

Narratives of the History of the Ottoman-Kurdish
Bedirhani Family in Imperial and Post-Imperial Contexts
Continuities and Changes

Barbara Henning



13 Bamberger Orientstudien

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hg. von Lale Behzadi, Patrick Franke, Geoffrey Haig,
Christoph Herzog, Birgitt Hoffmann, Lorenz Korn
und Susanne Talabardon

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Für meine Familie

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Note on Transliteration

I have used the system of the *İslam Ansiklopedisi* when transcribing Ottoman text. Diacritical marks and indications of length appear only when quotations from Ottoman source material are rendered in Latin script. Wherever individual Ottoman words appear, they have been transcribed according to the same system, but without the diacritical marks. Place names within the Ottoman lands are generally given in their Ottoman spelling (hence Diyarbekir instead of Diyarbakır). Ottoman and Arabic terms are transcribed and put in italics unless they appear as entries in the Merriam-Webster English dictionary, in which case they are spelled according to this dictionary (hence *mutasarrıf*, but sharia). Arabic text is transcribed according to the system of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (DMG).

Abbreviations

AIR	Air Ministry, United Kingdom
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
APP	Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris
AUB	American University, Beirut
BCA	Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi (Republican Archives), Ankara
BnF	Bibliothèque Nationale Française
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Ottoman Archives), Istanbul
CHP	Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti)
EI ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2 nd edition
EWK	Einwohnermeldekartei, Stadtarchiv München
FO	Foreign Office Archives, Public Record Office, London
H	<i>hicri</i>
İA	<i>İslam Ansiklopedisi</i>
IFPO	Institut Français du Proche-Orient, Beirut
İHK	İsmail Hakkı Konyalı Library, Istanbul
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
INALCO	Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris
IKP	Institut Kurde, Paris
M	<i>maliye</i>
MAE	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris and Nantes
MECA	Middle East Centre Archives, Oxford University
NL	Nachlass

PAAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)
SHD	Service Historique de la Défense, Paris
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, London
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi
TDV	Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı
USNA	United States National Archives
WO	War Office, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

The protagonists of the following discussion have one thing in common: All are members of a fairly prominent family of Ottoman-Kurdish notables, known as the Bedirhanis. My analysis follows several members of this family throughout a crucial period of transition, from the 1870s to about 1940. This time period is marked by large-scale social and political transformations, as the end of the First World War and the following collapse of the Ottoman imperial system challenged (former) Ottoman subjects to reorient themselves and assimilate to a newly emerging framework of Turkish nationalism and Kemalist ideology. This adaption process was particularly challenging for members of the former imperial bureaucratic elites, as their life worlds, their means to support themselves and their families, along with their economic, political and cultural resources vanished or were seriously devalued. As an integral part of the Ottoman imperial bureaucratic elite, members of the Bedirhani family had to navigate these processes of transition. How they did so is one of the key questions guiding my research: I ask how different family members lived through and coped with the challenges of transition from empire to nation state and inquire about continuities and ruptures in both their biographical trajectories and the narratives about their identity – in other words, in the stories they tell about themselves.

Members of the Bedirhani family are not unfamiliar to historians of the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. For the most part, however, the family's history has been studied in a very particular context: Against the backdrop of the emergence of a Kurdish nationalist movement in the early 20th century. To some extent, this is a legitimate perspective, since a number of members of the Bedirhani family did

indeed figure as pioneers, protagonists and prominent supporters of the Kurdish nationalist movement. By limiting an analysis of the family's history to this perspective, however, other questions which are not tied to Kurdish national history and identity tend to be marginalized. This leads to oversimplifications and a glossing over of the complex processes of post-imperial identity formation involved and, in particular, to an underestimation of the ongoing impact of imperial and other conceptions of identity and belonging not shaped by ethnic nationalism. Taking issue with these oversimplifications, my hypothesis is that the imperial framework, as well as network structures and resources related to it, continued to play an important role for members of the Bedirhani family as they modified and adapted ideas about themselves and perceived options and strategies available to them after the collapse of the Ottoman state. My approach for testing the assumption of an ongoing relevance of the imperial framework is two-fold: On the basis of ego-documents and archival sources, I reconstruct trajectories of family members immediately before, during and in the aftermath of the transition from imperial to post-imperial contexts. In addition, I look into changing narratives about family history and network structures family members operated in, again looking for continuities and ruptures, lending further support to my initial hypothesis. I argue that the study of the history of the Bedirhani family, while not necessarily representative for late Ottoman and post-imperial processes of identity formation as such, can still serve as a prism to understand the larger context of transition and transformation between imperial and post-imperial life worlds and the challenges which accompanied these processes.

1.1. Studying the History of Ottoman Kurds: State of the Art

In the following, I briefly sketch out the general development of an academic interest in Kurdish history. It is important to recall that, for one, production of knowledge on an ethnically defined Kurdish community takes place under particular conditions and circumstances which impact, guide, and limit the questions researchers ask and the methodological tools and theoretical approaches they apply in their attempts to answer these questions. Second, the genealogy of Kurdish studies provides a stark reminder that, as Kurdish history continues to be studied against the backdrop of contemporary political struggles, “researchers on Kurds (...) play, by their mere existence, a political role”¹ – as they deconstruct and critically distance themselves from certain concepts of Kurdish identity, they reproduce and legitimize others.

Gaping silences and great difficulty of access have continued to impact scholarship on Kurdish communities and their historical trajectories ever since the foundation of nation states in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria in the first half of the 20th century. Kurdish insistence on a separate historical and, in consequence, also political identity was highly unwelcome and in turn repressed by all of the states mentioned above. Kurdish demands for autonomy were perceived as a threat, calling the ideology and imagined coherence of the respective nation states into question. The origins of Kurdish studies² as a separate field of academic

¹ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel & Marie Le Ray, “Knowledge, Ideology and Power. Deconstructing Kurdish Studies.” In: *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 5 (2006), <http://www.ejts.org/document777.html>, last accessed March 29, 2016.

² On the history of Kurdish Studies, see the informative and detailed account by Martin van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Studies in Western and Central Europe.” In: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kurdische Studien* (Wien: Wiener Verlag für Sozialforschung, 2014), pp. 18-96, including an extensive bibliography. See also Scalbert-Yücel & Le Ray, “Knowledge, Ideology and Power,” Djene Bajalan & Sara Zandi Karimi, “The Kurds and Their History: New Perspectives.” In: *Iranian Studies* 47.5 (2014), pp. 679-681, and Janet Klein, “Minorities, Statelessness, and Kurdish Studies Today: Prospects and Dilemmas for Scholars.” In: *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 36 (2010), pp. 225-237.

inquiry lie in Soviet Russia in the 1930s. French and British scholars followed suit, their interest in the Kurdish community being closely tied to the needs of the colonial administration in the mandate territories of Syria and Iraq. Kurdish studies were established by European colonial administrators and, particularly in the French case, also Christian missionaries. This tradition found its continuation as Kurdish studies entered European institutions of higher learning: Both at INALCO in Paris and SOAS in London, Kurdish history and language were studied with an imperial gaze in mind, in order to facilitate control and influence over Kurdish communities under imperial rule. The second wave of Kurdish studies from the 1960s onwards, now undertaken from a perspective of Kurdish nationalist historiography by members of the Kurdish community and activists, drew on these early contributions, sometimes reproducing the underlying essentialist categories and timeless visions of the Kurdish nation. The trajectory of members of the Bedirhani family, who lived and worked as activists and intellectuals under the French mandate rule in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and 1940s, was profoundly impacted by this approach.³

The 1960s represent a turning point in the emergence of an academic interest in Kurdish history and culture, as social scientists turned to the study of Kurdish communities.⁴ It was around the same time that Kurdish intellectuals in exile in Europe also began to study Kurdish history and identity. Often, they did so in the context of their political activities.⁵ Interest in the Kurds thus developed with a strong focus on the contemporary Kurdish political struggle for greater independence.⁶ This tendency was reinforced by contributions from journalists and

³ See chapter 3 on the activities of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan.

⁴ Among them anthropologists like Fredrik Barth and Edmund Leach and also political scientists.

⁵ Examples for Kurdish activists-cum-historians include İsmet Chériff Vanly in Geneva, Nouredine Zaza in Lausanne, Wadie Jwaideh and others.

⁶ Scalbert-Yücel & Le Ray, "Knowledge, Ideology and Power."

human rights activists who investigated and published on Kurdish issues and by institutions founded by Kurdish diaspora activists in Europe, like the Kurdish Institute in Paris. So-called “human rights literature,” which is less concerned with historical depth and focuses instead at the current situation of the Kurds as a minority facing difficulties in several Middle Eastern states,⁷ has dominated the study of Kurdish societies and history until very recently. The keen international interest in the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq or in the comparatively small Kurdish minority in Syria in the context of the ongoing civil war in Syria provide the most recent examples for how current political concerns have shaped the agenda and outlook of Kurdish studies. For the past fifty years, a large part of the research conducted on the history of the Bedirhani family has been firmly rooted in this line of scholarship: The family history has been read in the context of the Kurdish political struggle for independence, within a framework of Kurdish nationalist history. Like the history of the Kurdish community in general, the history of the Bedirhani family is a popular area of interest for journalists and authors without formal academic training in history or social sciences,⁸ among them Naci Kutlay, Rohat Alakom and, with regards to the Bedirhani family in particular, Malmisanîj [Mehmed Tayfun].

Kurdish studies are not at last hampered by their marginalized position within mainstream academic institutions: There are, to this day, few chairs dedicated to Kurdish Studies explicitly,⁹ and Kurdish matters tend

⁷ I borrow the term and the observation from Jordi Tejel, “Scholarship on the Kurds in Syria: A History and State of the Art Assessment.” In: *Syrian Studies Association Newsletter* 16.1 (2011), he makes the argument with regard to Syria in particular, but I would argue it is valid for Turkey and Iraq as well.

⁸ This type of popular historian is often called *araştırmacı yazar* (i.e. researcher and writer) in Turkish.

⁹ Exceptions are the recently founded Centre for Kurdish Studies at the University of Exeter (2006) and the Mustafa Barzani Arbeitsstelle für Kurdische Studien at the University of Erfurt (2012). Another potential game changer in the field of knowledge

to be studied as marginal phenomena by researchers interested in the history of countries with a Kurdish minority like Syria, Iraq or Iran.¹⁰ Archival resources pertaining to Kurdish history were systematically withheld in Turkey until very recently.¹¹ Fieldwork in the Kurdish areas of the Middle East was restricted for researchers until the 1990s.¹² The 1990s marked another turning point in Kurdish studies, as scholars such as Nelida Fuccaro, Christian Velud, Lale Yalçın-Heckmann and others were able to conduct extensive fieldwork among Kurdish communities¹³ and reached a broader audience in Middle Eastern studies with their results. In recent years, steps towards greater political liberalization in Turkey have made archival research on Kurdish topics more feasible. In addition, studies on Kurdish history have also flourished in the wake of broader academic trends, like the growing interest in French and British mandate history¹⁴ or the study of state-society relations, looking into relations between the Kurdish minority and Turkish state authority.¹⁵ This recent renaissance in Kurdish studies, however, did not immediately bring about large-scale interest in Kurdish history. Instead,

production on Kurdish history are the universities in Iraqi Kurdistan in Erbil, Süleymaniye and Dohuk.

¹⁰ A further problem being that as there has been no Kurdish state, no central archives have emerged where the bulk of historical sources on Kurdish history could be stored. Hence, sources on Kurdish history are scattered between different Middle Eastern and western national archives.

¹¹ For her work on the Hamidiye regiments, Janet Klein was denied access to Turkish research facilities, see Janet Klein, *Power in the Periphery: The Hamidiye Light Cavalry and the Struggle Over Ottoman Kurdistan, 1890 – 1914*. Diss. Princeton University, 2002, p. 10.

¹² For Syria, see Tejel, “Scholarship on the Kurds,” p. 21.

¹³ Martin van Bruinessen was among the first researchers to attempt fieldwork among Kurdish communities in the Middle East but was not able to obtain necessary permission which would have allowed him to stay in one place for an extended period of time, see “I would be sitting in the village room where people gather – Interview with Martin van Bruinessen.” In: *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 5 (2006), <http://www.ejts.org/document777.html>, last accessed October 4, 2016.

¹⁴ Cf. Vahé Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie. Aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l’Irak (1919-1933)* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2004), Nadine Méouchy, *France, Syrie et Liban, 1918 – 1946* (Damascus: Presses de l’IFPO, 2002), Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2005).

¹⁵ Senem Aslan, “Everyday Forms of State Power and Kurds in the Early Turkish Republic.” In: *IJMES* 43 (2011), pp. 75-93 for a discussion.

it involved mostly anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists and linguists. Still, the work of historians like Janet Klein, Hans-Lukas Kieser and Ümit Üngör, among others, is evidence for a growing interest in Kurdish history, particularly embedded in local Anatolian history – abroad, but also in Turkey, as the publication of the popular history journal *Kürt Tarihi* indicates.¹⁶ The latest developments in Turkey, including renewed attacks on academic freedom and suppression of outspoken Kurdish identity politics in the aftermath of the general election of June 2015 and the attempted coup of July 2016, do not bode well for the future of Kurdish studies in Turkey.

This very brief overview¹⁷ of the development of Kurdish studies as a field of academic interest illustrates that even though Kurdish history became increasingly visible and feasible over the past decades and is about to overcome its nationalist framing,¹⁸ research on everyday history, small-scale dynamics¹⁹ and entangled histories between Kurdish and non-Kurdish actors are still much less prominent. Actors and events not directly relevant to the emergence of Kurdish national identity and the ensuing political struggles continue to be understudied.²⁰ It is these gaps in particular that I hope to address with my own research, studying the history of an Ottoman-Kurdish notable family as an integral part of late Ottoman history and including trajectories of members of the Bedirhani family who were not directly involved with the emergence of Kurdish nationalism.

¹⁶ Bajalan & Karimi, “The Kurds and Their History,” pp. 679-681. I draw on the example of a recent contribution to the history of the Bedirhani family published in Turkey to discuss the discourse about Kurdish history in Turkey more generally in chapter 4.

¹⁷ The discussion about the state of the art in Kurdish history is continued in the following chapters.

¹⁸ Thereby moving, in the words of Janet Klein, “into post-nationalist, theme-based, and global or world histories.” See Klein, *Margins of Empire*, p. 229.

¹⁹ Tejel, “Scholarship on the Kurds,” p. 23.

²⁰ Klein, *Margins of Empire*, p. 230.

1.2. General Methodological Approach

Using the trajectory of the Bedirhani family as a prism to understand processes of identity formation in the transition period between empire and post-imperial contexts, I hope to address the issue of “methodological nationalism”²¹ and avoid a reproduction of categories, time scales and perceptions of space which are prevalent in nationalist historiographies – in this case, both the Turkish and the Kurdish discourse have to be taken into account. In addition, standard western historiographical writing about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Turkish Republic, often rendered as a success story within a modernist framework of explanation,²² also operates with assumptions and categorizations which require further scrutiny. To deal with these challenges of historiographical preconceptions, my research focuses on the micro-level of small-scale examples and trajectories which are informed by larger, more abstract processes of transition and negotiations of identity and belonging. Methodologically, my analysis therefore draws on the concept of “thick description,” introduced by the social anthropologist Clifford Geertz.²³ This approach recognizes that the history of the Bedirhani family – very much like history in general – is a mosaic of multiple individual stories, some of them well-represented already, some of them marginalized and silenced in standard historiography, and none of them more valid or “true” than any other. These individual stories, their genealogies and subsequent trajectories are at the center of my attention.

²¹ Ulrich Beck & Natan Sznaider, “Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda.” In: *British Journal of Sociology* 57.1 (2006), pp. 1-23.

²² See e.g. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London et al.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968 [1961]).

²³ Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in: Idem (ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-32.

In addition, a strong focus is put on movement and migration. Not only do individuals migrate between actual places, different ideas and narratives are also on the move between multiple discourses and social or political contexts. Behind this approach lies the assumption that identity formation is a dynamic, ever-shifting process which needs to be read in its respective contexts. As people and ideas move, they leave traces in different sources. Inspired by Marc Aymes' remarks on a polygraphic approach²⁴ which brings multiple archives together and Leyla Dakhli's discussion of the first generation of Arab-Ottoman intellectuals, the activities of members of the Bedirhani family come into focus best in a parallel reading of different source material, including letters, journal articles, memoirs and other publications which complement each other and allow, much like a prism, different glimpses on the protagonists.²⁵

One might object that for the study of large-scale processes like transition, my sample is astonishingly small, including only members of one extended family and their networks. However, one advantage of my choice of the extended family as the primary unit of my analysis lies in the fact that all family members had a similar structural position within the imperial framework and disposed of similar potentialities and opportunity structures. Limitations and restrictions they encountered equally resembled each other. It is therefore interesting to inquire why, with all these structural elements being so similar, family members ended up taking markedly different paths throughout imperial and post-imperial times. Their choices, along with their attempts to justify them in changing political discourses and across major historical ruptures, provide some insight into opportunity structures, expectations and

²⁴ Marc Aymes, *A Provincial History of the Ottoman Empire. Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean in the 19th Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 8-12.

²⁵ Leyla Dakhli, *Une génération d'intellectuels arabes. Syrie et Liban (1908-1940)* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2009), p. 9.

norms and also the limitations and boundaries of what was acceptable throughout the time period under discussion here.²⁶

1.3. Structure

The following introductory chapter sketches out the three main theoretical lenses I use to approach and embed my research on the Bedirhani family history: (1) The study of processes of memory, (2) the study of biographical trajectories, relying on ego-documents, and (3) the qualitative analysis of network structures. Chapter 2 offers an extensive overview of the Bedirhani family history and sociology, including a commentary on the available sources and an in-depth discussion of the scholarly and more popular interest in and existing research on the subject. The following sections are then structured chronologically:²⁷ Chapter 3 is focused on the Bedirhani family history and family members' trajectories in the late Ottoman context, roughly from the 1870s to 1906. The chapter hinges on the case study of the Ottoman bureaucrat and notable Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in the Ottoman province of Greater Syria, illustrating through his example and by means of a comparison to other family members of his generation how the trajectory and the horizons of the entire Bedirhani family were firmly embedded in the framework of the Ottoman imperial system at the time. Chapter 4 then zooms in on the period of transition from imperial to other, post-imperial frameworks of meaning, roughly from 1906 to the end of the First World War. In the spring of 1906, members of the Bedirhani family were implicated with the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, the prefect of Istanbul at the time. The year 1906 thus marks an early

²⁶ For a similar approach, see Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives. Generations and Violence Through the German Dictatorships* (London et al.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), pp. 1-23.

²⁷ I am aware of the problems inherent in a chronological presentation of my material and I do not assume or suggest that chronological order is synonymous to relations of cause and effect.

moment of potential estrangement and rupture with the Ottoman state, about which interpretations of family members differed, illustrating that it is indeed misleading to treat the Bedirhani family as a monolithic entity with collective interests and a corporate identity. The discussion of the transition period draws on a comparison between two case studies: Mehmed Salih Bedirhan emphasized his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire until he passed away during the First World War, while his cousin Abdürrezzak Bedirhan reoriented himself and shifted his professional ambitions towards Czarist Russia. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the Bedirhani family history following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, that is from 1918 onwards. Again, the focus is on several case studies. In chapter 5, one of the better-known aspects of the family history is revisited: The activities of the three brothers Süreyya, Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan in Syria and Lebanon under French mandate rule and later in European exile are re-read in the context of the entire family history. In chapter 6, the memoirs of Müveddet Gönensay, a granddaughter of Emir Bedirhan who continued to live in Istanbul after the foundation of the Turkish Republic and assimilated into urban middle-class life there, along with the trajectories of other family members who stayed in Turkey after 1923, complete and complicate the picture of the Bedirhani family history in post-imperial times. In a concluding section, I revisit my hypotheses and ask about the implications that my findings and arguments might have beyond the immediate context of the Bedirhani family history.

1.4. Theoretical Tools

Before I lay out my methodological and theoretical framework in greater detail, I want to very briefly address what lies beyond the limits of my study: Like, as Clifford Geertz wrote, anthropologists do not study

villages, but *in* villages,²⁸ it is important to point out that instead of studying a (rather famous) family, the Bedirhanis, I set out to study *in the context* of this family, using it as a meaningful frame to ask questions about transition and the modification of ideas about the self. I reiterate here that the Bedirhani family history provides (merely) a laboratory for my research because my treatment of the family's history, while detailed, cannot be exhaustive or documentary. This approach is bound to be found lacking with some readers. To some extent, the gaps in the narrative are due to a lack of sources or, in some cases, to my lack of access to them. But they are also due to the fact that rather than attempting to reproduce a complete collective biography, particular questions have guided my outlook on the material and, in turn, lured my attention away from other issues that might have turned out to be just as interesting, relevant or pertinent.

For theoretical backing, my work on the Bedirhani family rests on three pillars: Memory studies, theories of ethnicity and identity, and qualitative network analysis. What brings all three tools together is a question asked pointedly by Clifford Geertz: My aim here is to find out “what the devil *they* think they are up to.”²⁹ They, of course, referring to different members of the Bedirhani family. One might expand this question to and who the devil *they* think they are, as I address questions of shifting Ottoman-Kurdish identity through the lens of the Bedirhani family history, claiming that multiple ideas about the self can exist simultaneously and that continuity with the Ottoman imperial framework of reference plays a far greater role than has been acknowledged in existing scholarship on Kurdish history. Behind this approach lies a semiotic understanding of culture as a system of symbols consisting of different layers of meaning which can be understood

²⁸ Geertz, “Thick Description,” p. 22.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 58.

through interpretation. On a very general level, this understanding sets the methodological and theoretical course for my entire research endeavor. I approach my material with the goal of formulating what has been termed “thick descriptions” of historical and biographical events.³⁰ The term implies a detailed description that goes beyond mere observations and includes context and the interpretations of different layers of meaning involved. This does, however, not mean that I expect to find a single symbolic system through which all actions, writings and other cultural practices by members of the Bedirhani family can be interpreted. Rather, and particularly since I am interested in moments of transition, I am expecting to find all kinds of incoherencies, contradictions and ambiguities existing simultaneously.

The approach of interpretative cultural studies has, in the wake of the *Writing Culture* debate spearheaded by James Clifford and George Marcus, been rightly criticized for not reflecting adequately on the role of the observing and interpreting researcher and the imbalances of power involved.³¹ Methodological problems this criticism addresses have been, as it is demonstrated by Edward Said and others who have followed since in the direction of his work,³² of particular relevance in the field of (traditional) Oriental Studies. For me, reacting to this line of criticism can only mean that borrowing from Geertz’ valuable and inspiring concept of culture has to be accompanied by cautious reflection and questioning of epistemological categories at play when writing out “thick descriptions,” in particular with regard to Kurdish identity and ethnicity.

³⁰ Geertz, “Thick Description,” drawing on the ideas his teacher, the philosopher of language Gilbert Ryle. See Gilbert Ryle, “The Thinking of Thoughts. What is ‘Le Penseur’ Doing?” in: Idem (ed.), *Collected Papers*, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1971), vol. 2, pp. 480-486.

³¹ James Clifford & George E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1986), pp. 3-8.

³² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1978).

A second limitation: My study does not aim to answer the question of where the beginnings of Kurdish nationalism lie. This and related questions have been addressed, with many scholars making the convincing argument that prior to the First World War, it is anachronistic to read and conceptualize Ottoman-Kurdish political and cultural activities in the framework of nationalism.³³ Other researchers have challenged this view. Most recently, Hilmar Kaiser made the argument that Kurdish nationalist activity in fact can be traced back into late Ottoman times.³⁴ I cannot agree with Kaiser's reading of the Bedirhanis' activities at the turn of the century, and I do believe that his understanding of Kurdish identity in ethno-nationalist terms is indeed anachronistic if applied to that time period. However, not only the answers, but to some extent the question about the origins of Kurdish nationalism seem problematic: There is a danger of constructing a misleading dichotomy between Kurdish and Ottoman identity, presenting the two as mutually exclusive and in opposition to each other. Research on other social groups in the late Ottoman Empire, however, has demonstrated that Ottomanism was in fact to no small extent compatible with other layers of identity, among them religion, a local sense of belonging and ethnicity. Michelle U. Campos conclusively made this argument with regards to Ottoman Jews in Palestine around the turn of the century.³⁵ Nathalie Clayer investigated similar questions of multiple and overlapping ideas of identity in the case of the Ottoman Albanians.³⁶ More generally, comparative research on imperial elites has conclusively shown that a crucial resource for members of these elites

³³ Hakan Özoğlu. "'Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables in the Late-Ottoman – Early Republican Era." In: *IJMES* 33 (2001), pp. 383-409, and also Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2003), p. 54.

³⁴ Hilmar Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir Region* (Istanbul: Bilgi Univ. Press, 2014), p. 112, footnote 37.

³⁵ Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers. Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2010).

³⁶ Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais. La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2007).

was the ability to switch between and make situational use of different codes of identification as they navigated multi-ethnic environments.³⁷ Hakan Özoğlu and others have convincingly identified 19th-century Kurdish notables as an integral part of the Ottoman imperial elite. It seems therefore reasonable to assume that as members of an imperial elite, Ottoman-Kurdish families like the Bedirhanis excelled at this situational code-switching observed by scholars others with regards to imperial bureaucrats in the Habsburg or Russian Empires. Against the backdrop of these and related findings, I am not asking about the origins of Kurdish nationalism, but about options, expectations and opportunity structures perceived by actors at different points in time. This perspective allows for overlaps of multiple discourses activated by protagonists who adapted their demands to discourses of European diplomats and to the logic of empire alike. I explicitly ask about the ambiguities, contradictions and things that seemingly do not make sense or go together well. One additional point needs to be considered when asking about the beginnings of Kurdish nationalism: Institutions within colonial or nation states created opportunity structures which incited actors to emphasize ethnic and other sociopolitical boundaries.³⁸ Proto-nationalist activities prior to the creation of nation states in the former Ottoman lands in the early 20th century, however, cannot be assumed to follow the same logic. Instead, one finds actors appealing to Ottoman imperial and European-imperialist frameworks, resorting in many cases not to nationalist propaganda but to a rhetoric of protection of minorities.

A final limitation concerns my discussion of continuity: Reinhart Koselleck has pointed to the false dichotomy between continuities and

³⁷ See the introduction in Tim Buchen & Malte Rolf (eds.), *Eliten im Vielvölkerreich. Imperiale Biographien in Russland und Österreich-Ungarn (1850-1918)* (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 14.

³⁸ Andreas Wimmer, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries. A Multi-Level Process Theory." In: *American Journal of Sociology* 113.4 (2008), pp. 990-993.

ruptures, arguing that in order to achieve a better understanding of change and processes of transformation, it makes more sense to depart from the notion that both aspects – both permanence and elements of sudden change – are coexisting at the same time, simultaneously. This perspective precludes easy assumptions and complicates my argument about imperial continuities in the history of the Bedirhani family. Large parts of the existing, often extremely biased scholarship have so far ignored the Ottoman dimension of Kurdish history in general and of the history of the Bedirhani family in particular. My point is therefore not one to deny the existence of changes or ruptures, but to bring elements of imperial continuity back into the picture which have no small relevance and have in the past been ignored or marginalized.

1.4.1. The Study of Memory and Identity

“Discussions of collective memory,” the historian James Gelvin noted, “tend to be, more often than not, exercises in storytelling.”³⁹ As I have argued above, drawing on Clifford Geertz, this does not need to be a bad thing. Looking at the stories and the ways they are told might prove to be a very valid exercise indeed, as I hope to illustrate. It might also be the only thing historians can, in all fairness, achieve.

The processes as well as the products of remembering the past are crucial objects of my analysis and offer answers to the questions I bring to the Bedirhani family history. My understanding of “memory” has an impact on both the selection of source material and the theoretical approaches adopted in analyzing it. Some remarks on the theoretical background of memory studies as an important framework to situate

³⁹ James Gelvin, “Collective Memory and Nationalist Narrative: Recounting the Syrian Experience of the First World War,” unpublished article, cited in Susan Slyomovics, “Memory Studies: Lebanon and Israel / Palestine.” In: *IJMES* 45 (2013), p. 600, footnote nr. 14.

and interpret my thinking about the Bedirhani family are therefore in order: Memory, discursive productions of meaning and processes of identity formation are closely linked.⁴⁰ In terms of sources, research on biographical texts and memory studies also show a lot of overlap. In the 1980s, the *biographical turn* brought the study of biographical trajectories, and thereby also of processes of commemoration, back into the discussion in the humanities. The scope of potential sources has become broader, including not only autobiographies and memoirs, but also other texts which discuss individual perceptions of the self, along with past experiences and expectations for the future. This extended understanding of sources on the self proved very useful in the field of Middle Eastern history, as it allowed to compensate for what was perceived as a lack of autobiographical writing in the western sense of the genre definition and to include other ways of writing about the self.⁴¹ The study of memory cannot be confined to written material: Maurice Halbwachs' argument that memory also works through objects needs to be considered,⁴² along with more recent claims that spaces are crucial in structuring memories as well.⁴³

The history of the Bedirhani family can productively be studied as a (collective) *imperial biography*.⁴⁴ This perspective implies that family

⁴⁰ Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets. Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso Books, 2002 [1995]), p. 161.

⁴¹ Ralf Elger & Yavuz Köse (eds.), *Many Ways of Speaking about the Self. Middle Eastern Ego-Documents in Arabic, Persian and Turkish (14th to 20th century)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010).

⁴² Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 128-130.

⁴³ See Joelle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory. A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937-1962* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996). Of less immediate relevance for the study of the Bedirhani family history seems Paul Connerton's observation that social memory can also be studied as embodied memory, Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 71-104.

⁴⁴ On the quite recent trend of researching imperial biographies, see the edited volumes by Buchen & Rolf (eds.), *Eliten im Vielvölkerreich* and Martin Aust & F. Benjamin Schenk (eds.), *Imperial Subjects. Autobiographische Praxis in den Vielvölkerreichen der Romanovs, Habsburger und Osmanen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2015).

members' career paths, world views and expectation for the future are understood as inseparably linked to imperial structures, while on the other hand family members themselves shape and modify these imperial structures through their actions.⁴⁵ The underlying assumption is that through the study of individuals, something can be understood about the larger context of their imperial life worlds, as well as about their strategies in coping with changes and transformations happening within these life worlds. This approach not at last opens up possibilities for inter-imperial comparisons. It is in this sense that I speak of the Bedirhani family as a prism to understand something about the Ottoman Empire immediately before and during a crucial period of transition.

In addition to guiding my selection of relevant source material, insights from the field of memory studies channeled my questions about what can be understood and studied with the material at hand. The first central premise is that the purpose of memory is linked to the present: Acts of remembering give meaning and orientation to current and future actions.⁴⁶ It follows that memories cannot be analyzed as being true or false, but have to be read as contingent on the present. They can be expected to be dynamic and shifting according to concerns in the immediate present of their author.⁴⁷ What both ego-documents and other sources on memory thus reflect are not past events themselves but (changing) discourses about the past and ways to commemorate and narrate it.⁴⁸ In addition, it has been argued that there is a link between memory and identity: Processes of identity formation can be traced in

⁴⁵ David Lambert & Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careerism in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006).

⁴⁶ Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1992), p. 18.

⁴⁷ Johannes Fried, *Der Schleier der Erinnerung. Grundzüge einer historischen Memorik* (München: Beck, 2004), pp. 105-107.

⁴⁸ Christoph Schumann, *Radikalnationalismus in Syrien und Libanon. Politische Sozialisation und Elitenbildung 1930 - 1958* (Hamburg: Dt. Orientinstitut, 2001), p. 47.

autobiographical writing and ego-documents.⁴⁹ Understood in this way, ego-documents authored by members of the Bedirhani family offer an opportunity to follow ideas about Ottoman-Kurdish identity from the late 19th century into post-imperial times, tracing changes as well as continuities over the transition period between imperial and post-imperial world views. Ego-documents authored by members of the Bedirhani family offer glimpses into a shifting Ottoman-Kurdish discourse about the past, at different points in time. The collective approach to the family's history allows to bring in various accounts, offering different perspectives and interpretations of the family's history. Collective and individual memory are intertwined here, they overlap and are by no means in opposition.⁵⁰ The example of the Bedirhani family and their memories is an interesting one because it can be analyzed as being situated on the border between two modes of memory that have been identified by Jan Assmann,⁵¹ between communicative and cultural memory. *Communicative memory* is more open and can tolerate the ambiguity of a plurality of different, even contradicting individual memory splinters. *Cultural memory*, on the other hand, is the result of a process of selection and institutionalization of certain memories and narratives. These are recorded, maintained and updated according to contemporary concerns by specialists, who act as archivists of the family history. As the personal memory of family members fades into the background because protagonists and their contemporaries pass away, one can observe how a conflicts about valid interpretations of the family history are unfolding.

⁴⁹ Volker Depkat, „Autobiographie und die soziale Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit.“ In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 29.3 (2003), pp. 441-476.

⁵⁰ For my analysis, it is not productive to keep these two dimensions of memory apart. See also Rudolf Jaworski, „Die historische Gedächtnis- und Erinnerungsforschung als Aufgabe und Herausforderung der Geschichtswissenschaft,“ in Martin Aust, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz & Stefan Troebst (eds.), *Verflochtene Erinnerungen. Polen und seine Nachbarn im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 2009), pp. 17-29 for a critique of a sharp dichotomy between individual and collective memories.

⁵¹ Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 50.

An analysis of the Ottoman-Kurdish discourse about the past – and, closely related to that, about identity – is situated within a discussion on the politics of memory in the post-Ottoman realm. With regards to the case of Republican Turkey, Esra Özyürek⁵² and others⁵³ have pointed out the manipulations, in the form of modifications, over-emphasis or silencing in public memory.⁵⁴ In no small part, Kurdish discourses on history and identity took shape in opposition to these Turkish Republican politics of memory, which aimed at silencing the Kurdish experience. These Turkish Republican discourses on the imperial past and their impact on Kurdish (counter)discourses point to another crucial aspect in the study of memory: Memories exist in the plural and in reference to each other, they are entangled.⁵⁵ This is true for collective politics of memory and competing claims about national pasts, homelands and histories as much as it is true for individual works of memory writing. Authors, the Bedirhani memoir writers among them, are not writing in isolation but make contributions and comments to broader conversations going on at the time of their writing. Sometimes these intertextual links are very obvious, with writers referencing other accounts and memoirs they intend to comment on, subscribe to or defend themselves against.⁵⁶

⁵² Esra Özyürek (ed.), *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2006).

⁵³ Leyla Neyzi, “Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity, and Subjectivity in Turkey.” In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44.1 (2002), pp. 137-158, and Doğan Gürpınar, “The Politics of Memoirs and Memoir-Publishing in Twentieth Century Turkey.” In: *Turkish Studies* 13.3 (2012), pp. 537-557.

⁵⁴ Drawing on Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

⁵⁵ See Martin Aust, “Verflochtene Erinnerungen. Einleitende Ausführungen zur Affinität von Gedächtnis- und Verflechtungsgeschichte,” in: Aust, Ruchniewicz & Troebst (eds.), *Verflochtene Erinnerungen*, pp. 1-15.

⁵⁶ An example from the Ottoman-Kurdish community are the memoirs of Mevlanzade Rıfat Bey, who justifies his own actions with direct reference to the recollections of Şerif Paşa, a former sponsor of his whom he eventually fell out of favor with, see *Mevlanzade Rıfat'ın Anıları*, edited by Metin Martı, (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1992).

A perspective on memories as entangled allows to become aware of the narrative structures of nationalist discourses on the past and to contextualize them, as well as their silences. For example: The “golden age” of the Bedirhani family history is, in most accounts written from a Kurdish-nationalist background, understood to be congruent with the moment of opportunity for the Kurdish independence movement in general, that is roughly from the end of the First World War into the 1930s. This supposed “golden age” thus covers a time period when there was still realistic hope for the foundation of an independent Kurdish national state. However, looking closely at the actual trajectory of the Bedirhani family in late Ottoman times reveals quite the opposite: The family prospered throughout the late 19th century and lost political influence, along with large parts of the family fortune in the post-war years. The “golden age” of Kurdish nationalism was spent by many members of the Bedirhani family in apprehension, insecurity and exile. In turn, the decades prior to 1914 would offer themselves as more fitting reference points for individual nostalgia in the memories of family members. Similar contradictions between collective (Kurdish nationalist) and individual memories of the imperial past can be traced in the comparison of different narratives of the family’s history.

One reason the imperial Ottoman-Kurdish past often gets dismissed in Kurdish nationalist historiography is that referencing it would mean stressing a shared past with the Turkish state. Especially in the context of the current AKP government’s discourse of glorifying Turkey’s imperial past and at the same time claiming this heritage exclusively,⁵⁷ emphasizing this shared legacy not in the interest of most Kurdish political leaders and intellectuals. As the history of the Bedirhani family is an important point of reference in Kurdish nationalist historiography, Ottoman imperial aspects are deemphasized accordingly. A second,

⁵⁷ Joshua W. Walker, *Shadows of Empire. How Post-Imperial Successor States Shape Memories*. Diss. Princeton Univ., 2012, pp. 7-8.

related problem adds to the reluctance to stress an Ottoman-Kurdish past: According to the Kemalist narrative, the Ottoman Empire collapsed because of its failure to modernize and westernize. Associating oneself with an Ottoman-Kurdish past might all too easily lead to stigmatization as reactionary and backward by political opponents. Only after a very recent shift in discourse towards the end of the 20th century, positive reference to the imperial past has become more acceptable. However, the monopoly over the interpretation and appropriation of this past for conservative nationalism rest almost exclusively with the Turkish state and its representatives. This appropriation has direct effects on the Kurds in the Middle East, as they, too, inhabit formerly Ottoman territory but are passed over in the contemporary official narrative.⁵⁸ The (counter)narrative of Kurdish nationalism is shaped not so much by positive reference to an imperial heritage as by a rhetoric of post-colonialism: The Ottoman Empire and the imperial past are seen as part of an oppressive situation which needed to be overcome to facilitate a liberation of the Kurdish people and the foundation of a Kurdish national state.⁵⁹ In this narrative, there is no space for Ottoman Kurds such as the Bedirhanis, who actually were, as my dissertation argues throughout, very much part of and beneficiaries of the Ottoman imperial system. However, choices made by political and intellectual elites about official memory cannot be expected to silence alternative versions of the past completely. Read against the grain of nationalist narratives, the history of the Bedirhani family is not at last an opportunity to open a window into these alternative discourses. Different chapters will provide opportunities to come back to the topic of memory from a variety of angles: In a discussion of Mehmed Salih Bey Bedirhan's Ottoman-

⁵⁸ Walker, *Shadows of Empire*, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁹ For one example, see Kemal Burkay, *Geçmişten Bugüne Kürtler ve Kürdistan. Coğrafya – Tarih – Edebiyat*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 279-300, who dedicates a chapter headlined „The Taking Shape of Kurdistan's Lagging Behind” [Kürdistan'ın Geri Kalmışlığın Şekillenmesi] to Ottoman economic and fiscal politics conducive to the systematic exploitation of Kurdistan.

Kurdish memoir writing, the value of ego-documents as a source for processes of identity formation will be tested. A chapter on Müveddet Gönensay focuses on the role of material objects and spaces in memory. Different accounts on the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906 show how different layers of memory and discourse are indeed entangled.

To make sense of the trajectory of the Bedirhani family, I use memories and other documents about the self as sources to trace ideas about identity. Identity is a fussy and quite opaque concept⁶⁰ – and yet, referring to it to explain all kinds of phenomena, particularly with regards to the history of ethnic and social groups, has been very much *en vogue* in scholarship of the past decades.⁶¹ One has to bear in mind, however, that as appealing, universally relevant and applicable the concept might seem to us today, the idea of “identity” as it currently used is of very recent origins and has been identified as a product of western modernity. The origins of the idea of an individual, stable and coherent identity can be traced back to U.S. American social psychology of the mid-20th century, a period which was marked by comparative stability, optimism and belief in progress. The much-cited concept of a single, stable identity taking shape in adolescence formulated by Erik Erikson is an important reference point for later works on identity, but also a product of its time.⁶² As such, it might be far from adequate for a less stable and predictable period of transition and transformation like the turn from imperial to post-imperial under scrutiny here or the transition from socialism to post-socialist societies. The historical

⁶⁰ See Aleida Assmann & Heidrun Friese, “Einleitung,” in: Idem (eds.), *Identitäten. Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), p. 11.

⁶¹ A particularly notorious example for this kind of discussion about cultural (in his case religious) identities as major explanatory framework for challenges of the modern world seems to be Samuel Huntington, “A Clash of Civilizations?” In: *Foreign Affairs* (1993), pp. 22-49.

⁶² Peter Wagner, „Fest-Stellungen. Beobachtungen zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Diskussion über Identität,” in: Assmann & Friese (eds.), *Identitäten*, p. 46.

contingency of the idea of identity⁶³ has a number of consequences: Having or striving to have one single, historically stable and clearly delineated “identity” cannot be assumed as a universal human need or desire, but needs to be understood as a phenomenon rooted in political and social developments in Europe during the last two centuries. Categories of identity, like “Kurdish,” in turn, are also historically contingent, and meanings attached to it can be expected to be subject to changes. The explanatory value of categories of identity for historical developments is dubious to say the least. People do not, per se, hold certain opinions or chose one policy over another merely because they are, think of themselves or are referred to by others, as “Kurdish.” The perspective of one single, stable and unchanging identity also does not seem readily applicable to the situation of members of the Bedirhani family at the turn of the century: Most of them lived through a period of large-scale social and political transformations, during which established patterns of making sense of the world, horizons of expectation and visions of the future became irrelevant and were modified or replaced by new ones.

While this observation seems quite obvious, a crucial consequence tends to be neglected in some discussions: Projecting a seemingly stable concept of ethnic Kurdishness back into history and subsuming complex developments in Eastern Anatolia over the 18th and 19th centuries under the label of Kurdish nationalism is problematic. It runs the risk of writing teleological history and falling back on anachronisms. Instead, historicizing the concept of “Kurdishness” means to follow changes in meaning over time, also seeking to understand the category’s impact and power to mobilize increasing numbers of people over the 20th

⁶³ Jürgen Straub, „Personale und kollektive Identität. Zur Analyse eines theoretischen Begriffs,” in: Assmann & Friese (eds.), *Identitäten*, p. 89: „Der Identitätsbegriff beruht auf historischen und soziokulturellen Voraussetzungen, die seine Anwendbarkeit und Geltung begründen und zugleich begrenzen.”

century. Such an outlook on Kurdish identity as historically contingent and dynamic allows to understand late Ottoman discourses about identity in their own right and to trace processes of identity formation beyond obvious shifts in labels. With regards to the Bedirhani example, I would be ill-advised to assume categories like “Kurdish,” “Ottoman,” or “Sunni Muslim,” to name but a few, to be unchanging or universally agreed upon. To the contrary, it is entirely possible that the name of a given category is retained while the underlying discourse changes considerably or that the labels being change while discussions and interests stay the same. My research will attempt to show examples for both scenarios.

To make sense in the context of my research questions and to help me find relevant answers in the sources that are at my disposal, the concept of identity I make use of here needs to meet a number of criteria: To gain access to different layers and coexisting ideas about the self, identity is understood as result of subjective processes of cultural construction through which an individual attempts to add up splinters and fragments of his or her personal experience to create meaningful narratives about him- or herself. These processes follow an internal logic which is expressed in social situations as well as in written and other material traces of thinking about and narrating the self.⁶⁴ To be able to reach the different layers of meaning these narratives can hold over time and, I look at processes of identity formation as discourses.⁶⁵ The perspective of discourse analysis focuses on the production of meaning and enables me to follow the genealogies and trajectories of ideas about the self. Building on Foucault’s strategies of discourse analysis, Ernesto Laclau

⁶⁴ Straub, „Personale und kollektive Identität,” p. 93: „Identität ist immer nur ein vorläufiges Resultat kreativer, konstruktiver Akte (...). Medium und Ausdrucksmittel für solche Akte sind alle möglichen sprachlichen und sonstigen Verhaltensweisen: Vom Beschreiben und Argumentieren über das (höchst bedeutsame) Erzählen von Geschichten bis hin zum Träumen und Gestalten von Objekten kommt hier so gut wie alles in Betracht.”

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981).

and Chantal Mouffe stressed that, as meaning in general is never fixed but continuously changing, categories of identity are also subject to changes and negotiations. Applied to the example of Kurdish identity, their perspective allows to perceive identity formation as a multifaceted process of cultural construction and to include overlapping concepts of identity as well as seemingly contradictory elements into the analysis.⁶⁶ In addition, drawing on Andreas Wimmer, I argue that institutions, power relations and networks play a large role in defining how protagonists think and write about themselves and what collectives they attach themselves to. I am interested in how thinking about the self in terms of Kurdishness and Kurdish ethnicity became possible and attractive for individual actors over the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The example of the Bedirhani family is particular in this respect, as it illustrates poignantly how not everyone who potentially fitted the criteria for ethnically defined Kurdishness (and in the Bedirhani case could even lay claim to a privileged position within the Kurdish community) was willing or able to seize this opportunity. On the contrary, for many family members, their Kurdish origins lost their appeal and utility as they tried to assimilate in to the urban elite of the early Turkish Republic.

To theoretically access and make sense of these disparate positions and heterogeneous post-imperial trajectories, I turn to Stuart Hall for help.⁶⁷ He thought about ethnic identities as claims made by actors in their social fields for particular reasons, to secure advantages over others, to gain access to material and symbolic resources or to forward personal goals. Hall's perspective builds on an understanding of identities as constructed and dynamic. It has the added value of pointing to what

⁶⁶ See the discussion in Georg Glasze, „Identitäten und Räume als politisch: Die Perspektive der Diskurs- und Hegemonialtheorie.“ In: *Europa Regional* 21 (2013), pp. 23-34.

⁶⁷ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in: Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-237.

potentially lies behind claims to one or another version of ethnically or otherwise defined identity. From this perspective, it is entirely possible to assume that while pursuing similar goals – like improving their economic situation or regaining influence over the family's former homeland in the area of Cizre – members of the Bedirhani family forwarded claims about identity that were incommensurable. This perspective should, however, not lead to an over-simplified outlook on the family as a monolithic collective with unchanging common interests. It is also possible that while voicing similar claims about identity and belonging, family members pursued very different individual goals. For both scenarios, examples can be found in the history of the Bedirhani family.

Moment of rupture and transition – like the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its immediate aftermath – open up new possibilities and have the potential to modify discourses about identity considerably.⁶⁸ As the imperial life world was being replaced by new systems of reference, prominently among them modern nationalism, the possibility to switch between and uphold multiple claims about identity at the same time decreased considerably. Ideologies about belonging became mutually exclusive and were constructed in opposition to each other. For instance, over the late 19th century, it was still possible for members of the Bedirhani family to position themselves and act as Sunni Muslims and followers of a particular Sufi tradition, as Kurdish landlords and military leaders and as Ottoman bureaucrats at the same time. The emergence of Turkish nationalism and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, however, made it necessary for them to abandon certain aspects of identity altogether (for instance Sufi or Ottoman imperial connections) and make a clear decision for one category or another (Turkish or

⁶⁸ Glasze, „Identitäten und Räume,“ pp. 23-34. Stuart Hall also draws attention to difference, rupture and discontinuity as important moments in the process of identity formation, see Hall, „Cultural Identity,“ p. 222.

Kurdish) in other respects. In this respect, the history of the Bedirhani family can be read as evidence for a decreasing tolerance of ambiguity in terms of identity.

My access to discourses about identity and belonging is facilitated chiefly through texts (which I have characterized as ego-documents). Looking at this body of sources, two levels of analysis suggest themselves: On the one hand, ego-documents can be interrogated about their narrative structures, and the extrapolated narratives can provide clues to decipher processes of identity formation. On the other hand, the same texts contain descriptions of material worlds and practices. These descriptions are also potential sources to trace ideas about the self and its place in society, which need to be incorporated into the analysis. To do so, I rely on concepts that are often subsumed as ‘theory of practice’ or performative approaches to culture.⁶⁹ In other words, I look out for moments of “doing Kurdish” or, respectively “doing Ottoman,” “doing Turkish,” etc.

With regards to the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani family, ethnicity constitutes a relevant dimension and subcategory of identity. Even though not the only possibility for identification, ethnicity becomes increasingly prevalent over the late 19th and early 20th century in the efforts of members of the Bedirhani family to locate themselves and their claims in a wider society. An early discussion of ethnicity (as “ethnische Gemeinschaftsbeziehungen”) goes back to Max Weber, who pointed already to role the subjective appeal and belief in a shared culture plays for the emergence of ethnic groups.⁷⁰ In the late 1960s, the anthropologist Fredric Barth contributed the ground-breaking and still

⁶⁹ Candace West & Sarah Fenstermaker, “Doing Difference.” In: *Gender & Society* 9.1. (Feb. 1995), pp. 8-27.

⁷⁰ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der Verstehenden Soziologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Zweitausendeins, 2010 [1922]), pp. 303-311. Also discussed by Wimmer, “The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries,” p. 973.

much-cited insight that boundaries between different groups are constitutive for ethnic identities. Ethnic groups are constituted in relation to other, similar groups and ethnic identity is thus a relational and dynamic product of mutual attribution of ideas about the self and others.⁷¹ His findings cleared the way for studies of the processes of formation and transformation of ethnic identity. Barth was concerned mainly with the salience of ethnic identity, which he then identified as relational and flexible. Other scholars have since developed his approach further, arguing that the contents to which ideas about ethnic identity are tied are also dynamic. This leads to the question if ethnic identity can be constructed at will – as some critics of Barth, prominently among them Abner Cohen have argued – or if it needs plausible cultural and historical backing to make sense.⁷² This issue has developed into a discussion between primordialists and constructivists/instrumentalists. The second group asks why and for the sake of which goals individuals adopt concepts of ethnic identity to frame their political or economic claims.⁷³ Much work has been done to reconcile both approaches, arriving at a compromise that serves as a tentative working definition of ethnicity: While ethnicity and its contents are constructed in particular situation, these constructions still rely to some extent on given structures and resources. Political scientists in particular have taken this as a starting point to ask about variables which impact the salience and specific characteristics of ethnic identity in particular contexts. For the purpose of my own research, I take a slightly different turn, leaving some of the opportunities but also many of the constrictions of a social science framework aside: Mirroring my thinking about identity in general, I ask about the construction of meaning and the genealogies of

⁷¹ Fredric Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of a Culture of Difference* (Bergen: Oslo, 1969).

⁷² A similar question has kept scholars of nationalism busy, see Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), arguing for a primordial core as basis of national identity that can be activated in certain contexts.

⁷³ Ted R. Gurr & Barbara Haff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder, Co.: Westview, 1994), p. 78.

the idea of a Kurdish ethnic identity. This approach does not provide me with a watertight explanation for why Kurdish ethnic identity became an option and political reality to reckon with over the first half of the 20th century or help me determine once and for all where the origins of this idea lie in earlier history. What my approach allows me to do instead – not so much in opposition than as complementary to other outlooks committed to social science methodology – is to trace the idea of Kurdishness with its internal complexities and consider it within the context of its contemporary alternatives.

Much like the concept of identity in general, the idea of ethnicity bears a heavy imperialist heritage. With numerous examples,⁷⁴ researchers have shown that ethnic groups which are seen as and often also understand themselves as going far back in time are actually recent formations and products of the colonial era. In that regard, the issue of ethnicity is part of a larger problematic guiding my research interest in the Bedirhani family, the question of teleological history writing and the projecting of categories and meanings attached to them back into the past. Can we presume a feeling of shared ethnical identity among the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire? Dealing not explicitly with Kurds, but with questions of history and ethnicity in Anatolia in general, the social anthropologist Chris Hann came to a cautious conclusion:⁷⁵ Hann draws on findings of Michael Meeker, who looked into the Ottoman past of the Black Sea region around the city of Of and found an Ottomanized political culture instead of political groups and factions divided along ethnic lines. Considering historical evidence provided by Meeker and others, Hann urges researchers to be careful to simply assume that ethnic identity

⁷⁴ For an example from Central Asia, see Judith Beyer, „Ethnonationalismus in Kirgistan.“ In: *Zentralasien-Analysen* 31/32 (2010), pp. 11-16.

⁷⁵ Chris Hann, “History and Ethnicity in Anatolia,” in: Idem (ed.), *Not the Horse We Wanted* (Münster: Lit., 2006), pp. 195-212. In Hann’s words: “But did the speakers of Kartvelian, Armenian, and Greek languages in the Ottoman period have any sense at all of constituting an ethnic group, as we use the concept today?” p. 201.

mattered as a principle of social organization in the past as much as it mattered later or matters today. Instead, ethnicity is better imagined as an accumulation of flexible concepts with their own history, constructed and “imposed”⁷⁶ on historical situations. To push this point a little further, I borrow from Rogers Brubaker.⁷⁷ Focusing on diasporas, Brubaker has looked at processes of identity formation with an interest in identifying paradigmatic cases that can enable large-scale changes in discourses. Adopting his perspective for the Ottoman-Kurdish case means to also be attentive to the trajectories of other minorities in the immediate post-war period,⁷⁸ as well as international discourses about national identity.⁷⁹ Benjamin White’s argument about the making of Kurdish ethnicity in Damascus in the 1930s offers support for this view: White demonstrates how emphasizing a Kurdish identity became an advantage for community leaders in Damascus, who were of Kurdish origins, but had become thoroughly Arabized under Ottoman rule. The French mandate administration arrived in the region expecting to find ethnically defined communities and provided opportunities accordingly. When he comes to the conclusion that “Kurdism offered a means for notables to maintain their own dominance in the quarter,”⁸⁰ White echoes Stuart Hall’s observation on the importance of claims behind identity politics. It is important to point out that White describes a crucial change in Kurdish identity politics which took place in the 1930s. Earlier, around the turn of the century, ethnic identity is not a helpful concept in explaining social or political behavior, as it has also been argued by Nelida Fuccaro with regards to the organization of space in

⁷⁶ Hann’s choice of expression, *Not the Horse We Wanted*, p. 206.

⁷⁷ Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora.” In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28.1 (2005), pp. 1-4.

⁷⁸ On the impact of neighboring and/or rivaling groups on the process of identity formation, see Barth, *Ethnic groups and Boundaries*.

⁷⁹ An example for such shifts are the principles formulated by the U.S. president Woodrow Wilson after the First World War pertaining to the status and the political future of different nationalities within the former Ottoman Empire.

⁸⁰ Benjamin White, “The Kurds of Damascus in the 1930s: Development of a Politics of Ethnicity.” In: *Middle Eastern Studies* 46.6 (2010), pp. 901-917, citation p. 909.

19th century Damascus.⁸¹ Insight about the constructedness of ethnic identity are of particular importance in the context of Ottoman history, as for too long, unchallenged ideas of ethnic identity have been used to explain inter-communal violence in the empire.⁸²

With these precautions in mind, I turn to the Ottoman-Kurdish example: A distinguishable language, territorial origins and the adherence to the Shaf'i instead of Hanafi school of juristic thought come to mind as material to draw on in the construction of a distinctly Kurdish ethnic identity. Describing ethnicity as constructed and situational does not mean to deny the existence of these particularities and differences. The question is, how much do these differences matter at given points in history, in what contexts and for what reasons are they mobilized to claim a distinct identity and historical trajectory – and when do they coexist with other splinters of identity without having much of an impact on social or economic interactions. Hakan Özoğlu is interested in Ottoman-Kurdish notable families in the 19th century, focusing mainly on the origins and early development of Kurdish nationalist thinking. In his theoretical framework, he therefore emphasized the connections between ethnicity, identity and nationalism.⁸³ He identified ethnic identity as “deeply embedded” in nationalism and looked at both concepts as constructed, but with real and undeniable impacts on social realities.⁸⁴ While my research has a lot in common with Özoğlu’s groundbreaking work, his perspective is different from mine: I strongly agree with his take on identities as

⁸¹ Nelida Fuccaro, “Ethnicity and the City: The Kurdish Quarter of Damascus Between Ottoman and French Rule, c. 1724-1946.” In: *Urban History* 30.2 (2003), pp. 206-224.

⁸² A paradigm shift, however, seems well underway with regards to Eastern Anatolia. For a recent approach, see Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores. Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912 - 1923* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), who looks at identities in Eastern Anatolia as contextual and dynamic.

⁸³ Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State. Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (State Univ. of New York Press, 2004), pp. 7-11.

⁸⁴ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, p. 7.

constructed, yet socially meaningful. However, it makes sense in the case of the Bedirhani family to be attentive to overlaps between, alternatives to and limited scope of several ideologies of identity involved instead of asking about the genealogy of one, nationalist line of thinking only. Özoğlu is interested in the emergence of nationalist thinking in the Middle East, taking the Kurdish community as an interesting and so far neglected example. My research, on the other hand, is concerned with a field of overlapping and coexisting ideas about the self, only one (at not necessarily the most pertinent one) being ethnically defined Kurdish identity.

The example of the Bedirhani family shows that most family members had access to a Kurdish dimension of their identity. Many family members proudly recall the family's history in Eastern Anatolia in their recollections. Many also had some command of Kurmancî, which family members continued to use among each other in the second generation in exile. Yet, I argue that Kurdish ethnicity as a meaningful marker of identity only came to play a role after the breakdown of the imperial system. Even then, the rupture with other, non-ethnic patterns of identification and social interactions was far from sudden or complete. While there are Kurdish aspects to the Bedirhani family's collective identity, like language or place of origin, there are other areas in which Kurdishness does not help at all to recognize or explain patterns of behavior and interaction: The residential areas the Bedirhanis lived in both in Istanbul and Damascus in late-imperial times were structured along lines of social class and income. In Istanbul, family members gave preference to the fashionable outskirts of the city, residing in representative wooden mansions in Şişli or Kadıköy. Children of the family attended prestigious Ottoman schools, and marriage patterns as well as friendships did exhibit ethnic preferences. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most Bedirhanis married outside the Kurdish community, and some of them even outside the Ottoman lands

altogether. Ethnic identity is present as one dimension of a complex cluster of imperial identity – but it is not a variable which can predict or explain behavior or interactions. Even if my assumption proves to be wrong and ethnicity did indeed play a major role in the self-descriptions and interactions of members of the Bedirhani family throughout the Ottoman period, it is still worthwhile to take a broader perspective. Categories guide our research, and if we go out looking for ethnicity, we will probably find some. Meanwhile, the more interesting question seems to be what else impacts how Ottoman Kurds thought about themselves.

Ethnicity can be analyzed as the result of a process of ethnification: When and for what reasons was Kurdish identity articulated, are there changes to be observed over time meanings ascribed to Kurdishness? What role do larger historical developments like colonialism or modernization play within this equation? A number of scholars have approached these theoretical questions, often focusing on the connection between modernization processes and the emergence of nationalism.⁸⁵ In the context of post-colonial theory, cultural interactions have been perceived as a two-way street, impacting both colonizers and colonized. Assuming there is an Ottomanization of the Kurdish elite in the 19th century or even earlier, is there also evidence of a Kurdification of the Ottoman imperial culture, be it ever so small? Michael Meeker has taken up this line of thought and argued for in case study on the Black Sea region that the “Ottomanization of Trabzon led inexorably to Trabzonization of the Ottomans.”⁸⁶ Where would one have to go to look for these traces of Kurdification in the Ottoman world? The Bedirhanis,

⁸⁵ See for instance Christine Allison, “From Benedict Anderson to Mustafa Kemal: Reading, Writing and Imagining the Kurdish Nation,” in: Clémence Scalbert-Yücel & Hamit Bozarslan (eds.), *Joyce Blau: L'éternelle chez les kurdes* (Paris: Institut Kurde, 2013), pp. 101-133.

⁸⁶ Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire. The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2002), pp. 106-107.

it can be argued, are not a bad starting point: Employed in the Ottoman imperial administration and the Ottoman military, family members were out and about all over the empire, from the Aegean coast to Yemen, from the imperial capital to some small hamlet in the Syrian desert. While they were part of the Ottoman bureaucracy and shared an elite culture, education and image of themselves with their (non-Kurdish) colleagues, there are also Kurdish elements they bring to the table: Pictures of family members posing in traditional Kurdish clothing testify to that, the presence of a Kurdish-speaking tutor in the family household constitutes another piece of evidence. The Bedirhanis also mobilized and coordinated Kurdish manpower for the empire. In the war against Russia in 1877/78, members of the Bedirhani family led troops of Kurdish irregulars in battle. Later, in the Ottoman capital, the Bedirhani family recommended themselves as patrons and spokesmen of the large Kurdish community of porters and workers in the city. And when Kurdish migrants were to be settled in the province of Ottoman Syria, members of the Bedirhan family were again involved.

What about Ottoman descriptions, concepts and not at last stereotypes about the Kurdish population? On the one hand, the Ottoman millet system divided the Ottoman population along religious lines and did not differentiate between Muslims of Turkish, Arabic or Kurdish descent. Different from Jewish or Christian communities in the empire, the system thus provided no reference point or institutional foundation for the formation of a separate Kurdish identity. Also, no foreign power was interested in or ready to intervene on behalf of the Ottoman-Kurdish community over the 19th century. Different from the cases of Christian communities, there was therefore no external incentive to form a community and claim protection, privileges or minority status on that basis. On the other hand, there was a geographical idea of a Kurdish territory already prior to the 19th century, which was later institutionalized as the *Kürdistan Vilayeti*. In the context of centralization

efforts, the Ottoman government attacked and eliminated the semi-independent Kurdish rulers in Eastern Anatolia in the mid-19th century. Different from the later Turkish Republican policies against the Kurds, however, the imperial state never denied their Kurdishness or shied away from using terms like “Kurdish.” Medals handed out to those who participated in the battles against the Kurdish emirates in Eastern Anatolia, for example, were called “Kürdistan Madalyası.” Somewhat parallel to the dismissive use of “Turk” for simple folks, the term “Kurd” was used to ridicule and belittle, being associated with stereotypes of coarse language and manners and lacking refinement. Ottoman stereotyping on the basis of ethnic identity was not a phenomenon of the 19th century: In his Counsel for Sultans (*nüṣḫat üs-selâtin*, dating from 1581), the author Mustafa Ali warns the Ottoman ruler against employing Kurds (and other ethnic/social groups like nomadic Turks) in the state administration: “But there are certain nations [*mîlel*] among the various races [*tavāyif-i muḥtelife*] that are definitely not suitable for an administrative position (...). One of these nations is the perfidious Kurds whose character is nothing but obstinacy and stubbornness.”⁸⁷ Kurdishness was also used to disqualify claims and arguments of political adversaries. During a religious controversy in the mid-19th century, Mevlana Halid was called a Kurdish saboteur by his opponent Osman Bey.⁸⁸

My aim in theorizing about Kurdishness and other dimensions of Ottoman-Kurdish identity in a period of transition between imperial and post-imperial life worlds cannot be to come to general conclusions about

⁸⁷ “Ol zümreden biri Ekrād-i bed-nihâddur ki ğibilletleri maḥz-i leğğ u ‘inâddur.” Edition and translation from Andreas Tietze, *Mustafa Ali’s Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979), vol. 1, p. 63.

⁸⁸ See Dina Rizk Khoury, “Who is a True Muslim? Exclusion and Inclusion Among Polemicists of Reform in 19th-century Baghdad,” in: Virginia Aksan & Daniel Goffman (eds.), *Early Modern Ottomans. Remapping the Empire* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), p. 268.

meanings of markers of identity at certain points in time. The material I am relying on, the history of one particular family, does not lend itself to these conclusions. I am not sketching out a conceptual history of Kurdishness, even though this would be a useful and interesting project. What I set out to do instead is to formulate relevant pointers and hypotheses about the meanings markers of identity had for certain individuals, in my case members of the Bedirhani family. These assumptions can be tested, refined and quite probably reformulated in other case studies.⁸⁹

1.4.2. The Concept of “Ego-Documents”

My research is part of a larger discussion an effort, going back to the 1980s and 1990s, of attempting to bring the individual back into history, to zoom in on the experiences and life worlds of historical subjects instead of being concerned with structures and patterns that shape these experiences on the macro level. Historians interested in bringing the individual subject back into the historical narratives have tried to identify and mine sources that speak of individual experience and world views. My discussion ties in with these long-standing efforts, which have so far largely focused on European history and the early-modern experience. Drawing on a term coined by the Dutch historian Jacob Presser in 1958 and brought back into the discussion in the 1980s and 1990s by Rudolf Dekker,⁹⁰ Winfried Schulze outlined a body of sources that he characterized as “Ego-Dokumente” (ego-documents).⁹¹ By ego-

⁸⁹ The history of the Ottoman-Kurdish Baban family from Süleymaniye, for example, offers an interesting comparison. I had no access to Metin Atmaca’s dissertation on the subject, but was able to attend a presentation and talk to the author in person in August 2016.

⁹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the genealogy and critique of the concept of “ego-documents,” see Kaspar von Greyerz, “Ego-Documents: The Last Word?” In: *German History* 28.3 (2010), pp. 273-282.

⁹¹ Winfried Schulze organized a symposium on ego-documents as a category of source material in Bad Homburg in 1992. The proceedings of this meeting were published under the title *Egodokumente. Annäherungen an den Menschen in der Geschichte?* in 1996. While

documents, Schulze understood any texts in which information about historical actors is communicated. This definition explicitly includes information not provided by the individuals themselves, but gathered by a third party, for example in surveys, or offered involuntarily, for example in court statements. Schulze's approach has since met with critique:⁹² One line of criticism, drawing on discourse analysis and de-constructivist approaches, points out that any attempt of the historiographer to access the individual experience of a historical subject is in itself futile.⁹³ In the context of these discussions, the very idea of a coherent self was called into question, and identity was recognized as permanently in flux, elusive and subject to changes.⁹⁴ However, even if one agrees with this criticism and accepts that ego-documents cannot be understood as windows into individual, distinct experiences and historical truths, they can still be fruitfully questioned about constructions of the self ("Ich-Konstruktionen"), which are changing in time.⁹⁵ It is these narrative constructions of the self that I am interested in: I study the Bedirhani family history not to piece together the historically truthful account of their trajectory (even though this in itself would be worthwhile and certainly interesting). I use them as an example to understand ideas about identity in the period of transition between imperial and post-imperial life worlds. Studying the personal

Schulze's introduction has since been widely cited by scholars from an array of disciplines, it tends to be forgotten that not all of the contributors to the volume were satisfied with his definition of the concept "ego-documents." Some authors, among them Gabriele Jancke and James S. Amelang, took an outspokenly critical stance in their own essays in the same volume. See Greyerz, "Ego-Documents," p. 279.

⁹² Andreas Rutz, „Ego-Dokumente oder Ich-Konstruktion? Selbstzeugnisse als Quellen zur Erforschung des frühneuzeitlichen Menschen." In: *zeitenblicke* 1.2 (2002), <http://www.zeitenblicke.historicum.net/2002/02/rutz/index.html>, last accessed in January 2015 and Greyerz, "Ego-Documents," pp. 273-282.

⁹³ Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience." In: *Critical Inquiry* 17.4 (1991), pp. 773-797, and Philipp Sarasin, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2003), pp. 10-60.

⁹⁴ A related but more pragmatic reservation about the use of ego-documents as sources about individual historical experiences concerns the question of authenticity, which is not always easy to establish.

⁹⁵ Rutz, „Ego-Dokumente oder Ich-Konstruktion?" p. 10.

narratives of members of the Bedirhani family over the late 19th and early 20th centuries provides insights into mentalities and systems of meaning prevalent at the time. It illustrates how personal experience was engaging with broader patterns of discourse.⁹⁶ Narratives of the self can productively be analyzed for inherent contradictions and silences.⁹⁷ This, however, is more complicated than it sounds, as it cannot be assumed that actors are, at the time of writing about their past experience, able to recreate and access meanings and belief systems they have since ceased to identify with.⁹⁸ The task had hand thus resembles that of the archaeologist, identifying and sorting out layers of meaning.⁹⁹ In sum, “[t]he purpose of reading personal narratives, then, is not to recover a more authentic non-discursive voice of subjects, but to use personal narratives to see as far as possible how people worked their way through dimensions of norms and relationships, through conflicting demands, ambivalent fears and emotions, how men and women gave these meaning, what narrative forms this took and what this meant in a particular context.”¹⁰⁰

A second line of criticism was aimed at the concept of “ego-documents” itself: As a category of source material, it was perceived to be too broad, including heterogeneous materials and posing methodological challenges, especially with regards to the question of authorship. It was questioned whether it makes sense to subsume autobiographical writing and documents authored for instance by state authorities under the same category. Some critics maintained that the term “ego-documents” was a particularly unfortunate choice of terminology, as it is quickly associated with Freudian psychology and might convey the rather naive

⁹⁶ Rutz, „Ego-Dokumente oder Ich-Konstruktion?“, p. 18.

⁹⁷ Rutz, „Ego-Dokumente oder Ich-Konstruktion?“, p. 15.

⁹⁸ This phenomenon has, for instance, been observed with regards to memoirs of active Nazi supporters after the divide of 1945, see Fulbrook & Rublack, “In Relation, p. 266.

⁹⁹ For this image, see Fulbrook & Rublack, “In Relation,” p. 267.

¹⁰⁰ Fulbrook & Rublack, “In Relation,” p. 271.

notion that ego-documents offered access to an individual psyche and could thus easily lend themselves to a sort of psycho-historical musings. In view of this critique, some historians have preferred to stick to the notion of “Selbstzeugnisse” instead, commonly translated as “personal narrative” or “self-narrative” in English.”¹⁰¹ All these terms, however, are not unproblematic in themselves. For my purposes, the notion of “personal narrative” falls short, as it applies only to a subset of sources on the family history at my disposal. It does not include petitions or testimonies and other information recorded in court documents, as they are not authored by *the self* in question. A large and interesting part of my source material on the Bedirhani family deals with a court case and its consequences for the family members in Istanbul in 1906 – to be able to include this information and read the courtroom reporting along with personal narratives, I prefer to stick with the broader concept of “ego-documents.”¹⁰² I am aware of its shortcomings and hope to mitigate them in two respects: For one, I look at a group of individuals, who engage time and again with broadly the same historical narrative and alter it to their specific purposes. There are many voices and much room and material for fruitful cross-reading and comparisons. Secondly, as my story plays out in the late 19th century rather than in early-modern Europe, there is ample additional material on my protagonists and their trajectories, in the Ottoman archives, in the documents of foreign consulates and in memoirs penned by contemporaries. It is therefore possible to contextualize and evaluate the personal accounts given by

¹⁰¹ Greyerz, “Ego-Documents,” p. 281. Another, less frequently encountered translation is “testimonies to the self,” see Fulbrook & Rublack, “In Relation,” p. 263. Benigna von Krusenstjern defined self-narratives (“Selbstzeugnisse”) as characterized by “Selbstthematization durch ein explizites Selbst,” Benigna von Krusenstjern, „Was sind Selbstzeugnisse? Begriffskritische und quellenkundliche Überlegungen anhand von Beispielen aus dem 17. Jahrhundert.” In: *Historische Anthropologie* 2.3 (1994), pp. 462-471, see p. 463: „Um ein Selbstzeugnis handelt es sich also dann, wenn die Selbstthematization durch ein explizites Selbst geschieht.”

¹⁰² Benigna von Krusenstjern makes clear that the terms ego-document and self-narrative are not mutually exclusive alternative, but that the difference is gradual, in the sense that personal narratives are a specific category of ego-documents. Krusenstjern, „Was sind Selbstzeugnisse?“

family members on the family history and trace, to some extent, the genealogies of different narratives.¹⁰³

Behind the search for a precise terminology lurks the larger question of how to usefully identify and define a body of sources, what to include and what to exclude, and where to draw the line in a conceptually sensible way. Where am I drawing my lines in the case of sources on the Bedirhani family? I cast my net as wide as possible, working with a broad concept of ego-documents that includes not only narratives authored by the self, but also accounts on the self by other actors and institutions. In social anthropological works on memory and transition, the anonymity of the informants who are still alive is assured through the use of pseudonyms. Engaging with the history of a particular family which is still not only well-known but actively involved in current politics, I have no choice but to disclose names and additional data like marriage connections. At the same time, I am not in every case able to assure the consent of the individuals concerned or their descendants. This dilemma is one of the reasons for me, in addition to analytical considerations, to conclude my analysis of the Bedirhani family history with the outbreak of the Second World War.

1.4.3. Qualitative Network Analysis

The network approach fulfills a double purpose for this study. First of all, it matters as an underlying theoretical assumption: Network analysis departs from the notion that social relations and identity are interrelated: Networks provide material, social and emotional resources and map out different options for decisions about self. Reducing complex social realities to meaningful structures, networks help actors to position

¹⁰³ Fulbrook & Rublack, "In Relation," p. 266.

themselves and make sense of the world.¹⁰⁴ From the 1970s onward, network structures have increasingly been understood and described as complex, dynamic and ever-changing entities. Jeremy Boissevain suggested to approach actors as entrepreneurs who act within and manipulate network structures to their individual benefit. According to Boissevain's model, network structures describe options individuals perceive, interact with and modify at given points in time.¹⁰⁵ In a similar vein, Dietmar Rothermund conceptualized networks as dynamic results of ongoing negotiations between individuals.¹⁰⁶

Roman Loimeier and Stefan Reichmuth pointed out the general use of the network approach for the study of Islamic societies.¹⁰⁷ A number of researchers have since picked up on their suggestions and fruitfully applied network approaches to Middle Eastern history, among them Thomas Eich¹⁰⁸ and Jan-Peter Hartung¹⁰⁹ in their studies on the ego-networks of individual protagonists, Bekim Agai in his study on the

¹⁰⁴ „Identitätsarbeit braucht soziale Netzwerke, da diese materielle, emotionale und soziale Ressourcen zur Verfügung stellen, Optionen für Identitätswürfe und -projekte eröffnen und die Komplexität der sozialen Welt durch die Vermittlung von Relevanzstrukturen reduzieren,“ Heiner Keupp (ed.), *Identitätskonstruktionen. Das Patchwork der Identitäten in der Spätmoderne* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2002 [1999]), p. 169.

¹⁰⁵ Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends. Networks, Manipulators, and Coalitions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), pp. 4-21. Boissevain departs from the earlier model of structural-functionalist network analysis, which did not account for dynamics within network structures and the interactions between actors and their options within the network.

¹⁰⁶ Dietmar Rothermund, „Globalgeschichte als Interaktionsgeschichte. Von der außereuropäischen Geschichte zur Globalgeschichte,“ in: Birgit Schäbler (ed.), *Area Studies und die Welt. Weltregionen und die neue Globalgeschichte* (Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2007), p. 199.

¹⁰⁷ Roman Loimeier & Stefan Reichmuth, „Zur Dynamik Religiös-Politischer Netzwerke in Muslimischen Gesellschaften.“ In: *Die Welt des Islams* 36.2 (1996), pp. 145-185.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Eich, *Abū-l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī. Eine Studie zur Instrumentalisierung sufischer Netzwerke und genealogischer Kontroversen im spätosmanischen Reich* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ Jan-Peter Hartung, *Viele Wege und Ein Ziel. Leben und Wirken von Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī Al-Ḥasanī Nadwī (1914-1999)* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004).

network structures through which the Gülen movement operates,¹¹⁰ and Henning Sievert with a focus on relations between center and periphery.¹¹¹ With regard to the history of the late Ottoman Empire and the transition period from empire to nation states, Michael Meeker¹¹² and Reşat Kasaba¹¹³ have argued for general continuity in network structures between late Ottoman and post-imperial times. Hakan Özoğlu brought forward a similar argument for the specific case of Ottoman-Kurdish notables who became engaged with Kurdish nationalism in the late 19th century. He found that in their commitment to the new common cause, they drew extensively on existing imperial network structures.¹¹⁴

Second, a qualitative network approach constitutes a methodological choice, suggesting a particular type of data collection and analysis. Relations between individuals can be mapped out, described and interpreted. Patterns and connections will emerge that ask for further explanation. In addition, network structures change over time – how and why they do so is also part of the questions I ask. One central advantage of a network perspective is that patterns and relevant links emerge from the data instead of being preconceived. This brings a relative openness to the analysis, which is useful for investigation of a time period marked by ruptures and transition like the one experienced by members of the Bedirhani family after the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. Network structures are understood here as a pool of potential connections that

¹¹⁰ Bekim Agai, *Zwischen Netzwerk und Diskurs: das Bildungsnetzwerk um Fethullah Gülen (geb. 1938): die flexible Umsetzung modernen islamischen Gedankenguts* (Schenefeld: EB-Verlag, 2004).

¹¹¹ Henning Sievert, *Zwischen Arabischer Provinz und Hoher Pforte. Beziehungen, Bildung und Politik des osmanischen Bürokraten Râğib Mehmed Paşa (st. 1763)* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2008).

¹¹² Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*.

¹¹³ Reşat Kasaba, "Dreams of Empire, Dreams of Nations," in: Joseph W. Esherick (ed.), *Empire to Nation. Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 198-228.

¹¹⁴ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 87-117.

can be mobilized and deemphasized and thus indicate options and potentialities available to a person at a given point in time. A qualitative network approach alone, however, is not sufficient for the analysis of elements of continuity and change in the collective historical trajectory of the Bedirhani family. Therefore, an analysis of collective and – in selected case studies like that of Kamuran Bedirhan in chapter 5 – also individual ego-networks is cross-read with changing descriptions of the self which are taken from a variety of ego-documents authored by members of the Bedirhani family at different times. The qualitative network analysis is meant to meaningfully supplement the textual analysis, thereby helping to put assumptions and hypotheses about Ottoman-Kurdish identity on firmer ground. Qualitative network analysis of historical situations comes with a number of limitations: Networks are snapshots of social worlds at given points in time, they are not fixed. As the density of source material on the Bedirhani family varies, information on network structures is often sparse. Combined with other data about personal trajectories and historical context, however, a focus on networks adds an element of surprise to the analysis, as networks often cut across preconceived corporate identities like ethnicity, religion or class and point to interesting or unexpected connections.

2. Bedirhani Family History

Why do I focus on an entire family, rather than follow the trajectory and analyze the writings of one key actor instead as he or she navigates the period of transition under scrutiny here? There are numerous personalities, both from within and beyond the Bedirhani family, which suggest themselves as highly interesting and meaningful examples for a study of the complexities of Ottoman-Kurdish identity and the changes it

underwent in post-imperial times. Ottoman-Kurdish biographies are understudied, and there is no shortage of material to bring to the discussion of Ottoman-Kurdish identity. My decision to give preference to a collective biography over the in-depth and detailed study of an individual trajectory thus calls for some words of explanation.

2.1. Thick Descriptions of the Everyday

An evident advantage of looking at the Bedirhani family as a collective rather than selecting an individual trajectory from their midst is the increased quantity and density of source material available. An inclusive approach seems best suited for the kind of “thick description” in the sense of Clifford Geertz that I attempt here. Looking at the experiences of concrete historical actors in particular circumstances lends some counterbalance to the otherwise very abstract, ephemeral notion of continuities that is at the basis of my research interest. Studying a family instead of an individual trajectory allows access to a micro-level of daily lives¹¹⁵ which has so far not been in the focus of research on the Bedirhani family. Until now, selected individual family members have been studied as political actors or intellectuals, largely in isolation of the rest of their family. Looking at the entire family, however, allows to include perspectives of less prominent members, also of children and women, to learn as much as possible about living conditions, material environments and household structures family members were dealing with. A focus on the family as a collective enables a study of the life worlds of an Ottoman-Kurdish elite, rather than making a contribution to a discussion of the emergence of Kurdish nationalist politics.

¹¹⁵ For the notion of *Alltagsgeschichte* and its impact on Ottoman history, see Ulrike Freitag & Nora Lafi, “Daily Life and Family in an Ottoman Urban Context: Historiographical Stakes and New Research Perspectives.” In: *The History of the Family* 16.2 (2011), pp. 80-87.

Studying the Bedirhanis as a family rather than isolating individual members for an analysis not at last suggests itself from the contemporary source material available. Logics of kinship are at work in the writings of the Bedirhanis and their contemporaries, as well as in the Ottoman state's dealings with family members, both in discourse and in practice. Kinship relations and kinship metaphors play an important role in the strategies and horizons of expectations of members of the Bedirhani family. The concrete terminology used in describing the Bedirhani family, by themselves and others, will be explored below. The family is not only a unit of analysis to study late Ottoman ideas of social hierarchy and organization, it is also a framework to trace processes of change and transition. I depart from the notion that larger political, social and economic changes are mirrored in changes on the level of the family, in marriage patterns, in choices about residence, the distribution of power and management of property.¹¹⁶ Changes within the family are linked to wider social developments and therefore offer an arena to study change. Much clearer than in an individual case study, the different trajectories of family members point to the plurality of options available, contributing to a non-linear understanding of social change.¹¹⁷

2.2. The Benefit of Comparisons

My first consideration is that added value lies in the possibility to compare particular developments as they play out in different biographical trajectories. I depart from the notion that members of the Bedirhani family had similar resources at their disposal as far as economic wealth, accessible network structures, education and not at last prestige and legitimation among Kurdish and other social groups

¹¹⁶ Margaret L. Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count. Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770-1840* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1999), p. 6.

¹¹⁷ Beshara Doumani (ed.), *Family History in the Middle East. Household, Property, and Gender* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2003), pp. 1-2.

throughout and even beyond the Ottoman Empire were concerned. The biographies of family members – which, in spite of similar starting points, played out in markedly different ways – can be understood as “laboratories,” suggesting and providing detail on a variety of possible or conceivable trajectories and pointing to decisive factors which shaped these trajectories at different points in time. A key theoretical concept facilitating these comparisons is the idea of generations. The concept of generations in history, which originated in sociology as an alternative or complementary unit of analysis to class, religion and ethnicity,¹¹⁸ has been criticized as it assumes a link between the rhythms of genealogical succession and patterns of social change. Understood this way, the concept is indeed of little explanatory value in my case.¹¹⁹ However, for a study of processes of transition and their repercussions on the micro-level, in the everyday lives of historical actors, an idea of generations seems useful and necessary. Some qualifications are therefore in order: First, I understand a generation not as a genealogical or biological unit, but as a social phenomenon. As such, it brings the social age of actors as they experience certain key historical events into focus.¹²⁰ This means, for instance, that the age of the protagonists in 1908, as they witnessed the Constitutional Revolution in the Ottoman Empire, mattered, shaping their perceptions of the event in different ways. In the case of the Bedirhani family, where most other variables locating the family members in a social coordinate system, like class and economic resources, social standing and religious prestige, ethnicity and education were more or less the same, the fact that actors belonged to different age groups and thus experienced and remembered events differently emerges as a major factor in explaining difference in the trajectories of

¹¹⁸ Karl Mannheim, “The Sociological Problem of Generations,” in: Idem, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 276-320.

¹¹⁹ For a comprehensive critique, see Hans Jaeger, “Generations in History: Reflections on a Controversial Concept.” In: *History and Theory* 24.3 (1985), pp. 273-292.

¹²⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives. Generations and Violence Through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), pp. 1-23, Fulbrook uses a similar understanding of social generations in her study of processes of transition in 20th-century Germany.

family members who started out from an otherwise structurally very similar position. Understood as a non-linear, social phenomenon, the concept of generations and the idea of looking into how different age groups within the family experienced certain developments also helps to mitigate an otherwise overly chronological explanatory framework: Rather than looking into the Bedirhani family's history decade by decade, suggesting a false sense of causality between chronologically subsequent events, the same time period of the early 1900s appears markedly different when the experiences of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, in his early fifties at the time, and his son-in-law Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, who was then in his twenties, are compared.

2.3. Provincializing Transition?

Inspired by post-colonial theory and in particular drawing on the idea of *provincializing* in historiography as it was brought forward by Dipesh Chakrabarty and others,¹²¹ it has been suggested to look at the history of the Ottoman Empire from the angle of provinces to better understand the empire on the whole. Understood in this theoretical context, a “province” is not necessarily a geographical location, but can describe any domain which provides a prism to study how processes and developments relevant in the larger context of the Ottoman Empire played out on a smaller scale, in the vernacular of a particular locality or context. It has been argued that looking at the empire through the prism of a province (understood in this particular way) provides an opportunity to understand better how the empire at large functioned.¹²² I suggest that the Bedirhani family can be a “province” in this particular sense of the term: A prism to study the late Ottoman Empire, along with

¹²¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2000).

¹²² Marc Aymes, *A Provincial History of the Ottoman Empire. Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean in the 19th Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 6.

processes of transition occurring in its aftermath at large, and a backdrop against which to analyze categories, scales and systems of meaning at play.

Studying the complex case of an extended family instead of an abstract, supposedly monolithic and homogeneous “Kurdish community” in the Ottoman Empire provides a level of analysis that allows to investigate and contextualize categories at play in describing late Ottoman society, rather than merely adopting and reproducing these categories. The trajectory of one particular family illustrates concrete interpretations of group identity, along with its limits and inherent ambiguities. This perspective points to a multiplicity of meanings of being “Kurdish” in the late Ottoman period, as well as to the fact that Kurdishness as a marker of identity coexisted with other ideas about the self, among them religious identity, local affiliations or the sense of belonging to a certain economic, social or professional environment. In consequence, such meanings of identifying as Kurdish are difficult for historians to recreate – and any research which relies on the category of a predefined “Ottoman-Kurdish community” as a starting point for further investigations is charged with an epistemological problem: How can it be avoided to project back meanings attached to being Kurdish today, along with contemporary markers of Kurdishness, such as language, territory of origin etc., into a historical context in which being Kurdish might have meant entirely different things?¹²³ Zooming in on a less preconceived group like the Bedirhani family offers an opportunity to ask about different ideas about being Kurdish, along with their limits and alternatives at play in the family’s history. These, along with time frames and spatial categories, can and will differ from standard

¹²³ To illustrate this point with one example: While today Kurdish language is an important marker of Kurdish identity, in the early 20th century, some Kurdish activists argued that a Kurdish state or autonomous region might fare better if it adopted Persian as a common language, MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, Ottoman pamphlet dating from July 18, 1921.

historiography of the late Ottoman period, adding to our understanding processes of identity formation and ideas about the self and belonging in the respective time period. Drawing on the concrete example of the collective history of the Bedirhani family, in other words, allows for a grounded theory¹²⁴ of being Kurdish in the late Ottoman Empire and the subsequent period of transition.

One problem with “Kurdish” as an analytical category is that it comes with a number of preconceptions: If Kurds are included in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire at all, they often appear at or even embody themselves the margins or the periphery of the empire, being perceived and depicted as the nomadic and tribal “other” to an increasingly centralizing Ottoman state. Such a perspective has the merit of helping us to understand Ottoman centralization efforts and their limits, as the work of Janet Klein and others has aptly shown.¹²⁵ The approach does, however, less of a good job in making us realize that individuals of Kurdish background were also an integral part of the Ottoman state bureaucracy and key actors not merely in the borderlands, but in the imperial capital and in the different provincial centers as well. The Bedirhani case can add evidence to the scholarly discussion of Ottoman centralization processes, and the defeat of Emir Bedirhan by the Ottoman army in 1847 has indeed been studied in this context.¹²⁶ Looking into the fate of the Bedirhani family after their being sent into exile, however, illustrates how Ottoman centralization policies involved not only coercion but also negotiation and bargaining on the part of the

¹²⁴ Jason Seaman, “Adopting a Grounded Theory Approach to Cultural-Historical Research: Conflicting Methodologies or Complementary Methods?” In: *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 7.1 (2008), pp. 1-17.

¹²⁵ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire. Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2011).

¹²⁶ See for example Suavi Aydın & Jelle Verheij, “Confusions of the Cauldron. Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800-1870,” in Joost Jongerden & Jelle Verheij (eds.), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2012), pp. 15-54.

Ottoman state: Instead of completely crushing the family, the authorities instead tried to discipline and win over members of the Bedirhani family – with considerable success, as the careers of a number of family members in the Ottoman civil service and military indicate. One can take the case of the Bedirhani family one step further, beyond a history of Ottoman Kurdishness solely perceived in the context of Ottoman state centralization and start to study Ottoman Kurds in their own right, asking what they thought of themselves, what being Kurdish meant at different points in time and how actors negotiated other aspects of their identity in relation to it. This perspective makes visible how actors of Kurdish background were not merely managed and acted upon by others in the social or geographical margins of the empire, but were actors themselves, disposing of agency in the process of shaping Ottoman state politics.

In sum, studying the history of the Bedirhani family as a “provincial” history offers an opportunity to explore ambiguities and contradictions inherent in their ways to position and redefine themselves over the late Ottoman and post-imperial period in productive ways, instead of glossing over these details by using a broad and already fixed category like Ottoman-Kurdish identity. In this sense, studying the Bedirhani family history also allows to ask about the processes of knowledge production and categories like “Kurdish.”

There are two things to be cautious of: First, in focusing on the collective history of the Bedirhanis in this way, internal diversities and heterogeneities are not to be overlooked. As their historical trajectory will provide ample evidence of, the Bedirhani family was often perceived as a closely-knit group with common, monolithic interests. On occasion, members themselves had an interest in presenting the family in this manner to their environment. Yet, numerous fault lines and splits internally divided the family into different factions and interest

groups.¹²⁷ I do not find it useful to apply terms like “clan” to describe the Bedirhani family,¹²⁸ as such a choice of words reiterates a highly problematic perception of the family as a homogeneous group with common and unchanging interests. Adopting such a perspective of the Bedirhanis as a monolithic collective actor with a single, shared agenda comes close to what Rogers Brubaker has identified as “groupism” in his discussion of ethnic identity. It comes at the considerable cost of being inattentive to shifts, ambiguities, internal disagreements and contradictions within the assumed collective.¹²⁹ In addition, words like “clan” and similar vocabulary cannot be understood as neutral or descriptive. On the contrary, different actors, some of them opponents of the family, some of them family members themselves, make use of kinship terminology for specific purposes, in specific conversations or discourses which need to be identified. Second, the notion of family in the Middle Eastern context as a monolithic, unchanging and all-encompassing “traditional” structure which is opposed to modern individualism is misleading and the choice to focus on a family as a unit of analysis in my work is by no means guided by this idea or meant to reproduce it. On the contrary, as the case studies discussed here will show, the Bedirhani family is a complex and multi-layered entity which includes a fair share of disagreement among its members, along with differing, at times even opposing loyalties and individual ambitions.

¹²⁷ Julie Bouchain, *Juden in Syrien. Aufstieg und Niedergang der Familie Farhi von 1740 bis 1995* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1996), p. 51 observes a similar tendency to perceive an extended family as a homogeneous entity in her own work.

¹²⁸ See e.g. Hilmar Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir Region* (Istanbul: Bilgi Univ. Press, 2014), p. 7 and passim. Taken to its extremes, such a perspective encourages conspiracy-like accounts on the family’s history, aimed at proving their supposed influence and involvement everywhere throughout Turkish history by merely pointing out relations or adherence to the family and assuming shared interest on this basis only, for a notorious example, see Mahmut Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri: İsyançı Bedirhan Bey’in yaramaz çocukları ve bir kardeşlik poetikası* (Istanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 2005).

¹²⁹ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), p. 8.

2.4. “Family” as a Unit of Analysis in the Context of Ottoman-Kurdish History

In the context of Middle Eastern history, family as a unit of analysis has been described as “a nexus of emotion and interest,”¹³⁰ as “espaces de polyactivité,”¹³¹ where economic activity, urban-rural connections, innovations, professional culture, engagement with ideologies, among many other things, can be observed, and as a framework and arena where a “micropolitique de la famille”¹³² plays out. Leila Hudson conceptualized family as the product of discourses, as something historical actors actively create through their actions, for different reasons.¹³³ Sometimes, this process includes outright genealogical inventions. From such a perspective, it makes sense to ask why and how actors decide to subscribe to such discourses.¹³⁴

In Ottoman history, families as subjects of studies have long been of secondary interest to historians,¹³⁵ who considered other forms of social organization as more relevant in the Ottoman context: Households, patron-client relationships and slavery come to mind. Ottoman notable families constitute an exception, as they have been identified as key political and economic players in different local settings. Family is anything but a universally applicable analytical category, and no general consensus can be assumed about its meaning. Applying it uncritically runs the risk of failing to account for non-western experiences and social realities.¹³⁶ The concept of “family” is contingent to historical and

¹³⁰ Doumani, *Family History in the Middle East*, p. 1.

¹³¹ Olivier Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles: une introduction.” In: *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 82 (2011), p. 193.

¹³² Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles,” p. 196.

¹³³ Leila Hudson, *Transforming Damascus: Space and Modernity in an Islamic City* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 2008), p. 68.

¹³⁴ Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles,” pp. 201-202.

¹³⁵ Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles,” p. 191.

¹³⁶ Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles,” pp. 189-211.

cultural contexts¹³⁷ and cannot be translated into the framework of my research without some clarifications on what is meant by “the Bedirhani family” and who is understood to be part of it. The Kurdish concept *mal* is generally translated as family, but is also applied to extended household, in which not only blood relatives but also other dependents, like adopted children, foster children (*besleme*) and servants live together under the same roof.¹³⁸ *Mal* can also refer to a patrilineal kinship group or even more generally to “a group of people who claim and recognize kin links between themselves and who can trace their origins to a specific common ancestor.”¹³⁹ Membership to a *mal* is a crucial point of reference to place individuals within the larger Kurdish community, particularly in a tribal setting.¹⁴⁰ Another term that seems relevant in the discussion about family identity in the Ottoman and Ottoman-Kurdish context is the concept of *hane*: Ömer Lütü Barkan understood *hane* as a household, in the sense of a group of people who formed an economic (and taxable) unit, even though they were not necessarily living together under the same roof.¹⁴¹ This applies to the case of the Bedirhani family, as all sons of Emir Bedirhan also constituted an economic unit in some sense: Vis-à-vis the Ottoman state authorities, all members shared claims to the heritage and *maaş* income which had been originally awarded to Emir Bedirhan. On a daily basis, however, the Bedirhani family was split up into a number of smaller households which were constituted around the more senior sons of the emir.

¹³⁷ David Warren Sabean & Simon Teuscher, “Introduction: Rethinking European Kinship: Transregional and Transnational Families,” in: Christopher H. Johnson, David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher & Francesca Trivellato (eds.), *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond* (New York et al.: Berghahn Books, 2011), pp. 1-22.

¹³⁸ For a discussion of *mal* and Kurdish household structures, see Martin Strohmeier & Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, *Die Kurden*, 3rd ed. (München: Beck, 2010), pp. 202-206.

¹³⁹ Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship among the Kurds* (Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang, 1991), p. 98.

¹⁴⁰ Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, p. 99.

¹⁴¹ Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles,” p. 199, and Ömer Lütü Barkan, “Research on the Ottoman Fiscal Surveys,” in: Michael Cook (ed.), *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East From the Rise of Islam to the Present Day* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 163-171.

The Bedirhani family needs to be understood here as a political, social and economic unit rather than merely a genealogically defined group of individuals. This understanding comes close to the concept of household which has been productively applied to the study of Ottoman provincial contexts in the 17th and 18th centuries.¹⁴² The concept of household frames Bedirhani family politics as attempts to exploit available resources, relying on patronage networks, marriage politics and other, chiefly economic strategies aimed at increasing the wealth and influence of the family. At the same time, this understanding allows to include members of the family who were not blood relatives but rather dependents and followers of some sort into the analysis. Very generally, Ottoman families were organized along patriarchal lines. The Ottoman family's traditional order and regime of authority, however, experienced mounting pressure as the 19th century proceeded, emerging as a battlefield of different ideas about society.¹⁴³ This trends also played out in the history of the Bedirhani family.

2.5. *Hep Bedirhanılar'la başlamıştı mı?* Trends in the Existing Research on the Bedirhani Family

A number of researchers have looked into the history of the Bedirhani family. Many of the most well-read works on the family history were written from a perspective of Kurdish nationalist history, keen to depict members of the family as heroes and forerunners of the Kurdish nationalist movement of the early 20th century. The very first publication on the family history of the Bedirhanis, however, predates Kurdish

¹⁴² Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt. The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 21-24; Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire. Mosul 1540-1834* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), and Thomas Lier, *Haushalte und Haushaltspolitik in Bagdad 1704-1831* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), pp. 1-13.

¹⁴³ Bouquet, "Famille, familles, grandes familles," p. 197. Generational conflict within the Bedirhani family, notably between Bedri Paşa and Mehmed Salih Bedirhan aptly illustrates that.

nationalist historiography: A thin volume with the title *Emir Bedirhan* was published in Ottoman Turkish in Egypt at some point after 1906.¹⁴⁴ The author, who signed his work only with the alias Lütfi, has since been identified as Liceli Ahmed Ramiz.¹⁴⁵ Ahmed Ramiz lived in exile in Egypt in Hamidian times and returned to Istanbul when the Ottoman constitution was re-installed in 1908. He was an active member of Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles in Istanbul in the early 20th century. He would have been personally acquainted with a number of Bedirhani family members, as he was, along with Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan, among the founding figures of the Kürt Te'avün ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress) in 1908. Ahmed Ramiz' account of the Bedirhani family history is of particular interest, as it predates the narrative of Emir Bedirhan as a forerunner and founding father of Kurdish nationalism and instead presents a story geared towards Ottoman imperial discourses about identity, depicting Emir Bedirhan as an eager Ottoman reformer.

Narratives of the family history were historically contingent and subject to change. With the emergence of a Kurdish national history, members of the Bedirhani family made an effort to write their own history into this account, giving it as prominent a place as possible. The history of the Bedirhani family in the Emirate of Bohtan, reaching back to the 16th century when they were among a handful of chosen local rulers granted

¹⁴⁴ Lütfi [Liceli Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan* (Cairo [?]: Matba'a-yı İctihad, no date). Ahmed Ramiz was the owner of the Matba'a-yı İctihad publishing house, which also published works and translations by Abdullah Cevdet and Süleyman Nazif.

¹⁴⁵ Rohat Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2011 [1998]), p. 124. According to Wedat Kaymak, *Les Éternels Exilés. Brève Biographie de 93 Personnalités Kurdes* (Paris: Association des cinéastes kurdes en exil, 1990), p. 21, Ahmed Ramiz (Liceli or also Kürdzade) lived between 1878 and 1940. A supporter of the Young Turk movement, he spent some time in exile in Egypt after 1904 and returned after the Constitutional Revolution to become involved with the Kürt Te'avün ve Terakki Cemiyeti in Istanbul. Between 1911 and 1912, he was exiled to Kastamonu by the CUP government. In the aftermath of the Sheikh Sa'id rebellion, Ahmed Ramiz left Turkey for Syria in 1925. He passed away in Damascus in 1940.

special privileges and autonomy by Sultan Selim I. in the aftermath of the Battle of Çaldıran, remained an important source of status for family members into the 20th century. In particular in the context of the emerging Kurdish nationalist movement, having a prominent part in what was cast as Kurdish national history was a source of prestige and frequently referred to by members of the family. In Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period, when Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan were in close contact with French Orientalists like Thomas Bois and Roger Lescot, a particular version of the earlier family history emerged: For one, this version stressed that the Emir Bedirhan would not have been defeated, were it not for a betrayal from within his own ranks. Second, the time of Emir Bedirhan and his descendants in exile is depicted as a period of misery and suffering. Both Thomas Bois and the two Bedirhani brothers themselves repeatedly claimed that the relations between the Bedirhanis and the Ottoman state were rather hostile and that the family members lived as hostages in the Ottoman capital.¹⁴⁶ This narrative fits only with great difficulty with the flourishing imperial careers of several members of the Bedirhani family.

This boundedness in time of the narrative of Bedirhani family history which is most familiar to readers and researchers today becomes obvious once other, earlier narratives of the family's trajectory are brought into the analysis. Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] prominently described the success Emir Bedirhan had as a just and able governor and energetic reformer in his area of influence in Eastern Anatolia.¹⁴⁷ Emir Bedirhan, who allegedly organized the military administration, the treasury and fiscal affairs and the religious leadership in the Emirate of Bohtan according to the standards of modern governance and installed a council

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Bois, *Connaissances des Kurdes* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), p. 86. Bois worked in close cooperation with Kamuran Bedirhan on issues of Kurdish history and also recorded parts of Kamuran's biography. Bois' narrative of the history of the Emirate of Bohtan and the Bedirhani family was therefore likely informed by Kamuran Bedirhan.

¹⁴⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 12-13.

(*meclis*) to assist and advise the government, was depicted in this account as an unlikely example for a modernizer and Tanzimat reformer. Lütfi also stressed that Emir Bedirhan succeeded in installing an administration which was in tune with both modern reform politics and the demands of Islamic religious law.¹⁴⁸ A particular interesting turn of phrase in this regard is Lütfi's claim that during Emir Bedirhan's reign, the rule of justice made considerable *progress* in the realm of his influence. Lütfi judged Emir Bedirhan by the standards of the Ottoman reform movement.¹⁴⁹ In the same passage, Lütfi used other expressions which also played an eminent role in the Ottoman discourse about modern administration from the mid-19th century onwards: With his rule, the emir restored calm (*asayiş*) and internal order (*intizam-ı dahiliye*) and subdued the unruly tribes of the area.¹⁵⁰ This is a narrative which one would expect to feature an Ottoman reformer of the type of Midhat Paşa as its protagonist, not a tribal leader like Emir Bedirhan, who was in many other accounts on the receiving end of administrative measures to establish peace and control. All these elements of Emir Bedirhan's (imagined) biography were not emphasized in any of the later accounts on his life and deeds which were authored after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. When Lütfi was writing his account, at some point after 1906, however, Ottoman-Kurdish actors imagined their future and their past as firmly entangled with the imperial framework and according to imperial ideals and standards. One such ideal, in particular for Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals in opposition to the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II and supportive of the reformers of the mid-19th century, was the Ottoman reform movement. Emir Bedirhan and, by proxy, his descendants were included into a broader invented tradition of reformism and opposition to the sultan, an

¹⁴⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 13, " ... zamân-ı hükümetinde 'adâlet o derege ileri gitmişti ki, ..."

¹⁵⁰ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 15.

inclusive tradition which extended beyond the Ottoman-Kurdish community. Emir Bedirhan was, in other words, depicted as the better and more modern Ottoman reformer compared to the sultan.¹⁵¹

The Bedirhani family members themselves were keen to influence how their past was represented by historians. They likely impacted the account of Ahmed Ramiz' *Emir Bedirhan* and their influence can be demonstrated with even greater certainty in the case of another early account of the Bedirhani family history. This much cited, although seriously flawed and overly embellished narrative with a focus on the trajectory of Emir Bedirhan himself, was provided by İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa (1889–1949) in his *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi* of 1946.¹⁵² Gövsa's whitewashed account of how Emir Bedirhan and Sultan Abdülmecid supposedly met and conversed politely was also transmitted by members of the Bedirhani family themselves.¹⁵³ It seems to have been the accepted version after the turn of the century, suggesting that inventions and embellishments were not mere products of the fantasy of Gövsa, but integral part of the story family members and others in the know would have told the historian. Like Ahmed Ramiz, Gövsa was close to the Bedirhani family, his wife was a daughter of Hasan Bey Bedirhan.

In later accounts, Kurdish uprisings prior to the revolt of Emir Bedirhan in 1847 and non-Bedirhani actors were pushed to the margins or entirely silenced in the narrative, with the purpose of telling Kurdish history

¹⁵¹ Kurdish nationalist historiography has retained this image of Emir Bedirhan as a modern ruler, leaving out the reference to the context of Ottoman reform prevalent in Lütfi's account. See Celilê Celil, *XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Kürtler* (Ankara: Özge Yayınları, 1992), pp. 127-135, and Kemal Burak, *Geçmişten Bugüne Kürtler ve Kürdistan* (Istanbul: Denk Yayınları, 1997), p. 355.

¹⁵² İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Yedigün Neşriyatı, 1946), p. 312. See the critique of Ahmet Kardam, *Cizre-Bohtan beyi Bedirhan: Sürgün Yılları* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2013), pp. 64-65.

¹⁵³ Abdurrezzak Bedirhan, *Otobiyografya*, transl. Hasan Cuni (Istanbul: Perî Yayınları, 2000), pp. 11-12.

essentially as a history of the Emirate of Bohtan and the Bedirhani family. This, however, has not always been the case, but can be identified as a phenomenon dating to the early 20th century. In 1919, the British military official Major Noel began his account on Kurdish national history not with the later inescapable Emir Bedirhan and his fight for Kurdish autonomy against the Ottomans in Bohtan. Instead, Noel chose a chronological approach, starting his historical account with a Kurdish uprising in Rawanduz in 1834 and continuing with a second Kurdish revolt in the district of Süleymaniye in 1843. It is only then and in the context of these previous events that the uprising of Emir Bedirhan is mentioned, albeit described as “the most important rebellion.”¹⁵⁴ Noel chose this way of rendering Kurdish history chronologically rather than focusing mainly on the activities of Emir Bedirhan, in spite of the fact that Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan were among his closest informants during his journey in Kurdistan in 1919. This might indicate that at that point in time, a narrative of Kurdish history which privileged the history of the Emirate of Bohtan and which the two Bedirhani brothers were later publicly promoting in their publications had not taken its final shape yet.

What can be regarded as today’s standard narrative of the history of the Bedirhani family dates back to the second half of the 20th century. In Chris Kutschera’s work on the history of Kurdish nationalism from 1979, Emir Bedirhan is cast as “le père du nationalisme kurde.”¹⁵⁵ Preparing his book, Kutschera interviewed Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris. In consequence, elements of Kamuran’s own narrative of the history of the Bedirhanis and the place of the family in the larger context of Kurdish history made it into the book. Central to this particular narrative was the idea that Emir Bedirhan was the most prominent hero and

¹⁵⁴ FO 608/95, Major Noel, “Notes on the Kurdish Situation,” report dated July 18, 1919, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁵ Chris Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p. 13.

forerunner of the Kurdish nationalist movement, as he was credited with being the first who united and ruled over a Kurdish quasi-state territory in the early 19th century.¹⁵⁶ Explicitly, Emir Bedirhan was singled out against other Kurdish leaders like sheikh Ubaidullah, who did not rule over any territory to speak of. At the time of Kutschera's writing, there was no comprehensive scholarly account of the history of the early Kurdish nationalist movement available yet. Kutschera worked from scratch and found himself confronted with fragments, gaps and contradicting information. It is clear that the discussions about Kurdish history between Kutschera and Kamuran Bedirhan took their starting point in the present: Kutschera argued that the contemporary Kurdish movement of the 1970s desperately needed a sense of a common history and a knowledge of their forerunners in the struggle for Kurdish independence.¹⁵⁷ This common history as it was then presented in Kutschera's book begins with Emir Bedirhan. Thereby, it also legitimizes the standing and prestige of his key interlocutor Kamuran Bedirhan, as a scion of what his book characterized as one of the most notable and valiant families in Kurdish history.

Much of the later research on the Bedirhani family is concerned with the question of the origins of Kurdish nationalism, casting the revolt of Emir Bedirhan in Bohtan in 1847 as an early manifestation of Kurdish nationalist sentiment and resistance. Some authors read the trajectory of Emir Bedirhan, his defeat and ensuing exile, as an expression of a timeless pattern of continued, state-sponsored repression against the Kurdish community, establishing parallels to developments in the second half of the 20th century. Ahmet Kardam, for instance, describes the measures taken in Eastern Anatolia after the defeat of Emir Bedirhan as an OHAL regime, OHAL (*Olağanüstü Hal Bölge Valiliği*) being the name for the region in Anatolia which was put under state of emergency

¹⁵⁶ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, pp. 13-18.

¹⁵⁷ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 8.

legislation during the Turkish-Kurdish conflict in 1987.¹⁵⁸ In his research on oral Kurdish literature, Lokman Turgut came across a Kurdish song (*qewl*) in which the defeat of Emir Bedirhan and betrayal of his relative İzzeddin Şir are related – in this song, the traitor is referred to as MİT, i.e. a spy, more specifically a member of the Turkish Republican *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, the modern-day Turkish national intelligence agency.¹⁵⁹ Again, contemporary categories are brought in to make sense of Kurdish history and establish supposed parallels and patterns in the trajectory of the Kurds.

It has been argued convincingly that the revolt of Emir Bedirhan, much like the uprising of sheikh Ubaidullah in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands in the 1880s, cannot be explained as motivated by nationalist feelings. The scholarly consensus today maintains that Kurdish nationalism, in the sense of “a political movement of a community that distinguishes itself from others as a separate cultural and political group,” with its “main objective [being, BH] political self-determination through either secession or autonomy”¹⁶⁰ is a result of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War.¹⁶¹ This characterization first applies to the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti, founded in December 1918 and openly making demands for Kurdish independence.¹⁶²

While it is generally accepted in mainstream scholarship on the history of the Ottoman-Kurdish community that nationalist ideology is a

¹⁵⁸ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁹ Lokman Turgut, *Mündliche Literatur der Kurden in den Regionen Botan und Hekari* (Berlin: Logos, 2010), pp. 162-165.

¹⁶⁰ Hakan Özoğlu, “Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables in the Late-Ottoman — Early Republican Era.” In: *IJMES* 33 (2001), p. 386.

¹⁶¹ Özoğlu, “Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables,” pp. 383-409; see also earlier Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1989), p. 2.

¹⁶² Özoğlu, “Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables,” p. 387.

phenomenon of the early 20th century, research on the Bedirhani family does not always mirror this scholarly consensus. Instead, a common narrative strategy is to cast members of the Bedirhani family as sole pioneers of the Kurdish nationalist movement and a Kurdish cultural renaissance: “İlk Kürt gazetesi, alfabesi, dergisi, ve başkaldırısı hep Bedirhanlılarla başlamıştı.”¹⁶³ From this perspective, Kurdish nationalist history begins with the Bedirhanis. For many researchers and hobby historians, this is the principal framework in which the family and its history are of interest. The detailed accounts of the Kurdish historian Malmisanîj in particular follow the logic that as the Bedirhani family members are pioneers of Kurdish nationalism, anything they did and experienced needs to be recorded and can serve as material to study Kurdish nationalism and nationalist history as such. Needless to say, such a perspective includes a lot of reading nationalist thinking and ambitions back into historical events and has to be taken with a grain of salt.

Two other trends can be identified in the existing historiography on the Bedirhani family: First, the reference to the family to add color to various conspiracy theories and second, the focus on the Bedirhanis by their descendants in an attempt to back up and legitimate contemporary political claims. Of particular interest in Turkish popular history are the alleged connections of the Bedirhani family into the Turkish Republican elite. Often cited is the connection of Rauf Orbay (1881–1964), one of the founding figures of the Turkish Republic, to the Bedirhanis through his mother.¹⁶⁴ Another Turkish nationalist with connections to the family is Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray (1873–1919), who married a great-granddaughter of Emir Bedirhan in 1899.¹⁶⁵ His example aptly

¹⁶³ Naci Kutlay, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Kürtler. Kürdoloji Notları* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2014), p. 360.

¹⁶⁴ Kutlay, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Kürtler*, p. 361.

¹⁶⁵ Nejdet Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray'ın Hayatı ve Hâtıraları* (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1997), pp. 16-17 states that when he was exiled to Trablusgarb, Mehmed Reşid got

illustrates the problem immanent in these genealogical reconstructions: The historian David Gaunt concluded that Mehmed Reşid, who served in the Ottoman administration under the CUP rule as governor (*vali*) of Diyarbekir and was responsible for the massacres of the Armenian community there during the First World War, facilitated contacts and secured the help of local Kurdish tribes in the surroundings of Diyarbekir through his connection to the Bedirhani family.¹⁶⁶ For one, Gaunt thus implies a misleading unity of the Bedirhani family in terms of political interests and ideological standing at a time when the family, as my following analysis will show, was internally divided and pursued diverse strategies.¹⁶⁷ Second, Gaunt judges with a good deal of hindsight: He knows that the Bedirhanis, in the aftermath of the First World War, came to be regarded as pioneers of the Kurdish independence movement, able to mobilize a great deal of support within the Kurdish community. Neither at the time of Mehmed Reşid's marriage into the family nor during his term in office in Diyarbekir would that have been very clear, however. No causality can therefore be assumed between Mehmed Reşid being part of the network of one branch of the Bedirhani family and his ability to mobilize Kurdish tribesmen on this basis. Being connected to the Bedirhani family does not provide as sound an explanatory variable for Mehmed Reşid's political strategies and behavior as David Gaunt leads his reader to believe. A connection between anyone and the Bedirhani family could mean a myriad of things to different people. Nothing in particular about political standing, network connections, sinister motives or clandestine support for the Kurdish nationalist cause of the individual thus connected to the family can be deduced from a mere biological

married to Mazlume, daughter of Ziya Bey and granddaughter of Bahri Paşa Bedirhan. The marriage connection between Mehmed Reşid and the Bedirhanis is also cited by Kutlay, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Kürtler*, p. 361, but without giving any further reference.

¹⁶⁶ David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia During World War I* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006), p. 155.

¹⁶⁷ See chapter 4 in particular.

connection to or marriage into the family. Every case deserves careful individual analysis.

Authors like David Gaunt and Naci Kutlay make genealogical arguments to back up their hypotheses about broader historical developments and connections: Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray was able to mobilize Kurdish tribes – this must have been because he married into the Bedirhani family. Mahmut Çetin goes one step further: For him, the Bedirhani genealogy itself is the subject of interest. From the genealogical connections he is able to trace, he draws conclusions about political standing and ideology. The cases of Emre Gönensay, a former Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and a great-grandson of Emir Bedirhan, the historian İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa, the Turkish nationalist Cemal Kutay and also the writer Halide Edip Adivar, whose connection to the Bedirhani family is only indirect,¹⁶⁸ figure prominently in Çetin's writings.¹⁶⁹ Mahmud Çetin's work is part of a broader discourse about biography and genealogy in contemporary Turkey, feeding into conspiracy theories about the origins of leading members of the Republican elite. These discussions involve a great deal of journalistic and sensationalist writing. A prominent representative of this trend is the Turkish author Soner Yalçın with his book *Efendi: Beyaz Türklerin Büyük Sırrı*.¹⁷⁰ Antisemitic conspiracy theory with a strong focus on the alleged influence of the crypto-Jewish *dönme* community within the early Turkish nationalist movement and notably the opaque family origins of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk are crucial ingredients of these accounts.

¹⁶⁸ Halide Edip's mother Bedrifem Hanım divorced Edip's father to then get remarried to Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan. Both families maintained regular and amicable contact with each other, making Halide a frequent visitor in the house of Ali Şamil Paşa. See Halide Edip, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (Istanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1979), p. 97.

¹⁶⁹ Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri*, pp. 98-101 on Gönensay, pp. 143-145 on Gövsa, pp. 151-160 on Kutay, pp. 132-140 on Edip.

¹⁷⁰ Soner Yalçın, *Efendi: Beyaz Türklerin Büyük Sırrı* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2004), followed by a second volume, idem, *Efendi 2: Beyaz Müslümanların Büyük Sırrı* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2006).

Another group of individuals doing research and publishing on the Bedirhani family history approaches the subject from a different angle: Building on a discourse that has been explored above, the idea of Bedirhani family members as pioneers of Kurdish nationalism and nationalist ideology, they depict the family history in benevolent terms, praising their achievements and efforts. In its extremes, this can amount to rather uncritical accounts and eulogies. Often, the authors following this trend in the research on the Bedirhanis have connections to the family or are members of the family themselves. Mehmed Uzun and Rewşen Bedirhan's edition of the memoirs of Mehmed Salih Bey Bedirhan comes to mind as a pertinent example.¹⁷¹ An entire network of mostly Kurdish historians working on the history of the Bedirhani family can be reconstructed from the prefaces and acknowledgments in publications on the subject. From this paratexts, it emerges that virtually all members of the circle of benevolent experts on the Bedirhani family received support in their research from the same individuals, gatekeepers of the family history like Sinemxan Bedirhan, who is the daughter of Celadet Bedirhan, and Malmisanij, among others.¹⁷² These gatekeepers' interests in legitimating the family's historical role and sometimes their own contemporary political standing and influence within the community direct the research on the family and, as these individuals have access to family archives and personal papers, limit the scope of what can be investigated: While the impact of some family members on the Kurdish nationalist movement in the early 20th century is well-researched, the history of members of the Bedirhani family in urban centers of the Ottoman Empire like Istanbul¹⁷³ or Damascus goes virtually unexplored.

¹⁷¹ See chapter 3 for a discussion.

¹⁷² Ahmet Kardam, the most recent addition to the circle of experts on the family history, consulted with Sinemxan Bedirhan, Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 16.

¹⁷³ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri* is the only attempt in this direction, see idem, p. 9.

2.6. The History of the Bedirhani Family

2.6.1. Notes on the Territory of Cizre and Bohtan

The historical region of Bohtan describes a mountain plain of roughly triangular dimensions, covering an area of about 5.000 km² in Eastern Anatolia.¹⁷⁴ Its natural borders are delineated by the course of the rivers Bohtan Su in the north and the Tigris (Dicle) in the west, while the area's southern limits are defined by the Habur river. In the local geography, the area is clearly set apart from the neighboring region of Tur Abdin in the west, Şirwan in the north, the mountainous plain of Hakkari in the east and Zaho in the south.¹⁷⁵

19th-century European Orientalist scholarship has associated the territory of Bohtan with the Kurds, drawing on sources which reach back into antiquity: The Greek historian Xenophon mentioned a people called “Kaduch” (*karduchoi*) which settled in the area around Bohtan, and some later scholars have recognized the ancestors of the later Kurdish population in Eastern Anatolia in Xenophon's “Kaduch.”¹⁷⁶ Beyond these sources dating back to antiquity, large parts of the region of Bohtan were not well known to European travelers and scholars even in the late 19th century. Only in June 1883 did Josef Wünsch succeed in reaching the source of the Bohtan Su,¹⁷⁷ and the mountainous areas of the Emirate of Bohtan in particular were not well documented before the turn of the 20th century.¹⁷⁸ It was generally difficult and tedious to travel

¹⁷⁴ Martin Hartmann, *Bohtān. Eine topographisch-historische Studie*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Wolf Peiser Verlag, 1897), vol. 2, p. 104.

¹⁷⁵ Hartmann, *Bohtān*, vol. 2, p. 61.

¹⁷⁶ Even though Hartmann, *Bohtān*, vol. 2, pp. 90-91 is already critical of this line of argument, it continued to be frequently made throughout the first half of the 20th century. See Bois, *Connaissances des Kurdes*, pp. 15-16 for one example.

¹⁷⁷ Hartmann, *Bohtān*, vol. 2, p. 67.

¹⁷⁸ Hartmann, *Bohtān*, vol. 2, p. 74.

in the area in late Ottoman times, as the accounts of Josef Wunsch and Hermann Burchardt indicate.¹⁷⁹

The capital of the Emirate of Bohtan was Cizre. Situated on the shores of the Tigris river, Cizre (or Ġazirat Ibn 'Umar, جزيرة ابن عمر in Arabic, literally an “island” in the river bend) was a commercial hub with a settlement history going back to antiquity. It was an important river port, connected notably to the city of Mosul through a navigable section of the Tigris. In addition, Cizre marked the spot of an important river crossing and point from where the hills to the east of the city, to which the valuable flocks of sheep were driven in the summer, could be controlled.¹⁸⁰ An ancient Roman road connected Cizre to the cities of Nusaybin and Mardin over land.¹⁸¹ In consequence, long-distance trade was an important pillar of the local economy, as several hans and vaulted bazars in the city center of Cizre bear witness to. Yet, Cizre seemed past its prime in the late 19th century, a small Ottoman district capital with a population of just under 10.000 individuals, which was decreasing further in the 1890s.¹⁸² Cizre was the principal city of an administrative district (*kaza*) which was governed from Diyarbekir, although the region had historically been more oriented towards Mosul and the plains of Mesopotamia.¹⁸³ Few European travelers had visited Cizre before the turn of the 20th century. The impressions of those who did were not favorable: In 1888, Paul Müller-Simonis passed through on his way to Mosul, observing that the town was more ruins and debris than

¹⁷⁹ Both accounts are cited by Hartmann, *Bohtān*, vol. 2, pp. 76-79.

¹⁸⁰ WO 106/64, report by Maunsell dated February 2, 1919.

¹⁸¹ Maunsell still found remains of a Roman fortress at the point where the road crossed the Tigris river, see WO 106/64, “Suggested Frontier of Northern Mesopotamia in Hakkari,” report by Maunsell dated February 2, 1919.

¹⁸² Nur ad-Din Elisséeff, “Ibn 'Umar, *Djazīrat*,” in EI², vol. 3, pp. 960-961. British observers estimated the population of Cizre to be around 7.500, with a majority of Kurdish inhabitants and a sizeable minority of around five hundred Chaldean Christians, see WO 106/64, report dated November 7, 1918.

¹⁸³ This was also noted by Maunsell, see WO 106/64, “Suggested Frontier of Northern Mesopotamia in Hakkari,” report by Maunsell dated February 2, 1919.

anything else, “ein großes Dorf zwischen Trümmern.”¹⁸⁴ In 1897, the British diplomat Telford Waugh observed that Cizre was a miserable town, a place of exile for Albanians from the western parts of the Ottoman Empire, who felt terribly homesick there. The local governor in 1897 was Faris, leader of the Şammar tribe, who had recently fallen out of favor with the Ottoman government and was exiled to Cizre.¹⁸⁵ The British journalist David Fraser traveled in the region immediately prior to the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and characterized Cizre as “one of the most evil places in all the Turkish Empire,” a no man’s land where the influence of the state was quasi non-existent and banditry galore.¹⁸⁶ Around the same time, Gertrude Bell hurried through for some “cursory sightseeing” only, as it was unbearably hot and the marshy area around Cizre was prone to malaria.¹⁸⁷

The British military official Col. Francis Richard Maunsell (1861–1936), who had served as British military vice-consul in Anatolia in the late 19th century and knew the region well, toured Cizre and its surroundings after the armistice in 1919. He pointed out the importance of the different waterways, which served as the principal lines of communication in the otherwise often inaccessible, ragged terrain. Trade was equally conducted along the rivers, sheep trade with Syria being the most important commercial activity. As these trade routes indicate, it was the Syrian lands and the region around Mosul and not the geographically closer areas of Van, Bitlis and Diyarbekir to which the former Emirate of Bohtan and its capital Cizre were oriented.¹⁸⁸ This

¹⁸⁴ Paul Müller-Simonis, *Vom Kaukasus zum Persischen Meerbusen. Durch Armenien, Kurdistan und Mesopotamien* (Berlin: Franz Kirchheim, 1897), pp. 251-253.

¹⁸⁵ Telford Waugh, *Turkey. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930), pp. 59-60.

¹⁸⁶ David Fraser, *The Shortcut to India. The Record of a Journey along the Baghdad Railway* (London: Blackwood & Sons, 1909), p. 205.

¹⁸⁷ Gertrude Lowthian Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (London: William Heinemann, 1911), pp. 296-297, including photographs of local monuments.

¹⁸⁸ WO 106/64, report dated February 2, 1919.

connection casts an interesting light on the activities of the Bedirhanis in Syria over the late 19th century. Banned from Eastern Anatolia as such, the Ottoman province of Syria was as close as family members could get to their former area of influence. It is conceivable that through migrating tribes and traveling sheep traders, members of the Bedirhani family were able to maintain contacts to their supporters and followers in Cizre. There is no evidence in the Ottoman archives, however, that the Ottoman authorities – who were otherwise keen to keep family members out of their former areas of influence – suspected these kind of activities.

2.6.2. Cizre as a Lieu de Mémoire

For the Bedirhani family, however, Cizre was not only an actual geographical location they used to have close ties to and were now banned from. In exile, Cizre and the wider region of Bohtan acquired symbolic meanings. Commenting on his concept of *lieux de mémoire*, Pierre Nora stressed three dimensions of the embodiment and anchoring of memory in certain sites:¹⁸⁹ A material one, a functional one and a symbolical one. All three dimensions can be identified looking at the memories of members of the Bedirhani family related to their lost homeland of Cizre. While *lieux de mémoire* can be anything, from text books to title deeds and from monuments to rituals and ceremonies, the commemoration of Cizre amounts to a topographical memory. The city of Cizre and wider Emirate of Bohtan have lived on in the memory of family members while conditions on the ground in Eastern Anatolia were subject to profound changes after the departure of the Bedirhani family in 1847. The symbolism associated with the space of Cizre and Bohtan was also changing over time, as a function of the changing

¹⁸⁹ Pierre Nora, “Between History and Memory: Les Lieux de Mémoire.” In: *Representations* 26 (1989), p. 7.

discourse about the family history and, by extension, also Kurdish history and identity in the late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican contexts. The site of Cizre became gradually more important as younger generations of family members, who were born and raised in exile, no longer retained personal memories of the actual space. As Pierre Nora pointed out, *lieux de mémoire* are particularly important in moments of rupture and discontinuity, when a community does no longer see its memory and narrative being included in the larger accounts of official history.

In the Ottoman period, the family's former homeland in Cizre retained its symbolic importance as family members intentionally set out to remember their origins, in spite of their quite successful assimilation into the Ottoman mainstream society and imperial bureaucracy. This insistence on remembering a story of exile, of failed resistance and loss points to the ambiguity and complexity of the family's Ottoman imperial identity. In an attempt to transmit a coherent story about themselves and pass on collective beliefs and communal values of the family, the region of Cizre came to play a crucial role. By holding on to the memory of Cizre, family members stressed a distinctive sense of identity and belonging, which was at odds with Ottoman imperial narratives. The memory of Cizre as a lost homeland could be transmitted and openly discussed, thereby serving as a placeholder for related, more painful and less "speakable" experiences of loss and displacement. While the topographical reference to Cizre and the wider Emirate of Bohtan remained the same over the 19th and 20th centuries, both function and symbolisms attached to it were subject to profound changes over time. A central aspect of *lieux de mémoire* as defined by Pierre Nora is their ambiguous nature and inherent openness to continued re-interpretations.¹⁹⁰ The symbolism invested in Cizre and Bohtan changed

¹⁹⁰ Nora, "Between History and Memory," p. 18.

in the aftermath of the First World War and again during the early years of the Turkish Republic. First, after 1918, the group addressed by the commemorative discourse was expanded. Not only members of the immediate Bedirhani family were subscribing to it, but it was now geared to find resonance within a larger Kurdish community. This reinterpretation was the result of an inclusion of Cizre and the Emirate of Bohtan within nationalist ideology and symbolism which was actively undertaken by members of the Bedirhani family, notably Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan during the late 1920s and 1930s. Their reinterpretations addressed a need within the Kurdish community to create and uphold cornerstones of their national history and heritage when official Turkish history was increasingly marginalizing and silencing Kurdish accounts and Kurdish counter-narratives could not be anchored in archives or any other central institutions.

In the emerging Kurdish nationalist narrative, the very landscape of the highlands of Bohtan was represented as embodying central values and attitudes which should serve as models to the Kurdish nation on the whole: A spirit of resistance, an assumed ethnic and linguistic purity and unity, and a propensity to justice and fair rule. In their journalistic writings targeting a Kurdish audience in Syria, Turkey and beyond in the 1930s, the Bedirhani brothers made an effort to cast the Emirate of Bohtan as a metonymic representation, a shorthand synonymous with the entire Kurdish nation.¹⁹¹ The region has been characterized in this context as the historical “homestead of Kurdish resistance”¹⁹² A close discursive relationship between geography and national characteristics

¹⁹¹ Ulf Brunnbauer & Robert Pichler, “Mountains as ‘lieux de mémoire’. Highland Values and Nation-Building in the Balkans.” In: *Balkanologie* VI.1-2 (2002), pp. 77-100 for similar observations in the Balkans.

¹⁹² Described as such in Newin, “Le nombre des repas chez les Kurdes,” *Hawar* 13 (December 14, 1932), pp. 8-20: “Un de ces foyers d’insoumission permanente était le pays de Botan qui fut appelé depuis l’antiquité Kurdistan, c’est-à-dire pays des Kurdes.”

has also been observed in the case of the Balkans.¹⁹³ A similar argument can be made with regard to the Kurdish territories: The figure of the highland shepherd, moving unrestrained through the mountain areas of Eastern Anatolia, emerges as a central figure in discourses about national independence, autonomy and freedom. It was assumed that the inhabitants of the highlands in particular had never succumbed to Ottoman central rule, and the respective territories were regarded as “sanctuaries of the nation”¹⁹⁴ and reservoirs of a spirit of resistance, to be reactivated in the national fight for independence. It is interesting that the Bedirhanis in the second and third generation in exile, who themselves grew up in urban environments of the Ottoman capital and provincial centers and were no longer familiar with the Kurdish mountain areas of Bohtan, would actively promote this discourse about national values embodied in a landscape so far from their own experience. The shift in discourse indeed necessitated some adjustments in the biographical trajectories of family members which will be under closer scrutiny in a later chapter: As origins in the true Kurdish homeland became more and more important to legitimate political leadership in the 20th century, several members of the Bedirhani family who were originally born in Istanbul “relocated” their birth places to the Jazira region, not far from Cizre.¹⁹⁵

Shifts in the meaning of Kurdish identity in general were necessary for these extended claims on Cizre as a pan-Kurdish, rather than a Bedirhani homeland to make sense: The idea of a group defined not on tribal, but on ethnic solidarity, with a common history, mythical origins and language was not a given, but was constructed over the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was not always clear where to draw the lines, whom to include and whom to exclude from the Kurdish community. In

¹⁹³ Brunnbauer & Pichler, “Mountains as ‘lieux de mémoire,’” p. 82.

¹⁹⁴ Brunnbauer & Pichler, “Mountains as ‘lieux de mémoire,’” p. 83.

¹⁹⁵ See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion on the incident.

the context of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period, the Bedirhani family members operating from there cast the family's hometown Cizre as the setting and the stage of key events in Kurdish literature and history. The castle of Cizre, the home of Emir Bedirhan, for instance, was said to be famous in all of Kurdistan for being the site where the Kurdish national epos, *Mem û Zîn* had taken place.¹⁹⁶ Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in particular emerged as “professional memory-makers”¹⁹⁷ in Syria and Lebanon during the mandate period, successfully converting their family's sites of memory into spaces of relevance in the broader context of Kurdish national history and heritage. They were thus writing a Kurdish national history which was inseparable from the history of the Bedirhani family.

2.6.3. Cizre and Bohtan in the History of the Bedirhani Family

From the 16th century onwards, the Emirate of Bohtan had been awarded the status of a *hükümet*, a largely autonomous region governed hereditary by Kurdish notable dynasties and disposing of considerable independence from the Ottoman center. Following the advice of the historiographer İdris-i Bitlisi after the victory over the Safavids in the Battle of Çaldıran in 1514, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I. arranged for the rulers of Bohtan, and also for the leading dynasties of neighboring Hakkari, Bahdınan, Bitlis and Hisn Keyfa (Hasankeyf) to govern along those lines.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ In the article “Chant d’automne.” In: *Hawar* 31 (August 1, 1941), it was stated that “Le palais des émirs de Botan, à Djeziré, est célèbre dans tout le Kurdistan pour avoir servi de cadre aux amours de Mem et de Zin, le Tristan et l’Ysolde kurdes [sic].”

¹⁹⁷ Brunnbauer & Pichler, “Mountains as ‘lieux de mémoire,’” p. 77.

¹⁹⁸ Bois, *Connaissance des Kurdes*, p. 85.

While some accounts on the history of the Bedirhani family convey the impression that the family had ruled over the area of Cizre and Bohtan for centuries prior to their being exiled to Istanbul in 1847,¹⁹⁹ it is necessary to point out that before Emir Bedirhan himself entered the scene in the 1830s, the family had not been prominent at all. In a historical account of the most renowned Kurdish notable families in the Ottoman lands dating from 1820, the Bedirhanis or Azizan, as they were also called, are not even mentioned.²⁰⁰ A further indicator for the relative insignificance of the family prior to the rule of Emir Bedirhan is not at least that the family, rather than being referred to as “Azizan” or “Azizanzade,” adopted the first name of its prominent but very recent ancestor, becoming in turn the “Bedirhanzade.” The immediate predecessor of the Bedirhanis as rulers over the Emirate of Bohtan has fallen into historical oblivion. He was a certain Mir Sevdin,²⁰¹ who is, however, hardly ever mentioned in later accounts on the family’s history. It appears that Mir Sevdin (also Seyfeddin) was a distant relative, who was disposed by Emir Bedirhan at some point in the early 1820s.²⁰² Emir Bedirhan’s father, Abdullah Han, was not a political leader, but reportedly lived a secluded life.²⁰³ After his death, Abdullah Han was initially succeeded by Emir Bedirhan’s eldest brother, Salih Bey, as head of the family. Taking after his father, Salih Bey is described as preferring the life of a religious man, in contemplation and seclusion, to the worldly affairs of governance. Salih Bey was particularly close to the Nakşbandi order. He soon stepped down from his position as head of the family, handing over power to his younger brother Bedirhan Bey,

¹⁹⁹ An early example is Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 5-6.

²⁰⁰ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 14.

²⁰¹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 140.

²⁰² Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 179 and Lokman Turgut, *Mündliche Literatur der Kurden in den Regionen Botan und Hekari* (Berlin: Logos, 2010), p. 164. Mir Sevdin was the father of İzzeddin Şir [Yezdaşêr], who cooperated with the Ottoman army in 1847 to defeat Emir Bedirhan and was briefly installed as his successor, see below.

²⁰³ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*. p. 8 describes him as “‘umür-ı dünyâdan gâfil olmakla vâzife-yi mevdû‘asımî ifâdan ‘ağiz idi” – he was unaware of worldly affairs and confined himself to carrying out a quiet task.

who, in the words of one Ottoman commentator, was cut out for the position as leader of the emirate.²⁰⁴ Soon, Bedirhan Bey was not only the head of his own (secondary) branch of the family, but also reached for political leadership over the Emirate of Bohtan. During the early days of his reign, he seems to have ruled in the name of his relative and predecessor Mir Sevdin.²⁰⁵

In the early 19th century, control of the central Ottoman state over the area of Cizre and Bohtan was virtually non-existent. But things were to change quickly as the Ottoman government was seeking greater control over its provinces to get a hold of tax money and man power for its ambitious and pressing military reform projects. These issues became even more urgent as the empire was challenged and in turn defeated by troops of Mehmet Ali Paşa of Egypt in Ottoman Syria and Anatolia in 1831/32. The Ottoman state expected Kurdish leaders in Eastern Anatolia to contribute contingents of tribal irregular fighters for its military efforts. Some of them, among them Mir Muhammad of Rawanduz, Nurullah Beg of Hakkari, and also Bedirhan Bey in Bohtan, were increasingly reluctant to comply with these orders over the 1830s and resisted the Ottoman authorities.²⁰⁶ As a result, the Kurdish emirates in Eastern Anatolia were targeted by Ottoman military campaigns between 1834 and 1839 which were to break the power of the local dynasties. Emir Bedirhan initially offered his support for the Ottoman campaign against rebellious local leaders and also joined the fight against Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt's son İbrahim Paşa and his troops at Nizip in 1839. Emir Bedirhan is said to have led up to 100.000

²⁰⁴ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 10, "Bedirhan Bey de hükümet için yaradılmış."

²⁰⁵ Turgut Lokman, *Mündliche Literatur der Kurden in den Regionen Botan und Hekari* (Berlin: Logos, 2010), pp. 151.

²⁰⁶ Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, p. 58 for a short summary, her focus is on the history of the Emirate of Hakkari, pp. 59ff. For more details, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 177-180.

Kurdish fighters in the battlefield, of whom 30.000 to 40.000 reportedly perished in combat.²⁰⁷

With most of their rulers ousted from power during the campaign of Reşid Mehmed Paşa in the 1830s, the Kurdish regions plunged into chaos, as the central government was unable to muster enough resources to firmly establish its authority on the ground. The vacuum of power was filled by local tribal and religious leaders, who entered into fierce competition as power was up for grabs in the early 1840s. In 1838, Emir Bedirhan still supported the Ottoman army in their efforts to oust another local Kurdish ruler, Sa'id Bey, from power. For his contributions, he even received an Ottoman decoration.²⁰⁸ Emir Bedirhan benefited greatly from the lack of influence of the Ottoman government in Eastern Anatolia, reaching the zenith of his power in the mid-1840s.²⁰⁹ He called off his alliance with the Ottoman authorities, joined forces with tribes from the region of Hakkari under Nurullah Beg²¹⁰ and from Müküs (Bahçesaray)²¹¹ and expanded his own influence in Bohtan and the adjacent regions considerably. He began to collect taxes for himself and minted his own coins, thus challenging the Ottoman central government by sending a strong message of autonomy. Emir Bedirhan was, at that time, allegedly able to mobilize a following of around 300.000 Kurdish fighters.²¹² Impressions of European travelers who met Emir Bedirhan in the 1830s suggest that the connection to the Ottoman state was in fact initially not something the emir resisted

²⁰⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 15.

²⁰⁸ Kadam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 77 reports that the medal was taken from him and remelted upon the Ottoman victory over Emir Bedirhan's uprising in 1847.

²⁰⁹ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 179-180.

²¹⁰ Nurullah Beg eventually switched sides and turned against Emir Bedirhan, receiving an Ottoman decoration for his services after Emir Bedirhan was defeated, see Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, p. 59.

²¹¹ Han Mahmud, a tribal leader from Müküs, was Emir Bedirhan's father-in-law, see Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, p. 58.

²¹² Henry F. Woods & Fahri Çoker (trans.), *Türkiye Anıları. Osmanlı Bahriyesinde Kırk Yıl 1869-1909* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1976), p. 314.

against, but constituted the very basis of his power: The Ottoman state had installed him as a *mütesellim* (a collector of taxes) and he had become rich and influential in this position. Only a couple of years prior to this career move, he and his branch of the family were hardly known of and of secondary importance in the area of Cizre.²¹³

Faced with the emir's bold demonstrations of autonomy, the Ottoman government could not be expected to lie low for long. Two further aspects gained pertinence, to the detriment of Emir Bedirhan's position: The Ottoman authorities were pushing for an administrative reform, and European powers sought local influence. A chief motivation for Emir Bedirhan's resistance against the Ottoman state was not a wish for greater independence, but discontent with an Ottoman administrative scheme which envisaged to divide the land controlled by the Bedirhanis between the *vilayets* of Diyarbekir and Mosul. In Mosul, the *vali* İnce Bayraktaroğlu Mehmed Paşa was not a friend of too powerful local notable families.²¹⁴ He would, had the administrative reform been put into practice, have increased his influence over the area of Cizre at the expense of the Bedirhani family.²¹⁵ In addition, European governments were increasingly calling for the protection of Christian and Yezidi minorities in the wake of the Ottoman reform process. They were particularly outraged about Emir Bedirhan's activities, who allegedly attacked, suppressed and massacred Nestorian Christians in his sphere

²¹³ Austin Wright, "Visits of Messrs. Wright and Breath to Bader Khan Bey." In: *The Missionary Herald* 42 (1846), p. 381: "Eight years ago, he [Emir Bedirhan, BH] was poor, without power, and little known. The Turkish government then took him by the hand; and now his wealth is incalculable." This paragraph is also cited by Özoğlu, "'Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables," p. 397.

²¹⁴ A protégé of Ali Rıza Paşa, the *vali* of Baghdad, Mehmed Paşa was appointed as *vali* in Mosul in 1835 and pushed for greater centralization and military reform, getting rid of the local ruling notable family of the Ğalili in the process, Christoph Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft und Modernisierung im Irak. Die Provinz Bagdad, 1817-1917* (Bamberg Univ. Press, 2012), pp. 90 and 241.

²¹⁵ Nazmi Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünün Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1982), pp. 61-66, and Özoğlu, "'Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables," p. 397.

of influence.²¹⁶ Already in 1832, Emir Bedirhan had invaded Shekhan ('Ain Sifni), one of the strongholds of the Yezidi community situated to the northeast of Mosul. Shekhan was sacked and many of its inhabitants were killed.²¹⁷ Emir Bedirhan's marriage to Ruşen Hanım, who was of Yezidi origins and around twenty years of age in 1832, might have taken place in this context.²¹⁸ In 1843, the religious leader of the Nestorians, Mar Shimun, was compelled to leave the region and sought refuge with British missionaries in Mosul.²¹⁹ Against the backdrop of these developments, European governments showed willingness to intervene in Eastern Anatolia to protect local Christians. The Ottoman government wanted to avoid an outside intervention at all costs and tightened measures against the autonomous Kurdish rulers in Eastern Anatolia, in an attempt to show initiative in favor of the Anatolian Christians. Austen Henry Layard, the British vice consul in Mosul at the time, called resolutely for the protection of the local Nestorian community. Layard

²¹⁶ It has to be noted that the Bedirhani family's relations with the Nestorian community were complex and cannot simply be explained with ethno-religious hatred. While there undoubtedly was tension and violence (probably arising over tax demands) in the mid-19th century, members of the Bedirhani family later pushed for a union and cooperation with Nestorian representatives in the early 20th century, referring to common historical roots and interests. Also, marriage connections existed between the Bedirhani family and the Nestorian elite, see below. The attacks on the Nestorians in 1843 were preceded by a refusal of the Nestorians under Mar Shimun to pay their usual tribute to the local Kurdish rulers of Hakkari, who in turn called on Emir Bedirhan for support, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 180. See also Turgut, *Mündliche Literatur*, p. 156.

²¹⁷ Birgül Açıkylmaz, *The Yezidis. The History of a Community, Culture and Religion* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 52, citing from Roger Lescot, *Enquête sur les Yézidis de Syrie et du Djebel Sindjâr* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1938), p. 125.

²¹⁸ If Ruşen was indeed from Shekhan, the enigmatic reference to her "Ankosi" origins which is given in the edition of her grandson Mehmed Salih's memoirs might apply to the village of al-Qūš (القوش), situated some 15 km west of Shekhan, which in Ottoman writing and Arabic script could have been misread as "Ankos(i)" by the editors. See Mehmed Uzun & Rewşen Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malîm* (Istanbul: Belge, 1998), p. 37.

²¹⁹ See Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, p. 58. Yalçın-Heckmann's sources, including a survey made by Reverend Badger, a British missionary in Mosul, also indicate that Mar Shimun probably greatly exaggerated the number of Nestorians killed and the pressure put on him personally to leave the region to increase leverage for his demands for support.

later expressed his dissatisfaction with what he perceived to be too mild a punishment for Emir Bedirhan.²²⁰

While European observers demanded more severe sanctions against Emir Bedirhan and his followers, an Ottoman account of the early 20th century took the side of the Bedirhani family and questioned the legitimacy of the Ottoman military operation against Emir Bedirhan in 1847. The already mentioned Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] pointed out that the military involvement had led to unjust and unnecessary suffering for the Muslim inhabitants and the followers of Emir Bedirhan in the region.²²¹ The account stressed as particularly reprehensible that Muslim Kurds were attacked and forced to defend themselves against fellow Muslim soldiers fighting for the Ottoman army.²²² Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] also mentioned the inferiority of the Kurdish fighters in terms of weapons and provisions, further adding to the victimization of Emir Bedirhan and his followers.²²³

Prior to the military intervention in 1847, an Ottoman intermediary, a certain Kemal Bey, was sent to Emir Bedirhan with the mission to convince him to come to Istanbul and meet with the sultan there. Emir Bedirhan, possibly suspecting foul play, preferred to remain in his stronghold near Cizre.²²⁴ His refusal was followed by an Ottoman military operation which brought about the arrest of Emir Bedirhan and a number of his followers. This operation was led by Osman Paşa, the commander of the Ottoman army in Anatolia.²²⁵ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz]

²²⁰ Austen Henry Layard, *Niniveh and its Remains* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1850), p. 81.

²²¹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 17: "Hükümet-i 'uṣmāniyenin Kürdistan'a 'asker sevḳ etmesine bir sebep-i ma'kūl taṣavvur olunamaz."

²²² Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 19.

²²³ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 20, stating that the Ottoman army was attacking with cannons, while the Kurds defended themselves with Mauser rifles.

²²⁴ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 18.

²²⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 54.

claimed in his account on the Bedirhani family history that despite the clear numerical superiority of the Ottoman forces, the followers of Emir Bedirhan were initially able to defeat them in battle, forcing Osman Paşa to retreat to Mosul.²²⁶ The emir and his supporters, Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] reported, were not rejoicing about their victory. On the contrary, they felt great remorse, as they had fought, wounded and killed fellow Muslims. Allegedly, Emir Bedirhan therefore abstained from further strikes on the Ottoman army and preferred to retreat into the mountains, to his stronghold at the fortified castle of Eruh.²²⁷ The Ottoman forces, however, had less qualms about attacking fellow Muslims: They attacked the castle and routed Emir Bedirhan and his followers. They were helped by the betrayal of a relative of Emir Bedirhan, İzzeddin Şir, who had been one of the emir's commanders and had ran over to the Ottoman side.²²⁸ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] argued that were it not for the moral reservations about fighting and killing fellow Muslims and thus disturbing the internal peace of the empire, Emir Bedirhan would have been able to resist the Ottoman onslaught for years.²²⁹ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] thereby not only victimized Emir Bedirhan, he also established the latter's moral superiority in his account of the events. In a third step of his argument, Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] attempted to gloss over animosities between the British and the followers of Emir Bedirhan – not at least betraying the wish for a rapprochement with the British in his contemporary political environment, the circles of Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals in Istanbul, at the time of his writing in the early 20th century. Citing from a treatise titled *Bir türk diplomatın evrāk-ı siyāsiyesi*, Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] offered his own version of the involvement of the British in the campaign

²²⁶ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 21.

²²⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 22. Eruh is sometimes also spelled Ewraç, see Turgut, *Mündliche Literatur*, p. 158.

²²⁸ Badem, *Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 362. It is sometimes stated that İzzeddin Şir was a son or otherwise close relative of Emir Bedirhan's predecessor Mir Sevdin and hoped to regain power for his branch of the family, Turgut, *Mündliche Literatur*, p. 159.

²²⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 23.

against Emir Bedirhan: He claimed that the British did not pressure the Ottoman authorities to take actions against the Emir, but on the contrary offered their support to him and suggested the creation of an independent Kurdish political entity under British protection. Emir Bedirhan, according to this account, preferred to remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire instead – doing himself and following generations of his family a disservice.²³⁰ Here, the author linked the Bedirhan family's past sufferings with the present situation of the Bedirhanis in 1907/1908: At the time of his writing, family members were accused and deported from Istanbul for their involvement in the murder of a high-ranking Ottoman official. Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] made clear that while the family had been both morally upright and loyal to the Ottoman state for generations, the state was to blame for any existing animosities.

2.6.4. Developments in Cizre after the Departure of the Bedirhani Family

Following their military defeat, Emir Bedirhan, his family and a large number of his followers were exiled from their homeland in Eastern Anatolia. In Cizre, the capital of the Emirate of Bohtan, Emir Bedirhan's nephew İzzeddin Şir [Yezdanşer] was briefly installed as the head of the local administration, but his loyalty towards the Ottoman center did not last.²³¹ The office of the *mütesellim* of Cizre was then taken over by Mustafa Paşa,²³² an official sent from Istanbul and one of the former commanders in the military expedition against Emir Bedirhan.²³³ When

²³⁰ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 25-26.

²³¹ Suavi Aydın & Jelle Verheij, "Confusions of the Cauldron. Some Notes on Ethno-Religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800-1870," in: Joost Jongerden & Jelle Verheij (eds.), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2012), pp. 15-54, and Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 363.

²³² Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 43.

²³³ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 141.

the new administrative unit of the *eyalet* of Kürdistan was created shortly after the defeat of Emir Bedirhan in December 1847, Cizre became the center of a district (*sancak*) by the same name. Mustafa Paşa continued to rule over Cizre, now appointed as *kaymakam*. His predecessor İzzeddin Şir was dismissed, but awarded a stipend from the Ottoman government and sent to Istanbul and later on to Mosul.²³⁴ İzzeddin Şir's influence among the tribal communities in Bohtan remained considerable even during his absence. He briefly returned to the area of Bohtan in 1854, attempting to resume control over his homeland by means of a local uprising when Ottoman forces were tied up in the Crimean War.²³⁵ It has been argued that although totally forgotten today, this uprising mobilized considerably larger numbers of followers than the earlier revolt of Emir Bedirhan,²³⁶ which has been stylized unduly as the point of origin of the Kurdish independence movement in national historiography. İzzeddin Şir benefited from the general dissatisfaction with the Ottoman centralization efforts and interventions in local affairs among the population in Bohtan. In November 1854, he and his followers occupied the government building in Cizre and arrested the local Ottoman officials. From Cizre, the uprising spread further among the tribes of the region.²³⁷ In spite of the obvious animosities between İzzeddin Şir and Emir Bedirhan, Ottoman authorities were wary that the emir might attempt to join the uprising in Kurdistan and the Bedirhani family's surveillance in exile was intensified during the uprising in Cizre.²³⁸ In the spring of 1855, an Ottoman military operation defeated İzzeddin Şir and his followers. He sought refuge with the British vice

²³⁴ İzzeddin Şir was found unfit for a position in the administration and frequently quarreled with his superiors, notably Osman Paşa, the *kaymakam* of Mardin, Badem, *Ottoman Crimean War*, pp. 367-368.

²³⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 140-141.

²³⁶ Badem, *Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 369.

²³⁷ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 144.

²³⁸ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 146, drawing on BOA, İ.MMS. 4.135, 02 C 1271 H (February 20, 1855).

consulate in Mosul, was later arrested and sent to Istanbul and from there into exile to Vidin in Bulgaria.²³⁹

Even though members of the Bedirhani family were able to maintain some connection to their former homeland throughout the second half of the 19th century, things on the ground were subject to change for several reasons: For one, the Ottoman centralization efforts took up speed from the 1850s onwards, and even if they were not always successful, increased the general presence of the Ottoman state in Eastern Anatolia. Secondly, with the end of the Kurdish emirates, networks of solidarity and patronage in the region underwent large-scale changes. A group that managed to benefit from these changes were religious authorities, mostly sheikhs of the Naqşbandiya-Halidiya order. They continued to play an important political role throughout the late 19th and early 20th century and in many ways emerged as rivals the Bedirhanis had to come to terms with to assert what was left of their influence over the region. Other actors who gained influence after the depart of the Bedirhani family were second-rank tribal leaders. Many of these, most prominently İbrahim Paşa Milli, managed to improve their positions further through activities in the Hamidiye cavalry, a body of Kurdish irregular fighters which was established during the reign of Abdülhamid II. Another serious local contender for power was Mustafa Ağa, the leader of the Kurdish Miran tribe. Carl Lehmann-Haupt, who visited Cizre in March 1899, found the entire place was run by the local Hamidiye, led by Mustafa Ağa. The official of the local civil administration were mere bystanders.²⁴⁰ The tensions between the

²³⁹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 146. In 1865, he and his brother Mansur Bey successfully applied for positions in the Ottoman administration, and İzzeddin Şir went on to become *mutasarrıf* of Yanya, Badem, *Ottoman Crimean War*, pp. 375-377.

²⁴⁰ Carl Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Behr, 1910), vol. 1, p. 363: „Die Stadt ist gänzlich in den Händen der Hamidieh, die Zivilbehörden spielen eine völlige Nebenrolle.“ Lehmann-Haupt also observed that brandnew barracks had been built to house the Kurdish regiments in Cizre. Among the sources of income of

Miran and the Bedirhanis went back far and had developed into an open feud when Emir Bedirhan disposed and killed the Miran leader Brahim Ağa. In exile, the Bedirhanis used their local contacts in Cizre and their growing influence in the Ottoman capital to plot against Mustafa Ağa in order to restrict his powers. But even though the Miran leader was indeed summoned to Istanbul for punishment at some point, he managed to hold on to his power. In 1902, Mustafa Ağa was assassinated on behalf of Ağa-yı Sor, a local ally of the Bedirhani family. Mustafa Ağa's son Abdülkerim followed him as leader of the Miran tribe.²⁴¹ Like İbrahim Paşa Milli, Mustafa Ağa was a member of the recently established Kurdish Hamidiye regiments. He enjoyed the patronage of the *vali* of Diyarbekir and had some backing from Istanbul as well. It can therefore not have been easy for the Bedirhanis to curb his increasing power and influence throughout the 1890s. The particular constellations of power in the former Emirate of Bohtan help to explain why members of the Bedirhani family never got involved with the Hamidiye and some of them even became outspoken critics of this institution and the Kurdish policy of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who cast himself as the “father of the Kurds” in general. As their local opponents relied on the Hamidiye, it made sense for the Bedirhani family to attack this institution. Their opposition to the Hamidiye and the authoritarian regime of Abdülhamid II more generally found its expression in support for constitutionalism and decentralization, but had a very pragmatic side to it, too, rooted in local power politics.²⁴²

It was not only local religious authority figures and Kurdish tribes like the Milli and Miran who filled the vacuum of power in the region of

the Hamidiye leader Mustafa Ağa was the demand of tolls from the boats passing through on the Tigris river, see p. 364.

²⁴¹ Klein, *Margins of Empire*, p. 90.

²⁴² Janet Klein, “State, Tribe, Dynasty, and the Contest over Diyarbekir at the Turn of the 20th century,” in: Joost Jongerden & Jelle Verheij (eds.), *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2012), pp. 146-178.

Cizre after the departure of the Bedirhanis. Particularly in the south of the family's former region of influence, in the Jazira region bordering the Syrian desert, the Arabic Şammar tribe was able to extend its influence northwards into the Emirate of Bohtan. After the 1850s and into the early decades of the 20th century, local Kurdish tribes were paying tribute to the Şammar.²⁴³ An additional element of change was brought about by the depart of local Nestorian Christians from Eastern Anatolia in the aftermath of the First World War. Their land ownings and other possessions were distributed among the remaining population and had the potential to change the local balance of power.

The Bedirhanis in exile found it difficult to keep in touch with what was going on in their former homeland. They themselves were forbidden to travel to the region, but members of the extended family, in particular of the branch around İzzeddin Şir, were still residing in the area. Relations to this part of the family, however, were understandably strained. There are indications that the Bedirhanis relied to local middlemen who helped them to maintain contact with tribal groups in the area of Bohtan. One important intermediary was an individual by the name of Ağa-yı Sor (also called Mehmed Sor Ağa or Şırnaklı Mehmed), who among other things is said to have facilitated the distribution of the journal *Kurdistan*, which was published by Abdurrahman and Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan, in the area of Bohtan.²⁴⁴ Ağa-yı Sor was a leader of the Kurdish Şırnak tribe, who controlled the borderlands between the Ottoman *vilayets* of Bitlis, Diyarbekir and Mosul around the turn of the century. His area of influence also included the *kaza* of Cizre. In 1907, two of his sons were held responsible for raiding and extorting protection money from

²⁴³ The practice was still noticed by the British Major Noel as he toured the region after the First World War, see FO 608/95, "Diary of Major E. Noel on Special Duty," dated April 1919.

²⁴⁴ Klein, *Margins of Empire*, p. 90.

travelers who crossed this region.²⁴⁵ The Şırnak tribe and the Bedirhanis had a common enemy, the Milli tribe under İbrahim Paşa, who had filled the vacuum of power after the departure of the Bedirhani family and with whom the Şırnak were rivaling for influence.²⁴⁶ Other local allies of the Bedirhani family in Eastern Anatolia included Kurdish tribes from Hakkari and Müküs.

The Bedirhani family lost not only its political influence over its former homeland, it also faced an almost complete loss of their economic assets. In spite of promises to the contrary by the Ottoman authorities,²⁴⁷ the Bedirhani family lost all of their property in Eastern Anatolia. Some of the villages the family had owned were acquired by Sultan Abdülmecid himself. The lion's share, however, was usurped by second-rank local rulers who benefited from the vacuum of power following the departure of the Bedirhani family. The family's possessions were plundered and their castle was destroyed.²⁴⁸ Among those leading the pillaging of Emir Bedirhan's property were his nephew İzzeddin Şir²⁴⁹ and a certain Eğinli Hoca Kesbar.²⁵⁰ In an attempt to retain some degree of control over his property, Emir Bedirhan had appointed an agent before his departure, who was charged with managing his affairs and looking after the family's estate in Cizre. The agent received orders to sell some of the family's possessions in order to settle debts and forward other items to the family's place of exile in Crete. A certain Molla Sadık from Cizre was appointed to that effect. Emir Bedirhan exchanged letters with him from exile, but Molla Sadık

²⁴⁵ MAE-Paris, 166 PO/E, dispatch from vice consul Degrand in Mosul to ambassador Constans in Istanbul, dated February 7, 1907, reports of attacks on French travelers, among them a missionary traveling through Cizre and being attacked by the sons of Ağa-yı Sor.

²⁴⁶ BOA, DH.MKT. 128.51, 27 S 1311 H (September 9, 1893).

²⁴⁷ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 23.

²⁴⁸ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 14.

²⁴⁹ İzzeddin Şir was the son of Mir Sevdin, who had ruled the Emirate of Bohtan prior to Emir Bedirhan's line of the family.

²⁵⁰ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 30, on the basis of documentation from the BOA.

did not act according to the emir's instructions. Instead, he allowed local officials, along with other strongmen and opponents of the family, to pillage their possessions.²⁵¹

Over the following decades and well into the 20th century, the Bedirhani family both contested the loss of their property and tried to regain their political influence in Cizre and the Emirate of Bohtan. Individual family members repeatedly attempted to reach the area of Bohtan over the late 19th century, despite the Ottoman prohibition and at great personal risk. In line with my own impressions, Janet Klein also observed that the Bedirhanis remained well connected in the region of the former Emirate of Bohtan.²⁵² In 1879, Hüseyin Kenan Bey Bedirhan traveled to the region of Bohtan, apparently to garner support for a local revolt.²⁵³ In 1894, Abdürrezzak and Halil Bey Bedirhan tried to reach Cizre via Russia to assert their power over local tribal communities. With the CUP in power after 1908, family members traveled again to the area of Cizre, this time trying to use the newly emerging political opportunities to their advantage: They wanted to run as candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections in 1911. As the CUP supported the family's old rival Abdülkerim Miran, the Bedirhanis switched sides and ran their election campaigns in opposition to the CUP.²⁵⁴ In spite of the Bedirhan family's recurrent attempts to restore their influence over Cizre and Bohtan, the region and notably the capital Cizre fell into disarray after the departure of Emir Bedirhan.²⁵⁵ The prolonged absence of the Bedirhani family from the area of Cizre and Bohtan was a disadvantage as family members tried to claim authority over the area in the aftermath of the First World War: The French officials they approached were not

²⁵¹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 68-69, citing from BOA, İ.MSM. 51.1300, which contains a letter in Arabic written by Emir Bedirhan to Molla Sadık.

²⁵² Klein, *Margins of Empire*, pp. 89-90.

²⁵³ Hasan Hişyar Serdi, *Görüş ve Anılarım (1907-1985)* (Istanbul: Med Yayınları, 1994), p. 105.

²⁵⁴ Klein, *Margins of Empire*, p. 124

²⁵⁵ Strohmeier & Yalçın-Heckmann, *Die Kurden*, p. 120.

convinced that members of the family still wielded any authority or could garner meaningful support in Eastern Anatolia. To them, Mahmud, the son of İbrahim Paşa Milli, seemed a much more likely candidate to rule over the former Emirate of Bohtan.²⁵⁶ The rivalry with the Miran and Milli tribal leadership, in other words, followed the Bedirhanis into the 20th century.

An institutionalized forgetting of the Bedirhani family in their former area of influence was actively promoted by the Ottoman state: The authorities had the former family home torn down and erected the new government building in the exact same spot.²⁵⁷ This was a strong political message, not only meant to eliminate traces of the former rulers, but appropriating and symbolically overwriting the former hub of their political power. The Ottoman policy was very visibly signaling to exiled members of the Bedirhani family and any remaining local supporters alike that the balance of power had shifted, with the central state now controlling the very place from where the Kurdish emirs had ruled for generations.²⁵⁸

2.6.5. The Bedirhani Family in Exile after 1847

Altogether, between three hundred and four hundred individuals from the family and from among the closest followers of Emir Bedirhan had accompanied him to his last stronghold, the mountain castle of Eruh.²⁵⁹ There, his party was besieged and eventually defeated by Ottoman

²⁵⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, undated report from Beirut.

²⁵⁷ Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians*, p. 84 and Bedirhan, *Otobiyografiya*, p. 22.

²⁵⁸ For an analysis of mechanisms of overwriting and silencing historical narratives, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Silencing the Past. Layers of Meaning in the Haitian Revolution," in: Gerald Sider & Gevin Smith (eds.), *Between History and Histories. The Making of Silences and Commemorations* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 31-61. Ilan Pappé has used the concept of "memoricide" for similar efforts to erase Palestinian presence from Israeli history, idem, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), pp. 225-229.

²⁵⁹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 19.

troops. They were arrested and a group of prisoners arrived in Istanbul via Harput and Samsun in October 1847.²⁶⁰ Upon their arrival, Emir Bedirhan and his followers were put under arrest. The emir was then received by Sultan Abdülmecid and, as legend has it, greatly impressed the Ottoman sovereign with fearlessness and wit: Asked why he had resisted the Ottoman army, he allegedly nimbly quoted a couple of lines from the poet ‘Umar Hayyam in Persian, the gist of which being: “I did something bad, now you did something bad in return, where is the difference between us?”²⁶¹ In his detailed and meticulously researched account on the life of Emir Bedirhan in exile, however, Ahmet Kardam has identified the roots of this narrative, which he describes as a “pembe öykü,” literally a rose-colored story, an account seen through rose-colored glasses.²⁶² Kardam traced the narrative to a treatise written by Mehmed Salahaddin during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, where the author told a whitewashed version of the capture and exile of Emir Bedirhan and his followers, downplaying the pressure, violence and misery they had to endure. In addition, the text falsely claimed that Emir

²⁶⁰ Over one hundred prisoners altogether, including two of his brothers, his wives and three children, the oldest between ten and eleven years old, accompanied Emir Bedirhan into exile, Hakan Özoğlu, “Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables,” p. 398. Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 32 cites an Ottoman official report stating that Emir Bedirhan’s brothers Salih Bey and Es’ad Bey were with him, along with Salih Bey’s son İbrahim, sheikh Abdülkuddus and his son, sheikh Erzai, his treasurer, several administrators and military leaders, messengers, and his personal secretary Osman. Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 70 mentions in addition four wives, ten daughters, nine female slaves (*cariye*) and ten foster children (*besleme*) in the company of Emir Bedirhan, citing from BOA, İ.MSM. 51.1297. See also Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 24.

²⁶¹ The anecdote is mentioned by several sources, among them Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 43-44. The reference for most later accounts seems to be Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 26, who cites the Persian original poem as follows:

بگو کیست جهان در کناه کرده تا
بگو زیست چون نکود کنه که کس ان و
دهی مکافات توید و کتم بد من
بگو جیست تو و من در میان فرق بس

Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 59, who is skeptical of the entire account, cites the verse as follows in Turkish: *Dünyada günah işlememiş olan kimdir, söyle ya Rab! // Günah işlemeyen kimse nasıl yaşar, söyle ya Rab! // Ben kötülük edeyim, se de bana kötülükle mukabele et // O zaman aramızda ne fark kalır, söyle ya Rab!*

²⁶² Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 11-13.

Bedirhan received all kinds of privileges and financial support from the sultan, who allegedly took a liking to him and had only reluctantly proceeded against him, pressured by European diplomats.²⁶³ Mehmed Salahaddin's narrative seems clearly tailored to the political needs of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who had identified Kurds as potential allies and loyal collaborators in the 1890s. The account, rooted in a very specific historical context, became a key source of most later writing on the history of the Bedirhani family. It was notably used by İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa in his in turn also very influential account of the family's history in his *Türk Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi*.²⁶⁴ Rejecting Mehmed Salahaddin's depictions, Ahmet Kardam argues that the suffering of the Bedirhani family in exile was far greater than has so far been acknowledged. They were held in captivity, covering the entire distance from Cizre to Istanbul in chains. Arrived at their permanent place of exile in Kandiye (Heraklion) on the island of Crete, their freedom of movement was limited, family members were not permitted to leave the space circumscribed by the city walls.²⁶⁵ Their activities were closely monitored and any correspondence from or to their homeland was restricted.²⁶⁶

Initially, Emir Bedirhan was hoping to be allowed to settle in Istanbul with his extended family.²⁶⁷ However, after less than three weeks in the Ottoman capital, he and his family, along with some of his followers were sent on to the island of Crete.²⁶⁸ Relatively little is known about the years Emir Bedirhan and his entourage spent on the island. They did arrive in politically eventful times: In 1841, six years prior to their arrival,

²⁶³ Mehmed Salahaddin, *Bir Türk Diplomatının Evrâk-ı Siyâsiyyesi* (Istanbul, 1306). It is unclear whether the date refers to the Hicri or Rumi calendar, a complete reproduction of the passage is provided by Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 255-258.

²⁶⁴ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 13.

²⁶⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 14.

²⁶⁶ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 94.

²⁶⁷ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 65.

²⁶⁸ Others were exiled to Rusçuk. 125 people accompanied Emir Bedirhan to Crete, see Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 45.

direct Ottoman rule had been reestablished, ending the quasi-autonomous government of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt over the island. Representatives of the local Christian communities and European observers kept demanding that Crete should either be united with the by then independent state of Greece or else at least become independent from the Ottoman Empire. In an atmosphere of agitation and insecurity about the political future, several local revolts against the Ottoman rule took place during the 1840s.

In Kandiye, the Bedirhani family and their entourage were housed in two buildings within the city's citadel (Kandiye Kalesi), and all exits of the city walls were ordered to be guarded by Ottoman military or police.²⁶⁹ Throughout 1847 and 1848, the family was neither receiving any allowance or support from the Ottoman state nor were they able to touch their assets in Eastern Anatolia. As a consequence, the Bedirhanis were living in great poverty.²⁷⁰ This particularly miserable situation of confinement and lack of resources lasted for the first two years of their exile. Beginning in 1849, the conditions were alleviated, family members were now allowed to move freely on the island and establish contacts with the local population. They were also permitted to work, acquire property and invest money. These measures were meant to speed up the assimilation of the Bedirhani family into the local population.²⁷¹ This indicates that the initial policy of the Ottoman authorities towards the Bedirhanis did not include the idea of removing the family from Crete again or of grooming its younger generations as members of a transimperial Ottoman bureaucratic elite.

²⁶⁹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 95, his account also includes a sketch of the citadel.

²⁷⁰ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 101.

²⁷¹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 114, quoting from BOA, İ.MVL. 142.3955, 07 B 1265 H (May 30, 1849). Particularly, marriages into the local population were to be encouraged.

In Crete, Emir Bedirhan supported the local administration in bringing about the reconciliation between Christian and Muslim communities.²⁷² He was reportedly quite successful in doing so, even though not much evidence describing his actual activities can be found in the Ottoman archives.²⁷³ He seems to have been put in charge on the initiative of the grand vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa.²⁷⁴ The governors of Crete were changing quickly at the time. The Bedirhanis in exile were received by *vali* Mustafa Na'ili Paşa in 1847.²⁷⁵ On the eve of the Crimean War, in July 1853, Emir Bedirhan petitioned the Ottoman authorities for permission to leave the island and settle in Istanbul instead.²⁷⁶ When this request was not granted, Emir Bedirhan wrote a follow-up letter, this time trying another angle, offering his services in the war against Russia which had broken out in the meantime – in the hopes of being allowed to leave the island to do so.²⁷⁷ His petition again remained unanswered. Neither he nor his followers were allowed to join the Ottoman army as irregulars, and surveillance of the family was even intensified when their relative İzzeddin Şir led an uprising in the Emirate of Bohtan in 1854/55.²⁷⁸ In 1855, Emir Bedirhan bought a piece of land on Crete,²⁷⁹ a farm two hours away from the city of Kandiye.²⁸⁰ Due to restrictions still

²⁷² Özöglü, “Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables,” p. 398.

²⁷³ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 15.

²⁷⁴ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 205, quoting from Ziya Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel Bizi İdare Edenler* (Istanbul: Anadolu Türk Kitap Deposu, 1943), vol. 2, p. 185.

²⁷⁵ Mustafa Na'ili Paşa was succeeded as *vali* of Crete by Vamık Paşa in 1851, whose successors in turn were Mehmed Emin Paşa in 1852 and then Veliyüddin Paşa, the son of former *vali* Mustafa Na'ili Paşa, in 1855. In 1858, Veliyüddin was recalled and replaced by Sami Paşa, see Kunalalp, *Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, pp. 93, 109 and 124-125.

²⁷⁶ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 131-132, citing from Emir Bedirhan's petition to the grand vizier in BOA, A.DVN. 90.18, dated 19 L 1269 H (July 26, 1853).

²⁷⁷ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 135-136, citing from BOA, A.MKT.NZD. 108.104, letters from Emir Bedirhan to the grand vizier, dated 09 Ra 1270 and 05 C 1270.

²⁷⁸ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 146.

²⁷⁹ According to a document cited by Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 160, Emir Bedirhan took out a loan of 150.000 *kuruş* to purchase the land, cited from BOA, MVL. 178.113, 17 Ra 1273 H (November 16, 1856).

²⁸⁰ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 155-157. Under the name Kabıl Hora, this piece of farmland is also mentioned by Mehmed Salih Bedirhan in his memoirs, see Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 52-53, indicating that the farm continued to operate after the death of

in place for members of the Bedirhani family, prohibiting them from leaving the area circumscribed by Kandiye's city walls, the farm had to be operated by middlemen. During an earthquake in October 1856, the Bedirhani farm suffered severe damage, causing Emir Bedirhan to turn to the Ottoman authorities and ask for help in financing the reconstruction works.²⁸¹ Yet again, his plea remained unanswered.

In 1857, after ten years in exile, however, Emir Bedirhan's pleas found more attention. He and his family were pardoned by the sultan and finally allowed to leave the island of Crete and settle in Istanbul. His family members were now also allowed to apply for positions in the Ottoman administration, but preference would be given to appointments in the western part of the Ottoman Empire. No family members would be allowed to return to their former homeland in Cizre.²⁸² Kardam, who investigated this period of the Bedirhani family history in great detail, assumes that this change in the Ottoman policy towards the family was due to fears that family members, possibly the adolescent sons of Emir Bedirhan, would find a way to escape from exile and rekindle unrest among their followers of old in Eastern Anatolia if they saw no other option to make a living. It seemed advisable to instead secure the loyalty of the family by giving the younger family members a perspective within the imperial bureaucracy.²⁸³ From looking into comparable cases of exiles, it seems fair to say that the treatment the Bedirhani family received was exceptional. A former companion and follower of Emir Bedirhan, Han Mahmud, who was exiled with his family from Cizre to Rusçuk in Bulgaria in 1847, was not treated with the same consideration: Despite repeated petitions over the following decades,

Emir Bedirhan. The exact location and trajectory of the farmland has not been identified yet, see also Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 157.

²⁸¹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 160-161, drawing on Emir Bedirhan's petition to the *meclis-i vala*, BOA, MVL. 178.113, 17 Ra 1273 H (November 16, 1856).

²⁸² Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 167-169.

²⁸³ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 169-170.

Han Mahmud was never pardoned or allowed to leave his place of exile, nor did he receive any special attention or material support from the Ottoman authorities.²⁸⁴

In the summer of 1857, Emir Bedirhan set off to the Ottoman capital.²⁸⁵ Upon his arrival, Emir Bedirhan received an amnesty and was bestowed the rank of an Ottoman *paşa* and the title of a *mir-i miran*.²⁸⁶ The allowance accorded to the Bedirhan family was also increased considerably on that occasion. Emir Bedirhan was offered to stay in Istanbul permanently, but he preferred to return to Crete, where he would now enjoy greater freedom of movement and financial security.²⁸⁷ Conditions, however, applied: Even after the amnesty, the Ottoman authorities made it clear that a return of family members to their former homeland was undesirable and that family members should not seek employment in or by any other means enter the greater area of Anatolia.²⁸⁸ Career paths and trajectories of all male members of the family who served in the Ottoman administration demonstrate that this condition was in effect throughout late Ottoman times – prior to the end of the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, not a single one of them was appointed anywhere near to Eastern Anatolia.

According to his own wishes, Emir Bedirhan returned to Kandiye after a brief stint in Istanbul. On Crete, a conflict between local Christian and Muslim communities erupted in May 1858. Reform measures which had been announced in 1856 had raised expectations among non-Muslim inhabitants to achieve greater equality. However, many non-Muslims were dissatisfied as they continued to perceive their situation

²⁸⁴ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 176.

²⁸⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 172.

²⁸⁶ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 172, citing from a imperial decree in BOA, A.DVN.MHM. 23.65, 30 M 1274 H (September 9, 1858).

²⁸⁷ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 173 and also Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 30.

²⁸⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 30.

on the ground as marked by oppression and discrimination. Tensions in Crete were further fueled by rumors that the local government planned to increase taxes, targeting non-Muslims in particular. Intercommunal violence erupted after Ottoman tax collectors had been attacked by Christian villagers. Many Muslim villagers, who were in the minority in most rural areas of Crete, fled to the fortified cities, seeking refuge with government officials and the Ottoman military stationed there. In the cities, tensions between Muslims and Christians thus also increased, and there was fear of violence and massacres.

According to consistent reports from both British and French diplomats present in Crete at the time, Emir Bedirhan attempted to deescalate the situation and, notably, provided a refuge for persecuted Christians in his house and gardens in Kandiye.²⁸⁹ Emir Bedirhan was in a position to mediate between the two communities, as he was also said to enjoy great influence and respect among the Muslim community of Kandiye.²⁹⁰ The relations of the Bedirhani family to the Nakşbandiyya-Halidiyya order constitute one possible way which could have facilitated this kind of influence – there is, however, no concrete evidence to support this assumption. For his efforts, Emir Bedirhan was awarded the Ottoman Mecidiyye order (of the 4th degree) in 1858.²⁹¹ In spite of this recognition and a renewed raise of his allowance, Emir Bedirhan continued to feel treated like an outsider on the island of Crete, slighted by the local officials and notables. In a petition addressed to the Ottoman *meclis-i vala*, he asked to be transferred to another location.²⁹² He also

²⁸⁹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 188-189, quoting from British and French consular reports. The episode is also mentioned by Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 32-33.

²⁹⁰ Georges Perrot, "Les Kurdes de l'Haimaneh." In: *Revue des Deux Mondes* (Feb. 1865), p. 628 comparing Emir Bedirhan's activities to Abdülkadir al-Ğaza'iri's efforts to protect the Christian population in Lebanon, and Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 190-191 and 270-273 for a Turkish translation of passages from Perrot's work which are related to Emir Bedirhan.

²⁹¹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 210.

²⁹² Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 213-214, drawing on BOA, MVL.782.64, dated 27 S 1275 H (October 5, 1858).

complained repeatedly that his allowance was not paid regularly. It took another five years, however, until Emir Bedirhan was finally allowed to leave Crete and settle in Istanbul with his family in 1863. In the Ottoman capital, he bought a mansion spacious enough to house his entire family in the neighborhood of Fatih, close to the Yavuz Selim Mosque.²⁹³ This building later hosted the Darüşşafaka association. Some members of the family, among them Emir Bedirhan's brother Es'ad, continued to live on the island of Crete after 1863, and the family also retained some property there.²⁹⁴ Emir Bedirhan and his family lived in the neighborhood of Fatih for seven years. Upon their father's request, several of the older sons of the Bedirhani family were appointed to positions in the Ottoman administration: Emir Bedirhan's son Necib, for example, started his career as a clerk at the *meclis-i vala*.²⁹⁵ In June 1868, shortly before the death of Emir Bedirhan, the Bedirhani family moved to Syria. Some sources say that Emir Bedirhan wanted to relocate for health reasons, as he did not support the air in Istanbul very well.²⁹⁶ He rented a house in the city of Damascus for his family to live in. Again, he asked for his older sons to be given positions in the local Ottoman administration, thus laying the foundation for the intricate network of the Bedirhani family in Ottoman Syria.²⁹⁷ Some members of his family, among them some of his older daughters who had gotten married in the meantime, stayed behind in Istanbul while the rest of the family moved to Ottoman Syria. Emir Bedirhan's daughter Zarife, who was the wife of Mehmed Arif Bey Mardin, was among those who stayed in the capital.

²⁹³ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 45.

²⁹⁴ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i A'malim*, pp. 52-53.

²⁹⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 232.

²⁹⁶ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, p. 185.

²⁹⁷ Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy. A Political, Social and Cultural History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 97 points out that other Ottoman notable families like the Karaosmanoğlu, the Menemencioğlu and the Çapanoğlu were also increasingly seeking out opportunities in the Ottoman state service for younger family members from the mid-19th century onwards.

With her husband and children, she lived in a mansion also known as Bedirhani Paşa Köşkü on the island Büyükada.²⁹⁸

Only one year after his arrival in Damascus, in the summer of 1869, Emir Bedirhan passed away. He was buried at the cemetery in the Rukn ad-Din neighborhood of the city. Emir Bedirhan was allegedly survived by four wives, five *odalıks* or concubines, forty-two children and twelve grandchildren. His second eldest son Necib Bey assumed the responsibilities as the head of the family after Emir Bedirhan's death.²⁹⁹ Necib Bey's abilities were immediately put to the test: Not only did he have to sort out the inheritance of his father, making sure the Ottoman allowance payments would continue to flow, his family had also just lost their home and belongings in Damascus to a fire.³⁰⁰

2.6.6. (Differing) Historical Narratives from Within the Family

The history of the Bedirhani family as it is reconstructed by historians today and has been briefly laid out above differs to no small extent from accounts given by family members themselves at different points in time and to various audiences. One rather detailed account was provided by Abdürrezzak Bedirhan in 1910, after he returned from exile and was preparing to leave the Ottoman Empire and settle permanently in Czarist Russia. In his plea for asylum to the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, he stated the following: For time immemorial, the ancestors of his family had ruled over vast territories between Bitlis, Van, Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Urfa and Hakkari, their influence extending at times as far

²⁹⁸ For the history and a historical photograph of the mansion, see Pars Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca İstanbul Adaları* 2 vols. (Istanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 217-218.

²⁹⁹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 240.

³⁰⁰ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 241, citing from a letter Necib Bey Bedirhan addressed to the grand vizier, in BOA, İ.DH.598.41717, no date.

as Süleymaniye, Mosul and into the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands.³⁰¹ This statement is greatly exaggerated, both with regards to the area supposedly under control of the family and the time frame given. As it has been pointed out above, prior to the advent of Emir Bedirhan on the stage in the 1830s, the ancestors of the Bedirhani family had not played a prominent role in local affairs at all. Abdürrezzak Bey traced the origins of his family to the Kurdish dynasty of the Azizan, who he claimed had continuously ruled over the historical region of Bohtan for the past millennium. According to Abdürrezzak Bey's account, the Bedirhani family's loyalty to the Ottoman state and imperial dynasty also went back far into history: When the Ottoman Sultan Selim I opposed the Safavids in Eastern Anatolia, the Sunni Azizan were found fighting on his side against the Shiite enemy.³⁰² Abdürrezzak continued by stating that his ancestors' reign had always been a peaceful one, as the family was highly respected by the different communities in the region. They were in particular trusted by local Christians, whom they treated with justice and tolerance. Abdürrezzak Bey's narrative is an implicit response to accusations that Emir Bedirhan had persecuted and massacred Nestorian Christians, which were ongoing at the time of his writing in the early 20th century, both among Ottoman and European observers. In his first account from 1910, Abdürrezzak Bey passed over the events which led to the military expedition against his grandfather in silence.³⁰³ In a second account on his family history dating from 1915, Abdürrezzak then changed his plot somewhat, claiming that the growing influence and popularity of Emir Bedirhan in Anatolia had worried Sultan Abdülmecid and eventually led to the military campaign against him.³⁰⁴ Abdürrezzak Bey continued his account with a report on the arrival of the Ottoman military expedition against Emir Bedirhan

³⁰¹ Bedirhan, *Otobiğrafya*, pp. 12-14.

³⁰² Bedirhan, *Otobiğrafya*, p. 13.

³⁰³ Bedirhan, *Otobiğrafya*, pp. 12-14.

³⁰⁴ Bedirhan *Otobiğrafya*, p. 21.

under Osman Paşa: 15.000 Ottoman soldiers, he relates, waged war against the Bedirhans for more than one year, committing massacres among the local population. Ultimately, a defeated Emir Bedirhan was exiled from his homeland. As the Ottoman rationale for the military expedition against the Bedirhanis is not mentioned in this account, the attacks appear unlawful and arbitrary. The Bedirhani family and their followers are presented as victims of an unjust intervention. Abdürrezzak Bey is particularly bitter about the fact that medals and decorations were given out to those who participated in the military expedition against the Bedirhani family. At the eve of the First World War, he continues to bear hatred towards the high officials who still wear this so-called *Kürdistan Madalyası*,³⁰⁵ a constant reminder of the defeat of his family.

In his account, Abdürrezzak Bey is telling a story about him and his family being wronged by the Ottoman state, as part of an argument he makes for no longer being bound to this state and eager to emigrate to Russia. Later accounts which members of the Bedirhan family have given of the family history differ from Abdürrezzak Bey's turn-of-the-century version: The brothers Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, living in exile in the French mandate territories in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s, tell a story tailored to the newly emerging narrative of Kurdish nationalist history. They stress the fact that their family suffered greatly

³⁰⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 78 provides some detail on the medal, along with two pictures: There were four categories of the *Kürdistan Madalyası*, differing in value and distinction: The grand vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa (1800–1858), the *ser'asker* Damad Mehmed Said Paşa (d. 1869) and the commander of the Ottoman army in Anatolia, Osman Paşa (d. 1847), received the first order, the second order was awarded to all generals and paşas who took part in the campaign, to the *defterdar* of the Ottoman army in Anatolia, as well as to the *vali* of Mosul Es'ad Mehmed Muhlis Paşa Ayaşlı (1780-1851), the *vali* of Harput Hacı Ali Paşa Kütahyalı (Germiyanoglu, d. 1876), the *vali* of Diyarbekir Mehmed Hayreddin Paşa (d. 1869), the *vali* of Sivas Ali Aşkar Paşa (d.1868) and the *vali* of Erzurum Ahmed İzzet Paşa (1798-1876). The medal sported a mountain landscape on its back, symbolizing the Kurdish areas and allowing the bearer – successfully, as is illustrated by Abdürrezzak Bey's continued anger – to symbolically appropriate them.

from displacement, being exiled from their Kurdish homeland under atrocious conditions in the mid-19th century. Their narrative evokes parallels to Kemalist policies of forced resettlement of Kurdish communities in the western part of the Turkish Republic they witnessed at the time of their writing. The audience that Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan were hoping to win over with their narrative, the Kurdish community in exile, was familiar with the sufferings of displacement. By stressing similar experiences in the history of their own family, the Bedirhanis could hope to increase their credibility and the legitimacy of their claims to a leadership role, in particular since they had mostly escaped the latest wave suffering and suppression in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s, having lived in exile in Europe, Egypt and Syria since the end of the First World War.³⁰⁶

2.7. The Bedirhanis from a Perspective of Family Sociology

It has to be defined what is understood by “family” as the concept is applied to the Bedirhanis: What ties family members together, and through which discourses are belonging, unity and difference negotiated and constructed? How did the Bedirhanis situate themselves within the wider Ottoman-Kurdish community and with regards to Kurdish tribes in Anatolia? How does the extended family cast itself as a community?

2.7.1. Genealogy

Kinship, in general and also in the case of the Bedirhani family, is best understood not as an actual practice or as a system of rules and prescriptions guiding actual practices in any predictable way, but as a

³⁰⁶ Celadet Ali Bedirhan [Herekol Azizan], *De la Question Kurde. La Loi de Déportation et de Dispersion des Kurdes* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 1997 [1934]) for his views on exile and displacement, in particular pp. 26-27 and 38.

powerful ideology which individuals will refer to, but not necessarily act upon. Neatly written out genealogies and family trees can contain invented elements and can also quite effectively mask discontinuities and ruptures.

It is interesting to note that throughout the family history, it is only Emir Bedirhan who is referred to as a common ancestor, the previous genealogy is alluded to, but rarely cited. This is not at least an indicator for ongoing dynamics and re-shuffling within the Kurdish tribal context. Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], who is citing from the *Şerefname*, does give the following genealogy, going back seven generations: Emir Bedirhan is identified as the son of Abdullah Han, son of Mustafa Han, son of İsmâ'il Han, son of Mansur Han, son of Emir Şeref Han II, son of Emir Mehmed Han, son of Emir Şeref Han I.³⁰⁷ As illustrated by this genealogy, the Bedirhani family identity is passed on through a patrilineal system. The pivot of the family genealogy, however, is Emir Bedirhan himself. Daughters of the family, who leave the Bedirhani household after their marriages, fade into the background once a patrilineal perspective is adopted. However, it has been pointed out that kinship ideology does not always mirror actual practice: Not all of the female members of the Bedirhani family vanished from the scene after their marriage. To the contrary, some of the matrilineal connections continued to be important or were reactivated, in particular as individuals want to stress their own Kurdish identity by pointing to their relation to the prestigious Bedirhani family. One case in point is the Kurdish activist Musa Anter (1920–1992), whose wife was a member of the Bedirhani family. This is rather exceptional and bears testimony to the prominence of the Bedirhani family even after the collapse of the

³⁰⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 8.

Ottoman Empire, whose genealogical prestige is able to overwrite that of other families.³⁰⁸

Insights from anthropological research on kinship among Kurdish tribal populations, although copious, did not prove helpful in the case of the Bedirhani family: I could find no evidence of members of the Bedirhani family situating themselves within a larger system of tribal relations. Different from what has been established as the standard setting of the Kurdish tribal kinship systems,³⁰⁹ members of the Bedirhani family apparently did not consider themselves as parts of a particular sub-tribe (Kurdish *ocax* or *qabîle*) or tribe (Kurdish *eşîret*). Rather, with their pronounced claim to leadership, they attempt to position themselves outside and beyond the framework of tribal loyalties and oppositions.³¹⁰ Thus, they recommend themselves as mediators in case of conflict between tribes and as mobilizers of larger, intertribal units. It is also noteworthy in this respect that in the contemporary Ottoman state documentation, the Bedirhani family was also not described as of tribal origins. The term *'aşîret* did figure very prominently in Ottoman documents on tribal affairs of any kind and was a key concept in the depiction of tribal unrest among the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia in particular. It carried strong pejorative connotations, placing the members of the tribes outside the confines of civilization.³¹¹ Generally,

³⁰⁸ On this question more generally, see Edhem Eldem, "Urban Voices from Beyond: Identity, Status and Social Strategies in Ottoman Muslim Funerary Epitaphs of Istanbul (1700-1850)," in: Virginia Aksan & Daniel Goffman (eds.), *Early Modern Ottomans. Remapping the Empire* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 233-255.

³⁰⁹ Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, pp. 98-102.

³¹⁰ The classic model of the segmentary society and mediators from "outside the system" as discussed in social anthropology goes back to Edward Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer. A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947). On mediators in the Kurdish context, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 67-69.

³¹¹ See the Ottoman discourse on tribes in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, e.g. the Hamawand tribe. Also Sabri Ateş, *Empires at the Margin: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples, 1843-1881*, Diss., New York University, 2006, p. 405.

the Bedirhani family was not characterized or understood along those terms by the Ottoman authorities, and I encountered no instance where members of the family used these characterizations for themselves.

How, then, did the members of the Bedirhani family refer to themselves? The Kurdish concept of *mal*, which I briefly introduced above, was used within the family and continues to have some currency within the community of Kurdish supporters to refer to the family. The tombstone of Emir Bedirhan in Damascus, for instance, is inscribed with “mala Bedirhan,” Kurdish for “the Bedirhani family.” In their communications with the Ottoman authorities in late Ottoman times, members of the family preferred to refer to themselves collectively as the “Bedirhan Paşazade” or else used the expression “familya,”³¹² translating the complex concept of *mal* into an Ottoman context. As family names were reserved to the most prominent families in the Ottoman realm, the fact that the Bedirhanis were continuously addressed as “Bedirhan Paşazade” or “Bedirhanzade” in the Ottoman sources is an indicator of their elevated social position.³¹³

2.7.2. Household Structures

Looking into the households members of the Bedirhani family lived in during the late 19th century, the following patterns can be identified: While not all children of Emir Bedirhan lived together under the same roof after their father had passed away, the family did tend to cluster and form, by the standards of late 19th century Istanbul, comparatively large household communities. While almost half of Istanbul households

³¹² See BOA, ŞD. 370.34, ek 3 and 5, 15. Kanun II 1305 M (January 27, 1890), for one example.

³¹³ Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count*, pp. 35-36 and Bouquet, “Famille, familles, grandes familles,” p. 203.

consisted of three or fewer individuals in the late 19th century,³¹⁴ the Bedirhani households were considerably larger. Often, brothers shared one home, with younger brothers moving in with older, already married siblings and their families. Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan was the head of a particularly large household, he lived with several wives, concubines and their children. His living situation was regarded as fairly exceptional by the standards of late 19th century Istanbul as well.³¹⁵ The sheer size of the Bedirhani family stood out to their contemporaries and is, to this day, mentioned in most sources on the family. The family was, by any standards, rather big. Emir Bedirhan is said to have fathered a legendary forty sons and forty daughters³¹⁶ – I was able to trace twenty-three sons and eighteen daughters. In the generation of the sons of Emir Bedirhan, the average number of children was 4.5, which was slightly above the Istanbul average at the time.³¹⁷ The family was further divided and structured by the different wives of Emir Bedirhan and their respective children. These branches or factions of the extended family stood close together and shared common interests, sometimes also rivaling with other family branches about resources and influence. One example for these internal divisions, which will be addressed in greater detail throughout the following chapters, was alluded to by Mehmed Salih Bedirhan in his memoirs. He recalled tensions between the children of his own grandmother Ruşen Bedirhan and Ali Şamil Paşa, who had a different mother.³¹⁸ Servants and other dependents were also an integral part of the Bedirhani family: When they left their homeland in Eastern Anatolia and were sent into exile, the Bedirhanis were accompanied by a

³¹⁴ Alan Duben & Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households. Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880 – 1940* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 50.

³¹⁵ For the comparisons, see Duben & Behar, *Istanbul Households*, pp. 50-55.

³¹⁶ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 33 mentions twenty-one sons and twenty-one daughters who survived their father's death in 1868. Altogether, Lütfi claimed that Emir Bedirhan fathered ninety-six children.

³¹⁷ Duben & Behar, *Istanbul Households*, p. 161. While the authors give the average number of children per woman, the Bedirhani family tree is much better documented for the sons of the family, i.e. on the patrilineal side.

³¹⁸ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, p. 37.

number of servants, among them wet nurses and teachers of the Bedirhani children. One of them was the Kurdish poet Hacı Kadir [Hacı Qadirê Koyî] (1815–1897) from Köysancak in Iraq, who was employed as a tutor for the children of the family.³¹⁹ In 20th-century Kurdish nationalist historiography, Hacı Kadir was idolized as an early Kurdish national poet.³²⁰ But the Bedirhani household also had many non-Kurdish members in Ottoman times: Both Emin Ali Bey and Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan, for instance, employed Greek governesses for their children.³²¹ As they were part of the urban elite of Ottoman Istanbul, the Bedirhani family employed numerous servants.³²² Some of them accompanied the family members into exile after the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906.³²³

The boundaries of the household and the residential units of members of the Bedirhani family were not fixed, but exhibited great fluidity. As family members moved across the empire for employment or to do business, they were hosted by their relatives in Istanbul, Damascus or Jerusalem. Traveling family members found accommodation for shorter or even extended periods of time, as the childhood trajectory of Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, who traveled with his grandmother Ruşen and lived with different family members in Istanbul, Syria and the Aegean island of Lemnos throughout the 1880s, aptly illustrates.³²⁴ In times of need,

³¹⁹ Strohmeier & Yalçın-Heckmann, *Die Kurden*, p. 35. According to Celadet Bedirhan, Hacı Kadir was the son of the Kurdish religious scholar Mela Ehmed from Anatolia. Hacı Kadir came to Istanbul to study and eventually also died there in 1912. See Herekol Azizan [Celadet Bedirhan], “Klasikên me. An Şahîr û Edîbên me ên kevin.” In: *Hawar* 33 (October 1, 1941), pp. 6-14.

³²⁰ See e.g. the depiction in Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 114.

³²¹ Kamuran Bedirhan in his autobiographical interview, Joyce Blau, “Mémoires de l’émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan.” In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), p. 79, and Müveddet Gönensay, *Müveddet Gönensay’ın Anıları*, pp. 8-9.

³²² According to Duben & Behar, *Istanbul Households*, p. 50 only 8 % of Istanbul households around the turn of the century had live-in servants. By these standards, the Bedirhanis were part of the urban elite.

³²³ Blau, “Mémoires de l’émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan,” p. 83.

³²⁴ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Âmalım*, pp. 35-40.

family members took relatives in to live with them, as was the case with Dilber Hanım and her children after her husband Kamil Bey Bedirhan went missing in the Russian-Ottoman borderlands in the aftermath of the First World War.³²⁵

While their father had been married four times and had, in addition, kept a number of concubines, most of Emir Bedirhan's sons and grandsons lived either monogamously or with two wives. In doing so, they were in line with the Istanbul average at the time, with most men living monogamously.³²⁶ In this respect, the Bedirhani family underwent an "Ottomanization." An exception that has already been mentioned was Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan. Another area where similar assimilations to norms prevailing within the Ottoman imperial elite can be observed is the choice of family members' places of residence in late Ottoman times. In both Istanbul and in Damascus, the two centers of the Bedirhani family in the late 19th century, family members lived in well-off, recently developed suburban environments. This indicates the social standing and aspirations of the family in late Ottoman society. The family members' neighbors came from diverse ethnic and linguistic background but most of them were, like the Bedirhanis themselves, Ottoman state officials. In spite of the undeniable rupture the First World War and the ensuing foundation of the Turkish Republic represented for the Bedirhani family history, residential patterns of the Bedirhani family members exhibit some continuity. Around the turn of the century, Ali Şamil Paşa lived in a spacious wooden *konak* in the neighborhood of Söğütlüçeşme in Kadıköy, Istanbul.³²⁷ From his house,

³²⁵ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları* (Spänka: Apec, 1994), p. 39, citing from the records of the Bedirhani family meetings in 1920.

³²⁶ Duben & Behar, *Istanbul Households*, pp. 148-149.

³²⁷ Adnan Giz, *Bir Zamanlar Kadıköy (1900 - 1950)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), pp. 134-135 and Müfid Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu. Kadıköy Konakları* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), pp. 378-379.

the train tracks leading away from the Haydarpaşa station could be seen. Among Ali Şamil Paşa's neighbors were the imperial palace jeweler Acemi Hüseyin Efendi,³²⁸ the Mısırlıoğlu family, who were money lenders (*sarrafs*) of Christian descent from Egypt,³²⁹ and the Greek Zamboğlu family.³³⁰ Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan lived thus among well-off and influential Istanbulites. When he was exiled from Istanbul in 1906, his wife continued to stay in their house in Söğütluçeşme. Later, the building was used as a primary school during the Allied occupation of Istanbul until it was finally demolished in the 1930s.³³¹ The plot of land in what is today Misak-ı Milli Sokak in Kadıköy currently hosts the building of the Kızılay Tıp Merkezi.³³² Even after their family home was demolished, at least one of Ali Şamil Paşa's descendants, however, continued to live in Kadıköy into Turkish Republican times: His son Übeyit Şamil [Çınar] had a dental practice there.³³³

Prior to 1906, Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his family also lived in Kadıköy, in a *konak* in the Mühürdar Caddesi. Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan, at the time working in the Yıldız Palace, lived on the European side of the Bosphorus, in the suburb of Şişli around the turn of the century, in a new house within a representative, recently developed neighborhood. Several of his younger, unmarried brothers lived in his household.³³⁴ The descendants of Osman Paşa Bedirhan and his wife Nesrin Hanım owned a house in the Feneryolu neighborhood and continued to live there in early Republican times.³³⁵ Not only the wealthy suburbs of Istanbul, but also the island of Büyükada, popular

³²⁸ Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu*, pp. 348-349.

³²⁹ Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu*, pp. 370-372.

³³⁰ Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu*, p. 376.

³³¹ Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu*, pp. 378-379.

³³² Bilgili, *İstanbul'un Sokak İsimleri*, p. 503.

³³³ Müfid Ekdal, *Bizans Metropolünde ilk Türk Köyü Kadıköy* (Istanbul: Kadıköy Belediye Başkanlığı Kültür Yayınları, 1996), p. 264.

³³⁴ For further information, see the respective chapters 4 and 5.

³³⁵ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürüleri*, p. 168.

with the urban elite of the city in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, attracted some members of the Bedirhani family. Zarife Hanım, a daughter of Emir Bedirhan and wife of Mehmed Arif Paşa Mardin, lived in a spacious *köşk* on the island in 1903, together with her son Ömer Fevzi and the second wife of her husband, Leyla Hanım, along with the latter's children.³³⁶

2.8. Resources to Draw on to Claim Legitimation, Leadership, and Status

Throughout the 19th century, members of the Bedirhani family drew on different resources and had made use of different concepts in describing who they were, where they came from and – most importantly – why others should support or obey them. The homeland of the family in the area of Bohtan, which played an indispensable role in this context, has already been discussed above. Religion, social status and the attempt to write the trajectory and accomplishments of the family into a larger, newly emerging narrative of Kurdish national history are three key areas of such resources to be investigated more closely in the following subsections. These legitimation strategies were subject to changes over time, with some elements gaining prominence while others, notably religion, gradually faded into the background. An interesting contradiction can be observed in this regard: Discernably, imperial strategies of legitimation became outright undesirable as the 20th century proceeded, even though the underlying networks and concepts, notably an imperial background and habitus the Bedirhani family members shared with many, also non-Kurdish, contemporaries continued to work to the advantage of the family. While still being drawn

³³⁶ Tuğlacı, *İstanbul Adaları*, vol. 1, p. 217, also cited by Alakom, *Eski Ystanbul Kürtleri*, p. 45.

on, however, these elements were no longer openly displayed or talked about.

The skills members of the family relied on to generate acceptance for their claims to status and leadership also varied over time, as well as the success family members had in applying different strategies. One example for a skill that was not a prominent concern for the first generation of Bedirhanis in exile but became increasingly relevant in the late 19th century was the ability to voice and shape opinions in the growing sphere of Ottoman print journalism. Members of the Bedirhani family of the second and third generations, prominently among them Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, picked up on these developments and became prolific journalists. These individuals can be regarded as part of a generation of imperial intellectuals which emerged after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and was to shape the developments in the Middle East over the following decades. As members of this generation, some Bedirhanis relied on specific strategies of legitimation, setting themselves apart from a people that was to be educated and enlightened by them.³³⁷ It makes sense to read these developments not limited to the emergence of Kurdish nationalist thinking, but in the broader context of transformations of imperial structures observable within the entire Ottoman imperial elite (and even beyond, as very similar developments and shifts can be traced in the Russian or Hapsburg Empires at the time).

2.8.1. The Role of Religion

Throughout late Ottoman times, an important element of the Bedirhani family's identity was their religious affiliation. They were Sunni

³³⁷ Leyla Dakhli, *Une génération d'intellectuels arabes. Syrie et Liban (1908-1940)* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2009), pp. 7-8.

Muslims, adherents of the Shafi'i *mazhab* and followers of the Nakṣbandiya-Halidiya branch of sufism. While the members of the family themselves were political leaders and not a single family member figured among the sheikhs or 'ulama' of Ottoman times, they enjoyed close connections to the Nakṣbandiya Sufi order and used the extended network of the order to forward the family's interests. Mawlana Halid-i Baġdadi (1779–1827) is credited with having brought the Nakṣbandiya tradition to the Kurdish regions of the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century. There had been Nakṣbandiya orders in Kurdistan before,³³⁸ but only with the return of Mawlana Halid from India did the movement really take root in the Kurdish regions. Mawlana Halid was originally from Şehr-i Zor in the region of Süleymaniye. From there, he was exiled to Baghdad and later, in 1822, to Damascus, in the aftermath of a dispute with the ruling family of Süleymaniye, the Babanzade, and the established religious orders of the Kadiriya tradition, who feared the newcomer's increasing influence and competition.³³⁹ In spite of being exiled, Mawlana Halid attracted thousands of followers during his life time, and his successors (*hulafa'*) were active all over the Ottoman Empire, as well as in Iran, providing the Nakṣbandiya-Halidiya order with an extensive transregional network. Many of the leading protagonists in Kurdish history of the later 19th century had connections to the Nakṣbandiya-Halidiya tradition, prominently among them sheikh Ubaidullah. Sheikh Ubaidullah's father, Seyyid Taha had been a religious advisor to Emir Bedirhan and was apparently involved in the latter's confrontations with the Nestorian Christians.³⁴⁰ The fact that

³³⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, "The Naqshbandi Order in 17th-Century Kurdistan," in: Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone (eds.), *Naqshbandis. Cheminement et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman* (Paris: Isis, 1990), pp. 337-359.

³³⁹ Halkawt Hakim, "Mawlānā Khālid et les pouvoirs," in: Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone (eds.), *Naqshbandis. Cheminement et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman* (Paris: Isis, 1990), pp. 361-370.

³⁴⁰ Joyce Blau, "Le rôle des cheikhs Naqshbandi dans le mouvement national kurde," in: Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone (eds.), *Naqshbandis. Cheminement et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman* (Paris: Isis, 1990), pp. 371-377.

Mawlana Halid was buried in Damascus and that several of his students and family members, among them his wife who was greatly venerated among his followers,³⁴¹ still lived in the city was a decisive factor for Emir Bedirhan to settle in the city during the final months of his life. It was, however, not uncommon at the time to maintain relations to or even be an initiated member of several Sufi orders.³⁴² Religious sheikhs and their families were well-connected among each other, as e.g. the marriage relations of sheikh Abu'l-Huda to the Bedirhani family indicate.³⁴³ The Bedirhanis were followers of the Nakşbandi tradition, while Abu'l-Huda was a prominent leader of the Rifa'iya order.³⁴⁴

Contemporary sources state that the veneration for Emir Bedirhan by his followers was almost religious in character.³⁴⁵ The emir appears to have been a deeply religious man: On his way into exile during the month of Ramadan, he missed out on the ritual fast. In prison in Istanbul, he allegedly meticulously made up for the days he had missed.³⁴⁶ He was, according to an Ottoman account dating to the early 20th century, renowned not only for his qualities as a leader and as a hero on the battle field, but also for his spiritual prowess.³⁴⁷ His rule over the Emirate of Bohtan was remembered as being in complete accordance with the religious sharia law. In one account from the early 20th century, the Emir

³⁴¹ Marie Luise Bremer, *Die Memoiren des türkischen Derwischs Aşçı Dede İbrâhim* (Walldorf: Verlag für Orientkunde Vorndran, 1959), p. 111.

³⁴² Julia Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung im urbanen Kontext am Beispiel von Aleppo (Syrien)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1995), p. 89.

³⁴³ Thomas Eich, *Abū-l-Hudā aş-Şayyādī. Eine Studie zur Instrumentalisierung sufigischer Netzwerke und genealogischer Kontroversen im spätosmanischen Reich* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003), p. 273.

³⁴⁴ Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Sultan Abdulhamid II and Shaikh Abdulhuda Al-Sayyadi." In: *Middle Eastern Studies* 15.2 (1979), p. 131.

³⁴⁵ George Percy Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 2 vols. (London: Joseph Masters, 1852), vol. 1, pp. 305-304.

³⁴⁶ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 53, citing from the testimony of one of Emir Bedirhan's companions.

³⁴⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 11, "kuvvet-i rüĥāniyyesi" is his choice of words.

himself is referred to as a servant of the sharia, “ḥādīm-i şerī‘at.”³⁴⁸ The Friday sermon (*hutba*) was also allegedly read in the name of Emir Bedirhan during his reign in Cizre, a fact that, if true, would have signaled not only his spiritual, but also worldly authority.³⁴⁹ Emir Bedirhan’s sons Emin Ali Bey and Bedri Paşa, both leading figures within the extended family, were particularly renowned for their religious leanings and piety. And Mikdat Midhat Bey Bedirhan claimed in 1898 that members of his family were still venerated as “pirs” or religious authorities in Eastern Anatolia.³⁵⁰

Further indication for the Bedirhani family’s religious prestige and involvement with Sufi circles in Ottoman Syria is provided in a story told about Bedri Paşa Bedirhan: He had an encounter with a snake which exhibits parallels to accounts of religious miracle working (*karamat*) of individuals particularly favored by God.³⁵¹ The story was related by Bedri Paşa’s granddaughter Ruşen Bedirhan as follows:³⁵² At the time when Bedri Paşa was governor of the Hawran region, violent conflict erupted between the Druze and the local Muslim population. To reconcile the opposing parties, Bedri Paşa hosted a lavish dinner for all of them. At the evening of the event, it was noted with some surprise that the host Bedri Paşa ate with his left hand, violating standards of purity and politeness in front of his guests. Only after the meal had ended did it become apparent that Bedri Paşa had caught a snake which had crawled up his leg with his right hand, keeping it in place while his guests were enjoying their dinner. At first glance, the story seems to be about the courage and cool-bloodedness of Bedri Paşa. There is however, an additional level to it: In Sufi tradition, the snake symbolizes the *nafs*, the ego or lower self of the individual which the practitioner attempts to

³⁴⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 13.

³⁴⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 13.

³⁵⁰ “Revue Kurdes et Albanaises.” In: *La revue des revues* (Paris, January 7, 1898).

³⁵¹ Louis Gardet, “Karāma,” in: EI², vol. IV, pp. 615-616.

³⁵² Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, pp. 116-117.

control. A mystic reading of the story thus depicts Bedri Paşa as successfully mastering his *nafs*, thereby attributing qualities of an advanced Sufi to him.³⁵³ Bedri Paşa was not the only one with a snake story attributed to him: A similar account was related about İbrahim Paşa, the son of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt. It allegedly happened during the Egyptian occupation of Beirut, between 1831 and 1840: “When riding over a narrow track covered with roots, a serpent rose up at the feet of his [İbrahim Paşa’s, BH] horse, which was terrified. Servants, who were following on foot, rushed forward to kill it; but Ibrahim waved them from him and with one stroke of his sabre sliced off his head.”³⁵⁴

Another indication for the religious *baraka* that has been attributed to members of the Bedirhani family is the ongoing veneration of Emir Bedirhan’s tomb, situated in the Rukn ad-Din neighborhood in Salihiye, a suburb of Damascus.³⁵⁵ Celadet Bedirhan, who took the German Orientalist Karl Hadank to visit his grandfather’s tomb in 1932, pointed out another grave in close proximity of the burial site of Emir Bedirhan: That of a very prominent Nakşbandi sheikh, whose name, however, is not given in Hadank’s recollection of the visit.³⁵⁶ The sheikh in question is no other than the already mentioned Mawlana Halid, the founder of the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya order. After a life of traveling, he had settled in Damascus in the 1820s and had died there shortly afterwards, to be buried in proximity of the grave of Ibn al-‘Arabi.³⁵⁷ Ibn al-‘Arabi, along with two of his sons, had been buried there since the 13th century,

³⁵³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam* (Aalen: Qalandar-Verlag, 1979), pp. 135-137. See also the interpretation of a dream by Aşçı Dede İbrahim, in which killing a white snake is said to symbolize victory over the lower self, Bremer, *Die Memoiren*, p. 117.

³⁵⁴ Helen Cameron Gordon, *Syria As It Is* (London: Methuen & Co., 1939), p. 4.

³⁵⁵ For the location, see Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 60.

³⁵⁶ See papers of Karl Hadank in Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130, notes dating from November 18, 1932.

³⁵⁷ Hamid Algar, “Reflections of Ibn ‘Arabi in Early Naqshbandi Tradition.” In: *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society* vol X (1991), available online, www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/naqshbandi.html, last accessed July 28, 2016.

adding to the nimbus of the cemetery of Rukn ad-Din, which was also considered a place of sanctity and pilgrimage related to the prophet al-Hizr.³⁵⁸ At the time of Karl Hadank's visit, the tomb of Emir Bedirhan was unadorned, bearing only the customary *fatıha*³⁵⁹ and a brief inscription in Kurdish.³⁶⁰ A number of other prominent figures of the Kurdish nationalist movement, among them Celadet Ali Bedirhan himself, have since been buried in close proximity to Emir Bedirhan's tomb. The religious practice of seeking to be close to a holy person in death was thus translated into a new context of Kurdish nationalism. The early beginnings of the visits of Emir Bedirhan's burial site constituted a veneration of local personality that some contemporaries were willing to attribute the status of a *wali* (pl. *awliya'*, a friend of God) to.³⁶¹ That the tomb is still cared for and visited today is due not to an ongoing religious veneration of Emir Bedirhan but to a successful shift in meaning, embedding it in a Kurdish nationalist historical narrative. Today, the burial site still plays a role as a reference and an actual place of pilgrimage.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 76. The burial site was a place of pilgrimage in the 19th century, Aşçı Dede İbrahim, for example, combined visits to the grave of Mawlana Halid with visiting the shrine of Ibn 'Arabi, see Bremer, *Die Memoiren*, p. 114.

³⁵⁹ The *fatıha* is not mentioned by Karl Hadank, but in Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 61.

³⁶⁰ Hadank recorded the inscription as follows: "Mir-e Çezire ü Bôhtan // Mir Bedir Khan Azizân // Rehmet-a xuadê li sâr-ı wî // ü li sâr-ı malbata wî bit" and translated it as "Der Fürst von Mesopotamien [sic] und Botan / Fürst Bedirhan Azizan / das Erbarmen Gottes sei auf ihm / und auf seiner Dynastie [sic], see NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130, notes dating from November 17, 1932. The inscription is reported in the same way by Malmisanij, quoting Mahmud Lewendi, who is said to have recorded the inscription in Damascus in 1993, Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 280.

³⁶¹ Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung*, pp. 75-77 points out that while there are certain structural requirements for attaining the status of sacredness after death, like the affiliation to an ashraf family, there is no institutionalized process of declaring someone to be a saint in Islam.

³⁶² Possibly anticipating imminent damage in the ongoing civil war in Syria, Adel and Hoşeng Nizâr Nûh and the historian Konê Reş visited the burial site in September 2014, taking pictures and recording the inscriptions in detail. Pictures were published on

Regardless of whether members of the Bedirhani family played an active role in any of the Sufi orders in Ottoman Syria or were merely affiliated to one or several of them, the network of the Sufi orders would have provided them with important links and connections in their immediate surroundings and within the larger province of Ottoman Syria, crossing not only geographical, but also social borders. The Sufi orders provided spaces of encounter for different social classes and ways to reach out to and mobilize rural or tribal populations. Mobilizing people, particularly by getting irregular fighters to the Ottoman battlefields, was one of the things the Bedirhani family had to offer in their bargaining with the Ottoman authorities. Connections through the Sufi orders offer a possible explanation as to how exactly this mobilization would have worked and why Kurdish irregulars would have been willing to heed the call of the Bedirhanis. Different elements, among them nobility status, religious and personal charisma as well as brokering effectively for their clients, providing them with easy access to spoils and other benefits, probably played together. The observation made by 19th-century observers that “the real power in the [Eastern Anatolian, BH] mountains belonged to the shaikhs”³⁶³ underlines that maintaining a connection to local Sufi networks was crucial for the Bedirhanis in that respect. The embeddedness of the Bedirhani family in Sufi networks, however, has so far been completely sidelined in existing scholarship. The more the descendants of Emir Bedirhan had an interest in framing his revolt in 1847 as an early Kurdish-nationalist uprising, the greater their silence about the religious background of the events and – crucially – about their family’s close links to the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya order.³⁶⁴

Sinemxan Bedirkhan’s and Hoşeng Nuh’s facebook pages, attracting a fair amount of reverent comments.

³⁶³ Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, p. 65, quoting from Bertram Dickson, “Journeys in Kurdistan.” In: *Geographical Journal* 35.4 (1910), p. 370.

³⁶⁴ The family’s denial of their Sufi background in the 20th century is mentioned by Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 208.

Looking into the 19th-century history of the Bedirhani family, however, several moments in which connections to Sufi orders played a manifest role become apparent: In the 1840s, when Emir Bedirhan ruled over the Emirate of Bohtan, sheikh Taha of Nehri, a Nakşbandi sheikh, yielded considerable influence over the emir. It was the said sheikh Taha of Nehri who instigated the local Muslim population, leading to an outbreak of violence against local Nestorian Christians.³⁶⁵ Sheikh Taha was the father of sheikh Ubaidullah and grandfather of sheikh Abdülkadir. This already indicates that the connection between the Bedirhani family and the sheikhs of the Nakşbandi tradition was a durable one, even though in the late 19th century, the Bedirhanis and sheikh Abdülkadir were no longer cooperating, but competing for power and influence within the Kurdish community. Already in the Emirate of Bohtan, there is evidence for the presence of sheikhs from the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya order: Close to Cizre, in the village of Besret, a successor of Mawlana Halid, Halid al-Ġazari, had established himself and from there, his teachings and followers had an impact in Cizre³⁶⁶ and beyond, in the surroundings of Mardin and Siirt.³⁶⁷ There are indications that in the mid-19th century, the majority of the population in the area ruled over by Emir Bedirhan were adherents of the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya tradition.³⁶⁸ The Ottoman military tried, in the 1840s, to activate connections to the local Nakşbandi sheikhs who were supporting Emir Bedirhan: The Ottoman governor of Diyarbekir, Hayreddin Bey, himself a member of the Nakşbandiya order, addressed several local sheikhs in Arabic, promising intervention on their behalf

³⁶⁵ Austen Henry Layard, *Niniveh and Its Remains*, 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1849), vol. 1, p. 228.

³⁶⁶ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 336.

³⁶⁷ Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf [19. Yüzyıl]* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), p. 329.

³⁶⁸ BOA, İ.MSM. 50.1266, ek 5, no date. This document was also referred to and transcribed by Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 328. Using religious sheikhs as intermediaries in their dealings with Kurdish leaders was a widely used strategy of the Ottoman authorities, who similarly negotiated with Nurullah Beg, the former Emir of Hakkari, after he was ousted from power and had fled to Iran, Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship*, pp. 59-60.

should they convince Emir Bedirhan to stop his rebellion against the government.³⁶⁹ To no avail, as it seems. Several religious sheikhs from Cizre accompanied Emir Bedirhan into exile in 1847.³⁷⁰

In the second half of the 19th century, when the Bedirhani family lived in Damascus, religious networks continued to play a role in their various interactions. Mawlana Halid had enjoyed the patronage of the local Muradi family when he came to Damascus in the 1820s. His successors and followers continued to receive support from the Muradis. Mawlana Halid's immediate successor as leader of the Damascene Nakşbandiya-Halidiya order was sheikh Muhammad al-Hani from Hama, who was also married to a daughter of Mawlana Halid. He led the order from 1832 to 1860 and was then succeeded by Muhammad al-Hani the younger. After 1860, the prestige and impact of the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya order in Damascus increased, as it became closely associated with Emir Abdülkadir al-Ğaza'iri. The emir had studied with Mawlana Halid when he had undertaken a pilgrimage to Mecca in the 1820s.³⁷¹ Mawlana Halid had a brother, Mahmud al-Sahib, who strongly resented Muhammad al-Hani's influence and coveted the leadership of the order for himself, although he was not much of a prolific scholar and closer to ecstatic Sufi practice. The opposition between al-Hani and the relatives of Mawlana Halid led to a division of the order in the second half of the 19th century. A son of Mahmud al-Sahib maintained close relations to sheikh Abu'l-Huda and his network. Based on the marriage connection between sheikh Abu'l-Huda and the Bedirhani family, it is possible to conjecture that Bedri Paşa Bedirhan and his household in Damascus would have been part of this very network at the time.³⁷² Another glimpse into the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya milieu of Damascus, which Emir

³⁶⁹ BOA, İ.MSM. 50.1266, ek 2, no date. Referred to and transcribed by Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 328.

³⁷⁰ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 32 and 53

³⁷¹ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, pp. 91-92.

³⁷² Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, pp. 96-97.

Bedirhan and later his sons, notably Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, were most likely part of, is provided by Aşçı Dede İbrahim in his memoirs, even though Aşçı Dede İbrahim did not explicitly mention any members of the Bedirhani family among his acquaintances. His recollections contain ample evidence on the interrelatedness of various Sufi orders and the networks of local bureaucrats in Ottoman Syria. Aşçı Dede İbrahim was a follower of the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya sheikh Fehmi from Erzincan. Aşçı Dede İbrahim spent parts of his career as an Ottoman official in Syria, where he benefited from the patronage network of Derviş Paşa (Lofçalı, 1817–1896), which functioned along the lines of Sufi affiliation. His relations to the Nakşbandiya order brought Aşçı Dede İbrahim in connection with other Ottoman officials, among them the *valis* of Syria Mehmed Halet Paşa³⁷³ and Osman Nuri Paşa.³⁷⁴ It can be assumed that Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, who also enjoyed the patronage of Osman Nuri Paşa, would have operated within similar circles.³⁷⁵

For the Bedirhanis in Istanbul, clustered around Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his sons in the early 20th century, the connection to the Sufi milieu was more complicated, as it was increasingly charged with personal tension and rivalry about political leadership. Sheikh Abdülkadir of Nehri emerged as a serious contender for power, as he wielded great influence over the Kurdish population of Istanbul. Elections proved these impressions right: When the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti was at loggerheads about the issue of Kurdish autonomy in 1920 and sheikh Abdülkadir and the Bedirhani family split over these tensions, sheikh Abdülkadir could count on the support of the Kurdish population.³⁷⁶ After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Sufi connections played a

³⁷³ Bremer, *Die Memoiren*, p. 87.

³⁷⁴ Bremer, *Die Memoiren*, p. 115.

³⁷⁵ For details on Bedri Paşa's networking strategies in general and the connection to Osman Nuri Paşa, see chapter 3.

³⁷⁶ Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1989), p. 22.

much less tangible role in the network of the Bedirhani family, not at last due to the crack-down on the Sufi orders in early Turkish Republican times. But even with the Sufi connections playing a less significant role than in Damascus, the early Kurdish nationalist movement in Ottoman Istanbul and notably the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, which counted numerous Bedirhanis among its leading members, continued to rely on religious references to mobilize a following: In 1919, the petitions of the society began with the *basma*.³⁷⁷ The reference to Islam underwent gradual changes as the Kurdish independence movement led by Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in the 1930s reached out to non-Muslims and notably approached the Armenian revolutionary movement for support.³⁷⁸ In the 20th century, as the role of religious legitimation faded more and more into the background,³⁷⁹ members of the Bedirhani family began to appropriate the Nakşbandi tradition as integral part of a Kurdish cultural heritage: In 1941, in an article in the Kurdish journal *Hawar*, Mawlana Halid – in Kurdish now spelled Mewlana Xalid – was counted among the early representatives of Kurdish national literature. It was stated that besides writing poetry in Persian, he might have also penned a number of poems in Kurdish language.³⁸⁰ In another, roughly contemporary essay in *Hawar*, the Bedirhani family's alleged pre-Islamic Yezidi heritage was stressed, putting the Bedirhanis in direct connection with the by then prestigious, allegedly pure Kurdish and Aryan religion.³⁸¹ The 16th-century chronicle *Şerefname* is cited for support, stating that allegedly, the ancestors of the Bedirhani family had been of Yezidi origins before

³⁷⁷ FO 608/95, letter from the Kurdistan Committee to Admiral Calthorpe, British High Commissioner in Istanbul, dated January 2, 1919.

³⁷⁸ See chapter 5 for a detailed discussion.

³⁷⁹ Religious legitimation and prestige did not, however, lose meaning completely within the Kurdish community: Members of the Cemilpaşazade family still proudly pointed out their status as *şeyyids* in the 1930s in exile in Syria, see Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, p. 208.

³⁸⁰ Herekol Azizan [Celadet Bedirhan], "Klasikên me: An şahîr û edibên me en kevin." In: *Hawar* 33 (October 1, 1941), pp. 6-14.

³⁸¹ "Memê Alan." In: *Hawar* 27 (April 15, 1941), p. 15.

they adopted Islam.³⁸² The appropriation of Yezidi heritage by the Bedirhanis and the Kurdish nationalist movement in general, however, was not undisputed. To this day, relations between Yezidi and Muslim Kurds are described as ambiguous and marked by memories of violence and oppression on the part of the Yezidi.³⁸³ The change of emphasis and increasing attention to a distinct Kurdish religion became necessary to set the Kurdish national community apart from their fellow Muslims in Turkey, in particular in the context of intensifying Kemalist politics of forced assimilation in the 1930s.

Marriage patterns show that the family also had a claim to *ashraf* status, that is they were or claimed to be descendants of the prophet Muhammad or of his closest companions. In terms of genealogy, the Bedirhanis traced their origins back to Halid ibn al-Walid, one of the contemporaries and followers of the prophet. In the 19th century, it did not matter to the Bedirhanis that their ancestor would have surely spoken Arabic instead of Kurdish. In a conversation with a French journalist in December 1900, Osman Paşa Bedirhan referred to his father as “Bederham [sic] al-Halidi,” pointing to the relation to Halid ibn al-Walid, which indicated that this ancestry mattered to him at that point in time.³⁸⁴ According to Basile Nikitine, similar references to noble early-Islamic ancestors can be found with other Ottoman-Kurdish notable families as well.³⁸⁵ The family of sheikh Abdülkadir of Nehri, another prominent figure in Ottoman-Kurdish circles in Istanbul in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, also claimed an Arab ancestry.³⁸⁶ The information that the Bedirhani family members were descendants of

³⁸² Cited by Hakan Özoğlu, “Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables,” p. 395.

³⁸³ According to an observation made by Hamit Bozarslan, “Les Yézidis: une communauté kurde atypique.” In: *La Pensée* 335 (summer 2003), p. 149.

³⁸⁴ “Révolte ouverte: Une conversation avec Osman pacha, l’ennemi d’Abdul Hamid.” In: *Le Matin* (December 18, 1900), p. 3.

³⁸⁵ Basile Nikitine, “La féodalité kurde.” In: *Revue du monde musulman* 60 (1925), p. 3.

³⁸⁶ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Ambassade de Constantinople, Situation Intérieur 1903-1913, report dated March 9, 1912.

Halid ibn al-Walid is traced back to the 16th-century Kurdish chronicler Şerefhān and his *Şerefname* in standard historiography.³⁸⁷ It provided Emir Bedirhan and his offspring with an impressive pedigree and placed the family in direct connection with the early history of Islam, adding prestige and a nimbus of piety. This genealogical link was stressed by accounts on the family history dating from Ottoman times, foremost among them Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] in his *Emir Bedirhan*.³⁸⁸ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] also provided the rule of the Bedirhani family in Cizre and the Emirate of Bohtan with historical continuity, claiming that from early-Islamic history onwards, descendants of Halid ibn al-Walid, and thus relatives of the Bedirhani family, had ruled over the Kurdish territories, founding the dynasty of the Azizan.³⁸⁹ From the 1930s onwards, however, this genealogical narrative was increasingly contested by historians and members of the Kurdish community alike. In his memoirs, the Kurdish poet and activist Ciğêrxwîn pointed out rather shrewdly that if one seriously bought into the Kurdish national myth that all Kurds descended from the same ancestors, any link to an Arab early-Islamic ancestor was either outright genealogical fiction or else disqualified those who claimed descend from outside of Kurdish nation from leadership over the Kurdish community. By pointing out this contradiction, Ciğêrxwîn attacked one of the foundations the Bedirhani family based its claim for leadership and special status within the Kurdish community on. From the perspective and political standpoint of Ciğêrxwîn himself, the attack made a lot of sense: He was an avowed

³⁸⁷ Heinrich A. Barb translated parts of the *Şerefname* into German, „Geschichte von weiteren Kurden-Dynastien.” In: *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften Wien* 31 (1859), p. 117: “Durch historische Überlieferung ist zur Gewissheit erhoben, dass die Fürsten Dschezire aus dem Geschlecht der Ommajaden-Chalifen, und zwar von Chalyd ben Welid abstammen.“ An edition of the complete text of the *Şerefname* was provided by V. Véliaminof-Zernof, *Scherefnameh ou histoire des Kourdes, par Scheref, Prince des Bidlis*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1860).

³⁸⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 5-6.

³⁸⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 6.

communist and, over the 1930s, came to increasingly oppose the influence of the old imperial Ottoman-Kurdish notable families.³⁹⁰

2.8.2. Status as (Ottoman-)Kurdish Notables

Still in the 1930s, a difference continued to be made within the Kurdish community between families like the Bedirhanis on the one hand, who had once been among the independent rulers of the Kurdish emirates in Eastern Anatolia and who were, in the words of Ciğexwîn “Kürdistan hanedanlarındandır,”³⁹¹ i.e. among those who belonged to the dynasties of Kurdistan, and Ottoman-Kurdish notable families like the Cemilpaşazades on the other hand, who were part of an urban nobility, but whose ancestors had never ruled autonomously over any part of Eastern Anatolia.³⁹² Within the internal hierarchy of the Kurdish community, the position of their ancestor Emir Bedirhan would have put the Bedirhanis a notch above the politically equally active Cemilpaşazade family and other members of the Kurdish circles of activists like Şerif Paşa. In some sources, the Bedirhanis referred to themselves or were referred to by others as descendants of the Azizan, or Mîrekên Ezizan in Kurdish,³⁹³ a dynasty whose claim to rule over the Emirate of Bohtan allegedly dated back far into history. Seniority constituted an important part of the legitimation of the claims to leadership over the Kurdish community the Bedirhani family brought forward. Into the second half of the 20th century and beyond, they were characterized as one of the oldest Kurdish notable families in Eastern Anatolia³⁹⁴ – mistakenly, as it has been pointed out above. The discourse

³⁹⁰ Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, pp. 215-216.

³⁹¹ Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, p. 215.

³⁹² The difference is clearly made by Ciğexwîn in his descriptions in *Hayat Hikâyem*, p. 208 on the Cemilpaşazade, and pp. 215-216 on the Bedirhanis.

³⁹³ On the title “Mîr,” derived from the Persian *amîr*, see Reuben Levy & John Burton-Page, “Mîr,” in: EI², vol. VII, pp. 87-88.

³⁹⁴ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 13.

about the rule of notable families like the Bedirhanis over villagers and other subjects has been illustratively summarized by Ekrem Cemilpaşa in his memoirs: He recalls that his family owned a number of villages in the surroundings of Diyarbekir in the late 19th century, where cereals and cotton were cultivated on a large scale. These villages, Cemilpaşa continues, were under the benevolent protection (*himaye*) of his family, who ruled with great justice, settled internal disputes and put a stop to disorder and banditry in the region.³⁹⁵ One can imagine that Bedri Paşa Bedirhan would have had something similar to say about his activities and influence in villages he owned in the Hawran region. This discourse of justification of social hierarchy and inequality within the Kurdish community, however, was quickly losing ground after 1908. To qualify as a ruler and community leader, being a successful local strongman was no longer enough. One now had to (also) cite other qualities, among them education. As Ekrem Cemilpaşa's memoirs show, however, several discourses about good governance and being a suitable ruler were overlapping and co-existing.

A key concept for the Bedirhani family to claim and legitimate power and influence over the Kurdish community was the leadership of the *mir*. Larger federations of several Kurdish tribes have in the past been headed by *mirs* – the Bedirhanis tried to lay claim to this tradition, by referring to their ancestors as the *Mirs* of Bohtan and by projecting these claims into the present and future: Members of the family, notably the brothers Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, were referred to and identified themselves with the Kurdish honorary title “*Mir*” well into the 20th century. Into the second half of the 20th century, Kamuran Bedirhan, living in exile in Paris after 1948, was addressed with this title, thus establishing a link between his own political ambitions and a tradition of leadership over the Kurdish community going back to his ancestors.

³⁹⁵ Ekrem Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım. Kemalizme Karşı Kürt Aydın Hareketinden Bir Yaprak* (Ankara, Beybun Yayınları 1992 [1989]), p. 14.

This indicates that the status and prestige that came from being part of the Kurdish nobility continued – and to no small extent still continue – to matter. However, referring to the Bedirhani brothers as “princes” or *mirs* also came to be sort of a litmus test for the stance an individual took towards the Bedirhani family: Supporters of a Kurdish monarchy, or at least of a prominent role of the Bedirhani family in a future Kurdish state, continue to use the title ostentatiously. Celadet Bedirhan’s daughter Sinemxan is thus introduced as a Kurdish princess in current discussions on the future of Kurdistan.³⁹⁶ Critics of the family, often standing further left on the current political spectrum than the Bedirhani supporters, on the other hand, would deliberately avoid references to the alleged nobility of the family when talking about family members.

Other indicators of the family’s status among the leading Ottoman notables include the extensive family genealogy. The Bedirhanis were able to ensure that their family history, the outline of their genealogy,³⁹⁷ along with crucial events and details, down to the exact numbers of children and marriages of their ancestors, were recorded and remembered not only by themselves, but are until this day also transmitted by others outside of the family. This is in itself already significant and indicative of the Bedirhani family’s elevated social status. A villager in 19th-century Ottoman Syria would have been expected to be able to recall the family history and achievements of the landowning family he was a dependent of rather than to be able to trace back his own family history.³⁹⁸ In addition to transmitting information about the

³⁹⁶ See for one example “Kurdistan irakien: Rencontre avec Sinemkhan Bedirkhan, princesse kurde,” reportage aired in French on TV5 monde, February 6, 2015, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFgVxoF9Coc> for the footage, last accessed July 27, 2016.

³⁹⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 8 cites the family genealogy back to the seventh generation prior to the advent of Emir Bedirhan himself.

³⁹⁸ Michael Gilson, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches. Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 53.

family history, the Bedirhanis were able to record and preserve representations of themselves, and in some instances their belongings in the form of well-staged photographs, posing for example in front of one of the family's stately mansion in Istanbul. In the late 19th century, posing for photographs like this and thereby owning and narrating one's history through images would have been reserved for the political and social elites of the empire. It would have been an activity through which existing status was recorded and reproduced, but also a resource to generate and renew claims to an elevated place within the social hierarchy.³⁹⁹

In an Ottoman account praising the deeds of Emir Bedirhan, he is described as a virtuous and exceptionally courageous, heroic figure.⁴⁰⁰ Boasting, challenging one's opponent and giving an impression of absolute fearlessness were strategies his descendants continued to rely on to claim leadership and social prestige in Ottoman society: In December 1900, Osman Paşa Bedirhan declared publicly in London that he intended to kindle an large-scale uprising in Eastern Anatolia, thereby directly challenging the authority of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Osman Paşa made a point of coming across undaunted by the risks entailed and excessively confident of his success. Such "rhetorics of power" are strategies the social anthropologist Michael Gilsenan has analyzed with regard to 20th-century Lebanon, concluding that these are central ways to claim authority and leadership.⁴⁰¹ For Emir Bedirhan and his descendants, a related and equally important element of the legitimation of his claim to power was the ability to give copiously to those in need among their followers. For Emir Bedirhan, this meant chiefly to be able

³⁹⁹ Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches*, p. 61.

⁴⁰⁰ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 11, a repeated formula being "şeğā'at ve besālet," bravery and heroism.

⁴⁰¹ Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches*, p. 29.

to supply his followers with large amounts of weapons.⁴⁰² It was more difficult for his descendants in exile to live up to such standards of largesse, as their funds were much more restricted. Still, part of the prestige and social standing of the sons of Emir Bedirhan was their ability to distribute resources – like paid employment or access to the imperial authorities – among their supporters.⁴⁰³ These patronage politics became significantly more difficult as the 20th century proceeded: After the collapse of the empire, it was not easy for members of the Ottoman-Kurdish elite to hold on to their fortune and property. As they were persecuted by the Kemalist regime because of their involvement with Kurdish nationalism, their fortunes were being targeted and their bank accounts were being frozen. A contemporary and fellow activist of the Bedirhanis, Ekrem Cemilpaşa recalls in his memoirs how he was able to hold on to a part of his father’s fortune by means of a ruse after the latter’s death in the late 1920s: Cemilpaşa secretly transferred the money from Istanbul to a bank in Rome and from there on to Aleppo for his family to touch it, before the Kemalist authorities noticed and could lay hands on the account.⁴⁰⁴ Ekrem Cemilpaşa’s recollections suggest that it would have been equally difficult for members of the Bedirhani family to bring the entire family fortune or even only large parts of it out of the country in the 1920s.

2.8.3. Claims and Counterclaims About Kurdish Identity

How did Emir Bedirhan think about himself and his trajectory during his life time? Did he think of himself as a “Kurd,” and if so, what did he understand by that? Evidence pertaining to this questions is so scarce that it is impossible to fully answer it. However, a statement by Emir

⁴⁰² Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 13.

⁴⁰³ Chapter 3, focusing on Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, will zoom in on that point in greater detail.

⁴⁰⁴ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 79.

Bedirhan which was published in the Ottoman *Takvim-i Vekayi* after his defeat by the Ottoman military in 1847 provides a starting point for further deliberations: Very likely, the statement was prepared by the Ottoman authorities for the emir. It is thus unclear where, if at all, his own voice shines through in the text. At the very least, however, the passages commenting on the identity of the emir reflect the Ottoman understanding of the uprising in the mid-19th century when he states or is cited as having stated as follows: “Biz dađ adamı olduđumuz için itimat edemezdik,⁴⁰⁵ because we are men of the mountains, we were not able to obey. Geographical disparity and an ensuing difference of lifestyle, along with sheer distance from urban, state-controlled areas were cited here as markers of difference and separate identity. Any reference to an ethnically or nationally defined Kurdish identity, imagined as separate from the Ottoman imperial framework did not play a role yet. Links between the history of the Bedirhani family and Kurdish national history were, as it has been laid out above in greater detail, a phenomenon which only became prominent from the early 20th century onwards.

In the post-war period after 1918, an ethnically defined Kurdish family heritage became something to claim for oneself and to deny one’s opponents to delegitimize their political claims. Some Ottoman bureaucrats, prominently among them Şerif Paşa, rediscovered their Kurdish origins in changing political circumstances. Others, among them Mahmud Bey, the leader of the Kurdish Milli tribe, denied the Bedirhani family’s right to rule over a future Kurdish state, arguing that they were not really of Kurdish origins.⁴⁰⁶ Quite possibly, members of the Bedirhani family took a stance against such allegations, stressing the Kurdish elements in the family’s history and downplaying the

⁴⁰⁵ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 20 Za 1263, also cited by Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 247.

⁴⁰⁶ FO 608/95, Col. Woolley, “The Kurdish nationalist movement,” report dated June 6, 1919.

connection to protagonists of early Islamic and Arabic history as such claims and counterclaims were expressed with vigor.

A problematic point in this regard for the Bedirhani family was their long absence from the Kurdish areas of the Ottoman Empire and their difficulties to converse in Kurmancî Kurdish. The blueprint of nationalist ideology, which was swiftly adopted by Kurdish (and, likewise, Albanian and Arab) associations in Istanbul around the turn of the 20th century, accorded a privileged place to language as a marker of national identity. In the Kurdish case, the realities on the ground were much more complex: Many of the Ottoman-Kurdish notables in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities, notably Damascus, were hardly able to communicate in Kurdish. The younger generation of the Bedirhani family was no exception.⁴⁰⁷ On the other hand, it was observed that in Eastern Anatolia, Kurmancî Kurdish was a *lingua franca* spoken not only by Kurds, but also by local Armenians and Nestorian Christians, to the point that, according to one report from 1919, “[t]here are in fact in parts of Kurdistan Armenians who know no other language but Kurdish.”⁴⁰⁸ An article from 1909, published by a certain Erzincanlı Hamdi Süleyman in the *Kürd Te’âvün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, veered into a similar direction:⁴⁰⁹ Pointing out the need for education of the Kurdish communities, especially in Anatolia, the author demanded that investments should be made to establish schools, dispatch qualified teachers and devise textbooks. Erzincanlı observes that not all Kurds (“ekrâd”) in fact spoke Kurdish (“Kürtçe”) exclusively or at all: He described linguistic characteristics not as fixed markers of ethnic difference, but as related to social and geographical conditions. While

⁴⁰⁷ In 1919, Kamuran Bedirhan was described by Major Noel as not knowing any Kurmancî Kurdish, E. M. Noel, *Diary of Major E.M. Noel, C.I.E., D.S.O., on Special Duty in Kurdistan from June 14th to September 21st, 1919* (Basra: Government Press, 1919), p. 55.

⁴⁰⁸ FO 608/95, Noel, “Notes on the Kurdish Situation,” report dated July 18, 1919.

⁴⁰⁹ Erzincanlı Hamdi Süleyman, “Kürdistân’da ma’ârifin tarz-ı tensik ve ihyâsı.” In: *Kürt Te’âvün ve Terakki Gazetesi* 8 (Muharram 1, 1327 M [January 24, 1909]).

Kurds who spoke both Turkish and Kurdish tended to be found in the larger Ottoman cities and district centers, those who spoke only Kurdish tended to live in the countryside (“*qarāda*”). Erzincanlı went on to argue that it made much more sense to invest into an Ottoman Turkish education for the young generation of Kurds and backed up his idea with several arguments: First, there were simply not enough resources, not even a standard grammar or dictionary available in Kurdish, and it would simply take too long to come up with all of these resources before even beginning to teach the children. Second, he argued that a sound knowledge of Turkish as the “*lisān-ı ‘umūmī-yı ‘uṣmānī*,” the Ottoman *lingua franca*, came in handy when one was to communicate with the state authorities, understand orders and communications or go through military service. Fluency in Ottoman Turkish, in other words, was indispensable once one tried to be part of the empire and was the way to knowledge and advancement. It can be assumed that Erzincanlı’s article summarized an approach to linguistic difference that was more or less mainstream prior to the First World War among the readers of the *Kürd Te’avün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, that is among the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual community of Istanbul to which members of the Bedirhani family also belonged.⁴¹⁰

Kurdish as a unifying language, as evidence for the existence of Kurdish national identity and marker of being part of this community, however, became increasingly important after the First World War. In his memoirs, Ekrem Cemilpaşa stressed that during his childhood as a scion of a prominent Kurdish notable family in Diyarbekir in the early 1900s, he learned to speak flawless Kurdish from the locals, and that long before he studied Ottoman Turkish or any European language. Mentioning his fluency in Kurdish, Ekrem Cemilpaşa implicitly lashed

⁴¹⁰ Ayhan Işık, “Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi (1908-1909).” In: *Kürt Tarihi* (Ağustos/Eylül 2013), pp. 46-49 mentions Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan among the founders of the journal.

out against the Bedirhani family and their ambitions to leadership within the Kurdish community, making a claim to purer, unadulterated Kurdish origins for himself and his own family. In doing so, he communicated a strong message about being Kurdish – and implicitly disqualified some of his contemporaries and fellow nationalists, among them the Bedirhani brothers Celadet and Kamuran.⁴¹¹ In Ekrem Cemilpaşa’s account, proficiency in Kurdish language appears as a cipher for Kurdish national consciousness more generally: Later in his account, he went on to relate that in the Kurdish villages around Diyarbakir, he did not only pick up the language from the locals. He also claimed that his national feelings (“milli hislerini”) took root during his childhood years among Kurdish villagers.⁴¹²

To counter such claims, history and western scholarship emerged as powerful tools for members of the Bedirhani family. A general strategy to back up such claims to Kurdish (national) identity can be traced in Süreyya Bedirhan’s attempts to convince the British government to support the foundation of a Kurdish state in 1918: To provide evidence for the far-reaching national history of the Kurds in Anatolia, he fell back on European scholarship and cited a definition and ensuing historical overview which the *Grande Encyclopédie Française* offered under the entry “Kurdistan.” The encyclopedia stated, according to Süreyya Bedirhan’s reading, that Kurdistan had already been inhabited by the Kurds since times immemorial.⁴¹³ Western scholarship on Kurdish and, more particularly, Bedirhani family history, had a decisive impact on how family members positioned themselves and communicated thoughts about their identity. For the immediate family history, the work

⁴¹¹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 12. However, Ekrem Cemilpaşa himself chose to write his memoir not in Kurdish, but in Ottoman Turkish. It was transcribed into Latin characters for the publication.

⁴¹² Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 15.

⁴¹³ FO 608/95, Süreyya Bedirhan to Reginald Wingate, British High Commissioner in Egypt. Cairo, letter dated December 16, 1918.

of the German Orientalist Martin Hartmann on the Emirate of Bohtan is of importance, and it was eagerly read by Celadet Bedirhan, who cited it in a conversation with Karl Hadank in the 1930s.⁴¹⁴ In the late 19th century, the descendants of Emir Bedirhan showed themselves interested in their family's history: Helmuth von Moltke had met Emir Bedirhan in the late 1830s when he toured Anatolia as an adviser to the Ottoman military, prior to the emir's revolt against the Ottoman Empire and ensuing defeat. In February 1886, Moltke answered a letter he had received from Emin Bey Bedirhan,⁴¹⁵ one of the sons of Emir Bedirhan. The original request was not preserved, but it can be reconstructed from Moltke's response that Emin Bey had asked him about the military activities of his late father. Friedrich Niewöhner, who published the exchange between Moltke and Emin Bey, assumed that the reason why Emin Bey had contacted Moltke was that he had lost contact with his father after the Battle of Nizip in 1839 and was now making inquiries about his whereabouts.⁴¹⁶ Knowing, however, that Emin Bey would have been exiled together with his father in 1847 and continued to be in touch with him until his death in Damascus in 1868, his request appears in a different light. Emin Bey Bedirhan was busy piecing together an account of his family's history and the achievements of his father. He perceived his father to be an agent in historically significant events, whose activities were worth recording and backing up with external sources. Other members of the Bedirhani family were also aware of the connection between Emir Bedirhan and Helmuth von Moltke: In his plea for asylum to the Russian ambassador in Istanbul dating from 1910,

⁴¹⁴ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160.

⁴¹⁵ Friedrich Niewöhner, "War der Kurdenfürst Bedir-Khan-Bey an der Schlacht von Nisib beteiligt? Ein unveröffentlichter Brief des Generalfeldmarschalls Helmuth von Moltke." In: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 133 (1983), pp. 134-144. Niewöhner reads the name of the recipient as "Mehmed Emir Bey Efendi." This individual is almost certainly Mehmed Emin (also known as Emin Ali Bedirhan), the father of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, as Moltke's response letter was addressed to Sivas, where Mehmed Emin Bey was employed in the judicial administration at the time, see his *sicill-i ahval* in BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.430.

⁴¹⁶ Niewöhner, *War der Kurdenfürst*, p. 136.

Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan equally mentioned Helmuth von Moltke as a reference in his summary of the family history.⁴¹⁷

As members of the Ottoman elite, the Bedirhanis had priority access to modernity.⁴¹⁸ Proficiency in European languages, the experience of extensive travel, and an education in high-ranking Ottoman institutions and even in Europe were at their disposal. The scions of different Ottoman-Kurdish notable families appear to be in an outright competition, stressing how modernity and liberal views allegedly dated far back in the histories of their respective families: In his memoirs, Ekrem Cemilpaşa for instance underlined repeatedly that in his family, education had always been a priority not only for male members of the family, but also for girls.⁴¹⁹ After 1908, members of the Bedirhani family continued to thrive as they were able to turn their access to modernity and respective resources into political and economic advantages. Over the early 20th century, a new element became apparent in the discourse about legitimization and status of members of the Bedirhani family: Being an intellectual, and educator and teacher to the community, out on an honorable mission to civilize and enlighten. This status, like all the other elements of legitimization discussed here, was not uncontested: The Kurdish poet and activist Ciğerxwîn, himself of humbler, rural origins, recalled being on the receiving end of this civilizing mission. He was, however, quite aware that the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals condescendingly perceived the likes of him as uneducated hillbillies. He remembers with bitterness how he felt patronized and belittled by them.⁴²⁰ On the other hand, Ciğerxwîn felt that many of the Kurdish

⁴¹⁷ Bedirhan, *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 12.

⁴¹⁸ Bouquet, "Famille, familles, grandes familles," p. 196.

⁴¹⁹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 11.

⁴²⁰ Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyetim*, p. 214. His account is focused on his encounters not primarily with the Bedirhanis, who also belonged to his circle, but with another avowed intellectual of Syrian Kurdish circles, Nouredine Zaza.

intellectuals (his primary example is Nouredine Zaza) were painfully out of touch with real life.⁴²¹

3. First Generation of Bedirhanis in Exile: Ottoman Bureaucrats and Local Strongmen

The following chapter addresses two related questions: First, drawing on the example of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, it sets out to conceptualize the Ottoman province of Syria in the late 19th and early 20th century not as the scene of unfolding Arab nationalism, but as an Ottoman and an Ottoman-Kurdish space. The bulk of the existing literature on the provincial history of Ottoman Syria has focused on the trajectories of Ottoman-Arab actors, their life worlds and political involvement. A key argument of my thesis is that the Ottoman dimension in the history of the Bedirhani family cannot be ignored. As it will be discussed in a later chapter, this assumption draws attention to the numerous continuities in the family history between Ottoman and post-imperial contexts. Less obvious but equally interesting is a second consequence of thinking about historical actors of Kurdish origins like the members of the Bedirhani family as an integral part of the Ottoman imperial world. As such, these Kurdish actors were located not only at the institutional or geographical margins of the imperial state, but also at its very core, as members of the Ottoman state bureaucracy. Trajectories of members of the Bedirhani family emerge as interesting case studies of such Ottoman-Kurdish bureaucrats, involved in the administration of the province of Syria, as they facilitate a shift in perspective, allowing to see Ottoman Syria as an Ottoman imperial – rather than Arab and proto-national – space.

⁴²¹ Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, p. 214.

Second, focusing on the first generation of members of the Bedirhani family in exile and their active involvement with the Ottoman state means to engage critically with existing historiography on the family and the Ottoman-Kurdish community at large. Countless traces of family members' imperial careers can be found in contemporary Ottoman and European archival sources. These findings, however, have so far rarely found their way into the scholarly discourse, where studying the Bedirhani family history too often means to limit one's focus to their role in the emergence of the Kurdish nationalist movement. The following chapter takes issue with this perspective, illustrating that the trajectories of family members throughout the late Ottoman period cannot be analyzed as a mere prelude to Kurdish nationalism. Instead, they are interesting in their own right, exhibiting traces of loyalties, ambitions and ideas about identity and belonging contingent to the late Ottoman context. By first generation in exile, I understand the sons and daughters of Emir Bedirhan, whose trajectories I follow in this chapter until roughly 1908. In the first part, my focus is on the complex relations between the family and the Ottoman state authorities. The second part contains detailed case studies of the careers of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in Ottoman Syria and Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan in Istanbul. Other members of the first generation of the family in exile are brought in for comparison.

3.1. Relations to the Ottoman State

Emir Bedirhan requested to be allowed to settle in Damascus towards the end of his life, as he preferred to be close to the community and the burial site of Mawlana Halid. As his request was granted, his extended family accompanied him to Ottoman Syria. Emir Bedirhan passed away shortly after the family's arrival in Damascus. His descendants swiftly assimilated into the local elite and made themselves at home in Ottoman

Syria, by means of marriage, investments in land ownership and employment in the local administration. While the Bedirhanis were negotiating with Ottoman state authorities, trying to advance their interests and to improve their financial situation, many of them were at the same time themselves an integral part of the Ottoman state administration. It is important to keep in mind for the following discussion that no neat differentiation between Bedirhanis on the one hand and “the Ottoman state” on the other hand can be made.

It is striking that rather than breaking up the extended Bedirhani family and leaving them to their own devices, far from their former homeland in Cizre and cut off from their networks of supporters, the Ottoman authorities chose to settle the entire family in one place and, in addition, provided for them through *maaş* payments and employment in the Ottoman administration. This is exceptional, as there are numerous examples of the Ottoman state adopting a different, much more adamant stance against Kurdish tribal and religious leaders in the east of the empire during the same time period. While more or less benevolent throughout, the Ottoman state’s policy towards the members of the Bedirhani family did not remain static. It was continuously modified and adapted to changing political circumstances. One of the most visible shifts occurred in the spring of 1906, when members of the Bedirhani family were suspected of being involved with the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, the prefect (*şehremini*) of Istanbul. These events will be the subject of a subsequent chapter. Likewise, the members of the Bedirhani family conceptualized their relations to the Ottoman state differently, depending on the political context. In one late Ottoman account sympathetic to the Bedirhani family, their lot following the murder of Rıdvan Paşa was compared to the history of the Barmakids, the influential advisors and ministers of the Abbasid caliphs, who spectacularly fell from grace during the reign of caliph Harun ar-Rashid

in the early 9th century.⁴²² Later, in the emerging Kurdish nationalist historiography of the 20th century, the role of the family within the imperial system was ignored. The Bedirhanis were now invariably presented as antagonists of the Ottoman state, as freedom fighters in opposition. Also, views on the relations to the Ottoman state differed among individual family members, some of whom were active in the opposition against Sultan Abdülhamid II while others thrived under his rule, benefiting from his patronage.

By sending the Bedirhani family into exile in 1847 and thereby distancing its members from their homeland and area of influence in the Emirate of Bohtan, the Ottoman authorities followed an already established pattern: Rebellious local leaders were regularly exiled to the Ottoman capital, where it was easier to keep an eye on them. Following this logic, Mir Muhammad, leader of a Kurdish tribe from Rawanduz, had been sent into exile in Istanbul ten years prior to the Bedirhani family.⁴²³ Nor were the Bedirhanis the last Kurdish leaders to be treated this way: In 1880, sheikh Ubaidullah was brought to Istanbul to live there in exile after he had led a rebellion in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands.⁴²⁴ While local leaders were exiled, Kurdish tribal populations in Eastern Anatolia and the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands became the target of Ottoman centralization politics, displacement and forced settlement.⁴²⁵ Arguably, both the more repressive Ottoman policy towards Kurdish tribes and the more lenient attitude adopted towards the Bedirhani family and other Kurdish leaders originated in the context of Ottoman state centralization in the second half of the 19th century.

⁴²² Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, Istanbul, no date, pp. 4 and 45.

⁴²³ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State. The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London et al.: Zed Books, 1992 [1978]), pp. 176-177 and Rohat Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2011 [1998]), pp. 42-43.

⁴²⁴ Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands. Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), pp. 220-221.

⁴²⁵ For examples from Ottoman Iraq, the Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890 – 1908* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 100-101.

Both can be read as reactions to various local challenges to these centralization policies. The question remains, however, why the Ottoman authorities chose to make concessions to the Bedirhani family, treating its members with more consideration than the average Kurdish strongman in exile.

3.1.1. Bedirhanis as Middlemen and Broker Personalities

One possible explanation as to why the Ottoman state had no intention to completely eliminate the Bedirhani family was that it benefited from or in some way depended on their cooperation and mediation. In the 1850s, one area in which the Ottoman state was in dire need for support was sheer manpower.⁴²⁶ A number of notables and local strongmen pulled together irregular troops to back up the Ottoman war efforts, notably against Russia in the Crimean War 1853–1856⁴²⁷ and in subsequent armed conflicts. There is evidence that senior members of the Bedirhani family led troops of Kurdish irregular fighters, notably during the campaigns in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878. In other words, the Bedirhanis were useful to the Ottoman state in their role as mobilizers of Kurdish irregulars. Bedri Paşa, Hüseyin Kenan Bey, Bahri Paşa and Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan, for example, each reportedly mobilized several thousand Kurdish volunteers for the Ottoman war effort against Russia in 1877/78.⁴²⁸ Bedri Paşa gathered followers in Ottoman Syria, Hüseyin Kenan Bey in the areas around Adana, Bahri Paşa in Ottoman Kurdistan and Ali Şamil Paşa in Istanbul.⁴²⁹ Still at the

⁴²⁶ An argument made by Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870. An Empire Besieged* (London et al.: Routledge, 2013 [2007]), pp. 1-17.

⁴²⁷ Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2010), pp. 52 and 154-155 notes how the irregulars or *başıbozuk* constituted a formidable problem for the Ottoman military, as they were difficult to keep in check, did not shy away from plundering on the Ottoman side if their payments and rations were not forthcoming and were also prone to deserting.

⁴²⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 36.

⁴²⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 36.

outbreak of the Balkan Wars, Murad Bey Bedirhan called on the Kurds of the empire to die for the Ottoman fatherland.⁴³⁰ Relying on the Bedirhani family's support in the mobilization of irregular fighters, the Ottoman state was caught up in a serious dilemma: Activities related to gathering volunteers for the Ottoman war effort brought the Bedirhanis in close contact with the Kurdish populations of the eastern part of the empire and allowed them to maintain their networks of supporters within the former Emirate of Bohtan. These ongoing connections enabled a number of family members throughout the late Ottoman period to return to their former homeland and challenge the Ottoman authorities by trying to reestablish the family's power and autonomous rule there.

All the volunteers Bedirhani family members were able to recruit were Kurds. That they were drawn together not only in the Kurdish areas of Eastern Anatolia but from across the Ottoman Empire was a result of 19th-century Ottoman resettlement policies targeting nomadic tribes. Suat Dede has chosen the example of the Kurdish Reşwan tribe⁴³¹ to study the processes of tribal settlement initiated by the Ottoman state from the mid-19th century onward.⁴³² The Reşwan tribe is of particular interest for my investigation of the links between the Bedirhani family and the tribal milieu of Anatolia, as there is evidence that contacts between the Bedirhanis and sections of the Reşwan tribe continued throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. When the British Major Noel toured Eastern Anatolia in the summer of 1919 in the company of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, one of the local Kurdish tribes they visited were the Reşwan, described by Noel as a rather large tribal group

⁴³⁰ *L'Humanité* (Paris), October 2, 1913, p. 4: "Le chef kurde Mourad Bederkhan a publié un appel invitant les Kurdes à mourir pour la patrie."

⁴³¹ Also spelled Reşvan, Rişvan or Rişvan in different sources. I opted for the Kurdish spelling here.

⁴³² Suat Dede, *From Nomadism to Sedentary Life in Central Anatolia: The Case of the Rişvan Tribe*, MA thesis, Bilkent University Ankara, Department of History, 2011.

of 4.000 to 4.500 families living in the mountains south of Malatya and led by Hacı Bedir Ağa.⁴³³ In 1919, Halil Bey Bedirhan, an uncle of Celadet and Kamuran, had been appointed as district governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Malatya, giving the family an opportunity to intensify existing connections to local tribes like the Reşwan. Suat Dede's work analyzes the history of the Reşwan tribe, whose members had lived as nomads in the areas between Maraş, Malatya, Adana and northern Syria in the 18th and early 19th centuries, as a target of Ottoman settlement politics from the mid-19th century onwards.⁴³⁴ While sections of the tribe stayed in their original homeland in Eastern Anatolia,⁴³⁵ other sections were settled by the state in the region of Haymana in Central Anatolia, not far from Ankara.⁴³⁶ I cite the trajectory of the Reşwan tribe extensively because a decisive factor which contributed to an ongoing influence of members of the Bedirhani family among the Kurdish tribal population were Ottoman imperial politics of displacement and forced settlement of Kurdish tribes throughout the empire. As tribes like the Reşwan, which originated in the homeland of the Bedirhani family in Eastern Anatolia, were divided and moved across the empire in the wake of Ottoman settlement politics, the Bedirhanis in exile maintained access to their former networks. Even as family members were banned from entering Eastern Anatolia, they were able to uphold communications with Kurdish tribal milieus. As Ottoman settlement politics unfolded over an extended period of time and individuals continued to go back and forth between their old homelands and newly assigned areas of settlement, it was virtually impossible for the Ottoman

⁴³³ Major Noel, Noel, E.M., *Diary of Major E.M. Noel, C.I.E., D.S.O., on Special Duty in Kurdistan from June 14th to September 21st, 1919* (Basra: Government Press, 1919), pp. 23-24 and 29.

⁴³⁴ Dede, *Nomadism to Sedentary Life*, pp. 41-44.

⁴³⁵ A fact overlooked by Dede, but documented in the reports of Major Noel, *Diary of Major E.M. Noel*, p. 20.

⁴³⁶ Dede, *Nomadism to Sedentary Life*, pp. 41 and 46, indicating that by 1848, five hundred households of the Reşwan tribe had been settled in the region of Haymana.

state to isolate members of the Bedirhani family from their former tribal followers.

Officially, however, members of the Bedirhani family remained banned from Eastern Anatolia throughout the late Ottoman period. While such an explicit ban to return to their former homeland was fairly exceptional, there was also a more general tendency in the Ottoman imperial administration to prevent the employment of officials in the administration of provinces where they had family origins. Avlonyalı Ferid Paşa (1851–1914), who later became grand vizier, was promptly recalled from a post in the Albanian district of Durres, when it emerged that his family was from there. Sultan Abdülhamid II did not approve of the appointment under these circumstances, generally preferring his officials to be deployed far from their homelands.⁴³⁷ The policy towards the Bedirhani family was in tune with this general attitude: Prior to the First World War, no family members were appointed to posts anywhere in Eastern Anatolia.⁴³⁸

Beyond the mobilization of Kurdish irregular fighters, there are further examples illustrating the role of members of the Bedirhani family as intermediaries between the state and the Kurdish community: Larger cities in the Ottoman lands like Istanbul⁴³⁹ and Damascus were home to

⁴³⁷ Abdülhamit Kırmızı, “Experiencing the Ottoman Empire as a Life Course: Ferid Pasha, Governor and Grandvizier (1851–1914).” In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40.1 (2014), p. 51.

⁴³⁸ Ottoman documentation on the career of Necib Paşa Bedirhan makes this policy explicit: When a suitable appointment for him in the imperial administration was needed for him in 1895, an *irade* insisted that he should under all circumstances be sent to a post where no Kurdish population resided (“Kürd bulunmayan mahall dâhilinde olmak üzere münâsib bir me’mûriyet”), BOA, İ.HUS. 43.34, 07 Ca 1313 H (October 26, 1895).

⁴³⁹ It is difficult to estimate the number of Kurds in the Ottoman capital, as they were in the Ottoman census counted as Muslims and not registered as a separate community, Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 11. Kemal Karpat suggests that in the late 19th century, around five thousand Kurds lived in Istanbul, Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population (1830-1914)* (Madison, Wis.: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 104. Due to seasonal migration of workers, this number could have been much higher.

sizeable Kurdish communities. Some of their members had settled permanently in these cities, others came and went as migrant workers, seeking seasonal employment or accompanying flocks of sheep to be sold in the capital.⁴⁴⁰ The Bedirhani family presumably had some influence over this community, as is illustrated by Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan's ability to order members of the Kurdish community of Istanbul to murder the prefect Rıdvan Paşa in 1906.⁴⁴¹ After the First World War, Kurdish notables like the Bedirhanis and sheikh Abdülkadir attempted to enlist the support of the Kurdish community, largely consisting of dock workers and porters for their political program.

Remarkably, for more than fifty years after Emir Bedirhan had been defeated, the Ottoman state preferred appeasement and co-optation to outright confrontation in its dealings with his descendants. During the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the policy of reliance on Kurdish notables as brokers who were able to mobilize and control Kurdish populations continued, albeit under slightly different circumstances: Rohat Alakom argues that while most of the porters of Istanbul's harbors prior to the Hamidian massacres of the 1890s had been of Armenian descent, Sultan Abdülhamid II then saw it fit to exchange these Armenian porters for Kurdish migrant workers.⁴⁴² This step can be read in the larger context of Abdülhamid II's policy towards the Ottoman-Kurdish community. In his memoirs, the sultan wrote that he made a conscious effort to rely more on Kurds, as they were fellow Muslims and thus supposedly more loyal, than on Armenians as his officials and servants.⁴⁴³ With privileges

⁴⁴⁰ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 36 and Florian Riedler, "The Role of Labour Migration in the Urban Economy and Governance of Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," in: Ulrike Freitag (ed.), *Urban Governance Under the Ottomans. Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 145-158.

⁴⁴¹ See chapter 4.

⁴⁴² Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 35.

⁴⁴³ Abdülhamid II., *Siyasi Hatıratım* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1975), p. 52. One example for this shift from Armenian to Kurdish servants is mentioned by Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 73: In the late 19th century, the Armenian fire brigade responsible for the Yıldız palace was dismissed and replaced with Kurdish firefighters.

and the generous payment of monthly allowances, the Ottoman government attempted to assure the loyalty of the leaders of the Ottoman-Kurdish community. Members of the Bedirhani family directly benefited from this policy. The Hamidiye regiments founded among the Kurdish tribes of Eastern Anatolia in 1891 and the opening of the *'aşiret mektebi*, a school for the sons of Arab and Kurdish tribal leaders in Istanbul in 1892, constituted another aspect of Abdülhamid II's policy towards the Ottoman-Kurdish community.

Religious communities and especially Sufi orders constituted an important vector through which links were created between incoming Kurdish migrants, the urban Kurdish communities in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities, and Ottoman-Kurdish notable families like the Bedirhanis. Crucial for the Bedirhani family was the network of followers of the Nakşbandiyya-Halidiyya order, to which Emir Bedirhan had adhered. The order had numerous followers in Damascus and also in Istanbul.⁴⁴⁴ Abdülvahab Susi and Abdülfettah Akri (el-Bağdadi) were the leading representatives of the Nakşbandiyya-Halidiyya tradition in Istanbul in the mid-19th century. Abdülfettah Akri presided over the Alacaminare *tekke* in Üsküdar.⁴⁴⁵ Among their successors in Istanbul in the late 19th century were Abdülhakim Arvasi (1864–1943), *imam* at the Sultan Ahmed Mosque under Sultan Abdülhamid II,⁴⁴⁶ and his nephew Mehmed Şefik Arvasi (1884–1970), who led the most important *tekke* and center of the Nakşbandiyya-Halidiyya order in Istanbul during the last years of the Ottoman Empire, located in the Koca Hüsrev Paşa Külliyesi

⁴⁴⁴ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 36-38. Alakom mentions that there were almost one hundred Nakşbandiyya *tekkes* in Istanbul in the late 19th century.

⁴⁴⁵ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁶ Arvasi was a follower (*halifa*) of sheikh Ubaidullah. He was originally from Arvas (Erwas) near Van, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 331 and Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 37 and 103. Other prominent sheikhs of the Nakşbandiyya-Halidiyya tradition with Kurdish origins in Istanbul included Mehmed Es'ad Erbili, Abdullah Fevzi from Muş and Bitlisli Abdülbaki Küfrevi.

in Eyüp.⁴⁴⁷ While many of these sheikhs and their followers belonged to the Kur-dish community, the order also facilitated links into others parts of the Ottoman society.

The pattern according to which members of the Bedirhani family acted as middlemen and brokers to mobilize and control large parts of the Kurdish community continued, with some alterations, from the mid-19th into the 20th century. Even in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906, the comparatively lenient Ottoman policy towards the Bedirhani family continued. No members of the family were executed, and initial death penalties were converted to long prison sentences. Regarding the family's relations to the Ottoman state, it is the year 1908 rather than 1906 which stands out as a decisive turning point: With the rise to power of the CUP after 1908, the Ottoman state policy concerning the Bedirhani family underwent fundamental changes. Having failed to co-opt representatives of the family as supporters of the CUP in Eastern Anatolia and realizing that members of the family were pursuing personal goals in the region, the CUP turned against the Bedirhanis. When Hüseyin Bey Bedirhan ran in the 1912 parliamentary elections in Siirt on the ticket of the Liberal Entente party (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası) in opposition to the CUP candidate, he received death threats and was forced into hiding.⁴⁴⁸ In May 1914, Süleyman Bey Bedirhan, who had been touring the provinces of Eastern Anatolia to mobilize local support for a return of his family to power together with several of his brothers, was ambushed and killed by Ottoman government troops.⁴⁴⁹ After fifty years in exile and at times rocky relations, this was the first time that the Ottoman state had gone so far as to physically eliminate a member of the

⁴⁴⁷ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 37. Mehmed Şefik Arvasi had been involved with Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles in the early 20th century, he is listed as a member of the Kurdish student association *Hêvî* in 1912, see Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti. İlk Legal Kürt Öğrenci Derneği* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2002), p. 56.

⁴⁴⁸ Kaiser, *Extermination of Armenians*, pp. 87-88.

⁴⁴⁹ Kaiser, *Extermination of Armenians*, p. 108.

Bedirhani family. Even though Süleyman Bey, as one of the younger sons of Emir Bedirhan, was not a prominent political actor, the consequences for the family were grave: On the one hand, they found themselves publicly embarrassed and lost prestige among their supporters, having been unable to protect one of their family members. The death of Süleyman Bey Bedirhan was a defeat in the competition between the central state and the Bedirhanis over power in Eastern Anatolia. On the other hand, the fact that the Ottoman authorities had gone so far as to kill an uncooperative relative convinced other family members to reconsider their options in 1914: Hasan Bey Bedirhan, for instance, made his peace with the Ottoman authorities, declaring himself ready to leave Eastern Anatolia, and accepted a position in the government of another province.⁴⁵⁰ He thus tried to fall back on the rules of the social contract that Bedirhanis and the Ottoman state had played by ever since the late 1840s: As long as the Bedirhanis stayed away from Eastern Anatolia, integration and even success within the Ottoman bureaucracy were possible.

3.1.2. Relations to the Ottoman State from an Economic Perspective

From his early years in exile from Eastern Anatolia until his death, Emir Bedirhan remained on the payroll of the Ottoman state.⁴⁵¹ After an initial period of great misery in Crete, during which the family depleted its last resources until they were unable to support themselves any longer, the Ottoman *meclis-i vala* ruled in January 1849 that an appropriate monthly allowance (*maaş*) should be accorded to the family

⁴⁵⁰ Kaiser, *Extermination of Armenians*, p. 112.

⁴⁵¹ Hakan Özoğlu reads this as evidence for the fact that the emir had been loyal to Ottoman interests throughout his reign in Cizre, Özoğlu, "'Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables," p. 398.

members.⁴⁵² Over the following years, it was unclear even to Ottoman officials involved in the case whether the payment was granted as a sort of charity or as compensation in return for property the Bedirhani family had left behind when they were exiled from Cizre. It was also unclear whether the allowance was awarded to Emir Bedirhan personally – and would thus be terminated after his death – or extended to the entire family, and thus inheritable and meant to continue for an undetermined period of time.⁴⁵³ That the legal situation of the former landholdings of the Bedirhani family in Cizre and its surroundings was ambiguous added to the uncertainty about the status of the *maas*: Some contemporary experts claimed that the property had been seized illegally after the departure of the family, and that Sultan Abdülmecid himself had been among the beneficiaries of the spoils.⁴⁵⁴ An opposing faction argued that the land had initially been state-owned (*miri*) before it had illegally been seized by Emir Bedirhan. It was therefore not illegal, but on the contrary absolutely necessary to return these lands to the Ottoman state. The case Emir Bedirhan could make to prove his legal ownership of the land was, in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities, further weakened by the fact that he was unable to provide title deeds for the properties in question.⁴⁵⁵

After some initial confusion, it eventually became accepted within the Ottoman administration that the money was being paid in compensation for the property the family left behind after they were

⁴⁵² Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 114.

⁴⁵³ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 162-164, drawing on a communication between the grand vizier and the Ottoman Ministry of Finances in the matter, BOA, A.MKT.NZD. 203.13, 03 Ra 1273 H (May 15, 1857).

⁴⁵⁴ See Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 104-107, who speaks of “*müsadere*,” i.e. seizure or confiscation.

⁴⁵⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 109, quoting from Emir Bedirhan’s letter contained in BOA, İ.DH. 436.28798, 01 N 1275 H (November 13, 1859). That he did not possess any title deeds does not necessarily mean he acquired the land illegally – but it is an indicator that the emir was not (yet) well-versed in Ottoman legal discourse, or else he would have seen the query for written proof of ownership coming.

exiled from their homeland. The payments were referred to as “bedel-i emlāk,” paid in exchange for confiscated property, “emlāk-ı mazbūtasına muķābıl” in Ottoman documents and by contemporary observers around the turn of the century.⁴⁵⁶ Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the Ottoman authorities repeatedly failed to pay this allowance on time.⁴⁵⁷ One source stated that the allowance amounted to 19.000 *kuruş* a month.⁴⁵⁸ Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan recalled a similar amount of 180 *lira* paid every month, to be divided among all family members.⁴⁵⁹ Accounts sympathetic to the Bedirhani family pointed out that the payments were largely insufficient and certainly no match for the wealth and vast amounts of property Emir Bedirhan and his family had lost in 1847. The annual income of six salt mines in the surroundings of Cizre owned by the Bedirhani family alone was said to amount to six million *kuruş*, and the number of live-stock left behind reportedly exceeded 20.000 animals.⁴⁶⁰ Eventually, the allowance came to be regarded as hereditary. The ongoing negotiations about the distribution, adjustment and redistribution in the event of the death of a family member created a considerable amount of red tape in the archives of the Ottoman Ministry of Finance (*maliye nezareti*).⁴⁶¹ Both sons and daughters of Emir Bedirhan were considered for allowance payments. Not only Emir Bedirhan’s direct offspring, but also his brother Salih and the latter’s

⁴⁵⁶ Lütü, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 27.

⁴⁵⁷ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 222-225.

⁴⁵⁸ BOA, ŞD. 370.34, ek 1, 28 B 1315 H (December 23, 1897) and also Lütü, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 27, who speaks of 20.000 *kuruş* per month.

⁴⁵⁹ Abdurrezzak Bedirhan, *Otobiyografya*, transl. Hasan Cunî (Istanbul: Perî Yayınları, 2000), p. 22.

⁴⁶⁰ Lütü, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 27.

⁴⁶¹ The usual procedure seems to have been to divide the allowance among the wife or wives, the children and other surviving family members of the deceased, with the amounts allocated to each individual decreasing in the process. This course of action was taken after the death of Hüseyin Kenan Bey in 1911 and also after the death of his brother Midhat Paşa in 1912, see BOA, BEO. 4270.320195, 16 M 1332 H (December 15, 1913, for Hüseyin Kenan Bey) and BOA, BEO. 4371.327822, 31 L 1333 H (September 12, 1915, Midhat Paşa). For an example from the second generation in exile, see the case of Ali Şamil Paşa’s daughter Nadide: After her death, her husband, but also her mother and siblings received shares of her allowance, BOA, BEO. 4374.328013, 07 Za 1333 H (September 17, 1915).

children received *maaş* payments.⁴⁶² After the death of Emir Bedirhan, the allowance was distributed among his surviving children – not in equal parts but according to their age: One of the eldest sons,⁴⁶³ Mehmed Necib Bey, was allotted the highest amount of 2.500 *kuruş*. All the emir's daughters received the same amount, 200 *kuruş* each, which was the smallest amount distributed.⁴⁶⁴ In addition to the more or less regular *maaş* payments, other grants, lump-sum payments and privileges were accorded to family members by the Ottoman state: In 1857, Emir Bedirhan and some of his older children received gratifications worth an equivalent of several thousand *lira*.⁴⁶⁵ Throughout late Ottoman times, family members were awarded decorations, medals and other gratifications, bestowed in an attempt to keep them dependent on and loyal to the empire.

The arrangement of the *maaş* payments, however, was not uncontested: A group of younger siblings, who found the distribution of the allowance to be to their disadvantage, pressed the Ottoman state to open up renegotiations in the late 1890s. They pointed out that when their older brother Necib Bey had secured an overly large share of the allowance for himself after the death of their father, they had been minors, too young to intervene on their own behalf. They deplored that Necib Bey had wronged them and demanded a new, fairer redistribution of the allowance.⁴⁶⁶ Another faction of the Bedirhani family, however, contested these claims for redistribution: In a telegram addressed to

⁴⁶² On Salih Bey, see BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 408.25, 30 M 1285 H (May 24, 1868).

⁴⁶³ The first-born son of Emir Bedirhan, Hamid Bey, was at a disadvantage in the competition for leadership within the family, as he suffered from an eye condition which left him practically blind. Necib Bey (later Necib Paşa), the second son, took over the role of the head of the family after his father's death. Karam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 67.

⁴⁶⁴ For the entire list with details on the sums paid to each individual, see BOA, ŞD. 370.34, no date.

⁴⁶⁵ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 32 mentions 5.000 *lira* paid to Emir Bedirhan and 1.000 for each child, in addition to several presents (*hedaya*) and 25.000 *kuruş* worth of travel expenses.

⁴⁶⁶ See BOA, ŞD. 370.34, ek 1, 28 B 1315 H (December 23, 1897) for a petition incriminating Necib Paşa, signed by (illegible), Ahmed Midhat, Kamil, Abdurrahman, Hasan, Hüseyin, Maryam and Zarife Bedirhan.

both the grand vizier and the Ottoman Ministry of Justice early in 1890 from Damascus, a number of female members of the Bedirhani family spoke out in favor of the existing arrangement.⁴⁶⁷ This is particularly surprising because women were among the family members most disadvantaged by the existing arrangement. The second petition thus added complexity, pointing to the internal divisions within the family. Some of these fault lines become clearer once we look at the position of the women who signed the second petition and defended the existing arrangement which favored the most senior sons over other family members: Rewşen Bedirhan, a wife of Emir Bedirhan, was actually the mother of several of the older sons of the emir. In other words, she was closely related to the very people who greatly benefited from the existing arrangement. Rewşen's son Bedri Paşa, for instance, was entitled to a monthly allowance of 1.000 *kuruş*. He likely mobilized his mother, his sister Sariye and other female members of his own household to intervene on his behalf and defend the existing arrangement.

Parallel to these internal disputes within the family, the entire arrangement of the *maaş* payments was also contested externally, in ongoing discussions with the Ottoman authorities. In 1308 H [1890/91], the descendants and heirs of Emir Bedirhan appealed to the Ottoman Council of State (*şura-yı devlet*), challenging the existing arrangement and claiming a complete restitution of their family property. The Council of State disagreed and issued an imperial decree (*irade*) which denied the Bedirhanis any claims to their former property.⁴⁶⁸ It was specified that the Bedirhani family members received the *maaş* payments as a compensation for their belongings and landed property which had been confiscated by the state in 1847. The Ottoman authorities had come to similar arrangements with other former ruling families from different

⁴⁶⁷ For the telegrams from Damascus, dated 13 Kanun II 1305 M (January 25, 1890), signed by Rewşen, Fatma, Sariye and Zeynep, see BOA, ŞD. 370.34, ekler 3 and 5.

⁴⁶⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 27.

localities throughout the empire, among them the Kurdish ruling family of Palu, but also once autonomous notable families of non-Kurdish origins, like the descendants of the former governors (*beylerbeys*) of Tripolis in Libya.⁴⁶⁹ Paying these kinds of allowances thus seems to have been part of a general Ottoman policy of appeasement towards formerly autonomous rulers throughout the empire from the second half of the 19th century onwards.

Over the years, members of the Bedirhani family referred to their legal claims to state support repeatedly, to the extent that it became a principal field in which they negotiated their relation to the Ottoman state. Even though they argued about the distribution of resources within the family, family members also acted collectively as they addressed the Ottoman authorities, signing collective petitions to increase their leverage. Inadvertently, by assigning allowances on the basis of an individual's belonging to the collective of the Bedirhani family, the Ottoman administration thus inspired close and ongoing cooperation among the family members. Working together provided the Bedirhani family with a network and a model for cooperation to draw on in the early 20th century, when the family voiced its demands for compensation in front of an international audience, following the end of the First World War. Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan, later one of the spokesmen of Kurdish demands for greater autonomy after the war and head of the Bedirhani family in Istanbul around 1920, had emerged already as a key figure in the negotiations with Ottoman state authorities about the distribution of the allowance payments.⁴⁷⁰ Receiving an Ottoman state allowance was a way to sustain oneself and make a living that differed from previous experiences of the Bedirhani family and, crucially,

⁴⁶⁹ Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, *The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in the Kurdish Periphery: The Politics of Land and Taxation, 1840 – 1870* Diss., Binghampton State Univ. of New York, 2011, pp. 83-84.

⁴⁷⁰ See BOA, ŞD. 370.34, ek 2, no date: Emin Ali Bey, acting in the name of his siblings, asked the Ottoman authorities to speed up the process of revising the *maaş* distributions.

required an entirely new set of skills. The ongoing negotiations about the allowance payments exercised competencies like being able to access key players within the Ottoman bureaucracy, to communicate demands effectively and in accordance with the existing bureaucratic lingo and discourse and to activate alternative channels to further one's interests. Networking skills in particular became a crucial asset. Some members of the Bedirhani family adapted to these new circumstances swiftly and rather successfully, recognizing the new opportunities at hand. This also had an impact on the internal power dynamics within the family, where not necessarily the most senior sons of Emir Bedirhan, but often the best communicators emerged as heads of the family around the turn of the century, the example of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan has already been cited above. It can be argued that the drawn-out process of negotiating the allowance payments constituted a means of Ottomanizing the Bedirhani family, forcing them to translate their interests and ambitions into a discourse about property and ownership rights commonly understood in the imperial framework.

The outlines of an unwritten social contract between the Bedirhani family and the imperial authorities become tangible in moments of dissatisfaction with the arrangement of the allowance payments: Whenever descendants of Emir Bedirhan clandestinely returned to their former homeland, as it happened repeatedly throughout the late 19th century, they reasoned that they were compelled to do so to sustain themselves, as the *maaş* payments were not sufficient. A pay raise or an offer for a lucrative position in the imperial administration would then help to change their minds and convince them to return peacefully to the capital. For members of the Bedirhani family, defying the official ban and leaving for their homeland in Cizre was therefore not dissimilar from strategies members of the Young Turk opposition used around the same time: During the Hamidian period, a number of opposition members went into exile in Europe to attack the Ottoman sultan from

there, but were often ready to return and cease their attacks when offered an amnesty in combination with a satisfactory sum of money by the Ottoman government.⁴⁷¹ The Bedirhanis' escapes to Cizre can similarly be read as attempts to obtain a more profitable bargaining position in their dealings with the state authorities. This strategy worked well for Hüseyin Bey Bedirhan: Out of work and short of money after the end of the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877/78, he made his way into Anatolia, to the great displeasure of the Ottoman authorities.⁴⁷² Hüseyin Bey readily returned two years later, when he was finally offered a well-paid position in the imperial administration in Istanbul.⁴⁷³

As the Bedirhani family grew and children of Emir Bedirhan married and started their own households, the original *maaş* of 19.000 *kuruş* was not raised. It now had to be divided among an increasing number of heirs and heiresses. As the money was not sufficient to provide for all family members, it was a logical consequence for the sons of Emir Bedirhan to enter the Ottoman civil administration and military and seek well-paid positions and advancement there. The *maaş* payments continued until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. It is unclear whether the payments were suspended between 1906 and 1908, while family members were persecuted and tried in the context of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa. There is evidence, however, that even the descendants of

⁴⁷¹ Both Abdullah Cevdet and İshak Sükuti, for instance, were ready to leave Geneva and cease their activities within the Young Turk opposition in 1899 in exchange for employment in the Ottoman Foreign Service, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor. The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905 – 1926* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 1984), p. 16.

⁴⁷² Some accounts claim that Hüseyin Bey was accompanied by his brother Osman Paşa. With the support of several thousand local supports, the two brothers are said to have conquered their ancestors' castle in Erüh, where they barricaded themselves to wait out the Ottoman counter attack, until they were ultimately defeated and deported to Istanbul, see Burkay, *Geçmişten Bugüne Kürtler*, pp. 370-371.

⁴⁷³ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 39-40 and also Hüseyin Kenan Bey's *sicill-i ahval* BOA, DH.SAİD. 1.245, stating that in 1297 H (1879/80), after two years of unemployment, he was appointed as a member of the *şehremanet meclisi* in Istanbul, touching a monthly salary of 2.500 *kuruş*.

Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan, one of the main suspects in the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa, continued to receive their share of the *maaş* payments into the early 1920s.⁴⁷⁴

3.2. Collective Outlooks and Internal Divisions

The Bedirhani family often appears as a fairly homogeneous collective entity in Ottoman administrative discourse. The discussion of the allowance payments in the previous section has hinted at possible explanations for this particular perspective. In spite of these collective renderings, not all members of the Bedirhani family shared identical interests. Instead, various splits and different factions can be traced within the family. Representatives of the Ottoman state, however, continued to assign a collective identity to all family members throughout the late Ottoman period. This led to rather paradoxical situations, one of which is apparent in the biography of Mehmed Salih Bey, a son-in-law of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan: After the outbreak of the First World War, he had declared himself an Ottoman patriot, eager to defend the empire against Russia. The Ottoman state, however, did not trust him to join the fighting in the Caucasus, doubting his loyalties on the basis of collective suspicions against his family.⁴⁷⁵

Mehmed Salih's renderings of the incident in his memoirs remain rather vague. He recalls that it was difficult for him to obtain permission

⁴⁷⁴ BOA, BEO. 4717.353706, 09.06.1338 M (June 9, 1922) provides detailed instructions from the Ottoman Ministry of Finance as to how the share of the allowance of Ali Şamil Paşa's deceased son Kadri Bey was to be divided among the latter's mother Sa'adet Hanım, his half-sister Mahmure Hanım and his half-brother Abdullah Bey.

⁴⁷⁵ I am repeating parts of an argument here that I made in an essay on Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, Barbara Henning, "A Passionate Ottoman in late 19th Century Damascus: Mehmed Salih Bedirhan's Autobiographical Writing in the Context of the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani Family," in: Martin Aust & F. Benjamin Schenk (eds.), *Imperial Subjects. Autobiographische Praxis in den Vielvölkerreichen der Romanovs, Habsburger und Osmanen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2015), pp. 233-254.

to go anywhere near the Ottoman-Russian border because of “trouble” stirred up at the time by his cousin Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan.⁴⁷⁶ What Mehmed Salih failed to mention in his recollections, but what can be reconstructed from writings from and about Abdürrezzak Bey is that the latter had interpreted the outbreak of the war quite differently from Mehmed Salih: He saw it as an opportunity not to defend but to finally rid himself of his connections to the Ottoman state, hoping for greater Kurdish autonomy under Russian protection and a chance to advance his own influence in Eastern Anatolia.⁴⁷⁷ It comes as no surprise then that the name Bedirhan raised red flags when Mehmed Salih Bey asked to be transferred to the Caucasus front, of all places, to fight the Russians there. The Ottoman administration of the very empire Mehmed Salih Bey felt so passionate and patriotic about doubted his loyalties. Ultimately, he was not given permission to join the Ottoman forces in the Caucasus. A comparative perspective demonstrates that this was because he was a member of the Bedirhani family, not because he was an Ottoman-Kurd: While members of the Bedirhani family were kept away from the eastern front, other Ottoman officers with Kurdish backgrounds were fighting in the Caucasus. One prominent example was Ekrem Cemilpaşa (1891–1974), member of an influential Kurdish notable family based in Diyarbakir, who was active in Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles in the early 20th century and later became one of the heads of the Kurdish independence movement in exile in Syria in the 1930s.⁴⁷⁸ The different standards applied in the case of Mehmed Salih Bey and Ekrem Cemilpaşa, respectively, indicate that in 1914/15, the Ottoman state’s perception of imminent unrest and possible secession in Eastern Anatolia was not yet colored by an exclusively ethnic

⁴⁷⁶ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â’malım*, pp. 87–88.

⁴⁷⁷ Michael Reynolds, “Abdürrezzak Bedirhan: Ottoman Kurd and Russophile in the Twilight of Empire.” In: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12. 2 (2011), p. 442. Abdürrezzak Bedirhan’s trajectory, along with his activities in the Ottoman-Russian borderlands will be the focus of chapter 4.

⁴⁷⁸ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables*, pp. 103–107 and Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 22, who states that he, along with two of his uncles, was deployed to the Caucasus front in 1914.

understanding of the conflict lines. There was, in principle, still room for passionate Ottomans of Kurdish background – but anyone whose cousins were blacklisted as troublemakers in the Ottoman government records raised suspicions. Mehmed Salih Bey's frustrated attempt to volunteer for the Caucasus front conveys an idea of how identities were not only claimed and negotiated by individual actors like Mehmed Salih, but at the same time assigned by the state and society at large. The two sides did not always overlap.

Particularly since the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906 and, as the predicament of Mehmed Salih Bey has illustrated, well beyond the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II and into the Second Constitutional Period, the Bedirhani family was perceived and treated by the Ottoman authorities as a homogeneous, monolithic entity with assumed common interests and strong internal solidarities. However, this should not obscure the fact that internal divisions existed between different factions and interest groups within the family at all times. In late Ottoman times, parts of the Bedirhani family had established close relations to sheikh Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadı, an intimate advisor to Sultan Abdülhamid II and eminent religious authority. Sheikh Abu'l-Huda was related by marriage to a faction of the Bedirhani family around Bedri Paşa and Osman Paşa Bedirhan.⁴⁷⁹ Other branches of the family, however, were wary of sheikh Abu'l-Huda and moved closer to one of his principal rivals in the palace, Tahsin Paşa.⁴⁸⁰ In his memoirs, Mehmed Salih Bey Bedirhan also alluded to some of these internal divisions: The brothers Bedri, Osman and Bahri Paşa Bedirhan were characterized as supporters of sheikh Abu'l-Huda, while another faction around Hüseyin Kenan Bey Bedirhan was described as strongly opposed to his influence. The relation to the

⁴⁷⁹ Thomas Eich, *Abū-l-Hudā aṣ-Şayyādī. Eine Studie zur Instrumentalisierung suftischer Netzwerke und genealogischer Kontroversen im spätoomanischen Reich* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003), pp. 208-210.

⁴⁸⁰ Eich, *Abū-l-Hudā aṣ-Şayyādī*, p. 209.

sheikh provoked heated arguments between different members and factions of the Bedirhani family.⁴⁸¹ According to Mehmed Salih Bey, the confrontation escalated when Ali Şamil Paşa physically attacked sheikh Abu'l-Huda in his own home, accompanied by his brothers Hüseyin Kenan and Halid Bey.⁴⁸²

However, a simple dichotomy of two opposing camps cannot sufficiently explain the complex internal dynamics within the Bedirhani family: There were those who stood with sheikh Abu'l-Huda, and there were others who sided with his rivals in the Ottoman palace circles. A third faction within the Bedirhani family, however, was critical of the entire system: They also opposed sheikh Abu'l-Huda, not on the grounds of palace intrigue (only), but because they more generally condemned his, and by extension Sultan Abdülhamid II's, authoritarian and reactionary politics. This critique found an expression in articles written by Abdurrahman and Mikdat Midhat Bey Bedirhan for the journal *Kürdistan* which they edited and published in Egypt and later in Switzerland in the 1890s.⁴⁸³ Twice in 1898, Abdurrahman Bey addressed the sultan in open letters in his journal, accusing sheikh Abu'l-Huda of scheming against his family and persecuting some of his relatives. Abdurrahman Bey urged the sultan to rethink his trust in the sheikh, whom he vituperated as an undeserving and mean parvenu, and support members of the Bedirhani family like Ali Şamil Paşa instead, who have proven themselves loyal to the empire and the sovereign, risking their lives in the wars against Russia. While the Bedirhani family's noble descent and standing are emphasized in the article, sheikh Abu'l-Huda

⁴⁸¹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 41-42, mentioning tension between his uncles Osman Paşa and Hüseyin Kenan Bey in particular.

⁴⁸² Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 48.

⁴⁸³ *Kürdistan* 6 (28 Eylül 1314 M), open letter from Abdurrahman Bedirhan to Sultan Abdülhamid II, and *Kürdistan* 7 (23 Tışrin-i Sani 1314 M), *arzuhal* from Abdurrahman Bedirhan, again addressed to Sultan Abdülhamid II.

is scorned as an upstart without any pedigree to speak of, called a descendent of gypsies (“kībīy’ül-neseb”).

It is insightful to return to the events which unfolded in 1906, in the aftermath of the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa, with these hypotheses and initial clues about the internal factions within the Bedirhani family in mind: Former opponents of sheikh Abu’l-Huda, among them prominently Ali Şamil Paşa, but also Mikdat Midhat and Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan received severe punishment and were imprisoned.⁴⁸⁴ This is particularly striking in the case of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, who was not involved in the murder at all and had only recently returned from an extended stay in Europe. The names of Bedri and Osman Paşa Bedirhan, on the other hand, did not figure on the list of main suspects brought to trial in Libya. Incidentally, the branch of the family around Bedri and Osman Paşa, who were punished comparatively mildly in 1906, also represented the partisans of sheikh Abu’l-Huda within in the Bedirhani family. It seems thus entirely possible that persecution of members of the Bedirhani family in 1906 differed according to the wider network of patronage individuals belonged to. Osman Paşa Bedirhan was employed in the Ottoman administration in the province of Tripolis, Libya at the time of the trials in 1906 and was eventually allowed to stay there, even though under close surveillance, when his arrested family members arrived.⁴⁸⁵ Bedri Paşa, who was a member of the Ottoman Council of State in Istanbul in 1906, lost his job and was exiled to the island of

⁴⁸⁴ See BOA, Y.A.HUS. 501.108, for a list of those punished in 1906. Abdurrahman Bey was imprisoned in Fezzan in Libya, Mikdat Midhat Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa were sent off to Ta’if in Yemen. Neither Bedri Paşa nor Osman Paşa figure on this list.

⁴⁸⁵ Osman Paşa Bedirhan was ultimately removed from Libya but was allowed to settle in relative comfort in Aleppo, where his family enjoyed long-standing connections, in particular into the patronage network of sheikh Abu’l-Huda, BOA, Y.MTV. 285.18, 04 S 1324 H (April 19, 1906). He continued to be employed in the Ottoman military until the Constitutional Revolution. In 1909, however, his imminent promotion to the rank of a *kolağası* was stalled for political reasons, BOA, MV. 133.67, 18.09.1325 M (December 1, 1909).

Rhodes with members of his household,⁴⁸⁶ by comparison a rather comfortable place of exile. He was later allowed to return to Damascus, where he had dependable personal connections going back to his first employment in the Syrian provincial administration in the 1870s.

3.3. Bedri Paşa Bedirhan – an Ottoman Bureaucrat in Syria

Bedri Paşa Bedirhan is an example for a successful Ottoman bureaucrat in the first generation of the Bedirhanis in exile. From the 1880s onwards, he was a key authority figure within the Bedirhani family in Damascus, as well as a prominent player in Syrian provincial politics. His example illustrates the argument that over the late 19th century, members of the Bedirhani family, with their strategies, ambitions and outlooks for their future, were deeply rooted in an imperial framework. His trajectory also demonstrates that to succeed as imperial bureaucrats, actors like Bedri Paşa Bedirhan also came to rely on their background and influence over certain groups within the Ottoman population, in his case the Kurdish community in Ottoman Syria.

While Bedri Paşa Bedirhan did belong to the ruling elite of the Ottoman province of Syria in the late 19th century and was recognized as such by contemporary observers,⁴⁸⁷ historians of Ottoman Syria and the subsequent French mandate period have largely failed to include him or the Bedirhani family in general into their analyses. Standard historiography of the Syrian lands over the late 19th and early 20th centuries has instead tended to focus on the trajectories of local notable

⁴⁸⁶ Bedri Paşa was banned to the island of Rhodes in 1906 and stayed there until 1908, free to move as he pleased on the island but without receiving a salary. After the Constitutional Revolution, he was allowed to return to Istanbul and was reemployed in the Ottoman administration, see BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448.

⁴⁸⁷ See a list of important Syrian notables, MAE-Paris, CPC Consulat Damas, vol. 15, Nr. 9, dating from March 6, 1889, which puts Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in the second of three categories of decreasing importance.

families of Arab origins and their involvement in the emergence of Arab nationalist thinking and politics.⁴⁸⁸ Kazem Daghestani's *Études Sociologiques sur la Famille Musulmane Contemporaine en Syrie* (1932) provides an early example of a scholarly approach by a Syrian author in which "Kurdish" matters already appear as neatly separated from "Sunni Muslim" identity and politics in Syria. Syrian-Kurdish identity in Ottoman Syria of the type incorporated by the Bedirhanis in the late 19th century has no place in Daghestani's work and the wider discourse it represents.⁴⁸⁹

An attempt to reconstruct Bedri Paşa Bedirhan's career and life world in Ottoman Syria can thus ideally serve a double purpose: Not only does it broaden the story told about the Bedirhani family by shedding further light on its crucial Ottoman imperial dimension, it also helps to achieve a more nuanced understanding of developments in Ottoman Syria, bringing in historical actors of non-Arab origins. It makes sense to consider Bedri Paşa's activities in Ottoman Syria through different lenses. After a brief summary of what is known about his biographical trajectory, I suggest three perspectives, focusing first on how network politics in the province of Syria affected his room for maneuvering and opportunities, but also brought about restrictions. Second, I explore how Bedri Paşa's individual career path and the interests of the wider

⁴⁸⁸ Neither Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983) nor Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics. Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985) mention the Bedirhani family in their studies on Syrian notable families.

⁴⁸⁹ Kazem Daghestani, *Études Sociologiques sur la Famille Musulmane Contemporaine en Syrie* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1932), pp. 4-5: "Enfin, nous avons achevé notre description par l'étude du phénomène considéré chez des groupes musulmans allogènes: Tcherkesses, Kurdes et Turkmènes. De tels groupes n'entrent pas dans le cadre de notre travail que dans la mesure où ils vivent replés sur eux-mêmes, en conservant leurs coutumes et leurs traditions intactes. (...) Par contre, nous avons négligé les groupes familiaux qui, tout en s'attachant par leur origine, à l'un ou l'autre groupe allogène précité, se sont si parfaitement assimilés à la masse des sunnites syriens qu'on peut difficilement les en différencier (...)."

Bedirhani family were closely related. In a third step, I reinvestigate turning points in his career which can easily pass for being chiefly impacted by political developments but do have, at second glance, a crucial economic dimension as well. Bedri Paşa's advancement into the higher ranks of the provincial administration of Ottoman Syria, I argue, impacted his decisions as an investor and land owner.

3.3.1. Ottoman Syria and the Bedirhani Family

As a framework of analysis for both Bedri Paşa's career and the network strategies he relied on, the space of Ottoman Syria plays a crucial role. Over the late 19th century, the province of Syria emerged as a space with both political and economic importance for the Bedirhani family. Second only to Istanbul, it was the center and meeting point of the family in exile. It is interesting to note that the close relationship to the Syrian lands, which was in no small part established by the politics of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in the late Ottoman period, was to continue on well into the 20th century: The brothers Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, along with other, less prominent family members, found refuge in the French mandate territories of Syria and Lebanon in the late 1920s and came to rely on existing networks and connections of the family there, as will be shown in a subsequent chapter. Until recently, the family also owned property in Syria, notably in the coastal area of Banyas, near Latakia.⁴⁹⁰

Ottoman Syria, referred to as Bilad aş-Şam in contemporary Ottoman sources, refers to an Ottoman administrative unit comprising a territory

⁴⁹⁰ Banyas, also known as Marqab, was part of the district of Latakia and the province of Beirut in Ottoman times. In the 20th century, the otherwise small and insignificant town of Banyas gained some import as the terminal of the British Iraqi Petroleum Company Line, where oil tankers were filled with petrol to be transported to Europe. A separate area within Banyas was developed to house British personnel and their families during that time. See Nedko S. Etinoff, *Thirty Years in Lebanon and the Middle East* (Beirut: self-published, 1969), pp. 99-100.

which not congruent with the modern 20th-century Syrian national state.⁴⁹¹ Around the turn of the century, Ottoman Syria consisted of the province (*vilayet*) of Syria with the capital Damascus, the separate provinces of Beirut and Aleppo, and finally the district (*sancak*) of Jerusalem. The history of Ottoman Syria cannot be read as a teleological prelude to the history of the Syrian nation state.⁴⁹² Much to the contrary, the empire-wide fields of interaction and far-reaching network structures of individuals like Bedri Paşa Bedirhan emphasize the multiple entanglements between Ottoman Syria and other Ottoman provinces and the imperial capital. During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the provinces of Ottoman Syria were counted among the more important regions of the empire and efforts were made to further their development. The sultan himself was particularly interested and favorably inclined towards Ottoman Syria, surrounding himself with Syrian advisers and investing in settlement and railway development projects in the region.⁴⁹³ Ottoman Syria in the late 19th century was not on the fringes but, at least politically, at the very center of the Ottoman imperial system – and so were the Bedirhanis. Not only Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, but also several of his brothers, among them Ali, Mustafa and Halid Bey held appointments in the civil and military administration of Ottoman Syria over the late 19th century.⁴⁹⁴ Hüseyin Bey Bedirhan was also active in Greater Syria, when he was dispatched to Jerusalem in 1882/83.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹¹ For one late 19th-century definition of Syria, albeit from a European-Orientalist perspective, see Max von Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1899), vol. 1, p. 9: „Unter der Bezeichnung »Syrien« wird im allgemeinen die Gegend verstanden, die im Westen vom Mittelmeer, im Norden vom Taurus, im Osten von Nordmesopotamien bzw. der arabischen Wüste begrenzt wird, und zwar vielfach mit Einschluss von Palästina.”

⁴⁹² James A. Reilly, “Ottoman Syria: Social Historiography Through an Urban Lens.” In: *History Compass* 10.1 (2012), pp. 70-71.

⁴⁹³ Stephen H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), p. 16.

⁴⁹⁴ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 42.

⁴⁹⁵ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 42.

The center of the activities of the Bedirhani family in Ottoman Syria was the provincial capital, Damascus.⁴⁹⁶ Over the second half of the 19th century, the city of Damascus witnessed a period of profound transformation, as economy and infrastructure – and with it, the city’s links to the wider world – changed, along with the outlook of its built environment and not at least local social structures and mentalities.⁴⁹⁷ After a period of inter-communal violence which had culminated in the killing of thousands of Christian residents of the city in 1860 by Muslim and Druze gangs, the Ottoman central state intervened, turning Damascus into a “canvas on which to test and prove [its, BH] reform (Tanzimat) philosophy,”⁴⁹⁸ and a testing-ground for state centralization politics. In the aftermath of the intercommunal violence and massacres, the established local balance of power which had greatly favored Muslim notable families was shattered. Particularly during the reign of the reformer Midhat Paşa as governor of Damascus between 1878 and 1880, Ottoman centralization efforts and urban modernization took up speed, beginning to change the face of the city with building projects and large-scale remodeling of the city’s infrastructure.⁴⁹⁹ In the years after 1860, the Damascene elite was in disarray – which allowed newcomers to carve out spaces for themselves and accumulate power and influence as a new framework of local power politics emerged. The already-mentioned sheikh Abu’l-Huda as-Sayyadi was among the better-known successful newcomers to Damascus from that period. The Bedirhani family, which arrived in Damascus from Crete in 1868, was also able to turn the vacuum of power to their advantage, finding a place for themselves within the networks of the Damascene elite and cooperating with other newcomers to the scene, notably sheikh Abu’l-Huda and his supporters.

⁴⁹⁶ It would have been very interesting to trace family members and their history in the city and notably in the local archives of Damascus, but due to the current situation in Syria, this kind of fieldwork – although highly desirable – is impossible at the moment.

⁴⁹⁷ For a documentation of the changes over the second half of the 19th century, see Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, pp. 2-13.

⁴⁹⁸ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, p. 15.

⁴⁹⁹ Nur ad-Din Elisséeff, “Dimashk,” in: EI², vol. II, pp. 277-291.

Governors and other high-ranking Ottoman bureaucrats sent to Ottoman Syria from Istanbul were caught in a dilemma: They had to keep local power holders and strongmen in check, but at the same time relied on the locals' resources, prestige and following to back up their own power. Individuals like Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, who by means of his family origins could claim to wield some influence over the sizeable Kurdish part of the population of Damascus and its immediate surroundings, emerged as crucial brokers and middlemen for the Ottoman administrative elite in this context. The trajectory of the Bedirhani family in the city of Damascus was profoundly impacted by the changes the city went through over the second half of the 19th century. Members of the family were integral parts of the local economy and political scene throughout the 19th century (and even way beyond, as a following chapter will argue), and their writings about themselves can be read as attempts to make sense of the changing Ottoman Syrian world around them. While too often, the story of the Bedirhani family is rendered as a tale about the Kurdish regions of Eastern Anatolia only, individuals like Bedri Paşa Bedirhan were at the same time shaping and also being shaped by the developments in the city of Damascus.

In the 1880s, at the heyday of Bedri Paşa's influence, Damascus was home to about 120.000⁵⁰⁰ to 150.000⁵⁰¹ people, the majority of them Sunni Muslims.⁵⁰² While the exact population figures cannot be determined, it seems clear that the period from the 1870s up until the eve of the First World War was marked by a considerable population

⁵⁰⁰ Till Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets? Investment in Public Space and Popular Contentions in Late Ottoman Damascus." In: *Bulletin d'études orientales* LXI (Dec. 2012), p. 329

⁵⁰¹ Nur ad-Din Elisséeff, "Dimashk," in: EI², vol. II, pp. 277-291.

⁵⁰² Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets?" p. 329. Population statistics prior to the first comprehensive census of the 1930s are estimations, based either on European travelogues, contemporary consular reports or Ottoman administrative sources, see Jean-Luc Arnaud, "La population de Damas à la fin de la période ottomane." In: *Annales de Démographie Historique* 1 (2001), p. 177.

growth.⁵⁰³ While Damascus was at no point completely segregated along religious or ethnic lines, the suburb of as-Salihiye, situated on the slopes of Mount Qasiyun, was recognized and regularly referred to as the Kurdish quarter of the city.⁵⁰⁴ Like the Bedirhani family, many members of the Kurdish community in Damascus had come (or been forcefully resettled) to Syria from other parts of the empire in the 19th century.⁵⁰⁵ In 1877, the number of Kurdish inhabitants of Damascus was estimated to be around 25.000 individuals. Their support and military strength were assets which Ottoman officials in Syria relied on and actively cultivated.⁵⁰⁶ The late 19th century already foreshadowed a period of waning political and, more importantly, economic influence for Damascus. The landlocked provincial capital lost much of its former importance to the neighboring port city of Beirut.⁵⁰⁷

Economically, the city of Damascus relied on its fertile hinterland, notably the Hawran region, located to the south of the city. When the Hawran was hit by uprisings of the local Druze population repeatedly throughout the late 19th century, the inhabitants of Damascus felt the immediate consequences in the form of rising grain prices, food shortages and, in the poorer neighborhoods of the city, bouts of famine.⁵⁰⁸ Infrastructural changes, notably the opening of a new carriage road between Damascus and the thriving Mediterranean seaport Beirut in 1863, as well as the investment in an extensive railroad

⁵⁰³ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, p. 40, quoting estimates of 150.000 inhabitants for the 1880s compared to 350.000 for the year 1914. Her own research samples from the *muhallefat* (inheritance inventories) of Damascus showed that the population of the suburb of as-Salihiye, where members of the Bedirhani family lived at the time, doubled between 1880 and 1914.

⁵⁰⁴ Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets?" p. 330.

⁵⁰⁵ Nur ad-Din Elisséeff, "Dimashk," in: EI², vol. II, pp. 277-291.

⁵⁰⁶ MAE-Paris, CPC Consulat Damas, vol. 11, report dated May 2, 1877. The population estimate has to be taken with a grain of salt: The Kurdish quarter of as-Salihiye was not always counted as part of Damascus *intra muros*, and it would thus not be accurate to say that more than 10% of the 120.000 to 150.000 inhabitants of the city were Kurdish.

⁵⁰⁷ Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets?" p. 329.

⁵⁰⁸ Grallert, "To Whom Belong the Streets?" p. 329.

network, connected Damascus and its hinterlands to a global market and facilitated a reshaping of the local economy, notably a commercialization of agriculture.⁵⁰⁹ Bedri Paşa Bedirhan's investments in agriculture are to be understood in this particular context, and his actions were part of a larger trend among urban notables from Damascus seeking control over agricultural production, particularly in the Hawran. Grain prices, however, were instable throughout the 1880s in particular, making these investments anything but a safe bet.⁵¹⁰ Other important links, both economically and symbolically, tied Damascus as an hub for pilgrims and starting point of the Ottoman imperial pilgrimage caravan to the holy cities of Islam in the Hicaz.

3.3.2. Bedri Paşa Bedirhan: Biographical Sketch

The by far most important and most colorful source about the life and career of Bedri Paşa are the memoirs of his son-in-law Mehmed Salih Bedirhan.⁵¹¹ Bedri Paşa pressured Mehmed Salih Bey to give up his own prospects for a career in the Ottoman civil service. Instead, Bedri Paşa urged him to get married to his daughter Samiye and become part of his own household – Mehmed Salih was frustrated by that and openly voiced his discontent with Bedri Paşa in his writings. The image of Bedri Paşa which emerges from Mehmed Salih Bey's recollections is therefore not a benevolent one, depicting Bedri Paşa as corrupt, unscrupulous and selfish. Some of these accusations might be exaggerations, but others can be corroborated drawing on external sources. Bedri Paşa himself did not, to my knowledge, leave behind any personal writings. In the later historiography of the Bedirhani family, especially in the context of Kurdish nationalist history writing of the 1990s and onwards, Bedri Paşa

⁵⁰⁹ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, pp. 50-51.

⁵¹⁰ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, p. 51.

⁵¹¹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*.

is only a marginal figure. This does not do justice to his role as head of the family and key player in the provincial administration of Ottoman Syria. The historian Malmisanij, in his standard work on the Bedirhani family's history, reserves a mere one and a half pages for Bedri Paşa and concludes this brief account with an out-of-focus, blurry half-length photograph of an Ottoman bureaucrat in full uniform, sporting numerous decorations.⁵¹²

It is worthwhile to try and bring Bedri Paşa back into focus and get a better grasp of both the Bedirhani family and of Ottoman Syria as an Ottoman-Kurdish space. Bedri Paşa was one of the older sons of Emir Bedirhan. His senior position within the family enabled him to claim the leadership over the Bedirhani household in Syria after his father and several of his older brothers had passed away over the second half of the 19th century. His Ottoman *sicill-i ahval* introduces him as Ahmed Bedri, born in 1264 H [1847/48] in the town of Cizre in Kurdistan.⁵¹³ He was thus born in eventful times, in the very year his father was fighting the Ottoman army and was eventually defeated, brought to Istanbul and exiled from there to the island of Crete. Bedri Paşa would have retained no personal memory of his family's homeland, which he left as an infant. He was one of the older children, possibly the oldest son of his mother Rewşen, one of the wives of Emir Bedirhan.⁵¹⁴ In some sources, his mother is said to have been of Yezidi origins.⁵¹⁵ Bedri Paşa spent his childhood on the island of Crete and was educated there by private tutors. In addition to his Kurdish mother tongue, he was taught not only the standard canon of Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Arabic, but became

⁵¹² Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızira Botanlı*, pp. 116-117.

⁵¹³ See BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448.

⁵¹⁴ His younger full brothers include Emin Ali (*1851) and Murad Remzi Bedirhan (*1855).

⁵¹⁵ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 116 refers to her as being of the Yezidi tribe of the Ankosi, citing the memoirs of Mehmed Salih for this information. For a possible interpretation of this descent, see chapter 2.

fluent in Greek as well.⁵¹⁶ In 1871, at the age of twenty-four, Bedri Paşa landed his first job in the Ottoman administration and was sent to a village in the Syrian district of the Hawran.⁵¹⁷ His appointment was part of a larger strategy and personnel policy of the *vali* of Syria Mehmed Reşid Paşa, who relied on administrators of Kurdish descent in the more troublesome districts of Hama, Hawran and Nablus to break the power of local Druze and Bedouin leaders. He hoped that Kurdish officials would be able to bond with and in turn mobilize local Kurds as armed irregulars to police the unruly areas.⁵¹⁸ From its early beginnings, Bedri Paşa's career in the imperial administration was closely tied to the province of Syria: He spent some time in the municipal administration of Damascus before he was appointed as district governor (*kaymakam*) of Hisn al-Akrad, again in the Hawran region, in 1875.⁵¹⁹ Bedri Paşa then participated in the preparations for the war against Russia in 1877/78, gathering Kurdish volunteers from Syria. Ultimately, he did not lead these volunteers in battle himself, but handed them over to the command of a certain Mustafa Ağa.⁵²⁰ After the war, when some his brothers were accused of planning an uprising in Kurdistan, he also found himself under suspicion and was put under state surveillance in Damascus.⁵²¹ Soon, however, Bedri Paşa was back on track and on good terms with his Ottoman superiors: He made a name for himself and

⁵¹⁶ BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448.

⁵¹⁷ BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448, the village is called Ğidür (جيدور) in the sources. Bedri Paşa, who had no prior experience in administrative work, received an exceptionally high salary of 3.000 *куруş*.

⁵¹⁸ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, p. 25. From the 1880s onwards, the Ottoman army relied on Kurdish *zaptiye* (gendarmes) to keep the Druze in the Hawran in check – these contingents were accused of ill-treatment and humiliations by the locals, Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 1, pp. 173-177. Following the expedition against the Druze in 1896, the new *kaymakam* of the Druze Mountain, a certain Mahmud Bey Bozo, was of Kurdish descent, see AAA Libanon (Syrien) R 14023 Bd. 2, Nr. 31, Konsulat Beirut (Konsul Schroeder) an den Reichskanzler, dated February 19, 1896.

⁵¹⁹ BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448, Hisn al-Akrad is equivalent with Qal'at al-Husn, referred to also as Crac des Chevaliers in European sources.

⁵²⁰ Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanli*, p. 116, speaks of three thousand volunteers recruited by Bedri Paşa.

⁵²¹ Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanli*, p. 116.

received praise when he presided over a tribunal in the Hawran district in 1879. Immediately afterwards, in 1880, he was appointed as district governor (*kaymakam*) of al-Quneitra in the south west of the province of Syria. In the following year, he received another appointment as district governor (*kaymakam*), this time to Safed in the Galilee. He held this position until 1882.⁵²²

By the early 1880s, Bedir Paşa had thus already some professional experience in the province of Syria, being familiar with several regional centers and local players. From December 1887 to April 1889, his career advanced significantly after he was appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of the Hawran district for the first time.⁵²³ He was reappointed to the same position in August 1894. In January 1896, Bedri Paşa was transferred as *mutasarrıf* to the city of Hama, and in July 1897, he was transferred again, this time to the same position in the city of Tripolis (Syria).⁵²⁴ In 1900, following more than a decade of service and growing influence in the Syrian provincial administration, he moved from Damascus to Istanbul and became a member of the Council of State (*şura-yı devlet*) there. Some persuasion was apparently necessary to convince Bedri Paşa to depart from Syria – where, after numerous complaints from locals from all over the province, he had become increasingly untenable. In Istanbul, his salary was increased to 10.000 *kuruş* and he also received a promotion.⁵²⁵ Even after his departure from Ottoman Syria, Bedri Paşa remained part of network of his long-term patron Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadi and continued to share the latter's political positions. In Istanbul, sheikh Abu'l-Huda was particularly close to the grand vizier Mehmed Kamil Paşa, whom he knew well from the latter's time in office as *vali* of

⁵²² BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448 for details on the appointments.

⁵²³ See *Sālnāme-yi vilāyet-i sūriye*, def'a 27, 1311 (1894), pp. 83–84.

⁵²⁴ Eich, *Abū l-Hudā as-Sayyādī*, p. 208 and BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448 for the precise dates.

⁵²⁵ BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448 for details.

Aleppo from 1877 to 1879.⁵²⁶ During Mehmed Kamil Paşa's term in office as grand vizier between 1885 and 1891, Bedri Paşa and his circle of supporters fared notably well. In January 1904, there was talk of sending Bedri Paşa to Kabul to present a high Ottoman decoration to the Amir of Afghanistan and further a rapprochement between the Ottoman sultan and his Afghan counterpart. This diplomatic move made sense in the framework of Sultan Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamist foreign politics and the emphasis of the sultan's role as caliph and thus spiritual leader of the global Muslim community. This type of pan-Islamist policy was prominently supported and co-designed by sheikh Abu'l-Huda, who chose Bedri Paşa as a trusted member of his own network to put it into practice.⁵²⁷

The murder of the prefect Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906 constituted a decisive breaking point in the relations between the Ottoman state and the Bedirhani family. Not all family members were directly involved in the events, but all of them felt repercussions. Bedri Paşa Bedirhan received relatively lenient treatment. He was not among those family members brought to trial in Tripolis (Libya), but he was dismissed from his position in the Council of State and exiled from Istanbul to the island of Rhodes. He was allowed to return to Istanbul after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, where he did not hold any office again, but continued to receive a regular salary until at least 1911.⁵²⁸ On the eve of the First World War, Bedri Paşa passed away.

⁵²⁶ Tahsin Paşa, *Tahsin Paşa'nın Yıldız Hatıraları. Sultan Abdülhamid* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1990), p. 184. On Mehmed Kamil Paşa (1832-1913), see Kuneralp, *Erkân ve ricâli*, p. 13.

⁵²⁷ See FO 78/5329, report from the British consul Nicholas O'Connor in Constantinople to the Marquess of Lansdowne, dated January 25, 1904.

⁵²⁸ BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448.

3.3.3. Bedri Paşa's Household and Family Network

Bedri Paşa is said to have had two sons, Hamdi and Ahmed Rufa'î, as well as one daughter, Samiye.⁵²⁹ Bedri Paşa himself claimed in 1891 that the immediate household of dependents he had to take care of in Damascus alone consisted of twenty-three individuals.⁵³⁰ In addition, he also looked after the members of his extended network, as favors he was able to grant were an investment into his own local power and influence. This extended network of clients, some of them family members, would have been considerably larger than the family household, comprising of several hundred individuals. Some of the members of the household of Bedri Paşa in Damascus make an appearance in Mehmed Salih Bedirhan's memoirs: Bedri Paşa had been married, but his wife, the mother of his daughter Samiye, had passed away in the late 1880s. He then lived with his concubine Serfiraz, who gave birth to a son, Ahmed Rufa'î, in 1890.⁵³¹ Other members of Bedri Paşa's household included his personal secretary Remzi Efendi, the son of Bedri Paşa's childhood tutor and long-standing servant of the Bedirhani family Hacı Süleyman who had already been living with the Bedirhani family before they were exiled from Eastern Anatolia in 1847. After Hacı Süleyman's death, Bedri Paşa took care of the deceased's family. He paid for Remzi's education and also for him to get married to a woman of Circassian descent from Amman.⁵³²

⁵²⁹ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanli*, pp. 81 and 116 for a family tree. Of Bedri Paşa's children, his daughter Samiye has gotten most of the attention in later historiography, as she is the mother of Rewşen Bedirhan and mother-in-law of Celadet Bedirhan, a prominent figure in the Kurdish independence movement in the inter-war period.

⁵³⁰ See BOA, ŞD. 2579.22 ek 2, 01.06.1307 M (August 13, 1891), telegram addressed to the *mabeyn-i hümayun*, signed by Bedri Paşa. He uses the expression "23 nüfus 'iyalım."

⁵³¹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 57.

⁵³² Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 66.

Bedri Paşa made ample use of his connections within the Ottoman provincial administration of Syria to secure positions and favors for members of his own family. While he served as governor in several districts of the province of Syria, he managed to get a number of family members appointed to posts within the lower ranks of the local administration. Doing so allowed him on the one hand to strengthen and extend his influence throughout the province, as family and household members could be expected to remain loyal to him personally. On the other hand, positions in the administration were also given out to ensure the commitment and ongoing loyalty of members of his own network of patronage. An example for this second strategy is provided by the career of Tahir Bey, a nephew of Bedri Paşa's: Tahir Bey was the son of İzzeddin Şir, the relative who had betrayed Emir Bedirhan to the Ottomans in 1847 and had then briefly ruled over the area of Cizre in the 1850s. As a consequence of their betrayal, İzzeddin Şir and his descendants had been shunned by the rest of the Bedirhani family. Bedri Paşa, however, attempted a reconciliation in the 1880s: He arranged for Tahir Bey to marry into the main line of the Bedirhani family,⁵³³ and also urged him to come to the province of Syria, where a position in the provincial administration was found for him. Bedri Paşa was able to get Tahir Bey appointed as district governor (*kaymakam*) of 'Ağlun in 1882.⁵³⁴ Tahir Bey continued his career in the Syrian provincial administration, holding the position of district governor in al-Quneitra around 1890 and being subsequently appointed as district governor in Dar'a.⁵³⁵ Through these kind of network politics, Bedri Paşa

⁵³³ Tahir Bey got married to Bedri Paşa's sister Nefise Bedirhan. When she died not long after the wedding, Bedri Paşa also arranged a second marriage for Tahir Bey, this time with a woman named Rukiye from a family that was already related by marriage to the Bedirhani family. Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, p. 60.

⁵³⁴ The *kaymakam* resided in the small town of İrbid. In 1882, not too much comfort could be expected, the government building (*saray*) was only erected in 1884, see Vital Cuinet, *Syrie, Liban et Palestine. Geographie Administrative* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901), p. 488.

⁵³⁵ Tahir Bey died while holding this office in the early 1890s, Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, pp. 59-60 and 67.

not only ingratiated relatives to himself and invested into their future support and loyalty. Simultaneously, he secured access for himself to the internal flow of information within the Ottoman administration, as his family network provided him with reliable informants in several places throughout the province of Syria. Another strategy to expand and strengthen the family network Bedri Paşa made ample use of were marriage politics, as the examples of Tahir Bey and also of his son-in-law Mehmed Salih Bey illustrate.

In spite of his skillful network politics, Bedri Paşa was not unanimously supported in the Bedirhani family. Some of his relatives, most of them from outside of Ottoman Syria, at times opposed Bedri Paşa and his politics. Rivalry and tension occurred in particular with other senior family members, notably his brothers, who competed with him for authority and access to economic as well as symbolic resources within the family. An example worth mentioning is the tension that existed between Bedri Paşa and a faction of family members around his brother Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan operating from Istanbul in the 1890s. Other conflicts revolved around the distribution of the Ottoman state allowance family members received in exchange for the property the state had confiscated from them in 1847. As it has been mentioned above, Bedri Paşa was able to mobilize members of his household to speak up in his favor and to forward claims that served his personal interests.⁵³⁶

Bedri Paşa was also not too fond of his brother Ali Paşa, who had embarked on a career in the Ottoman military. By the turn of the century, Ali Paşa Bedirhan was a commander in the police forces in Jerusalem, that is in what Bedri Paşa regarded as his wider sphere of influence in Ottoman Syria. The two brothers did not get along well: Mehmed Salih mentioned in his memoirs that in the early 1890s, Ali

⁵³⁶ See the previous section on the family's *maaş* for details.

Paşa had offered to pay for his studies, giving him an opportunity to dissociate himself from the network of Bedri Paşa. This seems to indicate that the two brothers were competing for influence in Ottoman Syria and that Ali Paşa was, unlike other members of the family in the same area, unwilling to accept Bedri Paşa's as his superior. Bedri Paşa fought back in what was to become a prolonged confrontation: In the summer of 1901, by then a fairly influential figure in the Ottoman capital and a member of the Ottoman Council of State (*şura-yı devlet*), Bedri Paşa addressed a detailed complaint about Ali Paşa to the latter's employer, the *serasker*.⁵³⁷ In this correspondence, Bedri Paşa let on that his brother Ali Paşa was uneducated and uncouth, owing his relatively high position in the military administration solely to the grace of the sovereign. Without giving too much evidence or detail, Bedri Paşa continued to blame Ali Paşa for all kinds of evil deeds and ill-mannered behavior which was, in Bedri Paşa's own words, unworthy of the sacred duty of a member of the military. Claiming to speak in the name of the rest of his family,⁵³⁸ he distanced himself from his brother, expressing fears that Ali Paşa's behavior might stain the reputation of the entire family.⁵³⁹ It is possible that Bedri Paşa was reacting to or hoping to reverse a recent promotion Ali Paşa had obtained: He had been appointed as commander of the Ottoman police battalion in Jerusalem only weeks prior to Bedri Paşa's intervention.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ BOA, Y.MTV. 217.59, telegram by Bedri Paşa Bedirhan to the *serasker*, dating from 07 Ra 1319 H (June 24, 1901).

⁵³⁸ That Bedri Paşa was able to do so is not at least an indication of his senior position within the family, albeit contested by his brother Ali Paşa.

⁵³⁹ BOA, Y.MTV. 217.59, telegram by Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, dating from 07 Ra 1319 H (June 24, 1901). An identical telegram was also sent to the Ottoman grand vizier, this time signed by Bedri Paşa and his brother [Murat] Remzi Bey, BOA, Y.A.HUS. 417.24, ek 6, 06 Ra 1319 H (June 23, 1901).

⁵⁴⁰ BOA, BEO. 125150, report dated 15 S 1319 H (June 3, 1901), dating exactly three weeks prior to Bedri Paşa's telegram. Bedri Paşa's blackmailing of his brother, however, did not bear fruit, as Ali Paşa was still in office during the following year and even received a distinction for his services, see BOA, İ.TAL. 277.1320, report dated 23 M 1320 H (May 2, 1902).

3.3.4. Bedri Paşa's Network and Networking Strategies

It has already been mentioned that Bedri Paşa Bedirhan likely had close ties into circles of the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya Sufi order in the province of Syria and beyond. He was related by marriage to Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadi, a key figure in Ottoman Syria with considerable influence in the Yıldız Palace in Istanbul. A second important pillar of Bedri Paşa's personal network was Osman Nuri Paşa,⁵⁴¹ who served as *vali* of the province of Syria several times in the late 19th century and saw to it that Bedri Paşa found suitable employment in the administration during his terms in office. In exchange for favors he received from Osman Nuri Paşa, Bedri Paşa had to pay bribes.⁵⁴² Connections to sheikh Abu'l-Huda and Osman Nuri Paşa opened doors for Bedri Paşa, but also restricted his opportunities on other occasions: Sheikh Abu'l-Huda was competing with İzzet Paşa al-'Abid (1851–1924) for influence throughout Ottoman Syria. Thus, when a protégé of İzzet Paşa's, Hüseyin Nazım Paşa (1854–1927),⁵⁴³ was appointed as *vali* of Syria in July 1897, Bedri Paşa was promptly removed from the scene. He was transferred from his post in Hama to the district of Tripolis, located in the neighboring province of Beirut and thus not under the jurisdiction of Hüseyin Nazım Paşa.⁵⁴⁴ His superiors apparently attempted to sweeten the relocation and ensure Bedri Paşa's goodwill by bestowing him with a decoration.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ A British report from 1896 calls Bedri Paşa Osman Nuri's "medium," see FO 195/1940, report dated January 9, 1896.

⁵⁴² See for example reports by the German consul in Beirut, Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Libanon R 14023 Bd. 2, Nr. 31, dated February 19, 1896 and also Khoury, *Urban Notables*, p. 48.

⁵⁴³ For his career, see Kunalalp, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 81. The connection to İzzet Paşa is explored by Max L. Gross, *Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus, 1860 – 1909*, 2 vols. Diss. Georgetown Univ, 1979, vol. 1, p. 471.

⁵⁴⁴ See BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448, the *sicill-i ahval* record makes explicit mention of "conflict" (*mübâenet*) between Bedri Paşa and the *vali* as the reason for Bedri Paşa's removal from Hama.

⁵⁴⁵ Bedri Paşa received the Ottoman Mecidiye order, 1st class, DH.SAİD. 2.448.

When Bedri Paşa was dismissed as district governor (*kaymakam*) of Tripolis, his successor Abdülgani Bey was a nephew of İzzet Paşa. Bedri Paşa's ensuing transfer from Ottoman Syria to Istanbul can thus also be read as a loss of power and influence of his patron sheikh Abu'l-Huda in Syria, which also affected the latter's network and protégés.⁵⁴⁶ While there seems to have been ample reason for removing Bedri Paşa from Tripolis, with a number of locals complaining about his administration and in particular about him blackmailing a local Christian family to extort money,⁵⁴⁷ his successor Abdülgani Bey did not fare much better if the reports of the British representative are any indication.⁵⁴⁸

Being part of the urban elite of Damascus, Bedri Paşa was in contact with leaders of virtually all of the prominent families in the region. Examples include the Barazi and Kaylani families, both of them families of landowners from Hama.⁵⁴⁹ Some of his contacts in Ottoman Damascus were later activated by members of the next generation of his family after the First World War and during the ensuing French mandate.

⁵⁴⁶ See Eich, *Abū l-Hudā as-Sayyādī*, p. 189. Eich points out a similar incident which was almost contemporary to Bedri Paşa's removal from Tripolis: Enis Paşa, *vali* of Aleppo and himself also a protégé of sheikh Abu'l-Huda, was replaced in 1902 by Mecid Bey, another man from the network of İzzet Paşa.

⁵⁴⁷ For these accusations, see FO 195/2097, report dated February 15, 1901.

⁵⁴⁸ FO 195/2097, report dated September 11, 1901, commenting on Abdülgani's involvement in illegal activities and contraband.

⁵⁴⁹ Connections between the Bedirhani and the Kaylani family related both to business and to personal affairs: Sa'id al-Kaylani was involved in the same commission to appease (and economically exploit) the Hawran region that Bedri Paşa was also a part of, and Nazire, a daughter of the al-Kaylani family was married to Halil Bey Bedirhan. See Schäßler, *Drusenbergländ*, p. 151, and James A. Reilly, *A Small Town in Syria. Ottoman Hama in the 18th and 19th centuries* (Oxford: Lang, 2002), pp. 25-30. Unlike the Bedirhanis, both families remained of economic and political importance in the region until they were sidelined by the Ba'ath regime in the 1960s, Raphael Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama. The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria* (London: Hurst & Co., 2013), p. 57.

3.3.5. Bedri Paşa's Involvement in the Hawran Region

Rural-urban ties have long been a particular point of interest in the study of Ottoman provincial history.⁵⁵⁰ It has been argued that influence over resources in the hinterland of Ottoman-Syrian city centers like Damascus was a key resource for urban notables in their struggles for political and economic power.⁵⁵¹ Bedri Paşa Bedirhan's activities in Ottoman Syria can be read in this context, against the dynamics of relations between urban and rural settings: One of the key impulses in parts of the Syrian provincial administration over the late 19th century was the competition for newly accessible economic resources. The Hawran area, which played a prominent role in Bedri Paşa's career, was opened up to external influences and – crucially – to economic investment over the late 19th century. The local population, highly suspicious of state-sponsored centralization, could not avoid to come increasingly into contact with Ottoman state institutions. Dealing with the claims and demands of the local population became a source of income in itself for members of the state bureaucracy like Bedri Paşa. Members of the provincial administration expected to benefit from the newly accessible resources and potential local clients.

Ottoman centralization of the Hawran region met with fierce local resistance, notably from the Druze population.⁵⁵² The Druze were opposed to paying taxes and doing military service in the Ottoman army

⁵⁵⁰ For Syria, see for instance Antoine Abdel-Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Beirut: Lebanese University, 1982).

⁵⁵¹ The argument has been made relying on evidence from the 18th and early 19th centuries by Brigitte Marino, *Le faubourg du Midan à Damas à l'époque ottomane: espace urbaine, société et habitat (1742-1830)* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1997), pp. 15-19. See also Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995), who comes to a similar conclusion in a case study on the city of Nablus, pp. 1-5 and 152-155.

⁵⁵² Birgit Schäbler, *Aufstände im Drusenbergländ. Ethnizität und Integration einer ländlichen Gesellschaft Syriens vom Osmanischen Reich bis zur staatlichen Unabhängigkeit* (Götha: Perthes, 1996).

and resorted to disobedience, rebellion and guerrilla warfare. Playing to the Druzes' advantage against an Ottoman army – which by far outnumbered them – was the inaccessibility of the rough, jagged territory of the Hawran region. It was well suited for guerrilla warfare, which repeatedly allowed the Druze to resist and withdraw from Ottoman inroads well into the early 20th century.⁵⁵³ An important instrument of centralization of the Hawran region was the construction of railroads. In 1894, a railway connection from Beirut via Damascus to the Hawran was inaugurated, also opening up new opportunities for the economic exploitation of the area.⁵⁵⁴

Bedri Paşa was not alone in realizing the potential of the newly accessible regions in Ottoman Syria and the Hawran in particular. It is interesting to note that another client of Bedri Paşa's patron sheikh Abu'l-Huda, the Damascene notable Ahmed Refik Paşa Şam'azade, also held the position of governor of the Hawran district.⁵⁵⁵ It appears that influence over the Hawran region was coveted by members of rivaling networks, with clients of sheikh Abu'l-Huda on the one hand and followers of İzzet Paşa al-'Abid on the other hand. İzzet Paşa was a member of a commission created by the Ottoman government to facilitate a reconciliation between Druze and Muslim inhabitants of the Hawran region after the massacre of Kerak in 1881. Hüseyin Fevzi Paşa, *müşir* of the 5th army in Damascus, presided over the commission. Both him and İzzet Paşa profited financially from their leading role in this body: Leaders of the Druze community payed bribes in exchange for exemption from persecution and punishment for those Druze fighters

⁵⁵³ See MAE-Paris, 166 PO/E Ambassade de Constantinople, Situation Intérieur 1903-1913: "Troubles dans l'Empire: troubles du Hauran," report dated September 14, 1910.

⁵⁵⁴ Philipp K. Hitti, *Syria. A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1959), p. 233.

⁵⁵⁵ For the connection between Ahmed Refik Paşa Şam'azade and sheikh Abu'l-Huda's network, see FO 195/1940, report dated December 1, 1896 and FO 195/2075, report dated June 19, 1900. Thomas Eich, on the other hand, is skeptical about the relevance of this connection, arguing that both men probably never even met personally and only shared a common enemy, İzzet Paşa, see Eich, *Abū l-Hudā as-Sayyādī*, pp. 199-200.

who had been involved in the violence against the local Muslim population.⁵⁵⁶

The archival evidence at hand strongly suggests that Bedri Paşa actively schemed to obtain the lucrative position of district governor (*mutasarrıf*) in the Hawran district. Shortly after a certain Behram Paşa was appointed as governor of the Hawran in 1888, the Ottoman authorities received serious complaints about his administration and skills, in which Behram Paşa was accused of general malpractice and corruption.⁵⁵⁷ Not incidentally, the whistle-blower was Mahmud İzzet Bey Bedirhan, a cousin of Bedri Paşa's.⁵⁵⁸ The scheme succeeded, and Bedri Paşa was appointed as Behram Paşa's successor. His prime, however, did not last long. In the spring of 1889, Bedri Paşa was already dismissed as governor of the Hawran when the civilian and military government of the district were merged, henceforth to be exercised by a representative of the military administration only. Memduh Paşa, who had previously been the military commander in the Hawran under the administration of Bedri Paşa, was appointed to the post and Bedri Paşa found himself unemployed. He perceived this as greatly unfair and petitioned against the decision over the following years.⁵⁵⁹ The events also laid the foundation for an ongoing personal enmity between Bedri Paşa and his successor and former colleague Memduh Paşa.⁵⁶⁰

In confronting his rival, Bedri Paşa fell back on well-tried measures: Similar to his course of action against his predecessor Behram Paşa, he

⁵⁵⁶ MAE-Paris, CPC Consulat Damas, vol. 12, reports nr. 15, dated March 8, 1881, nr. 16, dated March 15, 1881, and nr. 19, dated March 26, 1881.

⁵⁵⁷ BOA, DH.MKT. 1493.49, the Ottoman choice of words here is "sü-yı aḥvāl ve irtikâbından (...) şikâyet."

⁵⁵⁸ BOA, DH.MKT. 1493.49, Mahmud İzzet Bey was the father of Mehmed Salih, who was to become the son-in-law of Bedri Paşa in 1890/91.

⁵⁵⁹ See BOA, ŞD. 2579.22 ek 2, 01 Ağustos 1307 M (August 13, 1891) and also BOA, İ.DH. 1142.89107, 06 Za 1306 H (July 5, 1889).

⁵⁶⁰ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 60-61.

attempted to mobilize his personal network against Memduh Paşa. The success, however, was mixed this time: While Mahmud İzzet Bey Bedirhan showed his support, composing mocking poetry about Memduh Paşa, other members of Bedri Paşa's patronage network were quick in switching their alliances. Tahir Bey Bedirhan stands out as someone who, even though having greatly benefited from Bedri Paşa's support and mediation in the past, quickly ingratiated himself with the new administration under Memduh Paşa.⁵⁶¹ Unlike his earlier intrigue against Behram Paşa, Bedri Paşa's attempts to have Memduh Paşa removed were ultimately not successful. While Bedri Paşa was out of work and unable to secure a new position for himself over the following months, Memduh Paşa remained in office as governor and military commander of the Hawran until the summer of 1892. After Osman Nuri Paşa had been transferred to Yemen early in 1892, his successor as *vali* of Damascus was Mehmed Şerif Ra'uf Paşa.⁵⁶² In short order, Memduh Paşa was relocated to a position in the Balkans because of personal tensions between him and the new *vali*.⁵⁶³ Two things can be deduced from Memduh Paşa's trajectory which are of interest with regards to the history of the Bedirhani family: First, even though Bedri Paşa Bedirhan worked actively against him, Memduh Paşa was able to hold on to his post throughout the term in office of Osman Nuri Paşa as *vali* of Damascus. Bedri Paşa was part of Osman Nuri Paşa's network and otherwise enjoyed his support and patronage. That he was still not able to have Memduh Paşa removed either indicates that Memduh Paşa himself also cultivated good relations to the *vali*, or that Osman Nuri Paşa's influence over the military branch of the provincial administration was rather weak. Second, Osman Nuri Paşa's successor as *vali* in Damascus quickly had Memduh Paşa removed from the scene – but did not care to restore Bedri Paşa to his old position. This indicates

⁵⁶¹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *DeFTER-i Â'malm*, p. 60.

⁵⁶² Gross, *Ottoman Rule*, vol. 1, pp. 423-424.

⁵⁶³ BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK. 25.65, 20 Ş 1309 H (March 20, 1892).

that instead of a mere dichotomy between sheikh Abu'l-Huda and İzzet Paşa al-'Abid, multiple networks of Ottoman-Syrian bureaucrats were at play, each of them complex in itself and shifting over time.

Meanwhile, Bedri and Memduh Paşa were to meet again: After a brief stint in the Balkans, Memduh Paşa returned as governor and military commander to the Hawran district in 1894.⁵⁶⁴ Soon afterwards, he was joined there by his old nemesis Bedri Paşa, to whom he had to hand over the civilian administration, as it had been decided to return to the previous arrangement of a separation between the offices of civil governor and military commander.⁵⁶⁵ Both Bedri and Memduh Paşa returned to the Hawran shortly after Mehmed Şerif Ra'uf Paşa was succeeded by Osman Nuri Paşa as *vali* in Damascus again in 1894.⁵⁶⁶ These circumstances lend additional support to the hypothesis that both Bedri and Memduh Paşa were in fact part of the same patronage network of Osman Nuri Paşa.

The continued rivalry between Memduh and Bedri Paşa was part of a broader confrontation between branches of the civilian and military administration, both of which were competing for influence and control over resources in the Hawran. The *vali* Osman Nuri Paşa confronted the Ottoman military in the Hawran, led by *müşir* Ömer Rüşdü Paşa in 1895/96.⁵⁶⁷ At that time, the latest military expedition against the Druze in the Hawran had been successful to the extent that Druze leaders were willing to give up their arms, to surrender to the Ottoman officers and, crucially, to pay their tax arrears. These payments, made in exchange for

⁵⁶⁴ BOA, İ.HUS. 22.1311, 13 N 1311 H (March 21, 1894).

⁵⁶⁵ According to BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.448, Bedri Paşa was appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of the Hawran for the second time in August 1894.

⁵⁶⁶ Gross, *Ottoman Rule*, vol. 1, p. 425. Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 79 indicates that Mehmed Şerif Ra'uf lost his position following an intervention of sheikh Abu'l-Huda.

⁵⁶⁷ Ömer Rüşdü Paşa Mekkelioğlu (1843–1922), born in Kütahta, graduated from the Harbiye in 1866, see İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Yedigün Neşriyatı, 1946), p. 53.

security of their lives and belongings, were in large parts kept by the military officials and not transferred to the civilian administration of the province. In other words, while the Ottoman military mission was successfully extracting money from the Druze, the *vali* Osman Nuri Paşa in Damascus was seeing none of it, having no access to a considerable source of unofficial income.⁵⁶⁸ Read against the backdrop of these confrontations, Bedri Paşa had a viable, very concrete interest in opposing the military administration in the Hawran and throwing in his lot with Osman Nuri Paşa – access to sizeable financial resources was at stake. The ongoing tension between the civil and military administrations in Ottoman Syria was mirrored in the administration of the Hawran district, where civil and military officials competed over administrative power and access to payments from the local Druze. Bedri Paşa took part in the expedition against the Druze in 1895/96: There had been some back-and-forth between Muslim and Druze villagers, which culminated in a Druze siege of the Muslim village of al-Harak (الحراك) and the destruction of the local mosque. Bedri Paşa personally arrived to the scene with troops, but was forced into retreat by the Druze. His horse was shot to death and he himself only narrowly escaped being seriously harmed.⁵⁶⁹

The Druze uprisings in the Hawran re-erupted in the summer of 1896, likely because the Ottoman commission, which included Bedri Paşa's successor as governor of the Hawran, Husrev Paşa, and had been put in place to further appease the region, had pushed too hard and demanded so much extortion money that a return to the revolt appeared as the better option to the Druze leaders.⁵⁷⁰ In view of these developments, the

⁵⁶⁸ FO 195/1940, report dated January 9, 1896 for a summary of the situation.

⁵⁶⁹ Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 1, pp. 173-177.

⁵⁷⁰ FO 195/1940, reports dated February 24, 1896 and June 19, 1896. In addition, the Druze were revolting against attempts to introduce conscription into the area at the time, see Narcisse Bouron, *Les Druses. Histoire du Liban et de la Montagne Haouranaise* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1930), p. 215

removal of Bedri Paşa from the Hawran can be regarded as a failure from the perspective of the Ottoman state. By the end of the summer of 1896, the *vali* Osman Nuri Paşa was not only faced with a Hawran region re-descending into chaos and violence, he had also made a new enemy: By 1896, Osman Nuri Paşa had de facto taken over the military administration and the command of the 5th army in the province of Syria alongside his regular duties as *vali*. In June 1896, however, Tahir Paşa arrived from Istanbul and without further notice assumed the command of the 5th army for himself, thus considerably weakening the position of Osman Nuri Paşa in Damascus.⁵⁷¹ Shortly afterwards, Osman Nuri Paşa was recalled from his position as *vali*⁵⁷² and replaced by Hasan Refik Paşa, who had practically no expertise in the region.⁵⁷³ The attempts to establish greater military control and presence in the Druze Mountain continued into the early 20th century. In 1899, workers dispatched to construct military barracks in as-Suwayda' had to work under police protection, as the Druze were firmly opposed to the construction works.⁵⁷⁴ Local revolts continued until 1909, when CUP representative Sami Paşa (al-Faruki, 1861–1911) turned to organized warfare, vowing to systematically devastate valley after valley and village after village until the Druze were defeated.⁵⁷⁵

3.3.6. Bedri Paşa's Economic Activities in the Hawran

Bedri Paşa used his network and influence to obtain landed property in the province of Syria. He came to own several villages in the Hawran district, an area of which he had been governor of twice. His interest in landed property reflects the increasing value of agricultural land, as

⁵⁷¹ FO 195/1940, report dated June 25, 1896.

⁵⁷² FO 195/1940, report dated June 30, 1896.

⁵⁷³ Gross, *Ottoman Rule*, vol. 1, p. 458.

⁵⁷⁴ Bouron, *Les Druses*, p. 216.

⁵⁷⁵ Bouron, *Les Druses*, pp. 216-218.

Ottoman Syria was incorporated into the world market over the 19th century. Large parts of the province of Hawran had previously remained marginal to these processes, as access was difficult and the local population uncooperative and opposed to direct Ottoman rule. This, however, changed with a number of military expeditions against the local Druze populations from the 1870s onwards. Bedri Paşa was thus among the first non-natives to lay claim to the newly accessible agricultural lands, keenly aware of their value for the export of grain and other agricultural produce.

Among the land ownings registered in Bedri Paşa's name was a village referred to as al-Harra (الحرارة) in the Ottoman sources. As al-Harra was situated in the municipality of Ğīdūr,⁵⁷⁶ the very place of Bedri Paşa's first assignment in the Ottoman provincial administration of Syria in 1871, it seems fair to assume that his interest and involvement in the region went back to the very early days of his career. As the area of Ğīdūr belonged to the district (*kaza*) of al-Quneitra, Bedri Paşa would have been able to maintain and extend his influence there during his stay as district governor (*kaymakam*) of al-Quneitra between 1880 and 1882 as well. Hirbat al-Harra (which still exists today)⁵⁷⁷ was situated to the west of the Golan heights, less than forty kilometers south of the city of Dar'a.

In the late 19th century, al-Harra was inhabited by Muslim peasant families. Conditions for agriculture and in particular the breeding of cattle were favorable, with abundant water supply, fertile soil and extensive pasture lands. Situated on the slopes of an extinct volcano, al-Harra was widely visible from its surroundings. Because of the elevation, the climate was rather cool, with snow falling regularly during the winter

⁵⁷⁶ BOA, DH.MKT. 2522.23, 28 R 1319 H (August 14, 1901).

⁵⁷⁷ The small town with slightly more than 17.000 inhabitants (as of 2004) has its own entry in the English wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Harra,_Syria, last accessed June 24, 2015.

months. From January 1894 onwards, a train line connected Damascus to Muzayrib (مزيريب), facilitating the area's economic integration⁵⁷⁸ and an exploitation of the surplus production in the Hawran region by Damascene notables.⁵⁷⁹ This newly established train line also connected Damascus to the small town of al-Qunaiya (القنيطرة), from where al-Harra could be reached after a three-hour journey on horseback.⁵⁸⁰

In 1897, the village of al-Harra consisted of 126 stone houses and was inhabited by around five hundred people. All of the inhabitants were Muslims, except for a Christian merchant from Damascus, who had opened a store in the village.⁵⁸¹ Bedri Paşa had originally controlled the entire village, which was accorded to him as a tax farm. The land of the village was, like most land in Ottoman Syria, initially registered as state-owned land (*miri*). The right to exploit the land's surplus (*tasarruf*) was auctioned off, in exchange for taxes and other fees the new owner had to pay to the government. This, however, was where Bedri Paşa got into trouble: He and his local representative Halil Bey failed to transfer the tax payments to the Ottoman capital in due time. To meet the Ottoman authorities' demands for tax arrears, Bedri Paşa was compelled to sell half of his property in al-Harra to Selim Feriç (al-Freige) from Beirut.⁵⁸² The new owner, a Christian merchant and broker who was employed as

⁵⁷⁸ In addition, these infrastructural changes facilitated military involvement and thus state control over the Hawran region: In 1896, in the midst of a rebellion of the local Druze community, 30.000 Ottoman soldiers were brought into the Hawran by train, Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 1, pp. 177-181.

⁵⁷⁹ Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 1, pp. 21-23. Oppenheim notes, however, that at the time of his visit in the area, camels were still preferred as means of transportation for harvested grain, as they were much cheaper than train transportation.

⁵⁸⁰ Gottlieb Schumacher, "Notes from Jedûr." In: *Quarterly Statement — Palestine Exploration Fund* (1897), pp. 190-195.

⁵⁸¹ Schumacher, "Notes from Jedûr," pp. 190-195.

⁵⁸² The new owner Selim Feriç (al-Freige) is mentioned both by Schumacher, "Notes from Jedûr," pp. 190-195 and by Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, see Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, p. 69.

an interpreter (*tercüman*) at the Austrian embassy in Beirut,⁵⁸³ left local affairs in the village in the hands of his agent Yusuf Efendi Mansur Hatim.⁵⁸⁴ The remaining half of the village al-Harra was registered in Bedri Paşa's name, along with another village in the Hawran region, transcribed variably as "Ketibe" or "Kiteybi" in the memoirs of Bedri Paşa's son-in-law.⁵⁸⁵ This second village is more difficult to identify and locate than al-Harra, and it does not seem to exist anymore. The Baedeker guide to Syria of 1880 mentions a village by the name of Ktebe (a name which exhibits the same Arabic root paradigm, k – t – b, which also underlies Ketibe / Kiteybi) in the Hawran, on the way from Muzayrib to Damascus, one and a half hours north of the village al-Dilli (الدلي) and forty minutes south of al-Qunaiya.⁵⁸⁶ If Ktebe is indeed identical with the village owned by Bedri Paşa, it would be located in the same part of the Hawran as al-Harra, less than ten kilometers distance to the east of the former.⁵⁸⁷ Other members of the Bedirhani family also invested in export-oriented agriculture in Ottoman Syria. The above-mentioned Tahir Bey Bedirhan, during his time in office as district governor (*kaymakam*) of 'Ağlun, for instance, bought fertile land in the region of Sahm al-Karafat, situated in the north of the district of 'Ağlun, halfway between Damascus and Jerusalem.⁵⁸⁸ In the 1880s, investors from Damascus, many of them of Kurdish background, had begun to

⁵⁸³ Philippe Berger, *Notes de voyage: de Paris à Alexandrie – l'Égypte, la Palestine, la côté de Phénicie, la Syrie ...* (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1895), pp. 288 and 347. Berger met with the al-Freige family during his stay in Beirut.

⁵⁸⁴ Schumacher, "Notes from Jedür," p. 190.

⁵⁸⁵ Both spellings appear in Mehmed Salih Bedirhan's memoirs, Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malm*, pp. 69 and 78, respectively.

⁵⁸⁶ Karl Baedeker (ed.), *Palästina und Syrien. Handbuch für Reisende*, 2nd edition (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1880 [1875]), p. 302.

⁵⁸⁷ A village called Ktebe is also mentioned by Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 1, p. 62 as a station on the pilgrimage route from Damascus to Mecca, situated north of Muzayrib.

⁵⁸⁸ Martha Mundy & Richard Saumarez Smith, *Governing Property, Making the Modern State. Law, Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 56.

invest in this region. Tahir Bey established plantations where olives and pomegranates for export were grown on a large scale.⁵⁸⁹

What does it mean that the two villages al-Harra and Ktebe “belonged” to Bedri Paşa, what kind of property arrangement was in place, and in what way, if at all, was it profitable for its proprietor? Bedri Paşa owned the villages, not at last in the sense that he identified himself and was known as its owner to the local villagers. However, it is unlikely that the inhabitants of the villages, the majority of them peasants, would have met Bedri Paşa personally more than a handful of times a year. On the ground, he would be represented through his agent (*vekil*), who dealt with the affairs of the village on a daily basis. Bedri Paşa deployed relatives and other dependents from his own household and wider network as local representatives.⁵⁹⁰ As far as the psychological dimension of the power relations and regime of violence at work are concerned, however, it would have been crucial that the villagers lived under the impression that Bedri Paşa was personally aware of everything that was going on in his villages.⁵⁹¹ In the most exploitative version of such property arrangements, absentee landowners like Bedri Paşa would control not only the land, but also provide tools, animals and seeds to the sharecroppers as a loan, expecting to be paid back at harvest time in kind, sometimes with staggeringly high interest rates.⁵⁹² In addition, landowners were responsible for collecting the land tax (*’öşr*) of twelve percent or more of the harvest, to be forwarded to the Ottoman state

⁵⁸⁹ Mundy & Saumarez Smith, *Governing Property*, p. 56. The agricultural development of the region came at a great expense for local peasants, who lost access to their lands and thereby to self-sufficiency. The plantations of Tahir Bey were inherited by his children and continued to remain in possession of the family after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Michael R. Fischbach, *State, Society and Land in ‘Ajlūn (Northern Transjordan), 1850 – 1950*, 2 vols., Diss. Georgetown University, June 1992, vol. 1, pp. 189-190. See also Cuinet, *Syrie, Liban et Palestine*, p. 490.

⁵⁹⁰ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â’malım*, p. 82.

⁵⁹¹ Michael Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches. Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 1996) identified violence, physical coercion and universal control as crucial tools of absentee landowners in northern Lebanon.

⁵⁹² Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches*, p. 81.

treasury. Such arrangements would have ensured that the villagers in al-Harra and Ktebe were continuously indebted to Bedri Paşa. Landowners like Bedri Paşa were, in the late 19th century, the principal and sometimes the only representatives of the state on the local level – even though on a more regional or imperial scale, Bedri Paşa himself would be in conflict with state structures and Ottoman authorities.⁵⁹³ In spite of near-absolute power over the proceedings of his villages, making a profit from his property would not have been an easy task for Bedri Paşa: On the one hand, tribal populations living in the surroundings of his villages regularly demanded protection money or else would attack and devastate fields, often scaring the peasant population into leaving the village altogether. On the other hand, the markets were tough, and low grain prices in particular did not make agriculture very profitable in the late 19th century. Owning a village in Syria in the 19th century was, in other words, not unlikely to be risky investment.⁵⁹⁴ Bedri Paşa demonstrably looked at his property as an investment: He brought his own mill in operation,⁵⁹⁵ becoming thus more independent of local intermediaries, as he was able to both collect and process his own grain harvest,⁵⁹⁶ increasing his profit margins as he sold it (and creating an additional source of income for himself, as others would come to process their grain at his facilities as well).

In addition to being far from lucrative, Bedri Paşa's involvement in the villages al-Harra and Ktebe also met with local resistance: The earliest

⁵⁹³ Gilsenan, *Lords of the Lebanese Marches*, p. 68 for a similar line of argument, still valid in the mid-20th century in Lebanon.

⁵⁹⁴ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, p. 46 relates how the Prussian consul Johann Gottfried Wetzstein ran into – and, thankfully, also recorded – all kinds of trouble when he invested money in villages near Damascus in the mid-19th century. See also Ingeborg Huhn, *Der Orientalist Johann Gottfried Wetzstein als Preussischer Konsul in Damaskus (1841-1861) dargestellt nach seinen hinterlassenen Papieren* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1989), pp. 245-249.

⁵⁹⁵ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malm*, p. 79.

⁵⁹⁶ Predominantly, wheat and barley were grown for export, see Cuinet, *Syrie, Liban et Palestine*, p. 469.

complaints about Bedri Paşa's attempts to seize land for himself in al-Harra I was able to trace in the Ottoman archives date from 1893. At that time, Bedri Paşa was no longer in office as governor of the Hawran district. Local inhabitants, led by the headman (*muhtar*) of the village, saw an opportunity to proceed against Bedri Paşa in this moment of relative weakness: They complained that Bedri Paşa had produced a fake title deed to lay claim to property which the villagers had previously cultivated for generations. The inhabitants of al-Harra further reported that Bedri Paşa had a gang of twenty to thirty Kurdish horsemen at his command, who bullied and harassed the village into complying with Bedri Paşa's demands by restricting the villagers' access to their fields and interrupting the water supply. Locals also notified the Ottoman authorities of threats to drive them away from their village altogether. In addition, several inhabitants were heavily indebted to Bedri Paşa.⁵⁹⁷ The locals of al-Harra brought their complaints to the attention of the authorities in Istanbul after their case had been decided in favor of Bedri Paşa on the local level in Damascus, as Bedri Paşa was able to produce official documentation to back up his claims to the land.⁵⁹⁸ This seems to indicate that even though he was no longer in office as governor of the Hawran at the time of the trial, Bedri Paşa was still able to intervene with local officials according to his personal interest. When the petition of the inhabitants of al-Harra reached the government in Istanbul, however, it was read attentively and Bedri Paşa's oppressive policies were harshly condemned.⁵⁹⁹ Yet, there is no indication that any concrete measures against Bedri Paşa were taken beyond this criticism. Therefore, the complaints from al-Harra continued: The villagers brought forward that for generations ("ābā'en 'an ğedden"), their families had owned the land in question. Bedri Paşa, on the other hand,

⁵⁹⁷ BOA, DH.MKT. 43.14 ek 2, 23 Z 1310 (July 8, 1893), and ek 4 for the petition from al-Harra.

⁵⁹⁸ BOA, DH.MKT. 43.14 ek 2, 23 Z 1310 (July 8, 1893).

⁵⁹⁹ BOA, DH.MKT. 43.14, the grand vizier to the Ministry of the Interior, he uses the expression "zulüm" (oppression) to characterize Bedri Paşa's actions.

endorsed his claims to the property with reference to relatively new, Ottoman-administrative concepts. As a consequence of the Ottoman land law of 1858, real estate and landownership were re-registered, and written out *tapu* title deeds served as proof of ownership.⁶⁰⁰ As it had been ascertained in the trial against him, Bedri Paşa was in possession of such title deeds. The local inhabitants of al-Harra, again led by the headman of the village, however, complained in a petition to the Ottoman authorities in 1905 that Bedri Paşa had seized most of the land in al-Harra illegally, tricking and threatening the original owners and forcing them to cede one fifth of their crop to him. Eventually, Bedri Paşa produced a title deed – which the inhabitants of the village claimed was a forgery.⁶⁰¹

The economic transformation of Ottoman Syria, during which pasture land controlled by local, largely nomadic populations was being turned into agricultural land exploited by absentee landowners for both regional and export-oriented markets over the second half of the 19th century, was strongly impacted by non-economic concerns. One of these concerns was security: Areas where direct state control had so far been limited were brought under more direct influence from the Ottoman center, not at least to ward off European intervention. In addition, the economic transformation and state centralization efforts were embedded in a discourse about civilizing and modernizing localities inhabited by mobile, nomadic and often tribal populations.⁶⁰² The nomadic Bedouin

⁶⁰⁰ Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Co.: Rienner, 1987), chapter 5 “The Ottoman Land Law of 1858 and its Consequences,” pp. 67-90, especially pp. 82-84 on the situation in Syria.

⁶⁰¹ See BOA, DH.MKT. 935.41, 25 Z 1322 H (March 2, 1905).

⁶⁰² One aspect of this civilizing mission, like in other parts of the empire, was the state-sponsored spread of Sunni Islam. In the regions inhabited by Druze communities in the Hawran, mosques were built and conversion to mainstream Islam was encouraged by the authorities in the context of the military expeditions against the Druze, see Oppenheim, *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, vol. 1, pp. 173-177. On the campaign against the “wild Druze” in the press in Damascus in the 1880s, see Birgit Schäbler, *Aufstände im*

was, in the wake of this Ottoman *mission civilisatrice*, stylized as the “other,” in antithesis to Ottoman modernity.⁶⁰³ It has to be remembered, not at last in view of the abundant historiography stylizing the Bedirhani family members as targets of state oppression, resistance fighters and pioneers of Kurdish nationalism, that Bedri Paşa Bedirhan not only took part in the economic venture in the Hawran and the Syrian lands more generally but, as an Ottoman official, was also among the key protagonists of the *mission civilisatrice* which accompanied it. Ottoman-Kurdish notables, as the example of Bedri Paşa illustrates, were an inseparable part of the imperial system, tied to it not only economically but through a shared discourse of Ottoman imperial rule. This tends to be overlooked all the more because later, in Turkish Republican times, Kurds would very much fill the place of an “other” in Turkish nationalist discourse. In the late 19th century, however, lines of divisions were perceived differently.

3.4. Other Members of the Bedirhani Family’s First Generation in Exile

While the case study of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan provides an idea of one possible trajectory of a leading member of an Ottoman-Kurdish notable family, it makes sense to compare it to the biographies and careers of some of his relatives, if only to understand what is particular about Bedri Paşa and what might be more general concerns that are also valid for other actors from similar backgrounds.

Drusenbergländ. Ethnizität und Integration einer ländlichen Gesellschaft Syriens vom Osmanischen Reich bis zur staatlichen Unabhängigkeit (Götha: Perthes, 1996), pp. 127-128.

⁶⁰³ An argument made by Selim Deringil, “They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’ The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate.” In: *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 45.2 (2003), pp. 311-342.

3.4.1. The Oldest Sons of Emir Bedirhan

At the time when Emir Bedirhan and his extended family arrived in Istanbul in 1847, only his first-born son Hamid was old enough to be considered for schooling in an Ottoman state school, something Emir Bedirhan explicitly asked for at the time.⁶⁰⁴ Hamid Bedirhan, however, suffered from an eye condition which left him almost blind and was therefore considered unfit to enter the Ottoman school system.⁶⁰⁵ He was sent off with the rest of his family to the island of Crete instead. His disability was also the reason why Hamid Bedirhan's trajectory is not well documented, even though we would expect to find the first-born son of Emir Bedirhan in a prominent position within the family.⁶⁰⁶ Hamid is said to have spent most of his life in the province of Syria,⁶⁰⁷ where members of his family continued to live after his death.⁶⁰⁸

Necib Bedirhan was the second-oldest son of Emir Bedirhan. In 1861, at the age of nineteen, he applied for an appointment in the local Ottoman administration on the island of Crete, where his family lived at the time.⁶⁰⁹ He hoped to thereby increase the family's income and put

⁶⁰⁴ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 67, arguing on the basis of BOA, İ.MSM. 51.1297, 09 Za 1263 H (October 19, 1847).

⁶⁰⁵ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 67, the eye condition is described as "tavukkarası hastası," corresponding to *retinitis pigmentosa*, a steadily proceeding degeneration of eyesight which often leads to blindness.

⁶⁰⁶ Information on his biography is scarce, with some accounts being obviously false, including Mehmet Çetin's report that Hamid was born in 1820, and then in 1921 [sic!] collaborated with the Greeks during the occupation of İzmir, Mahmut Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri: İsyançı Bedirhan Bey'in yaramaz çocukları ve bir kardeşlik poetikası* (Istanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 2005), p. 91.

⁶⁰⁷ Yılmaz Öztuna, *Devletler ve hânedanlar* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991), vol. 1, p. 580. Öztuna's estimate that Hamid Bedirhan was born around 1820, however, does not sit well with the idea of sending him to an Ottoman state school in 1847, as he would have been too old. A date of birth around 1835 seems more likely.

⁶⁰⁸ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 214 mentions one daughter and three sons.

⁶⁰⁹ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 225. Necib applied to the customs administration in the city of Kandıye.

himself in a position to support himself and eventually get married.⁶¹⁰ After the death of his father, Necib Bey took over as head of the Bedirhani family in Damascus. Starting out as a military commander of Kurdish irregulars in the Ottoman war efforts against Russia over the second half of the 19th century, much like Bedri Paşa, Necib also embarked on a career as an imperial bureaucrat and provincial official. The district of Aydın emerged as his sphere of influence in the late 19th century. Until 1883, he was employed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) there, and in the following year, his name was under consideration for the office of the governor (*vali*) of Basra.⁶¹¹ Nothing came of these plans, and Necib Paşa headed off to Istanbul, where he became a member of the *cemiyet-i rüşumiye*. In 1895, he was again looking for a suitable appointment outside of the capital.⁶¹² Ultimately, he ended up in Ottoman Syria, being employed as *mutasarrıf* of Homs at the time of his death in 1898.⁶¹³

Other senior family members, among them Osman, Hüseyin and Bahri Paşa Bedirhan, opted for careers in the Ottoman military administration. Bahri Paşa built up a power base in Tripolis in Libya from the 1880s onwards.⁶¹⁴ In the war of 1877/78, Hüseyin Paşa Bedirhan had fought under *müşir* Şakir Paşa in Anatolia with several thousand Kurdish irregulars under his command. A large number of them were killed in action, leaving Hüseyin Paşa devastated and depressed.⁶¹⁵ He himself lost his sense of hearing during the campaign.⁶¹⁶ Unlike his brother Ali Şamil Paşa, Hüseyin did not receive an appointment after he returned

⁶¹⁰ Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, p. 225, drawing on Necib's petition in the matter to the Ottoman grand vizier, in BOA, A.MKT.MHM. 223.84.

⁶¹¹ BOA, Y.A.HUS. 179.91, 13 Za 1301 H (September 4, 1884). Nothing, however, came of these plans.

⁶¹² BOA, İ.HUS. 43.34, 07 Ca 1313 H (October 26, 1895).

⁶¹³ BOA, BEO. 1148.86057, 01.04.1314 M (June 13, 1898).

⁶¹⁴ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 42.

⁶¹⁵ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 37-38.

⁶¹⁶ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 38.

from the battlefield. To make ends meet and secure an income, he returned to the family's homeland in Anatolia – a move which was seen with great suspicion by the Ottoman authorities who had prohibited family members from returning there, fearing a reestablishment of the family's former influence.⁶¹⁷ However, Hüseyin Bedirhan is said to have stayed in the surroundings of Cizre for up to two years in the aftermath of the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877/78 and only agreed to return from there when a lucrative job in the Ottoman administration was offered to him. He was eventually appointed as a member of the prefecture (*şehr-emaneti*) of Istanbul.⁶¹⁸

Some of the sons of Emir Bedirhan relied on the support and sponsorship of older brothers who, like Bedri Paşa in Syria and Necib Paşa in Aydın, had already established local power bases and patronage networks. An example is the career of Murat Remzi Bey Bedirhan.⁶¹⁹ Born on the island of Crete in 1854/55, he took his first steps in the Ottoman bureaucracy as an apprentice in the administration of the province of Syria in the late 1870s – where his older brother Bedri Paşa had already proven his mettle. In the 1880s, he spent some time as a secondary official in the judicial administration of the province of Bursa. In the following years, he transferred to Kastamonu and Ankara, but did not advance in the ranks, being employed as an assistant (*mu'avın*) to higher officials in each case. His last entry in the *sicill-i ahval* dates from 1887. It appears that he subsequently sought out the protection of his older brother Bedri Paşa in Damascus to sustain himself and his family.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁷ Lütü, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 39.

⁶¹⁸ Lütü, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 40. He received a monthly salary of 3.000 *kuruş*.

⁶¹⁹ His career path is documented in his *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.423.

⁶²⁰ Murad Remzi Bey died in the Feneryolu, Istanbul in the 1940s, Anter, *Hatırlarım*, pp. 80-81.

None of these more senior family members, however, came to play a role in developments (and re-orientations of the family's interests) in the aftermath of the First World War, as most of them passed away over the first decade of the 20th century. It fell to Bedri Paşa's younger full brother Emin Ali Bey, his junior by four years, to lead the family through this period of transition. And while Emin Ali Bey, the father of the protagonists of the 20th-century Kurdish independence movement Celadet, Kamuran and Süreyya Bedirhan, is regarded and remembered as a forerunner of Kurdish nationalism, it is useful to recall that he grew up and operated in similar conditions as his brothers Bedri and Ali Şamil Paşa, following similar interests and being determined by similar horizons, at least prior to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.⁶²¹

3.4.2. Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan in Kadıköy

With the exception of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, none of the sons of Emir Bedirhan has left as many traces in the Ottoman archives and the memories of contemporaries as Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan. Cross-read with Bedri Paşa's trajectory, the career of Ali Şamil offers an interesting point of comparison, especially because he was in conflict with parts of his family and notably broke away from the patronage network of sheikh Abu'l-Huda in the 1890s. His biography also sheds additional light on the opportunity structures family members operated in more generally, as Ali Şamil Paşa opted for a career in the Ottoman military and, different from Bedri Paşa and his network, operated from Istanbul instead of Damascus. His trajectory is also singled out for a closer look here because Ali Şamil Paşa played a prominent role in the events leading up to the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906, which are the focus of analysis in the following fourth chapter. While his brother Bedri Paşa is today almost forgotten, Ali Şamil Paşa is vividly

⁶²¹ Emin Ali Bey's career and biography are discussed in detail in chapter 5.

remembered in Kurdish historiography. He is generally characterized there as a man of the common people, short-tempered and lacking formal education and refinement, but a courageous and just advocate of the Kurdish urban poor under his protection.⁶²² Sympathetic depictions often cite Halide Edip, the step-daughter of Ali Şamil Paşa, who included childhood recollections of jovial afternoons spent at Ali Şamil's house in Istanbul, characterizing him as a loving husband and father in her memoirs.⁶²³ The following analysis will complicate this picture, demonstrating how Ali Şamil Paşa was a successful but often ruthless local entrepreneur, politician and strongman of late Ottoman Istanbul.

Born probably in 1855,⁶²⁴ Ali Şamil Paşa was among the older sons of Emir Bedirhan.⁶²⁵ He did not receive any official schooling and was, according to contemporary accounts, not able to read or write.⁶²⁶ Nevertheless, he embarked on a successful career in the Ottoman military. In the 1870s, Ali Şamil held the rank of a lieutenant (*mülazım*) in the Ottoman army and was dispatched as an aide-de-camp (*yaver*) to the Sharif of Mecca. When the war against Russia broke out in 1877, he returned to the Ottoman capital to join his siblings in their efforts to gather Kurdish irregular troops. He and his men fought under the command of Gazi Osman Paşa during the defense of Plevna in 1877. The majority of his followers perished in the campaign, and Ali Şamil Paşa himself was severely injured on the battlefield.⁶²⁷ After the

⁶²² See e.g. the depiction of Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 57-59.

⁶²³ Halide Edip, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (Istanbul: Atlas Kitabevi 1979), p. 97.

⁶²⁴ As he was not a member of the Ottoman civil administration, there is no *sicill-i ahval* file available on Ali Şamil Paşa. His trajectory cannot thus unfortunately not be summarized in the same detail as Bedri Paşa's above.

⁶²⁵ See his entry in Mehmed Zeki Pakalın, *Sicill-i Osmanî Zeyli*, 19 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008), vol. 2, pp. 54-56. This date, however, cannot be correct if Malmisanij is right in pointing out that Ali Şamil was one of the oldest sons of Emir Bedirhan and born in Cizre, prior to the family being exiled, that is prior to 1847, see Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 107.

⁶²⁶ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], p. 110.

⁶²⁷ He was wounded in several places but a bullet wound in his left leg caused the most severe damage, leaving him with a slight limp for the rest of his life, see Ziya Şakir, *Yarım*

Ottoman defeat, he was held as a prisoner of war by the Russians. When he returned from captivity in 1884,⁶²⁸ he received a promotion and was appointed to a post in Urfa.⁶²⁹ Shortly afterwards, as a consequence of local complaints against him, he was transferred to the province of Syria, where he apparently fared better.⁶³⁰

In Syria, Ali Şamil Paşa married into a local family of sharifian descent (*aşraf*). His wife Nazire Hanım was a member of the Syrian Şurayyifzade family. Her sister had married Ali Şamil's brother Tahir Bey Bedirhan. By means of this double marriage, the connection between the Bedirhanis and the Şurayyifzade family was particularly strong. During his life, Ali Şamil Paşa married several more times. Among his wives was Bedrifem Hanım, whom he later divorced and who, through her second marriage to Mehmed Edib Bey, became the mother of Halide Edip. In addition, Ali Şamil was married to a young girl from Ethiopia,⁶³¹ and a Circassian girl from the harem of the Sharif of Mecca.⁶³² Also, the daughter of an Ottoman military official from Jerusalem is mentioned as one of Ali Şamil Paşa's wives, but the bride passed away shortly after the marriage had been concluded.⁶³³

Süleyman Şefik Paşa,⁶³⁴ who had fought with Ali Şamil in the Ottoman war against Greece in 1897, included a brief overview of Ali Şamil Paşa's

Asır Evvel Bizi İdare Edenler, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Anadolu Türk Kitap Deposu, 1943), vol. 2, p. 186.

⁶²⁸ This date is given by Müslüm Yücel, *Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Kürt İmgesi* (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2011), pp. 178-185.

⁶²⁹ Ali Şamil was later also promoted to the rank of *kolağası*, according to Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 39.

⁶³⁰ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, p. 186.

⁶³¹ Halide Edip, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (Istanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1979), pp. 97-98.

⁶³² Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 110.

⁶³³ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 110. According to his nephew Mehmed Salih Bey, Ali Şamil Paşa also had an affair with a Christian girl called Meryem in Jerusalem, Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i A'malım*, p. 56.

⁶³⁴ For Süleyman Şefik Paşa [Söylemezoğlu] (1860–1946), see Kunalalp, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 122. His family was from Erzincan, his father Ali Kemal Paşa had been the *vali* of Konya.

career in his memoirs:⁶³⁵ According to his account, Ali Şamil Paşa was able to secure a job in the military administration of Üsküdar with the help of Amedi Ferik Mehmed Paşa, the commander of the Ottoman troops in Üsküdar, even though he lacked a formal military education. At the time, Ali Şamil Paşa still enjoyed the support of sheikh Abu'l-Huda, who was intervening in favor of the Bedirhani family in the Yıldız Palace. According to the account of Ziya Şakir, another supporter of Ali Şamil was the commander of the army in Istanbul, *müşir* Arif Paşa.⁶³⁶ At some point, however, Ali Şamil Paşa broke away from his family's long-term benefactor Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadi and approached the latter's principal opponent Tahsin Paşa, who worked as chief secretary in the Yıldız Palace (*mabeyn başkatibi*) and was a very influential figure in palace circles. With Tahsin Paşa's help, Ali Şamil Paşa advanced his career and eventually replaced his former sponsor Amedi Mehmed Paşa as commander of the Ottoman troops in Üsküdar (*Üsküdar ciheti kumandanı*).

According to Süleyman Şefik Paşa's recollections, the local officials in Üsküdar and Kadıköy lived in fear of the short-tempered and often aggressive Ali Şamil Paşa and his bullies: Süleyman Şefik Paşa recalls how sheikh Abu'l-Huda's son Hasan Halid Bey and other Ottoman officials, among them the pharmacist Ahmed Refik Bey and the son-in-law of the *şeyh-ül-islam* Dr. Cemil Paşa, were harassed and humiliated by Ali Şamil Paşa in public. The background of pharmacist Ahmed Refik

Süleyman Şefik Paşa himself pursued a career in the Ottoman military and was *vali* of Basra (1913 to 1914) and briefly held the post of Minister of War (1919). Around the turn of the century, when he confronted Ali Şamil Paşa, he was a member of the court martial (*divan-ı harb*) in Tophane and commander of an artillery brigade.

⁶³⁵ Süleyman Şefik Paşa & Hümeyra Zerdecî, *Hatıratım. Başıma Gelenler ve Gördüklerim. 31 Mart Vak'ası* (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 2004), pp. 109-115.

⁶³⁶ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, p. 189. Arif Paşa (1848–1909), the son of Paşazade Ali Efendi, was born in Macedonia. He taught at the Harbiye and the Istanbul school for teachers before he embarked on a career in the Ottoman military, serving in Erzincan, in Rumelia and Edirne. In 1896, he was appointed to Istanbul as *müşir* of the 2nd army. He was involved with Hicaz railway project and died in the Hicaz in 1909. For his biography, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 45.

Bey's run-in with Ali Şamil Paşa was explained by Ziya Şakir, another contemporary witness, as follows: Ali Şamil Paşa was convinced that Ahmed Refik was one of the spies of Sultan Abdülhamid II, and he therefore did not tolerate his presence in Üsküdar, harassing him whenever he met him there, allegedly also attacking him with a whip during one of these incidents.⁶³⁷ Süleyman Şefik Paşa himself was also targeted by Ali Şamil Paşa after he had intervened in favor of an Armenian father whose daughter had been raped by Ali Şamil Paşa's bullies. Ali Şamil Paşa had made sure that they went unpunished, seeing to it that the case went on trial in Kartal, where one of his relatives was presiding over the court. Süleyman Şefik Paşa successfully pushed for a retrial, during which the assailants were eventually convicted. Süleyman Şefik Paşa knew, however, that he had overstepped his borders: During the following months, in 1902, he lived in constant fear of Ali Şamil Paşa's retaliation, hardly daring to go for walks alone or stay out in the evenings. Eventually, Ali Şamil Paşa had his house searched, but nothing incriminating could be found.⁶³⁸ Even though not only Süleyman Şefik Paşa, but also many other officials, among them prominently the head of the civil administration of Üsküdar, the governor Hamid Bey, were wary of Ali Şamil Paşa and doubted his professional competence,⁶³⁹ the latter remained in office until his entire family fell out of favor in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 200-205.

⁶³⁸ Süleyman Şefik Paşa, *Hatıratım*, pp. 109-115.

⁶³⁹ Süleyman Şefik Paşa described Ali Şamil Paşa as aggressive ("gaddar"), quick to lose his temper ("artık kabına sığamaz") and ignorant ("cahil," all p. 109). He also concedes, however, that Ali Şamil Paşa had a way of endearing himself to people and could be witty and entertaining ("Aynı zamanda, Ali Şamil çıkarı olanlara karşı gayet mütevazı, soytarıklık, tuhafılık eder, tatlı dilli bir adam idi," p. 111). Süleyman Şefik Paşa's description overlaps with comments Mehmed Salih Bey made on his uncle Ali Şamil Paşa's ignorance, see Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, p. 33.

⁶⁴⁰ See chapter 4 for details.

Süleyman Şefik Paşa's impressions of the fearful atmosphere in Üsküdar are corroborated by Ziya Şakir's account: Şakir recalls that ever since Ali Şamil Paşa had been appointed as head of the military administration in Üsküdar, he interfered with the affairs of both the local governor and the civil administration there. Şakir illustrated his account with some local lore about Ali Şamil Paşa's interventions with greengrocers and carriage drivers in Üsküdar and Kadıköy. The gist of all these stories was that while Ali Şamil Paşa was rude and strict, often even brutal, his interventions and the punishments he meted out were always justified.⁶⁴¹ In these anecdotes, Ali Şamil Paşa was depicted as immensely popular with the ordinary people in Üsküdar, also due to his reputation as a war hero. He was, however, not in great favor with the local officials. The Ottoman Minister of Finance Zühtü Paşa and his successor Reşat Paşa had frequent quarrels with Ali Şamil Paşa, who demanded the salaries of his soldiers to be paid on time.⁶⁴² Another incident describing how Ali Şamil Paşa felt he ran the show in Üsküdar – or was at least remembered that way in local lore – is also related by Ziya Şakir: Ali Şamil's mansion bordered the train line⁶⁴³ and the paşa allegedly had his personal train station built on his property, forcing the passing trains to stop at his convenience.⁶⁴⁴ He also engaged in an ongoing argument with the train company regarding property rights.⁶⁴⁵

Notably, even after Ali Şamil Paşa had violently attacked sheikh Abu'l-Huda's son with a horsewhip in public, he was apparently not punished or reprimanded by the sultan. Endorsing an argument made by Thomas Eich,⁶⁴⁶ this might indicate how sheikh Abu'l-Huda's influence in the palace was waning as he was increasingly outplayed by his adversary

⁶⁴¹ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 196-197.

⁶⁴² Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 212-214.

⁶⁴³ This is also described by Edip, *Mor Salkımlı Ev*, p. 112.

⁶⁴⁴ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, p. 212.

⁶⁴⁵ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 211-212.

⁶⁴⁶ Eich, *Abū-l-Hudā aş-Şayyādī*, pp. 178-190.

Tahsin Paşa. Sheikh Abu'l-Huda's son Hasan Halid Bey, at the time an Ottoman official and member of the *cemiyet-i rüsumiye*, had been driving in an open carriage through Fenerbahçe, accompanied by İzzet Bey, the brother of Kürt Sa'id Paşa, when he had a violent run-in with Ali Şamil Paşa.⁶⁴⁷ A report by Ziya Şakir sheds more light on the conflict between Ali Şamil Paşa and his former supporter sheikh Abu'l-Huda: Abu'l-Huda had married into the Bedirhani family, allegedly hoping to inherit a considerable amount of money when his wife's father passed away.⁶⁴⁸ Members of the Bedirhani family, among them Ali Şamil Paşa, disagreed, claiming the inheritance for themselves. Ziya Şakir asserts that the Emir Bedirhan's heirs were planning to invest it in the foundation of primary schools in Anatolia. Frustrated, sheikh Abu'l-Huda notified the sultan, claiming the Bedirhani family was about to provoke a rebellion in the east of the empire.⁶⁴⁹ As a consequence, several family members, among them Ali Şamil Paşa, Emin Ali Bey, Murad, Hasan and Kemal Bey, were arrested and imprisoned for several

⁶⁴⁷ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 206-208.

⁶⁴⁸ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 188-190. There is, however, some inconsistency in Şakir's account: Şakir writes that sheikh Abu'l-Huda was married to the daughter of an uncle of Ali Şamil, a man whom he in turn identifies as Mustafa Paşa, most probably drawing on Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 43, where the same (likely false) statement can be found. The narrative presented here does not make much sense, as (a) Ali Şamil Paşa had no uncle by the name Mustafa, and (b) sheikh Abu'l-Huda was, according to the detailed account given by Thomas Eich on his wives, never married to a daughter of any Mustafa Paşa, Eich, *Abū-l-Hudā aş-Şayyādī*, pp. 273-274. Interestingly, however, sheikh Abu'l-Huda was married to Emir Bedirhan's daughter Fatma Melek Hanım. Since her father Emir Bedirhan had already passed away long before the argument took place, even prior to the conclusion of the marriage, his death and ensuing disputes about his inheritance are unlikely to have been the reasons for a conflict between sheikh Abu'l-Huda and members of the Bedirhani family. It is possible that Fatma Melek Hanım herself passed away, leading to a conflict about her inheritance. Either way, even without all the details in order, arguments about property and are not an unlikely reason for the break between parts of the Bedirhani family and sheikh Abu'l-Huda.

⁶⁴⁹ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 44, offers a slightly different version of these events. According to him, Mustafa Efendi Şerifzade was entrusted with the testament and related paperwork. His house was searched in an unrelated incident, the papers were discovered and passed on to the sultan, who took action against the Bedirhani family.

months.⁶⁵⁰ They were released after a trial clarified what had happened between them and sheikh Abu'l-Huda. The attorney responsible for their defense was said to be the French-Polish legal expert Count Ostroróg.⁶⁵¹ The involvement of a foreign national speaking out for the Bedirhanis reportedly led to their eventual release and to a subsequent imperial amnesty. The Sultan, however, was said to have remained suspicious of the Bedirhani family ever since.⁶⁵² Ziya Şakir does not mention when exactly these incidents took place. He noted in his account, however, that Arif Paşa served as *merkez kumandanı* at the time, which situates the events somewhere between the late 1880s and mid-1890s. Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] is clearer in his account, dating the trial to 1314 H [1896/97].⁶⁵³ This time frame would again fit the general argument of Thomas Eich, who argued that the influence of sheikh Abu'l-Huda in palace circles was waning around the turn of the century.⁶⁵⁴ However, since Ziya Şakir's report is unclear about the marriage connection between the Bedirhanis and sheikh Abu'l-Huda, the events are highly unlikely to have played out exactly as he remembered. Money and inheritance claims more generally seem to have played a part, leading to a break-up between Ali Şamil Paşa and sheikh Abu'l-Huda and inspiring the former to seek revenge. If we are to believe the rest of Ziya Şakir's account, Ali Şamil Paşa did indeed get his revenge on sheikh Abu'l-Huda, seeking

⁶⁵⁰ These events are also related by Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁵¹ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 44. This was most probably Leon Walerian Ostroróg (1867–1932). Leon Ostroróg was born in Poland, had studied law in Paris and moved to Istanbul in the late 1880s, where he started to work as an advisor to the Ottoman judiciary, M. Emin Elmacı, “Osmanlı Hukuk Reformunda bir Öncü: Kont Leon Ostrorog.” In: *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 29 (2011), pp. 1-30. It is possible that Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan, who also worked as an inspector in the higher ranks of the Ottoman judiciary at the time, would have been acquainted to Ostroróg or was able to otherwise establish a connection to him through his professional network.

⁶⁵² Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 44. Lütfi goes on to link this first spark of suspicion of Abdülhamid II against the Bedirhani family to the events of 1906, when the sultan finally saw an opportunity to proceed against them. This, however, seems to be an oversimplified interpretation, as the careers of members of the family in the late 19th century indicate that they continued to be favored and promoted by the sultan.

⁶⁵³ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 45.

⁶⁵⁴ Eich, *Abu'l-Hudā aş-Şayyādī*, pp. 208-209.

him out in his home in Beşiktaş one day and beating him up in front of his servants and a visitor.⁶⁵⁵

In spite of this highly visible humiliation of a prominent advisor to the sultan, Ali Şamil Paşa was able to retain his post and even to advance his career. In 1901, he was employed in the Yıldız Palace, serving as aide-de-camp (*yaver*) to the sultan personally. Ali Şamil Paşa appears to have kept the sultan updated on internal matters within the Bedirhani family.⁶⁵⁶ Late at night after a meeting at his house, convened by Bedri Paşa Bedirhan and attended by himself, Ali Şamil Paşa and their brothers Hasan, Midhat, and Murad, Ali Şamil reported the results of their discussions via telegraph to the private secretary of Sultan Abdülhamid II. The secretary, who was addressed in the telegraph not with his name but as “*âlim beyefendi*,” learned sir, was Tahsin Paşa, an influential figure in palace circles and rival of sheikh Abu'l-Huda. It emerges from the telegraph that the Bedirhani family members met in an attempt to reconcile Ali Şamil Paşa and Murad Bedirhan, whose relationship was marked by “coolness” (*burüdiyet*). Ali Şamil Paşa let on in the telegraph that he disliked his brother Murad because the latter was a follower of sheikh Abu'l-Huda.⁶⁵⁷

In spite of his close relations to Tahsin Paşa, however, Ali Şamil Paşa found himself exiled to Manastır (Bitola) in May 1901, following a heated argument with an Albanian officer from the sultan's personal guard. The argument erupted in one of the palace hallways, and his

⁶⁵⁵ Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel*, vol. 2, pp. 191-192.

⁶⁵⁶ See BOA, Y.PRK.ASK. 167.65, a telegram, dated 11.12.1316 M (February 24, 1901), addressed to the sultan's private secretary and signed by Ali Şamil Paşa, in which he provides information on a meeting of several of his brothers around Bedri Paşa and their decision to improve the relationship with their brother Murad.

⁶⁵⁷ That the sultan would be interested in these kinds of updates on the activities of sheikh Abu'l-Huda seems to lend further support for Thomas Eich's argument that sheikh Abu'l-Huda's influence in the palace circles and over the sovereign was waning after the turn of the century. See Eich, *Abū'l-Hudā aş-Şayyādī*, pp. 208-209.

opponent drew a revolver on him.⁶⁵⁸ His fall from grace, however, did not last for long. In July 1904, there were reports in the international press that Ali Şamil Paşa had been arrested again in Istanbul.⁶⁵⁹ This information, however, appears to be incorrect, as a detailed report about Ali Şamil Paşa's activities in Üsküdar, authored by the local governor (*mutasarrıf*) Hamid Bey reached the Ottoman authorities in early November 1904. The report does not provide any reason to assume that Ali Şamil Paşa's activities in Üsküdar had stopped at that point or that he had in the recent past been penalized in any way.⁶⁶⁰ Hamid Bey complained that Ali Şamil Paşa constantly interfered with the affairs of the local administration, putting pressure on local police officers and other officials and harassing the population. He had his followers attack insubordinate locals, along with their homes and families and was said to illegally confiscate property and to arrest people in his own home. He refused to turn over any of his men involved in these activities to the Ottoman authorities for prosecution. According to Hamid Bey's petition, members of the military administration under Ali Şamil Paşa's direct command, as well as members of the community of porters (*hamal*) in Haydarpaşa were among his principal supporters.⁶⁶¹ It also emerges from the descriptions of Hamid Bey that Ali Şamil Paşa and his supporters acted as self-declared guardians of public morals, attempting to restrict Muslim women from undertaking evening walks in Fenerbahçe.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁸ See *Pester Lloyd*, June 1, 1901, p. 6.

⁶⁵⁹ See *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, July 12, 1904, p. 10.

⁶⁶⁰ The letter is preserved in the İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı Vakıf Kütüphanesi ve Arşivi (Istanbul), Nr. 1552, "Ali Şamil Paşa'nın Üsküdar'daki fenalıkları hakkında Divanı Harbe yazılan mektup," 3 adet, Üsküdar *mutasarrıfı* Hamid Bey to the *divan-ı harb-ı hususi riyaşet-i 'aliyesine*, dated 23. Tişrin I. 1320 (November 4, 1904).

⁶⁶¹ İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, Nr. 1552, Hamid Bey to the *divan-ı harb-ı hususi riyaşet-i 'aliyesine*.

⁶⁶² İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, Nr. 1552, Hamid Bey to the *divan-ı harb-ı hususi riyaşet-i 'aliyesine*.

A rather desperate petition authored by a certain Tevfik Bey from Kadıköy addressed to the sultan in August 1904, just weeks prior to Hamid Bey's intervention, sheds further light on Ali Şamil Paşa's activities in the area:⁶⁶³ Tevfik Bey owned a coffee-shop and an adjacent store, both situated in the Koşuyolu Caddesi in Üsküdar, not far from the Haydarpaşa train station. Ali Şamil Paşa had his men attack and demolish both businesses, and Tevfik Bey's merchandise was plundered in the process. The background of the attack becomes not entirely clear from his petition, but Tevfik Bey mentions that Ali Şamil Paşa had also demanded a considerable sum of money in cash from him, suggesting that the incident was the result of an argument about protection money. Tevfik Bey complained bitterly that, in summary, Ali Şamil Paşa did as he pleased in Üsküdar, with no one in the position to keep him in check.

According to contemporary accounts, Ali Şamil Paşa was not only interested in protection money, he was also keen to acquire real estate. A dispute with the railway company in Üsküdar to this effect has already been mentioned, and is reiterated in Hamid Paşa's petition.⁶⁶⁴ Ali Şamil Paşa's real estate ventures have left further traces in the Ottoman archives: An incident which is mentioned repeatedly by contemporary observers documents Ali Şamil Paşa's interest in a particular piece of property which was used as a local Muslim graveyard. On Ali Şamil Paşa's initiative, the graveyard was demolished and trees on the spot were cut down, possibly around 1904.⁶⁶⁵ A woman called Fatima Hanım claimed that Ali Şamil Paşa had illegally taken possession of her family graveyard ("kabristân") and appurtenant place of prayer ("namâzğâh")

⁶⁶³ BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ. 49.120, dated 18 C 1322 H (August 30, 1904).

⁶⁶⁴ İbrahim Hakkı Konyalı, Nr. 1552, Hamid Bey to the *divan-ı harb-ı hususî riyaşet-i 'aliyesine*.

⁶⁶⁵ İbrahim Hakkı Koyalı Vakıf Kütüphanesi ve Arşivi (Istanbul), Nr. 1552, "Ali Şamil Paşa'nın Üsküdar'daki fenalıkları hakkında Divanı Harbe yazılan mektup," 3 adet, Üsküdar mutasarrıfı Hamid Bey to Divân-ı harb-ı hususî riyaşet-i 'aliyesine, dated 23. Tışrin I. 1320 (04.11.1904).

situated in Kadıköy, close to Bağdad Caddesi. Ali Şamil Paşa already owned a plot of land adjacent to the graveyard and Fatima Hanım accused him of bluntly disregarding the boundaries of his property. The four houses Ali Şamil had built for himself and each of his three daughters were in part erected on Fatima Hanım's property. To facilitate construction works, Ali Şamil had several tombstones torn down and ordered more than two hundred fifty old cypress trees to be cut. The tombstones were then brazenly reused for the walls of the newly built houses.⁶⁶⁶ Although Fatima Hanım and other neighbors who also felt wronged by Ali Şamil Paşa's building project voiced their complaints from 1905 onwards,⁶⁶⁷ he went through with his plans. It appears from the later documentation that in spite of the unclear status of the property, the four houses were in fact built there.

Other transactions of Ali Şamil Paşa, which also involve the acquisition of property located in the same area, the Osman Ağa Mahallesi in Kadıköy, show a similar pattern: In December 1905, the department of financial affairs of the Council of State (*şura-yı devlet*) was concerned with one of these cases. In an auction, Ali Şamil Paşa had purchased the rights to a plot of land which was part of the Sultan Selim-i Salis Han Vakfı in Kadıköy. At first, he rented it. Then, however, Ali Şamil Paşa had four stores (*dükkân*) built on the plot of the rented *vakıf* land, something that was considered highly unusual and would have required special permission – which Ali Şamil Paşa appears to have neglected to obtain beforehand.⁶⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the officials in the department of financial affairs (*maliye dairesi*) allowed Ali Şamil to use the land in this way, reasoning that the plot had been vacant for some time and no

⁶⁶⁶ BOA, BEO. 3160.236932, dated 25 Ş 1325 H (October 4, 1907).

⁶⁶⁷ BOA, Y.MTV. 271.67, 16 Z 1322 H (February 21, 1905).

⁶⁶⁸ BOA, İ.EV. 39.38 contains the proceedings of the meeting of the *maliye dairesi* on the matter, dating from 28 Za 1323 H (December 26, 1905), where members seemed aware of the unusual arrangement: “Esâsen bu gibi arazi-yı vakfiye üzerine bilâ me'zûniyet ebniye inşâsı ğayr-ı ğâ'iz olmağıyla beraber ...”.

previous owner could be identified. Ali Şamil Paşa's investment, they added, was going to be a "most useful" (enfâ') solution for the property in question.

Two things can be deduced from these cases: First, from the turn of the century onwards, Ali Şamil Paşa was influential enough to convince a high Ottoman state institution like the Council of State to legalize exceptions and deviations from regular proceedings in his case. It is probably not irrelevant in this regard that Ali Şamil's brother Bedri Paşa Bedirhan was a member of the Council of State when the decisions about Fatima Hanım's land and the *vakıf* property were made. Second, Ali Şamil Paşa – who was described as ignorant and illiterate by his contemporaries – seems to have had a fine sense for lucrative investments. He had no doubt realized that parts of Kadıköy and Üsküdar were experiencing growth and gentrification around the turn of the century: With the railway line connecting areas further out to the Haydarpaşa station and from there, by boat, on to the administrative heart of Istanbul and the *Bab-ı 'ali*, wealthy Ottoman officials and merchants moved to the outskirts, building their summer houses and mansions there, amongst lush gardens and wastelands. Prices for property were on the rise, and additional infrastructure like stores or warehouses seemed an attractive investment case, for Ali Şamil Paşa and others. As local strongman backed by the Ottoman military administration and his personal following among Kurdish urban poor, Ali Şamil Paşa had the means to acquire valuable land on his own terms, as the cases of the *vakıf* and also his resolute course of action in the case of the family graveyard of Fatima Hanım demonstrate.

After 1906, when he was prominently involved in the murder of the prefect of Istanbul Rıdvan Paşa, Ali Şamil Paşa's fortunes changed irretrievably: In 1907, when the Ottoman authorities looked into the issue of Fatima Hanım's graveyard again, the balance of power had

shifted: Ali Şamil Paşa, formerly virtually unassailable in Kadıköy and Üsküdar, had by then been tried for his involvement in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa and was exiled to Ta'if in Yemen. Formerly influential family members, notably Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, who had been a representative in the Ottoman Council of State, were also no longer in office. Conveniently for the plaintiff, the question of Ali Şamil Paşa's illegal infringement on the property of Fatima Hanım was reinvestigated at that point. Engineers were sent to the scene to survey the property and draw up a detailed map. Based on these investigations, the Council of State now came to the conclusion that Ali Şamil Paşa's houses had in fact been built on Fatima Hanım's land unlawfully. Consequently, the buildings had to be torn down and the place was to be returned to his former state.⁶⁶⁹ The result of the court case illustrates clearly that the events of 1906 deeply affected the opportunity structures and leverage the Bedirhani family had in Istanbul. In December 1907, were reports that Ali Şamil Paşa had died in captivity reached the Ottoman capital.⁶⁷⁰ After the Constitutional Revolution in 1908, his remains were transferred to Istanbul to be buried at the Karacaahmet cemetery there.⁶⁷¹ In September 1908, however, Kurds in Istanbul were still demonstrating for the release of Ali Şamil Paşa and his return from exile.⁶⁷²

In sum, Ali Şamil Paşa's activities in Istanbul prior to 1906 can be read as the – fairly successful – career of a local strongman. What is termed as typical “*derebey* behavior” by Ali Şamil Paşa's contemporaries like Halide Edip has since been analyzed under the phenomenon of *qabaday*

⁶⁶⁹ See BOA, Y.MTV. 271.67, 16 Z 1322 H (February 21, 1905), contains as ek 3 the decision of the Council of State on the matter.

⁶⁷⁰ See *Neues Wiener Journal*, December 13, 1907, p. 5.

⁶⁷¹ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 113.

⁶⁷² See *Neues Wiener Journal*, September 14, 1908, p. 5.

power politics by Michael Johnson and other social anthropologists.⁶⁷³ Typically for a *qabaday* figure, Ali Şamil Paşa wielded considerable influence over a community of urban poor, in his case Kurdish migrant workers employed chiefly as porters in the docks and transportation hubs of Istanbul. He took care of his clients within this community by distributing favors and employment opportunities and also by intervening with the local authorities of their behalf. Ali Şamil Paşa was, in turn, respected by his clients and able to mobilize them as an irregular fighting force, for instance in the event of protests or to settle local disputes to his advantage. Very probably, Ali Şamil Paşa had obtained the rights, in the form of a commission from the Ottoman government, on a particular service like the unloading of boats in the harbor of Kadıköy or at the Haydarpaşa station. He used his exclusive access to employment in these areas to distribute jobs among his client base of Kurdish workers, which would explain the quasi-monopoly of the Kurds on this particular kind of job around the turn of the century. Other local patrons and strongman, however, rivaled with Ali Şamil Paşa over access to this resource of distributable employment, as they intended to build their own power base and bind clients to them. Rıdvan Paşa, in particular, the prefect of Istanbul, emerged as an opposing local strongman: He had access to employment opportunities in the municipality and in turn mobilized gangs of street cleaners as his dispute with the Bedirhani family escalated. His proceedings indicate that Rıdvan Paşa, much like Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan, had a community of urban poor at his disposal that he was able to mobilize on his behalf. This sheds some additional light on the rivalry between Rıdvan Paşa and

⁶⁷³ Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut* (London et al.: Ithaca Press, 1986), pp. 20-21. If Ali Şamil Paşa is recognized as being in a position equivalent to that of the *qabadays*, the mobilizers and brokers in Lebanese patronage networks studied by Michael Johnson, this begs one questions: Who, then, is Ali Şamil Paşa's patron, his *za'im* in Johnson's terminology, for whom did he mobilize support? While the wider network structures Ali Şamil Paşa operated in are still not entirely clear to me, the odds point strongly towards Tahsin Paşa as his patron and *za'im* around the turn of the century.

the Bedirhani family, as a fight for spoils and influence in the city. The conflict culminated in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906, the background of which will be the subject of closer analysis in the following chapter.

4. Members of the Bedirhani Family “in Transition”

The previous chapter introduced Bedri Paşa and Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan as senior members of the Bedirhani family and successful actors within the Ottoman bureaucracy and military, respectively. The end of the Hamidian era and the collapse of the Ottoman imperial system confronted family members with new challenges – this period, however, also held some opportunity for some among them who had previously been sidelined by patriarchal family structures and already-established networks of the family into the imperial elite and palace circles. To start off my deliberations on members of the Bedirhani family who had to navigate the period of change and upheaval, which began for the Bedirhanis in 1906 and intensified after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and again after 1918, I focus on Mehmed Salih Bey, son-in-law of the notorious Bedri Paşa Bedirhan and hopeful, yet ultimately unsuccessful, Ottoman bureaucrat. In a second step, I then look into the biographies of other family members who chose similar trajectories. It will become clear that although often cited in later historiography on the Bedirhani family, the role of family members in the Young Turk opposition was marginal and very ambiguous. I then look into the events around the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, which constituted a turning point in the relations between the Bedirhani family and the Ottoman state. To conclude the chapter, I trace one of the protagonists of the court case against the family, Abdürrezzak Bey, after his return from exile in 1910. Similar to the example of Mehmed Salih

Bey, it will be demonstrated that the ways in Abdürrezzak Bey's biography has been told were impacted by concerns of later nationalist historiography, to the point of making him the protagonist of an uprising in Bitlis which he had, judging from contemporary sources, next to nothing to do with.

4.1. Members of the Bedirhani Family in Opposition to Sultan Abdülhamid II

Literature about the trajectory of the Bedirhanis after in the period of transition between 1906 and 1918 often leaves its readers with some confusion: Did the family – which I have just introduced as led by Bedri Paşa and Ali Şamil Paşa in the late 19th century, two staunch supporters and beneficiaries of the Hamidian government – indeed turn around completely and support the CUP movement from 1908 onwards or, as some researchers have argued, even before that?⁶⁷⁴ It seems that the situation was much more complicated: My research has shown that only a very small faction among the Bedirhanis had reason to support the Young Turk movement in the late 19th and early 20th century. In retrospect and from the perspective of Kurdish-nationalist historiography, however, the connection to the opposition against the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II emerged as a key element in the narrative of the family's history. It went together well with the way in which some family members from the early 20th century onwards, in particularly the descendants of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan,⁶⁷⁵ cast

⁶⁷⁴ For example Birgit Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirhan - Wegbereiter der kurdischen Diaspora in Europa,“ in: Berliner Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Kurdologie (ed.), *Das Kurdische Berlin* (Berlin, 2003), pp. 46-47, Chris Kutschera. *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p. 19, and more recently Djene Rhys Bajalan, “Early Kurdish ‘Nationalists’ and the Emergence of Modern Kurdish Identity Politics,” in: Fevzi Bilgin (ed.), *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Questions* (Lanham et al.: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 13, who has Osman Bedirhan down as a CUP supporter.

⁶⁷⁵ See my discussion in chapter 5.

themselves as reformers and modernizers, putting an emphasis on an alleged family legacy of exile and political opposition. Thus, the considerable imperial success and involvement – which had been a reality and a recipe for success for the great majority of an earlier generation of the Bedirhani family – were glossed over in later historiography. They were replaced by the experiences of a very small minority of family members, among them Mehmed Salih Bey, Mikdat Midhat Paşa and Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan, who were indeed active in the opposition against Abdülhamid II. Their experience, however, was not representative for the Bedirhani family on the whole.⁶⁷⁶ This particular turn in later historiography has to be kept in mind when analyzing Mehmed Salih Bedirhan's trajectory. Not only his biography as such, but also the transmission and rediscovery of his story in the late 20th century are therefore subjects of the following analysis.

4.2. The Example of Mehmed Salih Bey Bedirhan⁶⁷⁷

Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, who lived between 1873/74 and 1915, was by no means a prominent political actor of the late Ottoman period. He was an Ottoman official of minor importance and influence, employed in the provincial administration in different parts of the empire over the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nevertheless, his life provides an illustrative example of an 'imperial career,' in the sense that the actions he took and the hopes he cherished were firmly embedded in the context

⁶⁷⁶ In addition, it needs to be recalled that the Bedirhani family did not function as a homogeneous entity, but was marked by internal divisions. Some of these divisions were surely cultivated for tactical reasons, enabling the family to "have a foot in every camp," others were born out of actual rivalry and competition among the different branches of the extended family.

⁶⁷⁷ An earlier version of this chapter was published as Barbara Henning, "A passionate Ottoman in late 19th century Damascus: Mehmed Salih Bedirhan's autobiographical writing in the context of the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani family," in: Martin Aust & F. Benjamin Schenk (eds.), *Imperial Subjects. Autobiographische Praxis in den Vielvölkerreichen der Romanovs, Habsburger und Osmanen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2015), pp. 233-254.

of empire. He was shaping his imperial life-world, while at the same time the context of empire informed and restricted his personal and professional trajectory.⁶⁷⁸ In the following section, I take a closer look at Mehmed Salih Bey and his writings, proceeding in three steps, first of all briefly presenting him and what is known about his biography and locating him in the context of the wider Bedirhani family. In a second step, I turn to the text itself and the particular background of its publication and edition in the early 1990s. And finally, I am interested in the connections between Mehmed Salih's personal trajectory and the imperial framework.

Mehmed Salih's career can be called *imperial* in several respects: On the one hand, his trajectory provides ample evidence of an imperial mobility, beginning already in his early childhood. From his writings, one can gather how movement of people across the Ottoman Empire was facilitated, that is in Mehmed Salih Bey's case through the activation of a network of solidarity based on family connections that spanned virtually the entire imperial space and connected the provinces to the imperial capital, as well as different regions among each other. On the other hand, his writings reveal a strong imperial ambition. Mehmed Salih Bey struggled to get an education which would allow him to succeed as an Ottoman official and advance into the higher ranks of the imperial bureaucracy. This ambition was cut short by leading members of his own family: His maternal uncle and later father-in-law Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in particular had other plans for him. In spite of this setback, the prestige culture of Ottoman officialdom, secular western education and urban bureaucracy remained a crucial framework of reference for Mehmed Salih Bey, which he used to position and define himself in the late Ottoman society. However, not only Mehmed Salih Bey's ambitions but also the eventual frustration of his personal and professional

⁶⁷⁸ Drawing on David Lambert & Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 1-3.

aspirations constituted an imperial aspect of his biography. Conflicting mechanisms of empire made and unmade his career, encouraging his personal ambition – but in turn also constraining him, as collective identities and responsibilities were projected onto him as an individual. Thus, Mehmed Salih Bey's trajectory reflects the relationship between the imperial framework and the collective of the Bedirhani family with some of its complexities and contradictions. It also illustrates the spectrum of options and strategies available to him in his attempts to succeed or at least get by as an imperial subject.

A closer look at Mehmed Salih Bey's biography further illustrates some of the aspects mentioned above: Mehmed Salih Bey was born in 1873/74 in Latakia.⁶⁷⁹ At this time, many of his senior relatives were employed in the Ottoman administration, both as low-ranking provincial officials and among the more prominent political players in the imperial capital and provincial centers. The already mentioned Bedri Paşa Bedirhan had become the head of the family in Syria in the late 19th century. As the previous chapter has illustrated, Bedri Paşa was well connected both in the province of Syria and in the Ottoman capital. During his two terms in office as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of the Hawran district, Bedri Paşa provided a number of his relatives with employment in the lower ranks of the Syrian provincial administration. Among those taken under his wing were Mehmed Salih Bey's father and later also Mehmed Salih himself. Being part of the well-oiled patronage network of Bedri Paşa's, however, came at the price of submitting to his authority. Mehmed Salih Bey's father, Mahmud İzzet Bedirhan (d. 1911), was one of Bedri Paşa's cousins. He served in the Ottoman provincial administration in a village near Latakia in Syria when his first son was born.⁶⁸⁰ Mehmed Salih Bey's mother Leyla was a daughter of Emir Bedirhan. She died when

⁶⁷⁹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, p. 30. In the text, the editors converted the year given by Mehmed Salih Bey, 1290 M, mistakenly to 1873.

⁶⁸⁰ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, pp. 30-31.

Mehmed Salih Bey was only five years old.⁶⁸¹ While the father was traveling and transferring between posts throughout the empire and remained a distant figure in the childhood memories of his son, Mehmed Salih Bey was brought up by his maternal grandmother Ruşen (ca. 1813–1895), widow of the late Emir Bedirhan. Mehmed Salih Bey's father married again soon after the death of his first wife. This marriage did not meet with Mehmed Salih Bey's approval and further alienated father and son.⁶⁸²

Mehmed Salih Bey spent his childhood traveling quite extensively throughout the Ottoman Empire in the company of his grandmother Ruşen, visiting and living with different maternal relatives and their families for some time, then moving on again. Their itinerary illustrates the empire-wide network of the Bedirhani family that came to function as a network of solidarity for the half-orphaned Mehmed Salih and his widowed grandmother. In his teens, Mehmed Salih Bey received a solid education in various Ottoman state schools in Istanbul and Damascus. For a short time, he also attended the *Alliance Israélite* school in Jerusalem. Mehmed Salih Bey's brief stay in Jerusalem constituted an early attempt to seek support outside of the network of his powerful relative Bedri Paşa: An uncle took care of him in Jerusalem and even offered to pay the fees for his higher education. Nothing, however, came of these plans.⁶⁸³ While Mehmed Salih himself hoped to continue his studies at the *mülkiye*, the prestigious Ottoman school for bureaucrats in Istanbul, his family thought differently about his future. In 1891, he was urged to marry his cousin, a girl named Samiye.⁶⁸⁴ After their marriage, the couple lived in the household and thus under close control of Samiye's father Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, at the time an influential notable

⁶⁸¹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 31.

⁶⁸² Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 68.

⁶⁸³ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 55-56.

⁶⁸⁴ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 57.

in Ottoman Syria and the key authority figure in the Bedirhani family.⁶⁸⁵ When Bedri Paşa was appointed as governor in the Hawran for the second time in 1894, Mehmed Salih Bey accompanied him as a low-level official.⁶⁸⁶ Later, he was deployed as a curator of one of Bedri Paşa's properties in the area of Baalbek.⁶⁸⁷

Mehmed Salih Bey's own writing does not provide any information concerning the time period from the mid-1890s to 1914, but it emerges from the biography of his daughter Ruşen Bedirhan (1909–1992) that Mehmed Salih Bey remained active in the lower ranks of the Ottoman bureaucracy in Syria and was later transferred to Kayseri.⁶⁸⁸ During these years, he continued to stay close to his father-in-law Bedri Paşa. In the spring of 1906, in the aftermath of the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa, the entire Bedirhani family faced repercussions. Mehmed Salih Bey seems to have left the province of Syria and accompanied Bedri Paşa into exile to the island of Rhodes. His memoirs, at least in their published form, however, are silent about this unsettled period of his life. The fact that Mehmed Salih Bey still strongly identified with the Ottoman Empire when he resumed his notes in 1914 indicates that being sent into exile in 1906 did, in retrospect, not constitute a meaningful break for him in his commitment to the Ottoman imperial state. After 1900, it appears that Mehmed Salih Bey became increasingly politicized and critical of the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. He founded and published the oppositional journal *Ümid* ('hope') in

⁶⁸⁵ This was an exceptional, albeit not completely unknown arrangement: "Exceptionnellement, à Damas et à Alep, il [the son-in-law, BH] peut habiter chez ses beaux-parents, surtout si sa femme est fille unique," writes Kazem Daghestani in his *Études Sociologiques*, p. 58. Daghestani stresses, however, that for a groom, moving in with the family of his wife would have been an urban and middle-class phenomenon, avoided and looked down upon by Kurdish, Turkmen or Bedouin members of the largely tribally organized Syrian society. The arrangement can thus be read as a further indication of the Ottomanization of the Bedirhani family.

⁶⁸⁶ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malm*, pp. 60-63.

⁶⁸⁷ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malm*, p. 82.

⁶⁸⁸ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, pp. 191-192.

Egypt, and the distribution of his writings was prohibited in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁸⁹ From 1913 onwards, he was a contributor for the Ottoman-Kurdish periodicals *Rojî Kurd* and *Yekbûn*. His articles in Ottoman Turkish and Kurdish in these publications were chiefly concerned with the question of education of the Ottoman-Kurdish youth.⁶⁹⁰ In 1914, Mehmed Salih Bey had returned from Egypt. After Bedri Paşa had passed away, he headed to İzmir.⁶⁹¹ When the Ottoman Empire was about to enter the First World War, Mehmed Salih Bey was back in Syria: In Damascus, he was aiding Abdurrahman Paşa Yusuf, one of the most prominent Kurdish notables of the city, in his effort to raise Kurdish irregulars for the 4th Ottoman army.⁶⁹² These irregulars were to fight under the command of Cemal Paşa in the attack on the Suez Canal.⁶⁹³ In March 1915, at age forty-two, Mehmed Salih Bey suddenly passed away, succumbing to typhoid fever in Damascus. While

⁶⁸⁹ See BOA, Y.PRK.UM. 51.70 (Ağustos 1316 / August 1900). An Ottoman-Kurdish student association called “Hêvî,” the Kurdish equivalent to Ümid / hope was founded in Istanbul in 1912. Apart from his contributions to *Rojî Kurd* and *Yekbûn*, which were published by Hêvî, Mehmed Salih Bey seems not to have been actively involved with this Istanbul-based association, and it is unclear to me if the similar choice of names is a coincidence or contains a reference of some sort. For Hêvî, see Malmisanij [Mehmed Tayfun], *Kürt Talebe Hêvî Cemiyeti. İlk Legal Kürt Öğrenci Derneği* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları 2002).

⁶⁹⁰ The published edition of Mehmed Salih Bey’s memoirs contains an appendix with some of his articles for *Rojî Kurd*, see Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â’malım*, pp. 107-120.

⁶⁹¹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â’malım*, p. 87.

⁶⁹² Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â’malım*, p. 86.

⁶⁹³ Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein described the preparations of the campaign in Damascus. He noted that numerous units of irregulars were mobilized to join the standing army, among them local Bedouins and fighters from Macedonia. He also pointed out that the Ottoman soldiers and irregulars alike were fairly well-equipped, but lacked sufficient training. A crucial problem von Kressenstein saw was that while the officers of the Ottoman command communicated in Ottoman Turkish only, the great majority of the troops was made up of Arabic speakers. Communication, it can be deduced from von Kressenstein’s account, was a major problem and individuals like Mehmed Salih Bey, who knew both Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, were in high demand and had to serve as interpreters. See Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal* (Berlin: Josef Krumbach, 1938), pp. 28-45. While von Kressenstein did not explicitly mention any involvement of Kurdish soldiers in the campaign, the commander Cemal Paşa himself mentioned in his memoirs how he inspected a unit of Kurdish fighters in Aleppo under the command of a certain Fahri Bey, see Djemal Pascha, *Erinnerungen* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922), pp. 150-151.

his childhood years and early youth take up the major part of the published memoir, Mehmed Salih Bey's activities as a journalist in opposition to the regime of Abdülhamid II and later as a contributor to the debate about the situation of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire are not a prominent subject in the published version of his writings. Keeping in mind that the text was issued for publication in the early 1990s, in the context of an increased interest of a predominantly Kurdish audience in the history of the early Kurdish nationalist movement and its protagonists, the focus of the text on the private instead of the political life of Mehmed Salih Bey is somewhat unexpected. In the following section, a closer look at the origins as well as the edition and publication of the text attempts to shed further light on this issue.

Mehmed Salih Bedirhan caught my attention because – contrary to many other, arguably more politically active and socially or economically prominent members of the Bedirhani family – he wrote about himself and his life. Excerpts from his writings have been preserved, albeit in a single, rather particular edition. The autobiographical text is colorful and multifaceted, it introduces Mehmed Salih Bey and his personal trajectory, depicts his ambitions, his dreams and disappointments and offers a glimpse of his ideas about his own, complex Ottoman-Kurdish imperial identity. For a number of reasons, Mehmed Salih Bey's recollections constitute an interesting body of writing: First of all, the author's timing for writing up his memoirs is auspicious: He did so over an extended period of time prior to the outbreak of the First World War. At a time, in other words, when Kurdish nationalist ambitions, discussions about independence or autonomy of a Kurdish nation state as well as Kurdish resistance to the Turkish-Kemalist political project were not on the horizon yet.⁶⁹⁴ In late 19th century Syria, Mehmed Salih

⁶⁹⁴ Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 2004), pp. 69–72.

Bey was writing and thinking about himself in an Ottoman imperial framework, negotiating Kurdish, Ottoman as well as religious, social and cultural aspects of his identity and adding to all of this the particular background of his family, the Bedirhanis. In 1915, shortly after the Ottoman Empire had entered the First World War, Mehmed Salih Bey passed away. Contrary to many of his contemporaries, who would write about the late Ottoman period in retrospect or later revise and edit their memoirs from late Ottoman times, influenced by newly emerging discourses of ethnic nationalism and nationalist historiography, Mehmed Salih Bey never had a chance to come back and alter his initial text. He died an imperial official and remained, in his own words, a ‘passionate Ottoman’ throughout his entire life.⁶⁹⁵ Secondly, it has already been indicated that unlike his uncle and father-in-law Bedri Paşa, Mehmed Salih Bey was not a high-level Ottoman official or influential policy maker. Rather, he was a state servant like there were many others, a bureaucrat of average importance. Yet, his perspective is not to be dismissed, on the contrary: His writings about his activities and his observations in the Ottoman province of Syria and in the district of Hawran in particular contribute an actor’s point of view on processes of Ottoman state centralization in the later 19th century which have so far most extensively been studied from the macro-perspective of social and economic history.⁶⁹⁶ Mehmed Salih Bey’s account provides an

⁶⁹⁵ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Âmalım*, p. 85, “Beni Osmanlılığımın hayatıyla rabitadar edecek marazi bir aşk vardır.”

⁶⁹⁶ Examples for this approach include Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus 1860–1920* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics. Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985); and idem, “Violence in Rural Syria in the 1880s and 1890s: State Centralization, Rural Integration and the World Market,” in: Farhad Kazemi & John Waterbury (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in the Modern Middle East* (Miami, Florida International Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 50–84; Birgit Schäbler, *Aufstände im Drusenbergländ. Ethnizität und Integration einer ländlichen Gesellschaft Syriens vom Osmanischen Reich bis zur staatlichen Unabhängigkeit* (Götha: Perthes, 1996); Hanna Batatu, *Syria’s Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1999); Max L. Gross, *Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus* 2 vols. Diss. Georgetown Univ, 1979; Martha Mundy & Richard Saumarez Smith, *Governing Property*,

opportunity to bring an individual perspective, in his case not of a prominent decision maker but of a practitioner of empire, back into the analysis of these processes.⁶⁹⁷

Mehmed Salih Bedirhan's autobiographical writings were read, re-evaluated and commented upon after his death. The text in its published form does therefore not only tell us about ideas Mehmed Salih Bey had about himself, but also opens up a discussion about the image some of his descendants wanted to convey of him and his role in the family's history as they edited and published the text in the early 1990s. An investigation of this attempt to translate an imperial career into the logic of Kurdish nationalist historiography shifts the focus from Mehmed Salih Bey's own rendering of an imperial expert's life to the *making of* an early pioneer of Kurdish nationalism by some of his descendants. What Mehmed Salih Bey has written is not a memoir or an autobiography in the narrower sense of the term – at least not in the form in which it was made available to a wider audience, first in 1992 in a serial for *Özgür Gündem*, a daily newspaper in Turkey, issued in Turkish language but mainly reaching out to a Kurdish readership, and later as a separate booklet with extensive footnotes, edited by Mehmed Salih's daughter Ruşen Bedirhan and Mehmed Uzun, a renowned Kurdish writer.⁶⁹⁸ The original text was written in Ottoman Turkish. Today, it is available not in

Making the Modern State. Law, Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 2007); among others.

⁶⁹⁷ Albert Hourani, "How Should We Write the History of the Middle East?" In: *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (1991), pp. 125–136, see also Geoffrey Wolff, "Minor Lives," in: Marc Pachter (ed.), *Telling Lives. The Biographer's Art* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 57-72.

⁶⁹⁸ The text first appeared as a serial in *Özgür Gündem* (Istanbul, November 26 to December 3, 1992) under the title "Hatıratım yahut defter-i A'malım." This version only includes the memoirs of Mehmed Salih up until his move to Baalbek in the mid-1890s. I have been able to consult the respective copies of *Özgür Gündem* in the archives of the Atatürk Kitaplığı in Istanbul. An extended version of his memoirs which included additional autobiographical fragments from 1914/15 and reprints of articles authored by Mehmed Salih Bey in the early 20th century and was published as Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i A'malım* in 1998.

its original Ottoman version but in the form of a transcription into modern Turkish, provided by the two editors. The extent to which the editors have made changes in the original is difficult to evaluate. Any information about Mehmed Salih Bey is certainly filtered through their particular perspective, which is firmly rooted in Kurdish nationalist historiography. The editors' choices, comments and footnotes on the text reflect a particular discourse on Kurdish history and bespeak a projection of categories of Kurdish national identity back into late Ottoman times. In spite of these limitations, it is possible to obtain valuable information about Mehmed Salih Bey's imperial life-world and his late Ottoman world-views from the edition of the text.

It is not easy to resolve when exactly *Defter-i Â'malim* was written. I would argue that the text consists of a number of autobiographical fragments, written at different times (roughly between 1909 and 1915), and with different intentions in mind. The editors chose to join a number of textual fragments from the personal papers left behind by Mehmed Salih Bey, quite possibly leaving out other elements that did not fit their preferred historical narrative. Evidence for such omissions can be found in the published version of the text itself, where an excerpt from the original Ottoman memoirs is reproduced.⁶⁹⁹ In the excerpt, Mehmed Salih Bey sketches out the contents of his recollections, and gives a list of events that he intends to write about. Some of these, however, are never mentioned again in the published text – these parts might have never been written, they might have been lost at some later date, or the editors might have decided not to include them. The textual fragments that were included in the edition differ in character: The first and in the edition most extensive part is an autobiographical account written in retrospect, most probably in 1909.⁷⁰⁰ Here, Mehmed Salih Bey

⁶⁹⁹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, pp. 17-19.

⁷⁰⁰ This can be gathered from the published text itself, where the date 15.05.1327 (according to the lunar Islamic calendar, corresponding to June 4, 1909) is mentioned. The

writes about his childhood years and his life as a young man in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1893, his writings are interrupted, quite suddenly and without further explanation. They resume in the fall of 1914, when Mehmed Salih Bey was involved in the recruitment of irregular Kurdish fighters for the Ottoman army in Damascus. After an introduction, an extensive general comment on current events, this second, shorter part of his writings was composed on a daily basis, evoking the style of a diary.

Such changes and irregularities make it difficult to clearly situate the text in one genre or another.⁷⁰¹ What awaits the reader in *Defter-i Â'malım* is not a high-level bureaucrat's account of his public activities. There are examples for this kind of autobiographical writing, especially after 1908, and these texts might have even served as models and inspiration for Mehmed Salih Bey. His own account, however, is strikingly private in nature. He writes about his hopes and disappointments, his ambitions and frustrations. He is very critical of himself and writes in an emotional manner about the loss of relatives who were dear to him and about his devotion and friendship to a female cousin who died at a young age.⁷⁰² This inward perspective, suggesting that the text was in large parts written for his immediate relatives, probably his children, is a particularity of the source.⁷⁰³ Mehmed Salih Bey comments on the

Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and the subsequent abdication of Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1909 might have appeared as meaningful breaks to Mehmed Salih Bey, prompting him to reflect on his own role in these events as well as on the past in general.

⁷⁰¹ However, being interested in processes of transition rather than the study of autobiographical accounts as literary compositions, I hope to set aside the genre question by merely pointing out that all fragments of the text can be subsumed under the category of ego-documents, that is texts which contain any kind of statements about the self, about past life experiences, social knowledge as well as the writer's expectations for the future, see Winfried Schulze (ed.), *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), p. 28, see my introduction for a discussion.

⁷⁰² Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁰³ Alan Duben & Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households. Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880 – 1940* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 22 come to the conclusion that family and private life are subjects that rarely figure prominently in Ottoman memoirs.

intention of his writings in his preface: He expresses the hope that his recollections can provide instructive and inspiring lessons and examples to his descendants.⁷⁰⁴

Although he was writing at a period of time when breaking away from the Ottoman Empire was a prospect conceivable for some actors, in particular members of minority communities, Mehmed Salih's memoirs contain a commitment to an Ottoman imperial identity. The prominence of this commitment, made in the introduction to the second part of his memoirs that begin in 1914,⁷⁰⁵ is at odds with the nationalist discourse on Kurdish history prevalent in the late 20th century, at the time when the text was published.⁷⁰⁶ In the 1990s, the public interest in the protagonists of the early Kurdish nationalist movement was on the increase, as works on popular history and also historical fiction – published both within Turkey and in the Kurdish exile community in Europe – indicate.⁷⁰⁷ Writing about Kurdish history and its protagonists, also in Kurdish language, became possible as the public discourse on minorities in Turkey shifted during the 1990s.⁷⁰⁸ In the wake of this general curiosity about Kurdish national history, Celadet Bedirhan, a political activist who had died in exile in Syria in 1951, attracted the attention of the Kurdish novelist Mehmed Uzun. Based on a number of extensive interviews with Celadet's wife Ruşen Bedirhan, Uzun wrote a fictionalized biography of Celadet Bedirhan in Kurdish language. The

⁷⁰⁴ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 19.

⁷⁰⁵ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 85.

⁷⁰⁶ This might constitute one of the reasons why the initial serial in *Özgür Gündem* did not include the writings from 1914/15.

⁷⁰⁷ Examples include the work of Malmisanij [Mehmed Tayfun], first published in Sweden, as well as Mehmed Uzun's fictionalized life stories of the Kurdish nationalist activists Memduh Selim and Celadet Bedirhan, respectively, cf. Mehmed Uzun, *Siya Evîne* (Stockholm: Orfeus, 1989), and idem, *Bîra Qederê: Roman* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 1995). In 1996, Avesta Yayınları, a publishing house with a focus on Kurdish literature and history, was founded in Istanbul.

⁷⁰⁸ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, "Emergence and Equivocal Autonomization of a Kurdish Literary Field in Turkey." In: *Nationalities Papers* 40.3 (2012), pp. 357-372. See also chapter 7, on Leyla Bedirhan.

rediscovery of Ruşen's father, Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, and his autobiographical account happened in the context of Uzun's work on Celadet Bedirhan, a much more prominent figure in Kurdish nationalist history. It remains difficult to reconcile the account of the self-proclaimed 'passionate Ottoman' and Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual Mehmed Salih Bey with an anachronistic 20th-century historical narrative that assumes an early and definite break between an oppressive Ottoman state and a fairly homogeneous Kurdish opposition struggling for national independence. But as their extensive footnotes and the additional material added to Mehmed Salih Bey's account illustrate, the editors meant for *Defter-i Â'malım* to be read as a preface to a specific narrative of Kurdish national history which emphasized both the long tradition of Kurdish nationalist activity, reaching far back into Ottoman times, and the particular historical claim of the Bedirhani family to leadership within the Kurdish independence movement.

Reading Mehmed Salih Bey's account with the particular perspective of his editors in mind brings a number of tensions between the actual text and the Kurdish nationalist historical narrative into view: The first of these tensions concerns space. Mehmed Salih Bey's trajectory plays out on an imperial scale, rather than being exclusively focused on the Kurdish homeland. Instead of chronological references, space and movement structure large parts of the memories of Mehmed Salih Bey, especially as far as his childhood-years are concerned. From a very young age, he was on the move throughout the Ottoman Empire, traveling in the company of his grandmother. During these years, relying on the solidarity network of his family, Mehmed Salih Bey came to experience the imperial scale of the life-world he was growing up in. His family's network spanned the entire Ottoman province of Syria: Mehmed Salih Bey's travels led him over the years from his birthplace in Latakia to Damascus, and later on to Beirut and Jerusalem. The Bedirhani family's network equally included provincial spaces further off, taking Mehmed

Salih Bey for example to the Aegean island of Limnos, where he attended primary school.⁷⁰⁹ He also spent time in the imperial capital Istanbul on several occasions. In addition, the homeland and place of origin of the Bedirhani family, the Emirate of Bohtan in Eastern Anatolia and its capital Cizre played a role on Mehmed Salih Bey's mental map of the empire.⁷¹⁰ The land of his ancestors was a place that he never set foot on himself, as the family was prohibited to return there after 1847, but that was continuously remembered by his senior family members and thus figured prominently as an imagined space in his own memories. Kurdish, the language of his grandmother and his childhood, constituted an important link to this place of origin.

A second tension between the Kurdish nationalist historiographical narrative of the late 20th century and Mehmed Salih Bey's account concerns his ambitions and hopes for the future: Quite possibly informed by the imperial dimension of his childhood and early youth, the empire became the framework for Mehmed Salih Bey's professional ambitions. In his writings, he devoted considerable space to the description of his hopes to become a high-level Ottoman state official. Early on, he claims in his recollections, he realized that the road to success in the imperial system must lead through education. It was therefore imperative for him to continue his studies at the Ottoman imperial school for bureaucrats, the *mülkiye*.⁷¹¹ Behind this vision of imperial success that Mehmed Salih subscribed to and worked actively towards lay a deep conviction to individualism and the value of personal

⁷⁰⁹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 35-40.

⁷¹⁰ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 21.

⁷¹¹ He shared his dream of a career in the Ottoman bureaucracy with many of his contemporaries: "The ideal man of the time was the government servant. The greatest desire of the educated youth was not to become a businessman or engineer, but to enroll in the Imperial School of Civil Servants (Mekteb-i Mülkiye-i Şâhâne), which became the best school of higher learning in default of a university." Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 1964), p. 257. Also, Mehmed Salih Bey would have found a role-model within his own family: His uncle Abdurrahman Paşa had graduated from the *mülkiye* in 1889.

achievement. Mehmed Salih Bey's position among his own relatives was at best secondary. He was only related to the main lineage of the Bedirhani family through his late mother, half-orphaned and in addition too young for his opinions to be considered by senior family members. While his prospects within the collective of the family were rather bleak, an imperial career held the promise of professional success, in exchange for considerable effort, but on the seemingly fair basis of personal achievement and merit. Under the reformer Midhat Paşa, the school system in Ottoman Syria had been upgraded. In the 1880s and 1890s, the generation of Mehmed Salih Bey benefitted from newly established secular schools, ambitious syllabi and up-to-date textbooks. Scions of the leading Damascene notable families were able to embark on promising careers on the basis of this education. Sons of less influential families or of secondary branches like Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, however, who had undergone the same schooling, were mostly passed over when prominent positions in the imperial administration were distributed and found themselves frustrated.⁷¹² Eventually, Mehmed Salih Bey's career plans were spoiled by the interference of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, who insisted that Mehmed Salih Bey should get married instead of further pursuing his education.

The vision of empire as a project of educated reformers who advance within the hierarchy on the basis of ability and merit, however, accompanied Mehmed Salih throughout his life and continued to inform the image he tried to convey of himself. Throughout his writings, as he localizes himself within late Ottoman society, and particularly in

⁷¹² With the support of local Damascene notables, Midhat Paşa initiated the foundation of a Society for the Promotion of the Building of Schools (*ğam'iya al-ğayriya li-inšā' al-madāris*), this society also founded the school Mehmed Salih Bey attended in Damascus, the Çakmakiye Rüşdiyesi. Rainer Hermann, *Kulturkrise und konservative Erneuerung. Muhammad Kurd 'Ali (1876-1953) und das geistige Leben in Damaskus zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.m.: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 11-21. Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, the protagonist of Hermann's study, was a contemporary of Mehmed Salih Bey in Damascus.

moments when he sets himself apart from others, the ideals he held true about empire shine through. In the 1890s, for example, when Mehmed Salih accompanied his father-in-law Bedri Paşa Bedirhan into the Hawran district and started working in the local administration there, he was soon confronted with the widespread practice of corruption. A petitioner offered him a bribe to advance his case, and, as he confessed in his memoirs, Mehmed Salih Bey at first pocketed the money. Such behavior being in clear contradiction with the values he held true about imperial rule and also with the image he had created of himself, he immediately regretted having taken the money and was, as he relates, overwhelmed by remorse. He vowed to never again participate in corruption.⁷¹³ Thinking of himself as incorruptible became a strategy for Mehmed Salih Bey to feel superior to people around him who were otherwise more powerful, notably his father-in-law Bedri Paşa Bedirhan. Bedri Paşa's vision and working-knowledge of imperial rule differed considerably from Mehmed Salih Bey's. Claims made by Mehmed Salih Bey in his writings that Bedri Paşa engaged in all kinds of illegal activities, bought his way into the Ottoman administration, was brazenly corrupt and did not shy away from forging the signature of Mehmed Salih Bey to get a loan on the latter's property, are supported by other contemporary sources.⁷¹⁴ When Mehmed Salih Bey writes about himself as an upright and honest citizen and devoted servant of the empire, he is also setting himself apart from Bedri Paşa and his ilk. The severe criticism Mehmed Salih Bey directs at his father-in-law Bedri Paşa breaks with the norms of the household community: He attacks the patriarch of the household, who at the time would have ruled the social

⁷¹³ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malim*, p. 81. The intention Mehmed Salih Bey gave for his writing, to provide an inspiration for posterity, might have influenced the depiction of the events as a lesson that he learned.

⁷¹⁴ See for example reports by the German consul in Beirut, Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Libanon R 14023 Bd. 2, Nr. 31 (February 19, 1896); and also Khoury, *Urban Notables*, p. 48. Bedri Paşa was close to Osman Nuri Paşa, then the Ottoman governor of the province of Syria, who had a reputation for corruption and working for his personal benefit.

group with such authority that dependents of his household were not considered as having an identity of their own and were not supposed to speak to others in his presence, much less criticize the head of the household.⁷¹⁵

Another important motif which informed Mehmed Salih Bey's image of himself is his education. Repeatedly, he comments on the lack of intellectual ability of people who crossed his path and whom he disliked for some reason. He proudly comments on his superior knowledge of French and mocks a fellow member of Bedri Paşa's household with whom he takes French language classes.⁷¹⁶ He also mentions in his writings that one of his maternal uncles he was not particularly fond of, was illiterate and an "uncivilized" brute.⁷¹⁷ The Syrian lands in the late 1890s, however, were a lonely environment for the self-declared imperial intellectual Mehmed Salih Bey: Late-19th-century Damascus was a city of Arabic speakers and readers. Leila Hudson, who has studied book collections mentioned in Damascene inheritance registers of the period, found that a mere eight percent of all books mentioned were written in Ottoman Turkish, while the overwhelming majority of books was in Arabic.⁷¹⁸ In terms of language, Mehmed Salih Bey, who wrote his personal memoirs in Ottoman rather than Arabic, was part of a small minority in Damascus. His preference for Ottoman as the language of the state and the itinerant imperial elite underlines his status as an "imperial expert" – but also made him a potential outsider. This was even more true in the Hawran region: Yusuf Ziya Paşa al-Halidi, an

⁷¹⁵ For the logic ideal workings of an Ottoman household, see Michael Meeker, "Concepts of Person, Family, and State in the District of Off," in: Gabriele Rasuly-Palecek (ed.), *Turkish Families in Transition* (Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 45-60. Mehmed Salih Bey makes a connection between his critique of Bedri Paşa and his more general political opposition to the absolute rule of the sultan. This observation fits with Meeker's argument that the household was an emulation of the imperial court and was understood as such, at least by Mehmed Salih Bey.

⁷¹⁶ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malm*, p. 65.

⁷¹⁷ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malm*, p. 42.

⁷¹⁸ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus*, p. 86.

Ottoman official and intellectual originally from Jerusalem served as governor in as-Suwayda' – a city that was, after all, not some total backwater but one of the major towns of the Hawran province – in 1894. He complained that he could find practically no one to have an inspiring conversation with and regretted that books or newspapers rarely found their way into the region.⁷¹⁹ The situation in the smaller villages of the Hawran region was likely similar, if not worse. This indicates how starkly Mehmed Salih Bey's educational background and his continuous emphasis on his intellectual abilities and refinement set him apart from others around him. In Sheikh Sa'ad, where Bedri Paşa resided as *mutasarrıf* of the Hawran, together with his officials, servants and retinue, Mehmed Salih Bey lived an isolated life: The administrative center was set apart from the village itself. The government building (*saray*) occupied an abandoned church building, the house of the *mutasarrıf*, a small guesthouse and a mosque used only by the local Ottoman officials were the only other buildings in the immediate surroundings.⁷²⁰ Mehmed Salih Bey's high hopes for an imperial success story never materialized. This was at least in part due to the fact that his idea of imperial rule as an affair of educated bureaucrats selected and employed based on their abilities and individual achievements stood in stark contrast with a second model of imperial rule that was organized along the lines of collective interests of households, patronage networks and factions instead. Not only his own family gave preference to the interest of the collective over Mehmed Salih Bey's individual dreams and hopes, by urging him to marry and to

⁷¹⁹ Algernon Heber-Percy, *A Visit to Bashan and Argob* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1895), pp. 102–103. The author personally met Yusuf Ziya al-Halidi in as-Suwayda' in 1894. Corinne L. Blake, *Training Arab-Ottoman Bureaucrats: Syrian Graduates of the Mulkiye Mektebi, 1890–1920*. Diss., Princeton University 1991, pp. 88 and 101 describes how Ottoman Syria did not offer a particularly stimulating intellectual environment in the 1880s and 1890s, as newspapers and book printing were restricted and secondary state schools were few in number.

⁷²⁰ Vital Cuinet, *Syrie, Liban et Palestine. Geographie Administrative* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901), pp. 466-469 for a detailed description of Sheikh Sa'ad, a mere village of 1.500 inhabitants which had been declared the center of the district in 1885.

accept his (secondary) place within the family's hierarchy. The imperial bureaucracy itself, the very institution Mehmed Salih Bey had placed his hopes in, equally operated with categories of collective identity in its interactions with him and other members of the Bedirhani family: Time and again, Mehmed Salih Bey's plans and room to maneuver were restricted by the Ottoman state, which assigned a collective identity to him and other family members, and in consequence treated the family as one homogeneous entity, at times distributing collective punishment and sanctions against its members, indifferent of their individual motivations or standpoints. This tendency increased after 1906, as it will be demonstrated below.

Read by itself, Mehmed Salih Bey's biography seems to depict a lonely figure, misunderstood and marginalized by his immediate environment and his family. In some way, however the trajectory of Mehmed Salih Bey can be regarded as representative of a larger current within the younger generation of the Bedirhani family around the turn of the century. There were other family members – some of them models and forerunners for Mehmed Salih Bey, others his contemporaries – who did not agree with the authoritarian imperial rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. But as none of them left behind an autobiographical account, much less is known about their trajectories and motivations. A number of them appear to have, over the late 19th century, cultivated links to the Young Turk opposition. This, however, should not be understood as guiding or restricting their actions in any determining way, as it has been argued convincingly that no such thing as a monolithic and static body of “Young Turks” with unchanging interests existed at that time. The Young Turk opposition of the 1890s was, apart from some individual exceptions, very different from the movement after 1908 and 1913 in terms of personnel, outlook and ideology.⁷²¹

⁷²¹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), p. 2.

4.3. The Bedirhanis and the Liberal Opposition

4.3.1. Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan and the Journal *Kurdistan*

Mikdat Midhat Bey Bedirhan (1856/57–1914?), an uncle of Mehmed Salih Bey's, was part of this group within the family which opposed authoritarian rule and corruption. After serving for two decades in the Ottoman judiciary and municipal administration of Istanbul,⁷²² Mikdat Midhat Bey left the Ottoman Empire in the winter of 1897/1898 on board of an Italian steamer headed for Cairo.⁷²³ He justified his unauthorized departure claiming that he went to Egypt to cure his respiratory problems.⁷²⁴ His claim that he had a hard time breathing can be understood metaphorically as well: A known supporter of the Young Turk opposition movement,⁷²⁵ Mikdat Midhat Bey was also fleeing from the general repressive atmosphere of Hamidian Istanbul. In Cairo, he published the first issue of the journal *Kurdistan*, which holds a singular position in Kurdish nationalist history, as it is recognized as the first journal ever published in part in Kurdish language, using Arabic script.⁷²⁶ In his articles for this publication, Mikdat Midhat Bey made the case for the existence of an ancient and unified Kurdish race, in possession of a cultural and literary heritage going far back in history and being utterly distinct from neighboring Turkish and Arab

⁷²² His *sicill-i ahval* lists appointments in Ankara, Kırşehir, İzmit, Urfa, Isparta and then Istanbul, BOA, DH.SAİD. 26.155.

⁷²³ *La revue des revues*, Paris, January 7, 1898, "Revues Kurdes et Albanaises."

⁷²⁴ Abdurrahman Bedirhan in *Kurdistan* Nr. 6, 28 Eylül 1314 (October 10, 1898) in an open letter to Sultan Abdülhamid II.

⁷²⁵ *La Diplomatie*, Paris, May 8, 1898, p. 13, "Correspondance Étrangère: Lettre de Turquie."

⁷²⁶ *Kurdistan* was published in Cairo, printed by the publishing house *al-Hilal*, between 1898 and 1902. It was to become a seminal point of reference for Kurdish journals founded later, after the Constitutional Revolution, like *Hêvî*, and beyond, as the example of *Hawar*, published by Celadet Bedirhan in the French mandate territories, shows.

communities.⁷²⁷ A very real problem for the journal was that when it began its publication, Kurdish language and script were not standardized and thus few Kurdish speakers were able to decipher the articles written in Kurdish.⁷²⁸ The intended audience of the journal were not so much the Kurdish communities in Anatolia, but Ottoman intellectuals and foreign observers, who would have turned to the portions of the journal written in Ottoman Turkish. Part of the mission of the journal *Kurdistan* seems to have been to counter the image of the Kurds as barbaric enemies of the Christians in Anatolia and to argue for a Kurdish community and sense of identity apart from the Hamidiye regiments assembled under Sultan Abdülhamid II. Articles in *Kurdistan* therefore notably argued for peaceful coexistence between Kurdish and Armenian communities in Anatolia.

It has to be noted, however, that the Bedirhanis' reasons to oppose the Hamidiye regiments was not only morally, but also politically well founded: The Hamidiye allowed former petty Kurdish tribal leaders to wield considerable influence in the former Emirate of Bohtan, a region the Bedirhani family, albeit in exile, still regarded as their home turf. Hamidiye commanders like İbrahim Paşa Milli emerged as serious competitors over local influence and followers. The journal *Kurdistan* was not at last a public platform, addressing Ottoman and European observers alike, for members of the Bedirhani family to speak out against the rivaling Hamidiye. The lines between lofty liberal opposition against the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II and more pragmatic personal

⁷²⁷ *La revue des revues*, Paris, January 7, 1898, "Revue Kurdes et Albanaises."

⁷²⁸ Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 21. This begs the question if not the intended audience was Ottoman and international intellectuals, rather than readers who only understood Kurdish. Writing in Kurdish would then have been necessary not so much to reach out to an actual audience, but to bolster claims to national identity through language politics, following the example of other ethnically defined communities within the Ottoman Empire around the same time, see e.g. the Albanian nationalist movement.

stakes in Ottoman power politics were thus blurred, making the liberal intellectual Mikdat Midhat Bey look not so different from scheming strongmen like his brother Bedri Paşa after all.

Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan later returned from Egypt to the Ottoman lands. As a consequence of his family's involvement in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, he was imprisoned in Sana'a between 1906 and 1908. He later and landed a job under the CUP government: In 1912, he was briefly appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Dersim and later of Malatya.⁷²⁹ He gathered Kurdish irregulars among the tribes in the area of Mamuret'ül Aziz and joined the war against Italy in Libya with them.⁷³⁰ In 1913, he was transferred to Ertuğul (Bilecik) after complaints against him.⁷³¹

4.3.2. Abdurrahman Bedirhan and the Young Turk Circles of Geneva

Abdurrahman Bedirhan – another uncle of Mehmed Salih Bey Bey's, who has already been mentioned as a possible model for him since he graduated from the prestigious Ottoman school for bureaucrats – followed a trajectory that was similar to Mikdat Midhat Bey's. Abdurrahman Bey was also close to circles of the Young Turk opposition and left Istanbul around the same time as his brother Mikdat Midhat Bey, seeking refuge in Geneva, Switzerland. There, he was in contact with the Young Turks in exile: Among Abdurrahman Bedirhan's close

⁷²⁹ See Mikdat Midhat Bey's (here called Ahmed Midhat) *sicill-i ahval*, BOA, DH.SAİD. 26.155.

⁷³⁰ BOA, BEO. 4097.307249, 02 Za 1330 (April 20, 1912).

⁷³¹ BOA, DH.SAİD. 26.155, after the outbreak of the First World War, Mikdat Midhat Bey's traces disappear. His wife Müveddet, her three sons and her servants lived with the family of Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan in Istanbul during the war, see Müveddet Gönensay, *Müveddet Gönensay'ın Anıları*, p. 11. Mikdat Midhat Bey also did not take part in any of the family reunions in Istanbul in 1919/1920, suggesting that he might have passed away during the war.

friends in Geneva was Abdullah Cevdet Bey (1868–1932), who was equally of Ottoman-Kurdish descent. Cevdet had been trained as a military doctor in Istanbul.⁷³² As a student, he became involved with the Young Turk opposition and was forced into exile, first to Tripolis, from where he later escaped to Europe. From 1903 to 1905, he lived in Geneva and ran his publishing house *İctihad* from there. Unlike Abdurrahman Bedirhan, who left Geneva for Istanbul in 1906, Abdullah Cevdet Bey returned to the Ottoman Empire only after the re-installation of the constitution, in 1911. In Geneva, the two worked together⁷³³ and also established a close personal friendship. Abdullah Cevdet was listed as a witness to Abdurrahman Bey's marriage to Elisabeth van Muyden in 1904.⁷³⁴ After Abdurrahman Bey's departure from Geneva, their ways separated, with Cevdet leaving Geneva for Paris and going from there to Egypt,⁷³⁵ and Abdurrahman Bey in prison in Tripolis between 1906 and 1908. After 1918, they were to meet again in Istanbul: Together with members of the Bedirhani family, Abdullah Cevdet became involved with the Kurdish nationalist movement in Istanbul during the armistice period. He established a meeting place for the Ottoman-Kurdish

⁷³² For his biography, see the very detailed article of Karl Süßheim, "Abd Allah Djewdet," in: EI¹ (Leiden: Brill, 1913-1936), Ergänzungsband, pp. 55-60. Süßheim interviewed Cevdet's son and widow for information and provides a meticulously detailed timeline. See also M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir siyasal düşünür olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve dönemi* (Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981), for his political thought and influences on him, see Şerif Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 171-181.

⁷³³ Both Abdullah Cevdet and Ishak Sükuti wrote articles for Abdurrahman Bey's journal *Kurdistan*, which he had moved to Geneva from Cairo after 1898. Cevdet had rented an office in the rue de Carouge 7, where the local Young Turk activists met. Abdurrahman Bey registered the editorial office of *Kurdistan* under the same address, see Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Vorkämpfer der ‚Neuen Türkei‘: Revolutionäre Bildungseliten am Genfersee (1870 bis 1939)* (Zürich: Chronos, 2005), p. 48. The Ottoman consul in Geneva monitored the activities of the exile community closely, Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *İlk Kürt Gazetesi Kurdistan'ı Yayımlayan Abdurrahman Bedirhan (1868-1936)* (Istanbul: Vate Basın, 2009), p. 13.

⁷³⁴ Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, pp. 22-25, with a partial reprint of the marriage certificate. The couple got married on July 13, 1904 in Collonges-sous-Salèves, a French village in close proximity to the Swiss border.

⁷³⁵ Yahya Kemal, *Çocukluğum, Gençliğim, Siyâsi ve Edebî Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: Fetih Cemiyeti, 1999), p. 193.

intellectual community in the Cağaloğlu neighborhood and continued to publish the journal *İctihad*, which he had created in 1904 while he was still in exile. Like his friend Abdurrahman Bey and other members of the Bedirhani family, Abdullah Cevdet was an intellectual and member of an Ottoman urban elite, with no influence to speak of among the Kurds of Anatolia.⁷³⁶ Under the government of Damad Ferid Paşa, Abdullah Cevdet was employed as director of the government's medical services. Like Abdurrahman Bey,⁷³⁷ Abdullah Cevdet stayed in Istanbul after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, where his family continued to live after his death in 1932.⁷³⁸

Another member of the circle of Young Turks in exile in Geneva and a close friend of Abdullah Cevdet was İshak Sükuti (1868–1903). Originally from Diyarbakir, he had studied at the medical college of the army (*askeri tıbbiye*) in Istanbul to become a doctor before he got involved with the Young Turk opposition. In 1896, he was exiled to the island of Rhodes, but politically like-minded friends in exile found a way to help him escape to Geneva. In 1903, he died in exile in Switzerland.⁷³⁹ In addition to Abdullah Cevdet and İshak Sükuti, Abdurrahman Bedirhan was also acquainted to Hikmet Baban (1880–1945) in Geneva,⁷⁴⁰ who was like himself a member of a prominent Ottoman

⁷³⁶ FO 251/93, report “Kurdish personalities,” dated June 1919. On the contrary, Cevdet’s known leanings towards secularism and anti-religious critique (see Süßheim, “Abd Allah Djewdet,” pp. 55-60) were not well-liked by the mainstream of the Kurdish population in Anatolia, where mobilization and local activism were organized along religious lines, see the account on the uprising in Bitlis in a later section of this chapter.

⁷³⁷ There are, however, no indications whether the two men remained in contact with each other.

⁷³⁸ Abdullah Cevdet had one daughter and one son, named Gül and Mehmet. Both studied to become teachers in the Turkish Republic, see Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 113.

⁷³⁹ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 114.

⁷⁴⁰ On Hikmet Baban’s biography and political activities, see Sabine Prator, *Der arabische Faktor in der jungtürkischen Politik: Eine Studie zum osmanischen Parlament der II. Konstitution (1908–1918)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993), p. 262. On his relationship to Abdurrahman Bey, see Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, pp. 15-16, with a reprint of two post cards dating from 1902, in which Abdurrahman Bey addressed Hikmet Baban as *ahi*, “my brother.”

Kurdish notable family. In 1902, they both participated in the first congress of the Young Turk opposition in Paris.⁷⁴¹

In addition to the Young Turk circles, other oppositional groups, among them prominently the Armenian Revolutionary movement, were among the contacts of Abdurrahman Bey in Geneva. He was following precedents of an attempted rapprochement between Young Turk and Armenian opposition members: Already in 1895, the Young Turk activist and journalist Mizancı Murat Bey had called for a cooperation between the Young Turk opposition and the Armenian revolutionaries against the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II.⁷⁴² Around the time of Abdurrahman Bey's arrival in Geneva in 1898, other liberal opposition members in exile were also involved in the attempts to establish such a dialog with the Armenians. Among them was another of the closer friends of Abdurrahman Bey in Geneva, Tunalı Hilmi Bey.⁷⁴³ Cooperations with the Armenian revolutionary movement, however, were not always smooth. Abdurrahman Bedirhan and his fellow activists in Geneva were ardent defenders of Midhat Paşa's reforms: According to Mikayel Varandian, the Young Turks in Geneva had taken to carrying around a copy of Midhat Paşa's constitution in their pockets, ready to draw it to defend their claims and arguments.⁷⁴⁴ There was a reason why the Young Turks came armed with the constitution to their negotiation with the Armenian revolutionaries: One of the key passages of the Midhat Paşa's constitution stipulated the absolute union and indivisibility of the empire – this was a key bone of contention and

⁷⁴¹ Chris Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p. 19.

⁷⁴² Garabet K. Moundjian, *Struggling for a Constitutional Regime: Armenian-Young Turk Relations in the Era of Abdülhamid II, 1895 -1909*. Diss. Univ. of California, L.A., 2012, pp. 73-74.

⁷⁴³ Moundjian, *Struggling for a Constitutional Regime*, pp. 75-76, quoting the Armenian activist Mikayel Varandian, who was based in Vienna as representative of the Western Bureau of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF).

⁷⁴⁴ Moundjian, *Struggling for a Constitutional Regime*, p. 76, citing from the political memoirs of Mikayel Varandian, *H. Y. Daşnak'owl'ean patmout'iwn* [The Development of the Dashnak Movement], 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie de Navarre, 1932 -1950), vol. 2, p. 2.

obstacle to the attempted cooperation between Young Turks and Armenian nationalists.

In spite of these differences, the support of the Armenian revolutionary movement yielded tangible benefits for the Young Turks, and for Abdurrahman Bey in particular: The Geneva-based Armenian journal *Troshag*⁷⁴⁵ published an article authored by an unnamed Kurdish leader, who was calling for peaceful Kurdish-Armenian coexistence and cooperation against the Hamidian rule in 1898 – the very year Abdurrahman Bedirhan arrived on the scene in Geneva.⁷⁴⁶ Later, Abdurrahman Bey continued to collaborate with *Troshag* as he moved the publication of his journal *Kurdistan* from Cairo to Geneva. He also relied on networks and middlemen of the Armenian revolutionary movement for the distribution of the journal and other political pamphlets, some of them also translated into Armenian, in Eastern Anatolia.⁷⁴⁷ The cooperation between the Armenian revolutionary movement and the Kurdish nationalists led by Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in the French mandate territories of Syria and Lebanon after the First World War could cite these connections as a precedent and possibly also built on existing networks and personal relations.⁷⁴⁸

Abdurrahman Bedirhan retained his critical mind and kept in contact with members of the opposition also after his return from exile and the Constitutional Revolution. In the summer of 1914, on the eve of the

⁷⁴⁵ *Troshag* (also *Droshag*, “the flag”) was published by supporters of the ARF in Geneva between 1892 and 1914. In addition to the editor Stepan Zorian (1867–1919, alias Rostom), Mikayel Varandian (1870–1934) and Kristapor Mikaelian (1859–1905) were part of the inner circle of *Troshag* in Geneva. All three are likely to have been in contact with Abdurrahman Bedirhan at some point.

⁷⁴⁶ Moumdjian, *Struggling for a Constitutional Regime*, p. 48, citing the article which appeared in *Troshag* as written by an anonymous Kurdish leaders as follows: “Goch Kurderun.” In: *Troshag* 6 (86), June 1898, pp. 51-52. On Abdurrahman Bey’s collaborations with the Armenian press in Geneva, see also Murat Issi, “Kürt Basımı ve *Kürdistan* Gazetesi (1898-1902).” In: *E-Şarkiyat İlmî Araştırmalar Dergisi* IX (April 2013), pp. 130-131.

⁷⁴⁷ Moumdjian, *Struggling for a Constitutional Regime*, p. 48.

⁷⁴⁸ See chapter 6 on these connections.

First World War, Abdurrahman Bedirhan was appointed as district governor (*kaymakam*) of the Adalar, the islands outside of Istanbul. The poet Yahya Kemal [Beyatlı] (1884–1958) had rented a house on Büyükkada during this time and recalls Abdurrahman Bey in his memoirs,⁷⁴⁹ as part of a lively circle of intellectuals spending the summer on the island and local officials, all of them critical of the policies of the Ottoman government in general, as well as of the Ottoman alliance with Germany and the Ottoman entry into the war in particular. Along with Abdurrahman Bedirhan, Yahya Kemal mentions the journalists Ali Kemal (1867–1922)⁷⁵⁰ and Necib Şakir (the owner of the journal *Peyam*), the educator and historian Fatihli Mehmed Tevfik Paşa (1855–1915),⁷⁵¹ the poet and playwright Tahsin Nahid (1887–1919),⁷⁵² the sons of Damad Mahmud Paşa, the former Ottoman officials Örfi Bey and Nizameddin Bey, the historian Ahmet Refik [Altınay] (1881–1937),⁷⁵³ Dr. Fa'ik Muhiddin and his sister, the teacher Nezihe Muhiddin Hamm (1889–1958), along with their families, as part of this circle of intellectuals. Like Yahya Kemal and Abdurrahman Bey themselves, many members of this group had been active in the opposition against Sultan Abdülhamid II prior to 1908 and/or had spent some time in exile

⁷⁴⁹ Yahya Kemal, *Çocukluğum, Gençliğim, Siyâsî ve Edebî Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Fethi Cemiyeti, 1999), pp. 129-135. Yahya Kemal and Abdurrahman Bedirhan had another acquaintance in common: The already mentioned Abdullah Cevdet, whom Yahya Kemal had met in Paris in 1903, see Kemal, *Çocukluğum*, p. 111.

⁷⁵⁰ Like Abdurrahman Bey, Ali Kemal was a graduate of the Ottoman *mülkiye* and had spent some time in exile in Europe in the late 1890s. In 1908, he returned to Istanbul, after stints in Paris, Brussels and Egypt. In the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, he became a member of the Liberal Entente party (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası) in opposition to the CUP and was later appointed as Minister of Education and Minister of the Interior under Damad Ferid Paşa, see İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa, *Meşhur Adamlar. Hayatları, Eserleri* (Istanbul, 1933-36), p. 36.

⁷⁵¹ Mehmed Tevfik Paşa (1855–1915) was a graduate of the Ottoman military college (*harbiye*) and an Ottoman official. In 1897, he fled to Europe and returned after the Constitutional Revolution in 1908, see İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa, *Meşhur Adamlar*, p. 381.

⁷⁵² Tahsin Nahid had studied at the Galatasaray Lisesi and then trained to be a lawyer at the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul, see Gövsa, *Meşhur Adamlar*, p. 374. Tahsin Nahid was the father of the author Mina Urgan.

⁷⁵³ He had graduated from the Ottoman military college (*harbiye*) in 1898 and became a teacher for German and history, Gövsa, *Meşhur Adamlar*, p. 25.

in Europe. Now, they were united in their critique of the CUP government. Shortly before the Greek occupation of İzmir and its surroundings following the Ottoman defeat in the First World War, Abdurrahman Bedirhan was appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Aydın. He is said to have been a close follower of his superior, the *vali* of İzmir Ahmed İzzet Paşa. The same Ahmed İzzet Paşa wielded some influence over the Kurdish community of Istanbul, having allegedly led several thousand Kurdish volunteers into battle against Russia in 1877/78.⁷⁵⁴ Turkish nationalists like Celal Bayar were, in retrospect, not sure where to put Abdurrahman Bey during the armistice period, suspicious of whether he was on their side or would support the Greek occupation of İzmir.⁷⁵⁵ I will return to Abdurrahman Bedirhan's trajectory – seen through the eyes of his daughter Müveddet Gönensay – in a later chapter.⁷⁵⁶

4.3.3. A More Complicated Oppositional: Osman Paşa Bedirhan

The example of another brother of Mikdat Midhat and Abdurrahman Bey, of Osman Paşa Bedirhan, complicates the picture of the Bedirhanis in opposition to the autocratic rule of the sultan considerably: Osman Paşa was trained in the Ottoman military and rapidly advanced through the ranks, being made aide-de-camp (*yaver*) of Sultan Abdülhamid II. In

⁷⁵⁴ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 14. Ahmed İzzet Paşa (Kambur) had served as *vali* of Van in 1912/13, on the recommendation of sheikh Abdülkadir, a Nakşbandiya-Halidiya leader of Kurdish origins who wielded considerable influence among the Kurdish community of Istanbul at the time and collaborated with members of the Bedirhani family in the *Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti* at the time, see Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires. The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908 – 1918* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), pp. 65-66. On Ahmed İzzet Paşa's professional biography, see Kunalp, *Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, p. 57.

⁷⁵⁵ Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım. Millî Mücadele'ye Giriş* (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1968), vol. 6, p. 1977 writes: "Mutasarrıf, Abdurrahman Bey adında birisi idi. Hakkında çeşitli mütalâa ileri sürülüyor. O, İstanbul Hükümet'nin adamı olmakla beraber İzmir Valisi Mahmut [sic] İzzet Bey'in emrinde idi. Direktifi buralardan alıyor ve ona göre hareket ediyordu. Memleketin mi, yoksa işgal ordusunun mu hizmetinde idi? Pek belli değildi."

⁷⁵⁶ See chapter 7.

1900, however, Osman Paşa left the Ottoman lands in a hurry, allegedly because of his opposition to the regime of the sultan. He chose London as a place of exile and, soon after his arrival, gave an extensive interview to a French newspaper. In this conversation, he posed as a steadfast oppositional and sworn enemy of the sultan and his close advisor Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadi.⁷⁵⁷ In the interview, Osman Paşa himself tells the story of how he public defied the sultan, challenging him in a public audience and, as a sign of revolt and disrespect, throwing the coat of his uniform along with his military decorations at the feet of the sovereign. It comes as no surprise that he was arrested on the spot and sent off to be imprisoned in Salonica. From there, Osman Paşa managed to escape to Europe by boat. The details of his bold account need to be taken with a grain of salt, but a break with the sultan seems obvious and beyond dispute.⁷⁵⁸ From London, Osman Paşa now made plans to return to his family homeland in Eastern Anatolia. In the interview, he publicly mused about gathering his local (both Kurdish and Armenian) supporters to mobilize them to fight for independence against the Ottoman Empire. He stressed that security needed to return to the region and showed himself confident that he could easily mobilize a large following.⁷⁵⁹ Uttering his views in this way, in a conversation he could be sure would be published and reach the Ottoman Empire in no time, Osman Paşa was sending a message to the sultan – not so much threatening him with actual revolt, but hoping to enter a bargaining process to negotiate his honorable return to the empire.

Different from the image he portrayed of himself in the European press, Osman Paşa was not a seasoned member of the liberal opposition

⁷⁵⁷ *Le Matin*, Paris, “Révolte ouverte: Une conversation avec Osman pacha, l’ennemi d’Abdul Hamid,” December 18, 1900, p. 3.

⁷⁵⁸ *Le Matin*, December 18, 1900, p. 3.

⁷⁵⁹ “Ce que je veux, c’est me servir de mon influence incontestable sur la nation kurde pour rétablir l’ordre, la sécurité et la dignité nationales. [...] aussitôt que j’aurai pénétré dans le Kurdistan, j’aurai une armée de 100,000 hommes prête à me suivre.” In: *Le Matin*, December 18, 1900, p. 3.

against the sultan. On the contrary, prior to his sudden departure from the Ottoman lands, he had been among the Bedirhanis who were closest to the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II. He had also been an intimate friend of the sultan's trusted adviser Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadi. Unlike his younger brothers in exile, the above-mentioned Abdurrahman and Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan, Osman Paşa entertained no connection to the liberal opposition of the Young Turks. He had, to underline that once again, no reason to do so – he was a member of the patronage network of sheikh Abu'l-Huda, a figure much despised by the Young Turk opposition. It comes therefore as no surprise that even Osman Paşa's own family members were highly suspicious of his supposed volte-face. They did not keep their suspicions to themselves, but consulted a French journalist to make their side of the story public, contesting the narrative of Osman Paşa: Abdurrahman Bedirhan's version of what led to Osman Paşa's departure from Istanbul and inspired his new-found opposition to the Hamidian regime differs considerably from Osman Paşa's account. Abdurrahman Bey confirmed that there had indeed been a commotion provoked by Osman Paşa during a reception at the Yıldız Palace. But Osman Paşa did not, as he claimed, defy the sultan's authority on that occasion. Instead, he had threatened his own brother, Ali Şamil Paşa, with a gun. He allegedly did so because his patron sheikh Abu'l-Huda and the latter's son found themselves in a serious argument with Ali Şamil Paşa.⁷⁶⁰ Osman Paşa was instructed by the sheikh to publicly teach Ali Şamil Paşa a lesson. This plan backfired: Sultan Abdülhamid II was not amused by the prospective of a fraternal shoot-out and exiled Osman Paşa from the capital. The latter, infuriated and mortally offended, set off to Europe to pose as an enemy of the Hamidian regime and avenger of the Kurds.⁷⁶¹ It appears that his plan did not work out too

⁷⁶⁰ For the background of this argument, see chapter 3.

⁷⁶¹ Pierre Quillard, "Le Sultan et les Kurdes." In: *L'Aurore*, Paris, January 2, 1901, pp. 1-2, Quillard interviewed Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan for this article.

well: Instead of returning back to Istanbul, Osman Paşa proceeded to Egypt, where he lived in exile Alexandria for a while.⁷⁶²

Reading the two differing accounts of Osman Paşa's departure against each other underlines that political, personal and family interests overlapped in ways which are not always transparent to those who retrospectively attempt to reconstruct fault lines, motives and political agendas of the individuals involved. The episode also points to the pitfall of treating the family as one monolithic entity with common interests. In addition, Osman Paşa's story cautions us to question and contextualize seemingly noble and disinterested political motives. For members of the Bedirhani family, the struggle for Kurdish autonomy is always – as other parts of this study will offer ample opportunity to discuss – closely linked to personal ambitions and rivalries between the individuals involved. These complexities tend to be glossed over in later narratives of Kurdish nationalist historiography, which are eager to establish links between the Bedirhani family and the liberal, anti-authoritarian opposition movement of late Ottoman times.

⁷⁶² This information goes back to the account of Clara Boyle, the wife of the British diplomat Harry Boyle (1863–1937), who had met Osman Paşa during his time at the British consulate in Egypt. Clara Boyle bought into Osman Paşa's version of him being a persecuted member of the liberal opposition rather than a vexed official of the Hamidian administration. Boyle also did not know about the broader context of Osman Paşa's imprisonment in 1906, as part of the punitive measures against his entire family. Instead, she understands the punishment as a consequence of Osman Paşa's alleged oppositional activities. Released from prison in 1908, Osman Paşa returned to Egypt and remained in contact with the Boyle family. Clara Boyle also recalled some trivia concerning Osman Paşa in her account, describing him as "... a striking personality: Tall and robust, fair with blond hair and an auburn moustache." She also mentioned that he had taken to breeding Kurdish herding dogs of immense size, which were paraded through the streets and to be held by two soldiers each. In Egypt after 1908, he lived a comfortable life, since he owned some shares of the Suez Canal. See Clara Boyle, *Boyle of Cairo. A Diplomatist's Adventures in the Middle East* (Kendal: Wilson & Son, 1965), pp. 2-4 and 14.

4.4. 1906: A Turning Point in the Bedirhanis' Relations to the Ottoman State

In the first part of this chapter dealing with members of the Bedirhani family in the transition period between Ottoman imperial and post-imperial contexts, the focus has been on individual actors, their decisions and agencies in taking a stance either in favor of or in opposition to the Ottoman government. Discussing the career of Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, it has already been noted that the state developed an increasingly collective outlook on the Bedirhani family, irrespective of the individual motivations or ambitions of its members. This outlook in turn limited the possibilities of family members to identify themselves in certain ways or to reject categorizations made by others. In the following, the state's perspective on the family will be subject to closer scrutiny, drawing on the example of a crucial turning point in the Ottoman state's relations to the Bedirhanis, the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, the prefect of Istanbul, in the spring of 1906.

4.4.1. The Murder of Rıdvan Paşa

Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan, a grandson of Emir Bedirhan, who was an assistant to the master of ceremonies (*teşrifatçı*) in the Yıldız Palace and thus fairly close to the sultan, had cultivated an ongoing dispute with one of his neighbors in the neighborhood of Şişli, with a certain Ahmed Ağa. Ahmed Ağa was an upstart and protégé of the prefect of Istanbul, Rıdvan Paşa. This dispute, which allegedly provided Abdürrezzak Bey with a motive to arrange the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906, is only hinted at in the otherwise very detailed contemporary courtroom reporting on the murder case.⁷⁶³ The animosities had

⁷⁶³ See the courtroom reports in *İkdam*, especially Nr. 4251, April 6, 1906 and Nr. 4252, April 7, 1906.

originated when Ahmed Ağa refused to have road repairs in front of his own house extended to the neighboring *konak* of Abdürrezzak Bey. Rıdvan Paşa, *ex officio* responsible for public works in the city, refused to have the matter taken care of, taking the side of Ahmed Ağa. From there, things got quickly out of hand: Abdürrezzak Bey ordered his men to kidnap and imprison Ahmed Ağa on his premises.⁷⁶⁴ In return, to free Ahmed Ağa, Rıdvan Paşa had fifty of his own men attack Abdürrezzak Bey's house.⁷⁶⁵ The confrontation culminated in severe street fighting in Şişli, stones were thrown at Abdürrezzak Bey's house, and several gunshots were fired. Bedirhan Bey, a younger brother of Abdürrezzak Bey, was injured during the skirmish. In addition, one of the Kurdish servants of Abdürrezzak Bey's household was killed, and all the windows of Abdürrezzak Bey's mansion were shattered.⁷⁶⁶ On top of all that, the hostage Ahmed Ağa had been able to flee in the midst of the uproar.⁷⁶⁷ This incident happened early in January of 1906.

Abdürrezzak Bedirhan in turn complained to the sultan, who promised to discipline Rıdvan Paşa by transferring him to a less favorable post outside of Istanbul and to punish others involved in the incident as well. Nothing, however, came of this complaint, and Rıdvan Paşa remained in office. According to an often-cited line of explanation, these events and in particular the sultan's failure intervene on the side of the Bedirhanis triggered some of Abdürrezzak Bey's relatives, most prominently a faction around Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan, to seek revenge themselves and

⁷⁶⁴ For an extensive account of the events (which, different from most later accounts, correctly states that Ahmed Ağa, not Rıdvan Paşa himself, had lived next door to and gotten into an argument over road repairs with Abdürrezzak Bedirhan), see the *Times*, London, August 23, 1906, p. 7.

⁷⁶⁵ See the eyewitness account in the memoirs of Cemil Filmer, *Hatıralar. Türk Sinemasında 65 yıl* (Istanbul: Emek Matbaacılık ve İlançılık, 1984), see the discussion in Klaus Kreiser & Patrick Bartsch (eds.), *Türkische Kindheiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Literaturca, 2012), pp. 58-83 and also the detailed account in Ziya Şakir, *Yarım Asır Evvel Bizi İdare Edenler* (Istanbul: Anadolu Türk Kitap Deposu, 1943), vol. 2, pp. 214-219.

⁷⁶⁶ *Pilsner Tagblatt*, January 12, 1906, p. 6.

⁷⁶⁷ See the detailed coverage in *Reichspost*, September 13, 1906, pp. 1-2.

right the wrong which had occurred,⁷⁶⁸ leading to the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa. According to one contemporary account, the murder was premeditated to the extent that the Kurdish gunmen hired by the Bedirhanis rented a house in close proximity to the train station of Göztepe, where Rıdvan Paşa was known to pass frequently to reach his country house in Erenköy.⁷⁶⁹ It was also convenient that the area of Göztepe was not only sparsely populated but was also under the authority of Ali Şamil Paşa, who was military governor of Üsküdar at the time. Ali Şamil Paşa did indeed intervene on behalf of the arrested suspects immediately after the murder, keeping them in the barracks of Üsküdar until the sultan himself insisted that they should be handed over to the authorities.⁷⁷⁰ Abdürrezzak Bey himself, during the trial and in later accounts, has claimed that he and Ali Şamil Paşa were encouraged by the sultan himself to proceed with the assassination. While this might be an exaggeration, Sultan Abdülhamid II was indeed weary of the quite powerful prefect Rıdvan Paşa, who had been in office since 1890, that is for more than fifteen years by 1906. The sultan was said to be particularly upset by the fact that Rıdvan Paşa had sent his armed followers, some sort of private army, to attack Abdürrezzak Bey's house in Şişli, situated not too far from the Yıldız Palace where the sultan resided. Rumors were circulating at the time that the sultan made plans to transfer the powerful prefect Rıdvan Paşa to Baghdad.

⁷⁶⁸ See the description of Halide Edip, who does confirm the involvement of the Bedirhanis in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa and describes the events as being motivated by Ali Şamil Paşa's "derebey" pride. This choice of expression can be understood as alluding to the fact that Ali Şamil Paşa took justice into his own hands, rather than relying on the Ottoman judiciary, see Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, *Tribe and Kinship among the Kurds* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 57 for the idea that "derebey" refers to "virtually independent rulers" in mid-19th century Anatolia, who had "arrogated the functions of government."

⁷⁶⁹ The house was situated on the location of today's Erenköy Kız Lisesi, in Ömerpaşa Sok. 82, Erenköy. After the death of Rıdvan Paşa, the house was bought by an Ottoman palace official. In 1911, it was turned into a school for girls. The building was destroyed by a fire in the 1940s. See "Erenköy," in: *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3, pp. 177-179 and Bedri N. Şehsuvaroğlu, *Göztepe* (Istanbul, 1969), p. 44 for a picture of the original building.

⁷⁷⁰ *Times*, London, August 23, 1906, p. 7.

Apparently, however, Rıdvan Paşa's mother, who had connections into the harem of the sultan, was able to prevent this.⁷⁷¹ When it became clear that Rıdvan Paşa would not be held responsible for his attack on Abdürrezzak Bey's home and household members, the Bedirhani family took matters into their own hands. According to contemporary observers, Rıdvan Paşa was aware that the family had vowed to do away with him. He asked for protection from the palace, but to no avail. Rıdvan Paşa reportedly brought his estate in order, in anticipation of his assassination.⁷⁷²

Courtroom Reporting in *İkdam*

After the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, the Ottoman daily newspaper *İkdam* followed the arrest and ensuing court proceedings against the four initial suspects closely. Day after day between March 30 and April 7, 1906, the paper devoted several columns to detailed courtroom reporting. The murder of Rıdvan Paşa and the subsequent investigation were the most prominent subject in the paper during these days.⁷⁷³ In their early reporting, prior to March 30, 1906, no mention was made of any involvement of the Bedirhani family. Only then it emerged that Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan had played a part in the murder. By April 6, the entire Bedirhani family was suspected of evil intentions and collectively blamed for the murder in the Ottoman press. The events leading up to the murder of Rıdvan Paşa can be

⁷⁷¹ *Reichspost*, September 13, 1906, pp. 1-2. Rıdvan Paşa was the son of the Ottoman official Mehmed Nüzhet Efendi, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 324, who makes no mention of his mother.

⁷⁷² *Reichspost*, September 13, 1906, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁷³ And probably beyond: The murder was mentioned by the British diplomat Andrew Ryan as one of the most memorable political events which shocked Istanbul in 1905/1906, the other being the attempt on the life of the sultan in July 1905, see Andrew Ryan, *The Last of the Dragomans* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1951), pp. 41-42.

reconstructed as follows:⁷⁷⁴ All of the four suspects were in the service of Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan: Hakkarili Emin, also known by the name of ‘Abduh ibn Tatar, thirty-five years old, had begun to work as a servant (*uşak*) for Abdürrezzak Bedirhan about three months prior to the murder. He was believed to be the leader of the gang. Emin was joined by Vanlı Mehmed, also known by the name Es‘ad ibn Sa‘ado, twenty-two years old. He, too, had already been in the service of Abdürrezzak Bey several months prior to the murder and testified in court that he had already been involved in the shootings between Abdürrezzak Bey’s and Rıdvan Paşa’s followers in Şişli. Abdürrezzak Bey turned to Es‘ad to recruit more men to assist with the assassination, and the latter introduced him to ‘Abduh from Bitlis. Bitlisli ‘Abduh ibn Mehmed, twenty-two years old, was a porter at the pier of Halıcıoğlu in Hasköy, Beyoğlu. Es‘ad approached him in the coffee shop of the local porters’ guild. Promising to save him from his backbreaking work, he offered him a job in Abdürrezzak Bey’s service. The fourth suspect, Vanlı Ahmed ibn Mehmed, thirty years old, had previously been a bricklayer in Eyüp and had entered the service of Abdürrezzak Bey, upon the recommendation of the above-mentioned Hakkarili Emin. All four men were of Kurdish origins, spoke Kurdish among themselves and had more or less recently migrated to the city of Istanbul from the east of the empire in order to find work. It is hinted at in their testimonies that all four retained close connections to their hometowns and relatives in Eastern Anatolia.

From the testimonies of the four assassins, it also emerges that Abdürrezzak Bey promised them all kinds of rewards should they succeed in killing Rıdvan Paşa, while at the same time threatening them with severe punishments should they fail. He also provided them with arms and ammunition. Abdürrezzak Bey then pointed out Rıdvan Paşa

⁷⁷⁴ The following summary of the events builds on the very detailed reporting in *İkdam*, especially Nr. 4251, April 6, 1906 and Nr. 4252, April 7, 1906.

to the assassins, in order for them to recognize him. As a member of the Bedirhani family, Abdürrezzak Bey was respected and, above all, feared by the four suspects. They feared for their own security, but equally for the lives of their families in the Kurdish areas of Anatolia. When asked in court why they feared Abdürrezzak Bey so much – the Ottoman prosecutor arguing that there was no need to be scared, as Abdürrezzak Bey was subject to Ottoman law and not an absolute ruler and could thus not harm them – one of the defendants insisted that while this might be the case in the capital, the influence of the Bedirhani family was unquestioned and unrestrained in the east of the empire (“bizim memlekte”). The testimonies convey some idea of the influence the Bedirhani family enjoyed among the urban Kurdish population of Istanbul, notably among poor migrant workers. Abdürrezzak Bey put a lot of thought into the proceedings of the murder: Weeks prior, Hakkarili Emin was instructed to rent a house, preferably a coffee shop, in the surroundings of Göztepe, where the *köşk* of Rıdvan Paşa was located. As he did not manage to find a suitable location, Emin proceeded to rent a house in nearby Erenköy instead. He moved in there, together with the already mentioned Es’ad. Both men received monthly wages from Abdürrezzak Bey during this time, who was also paying the rent for the house. The house in Erenköy was set up as a base camp to facilitate the surveillance and persecution of Rıdvan Paşa. The court later interpreted Abdürrezzak Bey’s course of action as proof of premeditated murder. While his friends were operating from Erenköy, the third suspect Vanlı Ahmed was initially instructed to patrol the streets of Beyoğlu and seize upon any good opportunity to assault Rıdvan Paşa there. However, he failed to run into Rıdvan Paşa in Beyoğlu and was eventually sent to join the other suspects in Erenköy. The four men stayed in Erenköy for about twenty days, without achieving much. They were then called to see Abdürrezzak Bey for a change of plans: Es’ad, Emin and Ahmed were to pose as tobacco traders, thus able to move about the area without raising suspicion and

to closely monitor the movements of Rıdvan Paşa. Abdürrezzak Bey was getting impatient, wanting for the murder to go ahead as planned. On the day prior to the murder, Bitlisli 'Abduh was instructed to follow Rıdvan Paşa in the city center of Istanbul and alert the others once the paşa made his way towards Göztepe. On that day, however, 'Abduh waited for Rıdvan Paşa in vain. He reported back to Abdürrezzak Bey that evening and later testified in court that his employer became very angry, insisting that Rıdvan Paşa should die the following day, a Friday, when he was likely to return to his *köşk* in Göztepe for the weekend. The suspects were to attack him either on the way home or, if all else should fail, in his house. Should the suspects not succeed in doing so, Abdürrezzak Bey made it clear that they would pay with their own lives.

The following day, a Friday evening, Bitlisli 'Abduh finally did spot Rıdvan Paşa at the Haydarpaşa train station and followed him on board of the train headed towards Göztepe. At the same time, Emin, Es'ad and Ahmed were waiting in the coffee shop at the Göztepe train station, playing *tavla*. Only minutes before Rıdvan Paşa arrived, their companion 'Abduh came running, notifying them that their victim was on his way and that it was time to proceed with the attack. The suspects left the coffee shop in a hurry and headed towards the train station. Rıdvan Paşa, in the meantime, had stepped off the train and was met at the platform by his son Reşad Bey. They were about to leave the train station together, when Rıdvan Paşa was attacked by the four suspects, two of whom immediately opened fire on him with revolvers and pistols. Rıdvan Paşa fell to the ground, wounded eight times, mostly in his chest and upper body. The assassins fled the scene, their weapons drawn. At first they tried to hijack a carriage parked nearby. When this did not work out, they started running into the open fields, towards Kadıköy. They were persecuted by a number of policemen on duty at the station and a crowd of civilians. The assassins kept firing at them as they fled. Other bystanders and officials of the train company attempted to help the

victim, taking him to a nearby pharmacy. There, Dr. Rifat Paşa arrived at the scene, he gave Rıdvan Paşa some water and examined his injuries. Shortly afterwards, Rıdvan Paşa died, without regaining conscience. His body was brought to his *köşk* in Göztepe and investigated there on the following day. Internal bleeding was identified as the cause of his death in the medical report.

In the meantime, a number of soldiers joined the persecution of the four assassins, who were now on their way towards Kurbağalı Dere. There, a local *karakol* unit succeeded in cutting them off and arrested them. The assassins resisted the arrest, but were eventually overpowered and taken into the police station (*karakolhane*), where paper work was filled out. Their weapons – several revolvers and daggers – were confiscated. The police were about to transport the criminals to Üsküdar, when Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan arrived at the scene, cutting the convoy off at the Kurbağalı Dere bridge. According to the courtroom reports, he insulted the police and threatened them, claiming that the arrested criminals were innocent tobacco traders and should be set free immediately. It was also reported that he untied their hands and spoke to them briefly in Kurdish, the arrested responding in the same language. According to their confessions, they told him at that moment that they had killed Rıdvan Paşa, whereupon Ali Şamil Paşa urged them to repeat to the police that they were merely tobacco traders and to deny any involvement with the murder. He then assured them that he would save them from the situation. Ali Şamil Paşa also offered the criminals, who had been beaten badly by the police, cigarettes and water. Ali Şamil Paşa then led the accused away from the police and seated them in one of the two carriages he had brought with him to the scene.

During his run-in with the police, Ali Şamil Paşa hit the *jandarma* who was guarding the assassins with a stick and repeatedly insulted the official, who was from Mecca, as an “Arab pig.” The *jandarma* escaped

into a nearby garden and hid from Ali Şamil Paşa and his men there, afraid for his life. In the meantime, Ali Şamil Paşa confiscated the assassins' weapons and ammunition from the police officer who had taken them, attacking him violently and pushing him to the ground when he resisted to hand over the evidence. Ali Şamil Paşa also tried to obtain the police reports (*jurnal*), but the officer in charge testified in court that he had anticipated trouble upon Ali Şamil Paşa's arrival and thrown the documents into a nearby ditch. He later managed to retrieve them and forwarded them to the authorities. The policemen and soldiers on the spot agreed in their testimonies that Ali Şamil Paşa had behaved outrageously and that they had been so anxious not to infuriate him any further, some of them had fled the scene. Ali Şamil Paşa then drove with the assassins to the *nizamiye karakolhane* in Kadıköy, had their wounds treated and brought them from there to the Selimiyye barracks.

The reluctance of the local police to oppose what was clearly an attempt by Ali Şamil Paşa to get rid of evidence in a murder case is explained by two factors: First, as commander of the Selimiyye barracks, Ali Şamil Paşa held an influential position in the military administration of the area. And second, he had been known for years for his violent and oppressive conduct and his leanings towards taking out his anger and personal revenge on those who opposed him.⁷⁷⁵ Like many times before, Ali Şamil Paşa felt confident that his bending of the law would have no consequences: On the day following the murder, he still felt in complete control of the situation. He sent one of his men to Hasan Rıza Efendi, the police president of Erenköy, and demanded that the amount of money confiscated from the four suspects should immediately be returned to him. It is indicative of Ali Şamil Paşa's reputation that said Hasan Rıza Efendi felt so threatened that he saw it fit to flee from the scene and hide in his home for the following days, anxious that Ali

⁷⁷⁵ See chapter 3 for details.

Şamil Paşa would take out his anger over the arrest of the assassins on him. Around the same time, however, the Hamid Bey, governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Üsküdar, had also begun to investigate the matter of Rıdvan Paşa's death, summoning some of the officials involved in the arrest of the suspects and the subsequent run-in with Ali Şamil Paşa for questioning. Hamid Bey was known to be on bad terms with Ali Şamil Paşa and had good reason to push for an investigation of the events. In his memoirs, Süleyman Şefik Paşa recalls how he himself attracted Ali Şamil Paşa's wrath in 1902 and was in turn threatened by his men and had his house searched for incriminating evidence against him. Governor Hamid Bey, however, personally supervised this search and stood up for Süleyman Şefik Paşa at the time, preventing Ali Şamil Paşa from fabricating evidence against him.⁷⁷⁶ In his memoirs, Süleyman Şefik Paşa explicitly states that things went from bad to worse between Hamid Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa after this.

This time, with the local governor suspicious of him already, Ali Şamil Paşa had overestimated his influence: On March 30, the newspaper *İkdam* reported for the first time that Ali Şamil Paşa and Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan were involved in the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa, having masterminded and organized the crime. A "longstanding personal enmity" was given as the Bedirhanis' motive to kill Rıdvan Paşa. During the court proceedings early in April 1906, all four suspects confessed and gave detailed accounts of the involvement of Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa. Also, more than thirty witnesses came forward with matching testimonies, backing up the accounts given by the suspects. At some point prior to the court proceedings, Ali Şamil Paşa's house was searched for the weapons of the assassins which he had confiscated. They could not be retrieved, but were later found when his wife tried to hide them after Ali Şamil Paşa had been taken into custody. Judging

⁷⁷⁶ Süleyman Şefik Paşa, *Hatıratım. Başıma Gelenler ve Gördüklerim*. 31 Mart Vak'ası (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 2004), pp. 112-113.

from his own account on the events, Abdürrezzak Bey was similarly surprised by the prompt measures taken against him and his arrest: He was arrested at his office and escorted directly to prison. From his account, it also appears that while the hearings of the assassins were continuing in Istanbul, the Bedirhani suspects were immediately whisked away from the capital and brought to Tripolis in Libya to await their trial there.⁷⁷⁷ It is not clear, however, if Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa had actually planned the murder together: First, the four assassins claimed in court that they did not previously know or expect that Ali Şamil Paşa would intervene on their behalf at the bridge in Kurbağalı Dere. Second, it emerged in the cross-examination that although Ali Şamil Paşa did frequent the house of Abdürrezzak Bey, he had lately only come to visit his mother there. With his nephew Abdürrezzak Bey, he was quarrelling and not on speaking terms.

Descriptions of the Bedirhanis in the Context of the Murder: *Bedirhani denilen mel'unları*

It makes sense to pause here to think not only about the chain of events leading up to the murder, but to also take a closer look at the narrative which was presented in the detailed news coverage and inquire about how exactly the Bedirhanis were depicted in it.⁷⁷⁸ First of all, the chronology is notable: In the initial reports on the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa in late March 1906, in the days immediately after the event, only the four assassins were mentioned, but no mastermind behind the crimes was hinted at. On March 25, the daily newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* reported that the four suspects were brought to the Selimiyye

⁷⁷⁷ Abdürrezzak Bedirhan, *Otobiyografya*, transl. Hasan Cunî (Istanbul: Perî Yayınları, 2000), p. 16.

⁷⁷⁸ It is worth noting that both *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and *İkdam* used almost identical wording in their descriptions of the Bedirhanis and the family's alleged involvement in the crime, making it likely that both cite from the same third source — possibly legal documentation or statements released by the Ottoman authorities.

barracks, making it sound as if that had happened on purpose, rather than following an unofficial intervention of Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan. At that date, no involvement of any member of the Bedirhani family was mentioned.⁷⁷⁹ On the following day, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* published a brief note, stating that the suspects and a number of witnesses were being interrogated. Still, no mention was made of the Bedirhanis.⁷⁸⁰ Quickly, however, it became clear that Ali Şamil Paşa was directly involved in an attempt to unlawfully release the suspects and that his nephew Abdürrezzak Bey had not only been the employer of all four suspects but had,⁷⁸¹ in addition, good reason to want Rıdvan Paşa, who had gotten away with attacking his home and injuring members of his household, dead. Prior to April 6, the news coverage focused on the involvement of Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa exclusively. Afterwards, however, one notices a significant shift in the narrative: Now, Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa along with their multiple accomplices (*hempalar*) are collectively held responsible for the crime. The expression refers to other members of the Bedirhani family and the family's network. In two instances, Mikdat Midhat, Halil and Hüseyin Kenan Bey Bedirhan were mentioned by name in the papers, even though no evidence was cited relating them to the murder. Especially in the case of Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan, who has been mentioned above as an outspoken critic of the authoritarian regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II and who had spent some time in exile in Egypt and published an oppositional journal there, it seems likely that he was singled out because of an already existing general suspicion against him – and not because he was part of the circle of Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa.

⁷⁷⁹ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* Nr. 8965, March 25, 1906. The issue contains a brief summary of the assassination and a rather extensive report on the funeral of Rıdvan Paşa, who was buried in Ortaköy on March 24, 1906. The report notably includes a detailed list of people who attended the ceremonies.

⁷⁸⁰ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* Nr. 8966, March 26, 1906.

⁷⁸¹ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* Nr. 8970, March 30, 1906 mentions the involvement of both Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa, based on the matching confessions of the four initial suspects.

The fact that the Bedirhani family was blamed collectively is interesting – because it went against the grain of the usual strategies and discourses of Ottoman modernization of the Hamidian period. These were generally all about holding the individual accountable and atomizing (instead of reiterating) collective identities with the help of census policies and taxation.⁷⁸² In the case of the Bedirhani family, I found that the focus on their collective identity served the purpose of excluding them from the realm of modernity and civilization all together.

İkdam cited a recent decision of the imperial council (*meclis-i mahsus*), stating that after the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, the presence of any member of the Bedirhani family in the capital was no longer desirable. The council therefore ruled that all family members were to be exiled and sent off separately to live in forced residence in remote parts of the empire. To back up these precautions and the severe collective punishment of the entire Bedirhani family, the readers of *İkdam* were reminded of the rebellious past of the Bedirhanis, and in particular of the activities of Emir Bedirhan, more than fifty years earlier: Emir Bedirhan was depicted as someone who “did not know the grace of the *padişah*” and showed himself “ungrateful towards the favors he received.”⁷⁸³ Having established the ungrateful nature of their ancestor, the next step in the argument was to underline the collective identity of the entire family, all of whom were now said to have a “natural condition” (*cibillet*) towards mischief. Like father, like son, *İkdam* went on to argue, all current family members were ungrateful and worthless individuals with an innate penchant for rebellion and disobedience

⁷⁸² Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate. Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), p. 29.

⁷⁸³ *İkdam* Nr. 4251, April 6, 1906: “Bunların bābaları Bedirhān 1259 senesinde hīzmet edeğēğim diye mīralāy olmuş bir adamdır, faқаt lūtf-i pādīşāhı bilmedi, kufrān-ı nī‘met etti, hiç hūkmü kalmadı, ‘ādī bir adam oldu.” This is presented in the newspaper report as a direct citation from the prosecutor during the trial.

against the authorities.⁷⁸⁴ An interesting image used in this respect was the idea that all members of the Bedirhani family were kneaded from the same dough.⁷⁸⁵ Another aspects which stands out in the description of the Bedirhanis, in particular with reference to Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa, is the accusation of them being traitors (*hā'in*, pl. *huvvān*). This, at first, seems puzzling and not like something that would be stressed in a murder investigation. The underlying reasoning seems to be as follows: First, like it has been discussed above, by turning against the state and the gracious ruler who cared for them and their family, the two accused betrayed the hand that had fed them. In addition, by interfering with police work when he led away the assassins from the scene, Ali Şamil Paşa had obstructed the course of justice and thus usurped privileges of the sovereign ruler. Interesting to note is also that while the Bedirhanis were collectively blamed for being rebellious and prone to mischief, at no point was a reference being made to the Kurdish origins of the family in any way. Ethnic stereotyping in the way it was later recalled by Kamuran Bedirhan, for example, who felt discriminated against for being of Kurdish descent already during his Ottoman childhood, does not appear to have played a major role in the defamation campaign against the entire Bedirhani family in 1906. In fact, one of the four men arrested for the murder of Rıdvan Paşa responded when asked why he felt compelled to obey the orders of Abdürrezzak Bey that the latter had said “We are Persians, we will hang you, we will rip you to shreds. You cannot be saved, neither here nor in the homeland.”⁷⁸⁶ In the Ottoman text, the word Abdürrezzak Bey used to characterize his family was *'ağem*, an expression rendered by the

⁷⁸⁴ Adjectives used repeatedly to make this point are *nānkörlük* (Redhouse: ingratitude, also treachery), *redā'et* (Redhouse: badness, worthlessness, viciousness), *denā'et* (Redhouse: meanness, despicableness) and *bāğī* (Redhouse: rebellious, obstinate, wicked).

⁷⁸⁵ *İkdam* Nr. 4251, April 6, 1906: “Hamire-yi vüğüdları (...) te'addi ve teğāvüz ve (...) gadr ve tasalluğ gibi alğaklar ile yuğurlmuş olan bu 'a'ile efrādī ...”

⁷⁸⁶ *İkdam* Nr. 4251, April 6, 1906: “Biz 'ağemiyiz. Sizi aşarız, keseriz, sonra ne burada, ne memlekette kırtulamazsınız, dedi.”

Redhouse dictionary as “non-Arabians (...) especially Persians.”⁷⁸⁷ Şemseddin Sami’s definition of the term⁷⁸⁸ goes into a similar direction, rendering it as (1) non-Arabic, and (2), more specifically, synonymous to *irānli*, i.e. Persian.

Two major parallels can be established to these descriptions of the Bedirhani family in 1906: First, they bring to mind the terminology used during the Ottoman submission of the Kurdish emirates in Eastern Anatolia in the mid-19th century. Descriptions of local Kurdish tribal populations dwelled on them being of evil character (*bednihād*) and prone to wickedness and mischief by their very nature.⁷⁸⁹ The second genre of texts operating with the discourses and vocabulary similar to those prevalent in the news coverage of the murder trial in 1906 are late 19th century Ottoman accounts of tribal populations perceived as troublesome and unruly by the state: A quasi innate tendency of tribal populations and nomads towards criminal activity was a recurring motive in Ottoman official reports, which relied on formulations like *muktaṣā-yı cibilliyetleri üzere* (“according to their nature”).⁷⁹⁰ Very similar choice of wording prevailed in the collective accusations of the Bedirhani family in the news coverage of 1906 – an attempt towards a “re-tribalization” of the family, underlining their being excluded from civilization and modernity? The attacks were clearly understood in that way by Lütfi [Liceli Ahmed Ramiz], who defended the Bedirhani family against these accusations and created a counter image of Emir Bedirhan as a model Ottoman reformer and just governor in the process.⁷⁹¹ Similar to Lütfi, Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan took issue with the depictions of the Bedirhani family members as uncivilized barbarians

⁷⁸⁷ James Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1974 [Istanbul, 1890]), p. 1287.

⁷⁸⁸ Şemseddin Sami, *Kāmūs-ı Türki* (Istanbul: Çevik Matbaacılık, 2010 [1317]), pp. 928-929.

⁷⁸⁹ Badem, *Ottoman-Crimean War*, p. 363 for further detail.

⁷⁹⁰ Suat Dede, *From Nomadism to Sedentary Life in Central Anatolia: The Case of the Rışvan Tribe*, MA thesis, Bilkent University Ankara, Department of History, 2011, p. 52.

⁷⁹¹ See chapter 2.

and bloodthirsty murderers. In his autobiographical interview with the Russian consul in Istanbul in 1910, numerous references can be found to the accusations and slander of 1906, which for Abdürrezzak Bey were still looming large: He was, first of all, eager to depict himself as an accomplished Ottoman, even cosmopolitan, gentleman. He dwelled on his various decorations and his contacts into, to use his own words, the highest ranks of international diplomatic circles. And there was more: He reasoned that Sultan Abdülhamid II had actively prevented him and other promising family members from studying in Europe, in an attempt to deny them any contact with European civilization. According to Abdürrezzak Bey, however, it was the Ottoman officials who were uncivilized and acting out of pure savagery when they arrested Bedirhani family members and plundered their possessions in the spring of 1906.⁷⁹² Abdürrezzak Bey thus tried to counter the accusations, rumors and stereotypes still in circulation about him and his family four years after the events by turning matters around, emphasizing his own civilizedness and underlining the savageries of his opponents. A discourse which began in the newspaper coverage after the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906 thereby continued well into the Second Constitutional Period. Throughout the entire time period, the discussion turned not so much around Kurdish identity and autonomy than around being recognized as members of a civilized and modern Ottoman imperial elite.

Standing Trial in April 1906

In the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, however, not only Ali Şamil Paşa and Abdürrezzak Bey, but all male members of the Bedirhani family over the age of twelve, a number of sons-in-law and other individuals related to the family by marriage, as well as neighbors,

⁷⁹² Tiflis, Georgian National Archives, Fonds 15.1.310. (1910).

friends and members of the extended network of the family were rounded up in Istanbul and other parts of the empire. Under strict surveillance, they were brought by boat to Tripolis in Libya, where the trial against them was to take place. Things moved quickly, the trial began only days after the initial investigations in Istanbul were finished, in mid-April 1906.⁷⁹³ The arrests took place on March 26, three days after the murder, and were prepared and accompanied by a press campaign against the entire Bedirhani family. In spite of clear warnings that by taking justice into their own hands, they had upset both the palace elite and the sultan himself, no member of the Bedirhani family took any precautions to leave the city in the aftermath of the murder. Judging from different accounts family members gave of the events, the arrests and ensuing exile came as a surprise to the family.⁷⁹⁴ By many locals of Üsküdar and Kadıköy, retributions against Ali Şamil Paşa in particular were greatly appreciated, as the local population had suffered for years under his rule and he had made lots of enemies over the years.⁷⁹⁵

Consequences of the murder trial affected large parts of the Kurdish community in the capital: Rumors were circulating about a far-reaching plot the Bedirhani family had come up with to increase their power over the sultan and palace circles: Kurdish employees in the palace were believed to be in on this conspiracy, and most of them were banned from Istanbul after the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa. Some sources even

⁷⁹³ The British consul in Tripolis, Justin Alvarez, listed the following thirteen names of prisoners: Abdurrahman Bey, Ali Şamil Paşa, Sa'îd Bey, Sami Bey, Midhat Bey, Cemil Bey [i.e. Cemil Conk], Fu'ad Bey, Hikmet Bey, Nuri Bey, Yusuf Bey, Halil Bey, Es'ad Bey, and an Ottoman military doctor by the name of Talib Bey, who was pardoned shortly after his arrival in Libya. See FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated April 14, 1906. Hüseyin Bey Bedirhan is not mentioned here, but his name appears in a later report among those receiving prison sentences, see FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated May 14, 1906.

⁷⁹⁴ See Müveddet Gönensay, *Müveddet Gönensay'ın Anıları*, p. 6 and Joyce Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan." In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), pp. 76-80.

⁷⁹⁵ *Reichspost*, September 13, 1906, pp. 1-2.

claimed that Ali Şamil Paşa had plotted together with Prince Yusuf İzzeddin (1857–1916), a son of the late Sultan Abdülaziz, to dispose the sultan.⁷⁹⁶ Ali Şamil Paşa's and Abdürrezzak Bey's homes were searched for weapons.⁷⁹⁷ A list with the names of fifteen prominent targets whom the Bedirhanis allegedly also planned to assassinate was found during these searches in Abdürrezzak Bey's house. Most contemporaries believed this to be planted evidence.⁷⁹⁸ The names of the assumed arch-enemies of the Bedirhani family are nonetheless worth mentioning, as they seem to mirror an actual balance of power in government circles at the time. Quite possibly, the list depicts the camp of those opposed to the growing influence of Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan and his family: Grand vizier Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Paşa (1851–1914), who was among those pushing for severe retributions against the family,⁷⁹⁹ was on the list, along with the Minister of the Interior Mehmed Fa'ik Memduh Paşa (1839–1923),⁸⁰⁰ *serasker* Mehmed Rıza Paşa (1844–1920), Minister of Justice Abdurrahman Nureddin Paşa (1836–1912), and İzzet Bey, the second secretary in the palace (*mabeyn-i hümayun ikinci katibi*), sheikh Abu'l-Huda as-Sayyadi, and the Minister of Trade Mustafa Zihni Paşa

⁷⁹⁶ *Linzer Tagespost*, April 21, 1906, p. 2.

⁷⁹⁷ During the search, several dead bodies were reportedly found in a well on Ali Şamil Paşa's property — the findings were unrelated to the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa, but (if indeed true) they would be telling in terms of Ali Şamil Paşa's style local politics, see *Linzer Tagespost*, April 21, 1906.

⁷⁹⁸ *Reichspost*, September 13, 1906, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁹⁹ See also Adnan Giz, *Bir Zamanlar Kadıköy ... (1900 - 1950)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), pp. 130-131. On Mehmed Ferid Paşa's career, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 136. He was a native of Yanya and hailed from a family of Ottoman bureaucrats, the Vloras. Interestingly with regards to the Bedirhani family, his father Mustafa Nuri Paşa had served as *kaymakam* of Kandiye during the time of the Bedirhanis' exile there.

⁸⁰⁰ Memduh Paşa also allegedly disliked the Bedirhanis enough to compose a poem ridiculing their being sent into exile, see Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 54, who cites Çankırlı Hacışeyoğlu Ahmed Kemal's memoirs as his source but is unable to provide an exact reference. Alakom claims a friend brought him photocopied excerpts without any further information.

(1838– 1912).^{801 802} It is interesting to note with regard to possible factions and networks involved in the fall from grace of the Bedirhani family that Tahsin Paşa, another grandee of Ottoman palace circles, who was among the sponsors of some members of the Bedirhani family and notably helped to advance the career of Ali Şamil Paşa and was an outspoken critic of Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Paşa, did not appear on the list. In his memoirs, Tahsin Paşa described Mehmed Ferid Paşa as two-faced and of limited capabilities.⁸⁰³ This set-up makes it likely that two factions, one around the grand vizier Mehmed Ferid Paşa, another around Tahsin Paşa which also involved (some of) the Bedirhanis, were competing for influence in the palace at the time. Tahsin Paşa seems to have been losing ground in 1906, his influence was not strong enough to keep his protégé Ali Şamil Paşa and the latter's family out of harm's way after the murder of Rıdvan Paşa.

Unlike the interrogations of the four assassins in Istanbul, which were open to the public and covered in great detail by the press, the trial against the Bedirhanis in Tripolis continued behind closed doors. As a result, press coverage was much less exhaustive. But without reliable information, speculations ran wild all the more: There were, for instance, false reports that Ali Şamil Paşa had violently assaulted, allegedly bitten the prosecutor Necmeddin Paşa.⁸⁰⁴ In the early morning hours of April 13, 1906, fourteen members of the Bedirhani family

⁸⁰¹ The mentioning of Mustafa Zihni Paşa is interesting, as he was himself of Kurdish origins, being born in Süleymaniye as a member of the influential Baban family, Kunalalp, *Osmanlı erkân ve ricalî*, p. 12.

⁸⁰² The last two were mentioned in an article in *Linzer Tagespost*, April 21, 1906, p. 2. The animosity between sheikh Abu'l-Huda and Ali Şamil Paşa is well documented in other sources as well, see chapter 3.

⁸⁰³ Tahsin Paşa, *Tahsin Paşa'nın Yıldız Hatıraları. Sultan Abdülhamid* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1990), pp. 93-98.

⁸⁰⁴ *Pilsner Tagblatt*, May 15, 1906, p. 4. According to this (false) account, the prosecutor had died as a result of the attack.

arrived in Tripolis, escorted by large numbers of police.⁸⁰⁵ The events provoked great excitement and curiosity among the local population in Tripolis, but the prisoners were held in strict confinement and no one was allowed near them.⁸⁰⁶ The proceedings began in the following week with the questioning of the two main suspects, Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa. Abdürrezzak Bey claimed to have prepared the assassination on the imperial order of the sultan himself – the judge refused this to be recorded in the official transcript.⁸⁰⁷ Abdürrezzak Bey never denied his responsibility for the death of Rıdvan Paşa, he had even admitted his involvement to the sultan in person shortly after the events.⁸⁰⁸ While it is difficult to assess if indeed the sultan had an interest in the death of Rıdvan Paşa, public opinion in Istanbul at the time found this explanation credible. Reportedly, the death of Rıdvan Paşa was not much regretted.⁸⁰⁹ For the sultan, the affair constituted a win-win situation, as he was able to come to terms with two powerful and rather unruly players in the capital at once, with Rıdvan Paşa dead and Ali Şamil Paşa sent off into exile.

On April 19, a steamer arrived in Tripolis from Istanbul with Ottoman officials, clerks and five judges, as well as fifteen witnesses and the four Kurdish prisoners accused of carrying out the assassination on the orders of Abdürrezzak Bey on board. The prosecutor in the case,

⁸⁰⁵ See FO 195/2212, telegram from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated April 13, 1906. Alvarez proved a keen and curious observer of the ensuing trial, to the extent that his supervisors in London chided him for providing too many gossipy details. On the other hand, it seems clear that Alvarez was largely uninformed about the broader context of the events, being unfamiliar with the Bedirhani family and their position in the capital, misspelling the family name as “Bederkhazad” in his first report dating from April 13, 1906.

⁸⁰⁶ FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated April 14, 1906.

⁸⁰⁷ FO 195/2212, telegram from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated April 27, 1906.

⁸⁰⁸ *Reichspost*, September 13, 1906, pp. 1-2.

⁸⁰⁹ See the three-page article in *The Outlook* dated April 7, 1906 and signed N., a copy of which is included in FO 371/149, ambassador Nicholas O’Conor to Edward Grey, letter dated April 9, 1906. See also “Murder of a Turkish Official.” In: *Times*, London, March 26, 1906.

Necmeddin Paşa was trusted by Abdülhamid II and had already been handling the trial following a bomb attack on the sultan in July 1905.⁸¹⁰ The group was accompanied by İsmail Bey, another intimate and aide-de-camp (*yaver*) of Abdülhamid II.⁸¹¹ On May 12, they were finally joined by Ahmed Ni'metullah Efendi, judge at the criminal court of appeal in Istanbul, who was appointed to preside over the trial against the Bedirhanis. The trial was opened the following morning and continued throughout the entire day, the public being excluded from the proceedings.⁸¹² Abdürrezzak Bey was reported to have defended himself rather than bringing a lawyer. He argued that the public being excluded from the trial was evidence that he and his relatives were not tried for a criminal offense, but for political reasons. He refused to answer any questions, protesting the illegality of the entire trial.

As a result of the trial, three members of the Bedirhani family were initially sentenced to death: Abdürrezzak Bey, Ali Şamil Paşa and Cemil Bey [Conk], a son-in-law of the late Necib Paşa Bedirhan. The accused secretly addressed petitions to the French, Italian and British consulates, pleading for a diplomatic intervention on their behalf. They argued that the trial had not been a fair one and expressed the fear that even those family members spared from death sentences were in great danger of falling victim to political murder.⁸¹³ The foreign diplomats, however, agreed that it was not in their interest to interfere.⁸¹⁴ The death

⁸¹⁰ *Linzer Tagespost*, April 21, 1906, p. 2.

⁸¹¹ FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated April 30, 1906. This was most probably general İsmail Fazıl Paşa (1856–1921), a graduate and former teacher of the Ottoman military college (*harbiye*), see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 193.

⁸¹² FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated May 14, 1906. Alvarez mentioned the extraordinary security measures which were taken, with high numbers of police guarding the venue and preventing people from so much as approaching the court house.

⁸¹³ FO 195/2212, telegram from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated May 20, 1906.

⁸¹⁴ FO 195/2212, note by Nicolas O'Connor, British ambassador in Istanbul, on the report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated May 20, 1906. An exception was made in the case of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, whose wife was a Swiss citizen. For international interventions on her behalf, see chapter 7 on Müveddet Gönensay, her daughter.

sentences for Abdürrezzak Bey, Ali Şamil Paşa and Cemil Bey were eventually converted into life sentences in prison. A number of other family members also received prison sentences and were sent off to different locations of exile.⁸¹⁵ Ali Şamil Paşa, Abdürrezzak Bey and Cemil Bey, along with Sa'id and Bedirhan Bey, were sent to be imprisoned in Ta'if in Yemen, Mikdat Midhat and Hasan Bey Bedirhan were sent to Sana'a, and Halil Bey Bedirhan, his unnamed son, as well as Murad and Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan were imprisoned in the Libyan hinterland, in the area of Fezzan.⁸¹⁶ Most of them were released from custody in 1908, following a general amnesty for political prisoners after the Constitutional Revolution. Ali Şamil Paşa died in prison prior to 1908, and Abdürrezzak Bey was released only in 1910.⁸¹⁷ Those family members who were acquitted and did not receive prison sentences were shipped off to Jaffa and Beirut, to be sent into exile from there after the trial was closed in the last week of May 1906.⁸¹⁸

Looking at the proceedings of the trial in detail reveals a number of things: First of all, the amount of security invested in keeping the Bedirhanis isolated throughout the trial is striking. Rather than holding the trial in the capital, the Ottoman authorities went through great inconvenience to ship suspects, witnesses and judges off to Tripolis in Libya, a place as remote as one could possibly find within the Ottoman

⁸¹⁵ According to consul Alvarez, Sa'id, Mikdat Midhat and Halil Bey Bedirhan were sentenced to life imprisonment, Hüseyin and Abdurrahman Bey received ten and fifteen years in prison, respectively. The others were acquitted.

⁸¹⁶ For a list with the intended places of exile for each individual, see BOA, Y.A.HUS. 501.108.

⁸¹⁷ Interestingly, the third suspect initially sentenced to death along with Ali Şamil Paşa and Abdürrezzak Bey, Cemil Bey [Conk] regained his freedom in 1908, indicating that he, too, was regarded as a political prisoner. See Cemil Conk, *Çanakkale Conkbayırı Savaşları* (Ankara: E.U. Basımevi, 1959), p. 1. Cemil Bey was an Ottoman military and graduate of the *harbiye*. He is remembered as a war hero of the Turkish War of Independence, which also constitutes the focus of his memoirs.

⁸¹⁸ FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated May 27, 1906.

lands at the time.⁸¹⁹ Mainly accessible by sea, access could, at least to some extent, be controlled. Local supporters of the Bedirhanis could be expected to be few. In addition, the trial was held in closed sessions. These extensive security measures are indicative of a fear of the authorities that the family was potentially able to mobilize a large base of supporters, stirring up public protest and unrest in their favor. This reading of the events is supported by the fact that in the days following the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, Ottoman troops were reportedly withdrawn from the Ottoman-Iranian border and sent to the Kurdish regions of Anatolia, “in apprehension of trouble among the Kurds (...) consequent on the severe measures instituted against Kurds in Constantinople.”⁸²⁰ On May 2, 1906, Yusuf, a lower-ranking Kurdish tribal leader and alleged protégé of Ali Şamil Paşa was indeed reported to be agitating among the Kurdish tribes, calling for an uprising in favor of the Bedirhanis.⁸²¹ Another indicator of a general fear of reprisal and Kurdish unrest following the arrest of prominent members of the Bedirhani family was that the sudden death of the former *vali* of Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid, Abidin Paşa (1843–1906), which occurred in the Yıldız Palace on May 8, 1906, was immediately brought in connection with a possible Kurdish “revenge for past ill-treatment,” as the British ambassador put it.⁸²² It turned out, however, that Abidin Paşa had died of natural causes.⁸²³ While a general atmosphere of apprehension prevailed in the capital and the Ottoman authorities feared that punitive measures against the Bedirhani family would potentially lead to a large-scale

⁸¹⁹ Using Tripolis and its surroundings as the Ottoman equivalent of Siberia, a place of exile for disagreeable oppositionals, was a policy well-tried by Sultan Abdülhamid II, who had a habit of sending critics of his authoritarian rule there since the 1870s, Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830 – 1980* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 90-91.

⁸²⁰ Quoted from “News in Brief.” In: *Times*, London, April 25, 1906, p. 5. The article goes on to report that Kurds in large numbers were being expelled from the capital.

⁸²¹ Quoted from “News in Brief.” In: *Times*, London, May 2, 1906, p. 5.

⁸²² FO 371/150, telegram from British ambassador Nicholas O’Conor in Istanbul to Sir Edward Grey, dated May 9, 1906.

⁸²³ FO 371/150, follow-up telegram from O’Conor in the afternoon of May 10, 1906.

uprising of the Kurdish tribes in Eastern Anatolia, this was not what happened – mostly because even though the Bedirhani family was indeed powerful and had access to a far-reaching network, extending to the Kurdish tribes outside of the Ottoman capital, their power and influence were far from undisputed. Notably, the prominent Hamidiye leader İbrahim Paşa Milli had an interest in keeping the power of the Bedirhani family in check, since he had established his own stronghold over the region around Viranşehir in the vacuum of power after the exile of the Bedirhanis. A powerful local opponent of the Bedirhani family and loyal supporter of his benefactor the sultan, İbrahim Paşa was highly unlikely to mobilize the Kurdish population in favor of the Bedirhanis.

It also emerges from the court case that the Ottoman authorities put pressure on the Kurdish community in Istanbul, among which the Bedirhani family counted numerous supporters, since they acted as patrons and advocates of Kurdish workers and were able to make their clients' interests heard in the state institutions. In the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, Kurdish workers were exiled from Istanbul in larger numbers, accused of being agents and collaborators of the Bedirhani family and about to prepare further political murders. While the charges were completely trumped-up, they provided the sultan with an occasion to thoroughly rid the capital of the network of supporters of the Bedirhani family, making it even more unlikely that they should return from exile and regain their former powers. Trying to understand the background of this purge of Kurdish networks in Istanbul in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, it makes sense to consider not only the interests of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who feared the increasing influence of the Bedirhani family in Istanbul, but also the actions of a

number of other high-ranking Ottoman officials involved.⁸²⁴ Among those pushing for a severe punishment of the Bedirhani family after the murder was the grand vizier Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Paşa.⁸²⁵ It was him who suggested the trial should be held in Tripolis instead of Istanbul, to prevent the numerous supporters and relatives of the family from getting involved in the matter.⁸²⁶

Bedirhanis and their Supporters in Exile, 1906 to 1908

As an appendix to his booklet on the history of the Bedirhani family, Lütfi [Liceli Ahmed Ramiz] provides a detailed list with information on the family members persecuted in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, along with their places of exile or imprisonment. Altogether, he counts 107 individuals related to the family who were targeted by punitive measures.⁸²⁷ Not all members of the extended Bedirhani family, however, were sent to Tripolis to stand trial after the murder. Only Murad, Mikdat Midhat, Hasan, Abdurrahman and Halil Bey Bedirhan, Abdürrezzak Bey's brothers Bedirhan and Sa'id Bey, along with Abdürrezzak Bey's cousins Ferid, Fa'iz, Süleyman, Fu'ad and Halil Bey were tried and convicted, together with Ali Şamil Paşa and Abdürrezzak Bey himself. It is unclear on what basis these family members were singled out for stricter punishment, other than the fact

⁸²⁴ Also keeping in mind the role of Ali Şamil Paşa and Rıdvan Paşa as *kabaday*, mobilizers, advocats and patrons of large numbers of urban populations. As two of these powerful brokers vanished from the scene in 1906, space opened up for other protagonists and their respective networks of supporters.

⁸²⁵ Mehmed Zeki Pakalın, *Sicill-i Osmanî Zeyli*, II. Cilt (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008), pp. 54-56.

⁸²⁶ BOA, Y.A.HUS. 501.50, 06 S 1324 H (April 1, 1906). Mehmed Ferid Paşa further suggested that those family members not directly involved in the murder should take an oath in front of a sharia court, swearing that they would abstain from any disobedience in the future. Family members also should be closely watched, until they "mended their ways," "işlah-ı nefis edeceğine kadar zâbıtanın taraşşudât ve takayyüdât-ı mütemâdiyesi altında tutulmağaları ..."

⁸²⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, Istanbul, no date, pp. 54-56.

that Sa'îd and Bedirhan Bey lived in the household of Abdürrezzak Bey and were thus particularly close to him. In the case of Mikdat Midhat and Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan, who both had proven ties to the liberal opposition against Sultan Abdülhamid II and had in the past been outspoken critics of his authoritarian rule, it seems as if palace circles were seizing the opportunity to get rid of them, regardless of their *de facto* role in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa.

The Ottoman province of Libya, where the trial took place, however, was not completely free of Bedirhani influence when the proceedings began in 1906.⁸²⁸ Osman Paşa Bedirhan, a general (*ferik*) in the Ottoman army, was serving in the military administration in the city of Tripolis when his family members were sent there in the spring of 1906. Finding this highly inconvenient, the Ottoman authorities at first made efforts to send Osman Paşa away, and Aleppo was suggested as a suitable place of exile. The officials in charge, however, soon had second thoughts about this choice: They realized that there was a sizable Kurdish population living in the surroundings of Aleppo and also feared that as Aleppo shared a border with the province of Diyarbekir, Osman Paşa would have no difficulties to get in contact with other Kurdish tribes in the wider region.⁸²⁹ It was then decided that Osman Paşa should be allowed to stay in the province of Tripolis, on the condition that he would not contact his relatives in any way or help them to escape.⁸³⁰ The case of Osman Paşa highlights some of the priorities the Ottoman authorities had in their handling of the Bedirhani case. It was feared that family members would cooperate to help each other and improve their situation, it seemed therefore essential for the Ottoman state to keep the

⁸²⁸ In addition to Osman Paşa, another son of Emir Bedirhan, Bahri Paşa Bedirhan, was also employed in Libya around the turn of the century. I have not been able to trace him or his family in the aftermath of 1906. On Bahri in Libya prior to that, see E. Dagobert Schoenfeld, *Aus den Staaten der Barbaresken* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1902), pp. 49-52. Schoenfeld was friends with Bahri Paşa's son Ziya Bey.

⁸²⁹ BOA, BEO. 2796.209652, 07 S 1324 H (April 2, 1906).

⁸³⁰ BOA, İ.HUS. 140.1324, 07 S 1324 H (April 2, 1906).

different family members apart. Secondly, it appeared crucial to keep members of the Bedirhani family a safe distance away from the Kurdish areas of the empire, where they could hope to mobilize support for their cause.

These priorities are mirrored in the trajectories of family members after 1906: In addition to the fourteen individuals related to the Bedirhani family who were brought to trial in Tripolis, a large number of other family members lost their positions in the Ottoman administration and were sent into exile or forced residence to remote corners of the empire and scattered far apart from each other. The dispatches of the British representative in Konya document the fate of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan, a younger brother of Ali Şamil Paşa's, in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa: Emin Ali Bey, who resided in Ankara in March 1906, was at the height of his career as an imperial official and had held the position of judicial inspector (*'adliye müfettişi*) for the provinces of Ankara and Konya since 1904, receiving a monthly salary of 5.000 *kuruş*.⁸³¹ In early April of 1906, immediately after the involvement of his relatives in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa had become known, Emin Ali Bey was dismissed from his post and forced to resettle in Isparta with his wife and children. At the turn of the century, Isparta was a fairly isolated small town, located in a mountainous region of the western Taurus range and known for the quality of its religious schools.⁸³² Emin Ali Bey's monthly salary was cut to 1.500 *kuruş*⁸³³ but he continued to be employed in the Ottoman administration, bound by a so-called *ikamet* arrangement, making him an official in (forced) residence, and prohibiting him from leaving his post. Since he had been in Ankara

⁸³¹ See Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan's *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.430.

⁸³² Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey. The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1989), pp. 151 and 153-154. Mardin is interested in Isparta because of another, more prominent exile sent into the town: Sa'îd Nursi, who stayed there in the 1920s.

⁸³³ FO 195/2219, vice-consul J. Sayabalian in Konya to British ambassador Eyres in Istanbul, report dated April 5, 1906, and BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.430.

during the preparations and at the time of the murder, it was highly unlikely that Emin Ali Bey was directly involved in the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa. The purpose of the measures taken against him was to keep him under surveillance and to prevent him from getting into contact with other members of his family or their network of supporters. When Emin Ali Bey did not abide to the conditions of his exile and left the area of Isparta without official permission, he and his family were exiled again, this time facing much harsher conditions: They found themselves sent off to live in a decrepit old fortress in 'Akka in Ottoman Palestine in 1907.⁸³⁴

The case of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan offers a blue-print to contextualize the less well-documented trajectories of other members of the Bedirhani family in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa. Many of them, like Emin Ali Bey, held offices in the higher ranks of the Ottoman administration and found themselves demoted in 1906: Emin Ali Bey's brother Hüseyin Kenan Bey was employed as district governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Yozgat in Central Anatolia in 1906. He, too, was dismissed from his post and sent off to Nablus to serve as an official in forced residence in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa.⁸³⁵ In the following year, the measures against him were tightened, and he was sent to be imprisoned in Ta'if in Yemen. This appears to have been a reaction to the fact that Hüseyin Kenan Bey left Nablus without official permission, attempting to return to his abandoned house in Istanbul to take care of his property.⁸³⁶ Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, who lived in Istanbul in 1906 and was a member of the Council of State (*şura-yı devlet*), was exiled to the island of Rhodes.⁸³⁷ Along with him, his brother Kemal Bey Bedirhan, who had been appointed as *kaymakam* of Haifa at the time,

⁸³⁴ For details on Emin Ali Bey's exile in Isparta and his biography in general, see chapter 5.

⁸³⁵ BOA, BEO. 2796.209674, 06 S 1324 H (April 1, 1906), and Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 54.

⁸³⁶ BOA, DH.SYS. 34.94, ek 3, 29.01.1329 M (April 4, 1911).

⁸³⁷ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 54.

and his son-in-law Mehmed Salih Bey were also exiled to the same locality.⁸³⁸ Other family members residing in the province of Syria in 1906, among them Hamid Bey Bedirhan and his son Galib Bey, Zübeyir Bey Bedirhan, who was working in the municipal administration of Damascus and others, were arrested on the spot.⁸³⁹ Fa'ik and İbrahim Hikmet Bey, the sons of the late Mustafa Ali Bey Bedirhan, were both dismissed from their posts in the imperial administration and sent into exile. Fa'ik Bey found himself on the island of Rhodes,⁸⁴⁰ together with some of his relatives, and İbrahim Hikmet Bey was forced to give up his position in the land registry office (*deFTER-i hakani*) in Istanbul and move to Kayseri.⁸⁴¹ A son-in-law of the Bedirhanis, Ali Galib Paşa, who was at the time governor (*mutasarrıf*) of the island of Midilli (Lesbos), was dismissed from his post and exiled to İzmir.⁸⁴² Even very young family members, among them the sons of Ali Şamil Paşa and Hasan Bey, who were only twelve years old at the time, and Emin Ali Bey's son Süreyya Bedirhan, were taken out of school, arrested in Istanbul and sent into exile from there.⁸⁴³ From the wider circle of acquaintances of the Bedirhani family, it is known that Leon Bey, one of the neighbors of Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan who worked for the Ottoman tax authorities, was also exiled from the capital, as was Hasan Fu'ad Paşa, a school director who happened to own a photography of Abdürrezzak Bey.⁸⁴⁴ Apart from these two individuals, the thrust of the investigation and ensuing punitive measures, however, was directed against the Kurdish community of Istanbul. The father of the Kurdish tribal leader Simko Ağa, for instance, was persecuted in the context of the measures taken against the wider network of the Bedirhani family. Simko Ağa himself

⁸³⁸ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 54-56.

⁸³⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 54-56.

⁸⁴⁰ See Fa'ik Bey's *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 75.87.

⁸⁴¹ See İbrahim Hikmet Bey's *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 112.228, and Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 55.

⁸⁴² Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 56.

⁸⁴³ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 55.

⁸⁴⁴ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 57.

later became a supporter and fellow combatant of Abdürrezzak Bedirhan in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands during the First World War.⁸⁴⁵

The wave of arrests hit the Bedirhanis by surprise. Only two members of the extended family, Halil Bey, a son of one of Emir Bedirhan's daughters, and Bekir Bey, a son-in-law of Necib Paşa Bedirhan, managed to flee to Egypt.⁸⁴⁶ Others targeted by the measures against the family were able to mobilize support on their behalf in order to avert or reduce the punishment meted out against them: Süleyman Fa'ik Bey, related to the Bedirhani family by marriage and employed as accountant in the administration of the pious foundations (*evkaf muhasebeci*) in the *vilayet* of Konya, was supposed to be exiled to Kayseri. Asked to intervene, however, the *vali* of Konya İbrahim Fa'ik Bey [İris] (1852–1941), was able to obtain official permission for Süleyman Fa'ik Bey and his wife to return instead to Damascus, their native city and family home.⁸⁴⁷

What did the events of 1906 mean for the relations between the Ottoman state and the Bedirhani family? For most of the family members, it does not seem justified to speak of an irreversible turning point or lasting rupture with the Ottoman system. Even though the majority of the Bedirhanis found themselves exiled from their former positions and cut off from the sources of income and networks of support they were used to, many of them continued to be employed in the Ottoman administration and were allowed to live with their wives and children. After only two years in exile, most of them returned to their homes and,

⁸⁴⁵ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 49, citing Refik Hilmi, *Anılar* (Istanbul: Nûjen Yayınları, 1995), p. 15. The original was not available to me.

⁸⁴⁶ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 55-56. As far as I can see, Necib Paşa had no son-in-law by the name of Bekir – most probably, Bekir [Şasa], the husband of Mihriban Bedirhan and son-in-law of Hüseyin Kenan Bey Bedirhan was meant here.

⁸⁴⁷ For this account, see FO 195/2219, vice-consul J. Sayabalian in Konya to British ambassador Eyres in Istanbul, report dated April 18, 1906. The name of the wife of Süleyman Fa'ik Bey, a granddaughter of Emir Bedirhan, is not mentioned. It was most probably Edibe [later Çınar, d. 1955], a daughter of Adıye Bedirhan, see her death notice in *Milliyet*, August 8, 1955.

in some instances, even to their former positions in 1908. The perspective of the state towards members of the family, however, had changed after 1906, as is demonstrated by formulations used in the *sicill-i ahval* files: Prior to 1906, members of the Bedirhani family were recorded as individual bureaucrats, some of them rather ambitious, approaching the height of their professional careers. Their personal files commented on what they knew, where they had studied and served and cited authorities testifying as to how well they had done. After the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, however, the tone of the files changed. A shadow of general suspicion was cast over all members of the extended Bedirhani family: “Bedirhānilerden olmak ğihetiyle ...”⁸⁴⁸ – “because he is one of the Bedirhanis” emerged as the formula explaining and legitimizing the measures taken against individual family members, along with the ensuing career breakups and stalled promotions in the *sicill-i ahval* files. Individual Bedirhanis were now treated as members of a collective by the authorities, permanently suspected of cultivating internal links of solidarity which cut across and might go against loyalties to the imperial state.

Alternative Outlooks on the Events of 1906

The official news coverage of the case in March and April 1906, as it has been illustrated above, amounted to a unanimous condemnation of the entire Bedirhani family, with various widely read newspapers in the Ottoman capital reporting stories which were, in some passages, identical to the letter. However, this does not mean that the published version of the crime and the ensuing investigation was a story everyone agreed upon. Rather, there were no public outlets for diverging accounts and defenses of the Bedirhani family. Those who disagreed with the official narrative, however, existed – and not all of them remained silent.

⁸⁴⁸ See for instance Emin Ali Bey's *sicill-i ahval* file BOA, DH.SAİD. 2.430.

In 1907 or somewhat later, Lütfi [Liceli Ahmed Ramiz] published his account on the Bedirhani family history, which focused on the events of 1906 as its linchpin. From his perspective, the entire family history, from their being exiled in the mid-19th century onwards, seemed to foreshadow and ultimately culminate in a conspiracy which brought down the family in 1906. With his text, Lütfi in many ways acted as the defense attorney the Bedirhanis were denied in court, taking the argument of the prosecution apart. Lütfi's account does not argue with the facts: He confirmed that Abdürrezzak Bey was indeed having an argument with Rıdvan Paşa, which had broken out over neglected road repair works. Abdürrezzak Bey in turn kidnapped Ahmed Ağa; Rıdvan Paşa sent his ruffians to free Ahmed Ağa from Abdürrezzak Bey's house; a member of the Bedirhani family was injured during this incident. Abdürrezzak Bedirhan hired assassins to take revenge on Rıdvan Paşa, who ended up being killed – no difference so far from the contemporary Ottoman news coverage which has been discussed above.

But Lütfi went on to stress two points: First of all, had the sultan reacted adequately and pressed Rıdvan Paşa to fulfill his responsibilities, or had he at least punished him after he had escalated the situation and attacked Abdürrezzak Bey's home, the murder would have been avoided. But since no support from the palace was forthcoming, Abdürrezzak Bey was, according to Lütfi, practically forced to take matters into his own hands. After all, Lütfi reasoned, his house had been under attack, his family's personal space and notably the most restricted and vulnerable space of their home, the harem had been invaded by strangers, and a family member had been injured on top of all that. It was, in Lütfi's understanding of the situation, a question of honor and an obligation for Abdürrezzak Bey to react to these violations.⁸⁴⁹ In other contemporary accounts, the Bedirhanis and notably Ali Şamil Paşa were accused of

⁸⁴⁹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, pp. 47-48.

overreacting and taking justice into their own hands, not unlike the feudal lords (*derebeys*) of old.⁸⁵⁰ Lütfi, on the other hand, blamed Rıdvan Paşa for escalating the situation. Using very similar vocabulary, he compared Rıdvan Paşa's conduct to the arbitrary *derebeys* and warlord-like Janissaries of earlier centuries.⁸⁵¹ While Lütfi's defense is clearly apologetic and just as biased and exaggerated as the reports blaming the Bedirhanis, it does provide a stark reminder that there was no consensus about what had happened in 1906 and who was to be held responsible for it. His account provides a glimpse of what could have been the line defense of the members of the Bedirhani family in court, an element completely silenced and left out in the other descriptions available. In addition, Lütfi's account provides some leads as to why Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa would have thought it possible that they could get away with the murder and what their reasoning why it was necessary to commit the crime would have been.

Second, Lütfi identified several weaknesses in the court case: The theory that Abdürrezzak Bey had hired the assassins, he pointed out, rested entirely on the confessions of the assassins themselves. No additional evidence supporting this had been brought forward.⁸⁵² Third, Lütfi took issue with the fact that not only the two main suspects in the case, Abdürrezzak Bey and Ali Şamil Paşa, were arrested and tried for the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, but the entire extended family was persecuted in the aftermath of the crime. What did Mikdat Midhat, Murad, Hasan or Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan do which justified them being tried for

⁸⁵⁰ See Halide Edip, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (Istanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1979), p. 112: "Zavallı Ali Şamil Paşa bu kavgayı uygun görmemiş, fakat bir yandan ailesinin etkisi, bir yandan da bir çeşit irsi derebeylik gururuyla başını belâya sokmuştu." A similar wording can be found in Gövsa's biographical sketch of Ali Şamil Paşa, "Üsküdar Ciheti Kumandanı iken âdeta Derebeyliği yapar (...)," Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 40. The very same term "derebey" also found its way into Müveddet Gönensay's recollections, *Müveddet Gönensay'ın Anıları*, p. 4.

⁸⁵¹ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 48: "... Rızvân Pâşâ da İştanbül içinde derebeyliği, eski yeniçeriliği uyandırmazdı ve 'Abdürrezzâk Bey'in hânesi başdırmak (...) bulunmazdı ..."

⁸⁵² Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 49.

murder, where was the evidence against them, Lütfi asked pointedly in his account.⁸⁵³ Lütfi found it even more reprehensible that innocent children and female members of the family also had to suffer severe consequences.⁸⁵⁴ Speculating about the motives for implicating the entire Bedirhani family with the murder, Lütfi argued that the sultan had come to fear the increasing influence of the family and was committed to bring them down once and for all.⁸⁵⁵ In addition to Lütfi, Abdurrahman Bedirhan's friend Abdullah Cevdet also spoke up against the collective persecution of the Bedirhani family. From exile in Cairo, he published an article to this effect in his journal *İctihad* in April 1906.⁸⁵⁶ It can be surmised that Abdullah Cevdet and Lütfi were in contact, with Lütfi's more detailed defense being perhaps a follow-up to Cevdet's article, as Lütfi's account was edited by Cevdet's publishing house in Cairo, the Matba'a-yı İctihad.

Drawing Conclusions from the Events of 1906

Looking at what individual family members did after they were released from prison or allowed to return from exile following the Constitutional Revolution and ensuing general amnesty for political prisoners in 1908 allows to speculate about their affiliations with the empire: Were they returning to their former homes, in Istanbul, Damascus or Greater Syria? Did they continue to work in the Ottoman administration? Or did they actively seek out other opportunities, looking beyond the Ottoman imperial framework? The evidence at hand strongly suggests that a large majority of members of the Bedirhani family continued to support and acted as part of the Ottoman Empire after 1908. Only Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan constitutes an exception: He was ready to break away from the

⁸⁵³ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 50.

⁸⁵⁴ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 50.

⁸⁵⁵ Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 51.

⁸⁵⁶ Hanioglu, *Doktor Abdullah Cevdet*, p. 218.

Ottoman state upon his return from exile. Following his release from prison in 1910, he asked for asylum in Czarist Russia.⁸⁵⁷ However, it needs to be remarked that he continued to operate within an imperial (as opposed to nationalist) framework, merely replacing one imperial sponsor with another by now seeking support from Russia. Abdürrezzak Bey wrote in his bid for asylum addressed to the Russian czar that he saw no future for himself or his family in the Ottoman Empire and had thus decided to emigrate, seeking protection in Russia. As one of the chief suspects tried for the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, he had been punished more thoroughly than other members of the family: Abdürrezzak Bey had spent time in prison and was held in solitary confinement for more than three years. In his bid for asylum, he described the injustice he had experienced and the misery his family had to endure after the departure of all its male members from Istanbul in detail, also mentioning that the family was expropriated when they were forced to leave the capital. After being finally released from prison in 1910, Abdürrezzak Bey realized that his prospects in post-Hamidian Istanbul were bleak. Prior to his fall from grace, he had been a high-ranking official close to the former Sultan Abdülhamid II. Under the CUP regime, however, he found his former networks of support no longer in place. His experience and contacts in Russia, dating back to the time he had worked as a diplomat at the Russian embassy in St. Petersburg, made him turn to the czar. After his bid for asylum was granted, he moved to Yerevan in 1911.⁸⁵⁸

Before I come back to the trajectory of Abdürrezzak Bey in the final section of this chapter, it is necessary to point out that his case is exceptional. Other family members did not perceive the events between

⁸⁵⁷ Abdurrezzak Bedirhan, *Otobiyoğrafya*, transl. Hasan Cuni (Istanbul: Perî Yayınları, 2000), p. 16.

⁸⁵⁸ Michael Reynolds, "Abdürrezzak Bedirhan. Ottoman Kurd a Russophile in the Twilight of Empire." In: *Kritika* 12.2 (2011), pp. 411-450.

1906 and 1908 as a meaningful break: For Mehmed Salih Bey, for instance, the murder and ensuing persecution of his family did not constitute a decisive turning point in his patriotism and attitude towards the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁵⁹ For younger family members like Kamuran Bedirhan, who lived through the affair of 1906 as a child, the events gained meaning in retrospect, from the perspective of a committed and seasoned Kurdish nationalist: In an autobiographical interview recorded by the French Orientalist Thomas Bois in Beirut in 1946,⁸⁶⁰ Kamuran Bedirhan recalled how he was a student at the prestigious Galatasaray Lisesi in Istanbul in 1906 when he was called into the headmaster's office one day, together with eleven of his brothers and cousins who also attended the school at the time.⁸⁶¹ The young Bedirhanis were immediately whisked away under police custody, to be interrogated and later sent into exile with their families. In retrospect, Kamuran Bedirhan claimed that this run-in with the Ottoman authorities shattered his confidence in an imperial future for his family and the Kurdish community beyond repair. His statements have to be taken with a grain of salt, as they constitute a comment on the Ottoman past made within a particular historical situation: In 1946, at the time of the interview, Kamuran Bedirhan was living in exile in Lebanon, working actively towards an independent Kurdish state and promoting the idea of his own family's claim to leadership within such a state. It made sense for him to stress a definite and preferably early moment of rupture with the imperial system within the larger narrative of his nationalist awakening.

⁸⁵⁹ Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i Â'malım*, pp. 85-96.

⁸⁶⁰ Joyce Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan." In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), pp. 71–90.

⁸⁶¹ This incident was unusual enough to make it into the annual school report: "The increase over last year in the number of students enrolled is 31. Seventeen races were represented, of whom the Greeks constituted 52 per cent; the Armenians, 21 per cent; the Bulgarians, 10 per cent. Four boys were from the Kurdish family of Bedr Khan Bey, a family which was prominent many years ago in the massacre of the Nestorian Christians. The adult members of this family (to the number of forty) were this year exiled from Constantinople on account of the murder of the Prefect of the City ...", cited by John Freely, *A History of Robert College. The American College for Girls, and Bogaziçi University (Bosphorus University)* 2 vols. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2000), vol. 1, p. 167.

Kamuran Bedirhan's own actions after his return from exile in the early 20th century, however, offer a different perspective which does not support the idea of an immediate break with the Ottoman Empire after 1906. Rather, his trajectory between 1908 and the end of the First World War was in line with the experiences of many of his relatives which have been explored above: He returned to Istanbul and swiftly regained his footing in the imperial system. He finished his secondary education in Istanbul and Edirne and then fought in the Balkan Wars on the Ottoman side.⁸⁶² He subsequently chose to study law in Istanbul, a profession which would have prepared him to enter the Ottoman civil service had the empire survived.

Another account of the events in 1906 and their aftermath helps to put Abdürrezzak Bey's break with the Ottoman Empire further into perspective, demonstrating that leaving the Ottoman Empire under the rule of the CUP was not the only alternative open to Bedirhani family members after they regained their freedom or returned from exile. Abdurrahman Bey (1868–1936), one of the youngest sons of Emir Bedirhan and slightly older than his nephews Kamuran and Abdürrezzak Bey, had studied to be an Ottoman official at the *mülkiye* in the 1890s and established connections to the Young Turk opposition, which led to his departure from Istanbul for exile in Geneva in 1898. Having just returned to the Ottoman Empire with his wife after an amnesty in 1905, he had hardly settled in when he was arrested and sent off to Tripolis with other members of his family in 1906. From his prison cell, Abdurrahman Bey wrote several moving letters to his newborn daughter Leyla, describing the conditions of his confinement and expressing his worries about the fate of the entire family.⁸⁶³ After his

⁸⁶² Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880–1925* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1989), p. 13.

⁸⁶³ Malmisanij [Mehmed Tayfun], *İlk Kürt Gazetesi Kurdistan'ı Yayınlayan Abdurrahman Bedirhan (1868–1936)* (Istanbul: Vate Basın, 2009), pp. 48 and 73-77.

release from prison in 1908, it would have made perfect sense for Abdurrahman Bey to turn his back on the empire, too – particularly since his wife was from Switzerland. However, he evaluated his situation differently, and contrary to Abdürrezzak Bey, he chose to stay in Istanbul and continued his career as an Ottoman official. The memoirs of his daughter Müveddet Gönensay are a source for Abdurrahman Bey’s trajectory after 1908, describing his service as an Ottoman official in Istanbul and in the province of Aydın prior to and during the First World War.⁸⁶⁴ Judging from this account, Abdurrahman Bey had not lost confidence in the Ottoman imperial system yet – possibly because the empire still provided him with employment and a framework to make sense of the world. According to his daughter’s account, he seems to have lost his bearings only later, with the breakdown of the empire after 1918, and spent the early Republican years retired and depressed before he passed away.

4.5. Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan, Between Russia and the Ottoman Empire

Prior to the First World War, the Ottoman imperial framework remained without real alternative for the Bedirhanis. Even the outlier Abdürrezzak Bey was at the time of his departure from the Ottoman Empire in 1910 not breaking with the imperial system *per se*, he was rather looking for a different imperial sponsor and framework to pursue his personal and political goals.⁸⁶⁵ His trajectory has received some attention in Kurdish nationalist historiography. From this perspective, the trial against the Bedirhanis and their supporters is often depicted as a far-reaching conspiracy against the family, masterminded by jealous

⁸⁶⁴ Müveddet Gönensay, *Müveddet Gönensay’ın Anıları 1910–1991* (Istanbul, 1991).

⁸⁶⁵ Michael Reynolds, “Abdürrezzak Bedirhan: Ottoman Kurd and Russophile in the Twilight of Empire.” In: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12.2 (2011), pp. 411-450.

anti-Kurdish officials in the circle around the sultan. The historian Rohat Alakom states in his account that the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa was only a pretext (“bahane”) to get rid of the influential Bedirhani family.⁸⁶⁶ The fact that members of the Bedirhani family and Abdürrezzak Bey in particular were subjected to state violence, imprisoned and forced into exile is stressed in Kurdish historiography,⁸⁶⁷ as these experiences resonate strongly with a contemporary Kurdish readership. Abdürrezzak Bedirhan’s activities in exile after 1910 are often depicted as motivated by Kurdish nationalism. However, looking at what is known about his trajectory reveals a much more complex and fragmented picture.

Among the key sources on the biography of Abdürrezzak Bedirhan are two brief accounts he himself wrote in 1910 and 1915, respectively. Both accounts were addressed to the Russian imperial authorities. The first document, dating from September 14, 1910, was addressed to Nikolai Valerievitch Charykov (1855–1930), the Russian ambassador in Istanbul at the time.⁸⁶⁸ The second, considerably longer document, dates from the fall of 1915 and contains detailed explanations about Abdürrezzak Bey’s activities, movements and expenses over the previous months, when he was coordinating Kurdish irregulars for the Russian army. It appears to have been written as a response to ongoing smear campaigns and accusations against Abdürrezzak Bey.⁸⁶⁹ A Russian translation of both documents is preserved in the Georgian National Archives in Tiflis. On the basis of these archival documents, the Kurdish historian Celîlê

⁸⁶⁶ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 54-55.

⁸⁶⁷ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 54-55.

⁸⁶⁸ Charykov served in Istanbul between July 1909 and March 1911, see Joachim Kornrumpf, *Fremde im Osmanischen Reich 1826-1912/13. Bio-bibliographisches Register* (Karlsruhe: Stutensee, 1998), p. 229. The distinguished Russian diplomat knew the Ottoman capital (and possibly also Abdürrezzak Bey) from earlier appointments at the Russian embassy in Istanbul between 1889 and 1893. After the Bolsheviks came to power in Moscow, Charykov chose Istanbul as his place of exile, see his autobiography, written in English, Nikolai V. Tcharykow, *Glimpses of High Politics. Through War and Peace 1855-1928* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), pp. 21-23.

⁸⁶⁹ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiografya*, p. 9.

Celil prepared a translation in Kurdish, which was in turn translated into Turkish by Hasan Cuni. An edition containing both the Kurdish and the Turkish version of the text, along with a brief preface by Celilê Celil, was published under the title *Abdurrezak Bedirhan. Otobiyografya* in Istanbul in 2000.⁸⁷⁰

Celil's preface introduces Abdürrezzak Bey's trajectory as a tragic life story: The protagonist is depicted as an outstanding intellectual, revolutionary and Kurdish freedom fighter who worked tirelessly for the advancement of the Kurdish nation, and was continuously threatened, persecuted and eventually assassinated by the Ottoman state.⁸⁷¹ Written in 1910, however, the autobiographical sketch itself predates Kurdish nationalist categories, and in many instances, the protagonist's eventful biography does not sit comfortably with Kurdish nationalist historiography. Nonetheless, the autobiographical account is framed by the preface, the numerous explanatory footnotes and not at last by the translation itself to fit within the master narrative of Kurdish national history. The challenges encountered by researchers approaching this source material are similar to those discussed above with regard to the biography of Mehmed Salih Bey Bedirhan.⁸⁷² Unlike Mehmed Salih Bey's biography, however, the case of Abdürrezzak Bey offers an opportunity to get closer to the original document, thereby side-stepping the layers added onto the text by later nationalist historiography: The National Archives of Georgia in Tiflis contain the Russian translations of the original accounts given by Abdürrezzak Bey in French, dating back into the same time period as the original text.⁸⁷³

⁸⁷⁰ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*.

⁸⁷¹ The text describes him as a "martyr" (*şehit* in the Turkish and *şehîd* in the Kurdish version of the preface), see Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 3.

⁸⁷² See the beginning of chapter 4.

⁸⁷³ Tiflis, Georgian National Archives, fonds 15.1.310 (1910).

The account given by Abdürrezzak Bey in an attempt to recommend him to the Russia czar understandably contain few details on his service in the Ottoman administration, which he in hindsight depicted as characterized by disappointment, oppression and coercion. Looking at Abdürrezzak Bey's *sicill-i ahval* files in the Ottoman archives provides an opportunity to obtain greater detail on the Ottoman imperial years of his life and career:⁸⁷⁴ Abdürrezzak Bedirhan was born in 1864 in Istanbul as a grandson of Emir Bedirhan and son of the Ottoman bureaucrat Necib Paşa Bedirhan⁸⁷⁵ and his wife Hanife. Abdürrezzak Bey had four brothers and three sisters, none of whom became prominently involved in politics or Kurdish nationalist activity.⁸⁷⁶ Completing his higher education in the Ottoman state school system, Abdürrezzak Bey was groomed for the Ottoman civil service.⁸⁷⁷ At the age of fifteen, he began an apprenticeship in the Ottoman judicial administration and later continued his training in the *sancak* of Aydın, where his father had been appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*). Abdürrezzak Bey had hoped to be sent to Paris for an extended period of time to study French, but was, according to his own account, prevented from doing so by Sultan Abdülhamid II himself. The sultan promised to send him to Europe later, on the condition that he completed his training as an Ottoman diplomat.⁸⁷⁸ Starting in October 1885,⁸⁷⁹ Abdürrezzak Bey thus worked

⁸⁷⁴ See his *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 22.234.

⁸⁷⁵ In his biographical account, Abdürrezzak Bey himself claimed that his father was the oldest son of Emir Bedirhan – which was not true, but was probably meant to endorse the claim that he wielded considerable influence over the Kurdish tribes in the eyes of his Russian interlocutors, see Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, pp. 22-23. Öztuna, *Devletler ve Hanedanlar*, p. 581 identifies Necib Paşa as the second-oldest of Emir Bedirhan's sons.

⁸⁷⁶ Abdürrezzak Bey's younger brother Bedirhan and his brother-in-law Cemil Conk (1873–1963, the husband of his sister Zekiye) were arrested and tried for the murder of Rıdvan Paşa along with him. See Malmisanij, *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 82 for Necib Paşa Bedirhan's family tree. In this document, his sons are listed as Abdürrezzak, Bedirhan, Akid, Neşet Şükürü and Muhammad Sait, his daughters are Sariye, Sıddıka and Zekiye.

⁸⁷⁷ According to his *sicill-i ahval* file, he had completed the Ottoman *rüşdiyye* and knew to read and write in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian and French, see BOA, DH.SAİD. 22.234.

⁸⁷⁸ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 14.

for four years in the Ottoman Foreign Ministry in Istanbul. When he was eventually transferred to a post abroad in 1889, he did not find himself in Western Europe, as he had hoped. Instead, he departed for St. Petersburg, where he served for one year as third secretary at the Ottoman consulate. Upon his return to Istanbul, he asked for a promotion and was offered a post at the Ottoman consulate in Tehran.

In September of 1891, already on his way to Iran, Abdürrezzak Bey was called back to the capital. The sultan had second thoughts about his appointment to the east.⁸⁸⁰ It becomes clear from the Russian version of his autobiographical sketch that Abdürrezzak Bey himself thought he had become the victim of denunciations.⁸⁸¹ Speculating about the reasons why Sultan Abdülhamid II changed his mind, it is worth noting that the Ottoman ambassador in Tehran at the time, Halil Halid Paşa, was a son of Ahmed Paşa Baban and thus a member of another powerful family of Ottoman-Kurdish notables regarded with some suspicion by the Ottoman government.⁸⁸² Possibly, the authorities wanted to avoid a concentration of Ottoman-Kurdish officials in the same place, particularly since Tehran was far from the Ottoman capital and closer to the Kurdish regions of Anatolia. Midway to Tehran, Abdürrezzak Bey, however, decided not to return to Istanbul, but proceeded via Sevastopol to Tiflis, then part of the Russian Empire. He himself stated later that he planned to settle in Yerevan, in close proximity to the Kurdish communities of Ottoman Anatolia. Making use of networks he had established into Russian diplomatic circles during his time in St. Petersburg, Abdürrezzak Bey received a warm welcome in Tiflis. However, it was made clear to him that pressure from the

⁸⁷⁹ See BOA, DH.SAİD. 22.234 for the exact date, Muharram 4, 1303.

⁸⁸⁰ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 15. The *sicill-i ahval* entry merely mentions that the appointment was postponed (“te’ehhür olunmuş”), see BOA, DH.SAİD. 22.234.

⁸⁸¹ Tiflis, Georgian National Archives, fonds 15.1.310 (1910).

⁸⁸² See Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy. A Political, Social and Cultural History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 100-101.

Ottoman government was to be expected and that neither Russia nor Iran were in a position to grant him the right to settle anywhere near the Ottoman border. His way further east being blocked, Abdürrezzak Bey eventually proceeded to Batumi. From there, he appears to have traveled on to Kiev, where he was imprisoned for a short period of time, hoping in vain for an audience with the czar. Somehow, he then managed to reach Great Britain.⁸⁸³ British sources document that he was staying in Brighton in January 1894. By the end of the month, he had reportedly left the country again.⁸⁸⁴ Meanwhile in Istanbul, Ottoman government circles put pressure on his family members. His father Necib Paşa succumbed and was able to convince his son to return to the Ottoman lands early in 1894.⁸⁸⁵

Upon his return to the Ottoman capital, Abdürrezzak Bey was interviewed by the secret police and then offered a position as assistant to the master of ceremonies (*teşrifat-ı hariciye mu'avını*) in January 1895,⁸⁸⁶ working under Münir Paşa.⁸⁸⁷ Abdürrezzak Bey did not retain particularly fond memories from this period of his career.⁸⁸⁸ According to his own account, he was later promoted to master of ceremonies

⁸⁸³ BOA, HR.SYS. 32.26, citing from an article in *Gazette Voss*, dated July 7, 1895. Janet Klein surmised that Abdürrezzak Bey, together with his uncle Halil Bey Bedirhan, had secretly made a stop-over in the former homeland of the Bedirhani family during this trip to Russia in 1894, to protest against the activities of the Hamidiye regiments there, Klein, *Margins of Empire*, pp. 123-124.

⁸⁸⁴ FO 78/4607-1895, reports dated January 7, 1895 and January 28, 1895, respectively. Abdürrezzak Bey left out this adventurous episode in his account to the Russian consul in 1910.

⁸⁸⁵ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 15.

⁸⁸⁶ BOA, DH.SAİD. 22.234, also indicating that he received a monthly salary of 4.000 *kuruş*. This is the last appointment mentioned in the *sicill-i ahval* file.

⁸⁸⁷ This is Mahmud Münir Paşa (1844-1899), son of Necib Efendi, the *kethüda* of former Minister of Finance Musa Safveti Paşa. As teenager, Münir Paşa was sent to study in Paris and embarked on a career in the foreign service upon his return. He was dispatched to the Ottoman embassy in Paris and, in 1878, made *teşrifatçı 'umumi nazırı*, a position he held until his death in 1899. See Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi*, p. 131 for a short biography and a picture.

⁸⁸⁸ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 16: “İlk olarak, beni öndeki divanın içinde yer alan Münir Paşa'nın hizmetine verdiler. Bu işte ben sayısızca bela ile karşılaştım.”

(*teşrifatçı*) at the Yıldız Palace. The appointment, while attractive as such and befitting his qualifications, was also keeping him inside the Ottoman capital, under close surveillance of the sultan. It came thus most probably as a disappointment to Abdürrezzak Bey, who had hoped to be sent to Europe as an Ottoman diplomat. His position allowed him, however, to establish contacts with foreign diplomats dispatched to Istanbul – an opportunity he made ample use of. He mentions having been close to Ivan Zinoviev, the Russian ambassador to Istanbul between 1897 and 1909.⁸⁸⁹ Another acquaintance from the Russian embassy, former dragoman Andrej Mandelstam, brokered the contact to Zinoviev's successor Nikolai Charykov for Abdürrezzak Bey after his return from exile in 1910.⁸⁹⁰ Throughout the 1890s, Abdürrezzak Bey also established connections to members of the British embassy in Istanbul. Former British vice-consul Telford Waugh retained fond memories of Abdürrezzak Bey, whom he described as an open-minded and amusing dinner and bridge companion.⁸⁹¹ The British diplomat Henry Woods, who was among the first to meet Abdürrezzak Bey after his return from exile in 1910, also mentioned him in his memoirs.⁸⁹² Among Abdürrezzak Bey's Ottoman colleagues⁸⁹³ at the *teşrifat-ı hariciye* were Mehmed Galib Paşa,⁸⁹⁴ who became Abdürrezzak Bey's superior after the retirement of Münir Paşa, Hüseyin Hilmi Bey,⁸⁹⁵ Mehmed

⁸⁸⁹ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 23.

⁸⁹⁰ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 23.

⁸⁹¹ Telford Waugh, *Turkey. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1930), pp. 96-97.

⁸⁹² Henry F. Woods & Fahri Çoker (trans.), *Türkiye Anıları. Osmanlı Bahriyesinde Kırk Yıl 1869 – 1909* (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1976), pp. 312-315.

⁸⁹³ The formation changed over the years. The *sâlnâme-yi hâriciye* of 1318 H (1900/1901) offers a snapshot, indicating that Hilmi Bey and Abdürrezzak Bey both served as assistants (*mu'avin*) under Mehmed Galib Paşa at the time, see p. 223.

⁸⁹⁴ Mehmed Galib Paşa made his entire career in the Foreign Ministry, advancing from *teşrifat-ı mu'avini* to *teşrifat-ı 'umumiye nazırı* in 1899. His son Fu'ad Bey was also groomed for a career in the Ottoman foreign service, see BOA, BEO. 1881.141055, 03 R 1320 H (July 9, 1902).

⁸⁹⁵ He was *teşrifat-ı hariciye mu'avin-i sanisi* during Abdürrezzak Bey's term in office, BOA, HR.SAİD. 3.11, 26 Z 1311 H (July 1, 1894).

Behçet Bey,⁸⁹⁶ Mehmed Fethi Bey,⁸⁹⁷ İbrahim Bey,⁸⁹⁸ Hasan Hayri Bey,⁸⁹⁹ Ömer Memduh Bey,⁹⁰⁰ Mustafa Nuri Bey and İhsan Bey. When Abdürrezzak Bey lost his position after the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa in March 1906, his spot was filled by Hayreddin Bey.

When he was employed in Istanbul, Abdürrezzak Bey lived in a mansion in the wealthy neighborhood Şişli with his family.⁹⁰¹ Around the turn of the century, he married Henriette Hornik, a dentist of Austrian-Jewish descent.⁹⁰² Their daughter Leyla Bedirhan, who later became a famous dancer, was born in July 1903.⁹⁰³ Abdürrezzak Bey's younger brother Bedirhan, his mother and his grandmother also lived in his household in Şişli. Not long after the birth of his daughter, Abdürrezzak Bey seems to have divorced his wife.⁹⁰⁴

In 1906, Abdürrezzak Bey's career as an Ottoman official came to a sudden end when he was found guilty of plotting the assassination of Rıdvan Paşa. His initial death sentence was turned into a life sentence

⁸⁹⁶ Mehmed Behçet was the son of Mehmed Rıfat Bey, born in 1270 H (1853/54) in Istanbul, BOA, DH.SAİD. 45.301.

⁸⁹⁷ Mehmed Fethi was the son of Yusuf Ziya Efendi, born in Istanbul in 1258 H (1842/43), BOA, DH.SAİD. 4.216.

⁸⁹⁸ İbrahim Bey was the son of Sa'id Bey Yusuf Ağa. He had two brothers: Hakkı Bey, member of the *istinaf mahkemesi* in Istanbul, and Ra'if Bey, and at least one son. See Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, vol. 5, p. 1438.

⁸⁹⁹ Hasan Hayri was the son of Abdürra'uf Efendi, born in Istanbul in 1278 H (1861/62), BOA, DH.SAİD.d 46.173.

⁹⁰⁰ He began his career as an interpreter in the *mabeyn* and advanced in the ranks. In Turkish Republican times, Ömer Memduh Bey was dispatched to the Turkish consulate in Danzig. BOA, HR.İM. 151.52, 1925.

⁹⁰¹ See the memoirs of Cemil Filmer, whose family lived in a neighboring mansion at the time, Klaus Kreiser & Patrick Bartsch (eds.), *Türkische Kindheiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Literaturca, 2012), pp. 58-83.

⁹⁰² The journalist Bernhard Szana, who claimed to have known Abdürrezzak Bey personally in Istanbul, relates that the couple met through Dr. Schwarz, an Austrian medical doctor practicing in Pera, see Szana's article "Ein Neuer Kaiser." In: *Prager Tagblatt*, June 14, 1923.

⁹⁰³ On Leyla Bedirhan's trajectory, see chapter 7. Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri*, p. 170 mentions that Abdürrezzak Bey and Henriette had a second child, but I found no supporting evidence of that.

⁹⁰⁴ See BOA, MV. 109.5, 09 M 1322 H (March 27, 1904).

by the sultan. While he was held in solitary confinement in Yemen, his house and possessions in Istanbul were looted and his family members lived in agony. His grandmother and mother did not live to see his return to Istanbul.⁹⁰⁵ In his own account from 1910, Abdürrezzak Bey cast himself and his family as victims of a vague complot, dwelling on the unlawful arrest and trial and on the unspeakable conditions of his confinement. He claimed that during the proceedings, he and his family members were threatened, witnesses were bribed and numerous documents were forged.⁹⁰⁶ He did not comment on his involvement in the assassination – which, judging from various external sources that have been analyzed above, can hardly be doubted. Abdürrezzak Bey held Sultan Abdülhamid II personally responsible for the misfortune and injustice he and his family had to endure. In his account addressed to the Russian diplomat Charykov in 1910, his frustration and disappointment with the Ottoman state shine through: “However much we surrendered to the Ottoman state, they approached us with suspicion. We never had an opportunity to lead a life free of fear. We were constantly facing injustice and suffered from unfair pressure (...) They always saw us as strangers, me in particular ...,” he wrote with the history of his family in mind.⁹⁰⁷ In a passage that is missing from the Turkish translation of his autobiographical sketch, Abdürrezzak Bey drew up an analogy which is telling of his understanding of the Bedirhani family’s relationship to the Ottoman state: He reasoned that if parents harm their children, the children will run away from them. For a

⁹⁰⁵ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁰⁶ This becomes most obvious from the Russian version of his autobiographical sketch, Tiflis, Georgian National Archives, fonds 15.1.310. (1910). I’d like to thank Katrin Levina for substantial help with the Russian text.

⁹⁰⁷ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 18: “... biz ne kadar Osmanlı devletine ayvallah ettiysek de bize karşı şüphe ile yaklaştılar. Biz hiç bir zaman korkusuz yaşama şansına kavuşamadık. Sürekli haksızlık gördük ve insafsız baskılar maruz kaldık. (...) Onlar bizi hep yabancı olarak saydılar, özellikle beni ...”

similar reason, he continued, he felt the need to leave the Ottoman Empire and turn to Russia.⁹⁰⁸

Unlike other suspects arrested or exiled in the context of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906, Abdürrezzak Bey was not pardoned after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908. The Ottoman imperial council (*meclis-i mahsus*) ruled that since he was serving time for murder rather than for a political crime, the general amnesty of 1908 did not apply to him.⁹⁰⁹ In September 1910, when he was finally released from prison after four years of confinement, he found his home and career in Istanbul in shambles and his old professional network of limited use after the CUP had come to power. Adding to his frustration, many of the Ottoman officials responsible for the trial and collective punishment of his family were, even after the abdication of Sultan Abdülhamid II, still holding influential positions in the Ottoman administration.⁹¹⁰ In this context, Abdürrezzak Bey approached the Russian embassy with a plea for asylum, expressing his wish to move to Yerevan and begin a life as a merchant there.⁹¹¹

The time period between 1910 and Abdürrezzak Bey's next correspondence with the Russian authorities dating from 1915 is less well documented. It seems clear, however, that while he had pledged to retire as a merchant to Yerevan, Abdürrezzak Bey most probably never intentioned to leave politics.⁹¹² Disappointed with the Ottoman state, he

⁹⁰⁸ Tiflis, Georgian National Archives. Fonds 15.1.310. (1910). The passage might have been left out of the Turkish translation because the imagery at play – the Bedirhanis as Ottoman-Kurdish children of an Ottoman fatherland – does not fit with the later Kurdish nationalist discourse, which operates with the idea of a Kurdish fatherland instead.

⁹⁰⁹ BOA, BEO. 3606.270450, 1327 B 10 H (July 28, 1909), ek 2.

⁹¹⁰ This becomes particularly clear in the Russian version of his autobiographical sketch, see Tiflis, Georgian National Archives, fonds 15.1.310. (1910).

⁹¹¹ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiografya*, p. 19.

⁹¹² In his second account addressed to the Russian authorities in 1915, he referred to his idea to settle as a merchant in Yerevan as a pretext (“bahane”), see Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiografya*, p. 25.

was looking for a new imperial framework and sponsorship for his attempts to regain control over the Kurdish areas of Ottoman Anatolia. In the fall of 1910, Abdürrezzak Bey arrived in Tiflis.⁹¹³ It quickly came to the attention of the Ottoman central administration that he was touring the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, allegedly to instigate the local Kurdish tribes into an uprising and provide them with weapons.⁹¹⁴ In Tiflis, Abdürrezzak Bey met with Russian military authorities.⁹¹⁵ After some days of briefing, he was dispatched to the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands to establish contact with Kurdish tribal leaders there.⁹¹⁶ Russia was hoping to expand its influence in the area, as the Iranian central government was weak and a vacuum of power prevailed in the border region. Ottoman representatives were equally active in the area, pursuing similar goals.⁹¹⁷ In the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, Abdürrezzak Bey also met with Simko Ağa, a Kurdish tribal leader to whom he referred merely as his “aide” in his account.⁹¹⁸

Abdürrezzak Bedirhan was not the only Ottoman-Kurdish activists seeking support from imperial Russia at the time. Russia had been trying to establish contact to Kurdish communities in the Ottoman Empire since the 1850s and had increased its efforts following the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877/78.⁹¹⁹ Important middlemen for the Russians were Kurdish notables from the region around Kars in the

⁹¹³ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 25.

⁹¹⁴ BOA, MV. 152.78.01, the initial information was provided by Behçet Bey, an Ottoman military and local official in the border region (*hudud-ı irāniye birinci kısım komiser erkân-ı harbiye kâ'imağâmi*).

⁹¹⁵ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 24. His Russian interlocutors included General Gryaznov, D. S. Koxanovskii, General A. S. Zelyonii and A. M. Kalyubakin.

⁹¹⁶ He mentions traveling among the Kurdish Milli and Mukri tribes in the area of Maku, Khoy and Kotur, Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, pp. 25-26.

⁹¹⁷ Abdürrezzak Bey recalls running into an Ottoman official in Khoy on such a mission, who turned out to be a former friend and colleague of his from Istanbul, see Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 25.

⁹¹⁸ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 26, the word in the Turkish translation is “yardımcı.”

⁹¹⁹ For the following information on Russian-Kurdish relations, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report from Beirut, dated October 2, 1924.

Ottoman-Russian borderlands. Among them was a certain Ali Şemseddin, known by his Russianized name as Ali Eşref Şemseddin, who emerged as a collaborator of Abdürrezzak Bey in the area. Other leading Kurdish figures who had established close relations with Russia were Seyyid Taha, a member of the family of sheikh Ubaidullah of Nehri and the younger brother of sheikh Abdülkadir,⁹²⁰ and the already-mentioned Simko Ağa, leader of Kurdish Şikak tribe. By the late 19th century, Russia was very present in the entire region: Diplomatic missions were established in Tabriz, Van and Bitlis. The Russian representatives there facilitated the contacts to the Kurdish communities and also actively intervened in local politics: In 1912, the Russian consulate in Bitlis granted protection and asylum to Seyyid Ali, the leader of an unsuccessful local Kurdish uprising.

It was in this context that, from the fall of 1910 onwards, Abdürrezzak Bey was traveling in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, constantly on the move between Van, Urmiye and Khoy to avoid being caught by the Ottoman authorities, who were monitoring him closely. The Ottoman Empire also put pressure on the Russians to surrender Abdürrezzak Bey to them, but to no avail. Both in Van and Urmiye, Abdürrezzak Bey was in constant communication with the local Russian consuls.⁹²¹ His mission was to promote the idea of an autonomous Kurdish region under Russian rule, to be separated from the Ottoman Empire, among the local Kurds. Meanwhile, Abdürrezzak Bey remained invested in Ottoman politics in Eastern Anatolia: He also actively worked against the influence of the CUP in Eastern Anatolia, distributing the journal *Meşrutiyet Dergisi*, a publication critical of the CUP government and

⁹²⁰ On Seyyid Taha, see Martin van Bruinessen, "The Sâdatê Nehri or Gilânizâde of Central Kurdistan." In: *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1-2 (2000), pp. 79-91.

⁹²¹ S.P. Olferyev in Van and Golubinov in Urmiye, see Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografiya*, pp. 26-27.

edited by Şerif Paşa, among the local tribes.⁹²² At the time, Abdürrezzak Bey was involved with the activities of the Ottoman Liberal Opposition Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*). The party's policy of decentralization appealed to him. Abdürrezzak Bey even attended a party congress in Paris, staying in France for three months before he returned to Tiflis.⁹²³ In the meantime, the pressure on him to return to the Ottoman Empire was increasing: He related that when attempts to bribe him with the offer of a prestigious post in the administration failed, the Ottoman government sent assassins to Tiflis with the mission to kill him.⁹²⁴

During the entire time, Abdürrezzak Bey's activities were closely followed by local Ottoman officials in Eastern Anatolia. An Ottoman report dating from May 1911 cautioned that Abdürrezzak Bey was instigating Kurdish tribes in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands to revolt against the Ottoman rule. The report proposed that Abdürrezzak Bey's movements should be observed at all times.⁹²⁵ His own account to the Russian authorities in 1915 suggests that he was operating on his own, making no mention at all of any other family members involved in his activities in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands. It becomes clear from the Ottoman documentation, however, that he was in fact closely coordinating his activities with some of his relatives: In April 1911, the Ottoman *vali* in Bitlis Hakkı Paşa reported that Abdürrezzak Bey and his uncles Bedri Paşa and Mikdat Midhat Bey Bedirhan had been sighted in

⁹²² Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, pp. 29-30. The monthly journal appeared in French and was printed in Paris, under the title *Le Constitutionnel – Mècheroutiette*, identified in the subtitle as *Organe du Parti Radical Ottoman*. As far as I can see, the publication was entirely in French, and thus of questionable use to most people in the borderlands between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The journal, which began its publication in 1909, was critical of the CUP's interpretation of constitutional rule and argued for decentralization and minority rights in general, addressing Kurdish, but also Albanian, Macedonian, Laz and other issues. There were regular updates on the political situation in the Kurdish areas, see e.g. "Dans le Kurdistan." In: *Le Constitutionnel – Mècheroutiette*, Nr. 8 (June 1910), p. 3.

⁹²³ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 30.

⁹²⁴ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, pp. 30-31.

⁹²⁵ BOA, MV. 152.78, 29 Ca 1329 H (May 29, 1911). The report was signed by Behçet Bey.

the region – the *vali* did not believe in coincidence.⁹²⁶ Traveling in Eastern Anatolia, Bedri Paşa and Mikdat Midhat Bey Bedirhan were reactivating their links and their family's standing with the Kurdish tribes of the area Bohtan. They allegedly carried a document with them for which they collected the signatures of local tribal leaders. In the document, it was stated that the land of the former Emirate of Bohtan belonged to the Bedirhani family, was unlawfully taken from them and needed to be returned.⁹²⁷ In addition, the two Bedirhani brothers were raising money among the local tribes and made efforts to rebuild the ancestral seat of the family in the village of Dergül near Cizre, which had been destroyed after the family was exiled from the region.⁹²⁸ Their behavior indicates that not only Abdürrezzak Bey found that times had changed when he returned from prison in 1910 to find the CUP in power. Other members of his family arrived at similar conclusions. With their networks in disarray and their erstwhile supporters from the circles around Sultan Abdülhamid II largely ousted from power, they had to reorient themselves, making use of new opportunities and tools at their disposal. Aggressively reclaiming their possessions in their former homeland with the help of some sort of local survey, but also the attempt to win seats as parliamentary representatives of their homeland were part of these new strategies. Based on the same realization that Ottoman politics under the CUP government were a whole new ballgame, these strategies were only gradually different from the course towards imperial Russia Abdürrezzak Bey had taken. In fact, Ottoman officials observing

⁹²⁶ BOA, DH.SYS. 24.2-1, dated April 14, 1911. The author of the document, Hakkı Paşa, mistakenly referred to Bedri Paşa and Mikdat Midhat Bey as Abdürrezzak Bey's brothers. Also, the two strike me as an odd couple, since Mikdat Midhat Bey had sided with the Young Turk opposition movement, while Bedri Paşa had been an eager supporter of the authoritarian regime of the sultan prior to 1908. It is possible that the Ottoman informant got the names mixed up. If he was correct and Bedri Paşa was indeed traveling together with his brother Mikdat Midhat Bey, this might indicate that the newly emerging opportunity structures under the CUP regime, notable the prospect of elections, was promising enough to unite the previously estranged factions of the family.

⁹²⁷ BOA, DH.SYS. 24.2-1, ek 1, report from the *vilayet* Bitlis to the Ministry of the Interior, dated May 1, 1911.

⁹²⁸ BOA, DH.SYS. 24.2-1, May 1911, ek 5.

Abdürrezzak Bey in 1911 were convinced that the ultimate goal of his extended travels among the Kurdish tribes in the borderlands was to secure the support of voters to win a seat in the upcoming Ottoman parliamentary elections.⁹²⁹

In September 1912, Abdürrezzak Bey was joined by Seyyid Taha in Tiflis. Together, they set out on a second tour among the Kurdish tribes in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, heading towards Khoy. Some way into their trip, they were joined by Simko Ağa. During this journey, Abdürrezzak Bey and Seyyid Taha were arrested by the Ottoman authorities as they tried to enter the region of Şemdinan, the homeland of Seyyid Taha, from Iran. On the way to Van, however, the military convoy accompanying the prisoners was attacked by Kurdish units. As a result, Abdürrezzak Bey and Seyyid Taha were freed and escaped to Iran.⁹³⁰ For the following year, Abdürrezzak Bey stayed in the surroundings of Khoy, establishing close relations to the Russian consulate there.⁹³¹ In Khoy, he also founded a school for thirty Kurdish children with the help of the Russian consul.⁹³² He was planning to expand his activities, hoping to open more schools in the surroundings of Kars, where Kurdish was to be taught on the basis of the Cyrillic script.⁹³³ Contacts into the Ottoman lands were facilitated through his local middlemen: Abdürrezzak Bey mobilized opposition to the Ottoman government in Erzurum with the help of *yüzbaşı* Hayreddin Barazi.⁹³⁴ In Erzurum, an organization called *İrşad* was collecting money to finance

⁹²⁹ BOA, DH.SYS. 24.2-1, May 1911, ek 5.

⁹³⁰ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, "Situation Intérieure 1903-1913," report dated October 25, 1912.

⁹³¹ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, pp. 33-34.

⁹³² Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 34.

⁹³³ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 37.

⁹³⁴ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti. İlk Legal Kürt Öğrenci Derneği* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2002), pp. 42-43. It is likely that Hayreddin Barazi was a member of the Barazi family from northern Syria, whose members continued to support the activities of the Bedirhani family in the mandate period, see chapter 6.

Abdürrezzak Bey's activities.⁹³⁵ Abdürrezzak Bey also traveled to St. Petersburg, meeting with Russian officials there in an attempt to rally support and resources for his activities among the Kurds.⁹³⁶ According to information gathered by French diplomats, Seyyid Taha and Abdürrezzak Bey were honorably received by Czar Nicholas II, who promised them money and a large number of rifles.⁹³⁷ When a local uprising broke out in Bitlis in 1914, Abdürrezzak Bey was in Russia, possibly still in St. Petersburg, and it emerges from his own account that he was neither involved in the preparations nor close to the protagonists of the uprising.⁹³⁸

All the while, the Ottoman authorities were still trying to have Abdürrezzak Bey handed over to them. The *vali* of Van was involved in the negotiations, attempting to convince Abdürrezzak Bey to return to the Ottoman lands voluntarily, and another plot to assassinate him was also in the making.⁹³⁹ European newspapers reported in October 1913 that Abdürrezzak Bey had surrendered to the Ottoman authorities and was allowed to return to the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁴⁰ This, however, was not true. Fearing for his life, Abdürrezzak Bey left the border town Khoy for Tabriz with the help of Russian diplomats.⁹⁴¹ Even with some distance between him and the Ottoman border, things became increasingly difficult for him, as Russia had committed itself to reduce its troops and personnel in Iran in a deal with Great Britain, and Ottoman influence in the area was growing as a result.⁹⁴² Ultimately, Abdürrezzak Bey

⁹³⁵ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti*, p. 44.

⁹³⁶ He remembers meeting officials from the Russian Foreign Office, among them Persiyani, Klemm, Zinoviyev and Orlov, along with Count Trubeskoy, Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 36.

⁹³⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report from Beirut, dated October 2, 1924.

⁹³⁸ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 37.

⁹³⁹ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 40.

⁹⁴⁰ *Wiener Zeitung*, October 15, 1913, p. 6.

⁹⁴¹ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 41.

⁹⁴² Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 42.

managed to return to Tiflis, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War.

After the outbreak of the war, Kurdish troops led by Abdürrezzak Bey, Simko Ağa and Ali Eşref Şemseddinov were fighting on the Russian side.⁹⁴³ As the Russian army advanced into north-eastern Anatolia, more and more local Kurdish tribes saw an advantage in choosing an allegiance to Russia over adherence to the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁴⁴ Several sources confirmed that in 1914, Abdürrezzak Bey received a monthly pension from the Russian government.⁹⁴⁵ At that time, one of his most important interlocutors was the Russian consul in Khoy, who helped him organize Kurdish resistance against the Ottoman government in Anatolia and the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands.⁹⁴⁶ In 1914, the CUP representative in Urmia, a certain Necati Bey, was instructed to closely monitor the activities of the Kurdish leaders in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands. He was also involved in planning the assassination of leading figures who were supporting the Russians in the border area, among them prominently Abdürrezzak Bey and Simko Ağa.⁹⁴⁷ Russian supporters of the Kurds in the border region, like the Russian consular officials in Maku and Khoy, were also targets of the CUP's surveillance.⁹⁴⁸ The CUP was not operating with empty threats: Süleyman Bey Bedirhan, a son of Halid Bey Bedirhan and cousin of

⁹⁴³ These cooperations between local Kurdish tribes and the Russian army were not unprecedented: During the Crimean War in the 1850s, Russia had already established contacts to Kurdish tribal leaders and recruited Kurdish irregulars (militias) in the border region, see Badem, *Ottoman Crimean War*, p. 365.

⁹⁴⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report from Beirut, dated October 2, 1924.

⁹⁴⁵ FO 195/2458/808, I.M Smith to Louis Mallet, report from Van, dated June 14, 1914. The pension was said to amount to 30 £ a month, which was a considerable sum at the time.

⁹⁴⁶ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiografya*, p. 35.

⁹⁴⁷ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, Affaires Politiques: "Situation Intérieur, troubles dans l'Empire: Kurdistan (Diyarbakir, Van, Bitlis, Mossoul)," report from the French vice-consulat in Van to the French Embassy in Istanbul, dated July 15, 1914.

⁹⁴⁸ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, Affaires Politiques: "Situation Intérieur, troubles dans l'Empire: Kurdistan (Diyarbakir, Van, Bitlis, Mossoul)," report dated July 7, 1914.

Abdürrezzak Bey's, had earlier been killed on the orders of the CUP government.⁹⁴⁹ At the time, turning against any of the centralizing empires, be it the Ottoman, Iranian or the Russian state, was dangerous business, as is illustrated by the Iranian government's (failed) attempt to kill Abdürrezzak Bey's collaborator Simko Ağa by sending him a bomb.⁹⁵⁰ In addition, the CUP-sponsored local periodical *Çaldıran* broadcasted government propaganda against the Russian-Kurdish cooperations and published slanderous articles containing personal attacks against Abdürrezzak Bey and others. Appealing to their conservative Anatolian audience, the paper chiefly depicted them as enemies of religion.⁹⁵¹ In view of this campaign and very real threats to his life, Abdürrezzak Bedirhan went into hiding in Iran in the summer of 1914,⁹⁵² together with Simko Ağa and Seyyid Taha. In Iran, he was actively seeking to establish contacts with local Kurdish communities, notably the Haydaranlı tribe under Mehmed Sadık Ağa. When the First World War broke out, Abdürrezzak Bey and his uncle Kamil Bey Bedirhan were in Tiflis, in close contact with Russian military officials. Abdürrezzak Bey then spent the first six months of the war in the Iranian city of Maku, as a guest of the Russian consul Olieriev. There, he established contact with the Russian general Nikolayev.⁹⁵³ Nikolayev provided him with arms and money, expecting him to lead local Kurdish

⁹⁴⁹ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, Affaires Politiques: "Situation Intérieur, troubles dans l'Empire: Kurdistan (Diyarbakir, Van, Bitlis, Mossoul)," report dated July 7, 1914.

⁹⁵⁰ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919. Simko Ağa himself survived the attack, but several of his followers standing by when the bomb exploded were killed. Incidents like this one accounted for Abdürrezzak Bey's distrust towards the state, showing him plainly that he and his followers were not safe and had good reason to fear for their lives, even far away from Istanbul or Tehran.

⁹⁵¹ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, Affaires Politiques: "Situation Intérieur, troubles dans l'Empire: Kurdistan (Diyarbakir, Van, Bitlis, Mossoul)," report dated June 11, 1914.

⁹⁵² MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, Affaires Politiques: "Situation Intérieur, troubles dans l'Empire: Kurdistan (Diyarbakir, Van, Bitlis, Mossoul)," report dated June 11, 1914.

⁹⁵³ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 43. Nikolayev was the commander of the Russian troops occupying Van in 1915, see Türkylmaz, *Rethinking Genocide*, p. 300.

tribal fighters into battle on the Russian side. In the fall of 1914, Abdürrezzak Bey toured among the Haydaranlı and Milli tribes in the borderlands and was, according to his own account, able to gather around three hundred armed followers. In the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, his fighters were persecuted both by the regular Ottoman army and irregular Kurdish troops which had formerly been organized in the Hamidiye regiments and were now reactivated by the CUP government.⁹⁵⁴ In November 1914, it was reported that Abdürrezzak Bey and his followers had crossed the Ottoman border near Maku to help the Russian advance there. They were, however, staved off by the Ottoman army.⁹⁵⁵

Abdürrezzak Bey's mission was not an easy one: Among his key responsibilities during the war was not only to gather Kurdish irregulars among the different local tribes, but also to mediate between enemies in order to forge a larger Kurdish coalition.⁹⁵⁶ He was, on several occasions, provided with money to be distributed among local Kurdish notables and leaders to assure their loyalty towards Russia.⁹⁵⁷ In 1915, Abdürrezzak Bey authored a manifesto to this effect, explaining the advantages of fighting on the Russian side and distributing it among the Kurds of Eastern Anatolia.⁹⁵⁸ His attempts to win over the Kurdish notables met with mixed success: The writer Naci Kutlay spoke personally to the Kurdish poet and contemporary witness Ciğexwîn,⁹⁵⁹ who remembered talking to several Kurdish tribal leaders in exile in the 1920s in Syria. Ciğexwîn's interlocutors had personally witnessed the chaotic developments in Eastern Anatolia during the First World War.

⁹⁵⁴ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 44.

⁹⁵⁵ *Znaimer Tagblatt*, "Vom türkischen Kriegsschauplatz," November 18, 1914, p. 2.

⁹⁵⁶ The Haydaranlı and Milli tribes, for example, were fighting against each other at the time, see Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 54.

⁹⁵⁷ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 58.

⁹⁵⁸ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 68.

⁹⁵⁹ They met in Sweden, where Ciğexwîn spent the final years of his life in exile, see Kutlay, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Kürtler*, pp. 84-87.

Ciğexwîn recalled that K r H seyin PaŐa, leader of the Haydaranlı tribe, along with Cemil   eto from Garzan and Sasonlu Ali Yunus, mentioned letters of encouragement and requests for cooperation they had received from Abd rrezzak and Kamil Bey Bedirhan. In the service of the Russian Empire, which had just invaded parts of Eastern Anatolia, Abd rrezzak and Kamil Bey were trying to convince the tribal leaders to prevent the local population from fleeing the area in scores. According to Ciğexw n's recollections, the Kurdish tribal leaders were not too willing to comply with these requests: K r H seyin PaŐa allegedly sent a furious reply to Kamil Bey Bedirhan, making it clear that as the latter was in league with the Russian infidels, he could hardly be considered a legitimate heir of the Bedirhani family.⁹⁶⁰ This heated exchange illustrates the difficulties the Bedirhanis – who were eager to revive the family's former influence in Eastern Anatolia, be it with Russian help or on the Ottoman imperial ticket – encountered in communicating their political goals and claims to leadership to a local community in which religious identity still marked the by far most important fault line. In addition, religious concerns and rhetoric were also used by local leaders like K r H seyin PaŐa, who, over the decades following the departure of the Bedirhani family from the area, had come to fill the vacuum of power there, to defend their own claims to power. While K r H seyin PaŐa was skeptical, another prominent Kurdish leader of the region, sheikh Sa' d, who was in contact with Abd rrezzak Bey in 1915, showed himself more open to his message. Abd rrezzak Bey hoped that the sheikh would intervene on his behalf with the leaders of the former Kurdish Hamidiye regiments, convincing them to stop fighting on the Ottoman side. Sheikh Sa' d argued that it was admissible to seek the support of non-Muslims in the fight against the oppression from the Ottoman authorities, but he did not convince many of his followers.⁹⁶¹

⁹⁶⁰ The conversation is cited by Kutlay, *Osmanlı'dan G n m ze K rtler*, p. 86.

⁹⁶¹ See Hasan HiŐyar Serdi, *G r Ő ve Anılarım (1907-1985)* (Istanbul: Med Yayınları, 1994), pp. 132-135.

In addition to a lack of support from among the Kurdish tribes, Abdürrezzak Bey faced several other problems: First, he needed to communicate to his followers why they were fighting fellow Kurdish tribesmen (the Hamidiye), and at the same time prevent them from fighting or plundering the possessions of local Armenian and Yezidi communities.⁹⁶² The government-sponsored newspaper *Çaldıran*, which was published in Van and distributed among the Kurds of Eastern Anatolia, tried to exploit the ensuing contradictions and thereby weaken Abdürrezzak Bey's position, depicting him as an opportunist in league with the infidels.⁹⁶³ Second, weather conditions in the mountains of the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands became increasingly harsh as the winter of 1914/15 approached, with snow blocking the roads in the more elevated areas.⁹⁶⁴ Abdürrezzak Bey eventually had to retreat to the plain of Julfa with his followers. Third, the relationship with the Russian military was not always smooth: It was only with great difficulty that Abdürrezzak Bey was able to allocate sufficient provisions for his followers, his Russian supporters being slow and sometimes reluctant to cover his expenses.⁹⁶⁵ Communications with the Russian soldiers were difficult, and misunderstandings frequent.⁹⁶⁶ On top of all that, Abdürrezzak Bey's Kurdish irregulars became the target of friendly fire, with some of his close followers being killed in the attack.⁹⁶⁷ This incident strained relations between Russian soldiers and Kurdish irregulars even further. Contributing to the at times ambivalent relations with the Russian generals was that Russian policies for the future of Anatolia were made

⁹⁶² In 1915, for instance, two hundred Kurdish irregulars subordinate to Abdürrezzak Bey, accompanied by a number of Russian cossacks, clashed with Yezidi led by Cihangir Ağa in the area of Saray, see Yektan Türkyılmaz, *Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915* Diss., Duke University, 2011, pp. 305-306.

⁹⁶³ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 40.

⁹⁶⁴ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 51.

⁹⁶⁵ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 56.

⁹⁶⁶ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 50. It appears from this account that Abdürrezzak Bey himself was not able to write his reports in Russian, using French instead, which was in turn not sufficiently understood by all of his Russian counterparts.

⁹⁶⁷ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, pp. 52-53.

up on the fly, shifting according to newly arising demands and challenges. One of these challenges was to somehow reconcile Kurdish and Armenian claims on the area. There is evidence that Armenian representatives actively lobbied with the Russian military command to keep the Kurds out of the region instead of encouraging their return and resettlement.⁹⁶⁸

In the spring of 1915, Abdürrezzak Bey resumed his activities among the Kurdish tribes in the borderlands. Support and provisions from the Russian military, however, were still not forthcoming on a regular basis, ultimately forcing Abdürrezzak Bey to dissolve the units of irregulars he had formed. He set out by himself, joining General Nikolayev in Beyazid (today Doğubeyazıt at the Turkish-Iranian border).⁹⁶⁹ Plans were made by the Russian army command to send Abdürrezzak Bey to Bohtan to gather more Kurdish irregulars there and attack the Ottoman army. Concrete financial or material support, however, was not provided, and Abdürrezzak Bey saw no opportunity to realize this plan.⁹⁷⁰ In the following months, he continued to tour the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, but without a clear mission or any support.⁹⁷¹ In September of the same year, he made a final effort and gathered around seven hundred Kurdish irregulars under his command in the surroundings of Maku. However, the Russian military again failed him, providing only insufficient numbers of rifles and ammunition and thereby diminishing the standing and prestige Abdürrezzak Bey enjoyed among the tribes.⁹⁷² His tribal followers were asking to be released from their duties to return to the mountains, and General Nikolayev made it known to Abdürrezzak Bey that he saw no further use for his services

⁹⁶⁸ Türkyılmaz, *Rethinking Genocide*, pp. 318-323.

⁹⁶⁹ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 56.

⁹⁷⁰ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 57.

⁹⁷¹ Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 62.

⁹⁷² Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 63.

and that he was thus free to go.⁹⁷³ His autobiographical account – which was chiefly written to justify his actions between 1914 and 1915 to his Russian sponsors – ends here, and Abdürrezzak Bey mentioned plans he had to depart for the Emirate of Bohtan with a few loyal followers.⁹⁷⁴ It is unclear whether he did in fact do that.

What is known is that Abdürrezzak Bey returned to the scene once more: When Russian troops briefly occupied Eastern Anatolia in the summer of 1917, Abdürrezzak and Kamil Bey were appointed as governors of Bitlis and Erzurum, respectively.⁹⁷⁵ The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing demise of the Czarist empire did not constitute a turning point for Abdürrezzak Bey's policies: The new Bolshevik government continued the well-tried imperial policy towards the Kurds and began, based on existing networks into the Kurdish communities in Anatolia and Iran and with the help of middlemen like Abdürrezzak Bey, to promote the foundation of a Kurdish Soviet Republic. The success of this vision, however, remained limited.⁹⁷⁶ In the power vacuum after the war, following the withdrawal of Ottoman and Russian troops from the north-eastern Anatolian border region, local Kurdish tribal leaders like Simko Ağa were able to temporarily accumulate considerable power and local influence.⁹⁷⁷ By the early 1920s, Simko Ağa controlled a wide area in the Turkish-Iranian borderlands and the plain of Urmiye. In 1922, Simko Ağa was ousted from there by the Iranian army and fled to Iraq, where he was assassinated in 1929. Contacts between Simko Ağa and the Bedirhani family continued in post-imperial times: Prior to his assassination, Simko Ağa had been in regular contact

⁹⁷³ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 71.

⁹⁷⁴ Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 71.

⁹⁷⁵ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007 [1996]), p. 112, footnote Nr. 38, and Michael Reynolds, "Abdürrezzak Bedirhan. Ottoman Kurd and Russophile in the Twilight of Empire." In: *Kritika* 12.2 (2011), p. 442

⁹⁷⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated Beirut, October 2, 1924.

⁹⁷⁷ Martin van Bruinessen, "Shakāk" in *EI²*, vol. IX, pp. 245-246.

with the Kurdish nationalist movement in the French mandate territories led by Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan.⁹⁷⁸

Towards the end of the war, Abdürrezzak Bey's tracks are getting lost: Several sources claim that he died in 1918.⁹⁷⁹ Henry Woods, a British diplomat and acquaintance of Abdürrezzak Bey, claimed that a personal enemy, the *vali* of Mosul, had arranged the assassination of Abdürrezzak Bey in the chaotic last months of the war.⁹⁸⁰ Woods did not mention the *vali* by name. Between September 1917 and the British occupation of Mosul in October 1918, Memduh Sermed Bey Ispanakçızade (1876–1924)⁹⁸¹ was appointed as *vali* of Mosul. He would have had ample opportunity to cultivate a dislike for Abdürrezzak Bey, as he was familiar with the latter's activities from his previous appointment as *vali* in Bitlis from September 1915 to March 1916. Memduh Sermed Bey was originally from Erzurum and had served in the local Ottoman administration in Anatolia and the Balkans over the course of his career. He was not popular with the government of Damad Ferid Paşa, who had him arrested and imprisoned upon his return from Iraq to Istanbul.⁹⁸²

4.5.1. The Bitlis Uprising of 1914

Early in 1914, two separate uprisings erupted simultaneously, one in the area of Barzan in the *vilayet* of Mosul and the other in Bitlis. Both uprisings were said to enjoy Russian support. The uprising in Barzan was led by Abdülselem Barzani, while a certain Molla Salim and other local sheikhs of Hizan were at the head of the Bitlis uprising.⁹⁸³ Through

⁹⁷⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, "Shakāk" in EI², vol. IX, pp. 245-246.

⁹⁷⁹ Celilê Celil in his preface to Bedirhan & Cuni (trans.), *Otobiyografya*, p. 6, and Chris Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p. 21.

⁹⁸⁰ Woods, *Türkiye Anıları*, p. 315.

⁹⁸¹ Kunalp, *Osmanlı erkân ve ricali*, p. 107.

⁹⁸² Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, vol. 3, p. 818.

⁹⁸³ McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, p. 101.

networks of Sufi orders, the small town of Hizan was well connected both to the Emirate of Bohtan, the homeland of the Bedirhani family, and to the religious opposition to the CUP government in Istanbul.⁹⁸⁴ None of the contemporary accounts, however, mentioned any involvement of members of the Bedirhani family in these uprisings. As the following discussion will show in greater detail, the uprising in Bitlis can be characterized as a local affair, driven chiefly by the interests of local religious leaders who wanted to maintain their influence and were firmly opposed to any meddling of the central government in the region. Their cause was helped by the fact that the local population equally resented the increased presence of the government, which made itself felt through standardized taxation and military recruitment. Abdürrezzak Bey had little to nothing to do with the uprising in Bitlis,⁹⁸⁵ he was not even in the area when it took place,⁹⁸⁶ much less was he involved in the planning. Later accounts rooted in Kurdish nationalist historiography, however, claim a prominent involvement of Abdürrezzak Bedirhan, thus taking the Bitlis uprising out of its original context and appropriating it for a 20th-century historical narrative of Kurdish nationalist struggle, which supposedly had its roots in late Ottoman times already.⁹⁸⁷

The district of Hizan lay to the east of Bitlis, close to the border with the neighboring *vilayet* of Van. Religious authorities in Hizan and adjacent districts were highly suspicious of the new political course and measures towards centralization taken by the CUP government in Istanbul. They

⁹⁸⁴ McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, p. 101.

⁹⁸⁵ There are reports that Abdürrezzak Bey had visited the area during his tours among the Kurds of Anatolia. In December 1911, he met with the sheikhs of Hizan near Bitlis. His visit was followed with great suspicion by the central government, as the surroundings of Bitlis were known to be particularly troublesome, see McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, p. 99.

⁹⁸⁶ Abdürrezzak Bey was reportedly on Iranian territory when the uprising in Bitlis took place, FO 195/2458/808, Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, April 16, 1914.

⁹⁸⁷ For example, Naci Kutlay, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Kürtler. Kürdoloji Notları* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2014), pp. 79-83.

feared for their regional influence and mobilized local support around the demand that the sharia law should be properly restored.⁹⁸⁸ Religious leaders unhappy with the current centralization politics of the government could further count on the support of Kurdish tribal leaders: Throughout the eastern parts of the empire, some of them had lost much of their former influence and privileges under the rule of the CUP, as the Hamidiye regiments were reorganized. Many units were disbanded in the process⁹⁸⁹ and efforts were made to return property which had been seized by Kurdish tribal leaders to their former owners.⁹⁹⁰

It was in this context that violence broke out in Bitlis in 1914: In March, a batch of rifles destined for sheikh Sa'id Ali of Hizan was seized by Ottoman government troops. A skirmish erupted between Kurdish fighters and Ottoman gendarmes, resulting in a number of casualties on both sides.⁹⁹¹ The situation quickly escalated from there: In mid-March 1914, a religious scholar close to sheikh Sa'id Ali was arrested by the Ottoman authorities in the surroundings of Bitlis. A large band of armed local Kurds gathered and freed the captive before he could be imprisoned in Bitlis. As the local government forces were in no position

⁹⁸⁸ FO 195/2458/808, report from Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, "Unrest amongst Kurds in Bitlis vilayet," dated Van, April 4, 1914.

⁹⁸⁹ It is most accurate to speak not of a complete withdrawal, but of a redistribution of local power, the fault lines of which split the Kurdish communities in Anatolia: To counter the growing Russian influence in the eastern borderlands of the empire, some of the Hamidiye regiments were reconstituted under a new name, as a "Tribal Light Cavalry," McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, p. 99.

⁹⁹⁰ The circumstances of the opposition of the Kurdish sheikh Sa'id Ali in the surroundings of Van sheds further light on the motivations local Kurdish leaders had to mobilize their followers: Sheikh Sa'id Ali resorted to armed resistance against the Ottoman government in 1911, after the *vali* of Van Bekir Sami Bey had begun to sort out conflicting local claims to landownership. Sheikh Sa'id Ali, who had illegally occupied land originally owned by Armenians, was fiercely opposed to these investigations and became a sworn personal enemy of the *vali*. See FO 195/2458/808, I.M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, July 11, 1914. The same sheikh Sa'id Ali was one of the leaders of the uprising in Bitlis in 1914.

⁹⁹¹ FO 195/2458/808, report from Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, dated Van, March 22, 1914.

to retaliate, the perpetrators were not caught or punished. As a result, the prestige of sheikh Sa'îd Ali of Hizan, the host of the liberated scholar, increased considerably. Several thousand armed Kurdish fighters marched towards Bitlis and set up camp in the outskirts of the city. In a show of force, they intended to enter the city and present their demands⁹⁹² to the local administration, causing panic among the population of Bitlis.⁹⁹³

At this point, the *vali* of Bitlis was recalled⁹⁹⁴ and replaced with the former district governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Siirt, Mustafa Abdülhalik Bey [Renda].⁹⁹⁵ The Kurdish fighters, who outnumbered the Ottoman troops present in the city by far, lingered in the close vicinity of Bitlis, causing the Ottoman authorities to call in additional military support from Muş and Van.⁹⁹⁶ Arms were also distributed on the orders of the new *vali* to form an irregular militia from among the city population.⁹⁹⁷ The American missionary Harrison A. Maynard was an eye-witness to the events in Bitlis. He informed the British embassy that on April 2, 1914, several hundred Kurds had entered the city: “These Kurds were only farmers, poorly dressed with poor guns and few of them,” Maynard

⁹⁹² They were opposed to the CUP government on religious grounds, suspected the CUP leadership of atheism and strongly resented politics of religious equality, pressing for a return to sharia law.

⁹⁹³ FO 195/2458/808, report from Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, “Unrest amongst Kurds in Bitlis vilayet,” dated Van, April 4, 1914.

⁹⁹⁴ This was Mazhar Bey, who enjoyed good relations to local Kurdish leaders and was therefore no longer trusted by the authorities, see Türkyılmaz, *Rethinking Genocide*, p. 75.

⁹⁹⁵ FO 195/2458/808, report from Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, “Unrest amongst Kurds in Bitlis vilayet,” dated Van, April 4, 1914.

⁹⁹⁶ FO 195/2458/808, P.W. Bullard to Louis Mallet, “Disorder among the Kurds in Bitlis,” report dated Erzurum, March 25, 1914, quoting information from a letter which was sent to the British representative in Erzurum by the American missionary Harrison A. Maynard from Bitlis.

⁹⁹⁷ FO 195/2458/808, telegram from P.W. Bullard to the British Embassy in Istanbul, dated Erzurum, April 4, 1914. Most of the locals who now defended the Ottoman government were Armenians, a fact that was widely commented upon and taken as evidence of Armenian patriotism and loyalty to the Ottoman Empire at the time, see Türkyılmaz, *Rethinking Genocide*, pp. 75-77 for a review of the contemporary international, Armenian and Ottoman press.

continues. They did not have much experience in fighting or shooting, and some of them were only armed with swords. According to Maynard, they were instigated by religious propaganda from their sheikhs. Grace H. Knapp, another member of the American Christian mission in Bitlis, described the events in April 1914 in a similar way, also recalling the religious undertones of the uprising: “In the spring of 1914 they [the Kurds, BH] marched into the city, a harlequin mob in their gay native costumes, and armed chiefly with short swords, scimitars and knives. Chanting weirdly, they took up a position on Sherif Bey’s Hill in full view of the government buildings and within direct range of fire from the barracks. They did not fear the enemy’s bullets, for these would be warded off by the magic power of their religious leaders, the sheikhs.”⁹⁹⁸ The attacking motley crew of Kurds was no match for the government troops in Bitlis, which were equipped with machine guns.⁹⁹⁹ The Kurds were rounded up and sought refuge in the Armenian Surp Kevork church, where they barricaded themselves until the evening. Their leaders, aware of the imminent failure of the uprising, sought refuge with the foreign consulates. Harrison Maynard, acting as representative of the local British vice-consulate, turned them down.¹⁰⁰⁰ One of the leaders of the uprising, Molla Selim, eventually found asylum in the local Russian consulate with three of his followers.

After three days of skirmishes, the Kurdish fighters scattered and fled.¹⁰⁰¹ The Kurdish offensive had started out strong, but their leaders

⁹⁹⁸ Grace H. Knapp, *The Tragedy of Bitlis* (New York et al.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919), p. 12.

⁹⁹⁹ Knapp, *Tragedy of Bitlis*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁰⁰ On these events, see two letters from Harrison A. Maynard to the British consulate in Erzurum, dated Bitlis, April 3, 1914 and April 30, 1914, respectively. Excerpts in FO 195/2458/808, Mohannan to the British Embassy in Istanbul, annex to a report titled “Kurdish disorder in Bitlis vilayet,” dated Erzurum, May 6, 1914. In neither of his otherwise very detailed and informed letters does Harrison A. Maynard mention any involvement of members or followers of the Bedirhani family.

¹⁰⁰¹ FO 195/2458/808, report from Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, “Unrest amongst Kurds in Bitlis vilayet,” dated Van, April 4, 1914.

fled as support from the local urban population in Bitlis was not forthcoming during the brief occupation and Ottoman military reinforcement were sent to Bitlis to end the uprising.¹⁰⁰² Already on April 4, the uprising in Bitlis was suppressed. By the end of April, numerous alleged participants were arrested and, according to information provided by Harrison Maynard, severely beaten to extract their confessions.¹⁰⁰³ Over the summer of 1914, eighteen local Kurds were executed as a consequence of their alleged involvement in the uprising.¹⁰⁰⁴ Among them were three highly venerated religious sheikhs. Their deaths caused much additional outrage among their followers.¹⁰⁰⁵ Over the following months, local officials were recalled from Bitlis and the district (*kaza*) of Hizan, and a great number of individuals allegedly involved in the uprising were imprisoned or exiled from the region.¹⁰⁰⁶ Ottoman government troops persecuted the fleeing Kurdish fighters into their villages. Most of the Kurds, however, managed to escape into the mountains with their families and cattle.¹⁰⁰⁷ The tombs of sheikh Sa'id Ali and the other sheikhs executed during the uprising quickly became sites of veneration and pilgrimage for the local population.¹⁰⁰⁸

Immediately after the defeat of the uprising in Bitlis, there were fears that the revolt was foreshadowing a much larger Kurdish revolt.¹⁰⁰⁹ In spite of repeated reassurances and condemnations of the uprising by

¹⁰⁰² McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁰³ Letter from Harrison A. Maynard, dated Bitlis, April 30, 1914, in FO 195/2458/808, Mohannan to the British Embassy in Istanbul, report titled "Kurdish disorder in Bitlis vilâyet," dated Erzurum, May 6, 1914.

¹⁰⁰⁴ FO 195/2458/808, I.M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, June 14, 1914.

¹⁰⁰⁵ FO 195/2458/808, FO 195/2458/808, Mohannan to Louis Mallet, "Kurdish Movement: Russian Support," report dated Erzurum, June 20, 1914.

¹⁰⁰⁶ FO 195/2458/808, "Kurdish question: Proceedings against those responsible for recent rising in Bitlis district; gov. action against Bedr Khan family," report dated Istanbul, September 4, 1914.

¹⁰⁰⁷ FO 195/2458/808, Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, April 16, 1914.

¹⁰⁰⁸ FO 195/2458/808, "Kurdish question: Proceedings against those responsible for recent rising in Bitlis district; gov. action against Bedr Khan family," report dated Istanbul, September 4, 1914. A flame reportedly appeared at night on the tomb of sheikh Sa'id Ali.

¹⁰⁰⁹ FO 195/2458/808, Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, April 16, 1914.

numerous prominent Kurdish notables and community leaders,¹⁰¹⁰ these apprehensions led to severe preemptive measures taken by the government against the Kurds more generally in 1914 – these punitive measures, in turn, also affected members of the Bedirhani family. In British diplomatic reports, it was assumed that members of the Bedirhani family had not played a decisive role in the uprising in Bitlis in the spring of 1914.¹⁰¹¹ British diplomatic observers suspected, however, that the Ottoman authorities would seize the opportunity to also proceed against the Bedirhani family in the aftermath of the uprising: Süleyman Bedirhan had been shot by government gendarmes when he was allegedly on his way to join Hasan Bedirhan in Cizre. Government officials asserted later that the shooting happened by mistake.¹⁰¹² Kamil Bedirhan was, around the same time, arrested by the Ottoman authorities in Siirt.¹⁰¹³ He was escorted to Istanbul via Diyarbakir in May 1914.¹⁰¹⁴ Towards the end of July 1914, rumors were circulating that Abdürrezzak Bedirhan had been killed in Tabriz. This turned out not to be true.¹⁰¹⁵ Hasan Bedirhan, who feared for his personal safety, was convinced that none of these events happened by mistake or coincidence, but that the CUP government’s goal was to target and eliminate all members of the Bedirhani family. According to

¹⁰¹⁰ Abdürrezzak Bey’s fellow combatant Seyyid Taha, sheikh Abdülkadir and others publicly condemned the uprising, see Türkyılmaz, *Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915* Diss., Duke University, 2011, p. 77.

¹⁰¹¹ Ian M. Smith, the British vice-consul in Van, arrived at the scene in Bitlis shortly after the defeat of the uprising on April 11, 1914. He reported that “[t]here is no reason to believe that Abd-ur Rezak of the Bedr-Khan family is in any way responsible for or connected with this rising.” See FO 195/2458/808, Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, April 16, 1914.

¹⁰¹² FO 195/2458/808, “Kurdish question: Proceedings against those responsible for recent rising in Bitlis district; gov. action against Bedr Khan family,” report dated Istanbul, September 4, 1914.

¹⁰¹³ FO 195/2458/808, “Kurdish question: Proceedings against those responsible for recent rising in Bitlis district; gov. action against Bedr Khan family,” report dated Istanbul, September 4, 1914.

¹⁰¹⁴ FO 195/2458/808, report by Col. Hurst to Louis Mallet, dated Diyarbakir, June 15, 1914.

¹⁰¹⁵ FO 195/2458/808, British vice-consul in Van Lt. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated July 31, 1914.

his account, his nephew Süleyman Bey had been attacked in his sleep, beaten and then shot by government gendarmes, who publicly threatened to proceed similarly with all the remaining Bedirhanis.¹⁰¹⁶

As a result of the violent suppression of the uprising in Bitlis, Abdürrezzak Bey's influence among the Kurdish community in Eastern Anatolia decreased, as local Kurds were no longer much inclined to fight the government, for fear of repercussions.¹⁰¹⁷ While the eye-witness accounts from Bitlis cited above do not mention any involvement of Abdürrezzak Bedirhan in the events in Bitlis, *Çaldıran*, the government-sponsored newspaper in Van, emphasized the role of Abdürrezzak Bey and the ongoing threat his activities allegedly posited to general security in Eastern Anatolia. Reportedly, Abdürrezzak Bey was distributing arms and propaganda leaflets among the local population.¹⁰¹⁸ According to the same sources, he had allegedly also proclaimed himself as “Şāh of Kurdistan” already in 1911.¹⁰¹⁹ Other politically active members of the Bedirhani family were affected by the repressive politics of the Ottoman government in the aftermath of the Bitlis uprising as well: During and after the uprising, Hasan Bedirhan was biding his time in the family's homeland. In Cizre, he was universally accepted as the “most influential of the Kurdish chiefs,” wielding “unquestioned authority over the tribes of the Jeziré and Bohtan regions.”¹⁰²⁰ In the aftermath of the Bitlis uprising, Hasan Bey kept a low profile, even though the local tribes were, according to him, anxious to rise against the central government. However, he had difficulties in providing them with arms and ammunition. Also, he feared for his personal safety, knowing that an Ottoman battalion had recently been dispatched to Cizre. Earlier, the

¹⁰¹⁶ FO 195/2458/808, Col. Hurst to Louis Mallet, report dated Diyarbekir, June 15, 1914.

¹⁰¹⁷ FO 195/2458/808, I.M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, June 14, 1914.

¹⁰¹⁸ FO 195/2458/808, I.M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, June 14, 1914, containing the English translation of an article which appeared in *Çaldıran* in May 1914.

¹⁰¹⁹ MAE-Nantes, 166 PO/E, Constantinople, Ambassade de France à Constantinople, “Situation Intérieur 1903-1913,” report dated January 2, 1912.

¹⁰²⁰ FO 195/2458/808, Col. Hurst to Louis Mallet, report dated Diyarbekir, May 14, 1914.

Ottoman authorities had offered Hasan Bey a post in the administration in exchange for his cooperation. He was interested in a deal and had asked to be appointed as district governor (*mutasarrıf*) of either Siirt or Mardin, but was denied both requests.¹⁰²¹ In a personal encounter with the British vice-consul of Diyarbekir, Col. Hurst, Hasan Bedirhan summarized the demands of the Kurdish rebels as follows: Taking their cue from developments in the Arab provinces of the empire, they asked for officials of Kurdish origins to be appointed to the Kurdish provinces and for a local reinvestment of the tax money collected in the Kurdish areas.¹⁰²²

Much like Hasan Bedirhan in Cizre, other local Kurdish leaders were apprehensive and careful after the severe punishments meted out by the government on those involved in the uprising in Bitlis. Kurdish tribal chiefs in the neighboring *vilayet* of Van were eager to profess their loyalty to the Ottoman government and sent elaborate letters to the local administration to that effect. The leader of the Haydaranlı tribe, K r H seyin Pa a considered it best to disappear out of reach of the Ottoman authorities for a while, going on a tour in the remote areas of his tribal lands close to the Iranian border.¹⁰²³

4.5.2. Conclusions to Be Drawn from the Trajectory of Abd rrezzak Bey

Later historians, both with Kurdish and Turkish backgrounds, have attempted to streamline Abd rrezzak Bey's trajectory to make it fit with their accounts of nationalist historiography. On the Kurdish side, the historian Celil  Celil evaluated Abd rrezzak Bey's activities against the

¹⁰²¹ FO 195/2458/808, Col. Hurst to Louis Mallet, report dated Diyarbekir, May 14, 1914.

¹⁰²² FO 195/2458/808, Col. Hurst to Louis Mallet, report dated Diyarbekir, May 14, 1914.

¹⁰²³ FO 195/2458/808, Ian M. Smith to Louis Mallet, report dated Van, May 16, 1914.

backdrop of the Kurdish nationalist movement of the 20th century, arguing that Abdürrezzak Bey was a pioneer and forerunner of these developments when the time was unfortunately not yet ripe for the Kurds to unite behind him.¹⁰²⁴ His Turkish counterpart, the biographer and amateur historian Mahmut Çetin suggested that Abdürrezzak Bey co-ordinated the activities of all his relatives, masterminding an large-scale uprising in Eastern Anatolia, while other family members worked towards the same goal of Kurdish autonomy with journal articles or the foundation of political clubs in Istanbul.¹⁰²⁵ Both perspectives are equally ahistorical and misleading, as they presuppose uncomplicated, monolithic and unchanging ideas about individual and collective identities and assume that contemporary categories of Kurdish identity and concerns about the Kurdish political trajectory were valid for Abdürrezzak Bey. There are hints that the reality on the ground in the early 20th century was far more complex. The alliance with imperial Russia divided the extended Bedirhani family: On the one hand, Abdürrezzak Bey was not the only member of the family who threw in his lot with Russia. He was joined in his efforts by Kamil, Süleyman Bey and others, who tend to be written out of later historiographies.¹⁰²⁶ On the other hand, however, a number members of the Bedirhani family in Istanbul publicly denounced any connection to Abdürrezzak Bey in December 1914, stating that with his cooperation with Russia, he brought shame to the entire family.¹⁰²⁷ In spite of these public reassurances, the Ottoman state authorities did not put much trust in the Bedirhani family's loyalty, as is indicated by the ban of Mehmed

¹⁰²⁴ See Celilê Celil in the preface to Bedirhan & Cunî (trans.), *Otobiyoğrafya*, p. 6.

¹⁰²⁵ Çetin, *Kart-kurt sesleri*, p. 167.

¹⁰²⁶ Kutschera, *Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 20.

¹⁰²⁷ *Österreichische Volkszeitung*, December 3, 1914, p. 3: "Konstantinopel. 1. Dezember. Die hier ansässigen Mitglieder der alten kurdischen Fürstenfamilie der Bederkhani haben durch Erklärungen in den türkischen Zeitungen ihren gegenwärtig für Russland auf dem Kriegsschauplatze tätigen Verwandten Abdurrezak Bei Bederkhan, der unter dem früheren Sultan hier die Stellung eines Zeremonienmeisters bekleidete, öffentlich abgelehnet und ihn als Schmach für ihre Familie bezeichnet."

Salih Bey, who was eager to fight for the Ottoman army, from the front in the Caucasus discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

5. The Sons of Emin Ali Bey: Süreyya, Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan

This chapter zooms in on one particular branch of the Bedirhani family, that is on Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his children.¹⁰²⁸ As a number of Emin Ali Bey's descendants grew up to become prominent figures in the Kurdish independence movement over the course of the 20th century, their situation is particularly well-documented. While all children of Emin Ali Bey grew up in the same upper class household in late Ottoman Istanbul, their trajectories following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire varied considerably: Some of them found their footing in the newly established Turkish Republic, adopted Turkish surnames after 1935¹⁰²⁹ and integrated into Turkish society, seizing political and economic opportunities there. Others chose to leave Istanbul and set out on a life in exile, dedicated to the fight for Kurdish independence. This chapter traces the trajectories of Emin Ali Bey's children and asks about differences, but also about common potentials and opportunity structures which underlie their respective biographies. Individual decisions to stay or leave, to assimilate or resist, are analyzed as informed by differing evaluations of past and present and by diverging expectations about the future. These decisions can be read as statements about identity and belonging.

¹⁰²⁸ Emin Ali Bey had six sons and one daughter. Not all of them, however, took to political activism, as the following section will show in detail. I chose the expression "Bedirhani brothers" to refer to the trio of Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, the most prominent among Emin Ali Bey's children who are remembered as protagonists of the Kurdish nationalist movement today.

¹⁰²⁹ The correspondent law, the *soyadı kanunu* (kanun nr. 2525) was passed in parliament in June 1934 and came into effect in 1935.

I look at the brothers Süreyya, Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan as post-Ottoman intellectuals.¹⁰³⁰ This choice of analytical framework is guided by historiographical as well as methodological concerns: In terms of historiography, the trajectories of the three Bedirhani brothers are most fruitfully read in conjunction with the biographies of other, also non-Kurdish intellectuals from the former Ottoman lands who were active over the same period of transition. It is particularly important to look for commonalities, moments of overlap and interactions across assumed ethnic and national boundaries, as these elements tend to get edited out in later nationalist historiography.¹⁰³¹ Looking at the Bedirhani brothers as members of a generation of post-Ottoman – rather than exclusively Kurdish – intellectuals, it becomes clear that the three brothers belonged to a network of journalists, students and activists whose members shared references and discourses as well as outlooks for their future and, even in post-imperial times, remained in constant interactions with each other. Strategies and concerns of this generation of post-Ottoman intellectuals which were identified by Leyla Dakhli in her work on Arab intellectuals show numerous parallels to the situation of the Bedirhani brothers: Much like their Arabic-speaking contemporaries, Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan created roles for themselves as journalists, interpreters and guides of their respective nations in the making.¹⁰³² They cast themselves as teachers of the uneducated masses of their people, or *peuple-enfant*.¹⁰³³ They were also faced with challenges mirroring those of their Arab counterparts: While the sons of Emin Ali Bedirhan were fluent in Ottoman Turkish as well as in several European languages and moved in cosmopolitan circles with ease, it was their own

¹⁰³⁰ Leyla Dakhli, *Une génération d'intellectuels arabes. Syrie et Liban (1908-1940)* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2009), pp. 7-8.

¹⁰³¹ This isolated perspective is not only prevalent in the case of Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual history but concerns the study of Arab intellectuals, as it has been undertaken by Leyla Dakhli and others, as well.

¹⁰³² Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 8.

¹⁰³³ Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, pp. 64-67.

cultural, historical and linguistic heritage that they were, bit by bit, discovering – or inventing¹⁰³⁴ – as they moved along.¹⁰³⁵

Giving preference to the concept of post-Ottoman intellectuals as a framework of analysis for the activities of the Bedirhani brothers also addresses a second, methodological concern: Leyla Dakhli describes her attempt to follow the trajectories of the generation of intellectuals she identifies as the sons of the Arabic *nahda* from 1908 into the 1940s as “une histoire par en bas des gens d’en haut.”¹⁰³⁶ This perspective mirrors my own concern with mentalities and cultural horizons, an approach which is given preference here over a history “from above” which focuses on events and ideas. Key questions about strategies individuals made use of to navigate the transition period and to create their own linguistic and political identities, about the outreach and legitimation of their appeals and narratives need to be asked with reference to Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals as well.¹⁰³⁷ To begin with, the example of the Bedirhani brothers demonstrates that social and political spaces as well as networks in Syria and Lebanon in Ottoman and post-imperial times were not exclusively an arena of Arabic-speaking activists, but inhabited by Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals (and others) as well. It therefore suggests itself to look at these actors in conjunction: Until the end of the First World War, the intellectuals of the generation of 1908 created and drew on a shared Ottoman identity.¹⁰³⁸ It was only in the

¹⁰³⁴ Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹⁰³⁵ Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 10.

¹⁰³⁶ Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 11.

¹⁰³⁷ Drawing on Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, pp. 10-11 for inspiration.

¹⁰³⁸ This has been extensively argued on the basis of different case studies from late Ottoman history, see e.g. Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011); Julia Phillips Cohen, “Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism: Jewish Imperial Citizenship in the Hamidian Era.” In: *IJMES* 44 (2012), pp. 237-255, and Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire. Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse Univ. Press, 2011), in particular pp. 13-18, all on the Ottoman-Jewish case.

context of the suffering and struggle for independence beginning, in the Kurdish case, during and after the Turkish War of Independence (1919 to 1923), that a second, soon equally important role and image of the intellectual as national freedom fighter gained currency.¹⁰³⁹ In addition, the case of the Bedirhani brothers illustrates the manifold links which existed between ideas and ideology on the one hand and more personal, economic or power-political concerns on the other hand. While research on Ottoman-Turkish history in general has shown an increasing interest in the context from which ideas and political decisions emerge,¹⁰⁴⁰ the historiography of the Kurdish nationalist movement has yet to follow suit. In an attempt to make visible how nationalist historiography has shaped and canonized the initially more ambivalent life stories of Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, their trajectories are presented in the context of the history of their entire family here. The biographies of their siblings provide material for comparison and help trace the historiographical mechanisms at work in the making of national heroes.

5.1. Sources Available on Emin Ali Bey and his Offspring

A number of archival documents and published sources are at the basis of my attempt to reconstruct the biographies of Emin Ali Bedirhan and his children. Leyla Dakhli has identified the intellectual as “un objet glissant,” a slippery object which is difficult to get a hold of and needs to be chased through a wide array of different sources.¹⁰⁴¹ Fortunately,

¹⁰³⁹ For the Kurdish movement, see Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State. Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 2004), pp. 77-84, and more generally Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁴⁰ See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk. An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2011) for one recent example.

¹⁰⁴¹ Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 9, see also Marc Aymes, *A Provincial History of the Ottoman Empire. Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean in the 19th Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 8-12 on a polygraphic approach in historiography which draws on a cross-reading of multiple sources and archives. Aline Schlaepfer, *Les intellectuels juifs de*

there is no shortage of material available on the family of Emin Ali Bey.¹⁰⁴² It comes as no surprise that a large share of this material concerns Celadet, Kamuran and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Süreyya Bedirhan. However, in spite of their decisive roles within the Kurdish nationalist movement, neither of them left behind an autobiography or otherwise comprehensive account of his life. Celadet Bedirhan died unexpectedly in July 1951, not yet sixty years old. No complete manuscript of memoirs has been found, even though there are indications that Celadet had thought about writing his life story and had compiled several documents to this effect. Between 1922 and 1925, as a student at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, Germany, Celadet kept a diary in Ottoman Turkish. An edited version of the original Ottoman text has been published in Turkish under the title *Günlük Notlar* by Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun].¹⁰⁴³ This text contains information on Celadet's everyday life in Munich, along with remarks on the activities of Kamuran Bedirhan and other family members during that period. I had access to the published and edited version of the diary in modern Turkish, but I have not seen or been able to locate an Ottoman original.

Bagdad. Discourses et allégeances (1908-1951) (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2016), pp. 2-6 introduces the concept of an “intellectuel moderne,” a modern thinker, who different from religious scholars, endorses his authority with diploma of western-style universities and who, crucially, publically engages with political and social questions, always in an interdependent relationship to the state, sometimes opposing and at other times devising and implementing state policies.

¹⁰⁴² Compared to the bulk of material available on Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in particular, documentation on their father Emin Ali Bey and their siblings is sparse. Women of the family in particular rarely make appearances in the sources. Emin Ali Bey's Ottoman *sicill-i ahval* file allows to reconstruct his career as an imperial official.

¹⁰⁴³ Celadet Ali Bedirhan & Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Günlük Notlar, 1922-1925* (Stockholm: Apec Tryck & Förlag, 1995). Following this first edition, the diary has also been published in Turkey: Celadet Ali Bedirhan & Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Günlük Notlar, 1922-1925* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 1997), followed very recently by a Kurdish translation: Celadet Ali Bedirhan & Osman Özçelik, *Rojên Almanya (1922-1925)* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2015). A complete pdf version of the 1995 edition is made available online by the Institut Kurde in Paris: <http://bnk.institutkurde.org/images/pdf/AFQU31TSLW.pdf> (last accessed June 20, 2016), attesting to the ongoing interest in the diary.

The biography of Celadet Bedirhan has become the subject of a widely read novel, written by the Kurdish author Mehmed Uzun (1953–2003) and published in Kurdish under the title *Bîra Qederê*, “the well of fate.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Uzun visited Celadet’s widow Ruşen Bedirhan and conducted several interviews with her. Preparing his novel, Uzun claims to have worked on the basis of an extensive autobiographical manuscript written by Celadet himself, which was made available to him by Ruşen Bedirhan during these visits. It is difficult to assess this information, as both Ruşen Bedirhan and Mehmed Uzun have since passed away. Uzun included what are allegedly fragments of Celadet’s original autobiography into his novel. It is entirely possible and even likely that Uzun invented these fragments, using them as a narrative device. In spite of this, Uzun’s novel arguably has some value as a source, as it is possible to differentiate between fictional elements on the one hand and the actual events that structure and inspire the novel on the other hand by carefully cross-reading the text with other sources on Celadet Bedirhan’s life. In addition, the novel cannot be ignored in the discourse about the biographies of the Bedirhani brothers: Reviews and comments in online discussion groups suggest that Uzun’s fictionalized account is often being read as a truthful summary of Celadet’s biography.¹⁰⁴⁵

Focusing mostly on his activities in Paris after 1948, the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan are kept in the library of the *Institut Kurde* in Paris

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mehmed Uzun, *Bîra Qederê: Roman* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 1995), also available in Turkish: İdem, *Kader Kuyusu* (Istanbul: Belge, 1998). Uzun also wrote a fictionalized account of the life of Memduh Selim, another protagonist of the early Kurdish nationalist movement: İdem, *Siya Evînê* (Stockholm: Orfeus, 1989). For an analysis of Uzun’s writings, situated between biography and fiction, see also Christine Allison, “Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel: ‘Ereb Şemo and His Successors.” In: *Studies on Persianate Societies* 3 (2005), p. 104.

¹⁰⁴⁵ See for example the review of Kani Xulam, “The Story of a Kurdish Prince in Exile,” dating from May 12, 2013, available at <http://rudaw.net/english/culture/12052013/> (last accessed January 22, 2015).

(IKP).¹⁰⁴⁶ These papers also contain information about the general Bedirhani family history and about other family members. In addition, the personal archives of close friends and collaborators of Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris provide complementary information on his trajectory. Most important among these sources are the personal papers of the French general and scholar Pierre Rondot (1904–2000) which are equally kept at the IKP,¹⁰⁴⁷ and the personal archive of the Dominican missionary Thomas Bois (1900–1975) in the Bibliothèque Saulchoir in Paris.¹⁰⁴⁸ Kamuran, who in his later life was allegedly repeatedly asked to write down his memoirs but never did so,¹⁰⁴⁹ agreed to a biographical interview with Thomas Bois in Beirut in December 1946. The text was preserved in Bois' personal papers and later published in the journal *Études Kurdes*.¹⁰⁵⁰ The original manuscript comprises twenty-six typewritten pages. The interview allows to reconstruct the broad context of Kamuran's childhood and early youth as well as the family's trajectory in late Ottoman times. Unfortunately, the biographical interview was never completed and, after a detailed and vivid description of his childhood and school years, it ends at some point prior to the outbreak of the First World War, with Kamuran Bedirhan leaving Edirne to attend law school in Istanbul. On the basis of the information available in his personal papers, the ego-network of Kamuran Bedirhan can be reconstructed, in particular for his years in Paris from 1948 into the 1960s. In addition, there is also evidence on how Kamuran Bedirhan

¹⁰⁴⁶ The papers are uncatalogued and appear fragmented. There was, as of summer 2014, no inventory of the collection. Citing from Kamuran's personal papers, I resort to the makeshift solution of giving the date and indicating the type of material and (if applicable) the sender of recipient of the document in question.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Rondot's papers are not catalogued or inventoried either. His personal archive seems to have been divided after his death. Rondot's political papers were sent to the French military archives (Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes) and are closed to researchers, while his scholarly papers relating to Kurdish studies are kept at the IKP.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Archive des Dominicains de Mossoul à la Bibliothèque de Saulchoir, Paris. Section V-641, 1-75, R.P. Thomas Bois (1900–1975).

¹⁰⁴⁹ Interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Joyce Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan." In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), pp. 71-90.

thought about questions of Kurdish identity: His preparations for putting together a showcase for an exhibit on “the Kurds” in the *Musée de l’Homme* in Paris in the mid-1930s were preserved in the museum’s archive.¹⁰⁵¹

As well-known public figures and leading protagonists of the Kurdish movement in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period, Celadet and his brothers Kamuran and Süreyya are mentioned in various memoirs of their contemporaries. In addition, their activities were closely monitored by the mandate authorities. The French diplomatic and military archives thus provide ample additional information on their activities. Kamuran Bedirhan in particular was regularly consulted as an authority and witness of historical events by scholars of Kurdish history. The French historian Chris Kutschera, among others,¹⁰⁵² interviewed Kamuran for his work. Finally, there are the Bedirhani brothers’ own political and scholarly writings: Süreyya Bedirhan briefly reanimated the publication of the journal *Kurdistan*, originally founded by his uncles Mikdat Midhat and Abdurrahman Bedirhan in the late 1890s. Celadet Bedirhan wrote for the Istanbul-based journal *Serbestî* in the years prior to the First World War.¹⁰⁵³ His articles on Kurdish linguistics and literature from the 1930s and 1940s are available in the journals *Hawar* and *Ronahî* which he published in Syria. Kamuran Bedirhan also contributed articles to these journals. In

¹⁰⁵¹ Archives du Musée du Quai Branly Paris, documentation in Dons Pierre Rondot, D 000041.

¹⁰⁵² Chris Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), pp. 20-26.

¹⁰⁵³ Issues 1 to 12 of *Serbestî*, dating from 03. Tışrin II to 14. Tışrin II 1324 M (November 16, 1908 to November 27, 1908) are preserved in the holdings of the Atatürk Kitaplığı in Istanbul. These issues are also available online, <http://katalog.ibb.gov.tr/yordambt/yordam.php?-ac=arama&-vt=YordamBTSYS&betik=serbesti> (last accessed June 21, 2016). I was, however, unable to locate or consult any issues of the journal dating from the time of Celadet Bedirhan’s work there.

addition, he created his own journal, *Rojâ Nû*.¹⁰⁵⁴ Between 1948 and 1950, while he was in France, Kamuran also wrote extensively on the Kurdish question in his *Bulletin d'études kurdes*.¹⁰⁵⁵

At the basis of my analysis of this wide array of sources is the very inclusive concept of ego-documents as it was developed by Winfried Schulze,¹⁰⁵⁶ including any texts containing information about the self, about hopes, dreams and expectations for the future of the writer. Autobiographical texts, like the diary Celadet Bedirhan kept during his stay in Munich, can be read along other texts which do not primarily have an autobiographical function but nonetheless contain information about the self of the author. Journal articles, political pamphlets and letters come to mind here. More theoretically challenging is the consideration of fictional texts as ego-documents: Kamuran Bedirhan authored an adventure novel and composed a large number of poems in French. I argue that paratext, along with narrative patterns and motives from these fictional compositions can be included into the analysis.¹⁰⁵⁷

Dealing with the sources which are at the basis of this chapter, several particularities and biases need to be taken into account, the most obvious of these particularities being that a number of accounts were written with hindsight, closely tailored to later nationalist historiography. The 1930s are the time period which has attracted the most popular and scholarly attention in the historiography of the Bedirhani family, at the expense of other, arguably equally interesting and formative periods.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Unlike Celadet's earlier contributions to *Serbestî*, the issues of *Hawar* and *Rojâ Nû* are almost entirely preserved and, in the case of *Hawar*, also easily available as edited volumes: Firat Cewerî, *Hawar* 2 vols. (Stockholm: Nûdem, 1998). Both journals are also available online via the IKP, see <http://bnk.institutkurde.org/catalogue/result.php?rech=liste> (last accessed June 21, 2016).

¹⁰⁵⁵ A complete collection is kept with Kamuran Bedirhan's personal papers at the IKP.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Winfried Schulze (ed.) in his preface to *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1996), p. 28. See also chapter 1.

¹⁰⁵⁷ See chapter 6 for an attempt to do so.

Historians with an interest in the history of the early Kurdish independence movement from the turn of the 20th century onward have routinely turned to the Bedirhani family, in particular to Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan's trajectories, to develop their arguments. This selective focus increases the risk of circular reasoning: Studying the assumed pioneers of the nationalist movement, researchers have found what they came looking for – but have rarely looked beyond. Another bias concerns the writings of the Bedirhani brothers themselves: In letters, articles and other publications from the 1930s and 1940s, they were subscribing to discourses about national awakening which took the imperative to catch up in a universal process of civilization for granted, thus often reproducing and appropriating imperialist and Orientalist perspectives and images of “the Kurds.”

5.2. State of the Art: The Sons of Emin Ali Bey in Nationalist Historiographies and Scholarly Research

The interest in the role of the Bedirhanis within the Kurdish independence movement gave rise to extensive collections of material about the family and its members. Malmisanîj [Mehmet Tayfun]'s work *Cızira Botanlı Bedirhaniler* from 1994 provides the standard reference and indispensable starting point for any research on the Bedirhani family history.¹⁰⁵⁸ Popular history blogs and online discussion forums offer easily accessible spaces for those interested in Kurdish popular history to discuss and exchange information. Celadet Bedirhan and his siblings are highly favored topics in these circles, and fiction, wishful

¹⁰⁵⁸ Malmisanîj [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızira Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları* (Spânga: Apec, 1994). A new edition was prepared by the Istanbul-based publishing house Avesta in 2009, attesting to the ongoing interest in the Bedirhani family history. The book is also available in an Arabic translation: Malmisanîj [Mehmet Tayfun] & Şakûr Muştafâ, *Badrhânîyû Ğazîrat Bûtân wa-mahâdîr iğtimâ'ât al-ğam'iyah al-'â'îliyah al-Badrhânîyah* (Arbil: Hükûmat Iqlîm Kurdistân al-'Irâq, Wizârat al-Taqâfah, Lağnat al-Matbû'ât, 1998).

thinking and facts sometimes get mixed up freely. Mehmed Uzun's fictional account of Celadet's life in particular is a source often referred to in these contexts. Historians of Turkey and the Middle East during the interwar period have also turned to the Bedirhani family, with different interests and research questions in mind: Martin Strohmeier looked at the trajectories of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan as case studies to learn about narratives in nationalist historiography and their construction.¹⁰⁵⁹ Jordi Tejel focused on the previously understudied experience of the Kurdish communities in Syria and Lebanon, drawing on material relating to the activities of the Bedirhani brothers there during the period of the French mandate.¹⁰⁶⁰ Other scholars like Ahmet Aktürk have turned to the example of the Bedirhani family with an interest in the formation of Kurdish identity and language politics.¹⁰⁶¹ Stefan Winter used material relating to the Bedirhani brothers to sketch out the Kurdish cultural and literary revival in Syria during the mandate period in its complexities.¹⁰⁶² The sons of Emin Ali Bey, and Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in particular, have been at the center of scholarly and popular interest for decades. However, there remain many unknowns, and worse, many half-truths and confusions about their biographies which continue to pervade discussions at all levels.¹⁰⁶³ Even though, as

¹⁰⁵⁹ Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2003).

¹⁰⁶⁰ Jordi Tejel, "Scholarship on the Kurds in Syria: A History and State of the Art Assessment." In: *Syrian Studies Association Newsletter XVI.1* (Spring 2011), pp. 4 and 18-29, and idem, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil: Continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)* (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2007).

¹⁰⁶¹ Ahmet Serdar Aktürk, *Imagining Kurdish Identity in Mandatory Syria: Finding a Nation in Exile*. Diss. Univ. of Arkansas, 2013.

¹⁰⁶² Stefan Winter, "The Other Nahda: The Bedirxans, the Millis and the Roots of Kurdish Nationalism in Syria." In: *Oriente Moderno* 25.3 (2006), pp. 461-474.

¹⁰⁶³ A pertinent example is Hakan Özoğlu, "'Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables in the Late-Ottoman — Early Republican Era." In: *IJMES* 33 (2001), pp. 383-409. In spite of drawing heavily on the example of the Bedirhani family for his overarching argument, Özoğlu confuses Celadet and Kamuran's biographical narratives (p. 401) and, in addition to getting minor details like the cause of death of Celadet wrong, repeats the unfounded and myth-making allegation that Kamuran's wife had been a "Polish princess" (p. 402). On Kamuran's wife Natacha and her background, see below.

this brief overview has shown, a lot has already been written on those members of the Bedirhani family who were involved with the Kurdish independence movement in general, I feel that important additional perspectives remain to be explored. What is still lacking and what I therefore focus on in the following chapter is the embeddedness of the trajectories of Celadet, Kamuran and Süreyya Bedirhan, both in the context of the wider community of post-Ottoman intellectuals and also within their own extended family and family history. Revisiting the stories of the three Bedirhani brothers, I argue that neither their ideas about Kurdish identity nor their political aims or the strategies they relied on in putting these aims into practice were entirely different from those at the disposal of earlier generations of the Bedirhani family. While there are important ruptures and changes, I feel the need to underline also the continuities which tend to be edited out of the standard narrative. To illustrate this point, an emphasis will be put on the network structures the sons of Emin Ali Bey operated in, pointing out and discussing new connections as well as ongoing relations originating in Ottoman times. In addition, I include the stories of members of Emin Ali Bey's family who did not achieve prominence in the Kurdish resistance movement but instead followed different trajectories, in order to show the wide range of possibilities open to members of the Bedirhani family, that is to individuals coming initially from a very similar background.

5.3. Biographical Sketches of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his Children

Before I delve into the biographical trajectories of his children, it makes sense to look at the background and personality of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan himself. Emin Ali Bey was a son of Emir Bedirhan and his

wife Ruşen. He was born in 1851/52 in Kandiye,¹⁰⁶⁴ today Heraklion on the island of Crete, where the Bedirhani family lived in exile. Emin Ali Bey completed his studies at the local Ottoman secondary school (*rüşdiye*) and then embarked on a career as an official in the Ottoman judiciary. At the age of sixteen, he left Crete and began to work as an apprentice in the Ottoman administration, at first in the province of Syria and later in Istanbul. His first appointment took him back to Kandiye in 1873, where he started working as a clerk in the directorate of the general secretary (*tahrirat müdüriyet-i 'umumiyesi*).

In the 1880s, Emin Ali Bey's career accelerated, as he was appointed in turn as judicial inspector to the courts in Ankara, Adana and later to Sivas, earning up to 4.000 *kuruş* of monthly wages and receiving impeccable evaluations from his superiors, who praised both his efforts and outstanding intelligence. As judicial inspector, Emin Ali Bey took part in an empire-wide process of reorganizing the Ottoman judicial administration which had begun in 1879. In the course of these reforms, promising early-career bureaucrats were dispatched throughout the empire to visit, monitor and review provincial courts, sending reports with their observations back to the imperial center. Distinguishing oneself in these often difficult working conditions could be a stepping stone into a career in the higher ranks of the Ottoman administration. At the same time as Emin Ali Bedirhan, the future grand vizier Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Paşa held a similar post as a judicial inspector in the province of Diyarbekir.¹⁰⁶⁵ In 1888, however, Emin Ali Bey was suddenly dismissed from active service in Sivas after a complaint had been filed against him. He appears to have been unemployed until 1894, when he was appointed to the municipal administration of Istanbul as a member

¹⁰⁶⁴ For his professional biography until 1908, see his *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 173.83.

¹⁰⁶⁵ See Abdülhamit Kırmızı, "Experiencing the Ottoman Empire as a Life Course. Ferid Pasha, Governor and Grandvizier (1851-1914)." In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40 (2014), p. 45.

of the *şehremaneti meclisi*. Two years later, Emin Ali Bey could still be found in Istanbul, now appointed as a member of the council of education (*meclis-i ma'arif*). The turn of the century marked the zenith of his career: Emin Ali Bey was promoted and reappointed as a judicial inspector, a post he held in turn for the *vilayets* of Yanya and İşkodra (1899 to 1901), Edirne and Salonica (1901 to 1904), and finally Ankara and Konya (1904 to 1906). During the same time period, Emin Ali Bey received several additional promotions and decorations, among them the medal of distinction in gold (*altın liyakat madalyası*). While there were complaints from locals in Konya and Ankara about his administration,¹⁰⁶⁶ it was the involvement of his family in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa that put Emin Ali Bey's career on hold in March 1906. It is interesting to note that only after this incident was Emin Ali Bey continuously being referred to as "one of the Bedirhani family" in the Ottoman records.

Emin Ali Bey was married twice and fathered at least eight children.¹⁰⁶⁷ After the death of his first wife, who was of Circassian origin, Emin Ali Bey remarried. His second wife, Seniha Hanım, had been educated in the household of Emin Ali Bey's mother and was, although not of Kurdish descent herself, reportedly familiar with Kurdish customs and language.¹⁰⁶⁸ In family photographs dating from Ottoman times, Seniha Hanım appears in traditional clothing, wearing a black *çarşaf* which

¹⁰⁶⁶ See BOA, BEO. 195259, 17 R 1323 H (June 21, 1905).

¹⁰⁶⁷ Emin Ali Bey's oldest son, Mehmed Şerafeddin, seems to have died in his early youth. He is mentioned in BOA, MF.MKT. 279.36, 05 Ra 1313 H (August 28, 1895) where plans are discussed to accept him as a boarder at the *mekteb-i sultaniye*, suggesting that he would have been born in the mid-1880s. Mehmed Şerafeddin does not appear in any later sources, and no *sicill-i ahval* file exists under his name.

¹⁰⁶⁸ As the 20th century proceeded and claims to Kurdish identity became increasingly tied to genealogical arguments, the non-Kurdish descent of their mother would have been an issue, even a potential problem for Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan. The attempt to equip her if not with biological then at least with cultural quasi-Kurdishness needs to be read in this context, see also below.

leaves only her face visible, as well as black gloves.¹⁰⁶⁹ Emin Ali Bey himself was later recalled by his son Kamuran as a distinctly religious man, who regularly attended Friday prayers, kept the fast during Ramadan and, in addition, urged his young children to join him in a modest diet of bread and olives once a week throughout the year to teach them compassion for the poor.¹⁰⁷⁰ It is interesting that while religion must have played a substantial role during their childhood years, neither Süreyya nor Celadet or Kamuran adhered strictly to Islamic rules of conduct or diet later in life. While Emin Ali Bey traveled through the Ottoman provinces as a judicial inspector, his family stayed behind in Istanbul for most of the time. His wife Seniha Hanım presided over the household, located in the Mühürdar Caddesi in Kadıköy.¹⁰⁷¹ The family home was situated in a part of Kadıköy which was then surrounded by lush gardens, prominent among them the large premises of the former *serasker* Hasan Rıza Paşa (1807–1877), whose daughter Zehra Hanım continued to live in the family *köşk* and was among the neighbors of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan's family in the late 19th century. Other neighbors in the remote and fairly well-off neighborhood included the brothers Krikor and Oseb Karagözlü and a Greek-Orthodox school. Around the turn of the century, the area was also a popular venue for exclusive receptions and balls organized by the foreign embassies of Istanbul.¹⁰⁷²

Like all Bedirhani children, Emin Ali Bey's older sons Süreyya, Hikmet, Celadet and Kamuran attended the Galatasaray Lisesi and stayed there during the week as boarders. The younger children were educated at home. Emin Ali Bey passed on a legacy of the study of law and the worldview of an imperial bureaucrat to his sons. He made a point in

¹⁰⁶⁹ The photograph is reproduced in Uzun & Bedirhan, *Defter-i Amalım*, between pp. 65 and 66.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Joyce Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan." In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), pp. 73-92.

¹⁰⁷¹ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁷² Bekir Bilgili, *İstanbul'un Sokak İsimleri Tarihi* (Istanbul: Us Medya Kültür Yayınları, 2010), pp. 474-475.

preparing his sons for a career in the Ottoman civil service and employed a Greek governess to teach them Greek¹⁰⁷³ – a language they learned to speak so well that Celadet Bedirhan was able to support himself by giving private lessons in this language to German students while he was trying to make ends meet in Munich during the economic crisis of 1923.¹⁰⁷⁴ It is difficult to establish whether the family also spoke Kurdish at home. It appears that in 1919, neither Kamuran nor his brother Celadet were fluent enough in Kurdish to keep up a conversation without an interpreter.¹⁰⁷⁵ Their father Emin Ali Bey, on the other hand, was said to write poetry in Kurdish.¹⁰⁷⁶ Emin Ali Bey, who was himself passionate about western music,¹⁰⁷⁷ also arranged for his children to study musical instruments.¹⁰⁷⁸ It is likely that the family did not see their father very often, as any return to Istanbul from his posts in the provinces apparently required a special official permission.¹⁰⁷⁹

In 1906, following the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, Emin Ali Bey was exiled with his wife and children to Isparta in western Anatolia. The family was accompanied into exile by Şeref Bey, a son of Emin Ali Bey's late brother

¹⁰⁷³ Emin Ali Bey himself, probably due to his education in Crete, was fluent in Greek according to his *sicill-i ahval* file, BOA, DH.SAİD. 173.83.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Major Noel, *Diary of Major E.M. Noel, C.I.E., D.S.O., on Special Duty in Kurdistan from June 14th to September 21st, 1919* (Basra: Government Press, 1919), p. 55.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Emin Ali Bedir-Xan, "Delaliya Zarowan." In: *Hawar* 5 (July 20, 1932), p. 4 and a translation of the text into French in the same issue, p. 11 by Hereqol Azizan (alias Celadet Bedirhan). Emin Ali Bey was, according to his son Celadet, also keenly interested in Kurdish literature in general. In 1894, he prepared the Kurdish epos *Mem û Zîn* for publication, but the result was so severely altered by the Hamidian censors that he gave up on publishing it altogether, see Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Joyce Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan." In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), p. 80.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Kamuran learned to play the violin, and continued to take lessons while studying in Munich, see Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁷⁹ In the fall of 1903, such a permission was granted to Emin Ali Bey. He returned to the capital to see his brother Bahri Bey who received treatment in the *Hamidiye Etfal Hastanesi* at the time, see BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ. 48.57, 17 B 1321 H (October 9, 1903).

Ahmed Hulusi Bedirhan (d. 1890).¹⁰⁸⁰ Kamuran Bedirhan retained happy memories of his time in Isparta, where the family spent two years and was made welcome by the local population. The Bedirhanis occupied a large house located in the outskirts of the small city and Emin Ali Bey busied himself with managing the estate. Now permanently at home, he became much closer to his family: As the Bedirhani children were not allowed to attend the local schools, he took it upon himself to tutor them at home, teaching them not only Persian and Arabic literature, but also chess and horse riding.¹⁰⁸¹ While their stay in Isparta is depicted as fairly idyllic in Kamuran's memories, it was still a forced residence, and no family member was allowed to leave the immediate surroundings of the small town. In 1907, Emin Ali Bey disobeyed these orders. The entire family was forced to leave Isparta as a punishment, much against their will and to the regret of the local population. From the Ottoman state's perspective, Isparta would have appeared as an ideal place of exile, situated in an isolated and mountainous region, far away from the Ottoman capital or any significant provincial center.¹⁰⁸² Or was it? Despite its isolated position, Isparta was famous for the quality of its religious instruction. Great numbers of religious scholars were educated in Isparta and later employed throughout the empire.¹⁰⁸³ The Nakşbandi tradition in Isparta was particularly active, and several different *tekkes* existed around the

¹⁰⁸⁰ Joyce Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir Kamuran Bedir-Khan." In: *Études Kurdes* 1 (2000), p. 79, and Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanlı Bedirhaniler*, p. 91 very briefly on Ahmed Hulusi Bey. Şeref Bey appears to have stayed close to Emin Ali Bey and his family: In 1922, he took part in one of the family meetings organized by Emin Ali Bey, Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanlı Bedirhaniler*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸¹ Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir," pp. 81-82.

¹⁰⁸² The archaeologist Friedrich Sarre visited Isparta in 1895, more than ten years prior to the arrival of Emin Ali Bey and his family. He estimated the population of the town to range between 18.000 and 20.000 people, with some four thousand houses, predominantly Muslim with small Greek and Armenian communities in separate quarters. Friedrich Sarre, *Reise in Kleinasien* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1896), pp. 167-168.

¹⁰⁸³ Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1989), p. 151. In the early 20th century, Isparta hosted another famous exile, Sa'id Nursi.

turn of the century.¹⁰⁸⁴ It is not unlikely that Emin Ali Bedirhan was able to draw on his family's *seyyid* status and their close connection to the Nakşbandi order to win support among the city's religious leaders and to gain access to local networks. Nothing is known about Emin Ali Bey's possible connections into the local administration. During the time of the Bedirhani family's stay in Isparta, the governor (*mutasarrıf*) was Mahmud Nazım Paşa (in office from 1906 to 1908). He was not overly popular with the local population and was recalled after the Constitutional Revolution in 1908, allegedly having gone mad.¹⁰⁸⁵

Following Emin Ali Bey's unauthorized departure from Isparta in 1907, he and his family had to present themselves in person to the Ottoman authorities in İzmir. It was decided to send them from there to the fortress of 'Akka (St. Jean d'Acre, north of Haifa). Miserable conditions awaited them there: The extended family was compelled to live in three clammy rooms of the old fortress. By then, the financial resources of Emin Ali Bey were depleted and his family was forced to sell any remaining valuable belongings, like their carpets. Emin Ali Bey's children were to experience some degree of poverty for the first time in their lives.¹⁰⁸⁶ To make matters worse, both Emin Ali Bey's wife and her newborn son Bedirhan fell severely ill on the journey from İzmir to 'Akka. Whereas Seniha Hanım recovered, the infant died shortly afterwards, at the age of eighteen months. Petitioning to the Ottoman authorities, Emin Ali Bey was eventually able to obtain some relief for his family: They were allowed to leave 'Akka and were sent to Hama in Ottoman Syria instead. Their relative Ali Bey, another member of the Bedirhani family, provided them with a warm welcome and introduced

¹⁰⁸⁴ For details, see Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf [19. Yüzyıl]* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), pp. 306-307.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Sümer Şenol, *A'dan Z'ye Isparta'nın El Kitabı* (Isparta: Göлтаş Kültür Dizisi, 2006), p. 138. The brief stay of the Bedirhani family did not make it into the chronicles of Isparta's local history, as far as I could see.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir," pp. 83-85. For the decision to send the family to 'Akkā, see also BOA, BEO. 31.96.239669, 24 L 1325 H (December 1, 1907).

them to the local Kurdish community, led by the Barazi family. The link to the Barazi family would continue to play a crucial role for Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan well into the 20th century.¹⁰⁸⁷

The period of exile from 1906 to 1908 retained particular importance in later narratives of the family history: In the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of the activists involved with the Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria and Lebanon had some first-hand experience with state violence, forced migration and exile. The Bedirhani brothers tailored the narrative of their own experience of exile between 1906 and 1908 to this new discourse, thereby casting themselves as part of a larger community of suffering. In 1932, the Kurdish journal *Hawar*, which was published by Celadet Bedirhan in Damascus, printed the lyrics of a Kurdish lullaby. It had allegedly been written by Emin Ali Bedirhan during his time in exile, after his youngest son Bedirhan was born in Isparta in 1906.¹⁰⁸⁸ In an explanatory note accompanying the text, an impossibly vague account of the circumstances of the Bedirhani family's exile from Istanbul is provided, stating that as a result of a personal vendetta, the entire family was forced to leave their home and was scattered to different parts of the empire in 1906.¹⁰⁸⁹ Taken out of its immediate context, the experience of exile becomes universal and relatable for members of the Kurdish refugee community in Syria and Lebanon in the 1930s and beyond.

In July 1908, following the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution, an amnesty allowed individuals who had been exiled for political reasons in Hamidian times to return to their homes. In the wake of these developments, Emin Ali Bey and his family made their way back to

¹⁰⁸⁷ Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir," pp. 86-87. See also chapter 3, on Bedri Paşa's links to the Barazi family.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Emin Ali Bedir-Xan, "Delaliya Zarowan." In: *Hawar* 5 (July 20, 1932), p. 4 and a translation of the text into French in the same issue, p. 11 by Hereqol Azizan (alias Celadet Bedirhan).

¹⁰⁸⁹ This very general account does not mention the murder of Rıdvan Paşa, the initial reason for sending the family into exile, at all.

Istanbul. The family returned to their former home in the Mühürdar Mahallesi in Kadıköy.¹⁰⁹⁰ Celadet and his younger brothers pursued their secondary education at the Vefa Lisesi in Eminönü and the family lived through the riots of the 1909 counter-revolution in the capital. They sided with the constitutionalists and organized a squad of Kurdish fighters to protect their neighborhood in Kadıköy during the troubles.¹⁰⁹¹ Following the return to power of the CUP government in 1909, Emin Ali Bedirhan was appointed as judicial inspector and president of the local court of appeals in Edirne. His older sons Süreyya and Hikmet were appointed to their first posts in the lower ranks of the Ottoman administration and set out on their own, while the rest of the family accompanied Emin Ali Bey. In Edirne, Emin Ali Bey became a close friend of the *vali* Hacı Adil Bey [Arda],¹⁰⁹² with whom he engaged in discussions about politics, justice and the impartiality of Ottoman officials.¹⁰⁹³

Emin Ali Bey became politically active during the Second Constitutional Period, keeping the interests of the larger Ottoman-Kurdish community but also of his own family in mind. On his initiative, regular family meetings were held in Istanbul and a family association, the *Bedirhani Aile Derneği* was founded in 1918.¹⁰⁹⁴ During these meetings, matters of immediate relevance to the family's communal life, but also more general questions about the future of the Ottoman-Kurdish community were being discussed.¹⁰⁹⁵ Records of the association's activities continue until 1922.¹⁰⁹⁶ Family associations of this kind were widespread among

¹⁰⁹⁰ Bilgili, *İstanbul'un Sokak İsimleri*, p. 475.

¹⁰⁹¹ Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir," p. 88.

¹⁰⁹² Arda served as vali of Edirne twice, between 1911 and 1912 and again from 1913 to 1915, see Kunalp, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 54 and Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁹³ Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir," pp. 89-90.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 105. On p. 131, however, Alakom writes that the family association was founded in 1920.

¹⁰⁹⁵ See the reproduction of the protocols of these meetings in Malmisanij, *Cızıra Botanlı*, pp. 260-272.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 131.

late Ottoman notable families and are still common today, for example among the Kurdish community in Beirut.¹⁰⁹⁷ They served and still serve the purpose of representing the interests of individual families and provide a framework to coordinate support and pool resources, for instance in the event of marriage, hospitalization or death of a relative, and to finance investments like business endeavors or the education of family members. Emin Ali Bey was also one of the leading members of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, but later drifted away from this organization, founding the Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctima'iyye Cemiyeti instead and acting as its first president.¹⁰⁹⁸ Some sources claim that because of his political activities, Emin Ali Bey was sentenced to death in 1909 and had to go into hiding in Egypt.¹⁰⁹⁹ His *sicill-i ahval* file, however, makes no mention of this, and neither does his professional career bear any traces of such a profound rupture. Emin Ali Bey's political activism was continued by his sons Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran in post-imperial times, who at times directly referred to Emin Ali Bey's role model and political heritage in their own political work.¹¹⁰⁰ His sons also drew on connections and networks that were first established by Emin Ali Bey in early 20th-century Istanbul and the wider Ottoman context. These networks included connections to future protagonists of the Kurdish independence movement like Şerif Paşa, sheikh Abdülkadir and Ahmed

¹⁰⁹⁷ Farah Wajih Kawtharani, *The Interplay of Clientelism and Ethnic Identity in Pluralist States: The Case of the Kurdish Community in Lebanon*, MA thesis, AUB Beirut, Feb. 2003, p. 14. See also Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut* (London et al.: Ithaca Press, 1986), p. 90 on *ğam'iyat al-'a'ila*.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürüleri*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 21. This might well be another instance of reading narratives of resistance and persecution into the earlier history of the Bedirhani family, as Kutschera received his information on the family history directly from Kamuran Bedirhan.

¹¹⁰⁰ Süreyya Bedirhan, for instance, introduced designs for a Kurdish flag that he claimed were made according to ideas of his late father, to the Kurdish activists in the mandate territories, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055 for a letter from Süreyya Bedirhan to Nizameddin Bey, dated October 27, 1927, in which he sent along a prototype of this flag, writing: "Si un jour le gouvernement kurde se forme, ce drapeau restera en souvenir de notre père mort avant d'avoir eu le bonheur de voir la libération de sa Patrie."

Zülkifl Paşa,¹¹⁰¹ to members of the Ottoman government under Damad Ferid Paşa, but also to Kurdish tribal leaders like Kahtalı Hacı Bedir Ağa of the Reşwan tribe.

Immediately after the armistice in 1918, Emin Ali Bey's career as an Ottoman official took a second wind. There was a small window of opportunity for Ottoman-Kurdish officials to secure influential positions in the spring of 1919. To ensure the support of the Kurdish community for the Ottoman state, the government under Damad Ferid Paşa was planning to install governors of Kurdish descent in the eastern provinces of the empire. In April 1919, Emin Ali Bedirhan was appointed as *vali* of Diyarbakir.¹¹⁰² This represented the most considerable advancement in his career so far and would have provided him with the opportunity to regain influence in the homeland of his family, from where they had been exiled for the past fifty years. The appointment also constituted a striking break with the previous Ottoman policy of keeping the Bedirhanis out of influential positions in the eastern part of the empire at all costs. Nothing, however, came of the appointment. Realizing that the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti in Istanbul was negotiating with British representatives, fathoming the possibilities for an autonomous Kurdish state, the Ottoman government around Damad Ferid Paşa no longer felt it could rely on the loyalty of its Kurdish representatives. Sheikh Abdülkadir lost his portfolio in the government as president of the Council of State (*şura-yı devlet*) in this context, and the offer made to Emin Ali Bedirhan was revoked. That the offer was made and, apparently, accepted by Emin Ali Bey, however, indicates that the Ottoman imperial option was still in the cards for him even after the armistice. British diplomats were, in 1919, not yet sure where to put him

¹¹⁰¹ Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion 1880-1925* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1989), p. 15.

¹¹⁰² Major Noel, *Diary of Major E.M. Noel*, p. 54 and FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

either, musing that he was “not definitely pro-Turkish” in one of their reports.¹¹⁰³ This window of opportunity, however, closed quickly: From the early 1920s onwards, Emin Ali Bey became more interested in a leading role in a future Kurdish state than in the participation in an ailing Ottoman government.

Emin Ali Bey left Istanbul with his family for Cairo in the early 1920s, his Ottoman pension expired soon after his departure. He died in 1926 in exile in Egypt and was survived by his second wife Seniha Hanım, who left Egypt and joined her children in Syria in the late 1920s.

5.3.1. Süreyya Bedirhan

Süreyya Bedirhan was the oldest son of Emin Ali Bey, and apparently the only surviving child he had with his first wife, a woman of Circassian origin who had died in 1887. Süreyya was born in 1883 in Istanbul.¹¹⁰⁴ He was a student at the Galatasaray Lisesi in the Ottoman capital. In 1906, during his final year at school, he was forced to abandon his studies, as he was banned from Istanbul, along with all other male members of his family, in connection with the murder of Rıdvan Paşa. Süreyya was exiled to Isparta with the rest of his family. He returned from exile to Istanbul in 1908 and, in the comparatively liberal environment of the early Second Constitutional Period, began to work as a journalist and editor. In connection with his publishing activities, he was allegedly arrested 1909/1910 and exiled from Istanbul.¹¹⁰⁵ According to his *sicill-i ahval* file, however, Süreyya was appointed as *nahiye müdürü*

¹¹⁰³ FO 251/93, report “Personalities in Kurdistan,” dated June 1919.

¹¹⁰⁴ See BOA, DH.SAİD. 173.87, Serhat Bozkurt reproduced Süreyya Bedirhan’s *sicill-i ahval* record in *Kürt Tarihi* 10 (Aralık 2013 – Ocak 2014), pp. 52-53.

¹¹⁰⁵ Malmisanij, *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 92, and Basile Nikitine, “Badrkhani, Thurayya and Djaladat,” in: *EI²*, vol. 1, p. 871. Nikitine was a friend of Süreyya’s and it seems that the latter somewhat exaggerated his run-ins with the Ottoman government and the ensuing persecutions when he related his life story to him.

to govern the municipality of Ayasuluğ, today Selçuk, then part of the district (*sancak*) of Kuşadası in the province of Aydın, in September 1909. He is said to have been on friendly terms with the British expatriate community of Bornova near İzmir during that time period.¹¹⁰⁶ In December of the same year, Süreyya was transferred to the municipality of Ayad in the province of Beirut. In 1912, he returned to Istanbul, but was soon arrested again because of his involvement with oppositional politics.¹¹⁰⁷ A British report, probably based on a personal interview with Süreyya Bedirhan, stated that grand vizier Talat Paşa offered him an instant promotion to a prestigious post in the administration if he gave up his involvement with the Liberal Entente opposition party (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası) and joined the CUP instead. Süreyya turned this offer down and, fearing repercussions, fled from Istanbul.¹¹⁰⁸ He left for Egypt and began to publish and pursue his political activities in Cairo, writing under the pen name Azizi Ahmed.¹¹⁰⁹ In Egypt, Süreyya was part of a circle of former Ottoman bureaucrats and intellectuals in exile around Ahmed Muhtar Paşa. He was employed to take care of the estate of Ahmed Muhtar Paşa's daughter-in-law, who was a member of the royal Khedivial family, princess Ni'metullah Hanım.¹¹¹⁰ Arriving in Egypt in 1912, Süreyya was also able to make use of connections to friends from the network of the Liberal Entente opposition party, notably the circle around the leading

¹¹⁰⁶ FO 252/93, report "Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections," dated July 1919, p. 6.

¹¹⁰⁷ Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 92.

¹¹⁰⁸ FO 252/93, report "Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections", dated July 1919, p. 6.

¹¹⁰⁹ This was a reference to the Bedirhani family's epithet "Azizan." Abdürrezzak Bedirhan used a similar reference in his communications with the Russian authorities in 1910, see chapter 4.

¹¹¹⁰ Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 92, where the author quotes the memoirs of Zınar Zilopi. Emine Foat Tugay, princess Ni'metullah's daughter, depicted the circles Süreyya Bedirhan was involved with in Egypt in her memoirs, but did not mention Süreyya or any other member of the Bedirhan family. Emine Foat Tugay, *Three Centuries. Family Chronicles of Turkey and Egypt* (Oxford et al.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963).

member Mehmed Sadık Bey (1860–1940), who was also operating from exile in Egypt.¹¹¹¹

British records suggest that Süreyya Bedirhan was in contact with the British representatives in Egypt at least since the beginning of the First World War.¹¹¹² He likely came to the attention of the British intelligence services even earlier, shortly after his arrival in Egypt in 1912. Quite possibly, Süreyya could build on relations he had forged in İzmir's diplomatic and expatriate circles.¹¹¹³ After the war had ended in 1918, Süreyya Bedirhan emerged as a person of considerable interest for the British as they were contemplating the political future of the Kurdish community in the former Ottoman lands. In a report on significant Kurdish personalities in the Middle East dating from June 1919, only a brief entry of no more than three lines was initially dedicated to Süreyya Bedirhan. In an addendum to this first report, dating from July 1919, however, substantial and detailed information on his biography was provided in what was now a lengthy paragraph. Süreyya was identified as “hereditary chief of the Boti tribe of Kurds in the Jezireh” and attributed “paramount influence among neighboring tribes [in the Jazira region, BH].”¹¹¹⁴ It is likely that Süreyya himself, who was personally acquainted with the British military attaché in Cairo, provided these information.¹¹¹⁵ The statements are completely exaggerated in themselves, but provide

¹¹¹¹ FO 252/93, report “Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections,” dated July 1919, p. 6. On Mehmed Sadık Bey, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 334.

¹¹¹² FO 608/95, telegram by Admiral Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, April 13, 1919: “My [Calthorpe’s] Military Attaché, who knows Sureya Bedrkhan well, says he has always been strongly pro-British and worked for us during the war.” I was unable to verify who the military attaché in question was.

¹¹¹³ FO 252/93, report “Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections,” dated July 1919, p. 6.

¹¹¹⁴ FO 252/93, report “Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections,” dated July 1919, p. 6.

¹¹¹⁵ This is indicated by a specific turn of phrase which found its way into the British documentation, stating that members of the Bedirhani family lived in Istanbul as hostages after the exile of Emir Bedirhan from Anatolia. An almost identical narrative for the events of 1847 was provided by Celadet Bedirhan, who also used the term “hostage.”

some insight into how Süreyya Bedirhan was hoping to present himself at the international stage: As the natural choice for a leader of the Ottoman-Kurdish community and – since he claimed to wield considerable influence over the Kurdish tribes in all of Anatolia and to represent his prominent family – as an incontourable interlocutor and partner for the British. As a matter of fact, however, Süreyya had not been to Eastern Anatolia in person even once throughout his entire life. He could not be sure to enjoy any considerable standing or following there. Being a member of the third generation of the Bedirhani family, rather than one of the sons of Emir Bedirhan, his claim to leadership within the family was equally spurious.¹¹¹⁶ In spite of his political ambitions, Süreyya was not able to travel to Europe after the war to take part in the Paris Peace Conference as he had intended. He limited himself to expanding his contacts and to extensive lobbying with the British authorities in Egypt, promoting Kurdish autonomy. To this effect, he founded a committee for Kurdish independence in 1918 and revived the publication of the journal *Kurdistan*, in the tradition of an earlier journal with the same title which had been founded by his uncles Mikdat Midhat and Abdurrahman Bedirhan in the late 1890s.¹¹¹⁷ In 1919, in a communication with British diplomats, Süreyya specified his occupation as “owner of the journal *Kurdistan*.”¹¹¹⁸

Early in 1920, Süreyya was in Syria, but was urged by the British to return from Aleppo to Egypt.¹¹¹⁹ After this intervention, from the spring of 1920 onwards, the center of Süreyya’s activities remained in Cairo: In

¹¹¹⁶ Süreyya’s claim to leadership within the family becomes slightly more credible if one zooms in on his own nuclear family and line of his father Emin Ali Bey, as whose eldest son Süreyya could then indeed claim a leading role among his siblings.

¹¹¹⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, report on Kurdish activities in Aleppo, dated August 14, 1931 and MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 802, dossier “Kurdes & Tcherkèss,” not dated. See also Malmisanij, *Cızira Botanlı*, p. 92.

¹¹¹⁸ FO 608/110, petition signed by Halid, Halil and Süreyya Bedirhan, addressed to Lloyd Georges, dated Cairo, March 30, 1919.

¹¹¹⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report from Damascus, dated February 01, 1929.

March 1920, he was living in the city center, in the az-Zahir quarter, listing his address as “Ragheb Pacha Street N°15.”¹¹²⁰ His home was not far from the palace built by the Ottoman-Syrian notable Sakakini Paşa, in an area that appears to have been a center for the Ottoman-Syrian community in Egypt at the time. Süreyya’s economic situation in Egypt in the early 1920s seems to have been comfortable: He addressed a letter to the British High Commissioner from the rather illustrious Shephard’s Hotel in Cairo in April 1921, from where he apparently coordinated his professional activities, possibly having rented an office there.¹¹²¹

In Egypt, Süreyya Bedirhan was part of the circle of Arif Paşa Mardinzade (1852–1920), the husband of his aunt Zarife Bedirhan.¹¹²² A close friend of the family, Süreyya oversaw Arif Paşa’s funeral arrangements when the latter passed away in October 1920.¹¹²³ Süreyya and Arif Paşa also shared political leanings, both were critical of the CUP government. Arif Paşa Mardinzade had come to Egypt immediately before the outbreak of the war in 1914, after he had fallen out with the CUP government and resigned from his office as *vali* of Damascus. As his wife had some property in Egypt, Arif Paşa chose to settle down in the Sabah Paşa quarter of Alexandria. The outbreak of the war then prevented him from returning to Istanbul, where the rest of his family

¹¹²⁰ FO 141/810/4, letter from Süreyya Bedirhan to the British Embassy in Cairo, dated March 4, 1920.

¹¹²¹ See FO 141/810/4, “Kurdish Activities: report from Süreyya Bedirhan on İsmail Milli,” dated April 26, 1921 and FO 141/687/2, letter from Süreyya Bedirhan to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, dated October 17, 1920. At the time, the Shephard’s in Cairo was one of the best hotels in town, popular with the political and financial elites as well as the *jeunesse dorée* from the entire region, see Maud Fargeallah, *Visages d’une époque* (Paris: Conscript, 1989), p. 128. Later, in 1927, however, he complained to a friend that his economic situation had become rather miserable, MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, letter from Süreyya Bedirhan to Nizameddin Bey, dated Cairo, October 27, 1927.

¹¹²² Arif Paşa had served as member of the Ottoman Council of State (*sura-yı devlet*) and *vali* of Basra and Syria, for his biography, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 239.

¹¹²³ FO 141/687/2, letter from Süreyya Bedirhan to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, dated October 17, 1920.

and his property remained. After the armistice, Arif Paşa therefore approached the British administration, seeking permission to return to Istanbul as soon as possible.¹¹²⁴ Permission was granted, but due to his declining health, Arif Paşa decided not to leave Egypt after all and asked for some members of his family to be permitted to join him in Egypt instead.¹¹²⁵ It is likely that, after Arif Paşa's untimely death, Süreyya was in charge not only of the funeral, but also involved in taking care of and accommodating the members of Arif Paşa's family who had just arrived in Egypt.

Through Arif Paşa's network, Süreyya Bedirhan was in contact with Şerif Paşa, one of the Ottoman representatives at the Paris Peace Conference and self-proclaimed spokesman of the Kurdish interest after the war. Şerif Paşa's son-in-law Mehmed Salih Husni, a lieutenant of the Ottoman army, lived in Egypt, was in contact with the Kurdish committee in Alexandria and also personally close to Arif Paşa. It is likely that the connection between Mehmed Salih Husni and the Mardinzade family opened up channels of communication between Şerif Paşa and the Bedirhanis.¹¹²⁶ In addition, Süreyya was in contact with Emir Faisal at the time, into whose family he had arranged for his daughter Kudret to marry.¹¹²⁷ In 1917, Emir Faisal made use of Süreyya Bedirhan as his intermediary when asking the British for a favor: Faisal wanted the British to release a political prisoner from the internment

¹¹²⁴ FO 141/687/2, letter from Arif Paşa Mardinzade to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, dated Ramleh, March 5, 1919.

¹¹²⁵ FO 141/687/2, letter from Arif Paşa Mardinzade to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, dated Ramleh, September 25, 1920. Arif Paşa asked for his mother Behiçe, his sister Latife and her daughter Hassina, his brother Abul'ula and his younger brother Cemal to be allowed to join him in Egypt.

¹¹²⁶ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

¹¹²⁷ Kudret Bedirhan got married to Rakan al-Hashimi, the son of Nasser ibn Ali al-Hashimi and later prince of Jordan. The couple had five children. Their first daughter, Fatima, was born in August 1927, another one of their daughters was called Süreyya (*14.03.1944), possibly in reference to Süreyya Bedirhan. Kudret passed away in Amman in 1977.

camp at Sidi Bishr in Egypt, rather than repatriating the individual in question to Istanbul. The prisoner posed as İsmail Bey, the son of the former Hamidiye commander İbrahim Paşa Milli, but was later found out as a fraud. It is indicative of Süreyya Bedirhan's comparative lack of local knowledge and familiarity with the Kurdish political scene in Eastern Anatolia that he did not recognize the supposed İsmail Bey as an impostor even after meeting with him in person and recording his story.¹¹²⁸

Ever since his arrival in Egypt prior to the First World War, Süreyya Bedirhan had been in close contact with the British authorities there. He was personally acquainted with the British High Commissioner Edmund Allenby. Süreyya Bedirhan was following orders of a British agent, an individual which is only identified as "I." in the British reports, to instigate the Kurdish tribes in Aleppo, Diyarbekir, Mosul and Bitlis in 1920 and attempt to win them over to support the British against the nationalist opposition which was forming around Mustafa Kemal. Süreyya was, however, quickly recalled from that mission and asked to return to Egypt. As his perplexity vis-à-vis the affair around the fake İsmail Paşa Milli described above indicates, he was lacking insider knowledge about the situation in the Kurdish territories and was therefore unfit as a mediator between the British and local Kurdish tribal authorities. Yet, the Kemalist leadership took Süreyya's connections to the British very serious and was eager to obtain information on his activities: In March 1920, some members of the Bedirhani family moved to Egypt from Istanbul. They were accompanied by a woman referred to as "a certain Turkish lady called Mafarate Hanim" in the British report, a

¹¹²⁸ See FO 141/817/8 for the paper trail on the affair in 1917. The fake İsmail Bey Milli had entered into contact with the British in northern Iraq in January 1917 and was able to secure an allowance for himself, before being found out as a fraud and sent to a prisoner camp to India and from there to Egypt.

lady who is further identified only as “Colonel Bahij Bey’s niece.”¹¹²⁹ This woman seems to have been a trusted family friend of the Bedirhanis, as she stayed in Süreyya Bedirhan’s house in Egypt and had access to his private papers. Mafarate Hanım, working together with a certain Hasan Şevki Bey, turned out to be spying for the Kemalists. She forwarded the information she obtained on Süreyya’s political activities to Mustafa Kemal’s camp and, when found out, threatened both the Mardinzades and Süreyya Bedirhan.¹¹³⁰

Over the 1920s, Süreyya continued to be based in Egypt, traveling frequently from there to Syria and Europe and promoting his plans for Kurdish autonomy. In the fall of 1927, Süreyya was in Cairo, unable to personally attend the inaugural meeting of the Kurdish association Hoybûn which was held in Beirut. Despite his absence, Süreyya was closely involved with the association’s activities: Following the foundation of Hoybûn, he was acting as its representative and middleman in Cairo. Through his contacts into circles of Armenian nationalists, Süreyya was able to enlist crucial financial and organizational support from Armenian and other anti-Kemalist movements for the activities of Hoybûn. In 1928, he embarked on an extended trip to France to this effect, and in the same year also toured the Syrian-Kurdish exile community in the United States.¹¹³¹ His meetings there were organized and brokered by Vahan Papazian¹¹³² and

¹¹²⁹ This is likely to be either Hakkı Behiç Bey [Bayıç] (1886–1943) or Behiç Bey [Erkin] (1876–1961), a grandson of *müşir* Ömer Fevzi Paşa and an Ottoman military who joined the Kemalist forces in the War of Independence, see Osman Nebioğlu, *Türkiye’de Kim Kimdir?* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Yayınevi, 1961-62), p. 356.

¹¹³⁰ FO 141/687/2, unsigned confidential report to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, dated October 12, 1920. According to this report, the mysterious Mafarate – which is most probably not her real name, but a misspelling, the name does not exist in Ottoman Turkish – had been married to an unnamed relative of Mustafa Kemal, whom she had divorced by 1920.

¹¹³¹ FO 141/687/2, unsigned confidential report to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, dated October 12, 1920. The French authorities did not agree with his political demands, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 3, 1928.

¹¹³² AIR 23/407, report “Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities,” dated June 17, 1929.

Herbert A. Gibbons (1880–1934), a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times* and supporter of the Kurdish cause.¹¹³³ Upon his return from the United States, Süreyya left once more for Paris, this time accompanied by his younger brother Celadet.

Ever since the late 1920s, the Turkish authorities had put pressure on France to restrict the travels of Süreyya Bedirhan, whom they had somewhat exaggeratedly identified as a key *éminence grise* behind the activities of the Kurdish nationalists in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands. In October 1928, the Turkish authorities decided to deprive Süreyya Bedirhan of his Ottoman citizenship. Still living in Egypt at the time, Süreyya then applied successfully for a Syrian passport, which he received in 1929, under the false pretense that he was born in the small village of Maqtala in northern Syria. This, the French authorities were able to confirm in 1933, was not true.¹¹³⁴ In 1930, Süreyya was visiting Syria. When his brother Celadet illegally crossed the border into Turkish territory, upsetting the Turkish authorities, the French put their foot down with the Bedirhanis. Süreyya was expelled from Syria and forced to return to Cairo.¹¹³⁵ He maintained regular contact with his brothers and informed them about his plans and wishes via mail,¹¹³⁶ but the balance of power within the family had shifted after 1930. With Süreyya's permanent absence from the mandate territories and Celadet's movements being restricted due to his house arrest, their younger brother Kamuran Bedirhan advanced as the main interlocutor for the French. In 1932, a French report on the Bedirhani family concluded that

¹¹³³ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 111.

¹¹³⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, "dossier Kamuran Bedirhan," investigation dating from December 22, 1933.

¹¹³⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 570, report dated December 8, 1932 and *Les Annales Coloniales*, Nr. 123 (August 12, 1930), "La Syrie expulse un chef kurde."

¹¹³⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, reports dated October 27, 1927 and August 12, 1930. A number of his letters were intercepted by the French security police.

Süreyya was too old and mentally instable to play any significant political role in the future.¹¹³⁷

In February 1931, Süreyya left Cairo once more for Paris. Entering the country, he specified his occupation as agronomist and landowner. He did not work while in France and lived off his personal resources. Süreyya continued to live in Paris until his death in 1938,¹¹³⁸ sharing an apartment in the rue de Sèvres with his French mistress.¹¹³⁹ His brother Kamuran visited him there at least once, in June 1938.¹¹⁴⁰ In Paris, Süreyya conducted research on Kurdish literature¹¹⁴¹ and established contacts with French intellectuals and scholars. He was also in conversation with Armenian and Greek intellectuals and activists.¹¹⁴² Kamuran Bedirhan could draw on the network his brother Süreyya had established when he himself came to Paris in the 1940s. In some sense, Kamuran also continued his brother's political work with very similar methods and priorities, publishing a monthly bulletin to communicate the Kurdish demands for autonomy to a European audience. In the fall of 1938, Süreyya Bedirhan died in Paris.¹¹⁴³ He was survived by his son Hakkı, who had studied in Munich with Celadet and Kamuran in the 1920s, and his daughter Kudret. Nothing is known about Süreyya's wife in Egypt, who is in some sources referred to as an Egyptian princess.¹¹⁴⁴

¹¹³⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, report not dated.

¹¹³⁸ APP, 77W553 – 205291, dossier Soyra Badrakhan, report dated August 31, 1938.

¹¹³⁹ APP, 77W553 – 205291, dossier Soyra Badrakhan, report dated August 31, 1938.

¹¹⁴⁰ APP, 77W553 – 205291, dossier Soyra Badrakhan, report dated June 8, 1938.

¹¹⁴¹ Prince Sureya Bedr-Khan, *La littérature populaire et classique kurde* (Bruxelles: Imprimerie Médicale et Scientifique, 1936). A copy of the six-page booklet can be found with the personal papers of Pierre Rondot at the Institut Kurde in Paris.

¹¹⁴² The Orientalist Basile Nikitine knew Süreyya personally, see letter from Nikitine to Kamuran, IKP, dated January 16, 1946. Several books in the personal library of Kamuran Bedirhan at the Institut Kurde in Paris had originally belonged to Süreyya and contain personal dedication to him, e.g. from the Armenian general Torcom [Arshak Torkomian].

¹¹⁴³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated November 14, 1938.

¹¹⁴⁴ See Uzun, *Kader Kuyusu*, p. 192.

5.3.2. Celadet Bedirhan

Celadet Bedirhan was born in Istanbul in May 1893, as the oldest son of Emin Ali Bey and his second wife, Seniha Hanım. Emin Ali Bey was in his forties at the time of his son's birth and employed as an Ottoman official. Celadet spent the early years of his childhood in Istanbul. Like his brothers, he was enrolled as a student at the prestigious Galatasaray Lisesi, before his entire family was exiled from Istanbul following the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906. Upon their return from exile, Celadet completed his secondary education at the Vefa Lisesi in Istanbul and in Edirne. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, Celadet enrolled to study law at the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul. Having graduated, he entered the Ottoman judicial bureaucracy as a clerk at the court in Edirne. This appointment was probably facilitated by his father, who was employed as judicial inspector in Edirne from 1909 onwards and was a close friend of the *vali*. Leaving Edirne, Celadet then worked at the press office of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, before he quit the state service entirely and began writing as a journalist for the Istanbul-based journal *Serbestî*, which was at the time edited by Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey.¹¹⁴⁵ Celadet fought as an Ottoman officer in the First World War, deployed at the Caucasus front.¹¹⁴⁶ After the armistice, Celadet took up residence in Istanbul and began to practice as a lawyer.¹¹⁴⁷

In 1919, he and his brother Kamuran were touring Eastern Anatolia in the company of the British Major Noel, on a mission to fathom the support of local Kurdish tribes for the British and to pacify the region. Their activities were viewed with great suspicion by the supporters of

¹¹⁴⁵ For a short biographical note, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, dated February 1, 1929.

¹¹⁴⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, dated February 1, 1929. See also FO 370/1935, British Legation Damascus to the Foreign Office, report on Kurds in Damascus, dated October 20, 1949.

¹¹⁴⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, dated February 1, 1929.

Mustafa Kemal in Anatolia. Together with his brother Kamuran, Celadet left the Ottoman lands in 1921, joining his siblings Tevfik and Safder in the south of Germany. He took up his studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. He stayed in Munich from 1921 to 1925, experiencing the economic crisis that hit Germany in 1923 and the ensuing political turmoil that shook the country. In Munich, Celadet studied law but also continued to pursue the interest in Kurdish language and literature to which he had taken during his travels in Eastern Anatolia in the company of Major Noel.¹¹⁴⁸ Celadet eventually left Munich for Egypt to join the rest of his family there in May 1925.

In 1927, Celadet moved from Cairo to Syria. He took up practicing as a lawyer in Beirut. From there, he traveled in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands and also to Iran and Iraq in the following years to mobilize support for Kurdish independence and kindle a coordinated uprising of the Kurds in eastern Turkey. The French mandate authorities grew increasingly suspicious of his activities, which were out of line with the emerging French policy of friendly relations with the Turkish Republic. As a consequence, Celadet was put under close surveillance and his movements were restricted. He was not allowed to travel in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands after he had illegally crossed into Turkey with a group of Kurdish tribal leaders in 1930. Being banned from the Kurdish settlements in northern Syria, he in turn lost a great deal of his political influence in the Jazira region. His brother Kamuran, who had publicly opposed the border crossing operation and was not as severely affected by the ensuing repercussion, came to be the preferred interlocutor for the French mandate authorities.

In the same year, in 1930, Celadet moved to Damascus, where he bought a house in the Kurdish neighborhood of as-Salihiye. He became a

¹¹⁴⁸ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” pp. 46-47.

prominent spokesperson of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon, being in close contact with the French mandate authorities and acting as a representative of the association Hoybûn. As restrictions put an obstacle to his political activities, Celadet shifted his focus to cultural and educational work in the 1930s and notably took up the publication of the Kurdish journal *Hawar* in 1932. In 1935, Celadet married his paternal cousin Ruşen Bedirhan (1909–1992), the daughter of Mehmed Salih Bedirhan. Their marriage carried a clear political message as well: In the face of Turkish assimilation politics, it was becoming a priority to protect the Kurdish national community by marrying endogamously.¹¹⁴⁹ The couple had three children. The first, a son named Safder in memory of Celadet's late younger brother, died in his infancy. Two other children, Sinem (or Sinemxan) and Cemşid, were born in the following years. The family continued to live in Damascus, in one household with Ruşen's daughter from an earlier marriage and her mother Samiye. The 1940s brought increasing economic difficulties for the family: Celadet worked occasionally as a translator and lawyer, his wife Ruşen was employed as a teacher.

Over the 1930s and 1940s, Celadet established himself as the undisputed intellectual authority of the Kurdish community in Damascus. Orientalists from all over Europe were in contact with him and visited him during their fieldwork trips to Syria.¹¹⁵⁰ A British report dating from 1949 described Celadet Bedirhan as a renowned sportsman and chess player and characterized him as an “astonishing linguist,” mentioning his superb knowledge of Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, Persian, French, German, English and Greek. It is noteworthy that Celadet was the only

¹¹⁴⁹ One generation earlier, in late Ottoman times, this had neither been a concern for Celadet's relatives nor for Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals more generally. Abdürrezzak and Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan married European women, as did Abdurrahman Bey's fellow Ottoman-Kurdish activists Abdullah Cevdet and İshak Sükutî in Geneva.

¹¹⁵⁰ Karl Hadank, for instance, a German Orientalist and linguist with an interest in Kurdish dialects sought out Celadet's expertise during his stay in Damascus, see below.

individual mentioned by name in this report on the Kurdish community of Beirut.¹¹⁵¹ It was stated in the same report, most probably inspired by how Celadet himself was telling his life story at the time, that he had spent most of his childhood in exile from his homeland in Cizre, being held as a hostage of the Ottoman government.¹¹⁵² This narrative, dating from the late 1940s, is extremely difficult to reconcile with the early beginnings of Celadet's career in the Ottoman civil service and his upbringing in the Ottoman elite of Istanbul around the turn of the century. His narrative was tailored to new discourses about Kurdish identity which emerged during the inter-war period: The Turkish state increased the pressure on the Kurds within Turkey to assimilate, while a generation of Kurdish intellectuals in exile was beginning to cast themselves as the advocates, instructors and leaders of the Kurdish people in Turkey and the mandate territories. Exile, being held in prison and, generally, being affected by state oppression emerged as markers of a shared Kurdish national identity.¹¹⁵³ Celadet, who was neither directly involved with the armed Kurdish resistance going on within Turkey nor personally exposed to the violence of the Turkish state, shifted the focus of his own biographical narrative to make it a better fit with this wider discourse and endorse his claims to leadership within the Kurdish community.

Witnessing the Syrian independence and the sharp turn towards an Arabization of the society following the Second World War, Celadet grew more and more disappointed with the stagnant situation of the Kurds and the unsatisfactory progress of the Kurdish independence movement. He increasingly withdrew from his former circles of Kurdish activists.

¹¹⁵¹ FO 370/1935, British Legation Damascus to the Foreign Office, report on Kurds in Damascus, dated October 20, 1949.

¹¹⁵² FO 370/1935, British Legation Damascus to the Foreign Office, report on Kurds in Damascus, dated October 20, 1949.

¹¹⁵³ Similar developments are described by Leyla Dakhli for the case of Arab intellectuals, she speaks of a shared "mémoire de la lutte," see Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, pp. 93-94.

Around 1950, Celadet saw an opportunity to reorient himself professionally: Hüseyin Ağa al-İbiş, a wealthy and influential Syrian notable and landowner of Kurdish origins, provided Celadet with a patch of agricultural land in the north of Syria, near a village called Hecân.¹¹⁵⁴ Celadet began to cultivate cotton there – a strategy very much in line with a general trend in Syria throughout the 1950s. At the time, land in the northern Jazira region was increasingly made available for large-scale, export-oriented agriculture with the help of new technologies of irrigation. As cotton prices were exceptionally high on the world markets, cotton became a popular crop with Syrian cultivators.¹¹⁵⁵

Celadet Bedirhan died unexpectedly in 1951, in a work accident on his recently acquired cotton fields. He reportedly fell into a well he had dug to help irrigate his land. In his trajectory, some Kurdish nationalists have recognized parallels to the tragic, unachieved fate of the Kurdish nation in general. To this day, Celadet's biography continues to be narrated, commented upon and embellished, enjoying an interest no other member of the Bedirhani family has achieved. Timing might contribute to the ongoing interest in Celadet's trajectory in popular history: His death roughly coincided with large-scale social and

¹¹⁵⁴ The İbiş family had plenty of access to land and agricultural investment: Hüseyin Ağa's younger brother Nuri al-İbiş was the president of the *Société Anonyme pour les Entreprises Agricoles* founded in Damascus in 1948 with the aim to foster irrigation and cultivation of formerly unexploited agricultural territories. See the society's listing in *Annuaire 1948-1949. Principales Sociétés exerçant une activité en Syrie* (Service de la Documentation de la Banque de Syrie et du Liban, 1949), p. 195. On the al-İbiş family, see FO 371/35206, report "Leading Personalities in Syria," dated June 22, 1943, p. 18. Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East. A Study of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq* (London, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1957), pp. 95-96 also mentioned Hüseyin al-İbiş, stressing that he had taken up agricultural investments only recently, after the end of the Second World War. He had been able to buy marshlands rather cheaply and had then begun to grow cotton, sugar cane and water melons for export. Warriner met with Hüseyin al-İbiş during her field work, describing him as an excentric individual, whose "appearance recalls the English or Scottish landowners of a generation ago, a tall, gaunt old man in tweeds." In addition, she recalls that he was suspicious of electricity.

¹¹⁵⁵ Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East. A Study of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq* (London, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1957), pp. 71-112. Warriner traveled to Syria in 1955 for fieldwork.

economic changes in Syria and the wider Middle East, notably the collapse of a political system dominated by the urban notable class and former Ottoman intellectuals like the Bedirhani brothers. Retelling Celadet's life story provides an occasion to nostalgically commemorate and mourn an era, between the end of the First World War and 1950, during which the Kurdish community had still been hopeful to achieve political independence.

5.3.3. Kamuran Bedirhan

Kamuran Bedirhan was two years younger than his brother Celadet. Throughout their lives, the two brothers were very close. Kamuran was, according to his own specifications, born on August 21 in 1895 in Maqtala, Syria.¹¹⁵⁶ Given that his brother Süreyya also claimed to have been born in the village of Maqtala but was found out to be lying by the French in 1933,¹¹⁵⁷ it is very likely that Kamuran – for the same practical and ideological reasons which will be discussed in greater detail below – similarly tampered with the information about his place of birth. It is very probable that like his brothers, he was born in Istanbul instead. Kamuran's early life ran parallel to his brother Celadet's: He, too, was a student at the Galatasaray Lisesi. He also accompanied his father and the rest of the family into exile in 1906 and was allowed to return to Istanbul in 1908. There, he attended the Vefa Lisesi in Eminönü for a short period of time in 1909, and then completed his secondary

¹¹⁵⁶ Kamuran Bedirhan himself wrote so in a letter to Pierre Rondot, dated January 14, 1949, fonds IKP. This information is also widespread in the secondary literature. Other sources give different dates or mention Damascus as his place of birth, see Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” p. 46.

¹¹⁵⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, “dossier Kamuran Bedirhan,” investigation dating from December 22, 1933.

education in Edirne. From there, he went on to study law, together with his brother Celadet at the law school of the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul.¹¹⁵⁸

Kamuran volunteered to join the Ottoman Army during the Balkan Wars, he fought in Bulgaria in 1913.¹¹⁵⁹ He also served in the Ottoman army during the First World War. After the war, in 1919, he was reunited with his older brother Celadet, accompanying the British Major Noel on his mission through Eastern Anatolia. As a result of his participation in these activities, he later became *persona non grata* with the Kemalist government. In the 1920s, Kamuran was in Germany. He studied law at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich and later continued his studies in Leipzig. When his siblings left Germany in 1925, Kamuran stayed on. In 1926, he graduated from the Universität Leipzig with a Ph.D. degree in law, having submitted a thesis on marriage law in Islam. In Leipzig, Kamuran studied under Prof. Alfred Schultze (1864–1946),¹¹⁶⁰ who held the chair for history of law and civil law in Leipzig between 1917 and 1934.¹¹⁶¹ By 1927, Kamuran was back with his family in the former Ottoman lands, practicing as a lawyer at the court of appeals (*cour d'appel*) in Beirut.¹¹⁶²

¹¹⁵⁸ According to his brief biography in Pierre Labrousse (ed.), *Langues d'O, 1795-1995. Deux siècles d'histoire de l'École des langues orientales* (Paris: Editions Hervas, 1995), p. 96, Kamuran graduated from the Dar'ül-Fünun in 1919.

¹¹⁵⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 570, report dated December 8, 1932, according to a reference made by the Turkish consul in a conversation with Kamuran Bedirhan that was recorded by the French.

¹¹⁶⁰ See Curt Wunderlich in the preface to Kamuran Bedirhan, *Schnee des Lichts* as cited in Petr Kubálek, "Towards Kurdish Studies in the Czech Republic." In: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kurdische Studien* 2 (2014), pp. 193-234. It is also possible that Kamuran studied under Paul Koschaker (1879–1951), a historian of law and professor for civil law at the Universität Leipzig between 1915 and 1931. Koschaker was interested in Oriental law, albeit focusing mostly on the Ancient Near East, and the comparison of legal systems. For Koschaker, see Gerhard Ries, „Koschaker, Paul." In: Historische Kommission der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 26 vols. (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1980), vol. 12, pp. 608-609.

¹¹⁶¹ On Schultze's biography, see his entry in Professorenkatalog der Universität Leipzig, www.uni-leipzig.de/unigeschichte/professorenkatalog/leipzig/Schultze_145/ (last accessed October 15, 2015).

¹¹⁶² APP, 77W440 – 496565, November 21, 1950.

His brother Celadet's controversy with the French authorities in 1930 strengthened Kamuran's position both within the Kurdish community and with the French authorities.¹¹⁶³ In the 1930s, Kamuran's focus was on educational politics, due to the fact that the French authorities had proscribed any openly political activities by the Kurdish nationalists in Syria: He taught evening classes for Kurdish language in Beirut and made plans to open an agricultural model-school (*ferme-école*) for Kurdish students in 'Akkār, a village north of Tripolis. The local Kurdish community in 'Akkār supported his project, but ultimately money was lacking to put it into practice.¹¹⁶⁴

Between 1933 and 1938, Kamuran traveled to Paris a number of times,¹¹⁶⁵ where his older brother Süreyya lived in exile.¹¹⁶⁶ The center of his activities, however, continued to be in Syria and Lebanon,¹¹⁶⁷ where he pursued his interests in Kurdish language and culture. He was a frequent contributor to the journal *Hawar*. In 1940, he presented his translation of the Qur'an into Kurdish in Damascus, which was also published in *Hawar* as a series and later republished as a separate book. In the 1940s, Kamuran also edited his own journal, *Roja Nû* and worked as a speaker for *Radio Levant*, issuing a regular program in Kurdish language. Kamuran returned to France on several occasions even after his brother Süreyya's death, throughout the early 1940s. He was fathoming the possibilities of taking up permanent residence in Paris after the war to more effectively advocate the cause of Kurdish autonomy from there, in close proximity to the venue of the Paris Peace

¹¹⁶³ See a report by Pierre Rondot, dated October 1932, fonds IKP.

¹¹⁶⁴ Report by Pierre Rondot, dated October 1932, fonds IKP.

¹¹⁶⁵ APP, 77W440 – 496565, November 21, 1950.

¹¹⁶⁶ Kamuran was in Paris in the spring of 1934: An article in *Hawar* 24 (April 4, 1934) was signed "Paris, Dr. K.A. Bedir-Xan."

¹¹⁶⁷ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” pp. 46-47 notes that Kamuran spent quite some time in Berlin in the 1930s and early 1940s, presumably working for almost a year with the Orientalist Karl Hadank there. I could find no further evidence of his stay. It is possible that Ammann confused Kamuran and Celadet, who did work with Hadank for a short period in Damascus. See chapter 6 for their encounter.

Conference.¹¹⁶⁸ He wrote and distributed political pamphlets laying out the Kurdish demands to international diplomats and journalists from the 1940s onwards. Already in 1946, when he was still in Syria, Kamuran and Pierre Rondot discussed the possibility of him taking over the position as lecturer for Kurdish at the prestigious *Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales* (INALCO) in Paris. From mid-1947 onwards, Kamuran was again in Paris, by now taking preparations to stay for an extended period of time. He pursued not only political, but also personal, economic opportunities: He established contact with several enterprises he hoped to work for as a representative to export consumer goods to the Middle East from Europe. Among them was *Ondia*, a company which produced radio receivers, much sought after at the time.¹¹⁶⁹ Kamuran returned once more to Syria and then came back to Paris in the spring of 1948, holding a visa which allowed him to stay on a permanent basis.¹¹⁷⁰ Like it had been proposed by Pierre Rondot two years earlier, Kamuran did take over the position as lecturer for Kurdish at the INALCO, filling in for Roger Lescot (1914–1975),¹¹⁷¹ on whose initiative the position had been created in 1945 and who, being a French diplomat, was transferred to the embassy in Cairo after the war.

From 1948 until his retirement in 1970, Kamuran Bedirhan taught classes in Kurmancı and Kurdish civilization and culture at the INALCO,

¹¹⁶⁸ APP, 77W440 – 496565, dated November 21, 1950 and a letter from Kamuran Bedirhan to Basile Nikitine, dated July 26, 1947, fonds IKP.

¹¹⁶⁹ See his personal papers at the IKP for a copy of Kamuran's contract with *Ondia*, dated November 13, 1947. The import of radio receivers promised to be a lucrative enterprise, as electricity had been systematically introduced over the 1930s throughout Lebanon and the market for electrical goods expanded considerably. See Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens. Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 22-26 for details on sales figures, popular radio programs, etc.

¹¹⁷⁰ "Visa n° 447, délivré par les services consulaires de France à Beyrouth," dated February 15, 1948. The visa was later extended to a temporary residency, see APP 77W440 – 496565, dated November 21, 1950.

¹¹⁷¹ Labrousse (ed.), *Langues d'O*, pp. 96-98 for a short biography.

apparently without receiving any recompensation or regular salary.¹¹⁷² During his years at the INALCO, he single-handedly shaped the program of Kurdish studies, putting a strong emphasis on Kurmanci, at the expense of other Kurdish dialects. It was only under his successor Joyce Blau that classes on Sorani Kurdish were added to the curriculum in the 1970s.¹¹⁷³ In addition to his scholarly activities, Kamuran continued his political lobbying for the Kurdish cause. In June 1948, he founded the *Centre d'études kurdes* in Paris and continued to publish material and make interventions at the United Nations and other institutions in favor of Kurdish autonomy.¹¹⁷⁴ His activities were closely monitored by the French authorities throughout the 1950s, but the respective police records did not find fault with Kamuran's non-violent lobbying and nationalist propaganda.¹¹⁷⁵ From Paris, Kamuran Bedirhan traveled extensively all over Europe, giving for instance a talk at the *Royal Central Asian Society* in London in August 1949.¹¹⁷⁶ He also traveled multiple times to Switzerland and Germany, chiefly to meet family members and fellow Kurdish activists, and also went to Italy for business purposes. In the fall of 1949, he embarked on his first journey to the United States, where he met with policy makers and journalists in the hopes of interesting them in the cause of Kurdish independence.¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷² He himself complained about this fact in a letter to Pierre Rondot, see IKP, dated March 8, 1949. His statement is corroborated by Joyce Blau's recollections, interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris.

¹¹⁷³ Interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris.

¹¹⁷⁴ The center, located in the apartment of Irmine Roumanette, a French writer and friend of Kamuran and his brother Süreyya, in 3 rue Debrousse, was essentially a one-man show, even though Kamuran had hoped for close cooperation with Pierre Rondot and envisaged the creation of branches of his center in Switzerland and Italy, see letter from Kamuran to Pierre Rondot, dated January 14, 1949, IKP, and interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris.

¹¹⁷⁵ APP 77W440 – 496565, Kamuran's activities were monitored until 1954.

¹¹⁷⁶ APP 77W440 – 496565, November 11, 1950 and letter Kamuran to Rondot, dated May 14, 1949, IKP.

¹¹⁷⁷ APP 77W440 – 496565, November 11, 1950.

Police records stated that even though he did not receive any income from his teaching position at the INALCO, Kamuran had ample personal financial resources at his disposal in 1950.¹¹⁷⁸ The publication of the *Bulletin du centre d'études kurdes*, however, was discontinued in the same year after thirteen issues, having not brought about the intended effect and being no longer worth the considerable investment of time and money. Kamuran's lobbying, however, continued. He spoke in favor of Kurdish independence at the United Nations for the second time in January 1952.¹¹⁷⁹ In Paris, Kamuran Bedirhan came to be a key intermediary for Kurdish students and expatriates coming to or preparing a stay in France. He used his contacts to facilitate scholarships for Kurdish students coming to Europe.¹¹⁸⁰ Tarık Ziya Ekinçi (*1926 in Lice) did not know Kamuran Bedirhan personally, but sought him out while he was in Paris during the academic year of 1954/55. Ekinçi was a left-wing activist and studied to become a medical doctor at the time. He attended Kamuran's Kurdish classes at the INALCO, together with five other students, among them one young woman and an Armenian refugee. After their first encounter, Kamuran invited Ekinçi back to his home, and they subsequently met several more times. Ekinçi found Kamuran eager to talk about Kurdish culture and folklore, and he immediately found himself quizzed about the local dialect in Lice. However, Kamuran was less willing to talk about politics and refused to recount the history of the first Kurdish nationalist societies in Istanbul when Ekinçi asked him to do so.¹¹⁸¹

¹¹⁷⁸ The same report mentions several million Francs, divided among bank accounts in Beirut, Geneva and New York, APP 77W440 – 496565, November 11, 1950.

¹¹⁷⁹ APP 77W440 – 496565, October 19, 1953.

¹¹⁸⁰ See IKP for letters from Kamuran Bedirhan to Fritz Grobba, dated May 16 and May 18, 1962. The German Carl-Duisberg-Gesellschaft was to provide the financial support for the scholarships.

¹¹⁸¹ See Tarık Ziya Ekinçi, *Lice'den Paris'e Anılarım*. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), pp. 320-324 on the encounter.

In 1953, Kamuran asked for a reference from his employer at the INALCO as he intended to move permanently to France¹¹⁸² and wanted to have his remaining belongings shipped over from Lebanon. Early in June 1954, Kamuran got married to the French citizen and former Russian refugee Nathalie d’Ossovetzky.¹¹⁸³ Nathalie, called Natacha, was his student, his secretary and close companion. The couple lived together in Natacha’s small apartment in Paris. Natacha helped Kamuran edit and prepare his writings and talks, filled in for him while he was traveling or at other times joined him on his trips.¹¹⁸⁴ In February 1975, Natacha died in Paris. Kamuran Bedirhan survived his wife by three years before he, too, passed away in December 1978 in Paris, at age eighty-three. While his brother Celadet’s grave in Damascus has become a veritable place of pilgrimage for supporters of Kurdish nationalism,¹¹⁸⁵ a different site of memory has been established for Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris: His personal papers are kept at the *Institute Kurde* in Paris which was founded in 1983 in the tradition of Kamuran’s earlier *Centre d’études kurdes*. Here, in the reading room of the research library, Kamuran Bedirhan’s portrait overlooks the scene and reminds visitors of his scholarly legacy. Throughout his life, Kamuran was a prolific researcher and writer. He penned more than one hundred works, most of them on Kurdish language, history, folklore and politics.¹¹⁸⁶ Working from Paris and connected to Kurdish leaders and

¹¹⁸² Paris became his home after that, but he did consider other options. In September 1960, *Le Monde* reported that Kamuran intended to move to Baghdad, where he was appointed as university professor for Kurdish literature, “L’émir Bedir Khan quitte Paris pour s’installer à Bagdad.” In: *Le Monde*, September 3, 1960. Nothing, however, came of this appointment and Kamuran stayed in France.

¹¹⁸³ APP, 77W440 – 496565.

¹¹⁸⁴ See the exchange of letters between Natacha and Kamuran kept with his private papers at the IKP, dating from October 1963.

¹¹⁸⁵ Joyce Blau mentioned that Kamuran was open to donating his mortal remains to science, interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris.

¹¹⁸⁶ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” p. 47.

activists all over the world, he is remembered as an integrative figure and leading representative of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe.¹¹⁸⁷

5.3.4. Other Siblings

In addition to his three more prominent sons Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran, Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan raised four more children, one of them a daughter. Since these children did not come to play a prominent role in the Kurdish independence movement, much less is known and remembered about their trajectories. Hikmet [Çınar] was born in Istanbul and was older than Celadet and Kamuran.¹¹⁸⁸ Possibly, he and his brother Süreyya were the children of Emin Ali Bey's first wife. In 1909, Hikmet received his first appointment in the Ottoman administration, as an official in the municipality of Dedeoğaç, today Alexandroupoli in western Thrace, Greece.¹¹⁸⁹ He later married and had two children with his wife Nuriye. The family continued to live in Istanbul after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. With the introduction of the *soyadı kanunu* in 1935, Hikmet and his family, along with other members of the extended Bedirhani family in Turkey, adopted the surname Çınar. Hikmet Çınar attended Celadet's funeral in Damascus in 1951, living in Adana at the time.¹¹⁹⁰

Emin Ali Bey and his second wife Seniha Hanım had three more sons: Tevfik, Safder and Bedirhan, who died in infancy, and one daughter, Meziyet. Tevfik [Çınar] was born in 1900 in Istanbul and died in an accident in Paris in 1963.¹¹⁹¹ While not the oldest, he was the first of

¹¹⁸⁷ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirhan,” p. 47.

¹¹⁸⁸ Blau, “Mémoires de l'émir,” p. 89.

¹¹⁸⁹ Blau, “Mémoires de l'émir,” p. 89.

¹¹⁹⁰ See the list of condolences in *Dikrî al-amîr Ğalâdat Badrĥân al-sāniyah, 1897 – 1951* (Damascus, 1951), p. 35, n° 19.

¹¹⁹¹ See *Milliyet*, March 15, 1963, featuring a brief note on his death.

Emin Ali Bey's sons to be sent to Europe for his university education. In 1919, he took up his studies in forestry at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich and later earned a Ph.D. at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. Tevfik returned to what was now Turkey after the completion of his studies and embarked on a career as a university lecturer in the Turkish Republic in the 1940s. Following an argument with the Minister of Education, he left the university to work in the private sector. He became the director of the ZİNGAL holding, a company dealing with wood in the Turkish Black Sea region. As wood was in high demand for construction projects, this would have been a booming sector at the time. In 1946, a British report described Tevfik Çınar as a wealthy businessman who had in the past allegedly been harboring sympathies for Nazi Germany. Early in 1946, Tevfik left Turkey for Belgium, and was said to have no intention to return.¹¹⁹² He did, however, eventually come back to Turkey. In the 1960s, Tevfik Çınar invested in the import of agricultural machinery.¹¹⁹³ He, too, had adopted the surname Çınar in 1935 and was married to Füsün Manyas, of the Ottoman Manyaszade family.¹¹⁹⁴ The couple's only child, Safer Çınar (*1946) currently lives in Berlin and is an activist for the interests of the Turkish community in Germany.¹¹⁹⁵ Tevfik Çınar and his family also attended Celadet Bedirhan's funeral in Damascus in 1951.¹¹⁹⁶ Tevfik's brother Safer Bedirhan also studied in Munich in the 1920s. According to Celadet Bedirhan's diary, he fell in love and got engaged to

¹¹⁹² FO 195/2596, W. Allen, press attaché at the British embassy in Ankara to the Foreign Office, report dated November 30, 1946.

¹¹⁹³ The information on Tevfik Çınar's biography and business endeavors was kindly provided by his son Safer Çınar, telephone conversation on February 18, 2014, and ensuing exchange of emails.

¹¹⁹⁴ Füsün came from a family of Ottoman bureaucrats and lawyers. She was the granddaughter of the former Ottoman Minister of Justice Refik Bey Manyaszade (1853–1908) and daughter of the Turkish banker Ali Raufi Manyas. On Refik Bey, see Hasan Basri Erk, *Meşhur Türk Hukukçuları* (Adana: Erk, 1954), pp. 375-376.

¹¹⁹⁵ Safer Çınar is a founding member of the Türkischer Bund in Berlin-Brandenburg. See <http://tbb-berlin.de/%C3%9Cber%20den%20TBB/Vorstand> (last accessed June 24, 2016).

¹¹⁹⁶ See the list of condolences in *Dikrî al-amîr Ğalâdet Bađrĥân al-sâniyah*, 1897 – 1951 (Damascus, 1951), p. 35, n° 13.

a German student, a young woman called Nora Pelikan in Celadet's account, in May 1923.¹¹⁹⁷ Safder died in Germany in 1926, following a long illness that is only hinted at in his brother's writings, probably tuberculosis.¹¹⁹⁸ Safder's memory lived on in the family, as both Celadet and Tevfik decided to pass his name on to one of their own sons, respectively. The only daughter of Emin Ali Bey, Meziyet [Çınar] lived in Istanbul, and later in Cairo with her parents. At some point after 1926, she returned to Istanbul with her mother after her father's death. She was married for a brief interval, but her husband died at a young age – possibly before the surname law of 1934, as she did not retain his surname after his death. According to Musa Anter, Meziyet's husband was a Kurd from Syria.¹¹⁹⁹ She worked as a school teacher¹²⁰⁰ and was, later in her life, also politically active. A number of sources credit her with the foundation of the women's organization of the *Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi* (CGP, Republican Reliance Party), which existed between 1967 and 1981 and had a Turkish nationalist outlook. In spite of her commitment to the Turkish Republic, she was in contact with her brothers Celadet and Kamuran throughout their lives. Meziyet died in Istanbul in 1986.¹²⁰¹ Her activities will be looked at in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

¹¹⁹⁷ The records of the university in Munich list no Nora Pelikan in the 1920s, I only found a Pelikan, Marianne from Brunn. The Stadtarchiv München, on the other hand, has an entry for a Nora Pelikan, born on July 17, 1901 in Gablonz, Bohemia and a student at Munich University in 1925 in its records, she lived in Türkenstraße 52/3 in the summer of 1925, see Stadtarchiv München, EWK 65 B 254.

¹¹⁹⁸ Bedirxan, *Günlük Notlar*, p. 18.

¹¹⁹⁹ Anter, *Hatıralarım*, pp. 105-106.

¹²⁰⁰ Shahrzad Mojab, *Women of a Non-State Nation. The Kurds* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publications, 2001), p. 64.

¹²⁰¹ On her experience in the Republican era, see chapter 7.

5.4. The Bigger Picture: Situating the Sons of Emin Ali Bey Within the Post-Ottoman Transition Period

A multifaceted picture emerges from these close-ups on the biographical trajectories of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his children. Many scholars before me have taken an interest in their lives and activities, focusing notably on Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan. This emphasis is also due to the comparative density of sources available on their biographies. In terms of information, I cannot add much to this previous research. Nor do I set out to answer all of the questions that are still open. Many details remain to be explored: What German newspaper or journal did Celadet Bedirhan write for when he was living in Munich in the 1920s? Where, if at all, did he publish the Kurdish stories he allegedly translated into German?¹²⁰² I am also not in a position to re-evaluate the importance of Celadet Bedirhan's activities for the early Kurdish independence movement under the French mandate. I am not attempting, in other words, a history of events or a contribution to the political history of the Kurdish nationalist movement. My more modest aim in the following is to change perspectives, by looking into the Ottoman past of the Kurdish activist and making the emerging picture of Emin Ali Bey and his sons a little more complex. Looking closely, there are interesting contradictions to ponder: For example, throughout his time in Syria, Celadet was an advocate for a Kurdish language reform and the introduction of a Latin alphabet for Kurdish. He coined neologisms, almost single-handedly created a Kurdish literary language in his journal *Hawar* which is still regarded as a standard by speakers and students of Kurmancî Kurdish today, and he collected and preserved countless oral traditions in Kurdish. Yet, in his personal communications, in his letters to his

¹²⁰² These open questions were brought to my attention in a personal conversation with Abdullah Keskin, the editor of the publishing house Avesta Yayınları in Istanbul in March 2014.

siblings and friends and his personal notes, Celadet often stuck to Ottoman Turkish in Arabic script.¹²⁰³

Having presented a brief overview of the trajectories of the protagonists of this chapter, a number of key moments in their biographies during the period of transition between imperial and post-imperial contexts will be revisited: Their late Ottoman school years, the publishing scene in Istanbul, the years of the First World War, and finally the experience of the immediate post-war period, from 1919 to 1926 in Istanbul, Germany and Egypt will be under the spotlight, respectively. In the following chapter, I then turn to a detailed analysis of the experiences of the Bedirhani brothers Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period, from roughly 1926 into the late 1940s. It is reasonable to look at the trajectories of the brothers Kamuran and Celadet in conjunction, at least until Kamuran Bedirhan left Syria to live permanently in Paris after 1948. The brothers, it can further be assumed, would have made use of more or less the same networks up until this time. Therefore, I regard and analyze their trajectories as interlaced and hope that they illuminate each other to some extent when studied together.

5.5. Ottoman Trajectories

The sons of Emin Ali Bey received their schooling and university education in late Ottoman times.¹²⁰⁴ Their first job appointments were

¹²⁰³ A pointed example in this regard are the editorial notes and corrections Celadet included in his own handwriting, in Ottoman Turkish using Arabic script, while proofreading printed drafts of *Hawar* dating from 1942. The drafts are preserved among Pierre Rondot's personal papers at the IKP.

¹²⁰⁴ Nothing is known about the schooling of their sister Meziyet, whose later career as a school teacher suggests she was educated, possibly tutored at home. This would not have been unusual in Ottoman bureaucrats' families: Anbara Salam Khalidi (1897–1968) wrote about her own experience being tutored at home in Beirut in the years prior to the First World War, in her case by the already well-known scholar Abdallah al-Bustani, in her

as apprentices and clerks in the Ottoman imperial bureaucracy. They took their first steps as writers and editors in the intellectual environment of Ottoman Istanbul around the turn of the century. It can be assumed that the Bedirhani brothers retained lasting impressions and, possibly, also ongoing friendships from this formative period in their lives. In the following, I set out to test this assumption by looking closely at three exemplary areas of their late Ottoman life world which each had a lasting impact on the biographies of Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan: First, their years of schooling at the Galatasaray Lisesi and, in the case of Kamuran and Celadet, at the law school of the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul are of interest. It will be demonstrated that mentalities as well as contacts and networks from this time period survived into post-imperial times. Second, their activities in the publishing scene and in intellectual circles of early 20th-century Istanbul will be traced. Third, their first experiences in the Ottoman civil service are subject to inquiry. The analysis provides evidence that the trajectories of the Bedirhani brothers were firmly embedded in the Ottoman imperial life world. This might seem obvious, but tends to be obscured in later historical narratives, as well as by the protagonists themselves.

5.5.1. An Ottoman Education: Galatasaray Lisesi and Dar'ül-Fünun

Evidence on the childhood and youth of the Bedirhani brothers is scarce in comparison to material on their later biographies and oeuvre. However, there are valuable fragments: In an interview recorded by the French missionary Thomas Bois, Kamuran Bedirhan talked about his childhood and school years in Istanbul.¹²⁰⁵ With the help of memories

memoirs, Anbara Salam Khalidi & Tarif Khalidi (trans.), *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist. The Life and Activism of Anbara Salam Khalidi* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), pp. 56-57.

¹²⁰⁵ Blau, "Mémoires de l'émir," pp. 71-90.

recorded by contemporaries, a general impression of their experience can be pieced together. Until the eviction of the Bedirhani family from Istanbul in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906, Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan attended the Galatasaray Lisesi in the Ottoman capital as boarders. There, they received a secular education in French. The Galatasaray Lisesi was without question the best and most prestigious state school in the Ottoman Empire at the time, its graduates being bound for careers in the Ottoman civil service and military. All subjects, except Ottoman Turkish and Persian language and the study of the Qu'ran, were taught in French.¹²⁰⁶ In exile in western Anatolia and Ottoman Syria from 1906 to 1908, the sons of Emin Ali Bey were educated at home, as they were not allowed to attend local schools. Following the return of the family from exile in 1908, Celadet and Kamuran did not return to the Galatasaray Lisesi, but enrolled in the Vefa Lisesi in Eminönü instead, and later finished school in Edirne. Their older brother Süreyya seems not to have returned to school after 1908.

Who were the classmates and teachers of the Bedirhani brothers, what would the atmosphere have been like at their schools? And would they have, in spite of their frequent changes of schools, retained any contacts to their former classmates? Contemporaries of the Bedirhani brothers from their time at the Galatasaray Lisesi later recalled a strong *esprit de corps*: Many students, especially when they came from provinces further away from the capital, rarely returned to their homes or saw their families during their period of study. As a result, they became firmly socialized in the community of their peers and teachers, learning to

¹²⁰⁶ Jean Chammas, *Recueil de Souvenirs. Du Caucase au Canada. La Saga d'une famille orientale* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1997), pp. 28-30. Chammas' father Ibrahim Bey, a Syriac Christian from Urfa, was a student at the Galatasaray Lisesi in the early 20th century, roughly contemporary to the Bedirhanis. Celal Arseven, who enrolled at the Galatasaray Lisesi in 1885, recalled even talking in French among his peers, see Dieter F. Kickingeder, *Celâl Esad Arseven. Ein Leben zwischen Kunst, Politik und Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2009), p. 35.

speaking a refined Istanbulite Ottoman Turkish, which would set them apart from their old friends and relations in the Ottoman provinces.¹²⁰⁷ Completing one's education at the Galatasaray Lisesi was equivalent to an entry ticket into the Ottoman elite.¹²⁰⁸ About two thirds of the school's graduates every year ended up in the higher ranks of the Ottoman bureaucracy around the turn of the century.¹²⁰⁹ As one of the principal goals of the school's founders had been to foster a shared Ottoman identity among its students, the Galatasaray Lisesi lost some of its popularity with nationalists of all shades after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908.¹²¹⁰ Some of the Bedirhani brothers' fellow students from the Galatasaray Lisesi continued to play a role in their lives also beyond the collapse of the imperial state: Among the classmates of Süreyya Bedirhan at the Galatasaray Lisesi was Mehmed Şükrü Sekban (1881–1960), an Ottoman Kurd from Ergani who was active in Ottoman-Kurdish circles in Istanbul and joined the Bedirhani brothers and their organization Hoybûn in Syria in the late 1920s.¹²¹¹

Living in Istanbul, students witnessed and participated in contemporary political developments from a close range: In his memoirs, Ekrem Cemilpaşa (1891–1974), a contemporary of the Bedirhani brothers who came to Istanbul from his hometown Diyarbekir in 1908 to attend school there, recalled vividly the chaos, the sheer excitement and insecurity about the future which reigned in the secondary schools of the city

¹²⁰⁷ Chammas, *Recueil de Souvenirs*, p. 30.

¹²⁰⁸ Chammas, *Recueil de Souvenirs*, pp. 30-31. Chammas' father was greeted with a huge reception when he returned with his degree in hands from Istanbul to Urfa and was immediately able to secure employment in the higher ranks of the local branch of the Banque Ottomane.

¹²⁰⁹ According to François Georgeon, "La formation des élites à la fin de l'Empire ottoman: le cas de Galatasaray." In: *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 72 (1994), p. 22.

¹²¹⁰ Georgeon, "La formation des élites," p. 22.

¹²¹¹ Mehmed Şükrü Sekban, who was a member of the Zaza-Kurdish community, later practiced as a doctor and became an active Kurdish nationalist activist, before he turned his back on the Kurdish cause and returned to Istanbul in 1938, arguing for an assimilation of the Kurds in Turkey. For his biography, see Klaus Kreiser, *Lebensbilder aus der Türkei* (Zürich: Vontobel, 1996), p. 160.

during the Second Constitutional Period. Police forces were deployed to restore calm among the students. Ekrem Cemilpaşa stated that to him personally, the events following the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 represented an important trigger for his later political consciousness and activities.¹²¹² In retrospect, Ekrem Cemilpaşa also stressed that as a student in Istanbul, he felt singled out and discriminated by his classmates because of his being Kurdish.¹²¹³ This statement was, at least in part, made with the hindsight of later developments following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Kamuran Bedirhan mentioned similar experiences of discrimination which occurred during his service in the Ottoman army.¹²¹⁴ Ekrem Cemilpaşa points out that these experiences of discrimination constituted an important impetus for him to embrace his Kurdish identity.¹²¹⁵

Not unlike the Galatasaray Lisesi, the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul with its community of law students and professional lawyers provided a shared intellectual and social identity for its members, along with a corresponding habitus and an awareness of being part of a political elite. In the post-war period, students of the Dar'ül-Fünun who had graduated around the turn of the century entered the political scene as key players in virtually all successor states of the Ottoman Empire.¹²¹⁶ Being able to rely on this shared background and networks certainly opened doors for the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon during the post-war period. Who, then, were the colleagues and classmates of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan? The two Bedirhani brothers attended law school in Istanbul prior to the outbreak of the First World War. Among their classmates

¹²¹² Ekrem Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım. Kemalizme Karşı Kürt Aydın Hareketinden Bir Yaprak* (Ankara: Beybun Yayınları, 1992 [Belgium 1989]), p. 17.

¹²¹³ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 17. Ekrem Cemilpaşa recalled that in 1908, when he entered the Galatasaray Lisesi, there were fifteen other students of Kurdish origins.

¹²¹⁴ Bois, *Connaissance des Kurdes*, p. 146.

¹²¹⁵ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 18.

¹²¹⁶ This is an argument made by Donald M. Reid, *Lawyers and Politics in the Arab World, 1880-1960* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981).

was Husni al-Barazi (1895–1975) from Hama, whose family would have been well-known to them. Emin Ali Bey and his family had spent some time living with the Barazi family in Hama during their period in exile in 1907. In 1969, Husni al-Barazi gave a biographical interview to researchers at the American University in Beirut.¹²¹⁷ For long stretches, this conversation deals with Barazi's involvement with the early Arab nationalist movement and its beginnings in late Ottoman times. Early on in the conversation, however, Barazi briefly talked about his youth and his time as a student at the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul. In his explanations, Barazi focused exclusively on individuals who were later of importance in the Arab nationalist movement. He did not mention any classmates of non-Arabic background. However, from Kamuran Bedirhan's papers and other sources, it becomes clear that the Bedirhani family was involved with the Barazis into the second half of the 20th century: Husni al-Barazi and other members of his extended family supported Celadet Bedirhan's journal *Hawar* financially in the 1930s and 1940s, and several family members held subscriptions.¹²¹⁸ Members of the Barazi family were also present and expressed their condolences at the funeral of Celadet Bedirhan in Damascus in 1951.¹²¹⁹ The biographical interview of Husni al-Barazi thus provides a strong reminder of the silences in nationalist historiography, a problem which concerns Kurdish and Arab historiographies alike.

While silent about the Bedirhani brothers, Husni al-Barazi mentioned a number his classmates from the Dar'ül-Fünun by name in the interview, among them Sami as-Solh (1890–1968), his brother Mumtaz as-Solh and

¹²¹⁷ For the interview, see http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/comes/interviews/husni_barazi/index.html, last accessed December 20, 2014.

¹²¹⁸ Aktürk, *Imagining Kurdish Identity*, p. 119 and MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, notebook listing the subscribers of *Hawar*, no date.

¹²¹⁹ *Dikrî al-amîr Ğalâdat Badrĥân al-sâniyah*, 1897 – 1951 (Damascus, 1951), pp. 32-36 mentions Necib Aĝa Barazi, Munir Bey Barazi and Ahmed Aĝa Barazi on the condolence list of the funeral.

the latters' cousin Riad as-Solh (1894–1951), both of whom were later to play important roles in Lebanese politics during the mandate period and after the Second World War. In 1908, Riad's father Rida as-Solh was elected to the Ottoman parliament as a representative for Beirut. His wife and his son Riad accompanied him on his journey to Istanbul. Riad as-Solh, in his teenage years, witnessed political debates and struggles in the capital. In 1910, he enrolled at the Dar'ül-Fünun to study law. Three years later, the family left Istanbul in a hurry, the political atmosphere having turned sharply against the liberal opposition which Rida as-Solh was a part of.¹²²⁰ The as-Solh were a family of landowners from Ottoman Syria, who like the Barazis had long-standing connections to the Bedirhani family, particularly to the branch around Bedri Paşa Bedirhan. The as-Solh family was also related to the Bedirhanis by marriage: Nezihe, a daughter of Zeynep Bedirhan and granddaughter of Osman Paşa Bedirhan, was married to Hassib as-Solh.¹²²¹

Among his classmates, Husni al-Barazi also mentioned Naci Şevket (Naji Shawkat, 1893–1980)¹²²² and Tefvik as-Suwaidi (1892–1968),¹²²³ both of them future Prime Ministers of Iraq under King Faisal. Shawkat was the son of the Ottoman governor of al-Kut in Iraq. Like Rida as-Solh, his father was elected as a representative to the Ottoman parliament in 1908 and brought his teenage son with him to Istanbul in order to send him to law school there. Husni al-Barazi also mentioned Tefvik al-Basat, Rafik Rizk Salloum (1891–1915), Yusuf al-'Azma (1883–1920) and the

¹²²⁰ Aḥmad Bayḍūn, *Riyād aṣ-Ṣulḥ fī zamanīhi* (Beirut: Dār an-nahār li'l-naṣr, 2011), p. 28.

¹²²¹ When Kamuran lived in Paris, he was in contact with Nezihe as-Solh. A letter from Nezihe to Kamuran Bedirhan is preserved among his personal papers at the IKP, dating from February 26, 1950. The tone of the letter suggests that the contact between the two had been regular, Nezihe also invited Kamuran to visit her and her family in Beirut.

¹²²² Nāḡī Şawkat, *Sīrah wa-dikrāyāt ṭamānīn 'āman: 1894-1974* (Baḡdād: Maktabat al-Yaqzah al-'Arabīyah, 1990). Shawkat later also served as Iraqi ambassador in Ankara.

¹²²³ As-Suwaidi's memoirs are available in an English translation, Tawfiq as-Suwaidi & Nancy Roberts (trans.), *My Memoirs. Half a Century of the History of Iraq and the Arab Cause* (Boulder, Co.: Rienner, 2013).

later Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Sa'îd (1888–1858)¹²²⁴ among his circle of friends in Istanbul. All of them later made a name for themselves in Arab nationalist circles. Other contemporaries of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan at the Dar'ül-Fünun prior to the outbreak of the Balkan Wars included Sa'adallah al-Jabiri (1893–1947),¹²²⁵ member of one of the prominent families of Sunni-Muslim landowners in Aleppo and a son of Abdülkadir Efendi al-Jabiri (Cabrizade).¹²²⁶ After the war, Sa'adallah al-Jabiri was a political ally of Riad as-Solh and a supporter of the Arab nationalist movement. Between 1920 and 1922, after the French had occupied Syria and Lebanon, al-Jabiri was exiled to Cairo. Back in Syria, he engaged in anti-French political activities. Al-Jabiri and the Bedirhanis were to meet again when the Arab nationalists of Aleppo supported the Kurdish movement in the late 1920s.¹²²⁷ Mustafa Barmada (1883–1953),¹²²⁸ a member of another influential notable family from Aleppo which also supported the Kurdish movement in the inter-war period, had also studied law in Istanbul and was likely frequenting the same circles as the Bedirhani brothers. Other contemporaries of the Bedirhani brothers at the Dar'ül-Fünun who later made a name for themselves in post-imperial Middle Eastern politics included Tevfik Abu'l-Huda (1894–1956), later Jordanian Minister of

¹²²⁴ Both Nuri as-Sa'îd and Yusuf al-'Azma did not study at the law school, but at the Ottoman military college at the time. The friendship between Riad as-Solh and Nuri as-Sa'îd is also attested in other sources, see Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Arab Independence. Riad el-Solh and the Makers of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), p. 85.

¹²²⁵ For his biography, see Sami Moubayed, *Steel and Silk. Men and Women Who Shaped Syria 1900-2000* (Seattle: Cune, 2006), pp. 255-258; David Commins, *Historical Dictionary of Syria* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996), p. 250, and Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Müllkiyeliler* (Ankara, 1968-1971), vol. 4, p. 19.

¹²²⁶ In 1913, Sa'adallah al-Jabiri graduated from the *mülkiye* in Istanbul, in the same year as the later Syrian president Shukri al-Quwatli. Al-Jabiri was a friend and classmate of Hıfzı Tevfik Gönensay, a brother of Müveddet Bedirhan's father-in-law, see Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi*, vol. 4, p. 19.

¹²²⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 27, 1927.

¹²²⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 27, 1927, and Sulaymân Salîm al-Bawâb, *Mawdu'ât al'lâm Sūrīya fi'l qarn al-'iṣrîn* (Beirut: al-Manāra, 1999-2000), vol. 2, pp. 238-240.

Defense and Prime Minister,¹²²⁹ Musallam al-'Attar (1892–1967), a lawyer and author who also came to hold several posts in the Jordanian government,¹²³⁰ and Muzahim Amin al-Pachachi (1891–1982), who was Prime Minister of Iraq for a short interval in 1948/49.¹²³¹ The two first Prime Ministers of Israel, Yitzhak Ben Zvi (1884–1963) and David Ben Gurion (1886–1973) also studied at the Dar'ül-Fünun as contemporaries of the Bedirhani brothers, between 1912 and 1914.¹²³²

Among the contemporaries of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan at the law school in Istanbul were also students of Ottoman-Kurdish origins. One of them was a close relative, Mehmed Es'ad Bey [Esat Çınar] (1894–1975). He was the son of Abdullah Hulusi Bey Bedirhan, a nephew of Emir Bedirhan who had joined him into exile in 1847. Mehmed Esad Bey was born on the island of Crete. After his graduation from the Dar'ül-Fünun, he worked as a teacher for Turkish language and literature in Ankara and İzmir. Between 1943 and 1950, Esat Çınar represented the province of İzmir in the Turkish parliament.¹²³³ A certain Abdullah Sadi (1890–1925) from Palu in the province of Ma'muret'ül-Aziz, a Kurdish student promoted by sheikh Abdülkadir who was later employed as the sheikh's personal secretary, was also among the contemporaries of the Bedirhani brothers at the law school in Istanbul.¹²³⁴

¹²²⁹ *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East?* (Cairo: Minerbo Press, 1949), p. 157.

¹²³⁰ *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East?*, p. 171.

¹²³¹ *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East?*, p. 177. Al-Pachachi seems to have spent only a brief period in Istanbul, he later graduated from the law school in Baghdad, see Edmund A. Ghareeb & Beth Dougherty, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), p. 253.

¹²³² Donna Robinson Divine, "Yitzhak Ben Zvi," in: Reeva S. Simon, Philip Matar & Richard Bulliet (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East*, 4 vols (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1996), vol. 1, p. 215.

¹²³³ For a short biography including Mehmed Es'ad's picture, see *T.B.M.M. Albümü 1920-1950* (Ankara: T.B.M.M. Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010), vol. 1, p. 477.

¹²³⁴ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 100. Sadi was executed in the aftermath of the Sheikh Sa'id revolt in 1925, see Malmisanij, *Kürt Talebe-Hêvi Cemiyeti*, p. 40.

While the Bedirhani brothers were initially training to become lawyers to get a head-start in the run for lucrative positions in the Ottoman civil service, their training and profession did prove useful in post-imperial times as well, even beyond the personal networks they had established during their school years: Being a lawyer in Syria and Lebanon in the mandate period meant being situated particularly well to form a client base. People would come seeking help and intervention with the authorities – and might be ready to return a favor.¹²³⁵ This came in useful in either seeking political influence for oneself,¹²³⁶ or else in improving one's bargaining position in negotiations with individuals who did seek this kind of influence.

5.5.2. Ottoman Intellectual Circles in Istanbul

In addition to being involved with their immediate environment at school and at university, the Bedirhani brothers were part of a generation of Ottoman intellectuals emerging in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution of 1908. When Emin Ali Bey and his family were allowed to return to Istanbul in 1908, they encountered a highly politicized city. The rules of the political discourse were changing, and the Bedirhanis played along: Clubs, associations and newspapers were founded and the discussions in the recently reopened Ottoman parliament were eagerly followed by the public. Political controversies sometimes turned violent, as was made plain by the murder of the journalist Hasan Fehmi Bey in April 1909. The Bedirhani brothers found their first outlets for early attempts in political and journalistic work in this exciting and turbulent environment. Süreyya Bedirhan revived the journal *Kurdistan*, initially started by his uncles Mikdat

¹²³⁵ Johnson, *Class and Client*, p. 102.

¹²³⁶ A number of prominent Lebanese politicians in the 1940s and 1950s, among them president Camille Chamoun, were lawyers.

Midhat and Abdurrahman Bedirhan in the late 1890s. Following suit in 1912, Celadet Bedirhan began to write for the newspaper *Serbestî*, which was edited by Mevlanzade Rif'at Bey and for which the assassinated Hasan Fehmi Bey had also written. Getting involved with *Serbestî*, Celadet thus threw himself in the midst of the ongoing controversy between the CUP government and its critics.

The activities of the Bedirhani brothers in late Ottoman Istanbul foreshadowed some of their later priorities in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period: Education of the younger generation and the general awakening and enlightenment of the Kurdish people emerged as central topics.¹²³⁷ In the environment of late 19th century Istanbul, the interest in questions of identity and identity politics was on an unprecedented rise. The meaning of being Kurdish was negotiated and multiple local, religious or tribal identities were replaced with the broader collective identity of "Ottoman-Kurdish" during the Second Constitutional Period. Discussions to this effect went on in the Ottoman capital and also in provincial centers like Diyarbekir. Confronted with the bulk of literature on the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual movement written from a later and more narrow Kurdish-nationalist perspective, it is easily overlooked that in the early 20th century, it was still possible to articulate, adopt and try out different ideas and notions about identity which would later increasingly be conceived as fixed, mutually exclusive or even antagonistic.¹²³⁸ Prior to 1918, Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals and activists continued to demonstrate an interest in the survival of the Ottoman state. The collapse of the Ottoman imperial framework was neither desired nor might it have been, in all its consequences, conceivable for the Ottoman-Kurdish elite prior to the fact. Kurdish

¹²³⁷ These concerns affected Ottoman intellectuals of all backgrounds equally, see Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, pp. 64-67.

¹²³⁸ See Ryan Gingeras, "The Sons of Two Fatherlands: Turkey and the North Caucasian Diaspora, 1914-1923." In: *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (2011), available online, <http://ejts.revues.org/4424>, last accessed June 24, 2016.

identity was not (yet) perceived as in conflict with or as an alternative to Ottoman identity, but rather imagined as a secondary, parallel and complementary aspect of one's place within a larger Ottoman framework.¹²³⁹

The Impact of the Constitutional Revolution of 1908

For the Ottoman-Kurdish community, much like for other ethnic or religious minorities in the Ottoman lands, the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 initially held great promise. Accordingly, Kurdish associations were quick to form in the Ottoman capital. In addition to creating an intellectual community through journals and publications, education emerged as a central topic for the Ottoman-Kurdish activists after 1908. A Kurdish school was founded in Istanbul in 1908, but soon closed down again by the CUP government.¹²⁴⁰ Publishing and political activities of the Kurdish associations were also pushed underground, with many activists seeking refuge in Egypt. Many Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals at the time saw the solution to the repercussions they faced from the CUP government not in demands for Kurdish national independence, but in a close cooperation with the liberal opposition movement, as is attested by an overlap in personnel and frequent collaborations.

In retrospect, however, the years immediately prior to the First World War were identified by members of the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles as a definite moment of rupture with the Ottoman-Turkish state

¹²³⁹ Something similar is true for other groups of identity activists emerging around the same time. Ottoman-Circassian intellectuals, for instance, followed very similar paths and founded organizations with names that resembled contemporary Ottoman-Kurdish ones: A Çerkes İttihat ve Te'avün Cemiyeti or a Çerkez Kadınlar Te'avün Cemiyeti can be encountered, among others, see Gingeras, "Sons of Two Fatherlands."

¹²⁴⁰ Thomas Bois, *Connaissances des Kurdes* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), p. 146.

and society. Kamuran Bedirhan, in an interview he gave in 1971 to a Swedish newspaper,¹²⁴¹ recalled a decisive turning point at which he realized that a shared future within the Ottoman framework was becoming impossible as Turkish nationalism grew stronger: In 1915, he was traveling by boat across the Bosphorus in Istanbul when by coincidence, he overheard a conversation among some of his fellow travelers. The CUP member Yaşar Nuri boasted that the government was making plans to eliminate all the minorities in the empire, starting with Greeks and Armenians and also getting rid of the Kurds. Kamuran Bedirhan vividly recalled how he was frightened and fundamentally shaken by this conversation. In his novel on the life of Celadet Bedirhan, Mehmed Uzun included a similar (most probably fictional) moment of rupture. He narrated in some detail how Celadet was supposedly stunned by a public conversation between Yusuf Akçura and İsmail Gasprinski, two of the principal political theorists of Panturkism and Turanism, which he attended in 1910.¹²⁴² During their talk, according to Uzun's narrative, Celadet came to fully understand the exclusiveness and divisive potential of Turkish nationalist ideology in all its consequence. Uzun based his account on a remark Celadet Bedirhan himself made about the encounter in an open letter to Mustafa Kemal in 1933.¹²⁴³

¹²⁴¹ The interview, which appeared in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* is summarized in Turkish in Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 105.

¹²⁴² Yusuf Akçura's seminal defense of Turkish nationalism, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* had already been published in 1904 was much discussed in Istanbul after 1908, Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism. From Irredentism to Cooperation* (London: Hurst & Co., 1981), p. 43. İsmail Gasprinski was based in Bahçesaray on the Crimean at the time, but was known to travel frequently and visit Akçura and Ahmed Ağaoğlu in Istanbul after 1908, see James H. Meyer, *Turks Across Empires. Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), pp. 157-158.

¹²⁴³ The fictionalized account can be found in Uzun, *Kader Kuyusu*, pp. 97-98 and the material Uzun is drawing on for his depiction in Nuri Dersimi (ed.), *Mümtaz Mütefekkir Celadet Ali Bedirhan'ın [Türkiye Reiscumhuru Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa Hazretlerine] Yazdığı Açık Mektup, 1933* (no place, Nuri Dersimi, 1973), p. 17.

The Publication of *Serbestî* and Mevlanzade Rifat Bey

In Istanbul prior to the outbreak of the First World War, between 1912 and 1913, the young Celadet Bedirhan wrote for the journal *Serbestî* (“Freedom”). Mevlanzade Rifat Bey¹²⁴⁴ was the founder, editor and, over long periods of time, main contributor to *Serbestî*. Highly critical of the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II, Rifat Bey had been exiled to Sana’a in Yemen in Hamidian times. No love, however, was lost between him and the CUP government either. Upon his return to Istanbul in 1908, he criticized the new regime’s involvement with the traditional ruling elite and the former supporters of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Rifat Bey was equally critical of the meddling of the Ottoman military in matters of politics. Together with his friend Hasan Fehmi Bey, Rifat Bey set up *Serbestî* as a platform for their political ideas. In March 1909, Rifat Bey was forced to leave the Ottoman lands in the aftermath of the counterrevolution, seeking refuge in Cairo and later in Athens. His partner Hasan Fehmi Bey stayed in Istanbul and fared much worse, falling victim to political murder in April 1909. While the CUP government in Istanbul convicted him *in absentia*, Rifat Bey eventually set out for exile in Paris. There, he was part of the circle of Prince Sabahaddin, where he met others who shared his opposition to the CUP rule and preference for a decentralization of the Ottoman state.¹²⁴⁵ With generous financial support from the Ottoman-Kurdish statesman Şerif

¹²⁴⁴ For his biography, see Murat Issı, “Hürriyet Âşığı Bir Osmanlı-Kürt Aydını. Mevlanzâde Rifat Bey.” In: *Toplumsal Tarih* 196 (April 2010), pp. 72-80 and Christoph Herzog, „Mevlânzâde Rifat und die jüdische Weltverschwörung,” in: Johannes Zimmermann, Christoph Herzog & Raoul Motika (eds.), *Osmanische Welten: Quellen und Fallstudien. Festschrift für Michael Ursinus* (Bamberg: Bamberg Univ. Press, 2016), pp. 243-267.

¹²⁴⁵ In addition to Mevlanzade Rifat Bey, Dr. Nihat Reşat Bey, İbrahim Baha Bey, Pertev Tevfik Bey and Şerif Paşa were among the regulars of this circle. See Ahmet Bedevi, *Harbiye Mektebi'nde Hürriyet Mücadelesi* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), p. 159.

Paşa, Rıfat Bey resumed the publication of *Serbestî* in Paris.¹²⁴⁶ The collaboration broke down, however, when disagreements about financial issues arose. Out of funds, Rıfat Bey was compelled to return to Egypt. From there, he eventually retreated to Istanbul, after a brief and unsuccessful intermezzo seeking support from the Khedive. He surrendered to the Ottoman authorities and was sent into exile again, this time to Bursa. He was eventually allowed to return to the capital and resumed the publication of *Serbestî* in 1912 but continued to face repercussions and threats from the Ottoman authorities and CUP circles.¹²⁴⁷ In January 1913, he was again forced to stop the publication of *Serbestî*,¹²⁴⁸ which he appears to have resumed shortly after the armistice.

Mevlânzade Rıfat Bey was of Ottoman-Kurdish origins, his family came from Süleymaniye in northern Iraq.¹²⁴⁹ He himself was born in Küçükçekmece, Istanbul in 1869/70.¹²⁵⁰ A committed member of the liberal opposition to the CUP prior to the First World War, he began to openly support Kurdish nationalism at some point around 1918. The British diplomat Andrew Ryan (1876–1949), who negotiated with the Kurdish independence movement after 1918, described Rıfat Bey as a political opportunist and turncoat. He suspected that Rıfat Bey's sudden fervor for Kurdish nationalism was in no small part inspired by his attempts to regain control over family land in northern Mesopotamia.¹²⁵¹ This is an interesting parallel to claims made by the Bedirhanis vis-à-vis

¹²⁴⁶ *Serbestî* was set up as an Ottoman sister-publication to Şerif Paşa's *Le Constitutionnel – Mècheroutiètte*, see chapter 4.

¹²⁴⁷ For Mevlânzade Rıfat's biography and political thinking, see his memoirs, *Mevlânzade Rıfat'ın Anıları*, yayına hazırlayan Metin Marı, (Istanbul: Arma, 1992). The memoirs treat the time period between 1908 and 1912, before Rıfat Bey was in contact with Celadet Bedirhan.

¹²⁴⁸ İssı, "Hürriyet Âşığı Bir Osmanlı-Kürt," p. 75.

¹²⁴⁹ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 121.

¹²⁵⁰ İssı, "Hürriyet Âşığı Bir Osmanlı-Kürt," p. 72.

¹²⁵¹ Andrew Ryan, *The Last of the Dragomans* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1951), pp. 155-156.

the British concerning the restitution of their family property.¹²⁵² As one of the 150 (*Yüzellilikler*), Rıf'at Bey was exempt from the general amnesty after the Turkish War of Independence.¹²⁵³ Banned from Turkey, he spent the final years of his life in exile in Aleppo. There, he was geographically close to and politically involved with the network of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan and their organization Hoybûn. Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey passed away in exile in Syria in 1930.

Celadet Bedirhan entered into a collaboration with Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey prior to the First World War and began to write for *Serbestî*. At the time, Celadet was a student at the law school in Istanbul. While it is impossible to determine how exactly his contact to Celadet was established, there is evidence that Rıf'at Bey was previously acquainted to at least one other member of the Bedirhani family: In his memoirs, Rıf'at Bey recalled meeting Hüseyin Paşa Bedirhan on the ship which brought them both back from exile on the Arab peninsula in 1908. Rıf'at Bey had been banned to Sana'a, and Hüseyin Paşa Bedirhan was returning from exile in Ta'if.¹²⁵⁴ Around 1918, Rıf'at Bey got married to Nuriye Ulviye Hanım [Mevlan, later Civelek] (1893–1964), who was an activist for women's rights and editor of the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası*.¹²⁵⁵ Nuriye Ulviye Hanım was also in contact with female members of the Bedirhani family, among them Mes'adet Bedirhan, possibly the wife of Süreyya Bedirhan, who was an author for *Kadınlar Dünyası*.¹²⁵⁶ The connections between the Bedirhani family and Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey were thus multiple.

¹²⁵² The Bedirhanis' demands for restitution of their property will be discussed in detail below.

¹²⁵³ Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State. Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011), p. 68.

¹²⁵⁴ Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, p. 12.

¹²⁵⁵ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 157.

¹²⁵⁶ Mes'adet Bedirhan is mentioned by Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), p. 73. In an article titled "La femme et l'hygiène" in *Kadınlar Dünyası* 126, (January 4 to January 17, 1914), p. 2 she wrote in French about women

The publication *Serbestî* continued during the armistice period and was perceived as pro-British by British diplomats in 1919. Rıf'at Bey was still involved, now aided by Sa'id Mollah Bey who was acting as the editor-in-chief.¹²⁵⁷ He continued in Rıf'at Bey's footsteps, with *Serbestî* being highly critical of the former CUP government. Sa'id Mollah Bey (1880–1930) was an influential member of the conservative imperial elite in Istanbul and the son-in-law of a leading religious authority, the former *şeyh-ül'islam* Cemaleddin Efendi.¹²⁵⁸ The British military attaché Calthorpe recorded a conversation with Sa'id Mollah Bey in May 1919. Sa'id Mollah Bey and the journal *Serbestî* were described as influential in religious circles and among the supporters of the caliphate and the Ottoman dynasty. Sa'id Mollah Bey declared himself in favor of a British mandate,¹²⁵⁹ to be established over the former Ottoman lands, and was critical of the CUP regime, demanding the arrest and trial of all its members.¹²⁶⁰ While addressing a much broader audience, *Serbestî* also emerged as the mouthpiece of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan) in Istanbul during the armistice period. At the time, the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, led by sheikh Abdülkadir Emin Ali Bedirhan, was also promoting a British mandate over the former Ottoman lands, including over a separate Kurdish state which was to be established. Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey was listed among the

volunteering as nurses in Istanbul. According to Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, p. 85, Mes'adet also wrote a theater play, a comedy titled *Hasbıhâl*, in addition to other journal articles.

¹²⁵⁷ FO 608/111/1, "Interview between Military Attaché in Constantinople & Said Mollah Bey," dated May 6, 1919.

¹²⁵⁸ Cemaleddin Efendi (1848–1919) was in office as *şeyh-ül'islam* from 1891 to 1909, and then again between 1912 and 1913. He was opposed to the CUP government and left Istanbul to live in exile in Egypt after the coup of 1913, where he passed away in April 1919. See Cavid Baysun, "Djamāl al-Dīn," in EI2, vol. II, p. 277.

¹²⁵⁹ In May 1919, Sa'id Mollah Bey had also founded the *İngiliz Muhibler Cemiyeti* (Association of the Friends of the English), advocating a British mandate over the former Ottoman lands, see Mehmet Demiryürek, "İngiliz Muhibler Cemiyeti hakkında bazı notlar ve belgeler." In: *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 37-38 (2006), pp. 77-101.

¹²⁶⁰ FO 608/111/1, "Interview between Military Attaché in Constantinople & Said Mollah Bey," dated May 6, 1919.

members of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti in 1919.¹²⁶¹ Sa'id Mollah Bey was not among the society's members, but instead active in a similar organization, the so-called Te'ali-yi İslam Cemiyeti (Society for the Advancement of Islam), which took a more inclusive, religiously conservative stance and likewise promoted a British mandate over the Ottoman lands.¹²⁶² In close cooperation with the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, Sa'id Mollah Bey and his followers envisioned an uprising against the Kemalist movement in Anatolia.¹²⁶³ Sa'id Mollah Bey's positions convey some idea about the political standing of *Serbestî*, to which the young Celadet Bedirhan would have been exposed to as he was writing for the journal. None of the actual articles Celadet wrote for *Serbestî* are, as far as I could see, preserved. Not only Celadet, also his younger brother Kamuran Bedirhan took his first steps in journalism in Istanbul prior to the First World War, where he was involved with similar circles. There is evidence that Kamuran wrote, for instance, for the journal *Kadınlar Dergisi* in Istanbul in 1914.¹²⁶⁴

The writers and activists involved with the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti and the journal *Serbestî* represented a particular position within a wider spectrum of Ottoman-Kurdish opinion at the time – it was a fairly conservative position, attempting to combine religious sentiment, a liberal and decentralist political agenda and specifically Kurdish demands. They were, however, far from holding a monopoly on speaking for the Kurdish community in Istanbul. Judging from the memories of contemporary observers, they did not even count among the prominent voices within the heterogeneous Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual scene: Ekrem Cemilpaşa, who wrote for *Jîn*, another

¹²⁶¹ FO 608/104/3, J. Duncan to the War Office, report dated June 26, 1919.

¹²⁶² Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation 1918-1923* (Boston et al.: Brill, 1999), p. 110, and also Feridun Ata, *Süleymaniyeli Nemrut Mustafa Paşa. Bir İşbirlikçinin Portresi* (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2008), pp. 98-101.

¹²⁶³ Accordingly, Sa'id Mollah Bey was also banned from the Turkish Republic by Mustafa Kemal as one of the 150 (Yüzellilikler) in 1924.

¹²⁶⁴ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 105.

Ottoman-Kurdish publication after the First World War, recalled how crucially important journals and newspapers were as an arena for fierce discussions and fights about the political future of the empire. He followed many of these publications closely and found his own position best represented in *Jîn*, the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and the French *Bosphore*, and strongly opposed the positions taken by Yunus Nadi in the journal *Yeni Gün*. On his fairly detailed mental map of Istanbul's publishing scene, Cemilpaşa makes no mention at all of *Serbestî*.¹²⁶⁵

The Bedirhani Brothers in Ottoman-Kurdish Intellectual Circles

From the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 onwards, Istanbul emerged as the center of Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles. Organizations were founded here, discussions took place in face-to-face conversations and in the newly emerging Ottoman-Kurdish press. An Ottoman-Kurdish public developed, with close links to other, non-Kurdish circles of intellectuals in the Ottoman capital and also with an outreach into the Kurdish communities beyond Istanbul. A notable local center of the emerging Ottoman-Kurdish movement was Diyarbekir.¹²⁶⁶ While these circles were aware of each other, opportunities to meet for those activists in Istanbul with those outside the capital were rare. Members of the younger generation of the Bedirhani family, notably Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, were a part of these Ottoman-Kurdish circles of intellectuals, students and journalists at the time. Some of the contacts and friendships they established during these days were to play an important role for the family members throughout the following decades.

¹²⁶⁵ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 48.

¹²⁶⁶ The activities of a circle of intellectuals around the Cemilpaşazade family are recorded in detail by Ekrem Cemilpaşa, see Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, pp. 27-32.

Initially, this first generation of Ottoman-Kurdish associations founded after 1908 had a cultural outlook, promoting the foundation of schools or offering support for fellow Kurds to study in Istanbul or to emigrate to the United States, rather than advertising political goals. In 1912, a group of Ottoman-Kurdish students established an association called the Kürt Talebe Hevî Cemiyeti or just Hêvî (“Hope”) in Istanbul. The organization quickly counted around two-hundred members, its most active and prominent spokespersons being the sons of the Cemilpaşazade family,¹²⁶⁷ along with Memduh Selim and Müküslü Hamza Bey.¹²⁶⁸ Another organization founded in the same period of time was the Kürdistan Teşrik-i Mesa’i Cemiyeti (Society for the Encouragement of Good Works), headed by Palulu Abdullah Sa’id, the personal secretary of sheikh Abdülkadir and classmate of the Bedirhani brothers at the Dar’ül-Fünun.¹²⁶⁹ Eventually, this society merged with Hevî to form the Kürt İrşad ve İrtika Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Right Guidance and Advancement).¹²⁷⁰ There was also the Kürt Neşr-i Ma’arif Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for the Stimulation of Education), a cultural society founded in 1910.¹²⁷¹ Among its goals was the foundation of primary schools for Kurdish children in Istanbul, the first of which was founded in 1910 in the Çemberlitaş neighborhood and, in honor of the constitution, baptized the *Kürt Meşrutiyet Mektebi*.¹²⁷² The endeavor was not long-lived, the school being closed down again in 1911. Several

¹²⁶⁷ Ömer Bey Cemilpaşa was the organization’s first president, see Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 20. Studying in Europe, the Cemilpaşazades also opened branches of Hevî in Munich, Lausanne and Geneva prior to the outbreak of the First World War, see *ibid*, p. 22. On Hêvî more generally, see Malmisanîj, *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti* and Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 42.

¹²⁶⁸ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 20.

¹²⁶⁹ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 100.

¹²⁷⁰ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 128.

¹²⁷¹ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, “L’élaboration de la langue kurde en Turquie (1898-1943): d’un simple outil d’éveil national au pivot de la définition identitaire,” in: Carmen Alen Garabato (ed.), *L’éveil des nationalités et les revendications linguistiques en Europe (1830-1930)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), pp. 255-274 and Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 125. Emin Ali, Kamil and Mikdat Midhat Bey Bedirhan was involved with this association, see Malmisanîj, *Cızıra Botanlı*, pp. 118, 151 and 170.

¹²⁷² Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 132.

Ottoman-Kurdish notables, among them members of the Bedirhani family, were involved with the activities of this society.¹²⁷³ The Kürdistan Muhiban Cemiyeti (Society of the Friends of Kurdistan) had a focus beyond the Ottoman Empire: Founded in 1912, it aimed at supporting Kurds who left the Ottoman lands to emigrate to the United States.¹²⁷⁴ Ottoman-Kurdish women were organized in the Kürt Kadınları Te'ali Cemiyeti (Society for the Progress of Kurdish Women), which was founded in 1919 and presided by Emine Hanım, the wife of Şerif Paşa.¹²⁷⁵ Emin Hanım, however, was not of Kurdish origins herself but a member of the Egyptian Khedive family and granddaughter of Mehmed Ali Paşa. Ulviye Mevlan, the wife of Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey, and Mes'adet Bedirhan were also prominently involved with the Kurdish women's organization.¹²⁷⁶

Some members of the Ottoman-Kurdish circles, like Nuri Dersimi (1892–1987)¹²⁷⁷ or Müküslü Hamza Bey (1892–1958), came to Istanbul from the eastern provinces to pursue their education. Others, like the Bedirhanis, had lived in Istanbul before. In Istanbul, these various groups now found opportunities to meet and interact: Already in 1910, Abdullah Cevdet had created a meeting space for the Ottoman-Kurdish community of intellectuals in the capital when he opened his *İçtihad Evi* in the Cağaloğlu neighborhood.¹²⁷⁸ Another integrative figure of the city's Ottoman-Kurdish community was Halil Hayali Bey Motkili, a teacher at the Halkali Ziraat Mektebi at the time. He would regularly

¹²⁷³ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 125-126. Another supporter of the association was Sa'id Nursi.

¹²⁷⁴ It had been founded by Mollah Hıdır Efendi in 1912, Nuri Dersimi was involved with this association and mentioned it in his memoirs, M. Nuri Dersimi, *Hatıratım* (Stockholm: Roja Nû, 1986), p. 28, see also Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 126.

¹²⁷⁵ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 130.

¹²⁷⁶ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 131.

¹²⁷⁷ Dersimi came to Istanbul in 1911 to study veterinary medicine. See Wedat Kaymak, *Les Éternels Exilés. Brève Biographie de 93 Personnalités Kurdes* (Paris: Association des Cinéastes kurdes en exil, 1990), pp. 165-166 for a brief biography.

¹²⁷⁸ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 113.

meet with Kurdish students on Fridays in the *Diyarbakir kıraathanesi* on Divanyolu in Sultanahmed and discuss Kurdish history and folklore.¹²⁷⁹ Müküslü Hamza Bey was among the newcomers to Istanbul: He had left his hometown, a small city near Van, to complete his education in Istanbul. He worked as a school teacher and introduced a wide audience to classics of Kurdish literature like the epos *Mem û Zîn* through his publications. In his case, the contact the Bedirhanis outlasted the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In 1919, Müküslü Hamza Bey left Istanbul for Diyarbakir, where he was arrested and released only in 1929. Upon his release from prison, he went to Syria to join the Kurdish movement there. In Damascus, he was reunited with old acquaintances from Istanbul, prominently among them Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan.¹²⁸⁰ Memduh Selim Bey (1880–1976), who was a student and member of the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles in Istanbul prior to the First World War,¹²⁸¹ was among those who prepared the grounds for the move of Ottoman-Kurdish activists from Istanbul to Syria in the early 1920s. He was one of the first Kurdish activists to reach Syria, taking a job as a school teacher in Antakya in 1920.¹²⁸² Many of his former fellow activists were to join him over the following years: Members of the Cemilpaşazade family, Liceli Ahmed Ramiz and others also moved from Istanbul to Syria during the 1920s.

Not only intellectuals, also influential religious leaders took part in these Ottoman-Kurdish circles in the capital. The already-mentioned sheikh Abdülkadir played a prominent role in this respect. In 1908, he returned to Istanbul from exile and was enthusiastically greeted by the city's

¹²⁷⁹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar*, p. 18 remembers Halil Hayali Bey vividly. Ekrem stayed in contact with him until he left Istanbul for exile in Syria in 1929.

¹²⁸⁰ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 111.

¹²⁸¹ Malmisanîj, *Kürt Talebe-Hêvî Cemiyeti*, p. 166.

¹²⁸² Vahé Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie. Aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l'Irak (1919-1933)* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2004), p. 351 und Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 111.

Kurdish population.¹²⁸³ Immensely popular among the Kurdish workers and Kurdish urban poor, sheikh Abdülkadir could provide a crucial link connecting the intellectual movement to the wider Kurdish population of the capital. He was among the founding members and in turn elected as president for life¹²⁸⁴ of the Kürt Te'avün ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress). A general meeting of the Kürt Te'avün ve Terakki Cemiyeti in 1908 attracted so large a crowd, it had to be held in the Hagia Sophia to accommodate all participants.¹²⁸⁵ Another religious authority with a considerable following among the Kurds of Istanbul was Sa'id-i Kürdi [Sa'id Nursi] (1876–1960). He came to Istanbul in 1907, and was in contact with the Kürt Te'avün ve Terakki Cemiyeti from 1908 onwards.¹²⁸⁶ Mehmed Şefik Arvasi was another Nakşbandi sheikh engaged with the movement, he later became a member of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti as well.¹²⁸⁷

The armistice and the discussions about the post-war order in the former Ottoman lands sparked a second wave of political organization within the Ottoman-Kurdish community: In 1918, the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti was founded, again with sheikh Abdülkadir playing a prominent role among its leaders. Members of many Ottoman-Kurdish notable families, among them the Babanzades and Bedirhanis, were also prominently involved. Not long afterwards, however, the Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctima'iyye Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Social Organization) was

¹²⁸³ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 99.

¹²⁸⁴ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, pp. 84-95, and Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 124.

¹²⁸⁵ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 124.

¹²⁸⁶ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 101-103, and McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 93-94.

¹²⁸⁷ Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, pp. 109-110, and Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 103. This connection between religious circles and the Kurdish associations has been underestimated in existing scholarship on Kurdish nationalism. Abbas Vali, for instance, has characterized the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti as chiefly influenced by positivism and Darwinist thinking, see his introduction in Abbas Vali (ed.), *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* (Costa Mesa, Cal.: Mazda Publishers, 2003), p. 21.

founded under the leadership of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan as a result of dispute and internal divisions within the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti. These disputes turned around the question whether complete independence or autonomy under a British mandate should be the ultimate goal for the Kurdish nationalists. Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his followers were in favor of the greatest possible independence.¹²⁸⁸ As a result of further tensions, the Kürt Millet Fırkası (Kurdish National Party) then split away from the Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctima'iyeye Cemiyeti not long after.¹²⁸⁹ The mid-1920s saw the demise of the Ottoman-Kurdish circles in Istanbul, with most of its members leaving for exile or else quietly assimilating into the newly emerging Turkish Republican society.¹²⁹⁰ A point of no return was reached when sheikh Abdülkadir, one of the most influential leaders of the Kurdish community of Istanbul at the time, was executed on orders of the Turkish government in the aftermath of the Sheikh Sa'îd revolt in 1925.

One way of looking at this rather confusing array of Kurdish associations, mergers and divisions is as expressions of already existing and competing patronage networks within the Ottoman-Kurdish community of Istanbul. Along its lines and through its institutions, favors and resources were distributed and new supporters could be recruited. This perspective not at last explains the crucial position of religious authorities like sheikh Abdülkadir within these associations: They were able to mobilize support among the urban Kurdish

¹²⁸⁸ Olson, *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, pp. 21-22, Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, pp. 77-86, and Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 129-130. Many of the society's members continued to play a role within the network of the Bedirhani family throughout the 1920s and 1930s, e.g. Memduh Selim, Mevlanzade Rıfat Bey, Şükrü Sekban and Ekrem Cemilpaşa.

¹²⁸⁹ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 130.

¹²⁹⁰ Ziya Gökalp (1875/76–1924), to name one prominent example, was writing on Kurdish linguistics for the *Kürt Te'avün ve Terakki Gazetesi* but then turned into a staunch supporter of Turkish nationalism after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, see Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 109. Other examples include Abdullah Cevdet and also Abdurrahman Bedirhan, see chapters 4 and 7.

populations for the political ambitions of the Ottoman-Kurdish notables, a fact that became increasingly important with elections on the horizon and mass demonstrations as accepted tools of in the changing political discourse after 1908.

5.6. The Impact of the Great War

It has been argued extensively that for many communities within the Ottoman Empire, the First World War marked a crucial turning point in their relations to the imperial state. Historians have identified the period of the First World War as the moment when confidence among the Ottoman Kurds in a shared, Ottoman imperial future was beginning to show cracks. While in theory, Kurdish and all other Ottoman-Muslim fighters were united by the call to jihad, the actual impact of religious ideology in creating a shared identity among the soldiers was limited. Kurds in the Ottoman army were facing discrimination, being disqualified as rustic and unsophisticated “lo” by their fellow soldiers.¹²⁹¹ In addition, the local population living near the frontline with Russia in Anatolia experienced great suffering and was targeted by deportations. On the initiative of Enver Paşa, large numbers of Kurds were deported towards western Anatolia, away from the border.¹²⁹² Eastern Anatolia suffered large-scale destruction, chaos and misery during the war and in its aftermath. As these events unfolded, Ottoman-Kurdish identity politics and activism had, for the past decade, promoted close links to and a collective responsibility for the Kurdish homeland among the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals of the city centers. This activism did not remain without consequence. In the aftermath of the war, the question of what should become of this Kurdish homeland and

¹²⁹¹ Bois, *Connaissance des Kurdes*, p. 146.

¹²⁹² Bois, *Connaissances des Kurdes*, p. 87. It was feared that Kurdish tribal leaders would switch allegiances and side with Russia, see chapter 4 on Abdürrezzak Bedirhan's involvement in this.

how the suffering of its inhabitants needed to be addressed were high on the agenda for the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals.

The end of the First World War in 1918 marked the beginning of negotiations for a new political order in the former Ottoman lands. All kinds of factions and parties, some claiming to speak for an ethnically defined constituency, others contending to represent religious groups, came forward with their respective demands for autonomy, claims to territory and various designs for a post-war order. Many of these suggestions were bold, and not all were mutually compatible. The encouragement given by U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, who had assured self-government and autonomy for all the national minorities in the Ottoman Empire, constituted a chief point of reference for all of these activists. The political activities of some members of the Bedirhani family in the period immediately following the First World War are to be understood out of this particular historical situation, marked by great insecurities, but also by newly emerging opportunities. On the one hand, a new order for the post-Ottoman Middle East and a replacement of the former imperial elites with personnel selected according to a logic of ethnically defined nationalism held a potential danger and set-back for the Bedirhani family: As an integral part of the Ottoman imperial elite, their social standing, along with the economic and political resources they had come to rely on for the past fifty years were seriously threatened. On the other hand, the imminent redistribution of influence over territory and resources in the former Ottoman lands also offered opportunities: The Bedirhani family could now hope to reclaim control over the Kurdish areas of Anatolia from where the family had been exiled since the mid-19th century.

For a brief interval immediately after the war, the prospects for a post-war order in the former Ottoman lands were rather unclear. Going with the flow, members of the Bedirhani family sought to keep a number of

options open to them, negotiating with British, but also with French diplomats and sending petitions to other European governments as well. A faction of family members around Kamil Bey Bedirhan was in contact with the Bolshevik movement in Russia after 1917.¹²⁹³ Other family members – who tend to get sidelined as a result of the strong focus on the sons of Emin Ali Bey as pioneers of Kurdish nationalism – were active in Ottoman Anatolia and Syria immediately after the war, among them Halid Bey Bedirhan in Malatya or his brother Zübeyr Bey Bedirhan in Damascus.

In spite of the new post-war order, however, it can also be argued that in many respects, the end of the war did not constitute as definite a turning point as one might imagine in retrospect: Turkish nationalism and its goals were not well defined yet by 1918, its outlook still being inclusive towards non-Turkish Muslim groups like Kurds or Circassians. At the same time, members of the Ottoman-Kurdish elite had fought alongside friends and former classmates from Istanbul in the Ottoman army during the war, upholding largely similar hopes and values. It emerges from the memoirs of contemporaries that a majority of the Ottoman-Kurdish community was rather slow to realize the definite collapse of the Ottoman imperial system.¹²⁹⁴ Unlike Circassians, however, it has been noted that Kurds were almost completely absent from the ranks of the generals, supporters and advisers in Mustafa Kemal's national movement in the aftermath of the war.¹²⁹⁵ This can be regarded as a decisive factor contributing to the alienation of members of the Ottoman-Kurdish elite from the emerging Turkish nationalist movement.

¹²⁹³ Manoug J. Somakian, *Empires in Conflict. Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920* (London et al.: Tauris, 1995), p. 193.

¹²⁹⁴ "Osmanlı devletinin münkariz olmasına rağmen, Kürt'lerin yüzde doksamı buna hâlâ inanmıyorlardı." Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 32.

¹²⁹⁵ Gingeras, "The Sons of Two Fatherlands."

Like most of their contemporaries, the Bedirhani family was severely impacted by the First World War: Several members of the family, among them Celadet, Kamuran and their uncle Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, fought on the Ottoman side. Up to thirty-five family members were said to have been killed in action during the war.¹²⁹⁶ The war and the years immediately after were remembered as an era of suffering and disruption of the old social and political order, especially with regards to Ottoman Syria, where large parts of the Bedirhani family lived at the time. Not much, however, is known in detail about how members of the Bedirhani family lived through these years. The war is surprisingly, almost suspiciously, absent in later accounts, sidelined by the narrative of the family's pioneering role in the Kurdish independence movement of the 20th century.

5.6.1. Post-War Ideas about the Kurdish Political Future

During a brief window of opportunity, lasting roughly from the end of the First World War to the revisions of the original peace accords with the Peace Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, many different voices made themselves heard in the conversation about the future of the Kurdish communities in the former Ottoman lands. At no point could it be taken for granted that an autonomous and homogeneously Kurdish state would be created. After the war, it was very much in the cards that the Kurdish populations would find themselves divided between the state of Iran and a newly created Arab kingdom in the Hicaz.¹²⁹⁷ From the armistice of 1918 into the mid-1920s, three main political options were discussed by international diplomats and leaders of the Kurdish

¹²⁹⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 570, report dated December 8, 1932. The reference was made by the Turkish consul in Beirut in a conversation with Kamuran Bedirhan, who did not object to these numbers.

¹²⁹⁷ FO 608/95, letter from Mardinzade Mehmed Arif Paşa to Şerif Paşa, dated Cairo, March 26, 1919.

community: These were (1) partial autonomy under an Ottoman successor state, (2) partial autonomy under the mandate of a western power, preferably Great Britain, and (3) complete independence of a Kurdish state. There was reason to consider Kurdish autonomy as a serious prospect, since it was stipulated in the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920.¹²⁹⁸ As the relations with the Kemalist government turned more and more complicated due to the violent suppression of the Kurdish uprisings in the 1920s, the first of these three options gradually lost its initial appeal. To this day, a small group of Kurdish intellectuals and activists around Emin Ali Bey and Süreyya Bedirhan in Istanbul and Cairo, and later around Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in Syria and Lebanon under French mandate rule continues to receive a disproportional share of attention in the standard accounts of early-20th-century Kurdish history. This, however, is an anachronistic bias, informed by hindsight. By no means was it foreseeable by the mid-1920s that the Bedirhanis would come to monopolize the role of the speakers and advocates of the Kurdish community over the following decades. On the contrary, many possible candidates and arrangements for leadership in a future Kurdish state were being discussed. It is worth looking into some of these alternatives for context before turning back to the role of the Bedirhani brothers at this historical juncture.

In the aftermath of the armistice, the city of Istanbul was far from being the only place where ideas for a Kurdish political future were debated. Diyarbekir in particular emerged as another hotbed of discussions:

¹²⁹⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated February 1, 1929. The treaty foresaw a Kurdish region that was much smaller than the area claimed by Şerif Paşa or the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, it stipulated “[autonomy, BH] for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia as it may hereafter be determined, and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia.” (section III, art. 62-64). Cited after Karen Culcasi, “Locating Kurdistan. Contextualizing the Region’s Ambiguous Boundaries,” in: Alexander D. Diener & Joshua Hagen (eds.), *Borderlines and Borderlands. Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation State* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), p. 117.

Having been demobilized from the Ottoman army, a group of local Ottoman-Kurdish soldiers, among them Ekrem Cemilpaşa and some of his friends and relatives, gathered in Diyarbekir. Networks of the local religious orders provided crucial networks connecting the activists in Diyarbekir to discussions going on in wider Anatolia.¹²⁹⁹ Activists from the Cemilpaşazade, Çerkezzade and Ganizade families founded the Kürdistan Cemiyeti (Kurdistan Society) in Diyarbekir in this context. Shortly after its foundation, the association purchased a printing press and began to publish a journal called *Gazi*. Ekrem Cemilpaşa stressed in his memoirs that all this allegedly happened eight to nine months prior to the foundation of the later more prominent Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti in Istanbul. Later, the two associations cooperated closely.¹³⁰⁰

5.7. The Role of Great Britain and France

After the armistice, a group of Ottoman-Kurdish intellectuals and former imperial officials was in contact with British diplomats, fathoming the possibilities for Kurdish autonomy with British support. In 1919, Britain appeared like the natural choice for the Kurdish leaders in Istanbul to turn to: The British armed forces enjoyed *de facto* power on the ground in the Iraqi parts of Kurdistan around Kirkuk since 1918. Long before the British were officially entrusted with the mandate over Iraq at the Conference of San Remo in 1920, they had already installed Mahmud Barzani as governor of the Kurdish region in Iraq and were to reckon with in all matters pertaining to a future Kurdish state. After the armistice, the British were in a position powerful enough to take action on the ground.¹³⁰¹ Yet, France was also still in the picture, in particular for the Bedirhani family: While the Sykes-Picot accords roughly divided

¹²⁹⁹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, pp. 28-29.

¹³⁰⁰ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 31.

¹³⁰¹ Bois, *Connaissances des Kurdes*, p. 89.

the imperial spheres of influence in a post-war Middle East, the exact border between what was to become the Turkish Republic on the one hand and Syria and Lebanon under French mandate rule on the other hand was not delineated yet.¹³⁰² Members of the Bedirhani family therefore had reason to believe that the areas which had formerly belonged to the Emirate of Bohtan and had been under the control of their ancestors might, at least in part, end up under French control. Being on friendly terms with French diplomats would have facilitated access for the family.

The seasoned British diplomat Mark Sykes had initially suggested the creation of an independent Kurdish state following the end of the war. However, his suggestions were viewed critically by French diplomats, who regarded it as their historical responsibility to protect the Christian communities of the former Ottoman lands.¹³⁰³ An idea brought up by Major Noel which somewhat addressed these French concerns was the creation of one single mandate regime over the entire region of Eastern Anatolia, i.e. the former Ottoman Six *vilayets* (*vilayat-ı sitte*). Noel envisioned an entity consisting of a northern, predominantly Armenian area, a southern Kurdish zone and a mixed area in the middle where both Kurdish and Armenian communities were to live together.¹³⁰⁴ Noel argued that given the intrinsically mixed character of the population, this would be the most sensible solution.¹³⁰⁵ His idea got rather short shrift and was never seriously considered. With the population exchanges in Macedonia and later between Turkey and Greece under way, Noel's idea

¹³⁰² In June 1919, for instance, it was still a matter of debate among British diplomats whether Diyarbekir and Urfa should be part of the state of Iraq which was about to be created, FO 608/95, A. Wilson in Baghdad to the British Vice Roy in India, dated June 5, 1919.

¹³⁰³ FO 608/95, secretary's note: Situation in Kurdistan, dated September 15, 1919. Sykes was not able to further defend his suggestions, as he had died in February 1919 while attending the Paris Peace Conference, succumbing to the Spanish flu.

¹³⁰⁴ FO 608/95, secretary's note: Situation in Kurdistan, dated September 15, 1919.

¹³⁰⁵ FO 608/95, Noel: "Notes on the Kurdish Situation," report dated July 18, 1919, see p. 32.

of peaceful coexistence instead of neat separation did not fit the *zeitgeist* of the post-war period. British diplomats preferred instead to leave the matter of an independent Kurdish state undecided for the moment, to be dealt with it after the peace conference.¹³⁰⁶ In spite of the British dragging their feet, however, many of the Kurdish leaders, among them members of the Bedirhani family, continued to hope for British support. It was only in 1927, already operating from within the French mandate territories and about to found the association Hoybûn, that the Bedirhanis and their supporters began to actively promote Kurdish autonomy under French protection. An alliance with Russia was no longer an option, at least for a large majority of Kurds, after the Bolsheviks had taken over power in Moscow in February 1917.

Throughout the armistice period, British diplomats were busy figuring out which among the many self-proclaimed Kurdish community leaders, parties and associations wielded actual influence among the Kurds in Anatolia. Within the Kurdish community, different factions were in the process of being formed and by no means hermetically sealed off from each other. Rather, one finds cooperation, communication and shifting alliances between rivaling Kurdish leaders.¹³⁰⁷ The British interests did not so much lie in Istanbul, from where the majority of the Kurdish associations operated, but in Eastern Anatolia: Towards the end of the First World War, the idea to “utilize [the Kurds, BH] to create a solid block of friendly peoples from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea to thwart the Pan-Turanian movement of the Turks which if left unchecked would certainly spread Eastward & in time threaten the safety of our

¹³⁰⁶ FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Webb to the Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, May 21, 1919, including the statement that he “[does] indeed lose no opportunity of impressing on Kurds with whom I am in touch the need for patience, calmness and confidence in peace conference [sic].”

¹³⁰⁷ A pointed example is the competition between sheikh Abdülkadir and Seyyid Taha for influence over the homeland of their family in the area of Nehri in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, see FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Webb to the Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, May 21, 1919.

Indian Empire”¹³⁰⁸ was being discussed in British diplomatic circles. Contenders to Kurdish leadership in Istanbul who could plausibly claim some influence in Eastern Anatolia thus emerged as preferred interlocutors for the British. This worked to the advantage of the Bedirhani family, whose representatives cast themselves as influential brokers in the Jazira region.

In 1918/19, the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde in Cairo, led by Süreyya Bedirhan boldly claimed to represent almost all the Kurdish tribes of the former Ottoman lands – with the exception of the area around Süleymaniye in northern Iraq.¹³⁰⁹ Petitions signed by Süreyya Bedirhan as a representative of the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde in Cairo, dating from December 1918, were among the earliest demands made for the independence of a Kurdish state after the war.¹³¹⁰ The petitions were inspired by the new possibilities which opened up in the political discourse as a consequence of the imminent liquidation of the Ottoman Empire, by the declaration of U.S. president Woodrow Wilson in support of autonomy for ethnic and national minorities in the Ottoman lands, and by the competition for territory and resources which emerged when designs to set up an Armenian state in Anatolia became known.

Against this backdrop, Süreyya Bedirhan discussed the allegations of violence and massacres committed against Ottoman Armenians during the war in his petitions. He arrived at the conclusion that these

¹³⁰⁸ WO 106/64, Maunsell in a report titled “Kurdistan,” dated December 1, 1918.

¹³⁰⁹ FO 608/95, telegram Col. French to the Foreign Office, dated Cairo, August 5, 1919. This region was the area of influence of sheikh Mahmud Barzani.

¹³¹⁰ FO 608/95, Süreyya Bedirhan to Reginald Wingate, British High Commissioner in Egypt, letter dated Cairo, December 7, 1918. It becomes clear from later correspondence that at around the same date, almost identical declarations were sent by Süreyya Bedirhan to other European governments, among them France, Italy and the United States, see a follow-up letter, Süreyya Bedirhan to Reginald Wingate, dated Cairo, December 16, 1918 and a telegram with a protest note from Süreyya Bedirhan to the Foreign Office in London, dated December 27, 1918.

accusations were exaggerated and that, much rather, the local Anatolian (largely Kurdish) population had been the victims of continued Armenian aggressions and provocations. All the while, Süreyya deplored, Armenian propaganda was unjustly slandering and misrepresenting the Ottoman Kurds as violent and barbaric criminals. He argued that as Armenians and Muslims had lived in peaceful coexistence for centuries prior to the arrival of western missionaries to the region, outside interventions must be held responsible for the sectarian conflict and violence of recent times. His outrage vis-à-vis the Armenian allegations and demands, Süreyya explained, compelled him to take matters upon himself, instead of relying on the Ottoman (in his own words now the “Turkish”) government to represent him and his community. A second line of his argument against Armenian territorial demands and in favor of Kurdish independence was numerical: Citing population statistics, Süreyya attempted to prove that the Armenians were but a small minority in Eastern Anatolia. He also argued historically, claiming that Kurds had lived in Anatolia long before the Armenians had arrived there, and that Kurdish territorial demands should therefore have priority. All three lines of his argument – the apologetic one which denies involvement with violence against the Armenians, the numerical one, and the historical one – were to emerge as recurring motives in the argumentations of Kurdish representatives for an independent state over the following years.

In a follow-up letter, Süreyya Bedirhan attempted to convince the British representatives to accord British support to a future Kurdish state, promising ample opportunity for British investment and political influence in an area of strategic importance in the Middle East.¹³¹¹ Süreyya’s British interlocutors were at no point convinced by his argumentation and found his demands and anti-Armenian allegations

¹³¹¹ FO 608/95, Süreyya Bedirhan to Reginald Wingate, letter dated Cairo, December 16, 1918.

rather outrageous, not deeming it necessary to respond to him in any way. In the eyes of British diplomats in Egypt, the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde was of marginal importance and could not be regarded as representative of the larger Kurdish community.¹³¹² While British support was not forth-coming, activities in favor of Kurdish independence continued in Cairo in 1919: Arif Paşa Mardinzade also belonged to the inner circle of the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde. One of his letters to Şerif Paşa, the Kurdish representative at the Peace Conference in Paris, dating from March 1919 contains unveiled anti-Armenian threats and adamant demands for Kurdish independence. Arif Paşa based his argument for Kurdish independence on religious grounds: He described the Kurdish *vilayets* of the former Ottoman Empire as “patrimoine héréditaire de l'Islam” and saw Kurdish and Turkish Muslims united by their faith in a struggle against the creation of an Armenian state.¹³¹³ This kind of religious undertones and anti-Armenian rhetorics in the political mobilization for Kurdish independence were to fade into the background from the late 1920s onwards, as members of the Bedirhani family entered into a closer cooperation with the Armenian nationalist movement in the French mandate territories.¹³¹⁴

The counterpart of the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde in Istanbul was the already mentioned Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, likewise founded immediately after the armistice and equally sporting members of the Bedirhani family among its leadership. This branch of the organization in Istanbul continued the discussion with the British diplomats after the initial attempts of the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde in Cairo had not

¹³¹² FO 141/810/4, “Kurdish Acitivites,” note from the British High Commissioner in Cairo to the Foreign Office, dated December 23, 1918.

¹³¹³ FO 608/95, letter from Arif Paşa Mardinzade to Şerif Paşa, dated Cairo, March 26, 1919 stating that “Liés par un pacte, quatorze millions de musulmans Kurds et Turcs ont fait le serment devant Dieu de défendre ces contrées jusqu'au dernier souffle, jusqu'au dernier homme.”

¹³¹⁴ See chapter 6.

been successful. Both associations advocated a pro-British political course and favored a British mandate over a future Kurdish state. The Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti claimed to enjoy the support of ten thousand Kurds in Istanbul alone and to have established numerous local branches throughout Eastern Anatolia.¹³¹⁵ The organization was led by sheikh Abdülkadir and included two of his sons, as well as three members of the Bedirhani family, in addition to Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey and Mustafa Nemrud Paşa, among others. Contacts between members of the Bedirhani family and sheikh Abdülkadir might have been going back to Ottoman Syria: In 1905, at the heyday of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan's influence in Ottoman Syria, sheikh Abdülkadir returned from exile in Yemen and settled in Beirut,¹³¹⁶ in the vicinity of the Bedirhani network. Their relationship after the war, however, was complicated: Sheikh Abdülkadir's family and the Bedirhanis cooperated in Istanbul, but in the Kurdish areas of the Ottoman lands, they had long been rivaling for influence. After the departure of the Bedirhanis from Anatolia, it was one of sheikh Abdülkadir's relatives, sheikh Ubaidullah, who was able to extend his authority over the areas formerly under the control of the Bedirhani family.¹³¹⁷ Membership to the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti was not limited to ethnic Kurds. The English translation of the association's regulations stated that "All Kurds (except notorious evil-livers) and non-Kurds who are deemed likely to be useful to the Society, may be admitted to membership."¹³¹⁸ To be admitted, prospective members were to provide a recommendation from one of the established

¹³¹⁵ FO 608/104/03, "statutes of the Society of Progress of Kurdistan," Major General J. Duncan to the War Office in London, June 26, 1919.

¹³¹⁶ Özoğlu, "Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables," p. 392. For details on Bedri Paşa Bedirhan's activities and contacts in Ottoman Syria, see chapter 3.

¹³¹⁷ Özoğlu, "Nationalism' and Kurdish Notables," pp. 387-392, with an illustrative map on p. 389 showing how the areas of influence of the two families overlapped.

¹³¹⁸ FO 608/104/03, "statutes of the Society of Progress of Kurdistan," Major General J. Duncan to the War Office in London, June 26, 1919, article 3.

members.¹³¹⁹ The Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti maintained its headquarters in the Cağaloğlu neighborhood, in the district of Fatih in Istanbul.

In January 1919, the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti demanded that a Kurdish representative be sent to the Peace Conference in Paris, where the borders of a future Kurdish state were going to be specified.¹³²⁰ The association’s petition stressed that the Kurds were, represented by the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti, now entering into negotiations with Britain for the very first time¹³²¹ – which, given the earlier interventions of the Comité de l’Indépendance Kurde from Cairo and the close relations which existed between the two organization, was not entirely correct. The emphasis on a fresh start might have been due to the reserve with which Süreyya Bedirhan’s earlier anti-Armenian rants in the name of the Comité de l’Indépendance Kurde had been received by his British interlocutors. This first petition of the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti set the tone for several others which were to follow: Both the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti and the Comité de l’Indépendance Kurde in Cairo estimated the total number of Kurds in the Middle East to range around five million, and both associations made almost identical territorial demands for a Kurdish state, which was to include former Ottoman as well as Iranian territories. In spite of claiming to speak for all Kurds in the wider Middle East collectively, it seemed clear to British observers that in 1919, the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti in Istanbul was not even in direct contact with the Kurdish tribal units in the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands, let alone representing anyone there.¹³²²

¹³¹⁹ Ekrem Cemilpaşa noted in his memoirs that he was able to join the Kürdistan Te‘ali Cemiyeti upon a recommendation of sheikh Abdülkadir, see Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 47.

¹³²⁰ FO 608/95, Admiral A. Calthorpe, British High Commissioner in Istanbul to Lord Balfour, report dated Istanbul, January 5, 1919.

¹³²¹ FO 608/95, Kurdistan Committee to Admiral Calthorpe, British High Commissioner in Istanbul, report dated January 2, 1919.

¹³²² FO 608/95, telegram from Ad. Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, July 10, 1919.

The Kurdish representatives in Istanbul had learned from the failures of Süreyya Bedirhan and the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde. While Süreyya had vilified the prospects for an Armenian state in Anatolia outright and in harsh words, meeting with sharp international critique and British unwillingness to respond to his demands, the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti opted for a different strategy: The brought in an expert witness. During their visit to Andrew Ryan at the British embassy in Istanbul, the delegates of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti were accompanied by a local historian who could endorse their narrative of Eastern Anatolian history. This alleged historical expert, whose name was rendered as "Abdulahad Dawoud" in the British documentation, vouched for the long-standing peaceful relations between the Bedirhani family and the local Christian communities of Anatolia, notably the Nestorians.¹³²³ Dawoud was born in 1867 in Urmiye as David Benjamin. He was a former Nestorian Christian himself who had converted to Islam. He had, in the 1890s, spent some time in Britain and was thus able to translate for the Kurdish delegation. Upon his return from Europe, he founded a school in his hometown in the surroundings of Urmiye, before he came to Istanbul in 1903. There, he converted to Islam in 1905, allegedly on the initiative of the *şeyh-ül'islam* Cemaleddin Efendi. His contacts to Cemaleddin Efendi in turn probably facilitated the connection to Ottoman-Kurdish circles: Cemaleddin Efendi's son-in-law Sa'id Mollah Bey was a supporter of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti and editor of the association's mouthpiece *Serbestî*. Sa'id Mollah Bey's signature can be found on the petition by the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti to the British.¹³²⁴

¹³²³ The emphasis on peaceful relations to the Nestorians was a proactive move: It could be expected that as the British representatives looked up the Bedirhanis in their archives, reports on the massacres of the 1840s which had led to international protests and, ultimately, a military intervention of the Ottomans against Emir Bedirhan in 1847, would resurface.

¹³²⁴ FO 608/95, Kurdistan Committee to Admiral Calthorpe, British High Commissioner in Istanbul, dated January 2, 1919.

In addition to historical expertise, a second strategy the delegates of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti made use of to forward their claims for Kurdish independence was to point out what they regarded as systematic injustices and oppressions the Kurdish communities in the Ottoman Empire had suffered under Ottoman rule. In this context, they also referred to the violent crushing of the uprisings in Bitlis in 1914 by the CUP government. The uprising which, it needs to be recalled, many of them had condemned at the time¹³²⁵ was now cited as evidence for Ottoman oppression of the Kurds. In addition, the delegation made a point of stressing the allegedly long-standing Kurdish support for the British, even under Ottoman rule. To back up this claim, they cited from the memoirs of the former *vali* of Baghdad, Cavid Paşa (1883–1932), who wrote that Kurdish volunteers in the Ottoman army refused to attack the British army in Basra in 1914.¹³²⁶ The petition was signed by the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti's president sheikh Abdülkadir, another member of the sheikh's family, signing as Seyyid Abdullah, by Emin Ali and Halid Bey Bedirhan, by Abdülaziz Baban, Sa'id Mollah Bey and Abdulahad Dawoud as translator, as well as by three individuals who are less easily identified: Mustafa Paşa (possibly Nemrud Mustafa Paşa), Mollah Ali Rıza and Muhammad Emin.

This change of strategy proved successful: The Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti's petition received more favorable attention from British diplomats in Istanbul than the earlier attempts made by the Comité d'Indépendance Kurde in Egypt. The British High Commissioner in Istanbul Admiral Calthorpe cautioned that "(...) the Kurds are an element whose claims cannot be disregarded in the eventual settlement of the affairs of Eastern Asia Minor. Any failure now to face the problem

¹³²⁵ See chapter 4 on the chiefly local dynamics of the uprising in Bitlis and later attempts to appropriate it into the narrative of Kurdish nationalism and Bedirhani family history.

¹³²⁶ FO 608/95, Admiral Calthorpe, British High Commissioner in Istanbul to Lord Balfour, report dated Istanbul, January 5, 1919. Cavid Paşa served as *vali* in Baghdad in 1914, see Kunalp, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 69 and Herzog, *Osmanische Herrschaft*, pp. 93-95.

of adjusting their claims and those of the Armenians would be to sow the seed of future trouble.”¹³²⁷ The Kurdish delegates were insistently following up on their demands: In the spring of 1919, sheikh Abdülkadir called on the British embassy in Istanbul at least twice, offering to use his and the Kürdistan Te’ali Cemiyeti’s influence in both Istanbul and Anatolia to bring about a “pacification” of the Kurds.¹³²⁸

Since the beginning of 1919, sheikh Abdülkadir had become increasingly alienated from the Ottoman government he was a member of. The grand vizier Damad Ferid Paşa confessed in an interview at the British embassy that he had lately grown suspicious of the activities of sheikh Abdülkadir and was aware that the latter was in regular contact with Kurdish tribal leaders in Anatolia, promoting support for Kurdish independence.¹³²⁹ Vis-à-vis the British representatives in Istanbul, sheikh Abdülkadir made it known that he would very much like to be offered an arrangement similar to the one King Hüseyin, the sharif of Mecca had found with Great Britain in the Hicaz. In other words, sheikh Abdülkadir saw himself as a candidate for the leadership in a future Kurdish monarchy.¹³³⁰

He, however, was not the sole contender. At around the same time, in March 1919, in view of the imminent foundation of an Armenian state in Anatolia, Şerif Paşa publicly declared himself ready to represent the interests of the Kurds at the Paris Peace Conference.¹³³¹ Originally sent

¹³²⁷ FO 608/95, Admiral Calthorpe, British High Commissioner in Istanbul to Lord Balfour, report dated Istanbul, January 5, 1919.

¹³²⁸ FO 608/95, Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, report dated Istanbul, April 25, 1919 and Admiral Webb to Lord Curzon, report dated Istanbul, May 12, 1919.

¹³²⁹ FO 608/95, Admiral Webb to Lord Curzon, report dated Istanbul May 12, 1919, relating that sheikh Abdülkadir had sent telegrams to numerous Kurdish tribal leaders, attempting to win them over for his movement.

¹³³⁰ FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, April 13, 1919.

¹³³¹ FO 608/112, George Graham to Lord Curzon, March 29, 1919, reference is made to an article which appeared in *Le Matin* on March 27, 1919, see note n° 267.

to Paris to negotiate for the Ottoman Empire, he quickly noticed that the liquidation of the Ottoman state was inevitable. Şerif Paşa predicted that a predominantly Kurdish territory would be separated from the Ottoman lands and, as no one else in Paris was in a position to represent the Kurdish interests, took it upon himself to do so.¹³³² He thus created a new and, in the face of the collapse of the empire, more relevant role for himself, arguing that the Kurdish community was in need of a capable and politically experienced leader who stood above tribal rivalries among the different Kurdish communities.¹³³³ This was not the first time Şerif Paşa had approached British diplomats with similar designs: Already in 1914, he had been offering his help in winning Kurdish support for the British war effort.¹³³⁴

Şerif Paşa claimed to be elected as representative by the Kurdish notables of Istanbul and was allegedly in close communication with the Kurdish associations through his middleman Fahri Adil Bey.¹³³⁵ Among the Kurdish notables he allegedly represented, Şerif Paşa prominently mentioned Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and sheikh Abdülkadir, vouching for their loyalty to Great Britain.¹³³⁶ Şerif Paşa was also in contact with the Kurdish activists in Egypt. The link to the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde in Cairo was maintained through his son-in-law Salih Bey Husni, who lived in Egypt and managed Şerif Paşa's estate there.¹³³⁷ A member of the Khedivial dynasty, Şerif Paşa's wife Emine Hanım was from Egypt

¹³³² Şerif Paşa, "Le général Chérif Pacha renonce à sauver la Turquie pour se consacrer à la fondation d'un État kurde." *Le Matin*, Paris, March 27, 1919.

¹³³³ FO 608/95, Şerif Paşa to Lord Derly, British ambassador in Paris, letter dated Montecarlo, June 6, 1918.

¹³³⁴ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

¹³³⁵ FO 608/85, Şerif Paşa to Mr. Vansittart, letter dated Paris, July 20, 1919.

¹³³⁶ FO 608/85, Şerif Paşa to Mr. Vansittart, letter dated Paris, July 20, 1919.

¹³³⁷ According to British information, Salih Bey was a former Ottoman military and opponent of the CUP government living in Alexandria, Egypt. His father was Husni Paşa. See FO 608/95, War Office, report dated June 3, 1919.

as well.¹³³⁸ In addition, Şerif Paşa claimed to be in contact with middlemen of sheikh Mahmud Barzani, the most influential leader in southern Kurdistan at the end of the war.¹³³⁹ Salih Bey's correspondence with his father-in-law strongly suggests that relations between the leadership of the Kurdish associations in Cairo and Istanbul and Şerif Paşa were not always smooth: Salih Bey prided himself with having won over Arif Paşa Mardinzade, persuading him and sheikh Abdülkadir to finally cooperate with Şerif Paşa for the greater benefit of their common cause.¹³⁴⁰ Şerif Paşa must have also been painfully aware of his lack of support among the Kurdish tribes of Anatolia. He was originally from Süleymaniye but had been absent from his homeland since his early childhood.¹³⁴¹ His son-in-law Salih Bey had instructions to ask his uncle, an unnamed individual who apparently had some degree of influence in the region around Süleymaniye, to embark on a tour through the Kurdish territories and get the local tribal leaders to sign a petition demanding the nomination of Şerif Paşa as Emir of Kurdistan.¹³⁴²

¹³³⁸ FO 608/95, letter from Salih Bey Husni to Şerif Paşa, dated June 3, 1919. Emine Hanım was the daughter of the former Ottoman grand vizier Sa'îd Halim Paşa (1865–1921), a grandson of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt. The marriage between Emine Hanım and Şerif Paşa took place in 1890, and the couple had at least one daughter, Melek, who got married to an Italian aristocrat in the 1920s. See Ali Birinci, "ŞERİF PAŞA, Mehmed (1865-1951)," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayın Matbaacılık, 2010), vol. 39, pp. 1-2.

¹³³⁹ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919. Mahmud Barzani, however, had sent two representatives of his own, Reşid Zeki Bey, a native of Süleymaniye, and Seyyid Ahmed, to act on his behalf and communicate his views to the Paris Peace Conference and to British diplomats.

¹³⁴⁰ FO 608/95, English translation of a letter from Salih Bey to Şerif Paşa, dated Alexandria, May 20, 1919.

¹³⁴¹ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

¹³⁴² FO 608/95, English translation of a letter from Salih Bey to Şerif Paşa, dated Alexandria, May 20, 1919. Something similar was attempted by members of the Bedirhani family prior to the war, who traveled the areas of the former Emirate of Bohtan to collect signatures for a petition demanding the land should be restituted to their family, see chapter 4. The proceedings seem to speak to a general change in discourse at the time, with the supposed voice of the people emerging as a powerful argument in discussions about political and economic influence.

Şerif Paşa attempted to obtain British subsidies for the Kurdish movement in Istanbul, which he would be then able to distribute among the Kurdish notables, securing his influence over them through patron-client relationships.¹³⁴³ Şerif Paşa's vision for a future Kurdish state can be understood as the logical next step once this patron-client network was up and running: He proposed to establish a federal council uniting the heads of the most prominent Kurdish notable families, over which he, as the Kurdish leader (*emir*) chosen by Great Britain would then preside.¹³⁴⁴ It has to be noted that at that point, Şerif Paşa was acting without a mandate or larger support from within the Kurdish communities of the Ottoman lands: "He does not carry any political weight and certainly does not represent the Kurds (...)," stated the British diplomat Louis Mallet in 1919.¹³⁴⁵ Şerif Paşa defended his claims against these doubts: In a memorandum sent to the British, he found it necessary to lay out his own genealogy in some detail, as evidence of his Kurdish origins. He stressed that both his father, Sa'id Paşa from Süleymaniye, and his mother's father were of Kurdish origins. He went on to argue that he was approached by influential Kurds both from Istanbul and Anatolia, as well as Kurdish POWs currently imprisoned in India to represent their claims at the Peace Conference and now saw it as his duty to answer to these calls.

I have dwelled on Şerif Paşa's example in some detail because his trajectory provides a rather well-documented example for a swift "discovery" of Kurdish identity by a former Ottoman bureaucrat, as new political options were opening up while other doors were closing during the fast-moving armistice period. His example, and in particular his

¹³⁴³ FO 608/95, English translation of a letter from Salih Bey to Şerif Paşa, dated Alexandria, May 20, 1919.

¹³⁴⁴ FO 608/95, Şerif Paşa to Louis Mallet, letter dated May 20, 1919.

¹³⁴⁵ FO 608/95, report by Louis Mallet, dated April 21, 1919. Other British diplomats observed that Şerif Paşa was too old and had too long been absent from the Ottoman Empire to be a good fit for a Kurdish representative, see FO 608/95, telegram from the Foreign Office to Admiral Webb in Constantinople, dated September 3, 1919.

failure to lay claim to a leadership position within the Kurdish community, also illustrates that some ground support in Anatolia and a basic recognition of one's genealogical claims were indispensable to successfully play the "Kurdish" card after the war. Albeit using similar tactics, Şerif Paşa was ultimately less successful in doing so than members of the Bedirhani family or sheikh Abdülkadir. Şerif Paşa's activities also convey an idea of the maneuvering and oscillations of Ottoman-Kurdish notables between different loyalties at the time. In a letter addressed to Damad Ferid Paşa, the head of the Ottoman government in the summer of 1919, Şerif Paşa reiterated that he would always care for and feel as part of the Ottoman Empire (which he calls "la Turquie").¹³⁴⁶ He went on to argue that through his support for a Kurdish-Muslim state in Anatolia, he was in fact rendering the Ottoman Empire a favor, as his activities would prevent that large parts of the empire fell under Armenian domination. In Şerif Paşa's writing, the double bind and dilemma of the Ottoman-Kurdish notables, who had been born and raised into the shared culture of an Ottoman imperial elite, shine through. His account illustrates that the decision to support Kurdish nationalist policies did, in the ambiguous context of the immediate post-war period, not preclude sentiments of loyalty to the Ottoman state or a feeling of commonality with Muslims of non-Kurdish descent.

In September 1919, in spite of the difficulties and tensions on the ground in Eastern Anatolia, Şerif Paşa had managed to work out an agreement with Boğos Nubar Paşa (1851–1930), the representative of the Armenian claims at the Peace Conference in Paris. Both men were confident that Kurdish and Armenian demands for the respective creation of national states were in fact compatible.¹³⁴⁷ British observers

¹³⁴⁶ FO 608/95, letter from Şerif Paşa to Damad Ferid Paşa, dated Paris, May 5, 1919.

¹³⁴⁷ FO 608/95, Şerif Paşa and Boğos Nubar Paşa to Clemenceau, dated Paris, November 20, 1919.

cautioned yet again that Şerif Paşa's support in Ottoman-Kurdish circles was small.¹³⁴⁸ Şerif Paşa's attempts to enter into a dialog with the Armenian delegate were not well received among the Kurds in the Ottoman lands, and many of his followers withdrew their support. In April 1920, Şerif Paşa stepped down from his post as representative of the Kurds at the Paris Peace Conference.¹³⁴⁹

Şerif Paşa and sheikh Abdülkadir were not the only contenders to Kurdish post-war leadership. Mahmud Barzani, a Kurdish tribal leader from the area of Süleymaniye, also aspired to greater political influence. In the eyes of the British, he quickly disqualified himself as a viable partner as he instigated a local, anti-British rebellion in 1919.¹³⁵⁰ A group around Hamdi Paşa Baban was also trying to achieve political independence for the Kurds.¹³⁵¹ In addition, Kurdish political activities after the war were also coordinated in the Allied prison camps, where Ottoman-Kurdish officers were brought together and began to formulate common political interests and programs.¹³⁵² Another idea, modeled on the Arab nationalist movement taking shape around the Hashemite dynasty, was to install a king for a Kurdish state. These designs for a Kurdish monarchy mostly appealed to conservative urban intellectuals and religious authorities, who maintained strong ties to the Ottoman government of Damad Ferid Paşa. It was in keeping with the imperial political logic that two members of the Ottoman dynasty, Damad Ahmed Nami and Şehzade Osman Fu'ad, were suggested as future monarchs of a Kurdish state.¹³⁵³ Osman Fu'ad (1895–1973) was a grandson of Sultan Murad V and son of Prince Mehmed Salaheddin and his fourth wife

¹³⁴⁸ FO 608/95, Şerif Paşa and Boğos Nubar Paşa to Clemenceau, dated Paris, November 20, 1919, and the letter, dated November 27, 1919.

¹³⁴⁹ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 26.

¹³⁵⁰ FO 608/95, secretary's note: Situation in Kurdistan, dated September 15, 1919.

¹³⁵¹ AIR 23/416, report dated February 1, 1930.

¹³⁵² AIR 23/416, report dated February 1, 1930.

¹³⁵³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 31, 1927.

Jalefer Hanım, who was originally from Kars.¹³⁵⁴ The British promoted a member of the Hashemite dynasty, Emir Zaid, a son of Sharif Hüseyin, as king of Kurdistan. In the long run, none of these designs did seem promising or feasible.¹³⁵⁵

Into the mid-1920s, the idea to overthrow the Kemalist regime and reverse the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate still found Kurdish and Turkish supporters. By then, they agreed on Mehmed Selim (1870–1937),¹³⁵⁶ a son of former Sultan Abdülhamid II, as their choice for a future caliph. Mehmed Selim lived in Beirut from 1924 onwards. By the supporters of the Sheikh Sa'id rebellion in 1925, he was indeed proclaimed as caliph, and the Friday sermon in the Grand Mosque of Diyarbakir was read in his name.¹³⁵⁷ Sheikh Abdülkadir was among the supporters of a return to the caliphate, along with other religious scholars and sheikhs of Kurdish descent. In their efforts to restore the caliphate and opposition to the Kemalist movement, they were united with other, non-Kurdish actors, among them leaders of the Rifa'iyya order, sheikh Ahmed al-Senussi, and allegedly also Çerkes Edhem Bey.¹³⁵⁸ The Kurdish supporters of the caliphate can be regarded a part of a coalition of defenders of the old Ottoman imperial order which brought together activists of very different backgrounds, on the basis of a commitment to a religious foundation of the state and a determined opposition to secularist reform.

Over the early 1920s, however, the Kurdish defenders of the Ottoman caliphate became increasingly separated from a second group of Kurdish

¹³⁵⁴ Yılmaz Öztuna, *Devletler ve hânedanlar* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1991), p. 294 and pp. 355-356. As Kars had and still has a large Kurdish population, it is conceivable that the choice was legitimated on this basis.

¹³⁵⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 741, Ambassade de Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique, report dated December 24, 1921.

¹³⁵⁶ Öztuna, *Devletler*, pp. 318-319.

¹³⁵⁷ Öztuna, *Devletler*, p. 318.

¹³⁵⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 15, 1927.

intellectuals and activists who rallied around the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon. These activists were working towards a secular Kurdish state and advocated a cooperation with non-Muslim communities, in particular with the Armenian nationalist movement of the Dashnaksutyun. Unlike in a Kurdish state controlled by religious authorities and governed by a descendant of the Ottoman dynasty, in a secular arrangement, members of prominent Ottoman-Kurdish notable families like the Bedirhanis but also the Cemilpaşazades, Babanzades and others could hope to attain political leadership themselves. From a perspective of power politics, support for a secular Kurdish state was therefore in the best interest of the Bedirhani family. Also, the moment of opportunity for a return to the imperial order did not last beyond the 1920s. Leading members of the anti-Kemalist opposition did no longer put much hope into the idea of a Kurdish caliphate after 1927.¹³⁵⁹

While Şerif Paşa, sheikh Abdülkadir, members of the Bedirhani family and others were vying for leadership over the Kurdish community, it would be a mistake to imagine the Kurds in the Ottoman lands as passive bystanders to these developments. To the contrary, the political future was being discussed animatedly among the Kurdish population of Eastern Anatolia as well. A member of the British military on expedition in Eastern Anatolia in the spring of 1919 noticed how arguments proceeded in local coffee shop well informed of the latest developments in Europe. Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations had become household names among the local Kurds.¹³⁶⁰ Immediately after the armistice in 1919, Muslim notables in Eastern Anatolia were working with local tribal and religious authorities to prevent a separation of the Eastern Anatolian provinces from the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of an Armenian state in the region. Petitions from Van,

¹³⁵⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927.

¹³⁶⁰ FO 608/95, Captain C. L. Woolley, "The Kurdish national movement," report dated June 6, 1919.

Diyarbakir and the region of Urfa reached the international delegates at the Paris Peace Conference, with all petitioners arguing along broadly similar lines that violence and conflict would be inevitable if what they identified as a small minority of Armenians were to dominate the areas they all lived in. It becomes clear from these petitions that their initiators, Muslims of both Kurdish and non-Kurdish background, perceived the situation in Eastern Anatolia exclusively along sectarian lines, as a conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. Petitioners insisted that their allegiance was with the Ottoman Empire: “Avant tout, nous voulons rester ottoman.”¹³⁶¹ Coincidentally, traveling in the area north of Mosul and around Nusaybin in April 1919, the British Major Noel also observed no sizeable support for national independence among the local Kurdish communities.¹³⁶² The pro-Ottoman position, however, soon became untenable, as Eastern Anatolia was occupied by the Allied Powers and plans for a division of the Ottoman Empire were substantiated as the peace conference proceeded.

Among the Kurdish tribes who opposed an occupation by the Allied Forces in 1919 was the Milli tribe in the region of Viranşehir. In June 1919, the British Captain C. L. Woolley was sent on an expedition to the homeland of the Milli tribe, during which he succeeded in meeting with their leader, Mahmud Bey.¹³⁶³ The locals Woolley encountered imagined their political future as part of a Kurdish principedom, which was to be led either by Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan or by Mahmud Bey Milli. No mention was made of the Comité pour l'Indépendance Kurde or the

¹³⁶¹ FO 608/111, petition from the Ligue pour la Défense des Droits nationaux des Vilayets Orientaux, dated February 20, 1919. See also FO 608/111, petition from the notables of Van, protest from the notables of Diyarbakir and petitions from Siradj [Suruç], all dating from April 1919. See also FO 608/95, Admiral Webb to Earl Curzon, report dated Istanbul, May 21, 1919.

¹³⁶² FO 608/95, “Diary of Major E. Noel on Special Duty,” dated April 1919. The local Kurds’ principal concern was, according to Noel’s observation, an acute fear of retribution for the crimes they had committed against Christians during the war

¹³⁶³ Mahmud Bey was the son of the infamous İbrahim Paşa Milli, a commander of the Ottoman Hamidiye.

Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, again suggesting that their actual influence and appeal in Eastern Anatolia were marginal. The Milli Kurds were reluctant to accept the leadership of any of the Kurdish associations, harboring their own ambitions instead: In a personal conversation with Woolley, Mahmud Bey Milli made it clear that he saw himself at the head of a future Kurdish state.¹³⁶⁴ Asked about his rival from the Bedirhani family, Mahmud Bey stated that “In the past, Abd El Rizaq’s [i.e. Abdürrezzak Bedirhan’s, BH] family was greater than mine, and in some ways I should consider him a greater man than myself. On the other hand, the recent generations of Bedr Khans have not done much or been very prominent – the family is not really Kurdish at all (...)”¹³⁶⁵ Woolley had to concur that at least locally, the influence and following of Mahmud Bey and his late father İbrahim Paşa Milli did indeed surpass the prestige of the Bedirhani family. Like in the discussions about the role of Şerif Paşa, being able to demonstrate one’s veritable “Kurdishness” emerged as a central criterion to legitimate or deny claims to leadership over the Kurdish community in the post-war period. These developments did not leave the Bedirhanis, or more precisely the narratives of the family’s history its members put forward, unaffected.

After the armistice, the Kurdish communities in the former Ottoman lands were split between what the British diplomatic jargon called a “pro-Turkish” and an “anti-Turkish” camp. Turkish, in this descriptions, referred to their respective attitude towards the CUP leadership. The Comité de l’Indépendance Kurde in Cairo and the Kürdistan Te’ali Cemiyeti in Istanbul both represented the “anti-Turkish” side of the political spectrum, operating in opposition to the CUP. This positioning also explains the considerable overlap in terms of rhetoric and personnel

¹³⁶⁴ FO 608/95, C. L. Woolley, report “The Kurdish nationalist movement,” dated June 6, 1919.

¹³⁶⁵ FO 608/95, C. L. Woolley, report “The Kurdish nationalist movement,” dated June 6, 1919.

with the supporters of the caliphate and the government of Damad Ferid Paşa. Şerif Paşa, for instance, was also an outspoken opponent of the CUP, who had spent several years in European exile prior to the First World War because of his oppositional leanings.¹³⁶⁶ On the “pro-Turkish” side of the Kurdish circles, British diplomats identified Abdullah Cevdet and Süleyman Nazif, both of Kurdish origins and supportive of the CUP government.

Members of the Bedirhani family who followed a different course of action in the armistice period than the later very prominent sons of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan go either practically unmentioned in later historiography or else are, in spite of their differing opinions, appropriated into a seemingly monolithic bloc of fighters for Kurdish independence. Similar mechanisms can be observed in the historiography of Kurdish activism in the post-war period in general: Kurdish activists who were not affiliated with the Kürdistan Te’ali Cemiyeti, but operated in opposition to the government of Damad Ferid Paşa, sometimes together with former CUP members, have not received much attention in later historiographical accounts. In 1919, however, these actors were a party to be reckoned with, as they helped stir up unrest in Anatolia, disquieting the Allied Powers.¹³⁶⁷ The activities of an “Eastern Vilayet Defense Committee,” for instance, were closely monitored by British diplomats in Istanbul. Opposing a European mandate, the organization was formed with the objective of defying the claims for autonomy made by Armenian and Kurdish organizations.¹³⁶⁸ The committee was led by Süleyman Nazif,¹³⁶⁹ an Ottoman Kurd and supporter of the Young Turk movement who had lived in European exile

¹³⁶⁶ See FO 608/95, letter from Şerif Paşa to Damad Ferid Paşa, dated Paris, June 6, 1919.

¹³⁶⁷ FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Webb to the Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, May 21, 1919.

¹³⁶⁸ FO 251/93, report “Kurdish personalities,” dated June 1919.

¹³⁶⁹ FO 608/95, Admiral Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, report dated Istanbul, April 22, 1919.

in the 1890s and returned to Istanbul after the CUP's advent to power. Under CUP rule, Süleyman Nazif had served as *vali* in Mosul and Baghdad.¹³⁷⁰

5.7.1. Personal Stakes for the Bedirhani Family in the Post-War Period

During the eventful and fast-moving armistice period, members of the Bedirhani family were not only harboring general political hopes and lofty visions for a post-war future. Several of them also had more personal ambitions and were not at last hoping to improve the economic situation of the family: With the end of the Ottoman Empire, members of the Bedirhani family were lobbying with the Allied Powers for the family's own benefit, pleading with them to restore the property which had been confiscated from their ancestor Emir Bedirhan in 1847 to the family. With this idea in mind, Halil, Halid and Süreyya Bedirhan addressed a petition to Lloyd George, who led the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in March 1919.¹³⁷¹ Their text begins with a detailed description of the alleged extensions of Emir Bedirhan's erstwhile possessions:

Nous soussignés Khalid Bey Bedir-Khan [sic], Docteur médecine, Khalil Bey Bédir-Khan, Ingénieur Agronome et Sureya Bédir-Khan, Directeur propriétaire du Journal Kurdistan; sommes les petits fils du feu Prince Kurde Bédir-Khan dont la principauté se limitait au Sud par la ville de Moussoul, au Nord par celle de Diarbékir, à l'Est par celles de Van et de Bitlis et à l'Ouest par celle d'Ourfa et de laquelle la capitale était la ville de Djéziré.

¹³⁷⁰ Sinan Kunalp, *Son dönem Osmanlı erkân ve ricali, 1839-1922: Prosopografik rehber* (Istanbul: İsis, 2003 [1999]), p. 122.

¹³⁷¹ FO 608/110, petition signed by Halid, Halil and Süreyya Bedirhan to Lloyd George, dated Cairo, March 30, 1919. The signatory Halid Bedirhan is not identical with Halid Seyfullah Bedirhan, a son of Emir Bedirhan who had passed away in 1906, but was a grandson of the emir.

Judged by all standards, this description blatantly exaggerated the historical area of influence of Emir Bedirhan. It also conveniently left out any reference to other, equally influential local Ottoman-Kurdish families, like the Cemilpaşazades in the area of Diyarbekir or the powerful tribal leader and direct rival of the Bedirhani family İbrahim Paşa Milli, whose descendants controlled large swaths of terrain in the surroundings of Cizre (referred to as *Djéziré* in the Bedirhani petition) and Viranşehir. The petition then continued with an account of Emir Bedirhan's resistance to the Ottoman state, narrating his eventual defeat and the exile of the family from Eastern Anatolia. The account depicted the emir as an innocent victim of Ottoman intrigues and as a careful and considerate ruler who surrendered to the Ottoman authorities not out of weakness but to avoid further bloodshed among his subjects and followers. To cast the Bedirhani family as a victim of state violence was a convenient reinterpretation of the family history in the context of the imminent liquidation of the Ottoman Empire, which was accompanied by a public stocktaking of acts of oppression the state had committed against different religious groups and minorities. This new narrative and victimization of the Bedirhani family is, however, far from what is elsewhere accepted as historical truth. Depicting the family as hapless and passive victim of the Ottoman state ignored the fact that for decades after their being exiled from Anatolia, members of the Bedirhani family were active, ambitious and successful, economically thriving representatives of the Ottoman imperial elite, on the payroll of the empire and imbued with considerable authority and room to maneuver to shape the very character of imperial rule, particularly in Ottoman Syria. The new narrative the Bedirhani petitioners were subscribing to in March 1919 effectively silenced large parts of this Ottoman imperial history of the Bedirhani family. This significant shift in how the history of the family was told impacts the historiography of the Bedirhani family to this day.

Having related the history of the family in detail, the three petitioners talked business: According to them, the family property confiscated by the Ottoman state in 1847 realized an annual profit of 1.500.000 Francs. For decades, however, the entire family had merely been receiving a modest yearly allowance of an equivalent of 48.000 Francs, a sum which had to be divided among all the members of the extended family. The petition accused the Ottoman state of unjustly exploiting the family's resources and also of persecuting and committing injustices towards the members of the family. In view of these material and immaterial harms, the Bedirhani petitioners demanded recompensations from the Peace Conference, in the form of a restitution of all their former family property in Anatolia. This was a bold move – but the British diplomats were initially willing to consider it, albeit without making any real commitment to the family. The Bedirhanis were not alone in trying to obtain compensation for alleged sufferings brought upon them by the Ottoman state. A variety of actors attempted to seize the historic opportunity. Another, similar petition reached the British delegates in February 1919 from Cairo, signed by a representative of the Comité de l'Alliance Libanaise. This organization claimed reparations for the harm suffered by the Lebanese population during the war.¹³⁷² Also, the general prospect of squeezing the British for some financial support seemed not too far-fetched at the time: Another Ottoman-Kurdish notable, Hasan Bey Babanzade, was touching an allowance from the British government in 1919, as he was unable to access his property in Kifri. His case might have been known to and served as an inspiration to the Bedirhanis.¹³⁷³ One problem with the Bedirhanis' claims in particular, however, was that they conflicted with territorial designs for a future Armenian state, whose foundation was pondered by the Peace Conference at the same time.

¹³⁷² FO 608/110, petition by the Alliance Libanaise to Lloyd George, dated Cairo, February 6, 1919. These claims, however, were immediately rejected as absurd by the British.

¹³⁷³ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

5.7.2. Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in Anatolia with Major Noel

It has been shown in the previous section that in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, many options were debated as far as the future of the Kurdish communities in the Ottoman Empire was concerned. Some members of the Bedirhani family opted for a close cooperation with the British. In the following, their activities, along with the underlying reasoning, will be the subject of investigation. Again, while the episode of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan traveling in Anatolia has received the major share of attention in later historiography, their activities cannot be analyzed in isolation from the trajectories of other, more senior family members.¹³⁷⁴

One member of the Bedirhani family who was very active during the war and the armistice period but is hardly ever mentioned in later accounts was Halil Bey Bedirhan. He had been an Ottoman official who rose in the ranks of the imperial bureaucracy under the government of Damad Ferid Paşa. His appointment as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Malatya was facilitated by Mustafa 'Arif Bey [Deymer] (1874–1954), a close friend and supporter of the Bedirhani family and Minister of the Interior under Damad Ferid Paşa between November 1918 and January 1919.¹³⁷⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the armistice, Halil Bey Bedirhan also enjoyed political support from Britain: In the contemporary Ottoman press coverage on his activities, it was suspected that the British had a hand in

¹³⁷⁴ Nor was the mission as singular an event as it is often portrayed. The tour of the Bedirhani brothers with Major Noel was neither the only nor the last British attempt to establish closer contact with the Kurdish communities on the ground in Anatolia by means of local intermediaries. Mevlanzade Rif'at Bey reported to the French in 1922 that he had earlier been instructed by the British to travel to Anatolia and kindle a general Kurdish uprising to relieve the Greek army during its offensive against the Kemalists during the War of Independence. He was eventually told by his British contacts to abandon the idea, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated Beirut, January 26, 1922.

¹³⁷⁵ Major Noel, *Diary of Major E. W. Noel*, p. 17, on Mustafa 'Arif [Deymer], see Kunalpal, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 108.

his appointment to Malatya.¹³⁷⁶ In exchange for their intercession, Halil Bey was allegedly promoting Kurdish autonomy under British protection in the region. In 1919, as *mutasarrıf* in Malatya, Halil Bey facilitated the visit of the British Major Noel to the region. Persecuted by the Kemalists after the activities of Major Noel were found out, Halil Bey escaped to Aleppo, together with the *vali* of Mamuret'ül Aziz Ali Galib Paşa. The British subsequently sent Halil Bey to Mosul with a mission to win over the local Kurdish community to help defy Turkish claims to the *vilayet* of Mosul. According to British reports, Halil Bey's mission was a failure, and British support for him dried up quickly. Halil Bey Bedirhan was exiled from Turkey as one of the 150 (*yüzellilikler*) and found himself in Syria from the early 1920s onwards, establishing contact to the French authorities and preparing the ground for the later activities of his nephews Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran, who arrived to the region in the late 1920s. Halil Bey facilitated their entry into Syria, reactivating and expanding existing networks of the Bedirhani family there. A center of his activities was Hama, where he himself had married into a local notable family.¹³⁷⁷ Individuals from Hama, crucially among them the members of the Kurdish Barazi family, did indeed emerge as important supporters of the Bedirhani brothers after their arrival in Syria.

It is important to also note the actual context, scope and objectives of Major Noel's mission, as they continue to be rendered incorrectly even in scholarly accounts:¹³⁷⁸ The mission was not meant to prepare the local population for a future independent Kurdish state, its goals were much

¹³⁷⁶ According to Turkish press coverage in *Akşam* and *Son Telegraf* during the first week of December 1924, paraphrased in *Bulletin périodique de la presse turque* (France: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, December 2, 1924), p. 5 “La question du Kurdistan.”

¹³⁷⁷ His wife Nazire was a member of the Kaylani family from Hama.

¹³⁷⁸ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” p. 46 writes: „1919 nach dem endgültigen Zusammenbruch des Osmanischen Reiches gründeten die Brüder Kamuran und Djeladet die Gesellschaft zur Wiedervereinigung der Kurden und reisten gemeinsam mit dem britischen Major E. W. Noel mehrere Monate durch kurdische Gebiete, *um dort die Stimmung der Bevölkerung bezüglich kurdischer Unabhängigkeit zu eruieren.* [Italics mine].”

more modest. The scope of the mission, however, was often exaggerated in later accounts, particularly in Kurdish nationalist historiography. In these accounts, the mission is described as a moment of opportunity for the foundation of a Kurdish national state, which was tragically aborted. This narrative gives Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan quite some prominence and agency in what supposedly constituted a key moment in Kurdish national history. This rendering, however, is largely the result of later accounts and needs to be contextualized and qualified in the following.

For a short period of time immediately after the war, the British government was considering the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish state under its protection. This policy was in line with the statutes of the Treaty of Sèvres from August 1920, which stipulated the foundation of a Kurdish state. British diplomats, among them Major Noel and Captain Woolley, were sent to the Kurdish areas of the empire to evaluate the situation on the ground. One important motive of the British involvement in Eastern Anatolia in the aftermath of the war was the urgent need for a swift pacification of the area. As the Ottoman army was demobilizing, general insecurity and a vacuum of power arose in Eastern Anatolia. Notably, further outbreaks of sectarian violence were to be feared, particularly after plans for the creation of an independent Armenian state became known. Adding to the local foment, the former governing party CUP, ousted from power and under pressure after the armistice, tried to mobilize Kurdish tribes to resist the Allied occupation, using the threat of the creation of an Armenian state to mobilize local Muslim populations.

The region in which the Bedirhani family was, in the eyes of British observers more so than in reality, supposed to wield the greatest influence was a hotbed of anti-British and anti-Christian activities immediately after the war: An influential local religious scholar, the

mufti of Cizre Ahmed Hilmi, toured the surroundings of Cizre, meeting with local tribal leaders. He was calling for resistance against foreign influences and promoted violence against local Christians.¹³⁷⁹ The head of the municipality (*reis'ül belediye*) of Cizre, a certain Osman Ağa, was similarly suspected of activities that were not in the interest of the British. Any effort to pacify the entire region of Eastern Anatolia would have to focus on Cizre and its surroundings as its pivot. British diplomats reasoned that the local Kurdish tribal leaders could be won over through persuasion, combined with credible guarantees that any crimes committed during the war, notably the massacres against the Armenians, would not be persecuted.¹³⁸⁰ To communicate the British offer and vouch for its sincerity, junior members of prominent Kurdish notable families joined a British expedition to Eastern Anatolia led by Major Noel in July 1919. It was in the interest of the representatives of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti in Istanbul to prevent both the spreading of CUP influence and an outbreak of chaos in regions they considered as part of their natural area of influence. Herein lies one reason why the Bedirhanis and others agreed to cooperate with the British authorities. According to British information, the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti had already been planning to send a mission to Anatolia by themselves, even before they were approached by the British.¹³⁸¹

From the perspective of British diplomats, the question of an independent Kurdish state was a side note to the more important issue of securing the northern frontier of Mesopotamia, which remained under British control after the armistice and was crucial both in terms of natural resources and as a strategic location, securing the British access

¹³⁷⁹ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

¹³⁸⁰ FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, report dated Istanbul, May 2, 1919.

¹³⁸¹ FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Calthorpe to the Foreign Office, report dated Istanbul, May 2, 1919.

to India via Iraq and the Persian Gulf.¹³⁸² Due to this very particular geopolitical perspective, the British were especially interested in cooperations with Kurdish tribal leaders or notable families who enjoyed some degree of influence in the northern Mesopotamian borderlands. This, in turn, was a chief reason why the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti around the Bedirhanis and sheikh Abdülkadir, out of the multitude of Kurdish organization operating in Istanbul, attracted British attention and support. Both the Bedirhani family's and sheikh Abdülkadir's supposed following happened to be based in these strategically important areas. Other Kurdish organizations and their representatives in Istanbul and beyond were of far less interest to British diplomats, and it comes as no surprise that reports about their activities were much less detailed or frequent.¹³⁸³ It can be argued that the British imperialist interests played a crucial role in shaping the movement for Kurdish independence after the First World War, giving preference to the voices of some members of the Bedirhani family over other contenders for Kurdish leadership because of the strategically important location of the family's alleged area of influence. Against the backdrop of the British policy in Mesopotamia, adopting a secular, Kurdish-nationalist position appeared – and for a while also proved – much more promising and potentially politically and personally rewarding for members of the Bedirhani family than any other options. The underlying argument that priorities of western imperialism played a crucial role in the formation of the Kurdish independence movement and the very ways in which ideas about Kurdish identity and history were expressed is revisited in the next chapter on the activities of the Bedirhani brothers under French mandate rule in Syria and Lebanon.

¹³⁸² FO 608/95, telegram from Admiral Webb to the Foreign Office, report dated Istanbul, July 10, 1919.

¹³⁸³ One of these other, less closely followed Kurdish organizations was the so-called “Young Kurdish Party” based in Diyarbekir, it was briefly mentioned in FO 608/95, “secretary's note: Situation in Kurdistan,” dated September 15, 1919.

At the time of Major Noel's mission to Anatolia, the British government was reluctant to make concessions to the Kurdish movement. Implicitly, however, many Kurdish leaders understood the British expedition into the Kurdish areas as an opportunity to prove their claims that Eastern Anatolia was, both historically and with regards to population statistics, a genuinely Kurdish area and should thus become an independent Kurdish state, rather than end up as part of an Armenian state. Arif Bey Mardinzade, a leading member of the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde in Cairo, tried to groom local Kurdish leaders for the visit, cautioning them against the use of Armenians as interpreters in their conversations with Major Noel and his team.¹³⁸⁴ Not everyone was happy about Major Noel's travel plans, illustrating again that many voices were competing within the Kurdish community at the time. The fact that Major Noel was accompanied by members of prominent Ottoman-Kurdish notable families was viewed so critical in both Istanbul and Anatolia that the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti felt compelled to release a statement, declaring that the Kurdish members of the expedition were not on the British payroll and had joined Major Noel "simply to facilitate his research, and also advise the Kurds to remain quiet until the Peace Conference had given its decision."¹³⁸⁵

When Major Noel left for Anatolia in the summer of 1919, he was authorized to assure freedom from domination by an Armenian state, along with an amnesty for Kurdish leaders who had committed war crimes.¹³⁸⁶ This was, however, explicitly not an assurance that Britain would commit itself to the creation of a Kurdish state under its protection. It appears that the aim and scope of the mission were deliberately left unclear. The French authorities, who monitored Noel's

¹³⁸⁴ FO 608/95, translation of a letter from Salih Bey to Şerif Paşa, dated Alexandria, June 3, 1919.

¹³⁸⁵ FO 608/95, declaration of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, dated October 8, 1919.

¹³⁸⁶ FO 608/95, Civil Commissioner in Baghdad A. Wilson to the Foreign Office, dated Baghdad, May 30, 1919.

activities closely, concluded that he was in fact preparing the way for a British mandate over the Kurdish territories of the former Ottoman lands.¹³⁸⁷ One of the members of Noel's mission, Ekrem Cemilpaşa, on the other hand, maintained that the primary aim of the journey was to gather population statistics on the Kurdish and Armenian communities of Anatolia, respectively.¹³⁸⁸ The tour in August and September 1919 was not Noel's first visit to the Kurdish areas. Already in April 1919, he had been dispatched from Baghdad to Nusaybin to fathom the attitude of local Kurdish leaders towards the British.¹³⁸⁹ He was familiar with and notably well-disposed towards the Kurds. In a report titled "Note on the Kurdish Situation" dating from July 1919, Noel wrote that "the resuscitation of Kurdish independence is far more justifiable historically than in the case of Armenia (...)." ¹³⁹⁰ He also believed that given the right instructions, Kurds could easily "adapt themselves to the conditions of modern civilization." ¹³⁹¹

Noel's enthusiasm for the Kurdish cause, however, was not shared by everyone in British diplomatic circles. Thomas B. Hohler from the British embassy in Istanbul wrote to a friend in the Foreign Office, sharing his concerns about Noel's policy and his notable bias towards the Kurds: Calling him "a fanatic" and "apostle of the Kurds" about to "turn out a Kurdish Col. Lawrence," Hohler was critical about two points in particular: First, he described Noel as biased in favor of the Kurdish cause to the point of unjustly denying Kurdish responsibilities in the violence committed against Christians in Eastern Anatolia prior to and

¹³⁸⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated October 6, 1919.

¹³⁸⁸ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 41. He remembers Celadet Bedirhan and Major Noel inquiring at the municipality in Malatya about these issues.

¹³⁸⁹ FO 608/95, "secretary's note: Situation in Kurdistan," dated September 15, 1919.

¹³⁹⁰ FO 608/95, Major Noel, "Note on the Kurdish Situation," dated Istanbul, July 18, 1919, p. 1.

¹³⁹¹ FO 608/95, Major Noel, "Note on the Kurdish Situation," dated Istanbul, July 18, 1919, p. 3. This discourse about the Kurdish ability to modernize was to become a central theme in the journal *Hawar*, published by Celadet Bedirhan between 1932 and 1943, see below.

during the war. Second, Hohler was worried that the degree of support and commitment Noel personally showed for Kurdish independence was out of tune with general British politics, as the British primary interest was not the establishment of a Kurdish national state but security in northern Mesopotamia. Any further public commitment or encouragement would be unwise, not at least because the Ottoman government followed the Kurdish activities with utmost suspicion. In spite of these concerns, Major Noel reportedly accepted an invitation from one of the Kurdish associations in Istanbul, dressing up in full uniform for the occasion and thus conveying the false impression that the policies and demands of his Kurdish hosts enjoyed official British diplomatic support.¹³⁹² Noel was so enthusiastic about Kurdish culture that he was said to talk, eat, dress and recite poetry like a native Kurd.¹³⁹³ His difficult standing within British diplomatic circles in Istanbul was further complicated by the fact that he was an outsider to their established chain of command, acting not as representative of the embassy but as deputy of Arnold Wilson, the British civil commissioner in Baghdad. Two different networks or factions within the British institutions might have clashed here.¹³⁹⁴ This is a reminder of the fact that “*the imperial state*” does not exist and needs to be analyzed as a complex field of different actors and interest groups instead.

Major Noel recorded his travels in Eastern Anatolia in some detail. The following summary of his mission is based on his diary:¹³⁹⁵ Early in July

¹³⁹² FO 608/95, letter from Thoams B. Hohler to John Tilley, Foreign Office, dated Istanbul, July 21, 1919. Hohler hinted at the fact that his colleague at the Istanbul embassy, Andrew Ryan, was also not fond of Noel’s course of action vis-à-vis the Kurdish movement. The Kurdish association in question was most probably the Kürdistan Te’ali Cemiyeti.

¹³⁹³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, information provided by Mevlanzade Rif’at Bey, dated February 28, 1922.

¹³⁹⁴ FO 608/95, “secretary’s note: Situation in Kurdistan,” dated September 15, 1919.

¹³⁹⁵ Major Noel, *Diary of Major E. W. Noel, C.I.E., D.S.O., on Special Duty in Kurdistan from June 14th to September 21st, 1919* (Basra: Government Press, 1919). A Turkish translation of the diary is available, attesting to the continued interest in the mission among the Kurdish

1919, Major Noel established contact with leading Kurdish families in Istanbul, among them the Bedirhanis and also the family of sheikh Abdülkadir. It is likely that Andrew Ryan at the British embassy in Istanbul brokered the contact between Major Noel and the leaders of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti.¹³⁹⁶ Noel was planning to travel through the Kurdish areas between Aleppo and Malatya to meet with tribal leaders there and get an idea of their political leanings. Neither sheikh Abdülkadir nor Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan, of whom Noel was personally rather fond, however, were willing to join him on his mission. They both feared repercussions from the government in Istanbul, as any instigations among the Kurdish tribes could be interpreted as treason. Emin Ali Bey in addition decried that he was short of funds, preventing him from making the impressive entrance into Kurdistan that would benefit a leading member of the Bedirhani family. Personal security also seems to have been a concern: Before they agreed to send members of their families on a tour through Anatolia with Major Noel, the leaders of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti asked for British protection in the event that they and their families should face any danger or experience persecution from the Ottoman state following their cooperation with the British. In view of the violent suppression of demands for decentralization and greater autonomy in Ottoman Syria and the execution of prominent leaders of the Arab nationalist movement in Damascus in 1915 in particular, these worries and attempts to take precautions appear perfectly reasonable. The Kurdish activists were aware that political persecution, even the prospect of a trial and eventual death sentence were in the cards for them.

Rather than joining Major Noel's mission himself, Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan proposed to send along two of his sons, Celadet and Kamuran.

community in Turkey in particular, E. W. Noel, *Kürdistan 1919: Kürdistan'da özel görevde bulunan binbaşı Noel'in günlüğü* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 1999).

¹³⁹⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated February 18, 1922.

Sheikh Abdülkadir initially agreed to have his son-in-law, Seyyid Mu'in, join them. Mu'in and another prospective participant, a certain Seyyid İbrahim from Dersim, however, later backed out and were replaced by Ekrem Cemilpaşa, a member of a prominent Kurdish notable family from Diyarbakir. Ekrem Cemilpaşa was personally indebted to Major Noel, upon whose intervention he had been spared from imprisonment in Aleppo during the war. Cemilpaşa himself recalled how he crossed paths with Major Noel and his travel companions in Aleppo, as they were just about to depart for Anatolia. Cemilpaşa had made plans to return to Belgium and resume his studies in electrical engineering there. The encounter convinced him, however, that it was his national duty to postpone his trip and join Noel's mission instead.¹³⁹⁷

According to Ekrem Cemilpaşa, their party consisted of seventeen people altogether: Major Noel and two other Englishmen, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, himself and Abdürrahim Efendi, a poet from Hakkari who was teaching Kurmancı to Major Noel. Both the Bedirhani brothers and Ekrem Cemilpaşa brought along personal servants. In addition, eight Kurdish fighters from the region of Süleymaniye joined the mission as guards.¹³⁹⁸ While Noel was aware of the general influence the Bedirhani family wielded among the Kurds of the Ottoman Empire and held Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan in particularly high esteem, he was far less impressed with the latter's sons. In his diary, Noel described Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan as "rather sloppy and fat individuals who had been brought up in Constantinople, where they earned a living by journalism."¹³⁹⁹ The traveling party met in Aleppo on August 19, 1919. It headed north, towards 'Aintab (Gaziantep) and from there followed a zigzag course through the Kurdish tribal territories towards Malatya. On

¹³⁹⁷ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 41: "Ben, tahsilimi ikmal için Belçika'ya gitmeyi çok istiyordum. Arkadaşlarla görüştükten sonra milli hizmeti şahsi menfaata tercih ettim."

¹³⁹⁸ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 45.

¹³⁹⁹ Noel, *Diary of Major E. W. Noel*, p. 1.

their way, they met with leaders of the Kurdish Sine, Milli and Atmalı tribes. Everywhere, they were received with great honors and stayed with the most prominent families from among the tribes.¹⁴⁰⁰ Their next destination, Malatya was a regional center of Kurdish nationalist activities at the time. Halil Bey Bedirhan, the local governor (*mutasarrıf*), had gathered sympathizers of the Kurdish cause around him. The leader of the Reşwan tribe, Hacı Bedir Ağa and the president of the municipality of Malatya Arpacı Mehmed Efendi belonged to this circle.¹⁴⁰¹ Even though the central government regarded the dispatch of an Ottoman-Kurdish official to a district with a Kurdish majority with increasing suspicion, Halil Bey Bedirhan remained in office because he was thought capable of keeping the region in check and enjoyed British support.

While Major Noel and Celadet Bedirhan paid regular visits to the municipality archives of Malatya to investigate population statistics, the rest of the party established contacts with local Kurdish leaders. The opportunity of meeting in person with many fellow activists whose names and writings were deeply familiar to him was remembered as a moving and formative experience by Ekrem Cemilpaşa. It can only be assumed that the Bedirhani brothers were moved in a similar way.¹⁴⁰² Soon after their arrival in Malatya, Major Noel and his fellow travelers learned that they were being followed. A sympathizer who worked at the telegraph office in Malatya got wind of Mustafa Kemal's preparations to arrest Major Noel and his fellow travelers, having sent soldiers to Malatya to this effect.¹⁴⁰³ Major Noel's party was compelled to leave the

¹⁴⁰⁰ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 42. He recalls different kinds of spectacles and competitions being held in their honor.

¹⁴⁰¹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴⁰² Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁰³ Mustafa Kemal mentioned the incident twice in his famous speech in 1927, see *Nutuk* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1934) vol. 1, p. 83 and vol. III, pp. 48-56 and accorded it quite some importance in retrospect by stating that the purpose of Noel's journey had been to mobilize the Kurdish tribes against the Kemalists. Thereby, the official depiction in

city in a hurry before daybreak.¹⁴⁰⁴ The *vali* of Mamuret'ül Aziz, Ali Galib Bey, helped them escape. They took flight into the mountains surrounding Malatya and were persecuted by Mustafa Kemal's soldiers. Traveling for ten hours straight, they sought refuge with the Kurdish Reşwan tribe.¹⁴⁰⁵ As they arrived at the summer quarters of the Reşwan, Halil Bey Bedirhan and Ali Galib Bey already awaited them there. They were soon joined by other leading members of the Kurdish circles in Malatya, among them Hacı Bedir Ağa, Arpacı Mehmed Efendi and Dersimli Süleyman Bey.¹⁴⁰⁶ After eight days with the Reşwan tribe, Major Noel's party left without giving prior notice to anyone.¹⁴⁰⁷ Noel had decided to cut their journey short. The party headed south again, passing through Kâhta and Urfa and, after a stopover in Arab Pınar (also Arab Punar, 'Ayn al-'Arab or Kobanî), where they met with the British Colonel William Elphinston,¹⁴⁰⁸ they arrived back in Aleppo on September 21, 1919.

The episode illustrates how members of the Bedirhani established contacts with British diplomats and military men like Major Noel or Colonel Elphinston, with whom Celadet Bedirhan was still exchanging letters in the 1940s, after the war.¹⁴⁰⁹ Other contacts proved less long-

Turkish nationalist historiography and the Kurdish counter-narrative – somewhat ironically – support each other in their exaggerations of the scope and the motivations behind Major Noel's mission. It is interesting that in describing Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, Mustafa Kemal reminded his audience of the Bedirhani family's history of disobedience and opposition to the (Ottoman) state, qualifying them as “öteden beri Hükûmeti Osmaniyeye düşmanlıklar ile meşhur,” thus revisiting an Ottoman imperial discourse about the Bedirhani family which has been the subject of closer analysis in chapter 4.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁰⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated Beirut, October 6, 1919.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 46.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 46.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Elphinston was stationed in Arab Pınar to oversee the establishment of a functioning administration among the local Kurdish tribes. He was close to Mustafa Şahin, the head of the Kurdish Barazi tribe, and his family. See William Elphinston Collection, MECA GB 165-0320, memoir.

¹⁴⁰⁹ See William Elphinston Collection, MECA GB 165-0320, letters from Celadet Bedirhan to Col. Elphinston, dated April 12, 1942 and August 24, 1942. Elphinston also wrote an

lasting. Major Noel, who had once been described by his colleagues as an over-eager defender of Kurdish independence, retreated completely from Kurdish politics shortly afterwards.¹⁴¹⁰ He served in India and Pakistan in the 1920s and turned his attention to other issues. There are no indications that Noel was in contact with members of the Bedirhani family after 1920.¹⁴¹¹ The Kurdish community in Istanbul and the Bedirhanis in particular, who had invested considerably in close personal relations to Major Noel, thereby quite suddenly lost an important advocate, together with his contacts into British diplomatic networks. Realizing this contributed to the Bedirhani brothers' interest in a closer relationship with the French in Syria and Lebanon during the ensuing mandate period.

After their mission had come to an end in Aleppo, the group split up: While Noel and Kamuran Bedirhan returned directly to Istanbul, Celadet Bedirhan set out alone, heading towards Diyarbakir and seeking to meet with religious authorities in the area around Şırnak to assure their support for Kurdish independence. The British authorities eventually called him back to Aleppo, from where he then returned to Istanbul.¹⁴¹² Seeing their political activities frustrated, the Bedirhani brothers set off to Germany soon afterwards. Their journey in the company of Major Noel came to be viewed as a failure and an example of British treacherousness in later historiography, feeding into the recurrent

obituary for Celadet after his death in 1951, William G. Elphinston, "The Emir Jaladet Aali Bedr Khan." In: *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (1951), pp. 91-93.

¹⁴¹⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated February 9, 1922

¹⁴¹¹ Unlike many of his contemporaries, Noel did not transfer any personal papers to a UK library or archive. In 1973, Cecil Edmonds tried to locate Noel and his family without much success, pursuing traces which led into Belgium. Noel died in 1974. See Cecil John Edmonds Collection, MECA GB 165-0095, letters from Edmonds to Alexander von Sternberg in December 1973 and February 1974, and Noel's obituary in the *Times*, December 19, 1974.

¹⁴¹² MAE-Nantes, Syrie Liban, carton 569, report dated February 18, 1922.

theme of the Kurds having no one but themselves to rely on.¹⁴¹³ The mission to Anatolia is mentioned in Dr. Bletch Chirguh [Süreyya Bedirhan], *La question Kurde, ses origines et ses causes*. According to this account, the party consisting of Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan and Ekrem Cemilpaşa had successfully mobilized three thousand Kurdish fighters, but were advised by the British to retreat and not attack the Kemalist forces.¹⁴¹⁴ This was later interpreted as British betrayal of the Kurdish cause.¹⁴¹⁵ Compared to Noel's and Ekrem Cemilpaşa's reports, however, these allegations appear exaggerated and unsubstantiated. The aim of the mission, as it has been demonstrated above, was not to mobilize Kurdish fighters for independence, it was a fact-finding mission. While the journey was neither a striking success nor the epic moment of missed opportunity in Kurdish national history as which it often gets depicted in later historiography, the visit to Eastern Anatolia did have an impact on the Bedirhani brothers. During their journey with Major Noel, the Bedirhani brothers set foot on their family's homeland for the first time, a place which figured so prominently in memories and accounts of their senior family members and was so crucial for the identity of the family. Later accounts indicate that this journey impressed them greatly. Kamuran Bedirhan recalls being deeply moved by the experience, treading the ground of the Kurdish territories with great awe.¹⁴¹⁶ During their journey, Celadet Bedirhan collected Kurdish folksongs from locals. A keen interest in Kurdish folklore was to stay with him for the rest of his life, and he treasured and continued to work with the material he had gathered in 1919. A text recorded in the surroundings of 'Aintab in 1919, for instance, was published under the

¹⁴¹³ This is often rendered as having "no friends but the mountains," which is also the title of a popular book on Kurdish history, John Bulloch, *No Friends but the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds* (Oxford et al.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

¹⁴¹⁴ Dr. Bletch Chirguh [Süreyya Bedirhan], *La question Kurde, ses origines et ses causes* (Publication de Hoybun, Cairo: Imprimerie Paul Barbey, 1930), p. 29

¹⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴¹⁶ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,“ pp. 46-47.

title “Loriya Fatê” (The shepherdess of Fatê) in his journal *Hawar* in 1941.¹⁴¹⁷

6. The Beginnings of the Kurdish Movement in Exile

The Bedirhani brothers departed for Germany soon after their return from Anatolia. The situation in the Ottoman lands in the early 1920s was unclear: Some of the Kurdish activists were persecuted by the Kemalist movement already prior to the Sheikh Sa'id rebellion in 1925, which constituted a watershed moment and major rupture between the Kurdish movement and the Kemalists. However, the Kemalists also attempted to enter into negotiations with parts of the Kurdish communities, but seemed to be unable to identify a representative speaking for a majority of the Kurds in Anatolia. In the early 1920s, Mustafa Kemal was still willing to compromise with the Kurdish leaders, as his resources were tied up in the fighting with Greece. The Kemalists thus yielded to some Kurdish demands: They offered to implement a quota system, according to which half of the local officials in Eastern Anatolia were to be of Kurdish origin. Religious propaganda also played a crucial role in these attempts to placate the Kurds: Sheikh Senoussi was dispatched to Anatolia to promote a peaceful cooperation, appealing, in the tradition of Ottoman pan-Islamism, to the religious sentiment of the Kurdish community.¹⁴¹⁸ In spite of these overtures, many members of the Kurdish movement felt compelled to leave the capital when the Kemalists entered Istanbul. Numerous among those who left were former supporters of the government of Damad Ferid Paşa who could not hope to maintain their political standing once the Kemalist had taken over.

¹⁴¹⁷ “Loriya Fatê.” In: *Hawar* 27 (April 15, 1941), pp. 13-14.

¹⁴¹⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated November 11, 1921.

Initially, a small circle of Kurdish activists from Istanbul reunited in the city of Kâhta near Malatya, planning to mount an armed resistance against the Kemalist movement from there. They were, however, discouraged in their efforts by British diplomats, who convinced them to wait out the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁴¹⁹ Pushed out of Eastern Anatolia by the advances of Mustafa Kemal, many supporters of the Kurdish nationalist movement went into exile, most of them to Egypt and Europe, mainly to Romania and Greece.¹⁴²⁰ Not coincidentally, Kurdish activists followed in the footsteps of the supporters of the last Ottoman government under Damad Ferid Paşa and the Ottoman caliphate. The two groups were to remain connected by a common enemy but also by shared networks, geographies of exile and political ambitions throughout the inter-war period.¹⁴²¹ These contacts had lasting implications for the network members of the Bedirhani family were able to activate in the immediate post-war period and beyond. It was only in the late 1920s that the gulf between the supporters of the old imperial system on the one hand and the proponents of an independent Kurdish state on the other hand broadened and their relations became more nuanced and conflicted.¹⁴²²

The links between the Kurdish movement and the wider network of supporters of Damad Ferid Paşa and anti-Kemalists were multiple and close. In an interview in the late 1970s, Kamuran Bedirhan described the ambivalent position of many Kurdish activists in the mid-1920s as follows: “La plupart avaient un pied dans le camp kurde, et l’autre dans

¹⁴¹⁹ Bois, *Connaissances des Kurdes*, p. 87. As it has been pointed out earlier, stability in what they claimed as their sphere of influence in Mesopotamia was a priority for the British. Support for Kurdish resistance fighters was not conducive to this aim.

¹⁴²⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, “Note au sujet des propositions de R. Bey concernant le Kurdistan,” report dated Aleppo, July 23, 1923.

¹⁴²¹ Damad Ferid Paşa’s government was ousted from power following the Greek occupation of İzmir on May 14 and 15 in 1919.

¹⁴²² See below.

le clan [sic] ottoman et islamique ... Ils voulaient être ministres.”¹⁴²³ It was also economically beneficial to stay close to Damad Ferid Paşa: His supporters, including Halil Bey Bedirhan, received considerable financial support in the 1920s.¹⁴²⁴ Şerif Paşa, the already-mentioned representative of the Kurdish cause at the Paris Peace Conference, also belonged to this network. Many of the leading figures of these circles were found among the one hundred fifty individuals exiled from Turkey by Mustafa Kemal (*yüzellilikler*): Among them was Ahmed Hamdi Paşa [Cakacı], a former member of the cabinet of Damad Ferid Paşa. He was of Kurdish descent and listed among the members of the Kurdistan Te’ali Cemiyeti.¹⁴²⁵ Ahmed Hamdi Paşa was exiled from Turkey and left for Greece. He later lived in Albania, where he decided to stay even after an amnesty and the permission to return to Turkey in 1938.¹⁴²⁶ Mevlanzade Rıf’at Bey, also on the list of the *yüzellilikler*, provided another crucial link between the anti-Kemalist opposition in exile and the circle of Kurdish activists around the Bedirhani brothers.¹⁴²⁷ General Nemrud Mustafa Paşa (d. 1936), a trusted advisor of Damad Ferid Paşa and former president of the Ottoman military court in Istanbul, had been touring the Kurdish areas of Anatolia after the war, cooperating with the British.¹⁴²⁸ Nemrud Mustafa Paşa, too, was exiled by the Kemalists – not because he was Kurdish but chiefly because he had presided over the trials against Mustafa Kemal, Halide Edip and Adnan Adıvar during the War of Independence.¹⁴²⁹ Nemrud Mustafa Paşa tried

¹⁴²³ Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 26, footnote 26.

¹⁴²⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, file on Halil Bedirhan, dated November 1927.

¹⁴²⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated November 11, 1921. He had led the Navy Ministry from July to October 1920 and is listed in Kunalalp, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 57 as “Ahmed Hamdi Paşa Cakacı, Süslü.”

¹⁴²⁶ Özoğlu, *Caliphate to Secular State*, p. 45.

¹⁴²⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, report dated August 26, 1931.

¹⁴²⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated November 11, 1921. Nemrud Mustafa Paşa was from Süleymaniye and related by marriage to the influential Babanzade family. He maintained relations to the Bahtiyari tribe, whom he tried to mobilize for an uprising during the First World War, see Ata, *Süleymaniye’li Nemrut Mustafa Paşa*, p. 27.

¹⁴²⁹ Feridun Ata, *Süleymaniye’li Nemrut Mustafa Paşa. Bir İşbirlikçinin Portresi* (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2008), pp. 82-83.

to establish a Kurdish government in Rawanduz in northern Iraq with British support, but failed.¹⁴³⁰ He lived in Syria from 1921 onwards and later moved between Damascus and Baghdad. He was in contact with the Bedirhani brothers and their organization Hoybûn in Syrian in the early 1930s¹⁴³¹ and died in Iraq in 1936.¹⁴³² Another link between the anti-Kemalist movement and the Kurdish circles in Syria and Lebanon was Nizameddin Bey, former chief of the Ottoman police in Bursa. Stranded in Beirut after the war, he was exchanging letters with Süreyya Bedirhan in Egypt.¹⁴³³

Other members from Damad Ferid Paşa's network who supported the Kurdish nationalist movement included Mehmed Ali Bey [Gerede] (d. 1939), former Ottoman Minister of the Interior under Damad Ferid Paşa, who lived in exile in Paris and was active in the anti-Kemalist opposition. He remained in contact with the Kurdish movement in Syria and Lebanon throughout the 1920s.¹⁴³⁴ Mehmed Ali Bey's representative in the French mandate territories was a certain Razi Azmi Bey.¹⁴³⁵ Among Mehmed Ali Bey's contacts in Paris were not only supporters of Damad Ferid Paşa, but also former CUP members in exile, like Ahmed Rıza Bey. However, their support for the anti-Kemalist movement was questionable.¹⁴³⁶ From Paris, Mehmed Ali Bey was also one of the key facilitators of the cooperation between the anti-Kemalists and the

¹⁴³⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated February 1922.

¹⁴³¹ Ata, *Süleymaniyeli Nemrut Mustafa Paşa*, pp. 98-107.

¹⁴³² Özoğlu, *Caliphate to Secular State*, p. 56.

¹⁴³³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated October 27, 1927.

¹⁴³⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 28, 1927. The report contains an intercepted letter from Razi Azmi Bey in Aleppo to Mehmed Ali [Gerede] in Paris. The name is spelled "Rady Azmi" in the French reports. He had a far-reaching network, İzzet Bey, one of his contacts in the 1920s, was operating from Komotini in Greece, MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927 for details.

¹⁴³⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927, containing information on letters from Mehmed Ali [Gerede] to Razi Azmi which were intercepted by the French.

¹⁴³⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927.

Armenian Dashnaktsutyun movement in Syria and Lebanon.¹⁴³⁷ In addition, Mehmed Ali Bey tried to convince his friends and acquaintances in the French administration to support the anti-Kemalist movement. In Paris, he was in conversation about these matters with General Gaston Billotte and Maréchal Louis Franchet d'Espérey, whom he knew from Istanbul.¹⁴³⁸

Gümülcineli İsmâ'il Hakkı Bey also belonged to these same circles. He had already opposed the CUP government in 1913, which won him the ill will of Cemal Paşa and a prominent place in the latter's memoirs.¹⁴³⁹ After the coming to power of the Kemalists, İsmâ'il Hakkı Bey lived in exile in Romania.¹⁴⁴⁰ In 1927, he was traveling between France, where he maintained contact with Mehmed Ali Bey [Gerede], and the French mandate territories.¹⁴⁴¹ From Romania, İsmâ'il Hakkı Bey received money from the former sultan Mehmed VI to publish a journal which promoted the return of the Ottoman dynasty and the caliphate. In 1927, however, this endeavor ran out of funding.¹⁴⁴² Hopes of the anti-Kemalist movement to enter into a cooperation with the Russian opposition in exile around Grand Duke Cyrill rested with Gümülcineli İsmâ'il Hakkı Bey, who claimed that his family had been well-disposed with the Russian imperial elite.¹⁴⁴³ In 1928, Gümülcineli İsmâ'il Hakkı Bey disappeared with a large sum of money he was meant to transfer from supporters in Paris to the Kurdish movement in Syria.¹⁴⁴⁴

In Syria and Lebanon, the anti-Kemalists and advocates of a return to the Ottoman caliphate were supported by members of the Maraşlı family,

¹⁴³⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927.

¹⁴³⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927.

¹⁴³⁹ Djemal Pascha, *Erinnerungen* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922), pp. 27-28.

¹⁴⁴⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 24, 1927.

¹⁴⁴¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 28, 1927.

¹⁴⁴² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927.

¹⁴⁴³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 7, 1927.

¹⁴⁴⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated February 1928.

and also by Hafız Mahmud Efendi, Celal Kadri Bey and Hasan Sadık Bey. The latter was the editor of the mouthpiece of the anti-Kemalists in Syria, a journal called *Doğru Yol*. In addition to Paris and Syria, Cairo emerged as a center for both the Kurdish activists and the anti-Kemalist opposition in exile from the mid-1920s onwards. A journal issued by the anti-Kemalist movement in Cairo, *Musawwat*, was arguing in favor of Kurdish independence in 1928, indicating lasting connections and overlap between the two networks.¹⁴⁴⁵ Like in Damascus, there was a small Kurdish community in Cairo prior to the arrival of the Kurdish activists. Kurds had come to Egypt in two major waves: The earliest wave of immigration had taken place in the context of Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi's conquest of Egypt in the 12th century. A second wave of Kurdish mercenaries from Syria came to Egypt during the rule of Mehmed Ali Paşa during the first half of the 19th century.¹⁴⁴⁶ Throughout late Ottoman times, prominent Ottoman-Kurdish notable families in Damascus like the al-Yusuf, Bozo and Ağılikine, who were the leaders of the Kurdish Kiki tribe, had maintained close connections to Egypt and to the Khedival dynasty.¹⁴⁴⁷ In addition to several members of the Bedirhani family, numerous other representatives of the former Ottoman-Kurdish imperial elite were active in Cairo, among them Vakkas Bey, a son of sheikh Abdülkadir. The Kurdish activists in Cairo tried to stay in touch with the Kurdish community and their supporters in Eastern Anatolia. Political pamphlets were printed in Cairo and sent to Mosul and Diyarbekir for distribution among the Kurds in Anatolia.¹⁴⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴⁵ MAE Nantes, Syrie-Liban 1055, report dated February 1928.

¹⁴⁴⁶ The center of the Kurdish community in Cairo was the district as-Salt. Information on the Kurdish community in Cairo can be found in MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "dossier sur les Kurdes: Les Kurdes en Syrie," no date, probably dating from October 1920.

¹⁴⁴⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "dossier sur les Kurdes: Les Kurdes en Syrie," no date, probably dating from October 1920.

¹⁴⁴⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Note au sujet des propositions de R. Bey concernant le Kurdistan," report dated Aleppo, July 3, 1923.

There were attempts to establish committees in different regional centers across Eastern Anatolia, the proposed organizational structure had a military character and was modeled on the structure of the CUP.¹⁴⁴⁹ These efforts were coordinated from Diyarbakir. Regional centers were reportedly put to work in Mardin, Siirt and Siverek,¹⁴⁵⁰ as well as in Bitlis, Sivas, Nusaybin, Mamuret'ül Aziz and Erzurum.¹⁴⁵¹ From Eastern Anatolia, the Kurdish committees extended their activities also into what had formerly been Ottoman Syria.¹⁴⁵² In Diyarbakir, the contact to local Kurdish tribal leaders was facilitated through mediators from the Cemilpaşazade family, a well-reputed family of local urban notables.¹⁴⁵³ According to French documentation, the Bedirhani family also had at least one representative based in Diyarbakir.¹⁴⁵⁴ Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his sons were in Cairo at the time, in the midst of the post-Ottoman intellectual circles there, playing a leading role in the political mobilization. But, unlike members of the Cemilpaşazade family, they were far removed from the resistance and fighting which took place on the ground in Eastern Anatolia. It was noted by contemporary observers that the influence and the prospects for leadership of the Bedirhani family within a future Kurdish political entity were severely hampered by the fact that as urban intellectuals, they had only tenuous connections to

¹⁴⁴⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated July 23, 1923.

¹⁴⁵⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated July 23, 1923.

¹⁴⁵¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dating from February 1922. An informant noted that in Mardin, a certain Eyyüb Bey and his family formed the core of the Kurdish organization.

¹⁴⁵² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dating from February 1922.

¹⁴⁵³ The Cemilpaşazade family was itself internally divided, with some members supporting the Kurdish independence movement and others, around Ziya Bey Cemilpaşa, cooperating closely with the Kemalists, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dating from February 1922.

¹⁴⁵⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated July 23, 1923 mentions "Abdulherim [sic] fils de Bedirkhan Pacha," an individual I have not been able to identify. The name is almost certainly a misspelling, but I also did not come across a family member by the name of Abdülkerim or the like.

the Anatolian tribes they claimed to represent and had not proven their mettle during the actual fighting in Eastern Anatolia.¹⁴⁵⁵

Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan and his family left Istanbul for Cairo in 1920. While Süreyya stayed in Cairo and established himself as a political writer and journalist, his younger brothers Safder, Celadet and Kamuran departed for Germany to complete their education at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. They joined their brother Tevfik there, who had already been studying in Munich since 1919.

6.1. Bedirhani Brothers in Germany

In Germany, the Bedirhani brothers were far removed from the increasing conflict and tension between the Kemalist government and the Kurdish communities in Turkey, which culminated in the uprising of sheikh Sa'îd in 1925.¹⁴⁵⁶ In the long run, this absence was a disadvantage. The Bedirhani brothers were disconnected from developments in Eastern Anatolia and lacked crucial collective experiences of resistance and persecution, which came to be markers of a shared Kurdish nationalist identity. In their memoirs, protagonists of the early Kurdish nationalist movement later proudly reported their services and sufferings for the sake of the Kurdish nation during this time. Ekrem Cemilpaşa set out to teach in Kurdish villages in Anatolia in the 1920s, rather than returning to Europe to resume his studies.¹⁴⁵⁷ It

¹⁴⁵⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Renseignements sur les Kurdes fournis par le Patriarche Chaldéen Mgr. Thomas," dated Aleppo, December 10, 1920.

¹⁴⁵⁶ On the earlier Kurdish uprisings after the First World War in Dersim and Sivas, see van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 279-278.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, pp. 48-53. Ekrem made use of his time in Anatolia not only to teach, but also to mobilize support for the Kurdish nationalist movement. He was arrested by the Kemalists in 1922. Released from prison, he abstained from political activities and worked on his family's estate from 1922 to 1925. He was then again arrested in the aftermath of the Sheikh Sa'îd rebellion in 1925 and spent three and a half years in prison in Kastamonu.

was in the following, ever so subtly, held against the Bedirhani brothers by their opponents and political rivals that they had missed out on the opportunity to labor, fight and suffer for the Kurdish national cause like many of their contemporaries had. The Bedirhani brothers needed to counter these accusations, finding ways to tie their own stories to this wider discourse of collective suffering which emerged as a formative element of Kurdish national consciousness. On the other hand, their absence ensured their survival, as many of the leading Ottoman-Kurdish activists involved in the rebellions in Anatolia during the 1920s were killed in action or executed by the Kemalists. Their stay in Germany influenced the thinking of both Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan in lasting ways. This time period of their lives is comparatively well-documented, as Celadet wrote a personal diary which has later been published. In the following, I focus on the question of how their stay in Germany impacted the Bedirhani brothers' thinking about identity.

In 1922, Celadet Bedirhan and his younger brother Kamuran arrived in Munich. They had taken a ship to Varna in Bulgaria and continued on from there by train, via Belgrade and Vienna. In Munich, they joined their two brothers, Tevfik and Safder. Tevfik had been the first of the sons of Emin Ali Bedirhan to come to Germany for his education. Since July 1919, he was enrolled as "Tewfik Aali" at the faculty for political science (Staatswissenschaften) at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich.¹⁴⁵⁸ In his studies, he focused on forestry, taking classes in plant taxonomy and forest management. In addition, the young man was also interested in politics: His file in the university archives indicates that during the summer term of 1919, he attended a weekly lecture given by Prof. H. Meyer on the history and political system of socialism. Safder Bedirhan was the second member of the family to arrive in Munich, he

¹⁴⁵⁸ Archiv der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Studienjahr SS 1919, Stud BB 578. Unfortunately, information on the coursework of his brothers is not available in the archives, as the corresponding holdings have been lost during the Second World War.

had joined his brother Tevfik in the spring of 1922, enrolling as a student of chemistry at the same university.¹⁴⁵⁹ The career and degree choices of his younger sons Tevfik and Safder indicate that Emin Ali Bey had planned for them to manage the family estates. Both chemistry and forestry provided skillsets which were of use for the development of agricultural lands. The older brothers Kamuran and Celadet continued their studies in law, caught in somewhat of a limbo: They had initially been preparing for a career in the Ottoman civil service, but the Ottoman state had all but collapsed when they departed for Germany.

Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan arrived in Munich and were greatly impressed by the city. They took advantage of the vivid cultural life there throughout their stay. Celadet, who played the violin himself, in particular made ample use of the opportunity to attend classical concerts.¹⁴⁶⁰ In the beginning of their stay, money was not a problem for the Bedirhani brothers. Kamuran was even instructed by his older brother Süreyya to invest some money in southern Germany and buy agricultural land there.¹⁴⁶¹ In 1923, however, the tables had turned: Germany experienced the worst economic crisis the country had seen so far and steep inflation drove up the prices. The Bedirhani brothers, who received an allowance from their father in Egypt and had to convert this money into Germany currency, incurred great losses from unfavorable exchange rates. The money they received was practically worth nothing. Bad came to worse when their father Emin Ali Bey found his pension (*maas*) suspended by the new Turkish Republican government in 1923 and struggled to keep up the regular remittances to his sons.¹⁴⁶² As the economic situation of the Bedirhanis deteriorated and Emin Ali Bey fell seriously ill, the family demanded the immediate return of the brothers

¹⁴⁵⁹ Archiv der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Immatrikulationsverzeichnis, Nr. 1669, "Bederkhan. Safder Aali."

¹⁴⁶⁰ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁶¹ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁶² Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, pp. 32-34.

from Germany.¹⁴⁶³ For reasons that do not become entirely clear in Celadet's diary, apparently having to do with the fact that some of his family members were excluded from the general amnesty the Kemalist government had announced and had to fear persecution and arrest upon their return to Turkey, Celadet and his brothers did not comply with their parents' wishes but stayed in Munich instead.

It seems that in his evaluation of the situation in Turkey, Celadet had to rely on rumors and was not altogether well informed about the developments on the ground. One of his uncles, Halil Bey Bedirhan was indeed listed as one of the one hundred and fifty 'undesirable' individuals (*yüzellilikler*) who found themselves permanently exiled by the Kemalist government, along with several other prominent individuals of Kurdish background. These, however, were targeted not for being Kurdish, but because of their involvement with Damad Ferid Paşa and the anti-Kemalist opposition. No other member of the Bedirhani family figured on that list.¹⁴⁶⁴ Another close friend and former colleague of Celadet Bedirhan, the journalist Mevlanzade Rıf'at Bey was also among those exiled from the newly established Turkish Republic. It is likely that Celadet and Kamuran feared repercussions because of their taking part in the British mission led by Major Noel through Eastern Anatolia in 1919. The Kemalists in Anatolia had been suspicious of their activities and had ordered their arrest, but the party had been able to escape. In light of these events, it might not have been clear to the Bedirhani brothers in 1923 whether they could risk to return to Istanbul. More recent accounts of their reluctance to return from Germany are

¹⁴⁶³ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, p. 48.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Özoğlu, *Caliphate to Secular State*, pp. 55-56. Mustafa Kemal had, however, called Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan traitors to their religion and their nation ("din ve milletlerini satmış") in several documents in 1919. He cited his condemnations verbatim in his speech from 1927, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1934), vol. 3, p. 56.

tinged by later historical developments in Turkey:¹⁴⁶⁵ The discrimination of the Kurdish communities in Republican Turkey and their attempted assimilation as “mountain Turks,” the suppression of expressions of Kurdish culture and prohibition of the use of Kurdish language are products of the 1930s. In the early 1920s, when the Bedirhani brothers decided against a return to the former Ottoman lands, the lines were not drawn quite so clearly yet, which is also indicated by the fact that their own family actually wanted them to return.

In any case, Celadet stayed in Munich for the time being, moving in with his brother Safder in 1923 to save money. To sustain himself, he began to write short stories for a German paper and also worked as a language tutor for German university students – not for Ottoman Turkish or Kurdish, but for Greek, a language he was familiar with since his childhood.¹⁴⁶⁶ In the summer of 1924, still unemployed and without much of a perspective in Germany, Celadet prepared to leave Munich, hoping to join his family in Cairo. One year later, in May 1925, he was finally able to leave, together with Hakki, the son of his older brother Süreyya who had also been pursuing his education in Germany. They took the train to Trieste in Italy and continued their journey by boat to Alexandria. In Cairo, they were greeted by Süreyya Bedirhan.

In total, Celadet Bedirhan spent around three years in Munich. He was part of a closely-knit community of his relatives, some of whom were already familiar with the city. He was thus able to rely on their knowledge about the university and life in general in Germany. Being part of this group of peers, however, also meant that Celadet was never really forced to speak German. He did take language classes, but since the Bedirhanis spoke Ottoman Turkish among themselves, it appears

¹⁴⁶⁵ See for example the rendering in Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” pp. 46-47.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, pp. 58-61.

that German never truly became a second language to him. When the German linguist Karl Hadank met Celadet in Damascus in 1932, ten years after his return from Munich, he described Celadet's command of German as merely tolerable and preferred to communicate with him in French.¹⁴⁶⁷ Kamuran Bedirhan on the other hand, who stayed in Germany longer, still wrote and received letters in German language in the 1960s.¹⁴⁶⁸

Contrary to his brothers, Celadet Bedirhan appeared undecided about his university studies. On June 26 in 1923, he enrolled as "Djeladet Aali Bedr-Chan" at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, on the same day as his brother Kamuran. Both brothers enrolled at the faculty of law, even though Mehmed Uzun would later claim in his fictionalized biography that Celadet studied German philosophy and linguistics, a much better fit with the activities he pursued during in the 1930s and 1940s as editor of his Kurdish journal and scholar of Kurdish language and literature. According to his university records, Celadet was enrolled for only two subsequent terms at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, in 1923/24.¹⁴⁶⁹ This might have also had financial reasons: With the perspective of Celadet and Kamuran, who were training to be lawyers and bureaucrats, severely shaken after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the family was more willing to invest in the more promising careers of the younger brothers, especially as the financial situation of the family became tighter. Kamuran Bedirhan was enrolled in Munich longer than his brother Celadet, from summer 1923 until the winter term of 1925.¹⁴⁷⁰ According to the diary of Celadet, Kamuran was also

¹⁴⁶⁷ See papers of Karl Hadank in Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160, notes from his stay in Damascus, November 1932.

¹⁴⁶⁸ See for example Kamuran Bedirhan's papers at IKP Paris for his correspondence with Fritz Grobba in German, letters from 1962.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Archiv der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Immatrikulationsverzeichnis Nr. 2574, "Bedr-Chan, Djeladet Aali."

¹⁴⁷⁰ Archiv der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Immatrikulationsverzeichnis Nr. 2573, "Bedr-Chan, Kamuran Aali."

frequently traveling within Germany. In 1926, Kamuran completed his doctorate in law at the Universität Leipzig.

Celadet's younger brother Safder took the most decisive steps to really settle down in southern Germany. He stayed on after Celadet had left in 1924, his university record shows that he was continuously enrolled from summer 1922 until the winter term of 1926/1927. According to Celadet's diary, Safder was in love with a German student, referred to as Nora Pelikan in the diary. The couple got engaged in May 1923, and Nora Pelikan was also well known to the other Bedirhani brothers. Safder was never to return from Germany – not because it became his second home, but for more tragic reasons. He died in 1926 from a long illness. Not only Safder Bedirhan fell in love in Munich, Celadet's diary also mentions a girlfriend of his brother Kamuran who from time to time joined them for their activities. Celadet himself, however, did not mention any of his own relationships in his diary – at least not in the published version. Possibly, respective passages were edited out later. Mehmed Uzun's fictional biography of Celadet includes details on his alleged relationship with a German doctoral student, Monika Karlfeld, who happened to be a specialist on the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁴⁷¹ Uzun most probably added this fictional character¹⁴⁷² to the narrative as a cipher for Celadet's interest and engagement with 19th-century German philosophy. Their fictional relationship can be read symbolically as a successful merging of eastern and western intellectual traditions.

In addition to the network of their peers and relatives, several other individuals who were in contact with the Bedirhani brothers during their stay in Germany can be identified: One of the first people Celadet and

¹⁴⁷¹ Mehmed Uzun, *Kader Kuyusu*, pp. 175-176 and 184-187.

¹⁴⁷² Neither the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität nor the Einwohnermeldekartei of the Stadtarchiv Munich have retained any record on an individual by that name.

Kamuran Bedirhan contacted upon their arrival in Munich was a man referred to as “Alfred Paloka” in the recollections of Celadet Bedirhan.¹⁴⁷³ He acted as a broker and intermediary, vouching for the two brothers so they were able to obtain a residence permit. During the financial crisis of 1923, the same individual also lent Celadet Bedirhan some money, indicating that they remained in contact after the Bedirhani brothers had settled in. Who, then, was “Alfred Paloka”? The records of the university of Munich contain information on a student by the name of Albert Paluka, enrolled at the faculty of political sciences between 1924 and the summer of 1925. His student file indicates that he was born in Istanbul.¹⁴⁷⁴ The Paluka family were merchants of Greek-Orthodox background, based in Istanbul with family connections all over south-eastern Europe. In 1839, a branch of the family had established itself in Nuremberg, thereby extending the family’s network to the south of Germany. Johann Wilhelm Paluka was born in Nuremberg, but returned to Istanbul as a young man and open the quite renowned store “Bazar Allemand” in the Grande Rue de Pera, where he sold German products and offered his services as a broker and middleman for all kinds of business relations to Germany. Johann Wilhelm and his six sons were well-established in the Ottoman high society of Hamidian times, receiving regular dinner invitations to the Yıldız Palace.¹⁴⁷⁵ It was to this family of go-betweens that Albert Paluka belonged. In the preparations for and also during their stay in Munich, the Bedirhani brothers relied on the network of the Paluka family, and contacts probably went back to Ottoman Istanbul. The employers of their brother Süreyya in Egypt, Ahmed Muhtar Paşa and his daughter-in-law princess Ni’metullah Hanım also had connections to Munich the Bedirhani family was likely able to draw on: Ahmed Muhtar Paşa’s son Mahmud

¹⁴⁷³ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, pp. 15-16 and 40.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Archiv der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Immatrikulationsverzeichnis Nr. 2563, “Paluka, Albert.”

¹⁴⁷⁵ Susanne Beyer, *Palucca. Die Biographie* (Berlin: Aviva, 2009), pp. 15-30 on the origins of the Paluka family, the rest of the biography is concerned with the dancer Gret Palucca.

Muhtar had spent some time in Munich in 1914, and his grandson Halil Bey studied in Germany (not in Munich but in Plauen) as well. A sister of Ni'metullah Hanım was also part of the Ottoman community in Munich at the time.¹⁴⁷⁶

In Munich, Celadet also actively sought out contact with German Orientalists, following up on the interest in Kurdish linguistics and literature he had developed during his travels in Eastern Anatolia with Major Noel. While I did have access to a detailed list of classes and lectures Celadet's younger brother Tevfik attended during the academic year of 1919, all the records from the archives of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich dating from the 1920s are lost today, probably destroyed in a fire during the Second World War. Therefore, nothing is known about the classes Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan signed up for and whether courses in Middle Eastern history or linguistics were among them. Celadet's diary contains evidence that he met with the German Orientalist Karl Süßheim (1878–1947) in June 1923.¹⁴⁷⁷ Süßheim himself also took a note concerning Celadet's visit in a diary entry from June 29, 1923:

[Celadet Bedirhan] gave me information about the Kurdish revolt of 1921 in Malatya undertaken by his family and himself, their recent passing of the Ottoman border by way of Mosul in 1922, their initiative in mounting a rebellion in that area, and the Yazidis. Because he had been sentenced to

¹⁴⁷⁶ Karl Süßheim, Barbara Flemming & Jan Schmidt, *The Diary of Karl Süßheim (1878-1947): Orientalist between Munich and Istanbul* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2002), pp. 125-127.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, pp. 20 and 25. Süßheim, who was a historian and lectured on Middle Eastern history with a focus on Seljuk studies at the university in Munich since 1912. He gathered a circle of Turkish students around him who met regularly and had also been a personal friend of Abdullah Cevdet, whose biography he wrote for the first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, "Abd Allah Djewdet," in: EI¹ (Leiden: Brill, 1913-1936), Ergänzungsband, pp. 55-60. On his activities and biography, see Süßheim, Flemming & Schmidt, *The Diary of Karl Süßheim*, pp. 1-7.

*death by the Sivas Court, he is avoided by the Turks and Ottomans here. He has learnt [to speak] German rather well.*¹⁴⁷⁸

His brief note provides a rare glimpse into how a narrative about Kurdish identity and the role of Bedirhani family in Kurdish nationalist history took shape in the post-imperial period: What Süßheim retained of Celadet's visits indicates that the latter was eager to present himself as a viable member of the Kurdish resistance movement, stressing and probably exaggerating the role of himself and his family in recent developments in the former Ottoman lands. Later interpretations of the journey with Major Noel as a preparation for a large-scale Kurdish uprising, supposedly led by the Bedirhani family, already shine through in this early account. It is also interesting that Celadet would mention his being sentenced to death by the Kemalists, which is probably also an exaggeration. It is, however, interesting that Celadet felt isolated from the Ottoman expatriate community in Munich – this might be true, as no contacts to fellow Ottoman students besides his own relatives are mentioned in Celadet's diary.

6.1.1. “Der Adler von Kurdistan”

Romantic nationalism found a strong echo within Kurdish nationalist thinking of the 1930s and 1940s, taking its cue from the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, among others. During their studies in Munich and Berlin, both Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan were exposed to German romantic nationalism, also studying it as a possible model for the Kurdish nationalist movement. Kamuran Bedirhan in particular continued to draw on these inspirations in his own work, in his poetry and in a novel titled *Der Adler von Kurdistan* [The Eagle of Kurdistan]. The book was co-authored with the German novelist

¹⁴⁷⁸ Süßheim, Flemming & Schmidt, *The Diary of Karl Süßheim*, pp. 238-239.

Herbert Oertel,¹⁴⁷⁹ a drawing teacher from Berlin who wrote also on Macedonia¹⁴⁸⁰ and the Dalmatian region.¹⁴⁸¹ It was published in 1937 by Voggenreiter in Potsdam, the same publishing house where another one of Oertel's books, the adventure story *Schirokko*, had been published two years earlier. In the following section, the novel *Der Adler von Kurdistan* is the subject of closer investigation, for two reasons: First, it illustrates the reception of German nationalist thinking by Kamuran Bedirhan. Second, even though it is clearly labeled as a work of fiction, I argue that the novel was impacted by autobiographic experiences as well and can thus be read as an ego-document.

The novel, and also his poems, provide insights into Kamuran's conception of Kurdish identity in the mid-1930s. Martin Strohmeier comes to the conclusion that "... the novel [i.e. *Der Adler von Kurdistan*, BH] reflected a rather successful, if highly problematic, borrowing from a western literary genre upon which the author was able to superimpose his own vision of Kurdish identity."¹⁴⁸² Kamuran chose the popular genre of the adventure novel to narrate a fictionalized version of experiences he himself either made or would have liked to have made as a young man: The protagonist of the novel is a Kurd from the city, like himself, who joins the Kurdish uprisings in the mountains of Eastern Anatolia under a certain Jado Ağa. Jado has been identified as one of the leaders of the Ararat uprising in 1930.¹⁴⁸³

¹⁴⁷⁹ According to the *Berliner Adressbuch* of 1937, Herbert Oertel lived in Berlin-Zehlendorf at the time.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Herbert Oertel, *Mazedonien. Leben und Gestalt einer Landschaft* (Berlin: Wiking, 1940).

¹⁴⁸¹ Herbert Oertel, *Erlebnis Dalmatien* (Berlin: Wiking, 1938), written together with the anthropologist Gerhard Gesemann (1888–1948), and idem, *Schirokko - und der Heiner weg. Eine dalmatinische Geschichte* (Potsdam: Voggenreiter, 1935).

¹⁴⁸² Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 5, and also Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” pp. 46-47.

¹⁴⁸³ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,” p. 47.

The novel is addressed and tailored to the expectations of a German audience, aiming to familiarize the German reader with the basic stakes and outlines of the Kurdish struggle for independence. In doing so, the novel employs a romanticizing discourse on the struggle for the freedom, infused with völkisch-nationalist topoi:

*An den Quellen des Euphrat und Tigris, dort, wo der Berg Ararat steil in den Himmel ragt, auf dem die Arche des neuen Menschen vor Urzeiten gelandet sein soll, wohnt das Volk der Kurden. Unbändig in unserem Freiheitsdrange, eingeschnürt von Fremden, kämpfen wir seit undenklichen Zeiten einen heroischen Kampf um Eigenleben und Selbstständigkeit – einen Kampf um unsere Freiheit, um das einfachste Recht eines jeden stolzen und aufrechten Volkes: sich selbst zu gehören und regieren zu dürfen.*¹⁴⁸⁴

In the same year, another book on the Kurdish independence struggle was published in Germany, Gottfried Johannes Müller's *Einbruch ins verschlossene Kurdistan*.¹⁴⁸⁵ Kamuran kept a copy of this very book in his personal library in Paris. This indicates some interest with the Kurdish predicament among German readers. In addition, Kamuran Bedirhan's novel was a fit with the general *zeitgeist*: Other, more famous and roughly contemporary works with a similar interest in freedom struggle and national independence set in the former Ottoman lands include Nikos Kazantzakis' *Freedom or Death* (1953) or Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945).¹⁴⁸⁶ In particular, the success of Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933), along with the international attention and sympathy for the Armenian cause it generated might have inspired Kamuran to write his fictionalized account of the Kurdish struggle for independence, hoping to establish a counter-narrative and achieve a

¹⁴⁸⁴ Kāmuran Bedir-Xan & Herbert Oertel, *Der Adler von Kurdistan* (Potsdam: Voggenreiter, 1937), p. 73.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Gottfried Johannes Müller, *Einbruch ins verschlossene Kurdistan* (Reutlingen: Fuhr, 1937).

¹⁴⁸⁶ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,“ pp. 46-47.

similar effect.¹⁴⁸⁷ Unlike Werfel's book, however, *Der Adler von Kurdistan* was neither a political nor a commercial success.¹⁴⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Kamuran published a French version of the book in 1938. Co-authored with Adolphe de Falgairolle (1898–1979),¹⁴⁸⁹ the novel was published under the title *Le roi du Kurdistan. Roman épique kurde*.¹⁴⁹⁰ I had no opportunity to compare the two versions, but doing so might shed further light on Kamuran's skillful tailoring of his political message to different audiences.

Another, slightly earlier, publication of Kamuran can be read in a similar vein: A collection of thirty-two poems, translated from the original French into German by Kamuran's friend from university,¹⁴⁹¹ the German lawyer Curt Wunderlich was published under the title *Der Schnee des Lichts* in 1935. Wunderlich appears to have been a supporter of the Nazi regime and made a name for himself as an author of fictionalized war front memories and polemic pamphlets criticizing Anglo-American economic policies in the 1940s.¹⁴⁹² In his preface to

¹⁴⁸⁷ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 155.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Strohmeier, *Crucial Images*, p. 155.

¹⁴⁸⁹ In the mid-1930s, Adolphe de Falgairolle and Kamuran both published in the monthly journal *Le Tresor des Lettres* which was edited by Irmine Roumanette, a friend of Süreyya and Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris. It is conceivable that they were introduced by Irmine Roumanette.

¹⁴⁹⁰ A later version of the text was also published as a series for the journal *Le Jour Nouveau*, beginning in July 1945, see Aktürk, *Imagining Kurdish Identity*, p. 122.

¹⁴⁹¹ Both Kamuran Bedirhan and Curt Wunderlich had graduated from the Universität Leipzig in 1925/26, and both had worked on similar research topics concerned with Ottoman-Turkish civil law. Wunderlich's dissertation was titled „Das Türkische Testamentsrecht nach Hanefitischer Lehre unter Vergleichender Berücksichtigung des Deutschen Rechts,“ and Kamuran wrote on „Das türkische Eherecht nach den Grundsätzen der Hanifitischen Lehre unter Berücks. des türkischen Familienrechtsgesetzes über Civilehe u. Scheidung vom 25.10.1917 und des türkischen Gesetzentwurfs über Eherecht vom 25.8.1924, sowie der Grundsätze des deutschen Eherechts.“ Born in 1902 in Berlin, Wunderlich was about ten years younger than Kamuran Bedirhan. See Universitätsarchiv Leipzig, Jur. Fak. B I 02, Bd. 4 for both dissertation topics.

¹⁴⁹² Curt Wunderlich, *Das Empire Brit. Raub u. Verrat; Amtl. belegt durch Postwertzeichen* (Berlin: Ernst Staneck, 1941) and idem, *USA: Dollarimperialismus und Wallstreetterror: belegt durch Postwertzeichen* (Berlin: Ernst Staneck, 1944), idem, *Fünfzig Monate Wehr im Westen. Geschichte des Reserve-Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 66* (Eisleben: E. Winkler, 1939).

Kamuran's collection of poems, Wunderlich depicted his friend as a "fiery admirer" and staunch supporter of Hitler's Nazi movement from its early beginnings in Munich in 1923.¹⁴⁹³ Cross-read with Celadet Bedirhan's memories from 1923, Wunderlich's claims appear completely exaggerated: In his diary, Celadet mentioned having read about the coup in Munich in the papers on November 9, 1923. He went on to briefly summarize the events, without showing any particular excitement or involvement, and then moved on to write about the rest of his quite ordinary day, during which he also met his brother Kamuran. At no point in this account did Celadet mention any personal involvement of him or his brother. On the evening of the same day, Celadet noted in his diary that he had been to the Odeonsplatz to witness the fighting between the police and Hitler's supporters. Again, Celadet wrote as a curious external observer, without taking sides or showing any particular passion for the putschists.¹⁴⁹⁴

Wunderlich's preface which depicts Kamuran Bedirhan as an ardent admirer of the German Nazi movement can therefore only be read in its immediate context of 1935. At that point, for a short period of time, it would have appeared opportune to Kamuran to present himself as a supporter of the Nazi movement to a German audience. His earlier engagement with German nationalism, his intimate knowledge of Germany and the German language and his contacts to local journalists and political writers like Curt Wunderlich and Herbert Oertel provided the grounds for this brief intermezzo. Back in Syria and Lebanon under the French mandate, however, Kamuran did not follow up on these links to Germany but continued to see his political future with France, working actively towards an Allied victory during the Second World War

¹⁴⁹³ An English translation of Wunderlich's preface is cited in Petr Kubálek, "Towards Kurdish Studies in the Czech Republic." In: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kurdische Studien* 2 (2014), p. 207.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, pp. 52-55.

by spreading French propaganda in his journal *Roja Nû* and as a speaker at Radio Levant.

6.2. In Syria and Lebanon During the French Mandate Period

From their arrival in Syria in 1927 onward, the trajectories of the brothers Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan were closely connected to the cultural and political context of the French mandate regime over Syria and Lebanon. This is true in terms of the networks the Bedirhani brothers operated in and with regards to the opportunities they seized. However, it should not be forgotten that the former Ottoman province of Syria was not unchartered territory for the Bedirhanis at all. The trajectory of the family in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period therefore shows significant shifts in the discourse about Kurdish identity and the family's own history, but also exhibits some degree of continuity with the role the family had played in the region in Ottoman times. My aim in the following section is to trace and contextualize shifts and new elements in the narratives about the family history, but on the other hand also identify moments of continuity with an imperial past which are otherwise rarely investigated in standard historiography.

On the one hand, the French mandate regime held ample opportunity for the Bedirhani brothers to extend their networks and, notably, to establish contact with French officials as well as French and other European scholars. The relations of Kamuran Bedirhan to the French missionary and Orientalist Thomas Bois and the encounter between Celadet Bedirhan and the German linguist Karl Hadank are two cases in point that will be under scrutiny in the following. On the other hand, the Bedirhanis were able to draw on previous family connections in the Syrian lands, dating back to the activities of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in the

late 19th century. While Bedri Paşa himself as well as his son-in-law Mehmed Salih Bedirhan had passed away by the end of the First World War and Bedri Paşa had no living male heir, other members of the family, notably Zübeyr Bey Bedirhan,¹⁴⁹⁵ were still present in Damascus after the First World War. Even though in general the power of the former Ottoman landowning notable families and their influence over rural communities and surplus continued in Syria and Lebanon well into the mandate period,¹⁴⁹⁶ the Bedirhani family appears to have lost control over most of their land ownings after the collapse of the empire. It is unclear who inherited or what happened to the villages and agricultural lands owned by Bedri Paşa in the late 19th century. Economically, the sons of Emin Ali Bey had to start from scratch when they arrived in Syria and Lebanon in the late 1920s.

French imperial discourse came to shape the Bedirhani brothers' thinking about the concept of minorities, about ethnic identity and nationalism in lasting ways. The French discourse about minorities in Syria and Lebanon emerged as a crucial point of reference for demands made by Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan on behalf of the Kurdish community in the mandate territories.¹⁴⁹⁷ In this respect, it is interesting to look at conceptions of Kurdish autonomy and other visions for an autonomous Jazira region in northern Syria as they changed over time. These changes and adaptations are indicators that identity is not a fixed, non-negotiable asset, but can rather be understood as a situative bundle

¹⁴⁹⁵ Major Noel, *Diary of Major E. W. Noel*, p. 55 and FO 252/93, "Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections," report dated July 1919, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Stephen H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), p. 283.

¹⁴⁹⁷ The impact of the French-imperialist discourse on minority politics in mandate Syria has been explored by Benjamin T. White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East. The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2011), p. 37, who proposed "to use the concept of 'minority' not as an analytical category, but as a subject of study in its own right (...)."

of claims made in order to achieve particular political, economic and personal goals.

6.2.1. Prior to the Arrival of the Bedirhani Family to Syria and Lebanon

The positions of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon in the immediate post-war period, prior to the arrival of the Bedirhani brothers is recorded in a pamphlet dating from 1921. The text with the title *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* was signed “Yamulchi Zade Suleimanali Moustapha Pacha.”¹⁴⁹⁸ In this contribution, the author made an effort to prove that for the longest time, the Kurds had formed a separate nation with a history reaching back into biblical times. He stressed that unlike the CUP government under Enver Paşa, the Kurds had always been known live in peace with neighboring communities, in particular with the Armenians. This reference needs to be read in the context of contemporary political discussions: Kurdish and Armenian claims for territory overlapped at the end of the First World War. With a strong and very vocal exile community and western support, the Armenians had good chances of achieving independence. The Kurdish representatives had to react to that: As I have shown above in my discussion of Süreyya Bedirhan and his activities for the Comité de l’Indépendance Kurde in Cairo,¹⁴⁹⁹ some Kurdish activists entered these discussions vilifying the Armenian claims. Other Kurdish leaders – among them the author of *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* – saw their best chance in advocating a cooperation with their Armenian counterparts. Eventually, with the foundation of

¹⁴⁹⁸ This was an alias of the already-mentioned Nemrud Mustafa Paşa, an Ottoman-Kurdish military and supporter of the anti-Kemalist movement after the First World War, see Ata, *Süleymaniyeli Nemrut Mustafa Paşa*, p. 30. The pamphlet is preserved as appendix to MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, dating from July 18, 1921.

¹⁴⁹⁹ See chapter 5.

Hoybûn in the late 1920s, representatives of the Bedirhani family also came to adopt a similar position.

In terms of language politics, the author of *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* stated that while there had once been a historical, shared Kurdish language, this language had been lost by the time of his writing. Pragmatically, he therefore proposed the adoption of Persian and Ottoman Turkish as official languages of a future Kurdish state. His position reflected linguistic realities within the Ottoman-Kurdish elite: Most of its representatives, including members of the Bedirhani family, had only a rudimentary command of Kurdish and, crucially, encountered it essentially as a spoken language. In retrospect, Mustafa Paşa's suggestions in *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* seem radical to the point that they would be unacceptable to many Kurdish nationalists today. This underlines how much the emphasis on Kurdish language as a marker of a shared Kurdish identity was, first, the result of developments which took place over the late 1920s and 1930s in the French mandate territories, and second, an achievement of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan. In 1921 in *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan*, Mustafa Paşa included the Kurdish population of Iran into his designs for a Kurdish state. Kurdish leaders after him were compelled to abandon this idea, due to political realities on the ground and restricted their claims for autonomy to the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon alone. Finally, Mustafa Paşa pointed out in 1921 that religion and adherence to the Ottoman caliphate were to be an important foundation for any Kurdish state – this idea, too, rapidly lost its appeal with the advent of the Kemalist government in Turkey.

In 1921, *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* thus already addressed many of the fundamental questions the Kurdish community and their leaders would continue to face during the inter-war period: How could they defend their claims to national sovereignty? How should their relation to other

minority communities look like? What was the role of the Kurdish language? And how were “the Kurds” to be defined as a group, what were the limits of the Kurdish community? Arriving on the political scene in Syria and Lebanon during the mandate period in 1927, the Bedirhani brothers were dealing with very much the same questions. The answers they found, however, differed in important respects from the ideas Mustafa Paşa had laid out in his *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* in 1921.

As the existence of the pamphlet *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* demonstrates, it would be wrong to regard the Syrian lands as *tabula rasa* in terms of Kurdish activism prior to the arrival of the Bedirhani brothers. They were preceded by representatives of the local Kurdish community who petitioned the French authorities, seeking support in local matters: In the fall of 1920, a Kurdish delegation led by a certain sheikh Abdüllatif asked for intervention, claiming that they faced increasing discrimination and hostilities from the Arab population which supported King Faisal. Sheikh Abdüllatif’s petition was signed by former Ottoman-Syrian bureaucrats of Kurdish origin who had lost their positions under the regime of King Faisal.¹⁵⁰⁰ Continuing this discussion, Nuri Kandj [Kindjzade], elected as local representative for the district of Kurd Dagh in northern Syria addressed the French authorities in 1924, insisting on Kurdish separation from the Arab majority and arguing for an autonomous Kurdish state under French protection.¹⁵⁰¹ Kurdish notables based in northern Syria, among them prominently Mustafa Şahin Bey from Jarabulus (Djerablous) also advocated for an administrative separation of the Kurdish district of Jarabulus from Aleppo.¹⁵⁰² Mustafa Şahin Bey, along with other members of his family, continued to voice these demands for greater Kurdish autonomy under

¹⁵⁰⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, petition dated September 25, 1920.

¹⁵⁰¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, undated petition from Beirut, ca. 1924.

¹⁵⁰² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, petition dated Beirut, May 4, 1924.

French mandate rule, and eventually entered into a cooperation with the Bedirhani brothers after they arrived in Syria in 1927.

In the spring of 1924, the leaders of the Kurdish community in the Syrian Jazira region sent a petition to the French mandate authorities, complaining that the current administrative system disadvantaged Kurds. Instead of a division of the areas settled by Kurds, they demanded the establishment of one single administrative unit comprising the entire Kurdish population, headed by an official of Kurdish descent. They suggested Bozan Bey Şahin as an appropriate candidate.¹⁵⁰³ Local Kurdish grievances, in other words, were already being voiced before the arrival of the Bedirhanis on the scene.

6.2.2. Halil Bey Bedirhan and the Invention of a Kurdish Community in Syria and Lebanon

In the mid-1920s, the French mandate authorities were trying to get an overview of the Kurdish population in Eastern Anatolia and the north of Syria. As it has been discussed above,¹⁵⁰⁴ the claims of different urban-based Kurdish committees in the context of the peace negotiations contained precise but largely unconfirmed data on the distribution and composition of the population in Eastern Anatolia. Little, however, was known about the actual situation on the ground.¹⁵⁰⁵ The need to learn

¹⁵⁰³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated March 28, 1924.

¹⁵⁰⁴ See chapter 5.

¹⁵⁰⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Notes sur le Kurdistan," undated report, p. 7 summarizes the French priorities as follows: "Il est particulièrement ardu de chercher à diviser d'une manière exacte les Tribus Kurdes, de déterminer leur importance exacte, de fixer leur terrain de parcours, leur division en groupes, en sous-tribus, en familles, en clan, bref de les classifier." As a sidenote, the need for translators and middlemen who could help them in dealing with the French was also urgently perceived on the Kurdish side: The Kurdish tribal leader Basrawi Ağa, for instance, approached an Armenian whose family had some relations to his tribe when trying to free some of his tribesmen who had been captured by the French military, see Bedros Der Bedrossian & Tamar Der Ohannessian (trans.), *Autobiography and Recollections* (Philadelphia: self-published, 2005), p. 113.

more about the Kurdish community in the mandate territories, not at last in order to devise a policy to keep it in check, became more pressing when the newly-founded Turkish Republic intervened: Against the backdrop of negotiations for an agreement intended to settle the border conflict between Turkey and the mandate territories, Turkish representatives complained bitterly about the unregulated Kurdish activities in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands, and in particular against anti-Kemalist propaganda which circulated among the local Kurds. In this context, Halil Bey Bedirhan stepped forward as an informant for the French, able to provide the much-desired information on the Kurdish tribes in the areas of Cizre and Mardin.¹⁵⁰⁶

Halil Bey Bedirhan was approached by the French mandate authorities and asked to act as an agent and mediator for them in their dealings with the local Kurdish tribal groups and incoming refugees in northern Syria. The French authorities wanted to deter the Kurds from crossing the border into Turkish territory and prevent them from going back and forth unchecked. Halil Bedirhan passed this message on to the local tribal leaders Haco Ağa and Emin Ağa. If one is to believe a letter they in turn addressed to Halil Bey, the two tribal leaders had not previously been aware that a prominent member of the Bedirhani family resided in the mandate territories. In their response to Halil Bey's intervention and his demand that they should in the future keep their distance from the Syrian-Turkish border, the two tribal leaders shrewdly reminded Halil Bey of the social contract which was at the basis of much of the influence Kurdish notable families had been able to exercise over parts of the Kurdish population in the past: On the one hand, Haco Ağa and Emin Ağa demonstrated due respect for Halil Bey's authority, addressing him as a great leader and declaring themselves willing to

¹⁵⁰⁶ MAE Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Troisième note de Khalil Bey Badrakhan," dated September 16, 1924. In the report, Halil Bey provided information on total numbers of fighters, numbers of mounted fighters, and names of tribal leaders.

obey his orders. But on the other hand, they also remind him that as they take orders from him, it will be his responsibility as their leader to defend their rights and interests towards the Turkish and French authorities and to help them provide for their families and dependents.¹⁵⁰⁷

The conversation between the French authorities, Halil Bey Bedirhan and the local tribal leaders illustrates that it was to no small part the French mandate authorities themselves who helped “making” the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon, facilitating contacts between previously heterogeneous, geographically dispersed and segmented Kurdish groups in the post-war Syrian lands.¹⁵⁰⁸ The French approach towards Halil Bey Bedirhan also hints to a policy which has been described as “colonial paternalism” by Elizabeth Thompson.¹⁵⁰⁹ The French identified potential middlemen, preferably members of the elite, like religious authorities or tribal leaders, and attempted to win them over with privileges. In exchange, these middlemen were expected to communicate the French policies to their respective communities and assert their smooth implementation. The French policy of operating through middlemen instead of devising policies that directly and uniformly targeted the general population brought the variegated splinters of the Kurdish population in Syria and Lebanon closer together: Recently arrived refugees from different parts of eastern Turkey, members of the former Ottoman elite who had fled the Kemalist Republic and were hoping for a return to the caliphate and imperial order, and lastly local, long-established Kurdish communities in Damascus, Hama and northern Syria. The colonial situation and the prevailing discourse on minorities had crucial consequences for the

¹⁵⁰⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated October 1, 1926.

¹⁵⁰⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated October 1, 1926.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens. Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 3-4.

formation of a Kurdish sense of community and identity in the mandate territories during the post-war period. In the 1930s, Kamuran Bedirhan took over from his uncle Halil Bey and emerged as mediator and broker between the French and local Kurdish communities. In July 1930, Kamuran pleaded the case of Osman Sabri Ağa, a Kurdish tribal leader from Malatya who had fled Turkey and was now seeking refuge in the mandate territories.¹⁵¹⁰

6.2.3. The Bedirhani Brothers Enter the Scene in Syria and Lebanon

In November 1927, the French mandate authorities became first aware of the activities of members of the Bedirhani family, who had arrived from Egypt, among the Kurdish communities of Syria and Lebanon. French officials began to closely monitor someone they did not know well yet and misidentified as Ali Celadet from Diyarbekir – an individual who was, in fact no one other than Celadet Ali Bedirhan. French agents took note of his travels throughout Syria and his meetings with local Kurdish representatives, among them Basrawi Ağa and Mustafa Şahin from the Jazira region.¹⁵¹¹ Not long after, the French authorities found an explanation for the commotion they had witnessed among the Kurds: They registered the foundation of the Kurdish organization Hoybûn, for which Celadet's travels and meetings had been preparing the ground.¹⁵¹² Soon, the French were also learning more about Celadet Bedirhan, who introduced himself to French officials shortly after his arrival in Syria in 1927.¹⁵¹³

¹⁵¹⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 21, 1930. At around the same time, Kamuran also acted as the representative of several Kurdish nomadic groups from Turkey who sought permission to settle in Syria, see *ibid*.

¹⁵¹¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated Beirut, November 16, 1927.

¹⁵¹² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated Beirut, November 29, 1927.

¹⁵¹³ In November 1927, Celadet was in personal contact with Col. Arnaud, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 29, 1927.

The Anti-Kemalist Opposition and the Formation of Hoybûn

According to Ekrem Cemilpaşa's recollections, it was Memduh Selim Bey who took the first initiative towards the foundation of the organization Hoybûn and convinced the Bedirhani brothers to leave Egypt and join his new movement in Syria.¹⁵¹⁴ Like the Bedirhanis, Memduh Selim Bey had been an active member of the Ottoman-Kurdish intellectual circles of late Ottoman Istanbul. Following their arrival in the mandate territories, the Bedirhani brothers came to play a leading role for Hoybûn. From the beginning, the outlook of their activities was beyond the Syrian-Turkish border, towards Anatolia. With the help of local Kurdish tribal leaders in northern Syria, the representatives of Hoybûn established connections into Turkey, to Malatya, Mardin and Cizre.¹⁵¹⁵ The center of the early activities of the Bedirhani brothers after their arrival in the mandate territories in 1927 and throughout 1928 was Aleppo. Only later, as the French authorities were keen on preventing the Kurdish activities in areas close to the Syrian-Turkish border, they were compelled to move their headquarters to Damascus and Beirut. Now based in the urban centers of Syria and Lebanon, the Bedirhani brothers still extended their influence towards the northern borderlands of Syria, establishing contacts with the Kurdish tribes in the area.¹⁵¹⁶

Somewhat prior to Celadet Bedirhan's arrival in Syria and the foundation of Hoybûn, the Armenian Dashnaksutyun party had sent a representative from Paris to tour Syria and Iraq and win over the local Kurdish committees and tribal leaders for a cooperation in a broad front of anti-Kemalists which was in the process of being established in Paris.

¹⁵¹⁴ Judging from Ekrem Cemilpaşa's description, convincing the Bedirhanis to come to Syria was not an easy feat: "Bhemdun içtimasından evvel Memduh Mısır'a Bedirhani Celadet ve Kamuran Bey'lere müteaddit mektuplar yazmış, ısrar ve ricalarla bu iki bey Suriye gelmeye ikna etmişti." Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 66.

¹⁵¹⁵ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated May 12, 1928.

¹⁵¹⁶ AIR 23/407, "Syria - Turkey: Kurdish Activities," report dated January 8, 1928.

This coalition attempted to draw together supporters of the Ottoman dynasty, organized in the İhtilat-ı Mukaddes Cemiyeti (Society for the Holy Revolution), agents from Italian and Greek government circles who were hoping to benefit from increased pressure on Mustafa Kemal's government, the Armenian Dashnaksutyun and also White Russian circles. The Dashnaksutyun representative, Vahan Papazian, arrived in Syria in May 1927.¹⁵¹⁷ Over the following months, Papazian traveled back and forth between the Middle East and Paris. He initially intended to establish contacts with the by then most influential Kurdish committee which had formed in Rawanduz in Iraq, hoping that its members could eventually broker a connection to the Kurdish tribal leaders. Notably, Papazian wanted to establish contact with Seyyid Taha, who enjoyed considerable influence and following among the Kurdish tribes throughout the region.¹⁵¹⁸ However, Papazian quickly came to the conclusion that the Iraqi Kurds in Rawanduz demanded too many concessions for his liking.¹⁵¹⁹ Seeing that negotiations with the by then most influential, albeit still loose, Kurdish association in Rawanduz were stalling, Papazian turned to Hoybûn, the brand-new and much more malleable Kurdish association emerging in the French mandate territories, deciding to support it both financially and in the creation of networks and institutions.¹⁵²⁰ By 1928, Papazian was actively sidetracking and attempting to marginalize the Kurdish committees based in Rawanduz, focusing his efforts for cooperation on the newly-founded Hoybûn only.¹⁵²¹ Kurdish activists in Rawanduz were closely

¹⁵¹⁷ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Kurdish and Kemalist Revolutionary Activities," report dated May 28, 1927. The local representative of the Dashnaksutyun movement in Beirut was a certain Dr. Tutundjian, see AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated March 31, 1928.

¹⁵¹⁸ Seyyid Taha, however, was employed in the Iraqi government service and was therefore not able to openly identify or cooperate with the Kurdish nationalist movement at the time, see AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated September 1, 1928.

¹⁵¹⁹ AIR 23/407, "Syria - Iraq: Kurdish Activities," report dated November 12, 1927.

¹⁵²⁰ AIR 23/407, "Syria - Iraq: Kurdish Activities," report dated December 3, 1927.

¹⁵²¹ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated May 25, 1928.

following these developments through Tevfik Cemil, one of their supporters based in Aleppo. The intervention of Vahan Papazian had a decisive impact on Hoybûn, linking it closely to the broader anti-Kemalist movement and isolating it from other Kurdish movements in Iraq and within Turkey. Based on his previous connections to the anti-Kemalist opposition, to Mevlanzade Rıfat Bey and others, Celadet Bedirhan recommended himself for leadership within Hoybûn.

The vision of the anti-Kemalist coalition for Anatolia was as follows: First of all, according to interests of the White Russians and the anti-communist Dashnaksutyun movement, Soviet Russia had to be prevented from extending its influence in the area. Second, Eastern Anatolia was to become part of an Ottoman state again, and autonomous Kurdish and Armenian federal entities were to be created and meant to be headed by Ottoman princes.¹⁵²² Accords detailing the establishment of said coalition were worked out in Paris in the fall of 1927.¹⁵²³ As the details of the cooperation were fleshed out, the numbers of anti-Kemalists in Syria increased: İsmâ'il Bey Gümülcineli¹⁵²⁴ was sent to the mandate territories to recruit support for the anti-Kemalist coalition among local Kurds, Circassians and other groups dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. He duly arrived in Syria towards the end of 1927, but cut his mission short, returning to Europe instead of proceeding on his tour to Iraq and Iran. In Paris, he allegedly entered into contact with the Turkish embassy, betraying details of the anti-Kemalist schemes. His defection delivered a severe blow to the anti-Kemalist activities.¹⁵²⁵ With Razı Bey, the İhtilat-ı Mukaddes Cemiyeti had its own representative in Aleppo. Razı Bey was hoping to establish contacts into the Kurdish

¹⁵²² AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated March 24, 1928.

¹⁵²³ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated July 23, 1928.

¹⁵²⁴ AIR 23/407 includes a note from the Air Headquarters in Baghdad to the Deputy Inspector General of the Police in Baghdad, dated January 21, 1928, in which İsmâ'il Bey Gümülcineli was (mistakenly) described as of Kurdish origins himself.

¹⁵²⁵ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated July 23, 1928.

movement in the mandate territories with the help of Mevlanzade Rıfat Bey. They met in Aleppo early in December of 1927.¹⁵²⁶ Mevlanzade Rıfat had been working with Celadet Bedirhan at the journal *Serbestî* in Istanbul. As the anti-Kemalist opposition was relying on Mevlanzade Rıfat for brokerage, it was no coincidence that when they were looking for Kurdish interlocutors, the names of the Bedirhani brothers came up.

The foundation of Hoybûn in 1927 marked a decisive step in the separation between the religious and Kurdish-nationalist strands of the opposition against the Kemalist regime. While this opened up numerous new possibilities for the Kurdish-nationalist organizations like Hoybûn to cooperate with non-Muslim actors, it also meant that an important section of the Bedirhani family's former Ottoman network, including the connection to the Nakşbandiya-Halidiya order, was no longer (openly) available for political cooperations. The formation of Hoybûn in Beirut was the result of a congress which brought together representatives from several Kurdish organizations to discuss the political future of the Kurds and the deteriorating situation of the Kurdish community in the Turkish Republic.¹⁵²⁷ The participating organizations, i.e. the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, the Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctima'iyye Cemiyeti, the Kürt Millet Fırkası and the Comité de l'Indépendance Kurde were dissolved and merged into the newly established successor organization Hoybûn.¹⁵²⁸ Hoybûn was thereby able to claim continuity and historical legitimacy. The Bedirhani brothers could, on the same basis, request a leading position within the

¹⁵²⁶ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," reports dated January 8, 1928 and January 14, 1928.

¹⁵²⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated February 1, 1929. The foundation of Hoybûn was part of a larger trend at the time in the mandate territories which Elizabeth Thompson has aptly characterized as "associationalism." The newly-founded associations were formalized according to French requirements and expectations, sporting lists of members, minutes, statutes and detailed statements of purpose, often written in French, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁵²⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, report dated August 14, 1931.

newly founded Hoybûn for themselves, as heirs of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan who had been a founding figure in these late Ottoman organizations. In a conversation with the German Orientalist Karl Hadank in 1932, Celadet Bedirhan placed Hoybûn in a long (invented) tradition: He explicitly referred back to the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti, founded by his father Emin Ali Bey, as the inspiration and direct forerunner of Hoybûn. He thereby appropriated the organization, which had developed in rather different historical circumstances and had pursued political aims contingent on the Ottoman imperial context, for his political strategies in Syria in the 1930s. His narrative served not only to legitimate his family's political ambition by establishing a tradition of Bedirhani leadership over the Kurdish community, it also effectively erased all other forums and associations in which being Kurdish was discussed and negotiated during Ottoman imperial times, glossing over all kinds of alternative meanings and moments of political and cultural expressions of Kurdishness which might have existed besides Hoybûn.¹⁵²⁹

But back to the inaugural meeting of Hoybûn: Seventeen Kurdish activists gathered at the congress in Beirut. Reportedly, representatives of the Kurdish religious establishment, among them a brother of sheikh Sa'id, as well as representatives of the Kurdish tribal elite in the Jazira region, among them members of the Şahin family, participated in the meeting.¹⁵³⁰ Süreyya Bedirhan, who was operating from Cairo in 1927, was unable to personally attend. He did, however, forward the request to present a draft his father Emin Ali Bey had made for a Kurdish flag to the congress in order to have it confirmed as the official flag of the Kurdish movement.¹⁵³¹ Much like the pretension to replace all of the

¹⁵²⁹ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130.

¹⁵³⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 24, 1927.

¹⁵³¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated October 27, 1927. In a letter intercepted by the French authorities, Süreyya wrote, "Si un jour le gouvernement kurde se forme, ce drapeau restera en souvenir de notre père mort avant d'avoir eu le bonheur de

previous Kurdish organizations of late Ottoman Istanbul, the proposal of a flag designed by Emin Ali Bey, of all people, symbolically endorsed the claim to leadership of the Bedirhani family in the newly founded organization.

Ambitions and Divisions: Hoybûn between 1928 and 1946

At the time of its foundation, Hoybûn had a transnational outlook: An Armenian-Kurdish congress in Beirut in 1927 had voted to extend the organization's activities beyond the French mandate territories into Iran, Iraq and Turkey.¹⁵³² Branches of Hoybûn were to be established not only in Damascus, Beirut, Hama and the Jazira region, but also in Turkey and Iraq, as well as in Paris and London.¹⁵³³ While the French authorities expected Turkish remonstrations against the activities of a Kurdish organization like Hoybûn in the mandate territories, they initially still tolerated Hoybûn's activities, as the organization declared itself friendly towards the mandate regime.¹⁵³⁴ In their conversations with the French authorities, the representatives of Hoybûn downplayed the political dimension of their work and stressed the philanthropic outlook of the organization instead. They were, however, were not successful in misleading either the French mandate authorities or the Turkish government about their motives in the long run.¹⁵³⁵

voir la libération de sa Patrie." Ekrem Cemilpaşa recalled that already during the armistice period, a flag of the same design, colored in red, white and green had graced the building of the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti in Istanbul, see Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 48.

¹⁵³² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 27, 1927.

¹⁵³³ See MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571 for a detailed list of sections and local representatives of Hoybûn, dated August 14, 1931. Nothing came of the proposal to establish branches in Europe.

¹⁵³⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated Beirut, November 29, 1927.

¹⁵³⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 29, 1927 and also Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie*, p. 350 for the Turkish perspective.

The core of supporters of Hoybûn in 1927/28 consisted of the following individuals: Celadet Bedirhan acted as the president of the society, and Memduh Selim as its secretary. The Kurdish tribal leaders Haco Ağa, Emin Ağa and Mustafa Barazi were involved with Hoybûn, as was Dr. Şükrü Mehmed Sekban, who became the representative of Hoybûn in Iraq. Other individuals involved with the activities of Hoybûn, according to the memoirs of Ciğexwîn, were members of the Cemilpaşazade family, Ahmed Nafiz, Osman Sabri, the young refugees Reşid Kurd and Qedrîcan, Mele Hesên and Abdurahman Ağa. Implicit in this list of supporters is also some information as to who did not cooperate with Hoybûn: Prominent and influential Kurdish leaders like sheikh Mahmud Barzani of Süleymaniye, Seyyid Taha, Simko Ağa or the family of the late sheikh Abdülkadir were not found among the supporters of Hoybûn. Some of them backed the Kurdish political circles in Rawanduz instead, whose representatives were going as far as to deny Hoybûn any right to speak for the Kurds.¹⁵³⁶

Leading activists in Rawanduz were right to suspect competition: It seems that only with the foundation of Hoybûn in Beirut did the center of the Kurdish activities shift from Iraq to the French mandate territories. Contemporary observers related that prior to 1927, the center of loosely coordinated Kurdish activities had been Rawanduz.¹⁵³⁷ The level of organization in Rawanduz picked up speed after the emergence of Hoybûn in Syria, (rightly) fearing a rival in the struggle for political influence and resources and rejecting Hoybûn's cooperations with the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun. From the beginning, the struggle for legitimate leadership within the Kurdish community was also a dispute about history: The Rawanduz group made efforts to set itself apart from Hoybûn and create its own historical legacy, commemorating the execution of sheikh Abdülkadir (which had taken place on May 25, 1925)

¹⁵³⁶ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated May 25, 1928.

¹⁵³⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 29, 1927.

and coming forth with their own publications in Kurdish.¹⁵³⁸ Less than six months after the foundation of Hoybûn, the Kurdish activists in Rawanduz declared themselves independent from the circle around the Bedirhani brothers and Hoybûn in Syria. The organization in Rawanduz was led by Seyyid Taha, a descendant of sheikh Abdülkadir, and included prominent members of the younger generation of religious authorities, among them the brother and a son of sheikh Sa'îd, along with the tribal leader Simko Ağa.¹⁵³⁹ In many respects, the confrontations between Hoybûn and the activists in Rawanduz thus mirrored previous conflicts and splits between supporters of the Bedirhani family and the relatives of sheikh Abdülkadir in Istanbul.¹⁵⁴⁰ In Rawanduz, claims for Kurdish regional autonomy overlapped with demands to give more weight to religious aspects of Kurdish identity. A particular bone of contention was the cooperation with Armenian nationalists, which was initiated by the leaders of Hoybûn without consulting the Kurdish representatives in Rawanduz. British reports from the summer of 1928 document that the organization in Rawanduz found it outright impossible to work with Hoybûn, as they thought it to be controlled by the Armenian Dashnaksutyun and it could, in their eyes, not be considered a legitimately Kurdish organization. An argument regarding the right to represent and speak for the Kurds in the Middle East shines through in these bickerings.¹⁵⁴¹

¹⁵³⁸ AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929.

¹⁵³⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated June 4, 1928.

¹⁵⁴⁰ I am indebted to Hakan Özoğlu, who brought this to my attention during a panel presentation and ensuing discussion in November 2016. The fault lines between Hoybûn and the Kurds in Rawanduz mirrored previous arguments in the Ottoman-Kurdish organizations, during which the followers of Emin Ali Bedirhan broke away from the Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti under the leadership of sheikh Abdülkadir. While the descendants of Emin Ali Bey were now regrouping in Syria and Lebanon, the supporters of sheikh Abdülkadir and his family could be found among the spokesmen in Rawanduz. See also AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929 for a discussion of the rivalries between the two families.

¹⁵⁴¹ AIR 23/407, "Turkey & Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities", report dated September 29, 1928.

The tensions between the Kurdish organizations in Iraq and in the French mandate territories culminated in serious personal accusations against the members of the Bedirhani family in particular, who were held responsible for the political course of Hoybûn.¹⁵⁴² By the late 1920s, the Bedirhani brothers were in the lead: According to British information, it would be misleading to regard the group of Kurdish activists in Rawanduz as more than a very loose association of Kurdish tribal leaders and religious sheikhs. The organization had no noteworthy funding to speak of and had yet to come forward with a political program beyond the shared distrust and rejection of Hoybûn and its cooperation with the Armenian revolutionaries.¹⁵⁴³

The unity of Hoybûn, however, was quickly crumbling as well, as some of the Kurdish tribal leaders who had supported the organization after its foundation returned to the Turkish Republic over the late 1920s and provided the Turkish authorities with insider information about the movement.¹⁵⁴⁴ The Turkish government had a keen interest in staying informed about Hoybûn and even attempted to infiltrate it, sending Refî' Cevad Bey [Ulunay] (1890–1968) to Syria to this effect.¹⁵⁴⁵ Refî' Cevad had been one of the *yüzellilikler*, the one hundred and fifty individuals banned from Turkey by Mustafa Kemal. He was hoping to endear himself again with the Turkish authorities, being promised amnesty and the possibility to return to the Turkish Republic in exchange for his services.¹⁵⁴⁶ The Turkish Republic took active steps towards a reconciliation with the Kurds, offering an amnesty to Kurdish refugees

¹⁵⁴² AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929.

¹⁵⁴³ AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929.

¹⁵⁴⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated June 4, 1928. Among the defectors listed here was Emin Ağa, a founding figure of Hoybûn, with his tribal followers.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Refî' Cevad Bey was born in Damascus as the son of an Ottoman official and had been a contemporary of the Bedirhani brothers at the Galatasaray Lisesi and later in the vibrant publishing scene of post-1908 Istanbul. He was allowed to return to Turkey only in 1938, where he resumed his career as a journalist and editor, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, p. 389.

¹⁵⁴⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated February 1928.

willing to return from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. In the light of these offers, a number of Kurdish leaders reconsidered their attitude towards the Kurdish independence movement. A number of relatives of sheikh Sa'îd, for instance, seized the opportunity to return to Turkey from Iraq in order to take care of their families and property they had left behind there. Other Kurdish leaders and their followers, however, left Turkey in spite of the government's assurances during the same time: K r H seyin and Musa Bey, both of them influential Kurdish tribal leaders, escaped from Turkey to northern Syria and threw in their support with Hoyb n, as was İsm il Aĝa, a Kurdish leader of Yezidi background. The Turkish Republic was closely following these activities through their consul in Aleppo.¹⁵⁴⁷

Throughout the summer of 1928, in spite of tensions and disagreements about a cooperation with the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun, members of Hoyb n and the Kurdish representatives in Iraq stayed in contact and attempted to work towards a compromise solution. Ali İlm  Efendi (1877–1964)¹⁵⁴⁸ and Mevlanzade Rıf t Bey represented the interests of the Rawanduz group in Syria and Lebanon. In August 1928, Celadet Bedirhan and Vahan Papazian traveled to Iraq to speed up the negotiations, but not much headway could be made, as Seyyid Taha flat

¹⁵⁴⁷ AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated November 9, 1928. The British report named "Nuri Genj" as the consul, however, according to Turkish documentation, Mustafa Őerif Bey [İlden] held the post between March 1927 and May 1929, being succeeded by Celal Bey [Mengilib r ], in office from May 1929 to July 1931. See "BaŐkonsolosluk Tarihi ve  nceki BaŐkonsoloslarımız," <http://aleppo.cg.mfa.gov.tr/MissionChiefHistory.asp>, last accessed December 2, 2015.

¹⁵⁴⁸ This is Fanizade Ali İlm  [Bilgili], a Kurd from the region of Adana, he was elected to the Ottoman parliament as member of the opposition in 1912 and represented the district of Kozan, see Malmisanij, *K rt Talebe-H v  Cemiyeti*, p. 23. He and two of his siblings (Zeynelabidin İrf n  and Mes'ud F n ) figured on the list of the 150 individuals banned from Turkey. Between 1929 and 1937, he worked as a teacher in Antakya, before he returned to his Turkish hometown after the amnesty of 1938, see Ali Birinci, "İlm  Bey, F n z de," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: TDV Yayın Matbaacılık, 2000) vol. 22, pp. 138-139. The article does not mention his activities for the Kurdish nationalist movement.

out refused to even meet with the Armenian Papazian.¹⁵⁴⁹ In spite of these failures to establish regional cooperations, representatives of Hoybûn overstated their organization's influence and impact beyond the borders of the French mandate territories, among the Kurds in Iraq and in Turkey.¹⁵⁵⁰ To give greater weight and legitimacy to their political demands, not only in their conversations with their Armenian sponsors, but also towards the French authorities, impact, size and activities of the organization were exaggerated. Different members of Hoybûn posed as delegates of Kurdish districts, in spite of not being confirmed through elections.¹⁵⁵¹ To convince anti-Kemalist supporters and sponsors of the effectiveness of Hoybûn, Memduh Selim Bey sent a confidant to Turkey in the summer of 1928 with a plan to assassinate Mustafa Kemal. This endeavor failed when the would-be assassin was caught by the Turkish authorities in Istanbul.¹⁵⁵²

In 1928 and 1929, Hoybûn was ambitious to expand its influence beyond the French mandate territories. As a representative of the organization, Celadet Bedirhan traveled to Iran, assuring the Iranian government that the Kurdish demands for an autonomous Kurdish state would not affect the Kurdish minority in Iran or make claims on Iranian territory.¹⁵⁵³ The Bedirhani brothers were thus framing their policies within the newly emerging post-war order of the Middle East. During his journey, Celadet Bedirhan also established contacts with Armenian circles in Teheran, as well as with the leading members of the Iranian-Kurdish community.¹⁵⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴⁹ AIR 23/407, "Turkey & Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated September 9, 1928.

¹⁵⁵⁰ AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929.

¹⁵⁵¹ AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929.

¹⁵⁵² AIR 23/407, "Turkey & Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated September 29, 1928.

¹⁵⁵³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated Teheran, November 10, 1928.

¹⁵⁵⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated Teheran, November 10, 1928. Celadet met with the Iranian-Kurdish notable Asadollah Han Kurdistani and the Iranian-Kurdish physician Dr. Sa'eed Han Kurdistani, the latter being rather famous, a convert to Christianity and miracle worker later in his life.

Celadet Bedirhan's trip to Iran took place at a time when in other neighboring countries, in Iraq under British mandate rule and particularly in Turkey, the room for maneuver for Kurdish nationalists was getting smaller. Representatives of Hoybûn hoped that Iran could emerge as a new regional center for Kurdish activities. This prospect was, however, not much appreciated in government circles in Teheran.¹⁵⁵⁵ Hoybûn's rationale according to which the Shah might be interested in supporting the Kurdish movement was as follows: In the event that the Turkish Republic came to regard the Turkish-speaking Azeri communities in Iran as allies and a leverage to influence internal affairs in Iran, the Iranian government could turn to the Kurds in Turkey to retaliate.¹⁵⁵⁶ Apparently, this scenario did not impress the Iranian authorities very much, as their reaction to the Kurdish overtures remained lukewarm. Celadet had hoped to be received by the Shah himself, but was only able to meet with second-tier officials.¹⁵⁵⁷ Continuing his visit, Celadet also seized the opportunity to mend ties with the circle of activists around Seyyid Taha, who had cut off their relations to Hoybûn in 1928, condemning the idea of a Kurdish alliance with the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun party. Since then, Seyyid Taha had left his former stronghold in Rawanduz in Iraq and settled in Iran. Celadet met with him there, but returned to Syria shortly afterwards, apparently without having achieved the intended reconciliation.¹⁵⁵⁸

On this rather disappointing note, the activities of Hoybûn seemed to come to a standstill in 1928. Ekrem Cemilpaşa, along with several other members of the Cemilpaşazade family, arrived in the French mandate territories in February of 1929. Two years after the ambitious foundation of Hoybûn, Cemilpaşa found the organization in shambles, its activities

¹⁵⁵⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated May 3, 1929.

¹⁵⁵⁶ AIR 23/407, "Syria-Iraq: Kurdish Activities," report dated November 12, 1927.

¹⁵⁵⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated January 5, 1929.

¹⁵⁵⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 1, 1929.

dormant, its members scattered and its finances in disorder.¹⁵⁵⁹ Internal splits and division had caused the former member Liceli Fehmi to break away from Hoybûn with some followers, founding his own organization, a Committee for the Liberation of Kurdistan.¹⁵⁶⁰ Memduh Selim Bey, one of Hoybûn's founding figures, had left Aleppo to take up a teaching position in Antakya. Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan had also left the city and moved to Beirut. Upon their arrival in Aleppo, the members of the Cemilpaşazade family decided to resurrect Hoybûn, spending a lot of effort and money to do so. Their priority was to organize support for the Kurdish uprisings which were going on in the Ararat region.¹⁵⁶¹ Ekrem Cemilpaşa and other members of his family grew increasingly suspicious of the Bedirhani brothers and their supporters and wished to act independently of them.¹⁵⁶² In the spring of 1929, this led to yet another split among the supporters of Hoybûn. The rupture, however, appears to have been temporary, as members of the Cemilpaşazade family later figured among the authors and supporters of Celadet Bedirhan's journal *Hawar*.¹⁵⁶³

In his memoirs, the Kurdish poet and activist Ciğexwîn sheds some further light on the split between the Cemilpaşazade family and the rest of Hoybûn: According to his account, the general atmosphere among the

¹⁵⁵⁹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 66. Ekrem Cemilpaşa's account needs to be taken with a grain of salt, since his own family pursued leadership within the Kurdish community as well and, in several instances, cast themselves as superior to the rivaling Bedirhani family. From this perspective, it made sense for him to tell the story of Hoybûn as a failure prior to the arrival of the Cemilpaşazade. The general timeline of a decline of Hoybûn after 1928, however, is also supported by French and British sources.

¹⁵⁶⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, report dated August 14, 1931. The reason for the split was a personal argument with the Bedirhanis. French observers reported that the influence of this new organization was limited. Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, p. 190 also remembered an argument about who should play the leading part in a unit of Hoybûn to established in Iraq in which Liceli Fehmi was involved. Liceli Fehmi seems to have been close to sheikh Sa'îd at some point and is sometimes referred to as his secretary.

¹⁵⁶¹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 66.

¹⁵⁶² AIR 23/407, "Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated June 17, 1929.

¹⁵⁶³ For example, an article signed Wecdi Cemil Paşa, "Hawarek." In: *Hawar* 8 (September 12, 1932), p. 6.

members of Hoybûn was already poisoned, disturbed by petty arguments and mutual accusations of misconduct and embezzlement of money when a small faction led by Kadri Cemilpaşa broke away from Hoybûn. The remainder of Hoybûn subsequently gathered around the very influential tribal leader Haco Ağa and the Bedirhani brothers. At first, this faction also enjoyed the support of the French authorities.¹⁵⁶⁴ Ekrem Cemilpaşa relates that complaints against Kamuran Bedirhan in particular, who acted as Hoybûn's representative in Beirut, were accumulating throughout 1929. An internal commission was formed by members of Hoybûn to investigate the matter. Eventually, their verdict was to expel Kamuran Bedirhan from Hoybûn entirely. His brother Celadet and the Bedirhani family's ally Haco Ağa also stepped down from their responsibilities. These developments weakened the organization considerably and constituted a blow for the Bedirhani brothers in particular.¹⁵⁶⁵ Members of the Cemilpaşazade family remained closely involved with the leadership of Hoybûn until 1946, while the Bedirhani brothers and their supporters faded into the background.

Increasingly, another split became apparent between followers of Hoybûn who supported the leading Kurdish notable families on the one hand and a younger generation of activists politicized in the inter-war period on the other hand who began to question the old social and political hierarchies. Individuals like Reşid Kurd, the poet Ciğexwîn [Şêxmûs Hesên] and also Celadet Bedirhan's former assistant Qedrican [Abdulkadir Can] turned to communism in the 1930s.¹⁵⁶⁶ For a long time, however, the lines between communist and nationalist activists were blurred, with many individuals active in both circles and networks

¹⁵⁶⁴ Cegerxwîn [Şêxmûs Hesên], *Hayat Hikâyem*, trans. Gazi Fincan (Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2003), pp. 208-209.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, pp. 67-71; "Kamuran Bey'in pek çok kusurları meydana çıktı. Hoybûn'dan uzaklaştırıldı." p. 67.

¹⁵⁶⁶ See Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, pp. 212-213.

cutting across the two factions. The turn to communism also does not necessarily need to be understood as an ideological statement, but rather as a strategy to legitimize acting independently from the existing patronage networks and leadership circles which favored the scions of the prominent Kurdish notable families.

In addition to internal divisions, the network of Hoybûn and in particular the cooperation with anti-Kemalist circles was beginning to show cracks. Former supporters withdrew their backing, among them prominently Mevlanzade Rîf'at Bey, the former mentor and companion of Celadet Bedirhan. Already in 1927, he had severely criticized the secular course Hoybûn was steering, which according to him was merely a result of personal interests of the organization's leaders – a thinly veiled criticism against the Bedirhani brothers.¹⁵⁶⁷ The animosities were mutual: In 1927, at an Armenian-Kurdish meeting convened by Celadet Bedirhan in Beirut, it was decided against any further political cooperation with supporters of the caliphate to whom Mevlanzade Rîf'at Bey adhered. That left the Armenian nationalist movement as Hoybûn's main ally in Syria and Lebanon. The Armenian nationalists, however, experienced a severe blow when Vahan Papazian, one of the leading figures of the movement and a key promoter of an Armenian-Kurdish alliance, was arrested in Beirut in 1929.¹⁵⁶⁸ Armenian funding and general support for Hoybûn experienced a serious drop after his arrest.¹⁵⁶⁹ That Papazian's exit from the scene was enough to bring the activities of Hoybûn to a near standstill is an indication of how closely the Armenian nationalists were involved with the Kurdish organization. To rekindle the Armenian-Kurdish cooperation and strengthen the support for the endeavor within the Kurdish community, Süreyya

¹⁵⁶⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 28, 1927.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Papazian was implicated with the murder of Sarkis Kaderian Dikhruni, a political opponent, see AIR 23/407, "Turkey & Syria: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish activities," report dated February 9, 1929.

¹⁵⁶⁹ AIR 23/416, report dated March 12, 1930.

Bedirhan arrived in the French mandate territories from Cairo in the summer of 1930. He embarked on a tour through the Syrian lands, meeting with tribal and religious authorities of the local Kurdish communities and promoting a cooperation with the Armenians. His trip was paid for by the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun movement.¹⁵⁷⁰

The example of Haco Ağa helps to illustrate the complaints of the Kurdish leaders: Haco Ağa felt that he had been made false promises by the Armenian nationalists. He was particularly angry that living in the French mandate territories, he was no longer able to exercise any influence among his tribal followers on the Turkish side of the border. Disappointed by these restrictions that came with supporting Hoybûn and the French mandate authorities, Haco Ağa tried to come to terms with the Turkish government again, negotiating the conditions for a possible return to Turkey in exchange for valuable insider information on Hoybûn with İbrahim Talî Bey [Öngören] (1875–1952), Turkey’s general inspector (*umumi müfettişi*) of the Eastern Vilayets.¹⁵⁷¹ Faced with the imminent defection of one of his key supporters, Celadet Bedirhan pulled out all stops, bringing about a turning point in his relations to the French mandate authorities: Together with Haco Ağa and a number of the latter’s followers, Celadet illegally crossed the border into Turkish territory. This happened in the context of the Kurdish uprisings in the Ararat region and was therefore enough to

¹⁵⁷⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 28, 1930.

¹⁵⁷¹ AIR 23/407, report “Kurdish activities,” dated January 11, 1930. İbrahim Talî Bey had been appointed as governor general of the eastern provinces in 1928, in an attempt to smooth the relations between the Turkish state and the local population in Anatolia and to counter international critique of Turkey’s policies in the east. He actively worked towards a compromise with the local elite and issued a partial amnesty shortly after he took office. The systematic exclusion of Kurds from politically or economically important positions and the state-sponsored efforts towards Turkification, however, continued under his rule, see McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 200-201 for details. İbrahim Talî Bey was elected as representative for Diyarbakir in the Turkish parliament in 1923. For his biography see *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950 (Ankara: TBMM Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010), p. 91.

make both the Turkish and the French authorities nervous.¹⁵⁷² Nothing came of their visit. Upon their return into Syria, however, Celadet and the other participants were arrested by the French. Celadet, Haco Ağa and members of the Cemilpaşazade family were then removed from the Syrian-Turkish borderlands and ordered to live under house arrest from August 1930 onwards. Haco Ağa fiercely protested these punitive measures against him throughout 1930 and 1931.¹⁵⁷³ Mustafa Şahin Bey was also put under house arrest, along with several members of his extended family. In October 1930, he implored the French authorities to end the punitive measures against him and his family, as they prevented him from supervising the harvest season in the villages his family owned in northern Syria.¹⁵⁷⁴

Consequences and New Strategies After the Stalemate of Hoybûn

It was against this background of internal divisions and withdrawal of external support for Hoybûn that Celadet and Kamuran began to consider alternative political options. One of these, which was ultimately discarded, was a compromise with the Kemalist government. Early in 1930, the Turkish Republic sent a member of the Babanzade family, an influential Ottoman-Kurdish notable family from Iraq, to Aleppo. Reça'î Nüzhet Bey Baban¹⁵⁷⁵ was instructed to establish contacts with Kurdish

¹⁵⁷² The leaders of the revolt in the Ararat, prominently among them İhsan Nuri Paşa and the leader of the Kurdish Jalali tribe İbrahim Heski Tello, were indeed in close contact with Hoybûn. On the collaboration, see İhsan Nuri Pasha, *La Révolte de l'Agridagh. "Ararat" (1927-1930)* (Geneva: Editions kurdes Genève, 1986), p. 45 and on the uprisings in general, see McDowall, *History of the Kurds*, pp. 203-207.

¹⁵⁷³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, reports dated May 23, 1930 and December 18, 1930.

¹⁵⁷⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated October 1, 1930.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Reça'î Nüzhet Bey Baban was involved with the activities of the Kurdish student association Hévi in Lausanne in 1913 and had during that time closely with Ekrem Cemilpaşa and his brothers, see Zinnar Silopi [Kadri Cemilpaşa], *Doza Kurdistan. Kürt milletinin 60 seneden beri esaretten kurtuluş savaşı hatıratı* (Beirut: Stewr Basımevi, 1969), p. 30.

leaders who had taken refuge in Syria, fathoming their willingness to negotiate with the Turkish government and, possibly, to return to Turkey.¹⁵⁷⁶ In 1930, an offer was extended to the Kurdish leader Simko Ağa, who could be convinced to leave his place of exile in Iraq and returned to Turkey.¹⁵⁷⁷ In 1932, the Turkish government also approached the Bedirhani brothers: The French authorities set up a meeting between Kamuran Bedirhan and the Turkish consul in Beirut.¹⁵⁷⁸ The two of them discussed the possibilities of a Kurdish-Turkish rapprochement, but nothing much came of their exchange. In January 1933, Kamuran and the Turkish consul met for a second time. As a result of this meeting, Kamuran was invited for personal talks with Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. Kamuran did, however, not follow up on the invitation, not trusting his interlocutors and fearing for his personal safety.¹⁵⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the Turkish government was spreading rumors in Anatolia that the Bedirhanis were about to return from exile and ready to reconcile with the Kemalist regime.¹⁵⁸⁰

Another strategy to counter the decline of Hoybûn was to build up a new constituency of followers: Numbers of incoming Kurdish refugees from Turkey saw a steep increase as the Kemalist government embarked on a military offensive against Kurdish fighters in the Ararat in the fall of 1930.¹⁵⁸¹ Kamuran Bedirhan acted as intermediary on behalf of these refugees, defending their interests vis-à-vis the French mandate authorities.¹⁵⁸² The Bedirhani brothers also intensified their presence among the Kurdish populations in northern Syria, where many of these

¹⁵⁷⁶ AIR 23/407, "Kurdish activities," report dated January 11, 1930. Reça'i Bey was the son of Nüzhet Bey Baban and had been employed as deputy governor of Edirne before being sent on his mission to Syria and Lebanon.

¹⁵⁷⁷ AIR 23/416, report dated March 12, 1930.

¹⁵⁷⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 570, report dated December 8, 1932.

¹⁵⁷⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated January 6, 1933.

¹⁵⁸⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated January 18, 1933.

¹⁵⁸¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 10, 1930, information provided by Kamuran Bedirhan.

¹⁵⁸² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, reports dated July 28, 1930 and August 19, 1930.

incoming refugees settled, in close proximity to the Turkish border.¹⁵⁸³ Mustafa Şahin Bey provided a refuge for participants of the Ararat uprising in his home in Maqtala, which emerged as a meeting space for the Bedirhani brothers and Kurdish community leaders arriving from Turkey.¹⁵⁸⁴ In northern Syria, the Bedirhani brothers were competing for influence and followers with the Cemilpaşazade family: Both Kamuran Bedirhan and Kadri Cemilpaşa were found traveling across the Jazira region in 1930, distributing propaganda and collecting donations among the local Kurds.¹⁵⁸⁵ Hoybûn's claim to unite and represent the entire Kurdish community in the mandate territories was further undermined as protests against the Turkish attacks on the Kurds in the Ararat region, were voiced by a third actor, the Société de la Défense de Kurdistan, an organization based in Damascus which also collected donations to support the rebellion.¹⁵⁸⁶

Notwithstanding this new competition, the Bedirhani brothers continued to cast themselves as advocates and representatives of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon. In the summer of 1932, a group of Christian and Muslim Kurds from the Jazira region, represented by Celadet Bedirhan, petitioned for an administrative reform in the Jazira region that acknowledged Kurdish autonomy. The petitioners explicitly demanded an administrative set-up modeled after the special administrations the French mandate authorities had granted to the Druze and Alawite communities in Syria and Lebanon.¹⁵⁸⁷ Representatives of the local Kurdish community also petitioned for Kurdish as official language in the Jazira region as well as for the establishment of a Kurdish primary school in the area. On a more

¹⁵⁸³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 7, 1930.

¹⁵⁸⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 8, 1931.

¹⁵⁸⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 7, 1930.

¹⁵⁸⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 25, 1930.

¹⁵⁸⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie Liban, carton 571, report dated July 12, 1932, and other petitions dated April 15, 1930 and July 8, 1931 to the same effect.

abstract level, what Kurdish circles led by the Bedirhani brothers were requesting was minority status and minority rights under the French mandate rule. Their conception of minority status, however, differed from the French understanding, resulting in problems that will be addressed in a later section.

A third consequence the Bedirhani brothers took after internal divisions and the breaking away of external supporters of the Kurdish movement was to shift the focus of their activities from political to cultural matters. In the fall of 1931, Celadet Bedirhan obtained permission from the French authorities to publish a bi-monthly, explicitly “non-political” journal with the title *Hawar* (Help) in Damascus.¹⁵⁸⁸ From the beginning, the French mandate authorities supported *Hawar* financially, and more funding was promised on the condition that the journal would stick to a francophile course.¹⁵⁸⁹ *Hawar*’s contributors were to abstain from political topics and authors had to publish under their real names. It is obvious from the French documentation that the mandate authorities were hoping to use *Hawar* as a means to control and influence the Kurdish community in Syria.¹⁵⁹⁰ On the other hand, the journal’s creation had consequences the French did not intend: Even without explicitly political content, periodicals like *Hawar* opened up discursive spaces, creating audiences and bringing readers and authors in conversation with each other. In the case of *Hawar*, as in many of the contemporary periodicals of Arab nationalist circles in Syria and Lebanon as well,¹⁵⁹¹ the community of readers and authors was small,

¹⁵⁸⁸ See the announcement in *Les Echos*, October 30, 1931, p. 2, “Un journal kurde à Damas.”

¹⁵⁸⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated June 16, 1933, stating that 2.000 Francs were spent on subscriptions to *Hawar* by French institutions, and a follow-up report dated July 25, 1933, mentioning an additional sum of 3.000 Francs paid to the publishers of *Hawar*.

¹⁵⁹⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 25, 1933, stipulating for instance that Osman Sabri was not allowed to publish in *Hawar*.

¹⁵⁹¹ Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 31.

with most of the contributors knowing each other personally. The journal provided a platform for the members of the community to keep in contact, even as they were physically separated, with some of them scattered throughout the Middle East and others operating from exile in Europe.

Hawar was not the first attempt made by the Kurdish activists in the French mandate territories to publish a Kurdish journal. According to British information, members of Hoybûn were already planning a publication in Aleppo in 1928 and had secured a permission to do so. In view of the short distance from the city to the Turkish border, however, the French authorities soon had second thoughts and the publication did not come into being.¹⁵⁹² In comparison to the later journal *Hawar*, the outlook of this earlier project was different: While *Hawar* was realized with financial support from the French mandate authorities – in exchange for the promise to keep clear of political topics and to submit to tight editorial control – the earlier publication would have received funding from the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun movement. Also, unlike earlier attempts of their brother Süreyya Bedirhan, Celadet and Kamuran were not referring back to the legacy of *Kürdistan*, the journal which had been initiated in the 1890s by some of their relatives. With *Hawar*, they were starting from a clean slate, stepping out of the shadow of their uncles and their older brother.

It is also noteworthy that Celadet Bedirhan, the editor and one of the chief contributors to *Hawar*, did not yet see his future in journalism in 1928. Instead of volunteering himself, he asked Cemil Bey, the father of his close collaborator Memduh Selim Bey, to act as the editor of the Kurdish journal that was to be founded.¹⁵⁹³ It was only after other, more politically active options were no longer open to him that Celadet

¹⁵⁹² AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated July 23, 1928.

¹⁵⁹³ AIR 23/407, "Turkey: Anti-Kemalist and Kurdish Activities," report dated July 23, 1928.

Bedirhan switched from the political to the cultural option with the publication of *Hawar*, as it was aptly put by Jordi Tejel.¹⁵⁹⁴ When the basics of a Kurdish standardized language in Latin script were laid down in *Hawar*, the distance between the Kurdish movement in the French mandate territories and Turkey on the one hand and in Iraq and Iran on the other hand increased, as the languages these communities used began to develop in different directions. In the beginning, Tewfik Wehbi (1891–1984), a former Ottoman general and Kurdish activist based in Iraq, had tried to maintain contact with Celadet Bedirhan to work on a Kurdish alphabet together, but the communication between the French mandate territories and British Iraq was difficult, cutting off the dialog between the two intellectuals.¹⁵⁹⁵

From 1932 onwards, Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan focused increasingly on cultural and journalistic activities. This is not to say, however, that their activities were no longer political: Meanwhile, the support for the Kurdish resistance movement, which was forced into the defensive by the Turkish military, continued in Syria and Lebanon, in spite of repercussions from the French mandate authorities. Cultural, especially linguistic politics and Kurdish resistance overlapped, as Turkish legislation ratified in May 1932 which prohibited the use of Kurdish language in Turkey triggered protests, also from among the Kurds in the mandate territories.¹⁵⁹⁶ This also sparked a new wave of

¹⁵⁹⁴ Tejel, *Le mouvement kurde*, p. 267 “de l’option militaire à l’option culturelle.”

¹⁵⁹⁵ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, “L’élaboration de la langue kurde en Turquie (1898-1943): d’un simple outil d’éveil national au pivot de la définition identitaire,” in: Carmen Alen Garabato (ed.), *L’éveil des nationalités et les revendications linguistiques en Europe (1830-1930)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), p. 272 and Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, p. 129, mentioning British travel restrictions for members of Hoybûn trying to enter Iraq. Wehbi was, however, in contact with Kamuran Bedirhan during the latter’s time in Paris. In 1965, he sent him an issue of the journal *Kurdish Studies* which he published in London, the issue and accompanying correspondence are part of Kamuran Bedirhan’s personal papers at the IKP in Paris.

¹⁵⁹⁶ The discussions surrounding the Turkish language reform could be followed in the 1930s in the press in Beirut, see e.g. the Arab journal *An-Nahar*, August 29, 1936, “Al

involvement of Hoybûn in Turkey: The French intercepted a letter from Hoybûn addressed to the Kurdish tribal leader Arif Bey in the area of Van. In this letter, Arif Bey was charged with the establishment of a local subsection of Hoybûn and reminded that all authority rested with the leadership of the movement in Syria, with which he was requested to remain in regular contact.¹⁵⁹⁷ In addition to targeting tribal leaders, Hoybûn also tried to get its political messages across to the general Kurdish population in Turkey, distributing printed leaflets. In view of the Turkish military offensive, these leaflets called for unity and armed resistance of the Kurdish community in Turkey.¹⁵⁹⁸ Both the letter to Arif Bey and the leaflets contained strong appeals to religious identity and unity. One leaflet even backed up its calls to resistance with citations from the Qur'an. Stressing religious identity was quite unusual for Hoybûn. The same organization, it will be recalled, had previously alienated Kurdish religious authorities because of its close cooperation with the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun movement. The renewed focus on religion was a pragmatic move, deemed necessary to mobilize greater support among the Kurds in Anatolia. It might have been eased by the fact that the faction around the Bedirhanis within Hoybûn, who had advocated a secular Kurdish state and favored close cooperation with the Armenian nationalist movement, were no longer dominating the organization.

Hoybûn tried to seize the window of opportunity in 1932, when the rebellion in the Ararat region was by and large defeated, to declare that the Kurdish areas of Eastern Anatolia had been wrongfully occupied by the Turkish government and claiming that Hoybûn alone represented the Kurdish interim government in exile. This rhetorical grab for power,

Mu'atamar al-sāliḥ li-islāḥ al-luḡa at-turkiyya," an article on the proceedings of language reform in Turkey.

¹⁵⁹⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 26, 1932.

¹⁵⁹⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated June 16, 1932, containing a French translation of such a leaflet.

however, remained without political consequence. One leaflet formulating Hoybûn's claim to political authority over Eastern Anatolia even went one step further, reminding the local population that any refusal to support the Kurdish independence movement would be interpreted as treason and punished accordingly after the victory of the Kurdish independence movement. In 1932, Hoybûn was, albeit it without much consequence, acting like a state, claiming a monopoly on political authority and, more importantly, on the exercise of legitimate violence.

Throughout the 1930s, Celadet and Kamuran remained involved with Hoybûn's activities and supported its goals. In addition to their work for *Hawar*, the Bedirhani brothers intensified their cultural and linguistic research and output, relying on French support for their work. In 1932, Kamuran Bedirhan received financial support from the Institut Français in Damascus for a work on Kurdish grammar.¹⁵⁹⁹ *Hawar* continued to receive considerable support from the French mandate authorities and other French institutions. Prominent advocates of the journal were Robert Montagne (1893–1954), director of the Institut Français in Damascus at the time, and Jean Chauvel (1897–1979), the French High Commissioner in Beirut. Montagne secured a number of paid subscriptions for *Hawar* among French diplomats and Orientalists in the Middle East and France, among them Henri Massé and Louis Massignon.¹⁶⁰⁰ By 1933, five hundred copies of every issue of *Hawar* were printed and distributed among Kurdish, but also Armenian and French readers in the larger towns of Syria and Lebanon, as well as in northern Syria. Some copies were sent to neighboring countries like Iraq and also to France.¹⁶⁰¹ In October 1933, however, there were complaints

¹⁵⁹⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 20, 1932.

¹⁶⁰⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 1932 for a list of subscribers to *Hawar*.

¹⁶⁰¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated April 4, 1933.

that even though the subscriptions had been paid for one year in advance, the bi-monthly journal *Hawar* had in fact not appeared for the past couple of months. It turned out that the delay of the latest issues of *Hawar* was due to the fact that printing types using a specially developed Kurdish script based on Latin letters had not been delivered on time.¹⁶⁰²

The French diplomat Pierre Rondot constituted the central link between *Hawar* and the mandate authorities. Part of his job was to control and, if necessary, censor the texts published in *Hawar*.¹⁶⁰³ In the spring of 1933, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan presented the French High Commissioner with copies of all back issues of *Hawar*, gave an account of their previous activities and asked for continued financial support.¹⁶⁰⁴ In spite of the tight imperialist control, the publication of a journal in Kurdish language, at a time when expressing oneself in Kurdish was prohibited in the neighboring Turkish Republic, became a crucial point of reference for the Kurdish independence movement. The legacy of the journal therefore continues to be larger-than-life in Kurdish nationalist historiography. The day the first issue of *Hawar* went to print, May 15, 1932, is commemorated and celebrated by some today as *Kürt Dil Bayramı*, Kurdish Language Day.¹⁶⁰⁵ In a similar vein, the original document in Arabic, permitting Celadet Bedirhan the publication of *Hawar* has been framed and is showcased to visitors and researchers by Celadet's daughter Sinemxan Bedirhan in her house in Erbil.¹⁶⁰⁶

¹⁶⁰² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, reports dated March 24, 1933; October 6, 1933 and October 23, 1933. The Bedirhani brothers received a payment of 5.000 Francs for the production of printing types in the new Kurdish alphabet they had devised.

¹⁶⁰³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated June 16, 1933.

¹⁶⁰⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated March 24, 1933.

¹⁶⁰⁵ See an entry on marksist.org, "15 Mayıs 1932: 'Hawar' dergisinin yayın hayatına başlaması, Kürt Dil Bayramı," entry dated May 14, 2013, <http://arsiv.marksist.org/tarih-tebugun/11464-15-mayis-1932-hawar-dergisinin-yayin-hayatina-baslamasi-kurt-dil-bayrami>, last accessed November 4, 2015.

¹⁶⁰⁶ See Aktürk, *Imagining Kurdish Identity*, pp. 100 and 276. For a picture of the framed document, see <http://www.avestakurd.net/nceyn-rojane/ruxseta-kovara-hawar-h5782.html>, last accessed November 4, 2015.

6.2.4. On the Eve of the Second World War

In the late 1930s, the French rule over Syria and Lebanon was increasingly called into question, by Arab nationalists, but also by other segments of the local society. The French had assured greater independence to the mandate territories in a treaty in 1936, but had yet to live up to the promises and concessions made in this document by the end of the Second World War. The retreat of the French from Syria and Lebanon and the corresponding process of decolonization was to be delayed until 1946. From the mid-1930s onwards, as Europe headed for war, Italy and Germany emerged as potential allies for those resenting the French rule in Syria and Lebanon. Members of the local Kurdish community, prominently among them Memduh Selim Bey, were looking for a closer alliance with the Italians in the summer of 1938.¹⁶⁰⁷

The political standing of the Bedirhani brothers on the eve of the Second World War was, according to contemporary observers, precarious and shaky. They were by no means undisputed or even generally accepted as leaders of the Kurdish movement in Syria, their relations to the Kurdish communities in Iraq and Iran had all but broken down, and Celadet Bedirhan in particular was increasingly burdened by personal financial difficulties. His brother Kamuran emerged as the more active of the brothers at that point, trying to gain public attention for the Kurdish cause and establishing diplomatic connections both in Europe and across the Middle East.¹⁶⁰⁸ In 1940, political support for the Bedirhani family decreased further, as some of their former supporters accused them of having pocketed donations Hoybûn had received for their own benefit.¹⁶⁰⁹ Others called off their alliance with the Bedirhani family as they became increasingly critical of the French mandate rule, while the

¹⁶⁰⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated June 17, 1938.

¹⁶⁰⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 802, undated report.

¹⁶⁰⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie Liban, carton 571, report dated August 31, 1941.

Bedirhani brothers continued to support the French.¹⁶¹⁰ These developments continued into 1941, when several members of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon, led by Abdin Ağa Şemdin, turned against the Bedirhani brothers, threatening to publicly tear up copies of their journal *Hawar* should the brothers continue to publish it. The French authorities suspected that the Turkish government had a hand in these attempts to disparage the Bedirhanis.¹⁶¹¹

After the French defeat by Nazi Germany in Europe, the French leadership was split between the pro-German Vichy government and Gaullist opposition. In Syria, those opposing the French mandate rule found a welcome ally in the Germans. Many influential figures in Syrian and Lebanese political circles were listed in the French secret service documents of the 1940s, being suspected of pro-German tendencies. Among the individuals listed as “germanophiles” were some members of the network of the Bedirhani family in Syria and Lebanon, for instance Necib Ağa al-Barazi, the head of the Barazi family,¹⁶¹² as well as members of the as-Solh family, prominently among them Ahmed Muhtar as-Solh and Celadet and Kamuran’s former schoolmates Riad as-Solh and Sami as-Solh.¹⁶¹³ In 1941, Celadet Bedirhan was watched closely by the French authorities, who suspected him of being in contact with the Axis powers.¹⁶¹⁴ During this period, Kamuran Bedirhan was particularly well-disposed for a closer cooperation with Germany, a country he knew well from his studies in Munich and Leipzig and his

¹⁶¹⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie Liban, carton 571, report dated August 31, 1941.

¹⁶¹¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated May 21, 1941.

¹⁶¹² SHD Paris, 4 H 322, *Notes biographiques*, p. 16 “Notice biographique Négib Agha BARAZI,” no date.

¹⁶¹³ Like Kamuran Bedirhan, Ahmed Muhtar as-Solh had long-standing connections to Germany: He had studied in Germany and served in the Ottoman military command under General Erich von Falkenhayn during the First World War. As-Solh’s wife was German, and he maintained close personal relations to the German delegate Rudolf Roser in Beirut from 1940 onwards. Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon. The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933-1945* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 125 and footnote 129.

¹⁶¹⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 802, report dated December 1, 1941.

activities in Berlin in the late 1920s. Kamuran Bedirhan's novel, *Der Adler von Kurdistan*, much in line with the ideology of the Nazi regime, would have further recommended him to German diplomats and raised suspicions among French officials. In France in the late 1930s, in an atmosphere rife with hysteria and suspicion, Kamuran was indeed suspected, by his brother Süreyya's French cleaning lady, to have pro-German leanings. There is, however, no tangible evidence of an actual involvement of Kamuran Bedirhan with the German Nazi regime.

Even if they remained without direct political consequence, Kamuran Bedirhan's relation to German nationalist and fascist thought and corresponding political circles came to play a role during this time. An analysis of his involvement can draw on an argument made by Götz Nordbruch, who looked at the engagement of Arab nationalists in Syria with fascist ideology, finding that it makes sense to ask what needs and demands of the local activists were met by appropriating aspects of the German or Italian fascist ideology.¹⁶¹⁵ Syria and Lebanon, like other parts of the former Ottoman Empire, were faced with a post-war order which left much to be desired for those who believed in national independence and found themselves under French mandate rule instead. Looking to Europe, Arab nationalists identified the situation of post-war Germany as strikingly similar to their own predicament: Germany sought to alter the outcomes of the Peace Treaty of Versailles, hoping to unite members of the German community who were scattered across European borders.¹⁶¹⁶ Nordbruch also points out that the engagement and adaption of elements of fascist ideology and imagery in Syria was highly selective and eclectic.¹⁶¹⁷ His analysis is concerned with the Arab community only, but his approach can fruitfully be extended to

¹⁶¹⁵ In Jennifer Dueck's words, "widespread interest did not mean widespread approval," Jennifer M. Dueck, *The Claims of Culture at Empire's End. Syria and Lebanon under French Rule* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), p. 137.

¹⁶¹⁶ Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria*, pp. 8-14.

¹⁶¹⁷ Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria*, p. 8.

the study of other, non-Arab communities in Syria and Lebanon during the mandate period as well.¹⁶¹⁸ Kurdish nationalists, like their Arab counterparts, would have equally found themselves looking for orientation, dissatisfied with the outcome of the peace negotiations after the First World War.

In terms of an emerging discourse about civilization and racial hierarchy, Kurdish nationalists were able to make a case for the Aryan descent of the Kurdish race.¹⁶¹⁹ Their Arab contemporaries faced greater difficulties in this respect, as German Nazism had them down as members of an inferior Semitic race. What can be observed with regard to members of the Bedirhani family is a situation similar to the one described by Nordbruch for the Arab case: Faced with the challenges of achieving Kurdish national unity and national revival, family members engaged with different lines of thought and went looking for potential allies with a high degree of political pragmatism. Racist discourse did play a role in the Bedirhani brothers' defense of the Kurdish cause: Kamuran Bedirhan's writings in the mid-1930s, parts of which have already been discussed above, are most prominent in this respect. His brother Süreyya, writing under the pseudonym Dr. Bletch Chirguh,¹⁶²⁰ used a discourse on Kurdish identity which showed racist underpinnings already in 1930, finding fault with a European public

¹⁶¹⁸ There is, as far as I can see, no comprehensive research dealing with the non-Arab minorities in Syria and their relations to European fascism.

¹⁶¹⁹ And many of them copiously did just that. In his preface to the memoirs of İhsan Nuri Paşa, one of the leaders of the Ararat revolt, one can almost hear İsmet Çeriff Vanly cringe as takes the racist discourse of İhsan Nuri Paşa apart in an attempt to distance him from fascist ideology, see İhsan Nuri Pasha, *La Révolte de l'Agridagh. "Ararat" (1927-1930)* (Geneva: Editions kurdes Genève, 1986), pp. 26-30.

¹⁶²⁰ "[Le] monde civilisé [...] n'adressait même pas un mot de sympathie, une parole de miséricorde à l'extermination des Kurdes par les Turcs. Et cela malgré que ce kurde appartenait à la race blanche, à la race européenne et que son bourreau était descendant de la race jaune, de la race mongole." Dr. Bletch Chirguh, *La question Kurde, ses origines et ses causes*, Publication de Hoybûn, Nr. 6 (Cairo: Imprimerie Paul Barbey, 1930), p. 33. The brochure can be found in MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 802, dossier "Beyrouth; Kurdes & Tcherkèss" and is not identical with Celadet Ali Bedirxan, *De la Question Kurde* (1934).

opinion which supported Turkish aggressors of Mongol descent instead of assisting the Kurds, of Aryan origin like the Europeans themselves. After the Second World War, in exile in Paris, Kamuran Bedirhan retained an interest in racial theory and in how it portrayed and classified the Kurds. Among his personal notes, he filed several references to relevant books in the field, among them works of Hans F. K. Günther (1891–1968), an expert authority and key reference for Nazi racial theory.¹⁶²¹ A closer look at Kamuran’s activities in the mandate territories indicates how political factions were following local concerns instead of the ideological fronts in western Europe and how the engagement of local politicians with racist ideology was complex and eclectic. Kamuran Bedirhan engaged with and drew inspiration from a racist discourse closely related to Nazi ideology, but continued to support the French rule over the mandate territories on the eve of the Second World War.

Kamuran retained personal friendships in Germany after the Second World War, his network in the 1950s and 1960s still included a number of German politicians and journalists. In the early 1960s, he was still exchanging letter with Fritz Grobba (1886–1973),¹⁶²² a former German diplomat with extensive experience in the Middle East. Grobba had served in Ottoman Palestine during the First World War and returned to the region in 1932, employed at the German embassy in Baghdad. Grobba was also a key interlocutor and contact for local supporters of a

¹⁶²¹ Hans F. K. Günther, *Die nordische Rasse bei den Indogermanen Asiens: zugleich ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Urheimat und Rassenherkunft der Indogermanen* (München: Lehmann, 1934), and idem, *Ritter, Tod und Teufel. Der Heldische Gedanke* (München: Lehmann, 1928). Kamuran copied several quotations on the Kurds from Hans F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde Europas* (München: Lehmann, 1929) verbatim. For the notes, see papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP Paris.

¹⁶²² Kamuran’s papers in the IKP Paris, letters from Fritz Grobba dated May 16, 1962, May 18, 1962, January 4, 1963 and November 5, 1963. In one letter, Grobba provides a reference for Kamuran to his friend and colleague Giselher Wirsing (1907–1975), a journalist who had started his career under the Nazi regime.

German take-over in Syria during the Second World War.¹⁶²³ Contemporary French officials described Fritz Grobba the “real head of the [German] propaganda services in the Middle East.”¹⁶²⁴ Kamuran also retained addresses and contact information of his German co-author Herbert Oertel, as well as his university friend Dr. Curt Wunderlich among his personal papers in Paris in the 1960s.¹⁶²⁵ Contacts, however, seem to have been personal and are not suggestive of political leanings. Birgit Ammann argues that Kamuran Bedirhan distanced himself repeatedly from the Nazi regime and even visited Israel in the 1940s.¹⁶²⁶

6.2.5. The Aftermath of the Second World War

From early 1946 onwards, Kamuran Bedirhan was negotiating his definite departure from the mandate territories to France. He left in the hopes of achieving greater diplomatic support for the Kurdish cause in the aftermath of the Second World War, correctly assuming that the geopolitical order of the Middle East would be subject to renegotiations. In a meeting with the French military official Col. Pierre Terrier on February 1, 1946, Kamuran asked for financial support in the form of travel expenses and a monthly payment of 20.000 Francs. Terrier’s recommendation concerning the support France should give to the Kurdish cause in the future was realistic, albeit positive: He argued that especially with regards to the imminent confrontation with Soviet Russia, support for the Kurds remained important. Yet, at a time when

¹⁶²³ Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria*, p. 105.

¹⁶²⁴ Dueck, *The Claims of Culture*, p. 135, citing from MAE-CPC, E-Lev, carton 457, report dated March 4, 1939.

¹⁶²⁵ Kamuran Bedirhan’s personal papers in the IKP Paris include an undated list with addresses in Germany which includes Oertel’s and Wunderlich’s contact information.

¹⁶²⁶ Ammann, „Prinz Kamuran Ali Bedirkhan,“ pp. 46-47. As evidence to that, however, she mentions an official visit to Israel in 1946, which seems confusing, as the state of Israel was only founded in 1948. Also, I could find no other evidence of this visit, but Kamuran was indeed in contact with several Israeli diplomats and politicians, as his personal papers at the IKP Paris indicate, see below.

France was about to retreat from Middle Eastern politics, large-scale interventions were not possible. Terrier advised, however, to continue to support Kamuran Bedirhan personally, who, according to Terrier, deserved French consideration and sympathy.¹⁶²⁷

At the same time, in the summer of 1946, Kurdish activists in Syria and Lebanon were making a renewed effort to coordinate their activities: A meeting was held in 'Ain Diwar, during which a General Kurdish Council was founded. Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan were part of this council, together with Memduh Selim Bey, Kadri and Bedri Cemilpaşa, Bozan and Mustafa Şahin, the poet Cîğexwîn and Ahmed Nafiz, among others. To finance future Kurdish activities, it was decided to collect an obligatory tax referred to as *zakat* from the local Kurdish communities.¹⁶²⁸ Leading spokesmen of the Kurdish movement in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War were Kamuran Bedirhan and Dr. Nafiz in Damascus. Both of them met with U.S. and British diplomats who were, independently of each other, touring the northern and north-eastern regions of Syria after the war.¹⁶²⁹ Kamuran Bedirhan in particular hoped for a closer cooperation with the United States: In 1946, he approached the U.S. diplomat Daniel Dennett, who was officially listed as cultural attaché at the U.S. embassy in Beirut, but was in fact working for the State Department.¹⁶³⁰ Dennett was from Massachusetts, held a degree in Islamic studies from Harvard University and had been dispatched to Beirut in 1943, in the midst of the war.¹⁶³¹

¹⁶²⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 802, report dated February 4, 1946.

¹⁶²⁸ FO 195/2596, Vaughan Russell, British consul in Aleppo, to Beirut, telegram dated July 23, 1946.

¹⁶²⁹ FO 195/2596, British Legation in Beirut to the Foreign Office, report dated March 4, 1946 and British Embassy in Ankara to the Foreign Office, report dated November 11, 1946.

¹⁶³⁰ See Alan Feuer, "A Dead Spy, a Daughter's Questions and the C.I.A." In: *New York Times*, October 23, 2007. Dennett died under suspicious circumstances in a plane crash in Ethiopia in 1947, leading his family to believe that his plane was sabotaged.

¹⁶³¹ Feuer, "A Dead Spy."

With the Syrian independence and the onset of the Cold War, the newly emerging post-war order pulverized the base of supporters of the Bedirhani brothers beyond repair. On the one hand, a younger generation of Kurdish activists began to frame their demands in the newly emerging political discourse of the Cold War era, stressing that if support was not forthcoming from the French, British or U.S. American side, they would find themselves compelled to turn to the Soviet Union for help.¹⁶³² British diplomats saw a realistic chance of that actually happening, with contacts between the Soviets and Kurdish representatives well underway. The turn towards Soviet Russia and communist ideology was also linked to a generational shift within the Kurdish community: Younger activists with no ties to the circles of the established elite of the Kurdish aḡas and wealthy landowning families pushed for greater influence. On the other hand, while the inner circle around the Bedirhani brothers continued to advocate for autonomy of a Kurdish territory in the Jazira, the Kurdish deputies in the Syrian parliament were opposed to these ideas, as they began to imagine their political future within the newly independent state of Syria and their own income and political influence were tied up with the institution of the Syrian state.¹⁶³³

6.3. Networking Strategies of the Bedirhani Brothers in Syria and Lebanon: Continuities and Changes

In terms of networking strategies and connections, the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period on the one hand relied on established connections of the family dating back to Ottoman imperial times. On the other hand, they also entered into

¹⁶³² FO 195/2695, British Legation in Beirut to the Foreign Office, report dated March 4, 1946.

¹⁶³³ FO 195/2596, "The Syrian Kurds," report dated June 3, 1946.

contact with new actors on the scene in former Ottoman Syria, including Kurdish refugees from Anatolia, Armenian revolutionaries and French and British officials. The following section will look at each of these groups in greater detail. In a subsequent step, it will be asked how these different connections and encounters shaped the Bedirhani brothers' ideas about identity and the claims they made based on these ideas. An entire generation of post-imperial intellectuals was in very much the same situation after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. New social networks, some independent of former imperial patronage systems and loyalties, some built on them, were created.¹⁶³⁴ What emerged in the case of the Bedirhani family was a widely ramified network built to contacts to individuals with common political goal and outlooks, a shared habitus of late Ottoman secular education and spiced up with contacts to Kurdish tribal and religious leaders. The case of the Bedirhani brothers' activities in Syria and Lebanon illustrates that in particular the links to the seemingly more established, "traditional" milieus of the Kurdish tribes were in part the result of very recent ruptures, population movements and quickly changing situations on the ground. As such, these connections were subject to modifications. This was, however, blurred by pseudo-historical narratives and attempts to present these links between the Kurdish tribes and the Bedirhani family as timeless and natural, not at least in order to endorse the legitimation of the Bedirhani family as leaders of the Kurdish community vis-à-vis the French mandate authorities.

It becomes clear from the trajectory of the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon during the mandate period that they actively drew on different layers of their network to pursue their personal and political goals, working with colleagues and former classmates they knew from Ottoman times, but also consulting with Kurdish tribal leaders,

¹⁶³⁴ Dakhli, *Génération d'intellectuels*, p. 48.

irrespective of whether these leaders' predecessors had already been allies of their grandfather Emir Bedirhan or whether they had just arrived in Syria and were assigned to the network of the Bedirhanis there.

6.3.1. Deconstructing “Kurdish” Networks

In an essay on the Kurdish community of Damascus, Benjamin T. White raises the crucial question of why some of the Damascene notables of Kurdish origin, although they were Arabized and integrated into local, urban networks to the point of sometimes even speaking Arabic instead of Kurdish as their first language, supported the Kurdish nationalist movement and its aspirations during the French mandate period.¹⁶³⁵ In tune with the argument made for the case of the Bedirhani family here, he comes to the conclusion that the French frameworks of viewing minorities and a “politics of ethnicity” adopted towards the local Kurdish communities played a decisive role in the choices made and the strategies pursued by local actors in expressing their identity. White is right in pointing out that a distinct, overarching sense of Kurdish identity cannot be taken for granted, as there is ample evidence for actors of Kurdish origins in Syria who decided not to support Kurdish nationalist demands and politics.¹⁶³⁶ For the period under scrutiny here, examples include Khalid Bakdash (1912–1995), a founding figure of the Syrian communist party,¹⁶³⁷ and the Syrian intellectual Muhammad

¹⁶³⁵ Benjamin T. White, “The Kurds of Damascus in the 1930s: Development of a Politics of Ethnicity.” In: *Middle Eastern Studies* 46.6 (Nov. 2010), pp. 901-917.

¹⁶³⁶ White, “Kurds of Damascus,” p. 903.

¹⁶³⁷ Bakdash had studied law in Damascus and was among the earliest members of the Syrian communist party, rising in the ranks to become secretary general of the party in 1934. Bakdash also translated the works of Marx into Arabic. For his biography, see Moubayed, *Steel and Silk*, pp. 194-197.

Kurd 'Ali,¹⁶³⁸ but also less prominent figures from among the Kurdish youth in Syria and Lebanon, supporting Arab nationalist demands and opposing the French mandate rule in the 1930s and 1940s. However, in the French sources, there is no room for these kinds of personal choices and ambiguities about ethnic identity. In the language of the administration, which is preserved in the French government archives, being “Kurdish” equals supporting Kurdish nationalism and is inseparable from what White calls “Kurdist” political demands.¹⁶³⁹

Once the category of “Syrian Kurds” is subject to closer scrutiny, it is recognized as an invention of French colonial administrators, a tool they came to rely on in their efforts to make sense of the intricate and complex local realities they encountered, of networks and power politics. From this constructivist perspective, the support of the urban Kurdish notables for a Kurdish nationalist movement centered in the northern borderlands of Syria, with a political outlook much more towards Eastern Anatolia than towards Damascus or Beirut, is no longer self-explanatory. White argues convincingly that in the context of the rise to power and increasing popular influence of the Arab nationalist movement in the 1930s, in particular during the government of the National Bloc in Syria from 1936 to 1939, local actors who did not have access to the networks of those in a position to distribute resources or who competed with those in power needed to find outlets to express their opposition. According to White, “Kurdism offered a means for notables to maintain their independence from government circles and dominance in the quarter [i.e. Hayy al-Akrad in Damascus, BH]”¹⁶⁴⁰ In their efforts, they could hope to win the support of the French authorities, who were equally wary of Arab nationalism and the National

¹⁶³⁸ On Kurd 'Ali's background and activities, see Rainer Hermann, *Kulturkrise und konservative Erneuerung. Muhammad Kurd 'Ali (1876-1953) und das geistige Leben in Damaskus zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1990).

¹⁶³⁹ White, “Kurds of Damascus,” p. 903.

¹⁶⁴⁰ White, “Kurds of Damascus,” p. 909.

Bloc government. In addition, White argues, the French mandate politics involuntarily supported a rapprochement between the Kurdish notables of Damascus and the Kurdish nationalist based in the Jazira region. By compelling Kurdish leaders like Celadet Bedirhan or the tribal chief Haco Ağa to live in forced residence in Damascus to prevent agitation in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands, the French facilitated contacts between the urban Kurdish notables and the nationalist movement.¹⁶⁴¹ This can be read as a further step in the “making” of the Syrian-Kurdish community by the French, a development which has been analyzed above with reference to the activities of Halil Bey Bedirhan in Syria in the early 1920s.

This part of White’s otherwise compelling argument, however, leaves out one important element which I hope to get into clearer focus drawing on the example of the Bedirhani family: While the French certainly had a hand in bringing the Kurdish communities of the mandate territories closer together, the connection between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the local Kurdish notables of Damascus was not as brand new as one might think. Part of it was, and French colonial politics played indeed a central role in shaping these connections, as it will be discussed in some detail below. But in addition, principal actors of the Kurdish nationalist movement like the Bedirhani brothers were able to activate connections and networks in former Ottoman Syria which went back to late Ottoman times. These imperial connections will be looked at in detail in the following, not necessarily because they are more important than newly emerging network structures, but because it is symptomatic for the historiography of the Bedirhani family to ignore or conceal the Ottoman imperial dimension of the family’s trajectory.

¹⁶⁴¹ White, “Kurds of Damascus,” p. 911.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a post-war border separated Eastern Anatolia from the regions around Aleppo and Mosul, interrupting historically important connections and vectors for trade and networking. Most local actors in Eastern Anatolia and the Jazira region thus found their long-standing network structures disrupted after the First World War and had to adapt to the new conditions. Members of the Bedirhani family, however, were already one step ahead of them: As they had been prohibited from entering Eastern Anatolia in Ottoman times already, they were used to working around a border that was now encountered by everybody else as well. The Bedirhanis had already established connections in Syria and, through middlemen, from there into Eastern Anatolia in Ottoman times, when most other actors were still free to move throughout the entire area and saw no need to do so. In some respect, the Bedirhanis therefore had an advantage over other Kurdish actors in the post-war period. Their functioning network in Syria and Lebanon might very well be one of the reasons explaining why the family was so successful in claiming a leadership role in the emerging Kurdish nationalist movements, even though there were initially several serious competitors for this position. The different layers of existing connections of the Bedirhani family in Syria and how these were mobilized and transformed during the mandate period are the subject of the following sections.

6.3.2. Networks of the Bedirhani Family in Syria

Ottoman Syria, as it has become clear in my analysis of the activities of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in an earlier chapter,¹⁶⁴² was a center of the activities of the Bedirhani family over the late 19th century. At the onset of the mandate period, however, not much was left of this. Many family members had either passed away or left Syria during the First World

¹⁶⁴² See chapter 3.

War. One member of the Bedirhan family still living in Damascus in the early 1920s was Zübeyr Bey Bedirhan, a younger brother of Bedri Paşa and thus an uncle of Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan.¹⁶⁴³ In one report, Zübeyr Bey was mentioned as the head of a household of around thirty family members in Damascus in the immediate post-war period.¹⁶⁴⁴

The journey with Major Noel among the Kurdish tribes in Eastern Anatolia, an area members of the Bedirhani family had been prohibited from entering under Ottoman rule, did for a variety of reasons not revive the former influence of the family in the area. A similar approach, however, was working much better in Syria: In an area where the Bedirhani family had enjoyed considerable influence in the late 19th century, their members were able to reactivate some of these connections into urban notables and tribal milieus. Former religious connections of the Bedirhani family, however, did no longer play a prominent role.

Urban Notables

Damascus, like in Beirut and Aleppo, was home to several influential notable families of Kurdish origins. Members of all these Ottoman-Kurdish families had been employed in the Ottoman imperial administration. They acted as esteemed middlemen and brokers for the Ottoman central administration in Istanbul. Kurdish notables disposed of some influence among the Kurdish tribes and communities of the region and were thereby able to keep in check and, if necessary, mobilize large parts of the Kurdish population. In Syria, as elsewhere in the empire, the Ottoman imperial administration made use of these

¹⁶⁴³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated February 1922.

¹⁶⁴⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie Liban, carton 569, "Dossier Kurde," no date.

connections: On the eve of the First World War, for instance, Kurdish families were settled in the Hawran region, the settlement process being organized and overseen by local Kurdish notable families.¹⁶⁴⁵ However, while members of some of these families of Kurdish origins remained actively involved in local and regional Syrian politics after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and throughout French mandate period, other formerly prominent families retreated from the political scene. One notable example were the descendants of the most prominent Ottoman-Kurdish notable of Damascus in the late 19th century, Abdurrahman Paşa al-Yusuf. His son Muhammad Sa'id al-Yusuf (born ca. 1899) had been sent to Germany and Austria for his education during the First World War and had married a German wife. Because of his family's history, Muhammad Sa'id was said to still enjoy some influence among the Kurds in Syria in the 1940s, but he abstained from any political activities, making a living as a wealthy landowner.¹⁶⁴⁶ His father Abdurrahman Paşa had mobilized Kurdish irregulars for the army of Cemal Paşa in the First World War, Mehmed Salih Bedirhan had been involved in these efforts.¹⁶⁴⁷ In spite of being a potential ally of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria and Lebanon, his son Muhammad Sa'id al-Yusuf could not be won over to throw in his support with Hoybûn or the Bedirhani brothers.

In addition to Damascus, the city of Hama and its surroundings emerged as a center of Kurdish activities during the French mandate period. The connection between the Bedirhanis and the Barazi family in Hama dated back to Ottoman times and continued into the 20th century. The Barazis were well connected in Ottoman Syria and their networks overlapped with those of the Bedirhani family: The Barazi family was related to other local Syrian notable families. Some of those relations,

¹⁶⁴⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Dossier Kurde," no date.

¹⁶⁴⁶ FO 371/35206 report "Leading Personalities in Syria," dated June 22, 1943, p. 34.

¹⁶⁴⁷ See chapter 4 and Uzun & Bedir-Han, *Defter-i A'malim*, p. 86.

like the Şahin family, were also of Kurdish descent. Others were of Arab or Ottoman-Turkish origins, like the as-Solh family. The as-Solh were related by marriage to the Barazis, Takiëddin as-Solh (1908–1988) was married to Fadwa Barazi.¹⁶⁴⁸ The Barazis, as well as both the Şahin and the as-Solh families were among the chief supporters of the Bedirhani brothers during the French mandate period. Describing the experience of the Bedirhani brothers at the Ottoman law school in Istanbul, I have already mentioned Husni al-Barazi as one of their classmates.¹⁶⁴⁹ Other members of the extensive Barazi family likely frequented the same circles as members of the Bedirhani family in late Ottoman times: Halid al-Barazi was a candidate for the Liberal Entente (Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası) opposition party for Homs and Hama in the elections of 1912, at a time when Süreyya Bedirhan was also closely involved with this party.¹⁶⁵⁰ When the British military official Captain C. L. Woolley visited the land of the Barazi family immediately after the war in 1919, he found them undecided in the matter of Kurdish autonomy: “The Barasi [sic] leaders say that while they would like a Kurdish national government, they don’t think it is practicable as there is not sufficient unanimity amongst the tribes.”¹⁶⁵¹ This being the case, the Barazi at the time much preferred to continue living under Ottoman-Turkish rule, which was familiar to them, than under the domination of a new Arab state.

During the French mandate years, the Barazi family was divided: The wealthy landowner Necib Ağa al-Barazi (1885–?) wielded considerable influence among the traditional constituency of the notable family, i.e. among local merchants, religious scholars, and the dependent peasant population of villages he owned in the surroundings of the city of Hama.

¹⁶⁴⁸ “Obituary: Takiëddin Solh, Ex-Lebanese Premier.” In: *New York Times*, dated November 30, 1988.

¹⁶⁴⁹ See chapter 5.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Rashid Ismail Khalidi, “The 1912 Election Campaign in the Cities of Bilad al-Sham.” In: *IJMES* 16 (1984), pp. 461-474.

¹⁶⁵¹ FO 608/95, Captain C. L. Woolley, “The Kurdish nationalist movement,” report dated June 6, 1919.

His nephew Husni al-Barazi emerged as his principal political opponent, not overly popular in Hama itself, but connected to influential notable families in wider Syria, among them the al-'Azm and Kaylani families.¹⁶⁵² Demonstrably, Necib Ağa al-Barazi and Muhsin al-Barazi were part of the network of the Bedirhani brothers and the Kurdish community in Syria: In 1927, Necib Ağa al-Barazi was listed as the local representative of the newly founded Hoybûn in Hama.¹⁶⁵³ In 1936, however, he represented Hama as a deputy in the Syrian parliament, on the ticket of the Syrian nationalists of the National Bloc (*Kutla al-Wataniyya*).¹⁶⁵⁴ Muhsin al-Barazi (1904–1949) also initially figured among the supporters of the Kurdish nationalist movement in the French mandate territories. He was a subscriber and sponsor of the journal *Hawar* in 1933.¹⁶⁵⁵ Like the Bedirhani brothers, Muhsin al-Barazi was trained as a lawyer. He had graduated from law school in France. He taught and later, from 1941 onwards, headed the law school at the university of Damascus. In spite of his Kurdish descent, British reports classified him as a Syrian nationalist and suspected him of pro-German tendencies during the Second World War.¹⁶⁵⁶ Muhsin al-Barazi's political career indicates that not unlike their Bedirhani counterparts, members of the al-Barazi family used their Kurdish heritage selectively, finding it opportune to combine their support for Hoybûn with taking over responsibilities in the Syrian government.

¹⁶⁵² SHD Paris, 4 H 322, "Notes biographiques Husni Bey BARAZI" and "Négib Agha BARAZI," no dates. Husni al-Barazi, born in 1882 as the son of Süleyman Ağa al-Barazi, was active in Syrian politics since 1926, having entered the political scene as Minister of the Interior in 1926. He then served as Syrian Minister of Education from 1934 to 1936. He subsequently fell out with most of his colleagues and was compelled to resign from political life in 1943. In the late 1940s, he was rumored to be in debt and accused of trafficking hashish. See FO 371/35206, "Leading Personalities in Syria," report dated June 22, 1943, p. 11 for a biography.

¹⁶⁵³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated November 27, 1927.

¹⁶⁵⁴ FO 371/35206 "Leading Personalities in Syria," report dated June 22, 1943, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Aktürk, *Imagining Kurdish Identity*, p. 119.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Muhsin al-Barazi served as Minister of Education in the cabinet of Halid al-'Azm in 1941 and as Minister of the Interior under Husni al-Za'im in 1947. In 1949, following a coup against the government of Husni al-Za'im, Barazi was executed, see FO 371/35206, "Leading Personalities in Syria," report dated June 22, 1943, p. 11.

Unlike the Bedirhanis, members of the al-Barazi family found their footing in a local, Syrian context and emerging Syrian nation state after the Second World War.

Another notable family from Hama the Bedirhani family was related to by marriage were the Kaylanis: Halil Bey Bedirhan, a son of Emir Bedirhan, had married into this family in late Ottoman times. The Kaylanis were a family of influential landowners and *ulama'*, many of them had studied Islamic law. The Syrian-Kurdish al-İbiş family was also among the supporters of the Bedirhani brothers during the French mandate period, providing Celadet Bedirhan with land when he had decided to invest in cotton cultivation after the Second World War. Nuri al-İbiş, Celadet's sponsor, and his older brother Hüseyin were the sons of Ahmed Ağa al-İbiş. Both were landowners and invested in agriculture on their properties in the surroundings of Damascus. Nuri al-İbiş had studied at the Cirencester Agricultural College in Britain. His brother Hüseyin dealt with race horses in Cairo and both brothers had, also on account of their sporting activities,¹⁶⁵⁷ contacts into international political circles. Nuri al-İbiş later went into politics himself: He was a member of the Syrian parliament in 1947, served as Syrian Minister of Agriculture in the cabinet of Husni al-Za'im after 1949 and later became Minister of the Interior. His brother Hüseyin was not involved in politics. Hüseyin al-İbiş was married to a sister of Abdurrahman Paşa al-Yusuf, a leading figure of the Ottoman-Kurdish community in Damascus in late Ottoman times.¹⁶⁵⁸ The İbiş family provided not only crucial links to the Kurdish communities of northern Syria, but also maintained friendly relations to the Bedouin tribes camping on their land.¹⁶⁵⁹

¹⁶⁵⁷ Nuri al-İbiş was credited with having introduced football to Syria after the First World War, see <http://www.syrianhistory.com/en/photos/246>, last accessed December 4, 2015.

¹⁶⁵⁸ FO 371/35206, "Leading Personalities in Syria," report dated June 22, 1943, p. 18.

¹⁶⁵⁹ FO 371/35206, "Leading Personalities in Syria," report dated June 22, 1943, p. 18.

In addition to out-spoken and generous sponsors like the above-mentioned al-Barazi and al-İbiş families, other Kurdish notable families in Syria were approached by the Bedirhani brothers during the mandate period, but were more reluctant to show open support. In 1931, Hoybûn was looking for endorsement among the long-established Kurdish notable families of Damascus. They approached Hüseyn Ağa Ramadan, Ali Ağa Zilfo¹⁶⁶⁰ and Omar Ağa Şemdin – all of which, however, were hesitating to enter into open cooperations with Hoybûn.¹⁶⁶¹ They feared that setting themselves and their constituencies apart from their Arab-speaking neighbors would be detrimental to their networks and influence.

Tribal Connections

Many of the urban notable families maintained close links to the Kurdish tribal populations in the borderlands of northern Syria and Eastern Anatolia. A family of tribal leaders with close relations to the Barazi family and the Bedirhani brothers were the Şahin. They were based in the village of Maqṭala, where Süreyya and Kamuran Bedirhan later claimed to have been born – a coincidence that does not, as it will be discussed in the following, indicate that the Bedirhani brothers had indeed grown up as neighbors of the Şahin family. It does, instead, underline that the Şahin family had been ready to help them out in the 1930s. The Şahin family were relative newcomers to Syria, having settled there in the late 18th century, arriving from Urfa. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Mustafa Ağa Şahin was a tribal leader active in the region around Suruç. In the spring of 1919, together with other local notables and representatives of the tribes from around Suruç,

¹⁶⁶⁰ Ali Ağa Zilfo [also spelled Zelfo] was the head of a notable family of Zaza-Kurdish origins who owned land in the area around Baniyas in north-western Syria as well as in the border area of Syria and Palestine. In the 1930s, they were based in Damascus.

¹⁶⁶¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated October 12, 1931.

he declared himself loyal to the crumbling Ottoman Empire. In a petition addressed to the representatives of the Paris Peace Conference, they wrote: “Nous déclarons que nous ne nous séparerons jamais de l’Ottomanisme auquel nous sommes fiers d’appartenir et que nous sommes prêts à faire à cet effet tous les sacrifices.”¹⁶⁶² In 1919/20, the area around Suruç was under British and French occupation, which was resented by the local population. Soon, they found out that the border between the French mandate territories and the newly founded Turkish Republic was to cut right through the areas controlled by Mustafa Ağa Şahin and that the small town of Suruç was to become part of the Turkish province (*il*) of Diyarbekir.¹⁶⁶³ Later, Mustafa Ağa Şahin emerged as one of the first supporters the Bedirhani brothers after their arrival in the French mandate territories. In 1927, he rented a house for Celadet Bedirhan in Aleppo.¹⁶⁶⁴ The Şahin family was also part of the wider network of relatives of the Bedirhani family, related to the already-mentioned Barazi family by marriage. Bozan Şahin was a son-in-law of Ahmed Ağa al-Barazi.¹⁶⁶⁵ Mustafa Ağa Şahin was the Kurdish movement’s initial link to the Kurdish tribal populations in northern Syria.¹⁶⁶⁶ He and his supporters had an ongoing feud with the neighboring tribe of the Kitkan(e), under the leadership of Basrawi Ağa. Basrawi Ağa and the Şahin family competed for influence in northern Syria throughout the mandate period.¹⁶⁶⁷ In 1927, Mustafa Ağa Şahin was interested in a reconciliation with Basrawi Ağa, as he wanted him and his followers to also support the newly founded Kurdish association Hoybûn.¹⁶⁶⁸ The Şahin family also attempted to establish a marriage

¹⁶⁶² FO 608/111, telegramm from Siradj [Suruç], dating from May 1919.

¹⁶⁶³ See Martin Plessner & Clifford E. Bosworth, “Sarûdj,” in: EI², vol. IX, pp. 68-69.

¹⁶⁶⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dating from November 1927.

¹⁶⁶⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated February 4, 1935.

¹⁶⁶⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 7, 1930, mentioning how Memduh Selim Bey delivered messages to be distributed among the Kurdish leaders of northern Syria to Mustafa Ağa Şahin.

¹⁶⁶⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated November 28, 1919.

¹⁶⁶⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dating from November 1927.

connection to the circles of Hoybûn, via the Cemilpaşazade family: Ekrem Cemilpaşa's daughter Hayriye was engaged to İsmet Bozan Şahin, but she died at a young age before the marriage could take place.¹⁶⁶⁹

As the Kurdish activists and later the Kurdish refugees arrived to northern Syria from Turkey, they did not encounter a no man's land. The region was, albeit sparsely, settled and cultivated. Local Bedouin tribes, in particular factions of the Arab-speaking Şammar and Tayy, emerged as important actors in the local power dynamics. Disputes between the nomadic Bedouin tribes and the newly arriving settlers not infrequently erupted because of conflicting claims to land: In 1935, Kadri Cemilpaşa was giving large plots of land away to newly arriving Kurdish refugees for cultivation. Sheikh Tallal, a leader of the Tayy tribe, fiercely protested against these measures, claiming that the land in question had always been owned by his ancestors.¹⁶⁷⁰ Arab nationalist propaganda came to the Bedouins' support, disputing the Kurdish claims to the Jazira region and depicting it as the "cradle of Arabness" and a center of Arab culture and civilization even prior to the advent of Islam.¹⁶⁷¹ The conflict over the use of land and, crucially, water resources in the Jazira did not stop at the border, but also involved Turkish cultivators: In 1930, the Kurdish landowner Kaddur Bey saw his fields fall in decay as cultivators on the Turkish side of the border had redirected irrigation channels to their own advantage.¹⁶⁷²

¹⁶⁶⁹ Cemil Paşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 80.

¹⁶⁷⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, reports of conflict among the Bedouin and the Kurdish settlers, dated July 12, 1932. Bedros Der Bedrossian, who lived in northern Syria in the 1920 and 1930s, recalls in memoirs how the Arab tribes gave "much trouble" to the Kurdish settlers, allowing their cattle to graze on the Kurdish agricultural land. Oftentimes, they succeeded in wearing the settlers out and driving them off their land. Bedros Der Bedrossian & Tamar Der Ohannessian (trans.), *Autobiography and Recollections* (Philadelphia: self-published, 2005), pp. 179 and 216.

¹⁶⁷¹ White, "The Kurds of Damascus," p. 914, quoting from the Arab newspaper *Al-Ayyam*, July 11, 1932, and MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated January 9, 1935.

¹⁶⁷² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated October 18, 1930.

Religious Networks

Religious networks and in particular the Sufi connections through the Nakṣbandiya order in which members of the Bedirhani family had been active throughout the second half of the 19th century did not play an important role for the Bedirhani brothers in Syria under the French mandate, at least not openly. In part, this can be linked to a more general change affecting Islamic networks during the post-war period: While in late Ottoman times religious activity, learning and patronage were mostly facilitated through the networks of Sufi orders, the early 20th century saw profound transformations, provoked by the rise of a new political Islam. Drawing on the reformist thought of Ğamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, adherents of this movement looked into the Islamic past for inspiration and rejected Sufi traditions. As a consequence, the landscape of religious networks in Syria underwent profound changes throughout the first decades of the 20th century,¹⁶⁷³ cutting actors like the Bedirhanis – who were well connected into the spheres of the local Sufi orders and established *ulama'* families but lacked connections to the newly emerging movement of religious reformers – off from some of their former networks based on religious ties.

More generally, while some of the connections facilitated through religious networks were maintained, the religious aspect of these links faded into the background. The Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon continued the close relations of their family to the Barazi from Hama. In Hama, the religious establishment, consisting of *ulama'* and conservative Sufi networks like the Nakṣbandiya order, was strong. Close connections of the Barazi family into this very milieu of religious

¹⁶⁷³ Raphael Lefèvre, *Ashes of Hama. The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria* (London: Hurst & Co., 2013), pp. 4-11.

scholars in Hama can be demonstrated well into the 1940s.¹⁶⁷⁴ Members of the Barazi family were part of the inner circle of supporters around the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon – but the religious dimension of their relation was not addressed. The commonality that was stressed above all was a shared Kurdish identity.

Transregional Networks

Not unlike the imperial network of the Bedirhani family, the connections of Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan extended well beyond the French mandate territories of Syria and Lebanon. Important points of reference were Paris, Cairo and also Iraq. A branch of the Kurdish activists' community was operating from Cairo after 1918 and members of the Bedirhani family themselves had stayed and worked in Cairo before they moved to Syria in the late 1920s. Initially, Egypt had been an attractive choice for a place of exile after the Kemalists' advent to power in Istanbul, as large parts of the last Ottoman government under Damad Ferid Paşa and his supporters were also retreating to Egypt.¹⁶⁷⁵

Süreyya Bedirhan was the key representative of the Kurdish movement in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s, assuring close connections between Cairo and the French mandate territories. After Süreyya Bedirhan's death in 1938, communications between Kurdish activists in Syria and Egypt continued throughout the 1940s. In 1946, Mehmed Hilmi, a former Ottoman diplomat with relations to the Iraqi-Kurdish Jaf tribe, and (Muhammad) Ali Avni were in contact with the Kurdish movement in Syria.¹⁶⁷⁶ The connection to Egypt even survived into the next

¹⁶⁷⁴ SHD Paris, 4 H 322, p. 16 "Notice biographique Négib Agha BARAZI," no date.

¹⁶⁷⁵ The considerable overlap in personnel and interests between the anti-Kemalist opposition and the Kurdish movement has already been pointed out above, see chapter 5 and first section of chapter 6.

¹⁶⁷⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 802, report dated March 21, 1946.

generation: Ali Avni's daughter, Doreya Awny, an Egyptian journalist and advocate of Kurdish independence, exchanged letters with Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁶⁷⁷

In addition to Egypt, the political network of the Bedirhanis included close links into the political elite of Iraq. Tewfik Wehbi (1891–1984) was an important interlocutor, as was the Nestorian Yusuf Malek (1899–1959).¹⁶⁷⁸ Both individuals still figured among Kamuran Bedirhan's closer contacts during his time in exile in Paris during the 1950s and (in Wehbi's case) 1960s. Tewfik Wehbi was an Ottoman-Kurdish military official and the former director of the Ottoman military academy in Baghdad. Under the British, he was appointed as district governor of Süleymaniye. During a short window of opportunity in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when officials of Kurdish origins were allowed to serve in the administration of the Kurdish areas of British Iraq, Wehbi introduced Kurdish as the primary language of instruction in local primary schools.¹⁶⁷⁹

Close contacts to the Kurdish refugees from Turkey helped the Bedirhani brothers to keep up a transregional network, despite increasing restrictions on their own movements. Kurdish refugees from Eastern Anatolia were not only headed for the French mandate territories; some of the tribes which left Turkey also sought asylum in Iraq. Among them was a faction of one thousand five hundred families of the Kurdish Miran tribe who arrived in Mosul in 1926.¹⁶⁸⁰ The Miran were originally from the region around Cizre and had connections to the Bedirhani family dating back to the first half of the 19th century. From

¹⁶⁷⁷ See Kamuran Bedirhan's personal papers at the IKP, Doreya Awny is mentioned in letters from July 28, 1959 and October 14, 1963, see also Awny's obituary, in *al-Ahram*, Cairo, March 20, 2015.

¹⁶⁷⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, undated report.

¹⁶⁷⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 7, 1930.

¹⁶⁸⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report from Beirut dated March 6, 1926, containing an article on the issue in English from the *Baghdad Times*, dated March 5, 1926.

the beginning, the Bedirhanis' intervention on behalf of the Kurdish refugees from Turkey was bound to have a transregional dimension, which was very much at odds with the new borders recently drawn in the former Ottoman lands between areas of influence of the rivaling mandate powers Britain and France.

Kurdish Refugees from Turkey

In addition, three new elements need to be considered in the analysis of the network of the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon during the mandate period: Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Armenian revolutionaries, and French officials. The first recent element on the political map of post-war Syria were the Kurdish refugees arriving from Turkey to northern Syria from the late 1920s onwards. Links to this Kurdish diaspora allowed the Bedirhani brothers to (re)establish contacts with Kurdish tribes, tribal leaders and networks in their family's former area of influence, the region around Cizre in Eastern Anatolia. The growing Kurdish refugee community in Syria and Lebanon was, however, a mixed blessing for the Bedirhani brothers: As the following section will demonstrate, not all newcomers readily submitted to the Bedirhanis' authority. To the contrary, challenges to their claim to represent the Kurdish community arose from the ranks of these incoming refugees. The refugee community was heterogeneous: Both Kurdish Christian and Muslim refugees from Turkey and non-Kurdish Christians, mainly from the Tur Abdin region, arrived in northern Syria from the mid-1920s onwards. A decisive trigger setting off their migration was the violent repression of the Sheikh Sa'îd rebellion by the Turkish government after 1925. Among the refugees were also Kurdish resistance fighters: In the fall of 1927, a group of two hundred insurgents, led by sheikh Abdurrahim, a brother of sheikh Sa'îd, fled

from Turkey to Deir ez-Zor in the French mandate territories.¹⁶⁸¹ The majority of refugees migrated and settled in Syria collectively, together with their tribes or religious communities. The Kiki and the Haverkan Kurds constitute examples for entire tribes on the move. Some of the refugees belonged to tribal formations which had found themselves separated by the new post-war borders and wanted to reunite. Members of the Kiki tribe, for example, arrived from Mardin to join their relatives in the mandate territories. Settling and taking care of these newcomers was perceived as a major challenge by the French mandate authorities, as most refugees had left behind their possessions in Turkey and were very poor. The French plan was to settle the refugees in previously uncultivated territories along the Syrian-Turkish border and distribute land among them for agricultural use. The small towns of Hasaka¹⁶⁸² and Qamishi¹⁶⁸³ turned into centers of refugee settlement. A key problem for this settlement policy was the ambiguous status of the Syrian-Turkish border, which complicated control over the movement of people. Soon, the Turkish government grew suspicious of the settlement of Kurds in such close proximity to its borders.¹⁶⁸⁴

The Bedirhani brothers quickly understood that influence among the incoming Kurdish refugees could be a key resource in bargaining with the French mandate authorities and a means to assert their own claims to leadership within the Kurdish community. Therefore, they attempted to recommend themselves to the newcomers, offering to negotiate in their interest with the French authorities. Numerous petitions authored by either Celadet or Kamuran Bedirhan in the interest of the larger Kurdish community in Syria, demanding primary education in Kurdish language, the appointment of Kurdish-speaking officials or asking for

¹⁶⁸¹ MAE Nantes, Syrie-Liban 1055, report dating from November 1927.

¹⁶⁸² Kurdish Hesîçe, rendered as Hassetché in the French documents.

¹⁶⁸³ Kurdish Qamişlo, appears as Kamichili or Kamichliyé in the French documents.

¹⁶⁸⁴ For a summary of the refugee problem from the perspective of the French mandate authorities, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, several reports dated October 1927.

protection for particular groups of refugees document these efforts.¹⁶⁸⁵ Although the Bedirhani brothers did dispose of some prestige as descendants of a prominent Ottoman-Kurdish notable family and had established functioning networks in northern Syria, they still had to make efforts assert their authority. The Bedirhani brothers' claim to leadership within the Kurdish community in Syria was not undisputed. Among the incoming refugees from Turkey were not only future allies and clients, but also potential rivals, like Haco Ağa, the leader of the Haverkan tribe,¹⁶⁸⁶ or Kadri Cemilpaşa, a representative of an influential Ottoman-Kurdish notable family from Diyarbekir.¹⁶⁸⁷ After the crushing defeat of the Kurdish uprisings in Turkey, members of the family of sheikh Sa'îd, among them his sons Salah ad-Din and Ali Rıza as well as his brother Abdurrahman, had sought refuge in northern Syria. The emerging Kurdish movement around the Bedirhani brothers, however, did not welcome the newcomers and the considerable influence among the Kurdish community they could potentially generate by activating religious networks. Complaints by Abdurrahman, on the other hand, blaming members of the Bedirhani family to divert funds and enrich themselves on behalf of the cause of Kurdish independence, led to further divisions within the Kurdish community from 1932 onwards.¹⁶⁸⁸

The trajectory of the Haverkan tribe, whose members sought refuge in northern Syria under the leadership of Haco Ağa after the Sheikh Sa'îd rebellion, provides an illustrative example of shifting alliances within the

¹⁶⁸⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, French evaluation of the petitions dated August 5, 1930.

¹⁶⁸⁶ The German Orientalist Karl Hadank met Haco Ağa in 1932 and described his appearance as follows: "Hadjo Ağa aus Heverka, einem Fluß in der Region Bohtan, dieser trägt Turban und einen europäischen Anzug, schwarzes Haar und schwarzen Schnurrbart, gebräuntes Gesicht und blaue Augen, ein Mitkämpfer des Emirs von Egri [i.e. Ararat, BH]," see the papers of Karl Hadank in Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 60, notes from his stay in Damascus, November 1932, and NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130.

¹⁶⁸⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated March 6, 1935.

¹⁶⁸⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, undated report.

Kurdish community and points to the considerable agency of the incoming refugees: Haco Ağa arrived in northern Syria with four hundred families belonging to his tribe in 1926.¹⁶⁸⁹ Among his followers were around two hundred and fifty armed men, .¹⁶⁹⁰ The Haverkan were a large tribe, reportedly consisting of twenty-four tribal subunits, some of them Muslim and some of them Yezidi. Until the defeat of Emir Bedirhan in 1847, the leaders of the Haverkan tribe had been vassals of the ancestors of the Bedirhani family. In the vacuum of power after Emir Bedirhan and his family were sent into exile, different factions within the Haverkan tribe competed for power, and leadership was changing hands quickly. In the 1890s, the Haverkan attracted negative attention from the Ottoman central administration, as they opposed centralization and fought the Ottoman military and neighboring tribes like the Dekshuri, who were allied with the Ottoman government.¹⁶⁹¹ In 1912, a section of the Haverkan tribe led by Derviş Ağa supported a revolt in the surroundings of Diyarbekir, an uprising with which Hasan Bey Bedirhan was allegedly also closely involved.¹⁶⁹² The ongoing support of the Haverkan tribe for the Bedirhani family, from the mid-19th into the early 20th century and beyond, culminating in the alliance between Haco Ağa and the Bedirhani brothers in Syria during the mandate period, supports an observation made by Ahmet Aktürk, who noted a high degree of continuity in the relations between the Haverkan tribe and the Bedirhanis.¹⁶⁹³ However, the road leading up to this alliance was winding, and the cooperation between the Bedirhani brothers and Haco

¹⁶⁸⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated May 23, 1931.

¹⁶⁹⁰ FO 371/11470, telegrams from the British High Commissioner in Baghdad to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated March 20, 1926; March 26, 1926 and March 31, 1926.

¹⁶⁹¹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State. The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London et al.: Zed Books, 1992), pp. 101-105.

¹⁶⁹² Hilmar Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir Region* (Istanbul: Bilgi Univ. Press, 2014), p. 94.

¹⁶⁹³ Aktürk, *Imagining Kurdish Identity*, p. 197.

Ağa cannot be taken for granted, as the history of the Haverkan tribe in the post-war period illustrates.

In the unclear situation of the armistice period, one of the leaders of the Haverkan tribe attempted to establish himself as autonomous ruler in the region around Midyat. When he was murdered in 1919, Haco Ağa emerged as one of the chief competitors for his succession.¹⁶⁹⁴ By the mid-1920s, he had united the majority of the tribe behind himself.¹⁶⁹⁵ Initially, Haco Ağa had cooperated with the Kemalist forces against neighboring Kurdish tribes.¹⁶⁹⁶ In the early 1920s, he consolidated his rule over the Haverkan tribe with the support of the Kemalist forces. As irregular fighters for the Ankara government, Haverkan tribesmen fought back the French advance in the areas of Cizre and Nusaybin. In 1923, fighters of the Haverkan tribe were responsible for wiping out an entire French cavalry unit at Bayandar. During the Sheikh Sa'îd rebellion in 1925, Haco Ağa did not falter in his support for the Kemalist government, ordering his men to intervene against the Kurdish uprising and fight the insurgents. Shortly afterwards, in 1926, however, Haco Ağa himself had become a target of Turkish centralization politics and left Turkey for Syria after a brief and failed uprising.¹⁶⁹⁷ This was, to put it mildly, a difficult legacy for an aspiring hero of the Kurdish independence movement in Syria and Lebanon, a fact Haco Ağa was surely aware of. Haco Ağa's son Cemil, who was interviewed by the historian Martin van Bruinessen for his research on the study *Agha*,

¹⁶⁹⁴ According to a French report cited by Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 149-150, Haco Ağa was born in 1860.

¹⁶⁹⁵ In 1914, Haco Ağa had served prison time in Harput and was not able to act as leader of his tribe. According to British reports, however, he was already recognized as a leading authority at the time and would have been a serious challenge to Ali Buti, who did lead the tribe at the time, had he not been arrested. See FO 252/93, "Personalities in Kurdistan, additions and corrections," report dated July 1919, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Hamit Bozarslan, "Les Yézidis: une communauté kurde atypique." In: *La Pensée* 335 (summer 2003), pp. 146-147.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Jean-David Mizrahi, *Genèse de l'État mandataire. Service des renseignements et bandes armées en Syrie et Liban dans les années 1920* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003), pp. 179-180.

Shaikh and State was eager to present a different narrative of these events, one which did not stigmatize his father as an opportunist and traitor to the Kurdish nationalist cause: Cemil stressed that while Haco Ağa had indeed sent his men to Diyarbekir on the request of the Kemalist government to help put down the Sheikh Sa'îd rebellion, he deliberately kept them out of any fighting. According to his son, Haco Ağa only participated in the military operation because he himself feared the confrontation with the Turkish military should he fail to comply.¹⁶⁹⁸

A contemporary British report sheds some additional light on the circumstances of the Haverkan tribe's arrival in Syria.¹⁶⁹⁹ In March 1926, Haco Ağa briefly revolted against the Turkish military in the surroundings of Midyat. His men seized several local police stations and frontier posts from Turkish government officials and Haco Ağa was apparently hoping for neighboring Kurdish tribes to join his uprising. His hopes, however, did not materialize and, after ten days, he retreated into Syria.¹⁷⁰⁰ His rebellion was a reaction to Turkish centralization and secularization politics in the region. By means of closing down local religious institutions like Sufi *tekkas*, but also Yezidi places of worship, and by exiling Kurdish religious and tribal leaders from the area, the Kemalist government intended to break the power of the traditional local authorities. Defeated, Haco Ağa sought refuge in northern Syria and continued to organize raids into Turkish territory from there, targeting the region around the Turkish border town Nusaybin in particular. Haco Ağa then hoped to find asylum for himself and his followers in Iraq under British mandate rule, but his request was turned down, as the British authorities feared it would be difficult to keep him and his heavily armed followers under control. Thus, Haco Ağa and his private army ended up staying in the French mandate territories. On the basis

¹⁶⁹⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 101-105 on the Haverkan and Haco Ağa.

¹⁶⁹⁹ FO 371/11470, report from Mr. Hoare, dated Istanbul, March 30, 1926.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 104.

of similar concerns like the British in Iraq had brought forward, the French authorities had initially denied Haco Ağa and his followers entry into Syria – but they lacked the boots on the ground to follow through on their refusal.¹⁷⁰¹ The French control over large parts of northern Syria was only nominal at the time, giving Haco Ağa a considerable degree of freedom in his movements across the Turkish border.¹⁷⁰²

At the time of their arrival from Turkey, Haco Ağa and the Haverkan tribe were not clearly identified as Kurdish, but initially described as a Yezidi or Assyrian tribal community by British observers.¹⁷⁰³ The Haverkan were a mixed tribal confederation, consisting of both Muslim and Yezidi subunits. The post-war border arrangements had divided the Haverkan tribe between Turkey, the French mandate territories and Iraq, compelling them to identify in one way or another according to the categories at play in each locality to avoid a complete marginalization within the new frameworks they found themselves in. It was in this context that Haco Ağa and his followers in northern Syria opted for Kurdish nationalism, embracing an unambiguously Kurdish, ethnically defined identity. However, Haco Ağa retained his close contacts into the Yezidi community, notably through İsmail Bey Chol in the Sincar mountains¹⁷⁰⁴ and Hamu Shiru.¹⁷⁰⁵ Haco Ağa's influence among the Yezidi became the major channel through which Kurdish nationalist propaganda of the late 1920s and early 1930s reached the Kurdish-

¹⁷⁰¹ Vahé Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie. Aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l'Irak (1919-1933)* (Paris: Ed. Karthala, 2004), p. 336. On the unsuccessful French attempts to establish control over the border area with Turkey, see also White, *The Emergence of Minorities*, p. 110, who draws on the example of Haco Ağa and the Haverkan tribe as evidence for the limits of state authority in the region.

¹⁷⁰² Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 104.

¹⁷⁰³ See FO 371/11470, report from Mr. Hoare, Istanbul, dated March 30, 1926 and Bozarslan, "Les Yézidis," pp. 146-147.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Birgül Açıkılımaz, *The Yezidis. The History of a Community, Culture and Religion* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 59.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds. Yazidis in Colonial Iraq* (London et al.: I.B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 104-105. The father of Hamu Shiru was from Bohtan, the former area of influence of the Bedirhani family.

speaking Yezidi community in Iraq.¹⁷⁰⁶ The Haverkan's arrival to northern Syria was looked upon with great suspicion by the established Kurdish tribal leaders in the area, who rightly recognized the tribe's leader Haco Ağa as a powerful potential rival. And Haco Ağa indeed quickly lived up to their suspicions: Unlike the established local leaders, he did not invest in agriculture, but concentrated his efforts on increasing his political influence. This worked out well: Despite the fact that he and his tribal followers did not own any land and could not fall back on any prior relations in northern Syria, a number of local villages started paying tribute to the Haverkan shortly after their arrival. Haco Ağa soon sought more permanent integration into the local networks of Kurdish tribal leaders in northern Syria: He married into the Şahin family, his wife was a daughter of Abni Abdullah Şahin from Nusaybin.¹⁷⁰⁷ In addition, Haco Ağa established himself as a key broker and interlocutor for the French mandate authorities, who were increasing their efforts to establish closer control over the borderlands with Turkey from the mid-1920s onwards, arguing with the Turkish government over the exact delimitation of the border. Haco Ağa's contacts to the French authorities were facilitated through the French officer Col. Pierre Terrier. Terrier, who was stationed in the Jazira between 1924 and 1927, advised the local Kurdish leaders to focus their demands on the Jazira region only. Instead of pursuing transregional goals, they should zero in on the objective of creating an autonomous Kurdish administrative unit in northern Syria.¹⁷⁰⁸ Reconsidering their initial refusal, the French allowed Haco Ağa and his followers to settle in the village of Dogur (Dougheur), in close proximity to Nusaybin and the

¹⁷⁰⁶ Açıkylmaz, *The Yezidis*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁰⁷ According to a French report cited by Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Eva Savelsberg, "The Syrian-Kurdish Movements: Obstacles rather than Driving Forces for Democratization," in: David Romano (ed.), *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East. Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria* (Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 88.

Turkish border.¹⁷⁰⁹ With French support, Haco Ağa later built his own settlement nearby, the village of Tirbe Spî (today al-Qahtaniya).¹⁷¹⁰ Haco Ağa's presence and political standing in northern Syria served as a catalyst, attracting other Kurdish refugees from Turkey over the 1920s and 1930s, among them prominent tribal leaders like Kör Hüseyin.¹⁷¹¹

From its very early beginnings in 1927, Haco Ağa was among the chief supporters of the organization Hoybûn. Unlike already established local Kurdish leaders, the newcomer Haco Ağa did not fear to alienate local, non-Kurdish patrons and benefactors by voicing his support for the Kurdish movement. For Hoybûn, Haco Ağa was a powerful ally because he actually had a fighting force under his command. And he did mobilize his fighters in the context of the Kurdish revolt in the Ararat region in 1930/31, when he organized raids over the Turkish border which were meant to distract and disperse Turkish forces in Eastern Anatolia, taking pressure off the insurgents in the Ararat. These cross-border raids lent credibility to Hoybûn, but also led to Haco Ağa's falling out of favor with the French authorities, as his operations across the border into Turkey went on despite explicit French prohibitions. Aware of Haco Ağa's influence and potential future usefulness in northern Syria, however, the French mandate authorities continued to appease him by paying him an annual pension of 70.000 Francs.¹⁷¹² Haco Ağa died at the height of his power and influence and was remembered in Kurdish nationalist historiography as the last of the great Kurdish tribal leaders in the region.¹⁷¹³ It was less frequently remembered, however,

¹⁷⁰⁹ Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie*, pp. 341-343.

¹⁷¹⁰ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 101-105. Tirbe Spî, located north-east of Hasaka, literally means "white grave." During efforts for an Arabization of northern Syria in the 1970s, Bedouins were settled in the area and Tirbe Spî was renamed into al-Qahtaniya (القحطانية). See İsmet Chériff Vanly, "The Kurds in Syria and Lebanon," in: Philip G. Kreyenbroek (ed.), *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 122.

¹⁷¹¹ Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, pp. 118-119.

¹⁷¹² Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie*, p. 390.

¹⁷¹³ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 101-105.

that towards the end of his life, Haco Ağa had cut his ties with the Kurdish independence movement and began to establish connections into Syrian-nationalist political circles in Damascus.¹⁷¹⁴

The movement of tribal communities and individual refugees from eastern Turkey into the French mandate territories continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Nouredine Zaza (ca. 1919–1987) depicted the circumstances of his own flight over the Syrian-Turkish border in his memoirs:¹⁷¹⁵ As a young boy, he was smuggled over the border by friends of his elder brother, the Kurdish activist Dr. Nafiz Bey, when pressure on the Kurdish communities in eastern Turkey was mounting in the aftermath of the defeat of the Ararat rebellion. Zaza was the son of a locally influential land-owning family from Ergani Maden near Diyarbekir. His father Yusuf Efendi had been employed in the Ottoman provincial administration of the area prior to the First World War. In the aftermath of the Sheikh Sa'id rebellion in 1925, the family was persecuted by the Turkish government, and many of its male members were imprisoned.¹⁷¹⁶ Nouredine Zaza arrived in Syria against his will and on his own, without the rest of his family. His older brother wanted him to pursue his education in the French mandate territories.

In the summer of 1930, Kamuran Bedirhan addressed the French authorities on behalf of newly arriving Kurdish refugees from the Diyarbekir region like Nouredine Zaza. The French authorities were wary of Kamuran's meddling, for two reasons: First, they did not want to encourage a large-scale exodus of refugees from Turkey. And second, they had suspicions about Kamuran Bedirhan's motives in speaking out for the refugees: The French officials were aware of historical relations

¹⁷¹⁴ Tachjian, *La France en Cilicie*, p. 399.

¹⁷¹⁵ Nouredine Zaza, *Ma Vie de Kurde ou le cri du peuple kurde* (Lausanne: Ed. Favre, 1982), especially pp. 56-60.

¹⁷¹⁶ Zaza, *Ma Vie de Kurde*, pp. 30-31.

the Bedirhan family had to the incoming refugees and were cautious to grant the Bedirhani brothers any kind of authority or endorse their claims for leadership over these tribal communities. The contemporary French reports made it clear that the authorities much preferred to deal with the refugees directly, without the intervention of Kamuran Bedirhan.¹⁷¹⁷ Over time, however, the Bedirhani brothers managed to recommend themselves as virtually indispensable brokers between the Kurdish refugees and the French mandate authorities despite these reservations. The home of Celadet Bedirhan in Damascus emerged as a meeting place for Kurdish tribal leaders and other prominent personalities from among the incoming refugees from Turkey. In 1933, Celadet hosted a certain Cemil Bey Muhammad Hacc Abdallah, a Kurdish notable from Mardin.¹⁷¹⁸ The family of Nouredine Zaza also found refuge in Celadet's house. In 1936, the French authorities were dealing with Kurdish refugees from Turkey who had settled in a decrepit area of Beirut. After their make-shift settlement was evacuated, most of these Kurdish refugees found themselves homeless and without any means to support themselves. Also, they did not have any tribal affiliations or any kind of representative. Against this backdrop, the French authorities decided to consult with Celadet Bedirhan, who stepped forward on behalf of the refugees. In this case, the Bedirhanis' intervention was more welcome than five years earlier.¹⁷¹⁹ Celadet suggested to settle the refugees in question in proximity to the Syrian-Turkish border, where they could hope to find work on the land of the local Kurdish notables Ali Ağa Zilfo and the Barazi family.¹⁷²⁰ It becomes clear from these episodes that the status of members of the Bedirhani family as brokers and middlemen mediating between local Kurdish communities and French officials was constantly subject to

¹⁷¹⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, reports dated July 28, 1930 and August 19, 1930.

¹⁷¹⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated August 3, 1933.

¹⁷¹⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, reports dated September 12, 1936; November 21, 1936; and December 14, 1936.

¹⁷²⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, "dossier kurdes de Beirut," dated 1937.

negotiations – sometimes their interventions were welcome, and at other times, the French tried to work around them.

A problem for the Kurdish community in general and for the Bedirhani brothers as their representatives in Lebanon was that Kurds did not have a right to Lebanese citizenship and, in consequence, were not entitled to cast their votes in local Lebanese elections, a situation that did not change until a large-scale naturalization campaign took place in the mid-1990s.¹⁷²¹ Unable to bargain with their votes, the Kurds in Beirut had not much to offer to local politically ambitious patrons (*za'im*, pl. *zu'ama*) and, in consequence, faced great difficulties when trying to access local networks of protection and distribution based on patronage.¹⁷²² Members of the as-Solh family emerged as important brokers for the Bedirhani brothers when they sought access into local networks in Beirut. The as-Solh were also a family of former Ottoman bureaucrats with empire-wide connections and interests and did share some common ground with the Bedirhani family. Their willingness to act as the Bedirhani brothers' local sponsors and patrons in post-imperial times, however, was hampered by the fact that the Bedirhanis were not in a position to mobilize votes for the politically ambitious members of the as-Solh family in the mandate period and during the first decades after the Lebanese independence, as Kurds in Lebanon were by a large majority not eligible to vote at the time. The situation of the Kurdish community in Syria after the Syrian independence was markedly different in this regard: Kurdish notables and community leaders like Nuri Ağa al-İbiş were running for seats in the Syrian

¹⁷²¹ Most Kurds in Lebanon obtained Lebanese citizenship only during a large-scale naturalization campaign in 1994. Prior to that, exceptions were made for a small number of Kurdish families who were granted Lebanese citizenship in the 1950s, upon the personal intervention of Sami as-Solh. See Farah Wajih Kawtharani, "The Interplay of Clientelism and Ethnic Identity in Pluralist States: The Case of the Kurdish Community in Lebanon." MA thesis, AUB Beirut, Feb. 2003, pp. 24 and 91.

¹⁷²² For an analysis of the system of bargaining with votes, see Johnson, *Class and Client*, p. 94.

parliament, and their Kurdish supporters were able to vote for them – a Kurdish constituency, in other words, was an asset and worth investing in. It comes as no surprise that Nuri Ağa al-İbiş was eager to maintain close connections to Celadet Bedirhan in Syria, whom he supported in the hopes that Celadet would instruct whatever following he had to vote for al-İbiş.

It can be argued that the Bedirhani brothers' shift towards a closer dialogue and cooperation with the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun movement was in part due to the realization that not many other allies were available. Their lack of leverage, due to the fact that they could not mobilize their Kurdish followers as potential voters, presented an obstacle for the integration of the Kurdish community into existing Sunni networks of patronage and distribution in Syria and even more so in Lebanon. The Armenian community, in turn, was part of the local patronage system¹⁷²³ and offered a potential point of access for the Kurds: Some of the Armenian nationalist leaders had an interest in the Kurdish community that went beyond votes or political support in the immediate context of the mandate territories. Kurdish advocacy and willingness to compromise were helpful in the Armenian nationalists' own struggle to regain political influence in eastern Turkey.

The Armenian Nationalist Movement

An initial rapprochement of Kurdish and Armenian political leaders in Syria and Lebanon was facilitated at the Paris Peace Conference in 1918/1919. The Armenian chief negotiator Boğos Nubar Paşa was in contact with Mehmed Ali Bey [Gerede] and the Kurdish representative Şerif Paşa. One of the key contacts for Celadet Bedirhan upon his arrival in the French mandate territories in 1927 was Vahan Papazian, an

¹⁷²³ Johnson, *Class and Client*, p. 99.

Armenian Dashnaktsutyun activist and journalist based in Aleppo. He had, in Ottoman times, been a parliamentary representative for Van. Papazian initiated and oversaw the cooperation between Hoybûn and the Dashnaktsutyun movement in the mandate territories.¹⁷²⁴ Other members of the Dashnaktsutyun movement in Syria and Lebanon included Hratch Papazian, the dentist Krikor Sarkissian¹⁷²⁵ and the medical doctor Toros Basmadjian.¹⁷²⁶ The Armenian nationalists supported and financed Hoybûn heavily over the following two years, until Vahan Papazian was arrested by the French authorities in February 1929.¹⁷²⁷ It subsequently emerged that most of the money the Dashnaktsutyun movement had raised to support Hoybûn had vanished, and some were accusing the Bedirhani brothers of having pocketed it for themselves.¹⁷²⁸ Contacts between the Kurdish movement and the Armenian revolutionaries had also been endorsed by the anti-Kemalist opposition in exile. Networks of supporters of Damad Ferid Paşa, the Dashnaktsutyun and the Kurdish independence movement in Syria were overlapping.¹⁷²⁹ The cooperation between the anti-Kemalist movement and the Armenian revolutionaries, however, was not always smooth. It was severely hampered by the fact that opposition against the Kemalist regime inside of Turkey was, to a large extent, voiced on the basis of religion, i.e. more specifically on the basis of religiously legitimated doubts regarding Kemalist politics of secularization. This was not at least necessary to effectively mobilize Kurds and other Muslim communities in Anatolia in opposition to the Kemalists. This constituency of fairly pious Muslims, however, did not much appreciate an alliance with non-Muslim secular nationalists like the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun. To complicate matters further, it should not be forgotten that the

¹⁷²⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dated February 1, 1929.

¹⁷²⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 8, 1931.

¹⁷²⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated July 7, 1930.

¹⁷²⁷ On the murder charges, see AIR 23/407, reports dated February 1929.

¹⁷²⁸ AIR 23/416, report dated November 23, 1929.

¹⁷²⁹ AIR 23/416, report dated July 23, 1928.

Dashnaksutyun were themselves only representing a very small faction of the Armenian population. Their backing from within the Armenian community was limited, and their alliance with the Kurdish independence movement and the Bedirhani brothers was regarded with some suspicion: The Kurds were still vividly remembered as chief perpetrators of violent crimes and massacres committed against Armenians and as economic beneficiaries of the Armenian exodus not only in 1915, but already since the 1890s under the reign of Abdülhamid II. It was obvious to most observers that against the backdrop of this recent, very violent history, peaceful cohabitation belonged to the realms of wishful thinking, especially since Armenian and Kurdish demands for territory in Eastern Anatolia were all but incompatible.¹⁷³⁰

While general Kurdish and Armenian expectations for their political future did not go together well, the Dashnaksutyun party did have something in common with the Kurdish independence movement: Both parties had a keen interest in seeing the initial stipulations of the Treaty of Sèvres realized. The treaty not only foresaw a Kurdish state, it also contained designs for an independent Armenian state in northeastern Anatolia. Unlike the Kurdish state, an Armenian Republic did come into being, but it was short-lived: Founded immediately after the First World War in 1918, it was overrun by Kemalist and Russian troops in 1920. The Armenian Republican government, almost all of its members Dashnaksutyun activists, fled to Syria, Egypt, Iran and Europe. The events of 1920 help explain the Dashnaksutyuns' fervent opposition to both Kemalism and Bolshevism.¹⁷³¹ In their relations with the Kurdish

¹⁷³⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 27, 1927, and also the discussion in Tessa Hofmann & Gerayer Koutcharian, "The History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire." In: *The Armenian Review* 39.4 (1986), p. 43.

¹⁷³¹ Cosroe Chaquèri (ed.), *The Armenians of Iran. The Paradoxical Role of a Minority in a Dominant Culture: Articles and Documents*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 363-369, citing an American Consular report "Sketch and History of Armenian Political Parties: An American Consular Report (1931)," dated October 12, 1931, Beirut, Syria, USNA 860 J.00/31. Ed.

activists in the mandate territories, however, a common enemy could not compensate for otherwise disparate policies. The cooperation between the Dashnaksutyun and the Kurdish nationalists can therefore only be regarded as a strategic alliance, which was bound to be short-lived. The economic dimension of the Armenian-Kurdish cooperation in the mandate territories should also not be neglected: On the one hand, the Armenian activists supported Hoybûn directly with considerable amounts of money. On the other hand, Armenian entrepreneurs and businessmen with relations to the Armenian nationalist movement in Syria and Lebanon created opportunities for Kurdish activists to earn a living and travel among the Kurds in northern Syria without raising too many suspicions. A case in point was the Armenian tobacco company Matossian.¹⁷³² Kamuran Bedirhan and others from among his fellow Kurdish activists were employed by this company as itinerant sales agents, providing them with an unsuspecting cover to travel extensively throughout the Jazira region and keep in contact with the Kurdish population there. Caspar İpekian, the director of the Matossian tobacco company in Beirut, was known to be an active member of the Armenian Dashnaksutyun.¹⁷³³ In spite of its obvious strategic and economic motivations, efforts were made to also historically legitimate the Armenian-Kurdish rapprochement and cooperation: As the connection to the Armenian revolutionary movement became closer over the 1920s, pseudo-historical claims emerged to back up and legitimize a Kurdish-Armenian collaboration. In his *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan* in 1921, Mustafa Paşa had already stressed the historically friendly relations between Kurds and Armenians. His successors in the late 1920s took this idea up a notch, claiming that in fact, the Kurds themselves had originally been of Christian origins like their Armenian counterparts.¹⁷³⁴ A second

¹⁷³² That is, the *Société Anonyme des Tabacs et Cigarettes de Matossian*, registering as a trademark in the spring of 1931, see *Bulletin officiel des actes administratifs du Haut Commissariat*, appendix to Nr. 4 (February 28, 1931), p. 1.

¹⁷³³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, undated report.

¹⁷³⁴ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Dossier Kurde," dated October 1920.

strategy to legitimate Armenian-Kurdish cooperations emerged in the 1930s, as petitions and political pamphlets stressed a common racial, Aryan identity of both Armenians and Kurds.¹⁷³⁵

The connections to the Armenian revolutionary movement also added a new transnational dimension to the network of the Kurdish activists in Syria and Lebanon: According to contemporary French reports, Ottoman-Kurdish exile communities existed in the United States, notably in Detroit.¹⁷³⁶ In the diaspora, formerly Ottoman, now Turkish, Armenian and Kurdish networks oftentimes overlapped. The connection to Detroit was a long-standing one, which was still activated by Kamuran Bedirhan, who was in contact with the Detroit Levant Club from exile in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷³⁷ Male workers from the Ottoman lands, many of them of Kurdish descent, had emigrated to Detroit after the First World War to find employment in the fast-growing car industry there. In the 1930s, the local Levantine community counted around 10.000 members, the majority of them male and almost half of them Kurdish speaking. The community was very active, and a number of local clubs and associations were founded. Kurdish members of the community maintained links to Hoybûn, regularly mentioned the organization's activities in their local publications and sent financial aid throughout the 1930s.¹⁷³⁸

¹⁷³⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, petition by the Kurds from the Jazira, dated July 12, 1932.

¹⁷³⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 571, undated report.

¹⁷³⁷ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP Paris for a memorandum he addressed to the Detroit Levant Club, dated May 1956.

¹⁷³⁸ Barbara Bilgé, "Voluntary Associations in the Old Turkish Community of Metropolitan Detroit," in: Yvonne Yazbeck-Haddad & Jane Idleman Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities in North America* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), pp. 381-406.

Contacts to French Officials and Administrators

The French colonial state in Syria and Lebanon is best described not as a singular unit but as “a heterogeneous assemblage of diverse, incomplete and overlapping regimes of practices.”¹⁷³⁹ French intelligence officers on the ground, employed in the *Service des Renseignements* needed to see like the local populations to make sense of local matters – a perspective which was not always in tune with the one adopted by their supervisors in the mandate administration based in Damascus and Beirut.¹⁷⁴⁰ In addition, particularly during the early years after the First World War and in the beginning of the French mandate rule over Syria and Lebanon, the French position, both on the ground in the Middle East and on the international scene, was not particularly strong. The country had encountered severe losses during the war and was, in the former Ottoman lands as much as elsewhere, forced to negotiate and compromise with other imperialist powers, in particular Great Britain. This comparatively weak position also compelled French administrators arriving to Syria and Lebanon to seek the cooperation of local notables and community leaders in the former Ottoman province of Syria. In this context, local notable families which had already been of political importance in late Ottoman times were able to carve out positions for themselves and successfully bargained for ongoing influence into the mandate period.¹⁷⁴¹ As a consequence of this French policy of relying on local intermediators, some of the established families of Ottoman Syria continued to hold key positions in the mandate administration, leaving the Ottoman networks members of the Bedirhani family knew well and could rely on largely intact. In other words, in terms of network strategies, the end of the war and the onset of the French mandate rule

¹⁷³⁹ Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate. Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), p. 34.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Neep, *Occupying Syria*, p. 126.

¹⁷⁴¹ Carla Eddé, *Beyrouth: naissance d'une capitale, 1918 – 1924* (Paris: Sindbad, 2010), pp. 32-35 and 59-60.

did not, at least initially, constitute a sharp break for large parts of the Ottoman elite.

Among the projects undertaken by the French mandate administration was a large-scale reorganization of the judicial apparatus in Syria and Lebanon. As new courts were created, there was an urgent need for qualified personnel.¹⁷⁴² In the early decades of the 20th century, the circle of intellectuals in the former Ottoman-Syrian lands was still relatively small. It was in this context that graduates of the Ottoman law school in Istanbul, like Kamuran Bedirhan and several of his classmates, found employment in the mandate judiciary. Sami as-Solh, like the Bedirhani brothers a graduate of the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul and later Prime Minister of Lebanon, for instance, presided over the Lebanese court of cassation in the late 1920s.¹⁷⁴³ The positions in the judiciary not only brought together former schoolmates and colleagues from Ottoman times, they also lent themselves as ideal starting points to found new extensive patronage networks: Structurally, lawyers occupied key positions when it came to bargaining with the administration and providing services or favors for their clients. As trained lawyers, both Kamuran and Celadet found a role for themselves in the judicial reform process initiated by the French.¹⁷⁴⁴ Kamuran worked as an attorney at the newly founded court of appeals in Beirut from 1927 onwards. During the mandate period, courts were focal points of political discussion and activism. It was galling to the local lawyers and judges that all courts were presided over by French judges and that thereby, the autonomy of the judicial system was severely restricted. Lawyers went on strike to express their critique about these restrictions on Syrian

¹⁷⁴² Eddé, *Beyrouth*, pp. 61 and 125-126.

¹⁷⁴³ See FO 371/35206, confidential report on personalities in Lebanon, dated August 26, 1946, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴⁴ On the overhaul of the Ottoman judicial system and the foundation of new institution in the late 1920s, see Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon*, p. 79.

sovereignty throughout the 1920s¹⁷⁴⁵ and 1930s.¹⁷⁴⁶ Kamuran Bedirhan would have likely been part of or at the very least exposed to these discussions, contributing to his politicization and a swift familiarization with a newly emerging political discourse.

In addition to Damascus, the established stronghold of the Bedirhani family dating back to Ottoman Syria, and the Jazira region, the center of the settlement of incoming Kurdish refugees from the mid-1920s onwards, Beirut emerged as a crucial hub in the network of the Bedirhani brothers, in particular with regards to their relations to the French mandate authorities. Local politics in Beirut throughout the late 19th and into the second half of the 20th century were firmly marked by patterns of clientelism and patronage politics.¹⁷⁴⁷ Local notable families which had enjoyed influence in late Ottoman times were, for the most part, able to hold on to their prominent positions into post-imperial times. A handful of politically powerful and wealthy families formed a closely-knit network, stabilized by means of intermarriages and business cooperations.¹⁷⁴⁸ Being part of or having some sort of access to this network was, judging from the memories of contemporaries, indispensable to get anything done in post-war Beirut: Appointments and introductions, favors, resources and opportunities were distributed along these lines.¹⁷⁴⁹

While Beirut had, unlike Damascus, not played an important role in the network of the family in late Ottoman times, the Bedirhani brothers disposed of a number of possible entry points into the local networks of the city in the late 1920s. One connection the brothers made ample use of was the link to the local Sunni community and their leaders,

¹⁷⁴⁵ Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon*, pp. 136 and 147.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon*, p. 215.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Johnson, *Class and Client*, pp. 14 and 48.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Fargeallah, *Visages d'une époque*, passim.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Fargeallah, *Visages d'une époque*, passim.

prominently among them the as-Solh family. A second point of access, which transcended communitarian boundaries, was the community of former Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats: In Beirut during the mandate years, the Bedirhani brothers re-encountered former schoolmates, friends from law-school and fellow budding journalists and writers of early 20th century Istanbul. As the following discussion shows, the Bedirhani brothers turned to these connections in their attempts to find their footing in the city. The Kurdish community of Beirut in the late 1920s was negligibly small. While some of the local notables claimed Kurdish origins, they all had long ago assimilated into the Arab-Sunni community of the city. The emphasis they put on their Kurdish legacy was a mere claim to prestige and of little practical relevance, as these notables and their families no longer spoke Kurdish or retained any noteworthy connections to the Kurdish communities elsewhere in the former Ottoman lands. Beirut did not lend itself as a center of the Kurdish diaspora, and it never became one. And yet, the Bedirhani brothers chose Beirut, in addition to Damascus and the Syrian-Turkish borderlands, as one of the centers of their activities in the French mandate territories. The Syrian-Turkish borderlands were, unlike Beirut, an actual center of the Kurdish community and a core area for the settlement of incoming Kurdish refugees. And Damascus was a city in which the Bedirhani family, as earlier discussions have shown, had maintained intricate networks and connections ever since the 1860s.¹⁷⁵⁰ Beirut, on the other hand, was a newcomer to the network of the family – why did they feel the need to establish themselves there?

Several, closely interrelated motives come to mind: Beirut was the center of economic and political developments throughout the mandate period. It was the seat of the French High Commissioner and, in turn, a place which attracted representatives of all kinds of interest groups hoping to

¹⁷⁵⁰ See chapter 3.

lobby for French support. The French mandate administration has been characterized as highly centralized, with a strong emphasis on Beirut as the seat of the administration.¹⁷⁵¹ Based in Beirut, the Bedirhani brothers could thus not only hope to enter into a continuous conversation with French administrators, but were also likely to encounter potential allies and keep an eye on possible opponents there. Beirut attracted former Ottoman community leaders, intellectuals and policy makers in exile from all over the Middle East. Several members of the extended network of the Bedirhani brothers were based in Beirut, among them Mustafa Ağa Şahin, a sponsor of the Kurdish nationalist movement. In his house in Beirut, the first meeting leading to the establishment of Hoybûn was convened in 1927. Beirut, in terms of network politics, was a crucial knot and intersection where many actors, ideas and resources were pooled together.¹⁷⁵² Beirut was a hub for the Levantine elite and *jeunesse dorée* of the 1930s and 1940s. The atmosphere of Beirut's elite circles of the time was colorfully captured in the memoirs of Maud Fargeallah (1909–1995), the daughter of the influential Christian-Lebanese Moutran family and lover of the Lebanese president Camille Chamoun.¹⁷⁵³ Maud Fargeallah operated within a sort of Levantine space stretching across the south-western Mediterranean, traveling back and forth between Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria, Jerusalem and Paris at ease and with great frequency, in touch with the same social circles that Süreyya Bedirhan would also have been part of at the time.¹⁷⁵⁴ Her family, much like the Bedirhanis, grew increasingly wary of the uncertain post-war status of family property in the former

¹⁷⁵¹ Caroline Attié, *Struggle in the Levant. Lebanon in the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p. 15.

¹⁷⁵² See also Samir Kassir, *Histoire de Beyrouth* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), pp. 16-19.

¹⁷⁵³ Fargeallah, *Visages d'une époque*, passim.

¹⁷⁵⁴ While she does not refer to the Bedirhani family directly, the as-Solh family is frequently mentioned as part of her circles, see Fargeallah, *Visages d'une époque*, pp. 125 and 173. While the Bedirhanis moved within the same Levantine space, their outlook would have been slightly different, their attention also turned inward, towards Damascus and the Jazira region where the family could hope to claim property rights.

Ottoman lands, from which they found themselves cut off by recently drawn international borders. Maud Fargeallah hoped to retain rights over her family's property, located in what by the 1930s had become Palestine under British mandate rule, but she eventually failed to do so.¹⁷⁵⁵ Her memoirs illustrate how members of the former Ottoman elite continued to move and act within a transregional context, not being bound in their actions, personal networks or interests to the framework of the nation state, which later took such precedence in many political memoirs and historical accounts.

In addition to being a meeting place of the post-imperial elites, Beirut was not at last a first-rate financial and economic hub and therefore a most convenient place to start a business. The economic advantages of Beirut and its investment-friendly atmosphere were recognized and exploited in particular by Kamuran Bedirhan. Beirut was also a center of the Middle Eastern publishing scene, which Kamuran Bedirhan himself was also part of. The headquarters of his journal *Roja Nû* and the office of Kamuran Bedirhan were situated in the *Immeuble Tabet* in what is today the area of Riyad as-Solh Square in the center of Beirut.¹⁷⁵⁶

French mandate institutions in Beirut and elsewhere not only facilitated contacts between local activists, they also brought the Bedirhani brothers in contact with French administrators. Several French military officers took an interest in Kurdish studies: Pierre Rondot and Roger Lescot in particular undertook fieldwork in the Kurdish areas of the Jazira. Early on, Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan acted as informants for these French officials-cum-scholars, and later, some of these relationships developed

¹⁷⁵⁵ Fargeallah, *Visages d'une époque*, pp. 30 and 218.

¹⁷⁵⁶ See MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, "dossier Kamuran Bedirhan," containing a telegram from İhsan Nuri to Kamuran Bedirhan under this address, dated December 17, 1944.

into “friendship and intellectual complicity,”¹⁷⁵⁷ with Roger Lescot encouraging Kamuran Bedirhan to compile a Kurdish-French dictionary and Pierre Rondot writing articles for the Kurdish journal *Hawar*. In spite of these personal relations, the ties to the French administration in Syria were often complicated for the Bedirhani brothers: The above-mentioned cooperations on the level of cultural politics notwithstanding, the French authorities watched Kurdish activities in the mandate territories closely. French colonial policies towards local elites were flexible, as Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan were to experience for themselves: While they were regularly consulted by the mandate authorities, their activities were also closely monitored.¹⁷⁵⁸ Measures against them were tightened in 1930, when Celadet Bedirhan openly disregarded a prohibition to cross the Turkish border. The degree to which the French authorities used force and punishment also varied greatly, adding to the perceived insecurity among the local Kurdish community: While some Kurdish activists, like the Bedirhanis, were disciplined with house arrest and temporary exile within the mandate territories, one of their collaborators, Osman Sabri Bey, was singled out for more severe punishment. He was exiled from Syria to the island of Madagascar for several years and later prohibited to publish or work as a journalist after his return to the mandate territories.¹⁷⁵⁹

A crucial means the French colonial administration came to rely on as a leverage in their efforts to keep the Bedirhani brothers in check was the complicated question of post-Ottoman citizenship: Neither Süreyya nor Celadet or Kamuran Bedirhan could hope to obtain Turkish citizenship after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, due to their activities in favor of Kurdish independence which were perceived as treacherous and

¹⁷⁵⁷ Tejel, “Scholarship om the Kurds in Syria,” p. 18. Similarly stated by Joyce Blau, interview November 18, 2014 at IKP Paris.

¹⁷⁵⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated February 1928.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem*, p. 210.

separatist by the Kemalist government. However, the Bedirhani brothers also failed to meet the necessary requirements to be awarded Lebanese or Syrian citizenship, as all of them had spent considerable amounts of time outside the Syrian lands following the First World War, with Kamuran and Celadet studying in Europe and Süreyya settling down in Egypt.¹⁷⁶⁰ Initially, Süreyya Bedirhan had successfully obscured the fact that he had not much of a right to Syrian citizenship by claiming that he was born in Maqtala in northern Syria, a small village near Jarabulus, where Mustafa Ağa Şahin, a long-term ally of the Bedirhani family was based and was evidently able to pull some strings for them. However, as the Bedirhani brothers grew more assertive in their political activities in the early 1930s, trying to extend their influence beyond the Syrian-Turkish border, the French authorities began to perceive them, and in particular Süreyya Bedirhan, as trouble makers. French officials decided to have a closer look at his claim to Syrian citizenship, finding that he had, in fact, no right to the Syrian passport he had received in 1929, as he had misled the officials about his place of birth. French officials checked back with the Turkish authorities, who could confirm that Süreyya was registered as born in Istanbul. As a result of this investigation, Süreyya Bedirhan was expelled from Syria in 1933. It was made clear in the French proceedings on his case that he had better abstain from complaining about the decision, as this might easily lead to the citizenship of his brothers Celadet and Kamuran, whose status as Syrian citizens was “jusqu’ici tacitement reconnu,” silently tolerated, also being made subject to closer investigations. The thinly-veiled threat being that all brothers could quickly find themselves as displaced

¹⁷⁶⁰ According to the French documentation on the case, Süreyya Bedirhan had lost his Turkish citizenship by decision of the Turkish council of ministers dating from October 21, 1928. See MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, “dossier Kamuran Bedirhan,” investigation dating from December 22, 1933.

persons, without any citizenship at all.¹⁷⁶¹ This threat constituted no small leverage against Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan and was well-suited to assure their cooperation and loyalty to the mandate regime. Judging from the activities of the Bedirhani brothers from 1933 onwards, the threat was effective: Both abstained from political activities and, in particular, interventions in eastern Turkey, confining themselves to cultural and educational endeavors.

It is true that not only Süreyya, but also Celadet and Kamuran have throughout their lives repeatedly claimed to have been born in the village of Maqtala. This came, as the case of Süreyya Bedirhan has illustrated, with the practical advantage of providing them with a claim to Syrian citizenship in the mandate period. Thereby, the Bedirhani brothers had a right to vote, to own property, to hold a government post and to run for office in the mandate territories, all of which were crucial prerequisites to become part of local patronage networks and establish a base of supporters. The French assumed in Süreyya's case that he needed proof of his Syrian citizenship to secure a bank loan, claiming that he held extensive property in Syria which he offered as a guarantee in exchange for the loan.¹⁷⁶² Kamuran Bedirhan maintained his claim to be born in Maqtala throughout his life. In addition to the practical benefits a Syrian citizenship held in local power politics outlined above, there was a second, ideological reason making it worthwhile to pretend to have been born in the Syrian-Turkish borderlands, instead of admitting to the reality of being born in Ottoman Istanbul. Unlike Istanbul, Maqtala was close to the Kurdish heartland, providing Kamuran Bedirhan with a much more prestigious pedigree and credentials in the context of Kurdish nationalism. It does thus seem like a deliberate decision, rather

¹⁷⁶¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, "dossier Kamuran Bedirhan," investigation dating from December 22, 1933. The word used in the French document is "heimatlose."

¹⁷⁶² MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, "dossier Kamuran Bedirhan," investigation dating from December 22, 1933.

than an innocent mistake on his part, to insist on Maqtala as his place of birth.

Among the French officials and Orientalists who drew on the Bedirhani brothers in Syria as informants and, in turn, also shaped their perceptions and understanding of Kurdish national history was Thomas Bois. From Bois' writings, it becomes clear that he subscribed to an evolutionary discourse about civilization and progress, arguing that the Kurds were wronged by the international community after the First World War, as they had a greater claim to an own nation state than other communities who were less evolved in Bois' view. His work on Kurdish history and culture also contains numerous examples of him reading nationalist categories like Kurdish, Turkish or Arabic back into the early centuries of Middle Eastern history, casting conflicts along oversimplified ethnic and national lines. Bois repeatedly stressed the prominent role Kurdish protagonists played in the history of the Middle East, appropriating notably Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi as an exclusively Kurdish actor.¹⁷⁶³ This line of thinking was to prove influential among Kurdish intellectuals and historians.¹⁷⁶⁴

As the 1930s and 1940s unfolded in Lebanon, the French and British were vying for influence, investing in contacts with local notables and representatives. Members of the elite in post-war Lebanon and Syria who had studied in either France or Britain were preferred interlocutors.¹⁷⁶⁵ For the Bedirhani brothers, who retained an impeccable command of French from their time at the Galatasaray Lisesi in Istanbul but had both studied in Germany and established networks there, this was a

¹⁷⁶³ Bois, *Connaissance des Kurdes*, pp. 84-85. The original manuscript is preserved in his personal papers in Archive des Dominicains de Mossoul à la Bibliothèque de Saulchoir, Paris. Section V-641.21.

¹⁷⁶⁴ A portrait of Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi, to stay with this example, graced the cover of *Hawar* 13 (December 14, 1932).

¹⁷⁶⁵ See Fargeallah, *Visages d'une époque*, p. 105 on her relations to the British Spears family during this time period, who were doing her all kinds of personal and political favors.

considerable disadvantage, limiting their opportunities in the mandate period, especially in the context of the competition between French and British officials during the Second World War. Their previous contacts to Germany to a limited extent also facilitated contacts to German scholars like Karl Hadank. His encounter with Celadet Bedirhan in Damascus in 1932 is the subject of the following section.

The German Orientalist Karl Hadank in Damascus in 1932

In November 1932, the German Orientalist and specialist on Iranian languages Karl Hadank (1882–1945) embarked on a field trip to Syria and Iraq. He planned to collect material on different Kurdish dialects and was also interested in Kurdish literature and history. Hadank's key informant on Kurdish life in Damascus was Celadet Bedirhan, referred to by Hadank in his notes as "the Emir." Karl Hadank visited Celadet several times in the latter's home in the Kurdish quarter of Damascus and they also met on other occasions. Their first encounter took place shortly after Hadank's arrival in Damascus. It is therefore likely that the contact to Celadet had been established prior to Hadank's departure for Syria. Celadet Bedirhan acted as a mediator and translator for Hadank. He brought him into contact with other members of the Kurdish community in Damascus and provided information, explanations and interpretations for Hadank. Having studied in Germany and being familiar with the European discourses in Oriental studies, Celadet was in a position to anticipate what the German researcher was likely to be interested in. He took him to the Kurdish cemetery where his grandfather, the Emir Bedirhan, was also buried, making sure Hadank had a chance to witness a Kurdish burial ceremony. He organized for Hadank to meet with a traditional Kurdish singer (*dengbêj*) and several members of the Zaza community of Damascus. Celadet also arranged for Hadank to take lessons in Kurmancî Kurdish during his stay in

Damascus, not with him personally but with his assistant and secretary, the twenty-year-old Qedrican [Abdulkadir Can], a former teacher from the region around Mardin who had recently left Turkey to seek refuge in Syria. Karl Hadank's notes indicate that he was aware and quite wary of Celadet's selectivity in his efforts to present a particular version of Kurdish tradition, history and linguistic heritage to him and that although posing as a disinterested researcher and colleague, Celadet Bedirhan was also a politician, pursuing concrete political interests for himself and the Kurdish community which he aspired to represent.¹⁷⁶⁶ Hadank's documentation of the program Celadet Bedirhan put together for him in Damascus contains valuable information about the latter's ideas concerning Kurdish identity and about his own efforts in promoting and shaping it.

Karl Hadank was not the only scholar Celadet Bedirhan was in contact with from Damascus. The list of subscriptions to his journal *Hawar*,¹⁷⁶⁷ for instance, shows that Celadet was in communication with several Orientalists in France, as well as with French scholars working within Syria, notably the above-mentioned Thomas Bois and Roger Lescot. Celadet was a seasoned representative and informant for European scholars. His views and messages influenced, at least to some extent, the ideas all these scholars brought back to Europe about the Kurdish community in Syria and beyond. In particular if they were, like Karl Hadank, staying for a comparatively short amount of time and were beginners in their studies of Kurdish language and therefore dependent on mediators like Celadet Bedirhan, who could translate and facilitate access to the local culture for them. Karl Hadank was aware that Celadet pursued personal interests in helping him to learn more about the

¹⁷⁶⁶ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160.

¹⁷⁶⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, small notebook listing the subscribers of *Hawar*, no date.

Kurdish community in Damascus.¹⁷⁶⁸ Hadank's notes are a source which can be consulted to address two questions: On the practical level, what did Celadet Bedirhan's life in exile in Damascus in 1932 look like, and how did he reflect on the history of his family and his own trajectory? And second, what was his agenda? How did he understand and promote Kurdish identity, what other elements in defining his own and his family's role within the Kurdish community did he refer to, and what elements or aspects were omitted?

In 1930, Celadet Bedirhan had moved to Damascus, where he bought a small house in the Kurdish neighborhood of as-Salihiye, situated on the hillside of Mount Qasiyun. Downstairs were two rooms, a reception area and a dining room and upstairs housed his study, from which the nearby Kurdish cemetery could be seen.¹⁷⁶⁹ To Hadank, Celadet seemed neither particularly wealthy nor in great economic distress. Hadank noted that he was able to pay for the printing of some material on the discrimination of the Kurdish community in Turkey out of his own pocket. He also employed, in addition to his personal secretary Qedrican, a servant by the name of Muhammad. Celadet was well connected in Damascus and excellently informed about issues concerning the local Kurdish community and the Kurdish refugees in northern Syria. Celadet himself was, at the time of Karl Hadank's visit in 1932, not allowed to travel to the Jazira region, where the majority of the Kurdish community lived close to the Turkish border. The French authorities had restricted his movements and confined him to Damascus. Previously, Celadet had found himself under even tighter surveillance, being obligated to report to the local police station in his

¹⁷⁶⁸ Hadank's dilemma bears some similarity to what social anthropologists to this day experience in seeking out local informants and have widely reflected upon, for a detailed contribution, see Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977).

¹⁷⁶⁹ Papers of Karl Hadank in Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130.

neighborhood every morning. In spite of these restrictions, Celadet was well informed about the situation of the Kurdish community in the borderlands and in Turkey as well. Not at last, recent refugees arriving from Eastern Anatolia like his assistant Qedrîcan likely provided him with up-to-date information. In 1932, Celadet was almost forty years old, unmarried and Hadank understood him to be the oldest son of Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan. This was not true, as his brother Süreyya was still alive, who was considerably older than him. Celadet told Hadank that he had fought in the First World War for the Ottoman army, but his loyalties to the Ottoman state had come to an end in 1919, when he claimed to have organized a Kurdish uprising in Zakho. I have not found any other reference to this alleged uprising, except for the fact that the narrative Celadet presented to Hadank is very similar to what he told another German Orientalist, Karl Süßheim, in 1923 about his presumed role in a large-scale Kurdish uprising in the aftermath of the First World War.

While Karl Hadank characterized Celadet as an extraordinary language buff, fluent in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian as well as in Greek and French, his German was only described as tolerable (“leidlich” in the German original).¹⁷⁷⁰ When Hadank visited Damascus, Celadet was no longer making much use of his previous connections to Germany. Celadet presented himself to Hadank with a reference to his famous grandfather Emir Bedirhan, whom Hadank could place, as he was familiar with Helmuth von Moltke’s recollections of his meeting with the emir in the mid-19th century.¹⁷⁷¹ Celadet also claimed to be related to a ruling family of Yezidi Kurds on his mother’s side. This was a claim made in the context of the Bedirhani brothers’ efforts in the 1930s to win over support from Kurdish speaking Yezidi groups in Syria for their project of Kurdish autonomy and their attempts to counterbalance the

¹⁷⁷⁰ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160.

¹⁷⁷¹ Helmuth von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835 bis 1839* (Berlin: Mittler, 1893), in particular pp. 35-39.

western perception that Kurdish rulers had always systematically discriminated against and persecuted local religious minorities. To achieve these aims, Celadet over-emphasized his personal connection to the Yezidi. Celadet Bedirhan's mother was a Muslim woman by the name of Seniha, the second wife of his father Emin Ali Bedirhan. She was not of Kurdish background herself but had been brought up as a member of the household of Emir Bedirhan. This does of course not exclude the possibility of her being of Yezidi origins and having converted to Islam later in her life. Nowhere, however, did I find this mentioned except here, in the very context of the 1930s, when the Bedirhani brothers were actively trying to establish links into the community of Yezidi refugees in Syria and Lebanon.

Another element of his identity which Celadet Bedirhan stressed in his interactions with Karl Hadank was the religious background of his family. He claimed that the religious tradition of the entire Kurdish community was rooted in Nakşbandi sufism. Celadet then went on to establish a strong link between the Nakşbandi tradition and his own family, proudly telling Hadank that his grandfather was buried right next to the founder of the Nakşbandi order in Damascus.¹⁷⁷² While the claim of a strong connection of the Bedirhani family to Nakşbandi sufism has a long tradition, being already cited by family members in the late 19th century, Celadet took this narrative one step further, subsuming religious identity as a marker of Kurdish national identity: In his version, the Bedirhani family embodied identity markers of the entire Kurdish community in their most pristine form, thereby legitimizing the Bedirhanis as natural representatives and authorities within the Kurdish community in Syria, Turkey and beyond. By putting forward this particular narrative starring only his own family members, Celadet effectively silenced all kinds of alternative voices and actors from

¹⁷⁷² Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130.

the larger Kurdish community, a community which is far less homogeneous in terms of religion, language or origin than he chose to represent it.¹⁷⁷³

To the trained linguist Karl Hadank, Celadet's bias was most obvious in terms of the link between language and Kurdish identity: While Hadank was interested in Zaza Kurdish and asked for Celadet's help to find Zaza speakers and collect Zaza songs and stories, he sensed that Celadet was deliberately frustrating his efforts to engage with Zaza speakers. He did introduce him to a number of Zaza Kurds in Damascus, but none of them was actively speaking the language anymore. The informants had in fact to be prompted by Celadet, who was not a Zaza speaker himself, to 'remember' and recite some basic sentences in Zaza. Celadet Bedirhan then claimed that the Zaza Kurds did not have any songs or epics of their own, transmitted in Zaza, but used Kurmancî Kurdish in their tales and traditions. This struck Hadank as highly improbable, and he wondered whether Celadet was reluctant to share information about Zaza Kurdish because he was planning to publish his own research on the subject, or if he had political motives to represent the Zaza Kurds as an insignificant subgroup which could easily be subsumed under the category of Kurmancî Kurds, making the Zaza part of the larger community that Celadet Bedirhan pertained to represent and lead, thus increasing his constituency.¹⁷⁷⁴

Karl Hadank was also exposed to some of the political messages Celadet and other members of the Kurdish organization Hoybûn were eager to distribute at the time. Celadet Bedirhan and Karl Hadank had a long conversation about the suffering of the Kurdish population in Turkey.

¹⁷⁷³ See also chapter 5 on this issue. The narrative of the Nakşbandiya order as the Kurdish "national order" or "ulusal tarikati" was persistent: It reappeared, for instance, in Mehmed Uzun's and Rewşen Bedirhan's annotations to the memoirs of Mehmed Salih Bey, see *Defter-i Â'malım*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160.

Celadet described linguistic and other kinds of discriminations and estimated that since the foundation of the Kemalist Republic, approximately ten million Kurds had been killed in Turkey. Hadank thought that these numbers were completely out of proportion.¹⁷⁷⁵ The circle around Celadet and Hoybûn tried to impact Hadank and raise awareness in order to get international attention for a what they referred to as a genocide of the Kurdish community in Turkey, copying and appropriating a discourse that the Armenian community had successfully made use of over the previous decades. This led to the publication of a brochure on recent events in Turkey and the situation of the Kurdish community, published in French and thus reaching out to an international audience, in which similar numbers of victims and statistics were cited.¹⁷⁷⁶ The brochure is another indicator that Hadank was not Celadet's only interlocutor and that the presentation he witnessed was well-rehearsed and part of a larger propaganda effort.

Another element of Celadet's understanding of himself shines through in Karl Hadank's descriptions: Celadet clearly thought of himself as a scholar and expert on Kurdish issues, notably on history and linguistics. He made an effort to be part of an international community of scholars. He used his direct access to the local Kurdish community in Syria to collect material, but was equally familiar with European scholarship on Kurdish studies. In his conversations with Hadank, Celadet mentioned the work of Martin Hartmann on Cizre, the homeland of his family, as particularly informative for him.¹⁷⁷⁷ On the other hand, Celadet severely criticized some European Orientalists' research on Kurdish topics, singling out Ely B. Soane's work as particularly ill-informed. His notes

¹⁷⁷⁵ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 130.

¹⁷⁷⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report with leaflets of Hoybûn, dated June 16, 1932.

¹⁷⁷⁷ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160. The work in question is Martin Hartmann, *Bohtan, eine topographisch-historische Studie* (Berlin: Pieser, 1897).

indicate that Hadank felt slighted by Celadet's broad critique. He did not share Celadet's criticism and – in his and his colleagues defense – drew attention to the fact that without the efforts of European scholars to collect and preserve Kurdish texts, most of the written heritage of the Kurdish community would be lost today. He would have expected to encounter a more grateful attitude from Celadet.¹⁷⁷⁸

Celadet Bedirhan talked to Karl Hadank not only about himself, he also shared his vision of what constituted the Kurdish community in Syria and beyond. Several elements are noteworthy in this regard: Celadet stressed repeatedly that the Kurdish community in Syria was sizeable and dated back to a period even prior to the reign of Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi in the 12th century. Only a small minority of its members were, according to Celadet Bedirhan, recent refugees from Turkey. This depiction is questionable on the factual level – but it contains valuable information about Celadet's political agenda:¹⁷⁷⁹ It was obviously important to him to present the Kurdish community as an integral and long-standing element in Syrian history. This claim needs to be interpreted in the context of the Bedirhani brothers' dealings with the French mandate authorities: The Bedirhanis hoped to obtain special minority rights for the Kurdish community in the mandate territories, their demands being inspired by rights and privileges which the French had accorded to the Druze and Alawite communities. The French authorities, however, remained reluctant and did not grant privileges or establish a special administration in the Kurdish regions throughout the mandate period. Celadet shared his ideas about a broad and inclusive Kurdish cultural identity with Hadank. He mentioned a number of authors who, according to him, were of Kurdish origin even though they

¹⁷⁷⁸ Archiv der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, NL Mann / Hadank, Nr. 160.

¹⁷⁷⁹ These claims can be further contextualized in an ongoing competition for resources, mostly land and water, between Arab and Bedouin inhabitants of the Jazira region and incoming Kurdish refugees. See Martin Strohmeier & Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, *Die Kurden*, 3rd ed. (München: Beck, 2010), pp. 165-166.

did not write in Kurdish, thus appropriating them for Kurdish history. In doing so, he projected back a narrow and only recently established category of “Kurdish” identity onto more ambivalent historical situations and complex biographies. Following Celadet’s argument, being Kurdish was not a matter of choice but of birth and blood. From this perspective, he regarded Ziya Gökalp and İsmet İnönü, both of them part and parcel of the Kemalist regime, as Kurds and traitors who had changed sides.

Not unlike Hadank’s cooperation with Celadet Bedirhan in 1932, Kurdish academics and their networks continue to play a role in providing access to the field for western researchers even today.¹⁷⁸⁰ These encounters have facilitated, but also framed and influenced the study of Kurdish history and language. On the other hand, local experts on Kurdishness like Celadet Bedirhan, confronted with the expectations and frameworks of explanation of their Orientalist interlocutors, also needed to adapt and translate what they had to say about Kurdish identity, history and culture to make themselves heard. Celadet and Kamuran were particularly skillful in doing so, as the following section will continue to elaborate.

6.4. French Discourses About Minorities and their Impact on Kurdish Identity Politics

It becomes clear from looking at the particular context of the French mandate period that institutional conditions and prevalent colonial discourses in the mandate territories as well as in neighboring Turkey shaped the discussion about Kurdish identity and nationalism which were conducted by the Bedirhani brothers and other Kurdish activists in

¹⁷⁸⁰ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel & Marie Le Ray, “Knowledge, Ideology and Power. Deconstructing Kurdish Studies.” In: *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 5 (2006), <http://www.ejts.org/document777.html>, last accessed March 29, 2016.

Syria and Lebanon over the 1930s and 1940s. The discourse about Kurdish identity and minority status adopted by the Bedirhani brothers in Syria under French mandate rule was flexible, embedded in the general discussion about minorities in the mandate period. Culture was a central framework to express and negotiate political claims: The French mandate authorities made use of cultural and particularly language politics to maintain and increase their influence among the local populations and to justify their imperial project in Syria and Lebanon, by promoting French language and instruction in French history, literature, and civilization.¹⁷⁸¹ The encounter between French mandate authorities and local actors, however, cannot be regarded as a one-way street of influence. To the contrary, French claims and cultural policies, divergent and far from monolithic in themselves, were constantly challenged, altered and negotiated by a variety of local actors.¹⁷⁸² The French mandate authorities depended on local brokers and middlemen for their cultural policies to be implemented at the level of the different local communities. This setup left ample room for agency and initiatives of local actors – a role the Bedirhani brothers were well-disposed to take up, as they were familiar with the French language as well as French cultural values as a result of their education and, on the other hand, were also closely connected within the local Kurdish community.

The French involvement with the local population and in particular the distribution of services like support for public works, infrastructure, charity etc., was facilitated along communitarian lines.¹⁷⁸³ A well-researched general consequence of this policy was a consolidation of religious interest groups in Syria and Lebanon and an

¹⁷⁸¹ On the crucial nexus between cultural and political interests in Syria and Lebanon in the period between 1936 to 1946, see Dueck, *The Claims of Culture*, pp. 3-8.

¹⁷⁸² Dueck, *The Claims of Culture*, pp. 9-12.

¹⁷⁸³ Eddé, *Beyrouth*, pp. 224-225.

institutionalization of their representatives and networks of distribution. The French focus on sectarian identity posed a particular challenge for the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon: Sunni Muslims by majority but internally divided along religious lines – there were Muslim but also Yezidi communities of Kurdish speakers – the Kurds were classified as part of the larger Muslim community of Syria and Lebanon. Since most of the members of the Kurdish community, however, were newcomers to the region, having migrated from Eastern Anatolia during the early years of the Turkish Republic, they found it difficult to access the local networks of Sunni patronage already in place. Kurdish interests were, in turn, not well-represented in the mandate territories – as the already-established Sunni interlocutors of the French felt no particular responsibility towards the Kurdish newcomers. Addressing the limbo the incoming Kurdish refugees were caught up in, the Bedirhani brothers tried to recommend themselves as leaders and spokes-persons of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon, attempting to make the Kurdish community a better fit for the French concept of minorities in Syria as they went along.

6.4.1. French Paternalistic Colonialism Meets Kurdish Agencies

In the 1920s, as the French were pushing for greater control over the northern borderlands of their mandate territories, Halil Bey Bedirhan had emerged as a broker between the French authorities and local Kurdish communities in the Jazira region. In Syria and Lebanon, the French continued a policy of “paternalistic colonialism” which had been designed for the French imperial rule in North Africa, adopting it, with some difficulty, to the conditions they encountered in the mandate territories. As it has been mentioned above, Halil Bey Bedirhan had not been in regular contact with the Kurds in northern Syria prior to his assignment. It was the French reaction to the local situation which

encouraged the development of lines of communication and laid the ground for collective political action between the different Kurdish communities in the mandate territories. For the 1930s, Benjamin White makes a similar observation with regards to Mustafa Ağa Şahin, a Kurdish deputy in the Syrian parliament whose presence in Damascus channeled the demands of the Kurdish community towards the capital and the Syrian state institutions: “The simple fact of being under the authority of the Syrian government and the French mandate [...] created a powerful potential link between Kurds in all areas of Syria.”¹⁷⁸⁴

So, the French demonstrably had a hand in creating a Kurdish community in their mandate territories in the first place. It can further be argued that they also had considerable influence in defining what the leadership of this Kurdish community looked like, to the advantage of the Bedirhani family. French administrators preferred Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan over other Kurdish leaders like Mevlanzade Rıfat Bey or the descendants of sheikh Sa‘id, who were taking a more oppositional stance towards the mandate regime.¹⁷⁸⁵ As they received favors and small privileges from the mandate administration, which they were in turn able to distribute among their followers, members of the comparatively francophile Bedirhani family were propped up as leaders of the Kurdish movement. In 1930s, Kamuran Bedirhan emerged as a key interlocutor for the French authorities in dealing with the local Kurdish community, which was growing as many Kurds decided to leave Turkish Anatolia in the wake of increasingly repressive Turkish nationalist politics. Kamuran made ample use of his advantageous bargaining position: A group of Arabic speakers from the region of Mardin in Eastern Anatolia arrived in Lebanon in the 1930s. They referred to themselves as “Mardalis” or “Malhamis” and did not speak any Kurdish. Yet, they were promptly labeled as Kurds upon entering

¹⁷⁸⁴ White, “The Kurds of Damascus,” p. 912.

¹⁷⁸⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated January 4, 1928.

Lebanon, on the insistence of Kamuran Bedirhan, who argued that they counted as Kurdish, since their homeland Mardin was part of Kurdistan. To this day, descendants of this group of immigrants from Mardin can be encountered in Beirut, where they identify themselves as Kurds vis-à-vis outsiders but retain a sense of a distinct identity within their own community.¹⁷⁸⁶

This incident illustrates how skillful Kamuran Bedirhan was in creating, modifying and defining a common Kurdish identity in the mandate territories. What benefits could he hope to obtain by insisting that the Mardali Arabic speakers from Mardin were in fact, against their own common sense, members of the Kurdish community? And why would the Mardalis go along with this charade? It is likely that Kamuran intended to broaden his basis of followers by taking the Mardalis under his wing as his clients, thus increasing his leverage as an intermediary for the French and in his negotiations with local community leaders. By classifying the Mardalis as Kurds, he would take responsibility for them and represent them whenever they wanted to get access to state services or charity. There is a second, quite clever line of reasoning to Kamuran's advocacy for the Mardalis: He might well have attempted to create a precedent with possible consequences for international law – he was, after all, trained as a lawyer and versed in legal matters. Once the French had recognized a group as “Kurdish” on the sole basis of them hailing originally from a particular territory the Kurdish community claimed as their national homeland, it could be derived that the entire population of this area, regardless of their command of Kurdish or their own ideas about their identity, was in fact part of the population of a Kurdish state that needed to be created. The Mardalis went along with Kamuran's

¹⁷⁸⁶ Farah Wajih Kawtharani, “The Interplay of Clientelism and Ethnic Identity in Pluralist States: The Case of the Kurdish Community in Lebanon.” MA thesis, AUB Beirut, Feb. 2003, p. 90. Kawtharani interviewed Mardali community leaders who made explicit reference of Kamuran Bedirhan's intervention to have their community registered as Kurds, mentioning him by name.

classifications, possibly seeing an opportunity to obtain resources for their community in a context where they otherwise lacked access to local patronage networks.

6.4.2. Language Politics

Language was a basic pillar of the French cultural politics in the mandate territories. With the central position of language politics in the general French discourse about culture, it comes as no surprise that Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan would concentrate their efforts to promote a distinct Kurdish identity and culture in the field of Kurdish language and linguistics. In late Ottoman times, Kurdish language was not discriminated against by the state and had not yet become an explicit marker of Kurdish identity and resistance. There was no crevasse between the state and the Kurds, to the contrary: In 1894, Yusuf Ziyaeddin Paşa published a Kurdish-Arabic dictionary in Istanbul. He dedicated his work with the title *Kitab al-Hadiya al-Hamidiya fi'l-luga al-Kurdiya* to Sultan Abdülhamid II.¹⁷⁸⁷

Even though they achieved a high level of scholarship and are, to this day, renowned and celebrated for their groundbreaking contributions to the study of the Kurdish language, neither of the Bedirhani brothers was a linguist by training. Both Celadet and Kamuran were lawyers by profession, self-taught in cultural studies and in close contact with European, mostly French but also German and Russian Orientalists. Not unlike the two Bedirhani brothers, who had not initially been destined for a career as Kurdish linguists, Kurdish language itself found its calling rather late: It did not emerge as a particular important element of Kurdish identity prior to the inter-war period. In a pamphlet on Kurdish autonomy dating from the early 1920s, the author recommended to

¹⁷⁸⁷ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 52.

adopt Persian as a *lingua franca* among the Kurds.¹⁷⁸⁸ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel argues that while Kurdish was already used by the Kurdish clubs and committees in the late Ottoman period in their publications, the language only emerged as an incontourable marker of Kurdish identity with the activities of Celadet Bedirhan in Syria in the 1930s, notably through his publication of the journal *Hawar*.¹⁷⁸⁹

In the context of the late Ottoman milieu of urban intellectuals, it did not matter that Kurdish was not a standardized language yet. What mattered was that Kurdish intellectuals, by publishing their own journals, were able to carve out a space for themselves on the late Ottoman intellectual scene, subscribing to a shared discourse of civilization and modernity.¹⁷⁹⁰ Initially, it was form, i.e. their ability to create and use the medium of the journal, that mattered, not language. But this was to change: In the early 20th century, a national language was increasingly deemed necessary for any community's nationalist claims to be accepted. Still, these discussions remained embedded in the efforts of Kurdish intellectuals to fulfill different universal criteria to be recognized as part of or on the way towards civilization: An aspiring nation needed a national language, a national territory, a national literature. These early discussions about Kurdish language were not yet linked to actual hands-on demands for political independence or separatism.¹⁷⁹¹ Discussions about a specific Kurdish alphabet emerged in Istanbul as early as 1909, and a suggestion to create a Kurdish alphabet using Latin script was made by Abdullah Cevdet. His suggestion was later – unsuccessfully – taken up by Mehmed Emin and Halil Hayali. Similar efforts to create a Kurdish alphabet not based on

¹⁷⁸⁸ Yamulchi Zade Suleimanali Moustapha Pacha, *Hakikat-ı Kurdistan*, p. 14: “Kurdlar için milli lisân-ı ‘umûmi,” the pamphlet is preserved as annex to MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, dating from July 18, 1921.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Scalbert-Yücel, „L’élaboration de la langue kurde,” pp. 255-274.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Scalbet-Yücel, „L’élaboration de la langue kurde,” p. 259.

¹⁷⁹¹ Scalbert-Yücel, „L’élaboration de la langue kurde,” p. 261.

the Arabic script were also made in Soviet Armenia after the First World War.¹⁷⁹² In the same circles, Kurdish writers and intellectuals were also aware of the need for a greater standardization of the different Kurdish dialects, and the dialects of either Bohtan or Hakkari were suggested as a basis to create a standard Kurdish.¹⁷⁹³ Celadet Bedirhan could draw on these earlier debates in his efforts to both create and propagate a Kurdish alphabet in Latin script and cast the dialect of his homeland Bohtan as the standard dialect for Kurdish. In doing so, he secured a quasi-monopoly for himself and other members of his family to pose as experts for Kurdishness.¹⁷⁹⁴ He was successful in doing so, to the extent that none of the earlier efforts to standardize Kurdish are talked about much today, while he is remembered as the father of the modern Kurdish language.

Language politics emerged as a crucial battlefield in the context of increasing repressions faced by the Kurdish population in Turkey with regards to the use of their language: From 1924 onwards, the use of Kurdish was prohibited in Turkey. Oppressive Turkish linguistic politics had a decisive impact on turning the Kurdish language into a central marker of identity and a site of resistance. By using Kurdish instead of Turkish or Arabic loanwords, Kurds saw a means to symbolically resist and challenge the occupation. Thereby, language took the central stage in a discussion about Kurdish distinction and difference from the Turkish national community, at a time when this difference was denied by the Turkish state. The need to stress difference is also a reason why religion did not suggest itself as a strong marker of Kurdish identity after the late 1920s. Being Muslim did not distinguish, but unite most

¹⁷⁹² Scalbert-Yücel, „L'élaboration de la langue kurde,” pp. 262-268 for details.

¹⁷⁹³ Scalbert-Yücel, „L'élaboration de la langue kurde,” pp. 261-262.

¹⁷⁹⁴ This is an argument also made by Tejel, *Le mouvement kurde de Turquie*, p. 268, where he cites from the personal notes of Pierre Rondot as follows: “[The Bedirhani brothers] ont une tendance à voir le Kurdistan comme une dépendance de l’émirat du Botan, et à confondre les questions kurdes avec les questions de restauration dynastique.”

Kurds and Turks. It was in this context that an interest in the pre-Islamic, allegedly purely and exclusively Kurdish Zoroastrian religion emerged.¹⁷⁹⁵ The Kurdish discourse about identity was also strongly marked by the situation in the French mandate territories. Claiming a separate ethnic and national identity was comprehensible to French authorities and other actors if reference could be made to a distinct national language, national literature and national history. Therefore, it was on language and literature that the Bedirhani brothers came to focus their efforts over the 1930s and 1940s. During the mandate period, this same nexus between national identity and language played a crucial role for other communities in Syria and Lebanon as well, notably for the emerging Arab nationalist movement. Sati' al-Husri (1880–1968), a contemporary of the Bedirhani brothers, in particular was very vocal in his demands for primary education in Arabic at the time. It has been suggested that the creation of the *Académie Arabe* in Damascus on the initiative of Muhammad Kurd Ali also served as an inspiration and model for the identity politics and linguistic work of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan.¹⁷⁹⁶

6.4.3. National History and Claims to Territory

A problem for the Bedirhani brothers was that the situation of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon did not fit neatly into the categories the French officials had adopted in dealing with local minorities. French minority politics in the mandate territories were largely tailored to non-Sunni religious groups, notably the Druze and Alawite communities. Securing the support and good-will of these minority communities with special privileges, the French authorities

¹⁷⁹⁵ Scalbert-Yücel, „L'élaboration de la langue kurde,” p. 272. This trend can also be traced in *Hawar*, see D.A. [Celadet Ali] Bedir-Khan, “Notice sur la littérature, moeurs et coutumes Kurdes: La langue kurde.” In: *Hawar* 2, June 1, 1932, pp. 8-10.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Scalbert-Yücel, „L'élaboration de la langue kurde,” p. 270.

were hoping to keep the Sunni majority of the region in check through a policy of divide and rule. Divisions as perceived by the French mandate authorities ran almost exclusively along religious lines. An ethnically defined and religiously heterogeneous Kurdish community did not stand out for a potential privileged partnership with the French in this set-up. It was difficult for the Bedirhani brothers as spokespersons of a largely Sunni community of Kurds to argue difference on ethnic grounds and claim special status and privileges. Another, closely related problem was the idea of national territory: In the context of French regional politics and particularly the rapprochement with the Turkish Republic, it was not politically advisable for the leaders of the Kurdish community in Syria and Lebanon to voice demands for a unified Kurdish state extending beyond the borders of the mandate territories if they were hoping for French support. This was a fine line that the Bedirhani brothers had to tread, as their supporters among the Kurdish population did expect them to bring about the formation of a Kurdish nation state, the territory of which would have cut across Syria, Iraq, Turkey and possibly Iran. These designs, however, could not be openly brought up in the negotiations with the French authorities. Nevertheless, to credibly claim national identity, a link to a somehow defined national territory was indispensable.

Faced with this conundrum, Celadet Bedirhan came up with a creative solution: He claimed the northern Jazira region, where Kurdish and Christian refugees from Turkey had come to settle after 1923, as the homeland for the Kurds in Syria and went on to demand political privileges like Kurdish-speaking officials and the use of Kurdish as the language of instruction in local schools. In locating Kurdish claims for autonomy within the territory of the French Jazira, Celadet Bedirhan made the case for a particularly close relationship with and ensuing responsibility of the French authorities. He argued that the Jazira was a creation of the French mandate authorities, who had begun to settle

refugees and facilitate the cultivation of land there.¹⁷⁹⁷ The Kurdish claim to the Jazira region, however, was not uncontested. To the contrary, Arab newspaper reports referred to the region as indivisible part of the Arab lands.¹⁷⁹⁸

The environment of Syria and Lebanon under French mandate rule had implications on the formation and institutionalization of the Kurdish movement: Hoybûn was founded as an organization to represent the interests of the Kurdish population in the mandate territories. In addition, a charity association calling itself Société de Bienfaisance pour l'aide des Kurdes pauvres de la Djezireh was active in the mid-1930s. With regard to its personnel, there was overlap with Hoybûn: Among the members of the Société de Bienfaisance were key supporters of Hoybûn like the Kurdish tribal chief Haco Ağa. The Société de Bienfaisance organized a lottery to raise money, allegedly to build a hospital in the Jazira, in 1936.¹⁷⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that an appeal for support of the aforementioned Société de Bienfaisance was issued in French. It was thus not primarily addressed to the local Kurdish community in northern Syria, where few people were literate, let alone able to read in foreign languages, but to an international audience.¹⁸⁰⁰ The leaders of the Kurdish movement organized in a way they could hope French authorities would understand and appreciate as modern, civilized and worthy of support.

¹⁷⁹⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated July 15, 1932.

¹⁷⁹⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, report dated July 15, 1932, with a references to articles in the Arab newspaper *al-Ayyām* on the issue.

¹⁷⁹⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, reports dated March 6, 1935 and July 3, 1936. The French noted that while badges were sold, no drawing ever came about, suggesting that Haco Ağa and his entourage had pocketed the money from the lottery sales for themselves.

¹⁸⁰⁰ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 572, undated report.

Hoybûn also issued a number of publications in French,¹⁸⁰¹ which addressed the “monde civilisé,” the civilized world. To contemporary observers, the Kurdish demands for autonomy and the introduction of a special administrative regime for the Jazira region under the French mandate regime would not have appeared too unrealistic: Throughout the 1920s, the divisions and administrative units created by the French in Syria and Lebanon had been subject to changes. Regions settled by Druze and Alawite communities were placed under special administration, as was the region around Alexandretta and the desert regions to the east of the mandate territories which were inhabited by Bedouins.¹⁸⁰² In the early years of the mandate period, French plans for the former Ottoman Syrian lands were not fixed, and different, sometimes contradictory proposals were circulating.¹⁸⁰³

Under these circumstances, the Bedirhani brothers felt they had a stake in trying to convince the French and the wider international community to support the Kurdish wish for greater autonomy. A pamphlet written by Dr. Bletch Chirguh – a pseudonym of Süreyya Bedirhan – titled *La question Kurde, ses origines et ses causes* walked its reader through Kurdish cultural history and literature, making a strong claim for Kurdish national identity and independence by ticking, so to speak, all the boxes relevant in the contemporary French and general western discourse about national identity and minority rights: The texts sets out by citing references from various European Orientalists who commented on the history and civilization of the Kurds: Basile Nikitine, Ely B. Soane and Martin Hartmann were mentioned, among others. These efforts to legitimate a Kurdish place in history by turning to western scholarship

¹⁸⁰¹ Dr. Bletch Chirguh, *La question Kurde, ses origines et ses causes* (Cairo: Imprimerie Paul Barbey, 1930).

¹⁸⁰² White, “The Kurds of Damascus,” pp. 901-902.

¹⁸⁰³ For a discussion of different approaches of local officers in the French *Service de Renseignements* and in the central mandate administration, see Neep, *Occupying Syria*, p. 34. Neep describes the colonial state as “a heterogeneous assemblage of diverse, incomplete and overlapping regimes of practices.” (ibid.)

finds its parallel in Turkey, where nationalist ideology also drew inspiration from western scholarship on Turkish culture, history and linguistics.¹⁸⁰⁴ Dr. Chirguh's pamphlet next mapped out the Kurdish national territory and cited population statistics. According to his account, the origins of the Kurds in the Middle East and thereby their claims to the territory they inhabited today, went far back in history. The following paragraph, not surprisingly, dealt with the Kurdish language, likewise locating its origins far back in time. The text then moved on to an outline of Kurdish national history, beginning in early antiquity and making an effort to show continuity between the recent Kurdish uprisings of the 1920s and early 1930s and a Kurdish legacy of resistance throughout Ottoman times. The Kurdish trajectory, the author argued, had time and again been marked by rebellion and struggle against attempts of imperial domination. The earliest historical precedent cited in the text for this long tradition of Kurdish uprisings was a rebellion organized in Süleymaniye by Abdurrahman Baban. Naturally, the Bedirhani family also figured prominently in this historical narrative as the account turned to the Kurdish opposition to Ottoman rule in the 19th century. The account focused on events in which members of the Bedirhani family were involved and, on the other hand, remained silent on any other activities or organizations acting independently from or even in opposition to them.

Dr. Chirguh's pamphlet made a point of emphasizing the support of the non-Kurdish, Christian populations for the Kurdish uprisings in the 19th century. Present concerns of the Kurdish movement at the time of the publication of the text need to be considered as a background to these assertions: In the 1930s, the Kurdish movement was indeed cooperating with, and in many ways (financially and in terms of network politics) depending on the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun movement and, to a lesser

¹⁸⁰⁴ Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 312-321.

extent, also cooperating with Yezidi communities in the mandate territories. What is more, the territory claimed by the Kurdish independence movement was inhabited by non-Kurdish minorities and any political solution would have to include some sort of cohabitation. By citing alleged historical precedent, the pamphlet promoted the possibility of such a peaceful cohabitation to western readers. This audience, it can be assumed, was very sensitive towards the issue of violence against Christians in Anatolia, and the author clearly attempts to cater to this sentiment.

The pamphlet does therefore not necessarily allow any conclusions about the political standing or personal opinion of its author in this matter. In fact, there is some evidence that Süreyya Bedirhan used to see the matter of Kurdish-Armenian relations rather differently in the immediate aftermath of the First World War: In January of 1919, he had addressed the British in a petition and fiercely opposed the foundation of an Armenian state in Anatolia.¹⁸⁰⁵ He explicitly mentioned the massacres of the Christian population in the 1830s and 1840s, allegedly instigated by Emir Bedirhan which were followed closely by western media at the time. The author must have thought that some readers would still associate members of the Bedirhani family with these massacres and therefore felt the need to confront and do his best to invalidate these allegations. He claimed that no extraordinary amount of violence was in fact applied by Emir Bedirhan and his followers in collecting, as was their certified right, taxes from the rural Christian population. The depiction of the uprising and ensuing defeat of Emir Bedirhan in 1847 is also noteworthy: The pamphlet made clear that, first of all, the rebellion was entirely legitimated, as the Ottoman state's centralization politics were violating a long-standing political agreement the Kurdish emirs had always honored: They would make sure taxes

¹⁸⁰⁵ FO 608/95, reports dating from December 21, 1918 and January 22, 1919.

were paid to the center – in exchange, they enjoyed autonomy in all other local matters. Second, the text argued, the rebellion could never have been defeated if Emir Bedirhan had not been stabbed in the back by a traitor from his own camp. It could only be concluded from this version of the narrative that the Bedirhani family were the rightful leaders of the Kurdish community, whose ancestors had had every right to turn against Ottoman domination.

From the mid-1930s onwards, the Bedirhani brothers and other Kurdish activists in the mandate territories were writing and speaking out against overbearing efforts to silence Kurdish voices and to flat-out deny the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity in the neighboring Turkish Republic. Many of their publications were thus attempts to argue back, showcasing the richness and historical depth of Kurdish traditions and cultural heritage. The pamphlet under discussion here likewise implicitly entered into a dialog with contemporary Kemalist renderings of the Kurdish uprisings going on in Turkey. Impartial reporting on these events was nearly impossible to obtain, as foreign journalists were kept away from the areas where the uprisings took place. The Turkish government depicted the Kurdish insurgents as backward reactionaries, motivated by blunt religious opposition to westernization and, in particular, secularization. Dr. Bletch Chirguh argued in his pamphlet that, to the contrary, religious opposition was only a pretext brought forward by the Kemalists to delegitimize the national struggle of the Kurds. It has to be pointed out that the author's version was partial and biased in this respect as well, since the Kurdish uprisings, as more recent research has shown, were indeed in no small part motivated by opposition to secular reform and not at least facilitated through religious networks.¹⁸⁰⁶

¹⁸⁰⁶ Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, pp. 92-99.

Over the following pages, the author critically commented on what he understood to be a British betrayal of the Kurdish movement after 1918, clearly catering to a French audience which, in the early 1930s, would have been suspicious of British imperial interests and competition in the Middle East. In the final part of the pamphlet, the author translated the suffering of the Kurdish population in contemporary Turkey into an internationally comprehensible language of breach of minority rights, discrimination and violence. In the framework of a newly emerging discourse about universal human rights, the author demanded to take measures against the Turkish crimes committed against the Kurdish minority. This constituted a new angle in the discourse about the justification of demands for Kurdish autonomy that had been going on since 1918. This shift can be read in the context of other, chiefly Christian minorities making similar arguments and drawing attention to their respective causes. The unwritten rules of this particular discourse about victimhood and human rights violations required that concrete evidence in the form of statistics, numbers of victims and graphic images of the atrocities committed was provided – these were added accordingly in an appendix at the end of the pamphlet.

In conclusion, Dr. Bletch Chirguh's pamphlet served several purposes: First, to attract international attention to the desperate situation of the Kurdish population in Kemalist Turkey. Second, to bear witness to the violence that occurred, by collecting evidence in the form of photographs and information on the number of victims in different villages. Third, to convince the French authorities to take responsibility for the predicament of the Kurdish refugees in the mandate territories. Political pamphlets were published by the Bedirhani brothers as representatives of Hoybûn not only in French, but in several other languages as well, with different audiences in mind. The authors were keenly aware that they were addressing different discourses and showed great skill in promoting their claims for Kurdish independence to different audiences,

neatly tailored to their expectations, respectively: A version of the above-mentioned pamphlet in Persian language, for instance, stressed the need for a close cooperation between Kurds, Armenians and Iranians to increase the strength of the Aryan race. The Arabic version of the same pamphlet, on the other hand, argued that just like the Arab nationalists had every right to claim independence for the Arab nation, there was a Kurdish nation with its distinct history and culture which sought to achieve national independence along the same lines.¹⁸⁰⁷ The use of films and images as a way to effectively communicate political messages and rally support for political causes also inspired the Bedirhani brothers: In April 1930, Celadet Bedirhan toured northern Syria with modern camera equipment, taking pictures to illustrate the political pamphlets his brother Süreyya was working on.¹⁸⁰⁸

6.4.4. An Ethnographic Gaze

The French discourse on minorities – in Syria and Lebanon and beyond – was marked by ethnographic interest. This particular perspective also had an impact on how Kurdish history and markers of Kurdish identity were presented and standardized. The ethnographic interest was in tune with a more general French-imperialist discourse about civilizing the populations under the mandate rule. While the colonial state was on a mission to promote modernity and progress, the societies it encountered were depicted as deeply traditional and timeless. In 1932, the Institut Française in Damascus allocated 4.000 Francs to sponsor research in Kurdish studies. Half of the money was spent on rounding up subscriptions for Celadet Bedirhan's journal *Hawar*, the other half was

¹⁸⁰⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated August 12, 1930, containing an intercepted letter from Süreyya Bedirhan to Kamuran Bedirhan where the outlines of different versions of the pamphlet were discussed.

¹⁸⁰⁸ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban carton 1055, report dated April 12, 1930.

made available to Pierre Rondot, who was working on a text book for the study of Kurdish language.¹⁸⁰⁹

Kamuran Bedirhan quite skillfully played along, perpetuating the prevalent image of the Kurds as a backward, yet valiant and warrior-like minority. As the ethnographic perspective on the Kurds called for the standardization of a great variety of heterogeneous markers of identity, among them traditional clothing, musical instruments, cultural techniques and crafts, etc., Kamuran Bedirhan promoted features which were local to his native region of Bohtan as representative of Kurdish culture on the whole. Thereby, he underlined the claim to leadership of the rulers of Bohtan – that is, of his own family – over the entire Kurdish community, equating “Kurdish” in general with what happened to be prevalent in his native region. The process of an ethnographic standardization – and to no small extent invention – of features of Kurdish identity, cultural expressions and traditions is aptly illustrated in a small exhibition to showcase “the Kurds” which was put together for the *Musée de l’Homme* in Paris.¹⁸¹⁰ The collection of ethnographic material on the different populations of the French mandate territories was initiated by Robert Montagne, who in 1935 instructed Pierre Rondot to acquire pertinent pieces for a collection on the Kurds of northern Syria. Rondot collected most of the items he subsequently brought to Paris in ‘Ain Diwar, other items came from Turkey. Mirroring the discourse of the time, Rondot complained that much of the material he

¹⁸⁰⁹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated June 16, 1933.

¹⁸¹⁰ Archives du Musée du Quai Branly Paris, dons Pierre Rondot, D 000041/4541, containing a letter by Pierre Rondot to Paule LeScour, dated July 15, 1953, and D 000041/4545, letters exchanged between Pierre Rondot and Paule LeScour in 1946, D 000041/4524, letter by Georges Henri Rivière to Pierre Rondot, dated October 30, 1935, and D 000041/4525, letter by Pierre Rondot, dated October 26, 1935. For a detailed inventory and descriptions of the exhibited items, see Pierre Rondot, “Vêtue Masculine et Artisanat du Vêtement chez les Kurdes de la Haute Djézireh Syrienne (à la Veille de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale),” undated printed brochure among the personal papers of Pierre Rondot at the IKP Paris.

had found was flawed and no longer purely Kurdish, showing the influence of Arab and Bedouin neighbors.

Among the pieces featured in the museum display was a photograph of Osman Paşa Bedirhan in full Kurdish attire.¹⁸¹¹ The image had been provided by Kamuran Bedirhan. In the display, this picture was included to depict original traditional Kurdish clothing – ironically, however, Osman Paşa Bedirhan would not have worn these clothes on a daily basis. He had dressed up for a studio picture which had been taken in Istanbul. Kamuran Bedirhan was, on the one hand, providing information, expertise and material evidence which satisfied the French ethnographic gaze and helped legitimize a corresponding policy of divide and rule among different communities in the mandate territories. What Kamuran Bedirhan was able to say about Kurdish identity was, in other words, inextricably linked to (and limited by) a French discourse on minorities and ethnic identity. On the other hand, however, Kamuran Bedirhan was not a passive observer or victim of this discourse and its limitations. To the contrary, he manipulated the rules of the ethnographic gaze for his own ends, seeing to it that features originating in his family's homeland around Cizre, but not necessarily universally accepted as representative of Kurdish culture in general, became standardized as universally, purely and most authentically Kurdish, putting him and his family's tradition at the center of Kurdish cultural heritage and history. The centrality of the cultural heritage of the Bohtan region for Kurdish identity was a result of the Bedirhani brothers' lobbying and interventions – this is further illustrated by observations Major Noel made while traveling through Eastern Anatolia in 1919: He noted that unlike the Kurds he had previously met in Süleymaniye and Rawanduz, the Kurdish communities of the region around Cizre had

¹⁸¹¹ The picture of Osman Paşa Bedirhan was reproduced in Pierre Rondot, "Vêtue Masculine et Artisanat du Vêtement chez les Kurdes de la Haute Djézireh Syrienne (à la Veille de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale.)"

struck him as quite thoroughly Arabized, having adopted the dress and customs of their Arabic-speaking neighbors and also relying on the use of Arabic in their written correspondence.¹⁸¹² His observations underline the extent to which the study of folklore and local history undertaken by the Bedirhani brothers in the 1930s amounted to an invention and successful promotion of rather than a mere conservation of a cultural heritage. Running parallel to my argument about the framing of Kurdish national history and suffering in the preceding paragraph, the example of the Paris exhibition on Kurdish cultural heritage illustrates once more that the context and particular discourse of the French mandate period had a decisive impact on possible meanings of Kurdishness. In addition, it has become clear that the Bedirhani brothers engaged with these prevalent discourses to forward their own personal and political aims.

In the light of a loud and often overwhelming discourse of memory prevalent in Kurdish nationalist history that presupposes Kurdish nationalist aspirations for all Kurdish actors and is silent on any activities that do not fit this pattern, it is crucial to underline again that adopting a politicized Kurdish identity was an active choice made by some individuals for specific reasons and that there was no automatic link between identity and political affiliation. The dominant narrative of the activities of the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon has pushed numerous other accounts to the side. There were, however, alternatives to activism under French mandate rule for Kurdish policy makers after the Kemalist government had turned against the Kurds in the mid-1920s. Their trajectories are less explored, and they have left fewer traces. Among these neglected voices, one even encounters members of the extended Bedirhani family itself: Kamil Bey Bedirhan, one of the younger sons of Emir Bedirhan, was reported to be actively promoting

¹⁸¹² FO 608/95, "Diary of Major E. Noel on Special Duty," dated April 1919.

Kurdish autonomy in a Bolshevik framework in 1927, even though he did not attract any noteworthy following.¹⁸¹³ Immediately after the armistice in 1919, reports had surfaced mentioning Kamil Bey Bedirhan as the leader of a movement for Kurdish autonomy in the area of Mardin.¹⁸¹⁴ Towards the end of the First World War, he had been in contact with British diplomats in Kushab and was briefly considered as a potential middleman in an Armenian-Kurdish dialog.¹⁸¹⁵ In 1922, based in Batumi in Georgia, Enver Paşa was trying to secure support from Kurdish tribes for his own bid to return to power, opposing the common adversary, the Kemalists, on a Bolshevik ticket.¹⁸¹⁶ Enver reached out to Kurdish tribal leaders and might well have been in contact with Kamil Bey in this context. The idea to enlist Bolshevik support against their common enemy Mustafa Kemal Paşa was not all that far-fetched, it had also occurred to Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan. Their alliance with the Armenian Dashnaktsutyun from 1927 onwards, however, precluded any moves in this direction, as cooperation with the Bolsheviks was vetoed by the Armenians.¹⁸¹⁷

Before I take up the opportunity to pursue the biographical trajectories of some of the lesser known relatives of the Bedirhani brothers in Europe and the Turkish Republic after the First World War, I want to briefly follow Kamuran Bedirhan into exile, to Paris.

¹⁸¹³ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, "Note sur le Kurdistan," report dated October 14, 1927. The information was provided by Ali Hilmi, a former Ottoman official of Kurdish origin. See also MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1054, report dated October 4, 1925, in which the French military attaché in Teheran briefly commented on Kamil Bey's activities.

¹⁸¹⁴ FO 608/95, secretary's note: Situation in Kurdistan, report dated September 15, 1919. In a contemporary British report, he was mentioned as "Kamil Bey of Kushab."

¹⁸¹⁵ FO 251/93, report "Kurdish personalities," dated June 1919.

¹⁸¹⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 569, report dating from February 1922.

¹⁸¹⁷ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, report dated December 27, 1927.

6.5. Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris, 1946 to 1978

A fellow Middle Eastern intellectual in exile, Edward Said, chose *Out of Place* as the title for his memoir.¹⁸¹⁸ “Out of place” also aptly describes Kamuran Bedirhan’s trajectory: In his youth, he was of Kurdish descent in an Ottoman society that, as much as it at that time despised Turks as brutish simpletons, also belittled Kurdish origins and way of living. Later, during his studies at the Galatasaray Lisesi and in Munich, he was an “Oriental” in an environment which cherished western education and values. Then, as the 20th century wore on, he stood out as non-Turkish in a setting increasingly marked by Turkish nationalism. In exile in post-war France, he arrived as an alien and an immigrant. And lastly, framing this chronology of being continuously out of place, there is his complicated relationship with the imagined homeland of Cizre in Eastern Anatolia. Having been raised far away and out of touch with the Anatolian Kurdish communities, Kamuran Bedirhan nonetheless was identified with and identified himself with this region he had hardly ever set foot on himself. Arguably, on the one hand, he can be regarded as an outsider, even a misfit in many communities he was involved with throughout his life. On the other hand, Kamuran Bedirhan was able to turn being out of place into a resource: His biography and network politics demonstrate how he was able to turn his ability to move between different contexts and groups of people to his advantage, bringing together networks that otherwise hardly overlapped, including Kurdish nationalists, Christian community leaders, Middle Eastern heads of state, French administrators, U.S. journalists and Israeli diplomats. His personal network was far-reaching and multifaceted, but I have no reason to believe that he was exceptional in this regard. It can be assumed that his brothers Celadet and Süreyya, as well as other members of his family, were able to make equally creative use of

¹⁸¹⁸ Edward Said, *Out of Place. A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

different connections they had established throughout their lives. I focus on Kamuran's example because his networking strategies are best documented, as parts of his personal correspondence is preserved at the Institut Kurde in Paris.

Kamuran Bedirhan began to make plans to leave the Middle East shortly after Syria had become independent from French mandate rule in 1946. The new Syrian government steered a course towards Arabization and homogenization of the society and, among other things, denied 120.000 Kurdish inhabitants of the al-Hasaka province in northern Syria the Syrian citizenship.¹⁸¹⁹ During the Second World War, Kamuran had been employed as a speaker at *Radio Levant* in Beirut, hosting a radio show in Kurdish language since 1942, with encouragement and support from the French. By 1946, as the French were preparing to leave the mandate territories, he had lost this position,¹⁸²⁰ as the independent Lebanese government in Beirut was evidently not interested in continuing the support for this kind of radio broadcasts. This sudden turn of fate illustrates how closely Kamuran Bedirhan's career and opportunities in Beirut (and beyond) were tied to his connections to the French mandate authorities. He could no longer hope to have much influence in local politics once the French rule had ended. This realization no doubt led to his wish to leave Beirut and settle in Paris. There, he was employed as professor for Kurdish language and culture at the prestigious INALCO. The idea to establish a Kurdish language program in Paris was not new: In 1932, Louis Massignon had tried to initiate such a program, hoping to win over the Russian Orientalist

¹⁸¹⁹ Strohmeier & Yalçın-Heckmann, *Die Kurden*, pp. 165-166.

¹⁸²⁰ Kamuran filed a complaint to the French administration, demanding that indemnities were to be paid to compensate for his sudden loss of employment and income, see MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth Ambassade Serie B, Dossiers personnelles, "dossier Kamuran Bederkhan," his complaint dates from November 3, 1946.

Vladimir Minorsky (1877–1966) to teach it. But ultimately, financial resources were lacking to put this plan into practice.¹⁸²¹

Kamuran Bedirhan came to France as a teacher and a scholar. But according to those who were close to him at the time, he had much broader ambitions. Joyce Blau, his student and successor at the INALCO, described Kamuran Bedirhan as a “pivot around everyone else was turning.”¹⁸²² With this, she provided a powerful image in terms of network theory: Visualized with the tools of network analysis, Kamuran Bedirhan would be a point at which many lines converge, an individual, in other words, which had access to many different, otherwise unrelated and separate networks. Someone who had the ability to bring people together, to make things happen. Structurally, Kamuran Bedirhan was what is called a broker in network analysis, as he maintained a central position in several otherwise distinct networks and invested time and expertise creating, maintaining and providing contacts for others, drawing on his network as a crucial resource.¹⁸²³ Kamuran’s personal correspondence shows how he literally traded in contacts: He provided friends with addresses and telephone numbers of acquaintances in Beirut or Damascus and in turn asked other friends to introduce or recommend him to their relations in the United States or elsewhere. Kamuran Bedirhan’s personal network was multi-layered and heterogeneous. Not unlike sediments, he continued to accumulate different layers of his network throughout his life. Some layers faded into the background over time, but others were reactivated. Kamuran Bedirhan’s network was complex and full of internal contradictions. Some of the people he was in contact with during the very same time

¹⁸²¹ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, letter from Robert Montagne to the French High Commissioner, dated June 16, 1933.

¹⁸²² Interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris. In French, she said “un pivot sur lequel tout le monde tournait.”

¹⁸²³ Jeremy Boissevain, *Friends of Friends. Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 147-169.

period of his life would have hardly been able to gather peacefully around one coffee table.

Silence and secrecy, keeping different layers of his network purposefully ignorant about each other when necessary, were key strategies for Kamuran.¹⁸²⁴ In addition, he needed to be an effective translator. Ideas and demands had to be tailored to different audiences – an exchange of letters between Kamuran and his brother Süreyya dating from 1930 in which they discuss how to best address different readers, French, Arabic and Iranian, to win them over for the idea of Kurdish independence, is illustrative of this concern.¹⁸²⁵ The fact that Kamuran did maintain contact and bring together so many otherwise fairly incompatible actors might have contributed to his reluctance to write down any memoirs of his professional life. A biographical interview he gave in 1946 remained limited to childhood memories only.

Kamuran's correspondence with his Lebanese friend Mansour Challita illustrates his network policies in action: Kamuran asked Challita to convince Michel Chiha, a very prominent Christian-Lebanese publisher, politician, banker and legal expert,¹⁸²⁶ to contribute a reference for the publication of his newly established *Bulletin des Études Kurdes*. Although Chiha did not end up providing such a reference, Kamuran's reaching out to him makes it safe to assume that he shared or at least did not object to Chiha's views on minority politics: Michel Chiha was quite

¹⁸²⁴ Nerina Weiss, "Tense Relations: Dealing with Narratives of Violence in Eastern Turkey," in: Maria Six-Hohenbalken & Nerina Weiss (eds.), *Violence Expressed. An Anthropological Approach* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 122 on the crucial role of secrecy in network politics in late 20th-century eastern Turkey.

¹⁸²⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, the intercepted letter from Süreyya to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated August 12, 1930, has been discussed in greater detail in the previous section.

¹⁸²⁶ Based in Beirut, the Roman-Catholic Michel Chiha was the publisher of the widely distributed French daily *Le Jour* and one of the "architects of the Lebanese politico-economic system," involved with the drafting of the Lebanese constitution in the 1920s. He was also a millionaire and part of a financial elite surrounding the Lebanese president Bishara al-Khoury, see Johnson, *Class and Client*, p. 121.

vocal about how he perceived the state of Lebanon as a place of refuge for persecuted minorities. He had identified minority rights as a central theme for his political activities and campaign. Even though I found no evidence of him speaking out directly in favor of the Kurdish community in Lebanon in this context, Kamuran Bedirhan apparently read a potential sympathy with the Kurdish predicament into Chiha's writings.¹⁸²⁷

It tends to be overlooked that Kamuran Bedirhan's network was not limited to political lobbying but also had a strong economic dimension. During the early mandate period, Kamuran worked as a lawyer at the court of appeals in Beirut. Connections to fellow lawyers and jurists remained important for him, inside and outside of the courtroom. In May 1944, Kamuran and some of his colleagues created *Trava*, a Syrian-Lebanese business association.¹⁸²⁸ *Trava's* aim was stated broadly, including investments in transportation by land, air and water, construction works, tourism, insurances and import-export business. Naim Wadih Achcar¹⁸²⁹ (1895–?), a business man and lawyer who had embarked on a political career and was later to become a member of the Lebanese parliament, acted as president of *Trava*. Among its members were Edmond Rabbath (1904–1991), a lawyer of Syrian-Catholic descent from Aleppo, who later helped design the Lebanese constitution,¹⁸³⁰ as

¹⁸²⁷ Attié, *Struggle in the Levant*, p. 28 and Jean Salem, *Introduction à la pensée politique de Michel Chiha* (Beirut: Samir, 1970).

¹⁸²⁸ See Pierre Rondot's personal papers at the IKP, Paris. They contain a dossier titled "Bedirhan" with a newspaper clipping titled "Mise au point," dating from August 1946. Further details on the *Trava* S.A. can be found in Service de la Documentation de la Banque de Syrie et du Liban, *Annuaire 1948-1949. Principales Sociétés exerçant une activité en Syrie*, p. 387. *Trava* S.A. disposed of a capital of 90.000 LL, divided into 180 shares of 500 LL each.

¹⁸²⁹ Achcar was also involved with a business endeavor to extract and refine oil, see Service de la Documentation de la Banque de Syrie et du Liban, *Annuaire 1948-1949*, p. 327.

¹⁸³⁰ For a biography, see *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East?* (Cairo: Minerbo Press, 1949), p. 501. In the 1920s and 1930s, Edmond Rabbath also published several books on the political situation during the mandate period, being rather critical of the French rule, see e.g. Edmond Rabbath, *L'évolution politique de la Syrie sous Mandat* (Paris: Marcel

well as Jean Calin,¹⁸³¹ Negib Aboussouan, a legal expert and honorary president of the Lebanese court of appeals,¹⁸³² Antoine Hana, and Alfred Asfar. Asfar, who was addressed as “Monsieur Alfred” in Kamuran’s letters from Paris, remained an important middleman as Kamuran entered into the import-export business upon his arrival in France.¹⁸³³ In Paris, Kamuran signed contracts as the local representative of the Beirut-based company *Asfar & Hana*.¹⁸³⁴ The company was listed in *Le Guide Arabe. The Arab Directory 1948-1950* as agents for import and export, with a focus on the trade with pharmaceutical products. Their offices were located in Khan Antoun Bey, a prominent location in the commercial center of Beirut.¹⁸³⁵ It can be concluded that contacts to colleagues opened the way to international economic cooperations for Kamuran from the 1940s onward. Their shared professional background as lawyers, judges and writers and their economic interests overlapped.

While he was living in Paris, how did Kamuran Bedirhan think about his family, and how, if at all, did he keep in touch with his relatives? A brief note from among his personal papers at the Institut Kurde in Paris indicates that he did think about his family history and pondered questions of genealogy: The worn-out piece of paper documents an attempt to reconstruct the Bedirhani family tree. The handwriting suggests that it was recorded by Kamuran’s wife Natacha. Remarkably,

Rivière, 1928). Rabbath was also involved in several business cooperations in the 1940s, he is listed as one of the administrators of the Syrian Glass and Porcelain Industries Corporation in Damascus from 1945 onward, see Service de la Documentation de la Banque de Syrie et du Liban, *Annuaire 1948-1949*, p. 293.

¹⁸³¹ For a biography, see *Who’s Who in Egypt and the Middle East?* (Cairo: Minerbo Press, 1949), p. 225.

¹⁸³² For a biography, see *Who’s Who in Egypt and the Middle East?* (Cairo: Minerbo Press, 1949), p. 158.

¹⁸³³ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris for a letter from Kamuran to Alfred Asfar, dated October 7, 1948.

¹⁸³⁴ Said Souhel (ed.), *Le Guide Arabe. The Arab Directory 1948-1950* (Beirut: Union International des Annuaire, 1951), pp. 115, 168 and 220.

¹⁸³⁵ Kassir, *Histoire de Beyrouth*, p. 159. Khan Antoun Bey was the largest khan of the city and was home to many foreign consulates and the first of branch of the *Banque Ottomane* in Beirut.

Kamuran Bedirhan did not recall all the sons of his grandfather Emir Bedirhan. Out of his at least twenty-three paternal uncles, Kamuran remembered a meager eleven.¹⁸³⁶ He did not mention any of the equally numerous daughters of Emir Bedirhan.¹⁸³⁷ While his father's line of the family, with his brothers and sisters as well as his nephew and niece were duly recorded, the name of his mother was not given either. Overall, very few women made it into his genealogical sketch: There was "tante Elza," née Elisabeth van Muyden, the wife of his uncle Abdurrahman Bedirhan, and also Neziha as-Solh, a granddaughter of his uncle Osman Bedirhan, and not at last Ruşen Bedirhan, Kamuran's sister-in-law. Notably, Kamuran also did not mention Mehmed Salih Bedirhan, one of the protagonists of my fourth chapter. In the paratext of the published version of his memoirs, Mehmed Salih Bey was described as a key figure within the early Kurdish independence movement by the editors, his daughter Ruşen Bedirhan and the Kurdish novelist Mehmed Uzun. That Kamuran Bedirhan did not even recall Mehmed Salih Bey among his relatives indicates that the prominent place Mehmed Salih Bey holds in Kurdish nationalist historiography today is a result of Ruşen's and Mehmed Uzun's interventions in the 1990s.

At the time of the writing of the above-mentioned genealogy, Neziha as-Solh was among the family members still in contact with Kamuran. They exchanged letters between Paris and Beirut, where Neziha lived with her husband Hassib as-Solh and worked at the *Lycée des Jeunes Filles*. Neziha and Kamuran exchanged details about their personal lives

¹⁸³⁶ They are, in the original order and spelling given in Kamuran's genealogy, Abdullah, Abdurrahman, Osman, Kamil, Midhat, Ali, Halil, Hasan, Husein, his own father Emin Ali and Bedri. See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, not dated. The handwriting being Natacha's, the note dates at least from the 1950s, probably later.

¹⁸³⁷ In a conversation with the French journalist Chris Kutschera in the late 1970s, Kamuran admitted that he did not know the exact number of children of his grandfather, but personally recalled fifteen to sixteen uncles and about as many aunts. See Kutschera, *Le Mouvement National Kurde*, p. 20.

and their financial situation and also shared plans for the future. Neziha invited Kamuran to spend the summer with her and her family in Lebanon. Through her husband, she was in contact with Riad and Sami as-Solh, who both played prominent roles in Lebanese politics at the time and who, Neziha imagined, might be able to help Kamuran to obtain a visa.¹⁸³⁸ Her letter indicated that Neziha was equally in regular contact with Kamuran's siblings Celadet and Meziyet. She acted as a go-between, facilitating exchanges between Kamuran and his siblings, who lived in difficult political circumstances in Turkey and Syria, respectively, and could have easily gotten into trouble for writing to each other directly. In a letter listing recommendations and potential contact persons for Pierre Rondot, who was preparing a visit to Lebanon, Kamuran mentioned that because of censorship, he was not able to write directly to his brother Celadet in Beirut to inform him about Rondot's visit.¹⁸³⁹ Kamuran did not even make it to his brother Celadet's funeral in Damascus in 1951, probably because of travel restrictions.¹⁸⁴⁰

In addition to communicating with his cousin Neziha in Beirut, Kamuran was also in contact with family members in Cairo and Istanbul. In the 1950s, he had taken to talking to his sister Meziyet Çınar in Istanbul on the phone once a month. These conversations were door-openers and opportunities to introduce students of Kurdish background who planned to come to Paris for their studies and to continued their political activism. In the family's obituaries published in Istanbul newspapers, however, neither Kamuran nor Celadet Bedirhan were mentioned as relatives of the deceased. When their brother Tefvik Çınar died in March 1963, only Hikmet and Meziyet Çınar were listed as

¹⁸³⁸ Personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Neziha as-Solh, dated February 26, 1950.

¹⁸³⁹ Personal papers of Pierre Rondot at the IKP in Paris, letter from Kamuran Bedirhan to Pierre Rondot, dated April 3, 1949.

¹⁸⁴⁰ Kamuran's name does not figure in the records of the ceremony or the list of condolences, see *Dikrî al-amîr Ğalâdat Badrĥân al-sâniyah, 1897 – 1951* (Damascus 1951), p. 35. All other living siblings seem to have been able to attend.

siblings.¹⁸⁴¹ In Cairo, Kamuran's nephew Hakkı, the son of Süreyya Bedirhan, was employed at the Iraqi embassy.¹⁸⁴² Neither Hakkı nor his sister Kudret, who had married into the Jordanian royal family, however, were mentioned in the genealogical sketch provided by Kamuran. This might be an indication that at the time when the sketch was drawn, Kamuran was no longer in close contact with his relatives in Cairo, but still maintained closer connections to the children of his brother Celadet. Both of them were mentioned in his genealogical sketch. Celadet's son Cemşid received support from Kamuran during his time at medical school in Germany.¹⁸⁴³ Cemşid, his mother Ruşen, Kamuran and his wife Natacha also met in Münster, where Cemşid studied, at least once, in September 1961.¹⁸⁴⁴ Joyce Blau recalls that Kamuran was equally close to his niece, Cemşid's sister Sinemxan Bedirhan.¹⁸⁴⁵ Although she is missing from his genealogical sketch, it is unlikely that Kamuran was not in contact with his cousin Leyla Bedirhan, who lived in Paris since the 1930s and was fairly well-known, as she looked back on a career as a professional dancer there. Back in 1932, there is evidence that she was in contact with Kamuran and his brother Celadet, who at the time still lived in the French mandate territories: Her name and Paris address can be found among the subscribers of the journal *Hawar*.¹⁸⁴⁶ A family friend by the name of Leyla was also mentioned by Natacha Bedirhan in her

¹⁸⁴¹ The obituary appeared in *Milliyet*, March 15, 1963 and was also cited by Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁸⁴² See the personal papers of Pierre Rondot at the IKP in Paris for a letter from Kamuran Bedirhan to Pierre Rondot, dated April 3, 1949.

¹⁸⁴³ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris for a letter from Cemşid Bedirhan, dated January 21, 1961. Cemşid wrote to his uncle in German and provided copies of his university records and diploma.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Archive des Dominicains de Mossoul à la Bibliothèque de Saulchoir, Paris. Section V-641, 1-75, R.P. Thomas Bois (1900-1975), postcard from the Bedirhanis from Münster, dated September 10, 1961.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at the IKP in Paris.

¹⁸⁴⁶ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, small booklet with subscribers to *Hawar*, not dated.

letters to Kamuran,¹⁸⁴⁷ but as the woman was not further identified, it is not certain whether this refers in fact to the same person, Leyla Bedirhan. Lastly, Kamuran's cousin Müveddet Gönensay was also not mentioned in the sketch. She herself, however, writing her memoirs in the early 1990s, did mention him and his siblings. She recalled how she used to play with Kamuran, Meziyet and Celadet as a child.¹⁸⁴⁸ That, however, seems unlikely, given that all of them were considerably older than Müveddet herself, who was born in 1910. The age difference to Kamuran was fifteen years. Müveddet's lapse of memory indicates that when she wrote down her recollections, Kamuran and his siblings had for a long time not played an active role in her life and the memories she kept of them were blurred, belonging to another period altogether.

In France, Kamuran Bedirhan drew on several mutually independent network structures: First of all, his stay in France was made possible through continued advocacy and support from French diplomats and scholars with an interest in Kurdish studies whom Kamuran had known in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period. Most prominently among them were the Dominican missionary Thomas Bois and the French officers Pierre Rondot and Roger Lescot. Still from Beirut, Kamuran had established contacts with other French scholars with an interest in Kurdish linguistics and history, among them the former Russian diplomat and Orientalist Basile Nikitine (1885–1960). Nikitine had already been a friend of Süreyya Bedirhan's and continued to support Kamuran as well. In several other cases there is evidence as well that after his arrival in France, Kamuran sought out contacts and old friends of his late brother Süreyya there. Among them were the French art lover and patron Renée Frachon¹⁸⁴⁹ and the French editor

¹⁸⁴⁷ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Natacha to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated October 14, 1963.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Müveddet Gönensay, *Müveddet Gönensay'ın Anıları*, manuscript p. 10.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Frachon wrote a letter of support for Kamuran which was published in his *Bulletin du Centre d'études kurdes* Nr. 11 (1950). In her letter, she mentions a memorable journey to

and writer Irmine Roumanette, in whose apartment Kamuran Bedirhan set up the office of his newly-founded *Centre d'études kurdes* in 1949.

Starting from there, Kamuran established his own network of supporters of the Kurdish cause in Paris, which included some of his students at the INALCO and a number of French as well as international journalists and policy makers. While he lobbied extensively in the United States and was in contact with several political decision makers there, there is no evidence in his papers at the Institut Kurde that he was in close contact with any French politicians at the time. In addition to his own contacts into the French administration and his late brother's connections, a third layer of Kamuran Bedirhan's personal network in Paris consisted of Kurdish students and activists. When Kamuran arrived in Paris in the late 1940s, there was hardly any Kurdish community to speak of in the city.¹⁸⁵⁰ When the Iraqi state began to persecute Kurdish resistance fighters from the circles of Mustafa Barzani in the 1960s, however, the number of Kurdish political refugees in Europe increased. Kamuran was involved with members of a younger generation of Kurdish activists like İsmet Cheriff Vanly in Geneva or Kemal Fuad in East Berlin. And not only resistance fighters and activists were eager to meet with him: Kamuran also received a letter by a civilian, a man who found himself as the only Kurd in Marseille, he had heard from Kamuran and asked him for support for him and his family.¹⁸⁵¹

Kamuran also had no small number of mutually incompatible contacts. On the one hand, he was close to the Israeli ambassador in Paris, Maurice Fischer (1903–1965), who provided him with contacts into the

Iran and Kurdistan with her late husband and her friendship to Süreyya Bedirhan. The issue of *Bulletin du Centre d'études kurdes* is preserved among the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Interview with Joyce Blau, November 18, 2014, at IKP Paris.

¹⁸⁵¹ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Ahmed Brahimi to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated Marseille, February 9, 1951.

Israeli Foreign Ministry.¹⁸⁵² Another connection into Israeli political circles was Walter Eytan (1910–2001), an Israeli diplomat who in turn introduced Kamuran to some of his contacts in the United States.¹⁸⁵³ On the other hand, the former chief of the Iranian secret police, Teymur Bakhtiyar (1914–1970) and the German Orientalist Fritz Grobba (1886–1973), who had been a high-level diplomat under the Nazi regime, were among Kamuran’s regular correspondents.¹⁸⁵⁴

While Kamuran did not, as far as I could see from his personal correspondence preserved in Paris, actively lobby French politicians, he became interested in the possibility of U.S. American support for Kurdish autonomy in the 1960s. His efforts were part of a more general trend among Kurdish politicians at the time: In the mid-1960s, Mustafa Barzani also began to seek out contact with U.S. journalists to communicate his political agenda to a western audience and possibly obtain concrete U.S. support.¹⁸⁵⁵ Kamuran Bedirhan’s first trip to the United States in 1949¹⁸⁵⁶ remained without consequences. It was only in the summer of 1962 that he returned, this time actively trying to convince U.S. politicians to support Kurdish independence. Among the potential supporters Kamuran had pinned his hopes on was William O. Douglas (1898–1990), judge at the U.S. Supreme Court and familiar with

¹⁸⁵² See the personal papers of Pierre Rondot at the IKP in Paris, letter to Pierre Rondot from Kamuran Bedirhan in which he referred to both his friendship with Fischer and his contact man in Israel, a man named Gershom Hirsch, letter dated April 3, 1949.

¹⁸⁵³ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Walter Eytan to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated May 23, 1962.

¹⁸⁵⁴ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letters from Fritz Grobba to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated May 16, 1962; May 18, 1962; January 4, 1963; and November 5, 1963.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Dana Smith Adams, a correspondent for the *New York Times*, met Mustafa Barzani in his headquarters in 1962. See also Dana Smith Adams, *Journey Among Brave Men* (Boston et al.: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1964).

¹⁸⁵⁶ APP, 77W440 – 496565, police report dated November 21, 1950.

the political situation and sufferings of the Kurds in Iraq.¹⁸⁵⁷ In 1971, a Kurdish-American Relief Society was established in New York, with judge Douglas acting as its honorary president.¹⁸⁵⁸ Acquaintances in Paris with links into the political scene in the United States provided Kamuran with additional contacts: Walter Eytan, an Israeli diplomat in Paris, referred Kamuran to George W. Oakes.¹⁸⁵⁹ Another Israeli friend, the already-mentioned Maurice Fischer, established contact between Kamuran and his sister Charlotte Kappel, who lived in the United States. In 1950, Kappel invited Kamuran to the wedding of her daughter.¹⁸⁶⁰ In 1962, prior to his second journey to the United States, Kamuran reestablished contact with Kappel and her family.¹⁸⁶¹ Kamuran was also eager to get to know U.S. American journalists from the 1940s onward. Among those he met were Michael Clark and his mother, the editor of the New York weekly magazine *The Nation*, Freda Kirchwey (1893–1976).¹⁸⁶² Both Kirchwey and Clark supported Kamuran Bedirhan's first issue of the *Bulletin d'études kurdes* which appeared in 1948 with enthusiastic letters of reference.¹⁸⁶³ In 1963, Kamuran was also in contact with the U.S. journalist and expert on Iraq Verna Rapp (1928–2011).¹⁸⁶⁴ By far the most important contact for Kamuran in the United States, however, was a man called Richard Kyle Keith. The two of them regularly exchanged letters over the 1960s, and Kamuran had been

¹⁸⁵⁷ Douglas had contributed a preface to Smith Adams' above-mentioned *Journey Among Brave Men*, in which he mentioned that he himself had met with Barzani personally in 1958 in Beirut.

¹⁸⁵⁸ "Kurdish Aid Group Formed in the US." In: *New York Times*, January 17, 1971.

¹⁸⁵⁹ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Walter Eytan to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated May 23, 1962.

¹⁸⁶⁰ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, undated invitation to Kamuran Bedirhan.

¹⁸⁶¹ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Natacha to Kamuran Bedirhan with Kappel's current address, dated June 13, 1962.

¹⁸⁶² Kirchwey might have met Kamuran in person when she traveled to Paris in 1950, see Archive of *The Nation*, records 4946: "Kirchwey, Freda. Paris (France) trip. Receipts and notes," 1950.

¹⁸⁶³ Kamuran Bedirhan (ed.), *Bulletin d'études kurdes* vol 1, (Paris, 1948), pp. 2 and 4.

¹⁸⁶⁴ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Natacha to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated October 14, 1963.

introduced to Kyle Keith's family during his visits to the United States. Kyle Keith wrote in a peculiar mixture of German and English and comes across as an ardent supporter of the Kurdish cause in these letters. He provided Kamuran Bedirhan with contacts to different U.S. institutions during his visits. Kyle Keith himself worked for the U.S. senate committee of the judiciary. He helped Kamuran to organize humanitarian help for Iraqi Kurdistan and took care of at least two Kurdish young men who had come to work and study in the United States, possibly through Kamuran's intervention. Kyle Keith sent Kamuran regular updates about their progress and provided them with jobs.¹⁸⁶⁵ Kamuran might have met Kyle Keith during his time in Germany. Like himself, Kyle Keith had studied there during the inter-war period.¹⁸⁶⁶ In the United States, Kamuran Bedirhan also contacted a professional public relations expert, Gilbert Jonas (1930–2006) in New York, who was known for his liberal political views and had previously also represented the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*. Jonas offered to promote the Kurdish demands for independence in the United States, in exchange for a recompensation of 10.000 \$ every four months.¹⁸⁶⁷ It appears from Kamuran's personal papers that he did not take him up on that offer.

Personal contacts of Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris included the family and friends of his wife, Natacha. It is worth mentioning her here, since there is no small degree of confusion about her background in the existing literature on the Bedirhani family, with some referring to her as a

¹⁸⁶⁵ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letters from Richard Kyle Keith to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated December 5, 1962; December 6, 1962; and May 10, 1963.

¹⁸⁶⁶ As stated in the wedding announcement of Richard Kyle Keith and Margo Hotchkiss, *New York Times*, June 10, 1956.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at IKP Paris, the offer dates from October 12, 1963. There is no evidence or further indication that Kamuran agreed to that offer.

“Polish princess.”¹⁸⁶⁸ Of Polish descent, Natacha was born in Moscow in 1914 and got married to Kamuran Bedirhan in Paris in June 1954.¹⁸⁶⁹ She had arrived in France with her family as a refugee in 1923 and had been naturalized as a French citizen in 1938.¹⁸⁷⁰ Both her father, Michael d’Ossovetzky (1885–?) and her siblings Victor (born in 1915) and Aline (born in 1909) also lived in Paris after the Second World War. Her mother, who had separated from Michael d’Ossovetzky, had passed away in 1946. Natacha’s father was a business man of a somewhat shady reputation. During the Second World War, he owned a restaurant and a night club in Paris and was accused of collaborating with the Nazi occupation forces.¹⁸⁷¹ Natacha d’Ossovetzky was a devout Catholic, which is particularly apparent in the letters she regularly exchanged with the Thomas Bois, in one of which she told him about her trips to the sanctuary in Lourdes and asked him to pray with her for the Kurdish cause.¹⁸⁷² Prior to their wedding, Natacha had worked as Kamuran’s secretary in the office of the Centre d’études kurdes in Paris and throughout her life, she showed a keen interest in Kurdish culture, language and political perspectives, she even began to study Kurmancî Kurdish herself. Kamuran Bedirhan no doubt benefited from both the economic resources and connections Natacha and her family had in Paris. The couple lived in Natacha’s apartment and had an additional income through housing they rented out to tenants in the suburbs of Paris.

Networks, as the analysis has demonstrated, were opportunity structures and crucial resources for a broker personality and mediator like

¹⁸⁶⁸ See for example Hakan Özoğlu, “‘Nationalism’ and Kurdish Notables in the Late-Ottoman — Early Republican Era.” In: *IJMES* 33 (2001), p. 402.

¹⁸⁶⁹ APP, 77W440 – 496565.

¹⁸⁷⁰ Notice in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, October 30, 1938.

¹⁸⁷¹ See his police record, APP, 77W1405, “Michel d’Ossovetzky”, dated May 30, 1951.

¹⁸⁷² Archive des Dominicains de Mossoul à la Bibliothèque de Saulchoir, Paris. Section V-641, 1-75, R.P. Thomas Bois (1900-1975), postcards from Natacha Bedirhan from Lourdes, Easter 1962 and 1973.

Kamuran Bedirhan. At the same time, networks put constraints on individuals that operate within them. Networks can not only bring individuals together, they can also quite effectively keep people apart.¹⁸⁷³ It comes as no surprise then that there were a number of holes in Kamuran Bedirhan's personal network. The first notable omission concerns religion: Even though Sufi orders had constituted a key dimension of the Bedirhani family's networks of support and patronage in Ottoman times, I could not find any evidence of Kamuran being involved in these circles. Keeping in mind the prominent role religious networks played for the Kurdish resistance movement in the early Turkish Republic, this absence is meaningful. Second, Kamuran Bedirhan does not seem to have maintained any contacts in the region of Cizre, the former homeland of his family. That comes as no surprise, given the Turkish restrictions and pressure on the Kurdish areas from the mid-1920s onwards. At the same time, not being well connected any longer into Eastern Anatolia, operating instead from Paris, far away from the Kurdish population in the Middle East and their sufferings, called into question Kamuran Bedirhan's claim to leadership over the Kurdish community. While the links to Cizre and to the Kurdish population there apparently did not survive into the second half of the 20th century, connections still existed in late Ottoman times, when Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan provided his sons, who accompanied Major Noel into the Kurdish regions in 1919, with contacts there. Another noteworthy absence is the apparent lack of any links to British journalist or politicians as Kamuran was lobbying for support for the Kurdish cause from Paris. While members of the Bedirhanis had been in close contact with British diplomats from the late 19th century up until the 1920s, this line of communication seems to have broken down completely afterwards. The reason for this rupture is not at last found in the dismissive British policy towards Kurdish autonomy. In spite of his far-

¹⁸⁷³ David Lambert & Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), p. 12.

reaching network and the investment of considerable resources, Kamuran Bedirhan' lobbying for the cause of Kurdish autonomy was never entirely successful.

7. Roads Less Traveled: Other Members of the Bedirhani Family “After Empire”

The trajectories of the most famous scions of the Bedirhani family, the brothers Celadet, Kamuran and Süreyya Bedirhan have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. To contextualize their experience, it makes sense to look at the situation of some of their relatives during the same time period, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and into the second half of the 20th century. Finding information on these less famous relatives is more difficult, but worthwhile, as their stories have the advantage of being less polished and shaped to fit the canon of Kurdish nationalist historiography. Ambivalences and contradictions shine through more clearly and more often, allowing the historian to get a grasp of the extent and the ways in which the biographical accounts of the more prominent family members have been altered over time.

My first examples focus on two very different life stories of female family members. First, I take a look at the quite flamboyant life of Leyla Bedirhan, a Paris-based artist and famous dancer in the 1930s and 1940s. An analysis of her biography serves a double purpose, zooming in on her experiences and at the same time providing me with an occasion to discuss the wider discourse on Kurdish personal memory in Turkey today. My second example is by far the least well known, introducing a thoughtful and elegant homemaker based in Republican Istanbul: Müveddet Gönensay, a daughter of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, lived through early Turkish Republican times as a young bride and much

later, in the early 1990s, recorded her personal memoirs for her children and grandchildren, seemingly far removed from discourses of Turkish or Kurdish nationalist historiography. In the second part of this chapter, I turn to the examples of Cemal Kutay, Vasif Çınar and finally Meziyet Çınar, all three of whom carved out spaces for themselves in the political landscape of Republican Turkey, while having to deal with their Ottoman-Kurdish family origins in some way.

7.1. The Invention of a Dancing Kurdish Princess: Leyla Bedirhan

There are several reasons prompting me to take a closer look at Leyla Bedirhan's biography, especially in comparison to the trajectories of her more famous cousins Celadet, Kamuran and Süreyya Bedirhan. First of all, hers is a female, not at first glance political experience. Interestingly, however, her art and dance performances were increasingly read in the context of contemporary Middle Eastern politics and the Kurdish predicament over the 1930s and 1940s, as they fed into larger, ongoing discussions about a distinct and independent Kurdish culture and civilization, marked by a clearly distinguishable, valuable artistic heritage. Leyla Bedirhan's dance performances constituted a way to prove these claims, at the same time popularizing and making Kurdish culture known to a wider European audience. One can trace in the articles written about her performances how her interviewers became increasingly aware of her Kurdish heritage. In the 1920s, at the beginning of her career, her origins were indiscriminately located in a far-off, almost mythical terrain of Iran or Turkestan. From the mid-1930s onwards, however, Leyla was increasingly described as a Kurdish princess. Second, descriptions of Leyla Bedirhan's career also point to a more general, romantic interest in Kurdish culture emerging in the French public in the 1930s which was informed by colonial discourse

and Orientalism: Examples range from popular fiction¹⁸⁷⁴ to more scientific and ethnographic discussions, as the installation of a showcase dedicated to Kurdish material culture in the *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris indicates.¹⁸⁷⁵ The French involvement in the mandate territories of Syria and Lebanon and the French policy of privileging local minorities to balance Arab nationalist demands provided the background for this kind of interest in Kurdish, but also Druze or Yezidi culture. It was this context that Leyla Bedirhan's quite successful career as a dancer took off.

It has to be remembered, however, that for Leyla, capitalizing on her Kurdish identity and cultural heritage was a conscious choice: Her parents separated when she was still very young and Leyla Bedirhan grew up in Cairo and Alexandria, at the court of the Khedive. Her mother, Henriette Hornik, was of Austrian-Jewish descent and part of the large Austrian community which surrounded Khedive Abbas, she was employed as his personal dentist. In her teens, Leyla Bedirhan was educated in Europe. During her childhood, contacts to her father and the Ottoman-Kurdish parts of her family were rare. Leyla could have decided to pose as a Levantine beauty, an Egyptian dancer or even simply as a ballerina from Vienna. She chose to underline her Kurdish heritage, which provided her with a certain mystique and an edge to forward her on-stage career.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Examples include André Brunel's story collection *Gulusar. Contes et légendes du Kurdistan* (Paris: Imprimerie de Delaye, 1946) and the personal travel accounts of Renée Frachon, *Quand j'étais au Kurdistan* (Paris: Tanger, 1963).

¹⁸⁷⁵ The exhibition was put together on the initiative of Robert Montagne and exhibits were collected by Pierre Rondot in the Jazira region over the 1930s with the help of Kamuran Bedirhan, see chapter 6 for a detailed discussion.

7.1.1. Biographical Sketch of Leyla Bedirhan

Leyla Bedirhan was the daughter of Abdürrezzak Paşa Bedirhan, the protagonist of an earlier chapter,¹⁸⁷⁶ and Henriette Hornik, an Austrian-Jewish dentist from Vienna. The couple met in Pera, where Henriette was part of a larger Austrian expatriate community.¹⁸⁷⁷ Leyla was born in Istanbul, probably on July 31, 1903.¹⁸⁷⁸ Later, she herself claimed that she was born in 1908. Already during the early years of her childhood, her father Abdürrezzak Bedirhan was often absent from her life, exiled and imprisoned in Tripolis (Libya) between 1906 and 1910. When she was about ten years old, her father disappeared from her life for good.¹⁸⁷⁹ Leyla accompanied her mother to Egypt, where she grew up in the palace circles of Cairo and Alexandria. There, her mother was part of a vibrant European expatriate community. Some of Leyla Bedirhan's closest relations in Paris, for example to the composer Maurice Naggiar, and her friendship with Yvonne Perret went back to these days of her youth in Egypt.¹⁸⁸⁰

After the end of the First World War, Leyla Bedirhan was sent off to the prestigious boarding school Montreux in Switzerland to continue her

¹⁸⁷⁶ See chapter 4.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Austrian dentists did have a tradition at the court of the Khedive, the Austrian citizens Josef Bilinsky, Anton Kautzky and Bruno Bitter had also been employed in this position. It can be assumed that a female dentist would have been preferred to treat the members of the harem. On the Austrian community in Egypt, see Alisa Douer, *Ägypten, die verlorene Heimat. Der Exodus aus Ägypten 1947-1967* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2014), p. 85, and Samir Raafat, "Queen for a Day." In: *Ahram Weekly*, October 6, 1994.

¹⁸⁷⁸ According to my communication with the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, December 18, 2014, the population register contains the following information on "Leila Bederkhan:" She was born on July 31, 1903 in Constantinople, her nationality was listed as Turkish, her religious affiliation as Muslim ("Mohamedanisch"). Student, dancer and princess are listed as her occupation in different documents, respectively. The first entry on her in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv dates from October 1922.

¹⁸⁷⁹ She said so in an interview on November 11, 1926.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Leyla Safiye, *Leyla: Bir Kürt prensesinin öyküsü* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2004), p. 119. Yvonne and Leyla Bedirhan also went to school together in Switzerland, and her friendship was to last: Yvonne Perret named her daughter Leila and Perret's husband and his relatives helped Leyla Bedirhan in 1945/46.

education. After graduating from there, she enrolled at a dance school in Vienna. In doing so, she acted against the explicit wish of her mother, who had wanted her to study medicine, as Leyla once shared in an interview.¹⁸⁸¹ Instead, she embarked on a career as a professional dancer. In the early 1920s, Leyla Bedirhan's life alternated between Munich and Vienna. Records show that she traveled to Berlin and Sweden as well and also spent time in a sanatorium in Austria during this time.¹⁸⁸² She did not, however, return to Turkey or Egypt.¹⁸⁸³ The early stages of her dancing career were documented in the contemporary Austrian press: In August of 1924, Leyla stayed in the health resort Gmunden in Upper Austria (Salzkammergut) and performed there. In the contemporary articles on the event, Leyla Bedirhan was referred to as Egyptian.¹⁸⁸⁴ In October of the same year, she went on stage in the Konzerthaus in Vienna. The reports about her performance were accompanied by a picture showing her in lavish stage costume.¹⁸⁸⁵ The same article mentioned that Leyla conversed in perfect German. A second article dating from the same period reported that she performed in spite of strong opposition from within her family.¹⁸⁸⁶ In November of 1928, Leyla's image made the cover of the *Österreichische Illustrierte Zeitung*. In the accompanying article, which announced her upcoming performances in Vienna's Großes Konzerthaus, she was now described as "granddaughter of the emperor of Kurdistan."¹⁸⁸⁷ In the fall of 1926, Leyla had moved from Vienna to Paris to further pursue her dancing

¹⁸⁸¹ Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, département des arts du spectacle, "Recueil factice d'articles de presse sur Leila Bederkhan, 1924-1949," 8-RO-12480.

¹⁸⁸² Rohat Alakom has researched her stay in Sweden in depth, relying on Swedish newspaper reporting as his principal source, see "Leyla Bedirhan Stockholm'de." In: *Biamag*, July 11, 2015, accessible online, <http://bianet.org/biamag/diger/165941-leyla-bedirhan-stockholm-de>, last accessed March 10, 2016.

¹⁸⁸³ Personal communication with the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv on December 18, 2014.

¹⁸⁸⁴ "Aus dem Salzkammergut." In: *Linzer Tagespost*, August 21, 1924.

¹⁸⁸⁵ See *Das Interessante Blatt*, October 16, 1924, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸⁶ See *Prager Tagblatt*, November 14, 1924.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Cäsar Segalow, "Eine Herrscherstochter als Berufstänzerin." In: *Österreichische Illustrierte Zeitung*, November 11, 1928, p. 11.

career.¹⁸⁸⁸ She shared an apartment with her mother in the rue Mignet, in the 16th arrondissement – a rather affluent area of the city.¹⁸⁸⁹ Her life remained centered in Paris over the following years, but Leyla also went on tour in the United States in 1927 and then toured Europe in 1929/30, stopping in glamorous places like Biarritz, Salzburg and Monte Carlo.¹⁸⁹⁰ In 1930, she returned to Paris and continued her career into the 1940s. She also toured abroad repeatedly, performing for example in the ballet *Belkis* in Milano in 1932.¹⁸⁹¹ After the Second World War, she terminated her active career and became a dance instructor for young girls, opening her own studio in the suburbs of Paris. She continued to live in Paris until her death in 1986.

In 1930, Leyla Bedirhan got married to the French citizen Henri Touache in Paris.¹⁸⁹² At the zenith of her career in the 1930s, Leyla was an integral part of the Parisian art and music scene, working with the famous photographer Dora Kallmus (alias Madame d’Ora, 1881–1963), who like Leyla’s mother was of Austrian-Jewish family origins.¹⁸⁹³ The French artist Jean Target (1910–1997) painted Leyla Bedirhan dancing.¹⁸⁹⁴ There is some indication that during her time in Europe, Leyla Bedirhan reestablished contact with some members of her father’s family: Her name can be found listed among the subscribers of the journal *Hawar* which was published by Celadet Bedirhan in Damascus.¹⁸⁹⁵ Celadet Bedirhan’s daughter Sinemxan also met with

¹⁸⁸⁸ Information obtained in personal communication with the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, December 18, 2014.

¹⁸⁸⁹ Paris, Archive de Police, 1W1703, report dating from November 30, 1928.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, département des arts du spectacle, “Recueil factice d’articles de presse sur Leila Bederkhan, 1924-1949,” 8-RO-12480.

¹⁸⁹¹ Safiye, *Leyla*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁹² Safiye, *Leyla*, p. 143.

¹⁸⁹³ Safiye, *Leyla*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁹⁴ A reproduction of the painting can be found in the database of the İstanbul Kadın Müzesi, <http://www.istanbulkadinmuzesi.org/leyla-bedirhan-lela-bederkhan>, last accessed March 10, 2016.

¹⁸⁹⁵ MAE-Nantes, Syrie-Liban, carton 1055, July 1932 for a list of subscribers.

Leyla personally in Paris at some point.¹⁸⁹⁶ Kamuran Bedirhan and his wife Natacha were most probably also in regular contact with Leyla.¹⁸⁹⁷

With a transnational biography, Leyla had a choice between different identities and personae. The dancing Kurdish princess was a stage character she successfully promoted and used to advance her career in the 1930s and 1940s. The French public was interested in this kind of romantic Orientalism, and Leyla Bedirhan was not the only artist with a multicultural heritage able to capitalize on these trends at the time. The composer and pianist Maurice Naggiar assembled the music for Leyla Bedirhan's dance performances.¹⁸⁹⁸ Naggiar was originally from Cairo, descending from a family of Maronite Christians. In the years prior to the First World War, he organized ballet performances for the Khedive and his entourage.¹⁸⁹⁹ After the war, he went to Paris. He was known for his Orientalist style, working with Leyla Bedirhan and other exotic dancers like Fatma Rouchdi.¹⁹⁰⁰ Similar to Leyla Bedirhan, Amal al-Atrash (1917–1944), better known under her stage name Asmahan, embarked on an international career as a singer and film star against the will of her relatives in the 1930s. Amal al-Atrash was a member of a politically prominent Druze family from Lebanon. Like Leyla Bedirhan, she started her career in Egypt.¹⁹⁰¹ And like Leyla, who tirelessly emphasized her Kurdish heritage, Amal al-Atrash was a member of a minority group in the French mandate territories. The French authorities had found a particular interest in these minorities from the 1920s onward, which in turn trickled down into the public discourse in

¹⁸⁹⁶ According to a comment made by Sinemxan Bedirhan on her public facebook profile on November 17, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/sbedirkhan?fref=ts>, last accessed March 9, 2016.

¹⁸⁹⁷ See the personal papers of Kamuran Bedirhan at the IKP in Paris, letter from Natacha to Kamuran Bedirhan, dated October 14, 1963.

¹⁸⁹⁸ Safiye, *Leyla*, p. 64.

¹⁸⁹⁹ See *Le Figaro*, March 19, 1911.

¹⁹⁰⁰ On Maurice Naggiar, see *Le Figaro*, April 8, 1925, and *La Correspondance d'Orient*, Nr. 303 (March 1923), p. 134.

¹⁹⁰¹ Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 209.

France, leading to a general curiosity about alleged exotic and Oriental traditions of the Kurdish or, in Amal al-Atrash's case, the Druze community.

With her art, Leyla Bedirhan catered to an already existing discourse about Kurdish culture prevalent in France prior to the Second World War. The Austrian newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* reported that after she returned from her tour in the United States, Leyla Bedirhan was asked by the French government to perform at the World's Fair to raise awareness for the heritage and culture of her fellow Kurdish nationals.¹⁹⁰² Setting herself in scene as a fierce and independent Kurdish princess, Leyla was able to build on previous discourses: The image of the wild and determined female oriental warrior, the "Kara Fatma" would have been familiar to a western audience at the time. For years, newspaper articles and illustrations in magazines had introduced the semi-fictional figure of a Kurdish warrior princess to the European public.¹⁹⁰³ Second, the interest in Middle Eastern minorities like the Kurds had increased with the French presence in the mandate territories of Syria and Lebanon. The image of the mysterious Kurdish princess which Leyla Bedirhan had successfully created for herself – almost certainly with a European rather than an Ottoman-Turkish or Kurdish audience in mind – happened to fit like a glove with images of Kurdish women that Kurdish nationalist historiography has come to prefer. Thus, Leyla Bedirhan's story and the persona she had created were easily translatable into the imagery of Kurdish nationalism and were integrated into the broader narrative of Kurdish national history. In this translatability lies one of the reasons for the ongoing interest in Leyla

¹⁹⁰² *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, August 20, 1931, p. 8, „[Leyla Bedirhan, BH] wurde von der französischen Regierung eingeladen, auf der Kolonialausstellung zugunsten ihrer Heimatgenossen zu tanzen.“

¹⁹⁰³ On the topos of "Kara Fatma," see Zeynep Kutluata, "Geç Osmanlı Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Savaş ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet: Kara Fatma(lar)." In: *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar 2* (2007), pp. 149-168.

Bedirhan's trajectory today. One of the results and, in turn, catalysts for this interest is a biography of Leyla Bedirhan written by Leyla Safiye which I look at in detail in the following section.

7.1.2. Leyla Bedirhan in Discourses About Kurdish Memory in Contemporary Turkey

*In the depths of darkness stands a young woman, her slender body
sparkling in soft silk of pearly hue.*

Her hair is dark, the color of the night sky.

Fear floats down her spine. Her long legs are trembling.

*In her Kurdish dance Dilan, Leila carries to the stage the fire in the
hearts of young men and women dancing at the Newroz festivities whose
origins go back to the ancient worship of the sacred fire.*

She feels the blood of her forebears coursing through her veins.

Leila: The journey of a name handed down through the times.

*The infusion of the Oriental into the West; the marriage of Eastern
passion and Western individuality in dance.*

*A marking of moments of Leila Bederkhan, a Kurdish princess who
crossed continents and cultures, who defied convention and succeeded in her
quest to become a famous dancer. (...)*

A woman whose name and life inspired generations to come.

(from the English summary of Leyla Safiye,

Searching for Leila).¹⁹⁰⁴

This quotation from the English summary of Leyla Safiye's biography of Leyla Bedirhan conveys a general impression of the tone and the motives inherent in the text under discussion here. In what follows, I take a

¹⁹⁰⁴ An English translation was published recently, Leyla Safiye, *Searching for Leila, the Kurdish Princess of Dance* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2012); the passage is taken from the English summary on the bookseller's website <http://www.pandora.com.tr/urun/searching-for-leila-the-kurdish-princess-of-dance/265280>, last accessed November 29, 2012.

closer look at Safiye's book on Leyla Bedirhan, which was first published in 2004 by Avesta Yayınları in Istanbul, situating it in a wider discourse on alternative memories and narratives of the past in contemporary Turkey. I argue that the biography can be read as an example of a seemingly apolitical text, which approaches Kurdish identity and personal history in a universal and lightly entertaining way, employing cultural difference as an ornament in a colorful and intriguing story, rather than drawing explicit attention to counter-narratives opposing Turkish national history. However, I posit that in doing so, Leyla Safiye's work still opens up spaces to discuss diversity and multicultural pasts in contemporary Turkey. I also argue that for an audience familiar with a more explicitly political discourse about Kurdish identity in Turkey, Leyla Safiye's depictions gain additional, more critical layers of meaning and reference more palpable discourses about Kurdish history and identity. Safiye's book on Leyla Bedirhan illuminates both possibilities and limitations inherent in the public discourse about non-Turkish pasts in Turkey today. By choosing not to talk explicitly about identity politics and underlining instead universal aspects of Leyla Bedirhan's biography, the text allows for a broad audience, including non-Kurdish readers,¹⁹⁰⁵ to identify with the main characters. At the same time, it provides key motives and images for a Kurdish audience, which relate to a broader and more political discourse about Kurdish national identity.

Discourses About Kurdish Memory in Republican Turkey

For the longest time after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, an all-encompassing Turkish nationalist vision of history and

¹⁹⁰⁵ For example, the Turkish lawyer Ayşegül Kaya reviewed Leyla Safiye's book favorably on her blog, praising its value from a feminist perspective and reading it as a story about the independence and will power of a young, talented woman. See <http://blog.camalti.net/leyla-bedirhan.html>, last accessed November 28, 2011. The blog is unfortunately no longer online (last attempt to access March 10, 2016).

identity did not allow for public expression of counter-narratives by non-Turkish groups. The Turkish state made an effort to suppress not only Kurdish, Armenian or Pontic Greek personal memories, but state policies equally targeted other expressions of non-Turkish collective cultural identity: The use of any languages other than Turkish was strongly discouraged.¹⁹⁰⁶ During the early years of the republic, Kurdish identity emerged as the key challenge to Turkish nationalist ideology: Repressive Turkish nationalist identity politics regulated not only the use of language but also encroached upon spaces, local histories and personal memories: A commission was set up in the 1930s to facilitate the Turkification of formerly Kurdish and Armenian place names in Anatolia.¹⁹⁰⁷ Large numbers of Kurdish children were sent to boarding schools and indoctrinated with nationalist ideology, history and geography to become Turkish citizens. Opposition to these cultural politics was perceived as an attack on the unity of the Turkish nation and met with severe repercussions, especially after the military coup of 1980.¹⁹⁰⁸

Since the 1990s, however, the discourse about the past in Turkey has shifted considerably. The interest in regional history, in biographical writing and in the Ottoman past in general has increased. An entire market emerged promoting different aspects of Ottoman heritage in Turkey – reaching from Ottoman cuisine and music to antique shops and successful novels set in Ottoman days. This high demand for the past is indicative of the emerging curiosity in Turkey about the country's

¹⁹⁰⁶ Early on, in the late 1920s and 1930s, campaigns were launched against minority languages under the slogan “Vatandaş, Türkçe Konuş” [Citizen, speak Turkish], see Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, “Les langues des Kurdes de Turquie: la nécessité de repenser l’expression ‘langue kurde.’” In: *Langage et Société* 117 (2006), p. 117.

¹⁹⁰⁷ On these toponymical strategies, see Kerem Öktem, “Incorporating the Time and Space of the Ethnic Other: Nationalism and Space in Southeast Turkey in the 19th and 20th Centuries.” In: *Nations and Nationalism* 10.4 (2004), pp. 559-578.

¹⁹⁰⁸ Konrad Hirschler, “Defining the Nation. Kurdish Historiography in Turkey in the 1990s.” In: *Middle Eastern Studies* 37.7 (2001), pp. 145-166.

Ottoman heritage.¹⁹⁰⁹ In the wake of this general wave of interest in history, often paired with nostalgia and an uncritical idealization of the Ottoman past, spaces also opened up where alternative historical accounts and non-Turkish narratives of the past, most of them very personal, could be discussed. One important turning point in that respect was the publication of Fethiye Çetin's *Anneannem Anı*,¹⁹¹⁰ relating the biography of Çetin's Armenian grandmother. She had concealed her non-Turkish identity for the most part of her life even from her closest relatives, only to tell her granddaughter, the author, shortly before her death. Çetin's publication anticipated a broader trend in contemporary Turkey: The generation of the grandchildren of those who had lived through the messy break-up of the Ottoman Empire and its aftermath now became increasingly interested in their own family history and personal accounts of the past. Like in Fethiye Çetin's case, inquiring about the past often revealed contradictions between the national history as it is taught in Turkish schools and more personal, less clear-cut memories which involved alternative identities still recalled by older family members.¹⁹¹¹

How did this opening in the discourse about a multicultural past in Turkey in recent years come about? External actors, notably the European Union and diaspora communities have had a significant impact on these developments: During the negotiations for Turkish membership to the European Union, strong emphasis was put on

¹⁹⁰⁹ Esra Özyürek (ed.), *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁹¹⁰ Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem Anı* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2005), and the English translation of the book, Fethiye Çetin & Maureen Freely (trans.), *My grandmother: A memoir* (London: Verso, 2008).

¹⁹¹¹ For an example of this unsettling experience, see also Çetin, *My Grandmother*, p. 66 who in a key passage of her book recalls the pride she used to take in reciting Turkish nationalist poetry as a schoolgirl and how she felt ashamed in retrospect for her performances when she finally learned about the origins of her grandmother.

reforms in the domain of cultural rights of minorities.¹⁹¹² Elected for the first time in 2002, the AKP government under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan initiated a reform process that – albeit slow and halting – initially led to a more liberal climate to express non-Turkish, particularly Kurdish, identity in the early 2000s.¹⁹¹³ At the time of writing in 2016, however, these developments have come to a halt. Long-term implications of the increasingly oppressive and authoritarian politics of the current AKP government for discourses about Kurdish identity are difficult to predict. In addition, exile communities have played a crucial role in the commemoration and transmission of alternative pasts.¹⁹¹⁴ In a time of growing global networks, with privately owned TV channels operating from abroad and receivable in Turkey and the emergence of the internet and social media as a platform to discuss questions of history and identity beyond the borders of the Turkish Republic,¹⁹¹⁵ these alternative versions of the Ottoman-Turkish past are increasingly broadcast to an audience inside Turkey, both Kurdish and Turkish. Since the 1990s, a space to discuss non-Turkish experiences of the past has thus opened up, with personal memories being the subject of works of fiction,¹⁹¹⁶ movies,¹⁹¹⁷ and TV series. There are, as Asuman

¹⁹¹² The treatment of the Kurdish minority in particular has often been referred to as the ultimate litmus test for Turkey's reform progress for EU observers, see Brendan O'Leary's preface in Robert Lowe & Gareth Standsfield (eds.), *The Kurdish Political Imperative* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2010), p. xi.

¹⁹¹³ Kemal Kirişci, "Turkey's Kurdish Challenge," in Robert Lowe & Gareth Standsfield (eds.), *The Kurdish Political Imperative* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2010), pp. 60-61.

¹⁹¹⁴ Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity and Subjectivity in Turkey." In: *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 44.1 (2002), p. 141. For the Kurdish community, broadcasts from Northern Iraq are of particular impact, see Lowe & Standsfield, *Political Imperative*, p. 5.

¹⁹¹⁵ For the growing impact of virtual communities for Kurdish history and collective memory, see Christine Allison, "Kurdistan Remembered Online. The 'Kurds Family Photo Album' and Other Virtual Memories," in: Stephan Conermann & Geoffrey Haig (eds.), *Die Kurden. Studien zu ihrer Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur* (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2004), pp. 97-120.

¹⁹¹⁶ See Elif Şafak, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (New York: Viking, 2007 [Istanbul 2006]) for an example: Set in contemporary Turkey, the story intertwines the trajectories of a Turkish and an Armenian family from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the present.

Suner observed for Turkish movies depicting minority memories, different styles of narrating non-Turkish pasts in contemporary Turkey. Suner made a broad distinction between what she calls “political approaches” on the one hand, which are outspoken about problems, grievances and contradictions inherent in minorities’ experiences, and “nostalgic recollections” of a universal past on the other hand, which refrain from raising politically sensitive issues explicitly.¹⁹¹⁸ Leyla Safiye’s account on Leyla Bedirhan’s biography clearly figures in the second category.

While it seems increasingly acceptable, even fashionable in certain milieus in Turkey today to speak out about one’s multicultural past, recalling an idealized and exoticized common Ottoman heritage, I argue in the following that explicit reference to Kurdish history and identity presents a slightly different case: In the current political context in Turkey, Armenian or Greek references to their respective former homelands have much less political topicality than the Kurdish claims in Eastern Anatolia, with several millions of ethnic Kurds currently living in the area¹⁹¹⁹ and the PKK (yet again) engaged in active guerrilla warfare against the Turkish state. Counter-narratives of Kurdish history must therefore be considered a case apart, different from other non-Turkish narratives of the past. To further situate Leyla Safiye’s biography of Leyla Bedirhan, I want to briefly sketch out the discourse about Kurdish identity in Turkey today, with its limits and opportunities.

¹⁹¹⁷ For a fictionalization of the Pontic Greek past of a woman in Turkey see Yeşim Ustaoglu (R), *Bulutları Beklerken* (Waiting for the Clouds), 2004. The movie is also analyzed by Asuman Suner, “Silenced Memories. Notes on Remembering in New Turkish Cinema.” In: *New Cinemas. Journal for Contemporary Film* 7.1 (2009), pp. 71-81.

¹⁹¹⁸ Suner, “Silenced Memories,” pp. 72-73.

¹⁹¹⁹ A recent estimate situates the number of Kurds in Turkey between eleven and fifteen million individuals. Kurdish nationalist sources often cite much higher figures, see Lowe & Standsfield, *Political Imperative*, p. 4.

Over the last decade, Kurdish intellectuals, writers and historians have benefited from the recent interest in multicultural pasts in Turkey. One of the early key moments which reopened the discussion of Kurdish identity after a period of complete denial following the military coup of 1980 was a comment made by President Turgut Özal (in office between 1989 and 1993), who publicly stated in 1989 that his grandmother had been Kurdish. It was again under Özal's presidency, in 1991, that the ban on publications in Kurdish language was lifted and new opportunities for Kurdish writers and publishing houses arose. While these early publications were mostly sponsored by Kurdish political parties, an independent publishing scene centered in Istanbul and Diyarbakir developed over the 1990s.¹⁹²⁰ At the time of the publication of Leyla Safiye's book in 2004 on Leyla Bedirhan, Kurdish literature and literature on Kurdish matters had achieved a steady presence in Turkey and began to reach out to non-Kurdish audiences. Publishing on sensitive issues of Kurdish history and identity, however, remained risky, as freedom of expression was (and still is) heavily curtailed,¹⁹²¹ and several Kurdish authors have been accused of and tried for propagating separatism and the disintegration of the Turkish state in the past. In 2009, a central demand of Kurdish activists was yielded by the Turkish government, as selected universities in Turkey introduced Kurdish language and history classes to their syllabi.¹⁹²² Recently, however, there has been a major setback in Turkish politics with regard to Kurdish minority rights. While these most recent developments do not matter directly for the contextualization of Leyla Safiye's book, which was first published in 2004, it is important to note that just as Kurdish narratives about identity and the past are neither fixed nor universal, the

¹⁹²⁰ Clémence Scalbert-Yücel, "Emergence and Equivocal Autonomization of a Kurdish Literary Field in Turkey." In: *Nationalities Papers* 40.3 (2012), pp. 357-372.

¹⁹²¹ Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering Smyrna / İzmir: Shared History, Shared Trauma." In: *History & Memory* 20.2 (2008), pp. 106-127.

¹⁹²² Nicole Watts, *Activists in Office. Kurdish Politics and Protest in Turkey* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2009), p. xiv.

opportunities to express them in contemporary Turkey are continuously changing as well.

Early on in the history of Kurdish nationalism, central figures of the nationalist movement recognized the need to write and transmit a Kurdish version of what happened in the aftermath of the collapse of Ottoman Empire and during the early years of the Turkish Republic. From the mid-1920s onwards, the Turkish Republican government set out to suppress Kurdish efforts to gain greater autonomy in Eastern Anatolia. Many Kurds were killed or forced into exile in the process of these uprisings. The Kurdish narrative of these events was silenced within Turkey, and the use of the Kurdish language and other markers of Kurdish identity was prohibited. It was in this context that leading intellectuals of the Kurdish movement, among them Nouredine Zaza and Musa Anter, became aware of the urgent need to record and preserve the history of the early Kurdish nationalist movement. Therefore, as they published their autobiographies and memoirs,¹⁹²³ they aspired to pass on more than just their personal recollections. They understood themselves as eyewitnesses and chroniclers of a crucial and formative period in Kurdish history.¹⁹²⁴ The works which were written against this backdrop were public, highly political memories which were meant to be read as part of a Kurdish national historiography. These early publications of Kurdish intellectuals have since been complemented with political memoirs and other writings of Kurdish activists, as well as movies which are set in an explicitly nationalist

¹⁹²³ See for one example Musa Anter, *Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: Doz Basım ve Yayıncılık, 1990), providing a detailed inventory of important figures of the early Kurdish nationalist movement.

¹⁹²⁴ Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes* (Leiden et al.: Brill, 2003), pp. 48 and 124 on Musa Anter.

discourse.¹⁹²⁵ These contributions, most of them in Kurdish language, target a Kurdish audience both within Turkey and in the Kurdish diaspora communities abroad. However, they do not generally make much headway into the broader Turkish public. At first glance, Leyla Safiye's account of the life of Leyla Bedirhan lacks this kind of direct reference to the broader political context of the Kurdish struggle for cultural autonomy. It does, however, reflect a different trend in contemporary Turkey: The general nostalgia for the late Ottoman period and the keen interest in personal memories that goes along with it. Looking at the website of Leyla Safiye's publisher, the Kurdish Avesta publishing house, one comes across a number of publications dealing with Kurdish history and biography on a popular level, many of them written in Turkish rather than in Kurdish language.¹⁹²⁶

7.1.3. Leyla Safiye: *Bir Kürt prensesinin öyküsü* (2004)

The illustration on the cover of Leyla Safiye's biography of Leyla Bedirhan provides a springboard into further inquiries about the book itself, its multiple messages and its audience(s).¹⁹²⁷ Against a bright red background, the book's cover features a black-and-white image of Leyla Bedirhan during a dance performance, wearing an elaborate Oriental costume. The image has possibly been taken from one of the show programs of Leyla's career in the 1930s. The dancer's shadow consists of two other female figures, a veiled, vaguely Oriental or antic goddess on the left and a female Oriental dancer on the right. These images might

¹⁹²⁵ See for instance the memoirs of the Kurdish activist Mehdi Zana, Mehdi Zana & Ali Öztürk, *Bekle Diyarbakır* (Istanbul: Doz Basım ve Yayıncılık, 1991) or the documentary *Close-up Kurdistan* (2007), directed by Yüksel Yavuz.

¹⁹²⁶ See the publisher's webpage for an overview, <http://www.avestakitap.com/>, last accessed March 12, 2012.

¹⁹²⁷ An image of the book's cover can be found online at http://www.avestakitap.com/urun_91_Avesta_Leyla%20Bir%20K%C3%BCrt%20Prensesinin%20%C3%96yk%C3%BCs%C3%BC.html, last accessed March 10, 2016.

depict other roles Leyla Bedirhan interpreted during her career, like the Queen of Sheba, Belkis or Salome.¹⁹²⁸ The montage also lends itself well as an illustration to one of the central messages of Leyla Safiye's book, the fact that Leyla Bedirhan incorporates the artistic and cultural heritage of an entire "Oriental world" into her dance performances. At the same time, the fact that three women are depicted, two of them as shadows of the one in the center, also reflects the way in which Leyla Safiye decided to organize her plot, clustering two life stories, that of her aunt Leila Perret as well as her own, around the biography of Leyla Bedirhan. Multiple ways of reading and understanding the imagery employed by Leyla Safiye (or her publisher) are possible – an observation that holds not only true for the cover illustration, but for Leyla Safiye's storytelling on the whole.

What at first glance, while scanning the entry in the library catalogue, seemed to me like an ordinary and straightforward biography of the Kurdish dancer Leyla Bedirhan turned out to be a much more layered and complex text: Instead of telling a single individual biography, the book attempts to link and entangle three different life stories: Starting with Leyla Bedirhan, the story segues into the life of the latter's goddaughter, the French-born Josiane Leila Perret (married Leila Kadirbeyoğlu, d. 2006).¹⁹²⁹ Leila Perret, in turn, is then revealed to be the aunt of the author, Leyla Safiye, herself. The author's approach begs the question of what is supposed to connect the Kurdish dancer, the French expatriate in Turkey and finally herself, the author of the book. The link is, unlike one might expect, not a shared Kurdish identity uniting the three women, on the contrary: Only Leyla Bedirhan is of Kurdish descent, while Leila Perret is French and Leyla Safiye herself was born

¹⁹²⁸ All of these roles are extensively commented upon, see Safiye, *Leyla*, pp. 21-25 and 86-89.

¹⁹²⁹ Perret married the Turkish businessman Güngürbüz Kadirbeyoğlu (*1931) in 1955 in Istanbul, the couple divorced later.

into a family of Turkish refugees from the Caucasus region. Safiye's own answer to the question of commonalities, her claim that she intended to follow the history of the name "Leyla" with her book, seems trivial at first – but it nevertheless situates her writing in a telling way. From the beginning, her style of writing and the issues she addresses in telling the three life stories make it clear that she is not at all interested in making any political statement about Kurdish identity or contribute to the corpus of historiographical writing concerned with Kurdish national history. Instead, Leyla Safiye turns to the much more ambiguous realms of myth, emotion and sensitivity: Her writing relies on detailed and ornamental descriptions – of Leyla Bedirhan's dancing as well as Leila Perret's paintings, on extensive depictions of nature as well as of family and childhood scenes from the lives of all three women. Leyla Bedirhan in particular is depicted as an independent woman who embodied the mythological powers of several consecutive ancient Oriental traditions in her dancing. Safiye's portraits of all three of her protagonists seem to be designed to allow her audience to identify with them and empathize with their respective experiences. By remaining vague, emotional and subjective in her storytelling, Safiye opens up the three biographies to different interpretations. Emotions play a central role in Safiye's writing, as she aims to enable her audience to relate the women's predicament and their experiences of loss and suffering, of exile, violence, forced migration and alienation, to their own personal trajectories. How can this text be situated in the larger field of literature about Kurdish history and identity in contemporary Turkey?

There are several ways of interpreting Leyla Safiye's sensual and seemingly apolitical approach in writing the biographies: As outlined above, Asuman Suner distinguished between modes of remembering in popular versus critical, politically motivated movies in her analysis of non-Turkish histories and memories in contemporary Turkish

cinema.¹⁹³⁰ Leyla Safiye's writing, it seems, fits very well with what Suner described as popularized, depoliticized and nostalgic commemorations of a universal and harmonious multicultural past, without open allusions to contradictions, tensions or larger questions of conflicted identities. Not only Safiye's vague and evasive style of writing justifies this understanding. A closer look at what is addressed in her text and what, on the other hand, is not talked about also supports this characterization: The factual biographical information provided for Leyla Bedirhan remain sketchy and inconclusive, while her career and achievements as a dancer are described in sometimes painstaking detail. The reasons for her emigration to Europe in her early youth, her experiences there and the difficulties she might have encountered remain largely unaddressed. It seems clear that this did not happen out of neglectfulness on the author's part, as Leyla Safiye invested a great deal of time and energy in her research. She consulted, for instance, a large number of international newspapers and journals to retrieve details about Leyla Bedirhan's dance performances and gave her writing an academic appearance by providing footnotes and an extensive bibliography.

Rather, Leyla Safiye seems to deliberately avoid politically sensitive or contradictory issues: The exact details of Leyla Bedirhan's life were of lesser interest to the author than her qualities as a dancer. This choice of perspective and focus allowed Leyla Safiye to tell the biography in a more universal way, without getting stuck in potentially contradictory minutiae. One example for such an internal contradiction which is sidelined in Safiye's account is the question of Leyla Bedirhan's Kurdish identity: While there is ample evidence that she referred to herself as a Kurdish dancer in interviews, possibly to promote her career at a time when exotism and Orientalism were popular with her European

¹⁹³⁰ Suner, "Silenced Memories," pp. 71-73.

audience, posing as a Kurdish princess constituted only one of several layers of her identity: Leyla Bedirhan's mother Henriette, who had raised her as a single parent in Egypt and later in Europe after the separation from her father Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan, was of Austrian-Jewish descent. Leyla Bedirhan's biography provides some evidence that her Jewish identity did continue to play a part in her later life. She married a man by the name of Henri Touache, a French Jew, and when she and her mother had to escape from France and seek refuge in Switzerland in the late 1930s, it was because they were persecuted for being Jewish. The Jewish element of Leyla Bedirhan's identity is heavily sidelined in Leyla Safiye's biographical account – but to tell a conclusive story, she cannot completely dismiss it. Here, it seems to me, lies one reason why Safiye draws up a mythological background to her story, including images of a more universally Oriental (rather than explicitly Kurdish) women as inspirations for Leyla Bedirhan, thereby bringing together biblical figures like Salome or the Queen of Sheba, ancient Egyptian deities like the goddess Isis and eventually linking all of these in the image of an independent and fiercely elegant female Oriental dancer.

Asuman Suner identified four factors which contribute to the establishing of the kind of depoliticized nostalgia prevalent in popular movies concerned with memory and history in contemporary Turkey – all of these factors can also be attributed to Leyla Safiye's writing on Leyla Bedirhan: Suner argues that apolitical, nostalgic depictions are marked (1) by making the past appear as a realm of complete innocence, often in contrast to the present, (2) by beautifying the past, (3) by a reconciliation of cultural and religious differences and (4) by reducing these differences in identity and culture to mere decorative elements of the story.¹⁹³¹ All four elements can also be found in Leyla Safiye's writing: First of all, she refrains from giving details on the watershed

¹⁹³¹ Suner, "Silenced Memories," pp. 74-76.

political events, prominently among them war and subsequent forced migration which marked the time period her story is set in, stressing instead childhood memories of her protagonists, thereby (counter-factually) depicting the past as a realm of complete harmony and innocence. Second, her depictions of artwork, in particular the details she gives on Leyla Bedirhan's dance performances, add an element of beauty to her take on Leyla's biography. Third, the author's attempt to bring together diverging narratives of the past by telling the story of three women who, while belonging to different ethnic groups, share the experience of exile and loss deserves further attention: Unlike texts situated in an explicitly Kurdish nationalist discourse about the past which focus on suffering afflicted on the Kurdish community by other ethnic groups and the Turkish state, Leyla Safiye tells a more universal story in which all protagonists endure pain in one way or another. She thus attempts to bridge the gap between Kurdish and Turkish suffering, rendering it as a more general, unspecific phenomenon, focusing on victims without identifying perpetrators. It is the ambiguity of her writing, in which she remains largely focused on the mystified, individual and subjective experiences of her female protagonists, seemingly detached from any larger political context, which enables her to do so. With regards to the last factor identified by Asuman Suner, it can be observed that Leyla Safiye does indeed make use of expressions of ethnic and cultural difference as decorative elements in her writing: Time and again, she describes for instance Kurdish traditional clothing, dancing traditions and other markers of cultural identity in great detail.¹⁹³²

In a second step, I now want to slightly modify Asuman Suner's argument that nostalgic and popularized depictions of multicultural history remain largely apolitical and take a second look at Leyla Safiye's

¹⁹³² Safiye, *Leyla*, p. 69 for an ornate description of Kurdish folk dancing, and pp. 163-165 for an account of the Kadirbeyoğlu family's Caucasian heritage.

writing, this time in the light of the discourses on Kurdish history and identity in contemporary Turkey. I agree with Suner that even popularized and depoliticized narratives of Kurdish pasts open up spaces to discuss Kurdish alternative history and counter-narratives publicly.¹⁹³³ In addition, however, I argue that Leyla Safiye's writing contains multiple layers of meaning, some of which connect it implicitly to a more political and conflicted discourse about Kurdish identity. Due to the ambiguities inherent in the text, Safiye's writing appeals to different audiences: On the one hand, she addresses a wider Turkish and even international readership, interested in and open to multicultural Ottoman history. On the other hand, however, a Kurdish audience will easily recognize the links and pointers to more explicit topics and tropes of Kurdish nationalist historiography.

Konrad Hirschler identified several motives as central to Kurdish efforts to create a collective identity:¹⁹³⁴ Responding to Turkish nationalist claims which depict Kurds as uncivilized and backward, Kurdish nationalist historiography stresses links to an ancient Kurdish past and civilization which supposedly predate the arrival of the Turks in Anatolia, thus challenging Turkish nationalist historiography at its core. In addition, a strong connection is made between the mythological past of Kurdistan and the present Kurdish community, arguing for timeless continuity and homogeneity of Kurdish identity. The claim to the Kurdish homeland is a topos of particular importance in that respect. Furthermore, Hirschler argues, ongoing Kurdish resistance to forced assimilation and the relentless upkeep of Kurdish traditions in the present is a crucial element of Kurdish nationalist accounts. He identifies the festivities of Newroz, a pre-Islamic, Zoroastrian New Year's celebration in the spring, as a central motive in that respect.

¹⁹³³ Suner, "Silenced Memories," p. 79.

¹⁹³⁴ Hirschler, "Defining the Nation," pp. 151-155.

All four elements identified by Hirschler can also be traced in Leyla Safiye's biography of Leyla Bedirhan: Her dance performances relate her Kurdish roots to a more universal, ancient Oriental culture and civilization, and readers familiar with a more explicitly Kurdish nationalist discourse would neither have missed her allusions to Kurdish dance as timeless expressions of Kurdish cultural identity nor the frequent references Safiye makes to dances related to Kurdish Newroz celebrations in particular.¹⁹³⁵ In Safiye's portrait, Leyla Bedirhan is not only inspired by her ancient roots, she also transmits the traditions of her ancestors on to the present, thereby preserving and perpetuating Kurdish identity. Leyla Bedirhan's connection to her Kurdish homeland is also repeatedly addressed in Safiye's account. It is the earth of her father's land (i.e. the Emirate of Bohtan in East Anatolia), the author raves that Leyla Bedirhan draws strength and inspiration for her performances from.¹⁹³⁶ Another example which allows to speculate about connections to a more political discourse about Kurdish identity is the image of the Kurdish woman: Leyla Safiye depicts her protagonist as a headstrong, independent and essentially modern woman who succeeds in Europe without the backing or protection of male relatives. As Safiye's account makes clear by mentioning that Leyla was more than once the target of blackmail and intimidation on the part of members of her extended family, who disliked her public appearances, this was a fairly dangerous endeavor. By making Leyla an example of a modern woman who manages to successfully bridge the gap between (Kurdish) tradition and (western) modernity and to transmit elements of an ancient Oriental civilization to the present, the biography refutes Turkish nationalist claims according to which Kurds are uncivilized, backward, averse to modernity and dependent on external intervention to achieve

¹⁹³⁵ On the importance of dance in Kurdish nationalist rhetoric, see Mehrdad Izady, *The Kurds. A Concise Handbook* (Washington et al.: Crane Russak, 1992), pp. 245-246.

¹⁹³⁶ Safiye, *Leyla*, p. 21, the term used in the Turkish version ("toprak" – earth) has strong connotations of the physical homeland.

civilization.¹⁹³⁷ In addition, Safiye's depiction of Leyla Bedirhan feeds into a broader discourse about Kurdish women as independent, more open and less restrained by prescriptions of religious law concerning veiling or confinement to the interior of the house than women in other Islamic societies. Kurdish nationalist historiography of the 20th century makes a point in highlighting independent female Kurdish figures like the 19th-century tribal leader Adela Hanum.¹⁹³⁸ The historical interest in Kurdish female warriors has some relevance in the contemporary political discourse about Kurdish identity and autonomy, as it is used as a historical legitimization of and model for female guerrilla fighters in the ranks of the Kurdish PKK forces today.

Another strategy for Leyla Safiye (and her audience) to connect seemingly apolitical writings to a more explicit and critical discourse about Kurdish identity and suffering lies in the comparative approach of her biographies: As Leyla Safiye claims that all three of her female protagonists suffered through similar experiences of exile and loss, it is interesting to note how each individual trajectory is described, respectively: While the account of Leyla Bedirhan's emigration to Europe remains sketchy and her motives or her feelings about it are never explicitly mentioned, the two other life stories address more directly what is only alluded to or silenced in Leyla Bedirhan's account: Suffering, violence, death and displacement. It remains up to the reader to establish the connections between the story of Leïla Perret's French family of Huguenot origins, whose violent persecution in 17th-century France is related in detail by Leyla Safiye, her own family's history of immigration to Turkey from the Caucasus, arriving as penniless *muhacir* and forced to leave behind their beloved homeland, and finally Leyla

¹⁹³⁷ Mesut Yeğen, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse." In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 34.4 (1999), pp. 555-568.

¹⁹³⁸ See Martin van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish History," in: Shahrzad Mojab, *Women of a Non-State Nation. The Kurds* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publications, 2001), pp. 95-11.

Bedirhan's story, where all these elements so prominently discussed in the other two biographical accounts are only alluded to. A second factor which adds to the allusive dimension of Leyla Safiye's writing is her framework of an across-time comparison of the biographies she presents: By taking the biographical account to the present, telling the reader about her own life and quest for identity, she assumes (and gives her audience reason to assume) that the essential questions in the story – questions of migration, loss and identity, of inquiring about one's past and origins like she herself does in her book are of relevance not only to her own story, but also to Leyla Bedirhan's biography, and thereby for the discourse on Kurdish identity in Turkey more generally. Safiye leaves it up to her readers to connect the dots and come full circle in the comparison of the three life stories, thereby creating a space to discuss, implicitly, Kurdish identity and suffering connected to it in contemporary Turkey.

It is the subjectivity and ambiguity in Safiye's account which allows multiple audiences to project their own understandings, stemming from different discourses about Kurdish identity and history in contemporary Turkey, onto the text. Safiye's ambiguous and apolitical style of writing is indicative of the opportunities and limitations Kurdish narratives and alternative histories encounter in the contemporary discourse about the past in Turkey: In 2004, a nostalgic and vague account of a multicultural past was possible, did not attract censorship or any other repercussions, and, if published in Turkish, even had the potential of reaching a wider, non-Kurdish audience.

Reception and Discussions of the Book: Who are Leyla Safiye's Readers?

The Istanbul-based publisher Avesta Yayınları, which released Leyla Safiye's book on Leyla Bedirhan, is the oldest and one of the largest Kurdish publishing houses in Turkey. It opened in 1996, after publishing in Kurdish language had first become legal in Turkey in the early 1990s, and has since been working with numerous renowned Kurdish and Turkish authors. Today, Avesta Yayınları reaches out to a Kurdish and Turkish, as well as an international readership, listing around two hundred titles in Kurdish, Turkish, French and English in its catalogues. The publishing house retains a special focus on Kurdish history, biography and women's writing.¹⁹³⁹ In spite of liberalization efforts, writing about Kurdish history in Turkey in 2004, when Leyla Safiye's book appeared, was still a sensitive, often dangerous activity.¹⁹⁴⁰ Avesta Yayınları did not shy away from sensitive issues and has repeatedly faced charges for promoting separatism – fines were imposed and the publishing house's editor-in-chief Abdullah Keskin even received a prison sentence in 2002.¹⁹⁴¹ Being published by Avesta Yayınları provided Leyla Safiye with visibility and some credibility with a critical Kurdish audience, situating her work in a discourse about Kurdish identity – and raising her readers' expectations that her biography of Leyla Bedirhan will address this discourse at some level.

¹⁹³⁹ For the program, see Avesta Yayınları's homepage, <http://www.avestakitap.com/>, last accessed March 12, 2012.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Evaluation of PEN America, see a press release dating from April 4, 2005: <http://www.pen.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/316 /prmID/2025>, last accessed March 12, 2012.

¹⁹⁴¹ It was later converted into a fine he had to pay, see Nicholas J. Karolides, *Literature Suppressed on Political Grounds* (New York: Facts on File, 2006), pp. 13-15. As of December 2016, Avesta Yayınları is still operating from Istanbul, albeit within a climate of growing apprehension.

Demonstrably, however, not all of Leyla Safiye's readers were of Kurdish background: More generally, her text resonated in particular with a female audience, which identified on an emotional level with the trajectories and quandaries of the three women introduced by Leyla Safiye. In bookstores, the biography could be found on the same shelf with historical fiction and semi-fictionalized biographical writing set in late Ottoman times, in particular stories from the Ottoman palace or relating to the Ottoman dynasty.¹⁹⁴² The catchy subtitle Leyla Safiye chose for her book, "Bir Kürt Prensesinin Öyküsü," the story of a Kurdish princess, situates her writing in the broader field of this currently very popular genre of Ottoman palace literature. In addition, the affordable price, the paperback format and the relative brevity of the book – a total of 219 pages, interspersed with lots of imagery – recommend it to a broad audience of average Turkish readers. Customers leaving comments on the book on the Turkish bookseller's website [kitapyurdu.com](http://www.kitapyurdu.com) were most impressed with the emotional impact of the book, with many reviewers stating how they were moved by the sadness of the story and some indicating that the biography had triggered a broader curiosity about Kurdish history.¹⁹⁴³ The Turkish lawyer Ayşegül Kaya discussed Leyla Safiye's book on her personal blog early in 2012. Being herself interested in women's rights, Kaya focused her discussion of the book primarily on the more universal elements of female struggles for autonomy inherent in Safiye's account, leaving aside the less explicit ethno-political dimension of the writing. Kaya's reading is telling about the ways in which Leyla Safiye's work resonated with a mostly female Turkish audience with a mainstream interest in feminism and of urban, educated and secular background, with a

¹⁹⁴² Other books recommended for customers who were interested in Leyla Safiye's book on [kitapyurdu.com](http://www.kitapyurdu.com), a Turkish bookseller website which works on the basis of algorithms similar to those of [amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), range from historical fiction set in Ottoman times to a popular biography of the wife of Mustafa Kemal and more explicitly Kurdish memoirs and publications on history, some of them in Kurdish language.

¹⁹⁴³ See the comments on <http://www.kitapyurdu.com/kitap/default.asp?id=85192>, last accessed November 29, 2012.

general openness towards questions of identity and cultural pluralism.¹⁹⁴⁴ The book was also discussed in the liberal Turkish newspaper *Radikal* shortly after its publication in Turkey in 2004.¹⁹⁴⁵ Discussing Leyla Safiye's biographical compilation of three female life stories, including her own, the paper followed the author's claim that she set out to write the history of her name, "Leyla," but also came to the conclusion that "between the lines" of Safiye's text, "there are notes of suffering and emotion for those who look for it."¹⁹⁴⁶ The discussion indicates that the reviewer at *Radikal* was aware of the layered character of Leyla Safiye's writing, suggesting that at least a part of her readership would equally understand the book in that way.

Recently, Leyla Safiye's biography of Leyla Bedirhan was translated into English; the translated version is available from the same publisher, Avesta Yayınları in Istanbul. The translation indicates that Safiye is reaching out to a wider audience beyond Turkey. Possibly, she has members of the second and third generation of Kurdish emigrants in the European diaspora in mind as part of her intended audience. Sparked by Leyla Safiye's book, the enthusiasm for the story of the dancing Kurdish princess Leyla Bedirhan continues in Turkey as well: In November 2015, the Kurdish dancing company *Mezopotamya Dans* based in Moda, Istanbul used Leyla Bedirhan's story as their inspiration

¹⁹⁴⁴ See Ayşegül Kaya on <http://blog.camalti.net/leyla-bedirhan.html>, last accessed November 29, 2012.

¹⁹⁴⁵ *Radikal* was a newspaper of the liberal Turkish left with a high circulation. The paper was known for regularly approaching questions of minorities and human rights in Turkey and frequently discussed Kurdish cultural rights. Since 2009, the paper had featured a regular column about Kurdish literature by Abidin Paraltı. See Scalbert-Yücel, "Emergence and Equivocal Autonomization", pp. 357-372. *Radikal* was shut down in the spring of 2016, its online archives are currently not accessible.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Metin Kaygalak, "Bir Leyla'da Üç Yaşam [Three Lives in One Leyla]." In: *Radikal*, December 10, 2004; http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=ktp&haberno=3316, last accessed November 26, 2012. The passage I quoted above reads in Turkish "Satır aralarında meraklısı için acı, duygusal notlar var."

for a modern dance production.¹⁹⁴⁷ In an interview, members of the cast confirmed that Leyla Safiye's book had kindled their interest in Leyla Bedirhan's biography. The performance emphasizes questions of identity the artists imagine Leyla Bedirhan had to come to terms with throughout her life and reads her career as a tale of resistance against her own family and generational conflicts.¹⁹⁴⁸ Leyla Bedirhan's career as a dancer was, according to the story told on stage in Moda, fervently opposed by her family. The dance performance is just the latest example showing that the discussion about the biography of Leyla Bedirhan is ongoing. She and her story have become an integral part of a discourse about being Kurdish, even though her initial decision to highlight her Kurdish heritage over other aspects of her identity had been a conscious choice with many alternatives.

7.2. The Personal Memoirs of Müveddet Gönensay

Müveddet Gönensay's personal memoir offers an opportunity to compare and situate the life stories and trajectories of some of the aforementioned, more prominent members of the Bedirhani family like Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran or Leyla Bedirhan. More generally, her writings offer a different perspective on narratives of the Bedirhani family history: Unlike the works on the three Bedirhani brothers or the dancer Leyla Bedirhan analyzed above, Müveddet's memoirs were not produced or edited as part of a discourse marked by Kurdish nationalist

¹⁹⁴⁷ See <http://bianet.org/biamag/kultur/169442-leyla-bedirhan-sahnedi>, last accessed March 10, 2016.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Modern dance as a cultural technique is already associated with some degree of resistance in contemporary Turkey, and leaders of the AKP government have been quite vocal in their disapproval of dance performances. All the more so, it can easily be imagined, when the subject chosen for such a performance is inspired by Kurdish history. See Altuğ Yalçıntaş, "Intellectual Disobedience in Turkey," in: Idem (ed.), *Creativity and Humor in Occupy Movements. Intellectual Disobedience in Turkey and Beyond* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 12 and also Cigdem Akyol, *Erdoğan. Die Biographie* (Freiburg et al.: Herder, 2016), p. 103.

historiography. Müveddet Gönensay, the daughter of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, was born in 1910 and was thus part of roughly the same generation of Bedirhanis that her cousins Celadet, Kamuran and Leyla also belonged to. Like them, Müveddet lived through the unsettling period of transformation and transition of the early 20th century. Her story as well as her narrative strategies, however, differ considerably from those I have traced so far in the biographies of other family members: After the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Müveddet stayed in Istanbul. There, she lived through the foundational years of the Turkish Republic, married into a Turkish upper-middle class family from Istanbul and successfully blended in with a Turkish Republican urban elite.

The rendition Müveddet Gönensay offers of her biography does not focus on the Kurdish origins of her family. Instead, her narrative revolves much more around the family she married into, her in-laws and her own children figuring prominently throughout the recollections. A sense of belonging and identification is conveyed through affectionate, detailed descriptions of familiar spaces and material environments of both the wider Istanbul neighborhood of Kalamış, where she lived with the family of her in-laws, and the stately townhouse owned by her parents-in-law. Nostalgia and longing for these places, which were lost to urban development and change at the time of Müveddet's writing in the 1990s, are the central *topoi* which shape and situate her narrative. At first glance, not unlike Leyla Safiye's writings on Leyla Bedirhan, Müveddet's recollections appear devoid of any political statements or context. Yet, her writing contains implicit comments on a conflicted discourse of belonging and identity. A comparison to other memoirs from the immediate context of the Bedirhani family highlights that her writing about her personal experiences presupposes a conscious choice on the author's part and makes silences in Müveddet's narrative concerning the Kurdish and Ottoman imperial aspects of her life story

more salient. A second point renders Müveddet Gönensay's perspective particularly interesting for the collective history of the Bedirhani family: In addition to not being modified according to Kurdish nationalist historiography, her narrative also offers access to a (very rarely heard) female experience. As her text was not intended for wider publication, it sheds light on more private dimensions of parts of the Bedirhani family's history. These particularities make Müveddet Gönensay's recollections a key piece in the puzzle that is the analysis of the Bedirhani family history.

7.2.1. “Müveddet Gönensay'ın Anıları, 1910-1991” – Context and Textual History

The personal memoirs of Müveddet Gönensay have so far not been mined by historians interested in the history of the Bedirhani family. This is due to the fact that the memoirs have never been published. Only a limited number of typewritten copies of the manuscript seem to have been distributed by Müveddet herself among family members and close friends. I came across one of those typewritten copies by coincidence when I systematically looked up female members of the Bedirhani family under their married names in the early stages of my research. A search for “Müveddet Gönensay” turned up an entry on the Turkish online sales platform gittigidiyor.com,¹⁹⁴⁹ accompanied by a photograph of the grey cardboard front-page of what appeared to be a personal notebook. In handwritten capital letters, the title read “Müveddet Gönensay'ın Anıları, 1910-1991.” I tried to contact the vendor online, but to no avail, I never received an answer. Several months later, when I was in Istanbul to do more extensive research on the history of the Bedirhani family, I remembered my online find and decided to look up the vendor once more. I found a link to a secondhand bookstore in Kadıköy, went

¹⁹⁴⁹ It works very much like ebay, accessible online at www.gittigidiyor.com.

there in person and eventually localized the copy that was offered online there and purchased it. The owner of the shop did not remember how or when he had acquired the booklet and was not aware of any other materials that he might have gotten from the same source, such as letters or family photographs.

After reading Müveddet Gönensay's memoir closely, I have come to the conclusion that the booklet is unlikely to have traveled far. Many of Müveddet's close friends and family used to live in and around the very area in Kadıköy where the secondhand bookstore is located today. Müveddet wrote and in turn distributed her copies in the early 1990s. Hypothetically, a friend of hers living in Kadıköy, of roughly her age maybe, might have received a copy and then later passed away, his or her descendants giving away the remaining personal papers, including Müveddet's memoirs, to the nearby secondhand bookstore. On the final page of my copy of Müveddet's manuscript, a handwritten addendum consisting of three lines and the author's signature can be found. Here, Müveddet Gönensay expressed her thanks to a woman named İlham, further identified only as the daughter of a certain Ömer Lütfü Bey from Fenerbahçe.¹⁹⁵⁰ Since these lines were apparently specifically added to this particular copy, it might have been prepared for either İlham Hanım herself or for members of her family.

My copy of the manuscript contains thirty-three pages of dense typewritten text with several handwritten corrections and annotations, followed by two pages of family pictures. As the text was copied from an original, the photographs are all in black-and-white, some of them very dark and blurry, making the individual scenes and family members

¹⁹⁵⁰ In Turkish, the addendum reads as follows: "Bu yazılarım derleyen, toplayan, ve yazan gene Fenerbahçeli çok sevdiğimiz Ömer Lütfü beyin kızı İlham'a teşekkürü bir borç bilirim. M. Gönensay."

depicted barely recognizable. Apart from that, the spiral-bound copy is in good condition, the text being complete and legible in its entirety.

7.2.2. Müveddet Describing the Origins of her Family

Müveddet Gönensay starts off her narrative with a summary of the history of the Bedirhani family. She traces her family's history back to famous historical figures like Saladin (Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi)¹⁹⁵¹ and Halid ibn al-Walid and also includes the 16th-century Kurdish men of letters Şerefhan Bitlisi ("Şeref Han") and İdris Bitlisi ("Bitlis Han") among the ancestors of the Bedirhani family. Like in virtually all other versions of the family history, the central point of reference for her after this broad historical introduction is her paternal grandfather, Emir Bedirhan. Painting a rather positive picture of Emir Bedirhan as an able and highly estimated ruler, she recounts the story of his confrontation with the Ottoman state in the 1840s, along with his eventual defeat and exile. She emphasizes the respectful reception of Emir Bedirhan by Sultan Abdülaziz, whom she describes as much taken and impressed by the emir. Müveddet also explicitly mentions a large sum of money and a mansion in Istanbul which the sultan allegedly bestowed on Emir Bedirhan. Müveddet's rendering conveys the impression of a rather peaceful encounter and an amicable relationship of the Bedirhani family with the central Ottoman state and the state authorities. More recent accounts, among them the extensive archival research conducted by Ahmed Kardam on the Ottoman military operation against Emir Bedirhan in the 1840s,¹⁹⁵² suggest a different, more violent and confrontational, narrative of this period in the Bedirhan family history.

¹⁹⁵¹ I did not find this claim made very often in Kurdish nationalist historiography, but it is brought up in İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Yedigün Neşriyatı, 1946), p. 67, as well.

¹⁹⁵² Kardam, *Sürgün Yılları*, pp. 11-13. See the discussion in chapter 2.

Müveddet's account, however, seems to be informed by the standard historiography prevalent in the family in late imperial times. Her narrative evokes the previously discussed account of Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] dating from 1907/08.¹⁹⁵³ It is possible that she had access to this narrative, either in the form of oral history transmitted by senior relatives or through a copy of the actual booklet authored by Lütfi. It is also entirely possible, however, that Müveddet's information on the early history of her family did, at least in part, not go back to any internal family tradition: Her historical account runs parallel to information on the Bedirhani family provided by İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa in his *Türk Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi* (1946), reproducing some of Gövsa's phrases verbatim.¹⁹⁵⁴ One addition that can be found neither in Lütfi's nor in Gövsa's account is Müveddet's brief comment on Emir Bedirhan's philanthropic activities in Damascus, where he spent the last years of his life and, according to Müveddet, endowed a number of religious institutions as well as bridges and public fountains.¹⁹⁵⁵

Müveddet presents her readers with a positive image of her grandfather Emir Bedirhan and underlines his being on excellent terms with the state authorities. While in tune with standard historiography on the family history dating from late Ottoman times, this version is in stark contrast to readings of the same events offered by Kurdish nationalist

¹⁹⁵³ Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz], *Emir Bedirhan* (Cairo [?]: Matba'a-yı İctihād, no date), analyzed in detail in chapter 2.

¹⁹⁵⁴ Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurları*, pp. 67-68. Gövsa writes, for instance, "Ailece isimleri bilinen cedleri yedince göbekte Bitlis Hanı ve meşhur Şerefname adlı tarihin müellifi Birinci Şeref Hana ulaşmaktadır." – Müveddet Gönensay wrote very similarly "Aile adları bilinen cedleri, yedinci göbekte BİTLİS HAN'I ve ünlü Şerefname adlı tarihin yazarı ŞEREF HAN'a kadar ulaşır," *Anıları*, p. 1. It is of course conceivable that both Müveddet and İbrahim Gövsa, who was himself related by marriage to the Bedirhani family, had access to the same, unpublished account of the family history, which would also explain the parallels.

¹⁹⁵⁵ My research in the Vakfiye Arşivi of the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü in Ankara, however, did not produce any evidence of these activities. Further evidence might be gathered from the local vakfiye archives in Damascus, I'd like to thank Astrid Meier for pointing this out to me.

historians,¹⁹⁵⁶ pointing to the malleability and ambiguity of the historical narrative which shifts according to concerns of the present. Müveddet wanted to stress a tradition according to which her ancestors had enjoyed friendly relations to state authorities, marked by mutual respect. This twist in her narrative enables her to refer to her family origins with pride, while at the same time casting herself as a member of a Turkish Republican elite.

In the following paragraph, Müveddet then summarizes the biography of her father, Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan, in very broad strokes. Without adding much detail, she traces the outlines of his career as an Ottoman bureaucrat, mentioning his education at the Galatasaray Lisesi, his studies in Switzerland and his contacts to the Young Turk opposition there, noting his eventual return to the Ottoman Empire¹⁹⁵⁷ and subsequent employment in the imperial administration. The brief account does not leave the reader with too vivid a picture of her father. The ensuing part of the memoir then traces the family on the side of Müveddet's mother. Her mother was a Swiss citizen, born as Elisabeth van Muyden in Geneva in 1881.¹⁹⁵⁸ Müveddet notes with some pride that her maternal great-grandfather Alfred van Muyden and other relatives on her mother's side of her family were famous painters and artists. Her getting some of the names and spellings wrong, however, indicates that she was not deeply familiar anymore with the Swiss side of her family. The general reference to artistic work and creativity nevertheless remained an important reference for Müveddet, as she saw this family legacy continued in the career of her own daughter Beyza,

¹⁹⁵⁶ See for example Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları* (Spånga: Apec, 1994), pp. 46-62.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Müveddet writes "Türkiye," *Anılar*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵⁸ This date of birth is given by Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *İlk Kürt Gazetesi Kurdistan'ı Yayımlayan Abdurrahman Bedirhan (1868-1936)* (Istanbul: Vate Basın, 2009), p. 22.

who also became an artist.¹⁹⁵⁹ While the information on the Swiss side of her family remain scarce and are at times imprecise,¹⁹⁶⁰ Müveddet appears to have been to Geneva herself at least once, indicating an ongoing interest with her Swiss origins.

There is some evidence that in the circles which Müveddet's maternal grandfather, the Swiss engineer François van Muyden, frequented, the story of his daughter getting married to an Ottoman foreigner – a Kurdish prince, none the less – was exceptional and not forgotten quickly. Accordingly, a friend of François van Muyden mentioned the episode, with some elaboration and errors, in his memoirs.¹⁹⁶¹ Müveddet alludes to the fact that the relationship and eventual marriage of her parents took place without the blessings of her mother's family and that only an aunt of her mother had supported the young couple. Abdurrahman Bedirhan and Elisabeth van Muyden got married in France, in July 1904.¹⁹⁶² This initial resistance and dismissive attitude might account for an alienation of Müveddet's mother from her family, especially after the couple had returned to the Ottoman Empire following the birth of their first child, Müveddet's sister Leyla, in 1905. Abdurrahman Bedirhan was able to return to the Ottoman Empire in

¹⁹⁵⁹ On Beyza Gönensay (*1932), see Kaya Özsezgin, *Türk Plastik Sanatçıları. Ansiklopedik Sözlük* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1994), p. 135

¹⁹⁶⁰ Müveddet's nephew Abdurrahman İtah Eroğlu (a son of her sister Leyla), who was consulted by Malmisanij for his biographical account on Abdurrahman Bedirhan similarly made a point of mentioning the Swiss relations of the family but had only very vague and imprecise information, suggesting that contact was very limited by the 2000s, see Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 22. Müveddet had continued or revived contacts to her family in Geneva after her mother's death in 1963. She visited an aunt in Geneva, and also mentions in her memoirs that Swiss family members came to see her and her siblings in Turkey. Her brother Kerim Çınar had studied in Switzerland, equally indicating that the relations to Geneva were never entirely cut off, Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 29.

¹⁹⁶¹ Jean-Elie David, Marianne Enckell & Pierre Enckell, *Notes au crayon: Souvenirs d'un arpenteur genevois (1855-1898)* (Lausanne et al.: Éditions en bas, 2004), p. 90: "Une de ses [i.e. François van Muyden's, BH] filles épousa un Kurde de grande famille qui fut mis en prison à Constantinople pour avoir conspiré contre le Sultan Abdul Hamid – le massacreur d'Arméniens –, fut délivré ou exilé en Tripolitaine, je ne me souviens plus, où sa femme put le rejoindre."

¹⁹⁶² Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 22.

spite of his association with the Young Turk opposition movement in Geneva after he received an imperial pardon.¹⁹⁶³

7.2.3. 1906 as a Break in the Narrative

The narrative pattern in the first part of Müveddet's recollections can be described as follows: Her parents, madly in love with each other and fearlessly overcoming all obstacles in their way, were finally united and all set for a life of bliss and happiness after the birth of their first child and subsequent return to the Ottoman Empire. Then out of the blue, a blow of fate threatened their happiness. Evaluating and situating this rather rose-colored account of the early years in the marriage of her parents, it needs to be considered that Müveddet drew up a somewhat idealized counter-image to contrast the events of 1906, which led to the trial and the eventual separation of her father from the family. Somewhat different from what is implied by Müveddet's account, the initial decision of the newly-weds to return to Istanbul in 1905, setting out on an exhausting journey with a newborn baby, would not have been one taken lightly. Müveddet did not comment on her parents' decision to leave Europe, which might have been a consequence of ongoing tension between the van Muyden family and Abdurrahman Bedirhan. Or else, it might have been a result of strong incentives offered by the Ottoman authorities which convinced Abdurrahman Bey to return. An indication that such incentives might have played a role is the apparent ease of the resettlement of Abdurrahman Bey and his family in Istanbul, where housing in a comfortable *konak* in Erenköy was provided for them. In addition, Abdurrahman Bedirhan did not face any

¹⁹⁶³ A copy of the respective document, BOA, DH.MKT. 1005.92, 13 B 1323 H (September 13, 1905), is also reproduced by Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 36. Malmisanij believes that Abdurrahman Bedirhan's family pulled strings for him, pressing his case with the sultan.

repercussions for his oppositional activities in exile upon his return to the Ottoman Empire.

The murder of Rıdvan Paşa in the spring of 1906, however, was a game changer. As it has been laid out in detail in a previous chapter, the involvement of some members of the Bedirhani family resulted in the entire family being targeted. Abdurrahman Bey, who had not been directly involved in the murder, was tried and sent into exile in Tripolis (Libya), having been sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment.¹⁹⁶⁴ It seems that as a result of his oppositional activities, he had been blacklisted in some way, and the Ottoman authorities seized the opportunity to get back at him in the context of his family's collective persecution, even though he did not share their political outlook. Abdurrahman's wife, who did not speak Ottoman Turkish, and baby daughter were put under arrest in their home in Istanbul. Having to fend for themselves, they were forced to sell their valuables to the guardsmen in exchange for bread and milk.¹⁹⁶⁵ The events following the arrest and exile of the male members of the Bedirhani family and the dire consequences for their wives and other dependents were rendered in similar fashion in other contemporary sources and have been discussed in greater detail above. Müveddet's narrative runs parallel to recollections of Halide Edip and others in this regard.¹⁹⁶⁶ From Switzerland, the van Muyden family tried to obtain a diplomatic intervention on behalf of their daughter, approaching several European

¹⁹⁶⁴ See FO 195/2212, report from consul Alvarez in Tripolis, dated May 14, 1906. For a discussion of the murder trial, see chapter 4.

¹⁹⁶⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁶⁶ Halide Edip, *Mor Salkımı Ev* (Istanbul: Atlas Kitabevi, 1979), pp. 111-114. Similar to Elisabeth van Muyden, Halide Edip's half-sister Mahmure Hanım was also put under house arrest with her young children while her husband was brought to trial in Tripolis (Libya) in 1906. She was detained in her home, heavily guarded and isolated from friends and family, who worried greatly about her, since she was about to give birth. Family friends intervened with the Ottoman authorities on Mahmure's behalf, but to no avail. Eventually, after the trial in Tripolis was concluded and her husband was sent into exile to Jerusalem, she was permitted to join him there.

governments for support. Eventually, both Elisabeth van Muyden and her baby daughter Leyla were allowed to return to Geneva, where they stayed until 1908, when Abdurrahman Bedirhan was free to return from exile after the Constitutional Revolution. Upon his release, Elisabeth immediately left Geneva to rejoin her husband in Istanbul.¹⁹⁶⁷

While in Müveddet's account, the time period between 1906 and 1908 was represented as a rupture and blow of fate on the level of family relations, she did not frame it in political terms like Kamuran Bedirhan and others have done in later recollections, as a definite break which went along with a complete loss of confidence in the Ottoman imperial state as such. For Müveddet's father, the "homeland"¹⁹⁶⁸ he returned to from exile in 1908 was still Ottoman Istanbul, where he resumed his professional career as an imperial bureaucrat. Seen as responsible for the misery and injustice suffered by the Bedirhani family was not the Ottoman state as such, but the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II – this constituted a different reading of the events than the narrative prevalent in later Kurdish-nationalist discourse, as it allowed for a continued identification with the Ottoman (and later Turkish) state.

7.2.4. Transition into Müveddet Gönensay's Own Story

After these initial six pages summarizing her family's history, which focused on events that had mainly occurred prior to the birth of Müveddet in 1910 and seem to have been gathered from a number of external sources, including written accounts of the Bedirhani family history, the text transitions into the more personal recollections of Müveddet herself.¹⁹⁶⁹ Immediately, the tone of the narrative becomes

¹⁹⁶⁷ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁶⁸ The term in the original manuscript is "vatan," see Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 7.

more intimate. In the style of a diary entry, dated February 1, 1991, Müveddet lays out her motivations for writing down her memories. Thinking back to the days of her youth, when an entire extended family of three generations lived together under one roof, she feels painfully reminded of her current isolation and loneliness. The snow falling outside as she writes triggers concrete memories of her family's social life and winter traditions. In particular, family gatherings around a large Russian tiled stove figure prominently in her colorful and detailed recollections. The introductory paragraph on her own life story contains some information on Müveddet's herself and her current situation: Born in 1910, she would have been eighty-one years old at the time of writing. She was living in Kalamış, a part of Istanbul which used to be intimately familiar to her since her early youth, but which has changed dramatically in more recent years, leaving Müveddet somewhat lost, longing for a space that no longer exists in the present. Müveddet lives alone, her husband Tefvik Bülent Gönensay has passed away in 1977, and she is painfully aware of her loneliness. Müveddet decides to write down the memories coming to her mind, as a testimony for later generations, lest there might one day be no one left to remember. She expresses the hope that her recollections will be of interest and value for her children and grandchildren and that through her writing, she will also be remembered by her family after her death.¹⁹⁷⁰ In turn, commemorating a number of family members who were dear to her and have since passed away is an important purpose of her writing. Her parents-in-law,¹⁹⁷¹ her mother¹⁹⁷² and other family members are recalled with affection and gratitude, the respective commemorative passages ending with the formulaic "nur içinde yatsın(lar)," may they rest in peace.

¹⁹⁷⁰ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁷¹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁷² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 25.

As it has been indicated in the previous section on Leyla Bedirhan, the 1990s marked a time in Turkey when spaces for personal memories opened up and interest in family history and Ottoman origins was increasing.¹⁹⁷³ Müveddet Gönensay's account, which dates from 1991, reflects this wider Turkish discourse about longing for the past and nostalgia, in which the concept of *hüzün*,¹⁹⁷⁴ translated as a melancholic sadness, plays a prominent role. *Hüzün* has become a key term in Orhan Pamuk's nostalgic renderings of Istanbul.¹⁹⁷⁵ This special kind of melancholy has a shared, collective aspect, and a close connection to the city and local culture of Istanbul, as well as a spiritual dimension.¹⁹⁷⁶

As far as her style of writing is concerned, Müveddet's recollections are clear and rely on engaging descriptions and vivid imagery. She draws her reader in with the first paragraph, using present tense and allowing insight into her stream of thoughts, thereby creating a sense of intimacy. In the subsequent parts of the narrative, Müveddet makes use of retrospectives and foreshadowing, creating a dramaturgy of events in an attempt to meaningfully connect the events which shaped her family's history. Her language and elaborate style of writing betray her background as an educated woman who, with her immediate family members, targets a group of equally educated readers. Possible models which might have sparked Müveddet's initial interest in writing her personal story and informed her style of writing include contemporary

¹⁹⁷³ Özyürek, *Politics of Memory*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷⁴ The introductory lines of this part of Müveddet's account in Turkish are as follows: "Kalamış'ta karlı bir gün. Lapa lapa kar yağıyor. Pencereden bu beyaz kelebeklerin uçuşlarını seyrediyorum. İçimde sebebini bilmediğim bir hüzün var," Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Orhan Pamuk, *İstanbul. Hatıralar ve şehir* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003).

¹⁹⁷⁶ See Kyra Giorgi, *Emotions, Language and Identity in the Margins of Europe* (Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 126-148.

autobiographies,¹⁹⁷⁷ but also fictional texts and accounts of local history.¹⁹⁷⁸

After the introduction, Müveddet continues her account with the event of her own birth in Istanbul in 1910. She was named after a female relative who lived with her parents at the time, but her mother Elisabeth – who was still having difficulties with the Ottoman Turkish language and talked to her daughters in French – much preferred to call her Detti.¹⁹⁷⁹ Müveddet was born and spent her first years in Kadıköy, where the family had rented the Köçeoğlu Köşk.¹⁹⁸⁰ For the following years, her childhood memories are marked by numerous relocations, as her father was transferred from one job assignment in the Ottoman administration to the next. Müveddet recalls spending time in a summerhouse on the island of Büyükkada, where Abdurrahman Bedirhan was employed as district governor (*kaymakam*) at the time of the outbreak of the First World War. While her mother spoke to the children in French – a language which Müveddet regarded as her mother tongue during her childhood – and the children picked up Turkish from their father,¹⁹⁸¹ the family also employed a female Greek servant and her daughter. From them, Müveddet also learned some Greek, a language she claims she

¹⁹⁷⁷ The Turkish journalist Nimet Arzık is one example, she published her memoirs in the mid-1980s: Nimet Arzık, *Tek at, tek mızrak* 3 vols. (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1983-1984). Arzık lived in the same part of the city and mentioned the Bedirhani family in her memoir.

¹⁹⁷⁸ For example: Müfid Ekdal, *Bir Fenerbahçe vardı* (Istanbul: TTOK, 1987).

¹⁹⁷⁹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 8. The relative named Müveddet referred to here was probably the wife of Müveddet Gönensay's paternal uncle Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan, and the choice might indicate a particularly close relationship between Mikdat's family and that of his brother Abdurrahman Bey.

¹⁹⁸⁰ The building had once belonged to the Armenian banker Agop Köçeoğlu (1820–1893) and was located in the Nişantaşı Yolu in the Acıbadem Mahallesi in Üsküdar, see Müfid Ekdal, *Bizans Metropolünde ilk Türk köyü Kadıköy* (Istanbul: Kadıköy Belediye Başkanlığı Kültür Yayınları, 1996), pp. 129-133.

¹⁹⁸¹ Letters sent by Abdurrahman Bedirhan to his older daughter Leyla in 1908, however, were written in French and indicate that the father communicated in French with his children as well, at least at times. For the letters (in Turkish translation), see Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, pp. 139-148.

still had a fairly good grasp of even now, in her advanced age.¹⁹⁸² The fact that Abdurrahman Bedirhan's children, and in particular his young son Kerim, who was born in 1915, were deliberately exposed to Greek, one of the languages which came in useful for a career in the Ottoman civil service, mirrors similar concerns Emin Ali Bey Bedirhan had regarding the education of his own sons. Celadet and Kamuran were part of roughly the same generation as Müveddet and her siblings and were also encouraged to learn Greek and had a Greek nanny. Interestingly, Müveddet does not mention any exposure to Kurdish, a language that her father would have been fluent in.¹⁹⁸³ This omission, however, might be due to the general denial of the existence of a distinct Kurdish language in a highly politicized discourse surrounding Kurdish identity which was prevalent in Turkey at the time of Müveddet's writing.

Towards the end of the First World War, Müveddet's father was transferred from his post in Büyükkada to the Aegean. In turn, the entire family accompanied Abdurrahman Bedirhan to İzmir, where they experienced great difficulties during the Greek occupation of 1919. Müveddet, nine years old at the time, vividly remembers her first encounters with Greek and Turkish nationalist propaganda in this context, recalling that she was very sad when she witnessed how the Greeks belittled and ruled over the Turks in İzmir.¹⁹⁸⁴ In retrospect, Müveddet strongly identifies with the Turkish side. Here, she connects her personal story with the larger narrative – and omnipresent foundational myth – of the emergence of the Turkish Republic, referring to herself as one of the Turkish victims of the Greek occupation. The details of her account of the family's stay in İzmir, however, illustrate that the fault lines between the different groups involved in the conflict

¹⁹⁸² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁸³ According to Abdurrahman Bedirhan's *sicill-i ahval*, BOA, DH.SAİD. 177.136.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 9.

were more complicated on the ground than later Turkish nationalist historiography suggests: In the hopes of being spared from the bouts of violence and looting caused by the Greek occupation of İzmir, Müveddet's mother flew the Swiss flag over the family home and eventually, when it became apparent that the family would have to leave the city for their own safety, enlisted the support of the local Swiss consulate.¹⁹⁸⁵ The Swiss consul arranged for Elisabeth and her children to leave for Istanbul by boat. Her husband Abdurrahman Bedirhan was absent from İzmir at the time, deployed in the Ottoman provincial administration of nearby Aydın. The Greek nanny and her daughter also preferred to leave İzmir and accompanied the family to Istanbul. Emphasizing her Swiss origins, Elisabeth played on the ambiguous identity of her family. Müveddet, on the other hand, who has subsequently been socialized with the Turkish nationalist version of the events, frames her experience as a Turkish one in her memoirs, fitting it into a larger discourse of memory marked by a strong and absolute dichotomy between "Greeks" and "Turks." This framework does not accommodate more complex realities, like the Swiss-Kurdish family being caught up in the middle of the fighting or their Greek nanny opting to leave a city controlled by fellow Greeks.

In Istanbul, the network of the extended Bedirhani family in the city took care of the refugees after their arrival from İzmir. Elisabeth and her children initially found shelter at the house of Abdurrahman Bedirhan's older brother Emin Ali Bey in Kızıltoprak. In her memoirs, Müveddet also recalls meeting Emin Ali Bey's children Celadet, Kamuran and Meziyet there. In her recollections, these three were playmates of her own age.¹⁹⁸⁶ However, Celadet and Kamuran were about ten years older than Müveddet and would have already been in her mid-20s in 1919. Müveddet's memory apparently played a trick on her – it is possible that

¹⁹⁸⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 10.

she confused Celadet and Kamuran with the younger sons of Emin Ali Bey, Safder and Tevfik. In any case, the inconsistency seems to indicate that Müveddet was not in regular or close contact with the children of Emin Ali Bey after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Otherwise, she would have realized her mistake about the age difference. Information provided by Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun] in his biography of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, however, suggests that Müveddet tried to contact Kamuran Bedirhan during a trip she made to Paris as an adult. Allegedly, Kamuran refused to see or talk to her, claiming that he was being followed and that a meeting between the two could have severe consequences for Müveddet upon her return to Turkey.¹⁹⁸⁷ Back in 1919, when Müveddet's father eventually returned to Istanbul as well, the family relocated, moving to a rented *konak* with a beautiful garden in the neighborhood of Erenköy, where Müveddet attended a French primary school. Her mother was eager, however, to no longer depend on rented property and used money she had inherited after her father's death to purchase a family home. From Erenköy, the family thus moved into a house in Kalamış, a building described by Müveddet as set in pink stone and surrounded by a large and well-tended garden.¹⁹⁸⁸ The family had servants who lived with them there, an Albanian gardener and his wife. The house was located in today's Fener Kalamış Caddesi, but has, like many neighboring buildings, been demolished during the reorganization of the marina and waterfront in Kalamış in the 1960s.

The personal file (*sicill-i ahval*) of her father Abdurrahman Bedirhan preserved in the Ottoman archives¹⁹⁸⁹ confirms the general time line provided by Müveddet for her childhood years: Abdurrahman was one of the youngest, if not the youngest son of Emir Bedirhan, born in Istanbul in 1867/68, shortly before the death of his father. Belonging to a younger

¹⁹⁸⁷ Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 104. He cites no source for this allegation.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁹⁸⁹ See BOA, DH.SAİD. 177.136.

generation of Bedirhanis, he was, at least initially, among the most successful of the emir's descendants in the Ottoman bureaucratic system. In 1889, he graduated from the prestigious *mekteb-i mülkiye*, the Ottoman school for civil servants in Istanbul, where in addition to Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian he had also studied French and English. Upon his successful graduation, Abdurrahman Bedirhan was employed as a teacher in a preparatory school (*i'dadiye*) in Salonica. In the following year, he was transferred to a similar school in Trabzon. It appears that Abdurrahman Bey remained stuck with similar, not really well-paying jobs in education for the following years. At the same time, he became increasingly engaged with opposition politics. In 1898, he left for Europe without permission from the Ottoman authorities, accompanied by his friend Ziya Bey.¹⁹⁹⁰ After seven years in exile in Switzerland, Abdurrahman Bey returned to the Ottoman Empire in 1905 with his wife and baby daughter Leyla. He was exiled to Tripolis (Libya) in 1906, but was then allowed to return to Istanbul and re-enter the Ottoman civil service after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, finding a job in the Ministry of Education.¹⁹⁹¹ In May 1912, Abdurrahman Bey

¹⁹⁹⁰ Ziya Bey is mentioned in BOA, ZB. 45.94, dating from Nisan 26, 1322 M (May 9, 1906). He had not only fled, but also returned back to Istanbul with Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan and was still in contact with him and his family after their return. He worked as an assistant to the judicial advisor (*hukuk müşavir-i mu'avını*) when an investigation was opened on him in the context of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa. Ziya was interviewed and stated to have been born in Istanbul in 1873. He also mentioned he had no living relatives in the city besides his older brother Halid Bey and currently lived Kadıköy together with his *süt dayı* Vehbi Bey, who worked at the Ministry of Finances. Ziya had graduated from the Galatasaray Lisesi and then embarked on a career as an Ottoman official. He had been married but his wife had died and their three children currently lived with his father-in-law Sami Bey, who happened to be a friend and chess companion of Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan. When asked to recall the exact circumstances of his flight to Geneva, Ziya Bey stated that he had taken advantage of the general confusion during the visit of the German Emperor in Istanbul in November 1898 to flee. He had boarded a steamer to Marseille and traveled from there to Switzerland.

¹⁹⁹¹ Throughout his professional life, education remained an important issue for the former teacher Abdurrahman Bey: He was involved with the foundation of a Kurdish association to foster education (Kürt Neşr-i Ma'arif Cemiyeti) in 1910/11 and was (probably) among the initiators of a school for Kurdish children in Istanbul. That he perceived these activities as fully compatible with his commitment to the Ottoman state is

was appointed as district governor (*kaymakam*) of the islands near Istanbul, receiving a monthly salary of 2.500 *kuruş*. His personal file indicates that on his own request, efforts were made to transfer him to a different post in the spring of 1914. Other sources suggest that his removal from Büyükada was due to tensions with the influential local notable Necmeddin Molla, whose horses Abdurrahman Bey had confiscated for the Ottoman army.¹⁹⁹² The personal file terminates in 1914 and there is no mention of Abdurrahman Bey's activities in İzmir, neither is the employment there, which Müveddet mentions in her memoirs, confirmed by any other document from the Ottoman archives. However, it appears that Abdurrahman Bey was appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of el-Hüdeyde (al-Hudaydah) in Yemen in 1914,¹⁹⁹³ which would have meant a considerable promotion, but he seems not to have taken office there. Müveddet made no mention of this in her account. It is highly unlikely that Abdurrahman Bey held the post as governor of İzmir at any point, as Müveddet (mistakenly) remembers.¹⁹⁹⁴ There is evidence, however, that towards the end of the First World War, Abdurrahman Bedirhan was appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of the nearby province of Aydın.¹⁹⁹⁵ According to the testimony of Asaf Gökbel, Abdurrahman Bey arrived in Aydın shortly before the Greek occupation of the city began on May 27, 1919. Abdurrahman was aware of the hopelessness of the situation, but saw taking office and overseeing the defense of Aydın – against explicit orders from the Ottoman capital, according to which resistance was strongly discouraged – as his patriotic duty.¹⁹⁹⁶ A month into the occupation of the city, towards the end of

indicated by the name given to the school he opened: “Kürt Meşrutiyet Mektebi,” the Kurdish constitutional school.

¹⁹⁹² Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 92.

¹⁹⁹³ BOA, BEO. 4279.320874, 27 Ca 1332 H (April 24, 1914).

¹⁹⁹⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁹⁵ BOA, İ.DUİT. 43.6, 30 B 1337 H (May 2, 1919).

¹⁹⁹⁶ According to Asaf Gökbel, *Milli Mücadele’de Aydın* (Aydın: Coşkun Matbaası, 1964), p. 97, Abdurrahman talked of himself as “Ben Aydın’ın şanssız yöneticisiyim,” [I am the hapless executive of Aydın] and stressed that he understood his efforts as a patriotic duty: “... vatanıma ve milletime yararlı olurum düşüncesi ile geldim,” [I came here thinking that

June 1919, Abdurrahman Bedirhan was arrested and imprisoned in İzmir by the Greek military. He was released after twenty-five days and apparently returned to Istanbul to join his family there.¹⁹⁹⁷ After the war, Abdurrahman Bedirhan never again held any office or, it appears, any other job. He did take part in the majority of the Bedirhani family reunions in 1920¹⁹⁹⁸ and put his knowledge of French to use in negotiations with foreign diplomats in the name of the entire family.¹⁹⁹⁹ He did not engage in political activities from the early Republican period onwards.

It is interesting to note that initially, during late Ottoman times, Abdurrahman Bey had understood himself and his actions in the framework of the liberal Young Turk opposition to the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. As it emerges from letters he sent from prison to his young daughter Leyla in 1908, he saw his personal suffering and the injustices he endured as closely linked to a greater struggle for freedom and the return to constitutional rule in the Ottoman Empire.²⁰⁰⁰ For Abdurrahman Bedirhan, the crisis of 1906 did thus not immediately translate into a definite rupture with the Ottoman imperial system or lead to exclusive support for Kurdish nationalism and the demand for Kurdish independence. On the contrary, as his professional trajectory indicates, Abdurrahman Bey remained firmly attached to the Ottoman imperial state. His commitment to the survival of the empire in the

I could be of use to my homeland and my nation]. The same paragraph is also cited by Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 102.

¹⁹⁹⁸ Malmisanij, *Cizira Botanlı*, see the minutes of the meetings, where the names of the individuals attending are given, pp. 21-39.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 103.

²⁰⁰⁰ These letters were originally written in French but later translated and typed up by Abdurrahman Bey's daughter Leyla Eroğlu. Malmisanij had access to two translated copies and reproduced both in his book, *Malmisanij, İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, pp. 139-148. In the letters, Abdurrahman Bey writes the following about the days of his arrest: "O karanlık günlerde idealimden asla vazgeçmedim (...) zira kutsal bir amaç için çalıştığım biliyordum." [During these dark days, I did not give up on my ideal (...) because I knew I was working towards a sacred goal], *ibid.*, p. 145.

wake of foreign attacks and occupation in 1919 can be read as further evidence of that.

A number of external sources, among them contemporary memoirs, complete and in some respects add some additional perspectives to Müveddet's childhood memories: Foremost among these is the autobiography of the Turkish writer and journalist Nimet Arzık (1923–1986), whose family lived next-door to Müveddet and her parents in the 1930s and 1940s. According to Arzık's recollections, the Bedirhani family's fortune and reputation in the neighborhood were in steep decline in the early Republican period, with Elisabeth and Abdurrahman Bey being treated as outsiders by their neighbors and being made the object of mockery and ridicule.²⁰⁰¹

7.2.5. The Neighborhood of Kalamış as a Place of Longing

Following a detailed and affectionate description of her family home (which I will return to below), Müveddet delves into an in-depth description of her neighborhood of Kalamış in the early 20th century.²⁰⁰² At that time, Kalamış was a popular place for well-to-do Istanbulites to pass the summer months, and many of the wealthier families owned or rented summerhouses there. Müveddet's mother took advantage of the popularity of the area, renting out an annex in their spacious garden to summer guests. The artist Bedri Rahmi Eyyüpoğlu (1913[?]-1975) and his wife Eren (1913–1988) stayed with the Bedirhanis during the summer months and became regular guests and friends of the family.²⁰⁰³ With the space of Kalamış, Müveddet associates the most

²⁰⁰¹ Arzık, *Tek at, tek mızrak*, vol. 1, pp. 69-71.

²⁰⁰² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 12.

²⁰⁰³ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 12. Bedri Rahmi's Canadian daughter-in-law, who lived in the Bedirhani garden house herself in 1975 and had known it as a visitor since her arrival in Turkey in the 1960s, wrote an autobiography which contains some information on the

pleasant and carefree time period of her youth, describing the atmosphere during these days as almost magical. She does not mention any difficulties her family might have encountered at the time, as they were navigating the transition from the imperial system into the early Turkish Republic. It is, however, more than likely that with the collapse of the imperial state, the family experienced some disorientation and hardship.

Abdurrahman Bedirhan, the committed former Ottoman bureaucrat, found himself falling through the cracks: He had great difficulties to find work or even a place for himself in the Republican context. His well-known Kurdish background, along with the outspoken oppositional stance a number of his family members living outside of the Turkish Republic adopted from the late 1920s onwards, constituted additional obstacles towards a full integration and recognition in the Turkish Republican elite. Between the lines of Müveddet's consistently upbeat and positive account of the post-war years in Istanbul, profound changes in the family's life and status do shine through: Her mother started to teach French and to give piano lessons, and her older sister Leyla took up a job as a secretary at a local girls' college.²⁰⁰⁴ Just decades earlier, it would have been unthinkable for female members of the family to work in public – but new opportunities, paired with the financial pressures faced by the family, facilitated swift changes. While Müveddet describes these events cheerfully, tuned to a Turkish Republican narrative of progress and women's liberation, it seems clear that the family was facing hardship and financial constraints during the early years of the Turkish Republic. Her father, who was likely struggling with his failure to find work and provide for his family, is not mentioned at all in

Eyyüpoğlu family, see Huguette Eyüboğlu, *From the Steeple to the Minaret: Living under the Shadow of Two Cultures* (Istanbul: Çitlembik Publications, 2006). In the early 1960s, Bedir Rahmi's address was listed as "Kalamış Fener Caddesi 29," see Nebioğlu, *Türkiye'de Kim Kimdir* – this then must have been the address of Elisabeth [Emel] Çınar as well.

²⁰⁰⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 12.

Müveddet's recollections at this point. In spite of financial difficulties, investments in the education of the children and cultural life in general remained important for the family's identity: Müveddet's younger brothers attend a fairly prestigious secondary school in Istanbul,²⁰⁰⁵ and she vividly remembers her mother purchasing a piano from a neighboring family. The piano has become an heirloom which was still owned by Müveddet at the time of her writing in the 1990s and continued to remind her of her mother.²⁰⁰⁶

Not only during Müveddet's childhood and early youth, but also throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Kalamış remained an important point of reference in Müveddet's memories. Her recollections of Kalamış are set against the appearance of the area at the time of her writing in the early 1990s, when due to urban change most of the former buildings had been replaced by nondescript high-rise apartment blocks and the once dominant lush gardens and the waterfront had been completely built over. Müveddet's memories of Kalamış of old are very sensual, she remembers, for instance, the fragrances of different trees on early summer evenings.²⁰⁰⁷ She walks her reader through this now vanished Kalamış, mentioning a Greek garden café (*gazino*) and church and a tea garden at the waterfront.²⁰⁰⁸ She then enumerates other notable buildings and grand family mansions of the area, among them the wooden *köşks* of the Viçino, the Urbah, the Smithlight and the Botter families,²⁰⁰⁹ as well as the Hotel Belvue, a popular meeting point for the

²⁰⁰⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 12, her brothers Kerim and Ferit attended the Feyz-i Âti Lisesi in Çemberlitaş.

²⁰⁰⁶ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 12.

²⁰⁰⁷ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 19. The phenomenon of smell triggering memories has been discussed extensively in memory studies, see e.g. Mikisha Doop, "Olfaction and Memory," in: Warrick Brewer, David Castle & Christos Pantelis (eds.), *Olfaction and the Brain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 65-82.

²⁰⁰⁸ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 19.

²⁰⁰⁹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 20. The Botter family had built an ensemble of four mansions after 1884 which had become an architectural landmark of Fenerbahçe, was frequently reproduced on postcards and was a well-known point of reference for locals. The houses

local upper class society.²⁰¹⁰ Müveddet's depictions also stress the cosmopolitan character of Kalamış in the inter-war years, and she deplores how this international, "Levantine" aspect of life in the area has completely vanished in later years.²⁰¹¹ Another element she regrets is the loss of intimacy among neighbors, which has now been replaced by the anonymity of a densely populated urban space.²⁰¹² Müveddet describes how life used to move slowly in the bay of Kalamış, with only a few boats a day leaving for the center of Istanbul on the European side of the Bosphorus.²⁰¹³ She also recalls activities her family used to engage with in the now lost Kalamış, mentioning luxuriant picnics and walks at the waterfront, as well as swimming and playing tennis matches in private gardens that extended down to the beach. Müveddet repeatedly stresses how beautiful Kalamış had been during these days, quoting at one point the praise a Japanese visitor of her father-in-law showered on the place, as if to give her own observations even greater credibility.²⁰¹⁴ Müveddet's recollections of the old Kalamış contain an implicit critique of the urban transformation, building boom and general acceleration of everyday life which began to affect the area during the 1960s and 1970s. Having undergone profound changes, "the real Kalamış" has been turned into a place which only exists in Müveddet's memories, and can therefore be idealized.

Müveddet's accounts of the social life in Kalamış contain markers of identity and belonging, characterizing her and her peers as members of a privileged, modern and educated urban elite of Republican Istanbul. Her detailed descriptions of Kalamış thus also serve the purpose of

were torn down in 1961, see Müfid Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu. Kadıköy Konakları* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), pp. 410-418.

²⁰¹⁰ In Turkish, Müveddet speaks of "en kaliteli aileleri," the most distinguished families, Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 20.

²⁰¹¹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 20.

²⁰¹² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 20.

²⁰¹³ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 19.

²⁰¹⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 19.

locating herself within this very group and can also be read as statements about herself and her ambitions. The link to Turkish Republican modernity is made even clearer when Müveddet mentions how Mustafa Kemal Atatürk would have come to frequent the very same social circles at the Hotel Belvue that she and the family of her in-laws were also an integral part of. Conflicted as it was during the time of transition, her own family history shows that the assimilation and successful adaptation into the Kemalist project of Turkish nationalism and modernity was not self-evident. Passages like these might serve the purpose of reassuring Müveddet and her readers of her place in society, her aspirations and loyalties: She clearly understood herself as a member of the Turkish Republican elite, a modern and educated young woman. In casting this image of herself, Müveddet associated herself increasingly with the relatives of her husband, the Gönensay family. Her own family origins fade into the background as her narrative proceeds. In Kalamış, however, Müveddet would have been close to other members of her extended family, even though the Bedirhanis are rarely mentioned in her account.

Kalamış and the Extended Bedirhani Family

With the focus clearly on the Gönensay family in depicting the years after her marriage, Müveddet's own parents and siblings barely make an appearance anymore and other relatives are hardly ever mentioned in her recollections. One exception is a brief note on Avni Şasa (1909–1976), a paternal cousin who lived in Kalamış as well and was in regular contact with Müveddet and her family throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Avni Şasa, who made a fortune with the trade of wood, and Müveddet's younger brother Kerim (1915–1994) were business partners.²⁰¹⁵ Avni

²⁰¹⁵ This information is given by Malmisanij, *İlk Kürt Gazetesi*, p. 105. Going into trade after the First World War was still a rather unusual decision for a Muslim from a family of

Şasa's office, as well as the summerhouse of the Şasa family, were situated in Müveddet's immediate surroundings, in Feneryolu and Çiftehavuz, respectively.²⁰¹⁶

Müveddet's silence on the presence of her relatives – apart from Avni Şasa – in the neighborhood of Kalamış is remarkable. As a matter of fact, the area, along with the wider surroundings of Kadıköy, was of no small importance for other members of the Bedirhani family, many of whom continued to live here in early Republican times. In addition to the Şasa family, Abdurrahman Bey's brother Murat Remzi Bedirhan lived in the immediate neighborhood. Murat Remzi had married into the family of Divriğili Hafız Hasan Paşa (d. 1876) and lived with his wife Nuriye in a *köşk* at the corner of Bağdat Caddesi and Dr. Faruk Ayanoğlu Caddesi.²⁰¹⁷ Another cousin of Müveddet's, Mihriban, the daughter of Hüseyin Kenan Bedirhan, also lived in the neighborhood of Feneryolu, close to Kalamış with her family in the early 20th century.²⁰¹⁸ Additional evidence indicates that Hüseyin Kenan Paşa himself also owned a *köşk* and a large garden in Kadıköy, located on Bağdat Caddesi. The property was inherited by his wife Zeynep after his death in 1908.²⁰¹⁹

It appears that the memory of the eventful past of the Bedirhani family was still very much alive among the locals of Kalamış and in neighboring areas in early Republican times, as the memoirs of Nimet Arzık indicate. It also emerges from her account that Abdurrahman Bedirhan and his wife in particular were a target for neighborhood

Ottoman bureaucrats, see Ayşe Şasa's comments on the career of her father Avni Şasa, who had studied law and then entered a company as an apprentice, before he was able to take over from its former owner in the 1940s, *Bir Ruh Macerası* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2013), pp. 17 and 20.

²⁰¹⁶ Şasa, *Ruh Macerası*, p. 32.

²⁰¹⁷ Ekdal, *Kapalı Hayat Kutusu*, pp. 153-154. The house shared a garden with the *köşk* of Nuriye's brother Na'il Bey Divriğili, a former Ottoman governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Lesbos. The buildings were torn down in the late 1950s.

²⁰¹⁸ Şasa, *Ruh Macerası*, p. 17.

²⁰¹⁹ BOA, DH.SYS. 34.94, ekler 22-24, dated February 25, 1908.

gossip and mockery. Because of her unusual size, Abdurrahman Bey's wife was given the nickname "the French giraffe," and Abdurrahman Bey himself was ridiculed for his lack of professional success and shrinking fortune, as well as for the constant arguments with his wife which the entire neighborhood was able to witness.²⁰²⁰

7.2.6. Introducing her In-Laws: The Gönensay Family

Different from her sister Leyla's trajectory, the next step for Müveddet after her family had hit rock bottom financially was not working life but an early marriage: The following part of Müveddet's memoirs describes how she befriended the daughter of the neighboring family of Talat Bey [Gönensay, d. 1963].²⁰²¹ Through her, Müveddet eventually also met the son of the family, Bülent [Gönensay], a young law school graduate and alumnus of the prestigious Robert College.²⁰²² At the time, Müveddet was in close contact with her cousins İhsan and Avni Şasa, the grandchildren of Hüseyin Kenan Paşa Bedirhan. They were roughly of the same age and lived in Feneryolu, where they had access to a private tennis court. Tennis matches there provided regular occasions to meet and socialize for them, Müveddet and the children of the Gönensay family, giving Müveddet and Bülent ample opportunity to get to know each other. Regular afternoon dance parties hosted by Talat Bey [Gönensay] in his house constituted another opportunity for Müveddet to socialize and meet members of the local elite, along with artists like the poet Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan (1852–1937)²⁰²³ or the musician Fulya Akaydın (1906–1975), who were among the guests of these rather extravagant and lavish events, for which food was brought from *en vogue*

²⁰²⁰ Arzık, *Tek at, tek mızrak*, vol. 1, pp. 199-200.

²⁰²¹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

²⁰²² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

²⁰²³ Abdülhak Hamit Tarhan was a personal friend of Talat Bey's brother Hıfzı Tevfik Gönensay, who also wrote a book in his memory after his friend's death, Hıfzı Tevfik Gönensay, *Hâmid'in son yılları ve son şiirleri* (Istanbul: Vakit Matbaası, 1947).

restaurants in downtown Istanbul.²⁰²⁴ With great appreciation for detail and deep admiration, Müveddet describes what would have constituted her window into an emerging upper class society of early Republican Istanbul in her memoirs.

On the initiative of Talat Bey [Gönensay], Müveddet eventually got engaged to his son Bülent. Talat Bey's daughter Emel, Müveddet's close friend, was at the same time also preparing to get married, she was engaged to Kazım Dilman, a friend of her brother Bülent. The two couples celebrated a splendid double wedding in Talat Bey's house.²⁰²⁵ Afterwards, Müveddet moved in with her in-laws. In her memoirs, she describes her new home, the *köşk* of the Gönensay family, at great length as an elaborately and thoughtfully decorated, palace-like environment.²⁰²⁶ From her account, it becomes clear that Müveddet strongly identified with her in-laws, the Gönensay family. She provides more information and detail on the family's background and social standing than on her own family in the preceding paragraphs. Her reader learns that her father-in-law, Talat Bey, was not only a pivot and a generous sponsor of cultural life in Istanbul, but also a successful lawyer. Müveddet notes how the occupation with legal matters and general erudition ran as a tradition in the Gönensay family, mentioning Talat Bey's brother Ahmed Samim Gönensay (1884–1954), a professor of law, along with a second brother, Hıfzı Tevfik Gönensay (1892–1949), who is introduced as a teacher and the founder of a boys' school in Istanbul.²⁰²⁷

The Gönensay family was originally from Salonica, and both Hıfzı Tevfik and Ahmed Samim Gönensay were born there. Their father İshak

²⁰²⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

²⁰²⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

²⁰²⁶ Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 13-14.

²⁰²⁷ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 14.

Tevfik Bey had been an official in the Ottoman Ministry of the Navy (*bahriye nezareti*) at the turn of the century. Two of his sons, Ahmed Samim and Müveddet's father-in-law Talat, embarked on a career in legal studies. While there is less information on Talat Bey himself, his more prominent brother Ahmed Samim Bey is known to have graduated from law school in Istanbul in 1908, before he set off to Paris to continue his studies there. In the Republican period, Ahmed Samim Bey became a professor of law and was well known in his field as the author of numerous legal reference books.²⁰²⁸ A third son of İshak Tevfik Bey, Hıfzı Tevfik, graduated from the prestigious *mekteb-i mülkiye*, the school for Ottoman bureaucrats in 1913.²⁰²⁹ He was a prolific poet and writer and also embarked on a career in teaching, eventually becoming the director of the Feyz-i Âti Lisesi.²⁰³⁰ In addition, İshak Tevfik Bey had three daughters: Fa'ize, Fikriye and Meliha.²⁰³¹

Müveddet's mother-in-law Fa'ika Hanım also descended from a family of legal experts and Ottoman bureaucrats. Like her husband's family, her ancestors came from Salonica. Fa'ika Hanım had two brothers, Ahmed Suat Güral (d. 1958) and Emin Muzaffer Güral (1905–?), who had both studied law and embarked on successful careers in the judiciary in Turkish Republican times. Ahmed Suat Güral was the president of the criminal court in Ankara in the 1920s, and his brother Emin Muzaffer Bey was appointed as magistrate (*sulh hakimi*) in the same city in 1929.²⁰³² Fa'ika Hanım also had two sisters, one of whom, Güzide [Alpar, née Güral], became a lawyer in Republican times as

²⁰²⁸ On Ahmed Samim Bey's biography and scholarly achievements, see Hasan Basri Erk, *Meşhur Türk Hukukçuları* (Istanbul: Erk, 1961), p. 491.

²⁰²⁹ Ali Çankaya, *Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler. Atık Mekteb-i Mülkiye Mezunları 1860 – 1949* (Ankara: Örnek Matbaası, 1954), pp. 829-830.

²⁰³⁰ On Hıfzı Tevfik Bey's biography, see Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurları*, p. 154.

²⁰³¹ Fikriye, who died in 1976, was married to the chemist Mustafa Somersan.

²⁰³² On the Güral family, see "Güral, Emin Muzaffer," in: *Günümüz Türkiye'sinde Kim Kimdir?* Istanbul 1989, p. 403.

well.²⁰³³ In her detailed descriptions of the Gönensay family home in Kalamış, Müveddet slips in a brief reference to her mother-in-law Fa'ika Hanım: Even in her old age, she would refuse to give up control over the management of the entire household, taking all the decisions herself and insisting on communicating with the servants in person.²⁰³⁴ Against this backdrop, it is fair to say that Müveddet married into an established elite family with a strong tradition in legal scholarship which had, different from her own family, negotiated the transition from Ottoman imperial into Republican times with great success.²⁰³⁵

It becomes clear from the ensuing part of Müveddet's memoirs that she identified strongly with the Gönensay family. In the eyes of her contemporaries, she blended in successfully with her in-laws and the emerging Turkish Republican elite at large: The journalist and writer Nimet Arzık recalls the Bedirhani family, who were her neighbors in Kalamış, in her memoirs, enumerating all the family members individually. Arzık remembers details from the family life, like the death of Müveddet's younger brother – Müveddet, however, is the only family members passed over in silence in Arzık's account, her name is not even mentioned. Arzık does recall the Kurdish background and intricate history of the Bedirhani family vividly, regarding them with suspicion and ridicule. Her failure to mention Müveddet in this context might be an indication of the latter's success in distancing herself from her own family and blending in with her in-laws instead.²⁰³⁶

Müveddet's focus and extensive, repeated reference to the extended Gönensay family is, however, not entirely in line with the Turkish

²⁰³³ Güzide Alpar died in 1958, see her obituary in *Yeni Yayınlar* 3 (1958), p. 59.

²⁰³⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 18. The Gönensay family apparently had a number of servants who lived with them. Müveddet mentions a nanny called Ayşe and a Greek gardener, Hristo and his son.

²⁰³⁵ The Gönensay family is presented in Müveddet's account as members of the Turkish Republican elite, also referred to as "white Turks" or "beyaz Türkler."

²⁰³⁶ Arzık, *Tek at tek mızrak*, vol. 1, pp. 69-71.

Republican ideal of modern family life, which promoted nuclear families instead.²⁰³⁷ In a similar vein, Müveddet's strong affection for the old, Ottoman-style family home of the Gönensays is not a good fit with Turkish official state modernism, which was also expressed in a preference for modern architecture. Nonetheless, the *köşk* of the Gönensay family plays a major part in Müveddet's efforts to situate herself in early Republican Istanbul, as the following section will illustrate.

The Gönensay *köşk*, *Lieu de Memoire* and Marker of Social Standing

Having sketched out the social background of the Gönensay family, Müveddet enters into a detailed description of the interior of the family *köşk*, which became her home as a young bride. The house was built according to the plans of an Italian architect, but Talat Bey himself also got involved in the planning process. Müveddet describes her father-in-law as a great lover of antiques who collected and exhibited pieces of great value in his house, which resembled a veritable museum.²⁰³⁸ The building materials used for constructing the *köşk* were of high quality, with marble ordered from Trabzon and tile work brought in from Kütahya.²⁰³⁹ Attentively, Müveddet walks her readers through the individual rooms of the house, remembering small details like the exact shade of color of the upholstery or the origin and measurements of valuable carpets as she proceeds.²⁰⁴⁰ Some objects in the house originated in the former Ottoman lands and in Iran, others were imports from European countries, among them Bohemian glassware and furniture custom-made in France. Müveddet traces the origins of some

²⁰³⁷ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern. State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham et al.: Duke Univ. Press, 2006), p. 68.

²⁰³⁸ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

²⁰³⁹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 14.

²⁰⁴⁰ Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 14-15.

particularly valuable objects, among them a door and other wooden decorations which had formerly belonged to Ayşe Sultan, a member of the Ottoman royal family.²⁰⁴¹ As depicted by Müveddet, the interior design of the Gönensay family home brought together and fused European and “Oriental” elements of luxury and social distinction, combining references to the old Ottoman ruling class with a new framework of Kemalist modernity. An image of Atatürk, hung in a gilded frame in a prominent place in the midst of the sumptuous Ottoman imperial interior,²⁰⁴² makes this connection visually explicit. All the elements described by Müveddet have in common that they are expensive and sought-after objects of prestige. In her account, mentioning them serves a representative function, conveying statements about the social standing of their owners. It fits this interpretation that Müveddet focuses her descriptions on those parts of the house and garden which would have been outwardly visible and accessible to guests and, on the other hand, includes far shorter descriptions of the more private areas of the house and her own every-day surroundings. The paragraphs of her memoir which deal with the interior design and furnishing of the Gönensay family home seem to have been of particular importance to Müveddet, as numerous handwritten comments and additions of details in the margins and in between the lines of the manuscript indicate.²⁰⁴³

The detailed description of the *köşk* of her in-laws serves to ascribe and affirm the social standing, exquisite taste and refinement of the family and, by extensions, of Müveddet herself. However, the depiction does not only serve a representative purpose. In addition, her portrayal of the family home is also closely connected to her personal memories. This

²⁰⁴¹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 14.

²⁰⁴² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 14.

²⁰⁴³ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 14. The information that wooden panels and a door were acquired from the palace of Ayşe Sultan, for instance, was added in a handwritten note.

aspect becomes particularly tangible in her descriptions of the extensive gardens attached to the property, where she recalls not only the valuable marble statues but adds very personal and sensual memories of the vivid colors and specific fragrance of an old magnolia tree. In her memoir, the detailed descriptions of the material conditions and qualities of the house precede the information Müveddet gives on the individual members of the household who lived in it. She is setting up an elaborate scene and then, in a second step, allows for the protagonists to make their first appearance. It can be gleaned from Müveddet's account that relations between Talat Bey and his siblings, his two brothers and three sisters along with their respective families, were close and Müveddet would have been personally acquainted with all of them. Talat Bey's house is described as the preferred venue of frequent family reunions, mostly revolving around elaborated meals. It emerges from descriptions later in the text that Müveddet had a lot of respect and esteem for both her parents-in-law, whom she honors and commemorates explicitly in a lengthy paragraph which brings to mind the style of an obituary.²⁰⁴⁴

One particular element in Müveddet's memories which can be decoded as a comment on where she located herself and her in-laws in terms of social identity and class is music: On the one hand, when Müveddet mentions the social gatherings and musical performances in the house of her venerated father-in-law, she stresses the "modern" character of these events and comments in detail on the type of music being performed there.²⁰⁴⁵ Men and women were entertained together, they danced and listened to western-style music, like the live performances of the acclaimed piano player Fulya Akaydın.²⁰⁴⁶ Müveddet's descriptions

²⁰⁴⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 14.

²⁰⁴⁵ "Talat bey modern görgülü eğlenmesini bilen çok görgülü bir bey. Her ayın üçüncü cuması evinde çalgılı, danslı çaylar veriyor. Bu toplantılar çok ilginç oluyor. Zamanın en ünlüleri geliyorlar (...)." Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

²⁰⁴⁶ Müveddet, however, renders her name as "Fulya Apaydın" instead, Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 13.

characterize the circle she herself belonged to – or aspired to be seen as being part of – as modern and secular, making a strong statement about her own identity. In her memoirs, listening to music and participating in mixed dances are semantic acts through which she communicates messages about how she wants to be perceived.

Implicitly, there is a counterpart to the western-style piano music and dancing she prefers: That is Turkish arabesk music, which was perceived as exotic and oriented towards the east. In the early Republican period, this type of music was seen as incompatible with modernity and not regarded as part of a Turkish nationalized and secularized cultural heritage.²⁰⁴⁷ Müveddet includes descriptions of this kind of music in her memoirs as well: It is in connection to the memories she retains of her father Abdurrahman Bey – which are rare throughout her narrative – that she mentions the traditional garden cafés of Kalamış where arabesk music was performed by well-known virtuosi like Salahettin Pınar (1902–1960) and Neyzen Tefik [Kolaylı] (1879–1953).²⁰⁴⁸ Müveddet mentions that her father had the habit to frequent a garden café owned by Todori Çarkas near the Kalamış waterfront, where he would meet friends, listen to music and drink and converse into the night.²⁰⁴⁹ Müveddet herself, as it becomes clear from her description, would not have been present at these gatherings. Even though this fragment of memory is woven into Müveddet's general description of bygone days in Kalamış, it also implicitly alludes to the problematic situation of the father.²⁰⁵⁰ While Müveddet does not include

²⁰⁴⁷ For a summary of the discourse on arabesk music in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. at the time of Müveddet's writing), see Martin Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate. Music and Musicians in Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 8.

²⁰⁴⁸ Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 19-20.

²⁰⁴⁹ Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate*, pp. 128 and 132 on these kinds of gatherings and performances.

²⁰⁵⁰ At the time, Abdurrahman was out of work and, possibly, headed for a drinking problem. Abdurrahman's good friend and drinking companion, the musician and composer Salahettin Pınar actually died at the Todori garden café of a heart attack, the result of years of substance abuse. Nihat Uzcan, *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Kadar Türk*

an open judgement or evaluation of this type of gatherings or arabesk music in general into her account, her reference to music in this passage of the memoirs can again be understood as a semantic act. Arabesk music has been understood as a “commentary upon powerlessness and the iniquity of power.”²⁰⁵¹ Her audience would have understood the reference to traditional, eastern-style music as a comment upon her father’s stance in Turkish Republican society: He is portrayed as a marginal figure, almost an outcast who refuses or is unable to take part in social situations more suited to Turkish modernity, like for instance the dance parties mentioned earlier which were organized by Müveddet’s father-in-law. Talking about his love for arabesk music allows Müveddet to make statements about the personal situation of her father (and to contrast him with her in-laws) without being too direct or openly offending his memory.

7.2.7. Müveddet’s Own Trajectory: Early Married Life

Müveddet and Bülent Gönensay’s wedding took place in January of 1928, and the couple set out on their honeymoon to the island of Büyükada shortly afterwards.²⁰⁵² In this context, Müveddet recalls an awkward incident which happened at the first night of their honeymoon: They were questioned by the local police and could not present their marriage papers. As Müveddet was only eighteen years old at the time of her marriage and, as she said herself, looked even younger, the hotel owner and the police suspected a case of kidnapping or elopement under way. The connections of her father-in-law, whom they immediately called for help, saved the couple from further trouble. A relation of

Bestekârları Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul: İtimat Kitabevi, 1978), p. 259, and “Pınar, Selahattin,” in: İlhan Tekeli et al. (eds.), *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul*, 8 vols. (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı ve Tarih Vakfı, 1993-94), vol. 6, p. 265.

²⁰⁵¹ Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate*, p. 12.

²⁰⁵² Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 15.

Müveddet's mother-in-law, Ahmed Suat Bey [Güral], was the president of the criminal court in Ankara. He was able to pull some strings and have the young couple released.²⁰⁵³ Again, some of what is left unsaid in this episode is what is perhaps most telling: It was a representative of the new Republican system who is called in for help – not Müveddet's own father Abdurrahman Bey, who, after all, had been the Ottoman governor of the very same island of Büyükada during the First World War but was unable to transfer his former influence into Turkish Republican times. In addition to her parents-in-law, other central figures during Müveddet's early married life include her former childhood friend and now sister-in-law Emel and the latter's husband Kazım Dilman, who all lived in the same house. Contacts and reunions with the extended Gönensay and Güral families were frequent, and the family life is described by Müveddet as very harmonious.²⁰⁵⁴ Her own family, however, is not mentioned in her recollections of these years – even though both families would have been all but neighbors at the time. This indicates how Müveddet increasingly identified and made an effort to assimilate into the family of her in-laws. Compared to her parents-in-law, even her husband Tevfik Bülent Gönensay is relegated into the background in her recollections of the early years of her marriage.

A turning point which somehow marks the end of her lighthearted and cheerful youth in Müveddet's recollections were the birth and early death of her first son Feza in 1929. Thinking of this loss still moves her at the time of the writing.²⁰⁵⁵ Her husband suggested a trip to Europe to distract and cheer up Müveddet after the death of her child, taking her away from the household where she would have been constantly reminded of her loss, her grief being aggravated by the fact that her sister-in-law Emel had also just given birth to her first baby. The couple

²⁰⁵³ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 21.

²⁰⁵⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 7.

²⁰⁵⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 16.

spends six months in Hungary, but Müveddet recalls how she was constantly in pain and felt cut-off from the world around her, immersed in her mourning.²⁰⁵⁶ Her second pregnancy, the ensuing birth of her daughter Beyza and the birth of her son Emre five years later, however, eventually allowed her to move on. She recalls the following years, the mid-1930s, when three generations of the Gönensay family lived together in the *köşk* in Kalamış, as the happiest days of her life.²⁰⁵⁷

7.2.8. Continuation of the Autobiographical Account in the 1940s

This blissful period ended when Müveddet's children left the house and began to attend secondary school in Istanbul as boarders, returning back home only for the weekends.²⁰⁵⁸ Both of Müveddet's children subsequently pursued their studies at the prestigious Robert College, the school their father had attended as well. In 1941, Müveddet lost her younger brother Ferit to pneumonia.²⁰⁵⁹ The family was devastated by this unexpected loss, and Müveddet recalls the grief of her father Abdurrahman Bey in particular, who died two years after his son's death, probably from the consequences of alcohol abuse.²⁰⁶⁰ Müveddet's mother took comfort in religion and converted to Islam after the death of her husband, changing her name from Elisabeth to Emel.²⁰⁶¹

²⁰⁵⁶ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 17.

²⁰⁵⁷ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 17.

²⁰⁵⁸ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 17.

²⁰⁵⁹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 22.

²⁰⁶⁰ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 22, "Bu felaketin acısı henüz daha geçmeden iki yıl sonra, biraz içki yüzünden, fakat aslında çektiği acı yüzünden (babam oğlunun ölümüne dayanamıyor) o da ölüyor. O da henüz yaşlı değil, daha 67 yaşında." [Two years later, when the pain of this catastrophe had not yet passed, he died, too – a little because of the drinking, but really because of the pain he had endured (my father could not bear the death of his son). He also had not been old yet, only 67 years of age.]

²⁰⁶¹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 22, "Eşinin ve evladının yanına gömülmek istediğinden Müslüman olmayı düşünüyor. İslam dininin inceliyor, ve Müslüman oluyor. 'Emel' adını alıyor." [She thought about becoming a Muslim because she wanted to be buried next to her husband and her child. She looked into Islam as a set of beliefs and became a Muslim. She took the name 'Emel.']

Her mother's conversion is one of the very few occasions where religion plays a role in Müveddet's autobiographical account. While she does sporadically refer to religious holidays to chronologically structure her narrative, she focuses on the social interactions within the family, the kissing of the hands of the elder generation and the distribution of sweets, and does not mention any religious rituals, prayers or visits to a mosque. That her way of depiction constitutes a conscious choice made in the context of Turkish Republican modernity is illustrated when Müveddet's account is cross read with other memoirs from the network of the extended Bedirhani family: One of Müveddet's relatives, Ayşe Şasa (*1941), who is younger than her but grew up in a similar secular, westernized urban middle class environment in Istanbul, bemoans the complete lack of religious reference during her childhood years.²⁰⁶² Ayşe Şasa, who later in her life turned to Islam, refers to her grandmother as her sole connection to a lost Ottoman world filled with religious meaning.²⁰⁶³ In Istanbul of the early 1990s, at the time Müveddet was writing her memoirs, talking about religion was still an ideological battlefield: With the rise of political Islam in Turkey, religious symbolism has become increasingly politicized. As much as Ayşe Şasa's account, making a strong case for a return of Islam to the public sphere, needs to be read against this political background, Müveddet is locating

²⁰⁶² Şasa, *Ruh Macerası*, p. 25, "Bayramlarda ziyaretlere götürürdü ailemiz bizi, büyüklerin, yaşlıların elini öpmeye götürürlerdi; bundan nefret ederdim. Ramazan'ın yaşanamadığı, anlamının hiç bilinmediği bir ortam da bir çocuğun bayramı kavranması, ona mana kazandırması mümkün değil ... Aniden bayram diye bir şey ortaya çıkıyor; elbiselerini giydireyorlar, büyüklerin ellerini öpmeye götürüyorlar. Kupkuru; ritüel var, fakat hiçbir mana yok ..." [On holidays, our family took us on visits, they took us to kiss the hands of the elders; I hated that. It is impossible for a child to understand, to attach meaning to a holiday in an environment that could not experience the month of Ramazan, that did not communicate its meaning at all ... All of a sudden, there comes this thing called *bayram*; they dress you up, take you to kiss the hands of the elders. It is as dry as a bone, a ritual, but there is no meaning to it ...].

²⁰⁶³ Şasa, *Ruh Macerası*, p. 48. It was Ayşe Şasa's maternal grandmother, Safiye Orbay who took her to a mosque and taught her how to perform her prayers.

herself within these debates as well when she chooses to barely mention religion or spirituality in the descriptions of her family life.

7.2.9. Return to Kalamış

In Müveddet's account, the following years are marked by frequent moves, leading up to an eventual return to Kalamış. At some point, Müveddet's sister-in-law Emel Dilman and her family moved out of the Gönensay family *köşk* and started their own household, still within walking distance in the neighborhood of Kalamış. The contact between Müveddet and her friend and sister-in-law remained close and visits were frequent.²⁰⁶⁴ When Müveddet's husband Bülent Gönensay was offered a teaching position for law at his alma mater, the Robert College, the family moved into housing on campus, on the shores of the Bosphorus. They continued to live there for the following seven years, during which Müveddet blended in and made friends with the wives of other college professors living on campus. Müveddet and her family eventually left the Robert College again, settling down in a large wooden summerhouse on the waterfront of the Bosphorus, the Yılanlı Yalı. Besides Müveddet's husband and children, who were both college students at the time, an Armenian gardener called Kevork, the nanny Ayşe and another servant, Fatma, belong to the extended household.²⁰⁶⁵ After Müveddet's daughter Beyza had graduated from college, the family moved back to Kalamış, supporting the aging parents-in-law with the upkeep of the large family *köşk*.²⁰⁶⁶ Eventually, her daughter Beyza got engaged and married in the *köşk*, an event that brought back memories of her own splendid wedding in the same spot to Müveddet.²⁰⁶⁷ Her son Emre also married soon afterwards, his bride was Aylin Koçibey, from a

²⁰⁶⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 25-26.

²⁰⁶⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 23.

²⁰⁶⁶ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 24.

²⁰⁶⁷ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 25.

family from Zonguldak in the Black Sea region.²⁰⁶⁸ Both of Müveddet's children eventually moved abroad, and her descriptions of them in her memoirs are perhaps deliberately sparse, as both would go on to become rather prominent in contemporary Turkey: Emre Gönensay held the post of the Turkish Foreign Minister in 1996,²⁰⁶⁹ and was already involved in politics as an economic adviser to the Turkish government at the time of his mother's writing, and Beyza Gönensay became a fairly well-known artist.

Müveddet was aware that in spite of any parallels and reminiscences, the Kalamış she returned to in the late 1950s was about to change for good: The neighborhood had lost some of its former appeal and vibrancy to her, mostly because close friends and relatives of earlier days were no longer alive or had moved away. Her in-laws, whom she refers to as the pillars who for decades had ensured the upkeep of the old family home and network in Kalamış,²⁰⁷⁰ also passed away soon after her return to the neighborhood. Even though she and her husband Bülent continued to live in the Gönensay family home, it became increasingly clear that the old Ottoman building was in dire need of repair and was far too big for the elderly couple. Eventually, they sold the *köşk* to an investor, who had it torn down. A high-rise apartment block was erected in its place. With the physical destruction of the beloved family home, the atmosphere and feel of earlier days of family life are also lost. Müveddet remembers how she could not stand to personally witness the destruction of what had been her home for decades.²⁰⁷¹ When the construction works began, she and her husband fled Kalamış and rented a summerhouse in the Çengelköy neighborhood. After the new apartment block which replaced

²⁰⁶⁸ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 27.

²⁰⁶⁹ Emre Gönensay is currently a member of the faculty of Işık University, for his C.V., see the university's homepage, <https://www.isikun.edu.tr/en/emre-gonensay>, last accessed August 12, 2016.

²⁰⁷⁰ Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 30-31.

²⁰⁷¹ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 32.

their former family home in Kalamış was completed, the couple returned and moved into one of the new flats.²⁰⁷² While Müveddet admits that the two of them, and after the death of her husband she by herself, lived there in greater comfort than previously offered by the decrepit *köşk*, she still bemoans the anonymity and crampedness of the place and the irreversible changes Kalamış has since undergone.²⁰⁷³ In the concluding pages of her memoir, Müveddet walks her readers through the careers, marriages and successes of her children and grandchildren, taking stock of how well everything has unfolded.²⁰⁷⁴ However, with many of her grandchildren successfully studying or working abroad, Kalamış was no longer the center of a vibrant family life. In the final paragraph of her memoirs, Müveddet comes full circle, referencing again the impression of recently fallen snow which had triggered her stream of memories and inspired her to record them for posterity. It becomes clear only now that in fact, even though the original *köşk* has vanished several decades ago, Müveddet still lives in the very same spot. She concludes by admitting that even though she is lonely, she is at peace with her life, which has been fulfilled and left her with many pleasant memories.²⁰⁷⁵

7.2.10. What Does It All Mean? Post-imperial Identity and Nostalgia

At first glance, as this summary has shown, Müveddet Gönensay's memoirs appear to be a deeply private account, almost devoid of any political statements or references to broader historical context. However, I would argue that somewhat similar to the case I made earlier about the biography of Leyla Bedirhan, reading between the lines points to

²⁰⁷² This seems to have been no uncommon arrangement, Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 58 has another example.

²⁰⁷³ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 33.

²⁰⁷⁴ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 33.

²⁰⁷⁵ Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 33.

additional layers in the text: Certain more general conceptions of identity and belonging are implicitly referred to by Müveddet, while others are firmly rejected. Müveddet clearly positions herself within a Turkish Republican urban elite, stressing her social background, connections to other Republican elite families, education and a general idea of “being modern” as markers of this identity. Her claims and references to this identity make their appearance in her memoirs as practices, enacted throughout her every-day life, and in her meticulous descriptions of the spaces and material conditions of her family life. This commitment to modernity, however, is somewhat conflicted: Throughout Müveddet’s memoir, a process of negotiation, even tension is perceivable between loyalty to Turkish Republican modernity on the one hand and elements that do not neatly fit the discourse of this modernity on the other hand: For instance, Müveddet dwells on the merits of life within a large, extended family. Not her own family, to be sure, but her in-laws. Yet, her account is not in line with the Turkish Republican ideal of the nuclear family which was meant to replace extended families and the loyalties of patronage and kinship which accompanied them. Another example for these inherent contradictions is Müveddet’s implicit nostalgia and longing for a more “Levantine,” more pluralistic Kalamış, along with her outspoken criticism of the profound urban transformations of the 1960s and 1970s.

Expressing nostalgia for a lost past, in Müveddet’s case for the early Republican period, with all its still heavily felt tinges and residues of Ottoman imperial culture, is not a feature unique to Müveddet’s account. On the contrary, feelings of nostalgia and melancholic longing for the past figure prominently in works of Turkish literature and other, more widely read memoirs which are contemporary to Müveddet’s writing. It has been argued that by recalling a lost Ottoman imperial past, which is remembered – and idealized in the process – as pluralistic, multicultural and cosmopolitan, writers are able to take a subtly critical

stance towards later Turkish Republican policies of ethnic homogenization and nationalist propaganda.²⁰⁷⁶ Müveddet's case is slightly more complicated: She does not recall an idealized Ottoman imperial past, which would have compelled her to deal in greater detail with her Ottoman Kurdish family heritage. Müveddet prefers to project a similarly idealized image of a multicultural and harmonious past onto the early Republican period. In Müveddet's memories of bygone Kalamış, Armenian gardeners, Greek coffee shop owners and stately Ottoman imperial summerhouses figure prominently, providing a counter-image to a narrower official Turkish nationalist ideology. While the nostalgia for a lost and now idealized past is present in her text, the Bedirhani family history or the general Ottoman-Kurdish dimension of her family origins did not make the cut. This selectiveness, not necessarily only of her writings, but possibly of her memories themselves, is somewhat contradicted by the geographical closeness of family members and key spaces of Ottoman history of the Bedirhani family to the Gönensay family home in Kalamış.

7.3. Carving Out Spaces in the Turkish-Republican Political System

In many accounts of Kurdish nationalist historiography, researchers assume that the members of the Bedirhani family who remained in Istanbul after the foundation of the Turkish Republic were suffering, experiencing discrimination and pressure to assimilate into Turkish society.²⁰⁷⁷ These authors thus take for granted that Kurdish identity was unchanging and inescapable for family members. The individual

²⁰⁷⁶ Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 154 and Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy. Social Poetics in the Nation-State* (New York et al.: Routledge, 1997), pp. 139-144 on what he calls "structural nostalgia" as an opportunity for marginalized individuals and groups to make claims for themselves in the present by referring to an unspoiled, shared past that they are also part of.

²⁰⁷⁷ See for example Rohat Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2011 [1998]), pp. 106-107.

trajectories and, in some cases, success stories of members of the Bedirhani family in the Turkish Republic, however, illustrate that these individuals were making conscious choices about their identity and that their choices were open to some degree of modification as circumstances changed. Some family members were even able to tolerate a fair amount of contradictions, for example keeping up contact with their openly Kurdish nationalist relatives in exile, while getting involved with Turkish party politics at home. In the following, I explore three stories of members of the Bedirhani family in Republican Turkey to pursue these ideas further.

7.3.1. Adopted by the Turkish Republic: Cemal Kutay (1909–2006)

Cemal Kutay²⁰⁷⁸ was born in 1909 in Konya,²⁰⁷⁹ as a son of Tahir Bey [Kutay]²⁰⁸⁰ and his wife Süreyya Hanım. His paternal grandfather was Emir Bedirhan. Cemal Kutay's father Tahir Bey had been an official in the Ottoman judiciary, serving as the president of the court of appeal (*istinaf mahkemesi*) in Aleppo in 1906. After the First World War, Tahir Bey worked as a lawyer in Konya, and later he was employed as president of the court of appeal in Sivas in the early 1920s.²⁰⁸¹ Cemal Kutay's mother Süreyya Hanım was a member of a family of *aşraf* from Ottoman Syria, she was the daughter of Mustafa Nuri Bey Şurayyifzade. Süreyya Hanım's sister Ayşe Nazire had also married into the Bedirhani family in the late 19th century, she was the wife of Ali Şamil Paşa

²⁰⁷⁸ For Kutay's biography, see Osman Nebioğlu, *Türkiye'de Kim Kimdir. Yaşayan Tanınmış Kimseler Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Yayınevi, 1961-1962), p. 430; and Gazeteciler Cemiyeti, *40. Yıl Albümü* (Istanbul: Gazeteciler Yayınları, 1986).

²⁰⁷⁹ Özlem Kuyaş, *Demem Tarihi Yazar Cemal Kutay. Tarihi Canlandıran Adam* (Istanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2009), p. 17. Other sources also give 1912 as his year of birth.

²⁰⁸⁰ While all other descendants of Emir Bedirhan adopted the surname Çınar after 1934, Tahir Bey and his family opted for Kutay instead. Meaning something along the lines of "auspicious moon" in Turkish, Kutay was meant as an allusion to "bedir," moon, in the original family name Bedirhan, see Anter, *Meine Memoiren*, p. 74 for this explanation.

²⁰⁸¹ Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri*, p. 157 — without citing any references.

Bedirhan.²⁰⁸² Personal contacts between the two sisters continued into Republican times. The Ottoman-Syrian descent of Tahir Kutay's wife, deliberately or at least conveniently, faded into the background in later accounts on the family history and Cemal Kutay's biography. Mahmut Çetin claims that Süreyya Kutay's ancestors came from western Thrace – unfortunately, he does not cite his sources for this piece of information, and it is thus possible that he was merely mistaken.²⁰⁸³ Given Cemal Kutay's outspoken aversion against all things Arabic,²⁰⁸⁴ “forgetting” his mother's family might have also been intentional on Kutay's part, with Mahmut Çetin then reproducing an already well-rehearsed and whitewashed version of his origins. Cemal Kutay's granddaughter Özlem Kuyaş, in her otherwise very detailed biographical account of her grandfather, similarly does not provide any information on the family origins of Süreyya Hanım at all.²⁰⁸⁵

Cemal Kutay had eight siblings, five sisters and three brothers. However, only six of them are mentioned in the detailed account of the family history provided by Kutay's granddaughter Özlem Kuyaş. Her selectivity suggests that Tahir Bey might have been married before and had two older children with his first wife. A brother named Ferid Bey, considerably older than Cemal Kutay, can be traced in Ottoman-Kurdish political circles in the early 20th century. He was also among those

²⁰⁸² See the notice for a memorial service (*mevlid*) for Ayşe Nazire Çınar forty days after her death, in *Cumhuriyet*, July 27, 1961.

²⁰⁸³ The same information is given by Cemal A. Kalyoncu, “Ku(ü)rt Tarihçi Cemal.” In: *Aksiyon*, September 8, 2001, http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/bilim-teknoji/kuurtarihci_507785, last accessed March 4, 2016. This text seems to be Mahmut Çetin's primary source on Cemal Kutay's life, from which he cites at times verbatim, but without clear reference. Kalyoncu, in turn, includes direct citations from what seems to have been a personal biographical interview with Cemal Kutay into his text. Yet, the article contains numerous factual errors. In light of this line of transmission, the confusion about the origins of his mother seems indeed to go back to Kutay himself.

²⁰⁸⁴ See *Zaman*, February 5, 2006, on the occasion of Kutay's death. In a biographical interview in 2001, Kutay appeared more at peace with the issue, mentioning that he knew Arabic well enough to read and understand his prayers in that language, see Kalyoncu, “Ku(ü)rt Tarihçi Cemal.”

²⁰⁸⁵ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, passim.

suspected of being involved with the murder of Rıdvan Paşa and was sent off to exile in Libya in 1906.²⁰⁸⁶ The fate of the older brother is unknown after that. In his granddaughter's account on his life, Cemal Kutay is referred to as the first-born son of Tahir Bey and Süreyya Hanım, preceded by four elder sisters.²⁰⁸⁷ All of his siblings have stayed in Turkey after the foundation of the Republic. It seems that the family assimilated well into the newly emerging Republican elite, without renouncing older ties of the Bedirhani family network entirely. Marriage politics illustrate this balancing act between Republican Turkish and Kurdish elites well: Four of Cemal Kutay's sisters were married to rather high-ranking Turkish officials in Republican times: Fa'ika Kutay got married to Mehmed Şevki Yazman (1896–1974), a former military and graduate of the Ottoman Military College (*harbiye*) from Harput. Yazman was trained as an electrical engineer. He was involved with the publication of the leftist magazine *Kadro*²⁰⁸⁸ and represented Elazığ (formerly Mamuret'ül Aziz) in the Turkish parliament in the 1950s.²⁰⁸⁹ A second sister, Fahriye Kutay, was married to the Turkish military official Suphi Akgün (d. 1978).²⁰⁹⁰ Sister number three, Fitnat Kutay, was the wife of Hasan Sıddık Haydari (1890–1966), a Kurdish landowner from Van. Hasan Sıddık had taken part in the War of Independence as

²⁰⁸⁶ See Malmisanij, *Cizıra Botanlı*, p. 133. In addition, some sources mention a daughter of Tahir Bey's named Neyyire.

²⁰⁸⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, pp. 17 and 19.

²⁰⁸⁸ *Kadro* was published between January 1932 and January 1935 and, drawing on Marxist theory, made the case for a genuinely Turkish version of a social revolution. Others involved in the publication include Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, Vedat Nedim Tör, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, Burhan Asaf Belge and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu. See Mustafa Türkeş, "The Ideology of the Kadro Movement: A Patriotic Leftist Movement in Turkey." In: *Middle Eastern Studies* 24.4 (1998), pp. 92–119. Mehmed Şevki began to write for *Kadro* in 1933 and contributed several rather technical articles on the future perspectives of electrical industry and fuel supply in Turkey.

²⁰⁸⁹ Sema Yıldırım & Behçet Kemal Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 2. cilt 1950-1980 (Ankara: TBMM Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010), p. 558 for a short biography and a picture.

²⁰⁹⁰ The couple's son Sermet Akgün later married into the family of Haşım İşcan, a Turkish Republican official, member of the CHP and mayor of Istanbul (in office from 1963 to 1968). Haşım İşcan was the son of the well-known Ottoman historian and legal scholar Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822–1895).

one of the bodyguards of Mustafa Kemal and served as representative of the province of Van in the Turkish parliament between 1920 and 1923. He was a leading member of the Kurdish Haydaranlı tribe, historically close allies of the Bedirhani family.²⁰⁹¹ Several sources claim that Hasan Sıddık was among the first graduates of the Ottoman tribal school (*‘aşiret mektebi*) established in Istanbul in Hamidian times. However, in his in-depth analysis of the tribal school, Eugen Rogan lists only one member of the Haydaranlı tribe among the students, a certain Tahir Bey from Van.²⁰⁹² Cemal Kutay’s fourth sister, Neyyire, who is not mentioned by Özlem Kuyaş in her biographical account and might have had a different mother, was married to Şevket Turgut (also Turgut, 1894–1968) from Istanbul, a son of the Ottoman military official İbrahim Şevket Turgut Bey.²⁰⁹³ Turgut had studied engineering in Switzerland, was a businessman, and, as a CHP member, served as parliamentary representative for Kırşehir between 1943 and 1950.²⁰⁹⁴ Less is known about Cemal Kutay’s remaining siblings: His sister Hayrünnisa got married to a merchant from Konya. Kutay also had three brothers, Abdi, Ferid and Kenan. Throughout his life, he remained particularly close to his brother Kenan and his family, caring about the latter’s children like his own and at one point planning to buy two attaching houses for the two families.²⁰⁹⁵ In the 1950s, Kenan Kutay worked as an official at the Turkish Sümerbank²⁰⁹⁶ and lived in Aksaray with his family.²⁰⁹⁷

²⁰⁹¹ Sema Yıldırım & Behçet Kemal Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950 (Ankara: TBMM Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010), p. 62 for a short biography and a picture.

²⁰⁹² Eugene L. Rogan, “‘Aşiret Mektebi: Abdülhamid II’s School for Tribes (1892-1907).” In: *IJMES* 28 (1996), p. 89.

²⁰⁹³ Ferik İbrahim Şevket Turgut had been Ottoman Minister of War (*harbiye nazırı*) for ten months in 1919 and then served as chief of staff in 1920. He died in 1924. Kunalalp, *Erkân ve ricali*, p. 123.

²⁰⁹⁴ Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 408 for a short biography and a picture. Şevket Turgut and Neyyire Kutay had three children. Their daughter Fatma married back into the Kutay family, her husband Tunçer Yazman was a son of her mother’s sister Fa’ika.

²⁰⁹⁵ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 57 and 80.

²⁰⁹⁶ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 140.

As a child, Cemal Kutay grew up in Meram, a pleasant small town in the province of Konya where his family owned a large, three-story mansion. In addition to his brothers and sisters, multiple servants, educators and nurses belonged to the extended household of his father Tahir Bey Bedirhan.²⁰⁹⁸ The father put a particular emphasis on the education of his children: Like his siblings, Cemal was educated at home and, in addition to secular knowledge, also introduced to the teachings of the Mevlevi Sufi order, an instruction which continued to have a life-long impact on him.²⁰⁹⁹ Even as an eager admirer of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Ankara during the 1930s, Cemal Kutay was known to regularly observe prayer times.²¹⁰⁰ In 1922, when he was only thirteen years old and the country was caught up in the midst of war and transformation, Kutay lost his father. As the oldest surviving male member of his family, he found himself responsible for the upkeep of an entire household, including his mother, sisters and younger brother Kenan. Instead of continuing his education at university as intended, Cemal Kutay finished secondary school in a rush and went to Ankara to earn his living and support his family. Kutay appears to have been a hardworking and extraordinarily gifted student, equipped with an exceptional memory, reading voraciously throughout his life, authoring a record number of more than one-hundred-fifty books and able to write with both hands intermittently.²¹⁰¹

Upon his arrival in Ankara in February 1928, Cemal Kutay turned to friends of his father, the late Tahir Bey, for help: He approached Bekir Refik Bey [Koraltan] (1889–1974),²¹⁰² who represented Konya in

²⁰⁹⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 80. Kenan Kutay's family included his wife Müzeyyen, their son Reşit and their daughter Süreyya.

²⁰⁹⁸ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 17.

²⁰⁹⁹ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 17-19.

²¹⁰⁰ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 29.

²¹⁰¹ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 20 and 45.

²¹⁰² For a short biography and picture, see Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 44.

parliament from 1920 to 1935 and had been a student of Kutay's father,²¹⁰³ and Na'im Hazım Bey [Onat] (1889–1953),²¹⁰⁴ another parliamentarian from Konya. With their help, Cemal Kutay landed his first job as a copy editor for the newly founded *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper. Later in life, he proudly related the story of how he prevailed against eighteen competitors and got the job, even though he was by far the youngest applicant.²¹⁰⁵ In the early Republican period, Kutay quickly made a name for himself as a successful journalist and editor. He was swiftly promoted from copy editor to correspondent by Falih Rıfkı Atay (1894–1971), his supervisor at the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*.²¹⁰⁶ Other established writers and journalists who supported Cemal Kutay during the early years of his career in Ankara include Ahmed Emin Yalman and Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın.²¹⁰⁷ The journalist and first director of the printing press of the Turkish parliament Feridun Kandemir (1896–1977) was also among the mentors and supporters of Cemal Kutay during these years.²¹⁰⁸ Kutay's life-long friendship to the journalists Yaşar Nabi Nayır (1908–1981) and Samih Tiryakioğlu (1908–1995), who both also wrote for *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* in the 1930s, also went back to his early years in Ankara. In the mid-1920s, Kutay continued his career as a correspondent for the news agency Anadolu Ajansı, then went on to work for the newspapers *Konya Zaman Mecmuası*, the *Yeni Anadolu Gazetesi* and the *Ulus Gazetesi* (the successor of *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*). He also wrote contributions for *Son Posta*, *Vatan* and *Tan Gazetesi* in the 1930s and

²¹⁰³ Another member of the same circle of Tahir Kutay's former students from the law school in Konya now in Ankara was Tevfik Fikret Bey [Silay] (1890–1959), who was also elected as representative of Konya to the Republican parliament, see Kalyoncu, "Ku(ü)rt Tarihçi Cemal."

²¹⁰⁴ Na'im Hazım Bey had gone through a traditional medrese education before he became a teacher. Bekir Refik Bey, on the other hand, had studied law at the university in Istanbul. While Bekir Refik Bey was already in Ankara in 1920, Na'im Hazım Bey arrived in 1923. For his biography and picture, see Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 109.

²¹⁰⁵ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 23.

²¹⁰⁶ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 23.

²¹⁰⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, pp. 24-25.

²¹⁰⁸ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 60.

1940s. During his time in Ankara, Cemal Kutay did not get involved in politics, but developed a life-long admiration for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whom he met in person on several occasions during these years.²¹⁰⁹

In 1939, Kutay was – suddenly and without being given any reason²¹¹⁰ – dismissed from his responsibilities, he left his position as a correspondent and moved to Istanbul. There, he founded a publishing house and issued his own newspaper with the title *Halk*, together with Refi Bayar.²¹¹¹ In addition, he edited other publications of his own, among them the journal *Millet Dergisi*. He was also a prolific writer, authoring several dozens of books on popular history.²¹¹² Kutay developed a particular interest in biographical writing and political memoirs: He edited the recollections of the Turkish Republican politician and diplomat Fethi Okyar (1880–1943)²¹¹³ and was the biographer of Kuşçubaşı Eşref (1873–1964)²¹¹⁴ and his personal friend Daniş Karabelen Paşa (1898–1983).²¹¹⁵

In 1944, Kutay got married to Melahat Günan, the daughter of a family of refugees from Rumelia who had been resettled in Niğde. Cemal Kutay's older sister Hayrünnisa arranged the couple's first meeting.²¹¹⁶ In spite of an age difference of fifteen years, Melahat agreed to the marriage, and the wedding was celebrated in September of 1944 with a simple ceremony.²¹¹⁷ The couple had five children, born between 1945

²¹⁰⁹ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 24.

²¹¹⁰ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 33, quoting Kutay himself.

²¹¹¹ Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri*, p. 152. Refi Bayar was the son of Celal Bayar.

²¹¹² His works include the twenty-volume *Türkiye İstiklal Hürriyet Mücadelesi*, four volumes of *Bilimeyen Tarih*, and also works titled *Örtülü Tarihimiz*, *Tarih Konuşuyor*, *Çerkez Ethem Dosyası*, *Türk Milli Mücadelesinde Amerika* and many more, a total number of 151 or even 187 works is given by his biographers.

²¹¹³ Fethi Okyar & Cemal Kutay (eds.), *Üç Devirde Bir Adam* (Istanbul: Tercüman, 1980).

²¹¹⁴ Cemal Kutay, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa* (Istanbul: Tarih, 1962).

²¹¹⁵ Cemal Kutay, *Beş Kit'ada Bir Türk Paşası: Daniş Karabelen* (Istanbul: Avcıol Basım Yayım, 2006 [1993]).

²¹¹⁶ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 35.

²¹¹⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 40.

and 1956 and spent most of their life together, moving between different neighborhoods of Istanbul. In 1950, Cemal Kutay had to abandon the publication of his periodical *Millet Dergisi* for political, and possibly also financial reasons. He eventually left the publishing scene entirely and opened a restaurant in Istanbul to support his family.²¹¹⁸ The Kutays had settled down in the neighborhood of Kuyubaşı in Kadıköy. In addition to his wife and children, his wife's mother, grandmother and aunt, and finally also Kutay's own mother Süreyya Hanım lived in the household, sharing a large three-story house in Kuyubaşı.²¹¹⁹

In the summer of 1950, prior to the closing down of *Millet Dergisi*, Kutay made one final attempt to secure financial support for his publication: He wrote a letter to the Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, trying to interest him in helping to finance his book project on the biography of Celal Bayar, who had co-founded the Demokrat Partisi with Menderes in 1946. Kutay's letter dates from July 1950 and was thus written shortly after Menderes had taken office as Prime Minister.²¹²⁰ At the same time, Kazım Nami Duru (1877/78–1967)²¹²¹ also intervened in favor of Cemal Kutay with Menderes. From Duru's recommendation letter, it emerges that the young family father Cemal Kutay was heavily in debt at the time and, according to Duru, on the verge of being evicted from his home. To help him repay his debts and continue to publish *Millet Dergisi*, Kazım Nami Duru suggested that banks and institutions close to the government should intervene and place regular paid advertisement in Kutay's journal.²¹²² To no avail, apparently, as the journal was closed

²¹¹⁸ Kuyuş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 43.

²¹¹⁹ Kuyuş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 52-53.

²¹²⁰ Ankara, Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30.1, 17.98, Sıra 31, letter from Cemal Kutay to Adnan Menderes, dated July 24, 1950.

²¹²¹ Kazım Nami Duru, a former Ottoman military with a colorful trajectory as a teacher, author and politician in post-imperial times, lived in Istanbul in 1950 and probably met Kutay in the local circles of writers and journalists there. For his biography, see Nebioğlu, *Türkiye'de Kim Kimdir?* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Yayınevi, 1961/62), p. 185.

²¹²² Duru added a list of possible clients for Kutay on the back of his handwritten note, see Ankara, Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 30.1, 41.242, Sıra 9, letter from Kazım Nami Duru

down in spite of Kutay's plea and Duru's interventions on his behalf in the same year. The incident provides some idea of Kutay's network at the time – which was, in 1950, no longer strong enough to provide him with lasting support or backing for his work as a writer.

In 1960, the family moved to Bahariye, a neighboring district in Kadıköy.²¹²³ The new family home, a wooden *köşk* situated in the Şair Latifi Sokak, had been bought by Cemal Kutay in 1946. Incidentally, this was an area of the city where many other members of the extended Bedirhani family also lived at the time, among them the descendants of Ali Şamil Paşa, the family of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, along with the above-mentioned Müveddet Gönensay, and Bekir Şasa and his family.²¹²⁴ One of Cemal Kutay's friends, the artist Bedri Rahmi Eyyüpoğlu was actually a tenant of Abdurrahman Bedirhan and his wife Elisabeth in Kadıköy.²¹²⁵ Kutay's new home, while situated in a neighborhood which was generally familiar to members of the Bedirhani family since the late 19th century, had not been in the family's possessions before, but was purchased by him from his former owner, the merchant Bartınlı İsmâ'il Efendi.²¹²⁶

Cemal Kutay took a particular interest in the education of all of his children: His daughters went to school in Istanbul, while his son Ömer Faruk was singled out to be sent off to study in England from the age of

to Adnan Menderes, dated July 11, 1950. According to this letter, Kutay owed a total sum of 72.000 Turkish Lira. It is not known how Prime Minister Menderes reacted to Duru's suggestions, but Kutay had to close down *Millet Dergisi* in the same year, indicating that sufficient support was not forthcoming.

²¹²³ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçî Yazar*, p. 60.

²¹²⁴ See the section on Müveddet Gönensay earlier in this chapter.

²¹²⁵ See the section on Müveddet Gönensay earlier in this chapter and Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçî Yazar*, p. 151 for the link between Eyyüpoğlu and Kutay.

²¹²⁶ Bilgili, *İstanbul'un Sokak İsimleri*, p. 475. The entry also indicates that the house was built in 1899 as a summer residence for the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul, who, however, never used the premisses but sold them to Bartınlı İsmâ'il Efendi shortly after the construction works were completed.

thirteen onwards.²¹²⁷ Kutay's older daughters Zeynep Sırma and Ayşe Mine both got married on the same day in September 1964, Zeynep to the engineer Bekir Erol Kuyaş and Ayşe to a lieutenant of the Turkish army.²¹²⁸ Even though Ayşe Mine subsequently moved to Erzurum with her husband, where he was based with his unit, and Zeynep Sırma's family settled in Ankara, the two sisters and their families stayed close to each other, their children being of almost the same age. In 1973, Cemal Kutay's daughter Nilgün married the construction engineer Mehmet Ciğer, who worked at a furniture store in the Kutays' neighborhood in Istanbul and whose family was originally from Kayseri.²¹²⁹ Kutay's youngest daughter İnci embarked on a career in advertisement and later, in 1996, married the photographer Moris Maçero.²¹³⁰

Cemal Kutay continued to live in the family home in Bahariye until his death in 2006. The house, a traditional wooden structure, was severely damaged in 1987, when a fire which broke out in an adjacent, abandoned house set the roof and first floor of Kutay's home ablaze as well. Cemal Kutay's rich personal archives and extensive library suffered great damages during the fire and the ensuing fire-fighting operation.²¹³¹

Throughout his life, Cemal Kutay had developed a habit of working hard and for long hours, mostly by himself or with a small team of young assistants, often students of history.²¹³² In spite of his workload, he was

²¹²⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 83. In the family history as it is told by Özlem Kuyaş, Ömer Faruk remains a distant figure. While his sisters are continuously mentioned as present in the life of Cemal Kutay, his son lives abroad in the United States and almost no information is given about his life.

²¹²⁸ Kutay's biographer Özlem Kuyaş is the daughter of the first couple, Zeynep and Bekir Erol Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 92-94.

²¹²⁹ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 105-106.

²¹³⁰ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, p. 141.

²¹³¹ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 114-115. Neighbors and friends volunteered to save some of the documents after the fire, drying and ironing them.

²¹³² Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçi Yazar*, pp. 46-47.

well connected into Kadıköy's community of writers, local historians and artists, being friends with the chronicler of Kadıköy, Dr. Müfid Ekdal (1918–2014),²¹³³ the historian Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu (1913–1992) and Ayten Hatice Eti, known as “the mother of Kadıköy [Kadıköy'ün annesi],” the first female bank director in Turkey and a committed sponsor of local arts and culture. Artists like Lerzan Öke (*1931) and Reyhan Somuncuoğlu (*1959) also belonged to Cemal Kutay's circle in Kadıköy. Kutay understood and presented himself as a self-taught historian, Turkish nationalist and fervent admirer of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He maintained contact to students of history and regularly visited Turkish military academies (*ordu evleri*) to teach and discuss history with the recruits.²¹³⁴ Later in his life, Kutay engaged closer with religion, remaining highly critical of what he perceived as damaging Arabic influences on Islam, a religion he believed to be unfit for the Turks, who should stick to their original, shamanic beliefs.²¹³⁵ With his book *Türkçe İbadet*,²¹³⁶ Kutay unleashed a discussion about the use of Turkish language in religious contexts and went as far as ascribing religious qualities to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

In addition to his large-scale research and publishing projects, Kutay also had a sense for business opportunities. Overcoming his earlier misfortunes, he invested in real estate and closely followed urbanization projects in Istanbul. As a member of the board of directors of the Emlak Kredi Bankası, he was connected into business circles in Ankara in the

²¹³³ Müfid Ekdal contributed the preface to Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*.

²¹³⁴ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 128.

²¹³⁵ On the occasion of Cemal Kutay's death, the conservative Turkish newspaper *Zaman* quoted him saying “Türk'ün dini İslâm'dır diye bir kayıt yok. Ben İslâm'a ve yüce Peygamber'ine karşı değilim, ancak Araplara karşıyım. Ben Şaman'ım, Atatürk de Şaman'dı,” [There is no record stating that Islam is the belief of the Turk. I'm not against Islam or the venerable Prophet, I'm against the Arabs. I'm a shaman, and Atatürk was a shaman as well], see the article titled “Cemal Kutay, 97 yaşında vefat etti.” In: *Zaman*, February 5, 2006.

²¹³⁶ Cemal Kutay, *Atatürk'ün beraberinde götürdüğü hasret: Türkçe ibadet: ana dilimizle kulluk hakkı* (Istanbul: Aksoy Yayınılık, 1998).

late 1950s.²¹³⁷ In the 1970s, Kutay supported the *Mavi Şehir Projesi*, a construction project for apartments, and used his extensive network of readers and subscribers to his publications to raise money for the endeavor.²¹³⁸ Kutay was equally well connected in the Turkish world of finance: Ahmet Süha Mermerci (*1931), for instance, whose mother Adile was the sister of Vehbi Koç's wife Sadberk Hanım,²¹³⁹ was a trusted business partner and close friend of Cemal Kutay's.²¹⁴⁰

In February 1992, Kutay's wife Melahat passed away. Cemal Kutay suffered greatly from the loss of his companion.²¹⁴¹ After her death, Kutay moved in with his daughter Nilgün and her family in Bursa for a while, but eventually returned to his home in Kadıköy.²¹⁴² Even though both his sight and hearing had become weak and he was no longer able to read or type much, the late 1990s were productive years which reintroduced him to the wider Turkish public as a popular historian and contemporary witness of Turkish Republican history.²¹⁴³ A series of extensive interviews with him was videotaped and broadcasted on TV.²¹⁴⁴ Cemal Kutay died in Istanbul in February 2006. His coffin was wrapped in the Turkish flag,²¹⁴⁵ and he was buried at the Karacaahmet

²¹³⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, p. 78.

²¹³⁸ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, pp. 102-103. In her narrative, Kuyaş insists that Cemal Kutay did not benefit personally from the investment and had, on the contrary, lived in comparative poverty and without social security or insurance until the end of his life, see p. 104. This has to be taken with a grain of salt, as part of an attempt to idealize her grandfather.

²¹³⁹ Ayşe Üçok, *Sadberk Hanım: Koç Ailesi'nin yaşamı* (Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 2005), p. 269.

²¹⁴⁰ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, pp. 106-107.

²¹⁴¹ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, pp. 98 and 145.

²¹⁴² Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, p. 149.

²¹⁴³ In one obituary, Cemal Kutay is referred to as a "canlı arşiv," a living archive, see Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, p. 251.

²¹⁴⁴ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihi Yazar*, p. 216.

²¹⁴⁵ See contemporary newspaper coverage on the occasion of his death: *Milliyet*, February 9, 2006, printed a picture of the coffin at the burial.

cemetery in Istanbul. There have been plans to turn his house in Kadıköy into a museum, which have not been realized yet.²¹⁴⁶

Throughout his life, Cemal Kutay demonstrated steadfast support for Turkish nationalism and Kemalist ideology. Through his copious writings as a journalist and historian over eight decades, he was actively involved in shaping and transmitting the official historical narratives of the Turkish Republic. How, if at all, did he confront his own partly Kurdish family heritage which, at best, has no place in the official historical narrative and, at worst, conflicts with and openly contradicts Turkish nationalist ideology? There are numerous indications that Cemal Kutay was not oblivious to the origins and history of his family: Mazlume Şahingiray, the widow of Mehmed Reşit Şahingiray (1873–1919) owned a notebook filled with personal recollections of her late husband. After her death, the material came in the possession of her son Cehdi and his wife Özel. When they, too, had passed away, the notebook was given to Cemal Kutay.²¹⁴⁷ This is not surprising, as Kutay was a well-known historian with a keen interest in early Republican history. Yet, Mazlume Şahingiray was not just a stranger who happened to own source material of interest to the historian. Cemal Kutay and Mazlume Şahingiray were also cousins, both of them grandchildren of Emir Bedirhan.²¹⁴⁸ On that level, it made sense for Mazlume's heirs to pass on her and her husband's personal papers to Cemal Kutay. Kutay was also in loose contact with other members of his extended family: Musa Anter, who had married into the Bedirhani family, recalls a meeting with him in Istanbul in 1951.²¹⁴⁹

²¹⁴⁶ As of August 2016, see Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 131.

²¹⁴⁷ Nejdet Bilgi, *Dr. Mehmed Reşid Şahingiray'ın Hayatı ve Hâtıraları* (İzmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1997), p. 45.

²¹⁴⁸ On Mazlume Şahingiray, see chapter 2 as well.

²¹⁴⁹ Musa Anter bought a used printing press from Cemal Kutay and his co-editor Refi Bayar, see Musa Anter, *Meine Memoiren* (trans. Ernst Tremel) (Münster 1999 [Istanbul 1991]), p. 125.

On other occasions as well, the historian Cemal Kutay was venturing close to events which involved members of his extended family in his research: Kutay's uncle Halil Bey Bedirhan was among the *yüzellilikler*, the one hundred and fifty individuals banned from the Turkish Republic by the Kemalists in 1925. The first historical account on this incident, including biographies of all banned individuals, was penned by Cemal Kutay in 1941.²¹⁵⁰ Kutay also discussed the historical role of Emir Bedirhan in his works. Mahmut Çetin points out that these accounts are full of factual errors: According to him, Kutay failed to mention the uprising led by Emir Bedirhan in 1847 altogether and reported instead that after having taken part in the Ottoman war against Russia, Emir Bedirhan was invited to Istanbul by Sultan Abdülmecid. He then stayed in the capital for a while, before he was allegedly appointed as Ottoman governor of Crete. Kutay continues to relate that the emir then returned briefly to Istanbul and later went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. On the way there, he supposedly died.²¹⁵¹ Most of this is wrong. The question is, did Kutay not know any better, was there a misunderstanding, or was he purposefully altering the story, leaving out moments of opposition and resistance against the Ottoman state and focusing on cooperation and loyalty instead?

In a biographical interview in 2001, Cemal Kutay spoke openly about the Kurdish origins of his family.²¹⁵² However, he made an effort to present himself as independent from his family, as a self-made man and self-

²¹⁵⁰ Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State. Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011), p. 34. Özoğlu states that while Kutay's original text, bearing the title *150'likler Faciası* (Istanbul: Siralar, 1941) is lost today, summaries of and references to this work still constitute a major source on the subject.

²¹⁵¹ Çetin, *Kart-Kurt Sesleri*, pp. 154-155. Unfortunately, Çetin provides no reference for these accounts. But he is right in pointing out that they are mostly baseless. Emir Bedirhan was never appointed to the Ottoman administration in Crete. The final part of the account given by Çetin brings to mind the trajectory of another leading Kurdish figure in late Ottoman times, sheikh Ubaidullah, who did in fact die when sent off into exile to Mecca.

²¹⁵² The already-cited interview with Cemal A. Kalyoncu is evidence of that, Kalyoncu, "Ku(ü)rt Tarihi Cemal."

taught scholar: In the interview, he related how he had lost his father Tahir Bey quite early in his life. However, in his own words, he never felt like an orphan because he was adopted by the community of Turkish politicians, journalists and intellectuals in Ankara in early Republican times. This, rather than his family background, is what he insists has shaped his trajectory. In the biographical account of his granddaughter Özlem Kuyaş, the Kurdish origins of the family are not mentioned once in a total of more than two hundred fifty pages. On the contrary, Kuyaş is eager to depict a family of committed Turkish nationalists with European origins: Introducing Cemal Kutay's first-born child into her narrative, she makes a point of describing the blonde hair, blue eyes and fair skin color of the infant in detail.²¹⁵³ She does allude to the intricate history and sheer size of Cemal Kutay's family, however, but mentions only Arif Bey Mardin and Vasıf Çınar as prominent family members.²¹⁵⁴

Similar to the autobiographical account of his cousin Müveddet Gönensay which has been discussed above, Turkish modernity is an important point of reference for Cemal Kutay: He presented himself and his remembered by his family members as a demonstratively modern man, who went as far as personally choosing the clothes for his wife and daughters and had a Greek tailor come to his house to customize them, making sure they projected the desired image of a modern, westernized Turkish family.²¹⁵⁵ Kutay is also remembered as a fan of classical Turkish music (*Türk sanat müziği*), another marker of a westernized and ostentatiously “modern” Turkish identity.²¹⁵⁶ Kutay showed himself particularly critical of all things Arabic, which he interpreted as traces of

²¹⁵³ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 41: “Sarışın duru beyaz tenli tıpkı bir pamuk gibi, mavi gözlü bir bebektir.”

²¹⁵⁴ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 83. Arif Bey Mardin was not a direct descendant of Emir Bedirhan but had married into the Bedirhani family, see chapter 5.

²¹⁵⁵ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, pp. 41 and 83-84.

²¹⁵⁶ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihçi Yazar*, p. 57 and the analysis of Müveddet Gönensay's characterization of her father and her in-laws for further comments on the link between music and identity.

Arab imperialism and attempts to dominate and erase Turkish national identity. He even convinced one of his research assistants, a young student called Kezban, to change her name into something more Turkish.²¹⁵⁷ Judging from what is known to be preserved in his personal archives, Kutay did have a keen interest in the history of Eastern Anatolia: He retained, for instance, a classified official report written by Celal Bayar to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the events in the east dating from 1936.²¹⁵⁸ It comes as no surprise that opinions about Kutay's legacy are sharply divided, polarized along the frontlines between Turkish and Kurdish nationalist historiography: While Turkish nationalist circles continue to celebrate Cemal Kutay as the “memory of the nation” and chronicler of Turkish national history, the Kurdish historian Rohat Alakom has accused him of denying his ethnic roots and identity.²¹⁵⁹

7.3.2. Another Child of the Republic: Vasif Çınar (1892–1935)

It is no coincidence that Vasif Çınar is mentioned among the few relatives of Cemal Kutay who were recalled by his biographer and granddaughter Özlem Kuyaş. Vasif Çınar's trajectory ties in with and in many ways parallels the story of Cemal Kutay in the early Turkish Republic. Unlike all other members of the Bedirhani family I have looked at so far, Vasif Çınar was not a child or grandchild, but a nephew of Emir Bedirhan. He was probably born on the island of Crete in 1892.²¹⁶⁰ His parents were Abdullah Hulusi Bey, a son of Emir

²¹⁵⁷ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçî Yazar*, p. 187. He found “Kezban,” which according to him was Arabic and translated into “liar,” entirely unbecoming for a Turkish girl. His assistant was happy to change her name, but did not obtain official permission to go through with it in the end, see Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçî Yazar*, p. 188.

²¹⁵⁸ Kuyaş, *Dedem Tarihiçî Yazar*, p. 233.

²¹⁵⁹ Alakom, *Eski İstanbul Kürtleri*, p. 107: “... Cemal Kutay kendi etnik kökenleri konusunda inkarcı bir tutum sergiler ...”

²¹⁶⁰ 1895 or 1896 and İzmir as his place of birth are also mentioned intermittently, his exact place and year of birth are unclear, see Cahit Kavcar (ed.), *Vasif Çınar. Yaşamı ve Hizmetleri* (Türk Eğitim Derneği VII. Anma Toplantısı, 27.10.1999), p. 8., Yıldırım &

Bedirhan's brother Salih Bey, and Sıdıka Hanım. Vasif Çınar's father and grandfather had accompanied Emir Bedirhan into exile to the island of Crete in the mid-19th century.²¹⁶¹ Vasif had a younger brother, Mehmed Es'ad Bey [Esat Çınar], who also went into politics in Republican Turkey, and two sisters, Sa'adet and İsmet. Much like in the case of Cemal Kutay's family discussed above, smart marriage strategies helped to smooth the family's transition into Turkish Republican times: Both of Vasif Çınar's sisters married men set for a career in the Turkish military. Sa'adet got married to the major Ali Süreyya Bey, and İsmet became the wife of Nusret Evcan, a personal adjutant (*yaver*) of Kazım Özalp, a leading officer in the Turkish War of Independence.²¹⁶²

In late Ottoman times, Vasif Çınar was a student at the secondary school (*i'dadiye mektebi*) in İzmir. He graduated in 1910 and, as a contemporary of his relatives Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan and together with his younger brother Mehmed Es'ad, began to study at the Dar'ül-Fünun, the Ottoman law school in Istanbul. He left the Dar'ül-Fünun in his third year there and returned to İzmir to become a teacher.²¹⁶³ Among his students in İzmir during these days was the future Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (1899–1961).²¹⁶⁴ In İzmir, Vasif Çınar also met Mustafa Necati Bey (1894–1929),²¹⁶⁵ who was to remain his close collaborator and life-long friend. In 1915, Vasif Çınar and Mustafa Necati Bey founded the *Özel Şark İ'dadisi*, a secondary school in İzmir, putting particular emphasis on physical education in the curriculum. The two of them were involved as teachers as well as in the school's

Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 117 state that he was born in 1892 on the island of Crete. Çınar's niece Neriman Selgin told Tülay Alim Baran that Çınar was in fact born in 1896, Tülay Alim Baran, *Vasif Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru Gazetesi Yazıları* (Istanbul: Bayrak Matbaası, 2001), p. 11.

²¹⁶¹ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 216.

²¹⁶² See the obituary for Çınar's sister İsmet Evcan, in *Cumhuriyet*, December 16, 1981.

²¹⁶³ Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 213, also Baran, *Vasif Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 11.

²¹⁶⁴ "Adnan Menderes kimdir?" In: *Cumhuriyet*, March 4, 1968, p. 4.

²¹⁶⁵ See Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurlar Ansiklopedisi*, pp. 279-280 for Mustafa Necati's biography.

administration. Their educational efforts were also closely related to emerging Turkish nationalist thinking: Both Mustafa Necati and Vasıf Çınar played an active role in the opening of the first branch of the *Türk Ocakları* in İzmir, going through with its foundation against the opposition of local religious groups. In the following years, Vasıf Çınar is said to have worked tirelessly for the spread of Turkish nationalist thinking and national consciousness in the region, earning his credentials as a committed Turkish nationalist in the eyes of his biographers.²¹⁶⁶ Süleyman Ferit Eczacıbaşı (1888–1973),²¹⁶⁷ Celal Bayar (1883–1986),²¹⁶⁸ Kazım Özalp (1882–1968),²¹⁶⁹ Hacim Muhittin Çarıklı (1881–1965),²¹⁷⁰ and others also belonged to the same circles of Turkish nationalists in İzmir which were frequented by Vasıf Çınar and Mustafa Necati Bey at the time.²¹⁷¹ In their meetings, his contemporaries recall in their memoirs, Vasıf Çınar regularly excelled with engaging, patriotic speeches.²¹⁷²

²¹⁶⁶ Kavcar (ed.), *Vasıf Çınar. Yaşamı*, p. 8 and Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 12.

²¹⁶⁷ Ferit Eczacıbaşı lists the members of the Nationalist Forces (*kuva-yı milliye*) in İzmir during the War of Independence in his memoirs as follows: “Miralay Süleyman Fethi Bey, Miralay Kazım (Özalp) Bey, Jandarma subayı Mümin Bey, Moralizâde Halit ve Nail beyler, Ragıp Nurettin (Ege) Bey, gazeteci Hasan Tahsin Bey, Mustafa Necati Bey, Vasıf Çınar Bey, *Ahenk* gazetesi sahibi Nazmi ve Başyazarı Şevki beyler, *Anadolu* gazetesi sahibi Haydar Rüştü (Öktem) Bey, Lise İkinci Müdürü İsmail Habib (Sevük) Bey, Eczacıbaşı Süleyman Ferit Bey, Mevlevi Şehi Nurettin Efendi, Feşçizâde Halim Bey, Vilayet memuru Enver (Sözgen) Bey, *Anadolu* gazetesi yazarlarından Reşat Bey, Kahvecizâde Hamdi Bey, Dr. Menekşeli Hüsnü Bey, Ahmet Naili Bey, matematik öğretmeni Nazmi Bey, Poligon müdürü Yüzbaşı Fa'ik, öğretmen Yıldırım Kemal, öğretmen Gaffar Bey ve daha birçok özgürlük âşığı İzmirli (…),” Yaşar Aksoy, *Bir Kent, Bir İnsan. İzmir'in Son Yüzyılı*, S. *Ferit Eczacıbaşı'nın Yaşamı ve Anıları* (Istanbul: Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), pp. 157-158. Note the overlap with the supporters of Cemal Kutay after the death of his father and during his early years in Ankara in the 1920s.

²¹⁶⁸ Celal Bayar represented İzmir in the Turkish parliament, see Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 206. Bayar mentioned Vasıf Çınar as a member of his circle of fellow Turkish nationalist activists in İzmir during the Greek occupation, see Celal Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım. Milli Mücadele'ye Giriş*, 8 vols. (Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1968), vol. 6, p. 1740.

²¹⁶⁹ Kazım Özalp was also a member of the Turkish parliament, representing Balıkesir, see Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 245.

²¹⁷⁰ Like Özalp, Çarıklı also represented Balıkesir in parliament, see Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 311.

²¹⁷¹ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 12.

²¹⁷² Aksoy, *Bir Kent, Bir İnsan*, p. 159.

After the armistice and during the ensuing War of Independence, Vasıf Çınar was based in Balıkesir, from where he actively supported the opposition against the occupation of İzmir. Together with Mustafa Necati Bey he founded the journal *İzmir'e Doğru*, which appeared twice a week from November 1919 onwards. The paper was very critical of the politics of the government of Damad Ferid Paşa in Istanbul, being particularly dissatisfied with the government's cooperation with the British occupation forces. *İzmir'e Doğru*, sporting the subtitle "Hareket-i Milliye'nin Hâdim ve Mürevvicidir"²¹⁷³ on its front cover. It adopted a Turkish nationalist stance and supported the resistance movement under Mustafa Kemal Paşa in Anatolia, reporting on its advances and encouraging the local population in İzmir and Balıkesir to support the struggle for Turkish independence and resist the foreign occupation. Consequently, the paper was banned by the occupying forces and had to be distributed clandestinely during the early years of its publication.²¹⁷⁴ In his articles for *İzmir'e Doğru*, Vasıf Çınar argued fervently for a complete break of relations with the government of Damad Ferid Paşa in Istanbul.²¹⁷⁵

Seen against the backdrop of his family background, Vasıf Çınar's political position is particularly interesting: While he was speaking out critically against the government of Damad Ferid Paşa, other members of his family, prominently among them Emin Ali Bey and his sons and Halil Bey Bedirhan, were closely involved with these very government circles in Istanbul. Another relative, Abdurrahman Bey Bedirhan, was appointed as governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Aydın in the province of İzmir at

²¹⁷³ The subtitle can be translated as "The Servant and Facilitator of the National Movement," for a reprint of a front page from *İzmir'e Doğru*, see Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 121. An extensive collection of numerous issues of *İzmir'e Doğru* is accessible in the library of the Türk Tarih Kurumu in Ankara.

²¹⁷⁴ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, pp. 42-44 and Aksoy, *Bir Kent, Bir İnsan*, p. 180. Eczacıbaşı himself played a role in the secret distribution of the journal in İzmir.

²¹⁷⁵ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, has reprinted some of his articles, pp. 51ff.

the onset of the occupation. Living through the same period of turmoil and insecurity as Vasıf Çınar, Abdurrahman Bedirhan initiated some attempts towards resisting the occupation of İzmir, but did not go as far as to openly support Mustafa Kemal's nationalist opposition in Anatolia.²¹⁷⁶ In 1919, shortly before *İzmir'e Doğru* began its publication, Kamuran and Celadet Bedirhan were traveling through Anatolia in the company of the British diplomat Major Noel – a collaboration Vasıf Çınar would have strongly disapproved of, to say the least. It is not clear whether members of the Bedirhani family were still on speaking terms and close enough at that time for the relatives to discuss their opposing positions among each other. The minutes of Bedirhani family reunions which took place in Istanbul in 1920 do not mention Vasıf Çınar's or his brother Mehmed Es'ad Bey's participation.²¹⁷⁷

One can only speculate as to why Vasıf Çınar decided to throw in his support with the Turkish nationalist opposition. Wanting to avoid a rupture from his circle of close friends in İzmir might have impacted his decision. And while members of the Bedirhani family in Istanbul were emphasizing their Ottoman-Kurdish origins to strike some sort of deal with the Ottoman government and the Allied forces in 1919, Vasıf Çınar lived through the violent military confrontation with the Greek army in İzmir, an encounter which urged him to draw the lines differently, differentiating between “us,” the Turkish population of İzmir and “them,” the Greek enemy invaders. In her memoir, Müveddet Gönensay gave her own childhood recollections of her family's departure from İzmir in 1919 a similar twist, identifying completely with the Turkish suffering during the occupation: “Biz Türkler için dayanılmaz bir durum, çok tatsız bir durum,” for us Turks it was an unbearable

²¹⁷⁶ Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım*, vol. 6, p. 1977 and Gönensay, *Anıları*, pp. 9-10.

²¹⁷⁷ See Malmisanij [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 16.

situation, she summarizes the days of the Greek occupation in İzmir.²¹⁷⁸ The similarities between Müveddet Gönensay's and Vasıf Çınar's perspective are partly due to the shared overarching narrative of Turkish nationalist historiography which both accounts subscribe to in retrospect. In addition, both had witnessed the misery and violence of the occupation first hand – this experience led them to position themselves in opposition to the occupiers, adopting this perspective as their main lens to make sense of and remember the events.

After the War of Independence had ended, Vasıf Çınar returned to İzmir and resumed his work as a teacher there, while at the same time rebuilding schools and other facilities which had been destroyed by the war. In doing so, he worked together with his brother Mehmed Es'ad Bey and his close friend Mustafa Necati Bey. He also met Hasan Ali Yücel (1897–1961), future Turkish Minister of Education, during these years. The *Türk Ocağı* in İzmir was reopened as a result of their efforts, and Mehmed Es'ad Bey began to publish a newspaper with the title *Türk Sesi*.²¹⁷⁹ In July 1923, Vasıf Çınar entered Turkish Republican politics: He was elected to parliament as representative of Saruhan. Following a brief intermezzo in Istanbul as prosecutor (*savcı*) at the Independence Tribunal (*istiklal mahkemesi*) from December 1923 to February 1924,²¹⁸⁰ Vasıf Çınar returned to Ankara. In parliament, he was mainly involved with education politics,²¹⁸¹ his biggest coup being the proposal for the *tevhid-i tedrisat* legislation, which was passed in March 1924. This law facilitated the unification and secularization of the Turkish education system, which also meant the complete abolishment of the traditional medrese education and the introduction of coeducation. After the law

²¹⁷⁸ "It was an unbearable situation for us Turks, a galling situation," Gönensay, *Anıları*, p. 9.

²¹⁷⁹ Kavcar (ed.), *Vasıf Çınar. Yaşamı*, p. 10.

²¹⁸⁰ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 17.

²¹⁸¹ In addition, he was a member of parliamentary commissions on population exchange, settlement politics and public works, see Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 15.

was passed, Vasıf Çınar was appointed as Minister of Education, swiftly putting the controversial *tevhid-i tedrisat* legislation into practice.²¹⁸² He was, however, forced to resign in November 1924, having been harshly criticized by more conservative factions in parliament for his radically secular education politics.²¹⁸³

Early in the summer of 1925, Vasıf Çınar left Turkey for Prague, where he was appointed as the first ambassador of the Turkish Republic in Czechoslovakia. This appointment marked the beginning of Vasıf Çınar's career as a diplomat: In 1927, he transferred to the Turkish embassy in Budapest, and in November 1928, he was appointed as Turkish ambassador in Moscow.²¹⁸⁴ From January to May 1929, Vasıf Çınar returned briefly to the government in Ankara. He came to replace his friend Mustafa Necati Bey, who had unexpectedly passed away, as parliamentary representative of İzmir and Minister of Education. In 1932, he left the Turkish capital to continue his career as a diplomat in Italy. In 1935, he was transferred again to Moscow, where he suddenly passed away, succumbing to heart failure after a severe appendicitis in June of the same year.²¹⁸⁵ A Russian navy ship brought his remains, wrapped in the Turkish flag, back to Istanbul. A state funeral was prepared for Vasıf Çınar at the Cebeci cemetery in Ankara.²¹⁸⁶ Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras spoke at the occasion, praising Çınar as a "child of the Revolution."²¹⁸⁷ Çınar was buried next to his life-long friend Mustafa Necati Bey. Vasıf Çınar was never married and had no children.

Vasıf Çınar continues to be commemorated as a child of the Turkish Republic. "Vasıf Çınar devrimin oğlu idi," he was the son of the

²¹⁸² Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, pp. 17-22.

²¹⁸³ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 25.

²¹⁸⁴ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 25.

²¹⁸⁵ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 26.

²¹⁸⁶ "Kaybettiğimiz Devrimci." In: *Cumhuriyet*, June 5, 1935, pp. 1 and 4.

²¹⁸⁷ "Tam bir inkılab çocuğu yetiş[ti] ...," the speech was rendered in *Fikir Dergisi* 6.130, June 15, 1935, p. 2, cited by Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 26.

revolution, stated a local newspaper in İzmir on the occasion of Vasif Çınar's death in 1935, revisiting the appraisal of Tevfik Rüştü Aras.²¹⁸⁸ Immediately after his death, there were suggestions to name a main street in İzmir in his memory.²¹⁸⁹ Given his complex biography and intricate family background, however, commemorating Vasif Çınar in the context of Turkish nationalist historiography was not an easy feat: In October 1999, the Türk Eğitim Derneği, the Turkish Education Association (TED) met for a conference to honor Vasif Çınar and the service he has rendered to the field of education in Turkey throughout his life.²¹⁹⁰ This conference was deeply embedded in the broader nationalist historical narrative of the Turkish Republic: The ceremony began with a minute of silence in commemoration of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as the model any Turkish educator of merit would have to strive to emulate. Subsequently, the history of the Türk Eğitim Derneği, founded by Mustafa Kemal himself in 1928, was related. Anyone present at the ceremony would have been intimately familiar with this account, whose function was thus not to inform, but to assure the audience of their shared identity. It was in this context, as a member of the community of Turkish-Republican civil servants committed to education, that Vasif Çınar was remembered at the conference held in his honor. A biographical overview chronologically listed the different stages of his career, painting a deceptively smooth picture of his biographical trajectory. Neither the fundamental turning point of the First World War nor the later hick-ups in his career in Republican times, when he had been sent into a sort of honorable exile to embassy posts in Europe in the late 1920s, were contextualized or explained. Rather odd for a biographical account of any sort, his family background was not mentioned at all in this introduction.

²¹⁸⁸ Baran, *Vasif Çınar ve İzmir'e Doğru*, p. 26.

²¹⁸⁹ "İzmir'de bir caddenin ismi 'Vasif Çınar' olacak." In: *Cumhuriyet*, June 10, 1935, p. 2.

²¹⁹⁰ The proceedings, including transcripts of the speeches given, were published, see Kavcar (ed.), *Vasif Çınar. Yaşamı*. The TED had begun in 1992 to honor a different outstanding Turkish educator each year with a conference.

After this brief introduction into Çınar's life and achievements, Zeki Arıkan, a historian based at the Ege Üniversitesi in İzmir, opened the first panel. His presentation focused on the youth of Vasıf Çınar and his activities prior to the War of Independence. Arıkan depicted Çınar as part of a generation of young activists who had created the new Republic of Turkey and had attempted to fulfill the Republican ideals even before the War of Independence had begun in Anatolia. Having thus set the scene and characterized Çınar as a steadfast supporter of the Turkish Republic, Zeki Arıkan was the first to finally mention the elephant in the room, the Ottoman-Kurdish family background of his protagonist. Arıkan insisted that, in line with Kemalist ideology, Vasıf Çınar had never subscribed to a narrow perspective of ethnically defined separatism.²¹⁹¹ However, Arıkan mentioned that time and again, doubts have been voiced about Vasıf Çınar's loyalty to the Kemalist Republic, some going as far as to call him an opportunist who, by siding with Mustafa Kemal in the last minute, hoped to secure privileges and ongoing influence for his family.²¹⁹² These doubts were unfounded, Arıkan argued, reiterating that Vasıf Çınar, as he laid out in the first part of his presentation, had already been a committed secular reformer and Turkish nationalist *avant la lettre*.

The second panel opened with a presentation on the journal *İzmir'e Doğru*, published by Çınar and his brother during the War of Independence. The last speaker at the conference was Orhun Köstem, a businessman and, as he explained, a relative of Vasıf Çınar's. Köstem is the grandson of Çınar's younger sister İsmet. He proceeded to tell a number of anecdotes from Vasıf Çınar's life and was supported in his efforts by two other family members who happened to be in the

²¹⁹¹ "[F]akat o, hiçbir zaman dar, etnik bir ırkçılık peşinde gitmedi." Kavcar (ed.), *Vasıf Çınar. Yaşamı*, p. 16.

²¹⁹² Kavcar (ed.), *Vasıf Çınar. Yaşamı*, pp. 16-17.

audience, Neriman Selgin,²¹⁹³ the already-mentioned historian Cemal Kutay, and Kayhan Çınar.²¹⁹⁴ The same Neriman Selgin, a niece of Vasıf Çınar, was also the principal informant for Tülay Alim Baran in her biographical study on Vasıf Çınar. She shared personal memories and family photographs with Baran.²¹⁹⁵ In the context of Turkish Republican historiography, Neriman Selgin emerges as the guardian of the public memory of Vasıf Çınar, who had no children of his own.

In sum, the conference in honor of Vasıf Çınar seems to serve the purpose of assuring the community of committed Turkish Republican educators, which had gathered at the occasion, of the fact that Vasıf Çınar was one of their kind. They achieve this by downplaying conflicting information about his family background, by emphasizing his commitment to Republican values from a young age onwards, and by rewriting his biography as a story which unfolded in parallel to the emergence of the Turkish Republic. Vasıf Çınar is, also in other publications of Zeki Arıkan, depicted as an integral part of the community of founders of the Turkish Republic.²¹⁹⁶ He is described as a revolutionary and courageous fighter for Turkish independence and against foreign occupation. His actions and ideas are contextualized within a closely-knit circle of friends that included Mustafa Necati Bey, Hasan Ali Yücel and others. His family origins fade into the background, to the extent that on thirty-two pages on Vasıf Çınar which are headlined “Vasıf Çınar Kimdir?” – who is Vasıf Çınar, his biographer Tülay Alim Baran manages to mention his parents in a single sentence,

²¹⁹³ Misspelled as “Neriman Sereğli” in the conference proceedings, Kavcar (ed.), *Vasıf Çınar. Yaşamı*, p. 41. Neriman, the daughter of Vasıf Çınar’s sister Sa’adet and her husband Ali Süreyya Bey, was married to Ahmet Hamit Selgin (1902–1989), a military doctor, CHP member and, from 1946 to 1950, representative of Ankara in the Turkish parliament, See obituary notice for Zeynep Neriman Selgin, in *Cumhuriyet*, April 2, 2004, p. 10, and Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 373.

²¹⁹⁴ All the interjections and contributions from the audience were duly recorded and published in the conference proceedings, Kavcar (ed.), *Vasıf Çınar. Yaşamı*, pp. 41-48.

²¹⁹⁵ Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir’e Doğru*, pp. 117-119.

²¹⁹⁶ Preface by Zeki Arıkan in Baran, *Vasıf Çınar ve İzmir’e Doğru*, pp. 5-7.

not losing another word on the history of his extended family or his Ottoman-Kurdish origins. How did, on the other hand, the chroniclers of the Bedirhani family history from a Kurdish nationalist background come to terms with the fact that one of the family's members was an active and outspoken representative of the founding generation of the Turkish Republic? Mostly, they shunned him. Malmisanîj, the author of a detailed compilation on the Bedirhani family history, noted that "as Vasif Çınar betrayed the Kurds and served the Kemalists, the family took the decision to cast him out of their community."²¹⁹⁷

In the shadow of his more prominent older brother Vasif, Mehmed Es'ad Bey [Esat Çınar] established himself as part of the generation of the founders of the Turkish Republic as well.²¹⁹⁸ Born at the island of Crete in 1894,²¹⁹⁹ Mehmed Es'ad Bey studied law at the Dar'ül-Fünun in Istanbul like his brother. He then worked as a teacher in Ankara and İzmir. He taught literature and French at the *Özel Şark İ'dadisi* which had been founded by his brother.²²⁰⁰ In the early 1920s, Mehmed Es'ad Bey published a Turkish nationalist newspaper titled *Türk Sesi*. A member of the CHP, he represented İzmir in Turkish parliament between 1943 and 1950. A family member, Rükzan Günaysu (née Çınar, she was a granddaughter of Murat Remzi Bedirhan), who also was one of Mehmed Es'ad Bey's students in İzmir, remembered that İsmet İnönü allegedly had to practically force him to give up his beloved

²¹⁹⁷ Malmisanîj [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 216: "Kürtlere ihanet edip Kemalistlere hizmet ettiğinden dolayı Vasif Çınar'ın, Bedirhani ailesinin aldığı bir kararla 'evlatlıktan atıldığı' söylenir." Mehmed Uzun is Malmisanîj's source for this information. However, Malmisanîj also points out that he has yet to encounter written proof of this family decision.

²¹⁹⁸ Much less is known about his trajectory than about his brother's. Malmisanîj [Mehmet Tayfun], *Cızıra Botanlı*, p. 133 mentions Esat Çınar very briefly, characterizing him as an ardent Turkish nationalist.

²¹⁹⁹ Yıldırım & Zeynel (eds.), *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, 1. cilt 1920-1950, p. 402.

²²⁰⁰ Ömer Faruk Huyugüzel, *İzmir Fikir ve Sanat Adamları (1850-1950)* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000), pp. 331-332.

teaching job and join the parliament.²²⁰¹ Mehmed Es'ad Bey was married and had three children. He died in February 1975.

7.3.3. Meziyet Çınar: Kurdish Networks, Turkish Party Politics

To conclude my deliberations on members of the Bedirhani family in the Turkish Republic, I return to someone I have already briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter. Compared to the intensively researched biographies of her prominent siblings Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, less is known about the biographical trajectory of their younger sister Meziyet Çınar (d. 1986). Her family background, her parents Emin Ali Bey and Seniha Hanım, along with her prominent siblings, have already been discussed extensively above.²²⁰² Growing up in Istanbul and Cairo, Meziyet Çınar later worked as a teacher in Turkish Republican times. Similar to her relatives Cemal Kutay and Vasıf Çınar, Meziyet found a place for herself within the Turkish Republican political system and was also politically active herself, as a member of the *Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi* (GP, Republican Reliance Party). Looking at the few things which are known about her biography in the broader context of Cemal Kutay's and Vasıf Çınar's experiences in Turkish Republican times helps contextualize her own trajectory and also adds an additional, female perspective to the general argument about members of the Bedirhani family in Turkish Republican times.

²²⁰¹ "Bir Atatürk Anısı, Bir Ders." In: *Cumhuriyet*, November 28, 2005, p. 17. In the same article, Rükzan Günaysu also described Esat Çınar as exceptionally knowledgeable, restrained and able to bring an element of balance into the circle of friends around Vasıf Çınar and Mustafa Necati Bey.

²²⁰² See chapter 5 for details.

Meziyet Çınar seems to have come to party politics late in life.²²⁰³ Her political home, the Republican Reliance Party, was founded in 1967. Turhan Feyzioğlu (1922–1988) and forty-seven followers, all of them in disagreement with the leftist leanings of the CHP, broke away to create a separate party. The Republican Reliance Party defined itself as a secularist and nationalist organization, its program and statutes referring directly to the principles of Kemalism. Renamed into *Milli Güven Partisi* (National Reliance Party) in 1971, the party existed until 1980, winning up to seven percent of the national vote in parliamentary elections. The party was banned after the military coup in 1980.²²⁰⁴ Meziyet Çınar is said to have acted as the president of the women's branch of the Republican Reliance Party.²²⁰⁵ Almost certainly, however, Meziyet was not a member of the higher ranks of the party leadership. It was İrfan Solmazır who was elected as president of the women's and youth branch of the Republican Reliance Party at the first party convention in March 1968.²²⁰⁶ Meziyet held a comparatively minor position within the local party ranks of Istanbul, where she presided over the local women's branch. Yurdanur Serhat (*1940), herself a young activist in the Republican Reliance Party at the time, vividly remembers "Meziyet Abla,"²²⁰⁷ suggesting that she was closely involved with party activities on the ground in Istanbul.²²⁰⁸

²²⁰³ She was in her sixties when she joined the Republican Reliance Party, I found no evidence for any earlier political involvement on her part (which might nonetheless have existed, as sources on Meziyet Çınar's life are extremely sparse).

²²⁰⁴ On the Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi, see Gürcan Bozkır, "Türk Siyasi Hayatında Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi." In: *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6.15 (2007), pp. 275-308.

²²⁰⁵ See the biographical interview with Yurdanur Serhat in Mücahit Özden Hun, *İğdir Sevdası*, 3 vols. (Ankara: Başak Matbaacılık, 2002), vol. 2, p. 357.

²²⁰⁶ Bozkır, "Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi," p. 283. Here, Solmazır's office is referred to as "kadın ve gençlik kolları bürosu başkanlığı." No mention is made of Meziyet Çınar in the article.

²²⁰⁷ Hun, *İğdir Sevdası*, vol. 2, p. 357.

²²⁰⁸ Leading members of the Republican Reliance Party in Istanbul included the lawyers Fehmi Atanç and Oğuz Alp Orhan, Yaşar Keçeli, and Abdurrahman Aslan, see İhsan Onur, "İstanbul teşkilâtı tamamlanıyor." In: *Cumhuriyet*, June 6, 1967, p. 5.

In spite of her involvement with Turkish party politics, which necessitated at least an outward acceptance of the political framework of the Turkish Republic and the pillars of Kemalist state ideology, Meziyet is also known to have been in regular contact with both Celadet in Syria and Kamuran in Paris. With her brother Kamuran, she scheduled monthly telephone conversations, during which she also brokered contacts between him and Kurdish intellectuals and students in Istanbul.²²⁰⁹ According to Musa Anter, Meziyet Çınar's apartment in the neighborhood of Şişli, close to the Greek-Orthodox cemetery, was a veritable place of pilgrimage for the Kurdish intellectuals of his generation.²²¹⁰ In a similar vein, Yurdanur Serhat remembers that it was over dinner at her friend Meziyet Çınar's house that she was first introduced to her future husband, the Kurdish lawyer and activist Medet Serhat (1943–1994).²²¹¹

²²⁰⁹ The Iranian-Kurdish politician Abdurrahman Ghassemlou (1930–1989) recalls how Meziyet Çınar established contact with Kamuran for him, who in turn helped him obtain a scholarship to study in Paris. See Orhan Miroğlu, “İstanbul’dan Viyana’ya uzanan bir hayat hikayesi Abdurrahman Qasimlo.” In: *Star Gazete*, January 20, 2013, <http://haber.stargazete.com/yazar/istanbuldan-viyana-uzanan-bir-hayat-hikayesi-abdurrahman-qasimlo/yazi-720975>, last accessed January 8, 2014.

²²¹⁰ He describes her home as both a “ziyaretgah” [a place of pilgrimage] and “bir kültür ve hatıra merkezi,” [a center of culture and memory], see Anter, *Hatıralarım*, pp. 105-106.

²²¹¹ Hun, *İğdir Sevdası*, vol. 2, p. 357.

8. Conclusions

In this dissertation, I have been concerned with the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani family and its history in Ottoman imperial and post-imperial times. Tracing various members of the extended Bedirhani family over the late 19th and early 20th centuries, I looked at the family's history as a case-study to inquire about dynamics of post-imperial identity formation over a crucial period of time: I was particularly interested in the Bedirhani family's history immediately before and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire – that is, at a decisive moment in the formation of the current geopolitical structure of the Middle East, marked by the rise of nationalisms and nationalist historiographies. I inquired about the strategies family members used to negotiate the shift from empire to post-imperial contexts. To get a better understanding of how family members coped with and tried to make sense of this transition, I looked at the stories they told about themselves and their family's history and also investigated the network structures they operated in.

I argue that with the end of the Ottoman Empire, imperial structures of solidarity and frameworks of identification did not just vanish overnight, to be replaced by nationalist identities and loyalties. Rather, I understand identity formation as a long-term process with many options aside from Kurdish nationalism and read post-Ottoman identity as a multi-layered phenomenon. Looking at individual trajectories of Bedirhani family members between imperial and post-imperial contexts, I observed different strategies and coping mechanisms. Departing from similar starting points in terms of resources like social standing, education, networks and economic wealth at their disposal, members of the Bedirhani family ended up in very different places after the First World War and the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. As a

counterbalance to existing research on the Bedirhani family, which has focused on a few politically very active family members, I found it necessary to point to alternative trajectories of family members who did not engage with Kurdish nationalist politics. Their lesser known but equally interesting life stories serve a double purpose in my analysis: On the one hand, their stories sketch out opportunity structures, potentials and ‘roads not taken’ of relevance for all family members. On the other hand, they shed light on the manifold modifications the stories of their more prominent relatives underwent to fit the larger narrative of Kurdish nationalist historiography in the 20th century.

One central insight of my work did not come as a surprise: Research and documentation on the Bedirhani family history continue to be severely impacted by Kurdish nationalist historiography. However, not all the expectations I had initially brought to the case of the Bedirhani family were met as my research proceeded. I was, for instance, not able to focus on all family members simultaneously but had to direct my attention to cases I felt were particularly instructive, representative or well-documented. Another expectation concerned the material I was able to obtain. Even though some family members would stand out as “usual suspects” for memoir writing, having been among the most prominent protagonists of the Kurdish independence movement, not many of such autobiographical texts surfaced. The few I was able to trace were short and limited in scope, like the diary Celadet Bedirhan kept during his time in Germany or the autobiographical interview Kamuran Bedirhan gave to Thomas Bois in 1946. With questions about the categories and narratives of Kurdish history and identity in mind, some of these writings appeared enigmatic, irrelevant, random and strangely pale.

I have structured my argument as follows: In chapter 2, I started out by looking at the collective history of the Bedirhani family. I argued that focusing on an already established group of people and patiently following them around through late Ottoman and post-imperial times

comes with the benefit of avoiding many preconceived notions otherwise at play in Kurdish nationalist historiography – and exploring different dynamics, time frames and mental maps instead. Let me illustrate this with just one example: I followed the Bedirhanis into Ottoman Syria and traced them on the Asian shores of the Bosphorus – and it turned out that these spaces, rather than an imagined Kurdish homeland, held great political and economic relevance for the family over decades. I understood kinship and genealogy as powerful cultural constructs rather than biological realities, allowing me to ask about changing notions of family and descent at play over time. A summary of the existing literature on the Bedirhani family history demonstrated that interest in their historical trajectory predates the advent of Kurdish nationalist historiography in the early 20th century. An early account, authored by Lütfi [Ahmed Ramiz] depicted Emir Bedirhan as a model Ottoman governor and eager reformer instead of focusing on his revolt and picturing it as motivated by nationalist fervor. From the 19th century onwards, members of the Bedirhani family themselves were prominently involved in the writing of the family history, skillfully tailoring it to shifting discourses within an increasingly nationalist historiography.

The second part of the chapter then traced the history of the Bedirhani family prior to their departure from their homeland in Cizre and followed them into exile to Crete, Istanbul and finally to Damascus. Unlike later historiography has insisted, it appears that the direct ancestors of Emir Bedirhan had not ruled over the Emirate of Bohtan for centuries, but had come to power in Cizre only recently. My historical overview also challenged the idea that Emir Bedirhan's revolt in 1847 was motivated by a desire for Kurdish autonomy and illustrated instead how the family's trajectory in exile can be read as an attempt to regain access to the imperial system with its resources and career options. Following the departure of the Bedirhanis, their former homeland in

Cizre underwent large-scale political and economic changes, but continued to be an important point of reference for members of the Bedirhani family well into the 20th century. Several instances demonstrate how family members were eager to cast their own family history and cultural heritage as representative of Kurdish history on the whole, in an attempt to endorse their claims to political leadership within the Kurdish community with historical evidence. As a result, these claims were challenged by their political rivals, tying the discussion about Bedirhani family history to concerns of the present and disputes about political leadership. I have identified religion, social status and (pseudo-)historical legacy as key resources family members were able to draw on to claim prestige and political leadership. While underlying resources and networks showed some continuity, rhetorics and strategies of legitimizing the family's status changed over time as the 20th century proceeded and Kurdish nationalist ideology took shape. Even though their position and political prominence were increasingly challenged, members of the Bedirhani family were able to defend their claims to leadership. A principal reason for their success in doing so was their ability to actively shape narratives about Kurdish history and identity, especially during the French mandate period, and write themselves prominently into these narratives. The family's agency in modifying their own story emerged as a recurrent theme of my research and is revisited in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3 brought the important, but too often neglected Ottoman imperial dimension of the family history into focus, chiefly drawing on the examples of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan in Ottoman Syria and Ali Şamil Paşa Bedirhan in Istanbul. Singling out the province of Ottoman Syria as a key space for the Bedirhani family throughout late Ottoman times, the chapter made the argument that Ottoman Syria can be fruitfully analyzed as an Ottoman-Kurdish space and that, similarly, Ottoman-Kurdish actors like the Bedirhani family members took an active part in

shaping and implementing local and imperial politics. Strategies members of the Bedirhani family relied on to make themselves at home in Ottoman Syria included marriage and network politics, going after employment in the imperial administration and economic investments, in particular in landed property and commercial agriculture. As members of the Bedirhani family were employed in the higher ranks of the imperial bureaucracy and Ottoman military, no clear distinction or antagonism can be drawn up between “the state” on the one hand and “the Bedirhani family” on the other hand. Looking at the relations between the Ottoman authorities and the Bedirhani family over the late 19th century, the chapter demonstrated that while the Ottoman policy towards the family was relatively lenient throughout, relations between the authorities and individual family members were sometimes tense and subject to ongoing changes. Among the reasons why the Ottoman authorities displayed comparative indulgence towards the family, the role of family members as successful and much-needed brokers and middlemen mediating between the government and Kurdish populations of the empire, in Eastern Anatolia and beyond, stands out. Throughout the late 19th century, members of the Bedirhani family mobilized Kurdish tribesmen as irregular fighters for the Ottoman army and also wielded some control over urban Kurdish populations, mostly migrant workers, in Istanbul and other cities. Ottoman centralization and resettlement politics targeting Kurdish tribes upset the traditional living conditions and patterns of migration of these tribes and in turn facilitated a continued influence of the Bedirhanis, even though they were banned from their former area of influence in the Emirate of Bohtan. Financially, members of the Bedirhani family in exile depended on support from the Ottoman state. Ongoing arguments about the status, the exact amount and the distribution of the payments family members received from the treasury illustrate the shifting internal factions and dynamics within the family. Negotiating with state authorities as a collective, writing petitions and networking with

government officials in their favor was a skill family members excelled at – and which gave them a head start over others after the collapse of the empire when discussions with imperial powers about the post-war order of the Middle East took off.

Bedri Paşa Bedirhan's career in particular demonstrates how the Bedirhani family was closely involved with the imperial state in Ottoman Syria: Not unlike a skilled chess player, he successfully positioned himself and members of his inner circle of clients in key positions all over the province. As an Ottoman official, Bedri Paşa was prominently involved in the administration of the Hawran region, which had only recently been brought under central Ottoman control. His influence in the Hawran in turn allowed Bedri Paşa to push his economic agenda: He purchased (or, more aptly, grabbed) agricultural land in the Hawran and invested in export-oriented grain trade. In spite of his leading role within the Bedirhani family throughout the late 19th century, Bedri Paşa has been ignored by later historiographers of the family history. In the final part of the chapter, I compared Bedri Paşa's career to that of another family member, Ali Şamil Paşa, who is remembered in Kurdish historiography to this day as a simple but righteous hero of the common people. My analysis, however, has complicated this picture, demonstrating that Ali Şamil Paşa, much like his brother Bedri Paşa in Syria, was a successful Ottoman-Kurdish strongman who knew how to benefit from the imperial framework both in terms of his network strategies and his economic endeavors. In Istanbul, Ali Şamil Paşa acted as the patron of the Kurdish urban poor, many of them porters (*hamal*) at the docks of the city – a role which gave him considerable leeway with the Ottoman authorities until the fortunes of the entire Bedirhani family changed with the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906.

Chapter 4 inquired more closely about the eventful period of transition between imperial and post-imperial contexts. I looked into moments of

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doubt about belonging and existing loyalties, roughly between 1906 and 1918 and chiefly drew on the biographies of two complex personalities from the midst of the Bedirhani family to do so: Mehmed Salih Bey Bedirhan – a disappointed, yet steadfast supporter of the Ottoman Empire – and his cousin Abdürrezzak Bey Bedirhan – a renegade looking for support in Czarist Russia. In focusing on these two individuals, the chapter followed up on the protagonists and key events introduced in the previous chapter: Mehmed Salih Bey came of age in the household of Bedri Paşa Bedirhan, and Abdürrezzak Bey was, together with Ali Şamil Paşa, one of the main suspects in the murder of Rıdvan Paşa. Both Mehmed Salih and Abdürrezzak Bey, however, perceived their opportunities differently than the Bedirhani family's previous generation of imperial bureaucrats and strongmen. Mehmed Salih Bey engaged with Ottomanism, positioning himself in opposition to Abdülhamid II and his system of authoritarian rule, while Abdürrezzak Bey left the Ottoman realm altogether. The biographies of Mehmed Salih and Abdürrezzak Bey, both of which have been published and were heavily edited in the process, provide illustrative examples for how later nationalist historiography has tried to incorporate the ambiguous family history of the transition period into a more straightforward narrative. That way, Mehmed Salih Bey's biography is today anachronistically read as a preface to Kurdish nationalist history, and Abdürrezzak Bey has been turned into a revolutionary and Kurdish independence fighter *avant la lettre*. I identified the murder of Rıdvan Paşa in 1906 as a turning point in the mutual perceptions of the Ottoman state authorities and the Bedirhani family. In the spring of 1906, Ottoman officials and journalists reactivated a collective and highly pejorative outlook on the entire family. It is interesting to note, however, that the exclusion and stigmatization of the family did not happen on the basis of their Kurdish ethnicity, but constituted more of a “re-tribalization” and attempted exclusion from the realm of Ottoman civilization and modernity. 19th-century defenders of the family argued,

unlike later Kurdish nationalist historiography, on the same grounds, depicting the Bedirhani family as an integral and valued part of Ottoman imperial society. The chapter also demonstrated how later nationalist historiography has focused on the opposition of some Bedirhani family members against the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II in order to establish a legacy of oppression and political opposition for the Bedirhani family and thus undergird 20th-century claims to leadership which were forwarded by family members. I was able to show, however, that the opposition to the sultan and the relations to the Young Turk movement were complex: First, only a minority of Bedirhani family members opposed the rule of Abdülhamid II in the late 19th century. Second, as the example of Osman Paşa Bedirhan has illustrated, taking an oppositional stance could serve different motives, including to improve one's bargaining position and leverage in negotiations with the Ottoman authorities. Third, soon after the Constitutional Revolution of 1908, new fault lines became apparent – CUP representatives, in many ways the successors of the earlier Young Turk opposition movement, emerged not as partners, but as major rivals of the Bedirhanis for influence in Eastern Anatolia. Not at last, the chapter also prepared the ground for the following part of the dissertation, stressing that some of the connections and interlocutors of members of the Bedirhani family, among them Armenian political activists, Kurdish tribal leaders and urban notable families, continued to play a role beyond the period of transition and the eventual collapse of the empire, retaining their importance into the 20th century.

Chapters 5 to 7 zoomed in on various members of the Bedirhani family caught up in transition after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, some of them politically active in Syria and Lebanon and others eager to fit in with the newly emerging Turkish-Republican elite in Istanbul. Chapter 5 looked at the by far most prominent members of the Bedirhani family, the brothers Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan. They are analyzed

in context, first of all as members of their own family – which is why the chapter started off with a section on the career of their father Emin Ali Bey and the household the three Bedirhani brothers grew up in. They are also understood as part of a community of post-Ottoman, rather than exclusively Kurdish, intellectuals who shared ideas, backgrounds and mentalities with friends, schoolmates and colleagues within a common imperial framework. The chapter argued that a generation of post-Ottoman intellectuals, which included the Bedirhani brothers, went through a number of formative experiences together as they came of age, among them the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and the First World War. Many of the connections the three Bedirhani brothers were able to forge during their years in school and at university, I was able to demonstrate, were to stay with them in post-imperial times.

I pointed out in this chapter how Kurdish nationalist historiography has focused on Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan and their activities in the late 1920s and 1930s in Syria and Lebanon, but in doing so has effectively glossed over, modified or even completely silenced the Ottoman imperial dimensions and concerns of the earlier years of their biographies. The current standard narrative of Kurdish nationalist historiography also remains silent about the numerous continuities, especially as far as skill sets, strategies and network structures are concerned, which helped bridge the divide between imperial and post-imperial settings for the Bedirhani brothers. Later accounts of the (historically contingent) experience of Ottoman state violence, persecution and exile in the aftermath of the murder of Rıdvan Paşa have been appropriated into a new narrative of the Bedirhani family's Kurdish nationalist resistance against the state which emerged in the late 1920s, helping the Bedirhani brothers to gain credibility and legitimacy as designated leaders of the Kurdish nationalist movement.

Tracing the three Bedirhani brothers over the period of transition between ca. 1906 to 1921 also illustrated how they were involved with broader political and intellectual currents within (post-)Ottoman and Ottoman-Kurdish circles. Immediately after the war, they were collaborating with the religiously conservative opposition to the independence movement of Mustafa Kemal, in league with the last Ottoman government under Damad Ferid Paşa and many non-Kurdish defenders of the Ottoman dynasty and the caliphate. Their activities after the armistice represented a particular spectrum of the political discourse and were, at that time, by no means representative of the very heterogeneous wider Ottoman-Kurdish community. The end of the war and impending collapse of the Ottoman state entailed great political risks for the members of the Bedirhani family, as many of them had been seasoned and successful representatives of the now doomed imperial system. On the other hand, the imminent redistribution of power and influence also held some promise: In particular, it opened up opportunities to reclaim the family property in Eastern Anatolia which had been taken from the Bedirhanis in 1847. With these priorities high up on their agenda, the Bedirhani brothers entered the political scene in 1918. At the same time, they were eager to keep many options available for themselves and their constituency, as things were changing rapidly on the ground. By the mid-1920s, it was not foreseeable that members of the Bedirhani family would emerge as incontourable representatives of the Kurdish cause and movement more broadly. Their rise to the top of the Kurdish nationalist movement has a lot to do with imperial, in particular British, geopolitical interests in the immediate post-war period: Concerned about British influence in northern Mesopotamia and the access to British India it guaranteed, British diplomats had a special interest to be on good terms with Kurdish leaders who wielded (or could credibly claim to wield) some degree of influence in this very region. Against this backdrop, Emin Ali Bedirhan and his Kürdistan Te'ali Cemiyeti emerged as preferred interlocutors for the British.

Communications with the British diplomats were a learning process for the Ottoman-Kurdish organizations: I found that different strategies which were tried out and sometimes discarded again if they did not prove successful, as the example of Süreyya Bedirhan's vitriolic but short-lived rants about the Armenians illustrate. The final section of the chapter revisited the mission of the British Major Noel to Eastern Anatolia, where he visited Kurdish tribes in the company of Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan. In a nutshell, Noel's mission and the place it has come to take in later historiography sum up nicely a main point of this chapter, illustrating once more how Bedirhani protagonists were written into Kurdish nationalist history: While the scope of the mission had initially been quite modest and the Bedirhani brothers were neither the first choice of the British nor, it appears, of great use to Noel, later historiography has emphasized the events as a key moment in Kurdish nationalist history, thus according Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan larger-than-life prominence in the historical narrative from a position of hindsight.

In chapter 6, I revisited a well-known story, adopting a critical perspective: The chapter continued to pursue the three brothers Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran in the time period between 1919 and the Second World War. Instead of reading their trajectory with the hindsight and from the often teleological perspective of later Kurdish nationalist historiography, I traced how what is presented today as the success story of the Bedirhani brothers was made and made possible. I laid out how one branch of the Kurdish nationalist movement under their leadership formulated and refined their agenda and messages, tailoring them to shifting political contexts. While the activities of the Bedirhani brothers remained closely connected to the network of supporters of Damad Ferid Paşa and the shared resistance to the Kemalist advent to power in the 1920s, alliances and cooperations later shifted during the 1930s and 1940s. I argued that the specific experiences and trajectories of the

Bedirhani brothers opened up opportunities for them and their followers, but also restricted and limited their room for maneuvering in other respects. One illustrative example is their connection to Germany: Both Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan had studied in Germany in the 1920s. The post-war order in the Middle East, however, was shaped by Britain and France. Their connections to Germany and command of the German language were thus of limited use to the two brothers, even though they continued to reactivate them throughout their lives. More importantly, however, the Bedirhani brothers warmed up to French discourses about minority rights and ethnic identity during their time in the French mandate territories in Syria and Lebanon. Developing their ideas about Kurdish nationalism and its markers, they closely followed the outline provided by French colonial politics, putting a strong emphasis on a national language and culture and deemphasizing other, more controversial issues like the question of the Kurdish national territory. To no small degree, it can be argued that (even prior to the arrival of the Bedirhani brothers in Syria and Lebanon) the French imperial discourse “made” the local Kurdish community, actively looking for representatives and facilitating contacts and collaborations between previously rather heterogeneous and geographically dispersed groups. As they were bargaining with the French, it made sense for the established and assimilated Ottoman-Kurdish notables in Syria to start talking to the leaders of the incoming Kurdish refugees from Turkey.

Demonstrably, the Bedirhani brothers’ ideas about Kurdish identity were shaped by the conditions and discourses of the French mandate rule. It is just as important to note, however, that the Bedirhani brothers skillfully modified and influenced these very discourses, using the French policies to their own ends and promoting a leadership role for members of their own family within the Kurdish community by “Bedirhanizing” Kurdish cultural heritage, history and language. While the French mandate authorities were looking for influential

representatives from within the Kurdish community as their interlocutors, it was by no means a matter of course that the Bedirhani brothers would come to assume that role. Another coincidence worked to their advantage: The anti-Kemalist opposition was at the same time, during the early years of the French mandate, trying to win over Kurdish supporters. After some differences with already established Kurdish religious leaders who were organizing in Iraq, it was decided to help initiate a new and more malleable Kurdish association in the French mandate territories. Celadet Bedirhan in particular recommended himself for leadership in the newly-founded organization Hoybûn because of his previous collaboration with Mevlanzade Rîf'at Bey. Closely cooperating with non-Kurdish and non-Muslim actors and heavily sponsored by the Armenian nationalist movement, Hoybûn had to modify its discourse about Kurdish identity, notably deemphasizing religious aspects.

All three Bedirhani brothers had been absent from the Ottoman lands during the time of the Turkish War of Independence and the ensuing Kurdish uprisings in Turkey in the 1920s. They faced the challenge to legitimize their claims to leadership over the Kurdish community in spite of this lack of a shared experience of fighting and suffering with their compatriots. This led them to exaggerate their role in the early Kurdish uprisings and the extent of their persecution. Previous experiences of state oppression from Ottoman times were taken out of their original context and presented as evidence for the long-term resistance of the Bedirhani family, effectively glossing over the long period of their imperial integration and success in late Ottoman times. The need to legitimize their position within the Kurdish nationalist movement also compelled the Bedirhani brothers to tinker with their biographies in other respects, notably falsely claiming that their place of birth had been in the Kurdish heartland, instead of in the imperial center Istanbul. Advancing their political and personal agenda in the

French mandate territories, the Bedirhani brothers could fall back on some of the already established connections of their family in Ottoman Syria, dating back to the 19th century. In addition, new elements gained importance within their professional and personal networks, prominently among them incoming Kurdish refugees from Turkey and Armenian revolutionary circles. These new encounters shaped the Bedirhani brothers' discourse about Kurdish identity and also compelled them to compromise. A brief look into Kamuran Bedirhan's personal network completed the chapter and exemplified the dexterous network policies of him and his family, whose members were able to switch between different contexts and activate otherwise unrelated or even mutually contradictory layers of their heterogeneous and multifaceted network for their own personal and political ends.

The final chapter 7 abandoned the story of the well-known Bedirhani brothers and looked again outside of the usual canon of Kurdish nationalist historiography, in search of less polished stories of family members. The chapter started off with a close look at the trajectory of the dancer Leyla Bedirhan, the daughter of Abdürrezzak Bey, and the ways in which her story is remembered today. Her choice to create a stage persona as a Kurdish princess was, I argued, not primarily informed by political deliberations or inspired by her support for the Kurdish nationalist cause. Instead, it was a well-calculated concession to the taste and preferences of her international (mostly French) audience. Coincidentally, her rendition of an independent and fierce Kurdish warrior princess fit well with the image of the Kurdish female fighter which became popular in nationalist discourses. Commemorating Leyla Bedirhan and her success as a dancer today, however, is not detached from wider discourses about Kurdish identity and nationalist historiography. I illustrated how the interest in Leyla Bedirhan's story ties in with broader narratives of Kurdish nationalism by looking at the example of a recent biography written about Leyla Bedirhan in Turkish.

Seemingly devoid of political concerns on the surface, a closer analysis of the biography revealed different layers of meaning, catering to different audiences. While the book was well-received by the general Turkish public, there is, I argued, an additional level of interpretation concerned with Kurdish identity which is accessible for readers with some background knowledge in Kurdish nationalist historiography. Due to its vagueness and ambiguity, Leyla Bedirhan's biography has reached an extensive audience, in spite of the still relatively difficult and guarded discussion about Kurdish identity and alternative memories of the past in contemporary Turkey. Leyla Bedirhan's biography also provided me with an opportunity to discuss the contemporary discourse about Kurdish memory in Turkey more generally, a discourse which impacts the commemoration of not only Leyla Bedirhan but of all the members of the Bedirhani family discussed here.

It was difficult, almost always impossible, to work around or somehow get rid of the layers and re-readings added during these later commemorations when looking at the protagonists of this study. One of the final examples I introduced, however, offered a slightly different perspective. The story of Müveddet Gönensay, a daughter of Abdurrahman Bedirhan, has so far escaped modifications and editing according to the standard narratives of contemporary Kurdish historiography because it is not well known (yet). Müveddet Gönensay distributed typewritten copies of her unpublished personal memoirs among close friends and relatives, her recollections were neither produced nor edited in a framework of Kurdish nationalist historiography. Her story, as well as her narrative strategies, differ from the ones applied by other family members who have been analyzed above, making her writing an interesting point of comparison. It illustrates yet again that a narrative concerned with identical historical events is extremely flexible and can be altered according to different needs and contexts. In her account, Müveddet Gönensay tailors the story

of herself and her family to the broader narrative of a Turkish Republican progress towards civilization and modernity. Müveddet is most concerned with making clear that she belongs to a particular sociocultural environment, to the Republican elite of Istanbul. She uses allusions to cultural practices like music and leisure activities but also the detailed descriptions of her material environment to convey a sense of her status and ideas of identity and belonging. Being Kurdish or a member of the Bedirhani family only plays a marginal role in her account. Her commitment to Turkish Republican progress, however, has its limits as well. Müveddet is subscribing to a very particular and narrowly defined modernity, expressing nostalgic longing for the golden age of the early Turkish Republic while condemning the urban development and rapid social changes of the 1970s and beyond. A deep attachment to a Turkish modernity of the early Republican period is something Müveddet shares with the final three protagonists of my research, with Cemal Kutay, Vasıf Çınar and Meziyet Çınar. All three had to come to terms with finding their place within the newly emerging Turkish Republican society after the collapse of their imperial life worlds – and all three of them did so rather successfully, emerging as more publicly visible and active figures than Müveddet. This, in turn, forced them – and later their descendants, students and admirers who were eager to commemorate them and their achievements – to come to terms with the Kurdish and the imperial dimension of their family heritage. Both Cemal Kutay and Vasıf Çınar tried to address this dilemma by casting themselves as self-made men and children, even orphans taken care of by the Turkish Republic. Their family origins were downplayed in the accounts about their careers, mirroring how successful they were in integrating and assimilating into the Turkish Republican elite.

To sum up: Existing research on the Bedirhani family and on Ottoman-Kurdish notables more generally has underestimated the decisive and continued impact of the Ottoman framework on their ideas about

identity and belonging and on the network structures at the disposal of individual actors. My research has shown that members of the Bedirhani family (tacitly) activated connections to their fellow members of the former Ottoman bureaucratic and intellectual elite well into the second half of the 20th century. Ignoring the Ottoman dimension of the Bedirhani family history, existing research has mostly stressed novelties, innovations and turning points in Kurdish national history members of the Bedirhani family were somehow involved or associated with, salient examples being the development of a Kurdish national language in Latin script or the evolution of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria and Lebanon during the French mandate period. In addition to these innovations and breaks with the imperial past, however, I was able to also identify moments of continuity as well as more complex and ambiguous engagements with the imperial past in the trajectories of different family members. Members of the Bedirhani family emerged as skilled code-switchers, able to tailor their demands to different discourses and audiences, depending on whether they were negotiating with colonial powers, with their Kurdish tribal clients and followers or with fellow members of the former imperial elites. In conclusion, it seems fair to say that there are moments of both astonishing continuity and of profound changes in the family's history, and that continuities have so far been widely underrated or even ignored. This bias has been helped along by the analytical categories at play in the existing research on the family: My work has added to a line of criticism arguing that narratives and categories stemming from Kurdish nationalist historiography are not a good fit for the analysis of earlier, imperial periods in Kurdish history and that we have to inquire about historically contingent meanings of categories like "Kurdish," "Ottoman," and even "Bedirhani" at play. My research demonstrated how members of the Bedirhani family themselves actively shaped the definition of Kurdish identity and the idea of who belonged to the Kurdish community as they emerged as informants for the imperial powers in the Middle East

during the post-war period. Being Kurdish and, even more so, being able to define what Kurdishness meant was a crucial resource for members of the family over the 1930s and 1940s.

Finally, my story is not meant to end with the Bedirhanis. It is my conviction that from the intricate case of the Bedirhani family, a lot can be learned about the complex processes of post-Ottoman identity formation more generally. I have used the history of the Bedirhani family as a prism to find out more about Ottoman and post-imperial life worlds and about ways to deal with challenges of transition. My findings pertain not only to the Ottoman-Kurdish case but engage with discussions about post-imperial identities more generally.

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This volume traces the history of the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani family in Ottoman imperial and post-imperial times. Following various members of the extended Bedirhani family over the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it takes the family's history as a starting point to inquire about dynamics of post-imperial identity formation before and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire – a decisive moment in the formation of the current geopolitical structure of the Middle East, marked by the emergence of nationalisms and nationalist identities.

Strategies family members used to negotiate the shift from empire to post-imperial contexts are being analyzed, along with the stories they told about themselves and their family's history and the network structures they operated in. At the core of the argument lies the observation that with the end of the Ottoman Empire, imperial structures of solidarity and frameworks of identification did not vanish overnight, to be replaced by nationalist identities and loyalties. Instead, the history of the Bedirhani family shows post-imperial identity formation as a long-term process and complex, multi-layered phenomenon.



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