,” writes “we need unity and strength, not factions and tribes.”⁶⁸¹ However, the readers were also encouraged to collect information and write about their tribes.⁶⁸² Jaladet Bedirkhan himself wrote a long article about the Jilan tribes of the Botan region, based on interviews with the tribal aghas.⁶⁸³ He also wrote about his own tribe, the Azizans, from which the emirs of Botan came. Jaladet adopted the pseudonym Herekol Azizan, emphasizing his lineal/tribal identity despite the

⁶⁷⁷ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 151-162.

⁶⁷⁸ In fact, Thomas Bois cites Roger Lescot’s translation of Kurdish proverbs in French in *Hawar*. Bois, *L’âme des Kurdes*, p. 9.

⁶⁷⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Edebiyata Welati [The National Literature],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p. 5.

⁶⁸⁰ Cited in Karaomerlioglu, “The Village Institutes,” pp. 51-52.

⁶⁸¹ Osman Sabri, “Marsa Xortan [The Anthem of the Youth],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), p. 7.

⁶⁸² “Stuna Xwendevanan [The Column of the Readers],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 29 (10 June 1941), p. 11.

⁶⁸³ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Ji Esiren Botan: Jeliyan [From the Tribes of Botan: The Jilans],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 34 (15 October 1941), pp. 4-13.

fact that the Bedirkhan family was known for their supra-tribal leadership.⁶⁸⁴ Moreover, from a published conversation between Jaladet and his children, Sinemkhan and Jamshid, we learn that his children called themselves “Kurmanch” and “grandchildren of the house of Azizan.”⁶⁸⁵

Many other exiled Kurds wrote about their tribes and tribal territories. These articles give invaluable information about settled and nomadic tribes, migration of the nomadic tribes, the tribal landscape, tribal wars, etc. Qadri Jamilpasha, Osman Sabri, Muhammad Jamilpasha and Hasan Hishyar all contributed to this subject.⁶⁸⁶ As mentioned earlier, in two *Roja Nu* articles entitled “Getting to Know Kurdistan,” Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan are described by means of tribes and their locations.⁶⁸⁷

Guiding the Ordinary People: From Kurmanches to Kurds

Despite their romantic perception of their *Volk*, the urban Kurdish nationalist elite, like their Turkish counterparts, viewed the ordinary people in the country side as subjects who needed to be awakened.⁶⁸⁸ In fact, the self-acclaimed mission of guiding (*ershad*) the ordinary people was apparent among the Kurdish urban notables and intellectuals like the Bedirkhans

⁶⁸⁴ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Mil u Zil: Bir u Esasen Esiren Kurdan [Mil and Zil: Sections and Foundations of Kurdish Tribes],” *Ronahi*, Year1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), pp. 12-14.

⁶⁸⁵ “Sinemxan u Resmen Ronahiye [Sinemkhan and the Photos in Rohani],” *Ronahi*, Year1, Issue 3 (1 June 1942), pp. 2-3.

⁶⁸⁶ Qadri Jamilpasha, “Gawestiyayi u Koceran Kurdan [Gawestiyayi and the Nomads of the Kurds],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), p. 1; Osman Sabri, “Mirdezan u Gawestiyay Wan [Mirdezan Tribes and Their Gawestis],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), pp. 6, and 11-2; Muhammad Jamilpasha, “Ciyayen Silivan [The Mountains of Silivan],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 39 (15 February 1942), pp.8-9; and Hasan Hishyar, “Esira Zirikan [The Zirikan Tribe],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17, (1 August 1943), pp.19-20.

⁶⁸⁷ “Naskirina Kurdistanê [Getting To Know Kurdistan],” *Roja Nu*, Year 4, Issue 66 (14 January 1946), p.1; and “Naskirina Kurdistanê [Getting To Know Kurdistan],” *Roja Nu*, Year 4, Issue 68 (4 February 1946), p. 1.

⁶⁸⁸ Karaomerlioglu, “The Village Institutes,” p. 53.

since the late Ottoman period.⁶⁸⁹ For example, in *Kurdistan*, the first Kurdish newspaper in the late Ottoman period, Abdurrahman Bedirkhan, Jaladet and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan's uncle, writes: "My attachment to my people, Kurmanches, induced me to show the right path to the Kurds with this journal....I feel sorry for the Kurmanches, who are more rational and braver than the other nations but lagged behind all the nations."⁶⁹⁰

Both traditional Kurdish leaders and urban elites asked the question "why have we (Kurds) lagged behind?"⁶⁹¹ They emphasized two major social ills affecting the Kurds, poverty and lack of education, explaining the causes and consequences of those social ills and offering their own solutions. The foundation of a Kurdish charitable organization in 1932 in the Jazira region and a strong emphasis on the education of Kurdish children by both groups indicate that they were dedicated to solving the problems of the ordinary Kurds. As tribal leaders, the aghas were unhappy about the situation of their subjects. An article by Jamil Hajo, Hajo Agha's son, entitled "Kurmanches Are Good But Ignorant" is a great example. After praising them as a courageous, honorable, competitive, bighearted people, he complains that Kurmanches lagged behind the developed and educated nations. Thus, he encourages people to contribute financially to the Kurdish philanthropic society to open schools to educate Kurdish children.⁶⁹² Another tribal leader, Mustafa Shahin of Barazi, emphasizes the significance of education by explaining

⁶⁸⁹ Jaladet and Kamuran's father, Amin Ali, publishes a poem in 1898 in the *Kurdistan* newspaper edited by Miqdat Bedirkhan, Amin's brother. It is a good example of this continuing mission of the Kurdish intellectuals. It was republished in *Roja Nu*. Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "1898 u 1943, Roja Me A Nu [1898 and 1943, Our New Day]," *Roja Nu*, Year 1 Issue 3 (17 May 1943), p. 1; and Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 359-360.

⁶⁹⁰ *Kurdistan*, Year 1, Issue 6 (11 October 1898), p. 7, in *Kurdistan*, Volume I, translit. M. E. Bozarslan, p. 179.

⁶⁹¹ Mustafa Shahin, "Em Ciman Bisunda Man [Why Did We Lag Behind]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 12 (November 1932), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁹² Jamil Hajo, "Qurdmanc Kenc in Le Nezan in [Kurmanches are Good but Ignorant]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 7 (August 1932), pp. 1-2.

how the Ottomans used to exploit the ignorance of Kurmanches to prevent unity among them. He claims that the Ottomans recruited them as officers into the Hamidiye Light Cavalry without any necessary training to guarantee their loyalty to the state.⁶⁹³

Like traditional chieftains, the Bedirkhan brothers adopted a paternalistic approach towards the ordinary Kurds. An article by Kamuran serves as a lesson in manners and etiquette. He starts by praising the noble values of the Kurds, namely being decent, keeping their promises, being generous and forgiving. However, he criticizes those who, he claims, forgot the manners of their ancestors. He advises them to thank people when they get something, say please when they want something, not slurp when they drink or eat, not put their fingers in their mouths and ears, and not beat their children. He implies that some Kurmanches ignore those things because they diverted from their ancestral traditions.⁶⁹⁴ Kamuran's obsession with cleanliness recurs when he criticizes Kurdish chiefs indifferent to the wellbeing of their subjects. In *Ster, Roja Nu's* supplement, he states, "If you are a beg or an agha, the conditions of your villagers or your nomads can show what kind of a man you are: if they are satiated, living in clean houses, wearing clean clothes and knowing somewhat how to read and write, you are a good man. If your villagers or the people of your tribe are hungry, poor, living in the dirty houses, and illiterate, you are a very bad man."⁶⁹⁵

The translation into Kurdish of the Russian author Grigory Petrov's *In the Country of White Lilies* by Qadri Jan and its serialized publication in *Roja Nu* is a very important case. The book is about the transformation of Finland from an underdeveloped country into a modern

⁶⁹³ Mustafa Shahin, "Em Ciman Bisunda Man [Why Did We Lag Behind]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 12 (November 1932), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁹⁴ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Rabun u Runistin [Manners and Etiquette]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 30 (1 July 1941), p. 15.

⁶⁹⁵ "Ma Ne Wilo Ye? [Isn't It So?]," *Ster*, Year 3, Issue 3 (22 October 1945), p. 1; and "Mal u Spehiti [Home and Delicacy]," *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 3 (17 May 1943), p. 1.

civilized country.⁶⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, it was a very popular book in Turkey as well, translated into Turkish, praised by the Turkish intellectuals and made a required reading for military academy students by Ataturk.⁶⁹⁷ It is important to remember that despite the parallels between the two nationalist discourses, the Kurdish nationalists repeatedly counter Turkish claims of “civilizing” the [Kurdish] east in Turkey. The Kemalist Turkish state’s major goal in its rural reforms was to Turkify the Kurdish areas under the guise of “civilizing” the backward east.⁶⁹⁸ The Turkish state presented the 1925 Kurdish uprising as a reaction to the Turkish modernization efforts.⁶⁹⁹ Starting with Khoybun propaganda pamphlets, Kurdish nationalist publications in the Levant claimed that Turks have devastated, not civilized, Kurdistan and the Turks are the uncivilized ones, not the Kurds.⁷⁰⁰ To counter the Turkish propaganda and to gain support of international community, a Khoybun pamphlet in English shows the images of Kurdish rebels who were hanged by the Turkish forces, entitled How Kemal ‘Westernizes.’⁷⁰¹ [See Appendix, Image 6] As Martin Strohmeier indicates the Turkish oppression was blamed for the social problems among the Kurds such as lack of solidarity.⁷⁰² In his letter to Ataturk, Jaladet criticizes Kemalist education policy toward Kurdish children. He claims that the Kemalist attempt to assimilate the Kurds would backfire and create opposite effects.⁷⁰³

Kurdish nationalists wanted to civilize their people, protect them from assimilation by the Turkish state and to make as many ordinary people as possible “Kurdish.” A good example was

⁶⁹⁶ The publication of the book in series started in the 4th issue of *Roja Nu*. “Di Welate Zembeqe Gewir De [In the Country of White Lilies],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1 Issue 4 (24 May 1943), p. 4.

⁶⁹⁷ <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/1101978058628>

⁶⁹⁸ Karaomerlioglu, “The Village Institutes,” pp. 47-49.

⁶⁹⁹ Mesut Yegen, “The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (October 1999), pp. 555-568.

⁷⁰⁰ Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*, p. 19.

⁷⁰¹ Sureya Bedirkhan, *The Case of Kurdistan*, p. 61.

⁷⁰² Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 146-147.

⁷⁰³ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 53; and Karaomerlioglu, “The Village Institutes,” pp. 47-73.

an article by Yousef Haji Harsan, a merchant from the town of Amuda. The death of his baby son was interpreted by his religious brothers-in-law as God's punishment for his friendship with Kurdish youth and for his reading Kurdish magazines and newspapers, and for not following mullahs and shaykhs.⁷⁰⁴ Another reader from the same city, Basher Hasani, a madrasa graduate, indicates that "shaykhs of Amuda say that Kurds are the friends of Jegerkhwin and Kurmanches who are in the path of religion do not read the magazines in Latin characters."⁷⁰⁵ Those who are close to the Kurdish nationalists are called Kurds and considered different from Kurmanches, who were not influenced or "spoiled" by the nationalist ideas. The nationalists regarded ordinary people's interest in Kurdish nationalism as "enlightenment" (ronahi).⁷⁰⁶

In the Kurdish press, the major point of reference for civilization remained Europe.⁷⁰⁷ However, Kurdish nationalists warned ordinary Kurds against imitating "bad" aspects of Western/European civilization. An article in *Roja Nu* about a Kurdish porter from Beirut, who was addicted to alcohol, is a good example. The author describes how wayward Kurds in cities like Beirut associate dignity with drinking alcohol, which is forbidden by Islam. If drinking alcohol was identical with progress, he argues, it would not have been banned in the USA.⁷⁰⁸ Kurdish nationalists' writings about their society set a great example for the three different orientations by nationalist elites, as explained by Anthony Smith. They want to return to tradition (traditionalism). They also want to assimilate Western civilization (modernism). However, they

⁷⁰⁴ Yousef Haji Harsan, "Min Nizani Bu Ko Rihistin Ji Dijmine Kurd e [I Did Not Know That The Grim Reaper Too is the Enemy of the Kurds]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), p. 10.

⁷⁰⁵ Basher Hasani, "Re Ji Ber Winda," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p. 32.

⁷⁰⁶ "Erefat Kure Brahime Ezem Ji Mala Emo Reso An Xwendevane Der Cot [Arafat, the son of Ibrahim Azam from the Emo Resho Household, or the Reader behind the Plow]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p.7.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ster*, Year 1, Issue 1 (6 December 1943), pp. 1-2.

⁷⁰⁸ "Ereqvexwar [Alcohol drinkers]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 55 (3 September 1945), p. 4.

also try to preserve certain aspects of their traditional culture and adopt certain aspects of Western civilization (reformist revivalism).⁷⁰⁹

Many Faces of Religion

A complex connection between Kurdish nationalism and religion is reflected in Kurdish periodicals. A careful reading of them shows that Kurdish religious identity constituted one of the major themes of the periodicals and of Kurdish nationalism. Religion in the Kurdish press is presented in various and sometimes contradictory ways. First, the Kurdish nationalists regarded the Kurds' Muslim identity as an obstacle for national awakening. Secondly, they viewed Zoroastrianism and Yezidism as more authentic Kurdish religions. Thirdly, they presented Kurdish nationalism as if it was a religion. And finally, at the same time, they relied on Kurdish Islamic religious tradition to explain the historicity of Kurdish identity and to spread a nationalist message among the Kurdish people.

Religion and Kurdish Disunity

In the Kurdish periodicals the Kurds' religious ties with the Turks and other Muslims were seen as a major obstacle for Kurdish independence. In an article in *Hawar*, Jaladet wrote that Greeks and Armenians gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire thanks to their religious differences from the Ottoman Turks. Even though many Greeks and Armenians did not know their own languages and spoke Turkish, their nationalities [national identities] were not subsumed by the Turks, Arabs, and Persians.⁷¹⁰ Kamuran Bedirkhan stresses the same idea symbolically in a story in which the people of Kurdistan give their best palace to an oppressive

⁷⁰⁹ A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 63-64, cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 153.

⁷¹⁰ Nivisanoqa Haware [A Scriber of Hawar], "Heyineqe Yeqsali [A One Year Old Existence]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-3.

man, symbolizing the Turkish rule, and continue to host him because of their religious affinity. The oppressive ruler complains that all of his wives left him with the exception of Sinemkhan, a classically Kurdish name, symbolizing the Kurdish nation.⁷¹¹

The studies analyzing the political vocabulary that Mustafa Kemal used during the Turkish War of Independence confirm the religious content of his discourse. Mustafa Kemal, at the time, emphasized Muslim unity and the religious bond between Kurds and Turks. He presented the Independence War as a Muslim War of Independence to save the Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate. However, once the Turkish Republic was established, Mustafa Kemal gradually adopted an ardently secular and Turkish nationalist discourse, and eventually abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate that he had vowed to save.⁷¹² In his open letter to Mustafa Kemal, Jaladet reminds him how he used a religious discourse to mobilize the Kurdish chiefs whom he called his brothers in order to dispel the Greek threat and end the Greek invasion that started in 1919. In the same letter, Jaladet indicates that even after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, when Mustafa Kemal adopted a more secular stance, he did not hesitate to resort to religion to suppress the Kurdish movement in Turkey. Reminding Mustafa Kemal of the Shaykh Said uprising, Jaladet writes, “The 1925 Revolution broke out. ...It was again necessary [for you] to perform a prayer. ... You presented the Shaykh (Said), dwelling in paradise, like an anti-Muslim apostate, acting with British money and Armenian orders, and [in this way] you deceived the wretched Kurds.”⁷¹³

⁷¹¹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Du Dengbej [Two Dengbejs],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 6-7.

⁷¹² Erik Jan Zürcher, “The Vocabulary of Muslim Nationalism,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Science*, 137, no. 1 (1999), pp. 81-92; Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, pp. 86-128; and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 70-74.

⁷¹³ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 49-51.

For some Kurdish elites like the Bedirkhan brothers, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the war changed the meaning of many things, including the significance of their religious and “national” identity. For example, following the defeat of the Ottoman Army in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and fall of the Ottoman city of Edirne to Bulgarians, Kamuran and Jaladet Bedirkhan warned their fellow countrymen (hemvatan) and co-religionists (hemdin) to be alert so that Ottomanism (Osmanlılık) and Islamic faith (İslamlık) remain forever.⁷¹⁴ During the First World War (1914-1918), Kamuran Bedirkhan praised the Ottoman soldiers as the “saviors of the Caliphate.”⁷¹⁵ However, in his diary the British Major Noel indicates that his mission to Kurdistan in the summer of 1919 along with Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan and other influential Kurds to measure the possibility of an independent Kurdistan was “with the object of counteracting the PAN-ISLAMIC [emphasis is his] propaganda of the Turks and their efforts to turn all Kurds against us [the British] by frightening them with the bogey of an Armenian domination backed by British bayonets.”⁷¹⁶ Thus, by 1919 Ottomanism and Islamism lost their legitimacy for the Bedirkhan brothers to such a degree that they could act with the British against Pan-Islamism, which they regarded as a threat to foundation of an independent Kurdish state following the Allied defeat of the Ottoman Empire.

Giving up their loyalty to the centuries-old institutions like the Caliphate could not have been easy for Ottoman Kurds. In his 1933 letter to Ataturk, Jaladet addresses the Turkish president as former fellow Ottoman citizen and criticizes him for abolishing the Caliphate without putting anything in its place and, thus, weakening Islam in the face of its rival,

⁷¹⁴ Kamuran and Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutununun*, p. 24.

⁷¹⁵ Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Tanın-i Harb*, pp. 20-21.

⁷¹⁶ Noel, *Diary of Major Noel*, p. 1.

Christianity.⁷¹⁷ In his 1934 book in French on the Kurdish question, however, since Jaladet's audience was Westerners, he presents the caliphate as an institution that prevented national awakening of the Kurdish people. Referring to Ahmed Khani's 17th Century book *Mam u Zin* as a literary piece with a Kurdish nationalist message, he writes, "And that was despite the religious fanaticism and the caliphate, which bounded the Kurds to their rulers with a sacred link."⁷¹⁸

As explained earlier, the Kurdish press was not allowed to interfere in political issues. That is why in the Kurdish press we do not see any references to how Syrian Arab nationalists, too, used religion to win over the Kurds against the French mandate authorities. The Arab nationalists were against the French backed autonomist movement in the Jazira region. The movement was advocated by a coalition of Christian and Kurdish notables. In this coalition the Kurdish nationalist Hajo Agha represented the Kurds. However, some Kurds influenced by the Arab as well as the Turkish propaganda opposed the Kurdish-Christian coalition, demanding autonomy for Jazira and thus serving the French policy of divide and rule in Syria. The clashes between the autonomists and the Syrian nationalists in the summer of 1937 in Amuda, known as the "Amuda Affair", exemplifies the power of religious discourse among the Kurds. Even though some Kurdish notables cooperated with Christian leaders to demand from the French authorities the autonomy of the Jazira region in Syria, some Kurdish tribes refused to cooperate with Christians and collaborated with their Muslim brothers, Arabs of Jazira, and attacked the Christian quarter. This caused the massacre of more than two dozen Christians in the town of Amuda. The "Amuda affair" concluded with French intervention. The French forces bombed

⁷¹⁷ Jaladet defines the Caliphate a political institution, "borne from Islam's fertile womb" and "generating a kind of national sense among various races and elements." Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, pp. 94-96.

⁷¹⁸ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), *De La Question*, p. 7.

some Kurdish areas in the Jazira region. Kurdish nationalists believed that religious indentity of the Kurds again conflicted with their national interests.⁷¹⁹

Mullahs, Saydas, and Shaykhs

Kurdish nationalists were also critical of Kurdish religious leaders, many of whom fled to Syria to avoid the extreme secular policies of the Turkish state.⁷²⁰ There are two main categories of religious figures among Kurds. First, are those who are affiliated with the madrasas, the formal institutions of higher Islamic education: madrasa students (*feqes*), madrasa graduates (*mullahs*), and madrasa teachers (*saydas*).⁷²¹ Secondly, there are the *shaykhs* of the mystic Naqshbandi and Qadiri Sufi orders.⁷²² In the writings of some Kurdish nationalists in the Levant from the Mandate period, people with religious authority appear to be the usurpers of ordinary Kurds. They were criticized for doing nothing but increasing their own wealth and power.⁷²³ Some contributors held them responsible for the two major social ills in Kurdish society preventing Kurds' progress and civilization, poverty and illiteracy.

The notorious critic of the Kurdish religious establishment was the Kurdish national poet, Jegerkhwin (1903-1984), who himself was a former madrasa teacher. Jegerkhwin harshly criticized religious leaders for exploiting the Kurds. He warned Kurds not to respect them and

⁷¹⁹ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 29-37; Fuccaro, "Kurds and Kurdish Nationalism," pp. 211-214; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 531-532; and Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 231-240.

⁷²⁰ Bruinessen, "The Qadiriyya and the lineages of Qadiri Shaykhs in Kurdistan," in *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics*, pp. 213-229.

⁷²¹ Zeynelabidin Zinar, "Medrese Education in Kurdistan," in *Islam des Kurdes*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen and Joyce Blau (Paris: Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, 1999), pp. 39-58.

⁷²² Bruinessen, "Religion in Kurdistan," and "The Kurds and Islam," in *Mullahs, Sufis and Heretics*, pp. 13-57.

⁷²³ Dilkule Doski, "Gazind u Hevi [Cry and Hope]," *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 45 (17 April 1944), p.4.

not to kiss their hands as they are not the religion, which, according to Jegerkhwin, is the independence of the Kurdish nation.⁷²⁴ He defined religious leaders as “germs” in the body of the Kurdish society.⁷²⁵ He blamed them for Kurds’ defeat at the hands of their enemies since they required Kurds to memorize difficult Arabic texts rather than studying modern sciences.⁷²⁶ He contrasted Kurds’ blind religiosity with their enemies’ technological advancement and wrote, “the enemies are on the plane /.../ shields at their hands are heaven /and maces at their hands are hell.”⁷²⁷ The shaykhs in response denounced Jegerkhwin for his blasphemy.⁷²⁸

There are also many stories, real or fictional, about decadent mullahs or shaykhs and their ignorant followers. In one, a young girl, Gulchin, seeks help from a shaykh to persuade her father to marry her to his young aide rather than an old man. Through trickery the shaykh earns Gulchin’s trust and convinces her that he is a holy man with spiritual forces who can help her. During her visits, the shaykh makes her drink alcohol as holy water, rapes her and eventually impregnates her. To prevent a scandal the shaykh then makes Gulchin drink water mixed with poisonous powder which slowly kills her.⁷²⁹ In a true story in *Ronahi*, a shaykh from Iraqi Kurdistan, Shaykh Muhammad Barzan, implicitly presents himself as the awaited Mahdi who, he himself claims, is bullet-free and has the ability to fly. To prove that their shaykh is the Mahdi,

⁷²⁴ Jegerkhwin, “Ger Nexwinin [If We Don’t Get Educated],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 15 (1 June 1943), p. 20.

⁷²⁵ Jegerkhwin, “Hey Kurd [Oh Kurd],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 18 (1 September 1943), p. 14.

⁷²⁶ Jegerkhwin, “Qulu al-Haq Walaw Anfusakum [Tell the Truth Even to Yourselves],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), pp. 5-6.

⁷²⁷ Jegerkhwin, “Ji Divana Cegerxwin: Silav Li Sifra Hazir E [From Jegerkhwin’s Anthology: Greetings to the Ready Dining Table],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), p. 4.

⁷²⁸ Bashir Hasani, “Re Ji Ber Winda,” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p. 32.

⁷²⁹ Qadri Jan, “Gulcin,” *Ronahi*, Year , Issue 16 (1 July 1943), pp. 5-8.

some of his “ignorant” followers shoot at him and throw him off the wall of the dervish convent, which which causes his death.⁷³⁰

Religions of the Kurds and the Kurdish Religions

The religious and sectarian division of the Kurds was seen as another problem in the Kurdish press. A nationalist indicates that the inhabitants of Kurdistan are divided religiously into four categories: Sunni, Alevi, Yezidi, and Christian, all of whom have freedom to practice their religions in Kurdistan. However, he adds that Kurdistan is the ancestral land of the Yezidi, Alevi and Sunni Kurds.⁷³¹ He writes “we are three brothers, one blood, one skin, one name, and one nation. Independence and freedom is the name of Kurdistan not that of a religion or sect.” He continues that “some of our fellow countrymen are Assyrian, Chaldeans, Suryani (Syrian Orthodox), and Jewish, they are our friends....If they attach themselves to us, we will consider them our friends and neighbors.”⁷³² In his book in French written for a Western audience, on the other hand, Sureya Bedirkhan indicates that there are Christian Kurds too. He emphasizes the religious diversity and tolerance among the Kurds by writing that before Islam the whole Kurdish nation was Zoroastrian. A minority group converted into Christianity which later was divided in to Catholicism and Protestantism.⁷³³ Thus, he indicates that Kurds are religiously

⁷³⁰ Osman Sabri, “Şexse Barzan Cawan Firandin ?!..[How was the Shaykh of Barzan Flown?!..],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), pp. 22-24.

⁷³¹ As Jordi Tejel indicates that almost all of the members of Khoybun members with the exception Nuri Dersimi were from Sunni Kurdish territories of Turkey. Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 18. Moreover, Jaladet Bedirkhan in his 1934 book interestingly suggests that all [Muslim] Kurds are Sunni. Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), *De La Question*, cited in Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 141.

⁷³² Hasan Hishyar, “Yekitiya Kurd Ci Ye, U Bi Ci Pek Te [What is Kurds' Unity and How Is It Achieved],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 48 (15 May 1944), p.1

⁷³³ B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 13, note 1; and Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 208-11.

divided into Muslims, Catholics, Zoroastrians, and Protestants, all of whom without any exception speak Kurdish.”⁷³⁴

Kamuran Bedirkhan indicates that the division of the Kurds along sectarian (Sunni, Alawi) or religious (Yezidi, Muslim and Christian) lines is meaningless when they are subordinated by other people.⁷³⁵ In an editorial in *Hawar*, the editor indicates that children of Kurdistan, Muslim or Christian, get separated from one another only at the time of prayer to enter a mosque or a church.⁷³⁶ A Yezidi shaykh emphasizes the unity of Sunni, Alevi and Yezidi Kurds by calling them “three brothers” speaking the same language.⁷³⁷

The Kurdish nationalists showed great interest in what they called the original Kurdish religions: Zoroastrianism and Yezidism.⁷³⁸ The Bedirkhan brothers especially regarded Zoroastrianism as an important aspect of Kurdish identity.⁷³⁹ Sureya Bedirkhan defined Zoroastrianism as the original religion of the Kurds to which the whole Kurdish nation belonged before Islam.⁷⁴⁰ Kurdish nationalists claimed that Zoroaster enlightened the world by introducing monotheism to humanity. In *Hawar*, a picture of Zoroaster was published [See Appendix, Image 7], his teachings were explained and the holy book of Zoroastrianism, *Zend-Avesta*, were introduced to readers.⁷⁴¹ In the same magazine Kamuran indicates that “Zoroaster used to be the

⁷³⁴ B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 42.

⁷³⁵ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Yeqbun u Yeqitiya Kurdi [The Kurdish Unity and Alliance],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 4 (3 July 1932), p. 2.

⁷³⁶ Yeqi Vexwendi [An Invitee], “Du Sersal [Two New Years],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 15 (23 January 1933), pp. 1-3.

⁷³⁷ Şex Heydere Ezidi, “Qurd Yeq in [The Kurds are One],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 21 (5 June 1933), p. 5.

⁷³⁸ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 167, note 17.

⁷³⁹ Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” p. 13.

⁷⁴⁰ B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 13, note 1.

⁷⁴¹ This, according to Kamuran, shows that Kurds were always on the right path. In the past they were Zoroastrians and now they believe in Islam, another monotheistic religion. Kamuran Ali

mullah of the Kurds” and “the light of *Zend-Avesta* used to be the law of the Kurds.”⁷⁴² The Kurdish nationalists used to call other Muslim nations such as Turks, Arabs, and Albanians their co-religionists prior to collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Their heightened interest in Zoroastrianism as their authentic national religion made them look toward co-religionists who are or used to be Zoroastrians, such as those in Bombay, and Persians who, like the Kurds, used to be Zoroastrians before their conversion into Islam.⁷⁴³

What made Yezidism special for the nationalists is the fact that it is exclusively Kurdish.⁷⁴⁴ Even though Zoroastrianism has followers among non-Kurds, all Yezidis are Kurdish. The sacred book of Yezidis, *the Meshaf Resh* (Black Book) is in Kurmanji Kurdish. In fact, in the Black Book it is written that “God spoke in the sweet language of Kurmanji.”⁷⁴⁵ There were many articles in Kurdish and French explaining the content of their sacred book, the significance of the Peacock Angel for the Yezidis, their prayers, hymns, feasts, religious sites,

Bedirkhan, “Zerdest u Reya Zerdest [Zoroaster and the Path of Zoroaster],” *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp. 10-11.

⁷⁴² Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Yeşbun u Yeşitiya Kurdi [The Kurdish Unity and Alliance],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 4 (3 July 1932), p. 2; and Behmen Zerdest, “Le [However],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p.3.

⁷⁴³ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Zerdest u Reya Zerdest [Zoroaster and the Path of Zoroaster],” *Hawar*, Year4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp.10-11; and Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Bedirkhan), “Newruz: Bist u Siseye Nisane [Newruz: April 23],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 42 (15 April 1942), p. 5.

⁷⁴⁴ Sureya Bedirkhan corrects a view that the name Yezidism has a connection with the Yazid I (680-3 A.D.), the second Umayyad Caliph. He indicates that it is derived from the word Yezid, meaning God. B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 13, note 1. In his 1922 article G. R. Driver indicates “the suggestion that the name Yezidi is derived from *yazdan*, the Persian word for “god,” is perhaps the most probable view.” G. R. Driver, “The Religion of the Kurds,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 2, no. 2 (1922), pp. 197-213.

⁷⁴⁵ Şex Heydere Ezidi, “Qurd Yeş in [The Kurds are One],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 21 (5 June 1933), p. 5; and B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 13, note 1.

and social customs and history.⁷⁴⁶ As their writings suggest, the French Orientalists, too, showed a great deal of interest in Yezidism. Roger Lescot even used a pseudonym which has reference to Yezidism, namely “Tawûsparêz” (Peacock Angel Worshipper).⁷⁴⁷ Despite their interest in Yezidism as a Kurdish religion, the Kurdish nationalists also admitted that Yezidism is “a distorted version of Zoroastrianism.”⁷⁴⁸ Osman Sabri bemoaned that because of the ban on literacy among the Yezidis, Yezidism, a religion rooted in Zoroastrianism, adopted elements from the teachings of Moses, Jesus, and especially Muhammad.⁷⁴⁹

Nationalism as a religion

Along with the emphasis on Zoroastrianism and Yezidism as being more Kurdish than Islam, some Kurdish nationalists presented nationalism (*gelperestî*) as its own secular religion.⁷⁵⁰ A series of articles in *Hawar* in 1932 by Jaladet Bedirkhan under his pseudonym, Hevinde Sori, constitutes a great example for this argument. He wrote that all nationalisms, like religions, have their obligations, sacred books, and prophets. He gives a list of the prophets for various nations,

⁷⁴⁶ “Notice Sur La Bible Noire,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 51 (30 July 1945), pp. 3-4, continued in *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 56 (10 September 1945), pp. 3-4; “Telqina Ezdiyan [The Yezidi Talqin],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 49 (15 September 1942), p. 4; “Qewil [Hymn],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 24 (18 October 1943), p. 1, and Year 1, Issue 27 (8 November 1943), p. 1; “Qewil [Hymn],” *Ster*, Year 1, Issue 1 (6 December 1943), p. 1, and Year 2 Issue 2 (28 February 1944), p.1.

⁷⁴⁷ Th. Bois, “Le Djebel Sindjar au Debut du XIXe Siecle,” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 56 (10 September 1945), p. 3; and Roger Lescot, *Enquête sur les Yezidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjâr* (Beirut: Institut Français de Damas, 1938).

⁷⁴⁸ B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, p. 13, note 1.

⁷⁴⁹ Osman Sabri, “Ezdi u Ola Wan [The Yezidis and their Religion],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 19 (1 October 1943), pp. 13-16; “Ezdi u Ola Wan-2- [The Yezidis and their Religion-2-],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 20 (1 November 1943), p.16; and “Ezdi u Ola Wan-3- [The Yezidis and their Religion-3-],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 21 (1 December 1943), p.15.

⁷⁵⁰ Carlton J. H. Hayes, “Nationalism as a Religion,” in *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), pp. 104-114; C. J. H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 164-182; and Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 4-5, 15, 26, and 40-2, cited in Rogers Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches,” *Nations and Nationalism* 18, Issue 1 (January 2012), pp. 2-20.

such as Mustafa Kamil, Saad Zaghlul, George Washington, and Ghandi. Ihsan Nuri Pasha, who was the commander of Kurdish forces in the Ararat Rebellion, is presented as the prophet for Kurdish nationalism.⁷⁵¹ On another occasion, he calls the medieval Kurdish poet Ahmed Khani “the prophet of our national religion, the prophet of our racial religion.”⁷⁵² Moreover, in his 1933 open letter to Mustafa Kemal in Ottoman Turkish, Jaladet defines Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924) as “the prophet of Turkishness” who, ironically, was an Ottoman intellectual of Kurdish origin.⁷⁵³ In fact, presenting nationalism as a secular religion was a tendency in Turkey at the time as well.⁷⁵⁴

If nationalism is considered a religion it should have its religious symbols. In a poem, Kamuran presents the Kurdish flag as the “mihrab (altar) of the mosques and churches.”⁷⁵⁵ Young nationalists presented Mount Judi and Mount Ararat as “the side of *qiblegah*, direction for prayer, for the Kurdish nation.”⁷⁵⁶ This was actually very similar to how a Turkish nationalist at the same time compared *Çankaya*, where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s presidential palace is

⁷⁵¹ Hevinde Sori (Jaladet Bedirkhan), “Yeçyetiman (2) [Unity],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 12 (27 November 1932), pp. 1-2; “Yeçyetiman (3) [Unity],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 3-4; and “Yeçyetiman (4) [Unity],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 14 (31 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁷⁵² Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Klasiken Me An Sahir u Ediben Me en Kevin [Our Classics or Our Old Poets and Literary Men],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 33 (1 October 1941), pp. 6-12.

⁷⁵³ Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 91.

⁷⁵⁴ Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, p. 63.

⁷⁵⁵ In mosques, a *mihrab* is usually a niche set into the middle of the qibla [direction of prayer] wall of a building in order to indicate the direction of Mecca. Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Ala Qurdan [The Kurdish Flag],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p.7.

⁷⁵⁶ M. E. Boti, “Ciyaye Cudi [The Cudi Mountain],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 45 (20 June 1942), p. 6; and Osman Sabri, “Agiri [The Ararat (Agri) Mountain],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 36 (1 December 1941), pp. 8-9.

located in Ankara, to the Kaba.⁷⁵⁷ This shows the “universality of religious aspect of nationalism” that “has a large number of quarrelsome [rival] sects.”⁷⁵⁸ Ironically, in the 34th issue of *Roja Nu*, readers saw the image of the Kaba, “the [real] direction of prayer (qiblegah) for all Muslims” [See Appendix, Image 8].⁷⁵⁹ In the 37th issue of the same magazine, however, a reader from Amuda, Syria, praises the efforts of the Bedirkhan brothers and writes “you [Bedirkhans] are the qiblegah of the patriotic work.”⁷⁶⁰

Patriot Mullahs and Shaykhs

Despite the presentation of nationalism as a new religion in the Kurdish press, Islam was not replaced by Kurdish nationalism. The majority of the Kurds remained Sunni Muslims.⁷⁶¹ Even Jegerkhwin, known with his harsh critiques of the shaykhs and mullahs, praised Shaykh Said, who led the 1925 Kurdish rebellion, as “the martyr of the nation and religion.”⁷⁶² Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi (1869-1932) is another example of a shaykh who was a national hero and martyr.⁷⁶³ Shaykh Garisi was assassinated in 1932 by his own personal servant who reportedly acted on orders from the Turkish authorities. Jaladet mourned his death by covering *Hawar*'s cover pages with a Kurdish flag and putting his symbolic gravestone on the back cover. [See

⁷⁵⁷ In a poem, Kemal Kamu, a member of the Republican People's Party deputy writes: *Çankaya* [Mustafa Kemal's presidential residence]-here Moses reached spiritual perfection/Here Jesus ascended/.../Neither miracle nor sorcery/Let the Arab possess the Kaba/ Cankaya is sufficient for us. Şükrü Hanioglu, “The Historical Roots of Kemalism,” in *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, ed. Ahmet T. Kuru and Alfred Stepan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 45.

⁷⁵⁸ Hayes, “Nationalism as a Religion,” p. 117.

⁷⁵⁹ *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 34 (10 January 1944), p.1.

⁷⁶⁰ Lawe Telo, “Piroznama Stera Celeng [Congratulation Letter for the Cunning Star],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 37 (31 January 1944), p. 2.

⁷⁶¹ Hayes, “Nationalism as a Religion,” p. 123; and H. Bozarslan, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” pp. 163-190.

⁷⁶² Jegerkhwin, “Sehnama Sehidan,” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), p.5.

⁷⁶³ Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, p. 132.

Appendix, Image 9] Shaykh Garisi not only had participated in the Shaykh Said and the Ararat rebellions but also issued a *fatwa* approving the use of the Latin alphabet for Kurdish instead of Arabic script.⁷⁶⁴ Garisi's support was very vital because, as explained earlier, other Kurdish shaykhs opposed the new letters, replacing the Arabic letters in which Quran is written and, thus, considered sacred by the Muslims. According to a reader, some shaykhs in Amuda, a Kurdish town in Northern Syria, claimed that Kurmanches who are in the path of religion do not read the magazines in Latin characters."⁷⁶⁵

Jaladet Bedirkhan in article in *Roja Nu* makes a distinction between those aghas and shaykhs responsible for the illiteracy and underdevelopment of the Kurds and those who work with the nationalists for their awakening.⁷⁶⁶ A living example of the patriotic mullahs was Mullah Anwar from Amadiya, Iraqi Kurdistan. He was praised in *Ronahi* for teaching religious subjects (tafsir, hadith and sharia) partly in Kurdish and teaching the new alphabet to his religious students so that they could read the Kurdish magazines.⁷⁶⁷ Mullah Anwar also published poems with nationalist messages.⁷⁶⁸ Thus, the Kurdish madrasas were in fact important centers for spreading the ideas expressed in the Kurdish periodicals.⁷⁶⁹ Letters published in the Kurdish magazines indicate that madrasa students from the Kurdish towns of

⁷⁶⁴ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "Şex Evdirehmane Garisi Cu Rehmete [Sheikh Evdirehmane Garisi Passed Away]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), pp. 1-3; Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Mesheda Ibreta [A Martyr's Grave for Lesson]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), p. 3; and cover pages of the same issue of *Hawar*.

⁷⁶⁵ Bashir Hasani, "Re Ji Ber Winda," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p. 32.

⁷⁶⁶ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, "Merhele [The Stages]," *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 1 (3 May 1943), pp. 1-2.

⁷⁶⁷ M. Ermexani, "Mela Enwer [Mullah Anwar]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), pp. 10-11 and Mullah Anwar, "Serbesti [Freedom]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), p.11; "Besta Welati [The Inspiration of Homeland]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), p.17.

⁷⁶⁸ Mullah Anwar, "Serbesti [Freedom]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), p. 11; "Besta Welati [The Inspiration of Homeland]," *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 12 (1 March 1943), p.17.

⁷⁶⁹ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 23.

Syria and beyond were among the most passionate readers.⁷⁷⁰ Several *Hawar* issues had a column addressed to madrasa students.⁷⁷¹ In *Roja Nu*, in the section of the local news from the Syrian Jazira region, the madrasas in Amuda are praised for teaching tajwid (rules of Quran recitation) in Kurdish language as it is very beneficial to the madrasa students.⁷⁷²

Furthermore, the Kurdish madrasas were historically important centers of Kurdish literary production. The anthology of Kurdish Classical Literature published in *Hawar* is dominated by madrasa educated scholars and authors such as Malaye [Mullah] Jaziri (1570-1640) known for his mystic poetry and Ahmad Khani (1650-1707) whose 17th century text, *Mamu Zin*, was considered the Kurdish national epic.⁷⁷³ Jaladet calls Mullah Jaziri “the mullah” for the Kurds and praises his Kurdish anthology in terms of philosophy and mysticism despite the fact that it is full of foreign [Arabic] words.⁷⁷⁴ Thus, Kurdish nationalism is actually rooted in traditional religious institutions and people. They explain the strength and historicity of Kurdish national identity.⁷⁷⁵

Kurds in the Service of Islam Question their Misery

Kurdish nationalists also stressed Kurds’ service and dedication to Islam. As explained before, Saladin, the famous Muslim commander of Kurdish origin, was criticized by some for

⁷⁷⁰ “Xwe Ji Bave Xwe Vedizi, Terka Gund u Mala Xwe Da Ko Hini Xwendin u Nivisandina Zimana Xwe Bibe [He Hid Himself from His Father, Left His Village and Family so that He Learns How to Read and Write His Own Language],” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 7 (1 October 1942), p. 7.

⁷⁷¹ “Stuna Fekehan [The Column of the Madrasa Students],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 1 (15 May 1932), p.4.

⁷⁷² “Li Cezire [In Jazira],” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 61 (5 November 1945), p.1.

⁷⁷³ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Klasiken Me an Sahir u Ediben Me en Kevin [Our Classics or Our Old Poets and Literary Men],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 33 (1 October 1941), pp. 6-12; and Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 48.

⁷⁷⁴ “Ji Mele [From the Mullah],” *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), p. 8

⁷⁷⁵ Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism,” pp. 2-20.

serving Arabs and their religion rather than his own nation.⁷⁷⁶ However many nationalists like Jaladet Bedirkhan praised him “for saving Muhammad’s religion from extinction by defending Islam against the Crusaders” and they called him the “Second Muhammad.”⁷⁷⁷ Some nationalists also argued that Kurds were more deeply dedicated to Islam than other Muslim nations. However, they were underestimated and even humiliated by their coreligionists.⁷⁷⁸ Kamuran Bedirkhan, for example, quoted a Turkish proverb saying “the Kurd is a Muslim compared to a nonbeliever.” However, the unorthodoxy of the Kurds, implied by Turks and Arabs, was also celebrated as a sign of their difference by both Kurdish nationalists and European Orientalists.⁷⁷⁹ Jaladet translates a German author’s observation that unlike in Turkish villages, minarets are a rare sight in Kurdish villages. In a note to his translation, Jaladet writes that Kurds never forget God and that is why, unlike Turks, they do not need to have high minarets in their villages to remember God.⁷⁸⁰ In a different article, he says that Kurdish nomads preferred the nomadic lifestyle and the highlands to be away from Turks in the cities and to be closer to God.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁶ Bisare Segman, “Ciroka Tarixi: Selahedin u Ricarde Serdil [Historical Story: Saladin and the Richard the Lionheart],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 51 (15 November 1942), pp. 3-5; and Osman Sabri, “Diroka Jina Selahedin [History of Saladin’s Life],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), pp. 12-14.

⁷⁷⁷ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, Sultan Selaheddine Eyyubi, *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁷⁷⁸ Qadri Jan, “Gelo Ne Wisan e,” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), p. 2.

⁷⁷⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Le Soleil Noir: Les Costumes du Pays des Kurdes,” *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp. 12-15, also cited in Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” pp. 13-36; Jaladet Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 47; and Bois, *L’âme des Kurdes*, pp. 47-57. It is ironic that, as Martin van Bruinessen indicates, another prejudice about the Kurds is that Kurds are staunch Sunnis and religious fanatics, a discourse utilized by the Turkish state at the time of the Shaykh Said rebellion: Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” and “The Kurds and Islam,” in *Mullahs, Sufis and Heretics*, pp. 13-57.

⁷⁸⁰ Herekol Azizan (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Kurd u Kurdistan Bi Cave Biyaniyan (3) [Kurds and Kurdistan through the Eyes of Foreigners],” *Hawar*, Year 2, Issue 24 (1 April 1934), pp. 1-3.

⁷⁸¹ Bave Cemsit [Jamshid’s Father (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan)], “Resbelek [Notes],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 48 (15 August 1942), pp. 2-4.

Moreover, the Kurdish nationalists stressed any difference between the Kurds and Turks in terms of practicing Islam. For example, Jaladet emphasized that Kurds belonged to Shafi school of jurisprudence, whereas the Turks belonged to Hanafi school.⁷⁸²

At the same time, Kurdish nationalists questioned why God did not seem to side with people who are such devout Muslims. In a poem, Jaladet asks if God, too, backs the powerful people.⁷⁸³ In a play published in *Hawar*, a character expresses his frustration for the defeat of the Kurds and says: “Oh God show mercy! Why do you tolerate such a situation? If you demand religious people, here we are. If you demand faithful and honorable people, here we are.”⁷⁸⁴ Mullah Anwar’s poetic conversation with God in *Rohani* is the best example. His two poems were entitled “My Question to God,” and “God’s Answer.” In the first poem he asks God why he is not merciful to the miserable Kurds whose territories were invaded. God replies that the Kurds are responsible for their own misery and he can help them only if they make an effort. God even advises Kurds to support the Kurdish magazines.⁷⁸⁵

Religion in the Service of Kurdish Nationalism

Mullah Anwar also cites a Quranic verse to encourage Kurds to work hard, “There is nothing for man except what he strives for.”⁷⁸⁶ This is a good example of another tendency in the Kurdish press, namely putting Islam in the service of nationalism through references to the

⁷⁸² Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, *Mektub*, p. 40, and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 141, note 10.

⁷⁸³ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Tola Karwen [Revenge of the Caravan],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 17 (6 March 1933), pp. 6-7.

⁷⁸⁴ “Hevind [Hope],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-11.

⁷⁸⁵ Mullah Anwar, “Pirsa Min Ji Xwede [My Question to God],” and “Cewab Ji Terefe Xwede [The Answer by God],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 16 (1 July 1943), pp. 8-10.

⁷⁸⁶ *Quran*, Chapter 53, Surah Najm, verse 39 in Mullah Anwar, “Cewab Ji Terefe Xwede [The Answer by God],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 16 (1 July 1943), pp. 8-10.

Quran and hadith (sayings of the prophet Muhammad). A good example was the hadith, “the love of homeland is an article of faith.”⁷⁸⁷ Kamuran Bedirkhan cites another and writes, “Our prophet, Peace be upon Him, cherished two kinds of people, those who teach others and those who educate themselves, exit from darkness and head toward light and progress.”⁷⁸⁸ In another article, he indicates that following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who fought to protect the faith, Kurds should fight for their freedom and independence.⁷⁸⁹ Ihsan Nuri Pasha, the former Ottoman officer and a leader of the Kurdish forces in the Ararat Rebellion, suggests in *Hawar* that internal conflicts among Kurds should be stopped according to the “Sharia of Muhammad.”⁷⁹⁰

One can also notice that unlike the earlier tendency of presenting the Prophet Muhammad as one of a line of prophets or calling him just Muhammad without any honorific expression, in the later issues of the Kurdish periodicals, we clearly see an emphasis on praising the Prophet when his name was mentioned. A 1945 front page article in *Roja Nu* is entitled “Our Prophet [Pexembere Me]” with the praising expression “May God’s Blessing and Peace Be upon Him.” The article is a kind of moral and manners lesson in reference to the Prophet’s example.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁷ “Hubbul Watan Minal Iman” in Arabic, and Hiba [or Hubba] /Hezkirina Welat Ji Îman e” in Kurdish. Qadri Jan, “Silêman Beg Bedir-Xan,” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 3 (15 June 1932), pp. 4-5; The same expression can be seen in a poem written by Suleiman Bedirkhan in 1911 and republished in *Hawar*. Suleyman Bedir-Xan, “Ax Kurdistan [Oh Kurdistan],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 10 (23 October 1932), p. 2; and in Bashir Hasani, “Re Ji Ber Winda,” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p.32.

⁷⁸⁸ “Xortên 25 u Zaroyên 7 Sali Dixwinin [The 25 years old young guy and 7 years old child reads],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 15 (9 August 1943), p. 2.

⁷⁸⁹ *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 39 (21 February 1944), p.1.

⁷⁹⁰ Ihsan Nuri, “Ji Lawan Ra [To the Sons],” *Ronahi*, Year 4, Issue 28 (March 1945), pp. 17-18.

⁷⁹¹ “Pexembere Me [Our Prophet],” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 55 (3 September 1945), p. 1.

Rationalizing and Nationalizing Islam

Right below the above mentioned *Roja Nu* article on cleanliness, hard work, proper treatment of children and women in reference to the Prophet's example, there is, ironically, a story about a woman who pretends to be very religious but cheats on her husband and a religious scholar who is arrested for theft.⁷⁹² Putting these two pieces together was a deliberate choice by the Kurdish nationalists to differentiate Islam from its misrepresentations. Osman Sabri, for example, explains how some shaykhs and mullahs discouraged women from obtaining an education despite the fact that the Prophet Muhammad required both men and women to get educated.⁷⁹³ There was also an attempt to demystify superstitious beliefs on jinn, zombies, and bogeys. Through several humorous real-life stories published in *Hawar* and *Ronahi*, Osman Sabri explains how sheer coincidence, optical illusion, fear, misunderstanding or the superstitious nature of human beings lead them to believe in evil spirits (şeytanqûnî /terşê şevê).⁷⁹⁴

The Kurdish nationalists also wanted to make the main sources of Islam accessible to readers through translation of the Quran and hadith into Kurdish. Kamuran translated the

⁷⁹² Brahime Metini, "Jin u Merik [The Wife and the Poor Man]," *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 55 (3 September 1945), p.1.

⁷⁹³ Osman Sabri, "Boblaten Me En Civaki [Our Social Catastrophes]," *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 9 (28 June 1943), p.1.

⁷⁹⁴ Osman Sabri, "Terşê Şevê (1) [Bogey (1)]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 14 (1 May 1943), pp. 6-7. Ironically, on the next page Osman Sabri shares a story with the readers about an old Kurdish man from the Botan region who kills a lion with a stick to emphasize how brave Kurds are without any demystification. Osman Sabri, "Serek Bi Darek [A Lion, With a Stick]," *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 14 (1 May 1943), pp. 8-9; "Şeytanqûnî (1) [Zombie (1)]," *Hawar*, Year 11, Issue 55 (15 June 1943), pp. 7-8; "Şeytanqûnî (2) [Zombie (2)]," *Hawar*, Year 11, Issue 56 (15 July 1943), pp. 3-4; and "Şeytanqûnî (3) [Zombie (3)]," *Hawar*, Year 11, Issue 57 (15 August 1943), p. 2.

Quran⁷⁹⁵ and hadith⁷⁹⁶ in the twenty-seventh issue of *Hawar*.⁷⁹⁷ [See Appendix, Image 10] He also published a catechism in Kurdish entitled *The Sharia Lessons*.⁷⁹⁸ Moreover, together with the Dominican father Thomas Bois, Kamuran also translate Christian religious texts into Kurdish.⁷⁹⁹

The translation of Quran into Kurdish was a controversial attempt since Arabic is considered the sacred language of Islam. However, it had already been done in Kemalist Turkey in 1924.⁸⁰⁰ In Turkey, the call for prayer (ezan), too, was translated and recited in Turkish

⁷⁹⁵ “Tefsira Qurane,” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), pp. 1-2. Kamuran interestingly entitled his Kurdish translation of Quran as “tafsir” (commentary) rather than “tercima” (translation). He listed the following books as his references: *Tefsir-i tibyan and tefsir-i mevakib* (Derseadet [Istanbul]: Arif Efendi Matbaası, 1324 [1905-1906]); *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* by Jalaladdin Muhammad and Jalaladdin Abdurrahman (Damascus: Hashimiyya Press, 1357 (1938-9)); *Qurtabi Tafsir of Quran* by al-Qurtabi (Cairo, 1933); and *Der Koran* by Max Henning (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1901).

⁷⁹⁶ The reference books for the hadith translations were listed as: Ibn al-Dayba‘, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī, and Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *Taysīr al-wuṣūl ilā Jāmi‘ al-uṣūl min ḥadīth al-Rasūl* (Miṣr: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Salafīyah, 1927); *Nukhbatuun min al-Kalam al-Nabi* by Mustafa al-Ghalayini (Beirut: Misbah Press, 1929); and *al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaghīr fī aḥādīth al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr Jalaladdin* by Abdurrahman ibn ebi Bekir as-Suyuti (Cairo: Hijazi Press).

⁷⁹⁷ The Quran translation continued in *Roja Nu*. “Tefsira Qurane,” *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 56 (24 September 1945), p. 3.

⁷⁹⁸ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, *Dersen Seriete [The Sharia Lessons]* (Damascus: Tereqi Press, 1938).

⁷⁹⁹ *Incila Luqa [Gospel of Luke]* (Beirut: The United Holy Book Society, 1953); and *Metheloken Hezrete Sileman [Proverbs]* (Beirut: ABS & BFBS, 1947); and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 156. However, all these did not mean their interest in Zoroastrianism and Yezidism ended. Interestingly, in the thirty-eight issue of *Hawar*, after Kamuran’s translations of passages from *Quran*, Jaladet translates the first two sections of “Zarathustra’s Prologue” from Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Jaladet is very careful not to offend his readers’ religious feelings that he makes sure that the last sentence of the translated text, God is dead!, is not understood literally by his readers. In a foot note he writes “that God meant here was not the master of the heavens and the earth, but false beliefs. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 3-5; and Seydaye Gerok [Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan], *Zerdest [Zoroaster]*,” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 38 (22 January 1942), pp. 3-4.

⁸⁰⁰ M. Brett Wilson, “The First Translations of the Qur’an in Modern Turkey (1924-1938),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, volume 41, no. 3 (2009), pp. 419-435.

between 1932 and 1950.⁸⁰¹ This practice in Turkey was actually evaluated in *Roja Nu* as it was implemented in the Kurdish areas of Turkey too. Under the image of a minaret in *Roja Nu*, it was written that: “The call to prayer (ezan) is in Arabic. In our territories some [Turks] are giving the call to prayer in their own languages, which our people [Kurds] do not understand. Our ears enjoy the Arabic call to prayer; however, if it is to be given in any other language, it should be in Kurdish.”⁸⁰² [See Appendix, Image 11] Here we see an important case, representing secular Kurdish nationalists’ view of religion. As already explained, they emphasized Zoroastrianism and Yezidism as Kurdish religions. However, Islam was very important to them as the majority of the Kurds were Sunni Muslims. As Partha Chatterjee indicates, “nationalists consider the domain of the spiritual their sovereign territory,” and they refuse to allow the colonial power [in this case the Kemalist state] to interfere with it.” However, “this does not mean the spiritual domain is left unchanged.”⁸⁰³ As explained above, Kurdish nationalists also tried to nationalize and rationalize religion. Over all, in the Kurdish periodicals in the 1930s and 40s, one can see “the complexity of continuing relations between religion and nationalism.”⁸⁰⁴ This means a syncretism of religion and nationalism.⁸⁰⁵ However, as Robert Brubaker indicates, nationalism is still a secular phenomenon led by a secular intelligentsia.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰¹ Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 45-84.

⁸⁰² “Minareyek [A Minaret],” *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 40 (6 March 1944), p. 1.

⁸⁰³ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 6, 120-121 and P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 41-42, cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 185.

⁸⁰⁴ A. D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 8.

⁸⁰⁵ Hayes (1926), “Nationalism as a Religion,” p. 123.

⁸⁰⁶ Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism,” pp. 2-20.

Nationalists' View of Women and Men

The prominent Kurdish intellectuals exiled in the Levant were all male. Thus, the nationalist discourse expressed their masculine visions and anxieties. National symbols were presented in a female imaginary, and women's shame was seen as a threat to their male, or national, honor. Moreover, women were expected to participate in the Kurdish national struggle by fulfilling their "appropriate" roles. However, in the fictional world of literature, Kurdish women were given the opportunity to transcend traditional gender roles to an extent that they could challenge the bravery of men. The overall sexist language used by male nationalists conflicted with their reformist ideas regarding the status of women. Furthermore, Kurdish national discourse was shaped by contemporary events. Reading or observing the victory of the Allied soldiers during the Second World War, Kurdish nationalists in exile felt frustrated due to their passivity. However, they also emphasized manliness and bravery as inherent Kurdish characters. These various and sometimes conflicting images of women and men in the Kurdish publications are presented in two different but intertwined worlds. One is the world of documentary reality and the other one is the fictional or created world of short stories, poems, and folkloric songs.

A Male Nationalist Discourse

When we look at the way most authors address readers in the Kurdish press, we can see that real actors of the Kurdish national movement were men, "defending their freedom, their honor, their homeland, and their women."⁸⁰⁷ In an editorial article in *Hawar*, Jaladet Ali Bedir Khan teaches his readers meaning of concepts like "homeland," "citizens," and "flag." He

⁸⁰⁷ Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, Issue 2 (1998), p. 244.

writes: “People of a country are brothers [and] male cousins of each other.”⁸⁰⁸ Many others, too, address their fellow nationalists as their “brothers, and male cousins.”⁸⁰⁹ A nationalist calls “sons of Kurdistan” to sacrifice their lives for their homeland.⁸¹⁰

In her book, *Visualizing the Nation*, Joan Landes indicates that the aggressively masculine French nationalism in the context of the French Revolution had a surprising feminine iconography.⁸¹¹ That seems to be the true for the Kurdish national symbols as well. Homeland, for example, is imagined as a mother, a sister, a bride and a fourteen year old girl.⁸¹² In a play entitled “Hevind” (Hope) that Jaladet published in *Hawar*, the Kurdish fighters sing: “We are brothers, [we are] altogether Kurds/.../Our homeland is our mother.”⁸¹³ In a poem Jaladet describes Kurdistan as a bride and fighting for Kurdistan as a wedding.⁸¹⁴ For Jegerkhwin Kurdistan is the “bride of the world.”⁸¹⁵ Not only Kurdistan but also the Kurdish journals are depicted as female. Jegerkhwin describes *Hawar* as “a young girl...very charming, and polite.” He also adds that “her bride money is little, cheap, only five hundred qurush.”⁸¹⁶ Jaladet Bedirkhan, in an article, encourages Kurds in Iraq to support a Kurdish magazine financially and writes “that great magazine comes in an envelope...like a new bride whose head is

⁸⁰⁸ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Welat, Welatini u Al [Homeland, Citizens, and Flag],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section) Year 1, Issue 9 (30 September 1932), pp. 1-2.

⁸⁰⁹ “Xwendevan [Readers],” *Ster*, Year 2, Issue 2 (28 February 1944), pp. 1-2.

⁸¹⁰ Nami, “Mars [Anthem],” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 41 (15 May 1942), p. 2.

⁸¹¹ Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.18.

⁸¹² A. Hesên, “Xewna Rastiye [The Dream of the Truth],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), p. 5

⁸¹³ “Hevind [Hope],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), p. 11.

⁸¹⁴ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Dawet e [It is a Wedding],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p. 3.

⁸¹⁵ Jegerkhwin, “Welate Min [My Homeland],” *Hawar*, Year 1, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), p. 4.

⁸¹⁶ Jegerkhwine Kurdi, “Ji Bona Haware [For Hawar],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), pp. 4-5.

covered.”⁸¹⁷ Thus, national symbols, ideals as well as publications are presented in a way to encourage male nationalists to attach themselves to them. As Landes argues, “eros becomes the glue that binds private passion and public duty.”⁸¹⁸

In 1913 following the failure of the Ottomans in the Balkan wars, Kamuran and Jaladet as Ottoman Kurds referred to the misery of women and children in Edirne under the Bulgarian occupation. The Bedirkhan brothers felt sorrow as “Ottoman honor” (namus-u Osmani) was violated by the enemy. They emphasized that not only had a city fallen to the enemy, but also that mothers’ breasts were cut off and the chastity of sisters destroyed.⁸¹⁹ The Kurdish nationalists, exiled in Syria and Lebanon, were no longer Ottoman. The Kurdish rebellions had failed and the rebels had fled to Syria. They were now in exile and worried about, not only Kurdistan, but also Kurdish women and girls left behind to the mercy of their enemies. Kurdish men “whose honor is tied to their women’s sexuality” were anxious about the possibility of forced sexual encounter between national women and alien men.⁸²⁰ In many articles it is emphasized that “girls, brides, and old women are at the hands of the enemy.”⁸²¹ A Kurdish nationalist writes “the Kurdish girls’ plaits are at the hands of the Romis (Turks).”⁸²² In a poem Qadri Jan indicates that [Kurdish] “sisters have sent [a piece of] their hair” to call for help and to awaken Kurdish men. The Kurdish nationalists saw the whole situation dishonorable and urge their fellow men to do something about that.⁸²³

⁸¹⁷ “Gelawej,” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p. 12.

⁸¹⁸ Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*, p. 153.

⁸¹⁹ Jaladet and Kamuran Bedirkhan, *Edirne Sukutunun*, pp. 40-1, 52, 76 and 101-3.

⁸²⁰ Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism,” p. 256.

⁸²¹ Osman Sabri, “Berdiliya Mihoke,” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 19 (1 October 1943), p. 5.

⁸²² Bozan Shahin, “Hawar e [It is a call],” *Hawar*, (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), p. 3.

⁸²³ Qadri Jan, “Xewna Hisyariye [The Dream of Awakening],” *Hawar*, (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 13 (14 December 1932), p. 2.

Kurdish Women: Preservers of the Nation

As Joane Nagel indicates, even though masculine interests, anxieties and ideologies dominate nationalist discourses, women are always given important roles defined by men and in support of men.⁸²⁴ Janet Klein indicates though the Kurdish press was born in 1898 “the woman question” began to be an important topic in the Ottoman Kurdish journals starting in 1913, immediately before the outbreak of the First World War, and especially after the beginning of the war and the declaration of President Wilson’s “Fourteen Points,” including the principle of national self-determination. Moreover, after the Mudros armistice, societies for Kurdish women were established in Istanbul in 1919. Ottoman Kurdish elites knew that the position of women in a society is an important sign of a nation’s progress and women as mothers play significant roles in the education of future generations.⁸²⁵ Kurdish nationalism in the Levant was an heir to the Kurdish activism of the late Ottoman period. As in the Ottoman Kurdish press, Kurdish nationalists in the Levant presented Kurdish women as the symbols and gatekeepers of uncontaminated Kurdishness.⁸²⁶

The prominent Kurdish male nationalists in the Levant were products of Ottoman institutions and some had studied in Europe. Jaladet Bedirkhan, who was born in Istanbul and studied in Ottoman and European schools, was a good example. However, his exile years in Syria meant his return to a national self, to Kurdishness. Therefore, his marriage to his female cousin, Rawshan, in 1935 had a symbolic importance. In his article entitled “Come My Female Cousin,” he expresses his regret for what many Kurds had been doing for many years, namely,

⁸²⁴ Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism,” p. 243.

⁸²⁵ Klein, “En-Gendering Nationalism,” pp. 25-51; Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” pp. 115-116; and Rohat Alakom, “Kurdish Women in Constantinople at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation*, pp. 53-70.

⁸²⁶ Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” pp. 111-116.

preferring foreign women to Kurdish women.⁸²⁷ As many fictional writings in the Kurdish press suggest, marriage with female cousin is a common practice among ordinary Kurds.⁸²⁸ This tradition was appropriated by the former Ottoman cosmopolitan Kurdish elite, re-discovering their national identity, specifically Jaladet Bedirkhan.⁸²⁹ Thus in a play entitled “Hope,” written by Jaladet, Sarwar Beg, the European educated gentleman in European garb, impersonates Jaladet, and is in love with his female cousin. His love becomes a symbol of his attachment to his Kurdish identity.⁸³⁰

The significant role of women in the family and at home constituted an important issue for Kurdish nationalists. *Roja Nu* presents the American family as an example to imitate in which women as wives and mothers contribute to the cleanliness of their homes, the happiness of their families and the education of their children. Even the education of girls in America, according to the article, is intended to prepare them for their above mentioned specific roles.⁸³¹ Jaladet argues that Kurdish men should marry Kurdish women since children grow up at the hands of their mothers. He adds that “a nation’s tradition, etiquette, language and all other characteristics are preserved by women. This is because women, unlike men, are more attached to the past and freer from foreign influence as their contacts with the foreigners are limited.” Women, according to Jaladet, protect their houses from invisible enemies namely, tradition, language and

⁸²⁷ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Were Dotmam [Come My Female Cousin],” *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), p. 3.

⁸²⁸ Fredrik Barth, “Father’s Brother’s Daughter Marriage in Southern Kurdistan,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 10 (1954), pp. 164-171.

⁸²⁹ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Ji Zin u Mem: Welate Kurdan [From Zin and Mam: Homeland of Kurds],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), p. 5; and “Strana Dilan [Ballad of the Hearts],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 8 (12 September 1932), p.5.

⁸³⁰ “Hevind” [Hope], *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), pp. 1-11.

⁸³¹ “Ev e Emerike [This is America],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 21 (20 September 1943), p. 2.

characteristics of other nations.⁸³² These ideas were not unique to Kurdish nationalists. Writing about nationalism in South Asian societies, Partha Chatterjee indicates that the home “must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world-and women is its representation.” Presenting South Asian nationalists’ views, Chatterjee writes, “The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality.”⁸³³

The only female author in the Kurdish press was Rawshan Bedirkhan, Jaladet’s female cousin and wife. She has only two articles in *Hawar*. One of them is under the banner of “Housewives Column.” In these essays she agrees with her husband by saying “men who hold the fate of nations at their hands grow up at the hands of women.” She emphasizes Kurdish women’s primary duties, wifedom and motherhood. She adds, however, Kurdish women have an additional responsibility due to their nation’s unique situation. As there are no Kurdish schools, Kurdish women have the responsibility to master their own language and teach it to their children at home.⁸³⁴

It is significant that most of Jaladet’s long address to the Kurdish youth in *Hawar* is dedicated to the Kurdish male youth. However, it has a short section at the very end for the

⁸³² Bave Cemsid u Sinemxane (Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan), “Naven Kurdmanci [Kurmanji Names],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 31 (1 August 1941), pp. 6-9; for similar arguments in the Ottoman Kurdish press please see Klein, “Claiming the Nation,” pp. 107-8 and 111-3; and Klein, “En-Gendering Nationalism,” pp. 34-36.

⁸³³ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p. 120; and “The Nationalists Resolution of the Women’s Question,” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. K. Sanghari and S. Valid (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 243, cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, p. 186.

⁸³⁴ Rawshan Bedirkhan, “Stuna Kebaniyan: Kebani u Mamoste [Column of the Housewives: The Housewife and The Teacher],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 27 (15 April 1941), p. 7 and “Jin u Bextiyariya Male [Women and the Happiness of Home],” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 28 (15 May 1941), p.12.

Kurdish female youth, reminding them of their duties to support their Kurdish male counterparts.

He writes:

O Girl! In these words your role is not small. Oh Girl! You are the daughter of that gentleman, wife of that man, and the mother of that young man whom I have advised and whose responsibility I have pointed out. That young man is your young man. You sang a lullaby to him when he was in a cradle. You ululated during his wedding.⁸³⁵

In this sense, Kurdish nationalist discourse regarding women sounded very similar to state-sponsored emancipation of women in Turkey and Iran. Like their Turkish and Iranian counterparts, Kurdish women were expected to educate themselves to better fulfill their “natural” roles as mothers, wives and daughters of Kurdish male nationalists.⁸³⁶

Emancipation of Kurdish Women for the Sake of Nation

The relative freedom of women among the Kurds as opposed to other Muslim nations was an important point emphasized by the French as well as other European Orientalists. In reference to the Russian Orientalist, Basil Nikitine, for example, Thomas Bois claims that prostitution is not something known among the Kurds. When the Kurds talk about it, they use the vocabulary borrowed from the Turks.⁸³⁷ The writings of Kurdish nationalists show the influence

⁸³⁵ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Xwe Binas [Get to Know Yourself],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 18 (27 March 1933), pp. 1-6.

⁸³⁶ Zehra F. Arat, “Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition,” in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, and Power*, ed. Fatma Muge Gokcek and Shiva Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 57-78; Shahrzad Mojab, “Introduction,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation*, pp. 5-8.

⁸³⁷ Basile Nikitine, *Quelques Observations sur les Kurdes* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1921), cited in Bois, *L'âme des Kurdes*, pp. 31-46; Tawusparez (Roger Lescot), “Le Mariage chez les Kurdes,” *Hawar*, Year 10, Issue 52 (20 January 1943), pp. 12-16; Mirella Galletti, “Western Images of Women’s Role in Kurdish Society,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation*, pp. 209-225; Tejel, “The Construction of the Kurdish Identity”; and Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 212-217. The British Major Noel, too, seems surprised by the freedom of women during his tour in Kurdistan. He writes, “What first struck one was that the women were unveiled and free. They argued with their men folk, joined in the conversation with us, and pushed their views and opinions to the fore with the greatest ease and naturalness.” He also hosts his Kurdish male hosts

of European observers especially in their French language writings. Sureya Bedirkhan in his book on the Kurdish question quotes Nikitine and indicates that Kurds in general practice monogamy and in Kurdish families women play a dominant role. He also presented a paper, titled “La Femme Kurde et Son Role Social” at the 16th International Congress of Anthropology, held in Brussels in 1935 on the same issue.

The Kurdish nationalists indicate that Kurds, as an Aryan nation, are different from other Muslims like Arabs and Turks, for which their best evidence is the respective treatment of women. Kurdish nationalists tried to correct Westerners’ misconceptions about the Kurds as they were often exposed to questions like “How many women do you have in your harem?” Their response was to distance the Kurds from the other Muslim nations. They argue that women are freer among the Kurds and not isolated from the social sphere. They refer to Kurdish folk literature to show that love marriages are very common among Kurds and Kurdish boys and girls can mingle freely. Kurdish women’s political and social freedom is explained through real-life examples such as Adile Khanum or Mariam Khanum who assumed leadership of their tribes, which was noted by the Europeans. Though Kurdish nationalists admitted that institutions and practices like the harem, polygamy, and divorce can be seen among the Kurds, they also argued that those things are not inherently Kurdish as they were introduced to Kurdistan by Islam and other Muslim nations. For example, according to Sureya, the harem originated in ancient Greece, and was later adopted by Muslim people and introduced to Kurdistan.⁸³⁸ This discourse of

saying, “Our women are not like the Turks,” and “The Turkish woman closes her veil and opens her skirt; our women do just the opposite.” Noel, *Diary of Major Noel*, pp. 4 and 10.

⁸³⁸ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “La Femme Kurde,” *Hawar*, Year 1, Issue 19 (17 April 1933), pp. 6-8; “La Femme Kurde,” *Le Jour Nouveau*, Year 3, Issue 49 (17 April 1933), pp. 1-2; N.A., “L’Hospitalite Kurde: Une Femme Chef de Tribu,” *Hawar*, Year 1, Issue 6 (8 August 1932), pp. 7-8; B. Chirguh (Sureya Bedirkhan), *La Question Kurde*, pp. 3-4; Sureya Bedirkhan, “La Femme Kurde et son Role Social,” Presented at 16th International Congress of Anthropology,

“indigenous feminism” among Kurds that was later damaged by foreign cultural influence was not unique to Kurdish nationalist discourse. In the same way, the Turkish nationalists claimed that their “national” culture used to make no distinction between men and women until the Turks came under the influence of other cultures.⁸³⁹

In the Kurdish language articles, however, since the audience was fellow Muslim Kurdish readers, the approach to the issue of women was slightly different. Here social problems related to Kurdish women were analyzed in detail. In his article entitled “Our Social Catastrophes,” Osman Sabri attacks two practices among the Kurds, namely the non-education of Kurdish women and bride money. He argues that despite the Prophet Muhammad’s requirement for both men and women to get educated, Kurdish women remained illiterate because of the Kurdish mullahs and shaykhs who hide the teachings of Islam from the Kurdish people. As for the issue of bride money, he says that those men who ask for bride money for their daughters treat them like the cattle sold in market place.⁸⁴⁰ In another article in *Roja Nu*, Osman Sabri deals with another “social ill.” He explains how “polygamy creates jealousy and conflict among the fellow wives which transform them into predators” and, thus, lowers their dignity. He refutes the

Brussels, 1935 (Brussels: Imprimerie Medicale et Scientifique, 1936); Tejel, “The Construction of the Kurdish Identity”; and Tejel, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie*, pp. 212-217; Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 153-4; and Martin van Bruinessen, “From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish History,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation*, pp. 95-112.

⁸³⁹ Ironically, Ziya Gokalp, Turkish nationalist of Kurdish origin, had argued the same thing about Turkish women. According to Gokalp the ancient Turkish religions granted rights to women who held positions equal to men in the nomadic Turkish tribes. Later, women were marginalized with the adoption of non-Turkish social norms: K. E. Fleming, “Women as Preservers of the Past: Ziya Gokalp and Women’s Reform,” in *Deconstructing Images of “Turkish Woman,”* ed. Z. F. Arat (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1998), pp. 127-138; A. Durakbasa, “Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey,” in *Deconstructing Images*, pp. 139-156; and Shahrzad Mojab, “Introduction,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation*, pp. 1-21.

⁸⁴⁰ Osman Sabri, “Boblaten Me En Civaki [Our Social Catastrophes],” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 9 (28 June 1943), p. 1.

argument that polygamy is permissible by religion for all times by stating that it was permitted in the Quran to prevent problems caused by prostitution in Arabia at a specific period of time.⁸⁴¹

Kurdish Women in the Imaginary World of Men

As explained in the previous chapter, one of the goals of the Kurdish press was to compile Kurdish oral literature and introduce contemporary Kurdish authors. In this imaginary world of folk stories and songs, and of modern stories and poems, we see a different world of Kurdish women. Here, Kurdish women appear to be more assertive and dominant. For example, they complain about their parents and husbands, challenge their lovers, teach their men bravery or manliness, and describe the beauty of their bodies. These qualities together transcend the so called “appropriate feminine behavior.” In many folk songs Kurdish girls and women are more active than they are in real life. Rohat Alakom calls this “the superiority of women in Kurdish folklore.”⁸⁴² In a folk song in *Ronahi*, a girl curses his father for having married her to a man whom she does not love.⁸⁴³ Another girl curses the mullah who performed her marriage ceremony.⁸⁴⁴ In another folk song in *Hawar*, a girl asks her lover to abduct her from her family. She also describes herself to him: “My chest is garden of roses and apples.”⁸⁴⁵ In another song, a girl explains to a boy why she rejects him, saying “your height is short/not at the level of my breasts.”⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴¹ Osman Sabri, “Pirjini u Belayen We [Polygamy and Its Troubles]” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 17 (28 July 1943), p. 1.

⁸⁴² Rohat Alakom, *Di Foklora Kurdî de Serdestîke Jinan [The Superiority of Women in the Kurdish Folklore]* (Stockholm: Nûdem, 1993); and Christine Allison, “Folklore and Fantasy: The Presentation of Women in Kurdish Oral Tradition,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation*, pp. 181-194.

⁸⁴³ “Lawik,” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 5 (1 August 1942), p. 11.

⁸⁴⁴ “De Gidyano,” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 9 (28 June 1943), p.2.

⁸⁴⁵ “Sahino,” *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 37 (20 December 1941), p.16.

⁸⁴⁶ “Xerabo,” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 27 (8 November 1943), p.4.

In modern stories written by the Kurdish nationalists we see a different form of female superiority which can be called patriotic femininity. We see women teaching their husbands bravery or girls fighting against the enemy. A short story by Kamuran Bedirkhan is about a newly married couple. The husband goes to war but he sneaks away to visit his wife. She, however, orders him to return to the battlefield.⁸⁴⁷ The main character in a story by Nuraddin Zaza is a heroic Kurdish girl, Parikhan. She undertakes a suicide bomb attack against the Turkish governor of the Kurdish territories in Turkey, sacrificing herself to take revenge for her father, who had been killed at the hand of the Turks.⁸⁴⁸ Jeanne d'Arc was also a source of inspiration for the Kurdish nationalists. In *Ster* there is a short piece, praising her for saving her "nation" in a time of despair.⁸⁴⁹ As Nira-Yuval Davis indicates, female figures like Jeanne D'Arc have an important place in the Western imagination. However, they are romantic figures and their function is not to prove that women are as capable as men in warfare.⁸⁵⁰ Indeed, in a play published in *Hawar* we can see that point clearly. The two young female characters challenge the male tribal chief to let them fight against the enemy like their fiancés. However, an older lady reminds them of their "more important" role, bringing new generations into world.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁷ Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, "Mere Min di Seri de ye! [My Husband is at War!]," *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 7 (25 August 1932), p. 2.

⁸⁴⁸ Nuredin Usif [Nuraddin Zaza], "Hevina Perixane [Parikhan's Love]," *Hawar*, Year 9, Issue 37 (20 December 1941), pp. 5-7; and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, pp. 179-180.

⁸⁴⁹ "Jan Dark," *Ster*, Year 1, Issue 1 (6 December 1943), pp.1-2; For an analysis of the biographies of Jeanne d'Arc published in the late 19th and early-20th Century Egypt (1879-1939) please see Marilyn Booth, "The Egyptian Lives of Jeanne d'Arc," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 171-211.

⁸⁵⁰ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 95.

⁸⁵¹ "Hevind [Hope]," *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 20 (8 May 1933), p.11

A Male Perspective and Sexist Language

Despite the dominant role of some women in Kurdish literature, it is not hard to notice the overall sexist language in the Kurdish press. An article in *Ronahi* written in a humorous style by Jaladet Bedirkhan on the unbalanced sex ratio in some countries during the Second World War years is entitled “The Surplus Women.” In a humorous way, he says “it would actually be a blessing for us. However, for American and European people it is a problem.” He recommends polygamy as the easiest solution by saying “American and European people, like us [Kurds], can marry several girls instead of one.” Then he explains how pre-Islamic Arabs, facing the same problem, had been burying their daughters alive. The Prophet Muhammad institutionalized polygamy as a humane solution to end the brutal tradition of the Arabs.⁸⁵² Jaladet Bedirkhan’s advice to the Westerners to practice polygamy is definitely in conflict with Osman Sabri, who, in the same magazine, chastises those who practice it.

Roja Nu presents European female fashion through images in many issues. The descriptions below the pictures suggest that they are for male readers. One of them reads like this: “Some of them are with hat and robe, and some with kufi and caftan. Some of them are blond and blue eyed; some of them are tan and dark-eyed. Some of them are short and some of them are tall. But all of them are women; elegant and slender; and cheer for young men’s hearts.”⁸⁵³ The publication of Western women’s pictures along with the folk songs further indicates that the intended audience of the Kurdish magazines was men.⁸⁵⁴ In one instance, two photos were published with a short description reading: “The beauties in other nations’

⁸⁵² “Zedehiya Jinan [The Surplus Women],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 25 (May 1944), p.16.

⁸⁵³ *Roja Nu*, Year 3, Issue 61 (5 November 1945), p.4.

⁸⁵⁴ See for example “Durik,” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 2 (10 May 1943), p.2, “Durik,” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 3 (17 May 1943). p.4.

hearths.”⁸⁵⁵ [See Appendix, Image 12] This “male perspective” can be seen in many other pieces in the Kurdish press like a short humorous article in *Ronahi*, titled “Women and Lies.” The article begins with a Kurdish proverb, “Mount Judi is twisted because of women’s tricks,” and Kurdish idioms such as “wiles of women,” “intrigues of women,” and “plots of women.” Finally, the famous actress Paulette Goddard is quoted, saying women lie to make men happy.⁸⁵⁶

Women in the pages of the Kurdish Press during the Second World War

Especially in the context of the Second World War, *Ronahi* and *Roja Nu* include many pictures of women and girls contributing to the war efforts of their countries. These included famous women such as wives of Charles De Gaulle, Franklin Roosevelt, and Chiang Kai-Shek, as well as female soldiers and workers whose contribution is praised by the Kurdish nationalists.⁸⁵⁷ They indicate that Kurdish women too have always helped their men during wartime, sitting next to them, and loading their guns.⁸⁵⁸

The distortion of the “natural” gender roles during two world wars and especially during the Second World War was an important issue in Europe at the time. As men had to leave their jobs to serve in the army, women began to take over the jobs normally reserved to men.⁸⁵⁹

Through many photos from Europe this issue of the so-called disruption of normality finds its place in the Kurdish press. There is, for example, a photo in *Ronahi* in which a policeman smiles at a female driver; the caption reads, “Since the war has started women have taken men’s places

⁸⁵⁵ *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 9 (28 June 1943), p.4.

⁸⁵⁶ “Jin u Derew [Women and Lies],” *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 6 (1 September 1942), p.3.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 1 (1 April 1942), p.1; *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 32 (27 December 1943), p.4; *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 9 (1 December 1942), p.10; *Ronahi*, Year 1, Issue 11 (1 February 1943), p.12; and Silemane Ferho, “Jinen Esker [Women Soldiers],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 26 (June-July 1944), pp. 17-8.

⁸⁵⁸ “Jin Di Eskeriye De [Women in Military],” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), p.9.

⁸⁵⁹ Margaret R. Higonnet, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 7.

in many jobs as men went to the front lines. Our picture shows the driver of a bus. A policeman gives her the directives or corrects a mistake politely by smiling. I wonder if the policeman would smile like that if the driver was a man.”⁸⁶⁰ [See Appendix, Image 13]

A ‘Challenge’ to Kurdish Masculinity

Besides photos of women soldiers and women working in factories and farms, there are also many wartime pictures in *Ronahi*, *Roja Nu and Ster* of male soldiers. Along with those pictures and news about the bravery of the Allied soldiers, we also see in the Kurdish press a strong emphasis on the Kurds’ bravery and manliness. In spite of many references to fighting and dying for the sake of Kurdistan by 1931, in the aftermath of the Ararat Rebellion, Kurdish nationalists in the Levant had no opportunity to fight for the independence of their country. This can be explained as a ‘challenge’ to Kurdish masculinity. They gave up military means for cultural ones such as publication of the Kurdish periodicals and reviving the Kurdish language and literature. However, from time to time they questioned this choice. Jaladet, for example, in an editorial article in *Hawar*, imagines a conversation with his dagger. The dagger complains that while Jaladet uses it only to sharpen his pencil, his ancestors used to stab it in to the ribs of brave men.⁸⁶¹ Kamuran Bedirkhan, in a 1933 poem, imagined Shaykh Said addressing a Kurdish youth:

Oh my son! Your heart cannot carry this dishonor/.../Make your body and chest a shield with bravery and happiness for your country, wife and children/.../Do not feel attached to life like a child/.../Escape is not a Kurdish word. The one who escapes kills his own wife, children, country and honor/.../Let your warm red blood flow through the hair on your chest. The body and face of a young man, among the flowers in a pasture are more beautiful than those of a bride.⁸⁶²

⁸⁶⁰ *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 25 (May 1944), p.13.

⁸⁶¹ Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan, “Gazinda Xencera Min [My Dagger’s Complaint],” *Hawar* (Arab Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 12 (27 November 1932), pp. 1-3.

⁸⁶² Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Herweqi Hate Gotin: Ji Deftere Şex Seid [As It was Said: From Sheikh Said’s Notebook],” *Hawar* (Latin Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 23 (25 July 1933), pp. 3-4.

This despair caused by their passivity is reflected in the Kurdish press from the very beginning and especially during the years of the Second World War. Kurdish nationalists were observing French, British and the Soviet soldiers fighting to free Nazi-occupied territories. Despite their willingness, Kurdish nationalists were not doing anything similar. In fact, Kurdish nationalists had no doubt about their own bravery and masculinity, which, they knew, was praised by the others. An article translated from Arabic to Kurdish in *Ronahi that* was originally published in a British propaganda magazine in Egypt, describes Kurds as “the strongest nation” and “a mountainous people” who are “characterized by manliness and the constitution of their bodies.”⁸⁶³ Osman Sabri, in a humorous way, argues that the absence of lions in the country of the Kurds is not a coincidence as Kurds and lions cannot coexist in the same land.⁸⁶⁴ Moreover, the bravery and manliness of the Kurdish martyrs like Shaykh Said, Ferzende, and Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi were praised in many writings.⁸⁶⁵ Ihsan Nuri Pasha in an article in *Ronahi* addresses young Kurdish men and argues that the Kurds’ failures are not due to lack of courage as “bravery is the name of our race. There is no nation in this world braver than the Kurds.”⁸⁶⁶ On the next page readers see, like many other examples, the photo of a shirtless, well-built European soldier.⁸⁶⁷ [See Appendix, Image 14]

As mentioned above, during the Second World War years, the Kurdish nationalists were exposed to the Allied soldiers in Syria and Lebanon. A *Roja Nu* editorial from August 9, 1943, Kamuran Bedirkhan indicates his envy of the Allied soldiers whom he sees in the streets of

⁸⁶³ “Kurdistan,” *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 23 (February-March 1944), p.16.

⁸⁶⁴ Osman Sabri, “Necir [Hunting],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 17 (1 August 1943), p.13.

⁸⁶⁵ Osman Sabri, “Li Goristanek Amede [In a Cemetery of Diyarbakir],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 2, Issue 21 (5 June 1933), pp. 2-6; and Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan, “Mesheda Ibreta [A Martyr’s Grave for Lesson],” *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932), p.3.

⁸⁶⁶ Ihsan Nuri, “Ji Lawan Ra [To the Sons],” *Ronahi*, Year 4, Issue 28 (March 1945), pp.17-18.

⁸⁶⁷ *Roja Nu*, Year 4, Issue 28 (March 1945), p. 19.

Beirut. He says those pure, decent, young men leave their country, properties, comfort, and beautiful wives and come to foreign territories not for something ordinary or worthless but for the independence and freedom of nations. Then he says that Kurds, who shed much blood for their own freedom and independence in the past, can contribute today to the efforts of the Allied forces.⁸⁶⁸ A Kurdish nationalist disagrees: “How cheap is dying for everyone else, for their nations’ and races’ cause.”⁸⁶⁹ The Iraqi Kurdish mullah, Mullah Anwar, addresses Kurdish youth in poetry: “Live in an honorable way or die, go from this world/.../ Dying like a man is a hundred times better than living like this.”⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁸ “Ceng and Siyaset [War and Politics]” *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 15 (9 August 1943), p. 1.

⁸⁶⁹ Hasan Hishyar, “Bange Kurdan [Call of the Kurds],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 13 (1 April 1943), p.10.

⁸⁷⁰ Mullah Anwar, “Xebat [Endeavour],” *Ronahi*, Year 2, Issue 15 (1 June 1943), p. 20.

7. Conclusion

The periodicals analyzed in this dissertation were a key instrument by which Kurdish intellectuals living in exile in the Levant in the 1930s and 1940s struggled to construct a Kurdish national identity. While the nationalists were united in their ultimate goals, their journals contain lively debates on a variety of cultural and social issues facing the Kurds. This Kurdish cultural movement took place in an age of new nations in the Middle East following the First World War. The region was no longer governed by the Ottoman and Persian empires. Instead independent states like Iran and Turkey and new states under French and British control like Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq came into being. The Kurds' nationalist ambitions were not fulfilled and they were left out of the new state system. Kurds became the citizens of the new Arab, Persian, and Turkish nation-states. It was in this context that the Bedirkhan brothers, disillusioned with the policies of the Turkish Republic and feeling pains of exile in Syria and Lebanon, elaborated a new pan-Kurdish national identity for the Kurds across the Middle East. Even though this dissertation focuses mainly on the Kurdish national movement in the Levant, there were similar movements in Iraq and Iran; nationalists in these lands addressed the similar issues in their publications, which made Kurdish nationalism a cross-border movement.⁸⁷¹

The Second World War and its aftermath opened a new chapter in the history of the Middle East. The end of European colonization in the Middle East and the beginning of the Cold War required Kurds to redefine their strategies. Rapprochement between some states and the Western powers, the anti-imperialist stance of others, supported by the Soviet Union, the foundation of Israel and ensuing Arab Israeli wars, the high tide of pan-Arab nationalism inspired by Nasser of Egypt and the Baath Parties of Iraq and Syria, and territorial nationalism

⁸⁷¹ Natali, *The Kurds*, p. 37.

and Communism as alternative routes all influenced the fate of the Kurdish national movement. Besides the political developments, the social and economic changes in the region in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s would play a significant role.⁸⁷² The issues covered in the Kurdish periodicals from the Levant in the 1930s and 1940s and discussed in the preceding chapters of this dissertation continued to be very important during the following two decades. Jaladet Bedirkhan, who died in 1951, did not live to see all these changes.⁸⁷³ Kamuran Bedirkhan, who died in 1985, however, would carry on their legacy into a new era. Moreover, some of the other Kurdish nationalists who participated in the Kurdish cultural movement in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s continued their struggle in the Levant or in Europe. Some key figures published their memoirs, starting in the 1960s, in which they analyzed the Kurdish national movement and narrated their personal experiences since the late Ottoman period.⁸⁷⁴

The Kurdish cultural movement in the Levant and the Kurdish demands for autonomy in the Jazira region of Syria during the mandate period had reflected French policy of empowering Syria's ethnic and religious minorities against the Arab nationalist movement. The publication of the Kurdish periodicals, which had taken place under the auspices of the French authorities, came to an end in 1946, when, under British pressure, France granted independence to Syria and Lebanon. Kurds continued to stand for elections to the Syrian parliament, but gave up their political demands.⁸⁷⁵ The foundation of Israel in 1948 influenced both national politics and the perception of the Kurds in Syria as well as in other Arab countries. The failure of the Arab regimes in the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war led to a series of military coups in Syria. Two of the

⁸⁷² Natali, *The Kurds*, p. 45.

⁸⁷³ Jaladet died in following an accident in a cotton field in April 1951. Reş, *Celadet*, pp. 37-38.

⁸⁷⁴ Zaza, *Bir Kürt*; Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*; Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdistan*; Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim*; Dersimi, *Hatıratım*; Hasan Hishyar, *Görüş ve Anılarım*; and Osman Sabri, *Hatıralarım*.

⁸⁷⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 471; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 42-44.

three military dictators who took power in Syria between 1949 and 1954 were, ironically, of Kurdish origin. This was a result of the French policy of recruiting soldiers from the minority groups during the mandate years. One of them, Husni Zaim, even had a Kurdish-origin prime minister, Mohsen al-Barazi, who maintained close contact with Kurdish elites like Jaladet Bedirkhan. However, this created anti-Kurdish sentiment in the Syrian army; in the late 1950s high-ranking Kurdish officers were replaced by Druze and Alawi counterparts. The foundation of Israel had already made non-Arab minorities suspicious in the eyes of the Arab nationalists. Increasing their fears, the new state of Israel followed the strategy of developing secret alliances with minorities in the Middle East. Kamuran Bedirkhan became an important link between the Kurdish nationalist movement and Israel. After 1947 Kamuran was based in Paris, where he founded the Center of Kurdish Studies and acted the role of self-appointed Kurdish ambassador in Europe and the United States.⁸⁷⁶

Turkey's transition to the multi-party system also took place in 1946. Since the brutal suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in 1938, the Kurdish national movement in Turkey had been silenced under a mono-party regime led by the Republican People's Party. The democratic spirit of the post-Second World War years would change this. The RPP's monopoly over Turkish politics ended with the foundation of the Democratic Party by a reform minded group within the RPP. The new party's call for change and for religious freedom without giving up the principle of secularism found echo in the Kurdish East. The competition between the two parties for Kurdish votes empowered aghas and shaykhs who could mobilize their followers in the elections. Those aghas and shaykhs who had been exiled in and outside Turkey during the mono-

⁸⁷⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 471; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, p. 40-46; Joyce Blau, "Foreword," in Malmisani, *Cizira Botanli*, pp. 9-11; Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 294-297; and Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: The Untold of History of Israel's Intelligence* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), pp. 65-70, 77-78, and 184.

party period were allowed to return to their homelands. A grandson of Shaykh Said, for example, returned to Turkey and was elected as a parliamentary member from the ruling Democratic Party in 1957. The parliamentarians in the Turkish National Assembly stressed the need for reform to solve the problems of the citizens of Eastern Anatolia. However, using the terms “Kurds” and “Kurdistan” or the expression of Kurdish ethnic identity continued to be a taboo in Turkey. Since the early 1940s, educated Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey were moved by Mullah Mustafa Barzani’s revolts in Iraq and the foundation of the Kurdish Mahabad Republic in Iran. They formed secret Kurdish organizations in the Kurdish urban centers in Turkey.⁸⁷⁷

The Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran and the forced abdication of Reza Shah in August 1941 weakened Pahlavi control over the tribal areas in Iran. To counter the rising western influence in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, the Soviets supported the Kurds in those countries seeking cultural and political recognition. Soviet propaganda became very effective among Kurds who were looking for a powerful supporter against the nation states ruling them. Moreover, Kurds were disappointed by the Western powers’ indifference to their cause after the Second World War, despite their pro-Allied stance. In the Soviet controlled Kurdish territories in Iran a nationalist organization, the Committee for the Revival of Kurdistan (*Komala-i Jiyani* *Kurdistan*), was founded in 1942.⁸⁷⁸ Even though the *Komala* had a nationalist and anti-traditional outlook, as in the case of Khoybun in Syria, its members were aware of tribal and religious leaders’ popularity. In fact, Qadi Muhammad, a leading notable, cleric and hereditary religious judge from Mahabad in Iranian Kurdistan, emerged as the leader of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Under his leadership, *Komala* was dissolved and replaced by the Kurdish

⁸⁷⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 398-400; Natali, *The Kurds*, p. 90-94 and 102; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 216-218; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 215-252.

⁸⁷⁸ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 231-239; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 243-249 and 267-268; and Natali, *The Kurds*, p. 125.

Democratic Party (KDPI) in 1945 to work for autonomy, if not independence, of the Kurdish areas. These developments in Iranian Kurdistan created excitement among Kurds across the Middle East. What made Qadi Muhammad's movement in Iran important for all Kurds was the arrival of Mullah Mustafa Barzani and Shaykh Ahmad Barzani in 1945 following the failure of their rebellion in Iraqi Kurdistan. With their men, they joined the Mahabad forces. The Mahabad Kurdish Republic was declared on January 22, 1946. A delegation representing Syrian Kurds, including members of Jamilpasha family, visited Qadi Muhammad and Mustafa Barzani in Mahabad. In fact, as Akram Jamilpasha later indicated in his memoirs, Khoybun organization, the representative of Kurds in Syria, joined the Mahabad Kurdish Republic. Qadri Jamilpasha dedicated a long section to Mahabad in his memoirs.⁸⁷⁹

The Mahabad Republic faced social and political problems similar to the ones analyzed in the Kurdish periodicals from Syria and Lebanon, such as lack of cohesion and rivalries among the Kurdish leaders. The tensions between the traditional leaders and intelligentsia, conservative people's reaction to the alliance with the communist Soviets, the parochialism of the tribal chiefs in Iranian Kurdistan who opposed Mullah Mustafa Barzani's forces from Iraqi Kurdistan as "outsiders," and the tensions between Qadi Muhammad and Mustafa Barzani all worked against the Mahabad Republic. Despite these internal problems, however, the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad could have survived if Soviet forces had remained in Iran. However, the Soviet Union was pressured by the Anglo-American alliance and decided to withdraw from Iran in May 1946. Without Soviet backing, the Mahabad Republic easily fell to Iranian forces in December 1946, after only one year of existence. Qadi Muhammad was hanged on March 31, 1947 by the Iranian

⁸⁷⁹ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 247-254; Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 126-129; McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 239-246; Malmisanij, *Diyarbakirli*, pp. 226-227; Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*, pp. 193-236; and Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim*, p. 71

authorities. KDPI was outlawed and became a clandestine organization. Mullah Mustafa Barzani went into exile in the Soviet Union where he stayed until his return to Iraq in 1959 following the Iraqi revolution.⁸⁸⁰

Due to his conflict with the Iraqi government and his involvement in the Kurdish struggle in Iran, Mullah Mustafa Barzani was supported by the Kurds not only in Iraq, but across the Middle East. However, some did not welcome his traditional establishment background. The Kurdish nationalist intellectuals in Iraq during the 1930s and 1940s were very similar to those in Syria and Iran. In 1935 they founded a political organization *Hiwa* (Hope), similar to Komala in Iran and Khoybun in Syria. However, they could not mobilize the Kurdish masses merely through their progressive nationalist discourse. In order to reach Kurdish peasants, the nationalists had to cooperate with their aghas, shaykhs, and mullahs. Shaykh Ahmad and his brother Mullah Mustafa Barzani became prominent leaders following their rebellion in 1931-1932. Coming from a Naqshbandi background, they used their religious charisma to mobilize the Kurdish masses for Kurdish nationalism. However, it is important to note that as in the case of Turkish and Arab nationalist movements, pan-Islamism lost its significance for Kurdish nationalists in this era. The rebellion led by the Barzanis was suppressed and they were exiled, but they did not give up. The conflict with the central Iraqi government restarted in 1943.⁸⁸¹

The educated Kurdish nationalists in Iraq supported Mullah Mustafa Barzani during his second revolt (1943-1945) against the central Iraqi government, which denied the Kurdish rights required by the League of Nations when Iraq was created. *Hiwa* supported Mullah

⁸⁸⁰ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 254-262; Olson, "Five Stages," pp. 403-404; Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 279-286; and Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 130-132.

⁸⁸¹ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 287-290; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 219-231; Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 37-39; Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*, pp. 181-193; and Zaza, *Bir Kürt*, pp. 117-139.

Mustafa's rebellion to popularize their nationalist cause and Mullah Mustafa adopted their nationalist discourse to expand his regional authority. The Kurdish organizations in other countries, like Khoybun in Syria, had contacts with Iraqi Kurdish nationalists. The rebellion was once again suppressed by the Iraqi government and the Kurdish nationalist magazine *Gelawej*, which was praised in the Kurdish periodicals published by the Bedirkhan brothers, was suspended. Mullah Mustafa had to take refuge in Iran, where he later joined Qadi Muhammad to defend the first Kurdish Republic in history. The nationalists in Iraq, after the suppression of the rebellion, split into pro-British and pro-Soviet groups until the creation of Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) in 1946 inspired by the KDP of Iran.⁸⁸²

Regional developments shaped the relations among the governments and the Kurds. The Egyptian Revolution in 1952 led by the Free Officers was a major manifestation of sentiments against the Arab governments' inability to unite against their regional and global enemies. The coup brought to power Gamal Abd al-Nasser and he became the voice of pan-Arabism and anti-imperialism in the Middle East in the context of the Cold War.⁸⁸³ Nasser used Kurdish language broadcasting as a tool against the Iraqis who chose to side with the West and its allies in the region. However, his plans for inspiring similar revolutions in other Arab countries did not appeal to Kurdish nationalists, who felt that Kurds had no place in a pan-Arab schema.⁸⁸⁴ The pan-Arab movement became very popular in Syria in the 1950s and 1960s. It is not a coincidence that in 1958, the year that Egypt and Syria merged into the United Arab Republic, the Syrian state formally banned publications in Kurdish. During the UAR years, Kurds were

⁸⁸² McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 290-309; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 229-242.

⁸⁸³ Joel Gordon, *Nasser: Hero of the Arab Nation* (Oxford: One World, 2006), pp.20-58.

⁸⁸⁴ Pierre Rondot, *The Changing Patterns of the Middle East* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 188-189; and Michael M. Gunter, "Foreign Influences on the Kurdish Insurgency in Iraq," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Vol. 12, No. 4 (1992), pp. 7-24.

seen as a threat to pan-Arabism envisioned by the Syrian Arab nationalists. Moreover, Kurdish tribal chiefs and notables represented feudalism in the eyes of Syrian Arab nationalists who believed in Arab Socialism.⁸⁸⁵

In the same year the United Arab Republic was formed, a military revolution in Iraq toppled the Hashimite Monarchy that had ruled the country since 1920. The new republican regime in Iraq, inspired by the ideas of Nasser, was thought by many to be pro-Arab unity and expected to join the United Arab Republic formed by Egypt and Syria. Kurds naturally opposed Iraq's union with the UAR. In fact, under Abd al-Karim Qasim's leadership (1958-1963), the new regime turned out to be more Iraqi patriotic rather than pan-Arab nationalist. Supported by the Iraqi Communist Party, Qasim emphasized the unity of Iraqi Arabs and Kurds and eliminated the pan-Arabist and anti-Communist branch of the junta represented by Abd al-Salam Arif. It also opened a new chapter for the Kurds. Mullah Mustafa returned from exile and met the new president. The new Iraqi constitution recognized Kurds as a part of Iraq. Iraqi Kurds were appointed to the official positions and they had cultural freedom. The Kurdish radio programs from Baghdad both in Sulaymani (Sorani) and Bahdinani (Kurmanji) dialects symbolized the new regime's policy toward the Kurds. It was an important development as the radio broadcasting could reach the Kurds of Turkey and Syria speaking the Kurmanji dialect. Jegerkhwin, who had published many poems in the Kurdish periodicals in the 1930s and 1940s, went to Iraq in this context. He arrived in Iraq in 1959 and taught Kurdish at Baghdad University for a few years. He also observed that despite the new opportunities for the Kurds to

⁸⁸⁵ Gordon, *Nasser*, pp. 58-65; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 472; and Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 40 and 48.

express themselves, the dialects continued to be a divisive element among them as many Iraqi Kurds continued to prefer Sorani to Kurmanji.⁸⁸⁶

In 1959 Qasim decided to abandon his emphasis on Arab-Kurdish fraternity. Instead, he decided to integrate Kurdish areas into a more centralized Iraq. The KDP was closed down. Between 1961-1963 Mullah Mustafa led a renewed rebellion. Qasim was overthrown by a Baathist coup in 1963. The new president and prime minister of Iraq, Abd al-Salam Arif and Hasan al-Bakr, also negotiated with the Kurdish leadership and recognized Kurdish identity. However, the emphasis on the Arab identity of Iraq and their policies led to a new uprising led by Mustafa Barzani. It is in this context Mullah Mustafa began to receive aid from Iran and Israel.⁸⁸⁷

In the 1950s important economic and social changes transformed the region as well. Agricultural developments and especially mechanization influenced all countries in the Middle East. The wealthy land owners who could afford to buy tractors also became representatives of their farmers in state politics. Moreover, mechanization of agriculture produced a flight of Kurdish farmers to the cities. In the absence of legal Kurdish parties, Kurdish workers in the cities supported communist parties. The communist parties created a common ground between Kurds and the anti-imperialists in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Kurdish religious and tribal

⁸⁸⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 302-306; Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 280-288; Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 48-49; Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 346-365; and Gordon, *Nasser*, pp. 65-66.

⁸⁸⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 307-320; Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 50-53; and Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, p. 184.

leaders, whose controversial but powerful positions were discussed in the previous chapter, became a target of the communist parties.⁸⁸⁸

The pan-Arabist ideology of the Syrian Baath Party did not attract Kurds. Instead, many supported the Syrian Communist Party, which was, in fact, led by a Syrian Kurd, Khalid Bakdash. Jegerkhwin for a while was an active member of the SCP. Soviet propaganda, through the Kurdish broadcastings of Erivan Radio played a significant role in their sympathy with communism. However, the Kurds were welcomed to the Syrian Communist Party as long as they did not address any demands in the name of Kurdish people, which was denounced as “ethnic chauvinism” or “deviation from communist principals.” It was in fact a common point of disagreement between the communist party members and the Kurdish activist in other countries too. The Iraqi Communist Party also criticized Iraqi Kurdish nationalism as a divisive feudal movement.⁸⁸⁹

In Turkey, the 1960 coup against the Democratic Party created unexpected consequences for the Kurds. The military regime tried to put an end to feudalism in Turkish Kurdistan. However, once civilian rule was restored the political parties, including the RPP, continued to rely on great tribal families in mobilizing support among the Kurdish peasants. The 1961 constitution aimed to empower civil society, labor unions, and opposition groups. This new freedom allowed Kurdish nationalists to publish in Turkish and Kurdish for a brief period of time. However, Barzani’s uprising in Iraq alarmed the Turkish government and Kurdish organizations and publications were again declared illegal. That made Kurdish language

⁸⁸⁸ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 400-404; and Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 47 and 98-100.

⁸⁸⁹ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 240-242; McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 472; Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*, pp. 38-43; Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp.297-318 and 339-343; and Zaza, *Bir Kürt*, pp. 149-152.

broadcasting from Cairo and Yerevan popular among the Kurds of Turkey. In the absence of legal Kurdish parties, Kurdish workers in the cities supported the Turkish Worker's Party.⁸⁹⁰

In Iran, after the collapse of the Mahabad Republic, Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) went underground. Some Kurds turned to the Iranian Communist Party. In the early 1950s, Turkey, Iran and Iraq became further integrated into the Western Camp. Kurdish nationalists viewed the Baghdad Pact, founded in 1951 as a pro-Western defense alliance by Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as an anti-Kurdish front. The Kurdish nationalist and communist movements entered a new period of inactivity. When the Tudeh party was outlawed in 1953, the Kurds had no option but to support the outlawed KDPI.⁸⁹¹

Iran watched the 1958 revolution in Iraq cautiously as the Qasim government recognized Kurdish rights and Mustafa Barzani. The shah was aware of the Soviet propaganda through its Kurdish language broadcastings. Thus, he introduced a series of limited reforms for the Kurds including Kurdish radio programs and publications monitored by the SAVAK and the foundation of the Kurdish cultural organizations. However, Kurdish political mobilization remained illegal. Moreover, as the monarchy became more authoritarian, the government began to emphasize Iran's Persian identity at the expense of other ethnic identities, including the Kurds.⁸⁹²

By the 1960s, Mullah Mustafa Barzani was a heroic leader for many Kurds, not only in Iraq, but also across Kurdistan. Though he did not have stable relations with the Iraqi regimes, he and his political party (KDP) seemed to be the legitimate representative of the Iraqi Kurds, and

⁸⁹⁰ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 402-405; Natali, *The Kurds*, p. 95-100; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 253-271.

⁸⁹¹ Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National*, pp. 260-271; and Olson, "Five Stages," pp. 403-404; Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 130-132; and Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*, pp. 236-240.

⁸⁹² Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 132-134.

he was supported by Kurds across the region. He had outside support and a militia called the Peshmerga. Thus, it seemed that the Kurdish nation had found its leader and was again fighting for its future. In Turkey, The Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (KDPT), a branch of Barzani's Iraqi KDP, was founded in 1966 as an illegal party. Kamuran Bedirkhan became a representative of Barzani in the international arena and in his memoirs, Qadri Jamilpasha presented Mustafa Barzani as the national leader of the Kurds.⁸⁹³

In Syria, too, inspired by Barzani movement in Iraq, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria was established in mid-1957. Since the independence of Syria, Kurds had not had a political organization of their own. As indicated earlier, some actively supported the Syrian Communist Party as the best option against the pan-Arabism of the Baath Party. The Syrian branch of KDP was founded in a period when the region felt the high tide of pan-Arabism excluding non-Arab communities. After completing his higher education in Europe, Nuraddin Zaza, the author many short stories in the Kurdish periodicals in the 1940s, became the founder and the first president of the party. However, the KDP could not unify all the Kurdish nationalists in Syria. Zaza, for example, believed that their priority should be the rights of Syria's Kurds. On the other hand, Osman Sabri, another prolific writer in the Kurdish press in the 1930s and 1940s, advocated a more revolutionary struggle for the unity and independence of Kurds living in all parts of Kurdistan. Since the party was illegal, people associated with it faced arrest and torture. The KDP, in the name of Syrian Kurdish people, opposed the union between Egypt and Syria. In turn, the Syrian Arab nationalists were suspicious of Kurdish nationalist plans in the heavily Kurdish populated Jazira region. In 1962, the Syrian government conducted a local

⁸⁹³ McDowall, *A Modern History*, p. 408; Natali, *The Kurds*, pp. 54-55, and 69; Akram Jamilpasha, *Muhtasar Hayatim*, p. 87; Zinar Silopi (Qadri Jamilpasha), *Doza Kürdüstan*, pp. 181-240; Joyce Blau, "Foreword," in Malmisanij, *Cizira Botanli*, pp. 9-11; and Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, p. 184.

census to determine the “legal” residents of Jazira region, those who lived there before 1945. As a result, 120,000 Kurds who could not prove their presence in Syria before 1945 lost their Syrian citizenship. The 1963 military coup by Baathist officers and the 1966 coup that eventually brought Hafiz al-Assad to power would further silence any demands by the Kurds.⁸⁹⁴ Thus, in two decades after the end of the French Mandate in the Levant and the end of the publication of the Kurdish periodicals that are featured in this thesis, the Kurdish national movement operated under entirely new social, economic, and political conditions. Kurdish nationalism was not only a cross-border movement but also it was shaped by the local, regional, and international developments. Though some of the issues addressed in the Kurdish periodicals of the 1930s and 1940s seemed to have been resolved, others continued to frustrate Kurdish nationalists trying to unify Kurds and Kurdistan. Many Kurdish nationalists stayed in the Levant and continued their struggle under new conditions. Others moved to Europe and, thus, relocated their nationalist movement in exile to a new setting.

⁸⁹⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History*, pp. 472-478; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*, pp. 48-53; Zaza, *Bir Kürt*, pp. 152-206; Jegerkhwin, *Hayat Hikayem*, pp. 343-344; and Israel T. Naamani, “The Kurdish Drive for Self-Determination,” *Middle East Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Summer 1966), pp. 279-295.

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9. Appendix

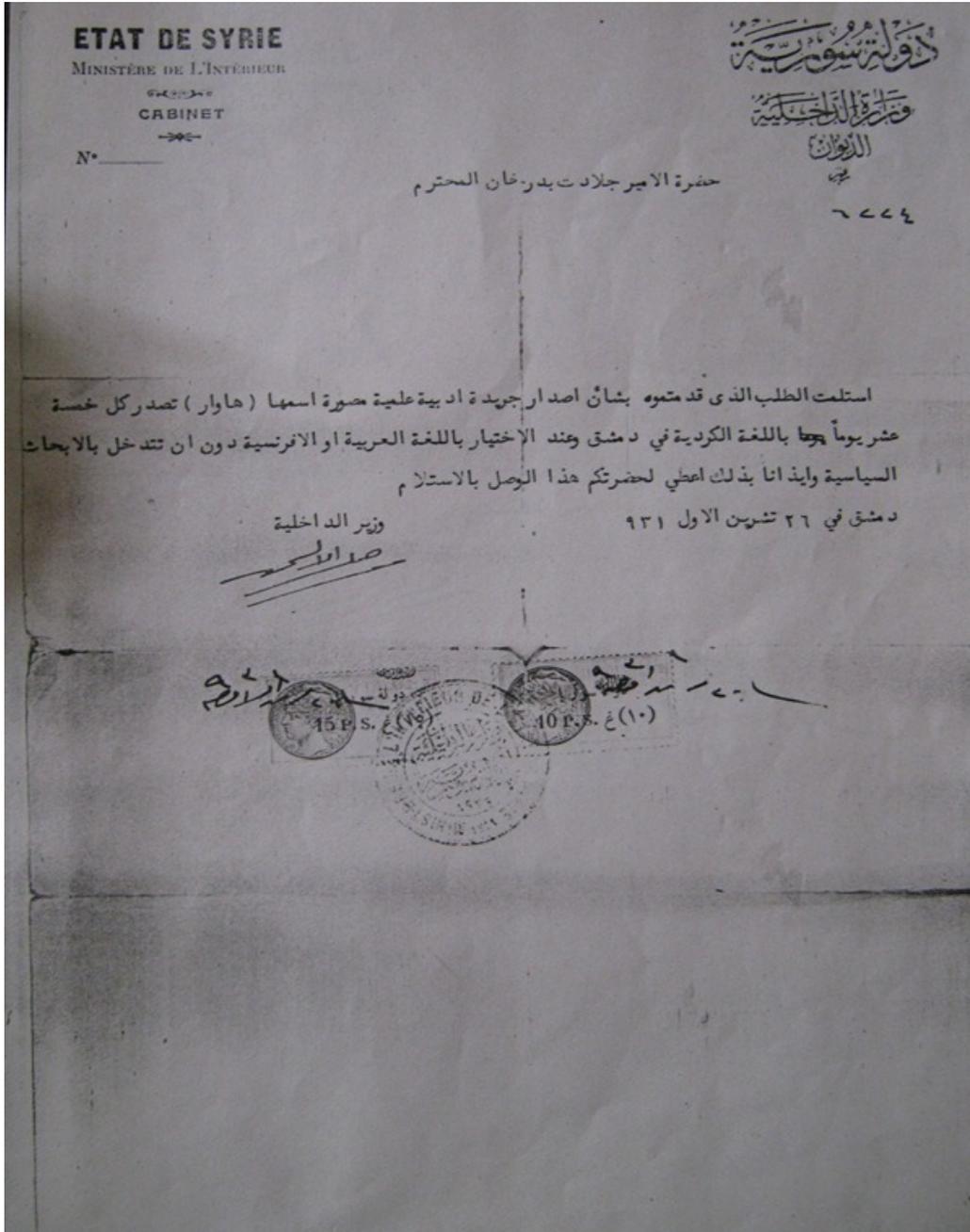


Image 1. The Official Letter sent to Jaladet Ali Bedirkhan from the Syrian Ministry of Interior permitting the publication of *Hawar* (26 October 1931). Source: Courtesy of Sinemkhan Bedirkhan

KARARNAME

Hoybun cemiyetinin organı olan ve Şamda çıkarılan "Havar" gazetesinin, mazur neşriyatına binaen Türkiyeye sokulmaması, Dahiliye Vekâletinin 25/E/932 tarih ve 24II/4586 numaralı tezkeresiyle vukubulan teklifi üzerine İcra Vekilleri Heyetince 30/5/932 tarihinde tasvip ve kabul olunmuştur .

30/5/932

REİSİCUMHUR

Ghazi M. Kemal

Bğ.V. V.

S. Refik

Ad.V.

M. Kemal

M.M.V.

S. Kemal

Da.V.

S. Kemal

Ha.V. V.

S. Kemal

Ma.V.

M. Kemal

Mf.V.

M. Kemal

Na.V.

M. Kemal

İk.V.

S. Kemal

S.İ.M.V.

S. Refik

G.İ.V.

Ali Rıza

Zr.V.

M. Kemal

18 01 02 23 43 13

Image 2. The document signed by Ghazi M. Kemal (Ataturk) banning *Havar* in Turkey (30 May 1932) Source: Prime Ministry Republican Archives (Basbakanlik Osmanli Arsivleri (BCA), 030-0-018-001-002-29-43-13, May 30, 1932.

Bedirhanflerden Süreyya Bedirhan tarafından yazılıp Ame-
rikanın Filâdelfiya şehrinde basılmış olan İngilizce "The Case Of
Kurdistan Against Turkey-Kürdistanın Türklere karşı davası" adlı
kitabın zararlı yazılarına tasdiğı anlaşıldığından memlekete sokul-
masının ve satışının yasak edilmesi; Dahiliye Vekilliğinin 8/3/-
939 tarih ve 5755/33/M.A. sayılı teklifi üzerine, 1881 sayılı Matbu-
et Kanununun maddel 51 inci maddesine tevfi kan İcra Vekilleri Hey-
etince 14/3/939 tarihinde onanmıştır.

14/3/939

REİSİCUMHUR

Ismet İnönü

Bş. V.
S. P. Ağaçoğlu

Ad. V.
S. Ağaçoğlu

M. M. V.
M. M. V.

Da. V.
Fağrı Özalp

Ha. V.
S. Sancar

Ma. V.
S. Ağaçoğlu

Mf. V.
Yıldırım

Na. V.
A. Çetinbaş

İk. V.
A. Ağaçoğlu

S. I. M. V.
S. H. Ağaçoğlu

G. I. V.
Karim Karim

Zr. V.
M. H. Ağaçoğlu

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Image 3. The Document signed by İsmet İnönü banning a Khoybun publication in Turkey (14 March 1939) Source: Prime Ministry Republican Archives (Basbakanlik Osmanli Arsivleri (BCA), 030-0-018-001-002-86-23-1, March 14, 1939.



Image 4. "The Imagined Kurdistan is Buried Here," *Milliyet*, September 19, 1930.

T. C.
BAŞVEKÂLET
Muamele Müdürlüğü
Şube:
Sayı: 12959

KARARNAME

Suriyede Latın harfleriyle tertip ve tabedilmiş olan gerek x
Alfabesinin , Hükümetimize kabulüne ; Dahiliye Vekâletinin x
8/6/1932 tarih ve 2696/4873 numaralı tezkeresiyle vakubulca tebli-
fi üzerine İcra Vekâletleri Heyetinin 9/6/1932 tarihli iqtisadında tas-
vip ve kabul olunmuştur .

9/6/1932

REİSTCUMHUR

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Bş.V. *İsmail* Ad.V. M.M.V. *Bekir S. Wyo* Da.V.
Ha.V. *S. T. B. B.* Ma.V. *M. H. H. H. H.* M.V. *esat* Na.V. *L. H. H. H.*
K.V. *Atatürk* S.M.V. *S. H. H. H.* G.V. *H. H. H. H.* Zr.V. *M. H. H. H.*

030 12 07 02 23 16 16

Image 5. A 1932 Turkish Official Decree Signed by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) banning the Circassian Alphabet in Latin Characters in Turkey. Source: Prime Ministry Republican Archives (Baskbakanlik Osmanli Arsivleri (BCA), 030-0-18-01-02-29-44-016, June 9, 1932.



Image 6. How Kemal "Westernizes." Source: Sureya Bedirkhan, *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey* (Philadelphia: Kurdish Independence League, 1928), p. 61.

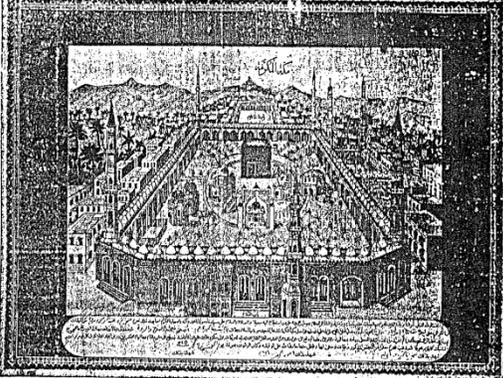


Image 7. "Zoroaster and the Path of Zoroaster." Source: *Hawar*, Year 4, Issue 26 (18 August 1935), pp. 10-11.

CENG & SIYASET
DEWRAN
 CIVATA NAVNJADIN

Sala nû wê Dibe
 Sala dawiya vi gertî xedar, sala zefêr û serfiraziyê û sala silê û agitiya çihanê, sala azadî û serbestiya hemî miletan dinyayê, çi biçûk, çi mezîn.
 Masegêl Semsî Hadîyon Londrê de qala wan liştan kiriyê û gotiyê: Piştî vi gertî divê teqilîyekê nav-nijadî, civatekê mijetan îbelê danîn ji bona parastinê û mihalefê kirina silê û agitiya çihanê û berevaniya miletan ji zihmê û kadayê û Bêrtanya Mezîn, Emerîka, Sovyetistan û Çîn gertî ko bikewin vê civatê û bi wan îgan mijal bibin; û bi yekîtiya wan her çar dewletan rahelê û serfiraziyê dinyayê bêne pêk anîn; û miletan bêtêref ji divê bikarin bibin lebatên vê civatê.
Ji Welatên Bêtêref
 Qesd çiyê, me xweg seh ne kiriyê, îbelê nas e ko piraniya miletan dinyayê ketine vi gertî mezin û ku mayîna ne bi navê Dewleta Bêtêref, îbelê bi yê gerdewell emel dikin.
 Ji xwe ji bona parastina agiti û raheliya dinyayê civatek danîn, ne îstêki getek nû û nûjen e. Ev îkir hema bi qasî dinyayê keva e, ji her ko sehî serdanan berî dîna îsa pîstember, feylesofê dînê û mezîn Konfîçyûs hilmen civatekê nav nijadî danî bû.
 Rêwîkîr Pîçîk

QIBLEGAHÊ MISILMANAN



MEKKE - BAJARÊ KO XWEDÊ LÊ HATIYE REHMÊ

DERBINE NUH
 LONDRE — General Montgomerî ye ko Dîye Serfermanderê qivetên îrlanti, ji bona vegirtina Ewropayê, hatiya Londrê û karê serdariya xwe xistiyê dest.
 LONDRE — Wêranîs îrlanti a hevayî dide xûnê; Refên îrlanti ji bombesavêjan giran hikûketî, gevê çûyî stêrîjî îstêfîkî kirine û du hezar ton bombeyên gewan û leqandîne avêtîne lajgeliha payezîstê elemanz; agir çûyî bi vî parîstînd ketiya û pê gewalîna mezîna çebane, pîştî û dî û domandîna wan gewanan her bi çarçûman ve 6 hezar pê bilind dîhan.
 LONDRE — Gerdîya Ser Nova grad-Vollusk vegirtiyê, ev bajar 15 kîlometir nîngî şîroên wotot

Image 8. “Qiblegah of Muslims.” Source: *Roja Nu*, Year 2, Issue 34 (10 January 1944), p.1.

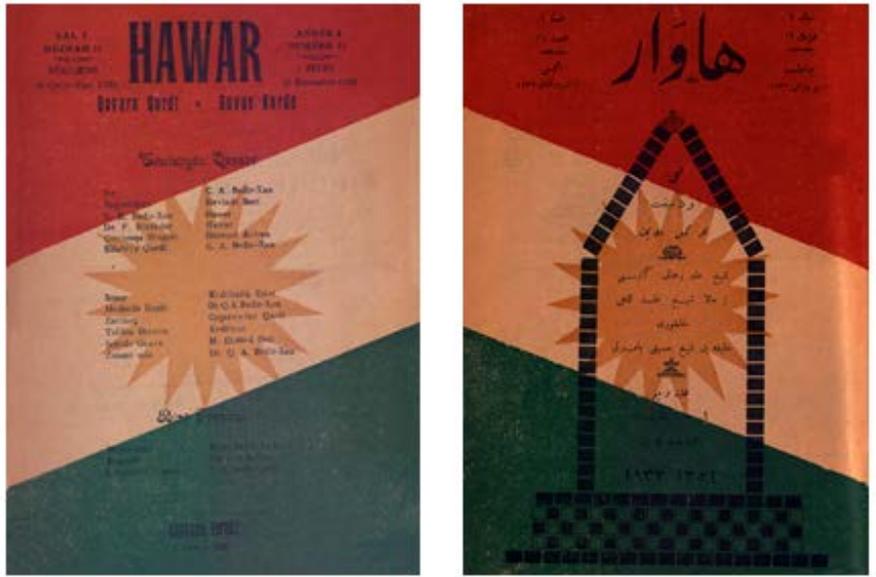


Image 9. Shaykh Abdurrahman Garisi’s Gravestone. Source: *Hawar* (Arabic Alphabet Section), Year 1, Issue 11 (10 November 1932)

DÛRIK
DORIKEN LI HER TEMBORÉ

KOTIKO

Mala te bi kotiko
Cim xweiro, cim qeysiko
Lawé Hora diliniko
Hema xwe pitrik diko
Teres siwaré dehsiko
Nav leyana Meréú à Metna
Ji xwe re kiriye qevziko

Kotik derket ser bona
Ban kir meleké ezmana
Ruhé kotik bislinin
Davén axé celana

Mala te bi kotiko
Cim xweir à cim qeysiko
Tu wek jina bi du giyana
Li gasina úf diko

Ne kark ú ne çétko
Ne mih ú ne berziko
Ne bizin ú ne kehriko
Ne çétek ú goilko
Lawé Hora diliniko
Hema xwe repik diko

XIDIR

Hey Xidir, Xidir, Xidir
Li ser minara ban dikir
Her ji du riwa tim li vir.

Xidir hilog hilog
Teres lawé kerifroq
Xidir ta o dilowine
Ba li beriké dixine
Ji Xelké weyé miçidí ne
Hemí riqk ú sipí ne

Xidir çu ye Mèrdiné
Xwe ji eqq à dila dilhejiné
Xidir çu saka kera
Nan kirf bú b'iteli pera
Li Mèrdiné, kir sala
Cavé teres li teqstela

Hey gidí, gidí lo Xidir
Her ji du riwa tim li vir.

ÈMO

Hey Emo, Emo, Emo
Tu here w'ez bilémo
Èmo li binya tehlka
Hamdsana keçka
Xweç ji masté ehlka.

Memké xwe li devé mi ke
Xweéd te bi riziqi mi ke
Èmo keçka keçe ye
Pupil tijé xurme ye.

Èmo li binya xaniya
Memké Èmo mi diya
Xweç e ji gogté kéviya
Hey Emo, Emo, Emo.

Èmií, Emo, Èmoçé
Dev tu ne, rin diçroqé
Mér tu ne kar li koge
Kocera deqta Moçé.

Èmo d'hat ú d'gulgull
Fynik dant, ú semilí
L'bejné paçiké gull
Nellan l'bejné edilí
B'èç ú meli tya min t
Mehhaha l'her vi dilí.

Èmo, Emo, Èmoçé
Èmo d'li hamé bandí
Tu b'xizémek ridwant
A ko mi digo te aní
Sed bimbarek li wí cant

Ramtsan

Mi d'f bú, te d'f bú
Nav pembón
W'ez ramtsim
Her du riwa

Mi d'f bú, te d'f bú
Nav tátné
Piling deyne
Ser qeyüné
Te ramtsim
Te satané

Mi d'f bú te d'f bú
Nav geneka
W'ez ramtsim
Bi beneka,

GUL, BIHIN, JINÈN SPEHI



DELALEN DILE XELKE

IMP LE MIROIR D'ORIENT SEYROUTI

Image 12. “The beauties in other nations’ hearths.” Source: *Roja Nu*, Year 1, Issue 9 (28 June 1943), p.4.



Ji wexilé ko wí çeri dest pé kiriye ji ber ko m'r çüne eniyun jin di gelek lişlan de bi karé wan radibin. Klişu me diajoga ewlobüseké şani dide. Mifetişeki polişé bi ken ú bi zirawí jé re latimatin dide, an xeleteke wé rast dike. Heke diajo mèrek biwa gelo mifetiş dísau wé holé bikeniya.

Image 13. Changing Gender Roles in War Time. Source: *Ronahi*, Year 3, Issue 25 (May 1944), p.13.

